
Youth Participation in the Economy

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ABSTRACT

Youth in South Africa are persons of the ages 14 to 35 and constitute a large part of the potential labour supply and economically active population. The youth are also one of the central focus areas of government and receive priority in national development policies. Very little is known about the role of youth in the economy. The purpose of this article is therefore to explore the position of youth in the South African economy. The survey below will indicate that one of the major problems faced by youth in Africa is the inability to establish a sustainable livelihood. Youth constitute 40 to 65 per cent of the unemployed in African countries, and this figure is rising. This requires alternative policies, in addition to the economic growth policies within the Growth, Employment and Redistribution framework. It has become essential that the scope be broadened for a larger range of solutions.

JEL E 32

1 INTRODUCTION: YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Youth in South Africa are persons of the ages 14 to 35 and constitute a large part of the potential labour supply and economically active population. Youth are one of the centre focus areas of government and they receive priority in national development policies. As is evident from recent research initiatives, very little is known about the role of youth in the economy. The purpose of this article is therefore to explore the position of youth in the South African economy.

The survey below will indicate that one of the major problems faced by youth in Africa is the inability to establish a sustainable livelihood, with the lack of a steady income as the main reason. Youth constitute 40 to 65 per cent of the unemployed in African countries, and this figure is rising (IDRC, 1997b: 16). Although the situation is comparatively better in South Africa, unemployment among the youth is still exceptionally high.

Economic growth is usually regarded as the ideal solution to high and rising levels of unemployment. However, the structure of the modern economy has changed to such an extent that in the wake of high economic growth rates, economies world-wide experience job losses. Breitenbach (1999) describes this as job-destructive economic growth.

Alternative policies, in addition to the economic growth policies within the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR - RSA, 1996) framework, are required. It has become essential that the scope be broadened for a larger range of solutions: from a focus on employment to the nature of sustainable livelihoods, from entrepreneurship training to the development of enterprise capabilities, from reliance on government intervention to private and informal sector involvement.

For this kind of shift in focus it is imperative that decision makers take cognisance of the views and needs of young women and men. What do they view as the basic needs for a sustainable livelihood; how do they perceive their role in the economy; what are their aspirations for productive participation in society? In this survey, some of these views will be discussed and contextualised within the larger global and African experiences. The survey has to be considered against the background that youth-related development challenges are relatively recent phenomena and tend to be sidelined.

2 YOUTH EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The plight of a third of all young men and women without the basic resources and skills to ensure a reasonable future has become one of the greatest concerns for government, parents and other sectors of society. In 1995 a third of the South African youth, amounting to 3.5 million, were not studying or in training, or had discontinued studies earlier than they had wished despite a desire to return to some form of study.¹ Only 12 per cent of black youth (as opposed to 58 per cent white youth) had studied as far as they wanted to. Young people aged between 14 and 24 have considerably lower levels of education than 26 to 35 year olds. Clearly the ideal point of entry for the development of employment skills is the education system. However, the current reality in sub-Saharan Africa is that most young men and women leave this system before the age of 12 (Hoppers, 1994). In 1995, 43 per cent of young South Africans were unemployed, and the National Youth Policy (NYP) document stresses that this represents 29 per cent of the total adult population of South Africa (NYC, 1997: 12).² There are indications that this situation is still deteriorating. According to Statistics South Africa (SSA, 1998), general unemployment was 20 per cent in 1994 and it grew to 22,9 per cent in 1997. In 1997, 35 per cent of people in the age group 15 to 30

were unemployed, 19 per cent in the group 31 to 45 and 10 per cent in the group 46 to 65. According to SSA more than 90 per cent of the unemployed people had been without work for a year or longer in 1997.

In 1996, South Africa's potential labour force (persons aged 15 to 65) was calculated at 24,4 million, 40 per cent of whom were not economically active. The economically active population then counted 14,5 million people, 38 per cent of whom were unemployed. Currently the labour force is expanding at a rate of about 3 per cent a year, while employment growth is negative, and analysts estimate that only one in 30 new entrants into the labour market will find a job in the formal sector of the economy (Erasmus, 1999). Youths and persons with lower skills levels are those most affected by this situation, and an analysis of the situation in South Africa reveals that unemployment predominantly occurs in the age group 20 to 44. It is estimated that 72 per cent of the unemployed are younger than 40 years of age and that 41 per cent of all unemployed people 20 years and older can be considered illiterate or severely under-educated (Erasmus, 1999).

3 YOUTH'S VIEWS ON THEIR SITUATION AND THE ECONOMY

It is difficult, and in some cases impossible, for outsiders to interpret what youth groups in various parts of the country consider to be an acceptable and sustainable livelihood. Researchers sometimes are amazed to discover that young respondents appear content to continue living in a relatively comfortable "squatter hut" as long as they can afford "luxuries" such as fashionable clothes and entertainment. Research for policy purposes will therefore first of all have to take cognisance of the perceptions, preferences and needs of young people themselves. This section is devoted to such an overview, based on a national survey, before the perceptions will be contextualised in the following sections.

The 1998 HSRC nation-wide survey (referred to as the HSRC survey) showed that most young people were unhappy and pessimistic about their living circumstances, although they remained fairly optimistic about the future. Contemporary views of youth on economic matters, livelihoods, etc., were collected by means of the survey conducted for the HSRC in November/December 1998³. Since the sample was representative of all population and age groups from 18 years upwards, the youth section of the survey largely reflected the views of the majority group, i.e. black youth between the ages of 18 and 34. Because the sample cells of the other youth population groups were proportionally small, it is not feasible to compare their views with those of young black people. However where relevant, comparisons were made between age, gender and income groupings. Questions about government's performance

regarding the economy and the provision of services should also be seen against the background that 53.5 per cent of the youth sample group indicated that they would support the ANC at that stage.

Respondents were asked how the financial situation in their households had changed in the previous year (before November/December 1998). Most youth felt that it was a lot worse (25.0 per cent) or a little worse (26.4 per cent) and only 2.6 per cent felt that it was a lot better. That young people were generally dissatisfied with their livelihoods, in particular the financial situation in their households, was indicated by the responses 'dissatisfied' (37.5 per cent) and 'very dissatisfied' (23.1 per cent). Most of the group felt that the situation in other households was about the same or a little better.

The general economic situation in the country was also perceived to have deteriorated during the previous year – to "it got a lot worse" (25.9 per cent) and to "it got a little worse" (26.3 per cent). Still, a considerable number of youths felt that the situation had stayed the same or improved a little. Youth perceptions were more optimistic than those of the total sample, of whom 31.4 per cent felt that the situation had "got a lot worse". Asked whether they were satisfied with the general economic situation in the country, 39.9 per cent the youth answered "dissatisfied" and 21.7 per cent "very dissatisfied". This reflected the general feeling of the total sample.

Cautious optimism about changes for the better within the near future (the next year) was considerably higher among young people than other age groups. No less than 32.3 per cent of the 18 to 24 year-old respondents felt that the general economic situation in the country would "get a little better" (25.5 per cent of 25 to 34 year-old), as opposed to 16.2 per cent of people over 55 years. These percentages also reflected the perceptions about changes in respondents' own households and the economic situation of people like themselves.

Youth's optimism about improvement in their livelihoods over the longer term was even more pronounced. Most of them felt that the economic situation for people like themselves would improve a little during the next five years (29.4 per cent), or even a lot (20.1 per cent). Only 15.9 per cent believed that the situation would get a lot worse.

It should be encouraging for the present government that, in spite of the general dissatisfaction with their own financial position, most young women and men felt that the economic situation of people like themselves had actually improved compared with what they were at the time of the April 1994 elections. A third of them (33.8 per cent) felt that the situation was a little better, 7.9 per cent that it was a lot better, and 20.8 per cent that it was about the same. A large group also

expressed their feelings about the way South Africa was being governed at present as "satisfied" (30.1 per cent) or "very satisfied" (12.4 per cent). Still, a substantial section answered "dissatisfied" (28.9 per cent) and "very dissatisfied" (15.3 per cent). The majority expressed trust (37 per cent) or strong trust in the national government as an institution.

More young people (51.9 per cent) than the older age groups also felt that government should adopt a more active role in the economy. The same pattern and statistics applied with regard to willingness to pay more taxes if this would allow the government to improve services that were important to the respondents. However this did not mean that youth were uncritical of government policies. No less than 41.2 per cent felt that government policies during the previous year had had a bad effect on the general economic situation in the country, however substantial portions also believed that the policies did not make much difference (33.3 per cent) or had a good effect (17.6 per cent). Similar sentiment were expressed regarding government policies' effect on the position of people like the respondents and slightly more positive regarding the financial situation in their households. Asked about the possible effect of these policies on the general economic situation in the country for the following year, less youth answered "bad" (33.2 per cent) than the older age groups (ranging from 40 to 53 per cent).

A large majority of young respondents (82.5 per cent) answered "no" when asked if they had benefited from the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme. With the exception of the provision of electricity and health care, young people felt that the delivery of various services had not improved or improved substantially since the general elections of 1994 in the area where they lived.

Turning to the employment situation, a solid majority of the total group (55.7 per cent) and slightly fewer youth (51 per cent) felt that government policies for the previous year were to blame for unemployment. They were asked if these policies had had a good or bad effect, or whether they had not made much difference to the prospects of people like the respondents getting or keeping a job. On the other hand, some youths felt that the policies were good (14.4 per cent) or that they did not make a difference (29.6 per cent).

The same criticism regarding the negative influences of government policies on prices that people like the respondents had to pay was expressed. A large majority of the total sample (65 per cent) answered "bad", with youth slightly less (60.7 per cent).

Considerably more young people (62.5 per cent) than the older groups felt that a strong and active labour movement was necessary to defend the economic interests of the majority of South Africans. A large majority of youth (65.6 per cent) also agreed with the statement that employers should give preference to people from previously disadvantaged groups when they hire and promote workers.

As was stated, the non-black section of the youth sample was not large enough for sound comparisons, however it is clear that the most significant differences can be found between racial groups. Whereas 28.9 per cent of the black youth were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the general economic situation in the country, the percentages were considerably higher for whites (41.5 per cent), Asians (37.5 per cent) and coloureds (31.8 per cent). Only 13.7 per cent of young black people felt that the economic situation of people like themselves were "a little" or "a lot" worse than in April 1994, but negativity was higher among whites (32.4 per cent), Asians (24.8 per cent) and coloureds (22.8 per cent). Only 10.2 per cent of black youth believed that the economic situation of people like themselves would get "a little" or "a lot" worse during the next five years, while pessimism was high among whites (37.5 per cent) and Asians (19.8 per cent), with coloureds (5.5 per cent) even more optimistic than blacks. Whereas only 14.0 per cent of blacks felt that their standard of living would worsen during the next 12 months, again whites (37.2 per cent) and Asians (42.1 per cent) felt that it would get worse, while coloureds (11.6 per cent) again were the most optimistic. In contrast to the black youth, the other race groups all felt that fighting crime was a more important priority for the government than creating more jobs.

Generally, youth groups in the lower income brackets (below R830 p.m.) were more satisfied with, and optimistic about, their own standard of living and the economic situation than those in the higher income brackets. The former group was also much more optimistic about the economic circumstances in the next five years. One of the explanations could be that most respondents in the lower income group were still largely financially supported and did not experience economic hardships directly.

Regarding most of the key issues discussed above, there were few differences between the young female and male respondents. Only 31.1 per cent of the females, as opposed to 37.3 per cent of the males, felt that the economic circumstances of people like themselves were "a little better" compared to April 1994, but in other respects the gender groups were equally positive and optimistic about their situation and that of the country.

Even if the statistics surveyed here mainly reflect the views of the majority of youth, i.e. black youth, it should be clear that South African youth as a whole have a strong opinion and remain a force to be reckoned with by decision makers. A survey of 1992 and various analyses (Slabbert *et al.*, 1994) showed that a small but significant component of the youth was highly militant before the political transition. Surveys since then have given the impression that this attitude has more or less "softened". In the face of growing unemployment, young women and men are understandably critical and even despondent about their own position and future in the economy, yet they remain optimistic. In spite of their critical stance they remain fairly loyal to the central government as an institution. They expect from the government that they have elected to help secure their future by fighting crime and creating employment.

The loyalty of young (black) people to the central government has significant implications for the possibilities of government interventions and programmes aimed at youth. Elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa youth have lost their confidence in governments and it is widely perceived that these institutions have failed them (Mkandawire & Chigunta, 1997). Still, South African youth's dissatisfaction with their economic situation and livelihoods should be seen as danger signals in a situation where it is highly unlikely that the government will, in the short run, be able to provide jobs, amenities, quality education, RDP services, etc.

At this stage it is a particularly good sign that, in spite of the hardships that they experience, youth have not lost their optimism and belief in the future. Even during the last years of apartheid (1993 to 1994), *The Co-operative Research Programme: South African Youth* (Slabbert *et al.*, 1994) found that the majority of young people were overwhelmingly positive and optimistic about their role in the country's future, and subscribed to community and family values.

The same trends were found recently in the HSRC project *A community youth development programme for the Khayalami Metropolitan Council* (KMC) of 1997 to 1999. This was the most comprehensive investigation into youth development to date. It included a survey among 1500 youth of the KMC area (Schurink, 1999) and a model for and an evaluation of the empowerment process that led to the establishment of the Khayalami Youth Council and all its new representative structures (Malan, 1999). The survey (Schurink, 1998) showed that most youth in the entire KMC area were in urgent need of information, training, guidance and other forms of empowerment. In particular they needed training in life skills, which training should address the most serious issues, such as health training and the prevention of crime, as well as economic empowerment and entrepreneurship training. In spite of this, most young people remained optimistic about the future and their own role in society. Considerable

numbers of (largely black) youth participated in the empowerment process that led to the establishment of the new regional youth council.

4 FACTORS INHIBITING PRODUCTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

Why do youth in one of the richest countries in Africa find themselves in a situation where they are generally pessimistic about their livelihood situation and their position in the economy? In this survey a conscious effort will be made to focus not only on the obvious answers, such as the lack of employment opportunities which may be linked to the legacy of apartheid. There is a range of factors inhibiting young women and men from contributing productively to society (listed in NYC, 1997, CASE, 1997, etc.). These include:

- The inability of the economy to absorb even skilled workers while low growth rates persist.
- The general lack of vocationally oriented education and training for the unemployed. The failure of the formal education system to provide for this group can be seen in persistently high non-literacy and semi-literacy levels. Most of the "out-of-school" young women and men are unable to acquire sustainable livelihoods on even the most elementary levels.
- The high incidence of crime and violence. The National Crime Prevention Strategy (RSA, 1997a) emphasises that, in many instances youth are both the perpetrators and victims of the rampant crime and violence. Gangsterism and crime are often perceived as an "easy option" for unemployed youth. In the HSRC survey young respondents (39.3 per cent) considered fighting crime as the most important government priority. It was asked how safe South Africa as a country is to live in, and youth respondents were generally negative, indicating "unsafe" (34.6 per cent) or "very unsafe" (14.1 per cent). They were critical of government's control over the crime situation at present, and 45 per cent felt that it had no control at all, while a large percentage (38.3 per cent) felt that it had control only to a small extent.
- Health-related issues such as HIV/AIDS and substance abuse are claiming thousands of young victims and have a devastating impact on the economy.
- The disruption of social and family structures is eroding society and is the cause of an unstable childhood for many young people. Values such as a belief and pride in hard work, honesty, respect for authority and the law, etc., are constantly undermined. Fundamental changes to traditional patterns of life in both urban and rural areas makes it increasingly difficult for youth to rely on the traditional social support systems (Grant & Schnurr, 1999).
- Early school leavers are particularly ill equipped to acquire sustainable livelihoods. They no longer have the benefits of formal education and most

resources and attention by far are directed towards the formal educational sector.

- Where training for groups such as these is available, it is mostly sectoral, *ad hoc*, aimed at “quick-fixes” and contributes little to a holistic empowerment process based on essential life skills.

There certainly are no simple answers to the questions surrounding these problems and simplified solutions might create dangerous expectations. For instance, many role players – and apparently even the National Youth Policy (NYP) – maintain that intervention by government, in collaboration with the formal sector, is the only workable solution. Certainly, next to fighting crime, youth in the HSRC survey viewed creating more jobs in the next ten years as the most important government priority (34 per cent). Government intervention also seems to be the preferred main strategy of the National Youth Commission (NYC). Although the NYP acknowledges the role of innovation and enterprise, its proposed strategy focuses on collective youth programmes and large-scale mobilisation (such as the National Youth Service and a national youth employment strategy). One may ask whether this emphasis is at the expense of recognising the importance and role of the informal sector and alternatives to mobilisation.

One of the main reasons why sceptics will question large-scale government intervention, which is discussed below, is disillusionment of large segments of Anglophone African society, particularly youth. For instance, it is no longer believed that central government and its policies could protect the vulnerable.

Is the situation different for youth in South Africa? During the political transition in this country it seemed that young people's position had at last changed considerably. For the first time, a youth policy was introduced and then President Nelson Mandela and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who took charge of policy development, both afforded youth development their personal attention. However, while women as a sector of society have been in the position to considerably strengthen their position in society since 1994 – particularly through representation in parliament – the opposite is true for youth.

Although a number of important policy documents concerning youth have been produced, there have been few implementation results. Various government departments are addressing some of the most burning issues, but research has indicated that only a systematic and holistic approach to the interrelated problems can produce effective results (Slabbert *et al.*, 1994; CASE, 1997; JEP, 1998).

According to various observers (such as JEP, 1998) no major national youth organisation has so far managed to produce any significant results in improving

the plight of the youth. The National Youth Commission (NYC) remains the only really significant role player within a youth constituency, primarily because it is responsible for the development of the NYP. Some youth circles have high hopes for the South African Youth Council, but many have not.

The NYC, which was established in 1996, and its NYP, adopted only in 1998, has so far had little impact on young people's situation. JEP (1998:4) notes that the NYC does not have the resources to translate the NYP into tangible implementation strategies and that the government's GEAR policy (RSA, 1996) has not been able to provide the growth in employment opportunities that was envisaged. The National Job Summit of October 1998 (RSA, 1998a) explicitly recognised the tremendous marginalisation of youth in the economy. Many young men and women therefore feel that their position in society has deteriorated since the transition to democracy. The early school leavers whose prospects for sustainable livelihoods are already bleak as a result of declining economic conditions, have suffered most. There are a number of basic reasons for young people to leave school: the lack of employment opportunities, even for the skilled is demoralising; a lack of even basic school fees and support by parents and other role players; the crises in education; general demoralisation; negative peer pressure; etc. The situation was exacerbated by political promises for job creation, particularly connected to the transitional Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), of which little materialised.

Instead, it has become an easy alternative for society to evade its responsibility towards a third of its youth by labelling them as "lazy" or "without moral fibre". It is easy to stereotype those young women and men who cannot productively participate in society as mostly belonging to subcultures and groups such as gangsters and other juvenile delinquents, such as drug addicts, street children or prostitutes.⁴

5 INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF YOUTH AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Traditionally youth have not been in the position to assert themselves in terms of national policy development, but across the world governments are increasingly aware of young people's position in society. Almost 30 per cent of the world's total population, i. e. one and a half billion people are between the ages of 10 and 24. By the year 2025 their numbers are projected to reach nearly 2 billion (cf. Population Reference Bureau, 1996). In Africa, more than half of the people are under the age of 25. In spite of the many health and educational problems, the health status of youth is improving internationally, and today's young people

are more likely to complete secondary school than any previous generation (Valla, 1996).

Still, across the world, youth are amongst the sectors of society worst affected by problems related to unemployment. Unemployment and under-employment are persistent long-term trends, affecting up to 30 per cent of the global work force, amounting to some 820 million men and women (Grierson, 1997: 1).

Even though international attention to youth policies is a relatively recent phenomenon, many international organisations have recognised the urgent need for youth empowerment and development. In a number of cases, they have initiated action plans to address these issues. These organisations include the UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, and IDRC (also with their ACACIA and ASPR programmes in Africa). The opening clause of the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth states that (NYC, 1997: 81):

Every State should provide its young people with opportunities for obtaining education, for acquiring skills and for participating fully in all aspects of society, with a view to, *inter alia*, acquiring productive employment and leading self-sufficient lives.

The influential United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in June 1992, paid specific attention to youth's participation in decision-making and their need for creating sustainable livelihoods (UNCED, 1992):

Numerous actions and recommendations within the international community have proposed to ensure that youth are provided a secure and healthy future, including an environment of quality, improved standards of living and access to education and employment.

Among the UN ESCAP's major objectives for national youth policies are the encouragement of full participation of youth in the socio-economic development of the country, and to produce good citizens and leaders (UN ESCAP, 1997). The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) recognises that communities should be built through the provision of opportunities to earn a livelihood. The approaches of their Community Adaptation and Sustainable Livelihoods section will be discussed below. The same principles guided the Assessment of Social Policy Reform (ASPR) programme of the IDRC, which will also be surveyed below.

6 AFRICA: YOUTH'S PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE⁵

Youth participation in the economy and in civil society has benefited considerably from the processes of democratisation in the region. The establishment of youth councils in almost every country in southern Africa is in itself a response to the growing numbers of youth organisations, which are a reflection of a liberalised political environment. Young men and women from civil society organisations are increasingly being afforded an opportunity to express their political views through the youth council forums. In the past five years their participation has been particularly noticeable in the realm of youth policy development (Mwansa, Mufune and Osei-Hwedie, 1994; Mkandawire, 1997b). This area has emerged as a conduit for the articulation of their political views, most of which are a direct criticism of government policies. They have expressed concern about issues like youth unemployment, crime and violence, youth health problems and gender inequalities. All these issues mirror the wider societal or national development concerns.

Youth are clearly beginning to reassert themselves in many countries by forming non-partisan associations whose primary objective is to articulate their interests and needs. Undoubtedly, these new youth organisations will increasingly act as pressure groups to compel governments in the region to formulate policies and programmes that reflect the needs of young people. In the case of South Africa for instance, the growing concern about youth unemployment resulted in the National Youth Council convening a National Youth Job Summit in 1997.

The subject of youth unemployment is reflected in literally all national youth policies in Commonwealth Africa. Most countries have identified youth unemployment as a problem that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, the resulting national Programmes of Action on youth are not clear on how the growing levels of youth unemployment will be curbed. There is a rather naive assumption that, since one of the major hurdles to the creation of self-employment among youth is limited access to credit, what needs to be put in place is a micro-credit programme to promote micro-enterprise development.

7 THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT IN AFRICA

The IDRC (1998b) lists several conditions such as demographics and a low level of GNP that make the plight of youth in Africa particularly challenging. The IDRC's Sustainable Livelihoods research was motivated by a growing concern that significant numbers of developing country youth lack a solid institutional context for developing their life and employability skills, leading to

unemployment and poverty. One of the commissioned reports notes that “youths constitute 40 to 65 per cent of the unemployed in African countries, and this figure has been rising. For instance, between 1986 and 1991 the proportion of youth who were unemployed in Zambia increased from 19 to 27 per cent. At present youth unemployment in Zambia stands at 30 per cent. Unemployment is particularly severe in the age group 12 to 19 years ... in Africa many children at the age of 12 are forced to enter the labour force as they cannot continue in school for various reasons” (IDRC, 1997b: 16).

Several conditions make the plight of youth in Africa particularly challenging. The most important is the juxtaposition between stagnant economic growth and a burgeoning youth population. Of 34 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Mead (1994) notes that GNP per capita declined from 1980 to 91 in 23 countries and was virtually stagnant in three others. The Anglophone Africa study cites a poverty assessment survey for 1996 that found that “76.6 per cent of those surveyed believed that they were poorer than they had been 5 years before” (IDRC, 1997b: 5).

According to the 1998 UNFPA report on the State of World Population, over 50 per cent of the global increase in young people (age 10 to 24) since 1980 occurred in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, approximately 75 per cent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 30 and approximately 50 per cent under the age of 15 (UNFPA, 1998).

Africa’s total population more than doubled between 1950 and 1980 and is expected to double again after the year 2000. Consequently, young people are a large portion of the African population. Over half the population is under 25. This increase in young people will eventually increase the numbers of economically active people. For West Africa, this increase has been estimated at 2.31 per cent a year from 1980 to 1985, 2.57 per cent from 1985 to 1990, 2.69 per cent from 1990 to 1995, and 2.84 per cent from 1995 to 2000 (Ndongo, 1997: 2).

Young people have benefited substantially from the processes of democratisation and policy development, including the youth policies surveyed above. When the focus turns to economic conditions and unemployment, a far less optimistic picture emerges. In their study of enterprise and entrepreneurship in African countries, Mkandawire and Chigunta (1997) describe a backdrop for the development crises which most Anglophone African countries have been facing since the mid 1970s and that have over the years induced far reaching economic reforms. Designed to improve economic management and performance, the reforms entail undertaking painful economic restructuring. A

major effect of the reforms is that the formal, largely urban based sector, is losing ground as an important labour sponge, much as the urban areas have deteriorated as a haven for safeguarding survival, especially for the youth. The restructuring of both the public and private sectors in the region has worsened the position of young people through retrenchments, liquidation of companies and labour market freezes and shrinkage.

Mkandawire and Chigunta (1997) appear to believe that the on-going economic reforms in Anglophone Africa have to a large extent shattered hopes for a better future among the youth. However, seen from the positive side, these reforms present new challenges and opportunities for the youth to enter potentially gainful employment through enterprise and entrepreneurship development. Already the urban informal and rural/agricultural sectors have grown in importance as sources of employment in the region.

In their discussion of development problems in the region, the IDRC (1998a) indicated that Africa presents the opportunity to improve the livelihoods of youth by means of enterprise. To begin with, there is acute and widespread poverty. Economies of the region are in the midst of significant structural adjustment, which nevertheless fails to meet the needs of a burgeoning youth population. In this process, masses of young people are moving away from rural, agrarian-based economies to urban centres in the hope of improving their lives.

Traditionally, it was accepted that formal education and vocational training systems imparted the skills needed for entry into the formal labour market. Reforms are now in place to integrate enterprise skills development with vocational training. However, a large majority of young people exits the formal education system before Level 7 and is unlikely to be in the position to access the training services offered by these reforms.

The decline of formal sector livelihood opportunities has resulted in increased informal sector activity, accounting for up to 80 per cent of GDP in some African countries.⁶ This is largely due to the vast numbers of young men and women entering the world of work prematurely and coping with poverty by barely scraping together a livelihood in the informal sector. Although economic adjustment envisages the possibility of a better policy environment for employment growth and enterprise development, the immediate effect has been to reduce the capacity of the economy to absorb new entrants into the workforce.

During this economic adjustment period, most young people are without direction in the sense that traditional socio-economic paths are eroded, yet new paths are not fully developed. With change also comes opportunity. The literature points to the increased demand for skills in certain sectors. For

example, tourism services, information and communication technology and environment sectors are increasingly offering livelihood opportunities. Moreover, structural adjustment programmes have assigned a significant role to endogenous enterprise and entrepreneurship in economic and social change.

8 LIVELIHOOD AND EMPLOYMENT ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICA⁸

There is substantial political commitment by the NYC in South Africa to award youth livelihood and self-employment skills development priority. This was prompted by the recognition that after 40 years of Bantu Education and other apartheid policies, many African communities became underdeveloped, especially in the former homelands.

The NYC, which received the legal mandate from government to co-ordinate national youth programmes, has identified the following elements which are intended to guide the national youth livelihood and self-employment initiatives.

- The establishment of a youth clearing house, that will provide information to unemployed and out of school young men and women on employment and training opportunities. The National Youth Information Service was established in 1998 and is contributing much to the dissemination of information that young people need for self-development.
- The co-ordination of a series of activities designed to promote the employment of young people and identify and research issues affecting young unemployed men and women. This will include labour market analysis, the design of youth training agreements and programmes and the promotion of specific sectors for youth employment such as science and technology.
- The promotion of Youth Enterprise Development, which will involve co-ordinated skills and activities designed to address the specific needs and opportunities facing young people in the field of self-employment and enterprise development. This will include the preparation of a National Youth Enterprise Policy and the subsequent design of programmes and services that promote self-employment opportunities. The specific barriers and constraints experienced by young people attempting to enter business or by those already in some kind of business, need to be addressed. (NYC, 1998).

The NYC has made the important observation that youth employment creation can only be viable when it is integrated with other broader youth employment initiatives. For instance, a micro-credit programme that is not linked to the

provision of marketing information, training of beneficiaries in entrepreneurship, communication and the development of interpersonal relationship skills, among others, is unlikely to create long-term employment prospects for young people. As observed elsewhere (Mkandawire and Chigunta, 1998), governments in Africa have established a number of micro-credit initiatives to promote micro-enterprise development among young people. One of the major weaknesses of these initiatives however, is that most of the micro-credit programmes over-emphasise the credit aspect in isolation of other broader employment concerns, such as training in entrepreneurship skills and manufacturing related programmes.

Micro-credit programmes in Africa have as a consequence turned out as a "quick-fix" solution to the youth unemployment problem. Most young men and women with no discernible production related skills, or entrepreneurial skills, resort to "quick-fix" money-making ventures, such as vending. A vending youth culture has therefore evolved and is being fuelled by the micro-credit programmes currently being promoted by governments in most African countries.

Notable micro-credit programmes for youth exclusively, have for instance been established in Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, among other countries. Most of these micro-credit schemes were not only established without a careful analysis of the prevailing social, cultural and economic environment where they were supposed to operate, but in many cases they were not linked to other broader youth employment concerns such as markets (Mkandawire and Chigunta, 1997). It is consequently not surprising that success stories in the delivery of micro-credit programmes as a strategy for creating youth employment in Africa are very rare.

9 LARGE-SCALE PROGRAMMES VS. THE INFORMAL SECTOR

As mentioned above, many role players, and apparently even the NYP, maintain that intervention by government, in collaboration with the formal sector, is the only workable solution. This also seems to be the preferred strategy of the NYC. Although the NYP acknowledges the role of enterprise, its proposed major strategy focuses on collective youth programmes and large-scale mobilisation.

The NYP emphasises government responsibility and the role of institutional structures. In the NYP survey of institutions and agencies responsible for youth development (NYC, 1997: 55-63) a considerable number of central, provincial and local institutions (mainly committees) are listed. By contrast, only a few paragraphs are devoted to non-government institutions (mainly the South

African Youth Council [SAYC]) while the informal sector is not even mentioned.

Central to the NYC's action plan is the proposed National Youth Service. The technical task team responsible for the Green Paper on National Youth Service (RSA, 1998a) released in October 1998, recommended that pilot programmes begin as early as 1999. The Task Team is of the view that different categories of youth require different types of services. The Green Paper identifies four key target groups as beneficiaries of the service: higher education students, further education and training students, unemployed young people and youth in conflict with the law.

The urgency to address youth unemployment and the widespread lack of training were also clearly recognised at the National Job Summit held on 31 October 1998 (RSA, 1998b). All parties were committed to the progressive building of South Africa's human capacity at all educational levels. An emphasis on learnerships was important for this project. A learnership is a work-based route of learning, and is one of the initiatives proposed in the Skills Development Bill. All parties were also fully committed to learnerships, an example of which is the partnership between business and government in Tourism and Hospitality to support some 6 000 learnerships. Another important decision emerging from the summit, was to initiate special measures to train and support women entrepreneurs.

The larger part of the summit's decisions on youth referred to the Youth Brigade Programme. This programme will be established as a means to involve youth in public and community service and to facilitate their access to income generating opportunities. There will be three leading programmes: Working for Water, The Clean and Green Cities Campaign and the Community Based Public Works Programme. Participants in a youth brigade would provide public works and/or community service, receive accredited education and training, as well as an allowance. Aids Brigades would launch a campaign against HIV/Aids. In addition to the Brigade, Government will, through the Departments of Education and Labour, explore opportunities for community service for students in co-operation with a range of stakeholders.

Both the NYP and the range of stakeholders present at the Job Summit therefore emphasised government intervention and were in favour of the overlapping concepts of a Youth Brigade and Youth Service. However, the IDRC (1998b: 34) questions the NYP reliance on institutional and volunteerism factors: "This document focuses disproportionately on awareness of national identity, volunteerism and institutional capacities. However worthwhile these objectives, they are fundamentally disconnected from the practical problems of employment

that policy itself documents in some detail."

The reliance on government intervention, bureaucratic management and collective endeavours might be at the expense of support for individual initiatives and innovation and the strengthening of the informal sector. Yet the informal sector has grown from 1,2 million people in 1994 to 1,8 million in 1997, according to SSA (1998). This is in accordance with international trends: the informal sector already accounts for up to 60 per cent of the labour force in the urban areas of many sub-Saharan African countries (Grierson, 1997: 2). The general lack of recognition of the importance of this sector and of the declining influence of government regarding youth empowerment in Anglophone Africa is cause for concern. On the other hand it should be pointed out that use of the concept "informal sector" is becoming increasingly controversial, particularly since government restrictions on small businesses have been relaxed everywhere.

Certainly a formally constituted governmental base responsible for policy formulation and implementation is integral to the success of youth development, as Mwansa, Mufune and Osei-Hwedie (1994: 261) conclude in their comparative study of youth policy in Botswana, Swaziland and Zambia. But in this regard, some hard lessons have been learnt in Africa. Earlier reference was made to the disillusionment of large segments of Anglophone African society, particularly youth, and that they no longer believe that central government and its policies could protect the vulnerable. The youth have adopted self-reliance coping strategies in order to survive the devastation brought by the economic crises and the social harshness of the measures implemented to combat it. Many youths no longer look up to the state, and have begun adopting practical survival strategies. This has resulted in the rapid growth of the informal sector in the region.

South African circumstances show a clear need for an emphasis on technology transfer and entrepreneurship in a national strategy to address unemployment. The White Paper on Science and Technology (RSA, 1997c) specifies six major requirements for promoting competitiveness and job creation, including a strong technology component for creating and sustaining micro-enterprises and small businesses, and development and entrepreneurship.

The need for a comprehensive and holistic strategy to address youth employment has been widely recognised since youth policy came under scrutiny. The Co-operative Research Programme: South African Youth drew attention to the low priority accorded to self-employment and entrepreneurship, and called for education and training to inform people of opportunities in these

areas (Slabbert *et al.*, 1994: 137). They suggest three specific ways to empower the unemployed:

- Education should be used to help eliminate the harmful effects of myths and stereotypes apropos the unemployed.
- There is a need for direct support services for the unemployed through the family, which currently provides most of the social and moral security for the unemployed in its midst.
- The unemployed should be helped to externalise blame for their being without work. Solidarity among the unemployed needs to be supported to provide a positive reference group for these people (Slabbert *et al.*, 1994: 136).

10 YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

Some form of employment, including self-employment, is crucial for a sustainable livelihood. However, if research is to identify ways for youth to play a truly productive role in building a prosperous and democratic society, much more than employment should be investigated. International youth development organisations are placing the empowerment of young people in a broader societal context. Following this worldwide trend, the Joint Enrichment Project (JEP, 1998: 1) has since 1994, worked towards an integrated and holistic strategy where government, the corporate sector and NGOs work together. Their strategy is called an Integrated Approach to Youth Development (IAYD). It wants to move away from the traditional focus on training only, and emphasises three areas: skills (technical) training, education support and life skills. An example of an approach that did not work was the short-term training provided by the Regional Training Centres, which often did not equip trainees to move into formal employment.

The integrated strategies developed by JEP and a number of other NGOs (JEP, 1998: 6) locate development of the young individual within a network formed by civil society, government, the community, family structures, youth culture and the media. In most approaches such as the IAYD, the emphasis is on personal empowerment, learning as opposed to only training and a comprehensive development process.

Personal empowerment is learned by discovering that even those labelled as poor or disadvantaged or otherwise socially incapacitated can triumph and improve their own lot. Real empowerment is the sense of efficacy that occurs when people realise they can solve the problems they face and have the right to contest unjust conditions. Empowerment is the process of gaining control over

different forms of social power. It also occurs when people gain skills and feel more confident.

Development is that process by which the disguised, unexpected, latent characteristics or potential of (young) people are developed, made available, utilised or transformed for the enhancement of their quality of life, the stimulation of environmentally sensitive modernisation and the improvement of the social functioning of those people.

11 BASIC COMPETENCIES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Youth development education programmes and policies will be assessed to determine if they address the five basic competency areas identified by Pittman (1991) as essential for success in adulthood:

1. *Vocational competence* – Understanding and awareness of life planning and career choices, leisure and work options, and steps to act on those choices.
2. *Personal and social competence* – Skills for understanding self and having self-discipline; working with others, communicating, co-operating, negotiating and building relationships; coping, adapting and being responsible; and finally, making good judgements, evaluating, making decisions and problem-solving.
3. *Citizenship competence.*
4. *Health and physical competence.*
5. *Cognitive and creative competence.*

While these five competency areas are an ideal focus for intentional learning experiences for non-formal youth development education programmes, they are also central to many school curricula. It is the educational design and delivery system that commonly distinguishes formal and non-formal education.

12 THE LIVELIHOOD, ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT CAPABILITIES APPROACH

The notion of a livelihood looks beyond the conventional meaning of employment and seeks to understand the fullest range of ways in which young men and women survive. Young men and women are often the last to be employed in the formal economy. They engage in a number of income generating activities to survive, which draw on their capabilities and resources. Underemployment (rather than unemployment) keeps individuals living at a

subsistence level and forces them to underutilise their abilities because of a lack of access to resources.

The World Commission on Environment and Development introduced the concept of sustainable livelihoods in 1987, to relate to ownership of and access to resources, basic needs and existential security, particularly in rural areas. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992 acknowledged the integrative value of the concept in Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992). It also introduced the concept "sustainable livelihoods for all", making it applicable in developing as well as developed countries. The concept enables decision-makers to integrate decisions on socio-economic and ecological policy issues in a coherent structure, which is pertinent to a development policy.

There is currently much discussion regarding the definition of sustainable livelihoods and its relevance to developing countries. According to the IDRC's first phase research findings (1998b), the definitions that have the greatest connection to young people in Africa are those that reflect an understanding of the realities which influence their decisions. For sustainable livelihoods to be relevant to the target group we have defined, it must take into consideration poverty, the lack of formal employment opportunities, family obligations and the significant gap between their education, their inherent capabilities and the resources available to them. Chambers and Conway (1992: 5) define sustainable livelihoods in the following manner:

(A) livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable, can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the local and global levels in the short and long term.

Sustainable livelihoods have been defined by Singh and Titi (1995) as people's capacities to:

...generate and maintain their means of living, enhance their well-being and that of future generations. These capacities are contingent upon the availability of and accessibility to options which are ecological, socio-cultural, economic and political, and are predicated on equity, ownership of resources and participatory decision-making."

Livelihood is therefore a broader category than "having a job" and more in line with the actual manner in which many young men and women in developing countries must organise themselves and their activities in order to survive. The key to generating a sustainable livelihood is adaptability and the utilisation of

what Chambers and Conway (1992: 6) describe as dynamic livelihood capabilities. Chambers considers that, “most livelihoods of the poor will continue to be adaptive performances, improvised and versatile in the face of adverse conditions, shocks and unpredictable change”.

The UNDP (1997: 5) believes that sustainable livelihoods should integrate all economic activities currently defined under employment as well as “introduce the social dimensions of sustainability and equity...” What is proposed is an inclusive, rather than exclusive concept of sustainable livelihood that is potentially applicable to any form of making a living which can be pursued independently, i) without compromising personal security, ii) is reasonably stable across significant periods of time (without of course any guarantee), iii) is mutually beneficial to individuals and their immediate social grouping, as well as to the consumers of their products/services, and iv) does not compromise the physical environment.”

Creating a livelihood is a necessity; making it sustainable is the challenge. Sustainable livelihoods always entail more than employment or economic empowerment, crucial as these aspects may be. Political, ecological, socio-cultural, educational and other factors all are important indicators of a reasonable means of living and well-being.

As UNESCO (1991: 4) points out, there is no direct conflict between employment and unemployment in developing countries, since there are two additional categories – underemployment and work in a family environment – which are geared more towards subsistence than towards commercial production.

The dynamic nature of sustainable livelihoods within different socio-economic contexts is well explained by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). The interaction between these contexts and sectors as theorised by their Community Adaptation and Sustainable Livelihoods (ISSD/CASL, n.d.) is paraphrased in this section. The local economy can be broken down, as can the macro-economy, into a number of sectors or activities. In a pastoral community for example, these might include livestock keeping, cultivation, employment, collecting (including hunting, gathering, fishing) and the informal sector. The relative importance of each sector (percentage contribution to sustainable livelihood) will vary widely from one local economy to another.

The concept of sustainable livelihoods is therefore not static. Because of both internal and external dynamics, to be sustainable a livelihood requires the capability to respond to change, and to continually renew and develop adaptive

strategies. The capacity of households and communities is both reactive in responding to adverse changes in conditions, as well as proactive and dynamically adaptive. Capacities and livelihoods, therefore, have a dynamic relationship; capacities enable a livelihood to be gained while livelihoods provide the support, enhancement and the environment for the exercise of capacities.

Possible indicators of sustainable livelihoods are divided by the IISD (CASL, n.d.) into the following sectors: ecology and environment, infrastructure and technology, socio-cultural, political and economy. Some of the indicators that touch on most of these categories are the following: diversity of income source, HDI index, access to transport, time spent on water source and accumulation of waste.

The notion of dynamic livelihood capabilities dovetails with a broader notion of enterprise and entrepreneurship. Chambers and Conway (1992) describe dynamic livelihood capabilities as “the ability to perceive, predict, adapt to and exploit changes in the physical, social and economic environment.” Canada’s Institute for Enterprise Education defines enterprise as the ability to take initiative to achieve a self-determined goal that is part of a future vision, in order to achieve one’s own meaning in life, while sharing achievements with others in the community” (IEE, 1998). Dynamic livelihood capabilities can be thought of as enterprising behaviour in a developing context.

By enterprise is meant that set of knowledge, skills and attitudes (referred to here as enterprise skills) that allow a person to adapt to changing circumstances by taking control and initiative. When these skills are applied to business formation and expansion, we call this “entrepreneurism” whereas enterprise skills may be applied to a wide variety of other life circumstances including coping with poverty. The IEE (Grant and Schnurr, 1999) sees the need for enterprise skills as being related to fundamental changes in the global economy that place new demands on the individual to create self-supporting skills.

Enterprising behaviour can have various manifestations. It can manifest itself in adapting to adversity in the traditional rural sector and in various forms of self-employment and income generation in the informal sector. A common manifestation of this behaviour is in vending and trading in the urban informal markets, which in many cases is considered an under utilisation of a young person’s potential. More productive manifestations of enterprise capabilities may come in the form of a self-employed clothing maker, bricklayer or furniture maker.

Entrepreneurship is seen as the application of enterprise skills or dynamic livelihood capabilities in the context of long-term business development. According to Loucks (1988), "all entrepreneurs are self-employed, but all self-employed are not entrepreneurs if we interpret entrepreneurship as involving production or sale of a product or service and the person concerned takes a substantial financial risk and its success generates further employment".

Enterprise capabilities allow technical skills to find social and economic expression where formal employment opportunities are constrained. Many young people naturally work in a dynamic, enterprising manner despite the barriers that block their access to important resources. Much of this enterprising behaviour is actually a manifestation of a failure in the employment market. It can be argued that these conditions predispose a larger number of young men and women to self-employment because they have been exposed to it through the inability of the formal market to absorb them.

In summary there are clearly defined sub-groups of school leavers who face different challenges and who possess different enterprise capabilities. The assertion is that enterprise approaches to non-formal training can help alleviate the market failure by: (1) helping young men and women cope; (2) improving the role of self-employment in the form of micro and small enterprise development; and (3) generating more formal employment opportunities by expanding the private sector through entrepreneurship development.

Self-employment will obviously be one of the most important alternatives for early school leavers to be investigated. The self-employed are working owners of unincorporated businesses. These units are also referred to as micro-enterprises (Hoppers, 1994: 5). Grierson (1997: 15) has developed a planning and assessment framework that can be used to evaluate vocational training for self-employment. The (a) selection, (b) training and (c) enterprise stages are distinguished, and respectively combined with "raw material", "processing" and "product" phases. Interventions in favour of self-employment can focus on any or all of these stages. All case studies used for this model demonstrate the close involvement with local communities and markets, and collaboration with other organisations interested in promoting self-employment (1997: 19).

13 A COHERENT APPROACH TO LIVELIHOODS, ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT CAPABILITIES DEVELOPMENT

There are several non-formal training programmes in place in, for example, Malawi, Zambia and South Africa. These programmes focus on developing the livelihood, enterprise and employment capabilities of young men and women.

The programmes are often developed in isolation of each other, with a lack of a detailed understanding of the livelihood contexts and capabilities of the target group and with few if any links to policy and a broader youth skills development strategy.

Viewing the situation from a development perspective, there are vast human resources waiting to be tapped. The 1998 UNFPA report on the world population talks of the bulge in the working age population, largely attributable to the growth in the population of young people (age 15 to 30), as the "demographic bonus", which "offers (developing) countries an opportunity to build human capital and spur long-term development" (UNFPA, 1998). Complementing this potential is a real demand by the private sector for skilled labour in the form of, for example, self-employed bricklayers, carpenters, computer service technicians and sales representatives (Grierson, 1997).

Finally, the study of micro and small enterprise development has produced an abundance of literature on financial and non-financial services for small business development, some of which is relevant to promoting youth enterprise and livelihood skills development (Grierson, 1997). The ILO,⁹ UNICEF and the UNFPA and a number of international NGOs and local community-based organisations have documented experiences on youth life skills development related to self-employment. The lessons learned from these experiences, placed in the context of the livelihood conditions, circumstances and capabilities of young men and women, have the potential to lead to the development of a coherent non-formal training programme framework for the development of youth livelihood, enterprise and employment capabilities.

14 LINKING NON-FORMAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING POLICY OBJECTIVES

The ideal point of entry for the development of employment skills is the education system. However, as mentioned earlier, the current reality in sub-Saharan Africa is that most young men and women leave this system before the age of 12. Skills development of early school leavers, in most cases, falls under the jurisdiction of the ministries of Youth, Gender and Community Affairs. In many cases (e.g., South Africa and Zambia), there are policy objectives for the development of self-employment skills. These objectives are often well articulated and are based on sound reasoning and a good general understanding of the conditions facing young men and women. The problem is that these Ministries tend to be understaffed with limited financial resources to implement these policies. A more efficient non-formal training system, with relevant links to policy could provide the means to implement many existing policy objectives.

In summary, the institutional challenge is to improve the effectiveness of the non-formal training system. There is a need to develop an institutional mechanism to respond to market failures to mediate the latent potential of young people into productive social and economic activity, while understanding their current livelihood conditions and capabilities. In particular there is a need to:

- 1) identify the skills and services demanded and by whom;
- 2) identify the young men and women with the capabilities to fill this demand;
- 3) develop the targeted training to support the development of these capabilities and link the supply of trainees to the demand for skills and services;
- 4) link the intent of skills development policy objectives to the range of effective programmes which do exist; and where possible establish links with the formal education system; and
- 5) identify the appropriate roles for government, civil society and the private sector.

15 SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN THE COMMUNITY

Research into livelihoods should pay particular attention to the existing support structures at the community level. Indeed in the African context, one cannot discuss the concept of a youth livelihood in isolation from the prevailing social, economic and cultural context within which young people find themselves. It will therefore be critical to explore how local communities as well as organisations such as churches or clubs or indeed any other local civil society organisation, support or impinge on sustainable livelihoods for youth.

For instance, in many countries in Africa some young people have sought political space through volunteering to work with local communities, including church organisations. Hence although not fully employed, the political and social space that is provided, enables them to gain some degree of skills including confidence, a sense of belonging and connection to their communities. This provides them with a useful springboard into future employment.

Social support structures are crucial for empowering young women. It comes as no surprise that Sharif (1998) finds that women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially youth, lack equal access to economic resources such as land, improved technology and government services (such as transportation). They also have unequal access to formal education and lack training in management related and technical skills. In South Africa, the National Job Summit (RSA, 1998b) fully recognised women's marginalised position as entrepreneurs and

adopted a range of proposals to remedy the situation. Before their situation is improved, however, they will have to rely heavily on community and family networks.

16 CONCLUSION

The problems facing the youth are so numerous and complex that only some of the most pressing ones could be surveyed here. Valuable lessons can be learned from international and comparative research.

In South Africa, it remains to be seen if the vision articulated by the NYC in the National Youth Policy and strategic plan, and also of the National Job Summit, will be translated into the creation of viable and sustainable livelihood initiatives for the majority of youth. Given the approach that the NYC is considering to adopt, one could only hope that mistakes made in the implementation of programmes to create sustainable livelihoods elsewhere, are avoided in South Africa by acquiring sufficient data about the current status of young men and women in their various livelihood contexts.

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, local statistics regarding youth are based on the 1995 household survey by CASE (1997), which was also used for the National Youth Policy (NYP).
- 2 Note that these statistics used for the NYP do not correlate with those of Statistics South Africa (1998), quoted below, but the survey Co-operative Research Programme: South African Youth found in 1993 that 42 per cent of young people between the ages of 15 and 30 were unemployed (Slabbert *et al.*, 1994:128). Obviously statistics will depend on the definition of "the unemployed" – strictly speaking youth undergoing training or education cannot be considered unemployed.
- 3 The survey involved a countrywide random sample of 2 182 respondents representative of all population groups, provinces and regions (including former TBVC states) of South Africa. Of these, 838 respondents were in the age group 18 to 34, whose views are discussed here. The survey was conducted for the HSRC by Market Research Africa. Multi-stage stratified cluster sampling was employed to draw the sample. Questionnaires were completed by means of personal interviews conducted by trained interviewers.

- 4 Terms used by Everatt & Sisulu (1992) and Everatt & Orkin (1993), but disputed by Slabbert *et al.*(1994) precisely because the negative terms contribute to stereotyping of youth.
- 5 This section is largely based on Mkandawire (1998b).
- 6 The survey of the informal sector is provided by the IDRC (1997a).
- 7 Non-formal training refers to skills development programmes that lie outside the formal education system. These programmes are commonly managed by non-governmental organisations and community based organisations (e.g. church groups) and funded by the private sector, donors and government.
- 8 This section was contributed by Mkandawire (1998a).
- 9 The ILO defines life skills as those that "enhance the abilities of trainees to both cope with the changing environment and translate technical skills into employment. Life skills empower people to make informed choices about their future". Some of these skills will have been acquired through schooling but equally important will be informal and non-formal means of acquiring skills.

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