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Examining the Role of Youth Empowerment in Community Development in Koboko District: A Case Study of Koboko Town Council

The ultimate resource of any community is its people and so are the youth who are a beacon of hope for the future of any society. This study was based on examining the role of youth empowerment in community development in Koboko town council, Koboko district. The objectives were to: (1) determine the value of youth participation in decision making in schools, local government and the community, (2) determine the role that schools and local governments play with regard to programmes designed to enhance youth entrepreneurship development, and (3) to establish the importance of youth involvement in voluntary activities in the community. Data collection involved the use of both primary and secondary methods with instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, focused group discussions, observation and documentary reviews. Data was largely analysed qualitatively according to the study objectives and presented in themes while quantifiable data obtained from the field is statistically presented using tables, percentages and figures. The key findings reveal that youth participation in decision making is valued in the schools, Local Government (LG) and community but the extent to which youth are actively involved is invariably limited by the dominance of adults and also by unfavourable policies. Students are not actively involved in the PTA and BOG except on rare occasions while in the Town council, youth are represented by two youth councillors whose effectiveness is constrained by many challenges. Enhancement of youth entrepreneurship development by schools is more theoretical and many students who study entrepreneurship do so to pass examinations with diminutive prospects at business as a future career. Youth as a category in Koboko Town Council (KTC) have a minimal budget allocation subsumed under the community development department which renders difficult the implementation of many planned youth activities including entrepreneurship development while adult-youth business mentorship programmes in the community are rare. Involvement of youth in voluntary activities was reported as important but youth attitude toward volunteerism was found negative. Schools were found not to have deliberate voluntary outreach programmes to engage students in community service. Whereas there is progress being made in improving youth participation in decision making, enhancement of youth entrepreneurship development and involvement in voluntary activities in the community is still underdeveloped. This condition calls for more concerted efforts by schools, parents, communities, LG, central government, the private sector and the youth themselves to tap into the potential of young people. Youth unemployment, poverty and HIV/AIDS were found to be among the main challenges facing the youth in KTC. Youth are vital resources; better policies can be designed to nurture, involve, support, and inspire them to act in positive ways to make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of others in the community. Such policies could help create opportunities and possibilities for the youth to meaningfully participate in community development efforts now and in the future.

Keywords: Community Development, Youth Empowerment, Koboko Town Council