

Youth Empowerment in Kenya: Paths to the Demographic Dividend

Kobia Margaret

St. Paul's University

Abstract

The central proposition of this paper holds that the legacy outcomes of present youth empowerment interventions in developing countries hold the key to the attainment of the age structure that would support the emergence of the demographic dividend. The paper reviews the global and local context of the situation of the youth and presents a conceptual understanding of youth empowerment, the demographic dividends and the structural nexus between them. Critical to its core proposition is the observation that focusing private and public investments, including policy orientation on the empowerment of the youth, provide an enduring pedestal for the economic and social inclusion of the youth in a way that places Kenya's demographic dividends within reach. Anchored on the empowerment theory and the theory of change, the paper outlines a synthesis of some of the most practical ways through which both state and non-state actors in developing countries like Kenya, can harness a country's youth bulge for the full realization of the demographic dividend potential. From the literature, it is deduced that youth empowerment initiatives and investments that signal the emergence of the demographic dividend are mutually reinforcing; even convergent. Towards the realization of the full demographic dividend potential, the paper recommends new policy orientation for youth-centric programmes on education, health and economic inclusion, explicit integration of pro-youth programmes in national development agenda, budget prioritization in youth-targeting programmes, and new national policy on youth skill and talent development that helps maximize their lifetime potential and chances.

Keywords: Empowerment, Youth Empowerment, Age Structure, Demographic Dividend, Education, Health, Family Planning, Entrepreneurship.

Introduction

Globally, young people represent agents, beneficiaries and victims of major societal changes and are generally confronted by a paradox: to seek to be integrated into an existing order or to serve as a force to transform that order. The transition from youth to adulthood marks a key period characterized by greater economic independence, political involvement, and participation in community life. However, the socioeconomic and political environment in which young people live can have a serious impact on their ability to engage (ILO, 2015). Having recognized the potential the youth hold for spurring development and overall societal progress in the face of the adversity that confront them, the United Nations, at the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, in 1995, strengthened its commitment to young people by directing the international community's response to the challenges the youth face. This was done through the adoption of an international strategy: The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (United Nations, 2010).

In presenting a case for engaging the youth in Kenya, Hope (2012) contends that the youth bulge in the country presents a number of challenges for both the youth and the country. While noting that the youth represent the most abundant asset Kenya has or will have over the near future, Hope (2012) points out that there are persistent risks and challenges faced by Kenyan youth. Holding that the youth are, and will remain, a significant share of Kenya's population for the foreseeable future, the author avers that the development and implementation of appropriate strategies, policies and programmes to mitigate the risks and challenges that the youth face must be a priority for the government. Hope (2012) further indicates that failure to provide appropriate opportunities for this large segment of the population could have enormous economic, political, cultural and social consequences. In recognition of the demographic dividends imperative, Kenya's National Council for Population and Development (NCPD) has developed a demographic dividend (DD) road map which domesticates the African Union Roadmap. In both the AU and Kenya's DD roadmaps, strategies that aim at youth development, participation and empowerment remain central.

The contribution that youth empowerment interventions that led to transitions in the age structure for the ‘Asian Tigers’ and ultimately the emergence of the demographic dividend is evident. However, many developing countries are yet to consolidate public policy focus on youth empowerment as a path to growth and development. This review focuses on this youth empowerment-demographic dividend nexus and presents a case for new policy concentration on youth empowerment programming and investments by both state and non-state actors.

Objective of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to present an understanding of the implications of youth empowerment for developing countries like Kenya in efforts to reap the demographic dividend. Specifically, it reviews the global and local context of the situation of the youth, and presents a conceptual understanding of empowerment, youth empowerment, and demographic dividends. It establishes the case for youth empowerment; presents a youth empowerment framework; establishes the nexus between youth empowerment and demographic dividend and, presents policy recommendations on strategies for youth empowerment that developing countries like Kenya could adopt and adapt to context; as a path to reaping the demographic dividend.

Contextualizing the Youth Concept

The UN and World Bank define youths as a person falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years. For the commonwealth, youth is the age bracket between ages 15-29 years. Ubi (2007) also cites African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone where the youth age limit is extended to 35 years. Article 55 of Constitution of Kenya affirms young people, and gives a firm commitment to guarantee education, meaningful participation, employment and protection of the youth. Article 260 of the Constitution specifically places the youth age bracket at between 18 and 35 years. On the other hand, the National Youth Policy (Republic of Kenya, 2005) defines a Kenyan youth as one between the ages 15-30 years. The African Youth Charter and AU policy framework to guide youth development, for example, define youth or young people as those between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Kenya’s understanding of youth age-bracket is consistent with the general global and continental trend.

The National Youth Council Act no. 10 of 2009 defines youth age as 18-35. While the literature presents a largely common trend, definition of youth can vary by context.

Conceptual Understanding: Empowerment, Demographic Dividend And The Theory Of Change

Empowerment

Empowerment is a multi-level construct consisting of practical approaches and applications, social action processes, and individual and collective outcomes (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Messias & McLoughlin, 2006). In the broadest sense, empowerment refers to individuals, families, organizations, and communities gaining control and mastery, within the social, economic, and political contexts of their lives, in order to improve equity and quality of life (Rappaport, 1984; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 2000). According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2007), empowerment means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. The youth can be considered as empowered when they themselves acknowledge that they have created, or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make informed decisions freely, take actions based on those decisions, and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions.

The World Bank (2002) defines empowerment as the process of increasing capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes to build individual and collective assets, and to improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets. Empowerment therefore includes expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

What is youth empowerment?

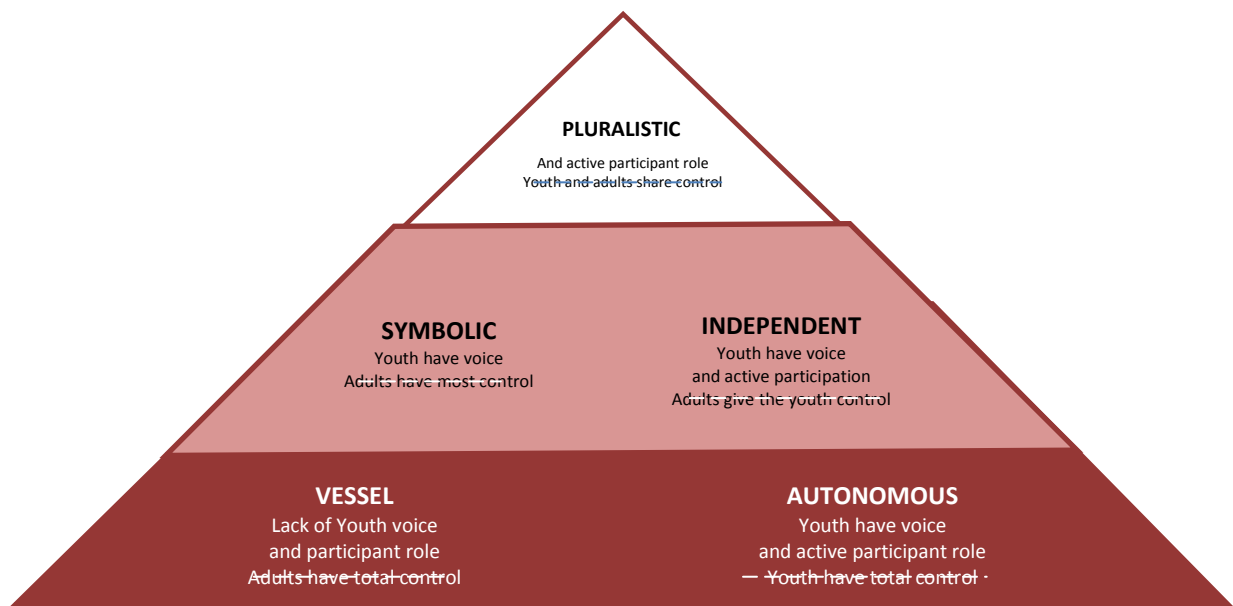
There are a number of definitions of youth empowerment. Vavrus and Fletcher (2006) define youth empowerment as an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults. The Youth Empowerment Solutions [YES] (2011) defines youth empowerment as the outcome by which youth, as change agents, gain the skills to impact their own lives and lives of other individuals, organizations and communities. The YES definition of youth empowerment at the individual level is exercising power over one's life by being skilled, critically aware, and active in creating community change while youth empowerment at the organizational level is the implementation of a culture, vision, and system that supports youth empowerment at the individual level. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others.

Types of youth empowerment: Youth empowerment can be divided into three different categories: individual, organizational and community empowerment (Ledford, Lucas, Dairaghi & Ravelli, 2013; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman, 2000; Minkler, 1990). Individual empowerment involves young people or adults developing skills to exercise control and improve their know-how, as well as developing 'critical awareness' or the ability to ask informed questions so they can work together better for the good of organizations and communities. Organizational empowerment involves organizations that provide, and benefit from the opportunity for young people or adults to acquire the skills needed to gain control over their lives, provide alternatives to service provision, as well as organizations that develop and influence policy decisions. Community empowerment, on the other hand, involves efforts to improve the community, respond to threats to quality of life, and provides for people's participation at a local, sub-national and national level.

Levels of Youth Empowerment: Varied levels or degrees of youth empowerment exist. Figure 1 represents the Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE) Pyramid (Wong, Zimmerman & Parker, 2010).

It presents five types of participation that outline various levels of youth adult involvement and empowerment: Pluralistic, Symbolic, Independent, Vessel and Autonomous. The pyramid shape represents degrees of empowerment.

Figure 1. Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment Pyramid



Source: National Youth Council of Ireland (2014)

Theory of Change: Defining the Concept

A theory of change defines all building blocks required to achieve a defined long-term goal. This set of connected building blocks is depicted on a map or diagram known as a Pathway of Change (Centre for Theory of Change, 2013). A theory of change describes the types of inputs that bring about the outcomes depicted in the Pathway of Change map. Each outcome in the Pathway of Change is tied to an input, revealing the often complex web of activity that is required to bring about change. Youth Livelihood and Empowerment Theory of Change reflects all the changes at various levels that can contribute towards enabling youth to having sufficient incomes and/or resources to enable sustainable, productive and fulfilling lives. The Empowerment Theory of Change reflects an understanding of the interventions and conditions

that would support the attainment of desirable change outcomes for the youth (Mackinlay, Monbiot & Boxelaar, 2011).

In its simplest definition, a theory of change is a theory about how and why a time-bound intervention in a prevailing situation or context is likely to work. A robust theory in this respect requires the development and articulation of a number of essential elements. In particular, a theory of change clearly specifies the long-term goal that a particular strategy is working towards. For instance, it should be based on all available evidence and the preconditions hypothesized as necessary for the achievement of this long-term goal should be fully articulated in a causal pathway over time (ActKnowledge and Oxfam Australia, 2013).

Demographic Dividend

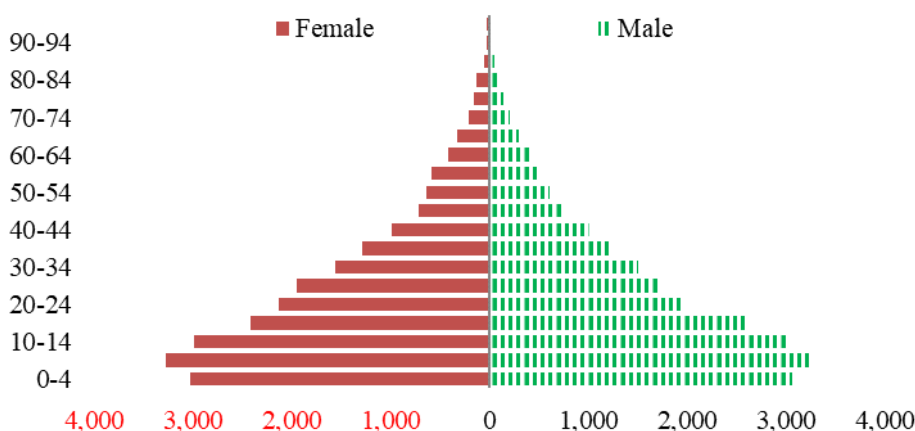
The demographic dividend is a temporary opportunity for faster economic growth that begins when fertility rates fall, leading to a larger proportion of working-age adults and fewer young dependents. Integrated family planning (FP), education and economic development policies can facilitate a demographic dividend for Kenya. A balanced population age structure, combined with investments in education and a policy environment that stimulates robust economic development would help Kenya achieve the Vision 2030 goal of a globally competitive and prosperous nation with a high quality of life (National Council for Population and Development [NCPD], 2014). Lieberman (2017) notes that the demographic dividend concept describes the boost in economic growth that society can experience when a well-equipped demographic, in this case the youth, have the education and jobs. Typically, countries can benefit by equipping young people with education and skills and making a transition from a large number of dependents to better family planning. The dependency ratio is a key element of the demographic dividend.

Fertility, Population Age Structure, and the Demographic Dividend Promise: Figure 2 presents a profile of Kenya's estimated population in 2016 by age structure and sex based on the 2015/16 Kenya Integrated Household and Budget Survey (KIHBS). The bottom of the pyramid constituted 0-4 year olds who numbered 6.08 million (13.4 percent). Children aged 5-9 years were 6.5 million (14.3 percent) compared to 6.02 million (13.3 percent) and 5.02 million (11.1

percent) for 10-14 and 15-19 years, respectively. Youth in the 20-24 year age bracket totaled 4.07 million (8.9 percent) compared to 3.67 million (8.1 percent) and 3.06 (6.7 percent) for those aged 25-29 and 30-34, respectively.

Persons aged 60-64 totaled 0.82 million (1.8 percent) compared to 0.29 million (0.6 percent) and 0.05 million (0.1 percent) for those aged 75-79 and 90-94 years, respectively. The age structure pyramid remains bottom heavy implying a high dependency ratio. Kenya’s attainment of an age structure that promises the demographic dividend will require public policy dedication to investments in education, health and family planning and other economic enablers.

Figure 2. Kenya’s Population Age Structure by Sex, 2016



Source: Author, Based on KNBS’s KIHBS 2015/16

Base and Combined Scenarios for the Demographic Dividend: As presented on Figure 3, present projections show that Kenya’s current demographic situation characterized by high dependency ratios, as seen in a concentration of most of the population at the bottom of the pyramid. This base age structure scenario is unlikely to change even by 2050 if no family planning interventions are instituted and the present average fertility rates of slightly over 4 children per woman remain (NCPD, 2014, UNDP, 2013, World Bank, 2016). Figure 4 illustrates the age structure that can be expected in 2050 if timely interventions are mounted by state and non-state actors in anticipation of demographic dividends.

Figure 3. Year 2050 Base Age Structure Scenario (Without Interventions)

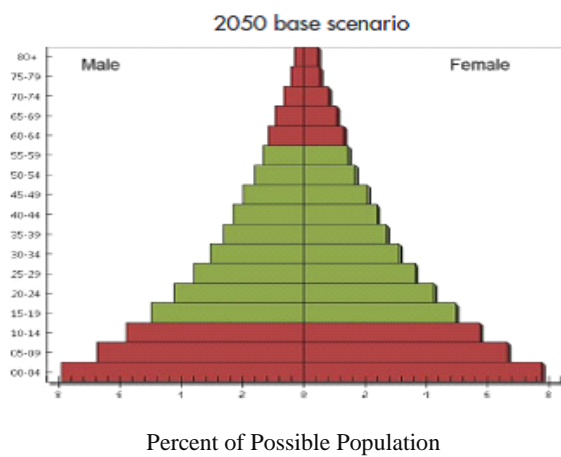
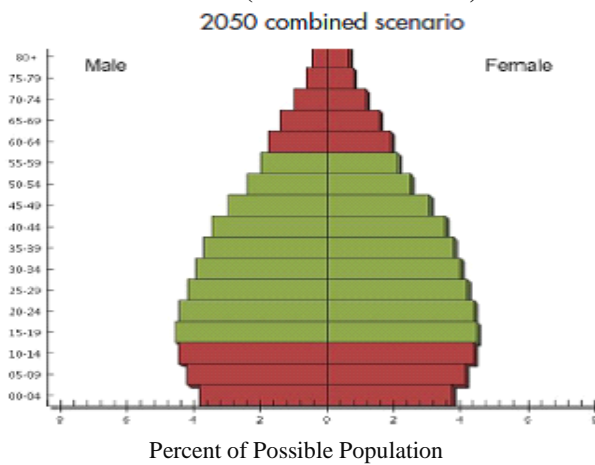


Figure 4. Year 2050 Combined Age Structure Scenario (With Interventions)



Source: NCPD, 2014

Theoretical Framework

Programmes and initiatives that seek to elevate the capacity of the youth to make the best of the opportunities that surround them and their lifetime chances can be grounded on two theories: (1) the empowerment theory and (2) the theory of change. This section presents an understanding of the nexus between these two theories and youth empowerment as the ultimate desirable outcome of founding interventions.

Theoretical Foundations of Youth Empowerment Interventions

The synthesis and analysis of the youth empowerment and demographic dividend nexus can be based on the Empowerment Theory which includes several empowering processes that support effective participation in community change efforts (Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman (1995) proposed a model of psychological empowerment that includes three core elements:

intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral. Collins and Clark (2013) contend that these three elements of empowerment are reflected in a youth who believes that he or she is capable of influencing a given context (intrapersonal empowerment), understands how the system works in that context (interactional empowerment), and engages in behaviours designed to exert control in that context (behavioral empowerment).

Another theory that is central to the link between youth empowerment and harnessing demographic dividends is the Theory of Change. Essentially, the theory of change helps present a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why desired changes in the circumstances of the youth are expected to happen in particular contexts. In this paper the theory focuses in particular on mapping out “missing middle” between what youth empowerment programmes or change initiative do, through activities or interventions, and how these lead to desired empowerment goals being achieved. The theory achieves this by first identifying the desired long-term goals of youth empowerment and then works back from these to identify all the conditions, including outcomes, that must be in place, and how these are related to one another causally, for the goals to occur (The Centre for Theory of Change, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

Two conceptual frameworks that can help explain and illustrate the youth empowerment continuum including the core enabling conditions and intermediate supporting conditions are the youth empowerment theory of change and the youth empowerment framework. The twining of these frameworks is premised on the view that, ultimately, the two frameworks present empowerment as the convergence of outcomes in their underlying processes and enabling conditions.

Youth Empowerment Theory of Change

As a core component of the empowerment process, the theory of change has its highest outcome at Level 5 where, ‘Youth have sufficient empowerment to contribute to the Demographic

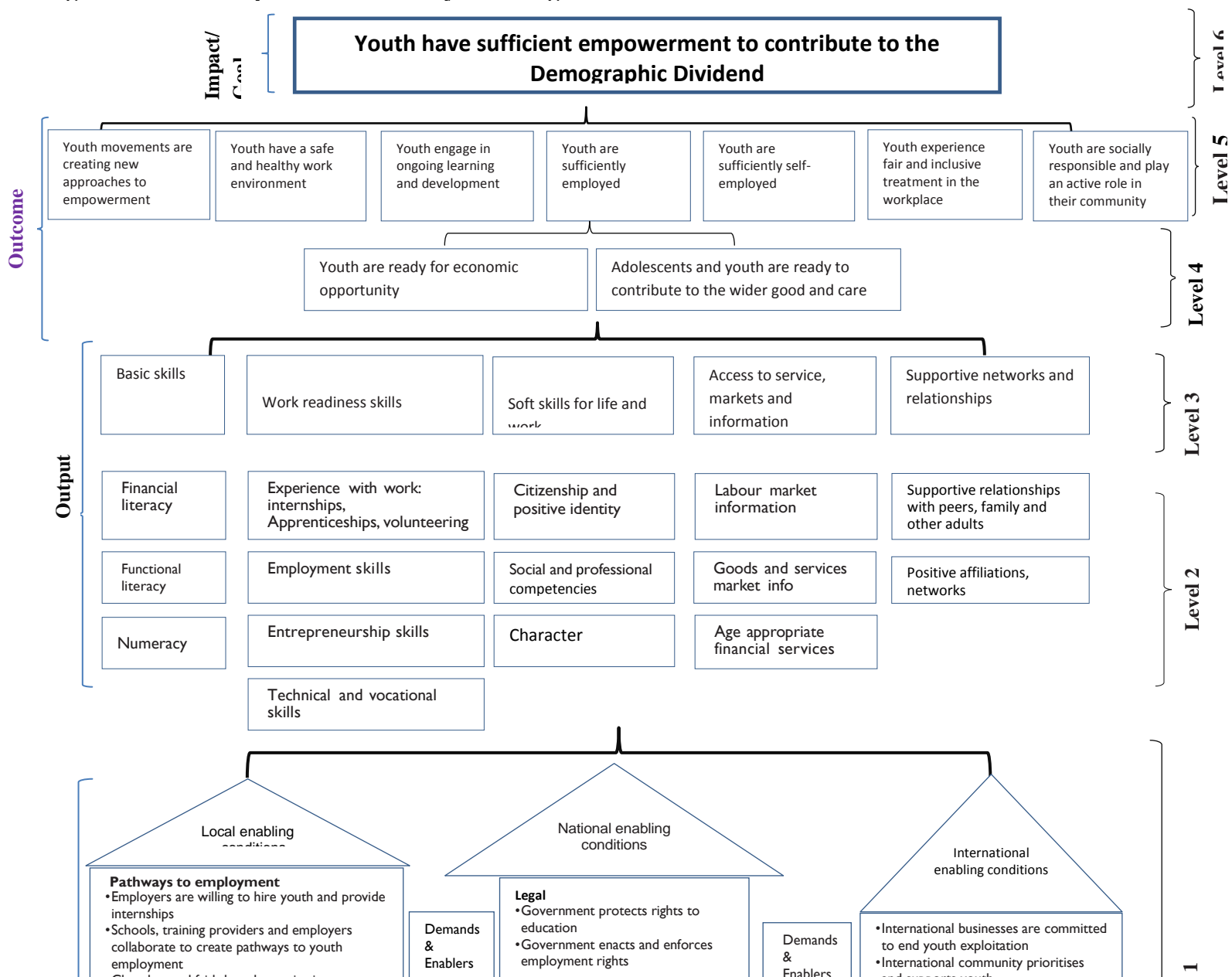
Dividend and sustain productive and fulfilling lives' (Figure 5). Generally, empowerment at this level is characterized by an enhanced capacity of the youth to make the best utilization of their life time chances, realize their aspirations, elevate their self-motivation and awareness; develop beneficial networks with other groups in society; and establish a sense of patriotism in the efforts to improve own circumstances. The first 4 levels (1-4) of the framework represent the core theory of change for sustainable youth empowerment while Level 5 represents the ultimate outcome (Figure 5).

The Core theory of the framework holds that for youth to attain a status of sufficient empowerment, incomes and resources to sustain productive, healthy and fulfilling lives and contribute to the demographic dividend, they must first be ready for economic opportunity. The theory of change identifies six additional preconditions that make it possible for ready youth to attain the empowerment sufficiency objective (Level 4). It is noteworthy that not all of these preconditions must be met simultaneously so they are not, in the strictest sense, necessary conditions. In addition, they may not cover all that is needed. However, these are pathways through which a "ready" youth may attain a sustainable livelihood and the more of them that exist, the greater the opportunity for success. The six pre-conditions are: (1) youth are sufficiently employed or self-employed; (2) youth experience fair and inclusive treatment in the work place; (3) youth have a safe and healthy work environment; (4) youth engage in ongoing learning and development; (5) youth are socially responsible and play an active role in their community (e.g. social justice, responsibility and environment); (6) Youth networks are creating new approaches to empowerment.

Level 2 of the framework of Pathways of Change diagram illustrates the enabling skilling conditions for establishing youth readiness for economic opportunity and readiness to contribute to the greater societal good as intermediate outcomes that follow from five sets of skills, competencies, access or supports. These are: (1) basic skills, which include functional literacy, basic numeracy, and financial literacy; (2) work readiness skills, which include livelihood preparedness, employment skills, entrepreneurship skills, technical & vocational skills, as well as

experience with work; (3) soft skills for life and work; (4) access to services, markets and information, which include labour market information, goods and services market information, and age-appropriate financial services; (5) supportive networks and relationships, which include supportive relationships with peers, family and adults, and positive affiliations and networks and economic cooperation. In essence, the pathways of change framework for the theory change yields a convergence with the empowerment theory in which once young people are ready and have gained “sufficient empowerment to sustain productive and fulfilling lives”, they can contribute to their community’s well-being.

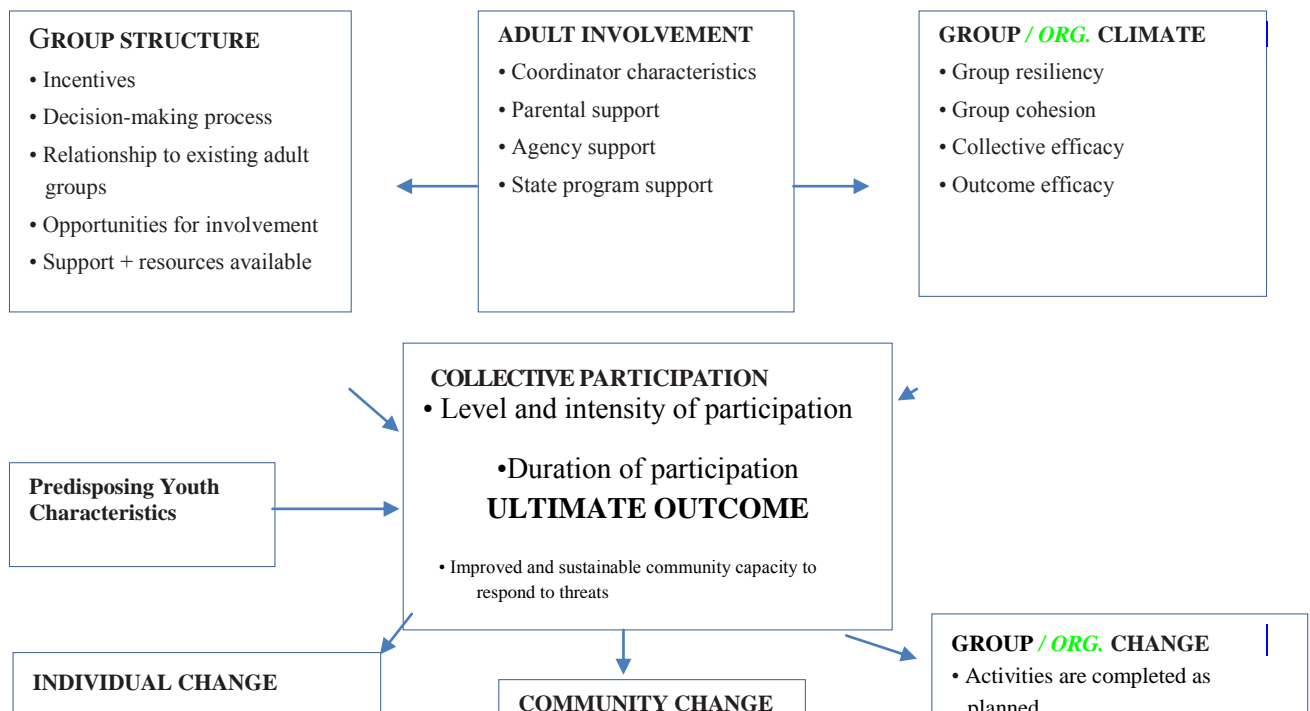
Figure 5. Youth Empowerment Theory of Change



A Youth Empowerment Framework

Based on the contextual understanding of youth empowerment presented in this paper and the case for youth empowerment, Figure 6 presents the conceptual framework for youth empowerment that aligns to the three levels of youth empowerment to produce individual change, community change and group / organizational change and the desirable outcomes for each of the three levels.

Figure 6. Youth Empowerment Conceptual Framework



Source: Snavely and Rigby (2017).

The Case for Youth Empowerment

The purposes of youth empowerment is threefold: to build their capacity to realize their aspirations and boost their self-motivation and awareness; facilitate youth to forge partnerships with other groups in society; and instill a sense of ownership in the efforts to improve their wellbeing (Republic of Kenya, 2006). Muthee (2010) contends that youth empowerment is therefore based on the belief that youth are the best resource for promoting development and they are agents of change, with the ability to provide sustainable solutions to their problems.

In this section, the paper reviews some of the underlying conditions in the Kenyan and typical developing country context that constitute the basis for initiatives and interventions that target youth empowerment towards the realization of the ultimate demographic dividends for Kenya. Examples of these underlying conditions include: youth economic exclusion; youth unemployment, youth fertility and dependency implications for demographic dividend; inequitable access to education and training and skill deficiency; gender dimension to youth

economic constraints; drug and substance abuse; political underrepresentation; youth migration; and youth health.

Youth Economic Exclusion: Globally, the youth continue to face systemic and structural forms of exclusion in terms of access to meaningful economic opportunities. Such exclusion gets more severe for the most disadvantaged youth whose circumstances are typically characterized by marginalization, living in remote regions, lack of access to basic health care, exposure to violence and conflict, under participation in education and training, and predisposition to drug and substance abuse and crime. The nature of economic exclusion of the youth, especially in the least developed countries (LDCs) is intensified by anything from constrained access to financial services and credit for even small capital business startups (United Nations 2003, 2007; UNDP 2013). In Kenya, the economic exclusion of the youth is evident both at the policy and programmatic fronts. With most policy level positions in both public and private sectors being dominated by older generations, often, the integration of pro-youth policies in national development programmes is largely an afterthought.

Even then, the design of programmes is often done without much thought on sustainability of the initiatives, results and outcomes. Hardly are pro-youth programmes designed with a rational theory of change as a basis for the measurement, monitoring and the evaluation of results (Kagwanja, 2007; Muthee, 2010).

Youth Unemployment: Availability of quality jobs for meaningful economic engagement of the youth is perhaps the strongest indicator of the existence of an enabling environment for youth empowerment that is characterized by inclusion and participation. However, the data for Kenya present a grim picture for the youth (UNDP, 2013; KNBS, 2016). Comparisons on Figure 7, show that, in 2016, youth unemployment peaked between 15-19 years before declining steeply to less than 10 percent after age 34. While unemployment rates among the 15-34 year old youth were higher in 2016, the rates for those aged 35+ years were lower compared to those of 2009. Comparisons by location of residence (Figure 8) show that urban youth unemployment rates remained higher than those of the youth in rural areas and across all other age groups.

In part, higher urban youth unemployment can be explained by rural-urban migration, urban inequality and the concentration of youth influx in slums and informal settlements that face acute social and economic hardships. Lower rural youth unemployment, on the other hand can be explained by the fact that unlike their urban counterparts, even those with basic education and skills or none at all can still be absorbed in labour intensive forms of employment like small scale agriculture.

Figure 7. Youth unemployment by Age and Year, 2016 Vs 2009

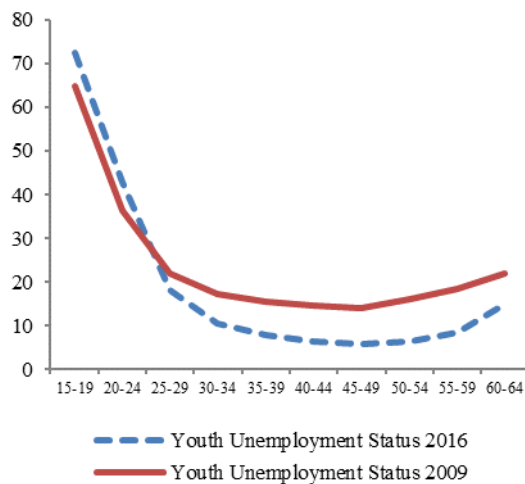
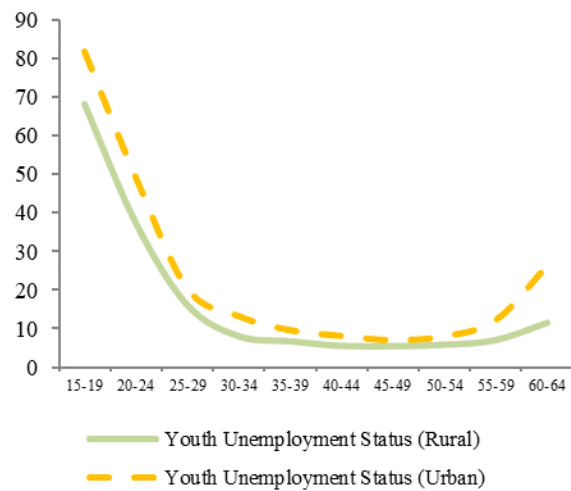


Figure 8. Youth unemployment by Age and Location of Residence, Urban Vs Rural



Source: Author's computations Based on KIHBD Data 2015/2016

Youth Fertility, dependency and implications for demographic dividend: Data suggest that youth fertility rates vary by sex, across age groups and levels of education. While the fertility rate for youth with only secondary education or less is higher, the average number of children for youth with post-secondary education is much lower. Owing to the connection between present adult population fertility rates and the likelihood of emergence of the demographic dividend, present projections for Kenya, based on the DemDiv modeling, tool developed by the USAID-funded Health Policy Project (HPP), suggest that, in the absence of investments on family planning, education and economic empowerment, Kenya is likely to miss her dividends by 2050 (NCPD, 2014).

Inequitable access to education and training and skill deficiency: Recent data suggest general improvement in youth access to education and training opportunities. Gross and net primary school enrolment rates have improved significantly since the introduction of free primary education 15 years ago in 2003. On the other hand, owing to government subsidies in day secondary school financing, the primary-to-secondary school transition rates have improved. However, this general trend masks some glaring gaps.

For example, even as the provision of universal primary education and subsidized day secondary schooling have improved access and transition, generally, the resulting crowding in schools in the face of low teacher population and inadequate facilities and learning resources have resulted in a decline in overall quality of education. The quality situation in universities is no different. Faced with the need for more resources to finance ever ballooning recurrent costs, public universities have been forced to over-stretch places for self-sponsored students. The net effect of this is crowded lecture halls, over-worked and demoralized teaching staff coupled with little meaningful learning and research work. In addition, Muthee (2010) points out that, often, training institutions have no linkages with the labour market, including the informal sector. The society's negative attitudes towards the informal sector discourages some youth from venturing into it, leading to the loss of its huge economic potential.

Gender dimension to youth economic constraints: The UNDP (2013) discussion paper on *Kenya's Youth Employment Challenge* pointed out that unemployment remains significantly higher among young females than among young males. The female rate of unemployment is more than 10 percentage points higher than the male rate for young people aged 15 to 25 years. The gap is larger at younger ages than at older ages. At its highest point, the female unemployment rate is almost 50 percent, compared to a male rate slightly above 30 percent. In contrast, at around 34 years of age, the female unemployment rate is above 15 percent, while the male rate is above 5 percent. Unemployed females largely outnumber unemployed males. For example, between ages 20 and 25, the UNDP report estimated 20,000 to 30,000 more unemployed females than males. It should also be noted that the highest unemployment hits females at an older age than males. Unemployment is typically high among females simply because there are few employment opportunities for them. The females' relative disadvantage in accessing informal jobs is worst at around 25 years of age. In the case of access to formal jobs, the disadvantage simply widens throughout the entire youth period. This reinforces the need to design employment promotion policies with a gender focus.

Drug and substance abuse: Combined with access to more information on other cultures, the existence of new socialization agents, a rise in youth migration, destitution, chronic unemployment, and incidences of drug and substance abuse among the youth are on the rise (World Bank, 2006).

That fact that drug and substance abuse among the youth has adverse effects on the health of the youth so as to ruin their lifetime chances is well documented. Previous and recent country level surveys on alcohol and drug use among young people aged 10 to 24 in Kenya, for example, have shown that the most common substances used by young people were alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, bhang, miraa (khaat) and inhalants such as glue. The surveys have consistently revealed that substance abuse remains much higher among out-of-school youth than among students. Other substances used by young Kenyans include amphetamines, barbiturates, cocaine, codeine, ecstasy, heroine, LSD, mandrax, pethidine, rohypnol, and valium (NACADA 2004, 2012).

Youth in crime and violence: As a result of unemployment and the shortage of opportunities for gainful employment, some young people are drawn to a life of crime. A crime survey in Nairobi conducted by UN Habitat and the City Council in 2002 found that youth delinquency and crime is a major problem (UN Habitat, 2002). Young people, who are also victims of crime, recognize the pressures that drive their peers to a life of crime. The UN Habitat study on youth and crime in Nairobi found the major grounds on which young people are arrested are theft, assault, drug possession, mugging, and manslaughter (World Bank, 2006).

Political underrepresentation: In presenting the examples of historical youth marginalization in Kenya's political scene, Kagwanja (2007) points that where older generations dominate the political scene, politically eligible youth, are rendered powerless and kept in the service of their respective elders. Thus, the writer contends, the youth constitute a powerless "counter-public" to the hegemony of the elders who dominate the state, political parties and other instruments of power. Muthee (2007) advances Kagwanja's proposition by observing that youth violence and the consequent instability they cause, hinder the establishment of the hegemony of a youth-led social movement to counter the hegemony of the elders. This has also blocked efforts to mobilize, consolidate and construct youth identity to push the agenda of youth in public policy. Without an organized, unified and strong social movement for youth, public policies have either by-passed or have had limited impact on youth.

Youth Migration: Historically, the youth have been seen as the most migratory segment of the population in practically all economies. Owing to ambition and the quest for better economic opportunities and quality of life, the youth are naturally the most migratory segment of the population. In Kenya, the youth migration has been an important coping strategy for dealing with limited economic opportunities in the mostly rural, remote and marginalized locations they grow up in (Brown, 2008; Raleigh, Jordan & Salehyan, 2008). In Africa, droughts and floods have led to increased reliance on migration as an adaptation measure (Bates, Kundzewicz, Wu & Palutikof, 2008); over the past 20 years more than 10 million people in the region have been displaced owing to environmental degradation and desertification (International Organization for Migration, 2009). In the Sahel, reduced agricultural yields have been a key

factor driving migration for roughly 30 years (Brown, 2008); climate change will continue to undermine agricultural productivity in the area and may be responsible for prolonged periods of drought (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007), further threatening the livelihoods of the nearly 60 million young women and men living there.

Youth Health: Muthee (2010) offers that reproductive health poses the greatest challenge among youth. This, the author notes, is related to HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases. Young women, aged 25-29 years and young men, aged 30-34 years face the greatest risk of new HIV infection. Yet this age group includes the most productive people of the society. There still exists a huge gap for youth-friendly health facilities. Among other things, the NYP proposes to: Incorporate youth in efforts to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS; promote and establish home and community-based welfare programmes to help youth orphaned by HIV/AIDS; provide affordable drug rehabilitation centers; enhance youth's capacity in leadership and advocacy to enable them manage health promotion programmes such as peer-to-peer counseling and behaviour change.

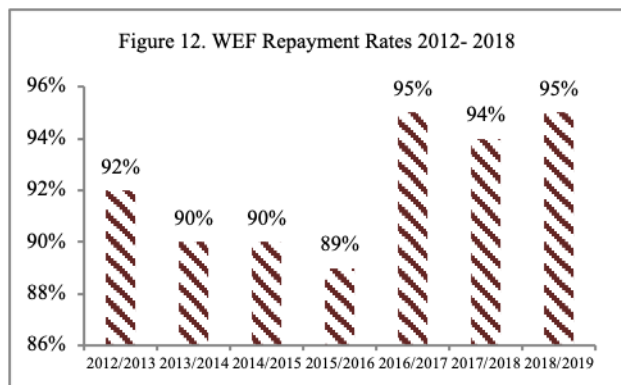
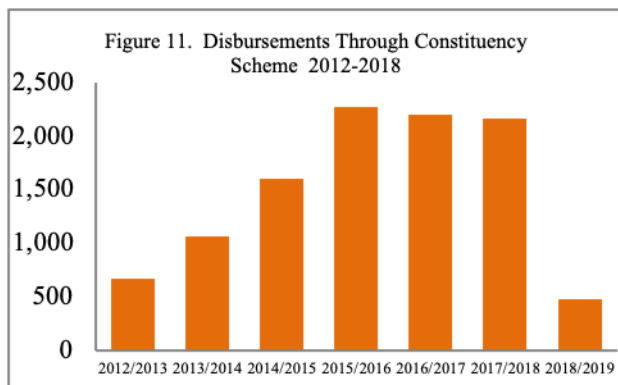
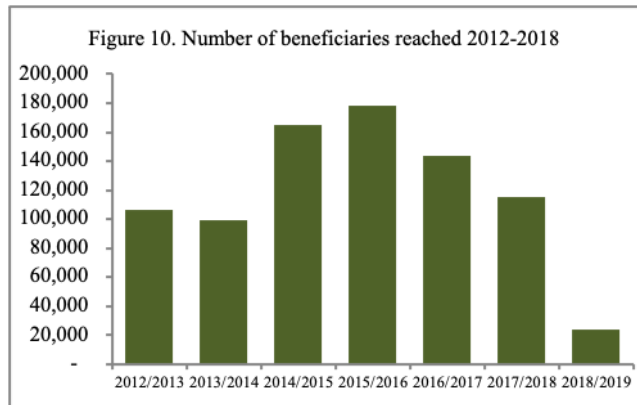
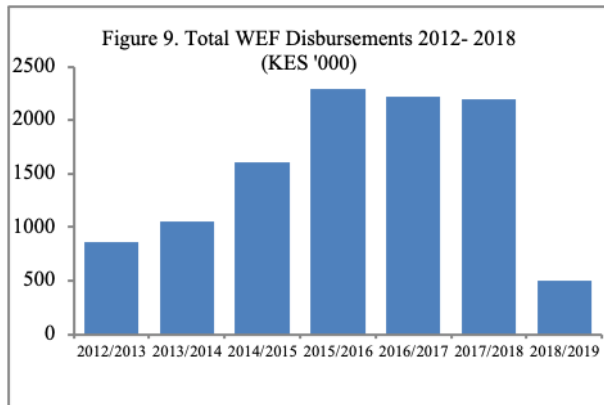
Kenya's Youth Empowerment Interventions

Legislation and Policy: Kenya's legislative and policy landscape for youth affairs demonstrates an appreciable level of government commitment to improving the circumstances of the youth with a view to reaping the economic, social, and perhaps political benefits of youth participation, inclusion and empowerment. Government strategies for the welfare of young people are anchored on the National Youth Policy, the National Youth Service Act, the National Employment Authority Act, and National Youth Council Act among others. On the policy side, the government has developed a national youth policy in 2006 and has since developed a national road map for the demographic dividend. According to Kenya's National Youth Policy (NYP), youth become empowered when they attain a position whereby they can make free choices in life, take action based on their decisions and accept responsibility for the action. The NYP identifies several prerequisites for youth empowerment: stable economic and social base;

political will; adequate resources and a supportive legal and administrative framework; a stable environment for equality, peace and democracy; access to knowledge and information and communication tools and skills; and a positive value system.

Youth Enterprise Development Fund: The Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) is a government institution that provides financial support and business development services to youth owned enterprises. Set up by the government of Kenya in 2006, (YEDF) provides loans to youth owned enterprises. Its core programmes include: provision of market support to youth enterprises, facilitating youth enterprises to develop linkages with large enterprises; providing trading premises and worksites and providing business development services to youth owned enterprises. Since inception in 2006, YEDF has registered great progress in youth empowerment through enterprise development and related programs. These include: Kshs. 12.4 billion in loans advanced worth to 1,985,533 youth enterprises across the country; training of 434,368 youth in entrepreneurship; facilitation of 7,937 young entrepreneurs in marketing their products both locally and abroad through trade fairs; facilitation of 26,015 youth to get jobs abroad through the Employment Scheme Abroad Program; facilitation of 1,653 youth entrepreneurs to secure trading spaces and business incubation services (YEDF, 2018).

Women Enterprise Fund: Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) is a Semi-Autonomous Government Agency in the Ministry of Public Service, Youth & Gender Affairs. WEF was established in August 2007 to provide accessible and affordable credit to support women start and/or expand business for wealth and employment creation. Government's policy and budget support to WEF is a demonstration of Kenya's commitment to the realization of sustainable development goals on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (SDG 5). Over the last decade since inception, the fund has achieved major milestones in total amount of loans disbursed each financial year, loan disbursement through the constituency scheme, LPO financing, number of groups reached, and total number of beneficiaries reached and repayment rates. Although WEF programmes focus on women, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of beneficiaries of the fund are young women in the youth age bracket (Figures 9-12).



Source: WEF, 2018

National Youth Service: The National Youth Service (NYS) was established in September 1964 through an Act of Parliament (Cap 208 of the Laws of Kenya) to train the youth in important national matters such as service in the armed forces, national reconstruction programmes and disaster response. According to the Act, the functions of the Service shall be the training of young citizens to serve the nation, and the employment of its members in tasks of national importance and otherwise in the service of the nation. The service has made tremendous contribution to youth empowerment. NYS contribution can be seen in its five operational pillars: (1) Paramilitary Training and Service Regimentation; (2) National Service & Youth Re-socialization; (3) Social Transformation and Vocational Training; (4) Enterprise and Youth Economy and; Bankable Institutional Architecture. Whereas the social transformation pillar empowers the youth through vocational training for applied skills, the enterprise and youth economy pillar supports programmes that seek to promote youth entrepreneurship.

The Youth Empowerment Demographic Dividends Nexus

The primary argument in the nexus between youth empowerment and demographic dividends is that while empowerment focuses on education and training for skills, economic capacity through youth and entrepreneurship, healthcare, and family planning, ultimately, these interventions establish the formative conditions for a developing country like Kenya to reap demographic dividend in the short and medium terms. This section summarizes a synthesis of the causal mechanisms through which pro-youth policies, programmes and interventions are supportive of the demographic dividend goals.

Implications of improved access and participation in education and training: From a human capital perspective, improved youth access and participation in basic and higher levels of education and training is known for establishing an accumulation the much-needed human capital for driving economic productivity and knowledge and service-based economies. For example, there is evidence that the provision of education and training helps keep the youth in the school system for much longer. Effectively, having the youth within the education system beyond age 25 means that, for most, the commencement of child-bearing would come much later resulting in reduced fertility. In their work, *Is the Demographic Dividend and Education Dividend?*, Cuaresma, Lutz an and Sanderson (2013) find no empirical evidence that changes in age structure affect labour productivity. From their results, the authors conclude that improvements in educational attainment are the key to explaining productivity and income growth and that a substantial portion of the demographic dividend is, in fact, an education dividend.

Girl Education Outcomes: Outside the now well-known and documented impacts of education on outcomes that support the emergence of enabling conditions for the demographic dividend, education access and participation policies that target girls and young women have been shown to have the most profound impact and influences. In their study on the *Cost of Not Educating*

Girls, Quentin, Claudio, Hoa and Adenike. (2018) contend that too many girls drop out of school prematurely, especially in low income countries. Low educational attainment for girls, the authors observe, has negative consequences not only for them, but also for their children and household, as well as for their community and society. The study by Quentin et al (2018) documents the potential impacts of educational attainment for girls and women in six domains: (1) earnings and standards of living; (2) child marriage and early childbearing; (3) fertility and population growth; (4) health, nutrition, and well-being; (5) agency and decision-making; and (6) social capital and institutions. The authors contend that educating girls is not only the right thing to do: it is also a smart economic investment that holds great potential for long term demographic dividend.

Youth entrepreneurship: Government backed programmes, such as the Youth Development Fund (YEDF), Uwezo Fund, Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP); that aim at entrepreneurial development and economic empowerment for youth also have implications for youth participation in economic growth and demographic dividends for the economy. By offering youth the opportunity for meaningful economic engagement to lead economically productive lives, entrepreneurship development programmes ensure that young people in the 19-35 year age bracket, who constitute 30+ percent of the population of most developing countries, like Kenya, can contribute to economic growth and development. Without such approaches to economic inclusion through youth entrepreneurship, the youth bulge, that characterizes most developing countries, would instead be a major source of social and even political tension. Ultimately, therefore, empowerment through pro-youth enterprise development policies and programmes serves economic investment goals that support efforts to harness the demographic dividend. Economically empowered youth are more likely to have smaller families, an outcome that is at the very core of the strategies for establishing a population structure that is supportive of the demographic dividend proposition.

Healthcare and family planning: Interventions that focus on health care and family planning for the youth ensure that young women and men remain healthy and can on their own make

informed choices on family size in ways that positively impact a country's long-term demographic dividend strategy. Healthy young parents themselves have the capacity to provide consistent and reliable labour and make meaningful economic contribution to national development. Programmes and investments that keep the young people and the youth healthy can cost effectively cut the aggregate national disease burden and can terminate or limit further spread of infections in a way that cuts public cost of health care. Government savings from returns on universal health can thus be re-invested in new and more productive sectors of an economy.

Conclusion

From the literature, it can be deduced that there is a cyclic connection between a country's investment in youth empowerment and the attainment of the demographic dividend. For example, while present youth empowerment investments in education and training prepare the youth for the world of work, focus on girl education has been shown to have, perhaps the greatest potential for attainment of the demographic dividend. Available data suggest that many developing countries are still decades off the demographic dividend threshold. To shorten the cycle to the age structure that presents the demographic dividend window, developing countries will need to: intensify their present investment and interventions in improving youth access to quality education and training, align curricula and training to the dynamics of labour markets; focus on advocacy for family planning uptake, invest in youth health care with greater emphasis on reproductive health and concentrate more effort and investments on sustainable youth entrepreneurship. Youth who go through all stages of a country's formal education cycle are more likely to delay the commencement of child raising and thus have fewer children compared to those who end in earlier cycles. Again, educated young women are not only more knowledgeable on the value of family planning but are more likely to start families much later. They are also more likely to space childbirth more in favour of their professional growth. Ultimately therefore, present interventions that place young women at the centre of youth empowerment programming will have the strongest legacy impacts on the path of developing countries towards the demographic dividend age structure.

Overall, youth education can be seen as the single most important empowerment investment because, as shown by empirical studies, improvements in educational attainment almost exclusively explain economic outcomes in the demographic dividend.

Policy Recommendations on Strategies For Youth Empowerment and Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

Family Planning: Empowerment to the youth that aims at reproductive health care for reduced fertility rates and low economic dependency should focus on: Full implementation of the government's Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) commitment to increase the contraceptive prevalence rate to 50 percent by 2015, and to 70 percent (modern methods) by 2050; (ii) increase the national and county government budgets for FP and eliminate the commodity funding gap; (iii) improving the logistics system to reduce stockouts and ensure basic family planning requirements are readily available to young women and men; especially the most economically disadvantaged and; (iv) financing and intensifying outreach and advocacy for family planning uptake among the youth. Beyond empowering the youth in taking charge of their reproductive health choices, effective family planning policies and programmes have implications for both savings and human capital accumulation. With few children, the youth are able to accumulate more savings for enterprise development. On the other hand, with low fertility, the youth, especially young women who are the main child care givers, have more financial and time resources to further develop their human capital through higher education. This improves the quality of employment they can compete for thus their lifetime earnings and overall quality of life and those of their children with positive implications for subsequent generations.

Education: Whereas education remains perhaps a leading area in which the greatest progress with respect to youth development and empowerment has been achieved, deficiencies in performance, attainment and outcomes persist between and within countries and regions. Efforts to make educational systems work better for youth development and empowerment and ultimately support the harnessing of demographic dividends should be concentrated on:

(i) tailoring interventions in education towards providing students with the basic knowledge they need to function in society and also towards furnishing the skills required to enter the world of work; (ii) improving country level education investments and interventions towards focus on improving quality and performance levels; (iii) aligning education and training systems and curricula to current and future industry and societal needs; (iv) expansion of access to university and advanced studies, engagement in research and training for self-employment; (v) expanding youth access to basic education through secondary and tertiary education; (vi) new policies on youth sensitivity and youth perspective in easing the school-work transition; (vii) state intervention in strengthening quality assurance mechanisms for private education and; a review and revision of educational curricula to ensure that young people are provided with the academic, professional, entrepreneurial and job-search skills they need in the fast-changing world of work.

Rights of girls and young women: While progress has been achieved in many areas, young women still face greater employment and wage discrimination than young men. Young women continue to face barriers in many areas of development. Although progress has been made in providing schooling opportunities for girls and young women, secondary and tertiary education remain elusive for many. Effective strategies required to improve the circumstances of young women towards greater equality and gender parity would include: (i) the incorporation of gender analysis into all youth development strategies with special focus on marginalized young women; (ii) formulation of effective policies to enhance the involvement of girls and young women in economy and ensuring employment policies are non-discriminatory against young people; (iii) adoption and implementation of innovative policies by state and non-state actors that create an enabling environment for young women to break out of poverty; (iv) provision of training at the national and sub-national levels to enable young women to acquire business-related, financial management and technical skills and to participate in economic policy-making in their communities and; (v) government and civil society interventions in the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming across sectors.

Entrepreneurship: OECD (2017) observes that unlocking the youth entrepreneurship potential calls for a number of actions at the programme and policy levels. Programme level interventions should: (i) carefully target interventions and tailor them to the specific challenges and needs of young entrepreneurs, who constitute a highly heterogeneous group; (ii) invest in comprehensive entrepreneurship programmes offering multiple services simultaneously; (iii) tap the lessons from impact evaluations when designing youth entrepreneurship programmes; (iv) reallocate resources away from ineffective programmes towards the most promising interventions. On the other hand, interventions at the policy level should among other things focus on: (i) the integration of entrepreneurship education in formal schooling to provide young people with different sets of competencies, including technical, non-cognitive and life skills as well as entrepreneurial acumen; (ii) promotion of youth entrepreneurship spirit through success stories and role models, and the development of networks of young entrepreneurs, knowledge exchange and other communication tools and platforms such as the media; (iii) simplification of administrative procedures for business registration; (iv) encouragement of formalization through the right mix of incentives and sanctions in order to support business expansion and; (v) development of a holistic and long-term vision to foster local and global value chain development for employment creation and job quality, especially in rural areas.

Health: To address the myriad health issues that young people around the world face, especially those in developing countries, like HIV/AIDS, obesity and related diseases arising from poor nutritional practices, the prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug use, the high rates of morbidity and mortality associated with accidents and violence among youth, steps must be taken to ensure the provision of high-quality primary health care, including sexual and reproductive health care, that is accessible, available and affordable (United Nations, 2005). Community-based interventions should be used more effectively to ensure that an appropriate environment exists for reducing young people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and for implementing targeted interventions.

Promoting participation as well as leadership skills: The 2003 World Youth Report on *The global Situation of Young People* underscores the value of leadership in youth transformation by

pointing out that the young people can emerge as leaders at a young age, and it is important that they have the opportunity to do so (United Nations, 2003).

Young people need their own leaders with the skills to advocate on behalf of those they represent. Youth organizations should focus on the promotion of participatory skills for all in addition to leadership skills for the few. Participation that is grounded on value-based youth leadership can play important roles in building ethical communities for the youth to drive truly sustainable change.

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