

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE YOUTH LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME (YLP) TO YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN HOIMA DISTRICT, UGANDA

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Abstract: The Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) of Uganda is a youth empowerment strategy based on the three pillars of skills development, livelihood support and institutional support. The programme targets and unemployed youths of the country but questions have been asked as to whether the YLP leads to the empowerment of the target group. This paper reports on a study that explored the contribution of the YLP to youth empowerment in Hoima District of Uganda. Using self-administered questionnaires, data were collected from 130 respondents selected randomly from the Youth Interest Groups (YIG) in the District. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse collected data. The study established that YLP faces a range of implementation challenges. The study concludes that while skills development significantly contributes to youth empowerment, results suggest that livelihood support and institutional support do not significantly contribute to youth empowerment. Strategies to enhance empowerment of the youth and suggestions for scaling up activities are given.

Keywords: *youth empowerment, skills development, livelihood support, institutional support*

JEL Classification: Z18

1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of empowerment has been widely studied and accorded considerable recognition by researchers and policy-makers. The breadth and width of studies and the recognition of empowerment shows that it is not just a means to attain specific ends – but is also one of the ends desired in developing countries.

1.1 Conceptualising empowerment

Empowerment relates to expanding choices and liberties of action for people hitherto denied such rights in society – to enable them to gain control over what belongs to them, even if the deprived suffer because of historical circumstances, religion or political distortions (Somerville, 1998). In the case of Uganda, empowerment has become a concerted effort among different players like the government, civil society and the private sector, working in partnership. For example, the government initiated several policies targeting vulnerable groups such as women, the youth, and persons with disabilities. These policies include: agricultural extension programmes like the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), Prosperity-For-All (PFA), the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP), and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) (Mwesigwa, 2016; Sseguya et al., 2009). Most of these policies covered the active poor who can be salvaged from poverty– rather than the absolute poor.

Chhay (2011) proposes several drivers for empowerment, such as allowing vulnerable groups to gain autonomy and the potential to provide the economic opportunities they need to control their lives and enter the public sphere with skill and confidence. This demonstrates that the process of empowerment is used as a path to re-linking those hitherto denied access to obtainable opportunities – so that the degree of inequality is reduced. Consequently, empowerment allows vulnerable communities to be prepared to tackle current and future challenges as self-reliant individuals (Wciórka et al., 2015). The attitude of individuals and groups changes from a beggar mentality to an entrepreneur mentality, in what is perceived as the positive values of society. In some cases, the empowerment process is shared between the facilitator and the facilitated through capacity building, financial support, supervision, regular monitoring, and market access (Milot et al., 2017). This allows the community or part of it to attain sustainable livelihoods, as members can obtain basic needs such as food, medical care, housing, education and clothing and improved quality lives (Hendrix & Degner, 2016).

One way through which empowerment can be attained is emphasising youth livelihoods which cover one of the largest sections of future generations – as they form the largest demographic in current global, regional and national statistics (Kirk et al., 2016). Nevertheless it will not be appropriate unless empowerment is targeted at the most vulnerable section of the youths where it can lead to greater impact on current and future communities. This article examines the *modus operandi* through which empowerment of the youth can be effectively attained using the YLP of Uganda in Hoima District as the case study.

1.2 Youth empowerment

The Commonwealth describe a youth as a person falling between childhood and adulthood – a period of semi-dependency during which time young people try to achieve personal autonomy, while still remaining dependent on their parent or the state. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda describes youths as people aged 18 to 30 years. By 2015, the youth population of Uganda was estimated at 7.7 million (21.3%) of the total population. The process of youth empowerment requires an understanding of youth demographics. Global statistics show that the youth population is about 1.8 billion – 90% of whom live in less developed countries and one-third in Commonwealth countries. Overall, youths generally account for 25% of humanity. (African Union Charter, 2006; United Nations, 2011). While none of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mentions youths, some targets and indicators are highlighted such as a commitment to the full realisation of young people’s rights and capabilities and helping communities to reap the demographic dividend (Bersaglio et al., 2015).

According to Bersaglio et al. (2015), the youth category needs to be better understood relative to wider politico-economic and societal changes as this directly impact the SDGs. Youth empowerment involves several issues. First, it involves empowerment within the individual themselves (Kirk et al., 2016). Yu (2013) suggests that even if many young people are constrained by inadequate systems, economic resources and movement, youth employment is a great determinant of youth empowerment. Youth empowerment involves

increased opportunities for youths to participate and become involved in public and collective activities (Jennings et al., 2006).

Others suggest negotiating with youths to help them examine the collective issues in the community, and for them to seek action in terms of advancing their lives (Pearrow & Pollack, 2009). This demonstrates that youth empowerment deals with mechanisms aimed at increasing power among young people at three levels: individual, community, and political. It is against this backdrop that the YLP focuses on developing selected skills and supporting livelihoods and Institutions of youth interest groups.

1.3 The Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP)

The YLP is a programme of the government of Uganda, which targets the poor and unemployed youths aged 18 to 30 years with the intention to offer strategic and sustainable interventions for youths, in order to allow them to contribute to national development. The programme implementation was assigned to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development with an initial budget estimate of UGX 265 billion over the first five years (Republic of Uganda, 2013:5).

The overall objective of the YLP was to empower the youth to harness their socio-economic potential and to increase self-employment opportunities and levels of income (Sseguya et al., 2009). This objective would be attained when: the youth are provided with marketable vocational skills and toolkits for self-employment and job creation; the youths are given financial support to enable the establishment of income-generating activities; the youths are provided with entrepreneurship and life skills; and the youths are provided with relevant knowledge and information for a change in attitudes.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Youth unemployment, which is often related to organised crime, lawlessness, political instability and social conflicts (Fergusson & Yeates, 2013; Artner, 2013), is rampant in Uganda. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2012) notes that the overall labourforce in the country includes 4.4 million youths. In addition, about 32 percent of

the estimated 6.5 million youths in Uganda are jobless, about two million of them are literate, and two million are under-employed (Bruno et al., 2017). The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2011) notes that 50% of the economically active youths are not engaged in income-generating employment. Consequently, youth self-employment is seen as the most important form of youth work, as 60 percent of employed youths are self-employed; 70% of the employed youths are engaged in rural agriculture, and 70percent of the youths in urban areas are engaged in the service sector. The statistics suggest that informal employment accounts for the highest proportion of the employed youths outside agriculture, and it is estimated that 67 percent of the youths become engaged in some sort of employment by the age of 18 years.

Uganda has, in the past, experimented with several policies aimed at enhancing youth employment; however, the outcomes have been unimpressive. While the YLP targets the poor and unemployed youths in all districts of the country, it is not clear whether the YLP can lead to the empowerment of the target group. This study aimed to establish the contribution of YLP to youth empowerment in the Hoima District.

This study was guided by four research questions: (i) who are the beneficiaries of YLP? (ii) What is the level of youth empowerment? (iii) What is the extent of youth livelihoods? (iv) What is the contribution of YLP to youth empowerment? Consequently, four corresponding objectives were generated within the framework of the study questions – preceding the assumption that: “there is no significant relationship between YLP and youth empowerment in Hoima, Uganda.”

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The social group and research site

The study was conducted among the youths aged between 18 to 30 years in Hoima District. One YIG was selected using a simple random sampling technique from each of the sub-counties, town councils and Municipal divisions in Hoima District (Chun et al., 2003:14). In total,

15 out of 42 active YIGs were selected each having an average membership of 13 members thus generating a population of 195 participants. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a sample of 130 respondents was generated.

3.2 Data collection

All data were gathered using one Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ). The instrument was closed-ended constructed basing on the four research questions, with two language versions – English and Runyakitara (the popular language of the area). Respondents, through the respective chairpersons, were requested to take part in a 10-minute survey about the implementation of YLP.

3.3 Analytical framework

All data were analysed using both descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Means and standard deviations were used under descriptive analysis to measure central tendencies and dispersion, while inferential analysis was used to draw conclusions on the relationships between YLP and youth empowerment (Lindquist & Hammel, 1998). Thereafter, correlations and chi-square were applied to measure the degree of relationship between the variables and to compare the difference between frequencies (Schramm & Higginbotham, 2009).

4. RESULTS

Outcomes based on the three study questions, namely: the extent of YLP; the scale of youth empowerment; and the relationship between YLP and youth empowerment are provided in the foregoing sections.

4.1 The extent of youth empowerment in Hoima District

The extent of youth empowerment in Hoima District was examined under this variable, using eight aspects. It was analysed using the Mean (μ) and Standard Deviation (SD), as indicated in table 1; the Mean shows the incidence of a response and the Standard Deviation shows the extent to which scores deviate from the Mean.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics showing the extent of youth empowerment

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Number of youth benefitting from the YLP	2.26	1.265
Average increase in the income levels of the youths	2.02	1.070
Youth in self-employment after programme support	2.15	1.097
Youth equipped with entrepreneurship skills	2.01	1.071
Youths that have opened their own businesses	2.78	1.466
Number of youths trained in life skills	2.04	1.088
Number of active youth groups formed through a participatory process	2.18	1.099
Level of satisfaction of the targeted youth with the quality of the project processes and implementation	2.00	1.074
Overall score	2.18	1.016

Legend: 4.24-5.00 (*very high*); 3.43-4.23 (*high*); 2.62-3.42 (*moderate*); 1.81-2.61 (*low*); 1.00-1.80 (*very low*) N=124

The outcomes in Table 1 demonstrate higher mean scores for the number of youths benefitting from the YLP and youths that have opened their own businesses. Regarding the number of youths benefitting from the YLP, the outcomes show that few youths are benefitting in the Hoima District, because a number of respondents disagreed with the statement (Mean (μ)=2.26), which is low and a high Standard Deviation with regard to legend two used in the study, indicating that there is a low number of beneficiaries of YLP in Hoima District. This was further supported by the high standard deviation (SD=1.265) which demonstrates how the frequency of beneficiaries deviates from the mean – indicating low beneficiary levels of YLP in Hoima District. Regarding youths that have opened their own businesses, the outcomes disagreed with the statement (number of youths that have opened up their own businesses) too at a Mean score of 2.78; this is a low Mean which generated a high

Standard Deviation regarding legend two (High). This was maintained by the high Standard Deviation (SD=1.466) demonstrating a low number of youths with their own businesses in Hoima District as a result of YLP intervention.

The outcomes show that three statements generated low scores. The first aspect regards an average increase in the levels of income of the youths; the outcomes disagree at a mean ($\mu=2.02$) which generated a moderate Standard Deviation (SD=1.070). This shows that the incomes of the youths have not increased in Hoima District. The second aspect regards youths equipped with entrepreneurship skills which generated a low mean ($\mu=2.01$) – being supported by the Standard Deviation (SD=1.071). These scores demonstrate that a low number of youths have been equipped with entrepreneurship skills, in spite of their significance with regard to Youth Empowerment. The third aspect regards the level of satisfaction of the targeted youths with the quality of project processes and implementation whose outcomes shows low satisfaction ($\mu=2.00$; SD=1.074).

Overall, there was a low level of Youth Empowerment observed from the low average Mean ($\mu=2.18$) although the high Standard Deviation (SD=1.016) demonstrates that Youth Empowerment deviates from the Mean. The outcomes attest that there is a low range between the attribute with the highest Mean value (number of youths that have opened their own businesses [$\mu=2.78$]; and the attribute with the lowest Mean value (level of satisfaction; $\mu=2.00$). The range between the highest and the lowest Mean scores (0.78) suggests they are not only similar but that overall Youth Empowerment resulting from YLP intervention in Hoima district is not impressive.

4.2 The YLP in Hoima District

The extent of YLP in Hoima District was addressed using three dimensions, namely: skills development, livelihood support, and institutional support. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the outcomes generated from the questionnaires.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics showing the extent of YLP (skills development)

Variables	M	SD	Interpretation
Brick laying	4.20	0.75	High
Carpentry and joinery	4.04	1.15	High
Hair dressing/cosmetology	3.86	1.13	High
Fashion and design (tailoring)	3.85	0.83	High
Metal mechanics	3.17	1.41	Moderate
Shoe making and repair	3.27	1.22	Moderate
Agro-processing	3.17	1.41	Moderate
Baking/cooking	2.94	1.48	Moderate
Electrical repairs	2.83	1.26	Moderate
Borehole repairs	1.04	0.02	Very low
Weaving and embroidery	3.88	1.14	High
Video-audio editing	1.02	0.01	Very low
Leather works	1.01	0.01	Very low
Computer use and applications	3.18	1.42	Moderate
Overall	2.74	1.03	Moderate

Legend: 4.21-5.00 (very high); 3.41-4.20 (high);
 2.61-3.40 (moderate); 1.81-2.60 (low); 1.00-1.80
 (very low) N=124

The outcomes in Table 2 show that a significant number of youths in Hoima benefit from training in five skills: bricklaying ($\mu=4.20$; $SD=0.75$), carpentry ($\mu=4.04$; $SD=1.15$), hairdressing (3.86 ; $SD=1.13$), tailoring ($\mu=3.85$; $SD=0.85$), and weaving and embroidery ($\mu=3.88$; $SD=1.14$) – which generated high scores. While male youths dominate bricklaying and hairdressing, the decision of the government to preserve wetlands is threatening the brick-making industry which relies on clay swamps. Males benefit from both rural electrification and affordable solar energy, which have enabled a good number to start up simple male-centred salons intended to trim male hair. While training in tailoring and weaving and embroidery are dominated by female youths, the importation of second-hand clothes threatens youth skills, since buyers have resorted to inexpensive textiles. However, skills in borehole repairing ($\mu=1.04$; $SD=0.02$), video-audio editing ($\mu=1.02$; $SD=0.01$) and leather works ($\mu=1.01$;

SD=0.01) had low decimal scores – suggesting either a shortage of trainers or inadequate training facilities in the district.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics showing the extent of YLP (livelihoods support)

Variables	M	SD	Interpretation
Dairy production	2.54	1.47	Low
High value crops	4.85	1.36	Very high
Poultry/egg production	3.58	1.33	High
Pigs	3.82	1.19	High
Improved goats	2.54	1.47	Low
Aquaculture/integrated farming	2.29	1.47	Low
Labour-saving technologies	1.14	0.54	Very low
Apiary/honey production	2.29	1.47	Low
Agro-forestry/tree propagation	2.51	0.98	Low
Post-harvest handling	1.50	0.97	Very low
Value addition and marketing	1.99	1.22	Low
Produce buying and selling	3.38	1.32	Moderate
Overall	2.70	1.23	Moderate

Legend: 4.21-5.00 (*very high*); 3.41-4.20 (*high*); 2.61-3.40 (*moderate*); 1.81-2.60 (*low*); 1.00-1.80 (*very low*) N=124

Table 3 demonstrates the extent of YLP through livelihood support in Hoima District. The outcomes show that most support from government is focused on the production of high-value crops like vegetables and fruit which generated very high scores ($\mu=4.85$; $SD=1.36$), as well as on poultry intended for egg production ($\mu=3.58$; $SD=1.33$) and keeping pigs ($\mu=3.82$; $SD=1.19$). However, the outcomes demonstrate very low support focused on labour-saving technologies ($\mu=1.14$; $SD=0.54$) and post-harvest handling ($\mu=1.50$; $SD=0.97$). Consequently, several youths continue to rely on traditional technologies which neither save labour nor increase productivity per unit cost. In addition, the noticeable failure to deal with post-harvest handling suggests losses of up to about 25% of the real produce from the garden to the market. This loss is much when compared to the size of land available to the youths for crop production. Overall, livelihood support in Hoima District is moderate

($\mu=2.70$; $SD=1.23$) – suggesting that much is yet to be achieved if the YLP is to attain its main goal.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics showing the extent of YLP (institutional support)

Extent of institutional support	μ	SD	Interpretation
<i>Programme implementation support (PIS)</i>	4.49	1.33	Very high
Strengthening the capacities of youth	3.83	1.44	High
Ensuring efficient and effective implementation of projects	3.50	1.50	High
Monitoring and evaluation of programme activities	2.85	1.01	Moderate
Coordination, collaboration and linkages	2.83	1.44	Moderate
Instituting a technical support team	3.36	1.33	Moderate
Ensuring capacity building and training	3.48	1.34	High
Knowledge dissemination/development communication and management information system (MIS)	3.87	1.36	High
2.80	1.45	Moderate	
<i>Transparency, accountability and anti-corruption</i>			
Working with Office of the Government Ombudsman	3.47	1.32	High
3.82	1.46	High	
Having a strong grievance handling and feedback mechanism	3.48	1.36	High
Tailoring information, education and communication programme to promote a positive mind-set and change in attitude			
Promoting good governance at all levels of implementation			
Overall			

Legend: 4.21-5.00 (very high); 3.41-4.20 (high); 2.61-3.40 (moderate); 1.81-2.60 (low); 1.00-1.80 (very low)

N=124

Table 4 shows that the component of institutional support through programme implementation support (PIS) and transparency, accountability and anti-corruption was ranked high. This ranking is supported by the outcomes, which range between very high for PIS: strengthening the capacities ($\mu=4.49$; $SD=1.33$); moderate: coordination, collaboration and linkages ($\mu=2.85$, $SD=1.01$); instituting a technical support team ($\mu=2.83$, $SD=1.44$); and ensuring capacity building and training ($\mu=3.36$, $SD=1.33$) for PIS. With regard to transparency, accountability and anti-corruption, all factors scored High except having a strong grievance handling and feedback mechanism, whose score was Moderate ($\mu=2.80$; $SD=1.45$). Overall, the component of institutional support was rated High ($\mu=3.48$; $SD=1.36$), suggesting that the extent of YLP through institutional support is the highest compared to other components of the programme. While the overall score of institutional support is impressive, the youths in Hoima Municipality indicate that corruption and lack of transparency are common, in particular, among the Local Monitoring Team (LMT) led by the Community Development Officers at Municipal divisions and or sub-counties. For example, the peoples' parliament held in Busiisi Division at the end of July 2017, demonstrated the need to change the YLP policy regarding the requirements for a group (such as number of group members) to access funding.

4.3 Contribution of YLP to Youth Empowerment

The study examined the contribution of YLP to Youth Empowerment. This was analysed using Multiple Regression to establish the relationship between the three variables as illustrated in table 5 (below). The model in the Multiple Regression takes the method of an equation which covers Coefficients for each of the three Independent Variables. Part one of the table presents estimations for B-values, demonstrating separate contributions for each of the Independent Variables. The B-values show the relationship between YLP and Youth Empowerment; the outcomes demonstrate a positive relationship between the two variables. Table 5 indicates that skills development ($B=0.138$), livelihood support ($B=0.055$) and

institutional support (B=0.025) are significant components. The positive B-values suggest that the presence of all three components of YLP (Independent Variables) has a positive contribution to Youth Empowerment in Hoima District albeit the varying levels of significance.

Table 5: The contribution of YLP to youth empowerment in Hoima District

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardised coefficients	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	2.719	0.296		0.000
Skills Development	0.138	0.056	0.149	0.019**
Livelihood Support	0.055	0.043	0.087	0.190
Institutional Support	0.025	0.036	0.043	0.507

*N=124; Significance levels: *<0.10; **<0.05; ***<0.01*

Table 5 shows that there is acceptable evidence to prove that YLP has a significant contribution to Youth Empowerment. The standardised coefficients (Beta) suggest that YLP in terms of skills development (B=0.149; p-value=0.019, livelihood support (B=0.087; p-value=0.190) and institutional support (B=0.043; p-value=0.507) contribute to youth empowerment. However, the outcomes demonstrate the significance of social capital enhancement through skills development, as the overriding component of Youth Empowerment (at 95% level of significance). This shows that once the capacity of the youths in Hoima District is enhanced, members will be able to attract the remaining components without being prioritised.

5. DISCUSSION: YLP AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

This study has uncovered some of the important issues in the implementation of policies like YLP which are intended to transform sections of our society that are often marginalised in terms of mainstream policy considerations. The outcomes have demonstrated that having a good policy is not an end in itself – until such a policy is translated into action in terms of meeting its premeditated goals for the target population.

By developing diverse skills among the youths in the form of bricklaying, carpentry, tailoring, and hairdressing, Uganda can be sure of self-reliance among the largest part of its population structure.

The second component of YLP is livelihood support in order to attain youth empowerment. Uganda foresees supporting livelihoods such as pig keeping, poultry and high-value crops as a sure way through which young people can achieve self-employment, at a time when global youth unemployment is escalating with Africa being the worst affected. Previous studies have demonstrated the significance of focussing on livelihoods for the formally marginalised sections of humanity. For example, a study in Ghana established that supporting livelihood activities is important in several ways – including conserving the ecosystem – if Africa is to attain sustainable development (Ekpe et al., 2014).

There is a view that the YLP focuses on diverse enterprises like agriculture, and in this regard, Addinsall et al. (2017) advise that a community can attain sustainable livelihoods if enterprises are implemented with the support of the government. While the household livelihood framework identifies livelihood assets which should be supported by the agencies of government and its partners, the household livelihood framework give emphasis to the significance of human, social and economic capital in attaining sustainable youth empowerment (Tanle, 2015). This study focused on attaining youth empowerment in the Hoima District through the YLP implementation – and one way to achieve this goal is by prioritising livelihood support.

The third component of the YLP is institutional support, and the outcomes have shown that compared to other components, there has been significant institutional support in terms of the three specific elements within PIS i.e. transparency accountability and anti-corruption. The degree of transparency, accountability and anti-corruption is significant for achieving the success of the YLP and consequently youth empowerment. The findings agree with previous

research on policy and planning and organisational structures as being vital ingredients of empowerment (Myatt et al., 2017). However, the outcomes disagree with Esteban-Guitart et al. (2015) and Petrič and Petrovčič (2014) who established that local people, including the youths, recognise superior support from the community – rather than support from authorised or government-led institutions. That is why Heagney and Benson (2017) noted that institutional flexibility, support services and sectoral support, are all key to the success of public interventions like YLP.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the contribution of YLP to youth empowerment in Hoima District, Uganda – using empowerment theory. The study found that present YLP policy has fallen short in leading a number of youths to socio-economic transformation. In general, while skills development significantly contributes to youth empowerment, results of this study suggest that livelihood support and institutional support do not significantly contribute to youth empowerment. The relationship between YLP operations and youth empowerment is closely associated with the YLP implementation. This study proposes the adoption of a demand-driven approach (DDA) which directs resources and support to those youth that need them most and which have a keen interest based on previous experience. Further, a repackaging of the YLP through a participatory process in which successful Youth Interest Groups play a pivotal role is recommended.

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