



CONCEPT NOTE

YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM - YEEP

Introduction

Youth in Kiribati represents 29.4% of the entire population and the bulk of this population group is concentrated on South Tarawa where youth socio-economic problems are higher and becoming major development challenges facing the people and Government of Kiribati.

As a small nation with a young population the population growth of 2.3% presents a scenario that the youth population will continue to grow and will put more demand on the Government system to provide their means of survival and living. This will become one of the challenging tasks for the Government and provide strong basis for innovative and sustainable intervention which could enhance youth level of resilience, sustenance and self-reliance and motivation to become productive and socio-economically active citizens of Kiribati. There are academically-based researches and has been becoming an internationally known political rhetoric the point that population or the human resources are the main important national capital to attain national development. However these human resources can become national capital if they have values which can contribute to economic growth. Meaning they have to be economically active and productive. If they are not contributing to national development but rather exist as burden to the Government – then the size and natural growth of our population need to be well managed.

Given our demographic situation and the policy definition of youth age in Kiribati (which is from 10 to 24 years) – the socio-economic wellbeing of the youth is a significant indicator for the national economic growth, the youth unemployment rate for instance.

As a small economy with the dominant role of the Government to regulate and facilitate the delivery of essential services to the general public, the MWYSSA through its mandate to coordinate national development program for youths, commits to put in place its long-term intervention known as the Youth Economic Empowerment. This economic empowerment program for youth is a long term strategy of the Government to address socio-economic issues and challenges facing our youth.

Rationale and Context

Given the fact that the youth population (years from 10 – 24) is the largest group in size of the entire population, the Government should have a dedicated and focussed approach to deal with current and possible future youth issues and problems. On the other hand, Government should also be able to take advantage of this situation where

the youth population size is the largest of the entire population of Kiribati by investing in youth development programs including the youth economic empowerment.

Currently, the national unemployment rate still stands at 30.6% which is considerably high. The youth unemployment accounts for 54% of this national unemployment rate. This rate is quite alarming especially for the youth as this is likely to be further increased in the next census 2020 given the prevailing rate over the of population natural growth over the past 5 years. Ironically, the rate of employment opportunities created does not match it. Even the Government as being the main employer and source of employment opportunities has already reached the maximal level where it can create employment opportunities and it can only do it incrementally every year. Even the growth of the private sector to complement the Government effort to meet and off-set youth demand for employment is also not adequate and is somewhat stagnant.

The KV-20 pillar on wealth sets a very ambitious target where by in the year 2036, our population especially the Youth will be highly educated and skilled so Kiribati can become a wealthy, peaceful and secured nation.

In light of the KV-20 objective – the youth population forms part of the Human Capital under its Pillar on wealth justifying the importance of our youth population for achieving this long term commitment and vision. This long term commitment requires an intervention such as the youth skill-based economic empowerment program whereby the youth skill base needs to be developed in a way that would enhance their resilience against impact of climate change, prepare them with developmental-based skills which would allow them to adaptive and useful in supporting any Government's development activities and economic projects. Last but not least, it will provide the youth with relevant skills which could enable them to migrate with dignity to other countries be able to contribute to such foreign countries.

Importantly, the youth to become skilled and socio-economically productive – they need to go through skill-based training program, therefore this YEEP intends to deliver a more skill-focussed programs which enable them to engage in variety of economic activities.

Objectives of the YEEP:

Broader Objectives include the following:

- To strengthen the capabilities of I-Kiribati youths to become socio-economically productive citizens of Kiribati; and
- To enable I-Kiribati youth population to contribute to the attainment of the KV-20 objectives – especially having highly-educated and skilled population by the year 2036.

Specific Objectives:

- To prepare youth with Life-skills so they can cope with impact of climate change affecting the environment and economy;

- To prepare our youths with skills which could enable them to work on any Government project which require economic-based skills; and
- To prepare our youths with the essential and special skills which could enable them to migrate overseas and/or secure their employment outside Kiribati

Desired Outcomes:

- Having in place a long-term Youth Economic Program with feasible funding options;
- Partnership is strengthened between MWYSSA and its development partners on this important undertaking – empowering the youths economically to become worthwhile citizens of Kiribati;
- Ensure that youths are asset/human capital and not liabilities which could contribute positively to national development aspirations.

Implementation of YEPP:

Given the fact the Government which still dominates and fitting to take a leading role in this important national long-term undertaking, the YEPP would be implemented into 3 main levels of commitment and phased out accordingly:

Level and Phase 1 – The Government led – Youth Economic Empowerment Program:

This level of commitment is to be implemented within the 10 year timeframe but the following programs need to be implemented within the 4 years 2019 – 2022 which will focus on the outputs as listed below:

- Financial incentive for youth economic activities; and
- Life-skill based youth economic activities; and
- Policy-based youth economic activities.

This component and level 1 essentially requires the Government real commitment and investment in terms of financial and technical resources to ensure that the 3 areas of activities are fully covered and implemented. Each of this component would be developed in the form of project proposals which will determine the level of funding required, the implementation strategy and timeline involved. However as appended below, it basically shows how such component would achieve the above and aforementioned objectives of this undertaking YEPP.

Level and Phase 2 – Combination of Government and Community Based Approach intervention:

This is the second level where the Government will be able to fully engage the communities in addressing the youth challenges. This may involve greater partnership and collaboration between the Government and local communities at all levels. This

is indeed based on the recognition of the communities' engagement to sustain the phase 1 intervention.

Though this is called the phase 2 component it would also be part of phase 2 where engagement of the communities would already be commenced from phase 1. The outputs to be delivered in this phase are mainly:

- Empowerment of Kiribati communities to ensure their youths are becoming productive members of communities;
- Enhancing Kiribati local communities resilience against climate change through empowering youths

Level 3 or phase 3: Whole of Kiribati approach to address youth social problems:

This is deemed to be the most important phase where all Government agencies, local communities and members of civil society and business community are working together to ensure that the youths are empowered through integrated and coordinated activities.

This in totality requires the full paradigm shift in the development practice in Kiribati. It may involve the pooling and sharing of all resources available within the economy of Kiribati to ensure that youths are contributing one way or another to national development. Since the youth problems are complex and multi-faced, the solution can be found in a multi-sectoral approach which involves the Government, NGO and Business communities and all local communities. The expected outputs are as follow:

- Youths issues are mainstreamed in all sectors;
- Youth problems are addressed at the national level; and
- Youth interventions are delivered through the Whole of Government approach.

Financing Strategy:

Similar to other social issues – youth problems need enough resources in order to be addressed adequately. The Government should also take the lead in this regard and be able to invest considerably in this issue. Given the nature of the youth problems which demands a long-term and consistent investment of financial resources – the Government should be able to innovatively fund the necessary intervention programs. This innovative financing may involve a consistent, incremental and mainstreaming funding. This may not require a substantial amount of fund but at least the intervention are continuing and impact are widespread across all sectors.

Ways-Forward:

In order to achieve this national goal – provision of Youth Economic Empowerment Program – YEPP needs a long-term commitment, partnership and investment from all relevant national bodies and sectors and also development partners. The failure to come up with appropriate and effective economic empowerment program for youth now, will result in much higher financial and economic costs to the government and

people of Kiribati. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the ways-forward presented below are adopted:

- Strengthening partnership between the Government, NGOs/Business communities and Development partners – through some agreed declaration and/or memorandum of understanding;
- The Government should be able to demonstrate its important role in taking the lead on most needed interventions; and
- Youth Economic Empowerment Goal should be placed in the heart of the national development process.