

UNHEARD VOICES: YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES OF STRUGGLE, HOPE, AND RESILIENCE IN A COVID-19 AFFECTED ECONOMY – TANZANIA

Tanzania (both mainland and Zanzibar) had a unique approach to the COVID-19 crisis.

- No single law or policy was enacted to guide the management of COVID-19 interventions.
- Tanzania employed less-stringent measures than other countries, thereby avoiding a total lockdown and instead implementing mitigating actions such as limiting unnecessary movement of people from one region to another and banning all public gatherings.

The partial lockdown and other measures taken to combat the spread of the virus in the country severely affected labour markets and economic opportunities for youth.

- Youth – many of whom work in the informal sector – have faced a loss of work, reduction in their working hours, wage cuts, and layoffs, significantly affecting their livelihoods.
- The economic impact of the crisis is expected to push an additional 600,000 people below the national poverty line, disproportionately affecting households that rely on self-employment and informal microenterprises in urban areas.

Most policies and strategies adopted to fight the pandemic did not take into account the specific needs of young people.

- Unlike other countries, Tanzania failed to provide relief and stimulus packages that would cushion the effects of the crisis.
- The government's inability to adopt robust policy guidelines for addressing the economic crisis means that the economic sectors that are the main employers of young people will remain vulnerable and will struggle to reach pre-pandemic levels of growth. This is expected to have a direct impact on young people's income and livelihoods.

The economic progress sustained over the past years has been challenged by the ongoing pandemic.

- Despite a slowdown in the economic growth rate, the country managed to avoid a recession.
- However, key sectors such as tourism and trade, both major contributors to GDP growth, have been severely hit. This could undermine the strength of the Tanzanian economy, putting pressure on the government for further reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments and policymakers should:

- Apply, design, and implement policies with a youth lens,
- Scale up existing social protection programmes and re-purpose them to protect young people,
- Provide access to education and training, ensuring support for the most vulnerable,
- Ensure young people receive financial assistance, and
- Provide support to keep building the evidence based on what policy approaches work best for youth.

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Haji is 24 years old and lives in Magomeni on the island of Zanzibar. Haji was unable to complete his secondary education due to financial limitations. He had a sponsor who was paying for his studies, but unfortunately that came to an end when he was in form two.

To cope with the situation and earn some income, Haji learned English and German to work as a tour guide in the archipelago. Before the coronavirus pandemic disrupted tourism in Zanzibar, Haji spent his days navigating the tiny streets of Stone Town, showing tourists around. On average, he would generate 800,000 Tanzanian shilling (US\$345) every month, which was comparatively high.

However, during the crisis, Haji lost his job and his income plummeted. He barely earned anything after the government imposed restrictions and tourists were not allowed to visit the isles. Even tourists who were already in Zanzibar confined themselves to their hotel rooms for fear of contracting the disease. Due to the situation, Haji had to spend all his savings to provide for his family. The financial situation worsened to the extent that he had to seek help from other family members.

When the crisis settled and tourism activities started to rebound, Haji found that most of the tourists who were now coming to Zanzibar spoke Russian, which he neither understood nor spoke. He was forced to stop working



as a tour guide and now earns a living working as a tutor, teaching English and German.

Haji dreams of setting up a centre that would document the history of Zanzibar. He has also asked the government to waive the US\$100 registration fee that tour guides must pay. According to him, tour guides are already shouldering a heavy burden and the fee is seen as an additional burden. He believes that the government and other organizations can also assist young people by providing entrepreneurial skills training.

The research

These findings are based on a research study exploring the effects of COVID-19 on young people's lives in Bangladesh, Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania with respect to income and employment opportunities. A youth-led research approach was utilised as part of the study.

The study outlines the evidence and provides recommendations to shape future crisis management's responsiveness to youth-specific issues and provide guidance on measures that can be taken to avoid exacerbating the exclusion and poverty experienced by many young people.

In Tanzania, research took place in Dar es Salaam, Pwani, and Arusha (in Tanzania mainland) and in Mjini Magharibi Unguja, Kusini Unguja, and Mkoa wa Kusini Pemba (in Zanzibar). The research was conducted mostly in Swahili.

