

The Role of Empowerment in Fostering Youth Participation in Kenya's Vision 2030 Development Agenda

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Background

Empowerment is a process that strengthens and activates the capacity of the youth to satisfy their own needs, solve their own problems, and acquire the necessary resources to take control over their lives. It yields competence, confidence, self-esteem and eventually self-actualization and gives them the opportunity to express their creativity and be free to voice their opinions in decision-making.

According to the Commonwealth Secretariat, empowerment entails creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. The United Nations Programme on Youth describes participation of the youth in development as involving working with youth as beneficiaries, engaging them as partners and supporting them as leaders. The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envision the youth as the drivers of the economy, but if this energy is not harnessed through gainful employment, it makes them susceptible to several vices such as drug abuse, prostitution and even lured into terrorism which threatens the security of the country. Besides, the African Union Agenda 2063 aspires "an Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by people, especially its women and youth and caring for children".

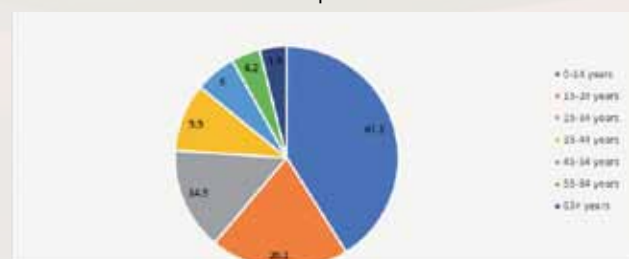
In Kenya, the importance of the youth in national development is reflected in the demographic characteristics of her population. According to the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) 2015-16, young people constitute about 60% of the total population. Further, it is estimated that close to 500,000 to 800,000 youths are entering the Kenyan job market yearly, whereas total unemployment rate in the country stood at 7.4%, with the youth

constituting about 85% of the unemployed. The structure and characteristics of the population place greater strains on the government to empower the youth and create more employment opportunities if only to exploit the full potentials of the youth in development.

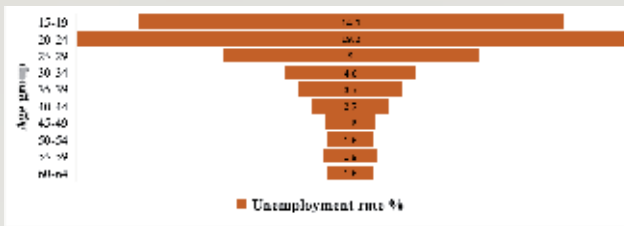
Kenya's growing large youth population should be an asset and their participation guided to sustain growth and reduce economic vulnerabilities. Presently, persons aged between 15 and 34 years constitute about 35% of Kenya's population. The youth exude energy, are talented and can be nurtured to contribute even more by helping them acquire basic skills and opportunities, self-worth and a sense that they are competent and able to do something with their lives.

So far, the formal labour market has been unable to absorb the constant supply of youth's seeking employment in the country. The youth (age groups 15-34) account close to 50% of the total unemployed population in the country, vastly outnumbering the jobs available in both public and private sectors. Many of the youths have turned to self-employment and/or entrepreneurship but are constrained by many factors including access to affordable capital to start or expand business. An additional key

Population distribution by age group (%); Source: 2015/16 Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS), Labour Force Basic Report 2018



Unemployment rates by age group in Kenya; Source: 2015/16 Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS), Labour Force Basic Report 2018



constraint is the youth's predisposition towards formal employment rather than entrepreneurial activities.

Opportunities for Empowering the Youth Under the “Big Four” Agenda

The youth are bona fide participants in economic growth and development the world over. In Kenya, the Constitution for Kenya 2010 recognizes youth involvement in national development under Articles 27 and 55 which outlaw discrimination in all spheres, including economic, social, cultural and political. Besides, the Vision 2030 has several specific flagship projects targeting the youth, including those aimed at providing financial support, innovation and skills development, awareness creation, information sharing and sports and creativity.

Under the “Big Four” agenda priority sectors, namely manufacturing, food security and nutrition, universal healthcare and affordable housing, are anticipated to create productive jobs especially for the unemployed youth being churned out of schools and training institutions and increasingly moving to cities and urban areas. These and the ongoing investments in infrastructure, resurgence of tourism, and improved business environment together can accelerate the pace of structural transformation of the economy and ensure inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The overall employment to population ratio in Kenya was 71.6% in 2016. This indicates that nearly 72% of Kenya's working-age population was employed. At the same time, employment to population ratio for persons aged below 24 years declined between 2009 and 2016, a fact that is largely attributed to education sector reforms which enlarged uptake and retention in training institutions. The labour force participation rate, which measures the composition of the labour and determines employment policies and long-term labour market characteristics, was 77.4%. It is however low (34.2%) for persons aged between 15 and 19 years, which is largely explained by their involvement in education and training activities. In normal circumstances, it would require not less than a decade of a steady 7% job-creating growth to absorb the estimated 800,000

unemployed and under-employed persons in this category. This justifies the fast-tracking of the “Big Four” projects to accelerate job opportunities in the short to medium term. In actual sense, GDP growth may take some time to have significant impacts on employment, although economic development creates employment in the longer term.

Within the manufacturing sector, creation of industrial clusters and improvements of ease of doing business offer pertinent opportunities for active engagement of the Kenyan youth. Identified clusters as established in Kenya's Industrial Transformation Programme, which include textile/apparels, leather, agro-processing, ICT, construction, oil, gas and mining services, and fish processing have high potential for harnessing the youths' skills set through value addition.

Under the agricultural sector, opportunities within the food and nutritional security agenda exist in form of agribusiness and processing linking suppliers to farmers, farmers to agri-businesses, and agri-businesses to markets. Productivity and profitability of farming and agribusiness value chains can be increased through openness to new techniques and technology, innovation, energy and education. The envisaged agri-business incubation hubs would provide pooled/shared facilities and equipment; mentoring and networking; services in business development, technology assessment, management methods and market access; and financial services. These provide new entry points to the youth in the agricultural value chains and can enable them to develop into small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Increasing returns of the agribusiness incubation hubs can be achieved by capturing and sharing the knowledge generated with other young agri-entrepreneurs at the national and county levels.

The affordable housing project is expected to deliver 500,000 affordable homes in the next five years. Implementation of the project is anticipated to impact on the housing supply chain and workforce, for instance by creating new job opportunities for various professionals, including: building surveyors, urban planners and architects to deliver the project. Further, construction of 92 Appropriate Building Technology (ABT) centres across the country is expected to offer the youth with requisite skills for job creation in building and construction industry.

The public procurement is a legitimate instrument used by governments to stimulate domestic production and consumption and is embraced the world over. The World Bank estimates that the global public procurement market is worth a whopping US\$ 9.5 billion. Ideally, the “Big Four” projects can be tailored towards youth-owned and youth-led enterprises that supply goods, works and services to government and public institutions, thereby expanding youth employment and empowerment.

The Public Procurement and Disposal Act 2015, in which 30% of all government tenders are reserved for youth, women and persons with disabilities is a good law which if effectively enforced can provide preferential procurement to favour youth empowerment. The enforcement of this Act together with the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) online platform, in which firms owned by youth, women or persons with disabilities are registered and prequalified lays the foundation for instituting youth friendly development strategies. However, the level of awareness among the youth about its existence is still very low. Besides, the policy lacks in mechanisms for integrating innovation and technological capabilities in agricultural, manufacturing and services sectors to support local production. On the contrary, it runs the risk of turning the youth into middle-men and brokers rather than innovators and producers (manufacturers). It therefore falls short of empowering the youth to be active participants in nation building as anticipated. Moreover, loopholes in registration, monitoring and enforcement of the law give room for non-targeted groups and non-deserving firms to be front runners in public procurement.

The creative arts and sports industries has great potential to create gainful employment for the youth. Creative economy encompasses films, TV, literature, advertising, art, crafts, design, fashion, music, performing arts, publishing and video games. Indeed, there is growing international interest in the potential of the cultural and creative industries to drive sustainable development and create inclusive job opportunities. Unfortunately, the contribution of arts, entertainment and recreation in Kenya is hardly 0.1% and with negligible numbers gainfully employed. Yet, according to UNESCO, the cultural and creative industries generate US\$ 250 billion in revenue a year, creating 29.5 million jobs worldwide. A study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 2010 indicated that Africa's share of the global creative economy is less than one per cent.

Similarly, the sports economy is among the largest in the global economy with several ancillary related activities necessary for sports. Sports organizations have many sources of income, including club fees and ticket sales, advertising and sponsorship, TV and media rights, re-distribution of income within the sport federations, merchandising, public support, etc. Among the visible sports-related sectors are health, education, entertainment, tourism, businesses and physical infrastructure. Some of the leading sports globally include baseball, basketball, American football, ice hockey (US), Football (Europe), athletics, tennis, rugby, golf, motor rallies, boxing, wrestling, among others.

Sports development is directly related to provision of various goods and services which have economic impacts to an economy. These activities generate incomes and employment during annual championship events and during hosting of regional and international competitions which attract major sponsorships from the private sector.

Some of the leading sports activities in Kenya which have attracted private sector sponsorship include athletics, rugby, football, basketball, motor rally and golf. However, inadequate provision of appropriate facilities and poor commercialization hinder sustainable growth and development of the sector.

Overview of some sports-related activities and products with economic impacts		
Consumer expenditures		
Goods and services conditional on doing sports		
Veterinarian	Dietary supplements	Sports Bets
Health services	Hotels, restaurants (sports tourism)	TV commercials and broadcasts
Doing sports		
Stadiums	Swimming pools	Theaters and other professional sports
Goods and services necessary to do sports		
Racing horses	Sport shoes and clothes	Sport weapons
School education	Sports cars, moto bikes	Fitness centres
Watches, clocks etc	Sailing equipment	Dancing halls, centres etc
Adopted from "Sport Satellite Accounts – A European Project: New Results" leaflet published by the European Commission (April 2011)		

Overall, success of tapping the full potential of the creative and sports sectors requires collaboration between public and private sectors to build appropriate infrastructure and capacity to commercialize creative talent and reap the vast fortunes. This is more so given that the intrinsic values of some products including music, arts and are beyond economic and financial values.

Major Constraints and Challenges

First, poor quality training arising from lack of linkages between education and industry has led to supply of secondary, tertiary and university graduates without relevant skills required in the job markets.

Second, lack of an effective regulatory and institutional framework for coordination of youth targeted programmes within government and the private sector has led to duplication of efforts and in some cases conflict of interest, thereby hindering implementation. A case in point is the establishment of multiple funds to enhance access to financial resources by the youth. In addition, there has been no proper training and sensitization of targeted groups

to ensure effective investments, thereby affecting sustainability of such programmes. Moreover, low levels of commercialization and incentives for investments in creative arts and sports industries is partly blamed on weak coordination, regulatory and enforcement frameworks.

Third, youth targeted programmes have been victim to corruption and mismanagement of financial resources. This has been witnessed in major funding schemes, and sporting activities particularly in football and athletics. Poor governance by managers and sports associations have partly led to failure to attract potential sponsors of these activities for scaling up and commercialization to take root.

Fourth, there is weak enforcement of the Public Procurement and Disposal Act 2015, with no clear mechanism of ensuring the youth benefit from the opportunities in a focused manner. The current law is subject to abuse to the disadvantage of the targeted groups who may not after all be technically and financially capable of participating in competitive markets. Besides, delays in payment of suppliers by national and county government agencies expose the beneficiaries to debt traps and financial instability, thereby killing innovation and productivity.

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. There is need to promote success through business outreach and youth entrepreneurship programmes. Young people should be trained to be creative thinkers and have a sense of ownership, commitment and love for whatever activities they are involved in.
2. Amendments to strengthen the Public Procurement and Disposal Act 2015 by reserving specific goods and services targeting the youth, ensuring established firms do not register as beneficiaries and adjusting the reserve threshold from 30% to 40% or 50% for greater impact.
3. The construction of various sports facilities and related infrastructure should be expedited to effectively promote creative arts and sporting activities in Kenya. The purpose should be to target active youth involvement and income generation, and discourage idleness which may lead to their involvement in social evils including drugs abuse and criminal activities. Besides, such facilities can be major sources of revenue to sports-induced economic activities or businesses, and the national and county governments, especially whenever championship events are held.
4. Talent identification and management of youth with respect to extra-curriculum activities should be scaled up and strengthened at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels for various festivals involving creative arts and sports. This should go in tandem with expansion of incentive schemes to attract more corporate support and sponsorships across all counties and at national levels.
5. There should be zero tolerance to corruption in youth targeted programmes and activities and officials liable should be barred from ever holding management offices in future. This should apply to both public and private sector offices, and sports associations for effective and sustainable empowerment of the youth.
6. Finally, there is need for a comprehensive national cultural, creative and sports industry mapping study to establish the existing products, employment, contributions to GDP and potentials for further development.

About KIPPRA Policy Briefs

KIPPRA Policy Briefs are aimed at a wide dissemination of the Institute's policy research findings. The findings are expected to stimulate discussion and also build capacity in the public policy making process in Kenya.

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