Youth Problems... Youth Solutions
2013 - 2017 Priorities
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Preface

Kenya has a fairly young population, with those below 34 years old constituting 78.31% of the population. Being dynamic and energetic these youth have the potential to play a critical role in Kenya’s socio-economic as well as political development. The realisation of Kenya Vision 2030 and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) critically depend on the degree of inclusion of the youth in the development agenda.

Youth Agenda has for the last 2 years independently and jointly with likeminded organisations tracked youth voices, provided platforms for dialogues with an aim of collecting and understanding youth needs and their proposed interventions. Regrettably, most young people in Kenya are unemployed, underemployed or underpaid thus placing them squarely in the ever growing ranks of Kenya’s working poor. Apart from unemployment the youth have cited a number of key challenges that continue to threaten their human dignity. They include; non-responsive education and training to the market needs, weak institutional responsible for youth development, low involvement, participation and representation of youth in decision making processes and limited access to health facilities.

Youth Agenda presented a summary of young people’s problems and their proposed solution in order of priority for discussion and input to over 450 youth elected and nominated youth leaders in Kenya during the National Youth Elected and Nominated Leaders Forum on 16th -17th May 2013 whose theme was “Celebrate, Learn and Strategise”. The leaders committed to drive and deliver the youth agenda.

The aspirations of young people presented in this publication titled Youth Problems...Youth Solutions will therefore serve as a reference to young people’s “Canaan”, youth information pack, advocacy tool and accountability framework for all key stakeholders.

This process would not have been possible without the individuals and institutions involved. Youth Agenda would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of all the youth of Kenya who participated in raising their voice by specifically presenting youth issues and recommendations for actions. Special thanks go to George Ojema, our Programme Manager Ms Judy Nguru-Walla and Project Officer Gilford Kimathi. Finally Youth Agenda would like to thank UNDP, UN Volunteers, Amkeni WaKenya, Ford Foundation, USAID and Pact Inc. for their generous support.

It is therefore our distinct pleasure to share the Youth Problems ... Youth Solutions publication, a compendium of issues that the youth and their leaders concur should be addressed in the new political dispensation through the leadership of the Jubilee Government.

Susan Mwongera
Chief Executive Officer
1. Introduction

It is recognised that 75 percent of Kenya’s populace is young and under the age of 35 years and this group has a role in shaping the country’s social, economic and political development. However, Kenya continues to experience a glaring mismatch between the aspirations of its youth and the opportunities available to them despite their high hopes and ambitions. This is clearly demonstrated by Youth unemployment which is currently estimated to be over 70 percent in Kenya and a major concern to policy makers.

The cause of the growing unemployment is partly attributed to lack of appropriate skills required in the labour market. Due to high youth unemployment and low participation levels, Kenya’s youth remain marginalized and unable to contribute to their full potential in national development as they continue to be relegated to the footnotes of all facets of development. Hence, many young people are unable to translate their modern aspirations into a productive and fulfilling future.

The key challenges of high expectations, disappointing employment, life prospects, and marginalization among young people often fuel frustration and desperation which in most cases breeds violence and creates civil despondency and all sorts of criminal behaviour. Therefore, in addressing the needs of the youth as captured in this document, the government must move away from seeing the youth problem in two perspectives of unemployment and education to appreciating the inter-connection of systems, their interaction and causal relationships that require joint strategies and multi-faceted innovative approaches.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the realization of Vision 2030 and its successive Medium Term Plans (MTPs) and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is hugely hinged on the degree of inclusion and mainstreaming of the youth agenda in our policy, planning and budgeting frameworks. Therefore issues affecting young people should be fully integrated and harmonized into every aspect of public policy and across all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Under the Vision 2030, specific policies and interventions are spelt out for implementation to fully develop the youth potential as well as prepare and engage them in socio-economic development.

It is against this backdrop that the Youth Agenda has developed this document through participatory processes in order to place youth issues and perspectives into the core focus of the Jubilee Government and which will form the basis for youth policy formulation over the medium term, that is, 2013-2017.

2. Priority Areas for Policy and Programmatic Interventions

This section provides evidence-based policy interventions that the Government should implement with a view to empowering the youth into the mainstream development platforms in realization of their aspirations.
2.1 Employment Creation

Minimal involvement of young people in gainful employment and economic participation as well as their exclusion from decision making poses a threat to national security, cohesion and stability in this country. This is demonstrated by the fact that 80 percent of the unemployed population is the youth. In addition, 92 percent of the unemployed youth have no vocational or professional skills training. On the other hand, about 500,000 graduates enter the job market every year.

The unemployment scenario among the youth leads to an increase in crime rates which may explain the increasing formation of youth criminal gangs and militia groups in Kenya. The 2007 Post Election Violence (PEV) and related events clearly demonstrated that having a significantly large number of relatively well educated but unemployed youth is not just a serious deterrent to economic growth but also poses a real threat to national security.

It is clear that enormous challenges facing the youth were exposed such as their exclusion and marginalization from decision making policies that directly affects them. It is therefore evident that there is a lack of operationally effective mechanisms of integrating the majority of Kenyan youth into mainstream economic activities.

In addressing the youth unemployment issues, it is incumbent for the Government to pursue the following policies and programmes:

2.1.1. Policy interventions

Declare Youth Unemployment a National Disaster - This will ensure that all Government efforts go into working towards creating employment opportunities and job-creation for the youth. In addition, support from the development partners will also be deemed critical in this noble undertaking.

Tax Incentives - As a fiscal policy requisite, the Government should provide tax rebates for companies that employ a certain percentage of youth as an incentive to spur Youth Employment. Tax incentives will also facilitate the growth of Small and Medium Enterprise for the youth and protection of property rights.

Promote agribusiness amongst the youth - Agriculture contributes directly to more than 25 percent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides a source of livelihood to majority of Kenyan youth. It is thus critical to promote this sector among the youth through irrigation, marketing, subsidized inputs, extension services and credit facilities, as well as stressing on value addition of crop and livestock products.

Develop and operationalize a Youth Employment Policy - It is proposed that the newly created Ministry of Devolution and Planning should facilitate the development of an elaborate empowerment policy in every County to nurture different youth talents and to provide markets for youth to showcase their talents in the form of youth market days and youth talent days.
Review of procurement laws and regulations - Include as a key performance indicator for all government agencies, the requirement to show that at least 30 percent of all their procurements are given to companies owned by youth. This will enable the youth set-up many firms thereby contributing towards employment creation, wealth generation and poverty reduction.

Restructuring of KEPSA - There is need to restructure and strengthen the operation of Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) and Ministry of Sports, Culture and Arts and Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services as regards to Youth Employment to provide opportunities for internships, apprenticeship, mentorship, role modelling, franchising, contract and outsourcing and private sector joint ownership of department producing relevant skills required by the private sector such as mechanic department being jointly owned by government – or parastatals and private sector institutions such as General Motors or Toyota Kenya.

Develop Business Start-Up policy – There is need to develop a policy to compel all Universities and other institutions of higher learning to establish mandatory Business Start-Up Post Graduate Courses for their graduates.

Review employment policies at Devolved levels - All Governors must ensure all Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and County-based Labour Intensive Work in their respective Counties employ a significant proportion of young people.

Review labour laws - In terms of legislation, it is a policy imperative to amend the law to prohibit the issuance of Work Permits for jobs for which young Kenyans are qualified and available.

Develop a clear Youth Fund Framework – There is need to develop legislation on the administration of the youth fund.

2.1.2. Programmatic Interventions

Establishment of ICT Park - It is proposed that each County should establish an ICT Park to enable youth to get employment In-Call Centres, Digital Villages and ICT-based innovation. This will reverse high unemployment levels.

Establish National Youth Employment Bureau - In order to operationalize Job Connect for the youth, it is recommended that the Government should establish fully functional, well funded and staffed National Youth Employment Bureau. Additionally, it is imperative to establish a structured Labour Export Programs through a division in the National Youth Employment Bureau that guarantees at least 100,000 jobs for youth annually. The Bureau should maintain a database of all youth registered who are unemployed and have the capacity to link employers with the data.

Youth Training Manual - Lack of capacity building and training on entrepreneurship is still an impediment to youth in terms of accessing critical skills to run businesses. Thus, it is equally important for the Government to Develop a Youth Training Manual with other key stakeholders to enlighten the youth on how to do business with government.
2.2. Market Accessibility and Business

2.2.1. Policy interventions

Review National Youth Action Plan - It is further recommended that the Government through its line Ministry should undertake a comprehensive review and operationalization of the National Action Plan on Youth Employment for the Year 2013-2017.

Promote the informal sector – As a key job creation avenue amongst the youth, it is recommended that the Government should invest massively in technological research in the informal sector coupled with establishment of many Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) towards promoting rural based income generating activities.

Establish a National Loans Guarantee Program - This will enable young people to access credit from commercial banks given that lack of collateral is a major stumbling block in access to credit among the youth.

2.2. Market Accessibility and Business

2.2.1. Policy interventions

Develop the 24 hour Street Market Policy. County governments should develop and implement a 24 hour market policy on major roads to provide a ready and accessible market for young entrepreneurs.

2.2.2. Programmatic interventions

Establish distribution Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs) for agricultural produce to capitalize on economies of scale to negotiate better prices.

Develop a better road network for agricultural areas to enhance market accessibility.

Establish one-stop business registration centres in every County to reduce the time it takes to establish a business.

Establish Capacity/ Mentoring Forums where entrepreneurs meet mentors, share skills and successes and obtain information on the latest/best methods of production.

2.3 Quality Education

Kenya aims at realizing globally competitive quality education, training and research for sustainable development. Indeed, the Government is committed to the provision of quality education, training and research for all Kenyans besides its commitment to International development policies such as MDGs and Education for All.

Although the government expenditure on education has grown marginally in over the last five years, the net result in quality education and training has been a mirage. Furthermore, access to education continues to show huge variances throughout the country leading to violation of rights to education of children and the youth in Arid and Semiarid Lands (ASALs) and other
marginalized areas in Kenya. Furthermore, the rapid increase in enrolment at all levels of education without commensurate increase in infrastructure and personnel have compromised the quality of education in public schools.

Other challenges include: Upgrading of tertiary institutions such as polytechnics and Teachers Training Colleges and other Technical Industrial Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Institutions (TIVETs) into universities hence lack of critical employment skills to guarantee meaningful employment for the youth who drop out of schools; low transition rates, high regional disparities in access to education, gender disparity; impacts of HIV/AIDS and operational and challenges in regard to teacher management; lack of policy framework for development, management and mainstreaming of youth polytechnics in education and training sector; and inadequate mechanisms for quality assurance, internship, research and curriculum development.

2.3.1 Policy Interventions

Adult Education Policy - The Ministry of Education should develop and implement Adult Education Policy through expanding access and increasing participation in adult classes, improving quality and operational efficiency of adult education programmes, reviewing legislative and regulatory frameworks on Adult Youth Education and promoting e-learning for out of school youth and adults.

Curriculum Review – There is need to integrate into the entire school curriculum- training on the National Values and Principles as outlined in Article 10 of the Constitution. Secondly, the Ministry of Education should ensure that every university reviews its curriculum after every three years with the help of employers to conform to the most current best practices for competitiveness in job market. This also calls for private sector to take lead in participating in the curriculum review in order to ensure conformity with labour market needs and global competitiveness.

Entrepreneurship Classes - It is suggested that the Government should include entrepreneurship as a practical course in the school curriculum system from primary school through tertiary institutions, where students visit existing businesses and learn practical lessons from successful firms and entrepreneurs. This is geared towards enhancing skills development on business and entrepreneurship.

Tax Rebates - Reduce and eliminate taxes on learning materials such as books and other stationeries. Another key area of intervention is provision of tax incentives for the private sectors which fund research activities in Kenyan universities and which are also involved in developing tertiary institutions

People With Disabilities (PWDs) - Lower the entry level for children with disabilities and introduce scholarships for such vulnerable group.

Informal Education - Promote non-formal education, life skills development and vocational training:
2.3.2. Programmatic Interventions

Skill Gap Assessment - Establish a 5 year Employability Skills Gap assessment tool to enable the country identify the skills gap and design appropriate training programmes that are needed towards addressing those gaps with more emphasis on critical employment & entrepreneurship skills in a knowledge-based economy.

Training – It should be made mandatory that all students undertake adequate trainings in established Career Development Centres in every County. In addition, the government should establish vocational training programs to local youth to strengthen business and agricultural practices.

Secondary Education – Key constraining factor to secondary school enrolment is the fact that growth in the number of secondary schools has not adequately matched the growth in primary schools. Thus, the government should guarantee a 100 percent transition rate from primary to secondary Schools by building Secondary Schools and other educational infrastructures within all the existing primary schools.

Youth Polytechnics - There should be a robust programme of ensuring that Government builds at least one Youth Polytechnic in every location to equip young people with requisite knowledge and skills necessary for labour market. Moreover, it is suggested that the government should establish more publicly funded Technical Industrial Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Institutions (TIVETs).

Triple funding to HELB - With rapid expansion of university enrolment; it is incumbent to ensure adequate financing to Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in order to expand access to university education. In this regard, the HELB Act should be reviewed to enable it operate as a fully fledged student bank with maximum capacity to meet students’ financial needs both at the University and other institutions of higher learning.

2.4. Public Participation and Representation

It is vividly observed that the participation of the youth in key decision making processes on national issues has been extremely minimal. Kenya is a signatory to other regional and international commitments which calls for enhanced youth participation and representation in national forums and other socio-economic spheres of development. Moreover, young people have limited opportunities to express themselves and to participate in productive ventures. Even at the community level, young people are commonly perceived as being idle not concerned about the community's well-being thus frequently excluded from public debates.

It is, therefore, regrettable that the government has made no visible efforts to push youth agenda in terms of political participation in any of the government’s organs. For example, the government has made no attempt to reserve seats for youth in cabinet or any government-run
institution where youth presence is almost non-existent. Institutions such as National Gender and Equity Commission (NGEC) and other Commissions do not have youthful face. Therefore, concerted efforts should be done within the reach of Government to ensure that Youth participation in national development issues is accorded maximum attention and prominence through the following interventions:

### 2.4.1. Policy interventions

Develop the Youth Affirmative Action Policy and Legislation – The government should enact law and develop a policy to operationalize Article 55 of the Constitutions in terms of youth social, economic and political rights and opportunities for young people though developing of clear and elaborate policy and legislative frameworks towards deepening affirmative action as stipulated in the constitution. Monitoring the roles of youth in political parties will also be critical intervention for ensuring Affirmative Action.

Ensure 30 percent Youth membership in national decision making organs such as Commissions, Boards and Committees.

Re-constitute the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) by appointing a youth commissioner to represent youth interest.

### 2.4.2. Programmatic interventions

Provide technical and financial support to build institutional capacity of the National Youth Council and other youth organizations

Provide training in entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills for the youth and their organizations.

Encourage youth to engage in discussions on economic, political and social issues at all levels (local, national, regional and international forums).

### 2.5. Sports and Arts

The youth potential is always demonstrated in sports and it is high time the Government developed this sector to address the challenges that the youth face in sports such as weak policy and institutional frameworks, inadequate resource allocations among others. It is recognized that through sports, youth can gain skills to promote leadership and development of talents to realize their potential.

### 2.5.1. Policy interventions

Implement the Sport’s Act to ensure that it will ensure promotion, preservation, development and promotion of talent in sports, film, music and culture.

Promote local arts and culture through establishment of cultural centres and theatres while training and empowering young artistes.
Promote traditional games as way of recreation and culture preservation.

Encourage representation of young people on sports decision-making bodies countrywide.

### 2.5.2. Programmatic Interventions

Build and equip a multi-disciplinary Sports Stadium in every Constituency. Establish a Sports Academy in every County and introduce sports scholarship in line with Kenya Vision 2030.

Establish a National Sports Sweepstake.

Improve the quality of training in all sports disciplines and the development, coordination, harmonization and promotion of sports in Kenya.

Use sporting platforms to advocate for important issues in the society such as HIV/AIDS prevention and inter-ethnic cohesion.

Inclusion of youth in key committees that make decisions on sports.

### 2.6. Environmental Conservation

The Government aims at enhancing access to clean, secure and sustainable environment, water and sanitation. It is noted that the environment sector contributes approximately 42 percent of Kenya’s GDP. Sound environmental conservation results in preservation of natural resources thus, assuring continuous supply of environment goods and services.

However, the sector continues to be plagued by numerous challenges such as: environmental degradation; decreasing forest cover; pollution and waste management; and recently the adverse effects of climate change and global warming.

#### 2.6.1. Policy interventions

Develop, Enact and Implement an integrated Environmental Conservation Policy.

Strengthen the involvement of the youth in environmental conservation programmes as well as ensuring youth representation in committees at all levels.

Establish collaborative linkages and networking between environmental committees at County and sub-county levels with environmental clubs in all learning institution. Improve access to information at the local level by setting up resource centres.

#### 2.6.2. Programmatic Interventions

Establish a Nation-wide Tree Planting as a program of Kazi Kwa Vijana, spearheaded by the Ministry of Environment and Mineral Resources. This will help in engaging the youth to address the global campaign on environment conservation and help increase the forest cover in various parts of the country.
Educate the people on Carbon-Credits redemption programs to encourage environmental conservation as a means of earning income.

Providing vocational training and disseminating environmental researches.

2.7. Information and Communication Technology
The Government takes cognizance of the fact that ICT forms a cornerstone for national transformation as the sector is key to economic development. On this front, the Government has endeavoured to improve the ICT infrastructure towards bridging the digital divide and lower cost of communications, thus the sector must be leveraged, secured and preserved to enhance national security.

Currently, the sector is faced with myriad of challenges such as: Weak institutional and legal framework for ICT integration; limited country-wide ICT awareness that always hinders cultural and attitudinal change; financial and human resource constraints; wide internal digital divide between rural and urban areas; high cost of ICT utilization and maintenance; and challenge of obtaining a better integration of ICT into company and public policies.

2.7.1. Policy interventions
Facilitate introduction of IT systems into all levels of education including primary schools, targeting skill building and job training in technology sector.

2.7.2. Programmatic Interventions
Ensuring young people with disability have equal access to ICT Training.

2.8 Alcohol and Substance Abuse
The perils of drug abuse is still a major policy concern that plague our young population and to the detriment of the economy. In this regard, this document calls for the following interventions:

2.8.1. Policy interventions
Develop a policy that provides for a mandatory rehabilitation program for drug addicts. Strict enforcement of the Mututho Law to ensure that young people spend their time productively.

2.8.2. Programmatic interventions
The government needs to clamp down on brewers of deadly local brews to protect young people from their detrimental effects.
Set up publicly funded rehabilitation centres in every constituency to help reintegrate young people into society.

Intensify youth rehabilitation programmes for drug addictions and criminals.

**2.9 Institutional Strengthening**

Need to strengthen the capacity of National Youth Council to undertake its work and access funds and amendment of the Youth Council Act and Regulations to ensure total compliance with the Constitution.

Need for a state department responsible for youth affairs at the Office of the President or Deputy President with a clear Strategic Plan autonomy to discharge its mandate, and with youth leadership.

The Public Service Commission should also be restructured to include the representation of National Youth Council in their organisational structure. This will ensure that the youth constituency is fully represented during recruitment processes for public service jobs to guarantee equality in job acquisition in the Government.

Review of the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) Act.

In terms of policy support, the Government should undertake a comprehensive review of the National Youth Policy and align it to the needs of young people. Policy alignment will also will ensure that youth aspirations are integrated and mainstreamed into the national development polices and planning processes at both County and National Governments.

The Government and other key stakeholders should support and ensure strong networking and collaborations on issues affecting youth through involvement of relevant institutions such as the Kenya Young Parliamentarians Association (KYPA) and Kenya Young County Assembly Leaders Association (KYCAA). These institutions should help in policy formulation, advocacy and capacity building towards empowering young people in all spheres of development.

**3.0. Conclusion**

This document shares the thoughts, hopes and expectations of young people and their vision for a brighter Kenya in future. Thus, this document aims towards the following:

1. Ensuring that voices and concerns of young people are being heard by government political actors, donors, civil society and the wider public.

2. Demonstrating that young people can rise above partisan politics, grasp the wider development issues at stake and make a useful contribution to the national development issues.

3. Countering the negative discourse around youth engagement in all forms of societal
debauchery

4. Bringing together like-minded organisations and individuals to share information and participate in a youth-led advocacy project.

5. Exploring ways of engaging youth in the process of economic development and identify constraints that hinder Kenyan youth from realizing their potential.

To ensure that there is enhanced job creation for the youth, quality education, market accessibility, public participation and representation, environmental conservation, strong ICT framework, management of alcohol and substance abuse and strengthened youth related institutions, the legislature and other key stakeholders should develop an elaborate youth mainstreaming policy at the national and county levels.