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AISRGD is pleased to receive funding for the research on: "effectiveness of government policies in addressing youth unemployment in Uganda", from the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA).

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Abstract

The problem of youth unemployment in Africa poses complex economic, social and moral policy issues. The 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda defines youth as all young people between the ages of 18 – 30 years inclusive, Youth and young people constitute 78% of Uganda's total population (currently estimated at 32 million people). Over 7 million people in Uganda are either unemployed or underemployed earning less than US\$ 1 a day; overall unemployment rate is 3.5% while unemployment among the youth is estimated at 22%. (MoGLSD 2006) proportion of youth employment to labour force is 32% for both males and females. Low employment opportunities vis-à-vis growing labour force is a major social and economic problem that has contributed to persistent poverty.

There are two main challenges the youth in Uganda are faced with. These affect both schooling and non-schooling youth. The first challenge, which is more of a global one, is unemployment. There is increased concern over the tragic waste of human potential, particularly for the youth. Most of the youth are either unemployed or underemployed, on the other hand they are also overworked in conditions lacking in the core labour standards. Youth unemployment is worse in urban areas in Uganda, 54% of the employed youth were self employed in 1992/93 and this went down to 40% in 2005/2006. During the same period, the youths who worked as unpaid family workers increased by 9% and the proportion of youths in paid employment increased from 15% to 21%.

Employment of youths in other sectors such as wholesale trade, retail trade and repair activities in the service sector increased from 7% in 1992 (UBOS, 1993) to 9% in 2005/06 (UBOS, 2006) while that in the manufacturing sector remained at an average of 4%. Despite Uganda's policies aimed at enhancing the quality and availability of gainful employment, youth unemployment has remained a major problem to the country (PEAP, 1997; PEAP, 2004; Government of Uganda (GoU), 2010a; GoU, 2010b). The challenge therefore is to design integrated employment-generating policies that can create decent opportunities for young people who represent a majority of the population in Uganda. It is not clear how far government has gone to achieve these in the last 10 years. This is the concern of this study.

Overall the project will assess the impact of government policies as well as factors which have led to the success and failure of employment policies among the youth in urban areas of Uganda. Explain the link between socio-economic and political consequences of youth unemployment to the development of Uganda. Establish unemployment trends among the youth in urban area and seek their views in regard to youth unemployment. Assess the level of youth participation in designing and implementing of policies aimed at addressing youth unemployment. Identify the employment policies formulated and implemented by the government of Uganda and draw lessons from the success and failures of these policies.

A secure and safe workforce that is gainfully employed and globally competitive are some of the areas of discussion in Uganda's policy arena especially around the implementation of the National Development Plan. This study will inform the discussions on how best to achieve these issues. The study will cover the last ten years (2000 – 2010). This period is selected given that a number of policies have been put in place and implemented to addressing poverty and unemployment problems in Uganda.

The study will use three approaches to collect the relevant data in order to achieve the above mentioned objectives. The first approach is a desk review on the trends of youth unemployment in Uganda including; liaising with key institutions directly dealing with labour force and employment issues in Uganda. These have been identified and holding discussions with key persons in the different institutions to be able to establish institutional capacity to handle youth unemployment, resource mobilization and governance issues related to youth employment. Second approach Information regarding the status of employment by the youth will be extracted from the two labour force surveys that were part of the Uganda National Household Surveys (2002/03), 2005/05 and (2009/10).