



COUNTY YOUTH LEADERS CONVENTION ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

PRESS STATEMENT

30TH JULY 2013

The youth unemployment rate in Kenya is at chronic levels and according to a report by the African Development Bank (AFDB) youth represent 70% of unemployed Kenyans and a report by USAID reports that over 500,000 Kenyans leave school every year, only to face the harsh reality that there are no jobs. High youth unemployment rates threatens the future of individuals, our national and county development. According to the same report, over the last six years, the Kenyan economy has generated only 150,000 jobs and the rest are forced to join the informal sector.

Government efforts to curb Youth employment

As Youth leaders appreciate that youth unemployment is on the agenda of the National Government and we laud the various initiatives that the government has undertaken to tackle youth unemployment like the Kenya Youth Empowerment Project, Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Kenya Youth Empowerment Project in partnership with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA). We also laud new products initiated by YEDF such as the agri- business loan which is commendable.

At present there is Ksh 6 billion for youth and women on the table dubbed the Uwezo fund to empower youth. However it is disheartening that young people are not being consulted on a fund that is meant to benefit them. We would also like to know how much money is going towards the women and towards the youth. Also clear systems should be put in place to disburse the fund to avoid misappropriation and mismanagement

County Government efforts

Youth unemployment at the county level is also at crisis levels and it's high time County Governments act firmly to tackle youth unemployment or risk losing whole generations from the labour market forever.

The situation in most counties is highly alarming as most of them do not even have independent departments that deal with youth issues. Sadly, according to the reports we have gathered only 25 out of the 47 counties have youth departments in place. Even worse is that, only 20 out of 47 counties have plans that are developed to tackle youth unemployment.

Budget allocations are ad-hoc as there are no clear procedures for allocating funds for youth programs which is worrying. It is also interesting to note that a majority of county governments have not made any budgetary allocations for youth programs and the few that have made allocations the monies are very insignificant compared to the total budget allocated to the county and the total youth population in those counties. It is also sad to note that most of these county budgets remain secretive and are hidden away from the public.

However, we also note that there are a few counties which are taking this issue seriously and coming up with innovative ways of tackling the problem like the one youth one cow from Muranga County. This is very encouraging and more counties need to come up with innovative ways to tackle youth unemployment.

Challenges facing all the counties

We as young leaders identified the following issues that cause unemployment and cut across all the 47 counties.

- low education levels and skills that do not match the demand in the job market
- Lack of experience that is always required by employers
- Corruption that takes away resources meant for youth development
- Ignorance among youth who still believe that employment is only about working in offices.
- Politicization of employment in the counties

The challenge of youth unemployment is dire and we call upon both the National and county Governments to invest more in the right skills for jobs in demand and introduce reforms in the educational systems to make them more cost-effective and competitive. Also, Governors need to create youth departments and allocate more fund to youth empowerment projects.

Therefore we as young leaders give the following recommendations:

- Full implementation of the governments directive that 30% of all procurement tenders should be given to the youth.
- Ensure meaningful participation and involvement of youth in leadership, planning and management at the national and county levels.
- Creating technical schools, reform education systems to ensure that youth get skills, knowledge and requirements of the labor market.
- Each county should set aside funds for youth programs and put in place guiding principles for allocation and utilization of youth funds.
- Transparency and openness in recruitment at the national and county levels
- Each county must establish an independent ministry of youth
- Corruption is a major cause of youth unemployment in all the 47 counties and the National and county Governments must do everything possible to fight corruption if they want to create more jobs for young people.
- There has to be clear communication and dissemination of information particularly on matters affecting the youth. All governments must go beyond putting statements in the Newspapers and seek more effective ways of reaching the youth in the counties.

These recommendations should be immediately implemented to effectively tackle youth unemployment.

signed by county youth leaders