

Youth Livelihood Program Fund and Unemployment Reduction in Relation to Gender in Western Division, Fort Portal Municipality, Kabarole District

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Abstract: The article established the relationship between youth livelihood program fund and unemployment reduction in relation to gender in western division, Kabarole District. The study adopted an observational, cross-sectional exploration design with both quantitative and qualitative as paradigms in order to describe the data and its characteristics. Questionnaires, interview guides and focused groups discussions were employed to garner information from the respondents. Data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and bar graphs. The study findings showed that there was a positive correlation between youth livelihood program fund and unemployment reduction in relation to gender. The study findings recommended that training of the youth groups should be handled on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the enterprises specialized in while considering the group dynamics. There should be regular follow up by the relevant offices to save the situation before it runs out of hand, increase the operational (monitoring) funds for the projects across the board. There is need to ensure capacity building of both men and women to improve their financial management and entrepreneurship skills, give males and females equal opportunities and treat them equally and have equal and easy access to the funds, the study also suggested that both males and females should be involved in policy making processes of their own groups so as to feel a sense of belongingness of their own projects.

Keywords: Youth funds, Unemployment, Gender, West Division, Kabarole District.

INTRODUCTION

The UN defines the youth as a section of the population between 15-24 years, while the common wealth considers those between 15 and 29 years. The National Youth Policy considers those aged 12 to 30 years [1].

The youth livelihood Program is a government of Uganda flagship five year development Program (2013/2014-2017/2018) targeting the poor and unemployed youth aged between 18 and 30 years in the present districts of Uganda, including Kampala, the capital with a projected total budget of UGX 265 billion. It was approved by cabinet and passed by parliament in 2013 and it was officially launched by the President in January 2014.

The youth livelihood Program (YLP) development objective is to empower the youth to harness their socioeconomic potential and increases self-employment opportunities and income levels. The youth livelihood Program provides support in form of a revolving start up credit for skills development projects and income generating activities initiated by the youth groups. Youth livelihood Program is managed by the ministry of gender, labor and social development

(MGLSD) and implemented through district and lower local governments.

Youth unemployment continues to be a developmental challenge not only in Uganda but in several sub-Saharan countries. Obena and Frannie [2] argue that out of the 7.3 billion global population, 1.5 billion people are within the age bracket of 12 to 24 and 87% of this young population lives in developing countries like Uganda. At least 64% of the total unemployed persons are youth aged 18 to 30 years. As the government struggles to look for solutions to the unemployment challenge, one approach has been the promotion of self-employment through the establishment of the national youth funds. According to president Museveni's speech at the ninth common wealth Youth Forum said one of the biggest obstacles to youth empowerment is the global crisis of unemployment. He further said that in Africa, out of the 13 million youth that enter the job market each year, only three million get jobs. Only 33% are in wage employment while the rest are unemployed or in vulnerable employment [3]. In Uganda, the case is not any different, however, efforts have been put in place to address the crisis through promoting skills based education under "the skilling Uganda Program," he

said, adding that Uganda is committed to empowering the Youth [4].

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted non-experimental research design while using both Questionnaires and interview guide as research tools to collect data from the field. The study population covered all the Youth of the Western division of Kabarole District in Western Uganda totaling to 80 people. The selected youth groups include Nyabusozzi Tweyimukye youth group, Kibimba A Tweyimukye youth Group, Fort workers welding and metal works, Kagote Tweyimukye youth group, Women of vision limited Rwengoma, Jabulani and Nyabusozzi development youth group. The sample size was chosen using the table of Morgan & Krejcie [5] and it was 66 participants whose findings were generalisable to the target population.

Close ended questionnaires were used to collect information (quantitative data) for the research study because they gather information within a short period of time. At the same time, interview schedules and focused groups discussions were also employed to collect information in form of words (qualitative data) for the research study because they can also collect data from facial expressions of participants

The reliability of the close ended questionnaire was reached at by using cronbach alpha coefficient formula, and for interviews was through carrying out persistent observations on the participants.

While the validity of the close ended questionnaire was arrived at using Content Validity Index and the validity of the interviews was assured by less talking and much listening.

Data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and bar graphs for quantitative data, while for qualitative data, it was analyzed employing categorization of data into themes and sub-themes along a story manner structure.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

This describes the age brackets of respondents and educational levels of participants that have contributed largely to the value of the study.

Age brackets of the respondents

The study further revealed that majority of the group members fall within the age group of 26- 30 years, followed by age group 21-25 years. Determining the age group was necessary to the study since it enabled the researcher to assess whether or not the beneficiaries were within the recommended age limit. The age groups further reflected that the majority of the youth who benefited were elder youth implying that they were the majority of the unemployed youth. For example, (26-35 years) youth who are much more involved in the youth livelihood program reflect those youth who are unemployed and therefore have taken the youth livelihood venture as important in order to harness them out of unemployment.

Table-1: Age brackets of the respondents

	Particulars		Total
	Male	Female	
18-20	8	2	10
21-25	10	15	25
26-35	7	24	31
Total	25	41	66
Grand total	66 participants		

Source: Primary Data

Table-2: YLP has increased Self Employment

Serial		Male	Female	Total
1	Agree	4	5	9
2	Strongly Agree	2	1	3
3	Disagree	13	8	21
4	Strongly disagree	18	15	33
	Total	37	29	66

Source: Primary Data

YLP has increased Self Employment

According to the findings 33 of the respondents strongly disagreed that youth unemployment program (YLP) has led to increased self-employment, 21 of the respondents disagreed that it increased to self employment, 9 agreed and 3

respondents strongly agreed. This means that YLP is trying to achieve its intended objectives of increasing self-employment opportunities and equipping the youth (both men and women) with enterprise development skills. It also means that many youth (33 of the respondents) do not see YLP as enormously important

in increasing self employment. This may be because the funds are meant for group members and also members are not given capacity building on how to venture in business which can generate income to them.

RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS

One of the respondents from the said youth groups stated that,

YLP has contributed positively in reducing youth unemployment in the West Division, it has led to improved standards of living, equipped unemployed youth with enterprise development skills especially women in different fields which helps them to start new ventures to enable them earn a living. However, there is little or no improvement in self employment creation since the funds are meant to be for a group of youths not individuals. The funds and the enterprises are meant for the groups and sometimes the challenge is that some group leaders mismanage the funds and end up using the funds alone which is not among the objectives of YLP.

This implies that, YLP has contributed to improved standard of living. However, it has not yet solved the problem of lack of skills enhancement especially self business development and entrepreneurship skills due to inadequate monitoring of the YLP funds by government officials and also lack of enough capacity building on how the youths can use the YLP funds.

YLP has a positive impact on entrepreneurship and skill development

From the table below, 23 of the respondents reported that they strongly disagreed, 22 respondents disagreed, 13 of the respondents agreed and also 8 respondents strongly agreed. This means that most of the youth have gained enterprise development skills which enable them to start their own businesses and this is in line with one of the YLP objectives. It also implies that most of the youth need more training on being creative and innovative so as to gain entrepreneurship and skills development.

Table-3: YLP has a positive impact on entrepreneurship and skills development

Serial		Male	Female	Total
1	Agree	5	8	13
2	Strongly Agree	7	1	8
3	Disagree	10	12	22
4	Strongly disagree	8	15	23
	Total	30	36	66

Source: Primary Data

RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS

One of the female respondents from the said youth groups stated that

YLP has enormously played a crucial role in enhancing enterprise skills especially on women. YLP has done much in promoting women empowerment and emancipation because most of them are involved in enterprise development. Males and females have started projects like poultry, saloon, outside catering, events management projects, piggery projects among others, all out of YLP. However, society and tradition still have an impact on gender (in) equality, when it comes to sharing of equal responsibilities in line with group leadership and management in our group, females are left behind and are fewer than males in the group composition. It is the males who are dominating females in all positions. Males and/or females think that females have a lot of domestic and caring responsibilities, constraints of motherhood and lack of personal traits like confidentiality and leadership skills that hinder them in management positions.

This suggested that YLP has empowered women to create their own development initiatives which help them in getting income to solve their daily

needs. It implies that if empowered, women are very committed and have team spirit in working as a group because it helps them to add value on their existing knowledge and skills since individual females learn from each other with in a group. Society has changed positively in the way it perceives a woman by empowering her to work and compete favorably in development activities. However, youth groups in the West Division of Fort Portal Municipality are more involved in livelihood enterprises than entrepreneurship skills and/or business development skills which would be fundamental to self-employment creation. Therefore both males and females youths need more capacity building to enhance their knowledge, skills and their confidence in leadership and financial management.

From the table below, 17 of the respondents think that long processes and many requirements to access the YLP funds are the most challenging factors and 15 of the respondents think that paying bribes to access the funds is also a challenge faced by the youths, 11 of the respondents think that poor financial management is also a challenge given the fact that youth are not given adequate training on how to use the YLP funds.

Table-4: Challenges faced by the youths in accessing and Using YLP funds

Challenges	Particulars		Total
	Male	Female	
Paying bribes in access of funds	8	7	15
Political influences	4	5	9
Gender biased discrimination	2	3	5
Limited information on the program	1	1	2
Late disbursement of funds	2	5	7
Long process and many requirements needed to access YLP funds	3	14	17
Poor financial management	5	6	11
Grand total	66 participants		66

Source: Primary Data

RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS

One of the male respondents from the said youth groups stated that

Financial mismanagement was one of the challenges strongly observed among our youth groups especially by the group leaders. This is largely due to lack of financial literacy and limited skills in financial management. When some of these leaders sign for big sums of money, they get excited and misuse the money for other personal gains at the expense of the group members. However, this mostly affects women in the group the fact that most of them are not in group leadership and are not interested in struggling and fighting with men in the group for YLP funds.

This implies that, adequate training is important because it can impart and add relevant knowledge and skills on group dynamics, financial management, savings, project management and general information on how to handle different resources. Training of groups in their respective interested projects and financial management before giving out funds has a greater impact on the successfulness of the youth group projects' growth and development. Monitoring of the youth groups can be an important tool in ensuring that youth funds are not diverted from the intended purpose of the received funds. The strategy of youth forming groups on their own, choosing the members of their choice can contribute much in ensuring co-operation among members and reduced levels of dropouts and this can increase concentration of members in the projects.

CONCLUSION

The research revealed the relationship between youth livelihood program fund and unemployment reduction in relation to gender in West Division, Fort Portal Municipality in Kabarole District. The study showed that youth groups in Fort portal Municipality are more involved in livelihood enterprises than entrepreneurship skills development which is fundamental to self-employment creation. The study showed that YLP enterprises in Uganda are greatly constrained by budget inadequacy, group dynamic challenges, limited training and insufficient monitoring and evaluation. Generally, females are disadvantaged and not adequately benefiting from the YLP based on

the youth group composition and leadership roles taken up by female beneficiaries. The YLP is contributing towards self-employment and improvement in the welfare of the youth. However, the multiplier effect is still very limited based on the type of enterprises the youth are engaged in and the inadequate amount disbursed and the ability to repay. The delayed and untimely release of the funds greatly affected the performance of the groups studied and above all communication gaps existed in explanation of the budget variance. Amidst the challenges the YLP is promising and can adequately contribute to the reduction of unemployment challenges in Uganda. Therefore, there was a strong positive relationship between YLP and youth unemployment reduction. The study findings recommended that training of the youth groups should be handled on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the enterprises specialized in while considering the group dynamics. There should be regular follow up by the relevant offices to save the situation before it runs out of hand, increase the operational (monitoring) funds for the projects across the board. There is need to ensure capacity building of both men and women to improve their financial management and entrepreneurship skills.

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