Helping Youth Thrive in Staple Agriculture: Learning from Experience

By

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Introduction

Box 1: Kenya Rural Youth Livelihood Strategies Programme (KERYLIP)
Youth can be defined in many contexts such as transitional, demographic, cultural, biological and social. In this context, the youth is defined within demographic and transitory paradigms. Transitional paradigm issues include independence, marriageability, responsibility, maturity and Productivity (Social and economic factors).

Youth unemployment has become a major challenge in the 21st Century. The Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions highly affected by youth unemployment. It is estimated to be more than 21% (ILO: 2003). According to ILO projection, Sub-Saharan Africa will witness substantial growth in additional labour force of 28 million - 30 million between 2003 and 2015.

While contending that the current economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa countries will not cope with the growing number of unemployed youth in the region, alternative strategies need to be developed before situation gets out of control.

In Kenya, youth unemployment is a serious development issue. It is estimated that 64% of unemployed persons in Kenya are youth. Interestingly only 1.5% of the unemployed youth have formal education beyond secondary school level and the remaining over 92% have no vocational or professional skills training and the majorities are found in the rural Kenya. Due to inadequate opportunities in rural areas the tendency is that they migrate to urban centres to look for such opportunities.

Kenyan economy heavily depends on Agriculture (30% of GDP), which is basically rural-oriented sector. Surprisingly, Kenyan agriculture is still labour-intensive thus the out-migration of young and productive labour force from rural to urban centres has a direct negative impact on agricultural production hence job creation in other sectors which are directly or indirectly linked to the sector will be reduced. A strategy of rolling back rural –urban migration by creating opportunities for employment and access of livelihoods would have a positive spiral effect on Kenya economy.
It is against this background that Kenya Rural Youth Livelihood Strategies Programme (KERYLIP: 2004) was established by Kenya Youth Foundation to create employment and livelihood access for rural youth along the Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Value Chain by venturing into both on-farm and off-farm enterprises/income generating activities.

The programme was piloted in Ahero- Nyando District of Kisumu County. The target was to empower 200 youth members through Kinda Tura Youth Group to have access to sustainable livelihoods based on agriculture, environment and natural resources management by 2007.

Source: Kenya Youth Foundation, 2006

In designing a youth programme, you must inculcate their aspirations in positive and constructive ways and this simply means consult them, listen to their opinions and work with them in the design and execution of the programme. In as much as you would want to change their situation positively, if their aspirations are not captured in your programme, you are bound to fail as they will look for other ways to satisfy their aspirations.

Challenges facing youth in developing countries (Kenya)

1. Unemployment

2. Lack of value based education system

   One of the unique educational models of Earth university in Costa Rica is to facilitate participatory and actively strengthen the ethical and social values that forms part of the students’ holistic development. [www.earth.ac.cr](http://www.earth.ac.cr)

3. Unequal opportunities in rural and urban settings (rural-urban migration)

4. Lack of comprehensive and coherent youth policy (current policies favours urban youth)

5. Lack of access to productive resources (land & capital)

5. Poor delivery of government services to the youth (programme design & capacities)

6. Private sector is impatient with the youth “The Standard Newspaper", Tuesday 5th June 2012, pg 45 “ How to deal with young restless employees” – These young employees are opting for jobs that promise training & education opportunities as well as avenues to network with mentors and role models in a way that influence their career path.

7. To much focus on supply driven solutions (quantity not quality)

8. General prescriptions for the youth instead of sector specific prescriptions
9. Too much focus on immediate solutions rather than long term solutions for the youth

**How to help youth thrive in Staple Agriculture**

i. Comprehensive & full cycle capacity building for target youth (needs assessment, trainings, awareness creation, implementation, monitoring & evaluation). The content must be relevant, up to date and practical

ii. Diversification of youth involvement in the Sector (Look at the Staple Food Value Chain)

iii. Prioritize socio-economic benefits and strategies to achieve them (It is about their aspirations) and therefore there must be a win-win situation

iv. Training & Implementation Support even on pilot basis (Technical & Financial Support)

v. Social interaction & entertainment should be mainstreamed (music, skits, drama, & sports as tools for agricultural extension services to farmers)

vi. Comprehensive policy that would address full participation by youth in the entire process, training government officers to specialize in working with youth, collaboration with other youth service providers (NGOs, Academic & Research Institutions and Private sector), adequate funding must be secured for both short & long term programmes

vii. Creativity, initiativeness, responsibility, self-reliance and involvement of other key segment of the society is important (parents & community leaders)

viii. Benefits & Incentives to motivate youth and their leaders

ix. Affirmative action for disadvantaged youth (out of school youth) such as specialized training packages and access to financial and marketing services

x. Increased & Diversification of funding for youth project (local & international)

**Conclusion**

**Question**: What else should be done to make agriculture attractive to young people?

**Sources**:

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