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Youth Empowerment For Sustainable Development In Kenya; Role Of Capacity Building

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ABSTRACT
Empowering young people for sustainable development is a strategic necessity to build a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous future. It involves providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to lead sustainable development efforts. With the right information and the ability to think critically, young people can spot holes in the market for sustainable goods and services. Determining the intervening influence of capacity building on young empowerment and sustainable development in Kenya was the primary goal of the study. The current study adopted a qualitative research design. The specific qualitative research design that was adopted was a desktop research design. The study collected both internal desktop research and external desktop research. Content analysis was used to present the data. According to studies, there is a favorable correlation between sustainable development and youth empowerment, and young people can be instrumental in accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to research, a nation's social, political, economic, cultural, and policy development can be accelerated by having a strong, active, and empowered young, especially in developing nations such as Kenya. The results of the study show that capacity building programs have a major impact on sustainable development. The results of the study suggest that capacity building programs have a major impact on young empowerment. In addition to addressing the social component of sustainable development that influences the creation of human capital, this study views capacity building as a main constituent of sustainable development. Economic benefits of human capital building include increased employability and private earnings, while social benefits include increased civic engagement. By providing the youth with the information and self-assurance to take part in decision making processes, promote sustainability, and provide solutions for environmental problems, youth empowerment can aid in the achievement of the SDGs. One of the implementation strategies for attaining Sustainable Development has been recognized as capacity building. Cooperation between youth organizations and organizations involved in education, training, and the labor market can be fostered through capacity building. Additionally, the study finds that capacity building strengthens the link between sustainable development and young empowerment. Capacity building is essential to ensuring that the workforce has the skills it needs to support sustained, equitable, and sustainable economic growth, which is the objective of SDG 8.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Youth Empowerment, Training, Developing Economies

INTRODUCTION

Youths refers to those individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. Empowering young people as citizens of our societies is crucial to achieving Sustainable Development (SD) and facilitating the shift from a human-centered to an ecosocial perspective[1]. Ecosocial transition is a comprehensive approach to sustainability that emphasizes the connections between social and ecological sustainability while taking into account the ecological, economic, and social aspects of development[2]. According to this viewpoint, if young people are given the information and chances to flourish and participate in decision-making they would create and become a positive and dynamic force for sustainable development[3]. Empowering young people for sustainable development is a strategic necessity to build a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous future. It involves providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to lead sustainable development efforts [Gill et al., 2]. With the right information and the ability to think critically, young people can spot holes in the market for sustainable goods and services. In order to solve environmental problems and provide economic opportunities, they can create and establish green start-ups [4].

According to Wanjiru [5], youth engagement in decision-making at the national, regional, and district or local levels is contingent upon empowerment. The policy process should encourage information sharing and active stakeholder participation, including from young people, in order to make any social intervention program inclusive[6]. Furthermore, many sustainable development policies have highlighted capacity building as one of the most important techniques for boosting the potential for sustainable development. Young people working together to start a small business, for instance, will be a positive outcome of a program that trains them to

do so. However, a sustainable outcome will depend on whether or not young people can make the business successful and generate revenue from it without outside financial or technical support [6].

Globally, the unemployment rate among the youth in 2018 stood at 13%; a total of 192 million youth were unemployed. In developed economies, the rate of youth unemployment was at 5.5% in 2018[7]. The high percentage of youth unemployment in China has persisted in recent years and is predicted to remain a problem for young people. In June 2023, China's young unemployment rate reached a record high of 21.3%. China Youth SDGs Learn Research and Practice Action is one of the many programs that encourage young people to strive for sustainable development in spite of the country's high youth unemployment rate. Raising awareness and empowering youth to be change agents are the goals of this initiative. Among the events are a youth training camp, a competition for college students, and an open class for elementary and middle school pupils. This program's goal is to increase Chinese youth's understanding of the SDGs through education, research, and hands-on activities. Chinese youths are urged to take part in real-world activities aimed at accomplishing the SDGs through training camps, public welfare initiatives, and other channels [8].

Finland is doing well in terms of sustainable development by international comparison[9]. Competence, high-quality education and skill development, robust institutions, and social stability are some of Finland's main advantages. Finland's Human Development Index (HDI) in 2022 was 0.942, ranking it 9th in Europe. Finland consistently ranks highly on the HDI Global Development Map, which is a reflection of high sustainable development [10]. The high level of sustainable development have been majorly associated with youth empowerment programs such as the Youth Act in Finland. This act promotes social inclusion, access to youth work and free-time hobbies, and the development of young people's abilities [11]. In Botswana's youth empowerment initiatives, both past and present, have not been able to make a considerable contribution to achieving the SDGs [12]. Because they are not based on the young people's diligent commitment, the majority of youth empowerment programs suffer from serious flaws [13]. Although various tactics, such as youth empowerment, have been implemented in Nigeria over the years to maintain economic development, the current high unemployment and poverty rates make the results unsustainable [14]. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) considers Nigeria's 2023 Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.548 to be low. Similarly, Mc-Donald, Iloanya, and Okoye-Nebo [15] had previously proposed that the Youth Empowerment Program in Nigeria had failed due to a number of reasons, including poor leadership, social disputes, environmental variables, and discrimination against female youth, debt load, and population growth.

Youth empowerment in Kenya is a government effort to advance the lives of young people through education, employment, and other opportunities. Programs such as Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) purposes to authorize youth through providing skill based training in various fields of growth. However, according to the International Labour Organization - ILO, the projected youth unemployment rate in Kenya stood at 26.21% in 2017. Policymakers, governments, and even academics are becoming more interested in this issue of teenage unemployment since it highlights the need for youth economic empowerment globally[17].

To guarantee that young people lead respectable lives, the Kenyan government has launched a number of youth initiatives at the national level. To guarantee that youth unemployment is addressed, the government has created policies and procedures. The effort aims to establish direct employment, regulate wages, run employment exchange programs, and create education centered on skills and talents [18]. These actions fall under two categories: income growth and competency acquisition and capacity building. They acquire the skills required for the labor market through the capacity building and training phase[19].

Sustainable Development

Johnson et al. [20]define sustainable development as an organizational concept that aims to accomplish human development objectives while maintaining the capacity of natural systems to provide humans with the ecosystem services and natural resources they need. Sustainable development combines environmental preservation, economic growth, and social fairness.

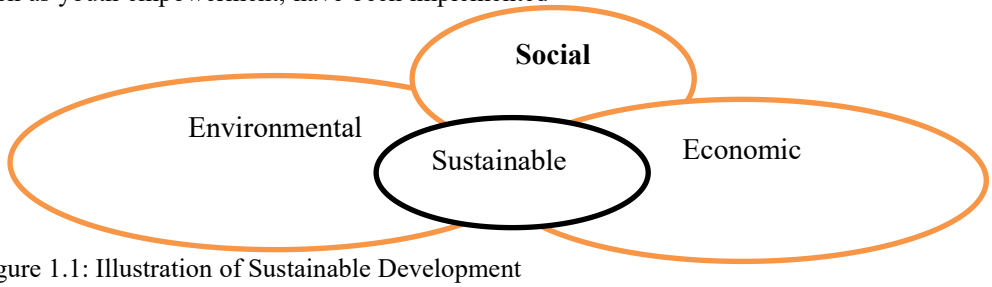


Figure 1.1: Illustration of Sustainable Development

The three pillars of sustainable development are environmental, social, and economic. In the process of sustainable development, the three pillars—represented by spheres—are interrelated and embrace a holistic approach. This example also suggests that actions in one area could affect the other in a favorable or bad way. The relationship between the three embedded domains has the most significance that economic, social, and environmental considerations are not distinct from one another in terms of logic and values[21].

The three categories which include social, environmental, and economic are compared to a variety of sustainable development indicators based on their interactions or effects. The UNDP's 1990 Human Development Index (HDI) and Daly & Cobb's 1989 Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) are two recent metrics that have been employed. Since 1990, the UN has created and compiled the Human Progress Index (HDI), a statistic that gauges the social and economic development of different nations. Gross national income (GNI) per capita, life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, and expected years of education are its four primary components, according to Kpolovie, Ewansiha, and Esara [22]. Figure 1.2 shows the HDI trend in Kenya.

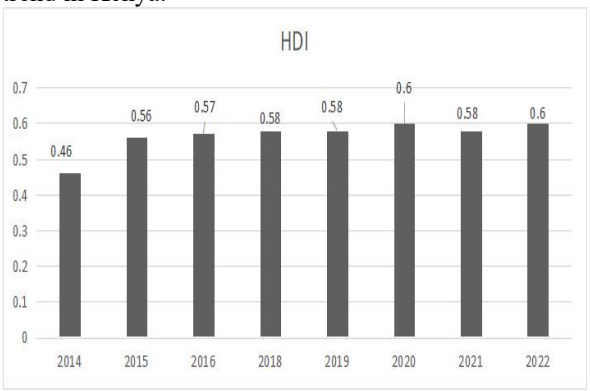


Figure 1.2: Human Sector Development in Kenya

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is a process that helps young individuals take charge of their lives by improving their access to resources and changing their beliefs, values, and attitudes [23]. Youth empowerment also refers to projects implemented to engage the youth in productive activities to sustain the youth in future to improve their employability in the county[24]. Youth empowerment can be alienated into three categories: communal, organizational, and individual. Individual empowerment refers to the ability of adults or children to exercise control and advance their knowledge. Organizational empowerment is based on giving adults or youth the chance to learn the skills they need to take charge of their lives. It also includes organizations that work with and profit from youth by offering alternatives to services, as well as organizations that create and have an impact on policy decisions[25]. Kenya has made significant progress in empowering its youth, with programs and policies that aim to provide skills, access to finance, and entrepreneurship support. However, there are still challenges to address, such as limited job opportunities and corruption. Youth empowerment in Kenya is a focus of many initiatives, including: Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (KYEOP), National Youth Employment Policy, National Action Plan on Youth Employment, Youth Empowerment Project, Ujasiriamali, Kenya Youth Economic Empowerment Program (KYEEP) Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF),

Capacity Building

According to Wanjiru [5], capacity building may be described as the process that empowers individuals to utilize their leadership, intellectual, and creative potential for both individual and national development. The six processes are determining whether training is necessary, involving stakeholders in capacity development, evaluating capacity needs and assets, developing a response to capacity development, putting the answer into action, and assessing capacity development[26].

Building capacity improves an organization's, group's, or individual's ability to solve problems, carry out essential tasks, and make progress toward goals, comprehend and manage development needs, and improve sustainability. Individual and community empowerment results from constructive capacity building[27]. Major international conferences on sustainable development have issued outcome papers and action plans that reflect this. The Sustainable Development Agenda acknowledges the need of capacity building. According to Agenda 21, a nation's capacity to pursue Sustainable Development paths is largely based on its ecological and geographic circumstances, as well as the capabilities of its institutions and citizens[28].

Problem Statement

Youth play a crucial role in sustainable development. This is because of their unique position as innovators and change agents, as well as their significant demographic presence. According to UN estimates, there are more than 1.2 billion youth worldwide, making up a sizable section of the population and being increasingly represented in the workforce. Since involving young people in the economic, social, and environmental domains is essential to reaching long-term sustainability goals, this surge offers both opportunities and problems for sustainable development.

Compared to other African nations, Kenya continues to have extremely low levels of sustainable development as indicated by the human development index. The human development index was 0.575 in

the year 2021 positioning Kenya at 152 out of 191 countries. Though the HDI slightly increased to 0.644 in 2022. This is still too low as compared to the country which had the highest HDI which was Mauritius with HDI of 0.796. Young people today must traverse a complicated environment full of major obstacles that prevent them from properly participating in and benefiting from sustainable development. These difficulties include serious problems impacting health and well-being, institutional barriers in work and education, and impediments to meaningful political and civic participation. Resolving these issues is essential to enabling youth to reach their full potential and to guaranteeing a more sustainable and inclusive future. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study sought to determine the intervening effect of capacity building on youth empowerment on sustainable development in Kenya

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the effect of youth empowerment on sustainable development in Kenya
2. To determine the role of capacity building amongst the youth on sustainable development in Kenya
3. To examine the intervening effect of capacity building on youth empowerment and sustainable development in Kenya

Research Questions

1. What is effect of youth effect of youth empowerment on sustainable development in Kenya?
2. What is the role of capacity building amongst the youth on sustainable development in Kenya?
3. What is the intervening effect of capacity building on youth empowerment and sustainable development in Kenya?

Significance of the Study

Because it highlights how vital it is to involve youth in the process of achieving long-term social, economic, and environmental improvement, research on youth empowerment and sustainable development is significant. Therefore, the study may help the government, non-governmental organizations, and other donor agencies comprehend young challenges and develop appropriate measures in response.

This study will outline Kenya's national and regional youth empowerment policies, action plans, strategies, and initiatives as well as current potential for sustainable development and job creation. Following that, suggestions will be given to the legislators on how to improve initiatives that explicitly target young people using more useful tactics.

This research adds to the frame of existing information since it looks at a broader spectrum of youth empowerment on sustainable development in Kenya. To scholars the findings will contribute significantly as a source of reference to them in their future academic endeavors and also in fulfilling academic gap that has been existing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature

This section contained the theories that informed this study. They included; Sustainable Development Theory and Positive Youth Development (PYD) Model.

Sustainable Development Theory

The Brundtland Commission of the United Nations created the idea of sustainable development (SD) [28]. As per the notion of sustainable development (SD), society can be structured to last for a long time without endangering the capacity of upcoming peer group to meet their own requirements. It entails choosing which advantages, with what resources, must be maintained over what periods of time. The foundation of the SD theory is the notion that all of the Earth's natural resources are in balance with one another. The Earth will be unable to supply the goods and services that people require if this equilibrium is upset.

The principle of sustainable development holds that advancement must meet present needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own. This idea creates a balanced approach to urban development that aims to reduce environmental effect while boosting social welfare by integrating economic growth, social fairness, and environmental protection [30]. The theory therefore informs the dependent variable which is sustainable development.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) Model

The foundations of this paradigm can be found in the research on the flexibility of developmental processes conducted by biologists [31] and comparative psychologist [33]. Many works of literature have resulted from this, particularly in North America. According to Roth and Brooks-Gunn[33], Positive Youth Empowerment Development (PYD) is a method that aims to shift the focus from interventions, problem-solving, prevention, and deterrent to youth preparedness and development. PYD specifically emphasizes the importance of youth involvement in program design and organization decision-making.

As one of its facets, PYD represents a larger trend toward a strength-based approach to youth empowerment[33]. Roth and Brooks-Gunn's [33] illustration of the forty developmental assets shows that YEP results are strength-based. Relationships, chances, and personal attributes (skills, competencies)

are these developmental assets that help young people avoid risky behavior. Additionally, the OECD keeps defining important abilities that support the concern for developmental assets, such as autonomous coping and knowledge-based and technological exchanges in diverse groups. These skills fall into two categories: primary and secondary YEP outcomes indicators.

According to Bandura [34] the primary outcomes are self-efficacy and self-esteem, which are defined as an individual's assessment of their own abilities and self-worth, respectively. It enhances young people's sense of self-worth and competence by including them as valued collaborators. According to the OECD secondary outcomes include theoretically improving personal development assets linked to individual academic success, savings, investment commitment, and the avoidance of antisocial behavior touched by YEP. Villarrual, Perkins, Keeth, & Bordens, [34] People acquire personal assets such as establishing social support, such as marriage, peer affiliations, a supportive family, and friendships. Positive relationships and social support are seen as protective factors that predict well-being, group functioning, and high performance.

A variety of verbal and nonverbal reactions that affect perceptions, reactions to people, and social interactions are examples of social asset abilities. Furthermore, it is anticipated that young people would gain transferable skills from these experiences as they actively participate in decision-makin[33]. The concept is pertinent to the study because it sheds light on how engagement in community activities, access to resources, and a supportive environment all contribute to the development of different developmental assets that are important markers of socioeconomic empowerment.

The development of individual assets, a crucial component of PYD, is achieved through training, participation in financed groups, and access to resources like credit and business experience sharing, and group support systems. The generated assets are categorized as primary assets, which include lobbying for community action that improves the community, learning transferable skills like public speaking and business skills, and developing self-esteem following group support systems. In order to give individual members more credit, the organization uses the secondary assets as collateral. According to the study, these assets serve as markers of each person's degree of socioeconomic empowerment. This therefore informs youth empowerment and capacity building variables.

Empirical Studies

Chang, Sjöberg, Turunen and Rambaree [3] focused on youth empowerment for sustainable development: Exploring eco-social work discourses. Twenty qualitative semi-structured interviews with important youth organization representatives from the Swedish municipality of Gävle were used to collect data, was used for analysis. The primary findings are examined in the context of adolescent empowerment, ecosocial work, and a Foucauldian understanding of knowledge, power, and discourse. The findings point to the necessity of ecosocial youth empowerment, urging people involved in social work practice to learn more about ecosocial work and youth empowerment via SD.

Gill, Aftab, Rehman, and Javaid [1] examined how Pakistan's Prime Minister's young Program provides evidence for sustainable growth and young empowerment. An online, self-administered structured questionnaire and a variety of secondary data sources were used to gather information from 275 randomly chosen respondents who were enrolled in higher education institutions. The results of the study suggest that the PMYP has a major impact on youth empowerment and that youth empowerment and SD are strongly positively correlated. Participants are generally satisfied with the program's offerings and perceive it as a genuine effort to empower youth for SD; nevertheless, this concept also necessitates an integrated youth development paradigm in Pakistan.

Rani, Niranjan and Teotia [36] focused youth empowerment towards sustainable development with reference to Delhi. Descriptive research was the basis of the study. A self-made survey is created and distributed to gather information on Delhi's youth demographics and socioeconomic standing. The majority of respondents believed that educational instruction from NGOs enhanced young people's personality development. Respondents' socioeconomic status improves as a result of youth empowerment and training. Ecosocial transition is a comprehensive approach to sustainability that emphasizes the connections between social and ecological sustainability while addressing ecological, economic, and social aspects of progress. Empowering young people contributes to sustainable development across the nation, enabling future generations to meet their own requirements.

Jegede, Irewole and Dada [14} focused youth empowerment as catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria. In order to do this, this paper examines Nigeria's youth empowerment initiative in order to pinpoint the issues impeding its effectiveness and provide remedies. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the gathered data. According to the report, the fact that over half of Nigeria's population is young, that around 70% of them live in poverty, and that over 29.5% of them are unemployed, makes youth empowerment crucial. The Federal

Ministry of Youth Development in Nigeria oversaw the coordination of youth.

Building community capacity for sustainable development: Achieving local community sustainability goals in an efficient manner was the main emphasis of Franco and Tracey's [28] study. A qualitative approach was used to conduct this study, combining several qualitative methodologies and techniques such as focus groups, surveys, individual interviews, policy analysis, and literature reviews. According to the analysis, the best way to increase local communities' capacity to handle sustainability difficulties over time appears to be to improve specified CSD priority areas in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The most important SDGs for effective community capacity building for sustainable development (CSD) were determined to be 9, 4, 15, 16, 17, and 8.

Through the combination of ICT and computer education for youth capacity building and liberation, Martins and Amuda [37] aimed to empower youth for future sustainable development. This study looks at using computer education to empower young people for a sustainable future. It was determined that the key to a sustainable future and the advancement of the country is youth empowerment. Concerns include sustainable development and the use of computer education for youth capacity building. According to the article, computer education should be used to help young people build their technological, process, and human resources.

In Ekiti State, Nigeria, Olusola-Fadumiye and Omodun [38] concentrated on education and capacity building for the long-term growth of youth empowerment. In order to examine the data produced by the study, a descriptive survey design was employed. The results demonstrate that there was a noteworthy contribution to raising the respondents' standard of life in the research area and to empowering young people by lowering crime rates among them. The results also demonstrated that the Youth Empowerment Scheme had high loan interest rates, low literacy rates, insufficient training facilities and equipment, and restricted credit availability.

Wanjiru [5] examined the impact of capacity building on the long-term viability of organizations that promote youth empowerment: The Mathare Youth Sports Association as an example. This study used a descriptive research design. It was again revealed that funding sources are often insufficient to meet needs and rising costs for projects sustainability. According to the correlational analysis human resources had a significant positive relationship with sustainability of youth organization. The regression analysis also showed that resource mobilization correctly predicts on sustainability of youth organization. Findings on the influence of human resources on sustainability of youth organizations, revealed that organization provides training which has a positive impact on employees. Results also showed that employees help to make fundraising of the NGOs to enhance sustainability. Results also demonstrated that the organization formed partnership with local NGOs to enhance youth initiatives. According to results human resources in the organization help community organizations for better project implementation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The method or plan used to find respondents and gather information from them in order to draw conclusions on a research issue is known as research design [39]. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research designs are the three fundamental categories of research design. The research design used in this study was qualitative. A desktop research design was the particular qualitative research design that was used. Desktop research (DR) can leverage huge sample numbers to get quantitative, bias-free data on a user population since it examines the results of earlier studies to obtain a wider perspective [40].

Data Collection

Data collection, according to Cote [41], is the methodical process of obtaining information about a particular topic. It is a methodical and structured procedure for obtaining and assessing data on factors pertinent to a certain study topic or goal. Primary and secondary data are the two categories of data. This study used secondary data because it was a desktop study. Internal desktop research and external desktop research are the two types of desktop research. While external desktop research was gathered online from multiple websites, internal desktop research for this study was gathered from university libraries.

Data Analysis

According to Ott and Longnecker [43], data analysis entails looking at the obtained data and drawing conclusions and inferences, which include identifying underlying structures, extracting crucial variables, looking for anomalies, and evaluating any underlying hypotheses. It entails examining the information that has been obtained and drawing conclusions. This study utilized qualitative data. Content analysis was used to present the data.

RESULTS

The first objective was to determine the effect of youth empowerment on sustainable development in Kenya. According to studies, there is a favorable correlation between sustainable development and youth empowerment, and young people can be instrumental in accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to research, a nation's social, political, economic, cultural, and

policy development can be accelerated by having a strong, active, and empowered young, especially in developing nations such as Kenya. Among the many issues that young people in Kenya confront are unemployment, a lack of professional skills that employers require, high levels of dependency that impede economic progress, rising rates of poverty, and an increase in criminality. These and other factors have a detrimental effect on the overarching goals of the Kenyan Constitution, Kenya Vision 2030, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established after 2015.

The second objective was to determine the role of capacity building amongst the youth on sustainable development in Kenya. The results of the study suggest that capacity building programs have a major impact on sustainable development and that there is a strong positive correlation between the two. It is evident that despite all of these efforts to speed youth capacity development in Kenya, youth capacity development has proceeded more slowly than anticipated, which has resulted in persistent socioeconomic gaps between young people and the general population. Finding out how capacity building affected young empowerment and sustainable development in Kenya was the third objective. The results of the study suggest that capacity building programs have a major impact on young empowerment. In addition to addressing the social component of sustainable development that influences the creation of human capital, this study views capacity building as a key component of sustainable development. Economic benefits of human capital building include increased employability and private earnings, while social benefits include increased civic engagement.

CONCLUSIONS

By providing young people with the knowledge and self-assurance to take part in decision making processes, promote sustainability, and provide solutions for environmental problems, youth empowerment can aid in the achievement of the SDGs. Further political stability, social well-being, and national economic output all increase when young people are assisted in finding fulfilling employment or developing their own economic opportunities.

One of the implementation strategies for attaining Sustainable Development has been recognized as capacity building. According to previous research, capacity building equips youth with the abilities and information necessary to promote constructive change, engage in civic engagement, and support the advancement of the country. Cooperation between youth organizations and organizations involved in education, training, and the labor market can be fostered through capacity building.

Additionally, the study finds that capacity building strengthens the link between sustainable development and young empowerment. Building capacity is essential for providing the workforce with the skills it needs to support sustained, equitable, and sustainable economic growth, which is the objective of SDG 8. This includes entrepreneurship skills, computer literacy, and vocational training—all of which are essential in the quickly evolving labor market. Improved employment prospects, higher productivity, and economic expansion are the results of such capacity building, especially in emerging nations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy, and Sports (MOYSA), the Kenyan government might host workshops and seminars on empowerment. This would help equip young people with entrepreneurial skills, particularly those who are not enrolled in school. The government should also improve the systems that allow young people to participate in economic empowerment, resilience building, and efficient and democratic governance. The government of Kenya should provide young people with the skills, resources, and opportunities to create sustainable livelihoods. This can be done through vocational training, mentorship, entrepreneurship programs, and access to finance literacy.

The government of Kenya should develop more policies to curb corruption and improve transparency and accountability in youth empowerment programs. In addition, the government should ensure the enforcement of policies regarding corruption by use of prosecution and asset recovery. Young people should be actively involved in the creation and development of youth policies. Due to their exclusion from the development process, young people are disengaged from government initiatives. Good youth policies should be created with youth input and result in more chances for young people to participate in development and governance processes.

Clearly defining how youths can be involved in the planning, decision-making, execution of youth development programs, and collaboration between youth and adults is also necessary to improve capacity building. As opposed to the current approach, which is top-bottom, it is advised that planning be done bottom-top. As a proper way to gradually phase out those who tried to swindle and not empower the youth, the Kenyan government could construct new training centers and renovate existing ones with furniture, IT facilities, training modules, and a comprehensive curriculum that has been approved by the government.

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