

## PERFECT Opportunities for Youth in Agriculture

*Reaching thousands through national radio program in South Africa*


By Hlami Ngwenya



Hlami Ngwenya is an international consultant for the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS [www.g-fras.org](http://www.g-fras.org)). She is involved in the “*Talent development in agriculture: Growing ambitions for agricultural professionals*” initiative that GFRAS is spearheading in collaboration with the International Agri-Food Network, Young Professionals for Agricultural Research and Development (YPARD), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Global Confederation of Higher Education Association for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA), Tropical Agricultural Platform (TAP), Nuffield International farming scholars and others (access the call at <http://www.ypard.net/2015-april-14/talent-development-agriculture-call-action>). This coalition serves as a response to the 2013 Committee on World Food Security’s endorsement of its Multi-Year Programme of Work for 2015-17, including a Round Table entitled “A Plan of Action to Build Knowledge, Skills, and Talent Development to Further Food and Nutrition Security”. Evidence suggests that the majority of young people are not interested in agriculture as it is often seen as an activity for the elderly and not lucrative enough. Agriculture is still seen from the dominant perspective of primary production or ‘farming’. While farming is an important aspect, narrowing the perspective of agriculture to this alone, has an influence in further alienating the young people away from agriculture. Farming requires other support functions such as Policies, Entrepreneurship, Research, Finance, Extension & Rural Advisory Services, Communications and Technologies. All these provide **PERFECT** alternative opportunities for youth in agriculture. Against this backdrop, Hlami Ngwenya has started a campaign on “**PERFECT**” opportunities for youth in Agriculture, as an effort to bridge the knowledge gap.



The Munghana Lonene FM (known as MLFM) is one of the National radio stations of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Broadcasting in XiTsonga (one of the 11 official languages in South Africa), the station has a listenership of over 1 million people in South Africa and parts of Mozambique ([www.munghanalonenefm.co.za](http://www.munghanalonenefm.co.za)). Every Sunday between 20h05 -22h00 MLFM hosts a show called Minkondzo ya Tinghwazi, (meaning “*Footprints of the Legends*”). This program produced by Ms. Ruth Maphophe (on left), and presented by Pastor Strike Manganyi (on right) is a motivational talk show aimed at profiling people from all walks of life who have made a difference in people’s lives in one way or another. As South Africa celebrates the Youth Month (of June) as a remembrance of the historic event of the June 16, 1976, many radio programs for this month are geared towards inspiring the youth.



On Sunday the 07<sup>th</sup> of June 2015, MLFM profiled as one of its legends Hlami Ngwenya to recognize the contributions that she makes in mentoring local youth; but also her involvement with GFRAS and engagement with other global partners in the advancement of “*Talent development in agriculture: Growing ambitions for agricultural professionals*”. During this two-hour live broadcast, Hlami shared about (among others) GFRAS and its creative competition on rural advisory services, the work of YPARD and CTA ([www.cta.int/en/](http://www.cta.int/en/)) and other **PERFECT** opportunities in the broader agricultural sector. During the show, the youth were allowed to phone in to engage and ask questions for clarity. In the week following the show, Hlami has directly received calls from both parents and youth from deep rural areas seeking for more information. The MLFL studio was also overwhelmed with calls from listeners who are hungry for more knowledge and information about agriculture beyond farming.

The effect that radio has in reaching millions of marginalized groups should not be underestimated. Radio remains one of the most accessible mass media platforms and this provides a great opportunity to reach out to the majority of the youth whom under normal circumstances would remain untouched by such valuable information.

Follow me on  @NgwenyaHlami  
@infogfras