

IDS researchers, professors Rosemary Atieno and Winnie Mitullah, presented the Kenya Basic Report on the Survey of Youth Employment in Kenya, under the auspices of the Innovative Approaches to Creating Opportunities and Incorporating the Youth in East Africa's Labour Markets project.

The report, submitted in Kigali, Rwanda, in November 2014, was based on a study whose objective is to generate innovative approaches and policy messages with which youth employment opportunities and poverty reduction can be achieved through economic growth.

It involved 800 youths sampled from Nairobi, Makeni and Siaya counties. Four categories of youths were sampled: The employed, the unemployed, those in school or academic institutions and those in self-employment. One of the important findings is that the youth, across the four categories, have high aspirations and ambitions. One common ambition is to continue with their education and get a profession.

"Most of the youth interviewed aspire to continue their education even after dropping out or getting employed. The youth also want employment opportunities which give them security and flexibility as well as the opportunity to develop their careers. These aspirations need to be taken into account in any interventions on youth unemployment," said the researchers in their report

The study established that most initiatives to address youth unemployment appear to target those who have dropped out of school and called for review of this trend. It was observed that while there are a number of interventions targeting those out of school, there are no initiatives targeting the youth in schools, which is their formative stages.

"Discussions with stakeholders showed that interventions should not only be targeted at the youth outside school, but should also target the youth in school or training institutions to shape their attitude and approach to the labour market. Changing the situation of the youth as far as unemployment is concerned requires policies which respond to the needs of the youth and well designed and targeted programmes," said the report.

It further emphasized that addressing the youth unemployment problem requires a change in the way the youth are viewed. The youth should be seen as an important development asset to the country whose development potential should be tapped. A number of policy documents in the country recognize them as an important resource.

"The youth are mobile and flexible. All the categories of the youth interviewed have moved from some of their original places to where they are now and are willing to move to get better employment opportunities. Initiatives to make the rural areas attractive to the youth are likely to attract the youth looking for employment opportunities," the study recommended

The IDS researchers observed that the coexistence of initiatives aimed at addressing youth unemployment together with the youth who are either not aware or not using these initiatives underlines the need for a multisectoral and coordinated approach to addressing youth unemployment.

"The discrepancy between interventions or initiatives and their actual utilisation by the youth imply the need for a change in approach. There is need for different sectors and actors to coordinate their interventions in targeting specific youth to avoid duplication and low uptake of initiatives," the study observed.

With respect to coordination among the different players, it was recommended that the government needs to play a more facilitative role, providing the enabling environment like linking the different players and ensuring standardisation in practices and products related to initiatives supporting the youth.

Significantly, it was observed that the youth belong to different categories and have different potentials which must be factored into the design of programmes. The youth block integrates those aged between

18 and 35 years with some of the youth falling within this bloc being young professionals who have made it and are effectively contributing to the economy.

The Institute for Development Studies (IDS) University of Nairobi, in collaboration with the Institute for Policy Analysis Rwanda, the Economic and Social Research Foundation, Tanzania and Makerere University, Uganda, has been conducting the study to identify constraints to job creation, and access by the youth to employment opportunities and identify policy implications from the results of the project.