

Makueni County Brief on A Review of Youth Employment Programmes



County Government of Makueni

Key Highlights

The employment of youth (15-34) is critical in achieving sustainable development. This county policy brief provides an overview of planned and implemented youth employment policies and programmes in Makueni County in the period 2018-2022. The brief describes: the county youth demographic and labour market indicators; youth employment programs (YEPs) and interventions; county spending on youth initiatives; the constraints in implementing the youth programmes, and relevant policy recommendations. The key highlights are as follows:

- (i) The youth unemployment rate in Makueni County is 8.1 per cent, which is slightly lower than the national average of 8.5 per cent. Youth unemployment rate in Makueni County is higher among males (11.4%) than females (4.8%). The percentage of youth who are neither in education, employment or training is 7.0 per cent among males and 8.1 per cent among females and higher among urban youth.
- (ii) The county, among other interventions, planned to develop a youth policy and an affirmative action policy; promote 5 youth-led honey development enterprises; increase access to credit by entrepreneurs; and increase the number of youths and women engaged in profitable agriculture. The achievements included: equipment of 10 youth groups (with 285 members) with designs of poultry houses and supply of 42,356 one month old chicks to 8,471 beneficiaries; increase the production of honey from 657 MT in 2018 to 668 MT in 2021 through the support of various actors; and establishment of two talent centres.
- (iii) There was partial and sometime non-implementation of planned interventions. The implementation of the YEPs was constrained by inadequate financial resources and unpredictable cash flows due to delayed disbursement from the National Treasury; and a weak monitoring, evaluation and learning system resulting to non-comprehensive reporting on the implementation status of most YEPs.
- (iv) Some of the key recommendations to enhance implementation of YEPs include the need to: ensure efficient monitoring, evaluation and learning attainable through adhering to the Guidelines for the Preparation of the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) for comprehensive reporting of the performance review of the previous CIDP period¹, enhance availability of financial resources by enhancing collaboration with other actors and improving budget absorption; and design and implement more comprehensive programmes² that have multifaceted interventions such as those that combine skills training, internship and job placement services.

County Youth Demographics and Labour Market Indicators

Makueni County had a total population of 987,4053 people with a population density of 121 persons per square km as at 2019 (Table 1). The youth were estimated at 328,830 (50.4%) with a large share (90.3%) residing in rural areas. The overall poverty rate for the county is slightly lower at 35.0 per cent compared to national level of 36.1 per cent as of 2015/16. In 2021, Makueni poverty rate increased to 39.7 per cent, which was higher than the national rate of 38.6 per cent. Youth poverty rate was at 28.0 per cent and 39.8 per cent in 2015/16 and 2021, respectively, compared with the national youth poverty rate at 28.9 per cent and 34.2 per cent in 2015/16 and 2021, respectively. Notable improvements were observed with the proportion of stunted children decreasing from 25.1 per cent in 2014 to 19.8 per cent in 2022. Although there has been a decrease in the number of stunted children in the county, it is still higher than the national average of 17.6 per cent. The high stunting rates in the county has implications on children's optimal cognitive and psychomotor development, human capital development and eventual labour force participation and productivity in the subsequent years.

Table 1: County and national demographics and economic performance indicators

| | County | National |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| Population (KNBS, 2019) | 987,653 | 47,564,296 |
| Population density (km ²) | 121 | 82 |
| Male | 489,691 (49.6%) | 23,548,056 (49.5%) |
| Female | 497,942 (50.4%) | 24,014,716 (50.5%) |
| Intersex | 20 (0.002%) | 1,524 (0.003%) |
| Youth 15-34 years (%) | 328,830 (48%) | 17,009,230 (36.10%) |
| Male youth | 165,590 (50.4%) | 8,237,120 (50.7%) |
| Female youth | 163,230 (49.6%) | 8,771,410 (49.3%) |
| Persons with disability (%) | 4.1 | 2.2 |
| Population living in rural areas (%) | 90.3 | 63.3 |
| School going age (4-22 years) (%) | 44.8 | 46.0 |
| Overall poverty (2015/2016) (%) | 35.0 | 36.1 |
| Overall poverty 2021 (%) | 39.7 | 38.6 |
| Youth poverty (2015/2016) (%) | 28.0 | 28.9 |
| Youth poverty 2021 (%) | 39.8 | 34.2 |
| Stunted children (KDHS 2014) | 25.1 | 26 |
| Stunted children (KDHS 2022) | 19.8 | 17.6 |
| Gross County Product (Ksh million) 2022 | 120,539 | 1.0% of total GDP |

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (Various)

The total unemployment rate in the county is 8.1 per cent, which is slightly below the national average of 8.5 per cent (Table 2). The labour force participation rate for the youth is 55.8 per cent and is highest among female and urban youth. For the employed youths, a significant share (71.2%) are either contributing family workers and own account workers, which are mostly poor-quality jobs characterized by informal working arrangements, low productivity, and inadequate earnings.

Table 2: A review of labour market indicators for the youth

| | Level | Total | Male | Female | Urban | Rural |
|--|----------|-------|------|--------|-------|-------|
| Labour force participation rate | County | 55.8 | 55.6 | 56.1 | 64.3 | 54.9 |
| | National | 55.7 | 57.1 | 54.4 | 55.3 | 56.0 |
| Youth employment to population ratio | County | 51.3 | 49.2 | 53.4 | 58.9 | 50.5 |
| | National | 51.0 | 51.1 | 50.9 | 49.0 | 52.2 |
| Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) | County | 7.5 | 7.0 | 8.1 | 20.6 | 6.4 |
| | National | 15.5 | 13.3 | 17.6 | 24.1 | 11.4 |
| Youth unemployment | County | 8.1 | 11.4 | 4.8 | 8.4 | 8.1 |
| | National | 8.5 | 10.6 | 6.4 | 11.5 | 11.5 |
| Share of contributing family workers and own account workers | County | 71.2 | 58.8 | 82.8 | 41.6 | 74.9 |
| | National | 65.7 | 54.8 | 76.0 | 39.9 | 79.8 |

Source of data: 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census

Youth Employment Programmes and Interventions in Makueni County

Youth Employment Programmes by the County Government

During the second CIDP period, Makueni County envisioned improving youth employability. The proposed projects included initiatives aimed at: (i) making the labour market work better such as creation of opportunities and linkages for internship and employment, lobby for a legislation for youth welfare activities, development of a youth economic empowerment plan; (ii) entrepreneurship support programs such as establishment of youth friendly clinics and promotion of five youth led honey development enterprises; (iii) skills training such as establishment of talent academies, youth rehabilitation centres and youth empowerment through mentorship; (iv) making training programmes work better such as expansion of the current bursary scheme and higher education scholarship fund, construction and equipping of Vocational Training Centres, staffing Vocational Training Centres/technical institutions, roll out of youth mentorship programmes in safe spaces, creation of youth awareness, creation of awareness on upcoming sports, procurement of sports equipment; and (v) comprehensive approaches such as enhancement

of *Tetheka* empowerment fund. Table 3 below summarizes the planned interventions and their implementation status using 5 broad categories. During the review period, Makueni County implemented programmes in the five categories.

Table 3: Status on implementation of youth programmes by the County Government

| Category | Planned activities 2018-2022 | Achievements |
|--|--|---|
| Making the labour market work better | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of a youth development policy Development and enactment of an affirmative action policy and strategy. Creation of 100,000 job opportunities directly and indirectly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 policies have been developed, accented to and are under implementation. No reporting on whether 100,000 jobs were created directly or indirectly |
| Entrepreneurship support programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance <i>Tetheka</i> empowerment fund to support innovative entrepreneurs. Promote 5 youth led honey development enterprises. Increase access and utilization of special interest funds for women, youth and PWDs. Increase in the number of youths and women engaged in profitable agriculture – youths constituting at least 20 per cent of farmers. Increase registered businesses owned by the youth to 35 per cent (but baseline not provided). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 242 PWDs groups received <i>Tetheka</i> Fund and an additional number received the Women Empowerment Fund. Increased the production of honey in the county by 2 per cent from 657 MT in 2018 to 668 MT in 2021 through the support of Kenya Water Towers Agency, WFP and Smallholder Irrigation and Value Addition Programme (SIVAP). To mainstream youth in poultry farming, 10 youth groups (285 members) were equipped by MYAEP with designs of poultry house and 42,356 one month old chicks supplied to 8,471 beneficiaries. The government started construction of poultry aggregation centres at Nguumo and Kambu markets, which are ongoing. Operationalization of the Makueni Recording Studio and establishment of Wote Green Public Park, which is a recreational centre; the roofed open air amphitheater enables use by performing arts during all seasons. |
| Skills training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training youth to provide essential crop and livestock husbandry practices. Offer training to youth, women and PWDs and support them with equipment to value add various products. Train and empower federation officials, referees, and coaches. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No records found on number of youth, women and PWDs trained. The number of athletes transiting to professional sports increased to 20. |
| Making training programmes work better | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationalize 2 talent centres (arts and sports). Operationalization of Makueni Youth Empowerment services (M- YES). Establishment and operationalization of agricultural incubation centre. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of 2 talent centres. |
| Comprehensive approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a youth economic empowerment plan. Enhance employability of youths through training/skill development and enhance employment opportunities for them through sports and recreation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced employability of youths through training and skills development. |
| Other youth programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct 2 urban model mini stadiums in Emali and Makindu. Construct and level 36 playfields. Establish and equip youth sports academy and operationalize an arts and sports talent centres. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitation and standardization of 22 playgrounds. |

Source: CIDP 2018-2022 and CIDP 2023-2027

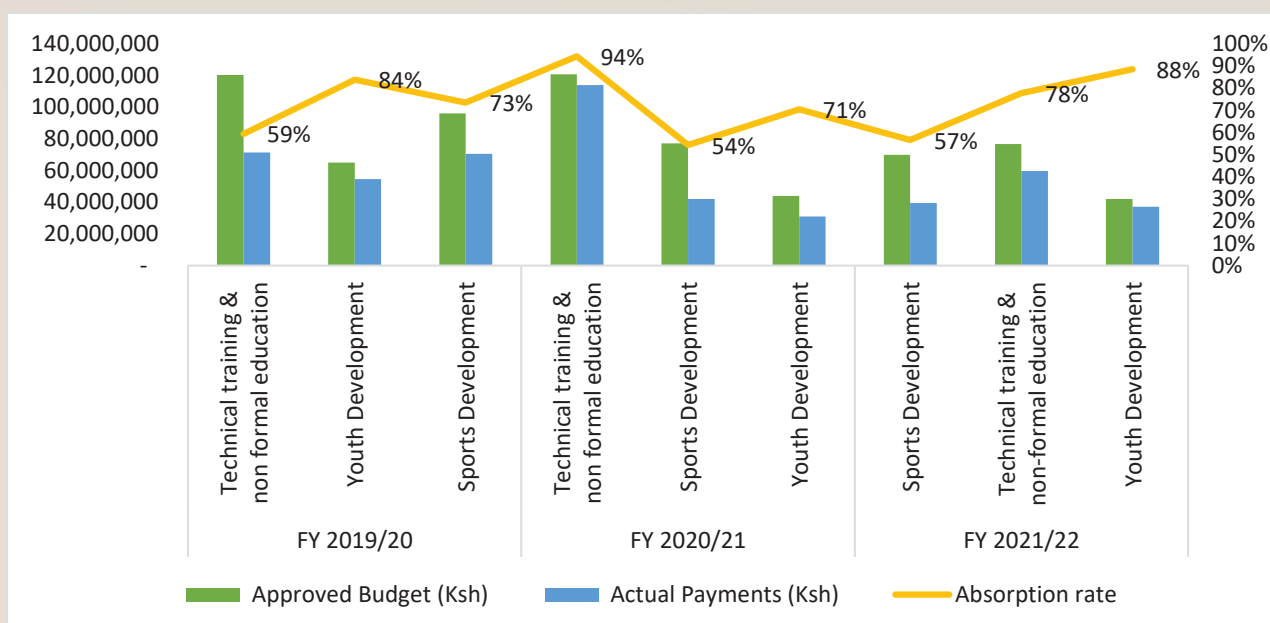
To make the labour market work better, the county planned on enacting a youth development policy and development and enactment of an affirmative action policy and strategy. A total of five policies were developed, enacted, and implemented during the review period. Entrepreneurship support programmes entails providing resources, training, and funding opportunities for startups and small businesses, creating more job opportunities. For example, the county disbursed funds to 242 PWD groups from *Tetheka* Fund; improved the production of honey in the county by 2 per cent from 657 MT in 2018 to 668 MT in 2021. To promote skills training, the county trained 20 athletes who

transitioned to professional sports. The review reveals that the county did not report clear achievements for some of the youth skills training programmes as proposed in their CIDP II such as the number of youth trained in crop and livestock husbandry practices. During the review period, the county government planned to create 100,000 jobs for the youth either directly or indirectly through various comprehensive approaches. It is not clear from the reported achievements whether 100,000 jobs were created in the planned period, since this was not reported.

County Spending on Youth Initiatives (2019/20-2021/22)

Makueni County has consistently implemented three programmes, namely: youth development, sports development and technical training and non-formal education, all of which are geared towards promoting skills training. The county spending on these initiatives at the sub-programme level varied considerably, ranging between Ksh 31 million for youth development and Ksh 131 million for technical training and non-formal education in 2020/21. Similarly, absorption rates ranged from a high of 94 per cent to a low of 54 per cent. Specifically, in 2019/20, the absorption rate for technical training and non-formal education was 59 per cent compared to other programmes such as youth development, whose absorption rate was 84 per cent. In the subsequent financial years, all sub-programmes were retained, namely, technical training and non-formal education, youth development and sports development (Figure 1). In 2020/21, the absorption rate for the technical training and non-formal education increased to 94 per cent from 59 per cent in 2019/20. There was an observed decline in budgetary allocation towards sports development from Ksh 96 million in 2019/20 to Ksh 77 million in 2020/21.

Figure 1: County spending and absorption rates on youth sub-programmes (2019/20-2021/22)



Source: Office of the Controller of Budget Annual Reports

Constraints in Implementing Youth Programmes

There are various crosscutting factors that affect effective implementation of youth employment programmes in Makueni County. These include:

- (i) Inadequate financial resources and low absorption of available resources. These set of challenges were linked to erratic resource flows and delayed disbursements from the National Treasury.
- (ii) Relatively weak reporting and inadequate data and information to inform planning and monitoring, evaluation, and learning. This is based on observed reporting of achievements in the consecutive CIDPs.
- (iii) Limited use of comprehensive programmes targeting the youth.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The overall objective of the policy brief was to review the implementation of youth policies and programmes in Makueni County. The county has made efforts towards implementation of programmes aimed at making the labour market work better, entrepreneurship support, skills training, making training programmes work better and at least one comprehensive approach aimed at youth empowerment and employment. Budgetary allocation towards the youth was focused on promoting skills training and development, sport talent and nurturing and youth

empowerment, all of which are aimed at enhanced skills training. That said, there are disparities in absorption rates across programmes, which could be attributed to delayed disbursement of funds from the National Treasury. There were also inconsistencies in reporting and implementation of sub-programmes across the years, which affects tracking on progress in implementation. To ensure effective implementation of youth programmes, the county requires to:

- (i) Improve the reporting on the review of performance of sector programmes as envisaged by the Guidelines for Preparation of CIDPs. Present reporting is weak on information useful for monitoring, evaluation and learning on the implementation of planned YEPs. The sector reviews can be improved through:
 - (a) A greater focus on reviewing all (and not just some) planned interventions in the previous CIDP.
 - (b) Providing a review of the challenges, emerging issues, and lessons learnt for each YEP.
 - (c) Clearly highlighting the non-implemented programmes and the reasons for their non-implementation.
 - (d) Clearly documenting lessons learned from implemented programmes by the county government and other partners to improve subsequent implementation.
- (ii) Plan and implement more comprehensive programmes similar to Tetheka to ensure a holistic and more effective approach in youth employment/empowerment programmes.
- (iii) Improve budget absorption across all the sub-programmes and ensure consistency in reporting on the activities by creating standardized reporting procedures and formats to ensure consistency in the way sub-programmes report on their activities and financial performance.
- iv) Maintain existing partnerships with other actors and create more partnerships, including with the private sector to reduce the resource gaps associated with the implementation of YEPs.

Endnotes

- 1 The Guidelines for Preparation of CIDPs include a chapter on performance review of the previous CIDP period. This section provides for a review of the performance of sector programmes including challenges, emerging issues, and lessons learnt.
- 2 Comprehensive programmes refer to those that encompass several types of interventions in one programme. An example is a programme that combines training, internship and job placement. These programmes are known to have better outcomes than interventions that focus on single aspects of the youth employment problem. An example in Kenya is the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project that has multifaceted services, including skills training and job placement.

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