

DRAFT – DO NOT QUOTE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Youth and MDGs: A Kenyan Experience

by

Hellen Tombo

1 July, 2005

Paper for Expert Group Meeting on “The First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006): Progress and the Road Ahead” organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 6-7 July 2005, Thailand, Bangkok

Acknowledgement

Youth in Kenya constitute over 80 per cent of the population. They have, in the past be on the forefront of the countries development. However since the late 1970's they have been systematically excluded from the decision making process of the country. By design or default the majority of the young people are now languishing in abject poverty, restricted to the people periphery of development process. Lucia Hanmer, Gerrishon Ikiara Walter Eberlia and Caroline Abong base this paper on the findings of research. (Development Policy Review, 2003,21(2): 179-196). Further information has been derived from the MDG's need assessment interim report and seasonal paper No.3 of 1999 on National Poverty Eradication.

Reducing poverty among the youth: the Kenyan experience

Youth in Kenya constitute over 80 per cent of the population. They have, in the past be on the forefront of the countries development. However, since the late 70, they have been sidelined.

Introduction

The oil shock of the 70s and the resultant inflation triggered an economic downturn for Kenya that was aggravated by the twin factors of political and economic ineptitude and aid suspension and the resultant escalation of debt.

By 1998 levels of domestic debt (Ksh 25.4 million or 3.4 per cent of GDP) held by the Government were becoming a threat to the resumption of economic growth. The debt had accrued in the wake of the 1992 elections when excessive monetary expansion were used to finance a large fiscal deficit (more than 10 per cent of GDP) in 1992, which was widely suspected to have been used to fund the election campaigns. The result was severe inflation for the 1993-5 period, peaking at 60 per cent in 1994. The problem was brought under control mainly through the use of short- term Treasury Bills at high interest rates. The build up of short- term debts, in combination with declining savings rates, led to lending rates of around 20 per cent in real terms during most of the 1990s.

Investment as a share of GDP experienced a major decline during the 1990s, falling from around 25 per cent in the early 1980s to 15 per cent in 1999. Projections used in the governments own Medium – Term Expenditure Framework do not show real growth rates exceeding population growth in the near future. Investor confidence nose-dived owing to high cost of doing business as well as political uncertainty in the country. The infrastructure suffered from high levels of dilapidation, while poor governance stifled efficiency, distorted market transactions and obstructed small- and large-scale private sector investments, production and organization. As a result of the standoff with donors, levels of domestic debt escalated even higher, increasing to Ksh 233 b in July 2002, around 24 per cent of GDP (Central Bank of Kenya, 2002).

Kenya's response to escalating poverty

Kenya's failure to adjust in the 1980s and early 1990s resulted in deteriorating macro aggregates, negligible growth, rising unemployment, increasing poverty and growing tensions with the donor community culminating in the suspension of aid in November 1991. Growth averages per annum were: 1960 –70 6.6 per cent; 1970- 79 4.6 per cent; 1980- 89 2.2 per cent; 1990- 99 1 per cent. By 1997, the poverty headcount was estimated at 56 per cent, having grown from an estimated 46 per cent in 1994 and 29 per cent in 1974.

With a population growth rate of around 4 per cent and an average life span now dropping to the high 40's (from low 1960's in the 1980's), Kenyan youth (under 35 years) make up 80 per cent of the population. 'This youth sector' bears the brunt of free trade inequalities and political ineptitude. They face a bewildering collision between traditional culture and modern technology as well as likely long life under-employment and an education system that makes it hard to attain university entrance standards. The few bright or extremely privileged go abroad for higher education and often stay there for work, thus depriving Kenya of its most valuable resource.

What then can be the response to this disastrous situation in Kenya for the youth? While other sectors of the population such as the children and the women have been addressed directly and indirectly through a variety of portfolios, programs supporting the youth have been supported in a more isolated fashion. The MDGs, to which Kenya is a Contracting party stands out as a unique commitment by the government to redeem young people from the vice of poverty. A cursory look at the goals themselves reveals that the MDG's have been integral part of the independent Kenya's development agenda.

The immediate post independence economic development blue- print –the sessional paper of 1965 outlined the government's commitment to eradicating the three vices of poverty, illiteracy and disease. Subsequent national policy documents including all the seven development plans, sessional papers and various sectoral plans have addressed the MDG's in varying degrees of concentration and focus.

Lessons learnt from previous poverty reduction initiatives

Over the first 36 years of independence, the government implemented a number of policies and programmes aimed at reducing poverty. The Land Resettlement Scheme, Harambee movement, special rural development projects, special targeted funds, and the rural urban balance strategy are some of the examples. An analysis of these past efforts to address social disadvantage and poverty reveals that they yielded limited significant positive impact. The key lessons, which have emerged from the review of previous attempts to address poverty, are summarized as follows:

- Basically a similar diagnosis of the problem and its causes were repeated in the national development plans, coupled with a recurring inability to implement the remedies prescribed and a weak understanding of the real nature of poverty;
- Policy gaps between very broad national plans and frameworks and routine sector actions projects, which further contributed to low levels of policy implementation;
- Decentralized and cross cutting poverty oriented programmes faced many difficulties because of limited resources and the weak commitment of sector staff and systems;
- Cooperative fund raising for special, urgent purpose was preferred to alternative, more sustainable frameworks of popular participatory action against poverty;
- There were instances of misappropriation of funds and the diversion of benefits away from the poor

Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper

It is no longer disputed that structural adjustment programmes [SAPs] were handed down rather arbitrarily by the Breton Woods Institutions [BWIs] – the World Bank and IMF. SAPs stagnated sub-Saharan Africa [SSA] economies of the 1980s, such as Kenya. The failed mission of the enhanced structural adjustment facilities [ESAF] to jump-start economic growth is well documented in the literature, but is also acknowledged in the late 1990s shift to the PRSPs. A fundamental criticism of SAPs, and indeed, reason for their failure to reverse SSA's economic malaise has been their neo-liberal agenda of opening up these tottering economies to global competition. The key instrument of neo-

liberalism has been macro-economic (market) reforms – liberalizing prices, interest rates, foreign exchange rates, etc. while removing government subsidies. Yet, even BWI economic analysts have shown that the poor do *not* operate in such markets, meaning that enriching benefits accruing from the reforms not only *exclude the poor*, but also widen the gap between them and the rich. This effectively raises the costs of living and the poverty line, the stagnant or declining incomes of the poor causing them to sink deeper into poverty.

One of the most marked changes in donor behavior in the 90s that influenced poverty alleviation was the shift towards a broader engagement with the PRSP process. At the start, justifiable doubts about its viability led many donors to hold back from active engagement. Later, a large number shifted to active support of the consultation part of the process, despite harboring doubts about the initiative as a whole.

While many donors had supported the development of the NPEP, launched in early 1999, most of them had shifted to the PRSP approach by the end of the year; that is, within a few months. For some stakeholders, this was because the PRS approach offered a genuinely new opportunity to bring together a broad coalition of reformers-private sector, NGOs, government and civil society-to implement the reforms needed to address corruption and secure sustained poverty reduction and economic growth. Others, more cynically, held that this confirmed their view that the PRSP process was `just another donor conditionality`, which should not be taken seriously in the long run.

The PRSP process in Kenya

The MTEF and the iPRSP came on stream in Kenya in the same time, leading to considerable overlap in their development. The microeconomic and sectoral working groups formed for the MTEF also contributed to various chapters of the iPRSP. In June 2000 the first MTEF budget was produced and the iPRSP was completed the following month. For the full PRSP, the government launched an ambitious consultation process in November 2000, with the PRSP secretariat in the ministry of finance and planning as the lead agency. The PRSP consultation was implemented at both national and regional levels.

Nine sector-working groups were maintained for production of the full PRSP, which was scheduled for completion by April 2001. District consultations took place between January- February 2001. These were organized in three categories, namely: comprehensive consultations conducted in 25 districts with an average of 200 participants in addition to participants in sub- district- level meetings; general consultations held in 45 districts with an average of 150 participants; and in- depth community-level consultations carried out in the form of Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA) in 10 districts and co-coordinated by an NGO, AMREF.

Participants in the district consultations were drawn from all sectors and interest groups in the various districts, with a representative target of at least 30 per cent women, 10 per cent youth, 20 per cent government, 10 per cent private sector, 10 per cent disabled and 20 per cent community leaders. Most of the communities selected participants from already participatory institutions such as self-help groups, churches, women's groups and other community-based organizations. It was not possible to assess all the district reports, but in the view of some donors, some of them were more or less 'wish-list'. The PRSP secretariat then had the task of drafting the national PRSP based on an iPRSP that was organized around key sectors.

The full PRSP was finalized in May/June 2001. It was supplemented with an implementation action plan in December 2001 and some thought has been given to its integration with previously existing planning instruments. The government has identified three key stages of planning process: the National Poverty Eradication plan- the long-term (15-year) strategy implemented by the office of the President; the National Development Plan- the 5-year strategy implemented by the Ministry of Finance; and the PRSP-

a relatively short- term strategy to implement the NPEP in 3-year rolling plans using the Medium Term Expenditure Framework as a link.

So what difference does the PRSP make?

The PRSP has been on the table since December 2000. None of the donors has seen any immediate prospect of supporting its implementation. Nevertheless, the PRSP process was a highly positive experience for Kenya in a number of respects. A relatively thorough consultation exercise around the drafting of the document widened and deepened constituencies for pro-poor policy change between and within some parts of government and civil society. Synergies between the PRSP, budget reforms and a ‘mainstreaming’ approach to aid delivery were also revealed.

In a relatively short period, the PRSP has made a considerable impact in the management of the national economy. The 2000/1 and 2001/2 budgets laid more emphasis on the theme of poverty reduction than previous ones. They were the first budgets to be prepared under the MTEF, a three- year rolling plan for fiscal years 2000/1- 2002/3, and they provided an opportunity to translate the first two years of planning under the PRSP into some annual estimates.

For the first time, the 2000/1 budget specifically identified the ‘Core Poverty Programs’, from which no re- allocation of budget resources was allowed, in an attempt to ring- fence key poverty reduction programs. The ring- fencing was tested when the IMF disbursements of funds in December 2000. The resulting short- fall meant that 50 per cent cuts were required across the board, but efforts were made to protect priority poverty reduction expenditures. The 2001/2 budget presented in June 2001, soon after the full PRSP draft had been presented at the national stakeholders’ forum, made greater efforts to incorporate poverty issues in the budget.

Possible second-round effects

Despite the short time allocated to the PRSP process, there are indications that it initiated changes that are likely to have a long time impact on national institutions and on the attitudes and activities of a wide cross-section of actors in the development process. More than any other national programme in the post-independent period, the PRSP has elevated public participation in the debate on poverty and wider socio-economic development issues.

The PRSP process significantly enhanced media coverage of poverty and related issues. Since the launching of the iPRSP in a national consultative forum in March 2000, the mass media have carried more articles and discussions on poverty. This has played an important role in raising awareness of the problem among the general public, one of the spill-over benefits being a move by some NGOs and civil society groups to revise their programmes to devote more attention to poverty reduction.

The process is likely to attract more financial resources to poverty-related programmes, as the government, donors, NGOs, civil society and other stakeholders push poverty up their list of priorities. Some of the actors in the consultative process also suggested that broad-based stakeholder participation has strengthened the communities’ sense of self-determination. This has led to a shift in their attitudes to initiation of their own development activities towards poverty alleviation, with or without government and donor support.

The consultative process at the national, district and community levels also provided a good opportunity for the various stakeholders to work together. It has enabled them to share information and to appreciate each other’s capacities, weaknesses and methods of operation, helping to reduce the prejudices that tend to exist among them.

At the same time, it generated an enormous amount of community-level data, which, if effectively processed, could radically change the country's planning in terms of priorities and new insights. Government officials in some districts agree that, in some cases, the community participation was able to bring dimensions and insights which were radically different from those that inspired past district development plans.

The Kenyan PRSP consultation process may thus lead to a number of long-term institutional spin-off effects. First, it seems likely to add force to the call for more democratic and participatory elements in Kenyan politics. This could lead to a more transparent policy-making process and greater accountability. The openness the government showed towards debate on general policy issues sets a precedent. The government may now be expected to meet the rising public demand for more open discussion on all poverty-related decisions, for example in the context of the annual budget.

Secondly, the most important institutional changes may occur not at national but at regional level. The broad consultations at district and divisional levels all over the country may raise the demand for more community participation in the decision-making process.

Third, if the institutional exclusion of parliament from PRSP process leads to a strong demand for inclusion, it could mark the beginning of a more systematic involvement of parliament in poverty reduction politics, an important manifestation which could be its greater engagement in the budget process, which is currently dominated by the executive arm of the government. At present, parliament's first contact with the budget is when the minister of finance delivers his budget speech (budget day), only hours before it comes to effect. A first step to overcome this institutional constraint could be the establishment of a parliamentary budget office supporting the MPs in their work. There are initiatives within parliament to create such an institution.

Fourth, the relatively well developed NGO community in Kenya used the PRSP process to improve its organization with respect to economic and poverty issues and this may lead to more institutionalized advocacy work on poverty issues in future. This would naturally have secondary effects on the governance framework. NGOs are now demanding more involvement in the budget process, for instance.

Fifth, the PRSP process may also have an impact on public debate on poverty issues. The PRSP has been widely discussed in both print and electronic media.

Features of the consultation process.

Positive features of the consultations include: the frank and open nature of discussions; the improved working relations of the communities and NGOs with local government in the districts; the integration of cross-cutting issues and specific themes (for example, gender, disability, youth, street children, pastoralists), which were voiced very effectively in some consultations; and the identification of actions in some communities which can be taken forward immediately with recourse to existing institutions and funds. The consultation process also had important positive effects on the participating NGOs, for example giving them experience of engaging with national and sectoral-level policies in poverty reduction work, and identifying needs for capacity building around advocacy on national policies and processes.

Several weaknesses in, or constraints on, the PRSP consultative process stand out. In some districts the tight time schedule is thought to have limited the level and quality of participation. Introductory information on iPRSP and PRSP was only available just before the one-day workshop. 'Meeting-dominated' consultations limited the participation of some population categories. Despite the

fact that the consultation was broad-based, its domination in some districts by government officials was said to limit the space for the common people to air their views freely.

Despite these weaknesses, many participants and observers express a positive and fairly optimistic view of the PRSP consultation process. While there had been previous experiences of consultation at the national level (for example, the NPEP process) as well as at the district/local level (the PPAs), there had been no effective institutional link between the two, such as the PRSP framework promised.

The greatest gain for the youth from PRSP is in that it informed the Economic Recovery Strategy that has resulted in the following quick gains since its inception following the general elections in 2002.

Poverty and hunger

By 1999, the proportion of the urban population had increased to 34.5 per cent and is expected to increase to 50 per cent by 2015. This has resulted in increased impermanent structures, unemployment leading to poor nutrition and sanitation. The youth being the majority of immigrants have found themselves in the slums faced by cross cutting issues from unemployment to poor housing and lack of basic amenities. To fight this, the government in line with the MDG's has come up with a slum-upgrading programme that aims at constructing 150,000 houses per year. This has not been achieved due to lack of funding, lack of proper planning and mistrust between the people and the government. To combat poverty, Constituency Development Fund has been set aside, each constituency plans its own strategies and it's a bottom top approach to development. This is however affected by corruption and nepotism in allocation of positions in the committee planning its implementation.

Education

The introduction of Free Primary Education in Jan. 2003 led to an upsurge in enrolment from 5.9 million in 2002 to 6.9 million in 2003, i.e. 99 per cent of Gross enrolment rate. Challenges are; overstretched facilities, overcrowding in schools, high pupil-teacher ratio and so on. There is also diminishing support by parents who are under the impression that it's the Governments exclusive responsibility to provide all resources in this sector.

The government is now trying to build low-costing boarding school for ASAL regions to curb effects of nomadic life on education. Its also increasing support to slum schools as well as improving schools health and nutritional programs. This has led to an increase in the number of youth attending formal and informal education.

HIV/ AIDS

Since the government's launch of the HIV/AIDS Strategic Paper 2000-2005, which established the constituencies Aids Fund. The results are a reduction from 700 deaths per day due to HIV/AIDS to 400 deaths in 2004.

Contraceptive use by the youth has increased to 39 per cent, this however is by the male youth. The female are still largely conservative due to the patriarchal nature of the society as well as there being low awareness on contraceptive use and also they are very expensive. The main intervention here is the public sector assisting in condom provision, zero rating tax on female contraceptive, encourage media coverage on this as well as increased V.C.T. services and universal precaution.

Environmental sustainability

To sustain the environment, the government has embarked on eradicating the shamba system, where people were farming in the forests and water catchments areas. This is to protect these areas and other territorial eco-systems so that future generations enjoy clean and uncontaminated water, forest cover, rain and fertile soil. This has seen thousands of people left homeless and the youth left with no places to earn a living. Ban on logging affects the youth since they are the ones mostly involved in this trade. Although these efforts are right, there is need for a settlement plan before such radical actions are taken.

Governance

There has been an improvement in that there is accessibility to prisons, press freedoms, opening up of torture chambers, and freedom of association e.t.c. The investigations and unearthing of the golden burg scandal, Anglo-leasing e.t.c. Indicate the magnitude of justice being offered in the country.

There is an increase in democratic space where the children and youth parliament can meet and offer recommendations to the government on issues affecting them.

The main challenge on achieving proper governance as well as the MDG's is the debt issue. Kenya didn't receive debt cancellation and as indicated the government spends 32 billion shillings to service the debt. And has paid around 122 billion in interest that is 32.2 percent of our entire budget.

This then has its interest in that the involvement of the youth in development and national sustainability is curtailed by the debt.

Gender equality and women empowerment in Kenya.

The Millennium Development Declaration commits member countries to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.

Gross gender inequalities persists due to prevailing discriminatory practices, leading to inequality in opportunities, wages/ employment, ownership of property, and access to education and training.

The prevalence of HIV/Aids has slightly declined though it's still higher for women than men. Gender based violence is a serious problem although the government is a signatory to the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of discrimination Against Women. Since independence, primary Education has gained near parity on gender. However some regions especially rural have low enrolment and high dropout rate occasioned by customary values, limited infrastructure and amenities.

Limited secondary schools opportunities for girls, high cost of education forces parents to invest in boys' education because of patriarchal values. The cut off points for female is now lower by one point to their male counterparts hence a good promotion for the female youth. The ratio of female youth in public universities has increased from 27.8 per cent in 1995/1996 to 30.8 per cent in 2003/04.

However, progress has been made through the ERS and PRSP by increasing women participation in leadership, the judiciary etc. There are 19 women parliamentarians in Kenya, though it's still low.

In governance, Justice, Law and Order Sector (GJLOS) Reform program, the ministry of Justice has put gender in its plan, i.e. more accessible formal justice system to the youth, poor and women.

The draft constitution, in line with MDG's provides for, (a) Increased awareness and provides education on women's reproductive health and rights. (b) Preventing practices that are harmful to women's sexual (c) effective monitoring and implementation of laws protecting participation effectively in economic and political affairs of the country.

Improve child survival and focusing on maternal health

The MDG's calls for reduced mortality rate of children under the age of 5 years by 2/3 between 1990 and 2015. Infant and childhood mortality has declined from the 70's to the 90's hence an upsurge in the next 15 years in the number of the youth.

However in the 1990s, immunization rate has gone down to 60 per cent in 1998 from 65 per cent. Hence a projection of fewer youth in the next 15 years. HIV/Aids and S.T.I.'s have singled as affecting both maternal and child survival. Mother- child transmission rate of HIV/Aids is higher due to lack of proper health care, its noted that 30 per cent of the people giving birth in hospitals are aged between 15-24 years and hence lies largely in the youth bracket.

Approximately 14,700 women die of pregnancy related complications; the proportion of mother assisted by skilled health personnel has declined from 51 per cent in 1989 to 42 per cent in 2003. Only 52 per cent Of pregnant women receive the 4 antenatal visits, against the recommended 12 visits. Major gains however have been on contraceptive use with 39 per cent of the young generation using them. The main problem now is how to handle their stock- out as well as the high prices especially for women.

The sanitary pads are still unaffordable for most women even though the Government has made efforts to reduce taxes on them. Most Kenyans are living below a dollar per day while the cost of sanitary towels is more than that. i.e. Ksh.89. This has affected education of girls who have to stay out of school during their menstrual period. Others are forced to use pieces of cloths or leaves to substitute. In the 2003-2004 budget, taxes on the sanitary towels were reduced from Ksh.89 to Ksh.75. In the 2004- 2005 budget, taxes were still reduced but prices remained constant.

The main challenge is on the government is to zero- rate them. There is need to address adolescents mothers who are the Majority and are affected through premature labour, miscarriages and still births and are likely to die of pregnancies related causes. Hence, great need for programs focusing on youth reproductive health. Key targets being education, stopping FGM, and benefits of delaying onset of marriage and childbirth.