

Social Capital: A Neglected Resource to create Viable and Sustainable Youth Economic Groups in Urban Tanzania

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Abstract

There has been an alarming increase in the rate of unemployment among active urban population in Tanzania whereby the youth are severely affected. In this regard Youth Economic Groups (YEGs) program was formed as one among the best alternative strategies to address this perennial problem. Membership in YEGs act as a means to complement youth abilities and strengths to accomplish their common goal of addressing unemployment problem, through facilitating access of financial, human and physical capital from various sources. This paper argues that the arrangement, in which YEGs program has been implemented, overlooks the pivotal role of social capital resource to ensure that youth undertake Income Generation Activities (IGAs) amicably and effectively. Most of previous research works on youth unemployment were focused on challenges related to financial, human and physical capital. Hence, very little attention has been paid on fact that YEGs are constituted by members with different socio-economic background whose behaviour and interests need to be harmonised by appropriate relations to achieve their common objectives. The paper contributes in filling that gap by drawing empirical evidence of YEGs in Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC) and suggests how various forms of social capital can be nurtured to create and sustain viable Income Generation Groups (IGGs) in urban Tanzania so as to address the perennial unemployment problem facing the urban youth.

Keywords: Social Capital, Unemployment, Youth Economic Groups, Urban Tanzania.

1. Introduction

In the last two decades unemployment has persistently remained one of several perennial problems facing the majority of the world's population, youth in particular. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) there were more than 74.5 million young people aged -15-24 unemployed by the year 2013 (ILO, 2014). Youth unemployment in Africa reflects the global crisis but with the additional challenge of a youth population much higher than most other regions and persistence high level of poverty (ILO, 2012). By the year 2012 youth age group in Africa was more than 60 percent and was projected to be over 75 percent by the year 2015 (AEO,2012). Available data from 2012 National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) in Tanzania show that the overall unemployment rate in the country is 10.7% and it is more pronounced among youth aged between 15 and 35 years who constitute majority of labour force (URT, 2013). Several studies (Contini, 2012, Frumence, 2011; Shayo, 2011, Diaconu, 2008, WB, 2000) have shown that social capital has increasingly been advocated in addressing a number of challenges worldwide facing individuals, groups and societies. According to Pronyk et al., (2008) social capital in form of strong social networks shapes individual behaviour through social and cultural pressures that discourages risk sexual behaviour. Social capital in form of participation in associations and organizations increases members' social status due to access to financial capital that facilitates economic projects (Mercer, 2002). Shayo (2011) posits that social capital foster beneficial relationships among stakeholders in education sector that foster excellent academic performance of students in secondary schools.

Formation of YEGs has been one among the various alternative strategies to address the problem of increasing unemployment in Tanzania (Shaidi, 2006). Experience in Tanzania has shown that, there has been a lot of support from the government and other stakeholders towards YEGs in terms of provision of human, physical and financial capital. The aim has been to impart to youths the necessary technical skills and finance capital so that they can effectively and efficiently undertake their income generation projects. However, in spite of such resources invested in the groups by the members and external stakeholders, there has been the prevalence of mushrooming weak and unsustainable YEGs in urban areas (KMC, 2014; URT, 2014). For instance, anecdote evidence in Kinondoni Municipal Council (KMC) in Dar es Salaam region shows that there were many YEGs created that have been underperforming, others unable to pay back loan which caused failure to undertake the groups' projects. Due to that many groups have been reported to have collapsed. Such a situation contributes in impeding successful implementation of initiatives undertaken by the stakeholders to increase employment opportunities for youths in urban area.

In addition to studies that had shown social capital significance on aspects such as academic performance, health and socio-economic improvement as stated earlier other studies (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Falk, 1999) have shown that social capital is a very important resource in which other resources such as human, physical and financial

capital can be invested. As Putnam (2000), purports social capital is a critical aspect of effective group functioning, since groups are relationships among individuals working for a common purpose. In view of that one can clearly argue that social capital can as well influence the content, goals, and sustainable implementation of groups' programmes and projects. Therefore, given a range of benefits that individuals, groups and societies accrue regarding the level of on social capital, this paper focuses on unveiling the extent to which attention has been given by various development stakeholders to apply the capital to address urban youth unemployment in Tanzania.

2. Theoretical Underpinning and Conceptualization

This paper is guided by social capital theory. The core idea of the social capital theory is that good social relationships influence positive socio-economic outcomes among individuals, groups and societies. Putnam (2000), one among the prominent scholars of social capital, propounds that just as machines (physical capital) or education (human capital) increase productivity, so too do social networks and relationships affect the productive capacity of individuals and groups. In that sense, while physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals in terms of skills and knowledge, social capital refers to connections among individuals, norms of reciprocity and the trustworthiness that arises from their relationships.

The concept of social capital lends to multiple definitions and interpretations. However, this paper adopts Putnam's (2000) definition of social capital. It views social capital as features of social organizations such as trust, norms and networking that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action and cooperation for mutual benefits. In relation to what Putnam propounds it can clearly be argued that social capital can facilitate the achievement of groups' objectives by bringing amicability and solidarity to members within the group in implementing their planned programmes by undertaking day-to-day activities both effectively and efficiently. To substantiate this point in relation to IGGs, Putnam further argues that the growth of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) reflects the application of social remedies. This is because such groups provide emotional, material and interpersonal ties that are invaluable to their members, and which therefore meet an important range of needs for those who are involved. Putnam (2000) suggests that forming SHGs of various types and purposes is a significant step towards the realization of both short and long-term objectives, such as addressing various problems faced by their members.

As noted above, social capital lends to multiple definitions and interpretations, this in turn has led to categorisation of the concept into various forms and features. In this paper the concept of social capital is divided into two types, cognitive social capital and structural social capital. Cognitive social capital comprises of more subjective and intangible elements such as generally accepted attitudes and norms of behaviours, shared values, reciprocity and trust. Structural social capital refers to relatively objective and externally observable social structures like networks, associations, as well as institutions, rules and procedures they embody (Uphoff, 2000). However, for the purpose of narrowing the focus of this paper three forms of social capital were selected for analysis and discussion. These are trust, civic engagement and networks. Definitions of trust differ not only between disciplines, but also within discipline. For instance, trust can mean that being able to predict what other people will do and what situations will occur. Gambetta (1988) refers trustworthiness as the probability that one will perform an action that is beneficial to other people and such action is potentially enough to determine other peoples' positive response in the future and hence further mutual relations in some form of co-operation. Civic engagement is understood as the interests, skills and knowledge that enable individuals to take part in civic life or participate in various processes through which different stakeholders share control of the decisions and resources that affect them. Social networks are face-to-face interactions or membership of various associations and social clubs that individuals have in a given society.

Therefore this paper argues that the higher the level social capital in form of trust, networking and civic engagement among youths within their respective groups and between their groups and other groups and stakeholders such as government and non governmental institutions, the greater the social capital. The greater the social capital YEG members have, the greater the chances to access more resources from various sources and increased chances to harmonise YEG members' interests for their common good. Hence, this in turn can help to increase the YEGs capacity to perform activities as well as to sustain viable IGAs. In this way, when IGG members and all youth development stakeholders invest in social capital before and after forming YEGs it can assist the mobilisation of various resources at a minimal cost towards the better achievement of the IGGs' objectives. Therefore, giving attention to social capital will facilitate the formation, performance and sustainability of viable YEGs to increases employment opportunities among urban youth in Tanzania.

In this paper YEGs refer to groups voluntarily formed by individuals aged between 18-35 years with the aim of undertaking a range of IGAs. This age group classification for youth is used as per the national specific definition that is used by stakeholders and policy makers in the country (URT, 2006). Most of the groups in urban areas undertake the following IGAs; plumbing, tailoring, gardening and selling of tree seedlings, painting and selling pictures, welding, and carpentry work, mechanics and other machines activities to mention but a few. The term sustainability has multiple definitions, interpretations and uses with regard to the context and content of the topic under study. According to Pretty (1998), 'sustainability' is a complex and contested concept, to many it implies persistence and the capacity of something to continue for a long time'. In this paper it refers to continuity, stability and the enhanced capacity of the YEGs in undertaking their day-to-day activities to achieve their objectives. Unemployment can be defined as the state in which a person is without work, is available to work, and is currently seeking work (ILO, 1982). In a broader sense the term 'without work' means either paid work or self-employment; 'available for work' refers readiness of an individual for any employed or self-employed work during the reference period. 'Seeking work' refers to steps taken by the unemployed to look and search for paid employment or self-employment. The specific steps may include checking for employment chances at various work sites, register their particulars at various private or government labour exchange offices, search for vacancy announcements or take measures to establish their own enterprise.

3. An overview of youth unemployment and strategies employed to address the problem

Global statistics of unemployment rate among the youth in both developed and developing countries is alarming. The 2015 World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) released by ILO estimated that more than 74 million people (aged 15-24) were unemployed globally. A report by ILO (2014) also revealed that the increasing unemployment rate in most of developing countries is relatively high compared to developed countries, whereby East and South Asia leads by having more than 45 per cent of jobseekers, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. In that regard there have been a number of global initiatives to address such worldwide challenge led by the United Nations through its various specialised agencies such as International Labor Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO). However, more serious efforts were required in African continent than other regions due to the alarming rate of increase in the proportion of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or various other forms of trainings which poses a further future threat to the age group. For instance, it was projected that unemployment in Africa will rise as high as it is in countries with large populations, such as India, Pakistan, the Philippines and the US (UNFPA, 2014). In addition, youth unemployment in Africa has additional challenge on the age group that most other regions worldwide due to the weak national labor markets and persistently high levels of poverty.

While youth in Africa represent more than 60 per cent of the continent's total population and account for 45 per cent of the labor force, it was projected that youth will be over 75 per cent by 2015 (AEO, 2012). Apart from high fertility rate in Africa, unemployment affects most developing countries due to lack of structural transformation and the low rate of job creation in the general economy resulting from the low rate of investment (ILO, 2012b). ILO has been collaborating with various stakeholders, including African countries' governments, to put in place national youth employment policies, plans and programmes to provide youths with decent work opportunities undertaken to improve youths' entrepreneurship skills among individuals in the growing informal sector (ILO, 2012). In the last two decades, this sector has been a major source of employment compared to its share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and has also influenced the wellbeing of the majority of Africa's growing population (AEO, 2012). Hence, a large portion of the youth in Sub-Saharan African countries has been embarking on self-employment in the informal sector by undertaking a wide range of economic activities.

Unemployment among youths in Tanzania just like many other developing countries has been one of the major crises since its political independence in 1961. In that regard just like there have been world and regional initiatives in various continents to address the problem, similar attempts have been undertaken in the country. During the early 1960s, the response to the issue of unemployment was focused on the modernisation development perspective that was in progress at that particular time. It was assumed that the establishment and development of industries would to a large extent contribute to absorb the greater portion of unemployed population, particularly in the urban economy. Unfortunately, this was not the case as investment in industries failed to provide jobs for the increased population in urban areas. The lack of proper strategies to address the problem led to an accelerated influx of rural, unskilled workers in search of urban employment opportunities that were not accessible (Bagachwa and Ndulu, 1996). Following the failure of the industries to increase employment opportunities, alternative strategies had to be formulated to reduce the increased number of urban unemployed people, the youth in particular. Among the strategies formulated to remedy the situation was to initiate programs which would create more jobs. The unemployed were mobilised to join together and form YEGs, to undertake self-help projects that intended to increase employment opportunities. The programme was initiated by the

Government of Tanzania (GoT), and supported by Non- Governmental Organization (NGOs), and other development stakeholders.

In 1983, the Government passed the Human Resources Deployment Act (Act No. 6 of 1983), as one of its intervention to coordinate efforts which directly intended to address the unemployment problem. All able-bodied individuals were required to engage in productive activities and it denounced loitering in urban centres. In 1996 National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) was formed and reviewed in 2007. One of the objectives of the policy has been to emphasis the provision of soft loans as well as technical and entrepreneurship skills (URT, 2007). In this way stakeholders can support government initiatives to address youth unemployment, reduce poverty and rural-urban migration. In continuing efforts to address unemployment problem National Employment Policy was sanctioned in 1997 identifying two categories on employment that is wage employment and self employment. In addition, programs such as YEGs, Youth Revolving Fund (YRF) and Youth Development Fund (YDF) were initiated by the Government of Tanzania (GoT), and supported by Non Governmental Organization (NGOs), and other development stakeholders. YEGs program was created in order to address unemployment problem among youth by taking part in various IGAs. YDF and YRF were specifically created in line with YEGs so that youth will have sustainable source and support in terms of access to loans that need to reach youth.

At district council level, local government authorities are tasked by the policy to incorporate their plans and implement youth development programs under the authority of District Executive Director (DED). Youth Development Officers (YDOs) and Community Development Officers (CDO) officers at district level cooperate with other officials such as Ward CDO and Ward Executive Officers (WEOs) who works with village leaders at the village level and streets leaders in urban areas to implement various youth projects. Among other things was providing youth with various forms of training that improves their human skills as well as providing them with credits. In the light of that, the government through its local authorities provided support to youth in various capacities. KMC, like other local governments, has been taking a number of initiatives to support youth projects as part of its responsibilities. Some of the stakeholders that have been cooperating with the Municipality include: Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO), Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA), banks and other financial institutions , Civil Societies Organisations (CSOs) to mention but a few.

4. Methodology

This paper is based on both secondary and primary data. Primary data were collected using interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and observations methods. Data were collected from ten (10) wards out of the twenty seven (27) which are found in Kinondoni Municipal Council located in Dar es Salaam region. The wards were randomly selected so as all YEGs in the Municipality have an equal chance of being selected to obtain relevant data to cover various types and characteristics of the groups' activities, its members as well as getting various perspectives of officials and community residents regarding the phenomenon under investigated. The study employed qualitative approach and an exploratory research design based on case study method. Non-probability sampling design was used to obtain relevant respondents with purposive sampling techniques. In this regard qualitative approach was found to be more relevant to gather and analyse data. The main concern of qualitative techniques is the way people understand things and give meanings based on the premise that knowledge is created by the 'knowers'. Hence, FGD and interview techniques as well as observation methods helped to obtain detailed and rich information from the respondents' views and perceptions of regarding the phenomenon under investigation. Computer analysis software (Nvivo, Version 7) was used to code data obtained in respect to themes. This offered an advantage due to it being relatively simple to use and quick given its electronic nature. For example transcribed data from a word processing package was easily, accurately, and transparently transported to the software and code them on the same computer screen. Hence the analysis process was as well accurate, quick and simple identified respondents and their specific answers were placed in respective study themes.

A total of one hundred and four (104) respondents were purposively selected. These were eighty two (82) youths, in the ten (10) YEGs from ten (10) wards as well as twelve (12) officials; ten (10) from the respective wards and two (2) at municipal level. At ward level officials were either Community Development Officers (CDOs) or Ward Executive Officers (WEOs) while at Municipal level were Youth Development Officers (YDOs). Ten (10) community residents in these wards were also selected. All these were key informants who provided rich and relevant information by virtue of their familiarity with the area. Selected respondents were those who had long time residence in the respective streets, understanding and closeness to YEGs' working sites

as well as various initiatives to support the groups from various stakeholders like private actors such as parents, relatives and NGOs as well as from government. The area of study was KMC which is one of the three municipalities of Dar es Salaam, the largest commercial city in Tanzania, where a number of economic activities are carried out. The selection of the municipality was based on the fact that it is one of the leading examples among other districts in the country in undertaking a number of programmes that provide financial assistance and training to YEGs but still have high rate of youth unemployment (URT, 2014). Other factors include manageability of an area in terms of all the logistics involved in meeting with the respondents.

5. Social Capital and Creation of Viable Employment Opportunities: Evidence from Kinondoni Municipal Council

At the outset the paper briefly highlighted the role and the linkage among various forms of social capital—trust, networking and civic engagement and individuals and groups ability to address their faced challenges. This subsection focus on discussion of the main findings to demonstrate how and to what extent social capital has been utilized both by default and by design by various stakeholders, youth in particular to create viable and sustainable employment among urban youth through their formed IGGs found in KMC. Further, the discussion centers on how social capital has been used and helped to facilitate IGAs of YEGs or neglected and hence impeded and hence ineffective and inefficiency creation of viable and sustainable employment creation of youth living in urban areas.

5.1 The Role of Trust

The findings regarding the role of social capital in forms of trust in KMC had shown mixed opinions with regard to the availability of trust and its use by various stakeholders in improvement and supporting YEGs' activities. There were relatively few number of successful YEGs whose members were found to have a relatively high degree of trust but there were also a relatively high number of unsustainable YEGs due to lack of trust. One among the reasons stated by officials and youth to explain the problem of lack of trust was that was lack of strong ties and relationships among the youth during the earlier stage of forming the groups. As a result YEGs that constituted of members who did not understand each other better before forming the groups, such as in terms of their behaviours, altitudes, and interest were not sustainable. These findings attest to the fact that trust facilitates better working relations of group members to undertake their activities both effectively and efficiently and the opposite is true. Nath (2010) also argues that a positive relation among group members as well as among community members has an important contribution to their improved development. Further, the study posits that social capital in form of trust facilitated better forest conservation outcomes in Bangladesh. Reciprocity and trust among community members in some villages of Bangladesh helped to maintain their environment. This was possible through joint participation of people in development activities that intended to protect their natural environment by conserving their forests. A study by Leana and Van Baren (1999) also is in line with the findings by observing that "trust is necessary for people to work together on common projects and is also a by product of successful collective action, based upon stronger and more numerous links between the organisations and its members". Stiglitz (1990) found out that trust among group members in Peru contributed significantly to enable poor people through group leading schemes to access financial resources.

In addition to the above it was found that failure of some groups to be well informed about members' trustworthiness behaviour to engage in group relationships, particularly IGAs, which require high integrity, hindered YEGs' effective performance. Self interest and lack of integrity on the part of some YEG members were exposed after joining the groups. This made few members to exploit the available resources such and groups' credits from government and financial institutions as well as contributions from members like membership fees at the expense of majority. As the result the various resources acquired by the groups from different stakeholders were misused by the few hence unable to sustain viable income generation projects. In turn such similar circumstances accelerated to internal conflicts among the members that disrupted effective and efficiency undertakings of groups' IGAs. Further, these vices, caused by lack of trust not only caused conflicts among the members but also huge negative impact on YEGs to access support such as credits from the stakeholders that led to their instability and collapse. This scenario of untrustworthiness to cause negative impacts is also explained by Gambetta (1988) who pointed out that absence of trust leads to betrayal and defection, deception, exploitation, manipulation, deceit and conspiracy in any society. Luhman (1988) also supports the idea by pointing out that trust reduces complexity in social relations. Hence lack of trust among many YEGs members in KMC hampered IGGs to achieve their objectives of addressing perennial urban unemployment problem among the youth.

However, it is important to recognise that there were also some few cases of successful groups facilitated by the presence of trust among them. Mutual trust among group members improved their relations in undertaking IGAs.

This was possible for the groups whose members were keen with selection of their fellow members. YEGs which selected their members based on understanding their historical background, that is good record of trust facilitated good social relationships among themselves.

5.2 The Role of Networks

Networks provide face-to-face interactions and give chances to individuals in a particular society to be having among other things socio-economic relationship with fellows. These expose individuals to various opportunities and resources potential to address their problems. Networks as one form of structural social capital, in this article was applied due to its position to expose individuals to access training that provide entrepreneurship skills to the youth as well as acquire important and timely information that can help the groups access resources such as land and loans. The study in KMC revealed that YEG members who were belonging to groups such as Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOS) and Rotating Savings and Cooperatives Associations (ROSCAs) increased their chances to save money and lend credits at a relatively low and affordable rate of interest. The interest rates charged by SACCOS and ROSCAs were relatively lower than those charged by other financial institutions whose condition to borrow money was so strict. It should be remembered that normally the financial institutions are operated under business philosophy of gaining super normal profit. Nombo (2007) on his study about AIDS, poverty and implication of social capital, shows that belongingness or memberships to various groups help members to get money to cater for various needs. The study also found out that these social groups and networks are built on trust among group members which facilitate undertaking of collective action. To some extent the findings relates to that of Nombo (2007) on the value of social in forms of networks to benefit individuals to address their poverty problems. The difference is only on the aspect of health improvement which was not the focus of this paper.

According to Putnam (2000) network and membership cut across to various institutions such as clubs, associations and religious organisations. For him church is among these religious organizations which are incubator for civic skills, norms of community interest and that can help individuals, youth in particular to access and learn various social and economic skills. These are such as how to prepare and run meetings, be able to manage disagreements and undertaking administrative responsibilities as well as managing various income generation projects. Kuenzi (2008) also pointed out that religious organizations have significant impact on effectiveness of groups by helping members to become active participants and responsible community members. This also shows that cooperation among group and community members leads to effective utilization of the available resources, such as human and physical capital. These are important resources to facilitate achievement of groups' tasks. For instance when members share their physical resources and skills within the YEG and with other groups through networks of cooperation it becomes easy to meet their objects than groups which do not. In a nutshell sharing of experiences in terms of skills to perform certain tasks and physical resources such as machines with other groups gives advantages to YEGs to accomplish their income generation projects successfully.

In regard to networks of relationships the findings had shown that there were many YEGs in KMC whose members had multiple memberships of various clubs and political parties. In these networks some youths occupied leadership positions that enabled them to learn a number of issues which contributed to YEGs' performance. However, on contrary some evidence further revealed that such advantage has never been fully utilised to help the youths to access a number of opportunities, such as information and ideas potential to enhance the performance of the groups' activities to meet groups' stated objectives. Low level of education among most of YEGs members was pointed to be one of the main reasons that contribute to this situation. For instance, the data show that out of 82 respondents in YEGs, almost a half 37(45%) had received primary education, with only 20(24.4%) members who had attained secondary education, 12(14.6%) had technical education and only 6(7.3%) for certificate level. YEG members stated that the level of education and position one has to the group influence the level and extent of multiple memberships to various groups. Hence group leaders and those with a relatively higher level of education, in particular, secondary education, increased chances to have multiple memberships compared to those with primary level of education or none education at all. In the aspect of position it was because of the opportunities that leaders were given, such as representing their groups at various meetings and forums. Through these forums they were able to meet various people, including members of other groups. With regard to education status those with a higher level of education had a better chance of being exposed to various opportunities that existed in different organisations. Their knowledge and skills exposed them to have easy access to information to facilitate their IGAs. Flap (2004) attest to the findings by purporting that social network that an individual has is vital to facilitate achievement of his or her own set objectives. In that respect lower level of education among many YEG members reduced opportunities

to increase their social networks as they were not able to mingle in a variety of groups with people of a different calibre—colleagues, their tutors as well as officials from various institutions.

On contrary a few group members who established networks by various other groups in KMC stated that they were able to gain the advantages of such networks. This in turn provided them a lot of excellent experience that was shared by fellow group members. YEG members gained new ideas and experiences from other groups that were utilised to support the undertakings of IGGs' activities. To substantiate this point, one member from a FGD explained:

We believe that a number of the contributions given by group members are originating from their involvement in other groups. I believe that, in the past, when we were at the stage of forming our current constitution, every member realised the benefit of multiple membership. We made several changes to the constitution so as to improve it; all this was greatly facilitated by new ideas from participation in other groups. This has made a very positive contribution to strengthening our constitution and group performance which in turn enables us to sustain our group. (FGD, SNZ, P 05)

The above extract clearly shows that networks that were manifested in multiple memberships had a very significant contribution to the YEG found in KMC. Members obtain relevant and new ideas that helped to improve groups' tasks. For example the respondents mentioned that the access of opinions and advices from other groups facilitated a number of advantages such as skills on how to form rules, regulations and general governing group's undertakings. The findings are in line with what was propounded by Field (2008) who argues that networks provide a basis for social cohesion as enables individuals to cooperate with one another for mutual advantage. Further, Bourdieu (1986) also propounds that social capital includes resources accrued by individuals as a result of social networks whereby individuals benefit due to networks of relationships established with other people. Therefore, as noted from the outset, the level of multiple memberships of most YEG members due to few people with leadership positions and level of education limited opportunities to facilitate viable and sustainable IGGs in KMC. Further, low level of education among the majority of YEGs reduced the capacity of the groups to manage and carry out activities efficiently and effectively.

5.3 The Role of Civic Engagement

Another aspect that is discussed in this paper is civic engagement. According to Putnam (1993), civic participation enhances good governance through active participation of individuals in various institutions affecting their lives. The level of civic engagement can be measured in various dimensions. However, in this paper the level of civic engagement among youth in YEGs and those out of the groups was measured by assessing the rate at which youth have been engaged in public affairs, that is volunteering in community activities and attendance at public meetings. The rate at which youth volunteered and took part in community activities was assessed by their participation in various voluntary activities and the willingness shown by them to participate in other activities for the benefit of their communities as well as their future achievement as individuals, groups and community. It was important to consider this aspect because individuals who engage in public affairs are better volunteers, able to work in team work, and are likely to have altruism character. Such characters are very crucial to maintain solidarity and unity among group members to attain their intended objectives. As argued by Putnam 'those who engage in and belong to formal and informal social networks are more likely to give their time and money to good causes than those who are isolated socially' (Putnam, 2000).

It was noted that that groups that were formed by individuals who were active participants in public affairs in KMC gained a number of long term benefits than the isolated ones. For instance, through meeting with various people in such public occasions youth said that they were able to exchange ideas and learned characters that were important for strengthening teamwork and solidarity among group members to improve multiple ways to undertake other activities. Group members' cohesion also increased opportunities to create long-term projects rather than focusing on short-term ones with minimal benefits. In turn low benefits in group activities lead to despair among members and disruption of the future and survival of the groups.

Community members' engagement in voluntary activities contributed in influencing and moulding the behaviour of most YEG members towards acquiring a spirit of altruism, teamwork and solidarity in undertaking group works. This was evident through youth taking part in various activities and community projects for the benefit of the group and society in general. It was also noted that YEG members who were very cooperative in undertaking voluntary activities in their respective areas had both directly and indirect benefits in terms of meeting groups' objectives. It was found that frequent volunteering groups were given greater recognition and first priority in

terms of the number of opportunities that became available, such as involvement in projects undertaken by the municipality or various other stakeholders that increased the income level of the groups compared to other groups. This assisted to a large extent in accessing various opportunities for IGAs as well as skills and experiences that contributes in improving the day-to-day performance of the groups. Hence, this contributed to make their groups more stable and viable income generation units.

A number of examples explain how YEG members benefited due to their groups' involvement in both voluntary and compulsory community activities. For instance, YEGs that participated in theatrical performances which were done voluntarily to persuade other community members to take active part in various other public functions and projects benefited after their works being recognised. During various other private and government functions these groups were re-invited and paid for their service of performance which helped members to gain income to sustain their living. In other occasions the YEGs were requested to facilitate various projects, such reproductive health education to their fellow youth. Participation in such activities contributes to the development of a positive self-image, essential social skills and values such as team work and tolerance (UN, 2005). One respondent from active YEG, during FGD had this to say when explaining how they used to take part in such community activities voluntarily:

We are used to volunteering several times for activities that are concerned with the cleaning of our environment and others. For instance, last time our group volunteered for the activity of planting trees surrounding Mabibo Dispensary. Apart from that recently a special operation was mobilised by Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner for cleaning Dar es Salaam City. Tools to undertake the exercise were provided by KMC. Actually our group and others other groups, that participated were not paid anything, we just volunteered, and after we had finished the work we returned the implements. (MBO FGD P03)

As it can be seen from the quotation above there were YEGs in KMC which participate in voluntary activities. Some youths, through their groups, have been responding very positively to undertaking various community projects. For instance, it was reported by the Community Development Officer (CDO) in the municipality that there are youths who through their groups participated in a number of voluntary activities. A good example was provided, it explained about YEGs participation was in the Malaria Programme. It was implemented in most parts of Dar es Salaam region. Youths actively participated, cleaning the sewage systems around their areas and many other activities.

Another aspect to unveil the role of civic engagement is participation in public meetings. The focus in this aspect was to examine whether or not YEG members have had a custom of attending public meetings and to what extent it was nurtured by various stakeholders. The assumption being that in such places, a number of issues are raised and discussed and decisions that affect the whole community including YEGs are taken. Such meetings provide, a good forum for youth to take part in the decision-making process and gain information that is important for their development, such as access to various available resources and opportunities to the groups so that they can undertake their activities more efficiently and effectively. The findings had shown that YEGs whose members were active participants in meetings were exposed to various decision-making processes, gained various benefits such as improved leadership skills and experiences that enabled them to acquire better leadership traits. Involvement of youth in decision making also benefited YEGs and made them access timely and relevant information to support their course. In addition to the above such meetings helped youths to gain access to information of various opportunities when they met with different people and developed relationships with them. Hence, such meetings exposed youth, YEG members in particular to many helpful ideas on different issues for their personal development as well as for the promotion of the groups' interests.

However, despite youth attendance and participation in some areas, the findings also show that in some wards the situation has been very different. There were many youth who were not attending the meetings. For instance, during the interviews with the staff at the municipal and ward level some evidence was provided to show lack of active participation by most youth. The below quotation from YDO in KMC substantiate:

... normally youth engagement in the meetings depends on the agenda set, since in most urban areas it is not a normal thing for youths to attend public meetings that do not directly seem to have any direct benefit for them. (KMC, YDO, 01)

The statement above shows that challenges that stakeholders face to support youth fail to improve undertakings of their IGAs due to failure to attend public meetings. This statement concurs with World Youth Report of 2005

that says: 'youth participation today tends to be issue specific and service oriented. Many young people today are increasingly reluctant to participate in public issues, but instead they prefer to take advantage of open opportunities created by communities and institutions for issues that concern them' (UN, 2005). The response above further portrays the reality on the ground regarding the variation of experiences that youths face due to their absence in meetings. It also points out the challenges that various stakeholders face in their efforts to address the unemployment problem. In particular, unemployment among the youth living in urban areas such as ensuring that all targeted youth are reached with up-to-date and timely information.

Further, lack of civic engagement among the YEG members also hindered their sustainability. It was noted that groups whose members were not active participants in various community activities missed a number of advantages that other—active participants groups—acquired. The advantages have been in form of opportunities for accessing paid works to groups that have gained good reputation from their past voluntary works, information concerning various opportunities available at their respective communities. Other benefits may include skills and experience gained in undertaking various community works as well as new ideas accessed from other groups on how to undertake and manage group activities both effectively and efficiently.

6. Conclusion

This paper has clearly demonstrated that despite the importance of social capital to facilitate creation viable and sustainable YEGs by some members, its role has been to a large extent neglected by both youth and various development stakeholders. The papers shows that in situation where YEG members had relatively higher level of social capital in form of trust, networks and civic engagement, their respective group accessed several opportunities such as timely information regarding available opportunities to improve efficacy and effective performance of IGAs. The opportunities were such as physical, human and financial capital. This in turn enabled youth to make their IGGs more successful in undertaking their activities and meet groups' objectives, hence, creating and sustaining viable YEGs. On contrary, presence of mushrooming weak YEGs in KMC was precipitated by inefficiency if not a total lack and neglect of some forms of social capital to support IGAs undertaken by youth in KMC. Hence, given the value of social capital to facilitate development, it resulted into failure of many YEGs in KMC to meet the objectives of their establishment. The findings suggest that if government, non-state actors train, emphasise and constantly remind youth about the role of social capital to select potential members it would prevent a number of negative behaviour that hampers strength and viability of YEGs towards addressing their unemployment problem. This article advocate all development stakeholders to strive for setting appropriate mechanisms that will help to nurture and sustain social capital among youth. These include but not limited to creating various forms for youth to increase beneficial networks and emphasis the role of trust to select potential fellow youth to work. By doing so YEG members will work amicably and effectively hence crate viable and sustainable IGGs to address the perennial urban youth unemployment in Tanzania.

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