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Assessment of Youth Employment Initiatives in Malawi: Implementation Realities and Policy Perspective

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Editorial

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Abstract

Availability of opportunities for quality jobs among youth is more concerning besides general unemployment challenges. The International Labor Organization (ILO) reported that in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) alone, about 10.9% of youth aged 15-25 are unemployed, a figure lower than the global average. However, despite the high youth participation in labor force, poverty levels is still apparent (70%) among this group of people. Likewise, in Malawi, majority of youth are trapped in low quality, low skilled and often informal jobs as much as youth labor force participation is increasing. Enhanced youth participation in agricultural value chains can possibly turn this underutilized youth into productive beings. Considering that there are a number of initiatives implemented, with the aim of enhancing youth employment in the country, there is need to understand how the implemented initiatives in Malawi have contributed to enhanced youth employment hence this study. Overall, the study aims to identify four representative initiatives implemented between 2008 and 2018, and assess how they have contributed to youth employment in the country. A Qualitative approach was used to address the objective.. A multiple case research design approach was adopted, with data collected sequentially among the purposefully identified organization. A SWOT analysis followed the multiple case approach, which assisted with exploring particular issues within each of the selected initiatives and across the programs. Results from the exploratory study showed availability of notable large projects in Malawi that were targeted at enhancing employment situation for the youth in the agricultural sector. However, there was limited availability of comprehensive data, which is captured centrally, in order to properly track impact. Despite availability, Full participation in the initiatives by the youth is constrained by; lack of land for farming, inappropriate technologies to address production challenges, lack of electricity in rural areas, high illiteracy levels and limited technical skills. Implementation approaches used were varying, and hence performance indicators also varied. An integrated promotion of women and youth empowerment activities was largely adopted in line with policy frameworks. Potential to enhance employment was established, and hence need to systematically track progress for documenting lessons to inform policy and implementation modalities.

Key words: Agriculture, youth employment, policy.

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Introduction

The period of transitioning from education to labor market for the youth is critical for development. This is because if not handled well it can have long lasting consequences on, not only individual wellbeing but also, economies. Having decent work for youth is crucial not only for their future, but also for communities, countries and the world (United Nations, 2018) Therefore, besides unemployment challenges, availability of opportunities for quality jobs need to also be of concern. According to International Labor Organization (ILO) (2016b), Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) registered 10.9% unemployment among youth aged 15-25, lower than the global average and which is expected to be decreasing. However, highest working poverty rate (70%) was reported amongst the group that was assessed, which was close to two times higher than the average for developing and emerging economies in 2016 (ILO, 2016b). Although labor force participation is high, majority of the youth workers in Malawi experience poor working conditions (ILO, 2012; ILO 2015). This situation therefore traps the youth in low quality, low skilled and often in the informal sector and hence vulnerable to shocks (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018).

The situation is not different for Malawi where youth unemployment and underemployment are still a challenge, especially for those seeking full-time, productive and decent employment opportunities. Transition for most of the youth is challenging as indicated in 2014 by many youths who are not in employment nor in education and training (NEET) (13.8%), informal employment (93%) and qualification mismatch (81% undereducated) (OECD, 2018; ILO 2016). Considering the 78% of youth population (2018 Census) for Malawi, these statistics represent a youth bulge, hence a need to be viewed as an opportunity to develop the country through policy and implementation frameworks that could benefit the youth. Engaging youth in value chains would be key in the agriculture sector which is not only the backbone of the country's economy but also an essential part of the social fabric. Although efforts have been made to engage youth in employment, a lack of contextualized evidence on what works or not, has resulted in the use of a 'one size fits all' approach (Yami et al., 2019). Therefore, there is need to understand the status of initiatives so far implemented, to inform the next steps for the effective use of the youth dividend.

This paper therefore presents findings of an exploratory study on how youth employment initiatives have contributed to improving youth unemployment status in rural Malawi. The study focused on identifying, describing and understanding outputs of previous and ongoing youth initiatives. The overall objective was therefore to document measures that contribute to the enhancement of employment and income opportunities for rural youth in Africa. The specific research questions addressed in this paper were: "What have been the four large scale youth employment initiatives undertaken between 2000 and 2018 in the rural areas of Malawi; and what lessons can be drawn to inform youth related unemployment policies or their implementation?"

Following this section, the paper is presented in four sections starting with the status of youth unemployment in section 2. Section 3 follows with an assessment of the policy environment in response to the discussed status. Section 4 discusses selected four large scale initiatives which have been implemented between 2008 and 2018 drawing lessons through strength and weakness analyses. Section 5 concludes and highlights key takeaways for implementation and policy recommendation.

Data Sources and Approach

Qualitative assessment was conducted to address the research questions. The focus was on identifying four initiatives as cases, to capture insights on how the selected initiatives have contributed to youth employment. Sequential data collection approach was employed, which started with identification of a comprehensive list of organizations implementing initiatives on youth employment. The list was sought from Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and National Youth Council, as key Government institutions mandated with documenting such data. Although their websites had a long list of affiliates, it was discovered that not all of them were implementing programs aimed at enhancing employment. A criterion was developed to select relevant initiatives, however records for some initiatives proved difficult to trace. A SWOT analysis followed the multiple case approach, which assisted with exploring particular issues within each of the selected initiative and across the programs (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). Multiple case studies are assumed better for analytical generalization and theorizing because of greater insight into phenomenon under study (Cheng, 2010).

Selection criteria: All traceable initiatives were listed (see appendix), out of which four large scale initiatives were selected as cases using the following criteria: (1) Geographical coverage of two or more districts of implementation ; (2) Number of youth targeted to be reached (Top 4 highest); (3) Duration, thus implementation period since 2008 to 2018; and (4) Documented/Expected impact on rural youth employment. Number of target beneficiaries and documented impact were the primary criteria, with the rest being secondary. According to ILO (2013), youth employment programs are grouped into four categories of employment services, skills development/training, employment creation, integrated programs (combination of all three) and other types of services (i.e. work experience, childcare, transport etc.). The initiatives were therefore also categorized using these criteria. All initiatives led by non-public actors were categorized as private-led.

The definition of large-scale employment initiatives could differ from people to people, country to country and even from area to area within the same country. Therefore, a proposal to consider large scale youth employment initiatives as those that would have contributed to reducing unemployed youth population at least by 1% (of the total unemployed youth population - thus over 87,000 youth) proved a challenge for Malawi. This was due to unavailability of comprehensive and updated database on implemented youth initiatives segregated by type of implementer and their outcomes. The study therefore subjectively considered initiatives that would have created or facilitated the creation of more youth

employment than others across rural areas of Malawi, using project documents and reports on expected and actual impact. A further categorization was applied to indicate type of implementer, thus public sector; Public-Private-Partnership (PPP); private sector; and self-employment (farmers' organizations/platforms/cooperatives employments included) initiatives were considered. The focus was on those that had been implemented from 2000 to 2018.

The selection step was complemented by a desk review of project implementation manuals; progress and evaluation reports, research publications among others, which are related to the selected four initiatives. The findings informed key informant interviews with each of the selected four initiatives. Interviews were also conducted with key informants on youth related activities at community level, where the initiatives were implemented. Content analysis was used to synthesize insights from desk review and key informant interviews. The study considered youth as individuals from the age of 10-35 based on the Malawi National Youth Policy definition of the youth (GoM, 2013).

Status of Youth Unemployment in Malawi

Growing youth unemployment is one of the most pressing policy problems across the African continent, and a major global challenge. It is estimated that the youth (in the 10-24 age bracket) make up as much as 1.8 billion of the global population currently pegged at 7.7 billion (OECD, 2018). The situation of underemployment in Malawi mirrors the trend both at the global and continental level. In Malawi, youth (aged between 10 and 35 years) represent 49.6 per cent of total population estimated at 17.6 million (National Statistical Office, 2018). According to the Malawi Labor Force Survey (2013), economically active persons (labor force) are those that are available to contribute to the production of goods and services falling within the System of National Accounts production boundary. The economically active category includes unemployed and employed groups. Table 1 presents an overview of unemployment rates (percentage of labor force) for Malawi in 2013. Over 22% of the youth were unemployed, with females in the urban areas recording higher rates.

Table 1: Selected National Employment indicators for Population aged 15-34

Youth not in Education and Not in Employment (%)								
National			Urban			Rural		
Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female
16.5	13.8	18.8	26.8	21.2	32	14.8	12.5	16.7
Unemployment rates (broad Definition)								
23	16.9	28.2	33.6	22.7	44.1	21.3	15.9	25.8

Source: NSO Malawi Labor Force Survey (2013)

The Government of Malawi (2017) estimated that 20.4% of the economically active population was unemployed, out of which 27.5% were youth (Mussa, 2016). According to ILOSTAT database, in 2017 youth unemployment rate for Malawi was estimated at 40.5%. Other studies also revealed that Malawian youth are underutilized and they work few hours per week (Mussa, 2016), indicating poor quality of employment. According to NSO (2013), 89% of employed people in Malawi were in informal employment, with 65% in the agriculture sector. This implies that majority are in informal employment. Informal employment includes both the enterprise someone works for (working in the informal sector) and informal characteristics of the worker’s job (informal employment) (ILO, 2015). In most African countries, majority of young workers in both rural and urban areas are in informal employment. For example, in Malawi, Ghana, Congo, Ethiopia, Senegal, Rwanda, Uganda among others, over 70% of young workers are self-employed or contributing to family labor (AFDB, 2012). Figure 1 presents extent of quality of jobs indicators for Malawi, which shows a gleam picture.

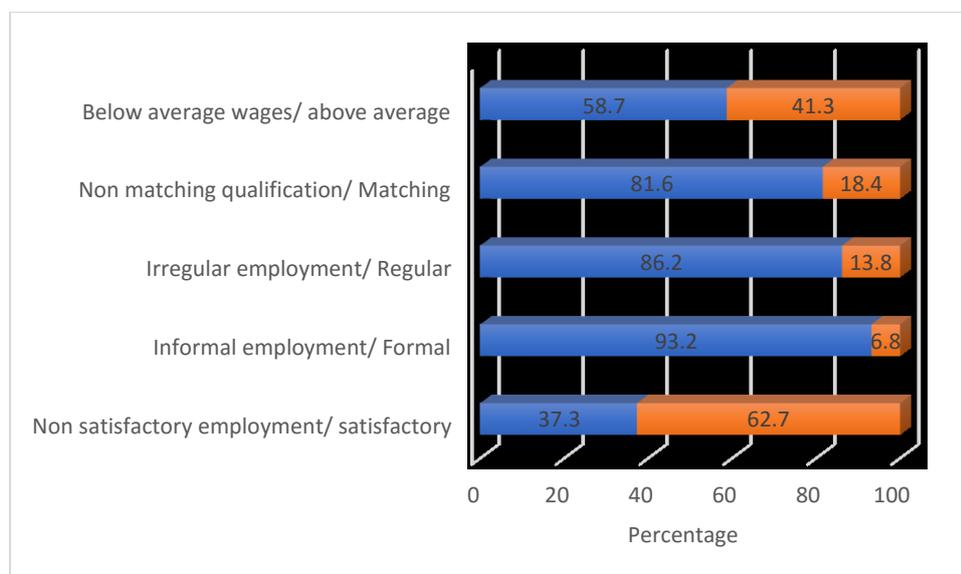


Figure 1: Quality of Employment for Youth

Source: School to Work Transition Survey for Malawi, 2014.

Therefore, for the majority of African countries, the employment problem is mostly to do with quality of the job than absence of a job, hence the need for structural changes in the right

direction. Considering the demographic youth dividend, the described situation presents an untapped human capital which if fully engaged would contribute to the socio-economic development of the country as indicated in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III (GoM, 2017). This revelation also extends to the agriculture sector. Agriculture is still providing the largest share of total youth employment (58.4%) in Malawi. This is followed by employment in wholesale and retail trade (9.8%) and manufacturing (7.7%). More young females (60.3%) worked in the agricultural sector than young males (56.6%) (OECD, 2018). Additionally, studies in Africa have shown that farming is found to be critical to determine the rate of off-farm job growth (Owoo and Lambon-Quayefio, 2017). Agriculture, therefore, has considerable potential to provide gainful employment opportunities for the youth, but only if supported by increased investments and conducive policy frameworks (Proctor and Lucchesi, 2012; Koira, 2014; Girard, 2016). Despite agriculture contributing heavily to the economy, the existence of large employment gaps across sectors raise the question of what limits the supply of hours in agriculture and what role technology, infrastructure and policies might play in addressing agricultural underemployment (McCullough, 2017).

In line with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III, a number of projects and organizations in the country are now supporting development and growth initiatives for small and medium agribusiness enterprises. The support is aimed at creating employment, and hence contribute to transitioning from subsistence to commercial food production. However, one of the key challenges to realizing this dream is the inability of the productive sectors to create employment. The formal sector of the economy is only able to create 30,000 positions a year while there are 130,000 new entrants (OECD, UNDP, UNECA and AFDB, 2012). This is also in line with the observation made by Page (2012) that Africa's employment problem is a symptom of the shift in resources from lower to higher productivity uses. Since policy informs practice, the next section assesses the policy framework to explore how it fits in with the agenda to provide decent work for all, especially the youth.

Policy Framework and Direction

Malawi recognizes that the youth are critical in the development of the country and this is reflected in its policy framework which is aimed at improving the situation of the youth. The institutional arrangement for implementing youth policies, plans and programs involves various stakeholders at both individual and cross-sectoral institutional levels. The national overarching Government policy document, the Malawi Growth and Development III (2017-2022), calls for aggressive investment in youth development programs as this would reduce the dependency ratio and empower the youth to contribute to the national economy. It observes that the high population growth rate has produced high demand for natural resources, jobs and social services. In addition, it also posits that the low investment in youth is resulting into high dependency ratio.

The National Youth Policy (2013) developed to guide on how youth development programs can be developed and implemented for meaningful impact, calls for the need to create more economic empowerment avenues for the youth through promoting youth entrepreneurship for self-employment. There is emphasis on agriculture with an assumption that it might offer or offers high opportunities for job creation compared to other sectors of the economy because of its diverse value chains. The policy further acknowledges that when youth complete education, there are very little prospects of securing a job, or engaging in entrepreneurial activities, in particular in rural areas where under-employment and poverty is more prominent. However, the policy does not seem to have clear strategies on how this problem of youth unemployment can be sorted out and there is no mention of meaningful monitoring mechanisms to ensure its (the policy's) full implementation. Although the policy calls for the need to create more economic empowerment or avenues for youth employment or even just opportunities for the youth through promoting entrepreneurship for self-employment. Very little action has been undertaken to address the question of creating youth employment or opportunities for young people to access business capital for sustainable livelihood production.

The Technical, Vocational and Entrepreneurial Act (1999) provided for the establishment of the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Authority and Employer Contribution training fund. In addition to the specific policies mentioned, there are other related policies that enhance provision of supporting environment for youth employment initiatives, for example, the National Employment and Labor Policy (NELP), which was approved by the Government in 2017. This policy aims to create more and better employment for the youth both in terms of quality and quantity. Other related policies are summarized in Appendix 2.

Although development of policies are commendable, OECD (2018) finds that the National Youth Policy and the MGDS III cannot address the youth unemployment challenges as they face several obstacles related to coordination and implementation. This is mostly due to lack of both human and financial resources to leverage partnerships and manage policy coordination across stakeholders. For example, the Youth Job Creation Initiative (YJCI) was a program which was implemented after the launch of the National Youth Policy in 2013 poised to bring back agriculture to the fore of youth development. The YJCI was a strategy meant for dealing with the problem of chronic youth unemployment by exporting unskilled, skilled and semi-skilled labor to South Korea, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates where they could acquire skills and knowledge that would in turn be put to productive use here at home upon return. However, this was not successful as the government of South Korea denied having sealed a youth labor export deal with the Malawi government. Due to poor coordination, this initiative failed though it had huge potential to contribute to the development and subsequent transformation of the agricultural sector as the youth are receptive and readily adopt new ideas (Chinsinga and Chasukwa, 2017). Similarly, the Youth Development Credit

Scheme (YDCS) and Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDEF) despite potential to enhance youth employment, the programs did not deliver as expected. The major challenge was that they targeted the youth and elderly that were aligned to political parties in power. Priority in disbursing YEDEF loans was given to the ruling party youth members (Chinsinga and Chasukwa 2012). This flouted the implementation procedures which affected success and sustainability of the program.

Malawi has good policies to tackle youth unemployment, however, problems of coordination, poor data on youth unemployment, political interference, funding and sustainability affect the effectiveness of the programs. With the policy framework in place, various stakeholders are implementing programs aimed at improving the employment situation for the youth, however, more needs to be done because the solution to employment problem cannot be found in employment policies alone (Page, 2012). Provision of evidence about what works in which context could be a starting point. There have not been precise unemployment figures on the youths' labor force, since the NSO Malawi Labor Force Survey (2013). What is clear though is that the number of jobless youths has been growing tremendously making it a political, security and socio-economic challenge worth prioritizing.

Implementation support establishments

At national level, the responsibility for youth labor market in Malawi mostly lies with three entities namely government through Ministry of Labor Youth and Manpower Development; employers through Employers Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM); and the union federations through Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) and the Congress of Malawi Trade Unions (COMATU). These entities form the national Tripartite Labor Advisory Council, which was established under Labor Relations Act of 1996 (OECD, 2018). The National Youth Council, on the other hand was established under the National Youth Council Act of 1996. Among other issues, this statutory institution, contributes towards youth empowerment and development through the promotion and coordination of youth organization activities. The youth council is also an advisor to the Ministry on Youth Matters relating to youth participation and development. Under the National Youth Council there are decentralized youth structures. For instance, there are Youth Technical Committees which work as an interagency coordination structure at district level working with all the district level structures in the youth sector. Below these structures comes the District Youth Offices which coordinate, implement and monitor youth activities at district level in collaboration with district, area and community youth committees and or clubs/clubs' networks.

Operationally, at the national level there is a Sector Working Group on Gender, Youth and Development and Sports (SWGGYS) which is the highest policy coordination body on youth issues and whose membership comprises policy makers from relevant governmental agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organization and the private sector. There is also a Technical Working Group of Youth (TWGY) responsible for the provision of

backstopping services and coordination of youth programs and its membership comprises technical officers from relevant institutions. The Ministry of Labor, Youth and Manpower Development serves a co-chair of the SWGGYS and chair and secretariat for the TWGY. Its primary responsibility is to coordinate and implement youth policies.

Under normal circumstances, policy makers and implementors such as the National Youth Council need to take a positive attitude in developing clear strategies that will be participatory and change the livelihood of the young people. Creation of youth employment will not exist without the involvement of the youth themselves in the policy formulation, decision making implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. There are over 1.2 billion young people aged 15-24 years, and hence actively engaging them to achieve sustainable, inclusive and stable societies is a necessity (UN, 2018 World Youth Report)

Overview of the Large-Scale Youth Employment Initiatives

Entrepreneurship skills-building programs have been shown to successfully encourage entrepreneurial thinking, behavior and development of socio-emotional skills (what works in soft skills). An exploration of interventions implemented in Malawi to enhance youth employment revealed insights on what has been happening in the sector in the past few years.

All interventions designed to improve employment prospects for the youth in Malawi were targeted for possible selection and analysis. The exploration revealed that implementation of the programs was done by both public and private organizations. A list of selected traceable initiatives implemented since 2008 to 2019 is shown in Appendix 2. Notably, most of the youth employment initiatives focused on agricultural related services, with majority concentrated on employment creation through trainings and granting access to start up funds. The public implemented initiatives also focused on entrepreneurship development through provision of information, training and education. Notably, provision of employment services was mostly missing in the private implemented initiatives, with only the ongoing program of Jobs for Youth attempting to offer all the five categories of employment services as described by ILO (2013). Various initiatives are being implemented, but at various scale in terms of target number of beneficiaries and geographical coverage. Table 2 presents details of five initiatives, for which a detailed review was conducted. The initiatives fall in the categories of private, public, and private and public-led initiatives.

Table 2: Overview of Selected Youth Initiatives

No	Initiative*	Districts covered	Targeted Youth	Implementing Organization**	Duration	Expected Impact on Rural Youth	Outputs/ Impact	Implementer and Category
1	L	Kasungu, Dowa, Ntchisi	1,500		2017-2020	To reduce poverty and vulnerability to climate change among rural poor people in Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted formation Village Savings and Loan groups. • training on use of energy saving technology and • conservation agriculture (86% trained, 53% follower trained) • Construction of 1286 energy saving stoves with 75 brick moulders 	Public and private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)
2	M	Rumphi, Nkhatabay, Mzimba, Mzuzu Dowa	39,000 where 10% were youth Approx. 4,000		2012-2016	Promote food security through sustainable agricultural development and land-based NRM implemented using the lead farmer approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of beneficiaries were women. • 40% of target by 2015- cooperatives with agreements with commercial entities (shops, supermarkets, process industries) • Local institutions and organizations strengthened. • Household's food secure throughout the year. 	Public and private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)
3	N	Mzimba North, Mzimba South, Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota,	23, 837		2011-2015	Girls economic Empowerment. Inspire girls to have a visionary change through education, entrepreneurship,	VSL and self-groups 91%.	Private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)

No	Initiative*	Districts covered	Targeted Youth	Implementing Organizations**	Duration	Expected Impact on Rural Youth	Outputs/ Impact	Implementer and Category
		Dowa/Mvera, Lilongwe Rural and Machinga districts				climate change resilience, youth participation, addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) and leadership		
4	P	Lilongwe, Mzimba, Nkhatabay Dowa and Ntchisi	12,000 (50% girls) 100,000 households		2014-2018	Youth are economically empowered through sustainable approaches to agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on climate change mitigation and adaptation through youth Lead farmer Approach • Increased food security • Youth engagement in business • piggery, goat production, bee keeping, bakery, selling of agriculture produce 92% 	Public and private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)
5.	Q	Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota	5186		2018-2022	The project has four components namely (i.) Irrigation Infrastructure & Watershed Management, (ii.) Youth Entrepreneurship, market linkages, agro-processing and Value	Project implementation started in 2018, and ongoing. 2, 935 youth registered as of 2018 and 175 agri-preneurs started classes in Jan 2019; 187 clubs selected enterprises to be involved in.	Public; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)

No	Initiative*	Districts covered	Targeted Youth	Implementing Organizations**	Duration	Expected Impact on Rural Youth	Outputs/ Impact	Implementer and Category
						Addition (iii.) Agro-Cooperative Development and Enhancement and (iv) Project Management and Institutions Strengthening.		

* The initiatives represented in the table were implemented by the following organizations listed in alphabetical order Agriculture infrastructure and Youth in Agribusiness Project (AIYAP); Malawi Mozambique Rural Food Security Program; Sustainable Agriculture Lead Farmer Program (SALFP); Sustainable Agriculture Program, MAZA; and Young Women Can Do It.

**Implementing organizations for each initiative included: (a) Find Your Feet (FYF), Network for Youth Development (NfYD), Mzuzu Agricultural Development Division (MZADD), and Trustees of Agricultural Promotion Program (TAPP)/MUSCO/AICC ; (b) Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (c) NfYD, DF, MUSSCO, CEPA, TAPP, AICC, MZAD, HEIFER/Find Your Feet; (d) TAPP/Find Your Feet Malawi/ Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (MUSCCO)/ Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development/ADC, VDC; and (e) TAPP, NFYD, MUSSCO, DF.

Issues from the Selected Case Initiatives

A synthesis of the selected initiatives revealed key lessons regarding factors that contributed to both the positive and negative outcomes. A consolidation of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threat analysis is presented in Table 3. Strength present the key positive achievements internal to the initiatives, weaknesses portrayed the internal challenges encountered during implementation. Externally, positive factors affecting program implementation are captured under opportunities, while threats indicate the external factors to the programs that affected it negatively.

Generally, the focus areas of the selected youth employment initiatives were in line with the strategies and policies as pointed out in section 3.0. Training and provision of productive resources dominated as key activities implemented to enhance youth employment. However limited information was available to give a clear picture pertaining to the training/capacity building approaches employed, and hence their effectiveness. A World Bank analysis of global studies indicated that while employers value all skill sets in an employee i.e. basic cognitive, technical, advanced cognitive and social emotional, they value the latter two skill sets. This is across region, industry, occupation and educational levels (Cunningham and Villasenor, 2016).

Weaknesses to enhance the employment initiatives dwell around limited mechanisms to capture meaningful data to build evidence on how effective the interventions are. This weakness echoes the world wide view that despite the support for soft skills development among educators, families and employers, the evidence base is not available (Youth Employment in Funders Group, 2018). In high income countries, a relationship between soft skills and employment is established at both macro and micro level. Youth with more developed soft skills have improved incomes, and better behaviors (Heckman et al, 2014; Mohanty, 2008). However, evidence on the same is lacking in developing countries. Most assessments that have been used in this analysis are self-report surveys which unfortunately might not be reliable due to reference biases (Youth Employment in Funders Group, 2018). Reporting mechanisms are generally concentrated on reporting gender dimensions, with less focus on the youth dimension despite their being the target beneficiaries. Improving participation of women in the economic sphere can create other social problems if not handled well. For example, reported sexual harassments and non-acceptance by communities to be led by women.

The major strength across most youth initiatives lies in policy and legal frameworks that are geared towards supporting youth initiatives. Development partner support towards such initiatives has increased over the years in line with recent global initiatives like the United nations 'Youth 2030: Working With and For Young People' strategy, and the African Union agenda 2063 agenda where Africa aspires that by 2063 it will engage and empower the youth among other aspirations. Effective collaborations among key implementing partners is therefore needed.

External forces affect implementation of the youth initiatives. Notable issues include hand out syndrome mindsets of participating communities which affects ownership and participation. Different implementation modalities result in other projects paying communities to participate in development initiatives, while others do not. As a result, other communities look at development initiatives as an 'income generating opportunity'. Delays in flow of funds and other coordination issues between funders and implementing agents caused challenges for most public-led initiatives.

Table 3: Internal and External Factors Affecting Implementation

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative delivery of activities with other capable organizations was beneficial. For example, an intervention helped to link members that had a 50kg bag of maize, groundnuts and beans with a marketing entity who mostly deal in large quantities. The linkage, and hence pulling of commodities together helped the youth to bargain for better prices and access better markets.• Integration with Government structures within implementation areas helped to provide quick solutions to production related problems where such requirements were not in line with the planned activities within the initiatives. For example, the extension workers helped to outline government recommendations on emerging challenges (i.e. fall army worms) and how to deal with them. This arrangement also helped to spread out initiative to non-developed communities in the area. Government programs such as food for work also helped clubs to raise funds for their activities.• Availability of hardworking staff, lead farmers and committed cooperative members.• Targeting innovative youth as lead farmers created role models within the area, that helped to motivate other youth. The same applied to youths who were taking up leading roles in the community for example in the VDC, ADC.
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- Most programs targeted the literate youth despite having adult literacy component, which could have allowed for anyone to be targeted. In some cases, such literate youth were given incentives i.e. bicycles for mobility, and this practice was viewed as discriminatory. A key informant reported that, due to such perceptions, in Dowa district, some non-beneficiaries retaliated by burning the maize stalks and residues that were stored to be used for soil conservation farming technique.
- Neither food nor allowances was provided during trainings and this affected participation of most youths. However, in some other initiatives only food was given. This situation however could be viewed as positive but also as negative depending on context. Poor targeting and limited monitoring systems resulted in other participants abandoning program midway once they access some benefits.
- All programs started with training at the beginning, however, follow up trainings were either irregular or non-existent, sometimes due to inadequate funding. Participants also reported that most clubs were not supervised to check on whether they were applying what they were trained on. Most programs had a component of adult literacy education, some interventions encouraged girls to go back to school from early marriages, but they failed to sustain them in school because the projects did not have the corresponding support such as fees.
- Majority of the programs included components of encouraging self-employment and farm related entrepreneurship at micro level. In all the study areas, respondents reported that there were limited or no initiatives supporting other skills development such as tailoring and carpentry. Such programs although offered in Government supported institutions, access by rural youth was limited.
- Lack of storage warehouse affected prices of farm produce as they could not meet the volumes demanded by the buyers. Sometimes the buyers would take long to come and this led to farmers selling at very low prices to the vendors that were readily available. A farmer narrated *'we just let them (vendors) buy our maize at give-away prices when we need money to pay school fees and buy other household items for our household, because bulk marketing requires time and patience.'* Another factor that led to farmers selling to the vendors was the failure to meet the standards of quality required in bulk selling.
- Irrigation technology of treadle pump that was promoted for the youth was inefficient as it was laborious to operate. Women in both Mpingu and Dowa reported that they were not capable of using the technology. Both areas recommended solar powered irrigation equipment for efficiency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges with consistent and adequate funding flow affects implementation. For example, in one initiative, a youth club had to raise own financial resources of K100,000 (about USD130) for a pig-pass on program, which was very difficult the youth involved. In another the program failure to provide loans for purchase of hybrid seed and fertiliser, while in the other they failed to reach out to all intervention areas to conduct leadership and marketing training.
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 95% of the initiatives implemented focused on agriculture which was more relevant as it was in line with various international and local developmental policies. The youth programs were highly supportive of the Millennium Development Goals at the international level. In particular, the interventions were supportive of MDG 1 (Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger), MDG 3 (Promoting gender equality and empowering women); MDG 6 (Combating HIV and AIDS), and MDG 7 (Ensuring environmental sustainability). At the national level, the program was supportive of various policy instruments, including the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS II), which is the overarching short-term strategy for the promotion of economic growth and reduction of poverty in Malawi. There were a number of organizations interested in implementing programs whose aim was to enhance youth employment in both rural and urban areas, hence an opportunity to implement integrated interventions for better impact. A deliberate focus on both male and female youths could help change attitudes towards gender discrimination for the next generations as opposed to focusing on females only as targets. Most programs were an integration of interventions such as environmental conservation, livestock, poultry, bee keeping, village savings and loans education in one program, which increased needed human resource to manage one program. Thus, creating employment. Youth make up the largest category of the Malawi population, and a large unmet demand for youth employment initiatives to be implemented in the country.

- A general resistance on trusting youths as leaders. For example, during elections, the youth were not nominated for elections and this could have contributed to electing leaders that may not have interest in youth affairs.
- Land ownership was limited for the youth due to increased population in the areas and also the customary land laws which restricted ownership to those with inheritance rights. Thus, they could only rent hence not invest on it, like, planting trees because ownership was temporary. Land ownership facilitation has the capacity to increase youth participation in agribusinesses, promote long term investment and create employment.
- Communication challenges as there was cell phone and radio network challenges in most rural areas. Additionally, it was also reported that most participants did not have mobile phones and smart phones. Women specifically had limited access to phones which they argued limited them from communicating with extension workers and buyers.
- Gender discrimination: Some women were not allowed to participate in community meeting by husbands. Those that were active were harassed by the traditional dancers called *Gule Wamkulu*. *Gule Wamkulu*, wearing scary attire and face masks chased women that tried to participate in community meetings and in some cases, they burnt all the residues that were seen to be laid by women for conservation farming.
- Climate change brought diseases and these included army worms and pig diseases. The pigs which were an important source of animal manure were dying as a result of climate.
- Weak enforcement on usage of yearly published commodity prices i.e. maize, soybean etc. While Government provides an indication of minimum prices, uptake by traders, and even sellers is not mostly done. This could be because prices published may not reflect actual market price, or due to weak bargaining power of sellers hence exploitation happen.

Conclusion

A number of youth initiatives have been implemented in Malawi between 2008 and 2018. Findings indicated availability of notable large projects in Malawi that were targeted at enhancing employment situation for the youth. However, availability of comprehensive data on all initiatives implemented, regardless of size, and implementing agency was a challenge. The projects were implemented by both private and public sectors, with others implemented by a combination. Structurally, establishments and policies were in place to support better implementation of initiatives, but the coordination was limited and hence uncoordinated delivery among stakeholders. Type of skills enhanced was skewed towards training, and provision of inputs, mainly for primary production, with limited focus on soft skills which was also necessary. Availability of ongoing large-scale initiatives led by public sector, whose focus was on various categories of youth skills, provided an opportunity to capture evidence of effectiveness of various interventions at the national level.

All programs studied were implemented using several local organizations that worked in complementarity integrating various components for improvement of livelihoods for the rural youth, for example agriculture, livestock, conservation farming, entrepreneurship, marketing and education (readmission for dropouts and adult literacy), and coordination was done at EPA level. However, there were great implementation challenges. These included poor funding for implementation and completion of the projects, lack of coordination among coordinating partners and lack of rigorous follow up of the activities. All the major youth initiatives studied focused on rain-fed agriculture, conservation farming which created temporary employment, leaving youth unemployed for most part of the year.

Insights from a multiple case of five initiatives revealed a number of issues worth considering for subsequent projects. First, most public-led initiatives were large in terms of targeted beneficiaries, but delays in implementation modalities resulted in only availing preliminary findings on impact, although participants were available for interview. Secondly, implementation of youth initiatives was done using different non proven approaches, some of which were not systematic, although all initiatives were aimed at improving unemployment situation in the country. Third, comprehensive survey data to track changes in youth employment indicators, as contributed by various initiatives were generally lacking. There were no standardized indicators that projects could adopt to track progress which could then be compared with other initiatives. In line with the third insight, possibility of tracking participants in phased out projects might be challenging if such data was not systematically captured and stored. A majority of initiatives implemented in the rural areas to enhance youth employment were agriculture related. Finally, most initiatives had integrated promotion of women and youth empowerment activities, however there was need for reporting to also emphasize age as much as gender segregation, to highlight youth groups.

This paper reveals strength and weaknesses of past and some ongoing projects, and helps to assess impact of youth employment initiatives in Malawi. Youth are not exploiting the opportunities because of lack of land for farming, inappropriate technologies to address production challenges, lack of electricity in rural areas, high illiteracy levels and lack of technical skills. Enabling environment required to allow the youth to take advantage of the mentioned opportunities therefore could include: introducing programs to improve access to land by the youth, integration of adult literacy education programs in all youth development projects, and investment in rural electrification. However, to add value to these revelations, a question of what are the most promising youth employment opportunities that have remained under/un- tapped in the rural areas of Malawi would be interesting to explore further to provide bases for policy making.

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Appendix 1

No	Initiative *	Geographic covered	Target Number	Implementing Organizations	Duration	Expected impact on rural youth	Outputs/ Impact	Implementer and category
1		Mchinji, Ntchisi and Rumphidistricts	9,050 youth	Total Land Care	2013-2015	to sustainably improve the socio-economic status of vulnerable young people, girls and boys, in five countries in continental Africa by engaging them into productive livelihoods through building their capacity in market-relevant skills. Pathways: Introducing Youth to Pathways Options, approval, preparation of transition to their pathway	961 youth trained out of 9,050 Lack of funding to complete project 15% (achievement of targets)	Private; Employment services
2		Nkhatabay	200	Help a Child Malawi (HAC) National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM), NASCOMEX Livingstonia Synod Aids Support Program (LISAP)	2015-2018	Increase groundnut production entrepreneurial skills, market access-200, sexual reproductive health 500	Improved agricultural productivity and increased incomes from K16,000-K54,000/month/hh; Enhanced youth entrepreneurship; Access to sexual and reproductive health services; Advanced groundnut value chain competitiveness through agro-cooperatives development and strengthened community institutional establishments.	Private; Entrepreneurship development and Employment creation (integrated)
3		Dowa, Ntchisi	247 youth (2473 hh)	TAPP / Network for Youth Development (NfYD)/ADC, VDC	2013-2016	To improve agro-biodiversity based livelihoods and climate resilience of rural communities in Malawi	Knowledge and skills in gender and sustainable agriculture activities 18 youth groups in Chipuka, Chivala and Mvera EPA; 6 youth groups trained as lead farmers. 180 (88M, 92M) were introduced and equipped with knowledge in sustainable agriculture practices in 2015	Private; Integrated services

No	Initiative *	Geographic covered	Target Number	Implementing Organizations	Duration	Expected impact on rural youth	Outputs/ Impact	Implementer and category
							Improved the climate resilience of rural communities Promotion of Village Savings and loan groups	
4		Kasungu, Dowa, Ntchisi	1,500 (TAPP-461)	TAPP/Find Your Feet Malawi/ Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (MUSCCO)/ Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development/A DC, VDC	2017-2020	To reduce poverty and vulnerability to climate change among rural poor people in Malawi	the project promoted Village Savings and Loan groups. training on use of energy saving technology which reduced deforestation. Training on conservation agriculture which involves use of crop residues instead of burning which pollutes air and kills soil microorganisms. Construction of 1286 energy saving stoves with 75 brick moulders	Public and private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)
5		Rumphi, Nkhatabay, Mzimba, Mzuzu Dowa -TAPP	39000 where 10% are youth 4000	Find Your Feet (FYF), Network for Youth Development (NfyD), Mzuzu Agricultural Development Division (MZADD), and Trustees of Agricultural Promotion Program (TAPP)/MUSCO/ AICC	2012-2016	promoting food security through sustainable agricultural development and land-based NRM that are being implemented using the lead farmer approach	-50% of beneficiaries were women. -Increased access to market for small-scale farmers cooperatives that have income generating agreements with commercial entities (shops, supermarkets, process industries) -40 % of target achieved by 2015 Strengthened local institutions and organizations through active VDC and ADC -households achieved food security throughout the year. -Small scale farmers implemented sustainable agriculture (SA) techniques through Lead farmer model	Public and private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)

No	Initiative *	Geographic covered	Target Number	Implementing Organizations	Duration	Expected impact on rural youth	Outputs/ Impact	Implementer and category
6		Bvumbwe-Thyolo	100	ILO/TEVET	2013-2015	Contribute, towards increased competitiveness and decent work creation capacity of selected sectors. *Reduce importation of horticulture crops through improvement of agriculture technical skills	Curriculum development/course design, training material development, Training of Trainers and Mentors, and training delivery. -100 youths trained. -Reduced importation from 90% to 60%	Private; Skills development services, employment creation (integrated services)
7		Mzuzu	12	NFYD, DFBA, CEPA	2015-2019	Economic Empowerment	VSL and self-groups 85%	Private; Entrepreneurship services
8		Mzimba North, Mzimba South, Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota, Dowa/Mvera, Lilongwe Rural and Machinga districts	23, 837	TAPP, NFYD, MUSSCO, DF	2011- 2015	Girls economic Empowerment. Inspire girls to have a visionary change through education, entrepreneurship, climate change resilience, youth participation, addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) and leadership	VSL and self-groups 91%	Private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)
9		Lilongwe, Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Dowa and Ntchisi districts	12,000 (50% girls) 100000h	NFYD, DF, MUSSCO, CEPA, TAPP, AICC, MZAD, HEIFER/Find Your Feet	2014- 2018	Youth are economically empowered through sustainable approaches to Agriculture	Training on climate change mitigation and adaptation through youth Lead farmer Approach -Increased food security -Youth engagement in business - piggery, goat production, bee keeping, bakery, selling of agriculture produce 92%	Public and private; Skills development services, employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)
10		Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota	5186	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and	2018-2022	The project has four components namely (i.) Irrigation Infrastructure & Watershed Management, (ii.) Youth		Public; Skills development services,

No	Initiative *	Geographic covered	Target Number	Implementing Organizations	Duration	Expected impact on rural youth	Outputs/ Impact	Implementer and category
				Water Development		Entrepreneurship, market linkages, agro-processing and Value Addition (iii.) Agro-Cooperative Development and Enhancement and (iv) Project Management and Institutions Strengthening.		employment creation, entrepreneurship development (integrated services)
11		32 Districts	3,600	TEVETA	2011 - 2015	Increased and sustainable access to economic opportunities for young people	2,140 (59%) trained through informal and formal approaches	Public; Entrepreneurship development
12		All districts	17,000 jobs	Ministry of labor, Youth and Manpower Development	2017-2020	to economically empower young women and men, improve employability in decent work, and promote sustainable entrepreneurship in Malawi	No documented impacts yet at time of this report due as implementation had just started	Public; Entrepreneurship development, Employment creation, Employment services, skills development (Integrated)

*Initiatives listed alphabetically: Agriculture Infrastructure and Youth in Agribusiness Project (AIYAP); Community Agro-biodiversity Management (CBAM); Entrepreneurship Scheme; Jobs for Youth (J4Y); Malawi Zambia Sustainable Agriculture program; Malawi Mozambique Rural food security Program; Sustainable Agriculture Lead Farmer Program (SALFP); Vocational Skills Training Program for Vulnerable Young People (VSTP VYP); Work integrated learning (Wil); YACSMART (Youth Active in Climate Smart Agriculture); ; Young Women can do it ;Youth in Action.

Note: An on going project on promotion of Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) with support from Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program also targets women and youth (2014; 2017-2019). Initial phase focusing on policies led to changes on allocation of budget to agriculture sector in 2015/2016. GIZ supported the African Unions New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Coordinating, which was coordinating implementation of this program across Africa in second phase.. Focus was on working with training institutions to provide relevant technical trainings in agriculture sector and for policies to embed such direction .A key partner to the project was the GIZ's Promotion of Technical Vocational Education and Training for the Agriculture Sector project. There were also other similar initiatives although with an aim of enhancing employment, but their target group of participants were not specifically mentioned as youth.

Appendix 2

Sector	Policy/Program	Key Youth Issues Addressed	Target Age Group	Responsible Ministry/Agency
Active Labor Market Programs				
Employment	National Employment and Labor Policy (NELP) (2011-2016)	Decent job creation: To create full, free, decent and productive employment, reduce unemployment and underemployment, and enhance labor productivity. It has 12 policy areas, including rural-urban migration, employment in the agricultural sector, gender and employment, youth employment, HIV/AIDS, and micro, small and medium enterprises.	All	MoAFS
	Decent Work Country Program (2011-2016)	Decent job creation: To strengthen the economic and labor market policy framework for increased generation of gainful and decent employment by focusing on employment-rich sectors and promoting employment opportunities. It also aims to strengthen the capacity of occupational safety and health services and build government and social partner capacity to improve service delivery	All	MoLYSMD
	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Strategic Plan (2013-2018)	Technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training (TEVET): To provide quality TEVET to Malawian workforce in a socially responsible manner via five strategic pillars: i) access and equity (enhance and promote good governance); ii) quality and relevance (effectively regulate the TEVET market); iii) governance and management (enhance and promote good governance); iv) funding and financing (maintain adequate funding and financing mechanisms); and v) cross-cutting issues, including emerging issues affecting the functionality of TEVET activities in other pillars	All	TEVETA
	TEVET Policy (2013)	TEVET: To better respond to labor market demands by providing quality TEVET for both wage employment and self-employment. To establish sound and sustainable mechanisms for TEVET through public-private partnership.	16-30	TEVETA, MoGCDSW
	National TEVET Policy (2010)	TEVET regulation: To regulate and co-ordinate all of TEVET and facilitate and promote TEVET.	All	TEVETA
	Formal Apprenticeship Program (1999)	Apprenticeship: To train qualified and competent artisans and technicians for existing and prospective industries, thereby creating both wage employment and self-employment.	All	TEVETA
	Vocational and livelihood skills training	Livelihood skills: To teach practical skills and raise awareness of higher paying job opportunities. To provide information about better job opportunities and connect to potential employers.	19-35	TEVETA,
	Vocational and livelihood skills training	Livelihood skills: To equip young people with knowledge and skills that can open-up employment opportunities or enhance competency for self-employment.	15+	TEVETA,
	Internship programs	Internship: To provide young people with on-the-job experience and opportunities to secure decent jobs and earn a decent living.	15+	MoLYSMD, MGCDSW

Entrepreneurship

	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Policy Strategy (2012-2017)	Entrepreneurship development: To improve MSME competitiveness and enhance the operations of individual MSMEs, assist priority industries, and improve the MSME operational and regulatory environment. The strategy calls for microfinance institutions and other service providers to develop innovative financial instruments that target and benefit women and youth specifically, and to find alternatives to prevailing collateral requirements. The policy also calls for the creation of a Financial Innovation Fund that would incentivise commercial banks to come up with innovative solutions for the provision of loans to the MSME sector, in particular to businesses owned by youth and women.	Young women and youth in rural areas	MoITT
Targeted Policies for Vulnerable Groups				
	National Agricultural Policy (NAP) (2011-2016)	Food security, poverty reduction of smallholder farmers: To recognise the importance of smallholder farmers and youth, who comprise the majority of the rural and agricultural workforce in Malawi. Policy actions related to employment and income generation include developing programs that reduce dependency on rainfed agriculture, promoting production of high-value crops among smallholder and estate farmers, providing support to vulnerable households with production-enhancing technologies, strengthening farmer organizations, and integrating smallholder farmers into domestic and international markets.	Smallholder farmers and youth	MoAFS
	Loan scheme programs	Loans: To give access to credit and training to SMEs with no age specifications. Eligibility is defined by the Community Development Department.	Dropouts and teen mothers	MoGCDSW, Development partners
Youth Participation in Social, Economic and Political Life				
Civic Participation	National Youth Policy (2013)	To promote the establishment of youth structures (clubs, organizations, networks, centres and youth parliaments to facilitate meaningful participation). To build capacity by providing technical and material support to youth and ensuring the functionality and sustainability of youth structures. Other priorities include a comprehensive, needs-based minimum standard package for youth structures, development of youth participation guidelines, award scheme for recognising outstanding contributions to national development, higher youth representation in decision making bodies at all levels, strengthened platform, and technical and financial support.	10-35	MoLYSMD
	Youth Participation and Leadership	Program Leadership skills: To build youth's capacity in managing their organizations (youth clubs, organizations, networks) and take up leadership roles in development structures (e.g. LDC, ADC). The program also promotes gender equality and provides leadership skills training.	10-35	MoLYSMD, NYCOM
	Youth Economic Empowerment	Entrepreneurship skills: To equip youth with entrepreneurial and vocational skills and to become active, effective participants in driving the economy.	10-35	MoLYSMD
	Policy Direction, Capacity Building, Monitoring and Evaluation	Youth work as a specialisation: To provide youth with diploma level in "youth in development work".	10-35	MoLYSMD, Lilongwe University of Agriculture & Natural Resources

	National Youth Service Program (since 2016)	Youth as productive citizens to curb youth unemployment by promoting three pillars: Patriotism, Integrity and Hard work. National Youth Service (NYS) will create a generation of productive youth by improving their information, communication and technology (ICT) and agriculture skills. NYS promotes good citizenship and empowers youth to contribute positively to the national agenda. The new community colleges program is one of the key features of NYS.	10-35	MoLYSMD
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