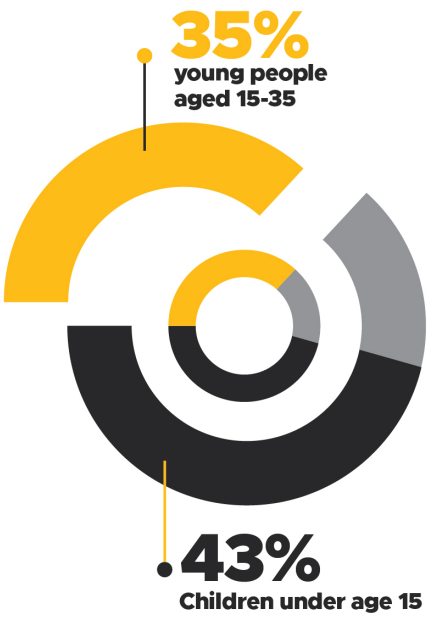
State of Youth Sector in Kenya 2025

By The Youth Congress

Their sheer numbers have made youth the centrepiece of national policy discussions. In Kenya, young people aged 15-35 constitute 35% of the population, while children under age 15 make up another 43% (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2025).



With the largest youth population in history, the country has the greatest opportunity in history, because, with each young person, we have new ideas and new energy. There is need to create enabling environment for young people to play a pivotal role in shaping the country's progress - review the place of young people in the country by putting in place practical actions to improve their position and condition. In particular, there is need to ensure implementation of Article 55 of the Constitution and national youth policy and strengthen National Youth Council, to carry out its mandate.

The country enacted a progressive constitution in August 2010. Youth, by their huge numbers, overwhelmingly endorsed the document in a historic referendum that year. This was a clear explanation that the new constitution was seen as a new dawn in promoting dignity and fundamental human rights of all Kenyans.

With the hope and promises that the new constitutions gives, this huge support was a clear indication that young people were discontented with the manner in which Kenya had over the years organized its body politics.

For example, the new Constitution under Article 55 provides that the State shall take measures, including affirmative action to ensure that the youth have access to relevant education and training; are accorded an opportunity to be represented and participate in political, social and other spheres of life; have access to employment and are protected from harmful cultural practices and exploitation.

In order to realize the aspirations envisioned under the Constitution, the State was supposed to create an enabling environment and formulate effective policies that will support the implementation and sustainability of youth initiatives.

But the new constitution is not a panacea for youth development. Although a raft of fundamental reforms have been instituted since the promulgation of the Constitution, there is still a lot that needs to be done to protect and realize the full gains created by the new Constitution.

Last year, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy, and Sports in Kenya developed a draft Youth Bill, 2024, aimed at advancing youth development, participation, and empowerment. The State Department for Youth Affairs and Creative Economy (SDYACE) invited public participation and comments on the draft bill.

Another important development in the country was the unveiling of the National Youth Development Policy (2019), setting off the journey of its implementation to transform the lives of our young people for generations to come. The policy forms a credible guide and reference tool for effective development and implementation of youth empowerment and development interventions in Kenya, in line with the Constitution and development goals at the county, national and international levels.

The framework offers clear mechanisms of implementation, coordination at national, county and sub-county levels, down to youth at the grass roots— a component that has been missing in the past. The policy emphasizes the need for strong partnership and coordination among different actors including, government at both county and national levels, non-governmental organisations, youth serving organizations, private sector, development partners among others.

However, government is yet to establish a National Steering Inter-Agency Committee on the implementation of the policy – the committee is important for effective implementation of the policy.

The other gap is failure to conduct National Youth Council elections, and strengthen the body that was established to provide a structured system of participation of the youth at all levels of government and involve the youth in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects of youth.

A few years ago, the country mooted the idea of a National Youth Council (NYC) anchored in the National Youth Council Act 2009. The NYC was established in 2012 to ensure effective coordination of youth related interventions and involvement of the youth in planning, monitoring and evaluation of youth interventions.

The drafters of the law intended to create formal mechanisms and structures to remedy lack of proper engagement, which youth blames for their low participation in all the national matters. It was envisaged that by strengthening the administration of youth programmes through meaningful participation at all levels, strong youth-focused policies would finally be channeled out.

Looking at the performance of the body, it is inevitable the NYC must be strengthened to create a safety valve that will see more youth get representation in all spheres including governance. There can be no doubt that a revitalised NYC will also give the youth an opportunity to meaningfully influence their participation in the economic development. Of importance is the need to review National Youth Council Act 2009 and strengthen the organizational capacity of NYC to execute its mandate.

The government and other actors alike must create environments where young people can meaningfully participate in governance and development. In particular, there is need to ensure implementation of Article 55 of the Constitution, a full and proper implementation of the national youth policy and elections and strengthening of National Youth Council.

Contacts

TheYouthCongress.Org

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