

Youth Unemployment in Uganda

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Abstract:

This research showcases the difficulties Uganda faces with their increasing youth unemployment, such as school dropouts, teenage pregnancy, and lasting consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak.

It compares how different demographics have an augmented risk of dropping out of school and contrasts policies from other east African countries that helped them decrease their youth unemployment. Particularly, Kenya's and Tanzania's programs in different sectors, such as Kazi Kwa Vijana and Building a better Youth Initiative for Agriculture businesses. The paper also analyses Uganda's previous attempts in decreasing youth unemployment and why they remained unsuccessful.

Finally, the paper recommends solutions to different drawbacks Uganda faces. One of those suggestions is by making contraceptives more accessible to reduce the teenage pregnancy rates. Furthermore, by having inmates aid in building new infrastructure like schools could help increase jobs that were lost during the 2020 Covid outbreak. Uganda could also implement training facilities to help certify more primary and secondary school teachers, as well as advertising more job opportunities. In addition to that Uganda can carry out a similar program to Tanzania to get more youth interested and competent in agriculture.

Keyword: Youth, Unemployment, Uganda

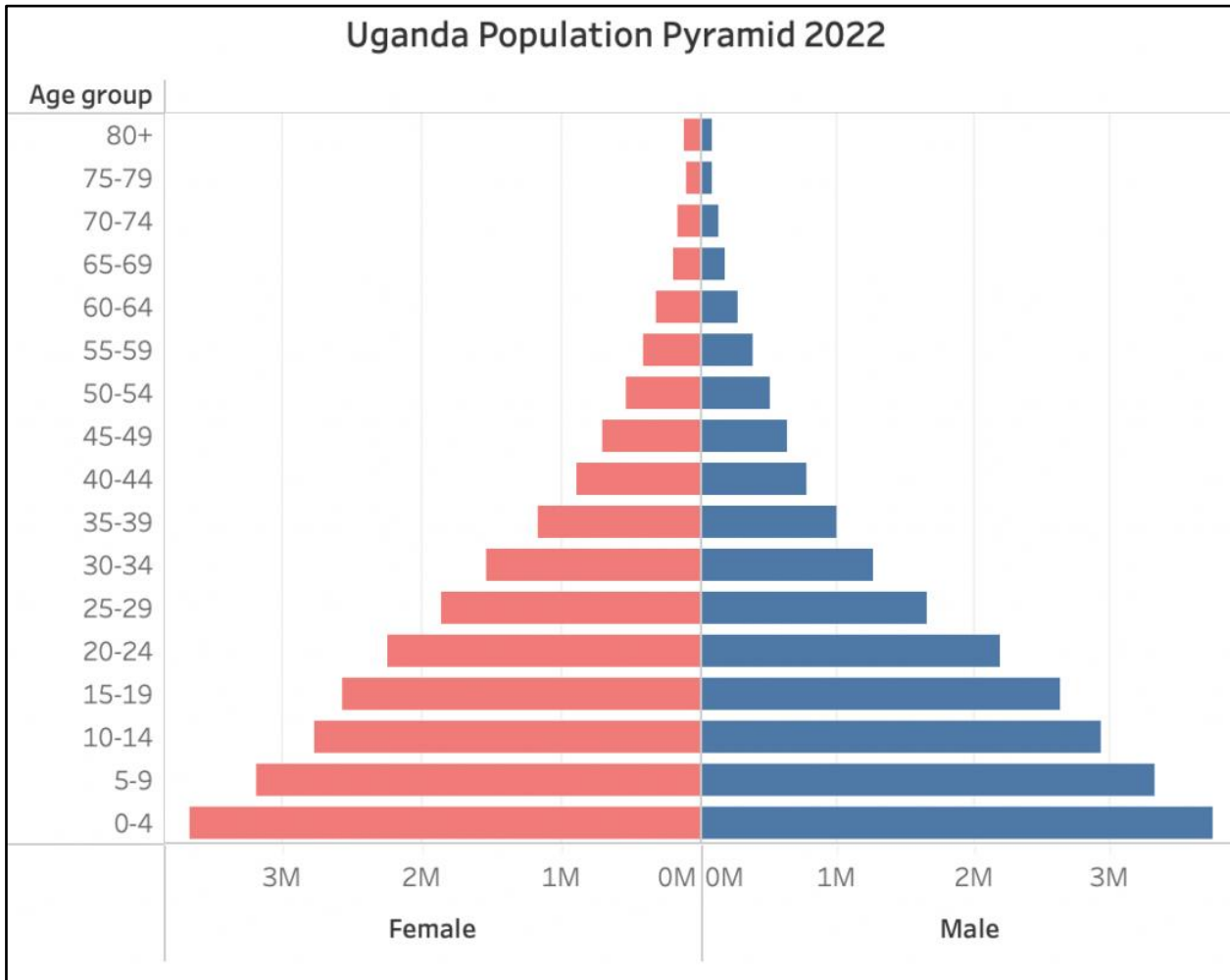
Introduction:

This research highlights the problem of Uganda's increasingly younger population and lack of skills that later lead to one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world. It will show the problems Uganda faces that lead to this rate and will recommend policies to decrease unemployment.

Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world with 78% of their 42.9 million population being under the age of 35. (Unicef, 2015)

The median age being 15.7 years old. (O'Neill, 2023)

Figure 1-Uganda Population Pyramid 2022

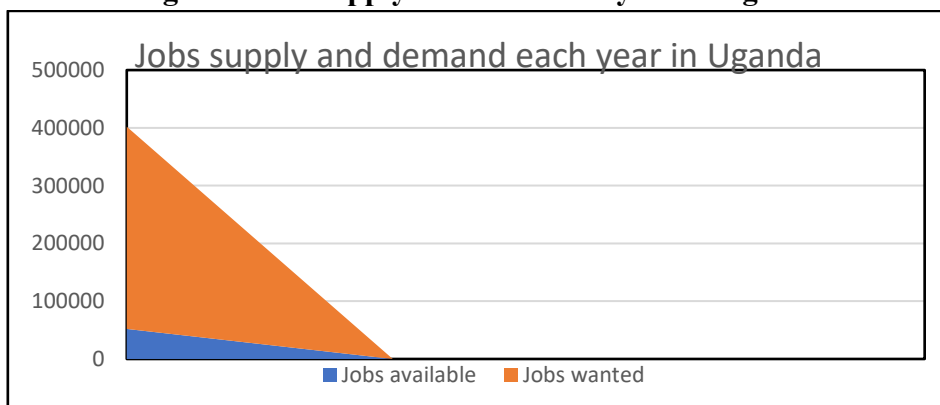


(Uganda_Bureau_of_Statistics, 2022)

The graph above shows an expansive population pyramid. These have greater numbers of the population in the younger age groups, with each age group smaller in size or proportion than the one born before it.

In a considerable amount of time, most of these individuals will or are intending to be part of the employed labor force. Each year 400,000 Ugandans enter the job market to compete for 52,000 jobs, which is illustrated in the graphic below. (Guyson, 2023)

Figure 2-Job supply demands each year in Uganda



According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate among individuals in the country, in the working age group of 18 to 30 is 57.1%. In comparison to other countries in East Africa, this is relatively high. In Tanzania, the youth unemployment rate is 16.1% and in Kenya it is 26.3%. (Uganda_Bureau_of_Statistics, 2022)

High youth unemployment rates have devastating effects on individuals, families and the country’s economy. Therefore, it is important to understand the causes, effects and solutions to the problem of youth unemployment in Uganda, this could form a basis for developing policies and interventions that may decrease youth unemployment.

For youth unemployment to occur, there is first a mismatch between skills possessed by the youth and skills needed by employers. A lot of young people lack skills, for example: technical skills and social capital, which makes them less attractive to employers.

1. The effect of the school system on Youth Unemployment in Uganda:

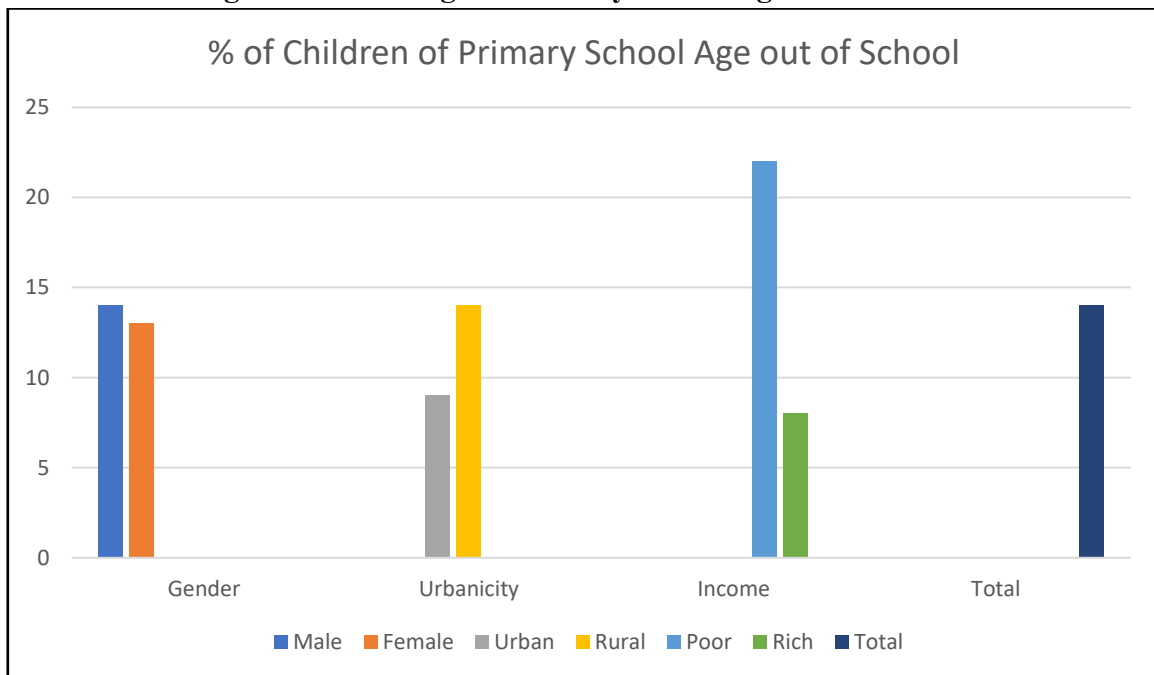
A lot of the time the education system is blamed for producing graduates who lack skills that can help them succeed in the job market.

Uganda’s education system consists of seven years of primary education, followed by the lower secondary cycle of four years and upper secondary cycle of two years. In total 13 years of schooling. Afterwards there is a possibility to go to university that has a time range of three to five years. (Uganda_Ministry_of_Foreign_Affairs, 2017)

Primary School builds the foundation for Secondary School, and the latter builds the foundation to have the skills to be able to work a well-paying job or proceed to further education like university.

The following bar charts illustrate different demographics of children that dropped out of primary or secondary school. They include genders, urbanicity and income.

Figure 3-Percentage of Primary School Age out of School



(World_Bank, 2018)

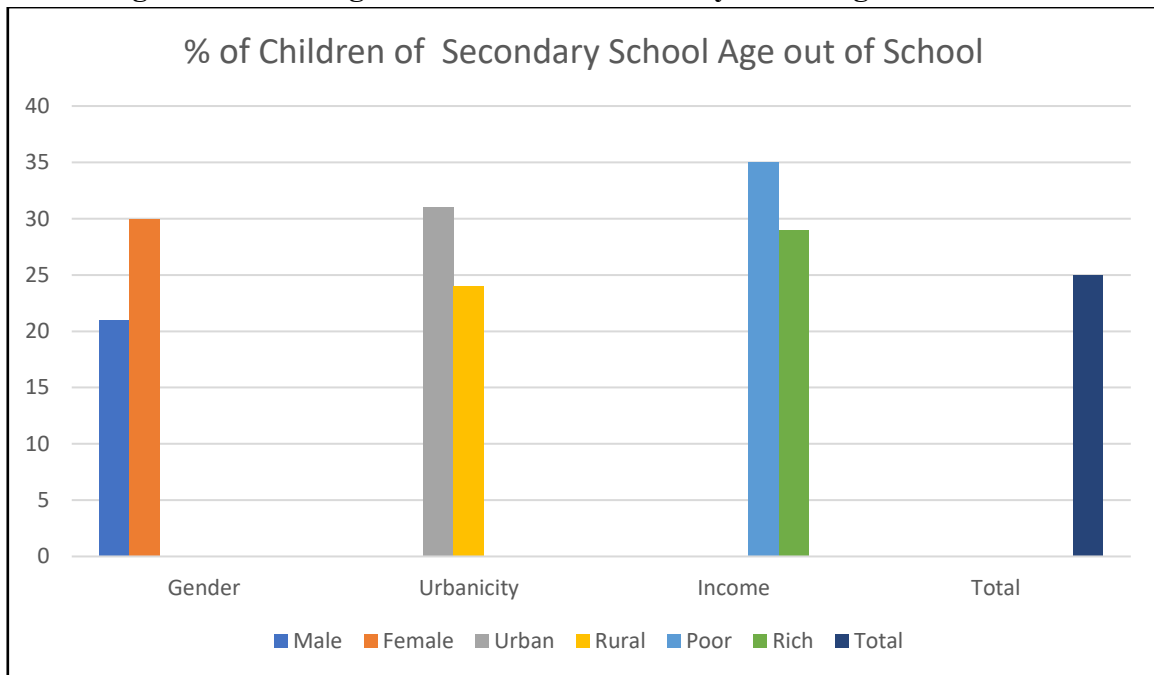
The graph above shows the percentage of children that dropped out of primary school. In total 14% of children are out of primary school.

Starting off with Gender; 14% of boys and 13% of girls are out of school.

Approximately 9% of children living in Urban areas are out of school, while 14% of children living in rural areas are out of school. This shouldn't be too surprising due to the fact that in city-like areas there are more schools and more of an emphasis on why schooling is important and in rural areas children help with farmwork instead of going to school.

According to the statistics, income plays a considerable role in whether or not children are no longer in school. 92% of offspring from rich families are still in school, while 22% of children that are from poor families are no longer in primary school. This is due to the fact that even though there are some public schools in Uganda that do not cost anything, these are rarely sighted and are often too crowded. There aren't sufficient teachers for the increasing population in children. Most schools in the country cost quite a lot of money and the parents cannot afford to pay for it and even if they can, they may not see the reason as to why school is so important. A lot of the time parents send their children out to beg on the street, and the children come home with more money than their parents' salary. This then doesn't make it seem like school is a lucrative way to spend their time and the long-term investment is often not considered.

Figure 4-Percentage of Children of Secondary School age out of school



(World_Bank, 2018)

In secondary school the total percentage of dropouts increases to 25%.

The proportion of female and male dropouts now switches. In primary school there was a greater number of male dropouts, but now in secondary school there is 30% of female dropouts and only 21% of male dropouts.

Similarly, to the gender, the proportion of urban area and rural area dropouts now switches. 31% of students living in urban areas drop out, while 24% of students living in rural areas drop out. This difference can be due to the fact that in city-like areas the school content tends to be more rigorous because of more highly qualified teachers. This leads to secondary school students not being able to keep up with the

content, which is one of the leading causes of dropping out in school across the world. Additionally, in secondary school especially in urban areas drugs are more common. In fact, a study in Ssenso High School Wakiso shows that teenager dropouts between the ages of 16 and 18 are more likely to be current users of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana and other illegal drugs. (Shamirah, 2023)

In secondary school, just as in primary school, poor children are more likely to drop out. In fact, 35% of poor students drop out, while 29% of students classed as rich drop out. This could be because children that did manage to get to secondary school from poor families are considered intelligent and are more likely to be supported in the decision to remain in school, in hopes for a later high paying job.

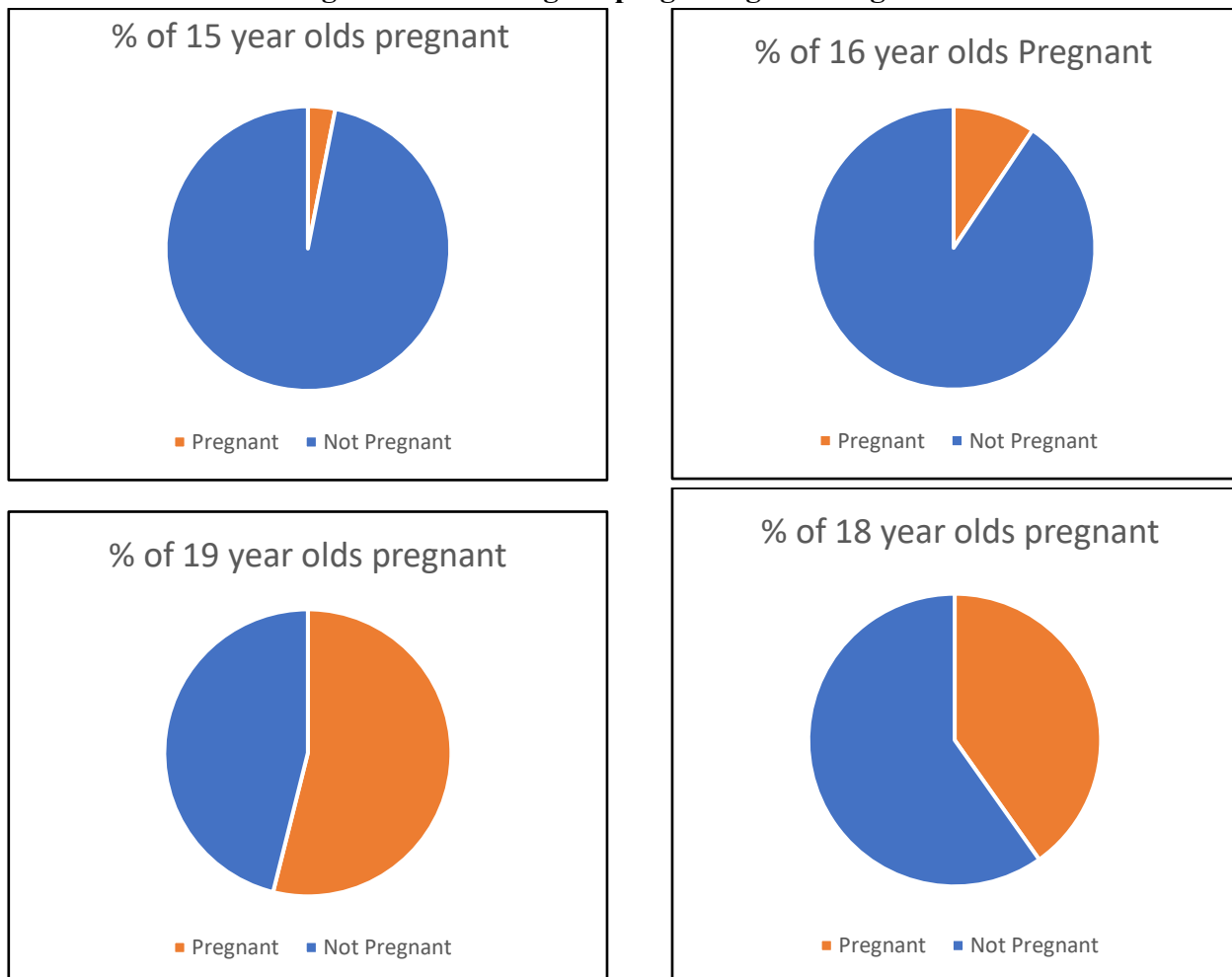
2. The effect of Teenage Pregnancy on Youth Unemployment in Uganda:

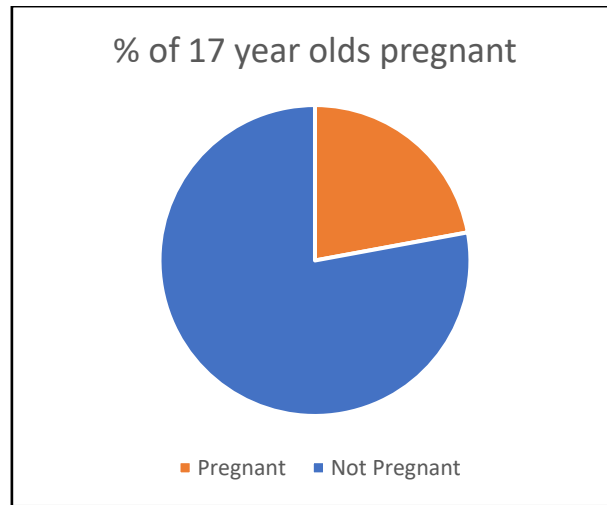
The Current Teenage pregnancy rate in Uganda is 25%. This is the highest rate in east Africa. (Unicef, 2022)

Females aged 13-19 have no choice but to leave school because of teenage pregnancies. They are then unable to finish secondary school or university because of the consequences of pregnancy. These consequences range from mild morning sickness to pre-eclampsia.

Even the fathers of those children often can't finish their education because they have to drop out of school to work, to start providing for their family. They then are unable to develop the skills that would later be needed to have a well-paying job.

Figure 5- Percentage of pregnant girls in Uganda

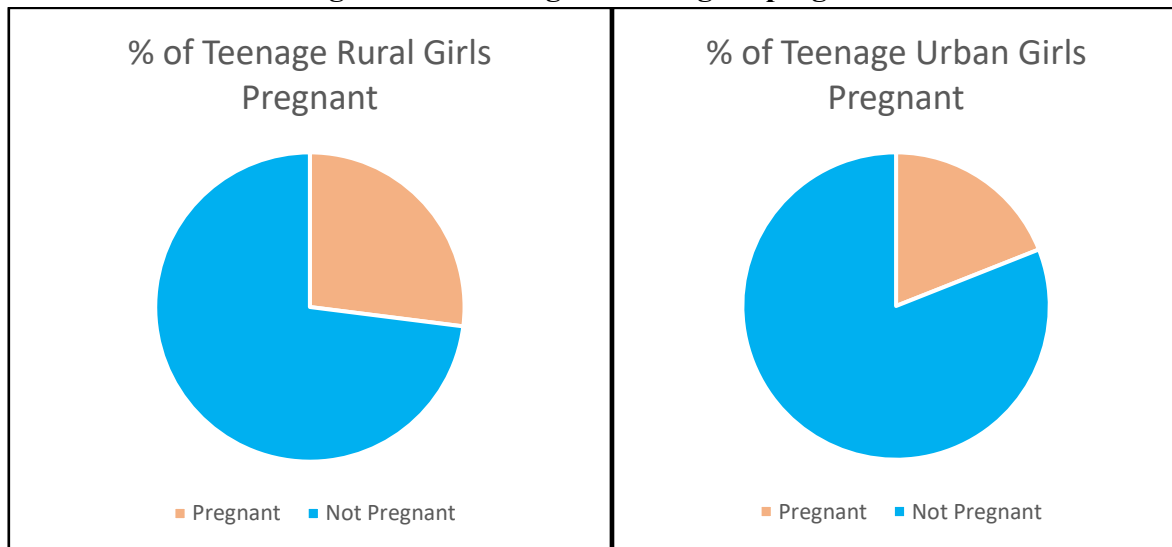




(Kyomuhendo, 2022)

As shown in the pie charts above there is a steady increase in the percentage of girls pregnant and their age. Starting off with 15-year-olds, only 3% of them are pregnant. Moreover, 9% of 16-year-olds and 22% of 17-year-olds are pregnant. A staggering increase is experienced by the 18-year-olds and 19-year-olds in which 40% and 54% of them are pregnant. Overall, these are incredibly high rates with more than half of 19-year-olds carrying a fetus. This can have significant consequences as mentioned above and can be because of information failure and lack of access to resources that would prevent this from happening.

Figure 6-Percentage of rural girls pregnant



(Kyomuhendo, 2022)

There is a significant difference between where young girls live and how many of them are pregnant. In fact, 27% of girls living in rural areas are pregnant while only 19% of girls living in Urban areas are pregnant. This can often be due to the fact that girls in urban areas have a little more access to contraceptives and information. This then makes it less likely for girls in urban areas to get pregnant. Additionally, there are still a significant number of cases of child brides in Uganda, especially in rural areas because legalities aren't controlled as much there. Furthermore, 34% of girls in Uganda marry before the age of 18, and 7% marry before the age of 15. These brides are then also usually expected to have children, which increases the teenage pregnancy rate.

(Girls_Not_Brides, 2023)

3. The effect of Covid-19 on youth unemployment in Uganda:

In many countries the post-covid effect has been significant. In the European Union, strict measures were introduced to prevent the spread of the disease, however this had a negative impact on the economy. In fact, in some countries that had a previous low youth unemployment rate like in the Czech Republic, Netherlands, Poland, and Slovenia the rate almost doubled. In the Czech Republic especially their rate increased by a factor of 2,19 from the end of 2019 to the end of 2020.

(Lambovska, 2021)

Covid-19 had severe consequences for Uganda. Similarly, to many other countries, Uganda closed its schools to avoid the spread of the illness. This school shut down lasted longer than in any other country, in total 22 months. The decision for the close down was met with controversy from different organizations due to the fact that Uganda's education system already faced challenges before the pandemic. Millions of children were affected by the closing, and an estimated 15 million pupils did not get a education for those years at all. This was because the students did not have access to computers because the overall wealth in Uganda isn't as high as in countries in Europe for example. This led to them being unable to learn over online platforms like zoom or google classroom. This caused a significant learning deficit, as well as other adverse effect like a 22.5% increase of pregnancies among Ugandan school-going girls and young women aged 10-24 between March 2020 and June 2021. There was also an increase of child labor from 21% to 36%, affecting girls in particular.

Girls were especially affected because they often have more responsibilities at home than the opposite gender. They often tend to be more confined to their homes, and for girls in rural areas, options to earn money were extremely limited. A study conducted in Luwero studied numerous girls of low socio-economic status one example is as follows: This girl is the oldest of five children and helps her mother with chores, childcare and informal sector work. She wanted to train as a nurse, but her school results weren't good enough because, as a girl, she had too many responsibilities. During the first lockdown she was offered a place in a government sponsored vocational training program in tailoring. But hardly any teaching took place. When the program finally resumed, classes were rushed. She said she got her certificate but didn't feel qualified to work as a tailor. And she lives in a rural community with no financial means, tools or opportunities to start her own business. Some boys in rural areas migrated to another region to find work, which was often precarious and exploitative. Additionally, child labor increased by a substantial amount because without school students were spending their time in other ways. (Nagawa, 2022)

Some schools have closed for good, as they were either destroyed for new real estate projects or sold. 293,000 jobs were lost only in the education industry, which also meant that thousands of children weren't educated anymore. Covid-19 episodes were also characterized by intermittent business closure of complete and partial nature. By the end of the second Covid-19 lockdown, businesses had not regained their pre-Covid-19 conditions. (ADF, 2022)

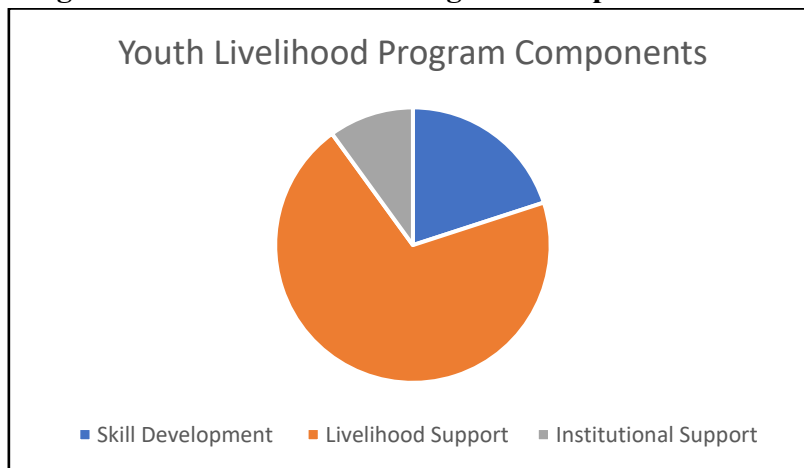
4. Programs implemented to curb youth unemployment in Uganda:

Youth Livelihood Program (YLP):

Its objective was to empower the youth to harness their socio-economic potential and increase self-employment opportunities and income levels. The government allocated \$100 million to give out in loan

form for youth to be able to pay for different opportunities of further education. The program was specifically targeting dropouts from schools and training institutions, as well as youth who have not had the opportunity to attend formal education. The project was carried out in all 112 districts in Uganda and started off as promising in 2014. It was made up of 3 key components and was set run until 2018. (Guyson, 2023)

Figure 7-Youth Livelihood Program Components



1. Skill Development: this develops the marketable livelihoods skills that create opportunities for self-employment among the poor and unemployed youth.
2. Livelihood Support: this provides productive assets for viable income generating enterprises chosen by the youth.
3. Institutional Support: this promotes good governance, accountability and improves the technical, administrative and managerial capacity of the key implementers of the Project.

(MGLSD, 2022)

However, only 1,3% of individuals that received a loan were able to pay it back in full. This was due to a multitude of distinct factors. One of which is excessive bureaucracy which made it hard for individuals to access the funds in the first place. Additionally, before the implementation of the program there was close to no youth involvement, which made it harder for them to execute the new concepts they were taught. Furthermore, one of the most significant reasons as to why the program failed was the way the budgets were managed. There was nearly no supervision as to how the individuals granted the loans were using the money, so naturally some of them weren't using it in the manner intended and bought alcohol or drugs with it.

(Okiria, 2021)

The Parish Development Model:

This program was set to run from July 2021 to June 2026. Its objectives are to create Wealth, Employment and increase Household Incomes. The Model proposes building infrastructure and systems that support processing and marketing of Uganda's agricultural products. It is supposed to generate data on households' country wide to inform of government interventions. Farmers in the Parish Development Model will be coordinated through area-based commodity clusters to increase production and productivity that will create sustainable agricultural production. Farmers will get access to Agricultural extension services as well as finance business Management training. (Guyson, 2023)

It has 7 pillars:

1. Production, Storage, Processing and Marketing
2. Infrastructure and Economic Services
3. Financial Inclusion
4. Social Services
5. Mindset change
6. Parish Based Management Information System
7. Governance and Administration

(MOLG, 2022)

Since this model is relatively new, any positive or negative consequences haven't been observed yet. However key concerns include; when giving out the budget's sizes were not taking into account, so no matter what the size of the district each one received UGXs 17 million. Additionally, there aren't any proper guidelines as to how to implement the money to the program, this exposes the program as a risk to corruption since similar programs before having had funds disappear. Furthermore, community participation in identifying what areas need tending to be crucial, this hasn't been executed in the Parish Development Model and poses potential issues in that area, like the community not accepting the model and being violent toward it. (Guloba, 2023)

5. Comparing Policies of other East African countries:

Kenya:

Kenya had significant youth unemployment from 2009 to 2020, with a demand- and supply-side problem. With Kenya's rising population there was an increased demand for jobs but there weren't enough jobs for everyone.

Kenya implemented two considerable programs to increase jobs.

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF):

It is tasked with promoting enterprise development as a critical strategy for increasing economic opportunities and youth participation in nation-building.

It generated income and employment for a significant number of young individuals.

However, YEDF also has its problems which included: mismanagement and corruption of funds. Another reason why YEDF didn't always work as intended was because the youth didn't have sufficient skills to effectively participate in the program. (Maurice_Sikenyi, 2017)

Kazi Kwa Vijana (KKV) 'Work for youth'

This program distracted youth from criminal tendencies and gave them hope that they would earn some money from lending their labor in the many public works and social service programs they had been involved in.

Studies have confirmed that Kazi Kwa Vijana distracted idle youth from criminal tendencies and gave them hope that they would earn some money.

In fact, it worked so well that now there is a petition to reintroduce the program to stem the crime wave. (Columnist, 2022)

Tanzania:

Tanzania has a youth unemployment program they recently started called: "Building a better Youth

Initiative for Agriculture businesses”, this program is planned to continue for around 8 years’ time. The project is set on training 200.000 individuals between the ages of 18 to 40 years.

It aims on involving more youth in agriculture, as it attempts to address the youth unemployment rate among the key population group in the country through the block farming model approach.

This farming model is a structure used to manage supply chains in an inclusive and sustainable way, with a block farm as the focal point of production. (Fabusoro, 2013)

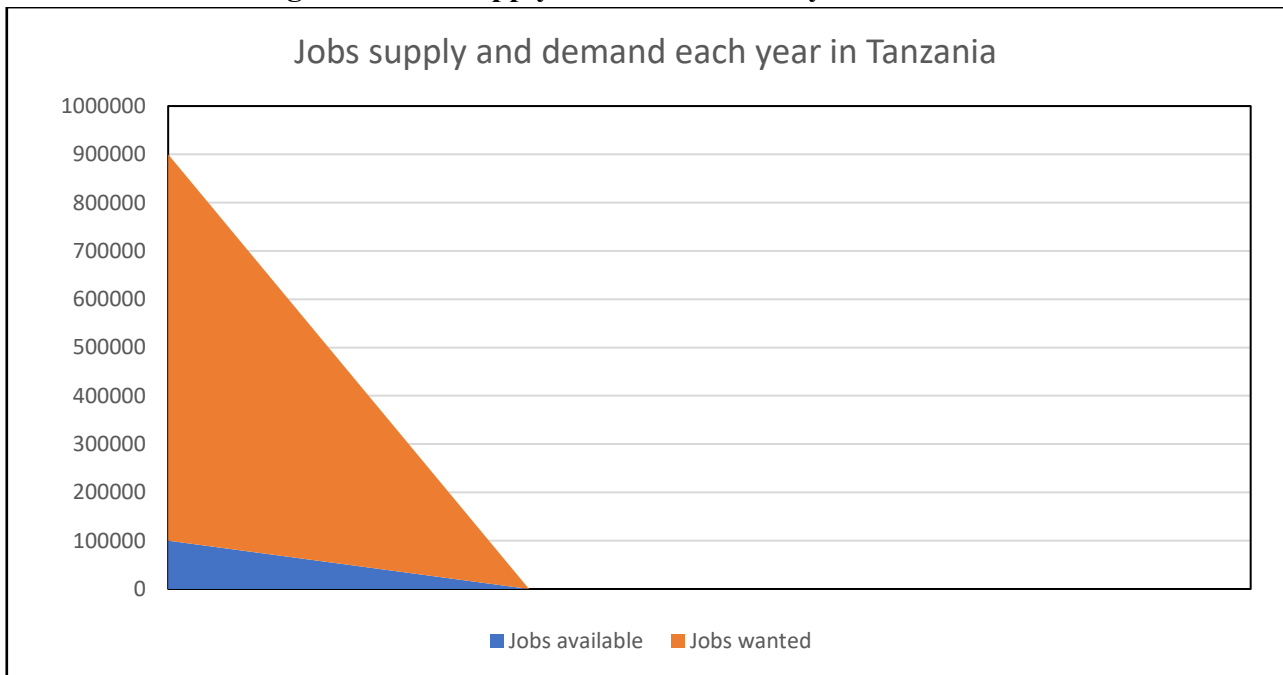
The project has seen more than 100,000 hectares of land set aside for its implementation.

The country is densely occupied by a large labor force that can be fully utilized to attain economic development from both personal and national levels.

A large number of young people are entering the workforce in Africa each year, but there are not sufficient jobs available or created to keep up with this influx.

This trend is likely to be exacerbated by the many reasons in Tanzania, particularly, where every year about 900,000 youth enter the job market to compete for less than 100,000 job opportunities.

Figure 8- Jobs supply and demand each year in Tanzania



To ensure success, the project included participation from government and non-government entities from the beginning stages of concept development. This could lead to aid with funding and accountability with the project.

Challenges, however, are also included. Government-driven initiatives have a history of poor performance, there may be a lack of commitment from government officials. It is important to highlight how the government plans to ensure accountability for those involved.

Another major challenge is ensuring that the project is environmentally friendly, amidst campaigns for climate change and conservation.

Pesticides, fertilizers and other toxic farm chemicals can poison marine ecosystems, air and soil. They also can remain in the environment for generations. Many pesticides are suspected of disrupting the hormonal systems of people and wildlife. Fertilizer run-off impacts waterways and coral reefs.

Fertilizers can harm marine life through a process known as nutrient pollution, which occurs when excess nutrients from fertilizers enter aquatic ecosystems, primarily through runoff from agricultural fields, urban areas, and other sources.

Tanzania is located along the eastern coast of Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean. The country's proximity to the sea is a key geographical feature, influencing its climate and biodiversity. Tanzania's coastal region holds beaches with coral reefs which make it a popular destination for tourists and contribute significantly to the nation's economy.

This makes it crucial that fertilizers and pesticides are used minimally and only in areas in which they are actually needed, preferably far away from the coast. In this way it would be possible to maintain the successful tourist economy while also beginning to establish a prosperous agricultural economy.

Not only will the youth be directly impacted through agriculture which is the main objective but the wider nation and other key sectors of Tanzania's development. (Mulokozi, 2023)

6. Recommended Policies for Youth Unemployment in Uganda:

1. To reduce the high rate of teenage pregnancy Uganda could do several things. One of which can be done by making contraceptives more accessible, which can prevent sexually active teenagers from conceiving. This could be done by having stands where flyers with information are given out as well as certain contraceptives. Moreover, the school system can make sexual education mandatory from a young age on. This is important for various reasons, one of which is assuring teenagers of knowing what leads to pregnancy and how to prevent it.
2. Due to the fact that Uganda has around 76 272 prisoners with 17,9% under the age of 21 a project like Kazi Kwa Vijana in Kenya could be implemented. (Byabashaija, 2023) These inmates (so long they are low risk) often can help ameliorate the infrastructure, specifically renovate and build new schools. This would aid the issue of the shut down and destruction of schools during the Covid-19 time. This could open up new job opportunities which were lost in the pandemic.
3. To be able to continue or reimplement the programs that Uganda has had in the past, they will have to manage the budgets more closely. If a program equivalent to the Youth Livelihood Program is monitored more closely the loans given out could be paid back in full to the government and the overall wealth in the country could increase. Specifically for the Parish Development Model community participation is crucial and should be made a focus. This is because the community is able to identify what areas need tending to, this will make the community accept and tolerate the project more and they may have insightful ideas as to what should be targeted most.
4. Similarly, to the youth enterprise development fund which helped young individuals in Kenya with their entrepreneurial skills, Uganda's government could do something equivalent but in the sector education. They could make free or affordable training facilities available, sponsored by donors, that instruct people on how to become a suitable educator. Because most individuals attend primary school, it would be especially fitting to coach them for that. This could prevent the problem that occurred in Kenya with the youth not having sufficient skills to participate in the program, because they already have covered all the topics that need to be taught to the primary school pupils. For people wanting to

get the further qualification of becoming a secondary school teacher, they can offer a additional program to certify them as such.

5. Uganda could start advertising more jobs, especially in the industries that are most needed. Advertising job opportunities can be done through different social media platforms, like twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Furthermore, flyers can be put up by employers on busy streets with an aim to get as many people to see these advertisements as possible.
6. Implementing a similar program as Tanzania's 'Building a better Youth Initiative for Agriculture businesses' could work well in Uganda. It could aim to focus specifically on harvesting coffee and tea in greater masses, so they can make a greater profit through increased exporting. The issues that the project brings with itself in Tanzania by having the fertilizers destroy the corals, would not exist in Uganda. This is because Uganda doesn't have a coast, so even though the use of fertilizers always has to be cautious, there wouldn't be as much risk of polluting and damaging a whole other industry like in Tanzania with their coastal tourism.

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