

**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE FORUM ON THE COMPLEX SOCIAL PROBLEM OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT HELD ON NOVEMBER 22, 2020 BY SSTT – UTAWALA AT THE SDA CHURCH MIANG’O.**



Photo | Part of The Participants Present at The SSTT - Utawala Community Forum | Nov 22, 2020

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## 1.0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Systems Solutions Think Tanks (SSTT) is a Community Based Organization that was formed by a section of youths from Mihang'o – Utawala with the sole objective of finding lasting solutions to the community's complex social problems. Against this backdrop, our current focus is on reducing the constantly rising cases of YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT in Utawala. The group applies the use of complexity and systemic approach to analyze the root causes of youth unemployment, as a complex social problem, in order to formulate long-lasting intervention models to solve this problem.

Basing on 2019 Kenyan Statistics, the conventional population of youth aged between 18 and 34 years was 13.9 million, in which 39% were completely unemployed. The other 61% consisted a majority youths in their tertiary education stage. A small number had an advantage of getting either formal or informal employment, of whom a number were underemployed; are in jobs that lack the collective aspects that make up decent work i.e. reasonable income, productive work, security, better prospects for personal development, social protection and integration, freedom to express concerns and equality of opportunity.

To get more information regarding the problem, we decided to engage members of the community in a forum that would give them an opportunity to give their voice, ideas and suggestions that they regard as essential in understanding the problem and creating long lasting solutions. To this end, some of the factors mentioned by the community members as causing youth unemployment surge include:

- I. Corruption
- II. Poverty /lack of capital to breed and implement new inventions and ideas
- III. Lack of entrepreneurial skills. This is an essential tool for any youth aspiring to be a successful entrepreneur.
- IV. Unfavorable business environment leading to less investments and expansion of entities
- V. Lack of knowledge on how to access resources set aside for youths, like the Uwezo fund and Youth Enterprise Fund.

In Kenya, the degree to which the youth can contribute to the development effort of the community and nation is constrained by lack of job opportunities and capital. Young people face particular challenges in accessing the labor markets and are more likely to lose their jobs during economic downturns. They face specific barriers to entry into labor markets and business world largely due to lack of experience and social networks.

There is a significant social and economic cost associated with underutilization of the skills and time of the youth. They are not only exposed to social exclusion in the face of underutilization of their skills, but also have the effect of triggering intergenerational poverty and worsening social cohesion across generations.

## 2.0. METHODOLOGY

The team applied a participatory approach in order to ensure every stakeholder present was given an opportunity to share their perspective views of the social problem. The entire schedule involved structure sessional presentations by the team members and question and answer session after every presentation, followed by short breaks. To ensure the participants stayed focused, the person presenting could ask general life questions and gift the first participant to answer correctly with an airtime worth 50 shillings. After all the presentations were completed, there was a general session of sharing experiences. The final remarks and vote of thanks were given by the team leader who then introduced the SAYDS representative present Elizabeth, letting her briefly explain to the participants more about SAYDS, its core values, mission, and objective in supporting youth groups. All presentations were done through written demonstrations on boards and structural designs on vanilla paper.

## 3.0. THE FORUM

The consultative forum started at 11 am. Amos Momanyi, Team Leader, welcomed attendees and did a brief introduction about the group, the social problem the team is tackling and the purpose of the forum. He then, expressing his hope of great enlightenment at by the end of the forum, proceeded to encourage the participants to express their ideas freely without any fear of judgement or prejudice.



Photo| *Amos welcoming the attendees and explaining the reasons for holding the consultative forum* | Nov 22, 2020

### 3.1. Purpose for Holding the Community Forum

- 1) To get the community's views and perspectives of youth unemployment problem in terms of:
  - Components making up the system, Utawala
  - Factors and components/stakeholders that play key roles in creating the problem in the system.

- 2) Share ideas on possible ways of stakeholder inclusion, and possible best interventions that would help solve the social problem.

### 3.2. Stakeholders Present

- a) Youths
- b) Parents/Guardians
- c) Sole proprietors
- d) Teachers
- e) Church leaders

## 4.0. COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS APPROACH PRESENTATION

The presentation was conducted by Amos Momanyi who explained to participants the complexity approach and its usefulness in understanding the complexity of the problem of youth unemployment that the team is dealing with, as well as why the social problem is considered to be a complex.

### 4.1. System Components.

#### 4.1.1. The following were identified by the participants as the components of the system:

- a) Government
- b) Youths
- c) Politicians
- d) Community Citizens
- e) Financial Institutions
- f) Learning Institutions
- g) Religious institution
- h) Business entities
- i) Security agencies
- j) Health institutions

#### 4.1.2. Components interactions and the Roles they Play

Component/Stakeholder	Interact with	Role They Play in the System
1. Youths	They interact with all the components in the system	Provide skilled and unskilled labor
2. Learning Institutions	They interact with all the components in the system	Offer training courses where one can enroll to acquire knowledge and skills required in the job/work field

3. Financial institutions	They interact with all the components in the system	Offer financial services, like saving services, loans, and financial advice
4. Government	They interact with all the components in the system	Policy development and implementation  Control how the country is run
5. Security Agencies	They interact with all the components in the system	Offer security and courier services
6. Politicians	They interact with all the components in the system	Some are legislatures
7. Parents/Guardians	They interact with all the components in the system	Raise and take care of youth
8. NGOs and International Organizations	They interact with all the components in the system	Humanitarian aid  Monitoring/oversite work
9. Business entities	They interact with all the components in the system	Services and good offering



Photo| *Teacher Moses explaining certain interactions within the system that result in youth unemployment* | Nov 22, 2020

- ★ A number of these components/Shareholders in the system do provide employment opportunities and quite a number of youths are fortunate enough to secure them.

- ★ Financial Institutions provide saving services and financial assistance i.e loans which one can use to expand one's business or start one

#### 4.1.3. The participants ranked the stakeholders according to the role and influence they have towards the unemployment issue as follows:

Stakeholder	Role (Minor)	Role (Major)
1. Youths	√	
2. Financial Institutions	√	
3. Business entities	√	
4. Security Agencies		√
5. Government	√	
6. Politicians	√	
7. Parents/Gurdians		√
8. Health Institutions		√
9. Learning Institutions	√	
10. Religious institutions		√

#### 4.2. Complex Causation



Photo| *Hannington contributing on causes of youth unemployment and their interactions.* | Nov 22, 2020

**4.2.1. The following were pointed out as factors that also contribute to youth unemployment rate surge in Utawala and Nairobi at large, and how they play out in the system, making it harder to solve.**

- a) Corruption: Bribing, miss-appropriation and embellishment of funds meant for beneficial projects like Kazi kwa Vijana that would ensure reduction the poverty burden among youths by helping youth groups initiate and run employment projects.
- b) Seasonal jobs: most companies and organizations whose products and services demand curve increases during specific seasons tend to recruit many youths, only to lay them off when the demand falls.
- c) Tribalism and nepotism: As these barbaric practices increase, many youths are not able to secure jobs/funds as it now depends on how well one is connected
- d) Lack of entrepreneurial skills: Many youths lack entrepreneurial skills, making it had for them to grab opportunities even when they have other resources, like funds they require for establishing employment opportunities.
- e) Poor education System: Many graduates lack necessary skills and knowledge required in business world and labor market. It was determined that the Kenyan education system is more of theoretical and IQ-based meritocracy than it is practical.
- f) Poor government strategies to curb unemployment and failure in implementing all proposed measures and policies towards solving unemployment for economic growth
- g) Rapid increase in number of college/university graduates: This leads to increased demand for higher academic qualifications and work experience for job seekers since the labor market cannot absorb all, thus acting as a sieve to filter many Youth out.
- h) Lack of capital to self-employ: Despite having ideas and inventions at hand, many youths have not been able to fully develop these ideas, which otherwise would have led to self-employment and, in some cases, employ others.
- i) Preference of white-collar jobs than blue-collar ones: Many youths have long exhibited more interested to be employed in the formal sector than in the informal sectors.
- j) Drug abuse: Some Youths have been laid off due to addiction to drugs like alcohol. Drugs affect the analytical and reasoning ability thereby altering productivity of these addicted youths.
- k) High taxation: This leads to low investments as many investors are putt off with the load of tax rate. Investments from local citizens and foreigners provide employment.  
High taxes also lead to companies/organizations downsizing-sending many off, rendering them jobless
- l) High loan interest rates; less borrowers; less investors/lack of business expansion, hence less employment
- m) Monopoly: An increase in dominance by one company/organization/firm and dirty Business environment make it hard for others to invest/establish new businesses that would create new employment opportunities.
- n) Unfavorable government policies: These policies create unfriendly environment for businesses.

As testified by most attendees, some of these factors have denied them the opportunity to secure certain employments despite having met qualification requirements. Others also said they have relatives and friends who have experienced these setbacks in their job hunting or when trying to start and run their projects. Others also observed closure of companies and businesses, like former giant Retailer chain shops Nakumatt and Tuskys, resulting in unemployment of many youths.

**4.2.2. There are a number of things voiced by attendees that have existed over the ages and are continuing to be a hindrance towards solving the problem of youth unemployment. These include:**

- **Stealing of ideas from Youth:** Many youths have come up with great ideas and inventions that would create more employment opportunities, but due to poverty and lack of funds their works end up taken up by others who have funds and connections who then register them as their own and develop them while the poor youth continue suffering.



Photo| *Elder Mweresa explaining how their idea got stolen by others as they went seeking for funds and partnership to actualize it... Ended being taken by different group who were given funds | Nov 22, 2020*

- **Politicking the unemployment issue:** Almost all the successive governments since independence have proposed policies and measures aimed at curbing the problem of unemployment, but due to selfish desires, the elected leaders never facilitate full implementation of these policies.
- **Rise of number of graduates in relation to slow economic growth:** Year in year out the number of those graduating from tertiary institutions keep increasing while the rate of creation of job opportunities is quite slow. Therefore, the labor market nor the business world is not that capable to absorb the graduates into employment.



- Corruption: This was cited by many participants as a major cause of youth unemployment in Kenya. It leans towards “What can you offer”, “who do you know”, questions when seeking employment. In addition, the embezzlement of funds and resources set aside for Youth development projects has become very rampant in most government ministries and state departments.
- High taxation: The continued increase in taxation by the government has caused a considerable number of businesses to downsize to limit the impact and maintain profit margins. Most sole proprietors /self-employed youths also struggle to keep up their businesses ending up closing down.

## 5.0. LESSONS

Basing on the main objective for holding the community forum, which was to engage the community in charting the best way to solve youth unemployment, several lessons were learnt from the discussions:

- a) Community engagement is the best first success step in any attempt to solving social complex problems.
- b) Everyone is right in their ideologies and perspectives according to their explanation of the same, and should be taken seriously without prejudice or intimidation when tackling complex social issues.
- c) Even though youths have the knowledge of youth unemployment, most of them do not necessarily understand the current rates and initiatives that are already being carried out to solve the problem. For those who had ideas of these initiatives, most of them do not know the procedures followed in accessing them.
- d) The use of certain language structures and words may not be appropriate when leading a community forum as they may result in prejudice or pre-judgement hence making some participants reserved of their ideas.

## 6.0. CHALLENGES

- a) There was lack of understanding of the complexity and systemic approach that the team is using to handle the problem leading to minimal participation in certain parts of the presentations.
- b) The venue for the forum being within the church building, the team faced a challenge of time management since the church was holding a function that made it a little bit challenging to begin arranging the venue early enough.
- c) The camera video coverage system was not so efficient and the team was therefore forced to supplement it with mobile phones
- d) There was overall late coming of the participants thus making the forum kick-off considerably later than the schedule,
- e) The numbers present was a bit lower than the expected population. However, those present greatly contributed toward achieving the objectives of the entire process.

## 7.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

Three of the participants recommended that the team should continue engaging the community throughout the process either through in-house forum meetings or on one-on-one interviews for robust ideas. It was also recommended that the team should invite many more people should it find it fit to have another forum of such nature. This would ensure expanded stakeholders' inclusion.

A suggestion was also made that, in addition to the written demonstrations, power point presentations using a projector would help paint a much clear picture of the process as well as enabling the participants to easily follow through the presentations.

## 8.0. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Systems Acumen for Youth-led Development Solutions (SAYDS) family. Your continued support greatly inspires us to continue with this noble course of creating a better society. Thank you also to the Systems Solutions Think Tanks (SSTT) group for taking up the challenge to improve the lives of our youths. And thanks to the community members, those who showed up for the forum and those who volunteered to support us in any way that we may not have mentioned herein. To Mihang'o SDA Church, thank you for your generosity in allowing us to use the church grounds. God bless you all.

Systems Solutions Think Tanks (SSTT)  
Utawala team



Photo| Rachel, a volunteer, taking temperature readings before participants can be allowed into the meeting room | Nov 22, 2020



Photo| Rachel distributing masks to participants as they register | Nov 22, 2020

**9.0. APPENDIX: LIST OF ATTENDEES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Category/Occupation</b>
1	Hannington Otieno	M	Youth/sole proprietor
2	Moses Otieno	M	Church Elder/Teacher/Parent
3	Maurice Jaji	M	Church Elder/Highschool teacher
4	Daisy Kemunto	F	Youth
5	Elizabeth Makana	F	Youth
6	Josiah Mweresa	M	Parent/church Elder/Self-employed
7	Isabella Totari	F	Youth/Teacher
8	Harriet Gesare	F	Youth/
9	John Thuku	M	Youth/Student
10	Rachael Nyasetia	F	Youth
11	Bonface Omondi	M	Youth
12	Amos Momanyi	M	Youth/SAYDS Fellow
13	Rodgers Opira	M	Youth
14	George Nyaosi	M	Youth/SAYDS Fellow
15	Makiri Jane	F	Youth
16	Laurrine Osike	F	Youth
17	Otieno Samwel	M	Youth
18	Martins Shegan	M	Youth/SAYDS Fellow
19	Julius Anyega	M	Parent/Business Person
20	Mrs. Julius Anyega	F	Parent
21	Mercy Ogola	F	Youth
22	Robert Odera	M	Youth/Teacher
23	Elizabeth Agola	F	Parent/SAYDS Rep
24	Wycliffe Omondi	M	Youth/KRA Employee

25	Christine Nyasetia	F	Youth/Teacher
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