

# Effects of Youth Empowerment on Community Development in Rwanda - A Case Study of Nyamasheke District

Ntihinyurwa Philippe<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Patrick Mulyungi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

**Abstract:** *The dominant goal of the youth sector in Rwanda is to support growth, competitiveness and to facilitate youth to contribute to the country's medium term objectives as outlined in the Vision 2020. For this noble target to be achieved, there is a need for youth to be empowered by reinforcing their capacity, participation, inclusion and collaboration in all aspects of the development of Rwanda. However, the challenge remains, youth are not fully involved in the processes of community development, they are poor and the majority of them live in conditions that still need to be improved. The main objective of this study is to assess the contribution of youth empowerment in the process of community development in Rwanda more especially in Nyamasheke district. The specific objectives of this study will be to find out how capacity building among youth increase small businesses in community development; to determine the effect of the youth social integration in increasing youth creativity toward Community Development as well as to examine the influence of capital availability in involving youth in decision-making towards community development. This research is very significant to various categories of people (researchers, Youth as well as local authorities). It will equip the researchers with techniques for problem identification and solving. It will be an instrument for implementation processes, performance and need analysis to youth in particular and to the whole community in general. This study will inspire the youth as well as the local authorities to the transformation of the current youth vulnerable jobs into productive remunerative jobs. It is very relevant as the youth represent a big part of our society, it is necessary to view them not only as the tomorrow's leaders but also as main actors and beneficiaries of the today's society. The study used descriptive research design by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The sample size was determined from the population using the formula developed by Yamane in 1967. Thus, the sample size of this study was made of 99 young people representing 12806 youth population of Kilimbi Sector in Nyamasheke District. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to support empirical findings for this research in Nyamasheke District and the data was finally analyzed. To ensure validity and reliability of the content, a pilot study was conducted where the researcher first tested 15 main respondents from key stakeholder.*

**Keywords:** Youth empowerment, Community Development

## 1. Introduction

Youth empowerment has been defined as that which encompasses attitudes, structures, and cultural process where the youth obtain abilities, authorities, as well as the avenue to independently make and implement choices that affect self as well as other people lives (Sazama and Young, 2006). Africa has a demographic boom of young people who not only need to be economically empowered but also to participate in the community development as World Bank (2010) report that about 50 percent of the developing world population is youths estimated at about 1.2 billion of age between 15 and 24 years. These statistics indicate that youths constitute a serious development opportunity as well as a challenge particularly in developing countries. The imperative of youth participation in community development programs considering their numerical strength is an unlimited window in which a larger and younger workforce who can drive economic development faster and play a significant role in national security, leadership and social development of their communities can be enhanced.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Development scholars have been emphasized on advocating on youth participation in community development as Arnot, M., & Swartz, S. G. (2013) suggested that Youth participation also helps young people to transition into adulthood and take on societal development issues at an early age. Lührmann, A. (2013) added that youth

participation enables youth to show their expertise and contribute to a democratic society whilst exercising their right. And (Checkoway, B., & Aldana, A. (2013) Emphasized that it is also an opportunity for self-development as well as knowledge and skills transfer amongst youth. However, Juris and Pleyers (2009) insisted that the personalization discourse broke down old binaries but it seems to be introducing a new binary to understand involvement: novel-traditional. However, existing evidence in several contexts shows that far from being that clear, processes of youth involvement are more complex and incorporate aspects of different traditions. In other word, (Hedayat Allah Nikkhhah, 2009) show empowerment as it is a process of change by which individuals or groups with little or no power gain the power and ability to make choices that affect their lives.

The Country has implemented a series of programmes derived from the National Youth Policy since 2006. Most of these programs mainly focused on Youth participation, mobilization and social welfare due to the challenges of the time. Effective entrepreneurship and business development is considered as one of the key strategies for creation of off-farm jobs. However, Youth are facing challenges in their struggles to penetrate the sector. According to Rwanda SME Survey 2013, 31.3% of Youth face challenges related to access to finance mainly due to lack of collateral. On the other hand, 27.8% face challenges related to procedures and lack of managerial experience to run their enterprises and thus questioning profitability. Other challenges involved, on

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one hand, include high interest rates in order to access loans and on the other hand poor or unbankable business plans. Lack of competitiveness, innovation, access and use of information technology are still challenges that need critical attention (GoR, 2015). As Wood and Hine (2009) note, young people therefore need to be engaged by adults as partners in their own development and in their development of their communities. Active efforts by adults to involve youth in decisions relating to their own natural environment and neighborhoods may help foster youth civic engagement, which consequently enhances community connection Brennan et al (2009). Affecting change at a systemic level is an incremental process, which requires time, knowledge and commitment. To that end, building on the passions of youth by engaging them in successful social change efforts and equipping them with advocacy skills can create a generation of potentially enlightened policy makers and social change advocates, Thackery & Hunter, (2010). DFID (2010) stresses that if activities are shaped to meet communities' needs, including the needs of children and youth, they will be more likely to lead to effective development.

Based on the above-mentioned scholar's articles and literature review, there are still limited studies on youth empowerment and community development in Rwanda. The existing study will focus on evaluating economic activities that youth are involved in and its contribution to their empowerment to reduce poverty in the community. This study will take into account youth empowerment and community development, it will focus on the contribution of capacity building, Social integration and capital availability as youth empowerment tools to achieve economic development of the country more especially in Nyamasheke district.

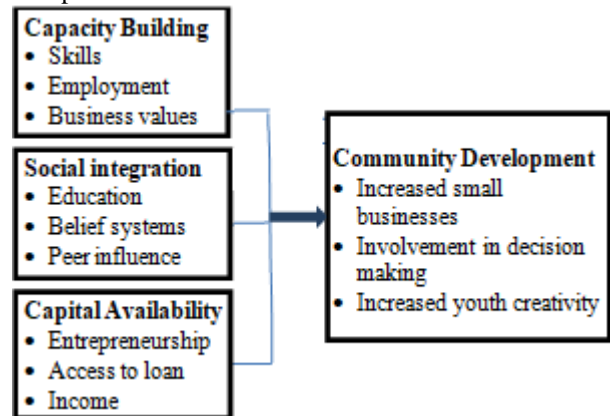
### 3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to assess the contribution of youth empowerment in the process of community development in Rwanda more especially in Nyamasheke district. Its specific objectives are:

- 1) To find out how capacity building among youth increase small businesses in community development;
- 2) To determine the effect of the youth social integration in increasing youth creativity toward Community Development.
- 3) To examine the influence of capital availability in involving youth in decision-making towards community development.

### 4. Conceptual Framework

Development Initiatives in Rwanda



### 5. Research Methodology

- **Research Design:** To enrich the research findings, this research included both qualitative and quantitative methods and this leading the researcher to use a Descriptive Research design
- **Target Population:** The targeted population for this study comprised of 12806 young people of Kirimbi sector
- **Sample Size:** The sample size of this study was made by 99 (ninety-nine) young people representing 12806 youth population of Kirimbi sector in Nyamasheke District.
- **Data collection instruments:** After the approval of the research proposal, the researcher proceeded to the authorities of Nyamashe district. After the permission is given, the researcher with his team initiated the research respondent accordingly on the objectives of the research and guaranteed them of confidentiality. The questionnaire was managed by the research team to avoid false interpretation of questions.
- **Data processing and analysis:** The data collected from field was coded before entrance and conversion into soft data. Excel sheets, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 software was used to convert data from hard to soft data and this helped in the creation of database for storing and management of the data. After data proceeded, they were analyzed also with SPSS. Descriptive Statistics have been used; frequencies and percentages was provided where data presented in tables.

### 6. Summary of Research Findings

**Table 1:** Influence of the capacity building on youth empowerment and community development in Nyamasheke district

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The current education system in Rwanda is playing a major role in promoting youth empowerment and community development	40	40	29	29	18	18	9	9	3	4
Vocational Training education is useful to increase youth empowerment and community development	18	18	44	44	24	25	10	10	3	3
Quality of youth community initiatives can contribute to fight unemployment	26	26	39	39	15	15	12	12	7	8
Youth entrepreneurship and creativity can be improved through empowerment	47	47	25	25	13	13	5	6	9	9
Skilled youth participate actively in community development to increase business value	31	31	42	42	18	18	4	5	4	4
Educated youth are better empowered to make decisions in community development	47	47	33	33	5	6	7	8	7	6

As shown by the above table respondents were asked if the current education system in Rwanda is playing a major role in promoting youth empowerment and community development. The current education system in Rwanda is playing a major role in promoting youth empowerment and community development 40% Strongly agree that the current education system in Rwanda is playing a major role in promoting youth empowerment and community development initiatives. Also 29% agreed while 9% disagreed and 4 % disagreed. Respondents were also asked if Vocational Training education is useful to increase youth empowerment and community development 18% strongly agreed and 44% agreed while 10% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed that vocational training education is useful to increase youth empowerment and community development. Further the study asked if Quality of youth community initiatives can contribute to fight unemployment, majority 39% agreed and 26% strongly agreed while 12% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed that Quality of youth community initiatives can contribute to fight unemployment. Respondents were asked if Skilled youth participate actively in community development to increase business value, 31% strongly agreed, 42 % agreed while 5% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. A big number of respondents also strongly agreed 47% and 33% agreed that Educated youth are better empowered to make decisions in community development. The findings also show that 47% of respondents strongly agreed with statement that Youth entrepreneurship and creativity can be improved through empowerment while another 25% agreed, 9 % Strongly disagreed and 6% disagreed.

As the data revealed majority of the respondents agreed that capacity building of the youth has strong relation with their empowerment in community development. The data supported Carter, (2000) who indicated that insufficient education and training for youth was an impediment of participation in community based activities.

A key informant interview conducted by the researcher also demonstrated that 84% % of the key informants indicated that there is strong relationship between youth empowerment and their capacity building. This also agrees with Salto-Youth, (2012). The educational methods of youth work place particular emphasis on the centrality of the learner and the voluntary nature of participation

**6.2 The influence of Social integration on youth empowerment and Community Development in Nyamasheke district**

**Table 2:** The influence of social integration on youth empowerment and Community Development

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Peer influence encourages youth empowerment and community development	29	29	38	38	20	20	9	9	3	4
Education influences youth empowerment and community development	16	16	50	50	24	25	6	6	3	3
Youth empowerment helps to increase youth entrepreneurship and creativity.	36	36	40	40	5	5	10	10	8	9

Belief systems and advocacy increase youth empowerment in decision making	45	45	35	35	5	6	7	8	7	6
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As indicated by the results of table above majority 38 % agreed and 29% strongly agreed the statement that Peer influence encourages youth empowerment and community development while on 9 % disagreed and 4 % strongly disagreed the statement. Further the findings of the study shown that 16 % of the respondents strongly agreed and 50 % agreed that Education influences youth empowerment and community development while 6 % disagreed. Respondents were also asked if youth empowerment helps to increase youth entrepreneurship and creativity, 36 % and 40% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that Youth empowerment helps to increase youth entrepreneurship and creativity. while only 10% and 9% disagreed and strongly disagreed the statement. Further the study indicated that majority 45 % strongly agreed that belief systems and advocacy increase youth empowerment in decision making and only 8% and 6% disagreed and strongly disagreed the statement.

**6.3 Influence of capital availability on youth empowerment and community development in Nyamasheke district**

**Table 3:** Influence of capital availability on youth empowerment and community development

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Entrepreneurship influences youth empowerment to increase small businesses	49	49	29	29	10	10	9	9	3	3
Access to loan increases youth empowerment and community development	18	18	48	48	24	25	4	4	5	5
Income helps to strengthen youth empowerment effectively	47	47	35	35	2	2	5	6	10	10

As indicated by the above table, respondents were asked if entrepreneurship influences youth empowerment to increase small businesses, majority 49 % strongly agreed and 29 % agreed respectively that Entrepreneurship influences youth empowerment to increase small businesses only 9 % disagreed and 3 % strongly disagreed the statement respectively. The researcher asked the respondents if Access to loan increases youth empowerment and community development, also majority of respondents 18 % and 48 % agreed, while 4 % and 5 % disagreed. The study further proved that majority of the respondents 47% and 35 % agreed and strongly agreed with statement that Income helps to strengthen youth empowerment effectively while only 6% and 10% disagreed and strongly disagreed that the Income helps to strengthen youth empowerment effectively. This implies that capital availability has positive influence on the youth empowerment and community development. The key informant interview led by the researcher also indicated that capital availability is one of the key pillar the can govern youth empowerment and community development. The key informants also explained that that the Rwandan communities used to support this empowerment long through different community activities.

**Table 4:** The role played by youth in the process of community development in Kilimbi sector

The role played by youth in the process of community development in Kilimbi sector	Frequency	Percentage
Skills development	12	12.1
Entertainment and/or Social welfare	3	3
Entrepreneurship and job creation	18	18.2
Community works	58	58.6
Sensitization and community mobilization	4	4
Modern farming	3	3
Other	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that a large number of youth of Kilimbi sector (58.6%) play their role in the process of community development through the community works known as *Umuganda*. This is compulsory to any citizen. Only 18.2% of youth of Kilimbi sector are contributing to the community development through entrepreneurship and job creation. From these data we can deduct that a big number of youth are not using all their potentialities and strength to the community development. There is a strong need to make them understand that entrepreneurship and job creation is one of the best ways to boost the community development as it is stated in EDPRS II.

**Table 5:** The Government intervention for youth empowerment

The Government intervention	Frequency	Percentage
Public awareness	32	<b>32.3</b>
Supporting youth initiatives	29	<b>29.3</b>
Initiating project for youth empowerment	5	<b>5.1</b>
Paying scholarship for youth	13	<b>13.1</b>
Other	20	<b>20.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary data

The table 5 shows that a big number of youth of Kilimbi sector (32.3%) think that the government intervention for youth empowerment is limited on public awareness. 29.3% are those who agree that the Government supports youth initiatives while 13.1% agree that the government intervene in promoting youth empowerment by paying scholarship for youth. Only 5.1% of Kilimbi youth agree that the government initiates projects for youth empowerment. This shows clearly that the big number of youth is not aware of the government interventions for the promotion of youth empowerment.

**Table 6:** The type of Government intervention for youth empowerment

The type of Government intervention for youth empowerment	Frequency	Percentage
Skills development	13	13.1
Access to capital through guarantee facility	17	17.2
Access to capital through coaching in preparation of bankable project	26	26.3
Providing start-up toolkits	14	14.1
None	29	29.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the data in the table 6 the big number of youth (29.3%) are getting none support from the government. This needs a particular attention on the side of Government official in order to know why. They are not aware of any of the government program meant to help youth to get empowered. This might be a big problem to the community development. During the interview with researcher 26.3% of youth of Kilimbi accept being aware of the government support to youth through coaching in preparation of bankable project are aware of grant than guarantee in order to access to capital. To promote youth empowerment, the government has initiated a number of interventions, but as stated in the table 4.3 the beneficiaries are not aware. There is a strong need to enhance the awareness of those initiatives among youth.

**Table 7:** Challenges that youth face to enhance their empowerment in Community Development

Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Lack of Financial Support	27	32
Lack of professional Skills	20	23
Lack of information accessibility	17	20
Lack of creativity and entrepreneurial skills	10	12
Social support	8	9
Other	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Analysis of the challenges faced by the youth to participate in the community development initiatives indicated that (27)32% of respondents indicated that lack of financial support is one most challenging difficulties faced by the youth, (20)23% of the respondents also stated lack of professional skills, another (17)20% of the respondents stated that lack of information accessibility is a challenge for the youth empowerment and community development. (10)12% of respondents replied that lack of creativity and entrepreneurial skills is a hindrance for the youth empowerment and community activities. The results also indicated that (8)9% of the youth belief that lack of social motivation is among the challenges while the rest (3)5% rated as there are other challenges.

**Table 8:** Insight on Youth empowerment and community development

Insight	Frequency	Percent
Youth empowerment increases youth income	26	30
Youth empowerment is essential for Community Development	21	25
Youth empowerment increase youth creativity and entrepreneurship	17	20
Youth empowerment increase youth potentials in decision making	13	15
Youth involvement is not necessary for the community development	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings indicate that (26)30% of the respondents think that youth empowerment increase youth income, another 21(25%) also proved that youth empowerment is essential for community development. The study also discovered 17(20%) that youth empowerment increases youth creativity and entrepreneurship. 13(15%) proved that youth empowerment is necessary for youth involvement in

decision making while 8(10%) do not considered youth empowerment as necessary for community development.

**Table 9:** Things should government consider

Things should government consider	Frequency	Percent
To provide financial support to the young entrepreneurs to increase small businesses	25	25
To support youth creativity	23	23
To create job Opportunities	21	21
To provide professional skills	12	12
To involve youth in decision making	8	8
To provide vocational skills	5	5
Taking advocacy campaigns against youth discrimination	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the respondents (25)25% proved that providing financial support to the young entrepreneurs to increase small businesses is necessary to increase youth empowerment in community development versus (23) 23% who emphasized on supporting youth creativity, (21)21% stated that creating job opportunities while 21(21) % selected to provide professional skills to the youth to increase their participation. 5(5%) of respondents also indicated that providing vocational skills is vital for youth empowerment and the left (5)5% indicated that taking advocacy campaigns against youth discrimination is a solution for youth inclusion in community development activities.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1 Conclusions

The study assessed three main variables that influence youth empowerment and community development in Rwanda; capacity building, social integration, and capital availability.

Over the last two decades, the Government of Rwanda has made remarkable progress in recognizing and giving high priority to Capacity Building as one of the key ingredients in the country's development process. This momentum underpins the country's development aspirations enshrined in the MDGs; Vision 2020; Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and Seven Year Government Plan

According to the research findings on the influence of capacity building on youth empowerment and community development in Rwanda conclusion were made that current capacity building system in Rwanda is promoting youth empowerment and community development and that educated youth are better empowered to make decisions in community development also increased the number of unemployed youth in Rwanda. (UNDP, 2015), every country should promote the wellbeing and capabilities of all their citizens, enabling all citizens to reach their potential, irrespective of class, gender, ethnic origin, religion, or race. Every country should monitor the wellbeing of its citizenry with improved measurements and reporting of life satisfaction. Special attention should be given to early childhood, youth, and elderly people, addressing the vulnerabilities and needs of each age cohort.

(RoR, 2013), The unemployment rate among young person's 16 to 30 years old was 21.0 percent. The survey showed an increasing pattern of youth unemployment rate from about 16.6 percent for young people with no educational attainment to 35.3 percent for youth with secondary education with a slight decline to 27.7 percent among youth who completed university education. The findings also revealed the need for increased vocational training education, youth entrepreneurship, creativity, and the quality of youth community initiatives through education. Over the last two decades, the Government of Rwanda has made remarkable progress in recognizing and giving high priority to Capacity Building as one of the key ingredients in the country's development process. This momentum underpins the country's development aspirations enshrined in the MDGs; Vision 2020; Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and Seven Year Government Plan Social integration was found to influence youth empowerment and community development in Nyamasheke district, where peer influence encourages youth empowerment and community development and contribute to the success of other linked indicators such as entrepreneurship, creativity, decision making and other related opportunities that help to increase youth empowerment and community development in Rwanda.

### 7.2 Recommendations

The government in partnership with other stakeholders should focus on providing financial support to young entrepreneurs to increase youth empowerment and community development. The government in partnership with other stakeholders should also help to create job opportunity and provide professional skills to increase youth entrepreneurship and creativity

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