

Youth Roundtable of the Expert Group Meeting on *Creating Strategies for Youth Employment in African Cities*

Nairobi, Kenya / 21-25 June 2004

Outcomes and Recommendations

Summary of Preliminary Outcomes:

The Youth Roundtable to the Nairobi Expert Group Meeting (EGM) successfully held sessions that tackled some key issues regarding urban youth employment and prepared contributions to the EGM. Through collective discussions, youth representatives shared common problems and explored practical strategies to solving the pervasive problem of youth unemployment in their cities.

The Youth Roundtable acknowledged their role and responsibilities to work in greater cooperation with other stakeholders in order to develop effective urban youth employment strategies. Members of the Youth Roundtable will continue to advocate their critical role in developing effective policy solutions at all levels for youth employment using some of the tools explored during the Roundtable sessions. This includes recent UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/133, particularly those paragraphs relevant to the Youth Employment Network and the National Action Plan process; the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the World Youth Report (2003); and the “Making Commitments Matter” Toolkit. The Youth Roundtable also met to review UN-HABITAT’s “Youth Strategy for Enhanced Youth Engagement”.

Overall, the work of the Youth Roundtable served to strengthen commitments among African youth to work together on youth employment as a central development issue and a key to addressing the Millennium Development Goals including Poverty Reduction, in partnership with governments and multilateral institutions.

Youth Roundtable Recommendations:

The Youth Roundtable to the Nairobi EGM recommends that youth policies and programmes seeking to effectively address youth employment in cities must:

1. Create entry-level positions and opportunities for youth to gain the critical experience required to secure decent jobs in the formal economy:

- Skills training and jobs creation programmes need to be linked directly to labour market demands and mechanisms. This must be coupled with an on-going analysis of market/socio-economic trends both locally and otherwise.

- Internships and learnership programmes, which provide young people with relevant opportunities and experience, must be encouraged. (South Africa is one example of a country that has legislated the Skills Development Act that regulates the implementation of learnerships for the youth).
- Strategic interventions should be set-up to provide job-placement and matching services under a public-private sector partnership.
- Training must be made available at the grassroots levels and reach the most disadvantaged of youth.
- Vocational training, internships and other hands-on experience should be certified in order to serve as experience that the youth can use when applying for loans or assistance. It will also assist potential employers in acknowledging young people's skills during employment searches.
- Gender equality strategies need to be at the forefront of the development of policy and programmes in this area.

2. Provide accessible and practical skills training that has been developed with youth input, either additionally or independently of formal education:

- Extra curricular activities and volunteerism needs to be valued and recognized as providing employable and transferable skills.
- Uneducated youth need particular assistance in finding ways to translate their talent to skills that can further be developed and therefore used for job creation
- Training programs should comply with nationally recognized quality assurance standards to ensure training is relevant and appropriate for youth development. It is incumbent upon respective government ministries to ensure that training adheres to professional standards prescribed by the relevant educational and vocational authorities.
- Life-long career paths must be brought to the fore of youth employment rather than focusing on "short-term" and isolated career interventions.
- Specific skills identified as being critical to employability in several fields include: basic entrepreneurial skills, basic financial management, access to and management of information and knowledge, project planning and implementation, and impact assessment and measuring outcomes.
- Gender equality strategies need to be at the forefront of the development of policy and programmes in this area.

3. Improve access to financing for youth-led employment initiatives:

- The capital that is available to youth is very limited and largely inaccessible. There is so much red tape, bureaucracy and corruption that face youth in the form of demands for security, collateral and experience, which in most cases young people do not have. Youth who come from poor communities and families can definitely not afford to fulfill any of these requirements.

- This lack of access to finance and credit facility programs hinders the progression of youth entrepreneurship. Finance companies and credit providers could therefore jointly conduct feasibility studies with young people regarding the proposed business, assist in the development of business plans and work together to meet financial projections.
- There is a need to build on and replicate successful models, such as those presented at the Nairobi EGM. (e.g. the Umusobvu Youth Fund from South Africa, the Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust from India and the program of the Youth Business International in which youth are the primary clients).
- The allocation of public resources and funds should be undertaken in consultation and collaboration with youth organizations.
- Gender equality strategies need to be at the forefront of the development of policy and programmes in this area.

4 – Strengthen the commitment and support of institutional partners, such as those involved in the Youth Employment Network, as well as national and local government players that are pro-youth in their approach:

- There needs to be strengthened interaction between the young people championing solutions to youth employment and the UN system. The Youth Roundtable would like to see increased and structured youth involvement in the YEN, through its proposed Youth Consultative Group and otherwise, which is strongly supported by each of its partners – the World Bank, UNDESA and the ILO.
- The roundtable endorses the idea of developing regional guides or toolkits that would facilitate youth working with the YEN.
- The roundtable endorses the idea of developing regional guides or toolkits that would support youth working with their various levels of government and other partners on the creation, implementation and review of National Action Plans for youth employment.
- Gender equality strategies need to be at the forefront of the development of policy and programmes in this area.

5- Increase youth participation and involvement in macro-economic policy decision-making, especially as it affects youth employment:

- The roundtable identifies a need for capacity building for engagement at this level.
- In terms of advocacy and inclusion, youth must be engaged in the creation and implementation of all development agendas, such as NEPAD, the PRSP process and the MDGs, particularly in identifying their role in these international development agendas. These processes are currently viewed as very closed to the active participation of African youth.
- PRSPs must be localized to enable youth involvement in their translation into concrete programmes of action at the local level. They should also support current national youth development and/or employment strategies.
- Youth recognize that some macroeconomic policies have negative effects on local youth employment and youth must be involved to assist in avoiding and mitigating these effects. Lack of domestic job opportunities, decline of national industries, lack of policies and

programmes that enhance diversification of local economies resulting in brain drain are but a few examples of these negative effects.

- In Africa, such policies need to increase regional and sub-regional integration to allow for the freer movement of labour and goods, matching regional labour supply and demands.
- Gender equality strategies need to be at the forefront of the development of policy and programmes in this area.

6- Give greater access to information and involve youth concerning decisions that are being made to benefit them:

- There are undeniably a number of issues that are affecting young people all over the African region, ranging from the exclusion of youth from the labor market as a whole, intimidation by the complexity of entrepreneurship, lack of availability in information, which is worsened by the inaccessibility of the information.
- Better information sharing and dissemination needs to take place to mobilize youth around positive initiatives and facilitate global policy to local policy connections.
- While the Internet is the most cost effective and fastest way to disseminate information very few Africans have access to it. The Youth Roundtable suggests the additional use of conventional medium such as radio (particularly useful at it reaching all types of people including poor and illiterate), pamphlets and newspapers.

7 – Pay particular attention to youth employment problems in the urban context:

- The Youth Roundtable drew on some of their experiences from the cities of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Nairobi (Kenya), Bosaso (Somalia) and Windhoek, (Namibia) and feels it is essential to address youth employment challenges that are particular to cities. For example, there must be policy linkages in addressing slum development through youth employment initiatives.
- Local economies need the support of their local governments. Too often small market places and informal economic activity is wiped out by urban planning and municipal directives. The effect can be devastating to small enterprises, on which youth are often very dependent for their meager incomes.
- Gender equality strategies need to be at the forefront of the development of policy and programmes in this area.

8 – Address the special needs of youth at risk.

- It is essential to have specific policies and solutions for creating employment for youth at risk, as their needs are quite different and specialized. The roundtable defined youth at risk as those youth who lack opportunities, education, proper housing and other support that is key to a young person's development. This may include those young people living with HIV/AIDS and those living with a disability.

- Some of the key realities the Roundtable expressed as being embedded in the life of young people at risk are drug problems and the difficulty of offering alternatives that match the profitability of engaging in this activity, being denied education, illiteracy, exposure to human trafficking, and especially the exploitation of young women and girls.
- Special policies and programmes need to be in place that address the needs of youth trying to secure decent employment in conflict and post-conflict areas.
- Gender equality strategies need to be at the forefront of the development of policy and programmes in this area.

9 – Address the pervasive gender inequality that continues to disadvantage young women in both the formal and informal economies.

- Although attached to each of the above recommendations, gender consideration and policies and programmes that address the specific needs of young women facing discrimination in the work place are essential to employment strategies.
- It is recommended that these be developed in direct consultation with the young women who are most affected by continued gender discrimination.

Members of the Youth Roundtable included:

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