

***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 constituting about 60% of the total labour force (World Bank 2014). Every year, approximately 1.2 million youth enter the labour market. A further 155,000 join the labour market after completing training in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or tertiary education (Kenya Country Report on Youth Employment, 2014). Thus, approximately 1.3 million new employment opportunities have to be created annually to meet this demand.

Despite a growing workforce, Kenya's economy is not creating enough productive jobs, particularly for the youth between the ages of 15-34 years. A report released by Trends and Insights Africa (TIFA) in December 2017 indicates that 86 per cent of the nearly 13 million unemployed working Kenyans are youth. Currently, youth unemployment rate stands at 26.21 per cent relative to the overall national unemployment rate of 11.47 per cent. Although agriculture sector remains the backbone of Kenya's economy, most of the young labour market entrants move away from the agricultural sector to fast growing non-agricultural sectors. 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 improving livelihoods.

Several development initiatives and policy frameworks have been started to address unemployment, specifically for the youth. Despite these efforts, unemployment remains higher among young people, making it imperative to provide evidence on the needed policy responses. In this context, the Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE) in collaboration with Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is facilitating a research-policy engagement forum: *Utafiti-Sera* on “Youth Employment Creation in Agriculture and Agro-Processing in Kenya”. Through the platform, policy actors have an opportunity to address youth employment challenges using evidence thus ensuring that appropriate policy actions are enacted.

The national policy dialogue is the culmination of preceding activities of the *Utafiti-Sera* house including: a stakeholder mapping exercise (December 2017); synthesis of evidence and production of various knowledge products (December 2017-July 2018); a county level policy dialogue (March 2018); a design challenge for Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Cohort 23 (April 2018); and a high-level policy engagement forum with senior policy makers (June 2018). The *Utafiti Sera* house members identified overarching issues for policy consideration namely: skills and training on youth entrepreneurs, budget allocation for youth and agriculture, youth access to enterprise financing and governance in value chains. These priority policy issues are in line with the Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021, Kenya Vision 2030 and also inform county level development processes on youth employment creation. Thus, the national forum is about presenting evidence, sharing lessons, experiences and building consensus on proposed policy actions to support youth employment creation in agriculture and agro-processing for inclusive growth in Kenya.

Objectives

The national forum aims to:

1. Provide evidence for policy interventions and actions;

2. Engage policy actors in building a consensus on policy options and;
3. Work with actors to identify areas and spaces for policy and program actions.

Expected outcomes

The overarching long-term outcome of *Utafiti Sera* is uptake of research evidence, setting agenda for national debates, and facilitate change in programme design and implementation. The national forum is expected to generate the following intermediate outcomes on youth employment creation in agriculture sector:

1. Interrogate policy options to highlight what is functioning and provide recommendations;
2. Create a platform for learning, knowledge sharing and action among various stakeholders to enhance opportunities for youth employment creation and;
3. Provide a comprehensive internship system to support policy and youth employment creation in agriculture and agro-processing.

Venue, date and itinerary

The national forum will be held in **Jumia Hotel** Kisumu County, Kenya on **November 15th-16th, 2018**. We are expecting 45 participants with representation from the youth in agriculture, existing *Utafiti Sera* House members, counties, national government, development partners, private sector, academia, researchers, NGOs, civil society and media. The forum will follow the standard format for conferences with an opening keynote address from **Director General, National Employment Authority, Mrs. Edith Okoki**, to set the tone of the national policy dialogue. This will be followed by plenary, panel, breakaway sessions, interactive sessions, exhibition-walk, media briefing and a roundtable to build consensus on policy recommendations.

Organizers

PASGR: The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is an independent, non-partisan, pan-African and not-for-profit research organization registered in 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya. As part of PASGR's Programme, *Utafiti Sera* has been developed to bridge the gap between research evidence and policy action.

CABE: The Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE) is an established Non-Governmental Organization registered in 2003, with a vision of being a lead promoter of agripreneurs in Kenya. 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.

About Kisumu County

Kisumu is the third largest city in Kenya after Nairobi and Mombasa with a population of 968,909 inhabitants. The county's principal industries are fishing, sugarcane and rice farming. The County government has devised strategies for growing the manufacturing and light industries segment in efforts to create 10,000 jobs annually, create wealth for the county economy, nurture technical skills and knowledge among the youth as well as promote growth in service industry and other supporting sectors.

Presently, the county is in discussion with the private sector to boost the agro-processing sector such as fruit, vegetable, cereal and fish processing, among others. Further, it is at the forefront in promoting food security, creating an enabling environment for food production by setting up an Agribusiness Guarantee Fund, developing agriculture sector growth policy and strengthening agricultural extension services, supporting entrepreneurship in agriculture, building capacity and technology transfer to enhance agricultural productivity.