

Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) and Poverty Reduction in the Rural Area of the Gambia: A Theoretical Examination

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Abstract

Youth empowerment programs are targeted at reducing the level of poverty among the youth through employment generation. This paper gives an assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) in the rural areas of The Gambia for the Period 2018 to 2020. It highlights YEP's efforts in upturning the migration movement and creating more jobs and opportunities within the rural area of the country with a view to improving the employability of the youth, reducing unemployment/ socio-economic imbalance and consequently reducing poverty level.

Key words: Youth Empowerment; Poverty; Rural Youth

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Gambia is one of the smallest countries on the continent of Africa. It is also one of such countries with the highest proportion of the young population globally. It specifically has a youthful population of 67 per cent under the age of 25. Also, the estimated total youth population stood at approximately 54 per cent for ages between 10 and 39 with expected increase at an estimated annual population incremental growth rate of 2.74 per cent (Gambian Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), 2013). GBoS

(2017) also reported that six(6) of the eight(8) local government areas (LGAs) in The Gambia are in the rural areas even though there are still few urban settlements especially in Basse LGA where the rich and wealthy tribe known as Sarahule hails from. GBoS report further revealed that the population in these LGAs are largely young people where extreme poverty is still prevalent especially amongst people living in Mansakonko, Kuntaur, Janjanbureh and Basse. GBoS (2017), in its report, concluded that poverty amongst the youthful rural inhabitants is still on the increase with an annual growth rate of 1.3 per cent.

The population structure of the local government areas (LGAs) in The Gambia shows that rural areas has the highest population of young people who are illiterates, without skills and employment and so eager to migrate at every slightest opportunity because of the high rate of poverty prevalent in the environment (Louise, 2015). According to him, most of these youths usually desire as well as struggle to either embark on irregular migration ('back way') or wooing a white man or woman ('tubab') all in the quest for a quick 'pathway' to better life due to the pressure to send money back to family in the village. This has become socio-cultural though hidden in nature and almost fast becoming a yardstick against which their identities, desires and future are being shaped/fashioned just because the societal values relating to wealth and poverty at both the rural and urban settings have continued to reaffirm this.

The government of the former President Yahya Jammeh has taken steps by rolling out youth policies that spanned over a period of ten years (the first of its kind came up between 1999 and 2008). The administration seemingly made progress in youth sector but much work still needs to be done generally especially in the area of youth empowerment in order to maximize their potentials in effective nation building. In addition to the above, the government also developed a Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (PRGS) for 2007-2011 that merged the

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II) with the Medium Term Plan, 2007-2011. This strategy sought to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty. Efforts have also been made by government and international agencies in the past by carrying out farming initiatives which have assisted the rural dwellers who depend largely on agriculture, mainly groundnut, for their livelihood (Food and Agricultural Organisation, 2011).

In order to support and improve government efforts on youth empowerment for the purpose of poverty alleviation, structural transformation and engagement towards effective nation building, international organizations and NGOs have risen up to the occasion by introducing various kinds of projects and prominent and most current among them is the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP). The National Youth Policies formulated and implemented at different times and other youth empowerment projects spearheaded by development partners have somehow not been able to actually reduce unemployment and consequently the socio-economic imbalance to an appreciable level hence the coming on board of Youth Empowerment Project (Yepafrica, 2019). Abatan (2020) expressed it that YEP's overall assessment so far revealed that the project has to an extent been visible and impactful on youth empowerment with corresponding poverty reduction in the urban setting although much still needed to be accomplished. However, its activity in the rural areas still seems shadowy hence the need for a theoretical study of its activities to ascertain its level of impact on youth empowerment and poverty reduction in the rural areas of The Gambia.

2. THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (YEP)

The YEP is spearheaded by The Gambia office of the International Trade Centre (ITC) and funded by the European Union (EU) Emergency Trust Fund for Stability. It started in January 2017 with the major focus on addressing the economic root causes of irregular migration by supporting youth employment and entrepreneurship. The project takes a market-led approach to improving the skills and employability of potential and returning migrants according to demands of the job market and simultaneously creating employment opportunities along Gambian value chains. YEP is a tool for unemployed young people to create their future in their own country with a specific focus on vocational training and support for micro and small-sized enterprises and creates new jobs in selected sectors through value addition and internationalization.

YEP programme was structured around two major result areas; namely skill development, through technical and vocational training or apprenticeship, and agropreneurship services, through business skills training and support including MSME improvement comprising of a total number of 47,500 youths involved

in the agribusiness and agro processing and a total of 95 senior and management members of staff of ITC/YEP and its key partners. Three categories of partners exist, namely Government, For-profit and Not-for-profit. These include Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE); Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS); The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI); The Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI); National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI); Gambia Songhai Initiative; Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA); and ITC.

There are many types of youth training programmes that support the empowerment efforts and which provide skills for employment outside agriculture. These include apprenticeships, public formal technical vocational education and training (TVET), private formal and informal TVET ("formal" meaning integrated into the formal education system; "informal" meaning outside of the formal education system), and stand-alone programs such as YEP. Training is delivered through a mix of private and public institutions, and each type of training tends to lead to a different type of work (non-farm home enterprises or modern wage sector). Two of the most common forms of training pursued by young people are apprenticeships and TVET. Within agriculture, the Gambian government developed national youth policy which was majorly anchored on filling the critical investment and service gaps in the agricultural and rural development sectors through private-sector partnership, with the public sector as a facilitator and catalyst (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2019).

The project has a large number of beneficiaries that are scattered across the rural areas of the four administrative regions in the rural areas (Upper River Region with headquarters at Basse; Lower River Region with its headquarters at Mansa Konko; Central River Region has its headquarters at Janjanbureh; North Bank Region has its headquarters located at Kerewan although Farafenni the most populous and Barra compete for the economic capital of the division) (Yepafrica, 2019).

As stated above, the establishment of YEP, no doubt, has brought about improvement in skills and employability of many young Gambians especially in the urban areas (Banjul, Kanifing and Brikama) over the past five years due to the support rendered on vocational training and support for micro and small-sized enterprises and job creation in selected sectors of economy (Agriculture and Tourism) through value addition and internationalization (Abatan, 2020). This is in affirmation to the claim by YEP that it has improved the life of an average Gambian youth through various empowerment programmes ran by them especially in the urban area (YEP, 2018). However, the demographic profile of The Gambia reveals that the youths in the rural areas (spread across the North bank and Upper, Central and Lower river regions) still engage in and thrive predominantly on rain-fed/subsistence

agriculture and are invariably faced with unemployment, economic hardship, lack of good education and rural infrastructure which can be corroborated by increased movement to the urban areas (Charles, 2018).

The goal of YEP in The Gambia has been to reduce the level of poverty among the youth through employment generation. Despite the project, it is the general belief that poverty level among the youth in the rural areas is on the increase. This belief has been hinged on the methods and programmes being used by YEP as well as some other unidentified challenges confronting the project, hence this study. This research intends to investigate this area in order to know how empowerment has assisted in shaping rural Gambian youth and alleviating poverty among them.

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Many Scholars, such as Ayalew, Klaus & Markus (2011) and Cloutier, Marie-Hélène, Reinstadtler & Beltran (2011), have worked on empowerment of different categories of youth (-urban or rural) in the Sub-Sahara Africa. Their observations have ranged from building an effective youth employment policy in favour of the youth over the other members of the population with much holistic consideration and support given to higher economic activities of agriculture, household enterprises and modern wage employment.

Literature on youth empowerment and youth employment, espoused by Bridges, Sarah, Louise, Alessio & Trudy (2013), among others, expressed the belief that uneducated and unskillful young people mostly have weaker links to the world of work than the general population, and therefore doubly disadvantaged and dissatisfied. Observation from the pilot studies by some World Bank researchers on the impact evaluation of youth empowerment documents positive effects on a variety of empowerment measures, including access to money, self-confidence, and anxiety about circumstances and the future of employment as far as poverty alleviation is concerned.

2.1 Youth

According to the United Nations (2008), youth and young people are used interchangeably to mean age 15-24 without prejudice to the fact that member states and other entities use different definitions. Youth can be viewed from the perspective of a period of growing up and/or transformation from the dependence of childhood to adulthood independence. It is often used to describe individuals transforming between ages of fulfilling adequate statutory educational requirement/ being empowered and getting a means of livelihood. The above is in line with Jones (1988), whereby she asserted that youth is most usefully conceptualized as an age-related process. Another perspective on the concept of youth is that of viewing it through a social process (such as schooling, families or the labour market) which they engage with in relation to their socio, cultural and political circumstances.

“To put it in slightly different terms, it is rare for most young people to actually adopt a visible, recognized sub-cultural lifestyle in the sense of an integrated deviant ‘way of life’, rather most adopt the ‘acceptable’ cultural forms in a society. It is the fashion that revolve around a core centre of ‘respectability’ which change, not basic ways of living and relating to others” (Johanna & Rob, 1997). From the above, we can conclude that a relational concept of youth offers an approach to understanding the social meaning of growing up that can take account of the diverse ways in which young people are constructed through social institutions, and the ways in which they negotiate their transitions (Johanna & Rob, 1997). Researchers have discovered that a major proportion of young people usually perceive the feeling of alienation and separation as a result of their experiences with institutional processes even though they love to actually belong in the society. According to Jones & Wallace (1992), the resultant effect here, which happens to be one of the most significant issues about youth, is that many have little access to an income, and many suffer extreme poverty.

2.2 Empowerment

As espoused by Adesopo (2020), the word ‘empowerment’ is a long term strategy that targets social transformation and positive change in an individual being and/or community. Friedmann (1992) described it within the development as involving a process of social and political empowerment whose long term objective is to rebalance the structure of power within the society by making state action more accountable, strengthening the powers of civil society in the management of their own affairs and making corporate business more socially responsible. Oakley (2001) in his own explanation of empowerment, asserted that social development as empowerment does not see the individuals as being deficient and/or needing external support or entirely powerless but rather seeks to create an interactive and sharing approach to development in which people’s skills and knowledge are acknowledged. According to him, people’s empowerment can manifest itself as power through greater confidence in one’s ability, or in terms of increasing relations meant to break their exclusion and to again access to state or economic resources.

In addition, many development agencies/bodies have interpreted empowerment differently as *Participation* also referred to as “Participatory Development”; *Capacity Building* in terms of strengthening local groups/ individuals (rural youth inclusive by way of training), civil society and NGOs; *Democratisation* in the political sense to ensure elimination of politics of exclusion; *Economic improvement* whereby the central focus is on poverty alleviation strategies in order to improve on the revenue / income of the targeted beneficiaries; and *Empowerment within a Human Right Framework* (Adesopo, 2020).

2.3 Youth Empowerment

Young people’s struggle to achieve livelihood is connected to the transformations in the nature of production,

consumption and general community life taking place on a global level. When youths are meaningfully and productively engaged, they serve as a reliable source for national economy and could be drivers of sustainable socio-economic development and beneficiaries of poverty alleviation. The concept of youth empowerment needs to be defined in order to emphasize the generic use of the term. Barker, Knaul, Cassaniga & Schrader (2000) view youth empowerment as a process whereby the youth are engaged meaningfully and empowered by earning a future through good incomes by managing, controlling or driving entrepreneurial activities including income generating processes such as the small and medium business (SME's), and owning an existing or upcoming economic ventures and lastly, possessing marketable and sustainable skills (Pearrow, 2008). The indicators associated with youth empowerment have been identified as: (a) growth and well-being; (b) relational; (c) educational; (d) political; (e) transformative; and (f) emancipative.

A unanimous definition of the concept is based on activities and interventions to engaging and occupying young people's strength by getting them involved in decision making process as relating to planning and implementation of programmes; and also granting them active goals in matters that affect them.

Empowering youths will enhance their citizenship and productivity as they move into adulthood as government structures and institutions will be strengthened, thereby resulting in stronger nations, poverty reduction and healthy individuals and communities. Meredith & Bronwyn (2013) differentiate youth empowerment from youth development, stating that youth development is centered on developing individuals while youth empowerment is focused on creating greater community change building on the development of individual capacity.

Empowerment of young people requires that they are assisted to remain involved or connected with the social process and to appropriate institutions revolving around production, consumption and community life, and the social and psychological experiences of disempowerment.

2.4 Poverty

The concept of poverty is multidimensional and multi-facet in nature and the situation of poverty is depended on people to people, society to society, economy to economy and history to history. Poverty is basically a severe deprivation of some basic human needs at the individual or household level in form of material and physical deprivation. That is, a condition where a person's basic needs for food; clothing and shelter are not being met. This can also be in monetary terms. In the view of Odeh & Okoye (2014), poverty is the failure to attain basic capabilities such as being adequately nourished, living a healthy life, possession of skills to participate in economic and social-political life, permission to take part in community activities. Duru (2012) simply views poverty

as a situation of low income and/or low consumption. To World Bank (1990), poverty is inability to attain a minimum standard of living. The UN had advocated that there should be positive impact and relationship between the youth empowerment project and poverty reduction if properly implemented.

Poverty is generally of two types. The first is "absolute poverty" which is synonymous with destitution and occurs when people cannot obtain adequate resources, which are measured in terms of calories or nutrition to support a minimum level of physical growth. This type of poverty means almost the same everywhere and can be eradicated as demonstrated by some countries. The second type is "relative poverty" which occurs when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standard as determined by a government and enjoyed by the bulk of the population. This type of poverty varies from country to country and even within the same country.

3. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Theoretically, empowerment consists of several core concepts such as power, powerlessness, disempowerment, empowering, poverty and poverty alleviation which actually represent the philosophical basis of empowerment. The wider academic community is of the opinion that youth empowerment has a concrete base of theory, at both process and outcomes levels. The process, which is also known as 'empowering level' provides opportunities for youth to develop skills and become problem solvers and decision makers. The outcomes, also termed as 'the empowered level', refers to the result of the empowerment process, including the consequences of attempts to gain control in the community and the effects of interventions designed to empower participants. Zimmerman (2000), a notable researcher in the field of empowerment theory, articulated that the theory of youth empowerment can be broken down even further into three components: individual empowerment, organizational empowerment, and community empowerment. According to him, individual empowerment implies youth or adults developing skills to exert control and improve competence, as well as developing critical awareness to effectively collaborate for the progress of organizations and communities. He described organizational empowerment as entities that provide, and benefit from the opportunity for youth or adults to acquire the skills needed to gain control over their lives, provide alternatives to service provision, as well as entities that develop and influence policy decisions. Community empowerment deals with efforts to improve the community, respond to threats to quality of life, and provide for citizen participation at the local, state, and national level. He further opined that it is necessary to distinguish between developing the individual and empowering youth to become change agents in society.

He summarized the youth empowerment theory of organizational and community participation in a simple manner as one that connects individual well-being with the larger social and political environment, and suggests that people need opportunities to become active in community decision making in order to improve their lives, organizations, and communities. Meanwhile, various researchers have demonstrated that the theory is sound, but for little evidence of achievements in the area of implementation, effectiveness, and accountability of youth empowerment. Some theorists say the reason for this lack of evidence emanated from the fact that it may be difficult to implement a theory. A further difficulty in the implementation of youth empowerment theory is that it requires young people to be involved not only in the day-to-day programming decisions but also in organizational governance. It is only through this involvement that communities will be able to promote the development of all youth and adults.

According to Zimmerman et al. (2018) on Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES), a Youth Empowerment theory, termed Youth Empowerment Model, reveals a three-pronged approach that effectively engages young people in work that challenges them to develop skills, gain critical awareness, and participate in opportunities that are necessary for creating community change. Empowerment Model is the theory of youth empowerment, not only aiding in the development of youth, but also helping to create generations of civically minded youth that take strategic actions to improve their communities. Critical Social Theory of Youth Empowerment in summary emphasizes that collective efforts are needed to create

socio-political change in youths. This theory identified key dimensions of critical youth empowerment such as a welcoming and safe environment, meaningful participation and engagement, equitable power-sharing between youth and adults, engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes, participation in sociopolitical processes to affect change, and integrated individual- and community-level empowerment so as to achieve positive outcome (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias, and McLoughlin, 2006).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Over the past few decades researchers in the international development community have worked on the best way to describe how programs lead to outcomes. One approach has been to use a Logical Framework (also called a LogFrame), which some donors now require. Another increasingly popular approach is to create a Theory of Change, which shows all the possible pathways leading to change, and why you think they lead to change. It is appropriate for tool for program design and evaluation while the Logframe as complimentary tool makes it easier for everyone including the donor to monitor program implementation (Piroska, 2014). The theory of change in social development has been found applicable to this study. This is because YEP investments in the rural areas are targeted towards socio-economic development of youth who reside in these poor communities. This set of youth are rather disadvantaged in terms of skill and access to finance and good life but are yearning for a change in their income level, social welfare and employability.

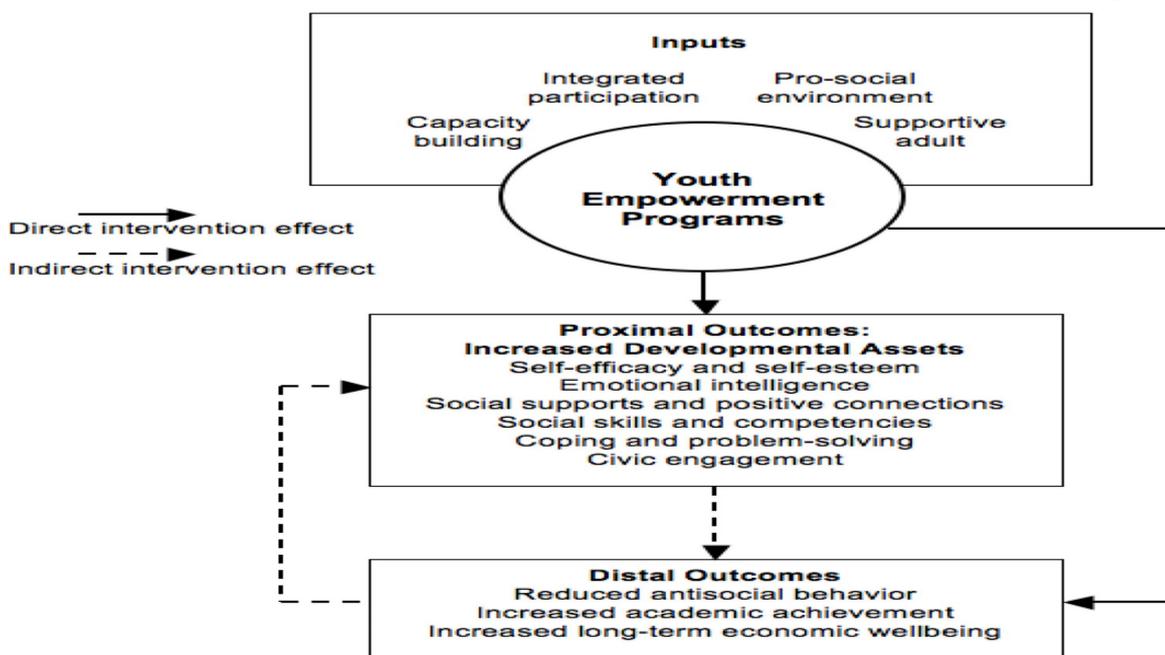


Figure 1
Template/Framework for Theory of Change

Source: Morton, M. & Montgomery, P. (2011) Youth Empowerment Programs for Improving Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem of Adolescents, *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 7, 79.

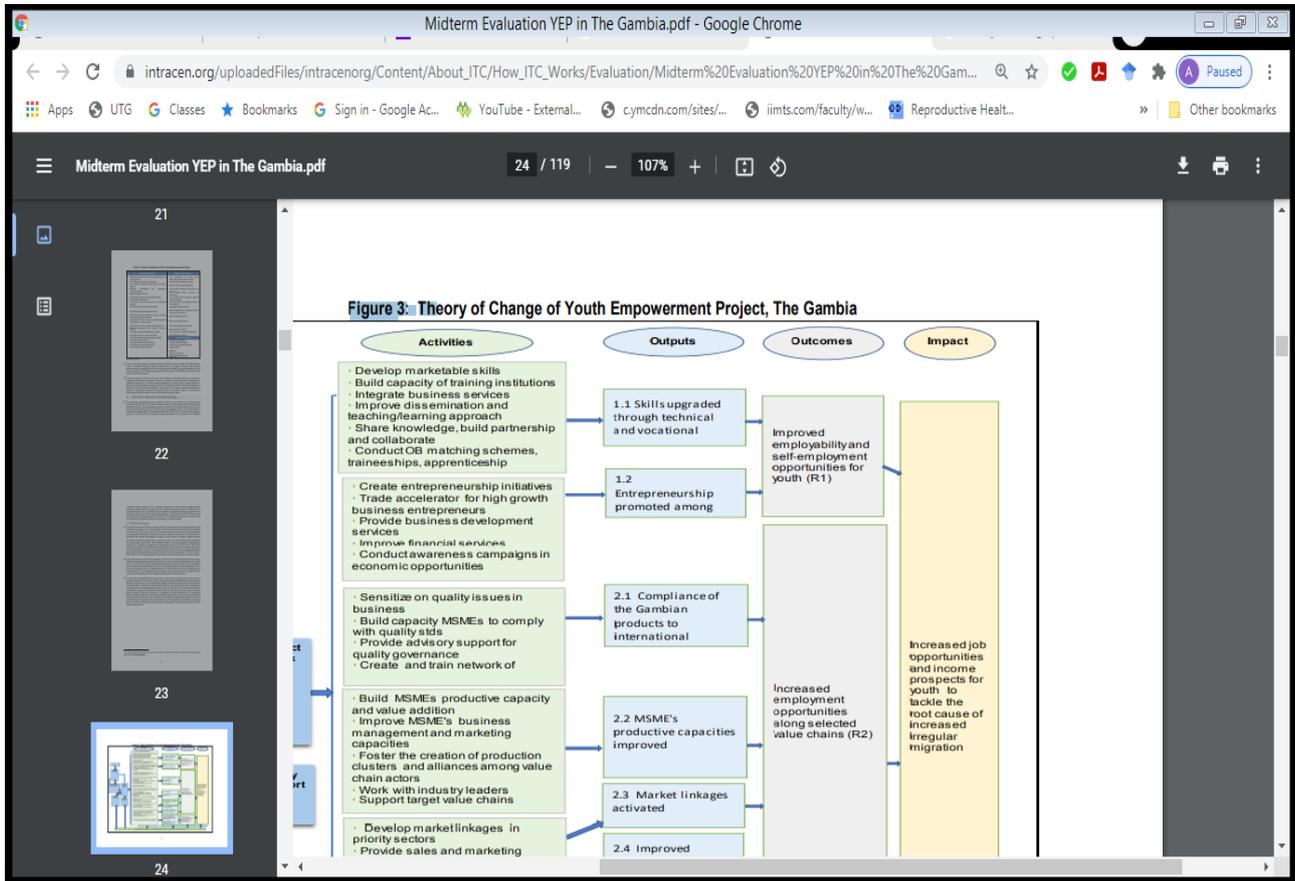


Figure 2
Theory of Change of Youth Empowerment Project, The Gambia
 Source: The theory of Change of Youth empowerment project, The Gambia (YEP, 2019)

5. YEP AND THE RURAL POPULACE

Agriculture remains the predominant occupation of rural youth in The Gambia. It is also one of the most reliable approaches to poverty alleviation and employment generation among the youth. YEP midterm report published in June 2019 reveals that it has made investments in promoting youth entrepreneurship, connecting poor communities to value chains, and promoting green trade, agro-processing through initiatives like business development services, strengthening quality improvement and market linkages and MSMEs' competitiveness. YEP's project investments in rural areas cover Mansakonko, Kerewan, Kuntaur, Janjanbureh, and Basse LGAs (see Figure 3 below). According to GBOS (2017), a total of 344,727 youths inhabit these rural Local Government Areas of The Gambia. However, the Strategic Youth and Trade Development Roadmap of The Gambia (2018-2022) and the Youth and Trade Roadmap for Nuts and Agroprocessing which were developed under the aegis of the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE) and Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), with the financial support and technical assistance of The Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), states that the total number of youths

employed in the agribusiness (which is sector affiliated to YEP's investment) stands at 47,500 (people who are either agropreneurs and/or farmers) (GBoS, 2017).

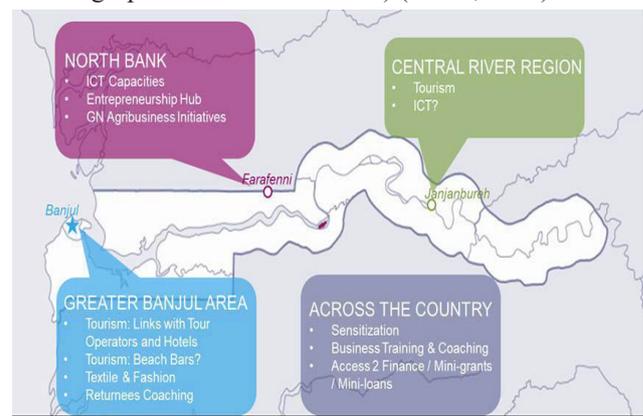


Figure 3
Yep Project Investments in rural areas
 Source: YEP (2019). *Map of The Gambia, with specific actions targeted at regions/villages.*

6. THEORETICAL EVALUATION OF YEP IN THE RURAL GAMBIA

In assessing youth empowerment and development situation in the rural Gambia, existing literature revealed

that a large number of youth in The Gambia are increasingly finding it difficult to live above poverty line. Broadly, the objective of this research is to assess Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) as it relates to job generation and poverty reduction in rural area of The Gambia. The Gambia MDG status report has also further confirmed that poverty in The Gambia is mostly a rural phenomenon; the report further stated that urban areas (i.e. Banjul and Kanifing) have lower levels of extreme poverty (0.8 and 6.8) than the rural areas ranging from 10 and 30.5% in LRR and CRR-North respectively. Extreme poverty is reported to be lower among the urban areas because of the availability of employment opportunities, both formal and informal.

Various criteria are utilized as yardstick for assessing and evaluating YEP. These include although not exhaustive: conformity with Standards; achievement of specific and overall objectives; Alignment with beneficiaries' needs, governmental and partners' plans; adequacy of human and financial resources; quality and adequacy of planning, monitoring and evaluation system; the extent to which the project interventions contribute to, or can be reasonably expected to contribute to, positive long-term change for key stakeholders, including target populations; the extent to which partners and beneficiaries are enabled, committed and likely to contribute to ongoing benefits and lastly the extent to which the activity was planned and implemented in synergy with other development/ humanitarian actors in the context (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019).

Conformity with Standards: Literature searches as regards the modus operandi of YEP reveals that mode of categorization of the youth who happens to be the target for empowerment followed the international standard, for instance the youth age bracket employed was 15-35 years.

Achievement of specific and overall objectives: The overall objective of YEP is to improve economic development and prospects for The Gambia's youth, including returning and/or potential migrants by promoting attractive employment and/or income-generating opportunities; and support the government in its attempt to nurture perception shift for the Gambian population moving away from a 'future through migration' to a 'future in The New Gambia'.

The Gambia Labour Force Survey of 2018, according to the GBoS (2018), reveals that the youth employment to population ratio was significantly lower in rural compared to urban areas represented by 45.3% and 54.7%, respectively. In addition, evidences from International Labour Organisation (ILO) data estimated that the youth unemployment rate showed a marginal declining trend between the period of 2018 and 2020 (before the precarious and devastating occurrence of COVID 19 in The Gambia) (Statista, 2022).

The above reveal that the issue about the Gambian youths looking for decent jobs with reasonable wage rates, particularly those in the rural areas who are experiencing extreme poverty and which makes them more vulnerable and prone to migrate to Europe in search of a better quality of life (confirming the fact that they were neither interested in remaining on the farm nor interested in relying on subsistence farming) could still not be solved by YEP. This is against the backdrop that its intent was to create job and income opportunities within the country by improving both the technical and entrepreneurial skills base in accordance with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the area of youth employment.

The issue of sustainable development for economic growth through youth empowerment and poverty reduction is evident in the project document thus making the project exhibit quite a deal of relevance by being strategically focused on non-traditional sectors, such as agro-processing, tourism, ICT and TVET to complement the government's efforts to support youth empowerment by creating opportunities within The Gambia especially in the rural area even though YEP's impact on beneficiaries as per income generation that can result in empowerment and poverty reduction is still not elaborate enough because the figures are not yet reflecting it.

YEP was designed in line with ITC's Youth and Trade Programme that aims at connecting young entrepreneurs, especially the young agro entrepreneurs from the rural areas to international markets. The ultimate effect of this is expected to be revealed by a boost in the country's Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product. According to IFAD (2019), agricultural and agro-processing sectors are the highest employers of labour contributing 40 per cent of the country's GDP, other sectors such as services (mainly trade, transport and communications) contributing the remaining 60 per cent. The GBoS (2020) provisional data on contribution to GDP estimates revealed a marginal increase over the period under review and this may be partly attributable to the observable effort of YEP.

YEP communication and dissemination strategy and partnership approach implementing youth empowerment initiatives in rural areas of The Gambia is a source of significant strength to the entire framework. The evaluation determines that the project's effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes and outputs is moderately satisfactory.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

According the GBoS (2018), youth unemployment remained high at 36.7% in 2018 (approximately 64% in the rural areas) and the problem is deep-rooted among the female youth. YEP's intervention has the potential to demonstrate what works in empowering youth. However, the coverage of YEP is limited and needs are vast. YEP

has demonstrated that it can work with a wide range of implementing partners. Several partners are committed to the purpose and are likely to continue to be involved. At present, there is no established mechanism for this to materialize.

As stated above, youth unemployment remains stubbornly high, and there are no meaningful, sustainable jobs or income opportunities for the youth. YEP has a limited scope for sustainable job creation. The national youth programs are scattered and under resourced. The government should seek active collaboration with other development partners, including the African Development Bank (AfDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and bilateral agencies to adapt the YEP framework for youth empowerment in the areas not reached out by YEP. ITC can play a significant role in contributing to support postharvest operations, skills development, MSMEs' business development, developing market linkages leading to the export of viable commodities, and creating sustainable jobs beyond the farm gate, efforts are needed to promote irrigation projects and other interventions aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and improving rural people's access to markets.

The issue of sustainable development for economic growth and poverty reduction is evident in the project document. However, the project is not explicitly aligned with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. As a UN entity, it must be adequately aligned with relevant SDGs, at least with SDG 4 and SDG 8. YEP has categorized the 4,000 sustainable job creation targets into two parts - jobs created (2,000) and jobs sustained (2,000) while the project Logframe seeks to create 4,000 sustainable jobs. The division of the target appears to be a departure from the original intent. To retain prospective migrants, the jobs need to be sustainable.

The project needs to streamline the number of partnerships to a manageable level and continue to remain focused on delivering project outcomes and envisaged impact. Stock taking of what works and what does not in each sector and work streams of the value chain is needed at this point in time. ITC is implementing other projects involving some of the common design features in The Gambia (e.g. SheTrade). The value chains that YEP has selected have a high potential for creating impact both in terms of employment and income for the beneficiaries with a view to reducing poverty. However, their viability in the Gambian context remains unknown at this stage in the light of weak governance, inadequate capacity, and shortage of funds. ITC has a comparative advantage of implementing similar activities and projects and can contribute to gains in project efficiency by consolidating activities across the projects so that the project can deliver intended outcomes. Project management could tackle cross-cutting priorities. The exercise should result in the

identification of strategic partners that can effectively and efficiently deliver targeted outputs regularly.

The potential for microenterprises to increase employment and reduce poverty remains small, because most of them are run as a family business or sole proprietorship employing minimal external casual workers when needed. There is a need to work with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well so that new sustainable jobs can be created. SMEs including exporters have the potential to create new jobs with a better chance of increasing the size of the operation. YEP was designed in line with ITC's Youth and Trade Programme that aims at connecting young entrepreneurs to international markets.

Several implementing partners do not have adequate capacity and facilities to accommodate the demand for services. The classroom size at the TVET institutions for instances, tends to be significant, and many do not provide enough equipment, which limits the learning abilities. Also, the capacity of other service providers tends to be limited, thereby constraining the scope of work. The majority of partner institutions is aspirational and commit to supporting youth. However, they are constrained by the investment required for improvement. There is need to strengthen the capacity of TVET institutions and other key actors in the sector value chain that have the potential to create sustainable jobs. The youth empowerment challenge is enormous for the country with limited resources. The Gambia may not be able to fund the youth empowerment programme with an internal budget, thereby risking youth being forced to migrate in search of decent jobs. Hence, it is recommended that ITC/YEP should collaborate with the MoTIE and support the development of a project proposal for scaling up and mainstreaming the YEP approach to other parts of the country especially the rural areas where the impact of the YEP model is though established needed enlarged coverage.

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