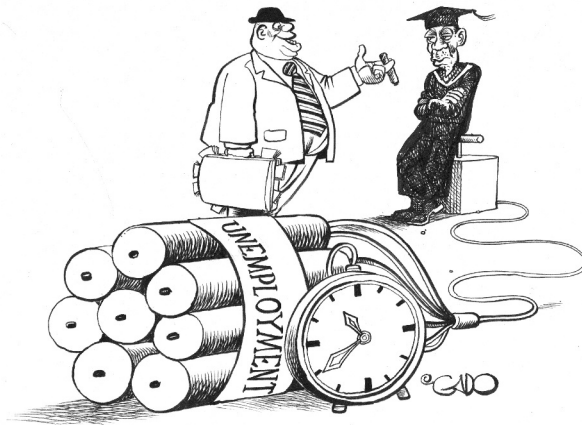


# Youth Unemployment in Kenya

## *A Ticking Time Bomb*



Edited by

• Helmut Danner • Monica Kerretts-Makau • Johannes Michael Nebe

  
**LONGHORN**  
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Published by


Longhorn Publishers Ltd  
Funzi Road, Industrial Area  
P. O. Box 18033 – 00500  
Nairobi, Kenya

Longhorn Publishers (U) Ltd  
Kanjokya Street, Plot 74, Kamwokya  
P. O. Box 24745  
Kampala, Uganda

Longhorn Publishers (T) Ltd  
New Bagamoyo/Garden Road  
Mikocheni B, Plot No. MKC/MCB/81  
P. O. Box 1237  
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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This edition has been generously supported by  Hanns  
Seidel  
Foundation

First published 2016

Cover design by Moses Otieno

**ISBN 978 9966 314 21 5**

Printed by

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## Preface

The pressures of urbanisation cannot be explained better than by the challenges faced by young people struggling to find meaningful employment. The sight of hand-cart-pulling young men is common in most cities and is evidence of the immense efforts young people put to make ends meet. Employment has become elusive and ventures such as these have offered an opportunity for self-employment. Many articles and pieces of writings have addressed this predicament mostly facing the young people. The title picture of this book highlights the plight of a group of youths some who may even be university graduates but they are jobless. Every day, these youths see the rich driving their big air-conditioned cars. And the rich drivers probably perceive the youths and their hand-carts as a hindrance to the smooth flow of traffic. The world seems closed for young people in Kenya.

Kenya's population is predominantly young and a significant number of youths are trained but cannot access employment. They are found in all facets of our social life in both positive and negative ways. It is difficult to imagine how these youths can break even on their own in a world where people of a certain age are expected to fend for themselves through meaningful income-generating activities.

We are not talking about a few exceptions or a few 'failures' but of the *majority* of youths. We must recognise that we are facing an enormous *social* problem that, if not mitigated in time, will affect this country for generations to come. Challenges emanating from the unemployment of young people have both negative economic and social outcomes. Families and entire societies are affected when young people cannot access employment. Maybe there is something fundamentally wrong with the society, politics and the economy?

This book intends to shed light on various aspects of youth unemployment. The authors depict a comprehensive picture: they highlight the desperate situation of youths who cannot access employment and resort to crime and prostitution. They discuss the informal sector, special groups and their challenges, programmes and opportunities for the youth, and the urgent need for meaningful and useful education. However, emphasis must be laid on the positive side of the otherwise depressing situation of youth unemployment by emphasising that opportunities exist, and, above all, that youths are indeed innovative and can improve their lives.

This book was inspired by the research project *Youth-Led Development in Nairobi – Challenges and Opportunities* (2013). The project, initiated and guided by J.M. Nebe, included students from the University of Trier (Germany) and Kenyatta University (Kenya). They elaborated on issues that are also the subject of this book. In their research, the students came across the astonishing creativity of Kenyan youths. In their article, Nebe and Wang'eni argue that young people should acquire a wide range of skills that fall under three main categories: foundation skills, transferable skills and technical and vocational skills.

The authors of this book have not necessarily been involved in the research project; they are mostly practitioners who report and reflect on their experiences and their contributions will enrich the original research project.

Among the issues discussed in this publication are: the desperate situation of the youth vis-a vis their entrepreneurial and innovative skills; the important economic and social role of the informal sector; the government programmes that are jeopardised by bureaucracy; the social and cultural factors that particularly affect women and physically-challenged persons; and the role of the education sector in preparing young people for the labour market.

Youth employment is the responsibility of everyone who has the ability to influence change in this area. The government, political leaders, employers, the youth themselves and opinion leaders in society all have to share in the blame of the catastrophe that is currently youth unemployment. Situational factors have also contributed to young people languishing without employment. These factors include the weak economic situation of the country, vices like corruption, poor prioritisation of development, nepotism and tribalism not to mention the inappropriateness of the education system for the job market.

In this publication, while attempting to explain the role of the youth in their own unemployment, *Judy Chege* argues that the challenge is magnified by a growing deficit of communication skills, unreliability and desire for quick money with the least effort. She argues that all these do not portray positive life skills that can positively predispose young people to employment opportunities and entrepreneurial success. Therefore, many young people do not possess the basic *work ethics* that are required for successful employment and for entrepreneurial engagements. These challenges, coupled with the tight labour market that does not offer enough employment, force the youth to seek alternative sources

of livelihood through self-employment like an entrepreneur including simple businesses like owning a hand-cart.

The fact that Kenya is leading in ICT in the African continent and that ICT has become relevant in all kinds of businesses, office work and other activities in general should encourage young people to see this sector as a new opening that can mitigate some of the employment challenges they are currently facing. However, there is still another opportunity that was until recently neglected as young people sought jobs in the big cities; agriculture. *Mwima Echessa* discusses a case study in Western Kenya where the Anglican Development Services promotes agriculture and *agri-business among the youth* and supported them to overcome the hindrances they faced as they ventured into this new area of income generation.

A similar case is described by *Diana Lee-Smith* who reports that youths, often young women, invest in urban agriculture by using tiny backyards to grow vegetables or plant on unused pieces of land. This case of “urban agriculture” is a clear example of the extent of frustration of young people especially women who are also caregivers at a very young age.

The Kenyan school system is often blamed for not preparing young people for the labour market. Indeed, a radical reform of the Kenyan education system has been a recent recommendation of many technical experts and analysts. The current system encourages mindless memorising that does not allow students to *understand* what they learn and does not encourage them to think independently and innovatively. *Monica Kerretts-Makau* examines the 8-4-4 system of education in this context. She advises that *entrepreneurship* requires certain capabilities and the discipline to follow certain rules to be successful, showing that the system has in many ways removed the major components – critical thinking and innovation – from the education equation in the Kenyan school system. She also notes that the digital development of the recent years offers new opportunities for employment.

*Jephthah Gathaka*, on the other hand, argues that the youth should get *education for life* by having elements of this educational idea in concepts of the past and in contemporary discussions about education; this should include adequate preparation for a vocation.

*Entela Kallamata* looks at the situation of the *European youth* and demonstrates how important it is that *practical* skills are taught as well. In those European countries where dual vocational education and training

is part of the education system, the unemployment rate of the youth is considerably lower than in countries without it.

*Helmut Danner* describes the *dual vocational training and education system* as implemented in Germany and explains that the unemployment rate of youth is considerably lower than in countries without it. If Kenya adopted this system, which is not the same as the training in “technical schools”, the youth’s preparedness for the labour market and chances for employment would most likely increase.

The Government of Kenya and its development partners are aware of the dire situation of unemployed youth. While this problem is more systemic than operational, they have introduced different programmes to support youth employment and livelihood needs. *Mutinta Munyati* describes one programme by the UN-Habitat that works with “*One-Stop Centres*” run by youth. These centres are established to provide youth with administrative and entrepreneurial experience; while at the same time they get training and support in various fields such as health, governance, ICT, entrepreneurship, livelihood and environmental sustainability. In two separate contributions, *David Mshila* and *Raphael Obonyo* emphasise the relevance of such *youth programmes* by the government and critically show the *constraints* youth experience to access them.

It is evident that many youths have neither been able to access gainful employment nor chances to benefit from public and private programmes such as the ones run by UN-Habitat to help them start off their life. With dwindling opportunities, they have resorted to the informal sector. *George Njoroge* as well as *Olang Sana* explicate the plight of young people in the slums. While the former narrates the circumstances and endeavours of the youth in the slums, the latter presents the results of a study he conducted in another set of slums in Nairobi. The objective of this research study was to establish what the Government of Kenya can do to expand opportunities for self-employment in the informal settlements, so that a large number of slum youth can be absorbed. In his findings, he states that while the *jua kali* sector faces many challenges, it is “the home of the country’s creativity, ingenuity and energy”.

These opportunities are, however, not available to all youth equally. Some groups of the society have to struggle more than the rest to find employment or initiatives to engage in. *Cathychristine Keya* and *Brenda Mbaja Lubang’a* draw attention to various social, economic, cultural and political obstacles that hinder *young women* from accessing equal employment opportunities as men. The authors report that young



women face exploitation, discrimination and under-representation in decision making. *Isaac Mwaura* adds to their concern by stating that *persons with disabilities* face similar problems of discrimination when seeking employment.

*Gabriel Dinda* notes that university graduates may have better chances of accessing employment opportunities than slum youths but are limited by the quality of training they receive at university. He explains that the education system does not adequately prepare graduates for the job market resulting in frustrations among these young people who rarely fit the needs of most employers.

However, *Kilemi Mwiria* gives Kenyan education a lot of credit and proposes that it prepares Kenyan youth for the *demand of highly-skilled labour* that comes from some countries in the Middle East or from Canada. But as long as Kenyan schools are not applying learning by understanding and students do not learn how to practically apply what they are learning, the idea of preparing youth for labour export remains futuristic. The need for demand-driven training is not only for the export labour market but also for Kenya.

*Howard Akimala* raises concern on a specific issue: *reproductive health* in connection with the youth. He maintains that, for various reasons, the needs of the youth are not adequately catered for. Although Akimala discusses the relationship between reproductive health and unemployment, the fact of the explosive *growth of the population* and its effect on unemployment does not appear as an issue for any author. However, Kenya's population is described as youthful and their high share of the population puts unnecessary demand on the already stressed economic capabilities of the country. This silent acceptance of having more children than the society can cope with may have cultural, social and religious roots. But it has to be addressed if youth unemployment shall be successfully dealt with. This aspect demonstrates that youth unemployment is not only an economic problem, but *a responsibility of the whole society*.

The editors of this book and the authors wish to raise the awareness of the complex and urgent problem of youth unemployment and to stimulate a constructive discussion about it. It is the responsibility of the entire Kenyan society – not any foreign organisation – to contribute to the full integration of the youth into the society.



# I. The Research Project

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Johannes Michael Nebe and John Wesonga Mang'eni  
**The Youth Question – Creativity as a Driving Force for Development**

## *Abstract*

*Despite the evidence in recent years of greater attention to youth, they still face many obstacles that keep them from safely transitioning into adulthood and into the workforce. This article addresses the topic of youth unemployment in Kenya. It discusses the objectives and research experiences of the research project dubbed Youth-led Development in Nairobi - Challenges and Opportunities. The article explores the problem of youth unemployment from a broad perspective, drawing on data from the relevant UN agencies. It then narrows to the Kenyan situation. Arguments advanced in the article emphasise the need for young people to acquire a wide range of skills that fall under three main categories: foundational skills, transferable skills and technical and vocational skills. The article also includes statements from students who participated in the research project. These statements bring out the student experience, which deepen the breadth of the study project.*

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## *Preliminary remarks*

The present contribution intends to address the topic of youth unemployment in Kenya. It will discuss the objectives and experiences of the research project, *Youth-led Development in Nairobi—Challenges and Opportunities*, which took place from September to October, 2013.

Students from various faculties in the University of Trier *Youth-led Development in Nairobi – Challenges and Opportunities* project, where they conducted interdisciplinary and intercultural projects intended to inform the Kenyan public and to stimulate potential solutions. The complete report can be read under the link stated in the footnote.<sup>1</sup> However, the project was very challenging and ambitious; it was revealed when the insights were presented

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1 <https://www.uni-trier.de/fileadmin/fb3/POL/Sonstiges/Nebe/Studie.pdf>

at a workshop in Nairobi. About 100 representatives from politics, business, science, civil society, and local media participated. We were delighted that many young people from the slums, who had been interviewed by us, also attended the open forum. That discussion has given the impetus for this book.

Youth unemployment, characterised by the dramatically increasing number of job-seekers is a ticking time bomb and should be taken seriously by the government. This challenge is not only faced by Kenya but is a global phenomenon. The high unemployment rate of the youth is also threatening the future of the European Union (see Entela Kallamata in chapter IV). This is even worse in developing countries where youth unemployment is a persistent and growing problem.

### *Young people matter*

A number of UN publications have featured the nature of the challenge of youth unemployment. In a United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report from 2014, the youth challenge is very clearly stated: “Young people matter. They matter because they have inherent human rights that must be upheld. They matter because an unprecedented 1.8 billion youth are alive today and because they are the shapers and leaders of our global future. Yet in a world of adult concerns, young people are often overlooked. This tendency cries out for urgent correction, because it imperils youth as well as economies and societies at large.”<sup>2</sup> It is also a highly alarming figure that about 9 out of 10 people between the ages of 10 and 24 years live in less developed countries.<sup>3</sup> Jobs are not created fast enough to meet the needs of this large, growing youth population. If governments in developing countries and the private sector fail to educate and train young people and employ them in well-paid jobs, they risk disappointing young people’s aspirations and wasting their potential. According to a UNESCO report (2012): “This limits opportunities for sustainable growth, and jeopardises gains from policy interventions in other areas, such

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2 UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) (2014): *The State of World Population*. New York, p. 1.

3 *Ibid*, p. 1.

as poverty reduction, health and agriculture. Providing them with opportunities to escape from low-skilled, low-paid work should be at the core of every skills development strategy”.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, tens of millions of children do not attend school, and those who go often do not receive an adequate education. In addition, employment prospects are often poor with jobs unavailable or of poor quality.<sup>5</sup> One of the reasons is that vocational skills are missing mostly in developing countries to qualify young people to find adequate jobs. Therefore, “the skills and knowledge young people acquire must be relevant to the current economy and enable them to become innovators, thinkers and problem-solvers”.<sup>6</sup>

Another statement concerning youth unemployment taken from a UNESCO publication highlights the impact of the economy: “Youth unemployment rates are high because the time taken to find work has become even longer as a result of the economic downturn. Long-term unemployment can be particularly damaging for young people, leaving them with little hope of earning a decent wage throughout their lives”<sup>7</sup>.

### *The Kenyan Context*

The age group of 10-24 year old accounts for 32% of the Kenyan population.<sup>8</sup> According to official data, approximately 78% of the Kenyan population is below 35 years old. There are about 800,000 young people entering the job market every year. Youth out of work make up the largest part of unemployed persons in Kenya, constituting a huge potential for social political conflict in the future. There is a young turbulent population growing up, who yearn to work and feel politically and economically excluded. There is risk that they may one day violently demand their right for a more dignified life. It is our collective duty to create opportunities that translate to meaningful participation of the youth in the development of their communities and the nation.

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4 UNESCO 2012: Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work, Paris, p. 170.

5 UNFPA 2014, p.31.

6 Ibid, p. i.

7 UNESCO 2012: Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work, Paris, p. 192.

8 UNFPA 2012, p. 62.

Due to inadequate employment and livelihood opportunities in rural areas in Kenya, the tendency is that young people migrate to urban centres, especially to Nairobi, looking for employment. In addition, rapid population growth, insufficient vocational and professional skills for training the youth, poor ability of the labour market, insufficient dissemination of stimulating labour market information, lack of structural reforms, poor infrastructure, and high labour cost are the most frequent explanations of the causes of youth unemployment in Kenya.

The few existing entrepreneurship programmes in Kenya are not always well-tailored to their needs. The Government of Kenya has taken steps to address these constraints through initiatives such as the Youth Fund and *Uwezo* Fund; but such initiatives have failed to make an impact.

### *There is hope*

Despite the negative landscape, there are characteristics of Kenyan youth that increase their resilience. For instance, the creativity and determination of the youth in Kenya in developing their own business ideas is remarkable and exactly what our project was aiming to leverage: we intended to show that initiatives “from below” have the potential to generate income, which in turn contribute towards improving the living conditions of young people and their families and communities. Regardless of the poor working conditions, young Kenyans seem to never resign to their own fates but instead fight for a better tomorrow. Their innovative business ideas result in a strengthened community, and often, produce convincing alternatives to the status quo.

Our research project took place at a time of heightened interest among researchers and policy-makers to unlock the employment potential of the youth. It was an extremely laborious and touching topic since it focused on the future of young people. With tight fiscal conditions in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, new jobs in Kenya and Africa are unlikely to be generated by the public sector. Entrepreneurship is then viewed as an option for generating sustainable livelihoods. We affirm that exploiting the creativity

among young people in Kenya could be an important driving force for development and growth.

In Kenya, as elsewhere, potential young entrepreneurs are mostly constrained by the lack of entrepreneurial skills, insufficient vocational training (see chapter IV for Helmut Danner's view on this topic) and limited access to finance. Without appropriate investments today in the youth to prepare them for a better future, the challenges of meeting the needs of a growing population will become increasingly daunting. Investments in human capital are the motor of any development. Therefore, an increased readiness for investing in the support of education and health is the essential condition for youth-friendly politics that will benefit the development of individuals as well as of the country.

Economic growth needs those crucial preconditions in order to create a large platform for employment. There is a lot of creativity in Kenyan youth as this was clearly demonstrated in our project from the year 2013. Young people have to be at the centre of Kenya's "Vision 2030", the development blueprint of the Government of Kenya. An ambitious reform programme for various social areas not only has to be formulated (as was done by the Constitution of Kenya 2010) but these also have to be implemented. Presently, young people face many hindrances to the development of their potential. These hindrances are gravest where poverty is dominant, where there is minimal access to vital health care and education and where conflicts and violence occur most frequently and life conditions are very hard.

### *The idea of the project*

In our research project, we intended to show that initiatives can change the living conditions of young people. They are also a positive force for political change and for society in general. The sub-topics we chose focused on:

- Renewable energy – finally a chance for the Kenyan youth;
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Kenya – striking the seclusion;
- Green revolution – agriculture has come into the city;
- Talents and sports;

- Peace and political participation of the youth;
- Young Kenyans on their way into the media industry;
- Youth, slum-upgrading and the environment.

Through an analysis of these areas, we have come to know a great number of talented young people with high motivation to overcome poverty. They are also innovative, creative and hard-working; never giving up especially when they notice that what they were doing had an impact. This is remarkable because the bureaucratic and political environment in Kenya has hindered rather than supported their entrepreneurial spirit.

The perspectives and data presented in our research can be an asset for the advocacy and design of a more focused and committed sustainable youth policy in Kenya. The aim being to give more young people hope and confidence in their personal development and lay a foundation for a more fulfilling life. The scale and urgency of the problem demands that the government looks more carefully into the deeper causes of youth unemployment and develop measures for job creation to overcome youth poverty. The crucial question should be focused on necessary skills and their improvement because the lack of skills is one of the worst forms of disadvantage in the labour market.

### *A wide range of skills is necessary*

We agree on the three categories of skills that are emphasised in the UNESCO report of 2012 and the contexts in which they are to be acquired and that all young people need: foundation skills, transferable skills and technical and vocational skills.<sup>9</sup>

### *Foundation skills*

These are the elementary skills typically learnt in primary and secondary school, i.e. literacy and numeracy, skills necessary for getting work that pays enough to meet daily needs, fundamental for enabling further education and training, and for acquiring additional skills such as technical and vocational skills. Without these basics, the opportunity for gainful employment or engaging

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO 2012, p. 170-173.



in entrepreneurial activities are greatly reduced. Therefore, completion of quality primary and secondary education is essential. For those that have not completed, skills training opportunities are helpful, providing a second chance to acquire foundation skills to work-based training, including apprenticeships and farm-based training.

### *Transferable skills*

Finding and staying in employment requires a wide range of skills that can be transferred and adapted to different employment needs and environments. Transferable skills include analysing problems with appropriate solutions, communication abilities, creativity, innovative entrepreneurial capabilities, leadership skills, responsibility and conscientiousness. Such skills can be further developed through secondary schooling and work-based programmes.

### *Technical and vocational skills*

These skills rely on foundational and transferable skills. They can be acquired through additional work-based training during school time and can be linked to secondary schooling and formal technical and vocational education, including traditional apprenticeships. Many jobs require specific technical knowledge, whether computer-based jobs or hands-on tasks such as carpentry. In today's dynamic global economy where the labour market is demanding and skills for specific occupations are constantly evolving, it is necessary to combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills that match the needs and demands of the job market. These accumulated skills enable young people to advance to better-paid work, including entrepreneurial opportunities, and to higher education.

### *Lessons learnt*

The following section provides the personal experiences of some of the students from Kenyatta University (KU) and Trier University (TU) who participated in the project.

*Phyllis Gatutha (KU):* I was challenged by the different innovative

ideas and projects that these youth engage in, using their talents in the arts and sports to earn a living. This opened my eyes and changed my mind-set on over-reliance on the government for employment. The government should, however, create a better environment to nurture the skills and abilities of the youth in order to enjoy their contribution towards the country's development goals.

*Stephan Kroppen (TU):* With our research project, we managed to create a comprehensive information source for all subject areas we considered relevant to summarise the challenges and opportunities for Kenyan youth. Our findings outline the working conditions for a wide range of Kenya's NGOs as well as give direct practical advice for policy-makers. The workshop at the end of the project, which brought together many different organisations, provided a platform for networking. Working jointly with Kenyan students was the best part as it enabled us to better understand how to successfully approach and gather information from Kenyan organisations and individuals. All in all, being successful in finding ways to track down and solve problems has a strong motivational effect on the will to deepen further research and call for a change wherever possible.

*Entela Kallamata (TU):* This study project came at a time when the EU was at the peak of its own youth unemployment crisis. It brought together students of different cultures who directly had contact with jobless young people and their various undertakings and ventures of economic, social, environmental and political nature. We met young people with basic needs who were willing to get engaged and involved; they told us their stories of self-employment; of making it in life; of breaking prejudices; and of starting anew. In summary, these cases became a strong example of what all had in common: the energy and ideas of young people to change their destinies and that of the nation. The potential of the youth is one key factor for a country going through a stagnating economic situation. Certainly, the study project was able to point out and underline the development initiatives that young people are able to join in. This should be supported and directed in the best way possible by the Kenyan politicians and government

officials concerned.

*John Wesonga Mang'eni (KU):* The study was an eye-opener to many especially policy-makers, civil society groups, youth groups and the private sector. The publication of the study findings provides an opportunity to critically look into the activities that young people in Kenya are involved in. This research work, which was jointly executed by students from two universities, will be a reference point for anyone interested in youth empowerment. This was a unique opportunity for the students to use their theoretical knowledge in solving the problems of the society. They obviously gained research skills, made contacts with potential employers and acquired several life skills. Apart from the field data collection, the students presented preliminary findings of the study during a workshop, which enabled participants to interrogate the objectives and results of the study. As a young Kenyan, I wish to call upon the government and other stakeholders to seriously look into the 'youth question'. The growing population of young people in Kenya and her neighbours can either be a curse or a blessing.

*Leonie Weber (TU):* The project brought together some people who started an important exchange where both sides could benefit from the experiences of others. This is only a start with potential for the greater project, which is to defuse the ticking time bomb of youth unemployment. It is my hope that more people will get involved in the fight for better conditions for the youth.

*Andreas Boneberg (TU):* I was excited to be part of a project I considered, right from the start, highly fruitful, not only for my career but even more for my personal development. Waiting to finally make my first trip to Sub-Saharan Africa was filled with mixed emotions. In Germany, the mainstream media tends to portray a rather stereotypical image of many African countries. Unfortunately, these mostly inappropriate representations inevitably make their way into the minds of many Germans. The Internet has made it worse since unverified information can easily be accessed. My working with young Kenyans and our visits to street corners, marketplaces and even slums shaped my image of Kenya and of its people in many positive ways. The open-heartedness and the hospitality of people coming from the poorest backgrounds have impressed me until today. All thanks go to the project leaders for

giving me and other students the opportunity to make a difference in peoples' lives. *Asante sana* to Kenya and Kenyans!

*Ochieng Arthur Onyango (KU)*: Not every young person is able to complete formal education and this raises the question: what happens to them? Should that be the end of their lives? There is an urgent need for an alternative education system - an excellent vocational training. This will definitely enable more youth to get adequate jobs. Our project report offers a picture of how young people face the challenges they have. The findings prove that if given better vocational training, the youth can do more. In summary, this study explored how young people rekindle their hopes and find purpose in their lives.

*Jan-Peter Schulz (TU)*: The project not only gave all of us students a deeper insight into the hardships and distress faced by the youth in the slums of Nairobi, but also into their creativity, will, and struggle to survive. What we witnessed affirms that there is need to give slums a new image and the recognition they duly deserve. There is need for stronger trust-building politics, which takes into account the commitment and high potential of the youth in slums. If not, there is a risk that Kenya will rob its own future of the very drivers who could propel its development.

*Hellen Bitieka (KU)*: It was a nice experience interacting with people of a different culture since I was able to understand their way of doing things, their views and I believe the German students too understood our ways and reasons of doing things. Another fundamental lesson from the project study was the realisation that youth have lots of opportunities to exploit and curb the unemployment crisis.

*Laura Koehler (TU)*: The project offered a platform for the youth to be heard. It also brought to light the various opportunities and challenges they have. A sustainable advantage for the youth can only be drawn from the project if they use its information and findings to work together and bundle their forces so as to maximise their power and resources. I urge the political class to use these findings to help make the efforts of the youth a reality.

*Vitalis Ogur (KU):* My experience with the project exceeded my expectations. My fellow students were dedicated and supportive, as were the rest of the organisations involved. The environment was friendly, stimulating and challenging. We discovered a lot of talents among the youth, which, if tapped, would boost the economic growth of our country.

## II. Life Skills

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Judy Chege

### **Back to Basics – Life Skills and Work Ethics among Kenyan Youth**

#### *Abstract*

*It has to be acknowledged that the youth are facing huge challenges from the family, learning institutions, the situation of the country's economy to the realities of the labour market. Yet, they need to realise that poor work ethics is an issue that is affecting their success in the labour market. Overall, they are increasingly challenged in the area of life skills: Youth's communication skills are alarming; too many expect the world of work to adapt to their 'culture', instead of adapting to the generally-acceptable work culture and work ethics. Many youth demonstrate a great lack of dependability and reliability and finally, many want to reap the most with minimum effort. A way out of this situation, this chapter suggests, is to entrench life skills training into the Kenyan education system, for example, based on the International Youth Foundation's Programme "Strengthening Life Skills for Youth".*

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The problem of youth unemployment in the world and even more so in Africa is a serious and complex one. This is evidenced by the diverse findings obtained from numerous studies that have been carried out around the area of youth and unemployment. Different authorities in the area of employability around the world have made diverse findings, gained various views, perspectives and experiences in relation to youth unemployment. Indeed, the complexity of the problem of youth unemployment will be further appreciated when one looks at the different definitions that have arisen around the unemployment issue, as evidenced for instance, in ILO's publication on International Definitions and Prospects of Underemployment Statistics (1999) where an enlightening study and discussion on differentiating employment, unemployment and underemployment is given.

Studies have shown that open unemployment rates are generally very low in low-income sub-Saharan African countries. Unemployment is simply not an option for the poor and unskilled, who find refuge in subsistence agriculture and the urban informal sector<sup>10</sup>. The ILO estimates that across a sample of 24 African countries, 49% of working young people live on less than USD 1.25 a day and 73% live on less than USD 2 per day. The underemployed face exclusion from labour markets and are unable to use their full labour capacity productively. They have a part-time occupation though they want to work full-time but cannot find full-time work. Vulnerable employment is the most prevalent form of youth employment in most African countries<sup>11</sup>.

In spite of the complexity of the problem of youth unemployment, there is one thing that all authorities in this subject most certainly agree on: youth unemployment is an urgent concern for every government, youth-focused organisation, business community and indeed every citizen. Alexander Chikwanda, Zambia's finance minister, was spot-on when he said: "Youth unemployment is a ticking time bomb", which now appears to be perilously close to exploding.

In appreciation of the fact that youth unemployment is indeed a complex problem, the other thing that authorities on this subject will probably agree on is the fact that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' explanation of the problem of youth unemployment, just as there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to it. It is a problem that must be analysed, understood and tackled from different dimensions, both at macro and micro levels.

This article discusses unemployment among Kenyan youth at a micro-level. Specifically, it focuses on looking at *how Kenyan youth are themselves contributing to the problem of unemployment*. In particular, it focuses on youth who have had a basic education, i.e. youth who have completed primary school, with a larger bias towards those who have some form of tertiary or university education. An analysis of the degree to which the issues addressed here are contributing to youth unemployment in Kenya is not covered and might be interesting to study.

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<sup>10</sup> Fields 2012.

<sup>11</sup> African Development Bank 2012.

While acknowledging that factors such as a country's economy, leadership, education systems, handling of vices such as corruption, etc., have a huge impact on youth unemployment, there is another factor I have noted with interest which in my view has been contributing to youth unemployment in Kenya especially within the last 20 years. This is the *deteriorating work ethics of Kenyan youth*. Poor work ethics among the youth cannot be blamed on the youth alone since ethics in general are learnt and developed in the context of societal culture. Poor work ethics among the youth, therefore, point to the fact that there is a larger problem in the society as a whole, which has contributed to the development of the said problem. As such, it needs to be addressed from a very broad perspective with government, institutions of learning and parents so they can all pool their efforts to remedy the situation.

However, the involvement of the different stakeholders in addressing the challenge of poor work ethics among the youth does not and should not take away responsibility from the youth in looking seriously at themselves and starting to address this problem at a personal level. Kenyan youth need to start realising that poor work ethics is an issue that is affecting their success in being integrated into the labour market.

### *Employers*

Having worked for at least 15 years in a career that involves bridging the gap between the demand and supply side of the labour market, I have come to believe that while a lot is invested in empowering Kenyan youth towards becoming employable, there is need for some work with a section of Kenyan employers as well, with regard to how they view and handle (young) workers. On the demand side of the labour market, there are employers who take advantage of the situation of youth unemployment by making young people work under difficult conditions such as working without formal contracts to shield them from exploitation and job insecurity. I have seen employers remunerate young workers poorly or pay them nothing at all if they are working as interns. Some employers say that they have no budget for interns (even though they rely



heavily on them) opting to include interns' allowances in the list of expenditures for cost-cutting in their organisations.

A section of employers have also taken advantage of the youth unemployment situation by viewing the huge pool of jobless youth as a source of cheap labour from which they can squeeze out the most at the least cost. Gradually, the coaching/mentoring role of employers has started to dwindle as the focus has shifted from giving back to society through empowering young workers to making maximum profits with least investment on the labour force. However, it is important to note that some companies have maintained or are starting to revive mentorship/coaching of young workers as part of an effort to give back to society. While employers could blame the country's economy for their inability to sustain a well-paid, formally engaged work force, I believe there are employers that have taken advantage of how desperate young people are for work and should a young person quit as a result of poor working conditions or terms of engagement, they are sure to get a replacement that will be grateful to put up with these unfair terms.

### *Work ethics challenge of the Kenyan youth*

On the other side of the coin, i.e. the supply side of the labour market, which I wish to concentrate on, we have a situation where Kenyan youth have unfortunately, knowingly or unknowingly, gradually *created a negative brand* for themselves in the labour market. Interacting with the demand side of the labour market, one will too often hear employers say that they cannot find suitable people to employ whilst there are too many jobless youth in the country. This is quite a paradox. The challenges employers face with regard to the search for Kenyan youth to employ is the focus of this article.

It is a fact that *Kenyan youth are very talented and innovative*, whether they are highly educated or not; this cannot be disputed. Young people in Kenya have excelled in diverse fields and contributed to the country's brand in a positive way – through innovations in ICT, great achievements in fine arts, performing arts,

sciences, entrepreneurship, sports etc. However, Kenyan youth, just like youth the world over, have equally been associated with not-so-positive activities such as crime, participation in unrest, drugs and alcohol addiction, and so on.

In relation to work, many Kenyan youth deserve to be acknowledged for their efforts to succeed and excel in an environment that is otherwise hostile towards the unemployed. As Mthuli Ncube, Chief Economist at the African Development Bank put it: “This (unemployment) is an unacceptable reality on a continent with such an impressive pool of youth, talent and creativity”<sup>12</sup>. Despite the high rate of unemployment, a lot of Kenyan youth are making efforts to light a candle rather than curse the darkness. They are engaged as casual labourers, involved in farming, running small businesses, forming youth groups and coming up with income-generating activities and basically doing whatever they can to earn an honest living. There is, however, a growing population among the employment-seeking youth that is threatening the youth brand in the labour market through a *growing culture of poor work ethics*. A description of this group is given in the following section. It is something that is possibly working against Kenyan youth as a whole despite the fact that not all of them are contributing to it.

### *Poor life skills*

The World Health Organisation (1997) has defined life skills as “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”, while UNICEF (2012) has defined them as a “large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help lead a healthy and productive life”.

Kenyan youth are increasingly challenged in the area of life skills especially as they relate to employability. There has been continued outcry from employers over this issue and it has recently

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<sup>12</sup> African Development Bank 2012.

drawn much attention of the government, youth-serving organisations and indeed all who work with the youth. It is clear that there is a lot of work to be done in empowering Kenyan youth with adequate life skills. Some of the fundamental life skills that are lacking seriously in Kenyan youth and hence as contributing to their unemployment/underemployment include communication skills, basic standards of work ethics, dependability etc.

Whether it is written or verbal communication, the wanting nature of the Kenyan youth's communication skills is alarming. This cuts across from youth with a basic education of primary school level to the university graduate. Unfortunately, nothing in our world moves without effective communication. It is the driving force behind every task we undertake whether in a business or in employment. The lack of this skill, therefore, is a major handicap for unemployed youth. Youth communication skills are worst in writing as most don't seem to have a grasp of simple grammar and basic writing skills. This leads to poor-written application letters and curriculum vitae, often with glaring spelling errors.

Too many Kenyan youth today expect the world of work to adapt to their 'culture' and not the other way around where they adapt to the *generally acceptable work culture or work ethics*. While the world has advanced and changed in leaps and bounds, there are certain things that remain unchanged such as the need for positive work ethics. These include punctuality, accountability, responsibility, initiative, etc. Sadly, some youth do not value or keep to these basic work ethics consequently disappointing employers. Complicating matters further, young Kenyan workers are known to spend much time on social media during working hours at the expense of their work.

Some employers believe that Kenyan youth are often not dependable. It is not uncommon to find young job-seekers saying one thing today and saying a totally different thing the next day. For instance, an employer may ask an interviewee if he (or she) is comfortable to work either on a weekend or a night shift, or whether he/she is comfortable to relocate to a different part of the country for work-related purposes and the interviewee will immediately assure the prospective employer that he/she is very comfortable and ready to do so as the case may be. The employer

will then proceed to make decisions based on the interviewee's acceptance of these conditions, communicate the same to relevant offices within the organisation and consider the person hired. However, when the same young person starts working and is informed that he/she will be working a night shift or will be relocated to a different place, he/she suddenly changes tune and says he/she is not comfortable with that. If the employer is lucky, this will be communicated to him face to face by the newly-hired employee.

Otherwise, what could also happen is that the young person will simply not show up for work and will not say anything until contacted by the employer, whom he will then inform that he has decided to quit because he is not happy with working a night shift or with relocating! The point is, there is an unusual culture among today's Kenyan youth of not meaning what they say and not saying what they mean when engaging with employers. This results in a lot of wastage of time and resources for the employer, not to mention disappointment and frustration. In other situations, young people will fail to show up for work and will give no explanation until the employer calls them up to ask why they did not report for work only to be given lame excuses. The Kenyan youth therefore often come across as *unreliable* to the employer and the result is that there is quite some hesitation on the part of employers in engaging youth on permanent terms. They hire them on casual or short-term contract basis, hoping for the best but expecting the worst, due to the negative experiences they have had. They are also slow in investing in young employees because they are known to job-hop a lot.

While there are many Kenyan youth who are flexible and prepared for humble beginnings, there is a worrying culture among some youth who believe in *making quick money with the least effort*. They do not like 'sweating it out' if they can find a short-cut to get what they want. Patience is not one of their strong virtues. Such youth will tend to have unrealistic expectations as they move from school into business or employment. They want huge returns, big titles, and excellent benefits - but will not be prepared for humble beginnings, hard work and patience to get them to achieve what they want. The result is that they opt to remain idle until the time

they ‘fall upon’ something that earns them the big money. The problem is that this windfall they await might not come or could lead them to opting for unscrupulous engagements.

An example is a section of Kenyan youth at the Coast who prefer to spend time along the beach hoping to find a tourist that is seeking for a person who can ‘entertain’ them, someone they can ‘have fun’ with. Another example is of youth who wait for politicians needing gangs for hire for the purpose of causing mayhem at public gatherings. Still others will get involved in a life of crime where they involve themselves in robberies, hijackings, kidnapping for ransom and even peddling of drugs. Still another category of youth will opt to live off hand-outs from their parents. The virtue of hard work is one that still needs to be promoted among a section of youth who seem to identify only with where successful people are today but not identify at all with how they got there and more so if they got there through years of hard work.

### *Way forward*

Although young people around the world are more and more likely to pursue formal education, upon graduation, they often find that they are not adequately prepared for the world of work. As skills relevant to key growth sectors of the modern economy - both technical and “soft” skills - are often not covered in traditional education systems, employers often find a “skills mismatch” between the competencies youth need to succeed at the workplace and those they actually possess<sup>13</sup>. Also, unlike developed countries, in Africa recorded unemployment rates rise with the level of education, and university graduates tend to have the highest levels of unemployment<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, there is a clear need to empower youth with life skills.

Already, something is being done by different stakeholders to address the lack of life skills among Kenyan youth. However, there are certain things that need to be addressed by the respective stakeholders to get the desired outcomes that have a real impact on young people’s life skills levels. Firstly, because life skills training

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13 IYF 2013a.

14 African Development Bank 2012.

is yet to be mainstreamed in Kenya's education system, those offering life skills training need to find some way of categorising the different life skills and determining which ones need to be offered and at what point.

Life skills are very broad. Despite their good intentions, stakeholders offering training in life skills have sometimes put together training programmes that attempt to cover a very diverse spectrum of life skills within the shortest time possible (in order to meet the high demand) without determining well in advance what they aim to achieve from the training. Perhaps some lessons could be borrowed from the International Youth Foundation's programme "Strengthening Life Skills for Youth"<sup>15</sup>. Its curriculum is organised as follows with each main segment having a number of topics:

- Core life skills for any life skills programme;
- Workplace preparedness life skills for job-seekers;
- Life skills for employed youth;
- Life skills for potential entrepreneurs.

Secondly, there is need to mainstream life skills right across the entire Kenyan education system. According to Angel-Urdinola et al.<sup>16</sup> comprehensive training programmes that combine in-class employability and life skills lessons with hands-on practical experience "have higher rates of success, with success defined as improving the probability of obtaining employment and/or higher earnings". Various discussions are already taking place on *how to entrench life skills training into the Kenyan education system*, but there is still a long way to go and meanwhile the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate.

The challenges that the country faces as it seeks to entrench life skills training into the education system include the *capacity and preparedness of teachers* in Kenyan schools to effectively teach curricula on life skills; its methodology of delivery in itself may not be so easily accommodated in the current education system. All the same, main-streaming of life skills training in our education system is very important in addressing the issue of the broad nature of life skills.

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15 IYF 2014.

16 Angel-Urdinola, Diego F, Kuddo, Arvo and Amina Semlali, 2013.

An advantage of entrenching life skills into our education system is that it facilitates the coverage of these diverse skills at different stages of a student's development. That happens in a way that complements their most urgent need at each stage as opposed to the current efforts to train youth on every possible life skill in a three-day workshop or boot-camp. An example that we could borrow from is the IYF's "Passport to Success" programme. The evaluation of this programme has shown that it has a significant impact among participating young people on four essential life skills categories: personal development, problem solving, healthy lifestyles and workplace success. Also, it has an impact on reducing school drop-out rates and increasing employment, and on helping at-risk-youth increase their levels of self-confidence and hope for the future.<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, it is very important that life skills curricula, which are geared towards making youth employable be *driven by the demands of the labour market*. In other words, organisations, institutions and consultants that offer life skills training have to have a very strong and frequently updated input from the labour market on what needs to be emphasised during the life skills training in order to genuinely help the youth fit better into the labour market.

It is necessary to note that also *parents* have a critical role to play in supporting the youth to change the negative brand they have created for themselves. Today, more than ever before, Kenyan youth are coming from dysfunctional homes where some of these values they are lacking should be taught. Unfortunately, some of the youth are living with parents suffering from addictions, enduring domestic violence and neglect, sexual abuse, laissez-faire leadership in homes, absentee parents (and especially fathers) and a culture of excessive dependence on parents especially if they are affluent. These are just a few of the problems in families that contribute to the negative attitude of youth towards work today. The youth are lacking role models in homes. Parents need to and must actually see their role in this whole equation of bringing up their children to have a positive attitude towards work.

The youth cannot afford to sit back and expect other stakeholders to address this problem without their input. They must

<sup>17</sup> IYF 2008.

realise that their poor work ethics and the stigma of the negative brand they have created in the eyes of employers is pulling back efforts that are made to address youth unemployment. If all other parties work hard to address the problem of youth unemployment, but the youth themselves are not involved, then the success that is being sought will not come about. It's true that young people in Kenya today are facing many challenges from external sources but it's also true that some of the challenges are internal and the youth's own creation like negative attitude towards work.

Kenyan youth have to realise that while indeed there is always a second chance in life, in the world of employment and business, sometimes opportunities only come once and if not seized, they are totally lost. Indeed, opportunities for employment and flourishing businesses are not many compared to the number of youth who are in need of them - all the more reason why what is there must be taken with the seriousness it deserves.



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2. [http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/theme/youth\\_employment/youth-in-african-labour-markets/who-are-the-working-youth-in-africa/](http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/theme/youth_employment/youth-in-african-labour-markets/who-are-the-working-youth-in-africa/)
3. Angel-Urdinola, Diego F./Kuddo, Arvo/Amina Semlali, (eds.) (2013): *Building Effective Employment Programs for Unemployed Youth in the Middle-East and North Africa. Directions in Development.* Washington DC (World Bank).
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8. IYF (2014): *Strengthening Life Skills for Youth.* Baltimore (International Youth Foundation).
9. Kingsley Inhobor (2013): "Africa's Youth: A Ticking Time Bomb or An Opportunity", in: *Africa Renewal, May 2013*: P10: <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may2013>.
10. UNICEF (2012): *Evaluation Report: Global Evaluation of Life Skills Education Programs.* Evaluation Office. New York (United Nations Children's Fund).
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### III. Agriculture as an Opportunity

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Mwima George Echessa

#### **Agribusiness – The Experience of the Anglican Development Services in Western Kenya**

##### *Abstract*

*Youth employment in farming is minimal and in the face of the shrinking formal labour market, there is need to address the factors inhibiting the entry of youth into farming. The current system of education is limited in practical and entrepreneurial skills in agribusiness. Equally, there are challenges with income seasonality, marketing, access to modern farming methods, land ownership, vagaries of climate change and natural resources degradation. Anglican Development Services (ADS) is one institution addressing the challenges by using communal structures that allow access to land for farming. It has built the capacity of youth groups to engage in the production of high-value fruits and vegetables, water harvesting, soil conservation and natural resources management, and climate resilient practices such as poultry rearing and bee-keeping. This chapter focuses on the case of ADS and argues that access to innovative farming technologies and establishment of marketing and collection centre are being realised, leading to high and consistent income from farming for youth.*

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National governments have sought to address the challenges of inequality through creation of competitive and decent employment opportunities. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), developing countries have endeavoured to share prosperity of national development by creating gainful employment for their citizens<sup>18</sup>. Report by the Food Agriculture and National Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) in 2012 indicated that macro-economic growth strategies worked

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18. UNDP 2013. Cultivating Youth Entrepreneurship through Agribusiness. Annual Report, Geneva.

well in a number of countries between 1960's and 1980's creating many job opportunities for the nationals.

The situation changed in 1990's and the global economic growth that created room to absorb many job-seekers slowed down leading to a huge wave of unemployment in developing countries<sup>19</sup>. Securing employment in developing nations has become a serious challenge with some 70% of citizens in low-income countries grappling with the issue unemployment.<sup>20</sup> The most affected are the youth with statistics indicating that 64% of jobless persons in developing nations are under the age of 35.<sup>21</sup>

### *The youths bulge phase and unemployment*

In Kenya, the constitution defines the youths as all individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 years<sup>22</sup> residing in the country. Based on this classification, 78% of Kenya's population is below 34 years old (*Ibid*). This situation is further compounded by population growth projection of the country that argues that the country will undergo demographic shift or transition due to changing patterns in fertility, mortality and socio-economic factors. The transition or shift will lead to youths bulge or a young people rich nation by 2030 (Njonjo, 2010). This means that the majority of Kenyans by 2030 will be aged between 15 and 34 years, compared to the current youth bulge where the majority of Kenyans are aged between 0 and 15 years. This is a recipe for socio upheavals and national instability if urgent and practical measures are not put in place to address youth's unemployment.

According to the Ministry of Youths' Affairs (MYA), only 25% of young people completing formal education and training were absorbed in national labour force (MYA, 2006). The majority

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19. Odhiambo 2006. Enhancing the Productive Capacity of Rural Youth in Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Management towards Employment Creation in Kenya. Kenya.

20. Njonjo 2010. Youths Fact Book, Infinite Possibility or Definite Disaster. Institute of Economic Affairs, Nairobi.

21. UNDP 2013. Cultivating Youth Entrepreneurship through Agribusiness. Annual Report, Geneva.

22. Njenga and Mugo 2012. Youths and Women Empowerment through Agriculture. Unpublished, Nairobi.

(75%) were left jobless. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that approximately 1.5% of jobless Kenyans have formal education beyond secondary school. The remaining 98% of jobless Kenyans lack either vocational or professional training (Njonjo, 2010). Therefore, over 2.5 million Kenyan youths cannot secure employment, a figure that keeps on increasing each passing day. The inability of securing employment in Kenya is attributed to slow or declining macroeconomic growth, rapid population increase and skills mismatch. In addition, there is poor dissemination of labour market information, high costs of labour and structural reforms (Njenga and Mugo, 2012).

The government of Kenya has committed to tackling the challenge of unemployment. Unfortunately, the current economic growth is appreciating at snail pace rate compared to rapid population growth creating a devise strategies to compliment the country's macro-economic growth for sustainable employment creation.

The agricultural sector's diverse potential has been ignored, yet the sector is uniquely positioned to absorb youths and lessen the burden of unemployment (Karen *et. al.*, 2014). The agricultural sector suffers official neglect leading to limited budgetary allocation, inadequate infrastructural development, limited innovations and little measures to add value to farm produce. For instant, the agricultural sector receives less than 5% of the government's annual budgetary allocation of which 80% is directed to recurrent costs<sup>23</sup>. This has seen the sector decline and by 2000, the rate of growth of Kenya's agricultural sector had dwindled to 1.3% compared to 6% in 1970's and 3% in early 90s<sup>24</sup>.

The systematic decline of agricultural sector is linked to unfavourable macro and micro-economic conditions, limited markets and marketing infrastructure, inadequate financial services, weak legal and regulatory framework and insufficient

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23. Odhiambo 2006. Enhancing the Productive Capacity of Rural Youth in Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Management towards Employment Creation in Kenya. Kenya.

24. IICD 2013. Exploring how Digital Tools and Skills Influence the Motivation of Young Farmers. Netherlands.

storage and processing capacity for perishable commodities. In addition, there is the challenge of inadequate and weak research and extension services, limited farmers' linkages, and limited coordination among stakeholders, natural disasters like drought, floods, pests and diseases outbreak. Last but not the least, there is the dilemma of poor governance in key institutions supporting agriculture, and declining environment and natural resources base. The outcome of limited attention given to agricultural sector is manifested in inability to create dynamic, competitive, decent jobs while generating significant income and wealth for the people.

### *Youth and farming*

Youths often perceive agriculture-related venture negatively, a situation that is affirmed by International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) in its report (2013). Following this realisation, the IICD has subsequently called for urgent measures aimed at reversing youths' perception of farming as back breaking, hardly remunerative and laborious preoccupation.

This scenario accrues from multiple angles. First and foremost, there is the role of media that demonises agricultural and rural economies as dirty preoccupation and lack of young model farmers to inspire others<sup>25</sup>. Practically, youths employed in non-agricultural sector earn higher wages than their peers in farming<sup>26</sup>.

The youth's perception of farming as less gainful is also based on seasonality of agricultural activities, concentration on a narrow range of agricultural commodities (largely staple crops), low investment in term of physical infrastructure and processing plants, underutilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and formal schooling that puts premium on white collar jobs. Equally, there is the challenge school to work transition, limited access to land, low returns on time and input

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25. Farmers' Forum 2012. Facilitating Access of Rural Youths to Agricultural Activities. Unpublished, Lima, Peru.

26. FANRPAN 2012. Engaging Youths in Agriculture Policy Processes. Policy Brief Series, Issue 2, volume xii.

investments, seasonality of income and limited innovations/low mechanization in the sector<sup>27</sup>.

Youths are the future leaders, policy makers, future researchers, farmers and drivers of social and economic transformation. The policy makers perceive youths to be uninformed, indecisive and problems fomenters<sup>28</sup>. This downplays vitality, energy, pace and vision they could bring for *agricultural transformation*. It also calls drawing closer to the young persons and understanding their situation. Agricultural sector has massive, untapped potentials that if fully tapped could lead to income and jobs creation. The opportunities include rapid urbanisation, a growing middle income class in Kenya, and increased demand on international markets for high quality agricultural products, devolved planning and resources allocation embedded in the new constitution.

It's also worth mentioning opportunities emanating from agricultural innovations, intensification of farming exemplified by innovations in horticulture, aqua-culture, dairy farming, poultry rearing that put little pressure on diminishing land size. Lastly, there is labour intensive and management practices in the farming creating need for large manpower<sup>29</sup>.

### *Anglican Development Services*

The average age of Kenyan farmer is 60 years<sup>30</sup>, meaning that the youths are not adequately represented in farming activities, although the agricultural sector is the second largest foreign income earner in Kenya. Over 52% of the youths have singled out limited access to land as major deterring obstacle in engaging in farming. However, youth find their various supports from groups such as the family, community, churches and schools. This realisation has formed basis of engagement between ADS-western and youth

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27 Njenga and Mugo 2012. Youths and Women Empowerment through Agriculture. Unpublished, Nairobi.

28 Farmers Forum 2012. Facilitating Access of Rural Youths to Agricultural Activities. Unpublished, Lima Peru.

29 Njenga and Mugo 2012. Youths and Women Empowerment through Agriculture. Unpublished, Nairobi.

30 UNDP 2013. Cultivating Youth Entrepreneurship through Agricultural Activities. Annual Report Geneva.

in addressing unemployment. Through churches, schools and community groups, sensitisation forums and learning analysis, ADS has managed to reach out to 5600 youths. The response has been mixed, but it's worth mentioning that some 1750 youths in groups are currently engaged in farming activities. The groups have provided golden opportunity to address factors and circumstances limiting youth's entry in farming.

Progress has been achieved in addressing the challenge of low profile accorded to farming by the youths through community structures, reflections and learning sessions. Significant results have been manifested in a number of college and university jobless young people joining community support groups venturing in farming. Hitherto, ADS is working with 360 Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and the youths' representation in the groups has been growing steadily. Some 12 CIGs are currently headed by the youths with formal, post secondary level of education, notably Munami Brothers Association, Emukola Young Farmers, Lun'ganyiro Youths' Association, Lusheya Youths Development Committee among others. These groups have been instrumental in recruiting young people in farming. Emukola Young Farmers group has grown in influence that it has been chosen by the County government of Vihiga to spearhead horticultural project in the county<sup>31</sup>.

### *Strengthening linkages for knowledge and capacity building*

The following provides an overview of the key projects supported by ADS facilitating a new dawn in youth farming;

The *community support structures* notably schools and churches have enabled youth's access land to practice farming. Notable example of community support structure is St. Hannington College and Mumias Cathedral that have seceded land to young farmers to engage in farming. Within the church and college precincts, youths have established orchards under passion fruits and high value Local Market Vegetables (LMV) and bananas.

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<sup>31</sup> Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (2014). Key Value Chains in attaining Food security and Poverty alleviation in Vihiga County. Unpublished, Kenya.

At *family level*, regular focused groups discussion with parents on importance of tapping youth's potential at an early age is impacting positively on access to land. Discussions with parents have helped alleviate the fear they have about surrendering land to youths based on a fear that some may end up selling or leasing the acquired parcel of land and that family squabbles might erupt if land is sold. Land is also viewed as a security to help support the extended family, meet educational needs of children and also as a safety guarantee in the event of emergency. Nevertheless, progress is being realised in overcoming parents' fears, evidenced by 214 youths currently owning and practising farming on their parents' land.

The *groups approach* is playing important role in youth's accessing land. It has emerged as viable tool of allaying parents' fear of seceding land to young farmers. Many parents feel that when youths are in a group, it's easier to check one's decision by the peers. Therefore, ADS has encouraged formation of youth groups and endeavoured to nurture their dynamics along livelihood and agribusiness engagements. The group approach has seen Munami Brothers Association (26 youths) and Lun'ganyiro group with 32 member access 5 acres piece of land for vegetables, fruits, tree nurseries and rabbit keeping.

Transforming agriculture into vibrant, dynamic and competitive sector has been slowed down by limited extension services and support to the farmers<sup>32</sup>. Alternatively, capacity building and extension services support has tended to increase production by 30 %<sup>34</sup>. ADS has stepped up efforts to build the capacity of young farmers to produce competitive agricultural produce. This has been achieved through *linkages and networking* with government line ministries and stakeholders in farming sector. The partnership has seen young farmers benefit from free trainings and support from key agencies. The Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and Kenya Plants Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS) have cooperated with ADS in building the capacity of young farmers. In this respect, KARI has been instrumental in supporting the youth with the production

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32. UNDP 2013. Cultivating Youth Entrepreneurship through Agribusiness. Annual Report, Geneva.



of Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (OFSP), while MOA has led the pact in production of bananas and LMV. Another key partner is Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA) and in collaboration with KEPHIS has ensured groups engaging in passion fruits production adhere to stipulated standards leading to competitive local and regional markets. Trainings and capacity building is delivered through public open days, farmers field days, field demonstration plots and seminars organized by ADS. This year (2014), the organisation conducted 152 farmers field days and by so doing reached 7094 youths with innovative ideas on farming.

An emerging and most effective tool in transforming the mindset of young people is field demonstration plots and farmers exchange visits. To this effect, the organisation has established 28 field demonstration plots for bananas, 42 plots for LMV, 14 plots for passion fruits, 17 for OFSP and 9 for amaranth grains. These are high value crops with massive potentials for value chain development. The demonstration plots situated within the community have been used as learning centres on appropriate agronomical practices. The opportunity created by field demonstration plots has been complimented by farmers' field visits to model farms. By 2014 ADS had supported exchange visits for 674 young farmers offering good lessons on designing on farm plan, poultry farming, bee-keeping, dairy production, passion farming and fish farming.

### *Innovations and appropriate technologies*

Youths' limited interest in farming is caused in part by the fact that it remains stuck at the subsistence level<sup>33</sup>. This means that attracting youth to farming calls for injecting dynamism and innovation into farming techniques. Some measures aimed at modernising the sector adopted by ADS include use of drip irrigation systems, use of green house kits and water pan harvesting infrastructure. Through the support and partnership with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), ADS has enabled 19 youth groups acquire drip irrigation system kits and 4 green houses kits. The acquisition of kits has enabled young farmers to

33 FARNPAN 2012. Engaging Youths in Agriculture Policy Processes. Policy Brief Series, Issue 2, volume xii.

produce vegetables (mainly capsicum, kales, LMV and tomatoes) on 6 acre piece of land. This approach has helped produce vegetables throughout the year, regardless of weather conditions thus supplying income.

*Innovations* have not been limited to techniques of production, but extended to the marketing of farm yields. The organisation has supported two youth groups with ICT centres in Bungoma County to facilitate marketing of their farm produce. Through front-line texting system, youths are able to get first hand information about competitive markets and prices. In addition, they are able to access online information on value chain development, pests and diseases control, and access new farming practices, agricultural technologies, initiate communication with common interest groups and share information. Innovative way of, Packaging and rebranding of honey and amaranth grain has seen groups get higher income of Kenya Shilling 250 per Kilogram instead of 100, and 150 instead of 70 shillings for honey and amaranth grains respectively.

*Appropriate technologies* like organic farming has been integrated to conserve soil, natural resources and indigenous knowledge. Through organic farming, degraded soils have been replenished through bio-matter removal and decomposition using efficient micro-organisms technology. This practice has had significant bearing on horticultural production, attested by 2 acres currently rehabilitated, and supporting production of passion fruits and bananas. Another aspect of organic farming is characterized by the use of natural herbs and certain plant species to control the spread of pests and diseases. Organic farming approach has reduced the cost of farm inputs and agrochemicals, (another factor curtailing entry into farming).

Success in endearing young people to farming can be further accelerated through *value chain development*. This is because the prices of farm produce tend to appreciate as the raw materials are converted into refined products. In partnership with USAID, the organisation has established a processing plant in Vihiga County. The plant is meant to convert raw materials from banana, sweet potatoes, cassavas, root tubers and amaranth grains into competitive market products. This is ensuring that farm produce

enter the market at a higher market price, branding is done while observing hygiene and safety measures. The established processing plant is flanked by 36 marketing and collection centres for farm produce. The establishment of collection centres has mitigated the exploitation that farmers groups have been subjected to by the brokers and middlemen.

### *Sustaining young farmers' interest in farming*

There is need to sustain young peoples' interest in farming and this calls for forging closer relationship with them. The most appropriate way of strengthening this relationship is through policy advocacy and legal framework to strengthen young farmers' access to land, farm inputs, markets and technologies transfer. Vibrant youth groups will act as a rallying point of mobilising and reaching out to others with similar interest. Measures aimed at encouraging youths to adopt farming should focus on their active participation in design, decision making and implementation.

Also, addressing seasonality of income from farming involves facilitating access to technologies and innovations to address the challenges of natural resources depletion and climate change to allow farming to take place through the year. This should be complimented with value addition development, diversification of farming activities and clear marketing strategies. The capacity building and linkages with key players in the sector, as facilitated by organisations such as ADS should form the basis of injecting dynamism, and attract youth to farming.

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Diana Lee-Smith

## **Kenyan Urban Youth Getting Involved in Agriculture**

### *Abstract*

*Urban agriculture presents a self-employment opportunity for Kenyan youth to escape poverty and gain employment. Seeing agriculture as a low status rural activity is at odds with market realities in African urban areas, where food is in high demand by all income groups. Mazingira Institute hosts the Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum (NEFSALF), that has provided elementary training over the last decade. The majority of trainees in 2013 and 2014 were youth, about half of them women. They fell into two categories, half living in houses with backyard space, and the other half in high density slums. The differences between them are significant, especially with regard to land availability for farming. The two cases illustrate the opportunities urban agriculture brings to youth and the constraints they operate under. Many have transformed their lives from this new source of income and food.*

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Young people in Kenya suffer from severe unemployment and resultant alienation as described in other chapters of this book. Agriculture presents a self-employment opportunity that urban youth are increasingly turning to. Many young Kenyans remember that agriculture was seen as something to be avoided in their childhood, a low-status activity left behind in the undeveloped rural hinterland. It was even a punishment at school, meaning it was not an attractive career choice. These misperceptions are actually at odds with market realities in modern African urban centres, where food is in high demand by all income groups and populations are rapidly expanding. Market research from 2010 in Kampala, Uganda showed that the demand for all urban farmers' products was high and unmet, whether by kiosks, traders small shops or supermarkets<sup>34</sup>. Urban farmers in Kampala, Dar-es-Salaam,

34 Nyapendi, R./Best, R./Ferris, S./Jagwe, J. (2010): 'Identifying market opportunities for urban and peri-urban farmers in Kampala'; in: Prain, G./Karanja, N. K./Lee-Smith, D. (eds): *African Urban Harvest: Agriculture in the Cities of Cameroon, Kenya and Uganda*, Springer, New York and IDRC, Ottawa.

Yaoundé, and Addis Ababa have all been found to have higher than average incomes<sup>35</sup>.

However, for the mass of urban youth such opportunities are rare. For one thing, they do not have access to any land from which to produce food. As juniors they do not have rights over any land the family might have access to, be it a backyard or scrap of space next to a slum dwelling. This is especially true for girls and young women, whose traditional land rights have been non-existent. So farming has not seemed like a viable option. And urban farming has long been perceived as the province of the old and desperate – people scratching a living for survival – contrary to what the research quoted above has shown. For some Nairobi youth perceptions began to shift when they were driven close to starvation during the post-election violence of early 2008. A youth group in Kibera that started farming then was able to supply itself with vegetables and generate some income, although the farming was on a rubbish tip and this brought health hazards. Nevertheless they had broad support, most notably from the community elders<sup>36</sup>.

The Mazingira Institute in Nairobi has worked on urban agriculture (UA) for several decades, having carried out and published one of the original studies which brought the widespread nature of urban farming and its economic importance to light in the 1980s. The Institute was established and registered as a non-profit in 1978 and has an international reputation. Currently, it hosts the *Nairobi and Environs Food Security, Agriculture and Livestock Forum* (NEFSALF), which has brought together a mix of actors from public, private and community sectors to promote cooperation around food security, agriculture and livestock-keeping in and around the city. The forum was established in September 2003, with the vision of “a better way toward human security of the many, rather than the few, and food security and sustainability in the city and environs.”

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35 van Veenhuizen, R./Danso, G. (2007): ‘Profitability and Sustainability of Urban Agriculture’. FAO Agricultural management, marketing and finance occasional paper no 19, FAO, Rome; also see Prain, G./Lee-Smith, D. (2010): ‘Urban Agriculture in Africa: What has been learnt?’ in Prain et al. (eds), (see previous footnote).

36 Lee-Smith, D./Gathuru, K. (2012): ‘Urban and peri-urban agriculture and livestock: policy issues and directions’, presentation to the Kenyan UPAL stakeholders forum Kari-Thika 25-26 June.

The farmers convened by the forum decided to establish their own NEFSALF farmers' network, and created structures based on the geography of the city. They elected officers to their own executive, following principles of gender balance. Training was one of the first priorities identified by this structure. As a result of dialogue held at the forum, two government ministries, dealing with agriculture and livestock development, agreed to collaborate with Mazingira Institute on holding regular courses for urban farmers at their premises in Westlands. A pilot training course was conducted in July 2004 for members of the NEFSALF farmers' network steering committee.

The network determined that each training course would last eight days, with participants coming in each day from across the city and getting bus fare and lunch. This was possible due to the support provided to Mazingira by Rooftops Canada/ Abri International with the assistance of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD). Trainees who successfully complete the requirements of the training course are awarded certificates with approval from Mazingira Institute and the course coordinator from the government extension system. The trainers are mainly government extension service officers.

Trainees are selected from different areas of Nairobi and environs according to the criteria of gender, type of urban farming activity being practised, location and age, to get a balanced distribution. Language proficiency is also a criterion as the courses are conducted principally in English although the trainers often use Kiswahili as well. Course materials and handouts are in English. Prior to the training courses, the extension service providers conduct site visits to trainees' farms, to assess their level of knowledge, skills and attitude and determine the gaps in practices and the content of the training courses. Post-training site visits are also conducted to evaluate the extent of implementation of knowledge and skills acquired and areas for further intervention.

Numerous courses have now been held and over one thousand farmers have received the elementary training. The training focuses on growing of crops, keeping of animals and recycling waste as compost for subsistence and income, as well as value

addition, marketing and distribution. Participants learn the basics of business and enterprise management, and comprehend all of these within an understanding of Nairobi's agri-food system and the progress towards getting an urban food policy.

Upon joining of the NEFSALF farmers network, members fill out a form, identifying the issues and problems facing farmers including those keeping animals and recycling waste in the city and suggesting what actions should be taken by themselves, the forum or government to address them. The lack of knowledge and political marginalisation were the first major problems identified.

The democratic structure of the NEFSALF network and its efforts to make forward-looking plans to achieve its goals led to the early identification of youth involvement as both an issue and a goal. Discussions among the network members, Mazingira and the extension personnel explored options for motivating the youth more towards getting involved in agriculture in Nairobi. Another part of the strategy was to seek out and motivate youth through the network's contacts. For the last several years youth have been given priority in selection for training.

The issue of land availability was thought to prevent youth from having any practical way of farming, plus attitudes and motivations that saw them wanting wage work or quick returns from any effort. A strategy was then developed to encourage parents to make available whatever space they could, as well as encouraging youth groups to identify and lobby to be allocated land they could use for productive enterprises including small livestock-keeping.

However, although the numbers of the youth joining up for the training started to increase slightly, they were still dropping out and lacking in motivation. Peer pressure played a role. Around 2009 things started to shift somewhat when the international networking dimension came in. Through its partner Rooftops Canada, the Mazingira Institute organized exchanges on urban farming between Toronto, Canada and Cape Town, South Africa. Toronto's civil society-led Food Policy Council also set up a Youth Food Policy Council and its representatives visited their peers in Nairobi.

The NEFSALF youth members were motivated to set up a



youth hub, emulating the women's hub, where women farmers meet regularly for mutual support and have set up a revolving fund. The new youth hub met to nominate a representative to visit Cape Town and meet youth leaders and farmers there. An enterprising young rabbit farmer was selected by the group and took part in a stakeholders' meeting and visits to farmers in Cape Town in 2011. Two young farmers from Cape Town made the return visit to Nairobi with their counterparts from Toronto in 2012. Meanwhile a further exchange was set up through urban food security partners in USA, and six women and men farmers from NEFSALF, along with colleagues from Western Kenya and Uganda, were selected to spend six weeks with their counterparts at Growing Power in Milwaukee and Chicago and other partners in Denver.

The return visits from USA counterparts and systematic reporting back to NEFSALF members on all of the learning from these exchanges transformed the image of urban farming for many more Nairobi youth, who now had more positive peer images and role models to motivate their efforts. The collective atmosphere of the NEFSALF forums highlighting youth participation along with reports from visitors and government officials served to reinforce the positive role of urban agriculture as a possible career. The negative image persists in many young minds however, and several young farmers, whether in Nairobi or Cape Town, have given up their farms when opportunities for steady employment – such as becoming a check-out clerk in a supermarket – show up. On the other hand some are showing the impact of the courses, such as the young rabbit farmer from Nairobi, who has a contract to supply to a major hotel and also smaller food outlets. Others, including some of the first NEFSALF trainees, have become successful business people and also continue as mentors and trainers of others.

As a result of the push towards youth engagement, the large majority of trainees in the NEFSALF courses held in 2013 and 2014 were under the age of 35, about half of them young women. They also fell into two categories with respect to where they lived, half living in houses with backyard space, and the other half living in high density slums. The differences between them are significant, especially with regard to land availability for farming.

For example, one young woman living with her husband

and two children had a backyard where they kept poultry and grew vegetables. Another kept poultry and pigs in her backyard of about 400 m<sup>2</sup> and also grew vegetables, In addition, she was growing maize and beans on an open space under a power line. By comparison, a young single mother lived in one room in a high density slum and grew crops in three sacks just outside her room, buying water to irrigate them. Likewise a young single man living in one room kept poultry in a cage just outside his room and belonged to a youth group which grew kale in an open space in the same area. A young couple living with relatives in two rooms used open space on a dump-site and on road reserves (totalling 200m<sup>2</sup>) to keep rabbits and poultry in cages and grow kale, spinach, *managu* (a local vegetable) and sugar cane.

This contrast between slum dwellers and backyard farmers has been highlighted in the research literature on urban agriculture<sup>37</sup>, which also shows that there are proportionally fewer low income people doing urban farming than those who are better-off, because of access to land<sup>38</sup>. Handling these discrepancies among the different categories of youth during training as well as bringing them to the attention of policy-makers are priorities for the future. They are also concerns of the now-stabilizing NEFSALF youth hub<sup>39</sup>.

The Chair of NEFSALF's Youth Hub was encouraged to farm from an early age by her mother and now keeps 300 chickens and 85 rabbits as well as growing vegetables in her parents' backyard. She says it is "the most sustainable business you can do". Although she complains that school does not provide the youth with the skills and capacity to do something useful, her family and the Mazingira training have done so. She learned farming was not a haphazard activity but requires discipline and patience, things she has learned through experience as well as training so that now she is a more focused person. She has learned to re-use manure for her crops,

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37 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2012). Growing Greener Cities in Africa. First status report on urban and per-urban horticulture in Africa. FAO, Rome.

38 Lee-Smith, D. (2013) 'Which way for UPA in Africa?' CITY 17, pp. 69-84.

39 You-tube: Mazingira Institute Nairobi Urban Farmers.

apply rabbit urine as a pesticide and keep her animals in vertically stacked hutches so they are healthy.

The young man who is now Chair of the Mutual Self Help Group in Mathare Valley slum, was selling drugs from the age of eight, having lost both his parents, but with help he has turned around not only his life but those of his group of 350 youth as well. During the 2008 Post Election Violence he and the group turned from involvement in political upheaval to urban farming instead. “Producing food is the only way to feed our families and get peace of mind” he said. They plant trees, including bamboo, as well as vegetables, protecting the soil and purifying the water along the Nairobi River. Bamboo is further useful for producing various wood products, including charcoal for cooking fuel and furniture items. They have also built and manage a toilet for hygiene and income generation. He says about 50% of the youth in the area have now switched from selling drugs to food production.

These two cases illustrate both the opportunities of urban agriculture and the constraints that youth operate under. Kenya is now entering a new era of devolved government, with agriculture becoming a central part of local county government and all urban administrations under new laws. Nairobi City County is one of the first to take up this challenge, and it is hoped that the lessons learned through NEFSALF’s collaboration with government extension services will bring good results for the urban youth throughout the country, who desperately need space, training, and most of all encouragement if they are to succeed.

## IV. Education

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*Monica Kerretts-Makau*

### **An Education for Entrepreneurship?**

#### *Abstract*

*Experience with and criticism of the 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya characterise it as limited to rote learning and exam orientation, imprisoning the mind. This cannot create an entrepreneurial mind and prepare for entrepreneurship, which is based on critical, innovative and problem-solving thinking. Therefore, through education and teaching, this kind of thinking has to be encouraged. Many commissions have tried to reform the school system to no avail. A problem of those reforms is that they pursue a political and/or administrative goal. However, what is needed is pedagogical reform including adequate teaching methodology and a holistic approach to education. With reference to Freire (1970), it can be shown that the role of the Kenyan teacher is oppressive. Therefore, the power structure in the whole educational environment has to be balanced, including all stakeholders changing their mindsets on the role of education. Entrepreneurship education demands a paradigmatic shift.*

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“Education is aimed at enabling the youth to play a more effective role in the life of the nation by imparting and inculcating the right attitude. In practice, however, formal education has tended to concentrate on imparting knowledge for the sake of passing examinations”.<sup>40</sup>

#### *The 8-4-4 system*

In 2015, my daughter turned six years and became my ‘case study’ on testing learning in her three to six years of age. I had agonised

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40 The Mackay Report, GoK 1981, p. 7.

over the day she would have to join school. I wanted in her someone who would question the status quo, who was not stuck to the syllabus but to holistic learning. I enrolled her in a private school in Kenya that used the British system. At three years, my daughter was not only learning how to interact with other kids but she was learning how to speak confidently. Because the school had an art stage and music and drama festival for their age group. She learnt to ask me questions all the time. To others, this little kid had too many questions and was very confident, but I could see how the education system she was in fostered a critical thinking approach. She brought leaves home and painted a lot. I only wished then she could be learning some key words in Swahili.

At age four, due to the inordinate amount of traffic on our Nairobi roads and the fact that I was unsure if I could sustain the high school fees, I moved her to a school two minutes from the house in the 8-4-4 system of education but still a private one. My daughter had to wake up early to enter a bus at 6 a.m. to be at school, which starts at 8.30 a.m. It did not make any sense. I also agonised with the teachers over the number of hours kids sat on their chairs and the fact that they had set breaks and hardly a huge amount of time spent playing or outside. My daughter's exercise books were all filled with the various subjects. By KG 3 she was learning advanced maths, something I learnt in class 2 or 3. She began having homework. My question to the school was: *"Homework for a five-year old kid?"*. And the reply was *"We are preparing them for class 1 and the primary school system"*. She now would come home at 4 p.m. and have a half-an-hour break, do her homework, then go out to play from 4.45 p.m. to just about 6 p.m. Even as I complained, I knew she was one of the lucky few who stayed right next to the school and could afford longer playing time.

In class 1, I counted the number of exercise books she had: 14 in total. Science and maths homework books, English homework books, etc. Her art book was hardly utilised and, by the fourth week, I went to ask the teacher if they would be taught art. This little young girl was becoming a victim of the education system. She came home one day with her diary saying they were having exams - exams?! "At class 1?", I asked: *"Yes, and we are hoping we*

*finish the syllabus earlier than usual*". After the exam, my daughter came home and in her innocence mentioned that the teacher said they were going to be made to line up according to the number they were in class (That was her last day in the 8-4-4 system)!

If my daughter would finish her school and university career in the 8-4-4 system, would she then really have learnt what she needed to know to become a *successful enterprising woman*?

### *The value proposition: innovation and the education system*

When we expect the 8-4-4 system to prepare young people for *entrepreneurship*, we are facing a dilemma. I am a product of the 8-4-4 system and note that the majority of papers documented on the system including the task forces have hardly been drawn from those who have been through the system. In my early 40s and being in the third cohort of the first crop of those who went through this system, I found myself in a dilemma as I thought of what type of learning my own child would get and what I really wanted from an education. This paper is the result of several conversations on our education system in fostering creativity and innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit. It draws on the views of a wide circle of friends, colleagues, several young people and those passionate about seeing a change in the issues that plague our education system in Kenya and my own teaching experiences.

This article also seeks to bridge the other articles in this book by highlighting issues at the heart of entrepreneurship - critical thinking, innovation and independent thinking. I claim those are missing from the current education system that needs to foster them in *creating entrepreneurial minds*. Often, the concept and content of entrepreneurship is discussed outside the realm of pedagogical thinking. As a result, entrepreneurship tends to be discussed as a subject matter on its own. Not surprising then, many studies have examined the genesis of this subject<sup>41</sup>, all noting a remarkable improvement in the subject of creating entrepreneurial minds. Nonetheless, many authors also note the lack of consensus on what entrepreneurship as an educational subject

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41 Pittway and Cope 2007; Van Praag et al 2007; Robb et al., 2014.

really consists of.<sup>42</sup> What is clear though, even as shown through the other authors in this book highlight, is a common belief that entrepreneurship education would help not only influence culture but more importantly build Kenya's (and Africa's) growing economies that would, in turn, reduce unemployment.

The idea of entrepreneurship requires us, however, to re-evaluate our education system and ask the deeper question: Why acquire an education at all? Indeed the value proposition for education has been well documented<sup>43</sup>. All researchers are contending that education would lead to accelerated economic growth, more wealth and income distribution, greater quality of opportunities, greater availability of skilled manpower, faster decline in population growth, longer life, better health outcomes, lower crime rates, national unity and political stability. For example, Okoth (2014) notes that education is a process that combines the mutually supportive human and natural developments. She further goes on to add that, "Education involves the art and act in which people are prepared to create or recreate new working values and habits for their changing lives in a dynamic environment"<sup>44</sup>. In addition, the World Bank (1987) has, over the years, argued that education impacts on development by improving the quality of life, raising awareness on environmental conservation and uplifting one's socio-economic status.

It follows from the above that any education should seek to not only build knowledge but more importantly create an *understanding* that facilitates critical thinking, innovation and problem solving, which all improve the economic development process. And while education in Kenya is not without its strengths, namely, an ability to teach one discipline and focus, it is premised herein that it is by far too dependent on rote style. At the same time, it is heavily reliant on the teacher as the centre of learning and thinking and the syllabus as the compass and object of accomplishment.

Yet, critical thinking as a pedagogical foundation to education is not something new. Numerous studies have been written on the

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42 Pittway and Cope 2007.

43 Otiato 2009; Schultz 1981; Harbison 1973; Psacharopoulos 1988; Abagi and Okech 1997; Amutabi 2003.

44 Okoth 2014, p. 1.

use of the critical method in pedagogical methodology and how learning operates<sup>45</sup>. The term “critical” is derived from the Greek word “kritikos” which means “skilled in judging”. To think critically means to judge whether or not some claim or premise is believed and convincing. Critical thinking liberates us from dogmatically accepting assertions or premises. Critical thinking entails making claims backed up by reasons and arguments. It is the underlying foundation for an education that moves the pedagogical procedures and the curricula from rote learning.

A lack of this underlying foundational teaching and learning perspective has meant that our societal and government thinking on education has focused on education as a grade with school ranking as an object. Not surprising, therefore, the recent abolishment of ranking schools by grade in Kenya in 2014, which was aimed at changing societal thinking on the same, nonetheless received heavy criticism. For example, since December 2014, at the release of the annual high school exam results, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) threatened to launch its own ranking system of public schools if the ministry does not rescind its decision<sup>46</sup>.

There are readers who will begin to feel uncomfortable with my premise. *Are you saying that there are no good things about our 8-4-4 system of education?* Readers may thus be disappointed that I have not touted the great aspects of the education system in this article. Indeed there are, but of critical importance is the question whether this system facilitates a mindset of innovation and creative thinking in all that is learnt. I, therefore, claim that there are huge gaps to the idea and goal of education as a centre for creative learning, thinking, innovation and problem solving. That assertion stands, even as I am a product of the primary and secondary part of the education system, and know that our education system has benefited many great people in our society. In focusing on a syllabus with a rote system of learning, the creative ability of

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45. Freire 1998.

46 <http://pulse.ng/student/knut-vs-moest-kenya-teachers-at-war-with-government-over-schools-ranking-id3538200.html> and <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Ranking-Ban-Examination-Results/-/1056/2573916/-/gayp60/-/index.html>.



many of us who have gone through the system, and those still in the system, has been learnt *outside* the school environment; or it has depended on the personality of the teachers and their ability to seek more than just a grade from the subject being taught.

*Kenya's education system: Education for what?*

The questions to start with, therefore, are: "Why the 8-4-4 system?" What was it started for? Did it seek to create innovative thinking within its embedded pedagogy? To answer this, we have to go back to the first localised schooling system in the country, the 7-4-2-3 system that was established at Independence. A quick reading on Kenya's history will reveal an education system based on race that was born out of colonialism.<sup>47</sup> Thus, at Independence, the need to change this was inevitable. According to Ominde (1964), who was the chairman of the first education commission of independent Kenya, the country existed on three racial lines: first, the European system; second, the Indian system, and third, the African system; all living side by side. The segregation in education was premised on the colonialist assertion that the mental development of the average African adult was equivalent to that of the average 7-8 year old European boy<sup>48</sup>. The African education system, therefore, simply existed to suit the colonial dictates of what was to be understood by the African then<sup>49</sup>. Thus, the debate on what system the African should use went through several commissions.<sup>50</sup>

Independence, therefore, brought a new dawn on the thinking on education. The only agenda then was to introduce changes that would reflect the nation's sovereignty. Hence, the Ominde Commission focused on creating Kenyan unity and identity - critical issues for the creation of the new Kenya. This is confirmed by Simiyu (2001) who notes that the main purpose of the Ominde Commission was to promote national unity and a desire to serve the nation. Between 1964 and 1985, the 7-4-2-3 system was adopted.

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47 GoK 1964.

48 Gachathi 1976.

49 Ominde 1964.

50 For a full read see Peter C. Ojiambo work titled "Quality of Education and its Role in National Development: A Case study of Kenya's Educational Reforms" KSR Volume 1, Number 1, December 2009.

The numbers translated into - seven years of primary, four years of lower secondary (Form 1-4), two years of upper secondary (Form 5-6), and three years of university. This did not include the 'pre-primary' schooling provided to children under the age of six.

So one must ask, did the system embed within it a learning of unity? The majority of those who went through this system will answer affirmatively. I remember learning about Koitalel Arap Samoei of the Nandi people and Waiyaki wa Hinga, a Kikuyu Chief, who both fought the colonial rulers then, and about the various rivers that criss-crossed our country (Tana, Mara, Athi) and the crops grown in the various regions, for example, the rice of Ahero and the onions of Pekera. Geography and history were designed to show Kenya's cultural heritage as a nation and the early years of the new system 8-4-4 later carried this over.

By the late 1970s, many students were being churned out of the educational system, but many had no jobs. It is not surprising, therefore, that between 1964 and 1983, three commissions<sup>51</sup> were tasked to review the system:

1964: The Ominde Commission – whose main goal as discussed was to nationalise the education system;

1976: The Gachathi Report - the report was to restructure the education system in light of the Ominde Commission;

1981: The Presidential Working Party on the Establishment of the Second Public University (Mackay Report).

While the Ominde Commission sought to nationalise the country's education system, the Gachathi Report<sup>52</sup> raised questions on the education system and its inability to form people who would create rather than seek jobs. According to Simuyu (2001), the 7-4-2-3 policy was criticised in two major areas:

- Its academic rigour - in a nutshell, the curriculum lacked the capacity to form people who would create jobs;
- An elitist attitude - while Simuyu does not adequately explain this, he notes that the dominant thought of the day was determined by socialist underpinnings, which the system was thought to circumvent.

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51 For a detailed read see: <http://softkenya.com/education/education-commissions-in-kenya/>

52 GoK 1976, p. 33-34.

The Mackay Report (1981), as it later came to be known, sought to introduce a second national university in Kenya. It was the point of genesis of the 8-4-4 system, a move away from the old British model of primary, lower secondary (O level), upper secondary (A level), and higher education. The policy was designed to encourage students to become more self-reliant and better oriented towards self-employment. It contained a mixed curriculum at both primary and secondary levels, with strong emphasis on practical subjects sitting alongside a rather traditional approach to academic subjects. In doing so, it was hoped that an entrepreneurial spirit and practical mindset would be embedded into the system. Business education was introduced into upper primary as evidence of encouraging self-employment and providing basic knowledge and skills on issues such as record keeping. It had a cross-circular emphasis on attitudinal orientation towards self-employment. The report also recommended the setting up of a Commission of Higher Education (CHE), within the 8-4-4 system, one that would later spearhead the pre-approval of new courses within the education system.

When the 8-4-4 system was thus introduced in Kenya in 1985, I was in class 5 and the clearest memories I remember was rushing through trying to knit a sweater, make a mud hut for an exam (with a lot of assistance from the teachers), stitch a pyjama and learn the key features of woodwork joints for my class 8 exam. This was in line with the curriculum and set exams. We then had practical exams as they called them. *How could the system teach anything on self-employment?* It was rushed and had no conceptualised methodology to the learner's orientation and what was needed to ensure that one acquired the needed practical skills. Still worse were the subjects that were added to the existing curriculum. There was no time to learn how to knit or spend time in a woodwork centre and learn to appreciate types of wood, how to cure wood and conserve it etc.

As the years went by, the curriculum introduced vocational subjects, for example: art and craft, agriculture and home science. These were studied in high school under the then new system, a change from the 7-4-2-3 system, replaced by 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary and 4 years of university

education. Thus, as 'A' level was abolished, one year was added to primary and another to the university level.

In high school, the new subjects were never seen as skills that would be used outside the school. They were taught, and learnt, as subjects for *exam preparation*. Yet the Mackay Report (1981) aimed at producing learners who could become self-employed and could create more jobs in the society, learners who were to be proud of their work and could work with their hands. Agriculture was meant to enable students acquire agricultural knowledge and skills, relevant and useful to their lives. Thus, while King and McGrath (2002) claim that "the 8-4-4 policy arose out of the concerns that a basic academic education might lack the necessary content to promote widespread sustainable (self-) employment", its application simply seemed to be one that created subjects within the same rote learning methodology.

Of importance is the fact that this education system was meant to solve the underlying unemployment in the country. In particular, the International Labour Organisation mission report, entitled "Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment of 1972", and the recommendations of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies of 1975 had both pushed for a system that would seek to provide practical skills. The 8-4-4 system was thus aimed at representing a shift from a focus on enrolment to restructuring the programme as a means to cater for the influx of the unemployed. Instead, however, it had over the years turned into a system filled with critique on its implementation programme. I, thus, submit that two key things continue to hold sway to the discourse on our education system in Kenya:

- Rote learning – an imprisonment of the mind;
  - The power imbalances that hold captive the idea of learning.
- These issues are discussed further below.

#### *a) Rote learning – an imprisonment of the mind*

Rote learning has served to show that there is indeed a gap. The education system was introduced to bring in creativity and innovation but was implemented as subjects without pedagogical

thought to the underlying framework in the learning orientation. Education cannot be about producing an end. In the case of Kenya, the consequent outcome is that all the curriculum changes have resulted in an end called exams. The learning orientation has, over time, focused on rote learning where the student regurgitates what was taught rather than question, challenge and integrate thoughts and ideas to the issues in their environment.

While education is a *gradual process* where the learner does not learn everything on a subject from that subject, the Kenyan education system has created silos of learning. Learning is a subject in class and not out in the field over a circle with friends talking and discussing with a teacher on what works and what does not work. Rather than education being the *lived experience* of the learner as well as the working together with the knowledge of the teacher and others to create a bigger whole, it has become an incomplete curriculum that lacks achievement.

Looking around and talking to several parents whose children are in the Kenyan education system reveals that education has been relegated to a desk and a chair and worse a curriculum that the teachers are prepared to die for in ensuring they stick to and complete to the letter. *Yet, is not education meant to challenge our existing attitudes on things? Is it not meant to re-define our thinking on our everyday lived experience? The fact that teachers can teach in class when the toilets are dirty, the playing fields become pools of mud or uncut grass, and litter is allowed all over the compound is evidence that we are not applying education.* It seems the system of education is unable to apply the very things we as Kenyans want to improve.

The orientation of the 8-4-4 system demands that we as Kenyans revisit our *teacher training* institutions. It demands a transformation in thought on the *learning methodologies* of those who teach and those who are taught to teach. It requires that emphasis is put on the development of *interest in learning*, with methods of inquiring, with ways of relating facts, and with the ability to use ideas in practical settings. Education should not be conformity, but should aim at forward movement towards complete realisation of the goals it has set for itself, and the improvement of society as well as individuals.

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa lecturers, presenting their case to the Koech Education Commission in 1999, said, “The 8-4-4 system of education should be replaced by the 7-4-2-3 system as its graduates at every level are neither practical oriented nor thinkers.” They advanced two arguments:

The system had failed to meet its objectives of being practical oriented as advanced by its proponents, and

The primary school curriculum is overloaded with too many subjects leaving pupils with little time to play or do organised homework. There are times parents are forced to do homework for the children<sup>53</sup>.

What should make every parent uncomfortable is that our education system that was meant to solve problems has become just *accumulation of facts*; however, the deeper issues of understanding, questioning and contextualising to everyday issues are left out of the equation. Njoroge and Barnes (1986) provide a detailed description of the *difference in knowledge and understanding*, noting that knowledge simply allows for fact gathering without internalising and/or understanding fully. *The Kenyan teacher is thus reduced - or 'elevated? - to one who is the holder of knowledge and the student the empty vessel to be filled.* My own teaching experience at the MBA level shows that this form of learning renders the student passive and, over time, slows down the brain's ability to think critically and question and internalise. The student thus attends class not to question, evaluate or debate, but rather, to simply gather information. Facilitating at this level becomes harder. This is because critical input from the students' own learning and everyday experiences is needed to facilitate a more holistic pedagogy in the learning approach of the issues in question. If not nipped, the student's learning process becomes one in which the negative forms of learning are revealed as exam oriented and brainwashing through cramming - something that is far beyond preparation for entrepreneurship.

Thus, while the dialogue of criticism of the 8-4-4 system remains valid around the discourses of too many subjects<sup>54</sup>, too

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53 CUEA 2005.

54 McGrath 2002.

little time to implement<sup>55</sup>, lack of resources<sup>56</sup> and the problem with the various reform processes used<sup>57</sup>, it is opined herein that, by far, the most critical issue requiring a reorientation is the *pedagogical* thought that underpins what education is meant to achieve.

This pedagogical thought has to take us to the point where Freire and Faundez (1989) in their book, *Learning to Question*, talks of “critical consciousness”. This is where one is able to question oneself and their relationship with the world they live in. This is the home of critical thinking and where eventually innovators are born. For a system of education to be able to achieve this, it has to move towards a *holistic* way of education. This means that knowledge is gathered through the various subjects and interactions with sports, the arts, music *and* all forms of creativity *and* with our day to day lived experiences. Such an education requires a teacher who is willing to interact with the student’s conscious world and not the syllabus only. This will be a system that is at pace with the times of our day rather than stuck in the thinking of knowledge accumulation considered as ‘learning’. This will need teachers who are exposed to various forms of learning pedagogies. Thus, our present Kenyan teachers are seen to apply what Freire<sup>58</sup> calls a “banking concept education”, which manifests itself in the following forms:

- a) The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- b) The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
- c) The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- d) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- e) The teacher talks and the students listen meekly;
- f) The teacher chooses and enforces his choice and the students comply;
- g) The teacher acts and the students have their illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
- h) The teacher chooses the programme content and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;

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55 Amutabi 2003.

56 Kerry 1997 and Simiyu 2001.

57 Bonyo 2012.

58 Freire 1968. p. 54-55.

- i) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
- j) The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects.

By that, the student eventually becomes a mere spectator in the world he/she lives in. It is no wonder our students and we as Kenyans are unable to solve simple problems in our own neighbourhoods. We would rather wait for the “benevolent government” also seen as the teacher to dictate the terms of engagement and the solution to the problem. Students, therefore, have no comprehension or digestion of the material, only memorisation. This system leaves the students with a view that knowledge and the world is somehow static, based on subjects that are unrelated; each subject is simply to be learnt on its own with examination as the main objective. There is no interaction or critical discourse with the reality of how they put the education into practice or how the subjects are interrelated and cross into each other in the real world. As Freire (1970) argues, the authoritative teacher role - in which the teacher holds all knowledge and projects ignorance onto the pupils, stifles inquiry, and undermines academic self-esteem - is a “*characteristic of oppression*”. By making learning passive and unquestioning, the banking concept produces passive and unquestioning students and adults who adapt this approach. The reality of oppression means that critical thinking and the ability for innovation are far removed; the students’ ability to innovate is instead, as Freire (1970) argues, overshadowed by numbness, subjugation and apathy, preparing students for their places in the world.

b) *The power imbalances underlying the ownership of education in Kenya*

The transformative orientation needed in our education system would mean a *change in the power balances* of the learning process - and that is political. An education that seeks to bring out innovation, critical thinking, and a learning related to one’s environment requires a re-orientation of the various power balances between the



teacher and the student, the student and learning, the student and society, the parent and student and the society and government. It is not surprising, therefore, to note that Amutabi (2003) argued that the rush to implement the 8-4-4 system was in itself a *political* issue rather than an *educational* one that allowed for a slower process of thinking through the deeper issues.

To date (2015), calls to reform the education system has been marred by politics, which has continued to plague the deeper needed *discourse on pedagogy*. And while the 8-4-4 system has seen more than its fair share of commissions since its inception in 1985, little progress has been made. Some of the commissions include: The Wanjigi Report<sup>59</sup>, the Kamunge Report<sup>60</sup>, the Mungai Report<sup>61</sup>, the Ndegwa Report<sup>62</sup>, and the Koech Report<sup>63</sup>. And given that education is now part of our political rhetoric and a tool for either gaining masses or fighting political wars, a number of these reports have either been rejected wholly (with hardly any public discourse on the same) or partially implemented. The Koech Report, which sought to bring in a new re-orientation towards educational thinking and stressing on an integrated approach, was wholly rejected while the Ndegwa and Mungai reports were partly implemented into the existing system.

Herein is the problem in education reform in Kenya. We continue to pick and choose based on the political debates of the day and the power that we are beholden to. We allow the political elite to dictate the discourse of rhetoric that is reported in the press. Thus, with the promulgation of the new Constitution in 2010, another round of debates on the education sector began this time to ensure that the education system was in line with the new Constitution and Vision 2030. For example, the then Kenya's Minister for Education as announced through the Kenya Gazette<sup>64</sup> did establish the Task Force on the Realignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution and Vision 2030 with effect from

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59 GoK 1983.

60 GoK 1985.

61 GoK 1995.

62 GoK 1991.

63 GoK 1999.

64 Vol CXIII No. 11, dated 28 January 2011.

2 February 2011 for a period of six months a period of six months. The expected outputs from the task force were: Comprehensive Task Force Report, Proposed Sessional Paper, Draft Education Bill and a Cabinet Memorandum and Policy Brief.

The same government through the Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, issued a Gazette Notice<sup>65</sup> establishing a Task Force on the Realignment of University Education (UE), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Sector with the Constitution for a period of three months from 1 November 2011. The expected deliverables from this task force were: The Task Force Report, a University Education Policy and Bill, a Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy and Bill, and a Science, Technology and Innovation Policy and Bill.

By early 2012, the rhetoric had changed with a call for the 8-4-4 system to change to a new system, namely to 2-6-6-3<sup>66</sup>. This would see pupils spend two years in early childhood development education, six years in primary, another six years in secondary and three years in the university. Thus, rather than the rhetoric being about the *pedagogy* of teaching and how to ensure that critical thinking is availed so that knowledge, understanding and practical application of the issues is possible, the discourse remained around the *years* of education and the *content* of the subjects to be taught. For example, in 2012, the Chairman of Parliamentary Committee on Education argued that the new system gives more priority to basic education<sup>67</sup>. But the teacher unions, on the other hand, argued that the proposed 2-6-6-3 system, which was proposed to need KES 340 billion per year to implement, would be too costly and impractical. Led by the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) chairman, they said that the current 8-4-4 system needed to be reinforced and not replaced with the proposed 2-6-6-3 system. Further, they argued that the new system had adopted some irrelevant policies from European countries such as a long summer break.<sup>68</sup>

65 No. 11626, dated 23rd September 2011.

66 <http://www.kenyaforum.net/2012/05/21/kenya's-education-system-8-4-4-or-2-6-6-3/comment-page-1/>.

67 <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Team-to-lead-shake-up-in-844-system-/-/1056/1376104/-/7b6ilbz/-/index.html>.

68 <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Teachers-oppose-planned-2-6-6-3-system--/-/1056/1375538/-/view/printVersion/-/o64ilp/-/index.html>.

As at 2015, the discourse on education reform in Kenya has not changed. And with every new change in cabinet comes a new issue that is dealt with on the issue of reforming the education system. It is no wonder that in May 2015, the current cabinet minister of education could afford to pick and choose what changes he wanted to the system without due discourse with all stakeholders. The issue of the time of opening and closing of school was thus on the agenda<sup>69</sup> and, as with all the other reform issues, left out the *pedagogical* issues at the heart of our education system.

This in itself makes the whole process of education *political*. Politics here encompasses the teacher-student relationship, the method of choosing the course content and the subject chosen for the syllabus. Politics is also in the questions and statements from teachers about the themes being studied, the freedom students feel when questioning the curriculum, the physical conditions of the classroom, the imposition of standardised tests, the grading and tracking policies, and so on. These are the key areas that determine the kind of educational practice put in place, whether it is domesticating or liberating. *Critical education* should develop the way students think about the world and act in it. *Domesticating education* orients students to accept inequality and their places in the status quo and to adhere to the authority. Liberating education should invite students to question the system, the knowledge being offered to them and discuss the kind of future they want - the right to remake the school and society they find themselves in.

The genesis of an education for innovation has thus been marred by political interference, creating a policy environment that is characterised by decrees, circulars and political rhetoric replacing stakeholder engagement, which is the bedrock of any policy-making process. Political interference is further seen in the creation of several task forces and several disjointed institutions all handling separate components of the education function. It is this trend that requires rethinking if education will spearhead national development.

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69 <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000158366/kaimenyi-unions-contests-hurting-education-sector>.

## *Conclusion*

The experiences with our school system related at the beginning of this chapter allude to the challenge that education reforms should solve - an *education for innovation*. It requires that our education re-orient itself in its learning outcome to one that constitutes a democratic and transformative relationship between all the players and the problems in society. It requires that we adopt new technologies such as ICT in schools such as the *Taifa Laptop* - a Kenyan laptop conceptualised and assembled in the country, a flagship product of Taifa Brand and a project of the Nairobi Industrial and Technology Park (NITP) being implemented in conjunction with the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT).

Every child needs to know how to use a computer, to play with it and to engage in what is now called the Internet of things. Children should find ideas and varied options on how to solve the same problems we have and then localise the same issues to what works in our own villages, towns, counties and the country as a whole. We cannot speak of environmentalism without ensuring that we teach our young children to engage in the environment and learn how to clean their own schools or care for trees around them. We cannot remain in *one* sport after 50 years – athletics - when we have other sports. And while this chapter has not sought to directly provide solutions, I wish to conclude with some general suggestions on what we can do to move the discourse of reform in the education sector.

Firstly, changing the education system requires that we understand that change is not a one-day solution with new decisions made using a top-down approach. We have to move the entire discourse of education to a nationwide subject in which *all stakeholders* are given a change to engage in the process. The call in June 2015 by County Governors to devolve education<sup>70</sup> is not the solution. We would not want to have different counties learning varied forms of what should be a holistic education. Yet at the

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70 [http://www.nation.co.ke/counties/Devolve-education – demand-leaders/-/1107872/2624888/-/icv5a7/-/index.html](http://www.nation.co.ke/counties/Devolve-education-%20demand-leaders/-/1107872/2624888/-/icv5a7/-/index.html).

same time, we would like to see that education takes into account the various unique situations in each county.

Secondly, and related to this, is that change in the education system cannot be left to politicians or parliamentary committees. Education is about communities, and communities must participate in the process.

Thirdly, of immediate concern is that the entire system of *comparing schools* either in primary or high school remains *superficial* as it does not take in contextual variables that are found within schools. How does one compare a school that picks the highest graded students from primary with one that does not? How does one compare the various levels of teacher training in each school or the level of participation of parents in the school? There are many contextual factors that need to be accounted for. Comparisons that do not distinguish this have made Kenyans compete for these schools. As a result, students and teachers cheat in exams to ensure that their schools score well.

Fourthly, we cannot realise a change in the education system without changing the entire *societal mindset on the role of education*. The entire development of a country is almost wholly hinged on the various educational programmes contained within that country. And while development in Kenya is a product of many forces, eventually, we need to recognise that there is indeed a huge gap in societal thinking on the role of education. Whether this has been a product of the various challenges we have as a nation - such as financial means or lack of technological tools - cannot be used as an excuse for not changing how we view education. Vocational education has to be put on the same level as formal education (see *Helmut Danner* on the “Dual Vocational Education and Training”). The fact that we do not have enough good metal or wood workers and all forms of technical training means that we have, for a long time, considered formal education in the university as higher than technical and practical education. We need schools that also deal with drama, football, art and music.

Fifthly and as discussed within this chapter, the need for *teacher re-training* stands out strongly as an area we as Kenyans have ignored. While many teachers do what they do with the best of their knowledge and for the love of what they do, it is no secret

that we in Kenya have not elevated the teaching profession. Many of the teaching institutions remain ill equipped and continue to encourage rote learning in the training methodology. Teacher education should thus be integrated with the environment and should seek to bring out the creative ability of the teacher to facilitate critical and analytical thinking in their classes. But this will not be achieved through political and administrative decisions alone. It needs an adequate *educational theory and teaching methodology* as the foundation and guidance for practical education, politics and administration.

Finally, education remains the *bedrock of any nation's development process* and has thus must be continuously modelled around issues that solve problems and tap into the creative element found in every individual. This requires that education is defined from the perspective that learners become critically aware of their potential; their power to use circumstances rather than being used by them. I am joining many of my colleagues in the education field who have consistently argued for a *paradigmatic shift* in the conceptualisation and management of the education process in Kenya. It is the gift we can give the next generation of innovators. And while *entrepreneurship education*, as a subject, takes root in many of our universities, we cannot allow it to stop there. We must ensure that the entire education system is innovation-driven with critical and analytical thinking as a core domain of the *pedagogy of teaching and learning* from an early childhood stage. It takes a lot of courage to look at one's failings and say that we believe this may have been right and appropriate for many years but face up to the famous Buddhist saying "*I will look at what I don't want to see*".

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Jephthah K. Gathaka  
**Education for Life**

*Abstract*

*This article reviews formal education systems to demonstrate that they do not adequately prepare youth with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to fit in the current employment market. Youths need an education for life and the skills and expertise to be able to fit in many kinds of employment and to create employment. Traditional education was designed to prepare students for every stage of life. But then, the colonial schools trained a labour force to cater to the European markets and missionary schools produced catechists to run the churches. Today's system, which emphasises on theory and passing of exams without practical experiences and little emphasis on art, crafts, sports, and music, denies the youth opportunities to prepare for their current and future environment. This article argues that technical schools play an important role in filling this gap and providing education for life and training graduates who could go on to create growth and employment.*

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"Unemployment among the youth is one of the acute problems affecting developing countries like Kenya. Not even university graduates and professionals are assured of jobs. The government can alleviate this. First, education should be more practical to prepare graduates for the workplace. Less emphasis should be placed on training for white collar jobs. Agriculture should be made attractive so that more young people can embrace it. The government can start by making it a compulsory subject in school."<sup>71</sup>

The above quote is taken from a letter to the editor of the Daily Nation. It prescribes a solution to youth unemployment: *education*. The writer suggests an ideal kind of education and the subjects matter that should be covered. Another contributor to the

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71 Mercy Cheronu, Masinde Muliro, letter to the editor, Daily Nation, 5th May, 2015.

editor looked at education from a different perspective though her observations are related to what should be the objective of education. She wrote:

"One of the reasons young people are getting radicalised is that education has failed to instil moral values in their young minds. Too much emphasis is put on passing exams, ignoring the other goals of education such as promotion of sound moral and religious values as well as fostering nationalism, patriotism and unity. Students cram their way to As, but leave without internalising integrity, honesty and love for fellow humans. Terrorists' recruiters have noticed this vacuum and proceeded to fill it with extremist ideology. We need to rethink the goals of education."<sup>72</sup>

This article argues for the importance of appropriate education for the youth or one that will not only prepare them for the employment market, but also prepare them for life without waiting to be employed and also create employment for themselves and others.

These two letters to the editor are written out of frustration. In this book, *Monica Kerretts-Makau* describes on the same line the present Kenyan educational system – in schools and universities – as being based on memorising and exams, where students mechanically repeat what they have not understood and what they typically forget immediately afterwards. It is no wonder employers are unhappy with school and university education and the lack of qualifications. It is no wonder young people often fail to show any interest, creativity and responsibility. But is education's only purpose to prepare youth for employment? Does our life not consist of more than work and jobs? What about our social life and responsibilities? What about our personal life? Both authors of the mentioned letters to the editor not only demand an education that is more practical and does not only prepare students for white collar jobs; they also wish to see an emphasis on moral and religious values, on values such as patriotism, nationalism and unity. They want an education that instils integrity, honesty and good human

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72 Emma Kabiru, letter to the editor, Daily Nation, 5th May, 2015.

behaviour. For sure, such orientation in education would provide a valuable qualification for any employment; it would also encourage being persons who are valuable to the society as a whole.

In this chapter, we will examine the kinds of education provided in the recent past and see what they contributed to an education that goes beyond what we experience now and what would prepare for life, not only for employment. Indeed, we are advocating for what could be termed as an *education for life* as described in Proverbs 4:13: "Always remember what you have learnt. Your education is your life, guard it well". With this in mind, this chapter seeks to provide an answer to the question: does education as we know it today educate for life?

### *Definitions and traditional education*

To educate is defined by Webster's dictionary as "To develop or train the mind, capabilities, and character by or as formal schooling or instruction; teach." It further defines education as "the systematic development and cultivation of the natural powers by inculcation. It begins in the nursery, continues through school, and also through life, whether we will or not."<sup>73</sup> In broad terms, Mugambi, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi defines education as "transfer and modification of knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes"<sup>74</sup>. He discusses the availability of this 'know-how' from the level of kindergarten to professional and vocational training.

It will be shown that traditional education before formal education was more conducive to what we describe as an education for life. Jomo Kenyatta says that the education system of the Gikuyu begins at the time of birth and ends with death. He adds that "The child has to pass various stages of age groupings with a system of education defined for every status in life."<sup>75</sup> He assigns the responsibility of education to parents at the earlier age

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73 The New International Webster's Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the English Language, Trident Press International, 2003 edition.

74 Mugambi, J.N.K: From Liberation to Reconstruction, African Christian Theology After the Cold War, East African Educational Publishers Ltd, Nairobi 1995, p. 224.

75 Jomo Kenyatta: Facing Mount Kenya, School Edition, EAEP, Nairobi 2011, p. 60.

and later to different leaders, such as “godfathers in the growing stages”<sup>76</sup>. What is important to note is that people in traditional forms of education were educated for the demands of each stage in life. Also the “Nyayo Philosophy” makes this point very clearly: “Every African society in Kenya had a carefully planned traditional education system, which was part of the whole social fabric, and which was responsive to the society's psychological traits and community philosophy. Such education was practical and continued throughout life. It was a practical response to the needs of the society, different age groups, sexes and socio-administrative standing.”<sup>77</sup> This education – by the way, just as Socrates described it – would begin with music which “you induce tales; true and false... first we tell fables to the children. These are mostly false, but there is some truth in them...”<sup>78</sup>

Both of these sources – education in theoretical definitions and in African tradition – point to the important contents of education: there should be education not only as formal schooling and teaching, but also as development of mind and character. The question here is, how does the ‘development’ of mind and character happen? Definitely, it cannot solely be through teaching, reading and memorising. Certainly, the whole person has to get involved, i.e. his/her emotions, imagination, responsibility, value judgement, etc. Therefore, education has to include not only knowledge and skills, but must engage and challenge our experiences and attitudes as well. This may involve learning by doing. Both sources speak of an educational process that lasts the whole life; it is ‘life-long learning’. Traditional education prepares individuals for life situations by building up the social durability of the individual. This is a real example of “education for life”.

### *The missionary and colonial education*

The objective of the education offered by the early missionaries in Kenya was different from what was offered by the colonial

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76 Fr. C. Cagnolo: *The Agikuyu. Their Customs, Tradition and Folklore*, New edition, Wisdom Graphics Place, Nairobi 2006, p. 73.

77 Daniel T. Arap Moi: *Kenya African Nationalism. Nyayo Philosophy and Principles*. Macmillan Publishers Ltd., London 1986, p. 9.

78 W.H.D. Rouse (Translator): *Great Dialogues of Plato*, New American Library, New York 1956, p. 174.

administrators. And the quality of the colonial education was questionable. “Every mission”, Baur notes, “had a central school where the most gifted pupils could reach a higher standard that enabled them to become catechists, learn a craft or find employment with the government or settlers”. Then he describes the progression: “...the time up to World War I (1900-1920) could be called the age of the bush school; the time between the wars (1920-1940) the age of the primary school; and the time after World War II (1940-1960) the age of the secondary school; and with independence there came the age of the university.”<sup>79</sup> It is clear that while the missionary objective was to enable the African to develop their own Church, the colonialists did not find it necessary for Africans to learn anything beyond what would enable them to serve the settlers’ practical needs in the colonial administration. Later, the primary schools were expected to be equal to those in Europe but adapted to the African environment. The colonial government wanted the missions or churches to be the agents for education while the government gave the aid and supervised the standards. It was after World War II that there was more need for secondary education in order to prepare Africa for independent nationhood. However, the curriculum was based on European examinations like the Cambridge Certificate of Education and the London General Certificate of Education. Early African universities were essentially constituent colleges of universities in Europe.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, appreciated the contribution made by the churches in education when he said, “The rise of our country is properly due to the missionaries. To their work and their assistance I, and others, owe what we now are...Yes, without their educational work independence would have been delayed for several decades or, if imposed by political events, it would have left the new nations without necessary leadership and manpower to run the country.”<sup>80</sup> However, Walter Rodney argues that the Christian missionaries were as much part of the colonising forces as were the explorers, traders and soldiers. He, therefore,

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79 John Baur: 2000 years of Christianity in Africa. An African History 62-1992, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi 1996, p. 257. Baur certainly means the period around World War I etc., not the exact dates.

80 Baur 1996, p. 274.

criticises the education system offered by the colonialists and missionaries as “an instrument to serve the European capitalist class in its exploitation of Africa”.<sup>81</sup>

Noteworthy is Baur’s observation that the school was the stepping stone in the emancipation of women, which is “the greatest single achievement of the mission besides general education”. He points out that schools and education gave to the girls a new self-consciousness and prepared them to earn their own living as teachers and nurses, which also made them independent in choosing their husbands and in running their family affairs. He laments: “However, the scholarisation of the girls was a very slow process, as parents, caught in their traditional views of the female role in society, would tenaciously oppose their girls’ European education.”<sup>82</sup> He reveals that in Africa in 1959 there were still two boys against one girl enrolled in school; and the beginning of secondary education for girls was, with rare exception, delayed. Rodney argues that the colonial administration did not encourage girl education noting that the “Metropolitan capitalist society had failed to liberate women, to offer them educational opportunities, or to provide responsible jobs at equal rates of pay with men... and modern education remained a luxury with which few African came into contact.”<sup>83</sup>

With regards to the missionary and the colonial education, was the concept of “education for life” realised? As far as the colonialists allowed Africans to be educated, the intention was to prepare them for practical use for settlers and in the colonial administration. This cannot be called an education that had life in general in mind and definitely not African life. While the missionary education also included practical orientation, we can assume that values were taught as well, though certainly values in the Christian context, not values of African societies; those were rather condemned as devilish. Thus, the colonial and the missionary education had the effect of alienation from the African life. On the other hand, the

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81 Walter Rodney: *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. EAEP, Nairobi 1972, p. 274.

82 Baur 1996, p. 274.

83 Rodney 1972, p. 276.

practical training and education through missionaries – last but not least also for girls – provided Africans with useful skills that helped them earn a living.

Notable in this context is the establishment of technical schools. This goes with the Catholic Church's objective "to offer to Africans who were keen to learn the chance to acquire a trade which would enable them to build a new Africa".<sup>84</sup> The National Council of Churches of Kenya in the mid-1960s encouraged its member churches to establish village polytechnic schools where both primary and secondary school leavers could learn a trade or course which would qualify them to get industry jobs or employ themselves. Many graduates from these institutions have created jobs for themselves and provided labour in the rural areas most in need. However, though they are important, polytechnic schools are criticised for providing pupils with a relatively lowly education. The establishment of the institutes of science and technology in the regional rural centres added more impetus to the advanced training than what is being offered in the village polytechnics. The training helps the graduates to get better jobs.

### *Formal education*

Attempts have been made to make students deal with life issues and to provide them with a more rounded and practical education. Subjects such as rural science taught the fundamentals of agricultural science and students gained practical experience by managing their own portions of land and planting crops using the skills they learned in class. Handwork and craft were subjects integrated into the system, specifically wood carving for boys and weaving and domestic science for girls. Carpentry, which would help students start their workshops when they left school and employ themselves as well as others, had been neglected. Music, which has become a big industry, had also been neglected. Today most talented young people get into the music industry with very little know-how and business management skills to effectively run their careers and the money they earn. Girls could again be

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<sup>84</sup> Gabriele Solidate: *The Pioneer. The African adventure of Benedict Falda*, Consolata Missionary. St. Pauls Publications, Middlegreen 1990, p. 209.



involved with domestic science. Unfortunately, these subjects were not part of national examinations. Students did not, therefore, put much emphasis on these subjects and instead focused on those that were required for national examination. The system created an emphasize on the non-practical skills and with that, a chance was lost to provide children with a more comprehensive education. Talent academies should be established in every region to help the young people develop and advance their talents. The technical institutes should be helping youth to understand new technologies and support them to come up with, and patent, their own innovations, innovations that could be developed through the practical classes such as art, carpentry, and domestic science.<sup>85</sup>

However, all these attempts for improvement in the education system intended to better equip young people with life skills, were not implemented in the formal education system. The system remains ‘top-heavy’ and one-sided with its emphasis on mindless memorising and its fixation on examinations – instead of enriching the minds and the lives of the youth.

There are a few political programmes that promise improvement. But one has to ask critically whether they should aim at an education for life and not only for making young people fit for economic use. The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) manifesto, dubbed “Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation”, had promised “to review the education curriculum to make it relevant to the changing socio-economic environment so that the students can more easily fit [sic!] in the labour market.”<sup>86</sup> However, the promise remains unfulfilled. The Jubilee coalition promises “to ensure that every child in Kenya gets quality education”.<sup>87</sup> These promises are an improvement of what had been envisaged in the government’s Vision 2030 plan, where

85 In the early sixties delinquent young people were collected and taken to “approved schools” where in addition to be corrected were taught a trade. When these young people came back to the villages they started doing booming businesses as carpenters, tailors and shoemakers. Some of them were well established and had big workshops and sheds where they taught others and employed them. This kind of courses was not only helpful to these young people but the whole community.

86 Manifesto of the National Rainbow Coalition – NARC – and the Republican Congress party – RCP.

87 See the shared manifesto of the coalition between the national alliance – TNA, and the United Republican Party – URP: „Transforming Kenya – securing Kenya’s prosperity, 2013-2017.

it seeks “to have globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development” for the purposes of “development and enhanced individual well-being,” without much explanation for what quality education looks like and how individual well-being can be realised in the current education system.<sup>88</sup>

### *Mother tongue*

There is one aspect of education for life that may easily be overlooked: the importance of one’s mother tongue. When school education was provided in the vernacular language, it helped the students understand their environment better. Because talking about their environment, in its historical tongue, means to take their personal and local life into consideration. Education through the local mother tongue is more conducive to an education for life than through a foreign language.

In addition, it should not be overlooked that learning the grammar of mother tongue can be helpful to learn the fundamentals of another language. I remember when I was not able to understand Greek participles during my biblical studies, it was my understanding of the Gikuyu grammar, which I had learnt in primary school class 4, that came in handy. Like Greek, the Gikuyu language can have one word, which can only be translated by an adjectival or adverbial phrase in English. It is unfortunate that since 1964 when the English education system was introduced in our schools there are millions of children who cannot read their mother tongue; this is a disgrace to the nation. A regular columnist in the *Sunday Nation* recently wrote, “that one day, we might just wake up to find our many languages dead and buried”.<sup>89</sup> It is in order for the students to learn in English but at the same time they should not discard their mother tongue.

The fables of tribal traditions that the young receive through their mother tongue – and its spirit – are also helpful for developing good discipline, values and virtues. An education for life should instil values and virtues in young people and recognition of this have led to attempts being made to include fables from tribal traditions in

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<sup>88</sup> Kenya Vision 2030, popular version.

<sup>89</sup> Caroline Njung'e, *Sunday Nation*, 24th May, 2015: Why I want my children to learn mother tongue.

their social studies subject. However, discipline, values and virtues should be cross-cutting issues to be mainstreamed at all learning levels. The national values and principles which are stipulated in Article 10 of the Kenya Constitution 2010 should be included in the curriculum – as cross-cutting principles, but not as a subject to be 'learnt'. This would help the youth understand integrity and accountability and to shun corruption.

The education system designed in the past ignores the practical aspects and concentrates mostly on theoretical aspects and therefore makes the youth non-thinkers. It was thought that the 8-4-4 education system could respond effectively to the challenges of the times and the needs of the people. It replaced the elitist education system with a system which could cope with the rapid growth of the population. But the result has been the opposite. The youth empowerment programmes are unlikely to succeed because youths have not received an effective education for life. The education provided must be designed to meet the needs of the youth and provide an education for life, but not of an examiner who is thinking in a foreign mind-set even if he or she is a Kenyan.

Education for life and education as preparation for work are not contradictory. The more somebody has grown in his or her personality, the more efficient he or she will be in the job. And vice versa, the more reliable and competent somebody is in his or her work, the higher will be the chance that this person is also reliable and competent in other areas of life. However, danger lies in one-sidedness of the education system – being too far detached from practical reality, this will cause problems in a work environment; and an education that only focuses on the labour market may have narrow-mindedness and perhaps antisocial behaviour as a result. Thus, education must be better balanced. It must have the creation and nurturing of one's personality in mind while simultaneously the capability to successfully contribute to a vocation. The *dual* vocational training has the practical and the theoretical side of a vocation in mind as well as the education of the apprentice's personality (see the paper by *Helmut Danner*). The real problem of the current Kenyan public education system is that it neither properly prepares for a vocation nor does it provide an education for life.

## *Conclusion*

In order to help the youth find employment we must provide them with the required education. It must be practical in all aspects of life. Equal emphasis must be laid on all subjects and relevance of the subjects should be judged according to the needs of the country. Technological innovation must be encouraged in all fields and talents developed. More emphasis must be put on technological studies in order to help youth catch up with ever evolving technologies. Agriculture, music and games should be emphasised. There should be role models and mentors. Virtues and values like integrity, hard work, honesty and trustworthiness must be inculcated in the minds of the youths. Vices like corruption, laziness and stealing must be discouraged. All stakeholders, that is parents, teachers, school committees/boards and government should have open discussions and play their roles well. The objective should be to design an education system for life.

Entela Kallamata

## **Unemployed Youth in the European Union**

### *Abstract*

*The European Union has experienced an economic recession since the global financial crisis in 2008, out of which it is still struggling to recover. Unemployment amongst the youth has reached particularly high levels and the prolonged situation has caused many, often violent, youth protests in EU countries. The EU intends to address the situation. Among the unemployed youth, those who have not completed high school education and have little practical skills represent the most difficult challenge. The transition from school to work is proving to be crucial for the employment opportunities of youth of the age 15-24, suggesting that dual vocational education and training established in the education system is vital to address youth employment in the long-term.*

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Young people of the age 15-24 years are typically still *in education* - in high school or in training or university. They only become part of *the labour force* when they begin to search for employment - either after they graduate or complete training, or while they are still in school, often looking for part-time jobs or apprenticeships<sup>90</sup>. The youth unemployment rate provides a measure of the proportion of the educated but unemployed young people to the labour force. Their situation is mostly determined by the level of the economic activity within a country, by the quality of their capabilities, and also by the relevance of their education. However, in addition to unemployed youths seeking work, the age group comprises young people who are not in any form of education or training and neither seek work, called “NEET”, meaning *not in employment, education or training*. They could be described as inactive young people and represent the severest challenge of the youth unemployment

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<sup>90</sup> Unless specified otherwise, the statistical information given in this article is based on periodic publications of the Eurostat and the European Commission. The statistical data are from the Eurostat News Release of 2 May 2014.

situation in the European Union at present; this situation has revealed shortcomings of education systems, going beyond the impact of the recession.

### *The recession in the EU*

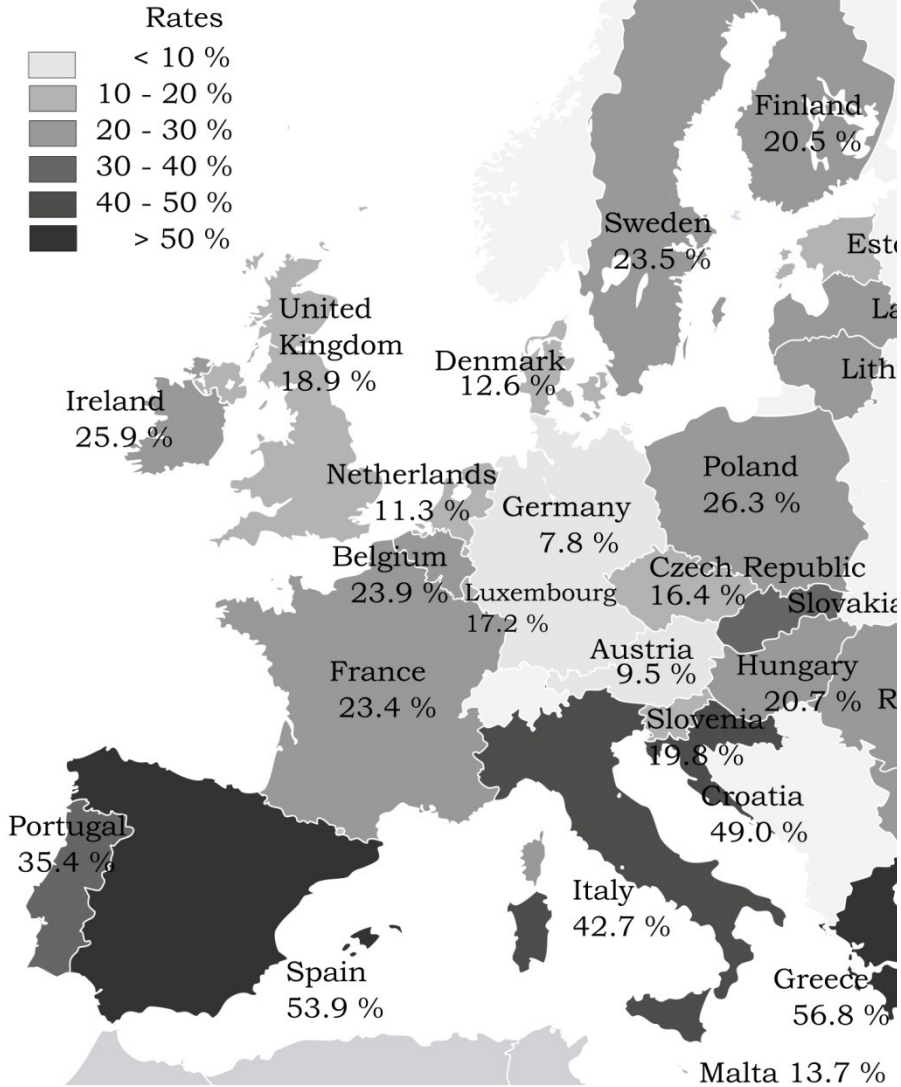
The global financial crisis of 2007-2008 led many economies around the world to the recession. Since then, in the European Union the unemployment among the working population has been steadily increasing. From a rate of 6.7% shortly before the crisis, the average unemployment level in the EU is currently at 10.5% and in Spain and Greece, the two most severe cases, it has reached 25.3% and 26.7% respectively.

Among the working population, young people of the age 15-24 years are stagnating at striking levels of unemployment that vary sharply across the countries in the EU. The highest rates are seen in Greece: 56.8%, Spain: 53.9% and Italy: 42.7%; while in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands the rate has been around 10% or even lower. On average, within the EU, 1 in 5 young people seeking work cannot find one, whereas in Greece and Spain the ratio stands at 1 in 2 young people.

The global financial crisis began with a series of financial institutions in the USA and the EU going bankrupt within the spring and autumn of 2008. It reached the EU through the real estate market, the banking system and through the financial market in general. The abrupt fall of investments and credit severely affected manufacturing and trade and the spending confidence of households, leading to deep economic recession. The real economic activity of the 27 EU countries altogether slowed from a growth rate of 3.2% in 2007 to -4.3% in 2009. The downturn is historically steep, comparable only to the Great Depression of the 1930s. In 2015 or well into the sixth year since, the economies are weakly recovering but, as yet, the statistical data do not reflect a decreasing trend in the youth unemployment rate - see Map: Youth Unemployment in the European Union - EU 28.

## Youth Unemployment in the European Union -EU 28

Youth under the age of 25  
 Statistics seasonally adjusted



Source: Eurostat, 2 May 2014

The striking high rates of youth unemployment in the EU can be analysed from two perspectives: in their variation across the EU member countries or in their total composition.

- From the first perspective, a detailed analysis would identify *determinant domestic policies* before and after the global financial crisis and the channels (markets) through which the crisis spread into each country. Likewise this perspective would highlight the economic sectors most affected by the recession and the reliability of each country on these sectors.
- From the second perspective, the analysis is of *the nature of the unemployment* among young people with respect to their level of education, identifying a series of disadvantages in their earliest attempts to integrate in the labour market.

Therefore, youth unemployment can be analysed either with regard to the economic activity of a country and its potential to create jobs, or with regard to the human capital and the productivity of young people. Of course, the current situation of the youth is severe because these two factors are entangled with one another and both perspectives are valid. While the first factor reflects the vulnerability of economic cycles that repeat over time, the productivity of young people reflects their level of education and shows the direct role played by education systems.

### *The nature of youth unemployment*

Young people of the age 15-24 years typically work part-time, temporary or have seasonal jobs, often in expanding business sectors such as construction. Otherwise they are at the very beginning of their career with little or no working experience.

In times of economic crises, therefore, young people become generally the first target of lay-offs; the *rigidity* or *flexibility* of the *labour market*, related to the regulations of employment protection and minimum wages, may give them a weaker or else a stronger position<sup>91</sup>. Characterised in this way, young workers are generally

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<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of this factor see Kiel Policy Brief, January 2013, “Youth Unemployment in Europe and the World: Causes, Consequences and Solutions”, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, No. 59.



*prone to be dependent on economic cycles.*

Besides this, *structural matters*, involving the education that young people acquire and the productivity that they develop, constitute a more complex problem. The last recession revealed a strong need for more *effective education systems* and, particularly, the need to institutionally support the transition of youths from school to work.<sup>92</sup> In 2011, unemployed youth and not in education or training or the NEET, constituted 12.9% of the whole age group while, in many EU countries, the largest part of the group had a low education level<sup>93</sup>.

*Education* is, above all factors, a determinant of the possibilities for employment. In this chapter it comprises knowledge acquired in academic institutions and through training programmes. Early school-leavers who also fail to complete a qualitative training relevant for employers become low-skilled workers as they grow older and remain continuously disadvantaged in the labour market. On the other hand, young graduates and trained young people may have difficulties finding employment due to overly theoretical education and lack of working experience, or when the skills that employers demand do not match with the skills obtained during their education.<sup>94</sup>

Shortcomings in quality and level of education obtained by young people have various forms: dropping out of school or training programmes, below average learning ability, poor school or training performance, or confidence in subjects of low relevance to current economy. These factors can make the integration into the labour market difficult and long, and lead, with time, to a further group of disadvantages; such as having inappropriate or temporary jobs, with repetitive periods of inactivity, which are protracted during crisis.

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92 See Scarpetta, S./Sonnet, A./ Manfredi, T. (2010): “Rising Youth Unemployment during the Crisis”, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 106, OECD Publishing.

93 This is especially the case for Spain and Portugal. See Eurofound (2012), NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

94 United Nations, World Youth Report, 2012: Youth Employment: Youth Perspectives on the pursuit of decent works in changing times.

On these grounds, the education system, along with the transition from school to work is crucial for the employment opportunities for the youth of the age 15-24 and beyond. In particular, the *dual vocational education and training programmes*, applied only in a few EU member countries, are designed to develop skills in addition to academic knowledge as well as to smooth the transition to employment. They are concerned with the productivity of young people, their possibilities to integrate into the labour market and to build a stable career. Studies prior and during the economic crisis confirmed that *well established dual systems of education reduce the risk of becoming unemployed* and, most importantly, of becoming part of the NEET group as low skilled or discouraged inactive young people.<sup>95</sup>

### *The approach and reforms of the European Union*

*“We are pushing for bold action to stimulate job creation for young people, even unorthodox measures that you don’t necessarily consider in normal times, like some subsidies for hiring at companies”*

(Stefano Scarpetta, Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs at OECD)

The 7.5 million young people in the European Union out of work or education or training in 2011 are estimated to have generated an annual loss of EUR 153 billion in welfare benefits paid and lost income they would have produced through their work, equivalent to 1.2% of EU GDP.<sup>96</sup>

The approach for tackling youth unemployment suggested by the European Union to the national governments is ensuring that young people that become unemployed, within a short time, either find a job according to their education, skills and experience, or continue education, training or an apprenticeship. The length of time between the end of education and a job or between jobs is a crucial element because of the emergency of the current

<sup>95</sup> Eurofund (2012).

<sup>96</sup> Estimation of the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions in Eurofound (2012).

situation, but high quality and relevance are a necessary basis for the commitment to last. Public employment services should give young people tailored assistance, advice and direction to possible opportunities. The strong need for dialogue and willingness to collaborate among many stakeholders is recognised by the business sector, trade unions, employment and social services and education and training institutions.

The complete package of reforms immediately addresses the current young generation; it is focused on the part of the *insufficiently* educated within the NEET group, tackling the disadvantages of their transition from school to work - if possible individually. It further covers future youth generations addressing the long term issue of adopting *effective* education systems in the member countries.

Main structures and programmes of the package of reforms<sup>97</sup> are summarised below:

- *The Youth Guarantee* is the major programme adopted as a recommendation in April 2013: Every young person under the age of 25 must receive an offer of either employment, further education or an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

*The Youth Employment Initiative* constitutes an extension of assistance through a fund of EUR 6 billion to be concentrated on regions where the youth unemployment rate exceeds 25%.

- *The Quality Framework for Traineeship and the European Alliance for Apprenticeship* are structures that should provide quality and opportunities for improving the transition from school to work.
- A series of education and information packages as well as a pan-European job search network support greater labour mobility, matching skills required with those offered and encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives among young people.

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<sup>97</sup> The complete package of actions of the EU addressing youth employment is available on the website of the European Commission: [europa.eu](http://europa.eu)

## *Mutual learning – successful experiences*

*“These figures underline the need to focus policies on growth, massive improvements in education and training systems, and targeted youth employment actions.”*

(José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, International Labour Organization, UN)

*The Youth Guarantee*, embraced by the EU as the main reform, is a scheme first adopted in Sweden in the 1980s and followed by Norway, Denmark and Finland<sup>98</sup>. To date, Sweden and Finland have been able to adjust and apply successfully the Youth Guarantee: the public employment services prepare an assessment of the needs and an employment plan for young people who seek work, *guaranteeing* within three months of becoming unemployed the restart of studies, a training programme or a new job place.

Germany, Austria and the Netherlands have been *recovering faster* than other European economies, which is a main factor for the better employment situation in the whole of Europe. On the other hand, they are characterised by a developed human capital, also of young people, thus, specific attention has been paid to their education system.

Germany<sup>99</sup> and Austria<sup>100</sup> rely on a *dual vocational education and training system*, covering the creation of skills in addition to academic qualification and of working experience during education in a strong collaboration with the business sector. Among the whole age group, school-leavers are of concern as well as students who do not achieve positive grades and youths whose level of qualification remains insufficient for an apprenticeship. The systems have been extended towards consulting and supporting services that offer individual guidance reaching back as early as the compulsory education time; the purpose is to detect students of problematic social backgrounds who show learning difficulties in low school

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98 European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *Youth Guarantee: Experiences from Finland and Sweden*, 2012.

99 European Commission: *Peer Country Comments paper – Germany*, The Hague, November 2013.

100 European Commission: *Peer Country Comments paper – Austria, Germany*, September 2012.

performance. In the Netherlands,<sup>101</sup> human capital formation has been a main objective of the government during the last decades. Education is compulsory until students have achieved a basic qualification. The rate of school drop-outs among the youth has been successfully lowered through an administration involving governmental and independent institutions, local authorities, school boards and a computerised monitoring system, which keeps an account of school absences. To this purpose, municipalities operate in collaboration with the education institutions on an autonomous budgeting of the financial funds.

### *Beyond reforms – Austerity and the Youth Guarantee*

The response of the EU to the financial crisis and to the recession that followed has been a policy of austerity - restrictions in government spending and increasing taxes. Implementation is on-going.

The highest increases in the rate of youth unemployment since 2007 are related to countries undertaking heavy austerity measures,<sup>102</sup> such as Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece. It is important to note that the NEET rate has been increasing more for this same group of countries. In spite of the willingness of the EU to give a solution to the present situation, the *Youth Guarantee* runs counter to the austerity conditions to which governments are actually bound. It requires large investments *per person* in order to be applied successfully. In the first place, they involve an infrastructure that does not exist in many countries or is not strongly established: a wide public employment service and a system of vocational education and training. The EU funding apart, the whole package of structural reforms is for every member government to implement through the national budget.

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101 European Commission: Host Country Discussion paper – Netherlands, The Hague, November 2013.

102 For the discussion in this paragraph see European Trade Union Institute, 2013, *Youth Guarantees and recent developments on measures against youth unemployment*, ETUI, Brussels; and Renner Institute and FEPS Young Academic Network, 2011, *The European youth guarantee: a reality check*, Brussels.

### *The 'scarring' effect*

*“The long-term prospects of young people in the crisis-ridden countries are extremely grim. This increases the risk of radicalization of an entire generation”.*

(J. Möller, Director of the Institute for Employment Research, Germany)

Prolonged periods of unemployment, particularly in early stages of the career, can determine future prospects. The missing work experience can influence negatively the wage level and the chance for a steady period of employment. Even though young people will mostly resume working and further develop their skills, there is a high possibility that they face continuously lower wages in their career later on or periods of unemployment might be repeated.<sup>103</sup> Basically, the prospect is the result of the continuous coming into the labour market of newly qualified generations, which hinders the reintegration of the long-time unemployed young people; this is even more discouraging for lower educated and inactive ones. This prospect has been called the ‘scarring effect’ of stagnating unemployment.

The unemployed young people of a high level of qualification constitute a definitely bigger part when those up to the age of 29 are included. Their situation can improve with the economies starting to grow again. Meanwhile, fiscal incentives from governments to businesses are important in order to encourage hiring and creation of jobs. The segment of youth that is less educated and more disadvantaged is especially approached by the *Youth Guarantee* through programmes of transition from school to work; however, without sufficient funds, this alone has a limited potential as a solution.

After all, the severity of the economic slowdown and the ongoing austerity measures in countries that were hit the hardest are conditions too unfavourable for both groups of the NEET youth. Even though the solutions they need differ, the lack of growth undermines any measure and is protracting their situation of unemployment.

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<sup>103</sup> See Scarpetta, S. et al. (2010).

## *The unrest of unemployed youth*

Pictures of unemployed youth - for a long-time jobless, left behind, hopeless - coming out into the streets and bursting into protest resemble one another across countries; this dismal situation is hard to cope with for anyone.

There are youths who will turn to drug use and crime, particularly those coming from difficult economic and social environments, exacerbating further their challenge in the employment market. And there are youths who will take up skills or education, venturing in entrepreneurship, wanting to redirect their energy in some positive way.

In the EU, the 23% youth unemployment rate means 5.3 million young individuals are willing to work but are not find opportunities. The feeling of insecurity grows as years pass by and as they realise there can be no quick change. Until the summer of 2013, as the rate reached the highest, demonstrations of youths were occurring in Greece, Spain, Sweden, Britain, France and Italy, many of which were violent while other times they were peaceful and fair, but demonstrating that a solidarity existed across the youth populations in many different countries.

Youth's unrest is not simply about the prospect of lower earnings. It is about the desire to work and feel integrated, make plans for a family, to improve, and to share the full benefits of their society.

Despite the willingness to tackle their problems, youth protests continue, as do the feelings that little is taking place to remedy the situation at national levels.

## *Conclusion*

The decision of the EU to address the issue of youth unemployment is based on economic as well as social reasons: it is fundamental to ensure stability and growth in the years ahead and through them, the sustainability of the Union itself.

The size of youth neither working, nor in education or training is seriously high in many EU countries and the low educated part of the group is the most complex to be tackled. The composition of

the unemployed youth and the experiences of countries that have been able to develop a skilled young labour force have shaped the thinking about youth unemployment: a lower rate of school drop-outs, close attention on pupils and students, relevant academic curricula and a system of qualitative dual vocational education and training are proving to be the terms of an *effective* education system; it would approach pupils at early ages, offer alternatives, decentralised to reach the individual and to '*insist*' on keeping the most disadvantaged active.

However, youth involves the family, the society, the country and the individual: family and educational institutions can do a lot in shaping and directing its choices. Youth has the potential to determine the long-term development of a country as one crucial economic factor is human capital and its productivity; yet the choice to develop capabilities rests with the young person itself.

Education is a foundation for development - the concern is unchanging. It is a call to governments because it is their responsibility to invest in an effective education system. But when willingness is lacking, funds are insufficient or an unsettled political situation is stagnating, the call is to the people behind the education institutions, perhaps to call for a different kind of responsibility towards young generations. But it is ultimately a call to the youth.



Helmut Danner

## **The Dual Vocational Education and Training in Germany**

### *Abstract*

*One reason for the unemployment of Kenyan youth is their insufficient practical training. The dual vocational education and training in Germany may be an example for efficient 'hands-on' training. 'Dual' means that this training has two major components: practical training at work and theoretical learning in vocational schools. Roughly speaking, the apprentice is training-by-doing for four days per week and learning the theoretical background of the vocation for one day per week; this lasts for about three years. The dual vocational training aims at understanding the theoretical aspects, at skills that are practised and experienced, and at a responsible attitude towards work. It is organised in partnership between businesses, vocational schools, government, and chambers of commerce and industry. Kenya cannot simply copy this system, but can learn from the principle of dual education and training.*

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Unemployment of the youth is a major challenge in Kenya. Two main components contribute to this problem: The general economic situation, which does not offer a sufficient number of jobs *and* the insufficient preparedness of youths for the existing job market. Too many university graduates remain unemployed in spite of their academic degrees; and on the other hand, employers complain about their lack of practical experience which makes them 'useless' for the job.<sup>104</sup> George Okari, Chairman of the Mafundi WA Kenya Association, states:

“We cannot create jobs for our youth if we do not enhance their technical skills at the tertiary level of education. Kenya needs a workforce that has quality skills and is globally competitive.”<sup>105</sup>

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104 Entela Kallamata shows in her contribution to this volume that those countries with dual vocational training have the lowest rates of unemployed youths.

105 Daily Nation, 10 June 2014: “Centre for training Jua Kali artisans launched”.

How could this enhancement of technical skills be achieved? There is the German example of the *dual vocational education and training* that may be worth looking at. It is an *example*; from the beginning, it should be stressed that it cannot and should not be copied as it is practised in Germany. There are too many structural differences in the economy, administration, school system, society, history, etc., that would not allow a copy-and-paste approach. However, it may be worthwhile to think about the basic *principles* of the *dual* training. It is important to notice that it is a *vocational* training, not a ‘technical’ training, i.e. it comprises all kinds of vocations and focuses on the preparation for specific vocations, not only for technical jobs. Then, besides ‘training’ it intends to be *education* as well. What all that means shall be elaborated on in the following.

### *1. The dual education and training system*

Let us begin with an example from Germany: Bernhard has started working immediately after Main School – approximately the equivalent to standard eight – as an unlearnt worker; he is trained only for very specific tasks. He is 20 years old and is employed by a machinery factory where he executes works at a lathe. One day he approaches the director of the factory and expresses his boredom of his repeated simple work and asks for more interesting tasks. As he lacks a comprehensive training which would, for instance, include the ability to understand technical drawings and the specific knowledge about the characteristics of the different kinds of steel and of tools, after some discussion the director, he agrees: his labour contract shall be terminated and he will continue with a new contract for an apprenticeship as an ‘industrial mechanic’.

This means, for Bernhard to accept a lower salary, the company would allow him to go to the Vocational School once a week and instructs the ‘master’ who is responsible for the technical production to take care of Bernhard’s systematic training. The director of the factory agrees with the local Chamber of Industry and Commerce upon the duration of the apprenticeship – in this case two years only instead of three years as the young man has already acquired practical experience for his future profession.

After two years, the result is very satisfactory; Bernhard graduates with good results and can continue to work as a skilled worker, gets a higher salary than before and more challenging tasks with more demanding responsibilities.

This example shows the principle of the dual vocational training, its main stakeholders and its flexibility. It is about an *apprenticeship* that happens – in this case – in a factory *and* in a Vocational School. This is what is meant by being ‘*dual*’. There is the apprentice, the ‘master’ who will do the practical training, the director of the company who represents the business side and offers the opportunity for an apprenticeship, the supervising Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Vocational School. And the regular duration is reduced to two years because of the individual circumstances.

<b>The Dual Vocational Training in Germany<sup>106</sup> is...</b>			
...carried out as	training at the work place	+	classroom tuition
...conducted in	companies	+	part time vocational schools
...based on	training contract	+	compulsory attendance at vocational school
...organised and financed by	private sector	+	public sector
...regulated by	federal government	+	states
...supervised by	Chambers	+	school supervision bodies

Table 1: Summary of components and the roles of stakeholders

106 With reference to Gisela Dybowski: “The Dual Vocational Education and Training System in Germany”: [http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/a23\\_internationales\\_dybowski-taiwan\\_april-05.pdf](http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/a23_internationales_dybowski-taiwan_april-05.pdf) [5.7.2014] Other sources: [http://www.pfalz.ihk24.de/linkableblob/luihk24/ausbildung/bildungspolitik/576832/.3./data/Duale\\_Ausbildung-data.pdf](http://www.pfalz.ihk24.de/linkableblob/luihk24/ausbildung/bildungspolitik/576832/.3./data/Duale_Ausbildung-data.pdf) [9.7.2014] Dieter Euler: Germany’s dual vocational training system: a model for other countries? [http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xbcr/SID-C74488C8-DE54EF02/bst/xcms\\_bst\\_dms\\_37644\\_37778\\_2.pdf](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xbcr/SID-C74488C8-DE54EF02/bst/xcms_bst_dms_37644_37778_2.pdf) [6.7.2014]

Table 1 summarises these components and the roles of further stakeholders who are important for the content and the organisation of trainings in various vocations. The duality of the system is visible in all components.

## 2. *The vocational education and training in the German school system*

The vocational training in Germany has to be understood on the background of its *historical roots*. It dates back to the Middle Ages when young men worked with a ‘master’ of a craft for several years; after they had been trained enough, they were ‘freed’, and they left their master and travelled through Europe in order to learn more from other ‘masters’ for whom they would work for a while. The English word for a skilled worker is still “journeyman”. The still existing labour structure of “apprentice - journeyman - master” traces back to that early time. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sunday crafts schools were founded. In 1871, the Vocational School (“Berufsschule”) was integrated into the school system and finally became compulsory. But it is only in 1969 that the Federal Law for Vocational Training was established to organise vocational training for the whole Federal Republic of Germany in order to guarantee equal professional quality all over the country. Since then, several organisational and administrative regulations have been implemented.

How does this ‘Vocational School’ fit into the whole German school system of today? Concerning education and schools, Germany is in a particular position. This has something to do with the federal system; there are 16 states (‘Länder’) that have authority over education – with the result that there is no uniform German school system. However, it is possible to show the *general structure* (Table 2<sup>107</sup>) that may have its variations in a specific state. The primary school lasts for four years, but in some cases it may be extended by a two-year level of orientation. Normally one enters the secondary level I either in the ‘Main School’ (‘Hauptschule’) or to the Middle School (‘Realschule’) or the High School (‘Gymnasium’). The Main School may end with class nine or ten;

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107 Kultusministerkonferenz: Übersicht über die Bildungsgänge und Schularten im Bereich der allgemeinen Bildung [Overview of the curricula and types of schools in general education]: [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/pdf/Bildung/AllgBildung/Schema-Bildungsgaenge\\_und\\_Schularten-Stand\\_2014-01.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/pdf/Bildung/AllgBildung/Schema-Bildungsgaenge_und_Schularten-Stand_2014-01.pdf).

the Middle School goes up to 10<sup>th</sup> class. The difference between both is that the Middle School is more demanding, e.g. it teaches a foreign language; accordingly, the final certificate of the Middle School has a higher market value than that of the Main School. Also a different orientation towards vocations plays a role. The most demanding school with an academic orientation, of course, is the High School; after the High School, students often continue to study at a university.

There are a number of other school forms, mostly related to a vocational orientation and that are full-time; and it is possible to change from one school type to another under certain conditions. These details do not have to occupy us here. The important aspect for us is the role that the *Vocational School* plays in the whole system. It is possible to enter an apprenticeship after each type of school – after Main School, Middle School and High School. This also means that the apprentice *has to* attend a Vocational School, which is part-time. This also applies to a student who does not finish the secondary level II of the High School; he/she *has to* go to a Vocational School. But *after* finishing the High School, i.e. after secondary level II, there is no compulsory school attendance for those who go to the university or do not enter an apprenticeship. Among those who entered a dual vocational training in 2011, 31.9% came from the Main School, 42.1% from the Middle School, and an increasing number of youths (23.1%) who finished High School began an apprenticeship.<sup>108</sup> The latter are a serious competition for those from Main and Middle School as they have a better academic foundation.

The Vocational School represents a building block in the German school system; it is the counterpart in the *dual* vocational education and training to the practical, systematic training on the job.

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108 For these and further data see <http://datenreport.bibb.de/html/5665.htm> [9.7.2014], also: “Fact-sheet Duale Ausbildung” by Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, 18.2.2014: <http://www.bmwi.de/BMWi/Redaktion/PDF/F/fact-sheet-duale-ausbildung-2013,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi2012,sprache=de,rwb=tr ue.pdf>. The data may differ according to year and source.

Class				
13	Vocational School		←	Secondary Level II
12				
11				
10	↑	↑		Secondary Level I
9	Main School	Middle School		
8				
7				
6				
5	Primary School			
4				
3				
2				
1				

Table 2: The German School System

### 3. The practical training

About 57% of the German youths decided to enter a vocational training in 2011, coming from different school backgrounds as we have seen. Historically, these were apprentices in different *crafts* – carpenters, masons, millers, etc. By and by, other vocations joined the dual training – in industry, commerce, trade, administration, health sector, agriculture, etc. In 2012, there were 344 recognised vocations in which dual training could be done;<sup>109</sup> in 2011, close to 1.5 million youths participated in a dual vocational training. Due to the rapid changes in technology and communication, new vocations are defined and introduced to the dual training system; the content

<sup>109</sup> Details see in: <http://www.bmwi.de/DE/Themen/Ausbildung-und-Beruf/ausbildungsberufe.html> [14.7.2014].

of others has to be overhauled and modernised. Of course, many vocations are specialised and not many youths partake in them. Therefore, in 2013 the five most popular vocations were for men: car mechatronic, industrial mechanic, retail merchant, electronics technician and plant mechanic. Young women preferred to train to become saleswomen, retail merchants, office administrators, skilled medical employees and skilled dental employees.<sup>110</sup> By the way, the technological development shows in the term “car mechatronic”; it is no longer a “car mechanic” because cars are now fitted with a lot of electronics.

According to the vocation, the *working places* where the practical training takes place can be very different. It can be the workshop of a plumber or an advocate’s office, a laboratory or a shop, a garden nursery or a factory hall or a doctor’s clinic. Also the size of the working place can vary considerably because the enterprise may have only five employees or many thousands. But the structure of the relationship between the apprentice and the enterprise (law firm, clinic, factory, etc.) and the structure of the training in principle are always the same.

The trainee and the company enter a *contract*. Beyond being a labour contract, it includes, for instance, the obligation of the employer to provide a systematic training according to an official *training plan*; and the apprentice must be allowed to attend the Vocational School. This is supervised by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce or another Chamber to which the specific vocation belongs. Contrary to former times when the apprentice had to pay ‘training money’ (‘Lehrgeld’) to the ‘master’, today apprentices receive some payment, which increases during the training time and is in average 761 €. Normally, the employer of the trainee will not be his/her *trainer and educator*; but the employer will delegate this task to a person who is qualified for it and recognised by the authorities. Those trainers are not ‘school teachers’ who teach by talking; the trainers on the job teach out of personal experience; they are able to demonstrate what they intend to teach. Big firms may have a separate training workshop with several trainers and educators for a group of apprentices (See as Table 3).

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110 <http://www.bibb.de/de/66208.htm> [10.7.2014].

There are advantages and disadvantages of being trained in a small or in a big company. The training workshop of a big company may be able to provide a more thorough and systematic training than the small company – where, however, the ‘touch’ with the ‘real world’ of business and daily needs will be more intensive than in a separate training unit. If an enterprise cannot provide certain details of the training plan, the apprentice may attend a specific training at another place (This also applies for the learning at a Vocational School). It is important that the apprentice acquires all necessary qualifications.

<b>Talent-oriented learning and developing</b>		<b>Period</b>
Foundation of basic qualification for chosen vocation	Orientation in other vocations	1 <sup>st</sup> half year 2 <sup>nd</sup> half year
Supplementary qualification, Part I Qualification for the vocation; preparation for exams		3 <sup>rd</sup> half year
<i>Intermediate exam</i>		
Supplementary qualification, Part II Qualification for the vocation; consolidation of specific knowledge		4 <sup>th</sup> half year
Special qualification Necessary specialised courses and introduction to work		5 <sup>th</sup> half year 6 <sup>th</sup> half year
<i>Final exam</i>		

Table 3: Training schedule of BMW<sup>111</sup>

111 <http://www.bmwgroup.com/com/de/karriere/schueler/berufsausbildung-talent/index.html> [12.7.2014].



Some 30 years ago, one could say as a rule that the apprenticeship would take *three years*; and the apprentice would (systematically) learn on the job for *four days* per week and attend the Vocational School for *one day* per week. Now, there are vocations that need only two years of training, while others may need three and a half years. Also the time in the Vocational School may now be even two days per week. In general, eight to twelve lessons per week are considered adequate for the Vocational School. The aforementioned training plan includes the learning at the Vocational School, for training on the job and learning at school are coordinated. The school must provide the *theoretical* knowledge that is necessary for the vocation while training on the job practices the practical skills. Also, the Vocational School will continue teaching *general* basic knowledge – like mathematics and language – which amounts to about one third of the curricula. Because of the complementary functions of company and school in the training and educational process of an apprenticeship, the attendance of the Vocational School is *compulsory* for the apprentice *and* the employer. After half of the time of apprenticeship, an intermediate exam will be conducted to see where the individual trainee stands. An exam at the end will qualify him/her as a ‘skilled worker’ – as a ‘journeyman’. Both exams include theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills and knowledge; i.e. Vocational School *and* the relevant Chamber are involved, the Chamber representing the practical part.

With the acquired qualification, the young man or woman will usually enter the job market; often he or she will be hired by the training company (66% in 2011). Some may decide to get the qualification of a ‘master’ (In English also ‘master craftsman’. But there is also a ‘master’ in industry, in agriculture, and in home economics). This will need several years of practical work in their vocation and an additional training course (of about two years) not only to learn more theory but also to acquire business and educational knowledge and skills. For, after an intensive training and exam, a ‘master’ will be allowed to train apprentices.

#### 4. The educational idea of the dual system

Dual vocational training is based on the educational idea that skills cannot be taught intellectually, by talking and teaching, by giving information and by rote learning. A comprehensive vocational training and education aims at:

- *Understanding* the theoretical aspects of the vocation and the context of the work process;
- *Skills* that are practised and experienced;
- A responsible *attitude* towards the work.

In the classical educational theory of the Swiss educator, *Heinrich Pestalozzi* (1746-1827), this means to address and to involve “*head, hand and heart*”; it comprises teaching, practising, and education. The *whole personality* of the young person has to get involved and to be ‘formed’. With a German expression, vocational training should aim at ‘*Bildung*’ which is more than teaching or training alone.<sup>112</sup>

How can it be that the whole personality of the apprentice is involved in the learning process? The apprentice has to *understand* what he/she is taught at the vocational school and what he/she has to do in practice. This understanding can relate to a simple expression that is used by the teacher or the trainer; it can relate to the sequence of a work process or to the application of physical laws. What has to be understood is the *meaning*, the *sense*, of what is taught and what is practically done. But this is what may happen: Teachers at schools present the content of textbooks or trainers have their apprentices do a job in a mechanical way. The apprentices ‘learn’ the theoretical information by memorising and perform a job without knowing why. To a certain degree, this kind of ‘learning’ may be successful – superficially and short-term. But obviously, there are two major forms of learning: *memorising* and *learning by understanding*. What is their decisive difference?

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112 The German educator Georg Kerschensteiner (1854-1932) reflected this context of the vocational training in principal and extensively. A contemporary, the German philosopher and politician Julian Nida-Rümelin, is pleading for strengthening the dual vocational training against a trend of an “academization mania” in *Der Akademisierungswahn. Zur Krise beruflicher und akademischer Bildung*. Hamburg 2014.

Memorising – even if it is systematic and putting one fact on top of another – does not really involve the learning person. Those facts do not mean anything to him and to his life; he does not have a relationship to them.

However, disclosing the sense of the same facts shows – so to speak – the ‘real thing’; it opens up a deeper dimension and the *context* of the facts. Learners who understand what the sense of the various theoretical and practical subject matters is will develop a relationship to them. For, a subject that they have understood will be meaningful *for* them. They will care for it because it has become part of them. They will not easily forget it. Therefore, the crucial task of a teacher and a trainer consists of presenting to his apprentices more than facts and data; he has to disclose the dimension of sense of the subject matter. He has to give his students a chance to *understand* what they are supposed to learn and to do. Of course, making apprentices understand is a more difficult task and a slower process than providing them with pure facts.

The effectiveness of the dual vocational training is based on the *practical application* of the theories as learnt at the vocational school and vice versa; the practical demonstration of theoretical knowledge through practice. Or in other words, *learning by doing* at the workplace challenges and supports the *understanding* of the subject matter. For, it has been shown that students remember 80% of what they *do* themselves and only 20% of what they are *listening to*.<sup>113</sup> And of course, also the real-life-situation at the workplace discloses the *meaning* of what the apprentice has to learn.

In order to achieve the aim of learning by understanding, the dual vocational training depends on the cooperation between *school* and *working place* of the apprentice. In school, his or her intellectual capabilities are addressed; the knowledge about the vocation is at stake. More than pure intellectual capabilities are involved when he or she is learning on the job *by doing* – with his/her own hands in crafts or, e.g., by dealing with people in another vocation; it is about involving the *personal experience*.

And finally, being thrown into the *real life* at the working place, the individual personality is challenged; the apprentice has

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113 P. Struck: Die 15 Gebote des Lernens [The 15 Requirements of Learning]. Darmstadt (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft) 2007, pp. 133-137.

to take decisions and responsibility; he has to be creative, but also patient; it is up to his ability whether his product can be used or not, or whether a customer will feel informed and comfortable in order to buy something or not. The training indeed happens in '*real life*' as the work of the apprentice contributes to the production of a workshop or a factory, to the business of a shop or to the procedures of an office. As it is a training process, this contribution will be little at the beginning and will increase during the time of the training. The *real life situation* can never be imitated in the artificial atmosphere of a technical school.

One of the most important educational components in vocational training is *practice*. Practice means the systematic repetition of an action aiming at mastering it – more or less – perfectly; to be successful it has to start with simple processes that can be handled by the beginner and has to increase complexity and difficulty gradually. Above all, practice cannot be done for me by another person. It is me who has to get involved in the matter, in the struggle with the tool and the material or in dealing with persons. Practising also means to use our senses; also they have to be 'trained'. A simple example may demonstrate the importance of practice and of our senses. Imagine you read the description of a keyboard, you may even learn this description by heart. Then you will have sufficient 'information' how to type. Go ahead and type! Of course, it will not be possible. But, why not? In spite of all the 'information', what is missing is the practice, the feeling, the 'memory of the fingers', the certainty of finding the keys at a high speed. All this cannot be achieved by lecturing and memorising. Practice is a repeated, slow, gradual process, depending on personal experience. Also intellectual processes and skills need practice, like reading, counting, using a dictionary, etc. As we have seen, the practice in the training has the seriousness of 'real life'.

Because of gaining work experience by practising in a systematic way, the training on the job is a *slow process*. Therefore, an apprenticeship of about three years is justified and necessary. But dual vocational training also includes the aspect of *education*. By that, it is supposed to be more than acquiring theoretical knowledge and practical skills. A good trainer will also try to instil

basic *work ethics* in the trainee. This starts with the quality of the work – it should be done as well as possible, it should be precise and tidy. The trainee should learn to be reliable in all what he/she is doing, should be honest and punctual. Above all, he/she should be able and willing to take responsibility for the work process and the work environment. He/she should learn to cooperate in a constructive way with his colleagues. To achieve all this, it will be important that the trainer – who, by the way, can be a man or a woman – has a good and sober relationship with the trainee.

Mainly under the educational perspective of the dual vocational training, it becomes obvious that it does not only play an important role for the economy of a country, it is also of great value to the individual. He/she not only will have good chances of employment, but during the about three years of dual training he/she will grow as a person.

##### *5. Partners in dual vocational training and education*

When we remember the story of Bernhard, then we will notice that he got in contact with only three partners: the enterprise where he works and learns, the Vocational School that he has to attend for two years, and the local Chamber of Industry and Commerce that examines him at the end and issues his certificate as a 'journeyman'. But there are several additional partners involved in the dual vocational training who act in the background (See Table 1). Knowing about them is necessary to understand the German system, but this does not add to the understanding of the *principle* of the dual vocational training. Therefore, we can be very brief on this aspect.

One major partner is the *business* in general, which includes all kinds of enterprises – from a craftsman to a lawyer's office. Business is represented in manifold employers' organisations and in their counterparts: the unions. Together, they determine whether the training outline of a certain vocation has to be modified, or abolished (because the vocation has become outdated), or included as totally new. They will present their proposal with a detailed training plan to the Federal Government.

The *Federal Government* is mainly represented by the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Education and Research. There is a specific “Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training”<sup>114</sup> under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Research. In cooperation with the business representatives they will finally decide on the content of the training needs of a specific vocation. Also, they will pass the necessary laws for the overall regulation of the dual vocational training.

As the *states* are responsible for the Vocational Schools, they will design the *curricula* for the specific vocational trainings, i.e. they implement the training plans on the side of the schools. The states also supervise the Chambers as far as they are involved in the dual vocational training.

On the practical level of the realisation of the dual vocational training, the *Chambers* play a crucial role. On the one hand, they are administrative organs of the business. On the other hand, because of their local representation, they consult the firms who intend to participate in the training; they supervise the firms and the qualifications of their trainers; they have to agree on the contracts between firm and trainee and organise and conduct the intermediate and the final exams through a committee and issue certificates.

The *dual* system obviously also shows on the organisational level; it is a partnership between government and private sector. About 447.746 or 21.3% of the enterprises participated in the dual vocational training in 2014; the private sector is contributing about 82% of the costs. In 2012, the private sector offered about 585,000 places for the dual training. In 2004, a “national agreement for training”<sup>115</sup> between the government and the private sector was reached to manage a balance between supply and demand for places of trainings because there is always a discrepancy of supply and demand, which can create political and social disturbances.

Besides the traditional dual vocational training and education system that has been described here, there are other forms and schools for vocational training in Germany. Interestingly, also

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114 <http://www.bibb.de/en/>

115 <http://www.bmwi.de/DE/Themen/Ausbildung-und-Beruf/ausbildungspakt.html>  
[14.7.2014]

at the college and university level, a study in combination with a practical working time frame in an enterprise is becoming increasingly popular.

#### 6. *Dual vocational training in Kenya?*

As mentioned at the beginning, a copy-and-paste approach would not make sense in Kenya for various reasons.<sup>116</sup> But as the Kenyan labour market needs qualified employees (e.g. plumbing often is a horror), to think about the *principle* of the dual vocational training could be helpful. The question is the readiness of the business community to *invest* in a training programme that would benefit most and foremost the economy *in general*, not necessarily the specific firm that conducts the training. Who would be able to do the practical training in the enterprises? Would the state be able and willing to provide the necessary vocational schools? Could the business community take over this task? Who would design the curricula? Who would provide the funds? Would youths be willing and able to invest in a period of training and learning where not much can be earned? Would practical, hands-on work be appreciated as part of the learning process in addition to pure theoretical learning? Can the polytechnics and technical colleges provide the same quality education and training that can be achieved by the dual system? A small and focussed trial with the dual way may show a way forward under the Kenyan circumstances. The launching of a centre for training jua kali artisans may be an encouraging beginning.

In general, it needs an encouragement of the business community to invest in practical, systematic training, i.e. to take on apprentices; it needs the theoretical, administrative, and financial support by the government; the society as a whole has to change the view on practical “hands-on” activities as menial work; schools like the technical institutes should incorporate the principle of dual learning and training – otherwise they cannot produce internationally competitive graduates.

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<sup>116</sup> Dieter Euler: Germany’s dual vocational training system... (see note no. 2), part I und III.

## V. Programmes

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Mutinta Munyati  
**Youth Action for an Urban Future**

### *Abstract*

*Globally, 85% of the world's young people live in developing countries and an ever-increasing number of them are growing up in cities. It is estimated that by 2030, as many as 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18. All over the world, young people are finding it increasingly difficult to break into the labour market. Yet youth is a resource that should be tapped to address a number of the global problems such as unemployment and underemployment. Governments alone cannot manage to address all the issues of youth but need partnership with other actors. This paper discusses, from the author's perspective, interventions and case studies from other African countries aimed at addressing issues of youth employment and youth participation in sustainable development.*

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### *Introduction*

The demographic dynamic - generally known as the “urban youth bulge” - makes it imperative to address the different dimensions of the youth phenomenon within the broad notion of economic growth. The youth are society's most important and dynamic human resource. There are more people under the age of 25 today than ever, totalling nearly 3 billion or half of the total global population; 1.3 billion of that total are between the ages of 12 and 24. These youth live, in the most part, in cities and towns.

Globally, 85% of the world's young people live in developing countries and an ever-increasing number of them are growing up in cities. It is estimated that by 2030, as many as 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18. All over the world,



young people are finding it increasingly difficult to break into the labour market. The youth make up 25% of the global working age population, but account for just 43.7% of the unemployed.

This means that almost every other jobless person in the world is between the ages of 15 and 24. The exclusion from the economic, political and social life of their countries breeds disillusionment, hopelessness and upheaval. Research has found links between youth unemployment and social exclusion and suggests that this may lead to political and social instability and possibly even to violence.<sup>117</sup>

Action is required to achieve economic prosperity for, and the inclusion of the youth. Although evidence shows that governments and cities are making efforts to tackle youth poverty and their lack of engagement in governance, resources to undertake such interventions are limited. UN-Habitat recognises the potential of the youth as a major force for creating a better urban future.

### *Youth as a resource*

Youth is a resource that should be tapped to address a number of the global problems such as unemployment and under-employment. Working on youth issues for more than 20 years, I have learned that given the right skills, mentorship and attitudinal change, young people have the capacity to make a difference in their lives as well as those of people in their communities. Many countries and governments around the world are concerned about young people who are neither in school nor in employment nor in any form of training. When young people are not in school, in an educational institution or anywhere in the labour market, they cannot develop key skills for meaningful employment. During my encounters with the youth, I have always emphasised that education is an asset that no one can take away from them unless as individuals they decide not to utilise it to its fullest potential.

However, access to education is not always available to all. If the youth are to access this important asset, certain actions have to be undertaken. For instance, the playing field needs to be levelled and opportunities of education or employment

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117 UN-Habitat: State of the Urban Youth Report 2012/2013.

services provided. Findings in the 2010/2011 UN-Habitat State of the Urban Youth Report (SUYP) showed that predetermined circumstances impact on youth inequality opportunity. These are issues that a young person has no control over but which exert life-determining effects on the trajectory of their opportunity outcome as adults. Predetermined circumstances include gender, parents' education, father's occupation as well as the location where the individual grew up. For instance, the outcome of a child brought up in an informal settlement or slum as they are commonly known is likely to be different from a child growing up in an up-market suburb because of access to different opportunities, facilities and amenities.

The said report also found that equality of opportunity requires a levelling of the playing field so that circumstances that are beyond the control of an individual do not adversely influence their life chances. Universal Primary Education (UPE) programmes being implemented in Africa aim to achieve this. For example, one of the main objectives of the UPE programme in Uganda is "to make education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities..." At the same time, this education has to be quality education.

Reports such as the one developed by UN-Habitat have led to an increase in the understanding of urban youth in the developing world. They have become model reports in developing new and unique data and identifying the issues of youth at the national and international level particularly from the youth perspective. They have also targeted policy makers at both national and local level through outlining clear recommendations. For example, in the 2012/2013 youth report there was a specific recommendation for municipalities: "Municipalities can and should provide support to business, including new firms, in the form of suitable land, financial assistance as well as public works programmes and training schemes for the vulnerable age group that is youth. In low- and middle-income countries, municipal authorities should secure financial and technical support from central governments for financing infrastructure and services required to gain economic

dynamism that creates employment for young people...”<sup>118</sup> These are specific recommendations for local authorities intended to deliver services to its people.

### *Youth participation in sustainable development*

Participation is regarded as a central contribution to youth development and poverty reduction processes. It is also believed that processes of participation will enhance people’s capabilities and skills, improve their position to bargain for access to resources and better life chances. However, participation alone may not suffice. Other actions are required to generate the desired transformation. Some governments have, through devolution, attempted to facilitate more effective participation of citizens in decision making processes on matters affecting them. In Kenya, for example, the new Constitution promulgated in 2010 created immense opportunities for Kenyan youth to engage in transforming their respective counties and the nation at large.

UN-Habitat, as an agency, has been promoting youth participation in issues related to sustainable development. One such mechanism is through the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) launched at the World Urban Forum IV held in Nanjing, China, in 2008. The mandate of the YAB includes: providing strategic advice to UN-Habitat on urban youth-led development focussing on urbanisation, unemployment, human settlement and advance measures on how to address them. It also aims to encourage and support effective and meaningful participation of young people in youth-led development initiatives and programmes, in order to strengthen UN-Habitat’s response to policy and programme development for the urban youth. Twelve youth representatives, nominated through a youth driven process, ensure that youth issues are mainstreamed in UN-Habitat programmes. This has been replicated at the local government level where representatives are elected in youth councils to promote the participation of youth in decision making. Other platforms through which UN-Habitat has been able to engage youth has been through demonstrative projects such as the *One-Stop Centre* model. Implemented by UN-Habitat

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118 Ibid.

since 2003, the model utilises an approach that is anchored in what are called the Kampala principles on youth-led development, formulated during a regional meeting of youth groups in February, 2007. These principles include:

- Youth must define their own development goals and objectives;
- Give youth a social and physical space to participate in development;
- Youth must be consulted;
- Promote adult and peer-to-peer mentorship;
- Youth promoted as being role models in helping other youth to engage in development;
- Youth must be integrated into all local and national development programmes and frameworks.<sup>119</sup>

The said model has been able to show innovative strategies targeted at urban youth. These programmes recognise that youth engagement and empowerment through training and capacity development is pertinent to addressing the challenges faced by young people such as employability, governance and lack of life skills. Over the past ten years, UN-Habitat has, together with its partners, established One-Stop Centres in five African cities with plans to expand to Asia and Latin America. The first such centre was implemented in Nairobi in 2003. In Kenya, the youth age bracket is 18-35; and 72% of the unemployed population is below 30 years old. The youth unemployment rate, currently standing at 66% of the population, is increasing rapidly thus contributing to under-employment, increasing the pool of the working poor and gender inequality in labour force absorption. According to the national policy Kenya Vision 2030, approximately 32 Youth Empowerment Centres were expected to be built annually.<sup>120</sup>

The UN-Habitat-supported One-Stop Centre is unique in the programmes it delivers, responding to the needs of the local youth population. Its core programmes are job skills and entrepreneurship training, sports and recreation, health services such as HIV/AIDS testing and counselling, and support for youth-led governance and planning. They are built on partnerships between UN-HABITAT

119 UN-Habitat One Stop Centre Model: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org).

120 <http://www.vision2030.go.ke/>

and the local government, civil society, youth and the private sector to develop programmes that respond to the needs of the youth through provision of a neutral space for young people, especially from marginalised communities, where they can interact with one another and with youth-serving agencies. The space has to be managed in a manner that would enable young people to constructively explore their own potential, where mentorship and information, training and counselling could be easily accessed and where young people can express themselves, listen and be heard as well as engage in policy development in a constructive manner. The space has to provide a safe, supportive and secure environment, which somehow caters for the youth of all backgrounds and abilities, regardless of gender, to enable them learn and grow. The aim is to develop as individuals and create communities where people can achieve their potential and fulfil their aspirations.

*Key characteristics of One-Stop Youth Centres*

- Youth-friendly space: Young people give their input into the look and feel of the space itself;
- Involvement of youth-led development partners in all phases of the implementation process;
- A sense of ownership and responsibility amongst youth and stakeholders in the One-Stop Centre;
- Youth volunteers who assist in the operation of the centre;
- Trained information workers and youth workers as centre staff and management;
- Programming in areas relevant to urban youth including thematic areas such as health, governance, ICT, entrepreneurship and livelihoods and environmental sustainability.

This model works as demonstrated in the model of Kimisagara, the One-Stop Centre in Kigali, Rwanda. The centre sees about 1,000 young people pass through its doors on a daily basis, trying

to access various services and skills. In the words of one of the parents:

“My child has earned 3 medals in Karate due to training and sponsorship from the centre. He has increased his confidence, and his academic performance has improved. Our family is respected by neighbours as a result of these achievements”.<sup>121</sup>

Activities at the One-Stop Centres have helped to cultivate a strong sense of social responsibility among young people coming to the centres as well as providing space for cohesive youth action. The youth are able to form various associations/companies that respond to their own and their communities’ needs.

Kajjansi Youth in Development Initiative (KYDI) in Kampala is one such initiative that has demonstrated youth resilience. It is a youth-led group started by Kenneth Kika, a youth trained in entrepreneurship at the One-Stop Centre in Kampala. Before the training, Kenneth was jobless and had dropped out of college due to financial challenges. Given his commitment to empowering young people, he was selected to participate in the UN-Habitat training in the entrepreneurship programme that was held in Nairobi in 2009. Kenneth says that the training is the best thing that ever happened to him because it helped him identify the opportunities that existed in his home town of Kajjansi in Uganda. Kenneth used savings of the training allowances to pay his fees and decided to start up KYDI to support other young people. He identified unemployment problems faced by many young people and the poor such as the challenge of solid waste management and disposal in and around Kajjansi. Addressing this, in 2009 he established a garbage management unit in KYDI that provides garbage collection as well as gardening services in Kajjansi, eight kilometres from Kampala city. Kenneth reported that the initiative that started with only three clients has expanded to over 80 registered clients and currently employs eight young men and women. Additionally, the group has been recommended to undertake a contract with an upcoming private sector recycling plant.<sup>122</sup>

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121 Giving Youth Their Space, A case study of the Kimisagara One Stop Youth Employment and Productive Centre; [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org).

122 UN-Habitat One-Stop Centre Model; [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org).

### *Achievements*

- The group that started with only three clients in 2009 in Kajjansi has today expanded to include a wide range of clients;
- Youth are being employed, hence improving their livelihoods and those of their families, with a perceived reduction in idleness and, therefore, less crime;
- A good practice on solid waste management has been established within the communities with possible impact on issues such as climate change.

Kenneth's major challenge is that the project uses hired trucks, which affects the project's profits. However, as the project expands, he plans to purchase a truck:

"I am happy that the initiative that started as a dream has grown and I am able to earn a living from it, impacting the livelihoods of other young people. My community gives me the confidence to carry on"  
(Kenneth Kika).

These concrete initiatives show that youth are making a difference in their communities. Though they are vital to the prosperity of cities in the developing world, they still face many barriers - most notably, underemployment and unemployment, and a lack of access to basic services such as healthcare and education - which prevents them from reaching their potential. UN-Habitat has worked with cities globally to overcome these barriers through the development of programmes that achieve key objectives of improving youths' livelihoods by increasing their employability, decreasing their vulnerabilities and integrating them fully into the economic and social life of the city. Cities are engines of growth and propel the world towards prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and youth are the engineers.

### *Youth empowerment for sustainable development*

One of the necessary enabling conditions for youth empowerment, apart from political will, peace and stability and access to

knowledge and skills, is *financial support*. In 2007, the UN-Habitat Governing Council adopted a resolution for the establishment of an opportunities fund for urban youth-led development. The idea was to pilot innovative projects on employment, governance, shelter and secure tenure, sharing best practices and assisting vocational training and credit mechanisms to promote entrepreneurship and employment for young people.

Among the first beneficiaries of the UN-Habitat Youth Fund is Association Jeunesse Sans Frontière (AJSFB) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Because of the initial support it received from UN-Habitat, it has been able to leverage additional funding and targeting more beneficiaries (1,250 households or about 12,500 people) under a project called “Collection and Recovery of Waste in District No. 2 of the City of Ouagadougou”. The vision of the organisation is to contribute to the overall improvement of the quality of life of the population of the District No. 2 of the city of Ouagadougou by 2016.

The English saying that “charity begins at home” is so true. In supporting youth groups and youth organisations in achieving their potential to contribute to national development, UN-Habitat has been able to engage with hard working and dedicated young people from informal settlements. Another such group is Altaawon, an organisation founded in 1992. This is a community-based organisation, non-political and non-profit making, with the aim of supporting the Korogocho community (an informal settlement in Nairobi) in general and specifically the vulnerable groups such as youth, women and children. Altaawon was originally founded as a study group through which members, who were in school-going-age, could support each other to pursue academic interests. However, having completed academic courses and moved on into other careers, the members realised the need to transform the organisation to look beyond education and include other areas of development to improve livelihoods in Korogocho.

In 2008, it became the first *model digital village* to be launched at the Korogocho slum, setting in motion an initiative to replicate the trend countrywide. The project, launched at the Altaawon community-based youth organisation at Korogocho slums, was part of a larger KES 210 million project to enable e-learning in



slum areas. Among the beneficiaries of this project was Linda Atieno.

*Linda Atieno*

Linda is a software designer, but has not always possessed this skill. Linda used to braid hair at her home, but had not considered this as a business initiative until she enrolled in Altaawon's business training programme. There, she learnt to treat her daily activities as business and was able to generate more income from hair dressing. "Information Communications Technology training is a prerequisite for business training and this developed my interest in computers. Eventually, I used my savings to further my computer studies. I pursued a diploma in software design and I am now qualified", says a jovial Linda.

Upon finishing her training, Linda was able to secure employment as a software designer in a private company. She also volunteers to train other youth in entrepreneurship and Information Communications Technology at the Altaawon centre. She is now a model and mentor to other young women.

"Altaawon developed my interest in computers and I feel obligated to give back to the community through acting as a role model and a mentor to the many young girls who look up to me for advice and to give guidance, that is why I am always in Altaawon centre over the weekend," states Linda.

Despite such achievements, young people, particularly those from slums and informal settlements, still have difficulties accessing jobs, essential resources and social services such as housing, education, health and skills training. They also require the best information and resources they can get when it comes to employment, health, crime prevention, governance, gender equality, rights and responsibilities in order to make meaningful contributions to their communities, cities and countries. This is why the proposed amendment of the procurement rules in Kenya to allow 30% of contracts to be given to the youth, women and persons with disability without competition from established firms is a very important statement. Similarly, this is reiterated

in the declaration of the Special Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) on “the fight against youth unemployment through infrastructure development and investment promotion” where heads of state and government committed themselves “to make youth employment creation one of the key conditions to the tenders related to government projects” on 24 July 2014 in Nairobi.<sup>123</sup> The challenge always is how to operationalize these excellent frameworks that are adopted by governments.

### *Conclusion*

Youth participation, capacity development and financial resources are all important elements for youth action for a better tomorrow. Other conditions required are the capacities to match skills produced by various learning institutions that the market demands as well as the soft skills targeted more towards service-oriented economies. With their typical dynamism and energy, young people can exercise a unique multiplier effect on global, national and local prosperity. The more they are allowed to benefit, the more they can give back to the overall good of the society.

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<sup>123</sup> <http://www.icglr.org/index.php/en/homepage/135-laast-news/474-icglr-summit-youth-unemployment-2014>

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### *Disclaimer*

Views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations, or its Member States.

David Mshila

## **Why Programmes Targeting Youth Employment are not Effective**

### *Abstract*

*This paper aims to contribute to public awareness of the serious problems facing the youth. It explores why the programmes targeting youth employment are not effective and shares ideas on approaches that can give the youth in Kenya a better perspective on their lives. This paper is based on the writer's past experiences and interactions with the youth in various areas of Kenya and argues that initiatives with creative potential, if supported by decision makers, can prevent possible political, economic and social disruptions and ultimately help to address the objectives of sustainable youth employment. In spite of negative indicators on Kenyan youth unemployment, it argues that Kenyan youth are creative and determined in developing their own business ideas based on various programmes and projects. Based on past experiences, current efforts by the government are examined and ways of improving youth employment uptake proposed.*

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### *Past experiences and interaction with the youth*

Development partners such as the German government's agency for international development GIZ, UN-Habitat, the World Bank, etc., in collaboration with the Government of Kenya, have long been active in promoting youth development through the policy, strategy and action plan development. This chapter seeks to contribute to increasing public awareness of the serious problems facing the youth, exploring the reasons why programmes targeting youth employment are not effective and recommending approaches intended to give the Kenyan youth a better outlook on their lives. It is based on past experiences and interaction with the youth in various parts of the country.

Internationally supported initiatives with creative potential, if supported by decision makers, can prevent political, economic and social disruptions and ultimately help to address the objectives of

sustainable youth employment. In spite of negative indicators on youth unemployment in Kenya, it argues that youth are creative and determined in developing their own business ideas based on various programmes and projects. The current effort by the government is examined and ways of improving youth employment are proposed.

## *2. Bringing the youth out of the periphery of the country's affairs and recognising their importance*

The population of Kenya aged 35 years and below constitutes slightly over 75% of the country's population, forming the largest source of human resource.<sup>124</sup> In Kenya, the law defines that youth is the population within the age bracket of 18 and 35 years.<sup>125</sup> Up to the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the youth were on the periphery of the country's affairs and their status was not accorded due recognition. They were excluded from designing, planning and implementing programmes and policies that affected them. They were also marginalized when good policies to address issues affecting their lives were non-existent. However, this improved significantly when the Ministry of Youth Affairs was created on 7 December 2005 in the Kibaki regime to specifically address youth concerns in Kenya. Success was achieved through concerted efforts by various actors, mainly GIZ, Habitat, Commonwealth Youth Organisation, Companionship of Works Association (COWA), German Foundation for World Population (DSW), Undugu Society, the World Bank, Department of Social Services and the Ministry of Labour etc.

This collaboration involved cooperating with youth and children workers using various approaches that were developed by these partners. It made a big contribution on the development of the Children Act, youth policies and building capacities for children and youth workers. The strategies used included "Sungura

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124 Kenya National Youth Policy, Sessional Paper no. 3 of July 2007, Ministry of Youth Affairs;

125 Kenya Government National Youth Council Act, no. 10 of 2009 Revised Edition, Published by the National Council for Law Reporting with the Authority of the Attorney-General.

Training”, which involved training and development of handbooks for youth and children workers. The ‘Sungura’ Youth Promotion Approach Handbooks provided tried and tested techniques on facilitating youth activities through animation, participatory approaches to organisation, management, entrepreneurship and innovative and creative thinking. The handbooks also provide suggested strategies for conflict resolution and management, as well as counselling techniques for remedial services.

The adopted peer-to-peer model used sought to enhance collaboration, resource sharing and team training. The approach was intended to also strengthen networking and synergy. This resulted in the creation and formation of the Youth and Children Workers Association. DSW also developed another model on peer-to-peer partnership, known as Youth-to-Youth (Y2Y) model. The Youth-to-Youth approach was used to reach out to youth and combined the adolescent sexual reproductive health issues with entrepreneurship and creating income opportunities for them, encouraging them to use all the resources available in their environment. It was founded on the premise that health alone was not sufficient. To maintain their health status, there was need to engage youth in productive activities, which could also create employment and income-earning opportunities. Using this approach, a number of youth-friendly centres were developed in various project areas in collaboration with partners such as local authorities.

In agriculture, the issues of the youth were addressed by identifying shortcomings in the policies and strategies used to marginalise the youth, which forced them to migrate to urban areas.<sup>126</sup> Opportunities for youth participation in agriculture were also explored and some innovative approaches were developed and promoted with limited success. The experience shows that many farmers, especially in cash crops were, on average, over 50 years of age and dominated by men. The youth and women were marginalised because, in most cases, the land was held by men. Youth and women were seen as labourers or workers to provide the necessary labour input required for production. But the decision and management remained in the hands of men.

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126 The Promotion of Private Sector Development in Agriculture (PSDA),

The Youth Employment Summit (YES) Kenya 2006, held in Nairobi, was a culmination of this collaboration between development partners, civil society, the private sector and the government. Organised for leaders and members of the 70 YES country networks and other diverse stakeholders from all over the world, the summit was a forum to not only sensitise the world but also to address the issues of creating markets for goods and services for rural areas and unleashing widespread entrepreneurship efforts to eradicate poverty. Innovative policies, best practices and ideas were shared and used for initiating committed and collaborative action. The summit attracted about 2,000 people, of which 1,000 were youth and the others were policy-makers, private sector, civil society and development partners. This was not just an event, it was organised as a workshop-based learning event to build capacity to conceptualise programmes and policies, and also to build partnerships for programme implementation to combat youth unemployment. YES Kenya included ministerial meetings, plenary sessions, open forums and skills development workshops.

A very important key lesson learnt was that most micro-credit failures occurred because the practitioners did not know how to cope with crop failures or disappointments. In addition, young people needed to note that the funds provided under different programmes are not a donation, but loans, repayable with interest. The youth needed to be keen on the accuracy of the information given about the funds. There had to be clarity on the structure to be used to share the funds as there is a lot of information, which goes out to the public, especially through the media, information that is not always consistent.<sup>127</sup>

Since then, the government had been slow to address the issues affecting the youth, not only through enacting the National Youth Policy but also by allowing the youth to elect their own representatives from the grass-roots level to the national level through the National Youth Council. The new Constitution and devolution have also brought in new impetus in dealing with youth issues in the country.

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127 Report on Kenyan Delegates Impressions and Lessons from the YES Summit, compiled for the GTZ Prosyrr Project on 29th September 2006 by Philip Ng'ang'a.

There is need, therefore, to recognise what the government has done to implement projects and programmes aimed at creating employment and involving youth in development. However, even with these interventions, the response from the youth has not been very encouraging. This paper looks at the challenges still facing the youth, why youth are not responding to these initiatives, and proposes a way forward with how to deal with such challenges.

### *3. Challenges: Youth – a political elite tool to propagate divisive politics?*

Kenya is known for being endowed with many agricultural and natural resources, i.e. tea, coffee, horticulture, and minerals etc. The country is also an industrial and commercial leader in East Africa, and also an innovator in education and sports policy. Yet, even with all this potential, Kenyan youth have not played and are not playing their role effectively. It can be argued that, in most cases, young people have been used by political elites as tools to propagate divisive politics, which add no value to their lives and merely contribute to worsening the circumstances affecting the majority of them. According to the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services, many Kenyan youth today are joining terror groups and are being radicalised because of corruption, marginalisation, poverty and unemployment.<sup>128</sup>

The economic growth rate has not been sufficient to create enough employment opportunities to absorb the increasing labour force (estimated to be about 500,000 annually). Most of this labour force is the youth, of which only about 25% are absorbed, leaving 75% to bear the burden of unemployment. Furthermore, some of those absorbed in the labour market are employed but in jobs that do not match their qualifications and specialisation and those not absorbed involve themselves in the *jua kali* sector. On any major highway, the youth risking their lives to sell agriculture produce such as fruits, tomatoes, etc. in the middle of the road are visible. Others are involved in dangerous work in quarries; mining sand and other building materials in order to make a living.

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128 “Why Youth Join Terror Gangs”, Saturday Nation, 30th August 2014.



Another challenge facing the youth is that young people are expected to be in the forefront in demanding good governance and proper management of national resources given that they suffer most of the consequences of bad governance and inappropriate allocation of resources. Some of the difficulties young people go through in an environment of impropriety and bad governance include the indecency of living in a society controlled by nepotism, tribalism, corruption, poor education, and general lack of the very basics of a more acceptable life. The Cabinet Secretary for Planning and Devolution, Anne Waiguru, has captured these sentiments in many of her speeches:

“It is imperative that we address the question of work ethics and attitudes among the youths. Unless work and its fruits are intertwined with honour and other forms of social credit, work and job opportunities alone will not translate into the social and economic development we envisage. We must forge ways of encouraging our youth to view work as an honourable undertaking that bequeaths them favourable status in society. This means that the sensibilities we impart on our youths must address issues of social decorum and decency alongside commitment to the greater good for the society as a whole”.

Khadija Juma, a sociologist, in her contribution to the “Talking” in the Saturday Nation of 29 August 2014, refuses to believe that Kenyans are divided along ethnic lines. She believes that ethnicity is a creation of the political elite to manipulate Kenyans for their selfish ends. Youth also have very high expectations and are very selective on the types of jobs they would like to have. Making reference to a research carried out by Deloitte in 2013, Muthoki Mumo noted that young employees are no longer interested in lifetime jobs. The youth are seeking jobs to fit their lifestyles, making it difficult for employers to retain skilled workers for those lucky enough to get employment; according to the survey, most companies are unable to cope, with 52 per cent admitting that they were not ready to deal with the challenge.<sup>129</sup>

Apart from unemployment, health is another big challenge facing the youth. They face a myriad of health-related problems,

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129 In: Sunday Nation, 3rd August 2014.

including widespread malaria, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), drug and substance abuse as well as poor access to health services. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is more prevalent among the youth under 30 years of age. Available statistics show that the youth make up 33% of Kenyans infected with AIDS. In addition, female genital mutilation and teenage pregnancies are unique to the female youth. Some of the consequences of these are dropping out of school and risks to life through unsafe abortions. Even the monthly periods for female students who make it to school create additional problems due to lack of sanitary towels. This results in many of the female students, cumulatively, missing out school for at least three months in one year, or one month per term.

As a result of unemployment, the youth are susceptible to drug and substance abuse. In Kenya, 9 out of 10 youths have access to, and abuse, addictive substances: *alcohol, tobacco, bhang, miraa* and *inhalants*. The school-going youths are the main users and abusers. The young people who abuse drugs are more likely to engage in risky behaviour and the girls who take alcohol are 2-3 times more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour than boys. Substance abuse also contributes to school drop-outs, street children and youth, and child labour. Due to idleness, especially after formal education, the youth become restless and try anything they can find. Some end up in crime or with deviant behaviour. The unemployment rate among the youth also leads to homelessness, lawlessness, depression and suicides, and the 70% of youth who are employed are underpaid, hence, unable to meet their day-to-day needs.

#### *4. New opportunities empowering the youth for employment creation*

The government directed that 30% of government procurement opportunities – estimated at about KES 200 billion – be reserved for the following target groups: The youth, women and people with disability (PWD) under the Access to Government Procurement Opportunity (AGPO) programme. With this programme, it is no longer true that the youth remain on the periphery of the country's affairs and that their status is not accorded due recognition.

President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy William Ruto constantly mention the youth in an effort to get them in the forefront of issues being addressed by the current government. President Kenyatta reiterated his concerns for the youth in an article in *The Star* newspaper, as he has done in many forums, by stating that “expanding job openings for youth is my number one onus,”<sup>130</sup> a continuation of what was started by President Kibaki’s government in 2005 when the Ministry of Youth Affairs was created.

However, despite these efforts, the youth have not responded well and the numbers taking advantage of these opportunities are worryingly low. During a meeting with youth representatives in Nairobi in June 2014, Ms Anne Waiguru, the Cabinet Secretary for Planning and Devolution, noted that only KES 2 billion out of KES 50 billion set aside for the youth was disbursed. This is about 4% of the funds available for the target group, which consists of the disadvantaged (the youth, women, and persons with disability), small enterprises, micro enterprises, local contractors and citizen contractors in joint-venture or sub-contracting arrangements with foreign suppliers. The same issue was also emphasised when she addressed the international conference on the Great Lakes Region Special Youth Summit in Nairobi, where Waiguru specifically said the uptake of the KES 200 billion government procurement services set aside for the youth is still low but noted that it is set to improve this financial year.

Though the government has done a lot and allocated resources for youth employment creation, efforts carried out so far only resulted in disbursing KES 2 billion. This means that more still needs to be done based on the experiences on the ground for all to increase the uptake of the funds made available and to ensure the presidential directive to “increase youth, women and persons with disability participation in public and private procurement”.

In addition to the AGPO programme, there are over a dozen other youth programmes supported by the government and development partners aimed at building capacities and creating employment for the youth. These include the *Uwezo Fund*, with a budget of KES 6 billion, *Women Enterprise Fund* with a loan portfolio in excess of KES 3.6 billion, *Youth Enterprise Fund* with

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130 *The Star*, 28th July 2014

KES 5.9 billion, 157 *Youth empowerment Centres* and over 700 *Youth Polytechnics* across the country. Other programmes include *Yes Youth Can*, a USAID programme with a total budget of US\$ 55 million for the period 2011-2015, *One Stop Youth Centres* that provide a meeting place for young people to come together to access information and resources critical to youth-led development programmes and projects such as entrepreneurship, health and social issues, environment, ICT, capacity building and governance and the newly-launched *Huduma Centres*, which enable people to access various public services and information from integrated service platforms aimed at promoting efficiency in public service delivery.

The services provided by Huduma Centres include the issuance of duplicate identity cards, seasonal parking tickets for Nairobi County, NHIF and NSSF claims. The remaining are *the Youth Development Partnership Fund*, which is a small grant of between KES 176,000 to 616,000 for youth development projects for and by young people aged 12-24 years and the *National Youth Service*, which now will require all high school graduates to sign up for the NYS. The programme seeks to give young people vocational training, instil patriotism and empower them to help safeguard the country. There are many other programmes run by NGOs, religious organisations and civil society that also provide the same services. For the *youth with disabilities*, there are a number of institutions that are involved in training. These institutions should be used in assisting the PWD to access AGPO at the county level.

##### *5. Areas that require to be addressed*

Lack of coordination of programmes targeting the youth, women and PWD is one of the main problems making these programmes not to be effective and efficient in addressing issues facing the youth, especially when it comes to income generation and employment creation. These programmes are being implemented as individual programmes without any coordination even though they all have the same target: *the youth*. Some of these programmes have been in existence for a very long time while some are in their initial stages so there is a need to build synergies amongst the various programmes and ensure that critical issues facing the youth, such

as accessing funds and capacity building are addressed in harmony and not in competition.

The largest of these programmes is AGPO, which can provide over KES 200 billion to the youth. However, the programme has been able to disburse only KES 2 billion of the available funds. And most of the youth who have registered and are accessing the funds come from Nairobi and its environs. Key challenges that need to be addressed for AGPO are as follows:

### *5.1. Registration of businesses for the target group*

The government has not succeeded in removing the bottlenecks hindering young people, women and persons with disabilities from accessing government procurement opportunities as directed by the president. Procurement rules and regulations still do not favour the youth, especially those from outside the Nairobi region. For example, registration/incorporation of businesses can only be undertaken in Nairobi as the registration is centralised at the Registrar General's office. The cost involved is also very high for unemployed youth. The registration using assistance from an advocate will cost between KES 15,000 and 30,000. If one does it on their own, it will cost about KES 5,000. It should be noted that these costs do not include the cost of travelling to Nairobi and accommodation that would be required. Obtaining a certificate of business registration can take up to 30 days.

From the foregoing, there is a need to revisit the concept and to address key issues that were assumed to exist. Namely, it was assumed that many businesses have already been formed by the target groups but in reality, especially in the counties far from Nairobi, this is not the case. However, *business registration* is a pre-requisite for registration for the target groups that are interested in participating in the AGPO programme. There is a bottleneck that needs to be taken care of if the programme is to achieve its target, i.e. registering at least 100,000 youths every year from all the 47 counties.

The following are some proposals that need to be considered in order to *simplify the registration of businesses* for the youth, women and people with disability:

- (1) Youth could be allowed to start businesses by *registering as self-help groups* similar to *Uwezo* and other funds with the plan of upgrading this to business registration within a given time frame. The minimum requirements should be based on the type of registration for the youth that is available at the county level and which does not require the youth to travel to Nairobi to meet the requirements. The following are easily available at the county level:
  - a) IDs
  - b) PIN/VAT Certificate.
  - c) Tax Compliance Certificate.
  - d) The IFMIS (Integrated Financial Management Information System) is also an important tool since it links planning and budgeting, procurement, accounting, electronic funds transfer, auditing, asset management and financial reporting. It also enhances financial controls for improved expenditure management, increases transparency and accountability and improves public service delivery for economic growth and development and will also ensure the provision of timely, accurate and quality financial information for the national and county governments.
  - e) Registration for self-help groups or any registration that is recognised by the government carried out by the national government or county governments. If youth are to be registered for the purpose of AGPO, then they should be guided by the same rules and regulations that will be developed by AGPO.
- (2) Registration of businesses should be *devolved to the counties*. This might not be possible at this time but it should be a long-term objective. Ways and means should be found to assist the county government offices in this regard. The following are some of the options that could be considered for this scenario:
  - a) The government could consider *waiving the cost of registration* for the target group, but a process should be developed to register youth at the county level without them coming to Nairobi to complete the registration. This function could then be easily done at the Huduma Centres. The idea of introducing *Huduma Centres* is a noble one, but

ways should be found to integrate the existing structures in the counties to support AGPO. Youth Polytechnics, One-Stop Centres, and youth empowerment centres are some of the structures active on the ground that could be used to extend some of the services being promoted by Huduma Centres on the county level. Furthermore, Youth Polytechnics, institutions for People with Disability (PWD), universities, NYS and other such institutions could partner with AGPO for the purpose of accessing tenders as part of the project in their respective institutions.

- b) *Using other funds in partnership* to meet the cost of business registration for youths as part of creating collaboration and synergy in youth promotion and employment creation. All organisations targeting youth, women and people with disabilities fall under this category. Some of these programmes such as Yes We Can are assisting the youth to obtain identification cards. This service could also be extended to registration of youth businesses. In this case, CDF funds could even be made available to register youth at the constituency level. This has already been done in some localities and it could be an incentive for the local MPs to promote using CDF funds towards youth development programmes.
- (3) The county governments should also register all youth in their respective areas and avail of funds to support the various target group activities of these entities to carry out business in the county.
- (4) Review the registration requirement of all the programmes targeting the youth, women and People with Disability with the aim of making them compliant with the revised AGPO registration. This will open the way for the youth in all these programmes to access the AGPO funds as part of their project and increase the uptake for the AGPO programme thus creating equality and equity since these programmes cover all the 47 counties.
- (5) The AGPO certification should also be redesigned to cater for different categories of target groups. This could be, for example, *Class 1* for those who are registered by the Registrar of

Companies and also with their respective professional bodies; *Class 2* for those only registered by the Registrar of Companies and *Class 3* for those registered under self-help groups, welfare groups or any other registration recognised by the government.

### *5.2. Tender awarding*

In this regard, integrity issues need to be addressed and conflict of interest of public officers at the county and national governments should be looked into. Tender awarding processes need to be fine-tuned to ensure that tenders are not given to friends and relatives of those who are responsible. A process that ensures transparency, accountability and good governance should be designed to deal with integrity issues in accordance with Chapter 6 of the Constitution of Kenya. Restricting a maximum number of tenders awarded to one company, ensuring that as many companies as possible are awarded the tenders are some of the measures that could be instituted. Based on the experience with the programme to date, certain types of tenders should be reserved for the marginalised groups especially the youth and people with disability.

### *5.3. Financing of LPOs*

When one finally manages to get a tender above KES 1 million, especially for companies owned by the youth, financing the LPO becomes a problem because the banks that are willing to assist require security worth over KES 1 million, which many youths do not have. This can be dealt with in the following ways:

- (1) *Create a risk guarantee fund* to encourage banks to provide funds to the successful youth. The use of risk guarantees would address the issue of lack of certainty/security.
- (2) *Build confidence in the suppliers of goods* required by youth who have secured tenders by ensuring prompt payment. Many businesses are not willing to extend credit because of past experiences. Payments are known to take a very long time and sometimes there is no guarantee when and whether the payments will be made. In this regard, the national and county governments need to minimise the length of time it takes to make payments for the LPOs they have awarded. Youth, being small-scale business people, need to be paid as per



the agreement without any delay. This will address issues of integrity and build trust among this age segment.

#### *5.4. Publicity*

Publicity is an area where a lot needs to be done to sensitise people on what the AGPO programme has achieved, how to access it and how it can work to targeting the challenges associated with youth unemployment. More needs to be done so that youths, women and people with disabilities who have benefited from the programme can exhibit their success in pictorials or the products, where possible, from different counties and different thematic areas.

There should also be a booklet to capture the best practices so far in each category. Exhibitions should be held in each county with the best exhibitors sponsored to exhibit at the national level. Different categories should be developed to capture different enterprises such as IT, construction, etc. This is one of the areas where the AGPO programme could partner with development partners, private companies and other youth programmes that have funds for publicity.

#### *5.5. Lack of coordination of programmes targeting the youth*

AGPO is one of the flagship projects for Vision 2030 and has the largest funds that can be accessed by the target group. AGPO, with its secretariat, should be considered as a programme to provide coordination. Developing win-win partnerships with all programmes targeting the youth will create a coordination mechanism and reduce the competition between programmes, thereby creating a synergy for the benefit of the target group. The end result would be an increase of the uptake for registration and access to the funds.

### *6. Conclusion*

In order to increase the uptake for the proportion set aside for the target group, it is important the various agencies work together to create synergy between all programmes targeting the disadvantaged groups, small enterprises, micro enterprises,

local contractors and citizen contractors in joint-venture or sub-contracting arrangements with foreign suppliers. A win-win situation needs to be created that would bring all partners on board. The youth intervention should be seen as a value chain starting with AGPO as the main programme and other programmes in the chain with reaching the youth as the target of the chain. Value chain development is a business-oriented approach that aims at assisting actors along the process (programmes, registration, those involved in tendering, up to the final target group) to capture collaborations and required inputs at all stages necessary to reach the target group. The better all partners in a value chain cooperate at every stage, the more youth will be reached effectively and efficiently. The end result would be improving the uptake in terms of registration of the target group and utilisation of the allocated funds for employment creation. This could also be achieved by building the following competencies, which are important in promoting good governance and poverty reduction:

- (1) *Technical competency*: Training of competent youths in all fields to manage their programmes;
- (2) *Moral competency*: For promoting good governance, transparency and accountability in management of resources. One can achieve technical competency but without moral competency, they cannot succeed in providing services to the youths and youths will not succeed in their business ventures;
- (3) *Social competency*: For sustainability of AGPO, the target group must be involved in planning and implementation of projects and programmes based on their priorities. Therefore, encouraging stakeholders' participation in AGPO, including planning and delivery of services, is important. This is because it is through participation that AGPO can succeed in employment creation.
- (4) *Cultural competencies*: Kenya is a country of diverse cultures with 42 tribes. Some of these tribes have less than 50,000 people, while some have over one million people. If discrimination against people based on tribe is tolerated, youth are not being supported to achieve their goals. There must be equality and equity in the provision of services.

- (5) *Spiritual competency*: This involves recognising the existence of God and that He is supreme without which all that we do is meaningless. Kenyans have focused more on acquisition of property and creating wealth at the expense of contributing towards building a just society based on loving our neighbours as we love ourselves. This should not be the case.

Raphael Obonyo

## **Policy Interventions to Tackle Youth Unemployment**

### *Abstract*

*While the youth bulge phenomenon in Kenya can be considered a dividend, it has also brought a myriad of problems. Currently, youth constitute 70% of jobless people in the country. The Government of Kenya has initiated a number of policies and programmes to address youth unemployment. However, going by the dismal performance of the interventions, it is apparent that Kenya has not found the right formulae to meaningfully engage its largest population – the youth. This paper discusses interventions, both policy and programmes, required to reduce youth unemployment in Kenya. In particular, it reviews some of the government’s youth empowerment programmes, highlighting the main gaps. The paper emphasises the need for a national youth employment plan that is well thought-out and coordinated. Also, the paper shows the need for robust policies and strategies required to address Kenya’s youth unemployment challenge.*

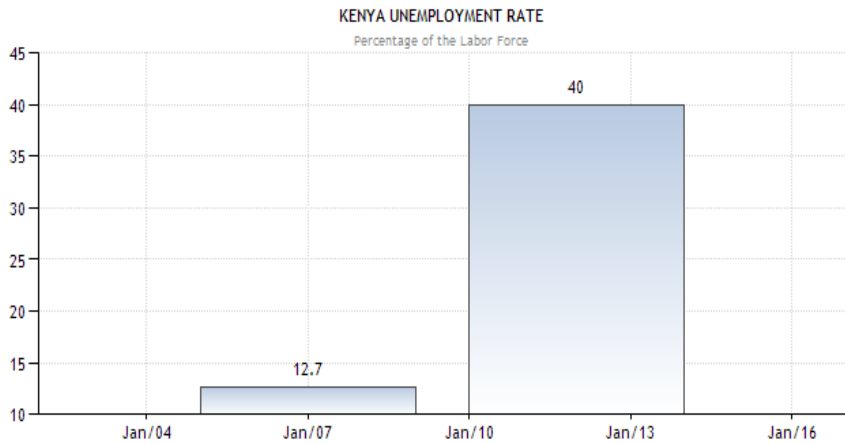
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### *1. Youth unemployment in Kenya – some key facts*

Kenya is staring at a ticking time bomb – youth unemployment – with young people constituting 70% of its total jobless population. Kenya’s unemployment rate is estimated to be 40% according to the Kenya Bureau of Statistics of 2015.

Today, Kenya has a huge youthful population. According to the 2009 Kenya population and housing census, 78% of the country’s total population of 38,610,097 people was composed of people below the age of 34 years.

Young people between the ages of 15 to 34 years constitute about 70% of the working-age population that is estimated to stand at about 19.8 million people. The group aged 15-34 years, however, is the largest of the unemployed in the working-age population.



SOURCE: WWW.TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | KENYA NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTI

## *2. Youth unemployment – a ticking time bomb*

If the growing youth unemployment in Kenya is not addressed urgently, there is a danger that it would adversely affect economic growth, social cohesion and economic stability. Tackling youth unemployment is not only good policy, it is also good politics. As such, the Government of Kenya must step in urgently to immediately put in place a comprehensive policy and plan for tackling youth unemployment.

The violent crime and insecurity the country has been experiencing in the recent past is persuasive enough to look into the youth and their unemployment challenges in a different prism. Attacks and insecurity are signs that Kenya has not found the right formulae to prevent crime and, most importantly, to meaningfully engage its largest population – the youth. In a country like Kenya, with its violent history and where youth between 18-34 years constitute about 35% of the population, not dealing with ways of accommodating them in the economy could have serious consequences on security and stability.

In 2014, unfortunate cases of unprecedented attacks on military barracks by a small group of young men only armed with crude

weapons, without any clear indication of the intended objective, sent shock-waves throughout the country. The attacks raised a hard question whether Kenya was yet again experiencing acts of manipulation by a section of politicians intending to achieve personal interests. It also raised concerns of such acts escalating into large-scale violence in the coming years.

Youth unemployment has climbed to staggering levels in Kenya. As already mentioned, about 70% of all jobless people in Kenya are between the ages of 15 to 34 years. In addition, every year, about 800,000 young people are graduating and expect to find jobs. It is now common to find jobless university graduates in Kenya. Unemployment is a root cause of insecurity in the country. Unemployed and frustrated youths are vulnerable to manipulation by individuals and politicians seeking to gain personal interests at great human cost.

### *3. Government interventions to address youth unemployment*

There is broad support for the government's policy to respond to the youth's job crisis. The government has made efforts to confront youth unemployment in many different ways. But despite the government's efforts, a significant number of Kenyan youth remain unemployed, underemployed or underpaid, as they are vulnerable to poor and exploitative working conditions.

Crucially, a lot of work needs to be done for successful implementation of the government's youth empowerment programmes like the 30% preference for youth in all government tenders, Uwezo Fund, Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), National Youth Service, and Youth Volunteers Initiative among others.

### *4. An important way forward – policy interventions*

First, the government should consider establishing a Ministry of Youth Affairs that would dedicate all its time and resources to promote youth development across the country. An independent department or Ministry of Youth Affairs would make it easier for the youth to access services. The government's failure to set up a

full ministry focused on the youth has made it hard to effectively tackle a myriad of problems that affect this constituency. A youth directorate that lacks extension officers has not made matters any better.

Second, it is important that the government allocates sufficient funds for youth development at the national and county level. Government should view expenditure on youth programmes as an investment, as young people are the country's greatest asset. It is commendable that the Jubilee government has committed considerable resources to reduce unemployment, more than previous governments. However, the interventions have not been very effective, especially in areas that have in the past suffered marginalisation.

Most importantly, there is need for more investment in agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and construction and in labour-intensive projects that will create the much needed jobs for young people. In this case, Kenya must transform the agriculture sector and make it attractive to the youth.

Third, the government should realise that it is only the private sector that will create the scale of jobs that the youth need. A multi-sectorial partnership with the private sector, civil society, development agencies and others is thus important in dealing with youth unemployment. Attention to youth employment must shift away from government to the private sector, which must also take an active interest and role in addressing the challenge. There are concerns that the private sector is not doing enough to tackle youth unemployment, yet it is thought that the private sector would be the most effective channel for tackling joblessness in the country.

Finally, Kenya must remodel its education system to ensure that it prepares young people for modern jobs. No doubt, there is a significant mismatch between the skills of new labour market entrants and the requirements of the job market.

##### *5. Reviewing youth empowerment programmes*

In 2006, Kenya introduced the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) to stimulate job creation. The fund has financed a significant number of youth enterprises and supported young

people to be business leaders. But the requirements and the process of accessing the fund are complex and discourage many young people. These constraints, coupled with lack of training, makes it difficult for youths to access government funds allocated to address youth unemployment. For example, in the case of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, to obtain the loan, the youth are not given any genuine training on business start-ups and management. Furthermore, funds are channelled through banks that view many deserving youths as high risk borrowers.

In April 2013, less than a month after he was sworn in, President Uhuru Kenyatta launched the Uwezo Fund to address youth unemployment. This was a clear indication that the government identified the high unemployment rate among the youth as a serious problem that required urgent attention. Indeed, many young people in the country believe that if implemented properly, the Uwezo Fund could be an effective means of helping the youth respond to the unemployment problem.

Also, it is crucial for youth empowerment in the country that the government embarks on revamping the National Youth Service (NYS). Far-reaching reforms of the National Youth Service started in 2014 with the launch of a new Strategic Plan that has a five-point reform agenda. Its most ambitious agenda item contains an improved training programme. Reports show that the new look of NYS is improving the lives of many young people. The Ministry of Devolution and Planning has moved decisively to strengthen youth empowerment programmes especially the NYS to restore public confidence and to attract its target group – the youth. The National Youth Service has managed to expand its training programme to reach more youth. In particular, NYS has created more than 13,000 jobs, and yielded US\$ 300,000 in savings for youth who reside in Kibera, the largest urban slum in Kenya that was neglected for many years.

But the restructuring of NYS has not been without criticism. Reports from the intelligence service have warned the government about training youth through the National Youth Service without clear mechanisms of their absorption in the labour market - an issue not be treated casually. Security experts have warned that training the youth on paramilitary tactics without clear guidelines



on how those skills will be utilised is a high-risk affair. The country has suffered terrorism attacks and youth radicalization, twin evils strongly linked to elusive job opportunities. Past violent tribal clashes were blamed on unemployed and frustrated youth who are vulnerable to manipulation by individuals and politicians seeking to gain personal interests at great human cost. Unless the government has a clear agenda of why it is so enthusiastic to offer paramilitary training, there is a serious and urgent need to interrogate and change the focus to reflect the country's needs and existing economic realities.

The Ministry of Devolution and Planning, which has strongly defended the training programme, appears to lack a robust plan that would ensure success of NYS in its role to create jobs among the youth. It has put a lot of emphasis on the numbers, indicating that it will train one million young Kenyans by 2016 through the institution without showing how they will participate in the economy. Instead, the focus should be on quality. There are many economic activities taking place both at the national and county government levels that require specialised skills that can be provided through NYS.

Training should be remodelled to equip youth with technical and vocational skills to enhance their employability. Also, entrepreneurial skills should be taught through the institution, since, as it stands today, Kenyan youth are not business oriented. Without creating opportunities to offer innovative and specialised skills that are not already in the market, any other training will not achieve the ultimate goal of reducing joblessness and will be seen as populist.

There is also need for coordination of youth empowerment interventions. Although the government has already put affirmative measures to address youth unemployment, all these initiatives appear disjointed, significantly compromising the expected results. The government needs to link the training with its other programmes such as the 30% tender rule requiring the national and county governments to source from the youth. In some counties, especially those in remote areas, this ceiling has not been met owing to the low level of participation of the youth in business.

There is also need for linkages with financing programmes such as Uwezo Fund and the National Youth Development Fund. Creating such linkages will easily open opportunities and tap more resources from the profit-driven private sector.

### *6. Deepening partnerships*

Although the government has indicated strongly that the growing economy will provide NYS with jobs, it is important to link up with other key actors especially involving the private sector in the country's future labour needs. The private sector should be the government's core economic partner in employment creation especially for the youth.

But tackling youth unemployment cannot be left to the national government alone. Both national and county governments ought to work together and put in place laws and strategies to address the rising youth unemployment in the country. It is imperative for all the 47 county governments to put in place comprehensive youth policies and procedures to address on-going youth challenges of poverty, unemployment, conflict and exclusion from decision making. As the country endeavours to implement devolution, there is need to prioritise youth and youth issues. An audit report by a youth lobby group in Kenya, released in 2014, revealed that less than 15 of the 47 counties have made budgetary allocations to address youth unemployment. Most analysts have rightly argued that devolution is not going to alleviate youth unemployment unless leaders make deliberate steps to prioritise youth issues and set aside specific allocations to address challenges affecting young people.

### *7. Lessons from Ethiopia*

Kenya can learn from Ethiopia, a country that seems to be on the right course in tackling youth unemployment. With a population more than double of Kenya's (at 40 million), youth unemployment in Ethiopia is at 50%. Ethiopia has managed to significantly reduce youth unemployment through a comprehensive and well-coordinated job creation strategy. The Government of Ethiopia has a robust youth empowerment plan that ensures that young people

are employed in large-scale construction projects such as hydro power, railway lines, roads, housing, water supply and irrigation. The projects have already employed millions of young people. Also, young Ethiopians who want to become entrepreneurs are assisted to access micro finance and trained on business start-up and management skills.

### *Conclusion*

To effectively tackle youth unemployment, Kenya will need to develop a well thought-out policy by providing a solid foundation for formulating youth empowerment programmes and setting-up sustainable interventions.

## VI. The Informal Sector

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George Njoroge

### **Trapped in the Informal Economy – Is there any Hope for the Youth?**

#### *Abstract*

*In Kenya, urban poverty and informalisation of employment and economic activities have grown rapidly, presenting huge challenges for the government. The article describes the increasing engagement of youth in the informal economic realm in urban areas of Kenya. It details the conditions in some of the informal sector activities in which the youth have occupied including boda boda and matatu transport services, hawking, the jua kali sector, water, sanitation, waste collection and disposal services, recycling as well as the social enterprises in the slums. Key conclusions are drawn by emphasising the urgency to address the plight of the youth and opportunities available for formalising the informal sector.*

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#### *Introduction*

The huge influx of unemployed youth from the countryside to urban areas that has led to a rapid upsurge of urban populations is an issue of key concern to the Kenyan government. The exodus of youth from the rural areas has its social, cultural and political triggers and heightened by economic drivers. Urban centres have gained reputation as havens of opportunities and the emigrants are bent on tapping into what they have to offer, intent to pursue a better life. But majority end up in slums and low-income suburbs where they exacerbate the serious well-being problems that are a hallmark of urban life in Kenya, including: unemployment, poverty, ignorance, disease, inequality, tribal conflicts, hunger and crime. Add to this political ineptitude and the results are terrifying. Kenya is reputed to have one of the most unequal societies in the world;

close to half of the population still cannot afford a decent meal and school enrolment remains low, compared to other similar or worse economies in Africa despite the much touted 'free education'.

In Nairobi, two main images stand out in marked contrast to one another. The first is where the elite of the city live in well-planned garden cities in which salubrious suburbs, the preservation of open space, and the presence of wide, landscaped boulevards which dominate the city's physical layout. Then there is the "self-help city" of make-shift housing, which although occupies a paltry 10% of the total area, it hosts two thirds of the city's population which is expected to have risen slightly above 3.2 million people recorded during the (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics) 2009 national population census. Naturally, informal housing and small-scale businesses are attracted to the large number of open areas in the city's upper income areas. This leaves the dividing line between Nairobi the "garden city" and Nairobi the "self-help city" with no clear demarcation. These urban problems have been aggravated by corruption and kleptocracy. Just like bad viruses, these vices have kept adjusting their DNA to suit the prevailing political and economic environment.

### *The slum economy*

Majority of the youth in urban areas end up working in jobs of extremely low-productivity. A significant number works as casual labourers in factories and earning poor wages. In Nairobi the poor rise early in search of all manner of work often menial and in factories and construction sites. They hope to catch the eye of a sympathetic foreman for a chance to get the day's job. Some say they rise early to avoid seeing the heart breaking reality of living in penury that comes with daylight. They walk purposely in all directions early in the morning and then again late in the evening when it is time to retire.

The increasing concentration of people in the slums has enabled thriving micro and small enterprises. A significant population of the youth ekes out a living from the businesses that constitute the main arteries of slum access; dealing in various goods and services that are consumed locally. It is common place that slum populations

meet much of their consumption needs locally. On the side-walks young men and women sell a range of food stuffs. Something that has become a way of life: the shadow city's equivalent of the fast food industry. Others walk for miles a day and hawk merchandise, mainly counterfeits from the Asian countries. Such menial jobs, hawking merchandise and other petty business around urban centres have grown to be a dominant 'employment sector' for urban youth. Indeed informality is about stretching ingenuity to its elastic limit and this is supported by the fact that at any given time, thousands of others youth are ready at a moment of notice to take up the positions held by their peers. Yet there is another category of youth that is camouflaged in the informal economy - the kind you cannot see signs of; the kind that don't look primed for crime; the kind that will pounce on you.

Much of the country is gradually opening up through an improving network of roads that link rural areas with urban centres, generating economic activities, though many of them informally. The public transport sector is also expanding to accelerate the growing movement of goods and people across the country. Thousands of youth have found work as drivers and conductors in this sector, one of the largest informal sector in the country. Many others including matatu route organizers, managers for bus companies and motor vehicle mechanics also make a living in the transport sector. While being a prosperous industry, it is also among the most corrupt sectors of the economy. Traffic law enforcers collect hefty bribes every day in exchange for leniency towards traffic offences. The mobility of people and goods has also been enhanced by informal motor cycle and bicycle transport popularly known as *boda boda*. All over the country youth can be found waiting at strategic locations to ferry people and goods for short distances. Despite corruption, the growth in the informal transport has contributed significantly to efficiency in micro and small enterprises. It has also absorbed thousands of youth who would otherwise face unemployment and poverty.

Markets such as Korogocho, Gikomba, Kangemi and Muthurwa in Nairobi; Kongowea in Mombasa, Kibuye in Kisumu etc., specialise in fresh farm produce and new (imported from Asian countries) and second hand clothes (from Europe and America). As such

these markets have become a major economic hub for the youth, though many of them are rather disorganized and poorly managed. The jua kali workshops such as Burma in Nairobi specialise in producing goods such as iron ware and attract significant proportion of the youth population. However, the sector contends with the thriving cheap imports from Asian countries. Thousands of other youth have invaded the urban centres to hawk all manner of merchandise, positioning themselves in every convenient street. It is a cat and mouse business as urban authorities relentlessly fight this 'menace'. During operations to get rid of hawkers from the city streets, the perpetrators are harassed with ruthlessness by on the duty county askaris backed up by police. The clean-up is driven by the mentality that hawkers ought to find alternative work and that doing so is a viable option. The police have occasionally opened fire on hawkers leading to deaths. The urban security guards on the other hand, benefiting from the police support and back up sets upon the youths, often assaulting them and confiscating their wares. Establishing hawkers markets such as the Muthurwa market in Nairobi has not sufficiently eased street hawking as the number of youths ardent on making a quick buck from the increasingly fast paced economy in the streets rises by the day.

### *Recession in the informal sector*

Business volatility is a common feature of informal economies. At certain times of a month, likely related to when workers are paid salaries, businesses boom with high demand for goods and services. However, good times are followed by downturns within the same month and economic activity quickly slows down as many people are unable sustain themselves for more than a few days. For example, a motorcycle operator who provides transportation services in the slum can make enough income for sustenance if he makes twenty trips a day. However, during the slow periods of the month, demand for his services might be half these meaning he won't earn enough to put food on the table. In the same slum, there is a grocer facing similar problems of low sales, and he needs transportation services to get around the slum. Yet, both slum traders don't get enough business during the slow periods

and therefore have to go without certain goods and services at points in the month.

In an effort to address these cyclical recessions, residents of informal settlements are resulting to complementary currency. American economist Will Ruddick for instance came up with vouchers known as *bangla-pesa* to serve as a medium of exchange in the Bangladesh slum in the city of Mombasa. The *bangla-pesa* voucher - appropriately named as it is only accepted within the confines of this particular slum - is used by traders and service providers to conduct business. Unlike vouchers that are used for a particular good or service, *bangla-pesa* coupons are accepted for many transactions and therefore, represent a complementary currency that acts as a means of exchange in the slum and operate alongside the official currency. Ruddick is persuaded that the *bangla-pesa* programme can cushion residents against falling below the poverty line during slow economic periods. He argues that the programme can stimulate the local economy and assist its members in trading their excess capacity by providing a means to purchasing power even without formal currency.

But questions about the broader implications of using a complementary currency such as *bangla-pesa* remain unanswered. For example, could the use of such localized currency weaken linkages with other communities and the larger economy? What might be the impact on the economy if many other slums in country or city adopt their own complementary currencies? Is this a programme that should be restricted or regulated? Is it a case of “bad money” driving “good money” out? These are some of the questions that should be explored before complementary currency programmes face further growth in Kenya and other developing countries.

### *Civic engagement*

The growing strength of the civil society in the country has provided new avenues for the poor, particularly the youth to demand for services and accountability by political and government leaders and to exert influence on policy. A number of youth-led initiatives have been instrumental in generating political will and



accountability, uplifting the socio-economic well-being, leadership and governance capacity in low income communities. These civic engagements and social enterprises are generated by residents or sometimes by external agents and they have gained a great deal of local acceptance and support. The initiatives employ innovative approaches and leadership input and attract both the young and older community members by providing them with opportunities for involvement, participation and airing their views. Some of the most notable efforts for improvement in community well-being where the youth have prominently featured include accountability check on government administrators and elected leaders. They have also been instrumental in enhancing political awareness and participation; they aim to clarify the kind of change they want and, by that, convince the communities. Essentially, these social enterprises can provide opportunities for youth to live pro-actively, packing their lives with activities that bring the much needed but relevant social transformations as well as in other stewardships roles in their communities.

### *Urban services*

Urban basic services, such as social services, water, sanitation and solid waste management (SWM) have been historically considered the responsibility of local or national governments. But in the last twenty years, a re-alignment in the provision of these services has occurred between state, private sector, and community organisations. New forms of collective organisations have begun to emerge among poor households. Social and infrastructure development projects are being initiated through such self-help efforts often championed by the youth, and more often than not funded by external agencies. Crucial services such as community ablutions and water points are some of the successful projects the youth have initiated in slums; all efforts that promote community and neighbourhood development and well-being. There is, however, a great urgency to develop stronger mechanisms to foster completion and sustainability of these important projects.

In many slums and low income areas, the youth have formed groups to offer waste collection and disposal services. The impact

these initiatives have in promoting cleaner neighbourhoods largely depends on the quality of waste collection (or service effectiveness), notably the frequency and the reliability. Comparatively, lacking inappropriate equipment coupled with inefficiencies in waste collection, the informal sector of SWM is still deficient in the densely populated areas it serves. Waste disposal facilities are unavailable, exacerbated by lack of provision for transfer stations. Collection, transport, and disposal are thus often poorly managed and chaotic. For example, waste pickers board open waste trucks on their way to dump-sites and pick waste out of the top of the moving trucks, discarding and littering the valueless scraps along the way. Most of the waste collectors engage in reckless dumping in easily accessible areas; resulting in mosaics of rotting, smelly and unsightly heaps of garbage. Open burning of waste and control of dumping by cartels is also common. However, despite its shortcomings informal sector SWM makes a strong contribution in the cities' densely populated settlements.

#### *Waste recovery and recycling*

Scavenging for waste materials in garbage is also common in low-income areas. The degree of scavenging is more intensive at waste disposal sites such as the Nairobi's Dandora dump-site. Youth aged between eighteen to forty years form the majority of waste pickers in the dump-site. However, there are children as young as ten who have been initiated to search for recyclable materials at the dump-site. Waste picking is often undertaken as a survival strategy and by that, a way to collect and resell a diverse range of discarded materials including plastics, scrap metal, cartons, bones, bottles, glass and ceramics, textiles, paper and cardboard, leather, rubber, wood and construction wastes, items like batteries, and also hair weaves, used motor vehicle oil and organics. The waste pickers also use the dump-sites as sources for meals. Keeping in mind that grit from ash covers the feet of the waste collectors up to their ankles, and embers beneath the ashes can cause severe burns. Infectious waste and disposal of hazardous waste is common. Activities such as waste picking, sorting and certain pre-processing and recycling operations thus lead to occupational health and environmental

risks, despite their environmentally and socially beneficial aspects. And while a source of income for thousands, the indignity of human beings scavenging shoulder to shoulder with Marabou Stalk birds is disheartening to say the least.

Waste pickers and dealers illegally control the dump-sites that are owned and operated by the city authorities, forcing them (city authorities) and private companies to 'bribe' to access the dump-sites. Moreover, waste economy which is worth a fortune breeds skirmishes involving youth gangs fighting over the control of the 'waste wealth'. The violence may at times take an ugly and murderous twist spilling out and exacerbating an already compromised security situation in the surrounding residential areas.

The waste pickers sell their daily collections to middlemen who in turn sell the waste to industries whereby exploitation of the waste pickers by the middlemen is prevalent. Waste picking has become an organised activity consisting of networks of waste pickers and middlemen. Waste pickers, itinerant buyers, traders and small-scale recyclers carry out their activities in close cooperation and conflict. Waste processing factories located in Ruiru town, Baba Ndogo and in the Industrial area in Nairobi utilise the bulk of materials recovered from waste. Small-scale value addition and product development that consume a significant volume of waste as well, particularly plastic and scrap metal, are also done at Kariobangi Light Industries, an innovation located in the Eastlands that is utilised by the youth.

Small-scale *recycling* activities conducted at Kariobangi Light Industries are driven by locally developed technological innovations and the quest to develop products that can be used locally. Besides recycling products, there is a variety of other products that are produced through skills and technologies nurtured in this light industrial park. Consequently, it has created employment for a significant number of youths both directly and indirectly. Kariobangi Light Industries could be one of the most successful models for promoting youth technological innovations; and it could be the answer to unnecessary importation of products that can be produced locally. However, the hub's sustainability cannot be assured as the limited space has been invaded by

residential premises, schools, hospitals, financial institutions and a host of other micro-enterprises.

*The contrast with the formal economy*

At the cities' CBD and immediate surroundings areas, the buildings make a higher and brighter skyline. There is an increasing diorama of concrete and glass as the cities gradually become dotted by beautiful towers. In Nairobi, the Kenyatta International Conference Centre has been overshadowed by the forty storey Kenya Revenue Authority Towers a sign that the city is determined to become a twenty first century metropolis. These new elegant buildings give the city a new appeal. New business parks and shopping malls are opening up and flagship super markets have established a number of chains around the city. Apparels, electronics and many other outlets compare with stores in other international prosperous cities. Nairobi's modern-day defining factor is no longer race but wealth, though this depends heavily on where one lives.

The narrative on informality may not resonate well if not contrasted against these bliss concentrated in the city centre and elite city suburbs. Because behind this glitz, glamour and hype at the heart of the city, a different reality lurks in the low-income areas. The youth inhabiting the slums and low-income suburbs have been pushed out of opportunities in the formal economy and engage in ludicrous informal industries and it is this plentiful supply of all manner of cheap casual labour that sustains the city. It is this labour that actually supports the formal economy. Thus, creating two economies that exist in parallel. Many engagements by the youth in the informal sector amount to what is known in economic language as the 'disguised unemployment'. These emigrants to urban centres permeate the gaps and peripheral edges in the formal economy. Consequently, the town and the city have become a dumping ground for the surplus population from the countryside instead of the envisaged hub for growth and prosperity. And it is lack of concerted measures that has allowed too many people to resort to these informalities.

Analysts concur that a thriving informal sector is disguised as an acceptable system; rather than treated as an absurd trend

where informalisation of the economy is growing faster than the formal one. A collective urban culture cannot bloom in an urbanism maintained by socio-economic exclusion and exploitation. Thus life in the cities and other major towns offers different things to different people. The rich LIVE (Lavishly Imbibe from Vast Endowment) while the poor STAY (Survive Through Adversity for Years) in the city.

### *Conclusion*

Kenya citizenry generally and youth in particular, hope for social and economic improvement and the government should demonstrate that there is adequate political will. The youth have awakened to the fact that globalisation is re-organising economies; rewriting them in dramatic ways. They resist to be left behind or to become losers of globalisation. The national and county governments should give the youth a chance by working in connection with urban development. Without an all-inclusive economic growth, Kenya will remain in the hole of 'arrested development'. In the slums and low-income areas, a sustainable solution of the indignity of poor living conditions is imperative for the achievement of peaceful communities in our towns and cities.

The Government of Kenya has set up several programmes to foster the youth, and other chapters in this book discuss them. It seems important that the government also develops some key sectors of the economy to create opportunities for the youth to invest in. There are many opportunities in the informal sector whose rapid growth in the last decade makes it a frontier of economic success for the youth. Therefore, a good part of the informal sector has the potential to keep this role if its operations formalised and well organised.

One example for investing in youth is developing innovation hubs such as Kariobangi Light Industries. This viable model should be replicated in other parts of the city and in other urban centres in order to open up opportunities for the youth. Other opportunities are; the waste management in towns and cities and the long overdue integrated Solid Waste Management Plans. These are a prerequisite in moving from waste management into resource

management, enabling the realisation of healthy, safe, secure, dignifying and sustainable solid waste management systems with plenty of opportunities for the youth. In the matatu industry, the new Transport Licensing Board regulations have set reforms in motion.

A healthy growing nation renews itself through its youth who, if given the opportunity, bring in new ideas and determination. It will take a great will, though, to bring the necessary improvement in this area.

Olang Sana

## **Youth Initiatives in Response to the Unemployment in Nairobi Slums**

### *Abstract*

*Youth unemployment in Kenya has reached a crisis level. The problem is especially pronounced in Nairobi slums, which host three-quarters of the city's population of about 3.5 million.<sup>131</sup> Despite the severity of this phenomenon, Nairobi slum youths have come up with innovative and legitimate mechanisms of coping with the unemployment crisis. The fact that four out of every ten youths earn a regular income through self-employment is a commendable achievement. This paper acknowledges that opportunities exist in the slums for self-employment and highlights some of the youth-led innovations, which today assure daily income to thousands. The paper, therefore, proposes practical measures that the Government of Kenya can pursue to secure and expand opportunities for more youths to earn a livelihood outside the constrained formal sector.*

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This paper is a contribution to the emerging discourse on the unemployment menace among slum youth. It presents the results of a study conducted by the author in May and June 2014 in the slums of Nairobi.<sup>132</sup> The primary objective was to establish what

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131 The population of Nairobi according to 2009 Population and Census result released by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) was 3.1 million. CBS projects the population will increase to 3.8 by 2015. It is therefore safe to estimate the population at 3.5 million by 2014 when this article was written.

132 The study was conducted among 40 youths spread in 4 slums in Nairobi. 20 out of the 40 respondents were unemployed while the other half represented self-employed youth category. The author used unstructured questionnaires to ask specific questions about unemployment menace, challenges and respondents' coping mechanism. The study also benefited from observation method. Through this method, the author was able to see and record the level of idleness as well as various forms of self-employment activities in which the youth are involved. One Focus Group Discussion was organised in Huruma slums with 15 out of 58 youths who serve as delegates in the Nairobi Slums Leaders Assembly (NASLA) of which the author is convener. Monthly discussions and debates on the floor of the Assembly between 2008 and 2013 also brought out pertinent issues about the state of youth unemployment in the slums. This being a primarily qualitative study, the author made minimal reference to secondary data.

the Government of Kenya can do to expand opportunities for self-employment in the informal settlements, so that a large number of slum youth can be absorbed into the economy.

*How do slum youth cope with the unemployment problem?*

The unemployment problem in Nairobi slums has reached a crisis level. With the increasing migration from the countryside to towns, more and more youths have joined the slums not just because the slums offer cheap housing for job-seekers, but also because the cost of living in these areas is relatively low compared to middle-class or affluent up-market neighbourhoods. To the youth flocking into slums, the settlements are just a temporary solution, especially for young, ambitious, but jobless university graduates who hope to relocate to affluent neighbourhoods once they get a well-paying job. But about five out of every ten youths were born and brought up in the slums (*wenyeji*). Therefore, they know no other home than the slums and they often stick to the areas even after their economic status improves.

Whether they are migrants (*watu wa kucome*) or *wenyeji*, the unemployment problem affects both groups equally. What is surprising, however, is the ability of the unemployed youth to cope with the crisis through innovation and creativity. Since necessity is the mother of invention, these innovative youth instincts rise out of need for survival in an especially hostile economic environment where the ability to earn a living decides whether one stays in the city or returns to the village. The study confirmed that it takes a young university graduate between 3-5 years to get a permanent and pensionable government job while their counterparts who lack university education have much less prospects of getting such employment. The aggregate effect of this dilemma is that young people have little alternatives other than looking for opportunities in the informal sector.

Focus group discussions conducted in 15 slums established that about 4 out of 10 youths who live in the slums are currently self-employed in a number of small-scale business enterprises from which they draw a regular income. Out of the *unemployed 6*,



4 depend on irregular menial jobs or crime for survival. Therefore, only 2 out of 10 youths are not involved in a form of employment or income-generating activity at all. These figures confirm that young people are independently waging war against unemployment.

### *Informal activities of youths in self-employment*

*Food* is the most common business in the slums for the simple reason that everybody must eat whether they *have* a job or not. The narrow streets in the slums are littered with young people cooking and selling takeaway bites such as chips, *bhajia*, *mandazi* and *chapatti* in the open air. Food kiosks offer a menu of variety, the most common being tea, coffee, boiled/fried beef, *githeri*, beans and *ugali*. Certain food kiosks serve fish and chicken especially for lunch. A significant number of slum residents - especially unmarried youth - survive on these foodstuffs for breakfast, lunch and even supper due to their affordability and accessibility.

Food is cheap in the slums partly because it is not prepared under strict hygienic standards recommended by the Department of Public Health and Sanitation, which attracts additional cost. Also, a number of food kiosks operate without government permits issued by the Nairobi City County Health and Sanitation Department; hence its proprietors do not pay taxes. More importantly, the investors in this industry understand their customers' needs and purchasing power so they cut down cost to make food cheap. A good lunch will cost about half a dollar (KES 50), while breakfast can cost as little as KES 20.

Notwithstanding the conditions under which these meals are prepared and sold, the food industry provides self-employment to 5 out of every 10 youths who are currently engaged in informal activities. The investors in this industry feed the slum population by offering alternative cheap food to the poor or unemployed. They have developed highly innovative ways of staying in business such as exploring alternative sources of foodstuffs. In nearly all slums the researcher visited, it was found that food kiosk attendants wake up as early as 4:00 am and close business at around 11:00 pm when the slums go to sleep. On average, food kiosk owners take home a profit margin of KES 3,000 to 5,000 daily. If this profit is

banked daily, it is double the sum that a university graduate earns monthly from a formal government job.

The food industry has activated other self-employment activities in the slums such as butcheries, groceries, shops, fruits and vegetable kiosks, etc. The rigour and risks involved in these form of investments require the energy and innovativeness of a youth. The author spotted young people moving around the slums in the evening with hot coffee in thermos flasks, which they serve to several customers (mostly male) who prefer to sit outside between 8:00 to 10:30 pm, chewing *khat (miraa)* or just discussing politics. This business practice is new and innovative.

*The transport industry* represents the second-largest self-employment activity in the slums. Youths who are not engaged in regular self-employment offer themselves as porters. Their duty involves assisting businessmen to transport their merchandise/ wares from one point to another either on their heads/shoulders or on special wheelbarrows designed for this job. They also assist tenants to transport their household goods especially during month-ends when moving houses is common or they offload goods, i.e. charcoal, potatoes or hardware materials from trucks. The youths also buy water from water vendors and supply it to various households using handcarts or wheelbarrows. The supplier makes a profit of KES 10 per 20 litre jerry can. Since a handcart can carry 10 such jerry cans full of water, the supplier makes KES 100 per trip. This is a lot of money considering the fact that one supplier can make 10 or 15 trips per day.

The majority of the drivers who operate public transport vehicles (*matatu*) and the conductors are youths who live in the slums. *Matatu* is a thriving business not only in Nairobi but in Kenya as a whole. Due to the underdeveloped railway system, *matatus* transport about 29% of the Nairobi population to and from their places of work.<sup>133</sup> The industry, therefore, employs thousands of youths. The driver and conductor have a responsibility to ensure that the vehicles generate a specified sum of money to be remitted

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133 According to a report by the Institute for Transport and Development Policy (ITDP 2013), *matatus/omnibuses* is the preferred mode of transport for 29% of Nairobi's commuters. A dismal 15% drive themselves to work while 47% walk (some of them between 5 and 8 km daily) to and from their places of work.

to the owner at the close of business, and a surplus profit to be shared by both without necessarily compromising the safety and condition of the vehicle. Youth who miss opportunities to work as drivers or conductors station themselves at bus termini to announce fares and usher in passengers onto a waiting vehicle at an agreed commission. Employees in this industry (drivers, conductors, and ushers) carry home between KES 500 and KES 1,500 daily.

To service this industry, youths have set up car-wash businesses in the slums, some of which operate past midnight when drivers and conductors retire to bed. It costs between KES 150 and KES 200 to clean one vehicle. With a car-wash machine, one can clean an average of 100 cars per day, which means an income of KES 20,000, but which is shared among ten to fifteen youths employed in a single car-wash business.

Successful *matatu* drivers and conductors have bought motor-cycles, which are used to transport passengers within slum villages as well as within city centres and peri-urban zones. Known in Kenya as *boda boda*, this transport business is popular in Nairobi because motor-cycles are cheaper than cabs. Additionally, they can wade through the narrow pathways in the slums that are otherwise impenetrable by motor cars. Motorcycles can also successfully wade through traffic jams, a menace in Nairobi, especially on week days. A *boda boda* operator makes a profit of KES 1,000 to 1,500 per day. Some youths have saved and bought taxis from income they have generated from the *matatu* industry or *boda boda* transport. Taxis have the potential to double or triple the income generated from *boda boda*.

*Solid waste management* is the third most popular self-employment business dominated by the youth. The youth have organised themselves into waste management associations primarily to help deal with the menace of solid waste that slums generate daily but which the Nairobi City County lacks the capacity to handle. Young people employed in this industry take the initiative to distribute solid waste paper bags to households in designated areas and then collect waste on specific days of the week. The waste is then loaded onto trucks and transported to a central dumping site. Youth groups that still lack finances to hire trucks use handcarts to remove waste from the slums. One

household pays KES 50 per month for this service and a single youth group can service up to 1,000 households. Youth employed in the waste management industry also open and service blocked sewers. Also, companies that have won tenders from the Nairobi County government rely on these youths to expand *sewer* systems in the slums. Some youth associations have won the tender to dig trenches for water pipes and cable lines, and clean/maintain public facilities.

A section of youth in the waste management industry specialise in combing plastic, glasses, metals, electronics, bones, etc. from dumping sites, which they then sell to recycling companies. Some have set up shops that specifically sell second-hand items collected from dumping sites or given to them by owners. Bones are used to make ornamentals such as beads, necklaces, rings, earrings, etc. By so doing, they conserve the *environment* by reducing the amount of solid waste that ends up in dumping sites. In Kibera, Mathare and Kangemi, youths have set up private toilet and bathing facilities to help de-congest limited public toilets. Customers pay KES 10 to use a toilet and KES 20 for bathing.

There are a myriad of *other self-employment initiatives* in which the youth are actively involved. They include operating barber shops (*kinyozi*) and salons, which specialise in hair dressing. The youth also do other activities like roasting maize, welding, carpentry/wood work, masonry, hawking, selling second-hand clothes, etc. Some have specialised in urban agriculture - especially growing vegetables (tomatoes and *sukuma-wiki*) or raising poultry on small plots. An increasing number of the youths have discovered their talent in sports and entertainment. Some of the best footballers in Kenya, such as Dennis Oliech, were born and raised in the slums. Indeed, slum youth dominate local and national football clubs. Though still underdeveloped, theatre and music are also emerging as important entertainment industries that promise to absorb a section of youth with talents in those fields. It is no wonder some of the best performing theatre groups and dancing clubs in Nairobi are based in slums.

Lastly, the youth play an important role in *security management*. The youth man slum streets and narrow corridors at night and secure business from burglars, robbers and arsonists. They also

keep intruders out especially during periods of ethnic tension or political violence widely experienced before or after general elections. These services are paid for by slum residents. Also, private security companies recruit personnel from amongst slum youths. The recruits go through training, which improves their skills in security management and employability in the up-market neighbourhoods. Women from the slums often work in neighbouring up-market estates as house-helpers and men as compound attendants. Although the salary of a security guard and a house-help is relatively low, employment in any form is generally seen as a deterrent from crime and other harmful activities common in the slums.

*How do the unemployed 60 per cent survive?*

Four out of six youths in the slums who are not absorbed in any form of self-employment survive through a number of strategies, which deserve in-depth analysis due to their implication on peace and stability in Nairobi. Some depend on their parents for upkeep. Youths who fall under this category are often sons and daughters of landlords or established businessmen/businesswomen. During interviews, the researcher came across about 15 youths to whom their parents have allocated between 3 and 5 rooms to collect rent for their survival. This category of youths is not under pressure to look for a job or create one because they enjoy parental protection. One said to the researcher: “*maze mimi silipi rent*” (man, I don’t pay rent). Those with relatives abroad – especially in the USA and Europe – usually receive a monthly monetary remittance for their upkeep. And a significant number of youths who fall under this category are *wenyeji*, or those born and brought up in the slums, hence not under pressure to hustle for an income.

*The construction industry (mjengo)* employs a significant number as well. The majority of construction work takes place outside the slums. Building companies pay wages ranging between KES 350 and KES 800 per day depending on the value of work done and the skills involved. The role of unskilled youth is limited to supplying bricks, mixing concrete, curing the structures, etc. Some are temporarily engaged by road construction companies and

in the *Kazi kwa Vijana* Government project. It is also important to recognise that some go to Nairobi's industrial areas to do all kinds of manual work including loading and offloading goods from trucks, arranging factory products, etc.

The majority of youths without jobs in the slums survive on *crime* and other illegal activities. Crime in the slums involve a number of dimensions. The popular ones includes mugging, burglary, theft, robbery, conning, printing fake currencies, brokering, pick-pocketing, etc. Organised crime pays off in Nairobi, and in the slums in particular due to their impenetrability by the police. It is for this reason that they are a safe haven for some of the most dreaded criminals in Kenya including those involved in bank and highway robberies. Surprisingly, it is alleged that some of the criminal gangs based in the slums execute their missions in collaboration with the police. For instance, it is said that it is common to find criminals using firearms hired from the police for a robbery operation. If successful, the robbers return the gun with a share of the loot to the police. The study established that the number of illegal firearms in the slums has multiplied beyond government control. Most of these firearms are used against well-known neighbours who live in the slums or they are used to conduct highway robberies especially hijacking passenger service vehicles and then robbing passengers. The latest reports indicate that the majority of illegal guns in the slums are in the hands of young people aged 13-18 years including girls. This category of young criminals is merciless compared to their mature counterparts.

*Political violence* has also emerged as a lucrative industry in Nairobi and it employs thousands of youths. Political violence has a long history, which stretches back to the early 1990s during the struggle by the opposition to open up the political space in Kenya through the introduction of multi-party politics. During this period, the then ruling single party regime recruited and hired youths to intimidate opposition politicians and to disrupt their public rallies. In response to this challenge, the opposition also used the same strategy of hiring hoodlums to protect its leaders and to challenge the police whenever they came to disrupt opposition rallies. With time, idle youths discerned the need to organise themselves into structured militia gangs for hire by politicians especially during

election periods. By February 2001, there were over 15 established militia gangs operating in the slums, each with a membership of over 5,000 youths.<sup>134</sup> Although the police have since declared these organisations illegal and ordered for their disbandment, some -such as *Mungiki*, *Kamjesh*, *42 Brothers*, *Usitambue*, *Sitaki Ku Jua*, etc. - still operate with impunity, thus posing a severe security risk to slum residents.

Although these gangs today claim to be vigilantes, their mission and operation remain largely the same as those of *militia gangs* or alternative government agents in the slums, creating order and employing a sizeable number of youths. During election periods, political aspirants must pay the leaders of these groups before they can be allowed to address a public rally in the slums they control. But due to lack of ideological commitment, these groups are amorphous and can be hired to serve private interests. The militias today participate in illegal evictions, land conflicts, control of *matatu* routes and bus termini. They also levy illegal taxes in slum villages and run illegal businesses such as the sale of hard drugs/substances and illicit alcoholic beverages. They also collect protection fees from businessmen who operate in areas under their control.

In summary, a section of the idle slum youths are employed in *violence industry*. Since they survive on violence, these youths take advantage of the slightest opportunity to foment a crisis. They have a large network and rarely does a week pass without an operation that generates income. Occasionally, they cause mayhem just so that they can loot property or rob innocent members of the public. Today, every slum has a ready reserve of “youth for hire”. During election campaigns, these youths are paid between KES 300 and KES 1,000 per day for an operation depending on the risk involved.

*What specific challenges do the unemployed slum youths pose?*

*Tension* exists between the self-employed, these are youths who are unable to find jobs in the formal sector but have defied odds to create some form of employment for themselves in the informal

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134 Okoth Okombo & Olang Sana, Taking Stock of Socio-Economic Challenges in the Nairobi Slums between 2008 and 2012, (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012)

economy and the unemployed who survive through the strategies discussed earlier. Generally, the unemployed believe they are smart because they can generate income for their sustenance without necessarily working as hard as their self-employed counterparts do. On the other hand, the self-employed also look down upon the unemployed whom they accuse of being lazy, unadventurous and unwilling to take risks. Indeed, the unemployed get unsteady income from their endeavours due to their temporary nature. In order to ensure survival, they rely on the efforts of the self-employed by begging them for food, lending them money, or altogether robbing and stealing from them. The aggregate result is that the cost of doing business and general survival in the slums has increased because of the unemployment challenge.

Since slums are the most insecure areas in Nairobi, every investor must think about how he/she can secure his/her business from thousands of unemployed youths who are potential criminals. Investors must, therefore, reserve some money for security paid in form of protection money. Alternatively, they must invest heavily on steel doors, hiring night guards, and in installing security gadgets such as lighting and alarm systems. Small-scale investors who cannot hire security guards are compelled to transport their merchandise or tools of trade home at the close of business. This is both expensive and tiresome. In any event, these goods are not any safer because determined robbers can still target them at their homes. As a complementary measure, some investors pay bribes at the slum-based police station so that those on patrol respond to emergencies if called upon.

Whereas threats to individual investors in the slums are always isolated, nearly all slum residents experience security challenges during periods of political instability. Indeed, slums become very unstable during election periods when various candidates take on each other for electoral victory. Election periods are also the time when the slums get deeply divided along ethnic lines as communities identify with particular political parties - especially those headed by politicians from their ethnic groups. Although the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) set strict rules that govern the conduct of election campaigns, politicians always ignore these rules and set communities against



each other. The unemployed youth play a leading role in fuelling tension, which occasionally escalates into violence. In particular, slum youth take advantage of the political instability to perpetrate all kinds of criminal acts including forceful eviction, looting, malicious destruction of property, murder, rape, refusal to pay rent to landlords, etc. Thousands of self-employed youths lost their sources of income during the 2007/08 post-election violence in Nairobi slums and some eventually returned to their rural homes with nothing while others joined the unemployed category after the unfortunate experience.

Apart from election violence, spontaneous conflicts among militia gangs fighting for dominance or between the police and members of a militia gang - especially the outlawed *Mungiki* sect - also predispose slums to instability. As a risk management strategy, entrepreneurs in the slums tend to limit the amount of capital injected or ploughed back into business. Some close down their businesses for weeks or months while others relocate to safer areas or travel to their rural homes whenever a crisis is imminent. For instance, business reduced drastically in the slums a week before 7 July 2014, i.e. the date of an opposition rally in Nairobi popularly called *saba saba*. On the actual day, business closed down completely both in the slums and in Nairobi's central business district due to insecurity. Also, people did not go to work even after the government announced that the *saba saba* day was not a public holiday.

Economic hardship exacerbated by the unemployment problem has encouraged prostitution and other forms of sexual immorality among slum youth. Studies have confirmed that majority of the 'parking ladies' along Nairobi streets and those who work in the brothels are youth from the slums. The main problem is that school girls are increasingly lured into prostitution, leading to early pregnancies and school drop-out. Prostitution also carries the danger of HIV/AIDS infection, which is reportedly higher in the slums than in the up-market neighbourhoods, mainly due to varying awareness levels. The researcher established that the majority of the men and women who engage in prostitution do so out of lack of alternative means of generating income. Yet, the cost of caring for HIV/AIDS victims and orphaned children is a

big burden to slum-based households that can barely afford basic needs.

*Which opportunities exist in the slums for self-employment?*

The fact that business operates way below capacity implies that there is plenty of opportunity in the slums for economic expansion. Owing to the large population they host, the slums provide entrepreneurs with such a big market for goods and services that they cannot satisfy. During the discussion at the June 2014 Nairobi Slums Leaders Assembly, a delegate said that there are almost no goods or services that would lack a customer in the slums. But since these businesses operate below capacity, some customers are forced to commute down-town for their shopping needs or to source services that are not available in the slums. A national projection that Kenya's economy is likely to grow in the next three years is good news to prospective investors in the slums because it means increased demand for goods and services.<sup>135</sup>

Secondly, there is an emerging consciousness among the younger generation that a business or private enterprise job pays better than white collar jobs. Indeed, even those employed in the civil service sectors set up private businesses as an alternative source of income or as a means to keep them busy after work or on weekends. This consciousness presents a big opportunity for the development and expansion of private enterprise in the slums because nearly everybody will have a stake in the economy, thereby reducing risk of incidents of disruptive violence and crime. Already, seven commercial banks have set up branches in the slums to tap into slum entrepreneurship. Surprisingly, these banks have longer queues than those operating within the central business district, which could suggest that they have many customers (even if low-income customers).

Thirdly, the modern slum youth tends to embrace a liberal attitude, not just towards enterprise but also towards fellow

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<sup>135</sup> The Office of the Cabinet Secretary for Devolution and Planning projects that the economy will grow from 5.7 per cent in 2013 to 6.9 in 2014. The economy is likely to improve further to 7 per cent in 2015. For details, see KIPPRA Policy Monitor, Issue NO.2, January – June 2013.

youths and the community at large. Today's youths exhibit a lot of flexibility in the labour market. Unlike before, they are willing to do jobs that were previously regarded as low paying, reserved for the uneducated or for a particular community and gender. Stereotypes about gender relations or other ethnic communities that their parents clung to three decades ago also seem to be dissolving due to the influence of modernity. This is evident in an increasing number of intermarriages and in men who today do what were once regarded as "women's jobs" and vice versa. The youth have even evolved their own language - *sheng* (a mixture of Kiswahili and English) - which is an important tool of communication. *Sheng* serves as a unifying factor for slum youth and the Kenyan youth fraternity at large. Coupled with a growing sense of youth solidarity, the emerging liberal attitude militates against disruptive inter-group conflict and this is pro-business.

Fourthly, the level of education among slum youth has improved tremendously compared to what it was 15 or 20 years ago. Today, 5 out of 10 youths have a form-four level of education, while 9 out of 10 have gone through class eight. Among the form four and university graduates, some still go for evening classes - especially for computer lessons - to advance their knowledge and efficiency. Other than their ability to read and write, the majority of the youth in the slums have and can use mobile phone technology while some are computer literate. What is more, 2 out of 10 youths have a bank account. These competencies can be harnessed to improve entrepreneurship.

Lastly, there is a lot of sympathy for the Kenyan youth and slum youth, in particular, given the despicable economic situation they are confronted with. Complementarily, there is a lot of good will from the Government of Kenya, individuals, local non-governmental organisations and the international community, which is supportive of the youth, especially of youth-led development. These agencies and institutions support self-employment as a way of diverting the attention of the youth from negative behaviours. The government has, for instance, rolled out a number of programmes that seek to train and provide support to youth entrepreneurship especially through provision of loans to youth groups in order to help relieve youth of the unemployment burden. Equally, a number of non-

governmental organisations have sponsored training programmes for the youths and provided them with other forms of technical and material support in aid of their entrepreneurship spirit. These opportunities can be harnessed to promote and advance self-employment for the slum youth.

*What can the government do to expand self-employment opportunities?*

Recommendations with greatest potential are those that focus on what the government should do to enable 30% or 40% out of the 60% unemployed youths to join the bracket of the informally self-employed. Respondents in the focus group discussions disclosed that there will always be some 20% left out of (informal) employment whatever the nature of interventions would be. However, slums will be safer if between 70% and 80% of slum youth have some source of income. The logic is simple: the collective resolve of the 80% who have stakes in the slum economy will overcome the challenges posed by the 20% left out. Secondly, expanding the number of the self-employed will naturally ease the burden currently borne by the 40% self-employed and will give them relief to operate their businesses with full capacity.

Below are some recommendations:

- The government should increase security surveillance in the slums not just to protect people and property from criminals but also to increase the presence and engagement of the government. Once this has been achieved, slum residents will relinquish their security management obligation to the state so that they concentrate on other pursuits including private enterprise as envisioned by ‘social contract’ theorists. The slums need regular police patrols. But this is only tenable if the government builds more police stations and increases staffing so that the police can sufficiently respond to residents’ distress calls. Further, each police station should be supplied with serviceable vehicles and modern firearms so as to facilitate rapid and effective response to crime or other security emergencies.

- The government should embark on a thorough disarmament programme targeting thousands of illegal firearms in civilian possession. In the same spirit, the police should flush out most wanted criminals who conduct robbery operations in Nairobi (and its environs) and then use the slums as their hideouts. Since some of these criminals are accused of working in cohorts with the police, a special unit should be established to investigate corruption within the police force and to discipline those found guilty.
- The relationship between civilians and the police is very poor. The police are always absent in the slums, but when they feature, they act unprofessionally often hurting innocent people. The claim by the youth that it is safer to meet a group of criminals on a mission than policemen on night patrol confirms the fear. “Whereas criminals will rob you and let you go home, the police will take a bribe, and then walk with you the whole night before bundling you into the police cells under framed up charges”, one slum youth said. As a remedial measure, the government must work to improve the relationship between police and citizens so that both parties can develop trust and confidence in each other and can see themselves as stakeholders in security management. Without this effort, entrepreneurs will continue to see the police as a liability to their businesses.
- The government should eradicate militia gangs and illegal cartels that thrive on the labour of the 40%, i.e. the entrepreneurs. Indeed, the cartels make business really difficult for those trying to start-up innovative companies.
- The Nairobi County government should install security lights along the main streets in the slums and expand the narrow streets to facilitate movement of goods to and from the slums as well as rapid response to security and fire emergencies.
- The government should take inventory of and register all businesses operating in the slums as a means of regulating the private sector and ensuring accountability in the industry. However, the government should drastically reduce or subsidise the fees charged by Nairobi County for the so-called ‘Single Business Licence’. In most cases, the licence is prohibitive to

small investors who have the burden of keeping the business afloat and paying rent at the same time. This forces the majority of investors to operate illegally and to evade or bribe City Council *askaris* (police) when they come to conduct regular inspection.

- The Youth Affairs Department – under the Ministry of Devolution – should organise capacity building seminars for youths who either have interest, or have shown demonstrable skills, in entrepreneurship. Studies show that young entrepreneurs face many challenges related to funds management, balancing books, operating bank accounts, communicating with customers, and the temptation to indulge in leisure before the business stabilises. These challenges have caused many businesses to collapse prematurely, thus rendering their initiators jobless. Early training can help minimise these challenges.
- The government should work in collaboration with the civil society and local community leadership to organise young entrepreneurs into associations. Often, competition for business - especially among those in garbage collection/recycling - results in violent confrontations among the youth, leading to chaos and disorder. The youth should be taught to embrace healthy competition and to shun monopoly or cartels.
- The government should avail easy loans to young entrepreneurs operating in the slums. Whereas the government has already made positive gestures in this respect, the conditions that applicants must meet to qualify for these loans are so rigid that they are almost prohibitive to many entrepreneurs. The result is that unspent millions of Kenya shillings are returned to the national treasury. Largely, the loan application process is also bogged down by corruption and unnecessary bureaucratic procedures. The government should, therefore, be more flexible while dealing with young applicants in order to attract more applications without necessarily compromising the security of the loan.
- The government should invest heavily in vocational training programmes especially those targeting the youth. In particular, Nairobi County should rehabilitate technical training institutes in the slums and set up new ones to absorb the ever-increasing

demand for training in technical subjects such as carpentry, masonry, wiring, drawing, catering, music, hairdressing, welding, driving, computer skills, etc. Youths with these skills have a demand not just within the slums but in the country at large. The existing technical colleges are privately owned, hence expensive and unregulated by the government. This has a negative impact on the quality of knowledge they impart to students.

- The despicable state of housing in the slums mitigates against entrepreneurship. The majority of structures are temporary and unplanned because the government still claims ownership of these lands and, therefore, treats residents as mere squatters. Indeed, cases of evictions have become rampant especially since the establishment of the county government system. Since the landlords lack title deeds or official documents, which can authenticate their ownership of the land, there is very little they can do to add meaningful value on the land due to the fear of forceful eviction and demolition in future. Yet, the government lacks funds to upgrade the slums and this responsibility has been assumed by private investors. The government should immediately issue security of tenure to the landlords in the form of title deeds so that they can apply for loans from commercial banks or sell their lands to those who are capable of developing them in conformity with plans and standards approved by the county government.
- The government should enforce the constitutional provision that at least one third of government tenders go to youth development programmes. Currently, this provision only exists in theory because most of the tenders are still awarded to established old businessmen who have the capacity to return 10% of the value of the tenders as bribes. Young people have little opportunity to progress business-wise if they do not enjoy such facilities and a modicum of government protection.

All these efforts should be complemented by the deliberate move to train, encourage and provide political leadership opportunities to the Kenyan youth at the national and county levels. In short, the youth must play a leading role

in political governance and decision making today because politics affects them directly in a number of ways.

### *Conclusion*

This paper seeks to demonstrate that young people are not necessarily lazy and lacking in initiative as often assumed by employers. It intends to make policy-makers aware that young business entrepreneurs are an important asset to the nation and that they deserve to be protected instead of being left on their own as incumbent and previous regimes have attempted to do. The reality is that Nairobi is sitting on a time bomb, given the ever-growing population of angry unemployed youth, which is nothing new to political analysts and government policy-makers. What is disturbing, however, is the lack of a practicable policy framework to mobilise and nurture the existing potential so that more youth can see hope in private enterprise and join the self-employed.

Based on the actual and potential threats to national stability posed by unemployed youths, the Government of Kenya should roll out deliberate programmes to promote self-employment. The recommendations presented earlier are not in any way exhaustive. Indeed, the government can come up with more innovative ways to reduce unemployment and curb potential youth unrest. Whereas this paper has focused primarily on the state's role, there is much that other stakeholder can do. Civil society, NGOs, the international community, academics, etc., can complement the efforts of the government to curb the unemployment menace among the Kenyan youth. Indeed, we are not safe until they are secure.



Richard N. Muteti

## **Opportunities and Challenges for the Youth in the *Jua Kali* Sector**

### *Abstract*

*The majority of the idle and unemployed youth are found in the informal economic sector, which plays a crucial role in most developing countries. As governments aim to cut costs, they fail to absorb as many employees as they should, while the organised private sector is unable to employ the growing number of job-seekers, whose majority are unemployed youth. Thus, the informal sector steps in to fill in the gap. In Kenya, this sector consists of school drop-outs, semi-literates and the unfortunate dismissals from the private sector, all of whom are youths competing for space, relevance and means for survival. Ironically, this is the home of the country's creativity, ingenuity and energy. Along with other factors ailing the youth, it is necessary to show the importance of appropriate programmes, policies and strategies to address various segments of the youth in our society—the aim of this chapter.*

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The informal economic sector is crucial for most of the developing countries in the world. In a concerted effort to minimise costs, the government is not absorbing as many employees as it would like to and, by that, leaves the private sector to take up this role. On its part, also the organised private sector has been unable to employ the growing number of job-seekers; the majority of whom are young people. Therefore, the informal sector has stepped in to fill the gap. Most of the unemployed population comprises of the youth, as has been well articulated in previous chapters of this volume.

The informal sector is part of the micro and small enterprises (MSEs) sector. Currently the MSE sector contributes more than 18.5% to the GDP; in Kenya, it provides more than 74% of all new jobs per year with a similar trend in the rest of the EAC states. It is currently estimated that in East Africa, the MSE sector employs more than 25 million people, excluding the agriculture sector.

The MSE sector – and with it the informal sector – has absorbed the majority of retrenched, retired, school drop-outs and the unfortunate dismissals from the private sector companies and organisations. Further, it is only in the informal economic sector that one can find under-age persons engaged in the struggle to make ends meet.

Numerous donor-funded programmes and NGOs are involved in MSE promotion and support. Lack of coordination and communication between these various actors has resulted in fragmented efforts and in *ad hoc* interventions. These have led to an inefficient use of resources and to low impact especially in terms of the sustainability of their programmes. And this has left the sector, which employs more than 74% of the nation’s workforce, in a confused and desperate situation.

The MSE sector in Kenya is divided into:

- A. Manufacturing
- B. Small traders
- C. Service providers
- D. Agro-based businesses

These MSE sub-sectors are businesses in both the formal and informal sectors.

The *manufacturing actors* in the informal sector – popularly known as *Jua kali* artisans – operate in around 18 sub-sectors covering: woodworkers/carpentry, wood crafts, metal and metal works, soapstone crafts, ceramics, plastic and plastic products, leather production, textile products (with several subsections, i.e. screen printing etc.), clay/pottery crafts, bee-keeping, mechanical engineering, food processing, electrical/electronic repairs etc.

The *small-scale trade actors* are both in the formal and informal sub-sectors with the latter referred to as “hawkers” or those who trade in all sorts of goods, found, for example, at the Muthurwa Market, Gikomba Market, city streets etc.

The *service providers* are actors who give services such as repairing watches, shining shoes, selling newspapers, providing delivery services, garbage collection, car wash services etc. The future sustainability of Kenya’s economy relies upon the viability of these sub-sectors. They are the home of the country’s creativity,

ingenuity and energy. What they are now able to achieve already, in spite of the challenges under which they operate, reveals the magnitude of their potential and resilience. A large number of Kenyans outside the small-scale agricultural activities derive their livelihoods from these sectors. For instance, in the year 2002 alone, the MSE sector employed about 5,086,400 people, up from 4,624,400 in 2001. This was an increase of 462,000 persons and consisted of 74.2% of the total employment in the economy.

More than 90% of all additional jobs in Kenya will come from the MSE sector in the next decade, while a significant proportion of the rural labour force will continue to depend on this sector to supplement their income as well as for self-employment. It is, therefore, evident that the MSE sector will be the cutting edge of growth and source of wealth and job creation in Kenya in view of the declining trends in employment in the formal economy.

The youth in the informal sector comprise of the uneducated, semi-educated and the educated. All of them are competing for space, relevance and survival in a sector that is characterised by an easy entry due to little or no barriers of entry at all.

The youths operating in this sector face the following challenges as they struggle to make ends meet:

- Lack of ownership of the land upon which they operate;
- Lack of access to appropriate and affordable credit facilities;
- Lack of access to appropriate and tailor-made affordable micro insurance facilities;
- Lack of business management, leadership and technical skills and thus ability to take concrete steps out of the *status quo*;
- Lack of markets for their products;
- High and prohibitive tax regimes;
- Lack of opportunities to do business with the government;
- Lack of access to affordable and reliable health care;
- The HIV/AIDS scourge;
- Limited opportunities for international linkage programmes;
- Poor coordination of MSE associations and institutions;
- Lack of understanding of issues of quality, standardisation and patenting, which therefore are not collectively and adequately addressed;

- Lack of involvement (at board level) in institutions that make decisions that affect them.

These are some of the reasons the youth in the informal sector should be supported and encouraged. In most cases, the informal sector is viewed as illegal; its activities are barred by the government as well as by the people working in the formal sector. *Jua kali* has been out of favour in national policy for several decades and has often been neglected and treated as low class, despite its important role in creating income for over 70% of Kenyans. In 2012, after a struggle of more than ten years by the informal sector Business Member Organisations (BMOs) actors, the country's Parliament passed the MSE Bill that was signed into law by the then president, Mwai Kibaki. Since then, the Government of Kenya has changed its stance, recognising *Jua kali* as a valuable source of skilled labour and allocating funds to support growth in the sector through the establishment of the MSE Authority.

A majority of the uneducated and the semi-educated youths who operate in the informal sector migrate from rural areas into urban centres in search of a decent and dignified life. They end up living in slums due to lack of sufficient income, which explains why slums keep mushrooming in various parts of the country close to the urban centres.

Due to the lack of appropriate and relevant short-term courses in the limited training institutions – that in any case have little to no space for the uneducated – the youth rely on on-the-job training in workshops, small trading and service sub-sectors of the economy. This is where many of them come into contact with the society in different ways including illicit trading, counterfeiting and other illegal quick money-making initiatives that entice them into crime. They are used in various crude ways, e.g. by drug traffickers and they may even be attracted by terrorists both for quick money and for hitting back at the society that does not seem to have space for them. The idleness in which the unemployed youths find themselves in both rural areas and urban centres makes them vulnerable to being lured into activities that are detrimental to the society, e.g. joining gangs, petty crime etc., which in turn becomes a breeding ground for insecurity and, to a larger extent, for instability.

## VII. Specific Groups in the Labour Market

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Cathychristine Keya, Mbaja Brenda Lubang'a

### **Youth Unemployment – The Plight of Female Youths**

#### *Abstract*

*Women often experience the impact of unemployment more severely than men; not only are they involved with a similar workload as men with less payment, but also that they have the responsibility of unpaid labour like household chores and child bearing. This paper addresses various social, economic, cultural and political obstacles that hinder women in Kenya from accessing equal employment opportunities as men. It maintains that young women face workplace exploitation, modern day slavery, discrimination, under-representation in decision making and other issues that determine the high rate of women unemployment. The paper further highlights the international declarations and the policies that Kenya has put in place to promote gender equality and, on the other hand, the wanting reality of implementation of these policies. Case studies as well as best practices from other African countries towards bridging the gap have been included to learn from them.*

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Gender inequality is very common also when we look at employment; this news keeps making the headlines even in the present days. Gender issues have been discussed and even laws and policies have been formulated but the implementation of the estranged policies and laws continue to expand the grave of inequality especially in developing countries. It remains pervasive and persistent in all aspects of life, from domestic households to social institutions to the economy. Its manifestation cannot be ignored – from disparities, access to employment, basic rights violation, access to and control of resources and not to forget the political voice. More so as young people being among the marginalised groups, a female young person faces a greater burden

of gender inequality. These sentiments are shared in the World Bank Report on Gender Inequalities in Developing countries, 2012.

The Kenyan labour market is characterised by inadequate employment opportunities against a large and growing population of unemployed people especially the youth. It is dual in nature, presenting a small formal sector alongside a large informal sector. It is approximated that by 2030, 24 million youths in Kenya will be unemployed. Young women in rural areas will account for the largest number of unemployed people and also females in urban areas also have higher rates of unemployment than the male youths in urban areas. This statistics clearly show a major gap in employment both in formal and informal sectors where a larger number of the country's youth are unemployed.

### *The burden of female youth in Kenya*

In Kenya, the prevailing narrative is that women have to work twice as hard as men to be half as good, grow enough muscle and do the kind of jobs that men do easily. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is tempting to say “this is not the case”. There are numerous studies that attempt to show how women have increasingly being given the same opportunities as men. But even with these opportunities, a closer look reveals that this progress is only superficial.

A young female engineer, Mary Wanjiru, highlighted the obstacles that women in Kenya have had to overcome to get to where they are – even though a lot still needs to be done. For a long time, she said, some jobs and courses were considered a man's world and the women who dared venture into them risked ending up single for the rest of their lives. The evidence of this disparity is still seen in some places such as the University of Nairobi. The Electrical Engineering building, known as the ‘American Wing’, does not have wash-rooms for female students and lecturers. Current female Engineering students have to walk to the nearby more modern Civil Engineering block. “As a female youth working in a man's world, you need to go the extra mile to be considered equal, if not better, and even earn some semblance of respect from your male counterparts,” says Ms Wanjiru.

The state of unemployment among the youth in Kenya is just a ticking time-bomb waiting to explode. While some people are afraid of dying in a road accident, there are many who wish that a car would run over them and end their misery. Many young women who have completed A-levels can be easily identified with this struggle. According to the reports by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, unemployment has increased to 40% in 2011 from 12.70% in 2006. While unemployment is an issue facing young Kenyans across the board, the evidence shows that women have a double burden.

### *Being a woman, a blessing or a curse?*

According to World Bank population indicator the dependency of youth in Kenya (2013) stands at 77.4%, indicating the lack of employment among youth<sup>136</sup>. The UNDP discussion paper on Kenya's Youth Employment Challenge (January 2013) indicates that the youth unemployment is further divided in terms of gender<sup>137</sup>. The unemployment rate is higher among female youths compared to male youths because there are 'few employment opportunities for females. The reasons for this disparity range from low levels of education, social, cultural, political and economic factors.

Despite stale promises from the government, it is clear the Kenyan economy has failed to create enough jobs to absorb and grant gainful employment to the rising labour market entrants. No wonder, the beautiful Kenyan girls are opting for alternative ways to generate income. Some have opted to pursue modelling as a career with the hope of leaving poverty behind, but this has not been without its problems. These girls have to daily deal with sexual predators daily who ask for sexual favours before granting them a job opportunity. There are countless stories of young women who were knocked off the potential employee list simply because they refused to give up their bodies in exchange for a job. Furthermore, those who refuse are seen as the 'dumb' ones while the 'wiser' girls who give into these advances snatch up the lucrative jobs.

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136 World Bank Age Dependency Ratio, 2013

137 UNDP Discussion Paper on Kenya's Youth Unemployment Challenge, 2013

It is this rampant sexual exploitation in the labour market that has even compelled some young women to venture into commercial sex work. While this may seem to be an easy way to make a living, the reality is grimmer. These young women expose themselves to all kinds of dangers; they are at a higher risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. Some of them are unable to negotiate for payments and there are numerous stories of clients who refuse to pay for their services.

There are also some challenges unique to female youths which create an imbalance in achieving gender equality in the labour market. For instance, some employers are prejudiced against women because of the possibility that a woman will need a four-month maternity leave which is both compulsory and paid for under the laws of the land. This makes employers reluctant to hire women. Young women who are at reproductive age face this discrimination at large, there are employers who during a job interview will ask a female interviewee if she was married, if she had children or if she plans to have children; whenever the females answer in the positive, the employer will shy away from employing them no matter how skilled the young women are. Others in the industrial sector prefer employing men to women since, they argue, women cannot work as much or as hard as the men in a sector whose main capital is physical strength.

Even the horticultural sector is replete with stories of women having to pay the 'ultimate price' to be accepted to do jobs as simple as being a casual labourer in flower farms. And just when you think it could not get any lower, it has become almost a fact of life for fishmongers at the shores of Lake Victoria to sell their bodies in order to buy fish. In Kenya, the rate of HIV infection among female adolescents has been raising at an alarming rate; this has been enhanced by factors affecting teenage females for example transactional sex which is high among the lake regions in Kenya. But due to high levels of poverty, many girls have been forced into this business.

Among females from informal settlements the story is the same; the only form of employment they can secure is doing odd jobs at other peoples' home, for example doing laundry and the money from this job is hardly enough. Therefore, they opt to also



engage in transactional sex to make ends meet. A 14 year old girl reported she was coerced by her mother and asked to look for an older rich man who can provide money for the family.

Due to the high rate of unemployment, young women have opted to work as domestic helpers. The money they get is hardly enough for food and most of them are subjected to abuse by their employers. The news media is rife with cases of young women from Kenya who chose to work as domestic house helps in Arabic countries only to be tortured and abused in these foreign lands – all in search for employment. Modern day slavery is alive and kicking as these women fall prey to well-oiled agencies promising gold but delivering less than lead.

### *Is the new constitution a ray of hope?*

The Kenyan constitution, promulgated in August 2010, guarantees the right to equality for both men and women. In chapter four under the Bill of Rights, part 2, Article 27 (2) defines equality to include the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms. Section (3) of the same article states that both sexes (male and female) have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres<sup>138</sup>. But even as beautiful as it is written and it sounds, the implementation of this constitutional article remains blurred.

The constitution further obligates the state not to discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground such as race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, colour, dress, language or birth (Article 27 (5)). Article 27 (6) directs the state to take legislative measures and other measures including affirmative action programmes and policies designed to redress any disadvantages suffered by individuals or groups because of past systematic discrimination. However, the political will to implement the stated articles of the constitution remains wanting; this was very obvious during the debate that made the headlines on the implementation of two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies 27(8).

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138 The Constitution of Kenya 2010

The education level is another factor negatively affecting young women. Many female students cannot afford the expensive tertiary education. In families where income is limited and a choice has to be made, the female child will be the last one to be considered. This lack of access to a good education severely affects their chances of getting formal employment or an opportunity to venture into entrepreneurship. In most cases the girls are left at home to scrub floors and do laundry while the boys go off to school.

Efforts of girl-child education and women empowerment seem to be greatly affected by the attitude that the society holds about women. Where will the girl's education go if she is not given an opportunity to bring forth the benefits of her education and what is the point of empowering women and advocating for gender equality if yet in reality women are still undermined and underestimated? The problem is deeply rooted and we can only deal with it once we understand its major cause and that is the attitude towards women's ability and place in society. We cannot have good legislatives and a well written constitution and expect it to be implemented by the people who have a negative attitude towards it. But if the attitudes are changed and people get to understand the importance of this matter then will we make a step towards equality in Kenya and across Africa. We cannot just afford to talk the talk; we have to walk the talk!

It would be wrong to look at this issue from the lower level of employment without looking at the national level point of view as well. During the election in 2013, it was unfortunate to note the number of women that were voted in for several seats both in the senate and in the national assembly. Out of 350 total seats women only got 65 seats making it 18.6% according to an Inter-Parliamentary Union Report of 2013<sup>139</sup>. It is heart-breaking to know that even in the twenty-first century women are still struggling for their efforts to be noticed. And this is not just a problem in Kenya but a global issue. The same report shows that the global average of women in parliament is 21.8%. Part 5 under the establishment of a Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission boosts

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139 Inter-Parliamentary Union Report on Women in Parliament, 2013.

the structure for the promotion of gender equality and equity in general and in coordinating gender main-streaming in national development (Article 59).

### *Socio-cultural barriers*

The socio-cultural barriers in Kenya are another obstacle women have to grapple with. This has negatively influenced their participation in the labour force. A recent study by the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Report 2014 ranked Kenya among the top 10 countries providing equal opportunities for men and women. But this could not be further from the truth. The researchers mainly focused on the policies being formulated to ensure gender equality, but the problem lies in the implementation of such policies, and this paints a less rosy picture.

The study also ranked Kenya at number nine of the sampled countries in terms of allowing both men and women to access business and investment opportunities, beating developed nations such as Sweden and Switzerland. But the sad reality is that we are not where we should be as a nation. The results of the study are out of touch with the reality on the ground and work still needs to be done to gain even a semblance of gender balance in the labour sector. It is imperative to put in more effort to ensure that gender equity especially in gainful employment is not just heard but felt.

Collective efforts from all spheres are required to have gender equality. One party alone cannot be expected to formulate and implement the laws and policies that support equality but rather different entities should join hands both in formulation and more importantly in enforcing and implementing the outlined laws and policies. So much time is wasted as we wait for someone else or for something to happen but no change can be achieved without any effort. We cannot afford to experience discrimination against women in this era because an empowered woman with opportunity equals to a developed nation and the world at large.

No gender is better than the other and no work is so hard for any gender, both genders have their own strengths and both

deserve equal opportunities by definition. If we do not raise our voices and put our words to action we will be on the losing end. We cannot confine a woman's space without considering her needs, her voice, her efforts, her struggle, and her feelings, mostly without giving her an opportunity or a chance to express her abilities. It is not our bias that we write and stand for women's rights; it is for the sake of fairness and justice that we speak our mind. Let no gender benefit at the expense of the other.

### *What can we learn from others?*

After all is said and after we have given an insight of a woman in Kenya, it is important to point out that there is hope; it is never too late; Kenya can learn from others, especially from African countries with whom we have common stepping points in one way or another. We can see what they are doing to curb gender inequality in employment fields.

Several nations have agreed with United Nations and regional platforms by signing declarations binding them to take measures to transform issues of inequality. Kenya is among these nations and we should lead by example to promote equality. The political, economic and social rights of women have been recognized and expressed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979<sup>140</sup>, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)<sup>141</sup> and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000)<sup>142</sup>.

Furthermore, the creation of the African Union (AU), which is committed by its Constitutive Act to the principle of gender equality, provides further opportunities for institutionalizing gender main-streaming and increased political participation by African women in regional decision-making. The AU Commission

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140 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)(1979)

141 The Beijing Platform for Action Fourth World Conference on Women(1995)

142 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000)

was formed on a gender parity basis. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted in July 2003, and in 2004, African Heads of State adopted a Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, providing normative standards on women's human rights in Africa to be adhered to by governments at the national level. Equal participation by women and men in public life has thus been recognised in these declarations as an important foundation for just and equitable relations between them.

With all this policies it is possible to curb the issues on women and also involve men to ensure that we have a nation without gender discrimination, because as a matter of fact we cannot afford to have dis-empowered men because that will be a disaster as gender main-streaming has value.

Kenya can learn from other neighbouring nations, for instance in 2005, the people of Liberia elected the first African woman president and in 2008 the people of Rwanda voted overwhelmingly for women, who won 56.2 per cent of the contested parliamentary seats. If the two nations achieved this, Kenya has a higher potential.

Not to forget that in 2007 the second woman Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations came from the United Republic of Tanzania, while Mozambique has a woman prime minister and Gambia has a woman vice-president. Also, the first speaker of the Pan-African Parliament is a woman, and at least one in every five national members of the Parliament is a woman. In Rwanda women make up 63.8%, while in South Africa 42.9% of all government ministers are women. These few examples of distinctive and remarkable transformations have materialized out of the emancipatory agenda of women's rights activism and political advocacy, fostering norms and practices to challenge the sexism of institutional processes<sup>143</sup>.

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143 Compendium of Emerging Good Practices in Gender Main-streaming, Volume 1, Economic Commission for Africa

## *Conclusion*

As young women in Kenya and across Africa gender discrimination remains the biggest barrier in development, both at the individual level and the national level. Female youth have a responsibility to make initiatives to ensure that gender discrimination is eliminated. Young women should advocate for their rights and demand implementation of gender policies that will pave way for empowered women.

Female youth should take advantage of basic rights like education and access to information that is available and use them to eliminate gender barriers that exist. We have to stand up and find ways of job creation and we should not wait for anyone to do it for us. It is about time female youth stood up in one voice stop complaining about what is working and what is not and move on to what can be changed for the better. Empowerment is a personal responsibility and therefore every young woman ought to be accountable for their own selves.

Women in leadership positions also need to come with a mechanism to help and uplift the younger women. For example in politics women have been seen to be struggling to venture and be elected because of financial constrains yet there are women out there who have made it and should be able to support their fellow women to access financial help. Therefore it is important for women to have women initiative that will empower female youth financially and politically. Women in general have the power to bring about the change and therefore we should be the key players in women empowerment and gender main-streaming.

There is also urgent need for the Government to strengthen and scale up successful measures targeting quality skill development and employment creation for the youth and also build strategies on ways to improve employment on female youths.

Isaac M. Mwaura

## **Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Employment**

### *Abstract*

*Persons with disabilities (PWDs) account for more than 15% of the Kenyan population; but of these, less than 1% is in formal employment. This is due to various factors, among others, such as accessibility constraints, low levels of education, negative attitudes in society, discrimination, low levels of awareness and gender bias. Several legal improvements for PWDs have been undertaken, e.g., in the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003 and in the Kenyan Constitution of 2010. They include, for instance, tax incentives for private employers; the regulation that 30% of public procurement is reserved for women, youth and persons with disabilities; or a five-years-later retirement for a PWD. A lot of challenges still remain for people living with disabilities because of uneven implementation of these laws. A positive development is that 12 Members of Parliament and 71 Members of the County Assemblies are PWDs.*

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### *Introduction*

Clarice Kojo is a 33-year-old lady with muscular dystrophy, a condition that has made her unable attend school nor actively participate in public life. I met Clarice through her cousin recently after I informed her of the kind of work I do. When I finally got to meet her at their middle-class neighbourhood in Nairobi, she told me that she had dropped out of school in form three since she could not walk to school like her peers. Clarice had a dream to go to school and become a lawyer like her cousin but didn't know how to. In fact, her cousin never knew the type of disability Clarice had. She first thought it was sickle cell anaemia. That Clarice spends more than 90% of her time indoors and rarely ventures out is a clear indication of the many limitations that persons with disabilities face on day-to-day basis in their quest to live independent lives. Her dream of becoming a lawyer is, up to now, still, a dream.

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) account for more than 15% of the Kenyan population, especially if the social model of disability is applied. Of these, only less than 1% is in formal employment while the majority are in informal employment. This is due to various factors such as accessibility constraints; low levels of education, unstructured and undocumented recruitment procedures, lack of social capital and participation so as to enable them to acquire vital information on employment opportunities etc. Amongst other factors, it is also due to negative attitudes, discrimination and stigma in society, low levels of awareness, and a largely informal economy. There is also a gender dimension at play as men with disabilities are better represented in formal employment than women. This reflects the fact that the Kenyan society is patriarchal in its social set up. Further, it takes longer for young graduates with disabilities to obtain employment than their non-disabled counterparts.

### *Normative framework*

The Persons with Disabilities Act (PDA) 2003 provides, in article 13, that the Council shall endeavour to secure the reservation of 5% (of all casual emergency and contractual employment both in public and private sectors) for persons with disabilities. Further,

Article 54 (2) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 calls on the state to ensure the progressive implementation of the principle that 5% of the members in elective and appointive bodies are persons with disabilities.

The National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), which is a body created by the PDA for implementation purposes, has established a job placement office to work with various employers on the issue. The office is mandated to collect CVs of PWDs and link them to employers. It also hosts trainings with regard to CVs development, job application and interview training. These efforts are meant to build the confidence of PWDs since most of them have low self-esteem due to continued marginalisation and lack of exposure and opportunities. Consequently, a modest number of PWDs have been employed in various institutions.



In addition, there is a disability main-streaming indicator in the performance contracts of all government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The MDAs sign contracts with the national treasury on how they roll out service delivery within a given fiscal year. All government entities are expected, therefore, to mainstream disability issues in their day-to-day activities on aspects such as employment, communication, accessibility, training and awareness creation. They are also supposed to develop and adopt a workplace disability policy that addresses employment-related issues. The inclusion of the disability main-streaming indicator in the performance contracts has led to a greater awareness of the need to include PWDs in the workplace. Organisations make quarterly reports to the NCPWD, which reviews progress and provides feedback on progress.

Article 15 of the PDA gives tax incentives to private employers such that 25% of the salary paid to each employee with a disability is deducted from their tax<sup>144</sup>. However, this provision has not been exploited, partly due to lack of clear guidelines on implementation and general reluctance or lack of awareness on the part of potential employers.

Article 16 of the Act also provides for a tax holiday of up to 50% of the total cost of modification of the workplace environment in order to accommodate PWDs. This is also in regard to hiring of expertise in order to achieve reasonable accommodation. Due to lack of clear guidelines as earlier indicated, no data exists to show progression on this aspect of inclusive development.

Articles 32, 33 and 34 of the Act establish a development fund for PWDs, provide for a revolving fund for Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) to run small-scale businesses and quite a number of PWDs and DPOs have documented success in this aspect. However, some challenges, related to the full realisation of the intended purpose of the fund, remain in low individual and organisational capacity.

Article 2 (6) of the Constitution domesticates all international treaties and agreements as part of the municipal laws. This, in effect, adapts the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

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144 Persons with Disabilities Act, 2003

Disabilities (CRPD). The Convention has a specific article on work and employment (article 27), which states that:

“State parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States parties shall safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia...prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability, protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others, enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programs, placement services and vocational and continuing training... among other provisions<sup>145</sup>”.

In order to implement this, a registration process for PWDs through the Council exists, where members benefit by not paying tax for up to KES 150,000 (about US\$ 1,800) per month. Only about 6,000 Kenyans have benefited from this provision, further depicting a deplorable state in the number of PWDs in formal employment.

Other measures that have been instituted to ameliorate the employment conditions of PWDs include: cash transfer programmes for persons with severe disabilities to relieve the families with the burden of care. There are also recruitment guidelines for teachers under the Teachers Service Commission that provide for affirmative action for teachers with disabilities. Recently, the government instituted measures to roll out preferential procurement quotas where 30% of public procurement is reserved for women, youth and persons with disabilities. Through this provision, PWDs can form companies that shall get tenders from government entities.

There are also Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) with companies such as Safaricom (a leading communications firm) and

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145 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008

Ipsos Synovate (a market intelligence firm) where a reservation of a certain percentage of employees is for PWDs. They regularly ask for CVs for PWDs for recruitment and a number have been employed. However, certain types of disabilities do not get an opportunity as is the case with the visually-impaired persons at Safaricom. The nature of the job, therefore, is critical.

### *Models of disability and challenges*

Kenya's experience is predominantly the charity model of disability as espoused within the context of the informal social welfare regime. However, officially the rights-based approach is adopted in various statutory provisions. It is to be noted that the relics of the medical model are still evident and alive and effective. PWDs are still seen as sick people who need medical attention or as objects of pity and ridicule.

There are numerous challenges that are prevalent with regard to the employment of PWDs in Kenya. These include poor physical and informational *accessibility* with regard to the workplace and employment opportunities. There are also *negative attitudes* towards persons with disabilities due to underlying cultural practices and competition for limited economic opportunities. Another factor is the high level of *unemployment* or underemployment in the country, which stands at 40% according to the 2009 Kenya national census.

Moreover, there are low levels of *education* amongst PWDs since less than 10% of children with disabilities are enrolled in school. In addition, 7% of respondents during the 2007 Kenya National Survey for Persons with Disabilities (KNSPWD) reported to not being able to access any school that would cater for their special needs<sup>146</sup>. Existing legal provisions are drafted in soft law hence are difficult to implement.

There is also *uneven implementation* of the laws due to other underlying socio-economic and political issues such as corruption and tribalism. For example, while the law provides that PWDs retire five years after the official retirement age, some companies are reported as ignoring this provision and sending their employees home at the age of 60 years. There are also inadequate provisions

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146 Kenya National Survey for Persons with Disabilities, 2007

for supportive environment, e.g. sheltered workshops for persons with developmental or mobility difficulties since they may not be able to work in formal settings; there is also lack of assisting devices and technologies to support their employment.

*Public transport services remain inaccessible to persons with mobility difficulties. Job adverts are usually done in newspapers, but PWDs typically cannot afford them and they are not accessible to the visually impaired. Further, PWDs are usually not in the right kind of social networks due to exclusion since 60% of all job opportunities are not advertised but announced through referrals.*

### *Achievements made so far and recommendations*

Several gains have been realised to date such as the inclusion of the disability main-streaming in the public sector. The NCPWD receives at least one request a day from employers. There have been several key appointments in public office; namely, two judges of the high court, one Principal Secretary and four members of constitutional commissions. The new Constitution has also opened up political space and Kenya now has twelve Members of Parliament (MPs) and seventy-one Members of the County Assemblies (MCAs) who are PWDs. This is anticipated to increase employment opportunities at the county governments' level.

The following are recommendations that would enhance increased employment of PWDs in Kenya. They include, but are not limited to: internship and mentorship programmes, educational support at tertiary levels through provisions of grants, bursaries and scholarships, course diversification with assistance of technology for a wider career choice, greater public awareness levels to reduce stigma and discrimination.

Other measures include: strengthening of job placement programmes, Public-Private Partnerships between government, CSOs and the private sector, involvement of the media in public education and demonstration and inclusive education from lower levels to higher formal education.

Gabriel Dinda

## **Uncertain Future – The Headache of Kenyan Students**

### *Abstract*

*This paper concentrates on the academic middle-class youth. They face the problem that employers consider them to be 'half-baked', i.e. they are educated yet still unfit for the job market because of inadequate specialist education and training. Therefore, companies head-hunt for graduates with outstanding performance and train them according to their specific needs. As the public sector is reducing its wage bill, job-seekers are dependent on the private sector. The Youths try to improve their chances in the job market by being innovative and going into entrepreneurship. The institutions of higher learning are supporting them in this and set up specific programmes. Youths increasingly turn to agribusiness and rural entrepreneurship. A considerable number of this kind of youth finds an income through freelance writing. In general, the graduates have to recognise and face the reality that they have to be innovative and open for entrepreneurship and that they should also focus on the informal sector.*

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This paper is written in response to the current employment status in Kenya with special focus on *middle-class youth* engagement. Middle-class youth in this case refer to mostly students or recently graduated students who have not settled 'out there'. The paper follows informal research conducted in five institutions of higher learning in Kenya where middle-class youths were trained to take up the jobs once the current groups of employees retire and leave the job market. The investigation of the current employment status is fundamentally aimed at bringing to light what the middle-class youth themselves can do to respond to the alarming status of employment.

### *The status of employment in Kenya*

According to the research, the current *statistics on employment* in Kenya is not encouraging for the youth, a fact confirmed by the

experiences of graduates. While students are still in school or in college, they seem to imagine many promising ventures; from their tone of optimism, one would not be mistaken for thinking that jobs are readily available. However, the research states that upon graduation from such institutions, the unemployment menace is real. The statistics show that students who graduate from institutions of higher learning are about 700,000 annually. This figure is against the 50,000 job opportunities created by the government per annum. This huge disparity between graduates added into the market per year and the available job opportunities shows a need to critically look at the job market.

Despite the high number of middle-class youth, who are churned out of colleges every year, there is still a lingering factor - *the 'half-baked factor'*. The research established that most human resource personnel are of the opinion that the graduates are practically not fit for the job market. Therefore, there is a big contradiction between the needs of employers and the provisions of the graduates. According to the report released by *Business Daily* in July 2014<sup>147</sup>, a whopping 74% of graduates are not fit for the job market. In other places, however, many have argued that the 'half-baked factor' could be a conspiracy and a way to turn down offers politely since they are not able to accommodate the requests. Either way, whether the graduates are really 'half-baked' or it is a conspiracy of employers, the unemployment figures remain glaring.

In spite of the assumed 'half-baked' factor, it is very interesting to note that some employment agencies and indeed employers have taken the deliberate efforts *to head hunt* for graduates. The normal way of handling the recruitment drive for new employees has always been to call for applications and, of course, evaluate (through a number of processes), and finally, recruit. However, the head hunting for some employees brings in a different question and angle to look at the issue.

Some companies go an extra mile to look for youths who are doing something unique, regardless of the academic qualifications and literally train them in a customised training with a view to establish a lasting relationship with them. Under this respect, one

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147 "75% of East Africa Graduates are Unfit for Job Market".

would like to ask whether it is true that graduates are ‘half-baked’. Could it be that the quality of training is not sufficient to sustain the needs at the workplace? Is it easier to train an individual than to delegate the same to training institutions? The answers to these questions bring us back to the quality question.

The two most vibrant sectors in employment of the middle-class youths are definitely the *public and private sectors*. As things stand now, the private sector is more lucrative in terms of opportunities and incentives. Most youths are evidently attracted to this sector due to what it offers. The public (government) sector on the other hand, is used as a fall-back strategy. When one fails to secure a chance in the private sector, one quickly thinks of the public sector as the way out. The public sector has become less lucrative because of the rigidities it comes with and the accusations of corruption and other ills that people associate the sector with.

In terms of vibrancy, there seems to be more energy in the private sector, the research has established. There are deliberate efforts in engaging middle-class youths in a more creative way, which makes the private sector more attractive. More than 40% of graduates who get an employment are currently absorbed by the private sector. The public sector is burdened by a high wage bill; hence it is reducing employment of new graduates to a greater level. In 2014, the government announced that it will freeze public appointments to reduce the wage bill. Other actions were also taken to this end. This, to a great extent, is affecting the middle-class youth seeking to be employed in the public sector.

### *Response to the employment crisis in Kenya*

According to the research, there is a difference in reacting to the status elaborated above; different factions show different response structures to the state above. The *society* has a special way of dealing with the employment crisis. With few opportunities in place, it has somehow adapted to accommodate the unemployed and even found a way of coexistence of the employed with the unemployed. The few jobs, which are available, are floated to the unemployed, who mostly are casual labourers with a little pay tag attached to it.

The economic law of demand and supply comes in to dictate the pay, which is low following the high demand for labour. Naturally, the existence is visible and the society is balanced in a way that accommodates the employed and unemployed.

The *youth*, who are the main area of focus in this case, have formulated *a number of ways to respond*. In terms of the accusations of a 'half-baked' status and the unsuitability to participate in the job market, there are a number of ways through which the same is addressed.

Literally, there is a struggle by the middle-class youth to secure their already insecure future through *innovation*. The youths who have witnessed the situation of the job market are alarmed to do something early enough to have their future in good shape when they finally get out of the training institutions. In universities for instance, most students' clubs, and societies have shifted their focus to the need to encourage and feed their students with information regarding the need for innovation. In most of the universities' career fairs, the innovation rhetoric becomes the area of focus. This effort is deliberate because it seeks to create more opportunities and at the same time provides a perfect excuse to elude the rocky employment terrain. Most institutions of higher learning have also included this in their programmes and even dedicated specific institutions to deal with this. Kenyatta University has, for instance, dedicated a whole centre to help in this regard. Most middle-class youths have also taken a personal initiative to have a taste of innovation. Many new products are realised by the youths, which expose them to the business world. Superficially, these efforts are meant to create a niche for the middle-class youth and get them engaged in the walk towards realisation of their professional goals. A critical look at one of those middle-class youth initiatives brings out an interesting part of the response of Kenyan youth to this aspect of the response.

Originally, entrepreneurial development and venturing in *agribusiness* was little known. Most youths loved the white-collar jobs. No graduate literally would participate in the 'small' jobs such as agriculture. Those who did used other people. However, with depletion of jobs from the 'city', most youths have found



themselves with other relatives in their backyard since it is too hard to cope in the city.

The same case has been replicated in the *entrepreneurial* sector. Originally, the mind-set was focused on employment as the vacancies were easily available. However, that is no longer the case as jobs have become rare. The youth, now faced with the unemployment menace, have chosen to reorganise themselves to conquer other areas. They have therefore gone back to the villages to settle on agribusiness and other rural entrepreneurship.

In the villages, the graduates apply their knowledge and skills to improve the traditional ways of practising agriculture. That way, they are able to realise higher productivity. The productivity of rural Kenya has for a long time been used to drive the urban economy. Therefore, the market of the products is readily available, save for some areas where there are other exogenous problems. *Rural entrepreneurship* has served as a safe haven for some of the youths who have not been successful in securing a job.

The problem of this venture is related to the skewed perception of the people living in the rural areas. Originally, it was considered that those living in rural areas are not 'learned'. Therefore, the locals find it hard to accept graduates sharing the same jobs with them. This perception has led the graduates to choose to remain connected to the cities even if there is little activity going on for them. The perception is widely accepted in most Kenyan communities and has literally driven out the youth from the rural areas. The situation is changing though.

Though known to very few outside the academic youth group, *freelance writing* is probably the 'saviour' for them in relation to unemployment. This is divided into academic, research and other forms of writing. It mainly involves the academic youth making contacts with international students, mostly from Europe and USA; they do research and assignments on their behalf. This way, there is a flow of capital from capital-intensive to labour-intensive areas. The low requirements of the area make it convenient for the youth to engage in. Three out of every five youths in urban centres are engaged in freelance writing, according to an informal observation. The position only requires one to have basic skills in writing, access to the Internet and fast typing speed. These requirements are

easily achieved by the lower-class youth who are mostly students in the universities. Freelance writing, therefore, ‘silences’ the lower-class youth and makes them forget about unemployment. The payment for the work done ranges between KES 200 to KES 300 per page. However, the payment also depends on the goodwill of the ‘employer’ and, of course, the nature of the work given. One student said to the informal researcher: “*buda, siwezi bila writing*” (“man, I can’t make it without freelance writing”).

The writing industry, in this context, has attracted a good number of lower and middle-class youth and this makes them a little less vulnerable to the needs of daily life. Some lower-class youths, though, have made it a full-time career, as they are able to pay their bills and other expenses – “...*hii ndio inanilisha*” (“This is what keeps me going”).

#### *What then can be done to help?*

All stakeholders have a part to play in helping the youth evade the unemployment problem. The youth themselves have the greatest role to play as the consequences squarely lie on them. Below is a list of recommendations, which could be put to practice to help alleviate the ‘ticking time-bomb’ of unemployment:

(1) *Recognition of reality*: It is high time the youth learnt that the population has practically outnumbered the job number of jobs created and, therefore, there is a dire need to make extra effort to make change. The recognition of such existence is crucial, as it will provide the space for the youths to consider their way out of the challenges of unemployment without experiencing undue pressure, which could push them to committing crimes and other atrocities.

(2) *Focus on informal sector*: The formal sector seems to have had a lot of experience with the youth as far as employment statistics can be relied on. The formal sector is overwhelmed, making it less likely to help with regard to the employment worries which the youth have. Therefore, the informal sector becomes more likely to be an option. The youth should, therefore, use the knowledge gained from institutions of higher learning with a view to *bringing*

expertise to the informal sector so that the pressure from the formal field is transferred to the informal sector, i.e. after the youths have failed to be accommodated in the formal sector due to inadequacy of jobs and the 'half-baked factor', they migrate to the informal field in large numbers.

*(3) Turn attention to entrepreneurship and innovation:* Entrepreneurship is an area which the youth should venture into very aggressively. The two intertwined areas, i.e. both the formal and the informal sector, will help expand the niche of the youth and reduce the vulnerability of the youth to the employment status.

### *Conclusion*

Though the government has not been directly mentioned in the recommendations above does not mean the society works in absence of the government. However, the government seems to have run out of ideas to avert the situation of unemployment of the youth. But the political class has the constitutional mandate to make and determine legal provisions that govern the coexistence of the public and private sector. The government has the duty to provide an enabling platform that can be exploited by private sector for the benefit of Kenyan youth and the economy.

## VII. Special Issues

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Howard Akimala

### **Reproductive Health and Unemployment – the Challenge for the Youth ‘Bulge’**

#### *Abstract*

*Kenya’s youth population has grown exponentially over the past two decades. However, the reproductive health needs of this critical group are not adequately catered for, largely due to inadequate budgetary allocations, lack of youth-friendly services, poorly-equipped youth centres and gaps in the implementation of the population policy. This exposes them to vagaries such as HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and a flooded job market. With projections that the youth will contribute largely to a swelling population of 66 million by the year 2030, there is need to urgently address their reproductive health challenges. This means putting in place targeted policy and budgetary provisions both at county and national level to mitigate the ‘youth bulge’ effect. By doing so, Kenya will be able to spur socio-economic growth by taking advantage of its youth in a fashion similar to the economic revolution experienced by the Asian tigers in the 1960s.*

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Over the last 50 years, Kenya has experienced a rapidly changing demographic landscape. The population has grown four-fold to stand at approximately 44 million in 2014. With improved healthcare and an estimated growth rate of approximately one million persons per year, it is expected to top 66 million by 2030 – all this in spite of a decline in fertility rates over the years.

Over the same period, the proportion of youth (15-34 years) has increased exponentially to currently stand at 16 million.<sup>148</sup> Under normal circumstances, this increase in the ratio of working-age to non-working age population and its potential benefits

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<sup>148</sup> Kenya data sheet 2013.

(demographic dividend) such as reduced dependence ratios should spur economic growth.

Despite growth of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), formal and informal job markets have been unable to keep up. As at 2006, only half of the youth were in employment<sup>149</sup> - whether formal or informal. The rest were either unemployed or inactive in the job market, either by virtue of being in school/college or disillusioned by lack of job opportunities. About 400,000 more youths are added to this number annually as they transit from schools and tertiary institutions. As in most developing countries, high levels of unemployment in Kenya usually result in increased rural-urban migration as people search for job opportunities in urban areas. Youth form the majority of this influx into major towns and cities. Development transformations necessary to support this influx and enhance the quality of urban life do not occur at the same rate. Challenges of insecurity, poor housing, lack of basic amenities and an overstretched healthcare system immediately become evident.

Despite the government's waiving of costs of treatment and maternity fees at public health facilities, there has been precious *little support towards the healthcare systems* at the grass-roots level. For instance, allocations towards health by the central government have hardly exceeded 6% over the past 10 years despite the government's participation in the Abuja Declaration, which called for a minimum of 15% allocation towards health. The result is that most of these funds are pooled towards provision of curative rather than preventive services such as reproductive health and family planning. The limited funding also means that fewer health facilities are supported, resulting in long queues to access services. Reproductive health services are not considered an emergency by many. In such a scenario, the access to reproductive health services is neglected and the affected - especially the youth - forego many preventive measures. In any case, this funding gap also affects human resources in the sector, which means that fewer staff specialise in reproductive health services in general, and in the provision of more youth-friendly services in particular.

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149 Youth Employment in Kenya: Analysis of Labour Market and Policy Interventions, 2012.

Due to the inadequate financing of health facilities, both by the national and county governments, most health facilities charge a “card fee” in order to enable *wananchi* access services as part of the *cost-sharing system* that has been in place for several years. Though the “card fee” is usually a token fee of approximately KES 100, most of the unemployed youth cannot afford such a fee to access health services as most also rely on friends/relatives who live below the poverty line. In such scenarios, reproductive health usually misses out in the family budgeting prioritisation due to “more pressing needs” such as food, water and rent.

It is well documented that the Asian tigers were able to lower their unemployment rates by reducing their fertility rate to less than two children per woman. These reduced numbers, and a highly revolutionised industrial economy, meant it was easy to absorb the youth into employment. Even reducing Kenya’s fertility rate to approximately two children per woman would not reap such dividends before the year 2030. Therefore, it is important that the issue of unmet need among the youth be addressed as a matter of urgency. The rate of *unmet need for family planning* among the youth remains unacceptably high. This is due to a combination of lack of youth-friendly reproductive health services, inadequate family planning products, lack of knowledge, myths, traditional practices, etc. As it is, the more the youth cannot access affordable/free family planning services, the more the youth bulge will continue to grow and hence further exacerbate the dependency problem.

In 2008, the government announced plans to set up *Youth Empowerment Centres* in each of the then 210 constituencies. The idea was also included in the government’s Vision 2030 as one of its flagship projects. The centres were to use creative approaches in engaging young people with a view to tap their talent and create opportunities for them. They were to further minimise the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among the youth. According to Vision 2030, the centres were to be equipped to provide services such as voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), ICT facilities, library and information services, training and performance facilities for music, dance and performing arts. Six

years later, only 54 centres<sup>150</sup> have been completed and most are either not fully equipped or not working at full capacity.

This can be seen as a huge *lost opportunity* for the government. Borrowing from civil society, which runs a number of youth empowerment centres, the concept can have remarkable success in keeping the youth meaningfully engaged, while at the same time building their life skills. The German Foundation for World Population (DSW) is one such NGO that runs a youth empowerment centre in Githurai, one of the many informal settlements in Nairobi. Though set up with donor funds, the centre is managed entirely by the youth. It employs up to seven youth who run its income-generating ventures including hiring out of public address systems, chairs, tents, pool tables, TVs etc. The centre also acts as a hub for reproductive health information, life skills training, women fund centre among others. Family Health Options Kenya (FHOK) also runs a similar highly successful centre in Eastleigh. Through such centres, the youth also have access to peer counselling services, access to reproductive health information and services away from “prying eyes” that are at times judgemental as to why they are seeking such services.

There has been an upsurge in reported cases of *sexual assault*, mainly involving youth in urban centres. In November 2014 alone, there were more than 10 cases reported in the media (it is estimated that for each reported incident, 3 more are unreported<sup>151</sup>). Most of these cases involve youth around *matatu*<sup>152</sup> termini who are usually touting for customers. In most urban centres, unemployed youth see touting as an avenue for quick and easy money. However, it is in the process of touting and whiling away time at these *matatu* termini that the young people end up picking social vices such as pick-pocketing, purse snatching, drug abuse and indecent assault. Gauging by the number of youth who spend time at youth empowerment centres such as the one in Githurai, this is an idea whose time has come and will help in keeping the youth off the streets.

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150 [www.vision2030.go.ke](http://www.vision2030.go.ke)

151 Health Rights Advocacy Forum 2012.

152 Matatu is Kenyan slang for public transport vehicle.

Biologically, the youth are at the peak of the reproductive health cycle. However, being caught in a phase where they are neither children nor adults presents *a unique challenge*. In many lower-income areas of Kenya, young people are often expected to fend for themselves once they are no longer in school. This may happen from when they are as young as 15, having dropped out of school due to lack of fees or lack of space at the said institutions. This basic education usually means that they cannot access white-collar jobs hence most end up in self-employment or undertaking menial jobs. Given the low financial returns from some of these ventures, it becomes difficult for them to meet their reproductive health needs as they usually have cost implications.

Most youth usually find it difficult to ask their parents/guardians for money to purchase basic yet important hygiene and reproductive health items such as sanitary towels, condoms, family planning products and underwear. A few lucky ones benefit from donor-supported projects in informal settlements that supply these. The rest are at the mercy of the elements. In such instances, it is not uncommon to find youth suffering from hygiene-related afflictions due to lack of, for example, sanitary towels. Those who cannot access free condoms or afford to purchase some, end up exposing themselves to STIs as well as HIV/AIDS. In extreme cases, some of these youth end up engaging in commercial sex work so as to be able to afford some of these basic items.

According to the Kenya AIDS indicator survey of 2012, the *HIV prevalence* rate is quite high for youth up to the age of 34<sup>153</sup>. This has a direct correlation to the transition from schools/institutions of learning, which in this instance, act as safe havens. We can, therefore, assume that when the youth are meaningfully engaged, whether in schools or employment, they are less exposed to vagaries such as HIV/AIDS. In many cases, there are usually counsellors and sanitation and reproductive health products within set-ups such as colleges and formal workplaces.

Given that the youth bulge and the high unemployment rates pose challenges that would disrupt Kenya's progress towards emulating the Asian tigers, the following *policy recommendations* could be implemented to mitigate this.

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153 Kenya AIDS Indicator Survey 2012.



First, there is need to *invest in reproductive health*. Under the devolved system of governance, counties need to ensure that there is adequate budgetary allocation towards health and more so reproductive health. It is especially important to ensure that youth gain access to reproductive health services by ensuring there are enough funds to support provision of youth-friendly reproductive health services. Through this, the cost of accessing health services should be within the reach of all. Public-Private Partnerships could be explored to look at the possibility of providing reproductive health services using the concept employed under the Output Based Approach (OBA) for provision of maternal health services. Under this approach, for a voucher purchased at a token fee, mothers are able to access maternal health services at no additional cost for a period of six months.

Second, it is important to ensure that the *unmet need for family planning is bridged*. The government, through the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), is currently implementing a sustained family planning campaign. Far from calling for restricting the number of children, the campaign rightly calls for informed choices and meeting all family planning needs. It is, therefore, important that both the national and county governments put in place adequate financial and logistical support to sustain its implementation as it would be ill-advised to create demand for products and services yet not be able to provide them. There is also need for religious leaders to be roped in, as they are key information gatekeepers who wield substantial influence among the general population.

Third, the government needs to move with speed to *ensure that youth empowerment centres are set up* and function optimally as per the government's development blueprint. Youth are recognised as a unique cohort that needs tailored strategies to address its needs. Youth empowerment centres can, therefore, act as a good melting point for ideas and service provision particularly in the field of sexual reproductive health. Additionally, there is need to fine-tune the education curriculum so as to address the most pressing needs of young people. This may also include age-appropriate sex education in schools.

Additionally, it is crucial that the *youth are perceived as the driving force for economic prosperity*. However, this can only happen if progressive policies and programmes affecting them are in place. Presently, the Directorate of Youth Affairs, has staff spread across several ministries. It is not clear how the reporting structure works as civil service rules dictate that staff are answerable to the principal secretary of the ministry under which it is housed. Therefore, as much as the Directorate of Youth Affairs falls under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, the spread of county level staff in various ministries causes confusion.

It is also important to point out that many *youth issues are cross-cutting* hence a number of policies and programmes are housed under different ministries. Only a few of these policies make a correlation between youth and other spheres of development in a forward-looking approach. This needs to change. Ministries' need to be better harmonised and geared towards achieving a favourable age structure, which provides a sufficient tax base for government services and a social safety net for the more dependent age groups.<sup>154</sup> The policies also need to be *pro-female* since women tend to form the bulk of unemployed youth and, therefore, bear the brunt of the population bulge challenges.

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154 Kenya's Looming Youth Bulge: Infinite Possibility or Definite Disaster, 2011

Kilemi Mwiria

## **Kenya Should Exploit Worldwide Demand for Highly-Skilled Labour**

### *Abstract*

*This paper is about how Kenya could exploit targeted training to take advantage of the evident demand for high-end skills to supply migrant workers to labour markets worldwide. This way, Kenya could convert the youth bulge into an advantage for the this age bracket, their families, local communities and the country at large. Such labour exports necessarily call for high standards in training guided by a well thought-out curriculum, which is implemented by all key stakeholders in the private sector and relevant regulatory and examining bodies. The export programme should be professionally managed from the selection of potential beneficiaries, the contractual agreements reached between Kenyan authorities and host countries, and by putting in place appropriate measures to ensure Kenyan workers are happy overseas. Much can be learnt from Asian countries that have had a relatively long history with labour export.*

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### *1. Background*

Youth unemployment is perhaps the biggest single challenge facing the Government of Kenya today. Youth comprise more than two-thirds of the national population; almost 40% of those with secondary education and beyond are unemployed. Three main factors account for educated youth unemployment. First, thanks to the growth of the Kenyan education sector, with over 70% of primary school graduates transiting into secondary education and with the burgeoning of the university sector, there are far too many educated youth for the available job opportunities largely because there has not been a commensurate growth of the economy.

Second, irrespective of the coverage and quality of a county's education system, no country can keep the pace of a population growth rate (averaging 4%) to a level that far exceeds the resources

available to meet the basic needs of this youthful population, including that of employment.

Third, even with an economy showing signs of great potential with the new grand infrastructural projects in the pipeline and enhanced linkages with regional and global markets, many formally educated youth will still find jobs hard to come by because jobs of the future, more than ever before will require more complex skills (both theoretical and practical), as well as the ability to adjust to emerging job challenges. Rapid changes in technology will almost certainly mean changes in the way and speed in which the labour force of the future will think, train and behave.

## *2. Technical, vocational education and training and youth employment*

It is generally accepted that education is the key to development and for most emerging economies, middle-level skills have been known to have the highest return on investment because the biggest responsibility for productivity is with those who do the handiwork while those with higher academic qualifications are more useful in research and policy formulation. Much more can, therefore, be accomplished through investments in vocational/technical education that is responsive to emerging challenges including for labour export. This is what has made Germany the strongest economy in Europe while the UK has regressed for maintaining a 19<sup>th</sup> century model that is out of touch with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is within this context that the Government of Kenya has prioritised technical vocational education as a key sector for the achievement of Vision 2030 whose driving forward will require a large pool of a well-trained workforce. In this connection, the government has put in place a number of measures, including: the expansion and modernisation of existing diploma-granting technical institutes; establishment of modern technical institutions in each of the 47 counties (and ultimately at least one modern vocational school in each of the 290 constituencies in Kenya); and support of existing universities and technical training institutions to offer certificates, diplomas and higher diplomas in technical and vocational skills in addition to technical degrees.

Through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), and under the Technical Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA), the government is also promoting collaborations and partnerships with the ministries responsible for youth affairs, agriculture, industrialisation, transport and other state departments where vocational training is carried out, with a view to expanding and modernising the range of available training opportunities within and outside the Ministry of Education, including in industry.

### *3. The labour skills market transcends Kenya's borders*

High youth unemployment in Kenya notwithstanding, there is a huge demand for the right vocational skills locally and beyond, especially with the booming construction and ICT industries; key drivers of creativity and innovation. Huge potential is evident in the regional market. There is also much unexploited demand in the Middle East countries, especially Qatar and United Arab Emirates, a market that is increasingly opening to Kenyans. Already, the Government of the United Arab Emirates has sent a request to the Government of Kenya for an initial 100,000 skilled workers. The significance of this is that between 2011 and 2013, Kenya exported less than 20,000 workers to the whole of the Middle East. Likewise, in 2010, the State of Quebec in Canada expressed an interest for many more times the number of workers UAE is asking for.

In fact, if well harnessed, the potential for employment of African youth with modern labour skills is present in the developed countries of Europe and North America not only because the youth in these countries are not keen on manual labour, but more so because, with declining birth rates, there are few, if any youth, there to engage in skilled labour. Thus, it is time Kenya and other African countries appreciated the value of developing human capital for blue-collar jobs that are in high demand outside of Africa. Due to Kenya's relatively advanced education system compared to most of Africa, the country is well placed to take advantage of the demands for highly skilled labour outside Kenya by providing the pool of young technocrats with an internationally acceptable

qualification. What is lacking, however, is the right mix and quality of the available skills.

In addition to generating employment for the youth, labour export will reduce crime and benefit families and communities of the employed youth. The sad experience of ethnic clashes of 2008 would not have happened if there were not too many youths carrying academic certificates they could not use; there are too many young men available for hire by politicians to attack members of specific ethnic groups. Through a programme of labour export, Kenya can convert this population bulge into an economic gain. The beneficiaries will also contribute to national building by joining many other Kenyans overseas who are remitting billions of Shillings to the country. Moreover, they could open up training and employment opportunities for many others. In addition, the international experience gained can be a major boost to Kenya's economy and the vocational training sector as the returnees can be a very valuable experienced resource.

#### *4. Preparing Kenyan youth for global jobs*

It is proposed that Kenya considers main-streaming technical vocational education and training (TVET) within the national skilled labour export programme. This should entail more than just having in place technical and vocational institutes across the country. It is much more important that these institutions offer a curriculum recognised internationally both in terms of course offerings and their quality for recognition and creation of demand for the skilled graduates. The design of the relevant curriculum should be competence-based and involve a tripartite agreement of the national TVET Authority representing the Government of Kenya, the local private sector, representatives of transnational companies and, to the extent possible, an acceptable skills' regulatory authority (or chamber of industry/commerce) from countries targeted for the labour export destination. Also to be involved is the TVET Curriculum Development, Assessment and Certification Council (TCDACC) established under the TVET Act, 2013; its Governing Council inaugurated in 2014; and the Kenya Qualifications Authority (KQA) established under the Kenya

Qualifications Framework Act, 2014 (KQFA). The latter and the KQA authority shall be the overarching TVET sector organs in Kenya for equation, recognition, accreditation and standardisation of national and international training programmes and curricula as well as qualifications and competence awards.

Training should be provided through several modules with each module good enough for employment and after which a trainee could return for further modules. Such a system is motivating and makes it possible for trainees to self-finance their education. Training duration could range from short-term service courses of between 3 to 6 months to 3-year diplomas. It should be supported by highly competent and experienced instructors; because if they are to impart globally-competitive skills, their academic and professional experience must equally be internationally competitive. Training institutions could also try to benefit from the experience of Europe by taking advantage of volunteer staff identified from countries with more established systems of vocational education and training such as Germany and Holland. The determination of courses to be taught has to be based on well-designed market surveys that take account of current and future skilled labour needs for the local, regional and international markets, going by the requests made to the Government of Kenya through MOEST, the Ministry of Labour and Social Services and others. However, already a high demand is present for highly competent joiners, masons, electrical fitters, motor mechatronic technicians, ICT experts, plumbers, welders, painters, steel fixers, domestic workers, heavy truck drivers, professional taxi drivers, well-trained security guards, old persons' caretakers, teachers and nurses.

Likewise, if trainees of the National Youth Service (NYS) programme have training on gun handling, most of them can be absorbed as security guards abroad and could later join Kenya's uniformed forces on their return. Another area constitutes the demand for trained motor vehicle mechanics from companies such as Toyota, Nissan, luxury vehicle agents such as Mercedes and BMW, especially if the trainees have some dealership experience. This category could receive short-term training in partnership with dealership companies operating in Kenya. Because many of those available for overseas jobs have little if any formal training,

there is also need to impart minimum formal educational skills to these youth. Apart from supporting curriculum development and standardisation of the courses offered, transnational corporations could sponsor students for internship during and after the formal training and will thus be good candidates for the employment of graduates as well as contribute to the cost of training, especially as they would be the biggest beneficiaries.

In addition to the actual technical and vocational skills, a pre-departure training programme would be needed for all those offered jobs overseas, especially in soft skills, namely: attitudinal change relating to the acceptance of skilled work as a noble profession (and not merely a career for those who don't have better alternatives), with work ethics, discipline, private sector mentality, honesty, hard work, loyalty to the employer and other values not particularly well internalised by most of Kenya's skilled and other workers. Training for the international labour markets would also need to be targeted in the culture and language of the intended labour destinations to circumvent any potential relocation shocks. These days when information and communications technology is the foundation of most work environments, all trainees should be exposed to basic ICT skills to improve both their performance and self-confidence.

##### *5. Managing cross-border labour migration*

Going by the experience of labour export to the Middle East, there are immigration challenges that need redress, the key ones being the lack of coordination and record of who is where as well as of universally acceptable terms and conditions of employment, exploitation of migrant workers, and the use of overseas employment as a cover for child and human trafficking. Of necessity, therefore, is the establishment of a credible national authority on trade in services and labour migration to be responsible for the coordination of recruitment, processing of travel documents, support with travel and relocation expenses, salary negotiations and for overseeing the conditions of Kenyan workers overseas. This authority should harmonise the work done by the ministries of: Devolution and Planning; Labour, Social Security and Services;



Foreign Affairs; East Africa Affairs and Commerce and Tourism with regard to labour export. In this regard, the government may want to strengthen the Ministry of Devolution's Youth Export Scheme Abroad (YESA) secretariat, which coordinates youth labour exports.

In addition, this body should prepare memoranda of understanding with potential employers overseas specifying: A clear provision in the work permit and entry visa on the maximum period an employee can work overseas; the period of employment after which the employee has to return home; and a commitment of a portion of the salary in a local cooperative/project to motivate employees to return home. The authority should also do a close monitoring of the activities of the migrant labourers overseas to ensure that the nasty incidences of their mistreatment and exploitation as witnessed in some countries of the Middle East are actions of the past. It would thus be advisable to link migrant Kenya labour to host families of local co-workers in the companies where they are posted to give them a feeling of home away from home, to provide much needed mentorship and to be the watchdog for the coordinating authority.

Kenya could learn through benchmarking from the Asian experience where export labour is booming in countries like Vietnam, India and Bangladesh that send skilled youth to South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, the UAE and Qatar as guest workers who return home upon completion of their contracts and then wait for the next assignment. For example, in Vietnam, the Ministry of Social Services and Invalids supervises all formal vocational training and overseas labour deployment by putting in place a system of recruitment that does not allow exploitation of workers by unscrupulous recruitment agencies and employers.

## *6. Conclusion*

The success of this initiative will depend on how favourable factors outside the training sector are trending. At the national level, there will be need (1) to mobilise resources for a globally competitive skills' training programme, (2) of increased investment aimed at moving the economy forward to accommodate the trained human

resources locally, (3) for strengthening of appropriate governance structures and national values, (4) for reaching out to the regional and global markets, and (5) for the availing of the necessary resources to make Kenya attractive to more foreign investors and tourists who will ultimately provide the market for our skilled youth, (6) for an appropriate legal framework to guide the labour exports. (7) for greater goodwill in welcoming African artisans who are often less welcome than their Asian counterparts, through the relaxation of visa restrictions for the immigrant workers and families, and (8) for opening up more training opportunities for those Africans who apply for further training in the West as well as commensurate job opportunities.

## Acknowledgements

This book on youth employment is a product of broad consultations and contributions from many people with diverse perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for Kenya Youth in the labour market. The work could not have been realised without the engagement and cooperation of those involved. A significant contribution started with the work of the students of the University of Trier, Germany and Kenyatta University, Kenya, all of whom participated in the project *Youth-led Development in Nairobi – Challenges and Opportunities*. This collaboration saw the contribution of partners in Kenya and Germany whose input the editors of this book appreciate. Further appreciation goes to the book chapter authors who patiently and willingly cooperated and contributed their valuable knowledge, experience and views to the varied dimensions of youth unemployment discussed in this book. GADO, the cover illustrator, hits the nail on the head with his inspiring drawing. Helen Nebe and Wambui Danner supported thorough editing of the manuscript. The editors thank all of them and appreciate their specific contributions.

The financial support by the Hanns Seidel Foundation is highly appreciated.

Special thanks go to those readers who feel the seriousness of youth unemployment and engage in finding concrete improvements.

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