

Utafiti Sera National Forum on Youth Employment Creation in Agriculture and Agro-processing for Inclusive Growth in Kenya

Background

Kenya has about 13.7 million youth accounting for 35.4% of the population and constitutes 60% of the total labour force. Every year approximately 1.2 million youth enter the labour market comprising of 1 million who are either school drop-outs, have completed secondary school or not enrolled in tertiary education, and a further 155,000 joining the labour market after completing training in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or at the University level (Kenya Country Report on Youth Employment, 2014). Hence, approximately 1.3 million new employment opportunities have to be created annually to meet this demand. Despite this growing workforce, Kenya's economy is not creating enough and high productive jobs for the young people¹ who make up 80% of the currently 2.3 million unemployed population (United Nations Human Development Index, 2016). The youth unemployment stood at 22.1% relative to the overall national unemployment rate of 14.7% (World Bank, 2017). Although most of the young labour market entrants move from the agricultural sector to fast growing non-agricultural sectors, the former remains pivotal to Kenya's economy. Agriculture directly contributes 24% of the annual GDP and 27% of the indirect contribution (ASDS, 2010 – 2020). Therefore, the sector is critical in creating employment and offering opportunities for improvement in people's livelihoods.

There have been a myriad of youth development initiatives and policy frameworks addressing unemployment issues. However, youth unemployment persists, making it imperative to provide evidence on the needed policy responses. Thus, Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE) in collaboration with Partnership for Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is facilitating a research-policy engagement forum dubbed *Utafiti-Sera II* on “Youth Employment creation in Agriculture and Agro-Processing in Kenya”. Through the platform, policy actors have an opportunity ensure that appropriate policy actions are taken through either programmes, legislation, policies and other actions, which policy research has provided evidence

This national policy dialogue with senior policy makers is a culmination of various activities of the *Utafiti-Sera* house II. These are a stakeholder mapping exercise (Dec 2017); synthesis of evidence and production of various knowledge products (Dec 2017- July 2018); a county level policy dialogue (Mar 2018); a design challenge for Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI Cohort 23 (Apr 2018); a high-level policy engagement forum with senior policy makers (June 2018) and the national forum held in Kisumu on Nov 15-16, 2018.

The *Utafiti Sera II* house members discussed the need to invest in a policy framework that integrates formal and informal apprenticeship systems. The overarching issues on the proposed policy framework are skills and training development, improving access, financing, governance, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). These priority policy issues are in line with the

Kenya ational Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) clusters young people from ages 15-34.

Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021, Kenya Vision 2030 and the Big Four Agenda of the Kenyan Government (2017-2022). Hence, this policy dialogue is about providing highlights of the policy process and building consensus on the proposed policy framework options to support youth employment creation in agriculture and agro-processing for inclusive growth in Kenya.

Objectives

- 1) To provide highlights of the proposed integrated youth apprenticeship policy framework in agriculture sector in Kenya.
- 2) To engage key senior policy makers and practitioners in building a consensus on the proposed policy options.

Expected outcomes

The overarching long-term outcome of Utafiti Sera is uptake of research evidence as seen in the design and review of employment policies, setting agenda for national debates, and changes in, programme design and implementation. The national policy dialogue with senior policy makers is expected to generate the following intermediate outcomes on youth employment creation in agriculture sector:

- 1) Provide improved access to packaged research evidence on the needed policy responses to stimulate youth employment creation to state and non-state actors;
- 2) Provide a non-partisan national platform for knowledge by different members of the research-policy community to foster inclusive policies, and programmes and;
- 3) Enable increased international and continent-wide recognition of innovative approaches to evidence-informed policy making in Africa.

Venue, date and itinerary

The national forum will be held at the Intercontinental Hotel, Nairobi on February 7, 2019. Participation is planned for 15 senior policy makers and practitioners from agriculture, NEA, TVETA, NITA, TVETs, YEDF, KCB Foundation, development partners and private sector.

Organizers

PASGR: The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) (www.pasgr.org) is an independent, non-partisan, pan-African and not-for-profit research organization registered in 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya. Its vision is to promote a vibrant African social science community that addresses governance and public policy issues in Africa. PASGR pursues its vision through three core programmes: Higher Education, Professional Development and Training and Research. The Research Programme works with African social scientists to produce high quality governance research that informs and influences public policy and transforms the living conditions of people in the target countries. As part of this Programme, Utafiti Sera has been developed to bridge the gap between research evidence and policy action.

CABE: The Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE) (www.cabe-africa.org) is an established Non-Governmental Organization registered in 2004, with a vision of being a lead promoter of agri-preneurs in Kenya. CABE works with growth-oriented women and youth agri-preneurs to improve the livelihood of rural families beyond household food security. CABE conducts policy research and analysis, and hosts East African regional hub for UK-DFID funded Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA). In collaboration with PASGR, the organization has hosted Utafiti Sera forums in sugar and horticulture sector, and is now hosting the Youth Employment Creation in Agriculture and Agro-processing for inclusive growth in Kenya, which builds up on previous forums in the two sectors.