



PROGRESSIO



POLICY BRIEF No.2/2011

THE YOUTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN ZIMBABWE

Introduction

Unemployment is the most pervasive challenges faced by youths in Zimbabwe due to the socio-economic and political collapse that characterized the past decade. The overall unemployment rate in Zimbabwe is over 95%, with youth unemployment being pegged at over 70% (ILO 2006). Unemployment has brought all sorts of vices including participation in politically motivated violence, spread of HIV and AIDS and drug abuse among the youth. With a new political dispensation in Zimbabwe in the form of the Global Political Agreement, there is a general consensus on the need to reduce unemployment. A study was necessary to critically analyze the causes of high youth unemployment and its effects in Zimbabwe.

Employment situation in Zimbabwe

Youth unemployment is a global phenomenon. Worldwide, youth are 43.7% of the total unemployed people (ILO, 2010). In sub-Saharan Africa, about 60% of the unemployed are youth (ILO, 2010). The situation is no different for Zimbabwe with the Zimbabwe Poverty Assessment study (1995) revealing that the youth have the highest unemployment rate among all the age groups in the labour force in Zimbabwe. More recent figures indicate that out of the country's 12 million people, only 480,000 were formally employed in 2008, down from 3.6 million in 2003 (The United Nations Office of the Coordination Humanitarian Affairs [UNOCHA], 2008). Formal sector unemployment stood at 94 percent of which 67.7 percent constituted the youth (www.mydec.gov.zw). The rate of youth unemployment with regard to both formal and informal sectors of the Zimbabwe economy stood at 19 percent for females, 11 percent for males (Chakanya, 2008). It was during the decade of long political and economic crisis that plagued Zimbabwe since 2000 that youth unemployment peaked. The unstable economic environment during this period led to the proliferation of the informal sector and parallel (black) market which absorbed most young people as agents and dealers. With the signing of the Global Political Agreement, the economy stabilized and these activities came to a sudden halt, worsening the situation of the youth. Against this backdrop, the Government of National Unity took reducing unemployment to be one of the key areas of action. Article 3.1a of the GPA states that the parties shall be committed to working together on a full and comprehensive economic programme to resuscitate the economy which will urgently address the issues of unemployment (GPA 2008).

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study which informs this policy brief were to:

- Analyse the employment situation of youth in Zimbabwe

- Examine the effects and impact of high unemployment rate among the youth in Zimbabwe
- Collate recommendations on how to reduce high unemployment rate among the youth in Zimbabwe

Research methodology

Data for this for this policy brief was gathered through use of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through consultative meetings in five regions-Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo, Mutare and Gweru; key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Secondary data consulted included journals, magazines, textbooks, newspapers and the internet. Data was collected and analyzed according to the themes identified.

Key findings

Causes and effects of youth unemployment in Zimbabwe

The main cause of unemployment was the incompatibility between the curriculum and the needs of the industry in changing times. As a result of this disjuncture, graduates' skills are not relevant to the needs of the communities and nation at large. Furthermore, the shrinking economy cannot absorb all the youth. The effects of high youth unemployment include youth engaging into drug abuse, violence and crime, promiscuity leading to prostitution where they end up contracting HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections that can be detrimental to their health.

Recommendations

The following key recommendations are made:

- There is need for a multi-sectoral approach and the involvement of all relevant ministries working on the youth, labour and employment issues to create synergies in attacking unemployment.
- There is need for revision of the curriculum to make it compatible with the needs of the industry
- Resources need to be provided to the youth to support their development.
- An efficient apprenticeship system should be put in place so that firms have more input into the system.
- Practical subjects like Physical Education, Music and Arts should be examinable to encourage participation in them.
- There is need for the establishment and strengthening of entrepreneurship education in schools and tertiary institutions to foster the development of an entrepreneurial culture among the youth to facilitate self-employment.
- A loan and grant scheme should be in place to assist the needy to finance their education in vocational training colleges, technical colleges and universities.
- A skills requirements audit in the economy should be carried out so that education and training respond to the needs of industry.
- There is need for wide dissemination of the skills requirements of the economy through career guidance and counseling sessions so that students make informed decisions.

- A co-ordinated Labour Market Information System needs to be established to monitor labour market trends and facilitate the designing, planning and monitoring of policies and programmes geared at employment generation.
- There is need for an expansion of the existing system to offer indirect routes to skills acquisition which would cater for those who fail to meet minimum academic requirements but with the elegance to follow certain skilled professions.
- There is need for an introduction of a comprehensive incomes policy to address discrepancies in salaries in the private and public sectors. Investments are to be made into the informal sector to allow for easy access of credit and general reform of regulations to allow the development of the sector.
- A comprehensive national employment policy should be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders. There is need for strong involvement of the National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO) in employment policy issues and employment creation.

***NB.** This policy brief is a summary of the policy monograph on the youth and unemployment in Zimbabwe written by Sunungurai Chingarande and Macnoman Guduza. The policy monograph was developed by the National Association of NGOs (NANGO), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) from the University of Zimbabwe and Progressio-Zimbabwe with the financial support from the European Union. For more detailed information on the policy monograph contact Mr. Christopher Mweembe at NANGO offices in Harare on the following emails: chrismweembe@yahoo.com or chris@nango.org.zw and on the following telephone numbers: +263 4 732 612 / 708 761 or +263 712 035 393*