

Factors Influencing Economic Dependency Levels Among Educated Youth: The Case of Makueni County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to assess the influence of the factors that have contributed to the economic dependency among the educated youth in Makueni County. Survey design was employed in this study which endeavored to establish the underlying factors in the ever persistent socio-economic dependency among especially the educated youth, i.e., those who have attained the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education certificate and above. A sample constituting 108 youth aged 20-35 years was drawn from three randomly selected districts in Makueni County. Relevant stakeholders in the youth development sector were also interviewed. Quantitative data was captured from primary sources including, questionnaires, focus group discussions and key informants and secondary sources like desk reviews and internet. The data was edited, coded and analyzed. The results were presented using frequency tables and percentages. Qualitative data, obtained from focus discussion groups (FDG) and key informants (KI) was also analyzed and used to back-up survey data. The study findings were meant for all sectors of economy focusing on youth development besides other developmental areas.

Keywords: Youth, Age Dependency Ratio, Poverty, Youth Empowerment, Makueni, Kenya

1. Introduction

In many African societies, the concept of youth has been understood and used differently by different governments, non-governmental organizations(NGO's) and the public in general (Mkandawire,1996). Sociologically, 'Youth' denotes an interface between childhood and adulthood. However, in many African societies, especially rural Africa, the status of adulthood is largely determined by the capacity to sustain a legal marriage (Abdullah, 1999).

Youth as a social group are defined in terms of age;ranging from the ages of 10 or 11 years to as high as 35 years. In most African countries, the tendency to extend the category of youth to 30 years and beyond seems to be a reflection of the emerging phenomenon of prolonged period of youth dependency (Abdullah, 1999).

This is a reflection of the inability of many young people to pursue independent or sustainable livelihoods as a consequence of the depressed or stagnant economic situation in contemporary Africa.

Youth accounted for about 20%, 29% and 36% of the population in developed countries, developing and least developed countries respectively at the start of this millennium. Kenya's population has been characterized by a high proportion of young adults. The youth constitute about 32% of the Kenya's estimated forty million people making this group a vital component of the country's political, social and economic development (KNBS, 2009). Such a percentage of youth presents a 'youth bulge', and having a population that is skewed towards the young can be a challenge for a country (UNDP, 2010).

The government of Kenya in 2005 mooted the idea of establishing a ministry (ministry of youth affairs and sports) that would tackle youth issues as one of the bold and radical interventions to address youth unemployment, marginalization and consequent dependence on relatives and well-wishers for survival.

Since the establishment of the ministry of youth affairs and sports (MOYAS) in 2006, the government further proved its commitment to address youth issues by putting in place several other initiatives such as youth enterprise development fund (YEDF) in 2006, youth empowerment program (YEP) in 2009, subsidized youth polytechnic tuition (SYPT) introduced in 2007 and the National Youth Council (NYC) in 2011. These initiatives focused on the critical factors for positive youth outcomes which include the acquisition of wealth; access to education and training; access to labour markets; good personal and reproductive health; longevity of life; access to social services, opportunities and conditions (availability, knowledge, attitudes, access, utilization, perception). These were efforts to lift youth to a reasonable standard of living and reduce the dependency levels, apathy and vulnerability to certain risks.

According to the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS, 2005/06), the unemployment rate was estimated at 40% of the labour force out of which 67% is youth. The majority of the unemployed youth had formal education but no skills or vocational training. Primary and secondary school graduates accounted for 82% of the unemployed and university graduates for 14%, as indicated in the employment marshal plan.

Makueni District Development Plan (2002-2008) revealed that majority of youth in Makueni county lack meaningful sources of livelihoods. Most young people in the area were poverty-stricken and dependency levels were high. Studies conducted in most developing countries indicated unemployment, high youth population growth rate, conflicts, poor economies, rurality, lack of access to resources and general youth exclusion as key factors contributing to youth poverty and resultant dependency.

Studies carried out in Kenya concerning youth challenges have only revealed the general issues without drawing the rural-urban dichotomy. The studies also failed to reflect regional differences in terms of resource endowment and youth development issues. Thus, no comprehensive study has been conducted in Makueni County to establish the root causes and the essence of the imposing youth poverty and socio-economic dependency, hence this initiative.

This survey sought to establish the following objectives:

- i. To establish the influence of entrepreneurial skills on dependency levels among youth in Makueni County.
- ii. To assess the influence of access to sources of funds for income generating activities on dependency levels among the youth in Makueni County.
- iii. To establish the influence of welfare provision (donations) on levels of dependency among youth in Makueni County.
- iv. To establish how unemployment influence dependency levels among the youth in Makueni County.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Study area

The target group under investigation (i.e., population) constituted youth aged 20-35 years and with at least a K.C.S.E within Makueni County. The County consists of nine districts. According to the 2009 population and housing census, Makueni County had 884,527 people. The total number of youth stood at 224,335 which accounted for 25.4% of the total population (KNBS, 2010).

Generally, youth development in Makueni County continued to face obstacles despite the numerous national resolutions to provide young people with opportunities for participating fully in all aspects of the society. The county is prone to frequent droughts that are normally experienced in the extensive lowlands which account for almost 90% of the total area of land. Drought was the major cause of poverty in the county. Many families loosed their livestock during prolonged drought. Funds which would otherwise be spend on gainful development activities were spent on relief food given to the people during periods of famine (Makueni District Development Plan 2008-2012). According to the District Development Plan for Makueni, drought and the cost of relief provision had impacted negatively on the efforts being made to reduce poverty in the county.

2.2 Research design

The study took on a survey research design. Questionnaires were administered; interviews and focused group discussions were also conducted. Purposive sampling method was employed since the survey targeted youth who had obtained at least a high school certificate. Snowball sampling was also used in areas where identifying samples proved challenging to help obtain adequate samples.

The samples were randomly selected from three randomly selected districts in Makueni County. One division was randomly selected from each district and then two locations were randomly selected from each selected division. 12 respondents from each of the identified locations were interviewed. Gender balance was ensured in the sample selection. In addition key informants (KI) including officers working with the Youth Affairs and social services departments, NGOs, community based organizations operating in the county were also interviewed. At least one focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted in each chosen district in the county. Information drawn from the development agencies and the FGDs was used to supplement data obtained from the 108 respondents.

2.3 Sample size

A sample constituting 36 respondents was obtained from each of the three districts namely; Kathonzweni, Wote and Makindu. 108 randomly selected youths (54 men and 54 women) aged between 20-35 years were involved in the study. The sample also constituted both employed and unemployed (idle) youth based on sex and age cohorts as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Sample size per age cohort

Age	Number of male and female respondents from each of the two locations in a district		Total number of respondents from each district
	Males	Females	
20-24	3	3	12
25-29	3	3	12
30-35	3	3	12
TOTAL	9	9	36

Source: Research data, 2012

2.4 Data collection

This study employed both primary and secondary data collection methods. Questionnaires were administered directly to individual respondent. Focus group discussions were also organized. The participants were encouraged to discuss some focused questions and give their views and opinions. Key informants were also contacted to give certain classified information along the study themes.

2.5 Methods of data analysis

The quantitative data collected was edited, coded and analyzed. The results were presented using frequency tables, percentages and bar graphs. Qualitative information obtained from individual respondents, FGD's and key informants was transcribed and analyzed along the study themes to supplement and back up the survey data. Secondary information captured during the survey was utilized to augment and confirm the conjectural viewpoint and conclusions drawn along the study themes.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Respondents' characteristics

The results indicated that most of the respondents (70.4%) interviewed were aged between 20 to 29 years and only a few (29.6%) were aged 30 years and above. The results further revealed that 43% of the respondents had secondary education, 44.9% had college education and a lower percentage (12.1%) had university education. The results therefore implied that majority of the youth (57%) in Makueni County were well educated as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Age and education level of the respondents

Age bracket in years	Percentage of total respondents
20-24	32.4
25-29	38
30-35	29.6
Education level	Percentage of total respondents
Secondary school (KCSE)	43
College	44.9
University	12.1

Source: Research data, 2012

3.2 Age at marriage

The results revealed that 84.5% of the respondents married when they were 20-29 years as shown on Table 3. This is the age at which most youth pursue their careers through education. They are therefore not better placed to fend for their families, which come with additional responsibilities. This could be one of the reasons why most of the youths (85.1%) supplemented their income from their parents and/or siblings.

Table 3. Age of respondents at marriage

Age At Marriage In Years	Percentage
Below 19	2.2
20-24	35.6
25-29	48.9
30-35	13.3

Source: Research data, 2012

3.3 Family background

Most of their parents were peasant farmers with 44.2% of the respondents having fathers who were peasant farmers while 50.5% had mothers who were peasant farmers. 32.2% of those interviewed had self-employed fathers while 24.3% had self-employed mothers. Moreover, the self-employed parents were running small-scale enterprises with meager incomes as reported during focus group discussions. Only a few of the youth had parents who were in permanent salaried jobs as shown in tables 4 and 5. The foregoing portrayed a poverty situation and a reason for the prevailing situation whereby majority of the youth were economically dependent while those in any form of employment had several dependants who included parents and siblings.

Table 4 Fathers' occupation

Type of occupation	Percentage
None	7
Peasant farmer	44.2
Self employed	32.2
Public servant	16.3

Source: Research data, 2012

Table 5 Mothers' occupation

Type of occupation	percentage
None	15.3
Peasant farmer	50.5
Self employed	24.3
Public servant	9.7

Source: Research data, 2012

Those with 5-7 siblings took the lion's share of 41%. When asked whether their parents or siblings got any financial assistance from them, 64.8% said yes while 35.2% said no. Most of the respondents provided financial assistance to their parents/siblings. That could be attributed to the fact that most of the parents were peasant farmers, who earned very little if any from it. Because the youth came from poor families, who consumed the little income they got, it implied that the family background had a bearing on youth dependency because the more the youth gave financial assistance to their parents or siblings, the more they become prone to dependency because of the increased financial burden and the constant or decreasing sources of income. Information obtained from focus group discussions revealed that those who came from well up families depended on their parents and siblings to supplement their income as explained later in this chapter. The results of the survey also indicated that 62.7% of the youth interviewed were living independently in their own homes while 37.3% were still housed by their parents. This implied that still a significant number of youth in Makueni County could not live independently from their parents.

Regarding the age at which the employed youth got their first employment, the survey revealed that 78% of the respondents entered the job market while at 20 to 29 years of age as shown on table 6.

This could be a reason why a big percentage of the respondents (61.1%) said that they were not with their first employer due to the search for what is popularly known as greener pastures or better employment.

Table 6 Age (of respondents) at first job

Age In Years For The First Job	Percentage
Below 20 years	11
20-24	61.6
25-29	16.4
Over 30 years	11

Source: Research data, 2012

3.4 Reliance on welfare

The study aimed at gathering data and information on how the youth rely on assistance for their life, from whom and the kind of assistance. Majority of the respondents (83.3%) said that their monthly income was not enough to sustain them. Most of the respondents (85%) said that they relied on their parents or siblings to supplement their monthly incomes in order to survive, an indication that the youth were not satisfied with their monthly income. In contrast, majority of the respondents (66.6%) said that the residents of the area did not often get relief provisions. Another 68.3% said that members of the community could do without relief. However, when asked the kind of relief they often got either from the government or NGOs, they said that food constituted the greatest percentage at 61.3%. A whopping 58% believed that the members of the community were used to getting relief.

In regards to dependence on funds, majority (66%) said that they did not depend on any social fund for survival, with the NGOs leading in the provision of social funds to the youth at 56.8% against 43.2% by the government. The data gathered on reliance on welfare did not confirm that reliance on welfare had contributed to economic dependency among youth in Makueni County. The fact that majority (58%) said that young members of the community were used to getting relief cannot mean that this had led to economic dependency among the members of the community.

This is because majority of the youth relied mostly on food relief and farm tools but not other kinds of welfare. This can be confirmed by the fact that majority (68.3%) said that they were able to survive without relief, an indication that the youth and the population in general had the capacity and potential of helping themselves, only that they had limited opportunities for maximizing their income, and that is why they were of the view that their income was not enough to sustain them. What this meant was that if the youth in Makueni County had the means of maximizing their income, then they would not rely on any kind of relief or donations. If they had access to social funds, they would engage in productive activities, including small scale irrigation farming. Opinions from focus group discussions emphasized that, instead of the government giving occasional relief food, it, or other players should consider equipping the youth and other beneficiaries with funds to engage in business as well as in food production.

To this end therefore, the study found no relationship between the independent variable of reliance on welfare and the dependent variable of increased economic dependency among youths in Makueni County, reason being that the welfare which was provided to the youths and the community in general was food, which was hardly enough. A person cannot rely on something which is not enough and not sustainable.

3.5 Unemployment

This study sought to find out how unemployment influenced economic dependency levels among youth in Makueni County. Employment status is a key factor in determining one’s socio-economic status. Three variables namely; available forms of employment, level of unemployment and manifestations of underemployment were assessed to establish their influence on youth economic dependency in Makueni County. The survey results indicated that commodity business was a leading sector in terms of employment provision (26.4%), followed by the transport sector (23%) as shown on Table 7

Table 7: Forms of employment available to youth in Makueni County

Employment sector	Percentage of respondents
Commercial farming	19
Commodity business	26.4
Public/private sector jobs	22.6
Transport services	23
Entertainment	9

Source: Research data, 2012

From Table 7, it is evident that majority of youth (26.4%) in the county engage themselves in commodity business, meaning that if they were adequately facilitated, they would be able and willing to work and generate enough income for themselves and avoid dependency. The fact that commercial farming did not attract many youths in the county could be attributed to the occasional rain failure, because most of the agriculture in the county is rain fed. This underscored the fact that relief food topped the kind of relief given to the people in Makueni County as indicated earlier.

Those who said that they were working either in the public or the private sector, i.e., those who were salaried expressed dissatisfaction with their employment with 63% saying that they were not satisfied with their current job and another 57.3% saying that they felt at risk at their current workplace. In contrast, majority of the youths were not ready to quit their jobs, majority saying that they were not able to do without the jobs despite the fact that they were dissatisfied with them. When asked the number of hours they worked in a day, their response was as shown on Table 8

Table 8. Number of hours worked per day

Number of hours in a day	Percentage of respondents
Less than 8 hours	4.7
8 hours	38
More than 8 hours	57.3

Source: Research data, 2012

From Table 8, it was clear that the youths were actually hard working but the rewards from their work simply did not match their efforts, meaning that they worked for long hours for less money and therefore the income was not enough to sustain them, thus prompting them to rely on other sources to survive. When asked the rate of unemployment in Makueni County, their responses were as shown on Table 9.

Table 9. Rate of Unemployment

Rate	Percentage
Very high	54.8
High	30.7
Moderate	3.0
Low	6.7
Very low	4.8

Source: Research data, 2012

Yoshimoto (2000) observes that young people actively seeking employment were two to three times more likely to miss jobs compared to the older generation. From Table 4.8, it is clear that the levels of unemployment in the county were very high because if those who said it was very high were combined with those who said it was high, the total percentage was 85.5%, meaning that majority of the youth were not employed in the County. Moreover, 63.5% of the youth said that they were not satisfied with their current jobs as well as a whopping majority of 61% who said that they were not with their first employer and another 73% who revealed that they had changed jobs more than once. When asked the kind of employment they were engaged in, those who were self employed claimed a greater percentage at 36%, against 33.7% and 30.3% in the public sector and private sector respectively. However, when looked at from the perspective of salaried employment, those with salary were majority at 64% i.e., 33.7% for the public sector and 30.3% in the private sector as shown on Table 10.

Table 10. Kind of employment

Types of Employment	Percentage of respondents
Public sector	33.7
Private sector	30.3
Self-employed	36

Source: Research data, 2012

When asked whether they aspired to get better jobs, majority of the respondents (93.5%) said yes against 6.5% who said no. That reinforced the 63.5 % who said that they were not satisfied with their current job. 85.7% of those who aspired to get better jobs said that they had the relevant skills and qualifications. Despite the efforts made by the government to tame the problem of unemployment in the country, an overwhelming majority of the youth (90.6%) in the county said that they had not benefited from any of the government economic stimulus programs such as KKV, with 60% of those who said they had benefited saying that the programs did not bring any change in their lives.

The problem of unemployment among the youth in Makueni County is therefore real and prominent. This can be said to have contributed to the high economic dependency among the youth in the county. This is because majority of the youth were either unemployed or underemployed. That pushed the youth to look for other sources of income so as to survive. That made them depended on assistance from their siblings and parents as well as the government and NGOs. The relationship between the dependent variable (dependency) and the independent variable (unemployment) is therefore evident, meaning that the higher the rates of unemployment, the higher the dependency levels. This is because employment forms the core of lives of the youth and with good employment they are able to sustain themselves and live decent lives as opposed to those who are not employed. Since the youth have to survive irrespective of whether they are employed or not, they have to look for alternatives of sustaining themselves, and this makes them to be depended on others by default.

3.6 Access to sources of funds for income generating activities

When asked the available sources of capital, the respondents gave the following information as presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Available sources of capital

Source Of Capital	Percentage of respondents
Commercial banks	23.3
Micro-finance institutions	27
Table banking/merry-go-round	30.1
Shylock	8
Government	11.6

Source: Research data, 2012

Merry go rounds were major sources (30.1%) of capital to do business in the county. The other key sources of capital were micro-finance institutions (27%) and commercial banks (23.3%). The government and shylock sources had not gained popularity among the youths as sources of capital since only a few had benefited from them (11.6% and 8% respectively). The results further revealed that, 61.8% of the respondents were engaged in income generating activities while 38.2% werenot.

Majority of those who said they were engaged in income generating activities (IGAs) revealed that they got the capital from personal savings (40.6%). Women enterprise fund and youth enterprise fund were also key capital sources utilized by the youth and had been utilized by 23% and 13.5% of the respondents respectively. Loans from micro-finance institutions were the least utilized with only 3.1% of the respondents having accessed them as shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Sources of funds for existing youth IGAs

Source of funds for existing youth IGAs	Percentage of respondents
Personal savings	40.6
Parents/siblings	7.3
Friends	7.3
Micro-finance loan	3.1
Youth enterprise fund	13.6
Merry-go-round	5.2
Women enterprise fund	23

Source: Research data, 2012

The survey results further revealed that, 62.2% of the respondents reported that, most of the youths were willing to get loans to run their businesses, while 37.6% felt that they were not. When asked how accessible credit to start business was in the area, 53.5% of the respondents felt that, they were inaccessible while 30.3% felt that the loans were accessible. 9.1% and 7.1% of the sample were of the opinion that the loans were highly inaccessible and highly accessible respectively as shown on Table 13.

Table 13. Rate of accessibility of credit

Accessibility	Percentage
Highly accessible	7.1
Accessible	30.3
Inaccessible	53.5
Highly inaccessible	9.1

Source: Research data, 2012

Majority of the respondents (64.1%) said they had information about the available credit facilities against 35.9% who said they had no information. Majority (55.5%) of those who said that they had information regarding availability of credit facilities, said that the information was availed to them oftenly.

From this information, it can be deduced that the youth in the county were willing to get credit to start businesses as sources of income. The youth were also much aware about the availability of credit facilities for starting or financing income generating activities. The banks and microfinance institutions are the ones which are in a better position to give adequate loans or credit to start business than friends and personal savings. However, many youths did not access the funds from the institutions but preferred their personal savings. The reason for such a state of affairs as established after further probe was that the banks and microfinance institutions had other requirements like collaterals or guarantors, which the youths were unable to provide. The study therefore found out that poor access to credit for income generating activities had led to economic dependency among the youth in the county.

3.7 Entrepreneurial skills

The study also aimed at assessing the extent to which entrepreneurial skills contributed to economic dependency among youth in Makueni County. The results of the study revealed that majority of the youth (76.1%) who were interviewed said that the few institutions offering entrepreneurial courses imposed very high charges beyond the reach of many youths. That was what most of them (81.8%) thought was the reason why majority of the youth in the county did not have the necessary entrepreneurial skills. Most of the respondents (57.1%) said that the entrepreneurial courses offered at the institutions were below the market standards. In regards to business skills, few of the respondents (22%) said that they possessed business skills, with 72.2% of those with such skills saying that they acquired them through formal training.

The results showed that a higher percentage of the youth with entrepreneurial skills had acquired the skills up to diploma level (39.4%) and through seminars (29.4%). Others had acquired the skills up to certificate level (24.7%) and only a few had degrees (6.5%) in the field as shown on Table 14.

Table 14. Level at which the business skills were acquired

Level of business skills training	Percentage of respondents
Seminar	29.4
Certificate	24.7
Diploma	39.5
Degree	6.4

Source: Research data, 2012

The results indicated that most of the respondents (78%) lacked business skills which emerged the leading cause of failure of youth run businesses. Information obtained from focus group discussions also revealed that even those endowed with entrepreneurial skills had little to show in terms of enterprises. When asked the causes of failure by youth run-businesses in the area, the responses from the youth were as shown on Table 15.

Table 15. Causes of business failure

Causes of business failure	Percentage of respondents
High local authority levies	11.1
High cost of running business	13.1
Lack of family support	6.1
Poor government policies	3.4
Poor infrastructure	8.7
Lack of motivation to run business	10.2
Competition	6.1
Lack of market	9.6
Poor entrepreneurial skills	17.2
Lack of access to credit	14.5

Source: Research data, 2012

As indicated on Table 15, it is evident that majority of youths in Makueni County did not have entrepreneurial skills. Though majority of youths (61.8%) were engaged in income generating activities, the leading cause of failure of businesses run by the youth in the county was lack of entrepreneurial skills. This meant that the more the youths lacked entrepreneurial skills, the more the businesses failed and the lesser the income they got on monthly basis.

3.8 Key Informants

The key informants included; NGO officers, Social services officers and CBO officials. The key informants seemed to share similar views with the respondents. In regards to the issue of reliance on welfare, majority of the key informants said that the youth had the capacity and potential of freeing themselves from reliance on welfare, which they acknowledged was not enough. They described the youth of the county as well educated, aggressive and willing to engage in income generating activities so as to avoid reliance on any form of welfare provided either by the government or the private sector. To them therefore, reliance on welfare had nothing to do with economic dependency levels among the youths in the county because the welfare provided to the youth was mainly in form of relief food, which was hardly enough for any youth to rely on for his or her survival.

Regarding the issue of unemployment, the key informants said that unemployment was a real challenge to youth in the county. They attributed this to the lack of a proper government policy on employment for the youth, with majority dismissing the efforts made by the government to address the problem of unemployment in the country and in the county in particular and instead calling for a radical approach to the problem. Those who dismissed the government's efforts said that majority of youth in the county were properly educated and therefore better placed to secure good jobs as well as to establish their own businesses, especially in the agriculture sector due to the availability of vast land for agricultural activities. They felt that, the youth needed to be equipped with adequate resources so as to engage in income generating activities.

As pertains the issue of access to credit to start income generating activities, the key informants said that the county lacked adequate credit facilities which were friendly to the youth.

They also seemed to dismiss the government credit initiatives like youth fund and women fund as too little and too sophisticated for the youths to access. They said that the government should consider revising the policy on youth fund and women fund to make the funds highly accessible to majority of youth. They also said that most of the youth run-businesses were established using other financial resources but not the youth or women funds. They described the youth in the county as capable of engaging in income generating activities if provided with the funds to do so and to that end called for provision of credit, both in monetary form and in kind to the youth so as to ensure that youth run-businesses or income generating activities did not fail. According to them therefore, provision of credit to start income generating activities by the youth was a way forward in addressing the problem of youth dependency in the county.

In regard to entrepreneurial skills, the key informants said that the county lacked 'up to market standard institutions offering entrepreneurship courses to the youth. They described the few which were there as not doing enough to equip the youth with entrepreneurial skills. However, according to them, lack of entrepreneurial skills was not a major cause of youth dependency because majority of the youth in the area were well educated. They said that what the youths lacked was adequate employment and lack of credit to establish income generating activities so as to liberate themselves from dependency.

4. Conclusion

This particular study aimed at assessing the factors that influence economic dependency among youths in Makueni County. From the study, it emerged that unemployment and lack of reliable and youth friendly credit facilities were the leading cause of youth dependency in the county. This is despite the government's initiatives to deal with the problem of unemployment and lack of credit to the youths in the country in general and Makueni County in particular. It seemed that there was a missing link between the government and the youth when it came to addressing the problem of youth dependency. It should be noted that any sustainable development initiative must involve all the stakeholders, meaning that they should all participate in finding solutions to the problems. The idea of coming up with a generalized approach to the problem of youth dependency seems to have failed to yield good results especially in Makueni County.

5. Recommendations

It will be fair to acknowledge government's efforts in trying to alleviate poverty in the country and especially in marginal areas. The benefits of the programmes trickle to all the segments of the societies especially to the young members of the communities.

The survey established the need for cheap credit to enhance access by the youth who own little in terms of assets. The government attempted to provide a solution by establishing the YEDF and WEDF. However, the youth have been unable to access the funds due to the nature of the credit provided through these establishments.

There is need for urgent intervention by the government and other stakeholders to ensure that the courses offered by the existing institutions are enhanced to match the market expectations and the capacities of the institutions are improved to absorb more trainees. That would improve enrolment and revenue and hence lead to reduced course costs.

In addition to equipping the youth with entrepreneurial skills, the government and indeed all relevant stakeholders needed to help the youth acquire necessary equipment for value addition and storage of their farm produce. Much of the farm produce from the county went to waste or was sold at throw-away prices because it was usually in raw material form or due to lack of modern technology storage facilities especially for storing highly perishable produce. This would also ensure prolonged supply and income generation.

The government has been on the forefront in making market linkages for producers in the country. Also through the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the government has been linking the youth with overseas consumers of certain unique products. However, these efforts need to be supplemented with financial support and marketing skills to help the youth be able to market their products effectively.

It is one of the key mandates of the government to ensure infrastructural development all over the country. Information obtained from the survey revealed that Makueni County has all along been poorly endowed with infrastructural facilities.

For instance, the road network was poor especially in most interior localities within the county. Electricity was a rare utility in most parts of the county. The county also borders the River Athi basin which was underutilized. Only few small scale irrigation units individually owned by a few able residents produced for the local markets. The government needed to step in and establish extensive irrigation schemes since there was a vast idle land along the river basin. This would offer an opportunity to the youth to work and earn. This coupled with the value addition and storage equipment would ensure constant flow of income in the county.

With the right combination of motivation, ideas and opportunities, young people are able to establish productive and creative business ventures and shift themselves from the status of job seekers to job creators. If the government and all relevant stakeholders ensured provision of the necessary skills, funds, equipment and infrastructure, then much would be achieved through this energetic and vibrant segment of the county community and the country in general.

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