Youth Unemployment in Somalia: A Case Study of Baidoa, Southwest State of Somalia

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Abstract: - This study examines the problem of unemployment in Baidoa city, the capital of Bay region in the Southwest State of Somalia. The results indicate that the root causes of unemployment among the youth are corruption, tribalism, lack of skills, inadequate education, and poor economy. The findings further reveal that the problem of unemployment, which leads to youth radicalization, increase of crime, and migration, can be curbed by eliminating the practice of tribalism and corruption and setting a proper strategy for job creation. While these are the perceptions of the 50 respondents surveyed in the study, suggestions and recommendations are given to various stakeholders to find solutions to the negative impact unemployment is causing to the youth in Baidoa.

Keywords: Baidoa, Corruption, Somalia, Southwest State, Unemployment, Youth

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is a very challenging global phenomenon that is related to massive underdevelopment of extensive dimensions, affecting mainly the developing countries. The constraints of youth unemployment cause more serious problems to countries like Somalia where successive natural and man-made catastrophes prevail in the daily life of the masses. This study discusses the problem of youth unemployment in Baidoa, Southwest State of Somalia, where the situation of youth unemployment has impacted the town in addition to recurrence of severe droughts, famine, massive influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and insecurity. In order to gain an understanding of the nature of the problem, this study explores youth perception regarding the effect of the problem. It further reveals factors the youth think as contributors to the dynamics behind their lack of employment.

Categorization of youth

Youth in Somalia can be organized according to clusters and culture of living or residence. While some live in rural areas as pastoral nomads or agro-pastoralists, others are in IDP camps with very little aspiration for a durable change in their current living situation, while a growing number of them pursue a living mode as urbanites. Considering the undesirable situation of the country which for decades has been in pendulum between natural disasters and man-made catastrophes, the education system has become poor, unregulated and uncoordinated, for the past three decades (Eno 2018; Eno et al. 2014; Eno et al. 2019). As a result, the sector has done very little in offering quality education that is at par with or even close to what has been achieved in neighboring countries. From another aspect, although the nature of the difficulty challenges almost all categories of youth, available study informs that youth from marginalized clans are most severely impacted in all areas of human development: academically, politically, socially, economically as well as in terms of employment or employability—thus hindering them from accommodative social spaces and leaving them only with the option of manual work (Eno 2008; Eno 2021).

World Bank Indicators estimate the average Somali population as about 15 million (World Bank 2018), although other sources "The indicate that current population of Somalia is 16,693,104 as of Sunday, April 24, 2022, based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data." Another source, the World Population Review (2022) estimates, "The current population of Somalia is 16,750,922 based on projections of the latest United Nations data. The UN World Population Fund estimates the July 1, 2022 population at 16,841,795... [with an estimated youth population of] 70%." About 75 percent of Somalia's overall population is estimated to be very youthful cohort below 35 years (UNFPA 2014; USAID 2020), a figure that demonstrates the impact of youth bulge on Somalia's population growth as it did elsewhere in Sub-Sahara Africa or the underdeveloped world at large. A joint report by UNFPA, UKaid and Sweden titled "Somali Adolescents and Youth: Boom or Gloom?" (UNFPA 2019, p. 15) estimates, "Adolescents and youth (10-35 years) form 50.8 percent of the total Somali population."

Previous surveys

In a press release, the United Nations Country Team for Somalia (2014) cites a UNDP Somalia (2012) Human Development Report entitled "Empowering youth for peace and development," that emphasizes the importance of the role of Somali youth in the society. The UNDP Somalia report which surveyed "over 3,000 households in South and Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland" demonstrated how 82% and 71% expressed respectively their entitlement to good education and good jobs (UNCT 2014.). The Thematic Briefing of the United Nations Country Team Somalia, reveals a statistical description of Somalia's youth unemployment problem as a major concern and writes: "Over 70 per cent of Somalia's population is under the age of 30. The unemployment rate for youth aged 14 to 29 is 67 per cent—one of the highest rates in the world. Among young women it is even estimated at 74 per cent." More recently, in their study on graduate unemployment in Somalia, Gelle et al. (2021, p. 14) identify the culprits as "poor political governance, inadequate developmental skills, corruption, sub-optimal quality of graduates, and low level of English proficiency." Results of earlier studies as mentioned above, along with the current social debate on youth unemployment, have necessitated the conduct of this study focusing on Baidoa city of Southwest State of Somalia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Muiya (2014) discussing the situation of youth unemployment in Kenya, "Most youth in Mathare (a large slum in Nairobi) were unemployed due to lack of education and necessary skills." Furthermore, Muiya explained that urban youth unemployment in Mathare caused a lot of problems for their informal settlement such as housing, prostitution, school dropouts, marginalization, rape, HIV/AIDS infections as well as early marriage. In Baidoa, similar to Mathare in Nairobi, there is a huge youth unemployment rate, although the problems it causes are more serious because youth engage in dangerous activities such as radicalization.

However, as Muiya mentioned, various factors are responsible for the high youth unemployment rate in Africa in general, and the major factors stated include low economic growth. Ali (2018) and Ibrahim (2014) would agree with Muiya because poor economic situation of the country and lack of meaningful investment in youth training and capacity building are not addressed. Yet, these two, along with education and vocational skills training as well as strong economy and investment are key factors for reducing the unemployment issue around the world which affects developing countries more than developed nations.

The picture one can draw from the discussion is that developing countries have poor economic growth and suffer from lack of sufficient investment that leads to increase in the unemployment rate. According to Muiya (2014) "The world's youth population is estimated at 1.2 billion, with nearly 90% living in developing countries." For example, "In Kenya, young people constitute 30% (12,321,280) of total population while youth unemployment constitutes 78% of the total unemployment." Muiya's statement should be worrying for the reason that many people perceive Kenya to be more developed and economically stronger (which it really is) than Somalia; thus, the assumption (or misperception) of Kenyan youth being in a better employment condition.

According to Bakan, (2010) "The problem of urban youth unemployment is compounded by lack of education and training skills by some of the urban youth." Bakan's argument seems to support Muiya's statement and other scholars' studies that African countries have highest youth unemployment rates. In addition, Muiya (2010) observes the lack of youth unemployment from another important angle-that of gender, and reports: "Youth unemployment has also been considered from the gender perspective. Unemployment is significantly higher among young females than among young males." In Kenva, the female rate of unemployment is more than 10 percentage points higher than the male rate for young people aged 15 to 25 years, according to a UNDP (2013a) report. Compared to Somalia, the unemployment rate for youth aged 14 to 29 is 67%, which is one of the highest rates in the world; women lose out more, with unemployment rates at 74%, compared to men at 61% (UNDP 2013b). Furthermore, a recent report by Borino and Sage (2019, p. 13) confirms that "Somalia has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world, and very low education indicators," with the latter being a crucial topic Eno et al. (2019), Eno (2018), Eno et al (2015), and Eno et al. (2014) highlighted as a sector Somalia is experiencing a major development setback.

According to the African Development Bank, (AfDB, 2013) "Africa has the youngest population in the world, which is also growing rapidly and will be doubled in the 2045." In fact, AfDB raises the concern that the developing countries do not take advantage of their very large number of young people due to corruption and tribalism which increases only the unemployment rates and affects to decline the economic growth of the countries. Youth workforce could play a major role in boosting the economies of developing countries had they eradicated corruption and tribalism. According to ACBF (2017), "While the youth can be crucial in spurring growth through increased productivity, if policies are not in place to absorb them into productive employment, they can become socially and political destabilizing-possibly generating an explosive fallout with millions of urbanized and educated youth without jobs."

The concern about Africa's youth unemployment has caused a huge debate in the continent and in the world. Beegle & Christiansen (2019, cited in Fox & Gandhi 2021, p. 2) problematize the subject as follows:

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the world's youngest region, and improving employment opportunities is especially important, due to several reasons. First the 43 percent of the population under the age of 15 mostly depends on the incomes that their parents earn for their own survival, growth, and personal development. At the same time, 41 percent of the population lives in poverty, and the children who grow up in these households risk permanent physical and social damage and even death owing to malnutrition and childhood illness, and lack of quality education and other opportunities to build human capital. According to Fox and Gandhi (2021), youth usually aspire to obtain a good, decent job to make a living and enter the job market with enthusiasm. Coauthors Fox and Gandhi factually mention that although at times opportunities are available, youth may not be able to land a job due to several reason. In cases like this, it becomes time consuming for the youth as they keep searching until such a time when either they start one or find themselves completely in disappointment for not realizing the goal. From another critical perspective, Fox and Gandhi (ibid,) acknowledge the fact that "Sometimes youth do not have enough skills for the opportunities available, so they need to return to school or find another way to gain the skills they need," although the authors admit that there are situations when "often youth have skills, but there are few opportunities compared to the number entering the labor force."

In situations such as in the preceding paragraph, the desperate youth are not left with much of a choice but to continue looking for a job or trying to create new opportunities like establishing their own business as self-employed people. Although this maybe a viable solution to a majority of the unemployed youth today, the fact is that a huge number of the unemployed youth in Baidoa, similar to others in developing countries, cannot afford to self-employ themselves due to lack of capital for investment that would enable them establish a small enterprise of their own (Melak & Derbe 2022; Kirui 2016; Schneider et al. 2021).

Muiya (2014) argues that "Youth unemployment still remains a big problem making youth vulnerable to crime and social unrest," a factor which every developing country needs to consider and address effectively. Muiya's argument is supported by the fact that "unemployment is one of the major problems facing underdeveloped as well as developing nations of the world. Global unemployment was estimated at 188 million as of 2019, and it is projected to increase by 2.5m annually owing to labor force growth," according to a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO 2020). The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF 2017), on the other hand, states that "The causes of current high youth unemployment include inadequate skills, lack of experience, and a mismatch between education and training and requisite job skills. Other factors include economies' low growth and job creation's slow pace."

Youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa is twice that of adults (12.8 percent versus 6.5 percent) and nearly quadruples that of adults in North Africa (27.1 percent versus 7 percent) (ILO 2013). Growth rates are not high enough to guarantee productive employment for the increasing population and labor force. With almost 200 million people age 15–24, Africa has the youngest population in the world (Assaad & Levison 2013), and that number will double by 2045.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research benefits from the quantitative case study method due to the limited focus of its geographical scope. The reason for considering the method was due to its easy data collection and analysis processes which were suitable for realizing the objective of examining a single unit. It also follows the descriptive path of analyzing and explaining correlations of variables i.e., youth unemployment and migration, crime and radicalization etc. Its aim to observe outcomes rather than determine causes and effects.

Forward Planning

We gave due consideration to the analysis stage of the study prior to our data collection assignment. The aim was to choose the kind of data we needed to collect to achieve the goal of the study. During this pre-data collection stage, we decided to produce our results based on frequency and in percentages. We used this as a simple technique to present data in a friendly and easily legible manner. During this stage, we discussed the structure of our questions and shared them with an expert for comment. Some of the repetitive questions were aligned, others were completely discarded as irrelevant, while others were either edited or completely rewritten. Following the expert's suggestions, comments were added to the close-ended questions to allow the respondents to express themselves and add voice to the predetermined multiple-choice responses provided by the researchers.

Sample Size and Coding

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. While some of the respondents used self-administered means to fill out the questionnaires, others preferred to complete the survey in our presence so we could help them in case of any difficulty. Data were collected from a selected sample of 50 participants of youth between 20 and 40 years of age. Random sampling was employed for convenience as the questions did not require specific category of youth to respond to them. After collecting data, we ensured data entry by using a simple coding method of assigning numerical values to each of the answers as we already knew the available options from the multiple-choice responses already given to each of the questions in the survey questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Raw data on its own, upon its entry and saving in the computer does not bear value without analyzing and interpreting the significance of the numbers and their meanings. We carried out data analysis using SPSS software to calculate and produce the statistical results. Tables are used to present the results, interpret the data and discuss their significance as presented below in the Analysis and Discussion section..

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter brings into context all matters that are concerned with the presentation of the results and analysis of the data. Using a quantitative approach, the study uses tables to display the results in the form of simple statistical method. For that matter, the results are demonstrated in the tables in terms of categories, frequencies and percentages.

Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
	Male	30	60
Gender	Female	20	40
	Total	50	100

Table 1: Gender

The data presented in Table1 indicates that the gender distribution stands at 60% male and 40% female participants. Although there is disparity in the numbers displayed with men's participation being more than the women's, it nevertheless assures that both genders are represented. Data were collected from all 50 participants with all questions filled in without leaving out a question or destroying a questionnaire for the reason that many of the questionnaires were filled in our presence and in some cases with our help in the case that a respondent needed a clarification of some sort.

Table 2:	Age
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Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
	20-25	21	42
	26-30	18	36
	31-35	6	12
Age	36-40	5	10
	Total	50	100

As presented in Table 2, 42% of the respondents were between at the ages of 20-25 years, while 36% were between the ages of 26-30 years, 12% between 31-35 years old, and the remaining 10% between 36-40 years. Majority of the participants in the study fall in the age bracket between 20-25 years. On the other hand, the data in Table 2 also demonstrates that respondents between 20 and 30 years make the majority of the youth expressing their opinions in the current study.

Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
	Single	23	46
	Married	24	48
	Divorced	1	2
Marital status	Windowed	2	4
	Total	50	100

Table 3: Marital Status

Table 3 shows 48% of respondents are married, while 46% are single, 4% are windowed, and only 4% are divorced. The result confirms that a slight majority of the respondents are married compared to other groups. The result supports the notion of Somali marriage at early age, with a majority of the literature discussing the practice in terms of girls' marriage in either

arranged or forced marriage (Sharma et al. 2020; Landinfo 2018; UNICEF 2001).

Variable	Categories	Frequencies	Percentages
	Secondary	6	12
	Diploma	7	14
Education	Bachelor-degree	33	66
	Master-degree	1	2
	Uneducated	3	6
	Total	50	100

Table 4, provides the educational background of the respondents. Respondents numbering 66% hold a Bachelor's Degree, followed by 14% were a post-secondary school diploma, where 12% are secondary school leavers, and 6% are uneducated, while only 1 respondent (2%) obtained a Master's Degree. That 66%, the highest number of respondents, are holders of a Bachelor Degree gives the view that the prospect looks good for Baidoa and for the Southwest State as youth seek higher learning, despite the contention over the quality of education offered in the country (Eno, 2018; Eno et al. 2015; Eno et al. 2014; Eno 2021). Furthermore, attention needs to be paid to the 6% counted as uneducated. To put this in good perspective, 'uneducated' in this context is understood as not having formal schooling, contrary to being illiterate. For, in overall learning or literacy in Somalia, children begin their Koranic studies at early age and become competent in reading and writing in the Arabic language before attending schools for formal education. In addition, many citizens learn reading and writing in the Somali language without necessarily attending conventional classes or having formal education in the context of structured learning (Eno t al 2014). Concerning the meagre 2% response rate, the scarcity of higher degrees at Masters or PhD, can be explicated from the fact that these qualifications are either too expensive for the local community to acquire or need a travel out of the country, as not many institutions have offered such qualifications in Baidoa or the country as a whole until recently (Abdinor et al. 2021).

Table 5: Whether there	is youth	unemployment ir	n Baidoa or not
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Participants	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	47	94
No	3	6
Total	50	100

An overwhelming majority of 94% of the respondents agree that youth unemployment is prevalent in the Baidoa, while an insignificant number of 6% disagree. The result demonstrated here in Table 5 captures the reality of the problem of unemployment which the youth in the district are facing. Remarkably, the youth unemployment mentioned above in the Introduction and in the Literature Review, is also deeply felt among the youth community in Baidoa. The high rate of response explains the magnitude of the problem Baidoa city is facing in particular and Southwest State as well as the entire Somalia in general. The smaller number of disagreeing respondents may have their positive opinion possibly because they are employed, whether in the public or private sector or self-employed. Notwithstanding the entitlement to their opinion, the fact that the majority have a negative perception cannot in anyway be overlooked, as can be surmised from the data provided in the next tables that provide details of the responsible factors on the one hand and, on the other, the impact unemployment can have on the youth and the whole nation for that matter.

Problems	Frequency	Percent (%)
Tribalism	12	24
Corruption	12	24
Lack of skilled youth	5	10
Inadequate education	2	4
Poor economy	3	6
All above	16	32
	Total: 50	Total: 100

The data presented in Table 6 is based on a multiple-choices question where a respondent was allowed to choose as many responses as they thought suitable. Table 6, therefore, illustrates that close to half of the respondents split their responses equally between tribalism (24%) and corruption (24%), when measured from the viewpoint as single variables as the two are blamed for being mainly the problems leading to youth unemployment. Although these two are the most castigated compared to youth's lack of skills (10%) and insufficient education (4%), or poor economy (6%), the overall majority of 32% believe that youth unemployment is not as a result of a single phenomenon but that a combination of all the factors provided- tribalism, corruption, lack of skilled youth, inadequate education, and poor economy-are responsible for the problem. A critical analysis of the five reveals that these are, among others, the major phenomena Somalia is often identified with. On the current economic situation, the African Development Bank reports:

> Financial sector development is still nascent and there is no scope for monetary policy because of dollarization and currency counterfeiting... Seven of 10 Somalis survive on less than \$1.90 per day, and the COVID–19 crisis has likely increased poverty, as the 4.4% decline in real per capita income would suggest... While a balanced fiscal position is expected, due to conditions imposed for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, the current account deficit is projected to

widen to 12.8% in 2021 and 12.9% 2022. Poverty and unemployment are expected to increase due to reduced remittances, which will disproportionately affect women, youth, and displaced persons. (African Development Bank, p122).

Secondly, it is not secret that Somalia is a champion of tribalism, clannism and nepotism, to the extent that the country's political power-sharing mechanism is built on the pillars of clannism through a system ordained as 4.5 (fourpoint-five): four clans that take equal share in parliament representation and in the cabinet; and a cohort of another section that is given half of what a major clan acquires (Eno 2008; Eno 2021; Eno & Eno 2009). The poor quality of education which Dawson (1964) mentioned in the 1960s is still haunting Somalia to date, although some remarkable achievement was realized in early 1970s when the military regime of Siad Barre introduced the Somali orthography and the medium of school instruction was Somalized. However, the achievement did not last long as the government eroded the education budget, thus starting the sector's spiraling into a deplorable downward trend through mid-1980s (Eno et al. 2014:15; UNDP, 1998:69; 2001:82). Upon the collapse of the state in early 1991 through the current period, Somali education has had no uniform curriculum or an effective education policy. The education gap created by statelessness was promptly filled by private entrepreneurs with neither a regulatory body nor quality assurance organ to hold them accountable. As a consequence, lack of skills and inadequate education can be attributed to the general situation of lawlessness and ineffective administrations the country has been struggling through the last three decades and half (beginning from 1985). On corruption and related fiscal malfeasance, Somalia ranks 178 out of 180 countries in the 2021 corruption perceptions index (CPI) of Transparency International.

Factors	Frequency	Percent (%)
Idleness	10	20%
Radicalization	7	14%
Loss of self-esteem	13	26%
Crime	11	22%
Migration	11	22%
All the above	21	42%

Table 7: Major impact of youth unemployment

The 50 participants were asked to select choices of what major impact unemployment can have on the youth, as displayed in Table 7. Forty-two percent (42%) believe that all the variables mentioned in the responses can have a negative impact on the youth as a result of unemployment. On the other hand, 26% perceive that loss of self-esteem is a major impact youth unemployment can cause while 22% agree crime as principal impact from unemployment the same as migration which returned 22% response. Furthermore, 20% think idleness as a major factor resulting from unemployment. With only 14%, radicalization, which is often highlighted in the literature on Somalia as a major youth influencing factor due to unemployment (African Development Bank, 2020, p. 3), is rated as having the least impact on the youth and therefore less significant than the rest of the choices. Also contrary to the literature, the result in Table 7 provides that factors such as idleness, crime, loss of self-esteem, and migration have more serious impact than radicalization as a single unit. This is not to suggest that youth unemployment has not an impact on radicalization, but that the youth in Baidoa, particularly the 50 whose perceptions were captured and evaluated in the study, believe that its significance is not as major as other variables measured in the results furnished in Table 7.

Factors	Frequency	Percent (%)
Elimination of tribalism	6	12
Elimination of corruption	9	18
Creation of jobs	6	12
All above	29	58
	Total: 50	Total: 100

Table 8 illustrates that in order to overcome youth unemployment, corruption and tribalism/clannism should be eliminated and jobs created, according to 58% of the respondents. While as single factors 'elimination of corruption' with 18%, and elimination of tribalism and creation of jobs score a response of 12% each, the statistics give us an idea of how the three are perceived, and that the majority of the respondents believe all the three should be realized so as to design a strategy that can help the youth access jobs. In essence, what the result is telling us is that eliminating tribalism and corruption are vital factors in overcoming the effects of youth unemployment, as the respondents confirm that prevalence of these two factors are precarious to youth aspiration toward job accessibility. In fact, a majority 58% suggests elimination of tribalism, elimination of corruption, and creation of jobs are the three pillars to overcome the cancerous situation of youth unemployment in the district of Baidoa, .

Table 9: Agencies responsible	for youth unemployment
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Responsibility	Frequency	Percent (%)
Government	26	52%
Education sector	2	4%
Youth	1	2%
Parents	0	0%
Civil war	5	10%
All above	17	34%

The data presented in Table 9 suggest more than half of the respondents, 52%, blame the government for the situation of unemployment the youth in Baidoa is suffering from, compared to 34% respondents who agree a combination of agencies including the government, education sector, youth, and the civil-war should all take a portion of the responsibility for youth unemployment and not necessarily one single agency. The suggestion of a collective responsibility is supported by the results in Table 9 which distribute the blame on individual variables as 10% for the civil war, 4% for the education sector. and only 2% for the youth themselves, against 34% that all are responsible for the problem. While only 2% thought that the youth are responsible for not making initiatives to help themselves out of the conundrum of unemployment, all the 50 respondents exonerated the parents with 0% blame of any responsibility for their lack of unemployment, a suggestion that the guardians have done their part once educating the children and that they need not be held responsible for the lack of employment that is frustrating the youth. In comparison, the government is taken to task as the major responsible agency to the unemployment problem. The education sector, although in the third position and only with 4% of the respondents agreeing to it as a contributing factor, could be blamed for not producing creative men and women graduates with a potential to interpret their knowledge and adapt it to either the market or start an initiative to advance their living.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study focused on the problematization of youth unemployment in Baidoa, Southwest State of Somalia. The data suggested various causes and reasons for the hard situation of unemployment and the negative impact it can have on the youth. Furthermore, the study identified several factors as the root causes of unemployment among the youth such as corruption and tribalism. Although these two were identified as the major causes of youth unemployment in Baidoa as individual cases, 32% of the respondents stated that there are other factors as well. For instance, the results demonstrated that lack of skills, inadequate education, and poor economy to be among the causes of youth unemployment. The data also revealed the negative impact unemployment can have on the youth, the least among them being radicalization of youth by extremist groups compared to increase of crime in society and migration of youth to other countries in search of better opportunities and living. The study highlighted the elimination of tribalism and corruption and creation of jobs for the youth as necessary solutions to the negative effects unemployment is causing to them, according to 58% of the participants. However, regardless of the accusations leveled against the government for its part in youth unemployment, eradication of tribalism, elimination of corruption and creation of jobs are key roles toward the strategy to overcome the effects of youth unemployment,.

Recommendation

In view of the results and analysis demonstrated above, the study suggests the following recommendations:

- The government of the SWS should create job opportunities for the youth in order to decrease the unemployment rate as well as the harmful impact joblessness can cause to the entire community.
- The SWS government must provide good governance and equal consideration to the citizens fairly and decrease any factors that contribute to youth unemployment
- Youth should not give-up hope but, instead, should learn how to create their own activities.
- The SWS government should also provide quality education to the community in order to address the problem of inadequate education which impacts opportunities for youth employment.
- The SWS government officials and the community in general should avoid corruption and tribalism.
- More research needs to be carried out to further understand the problem and address it satisfactorily.

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