



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



Youth futures

Policy Research

Initial Dialogue

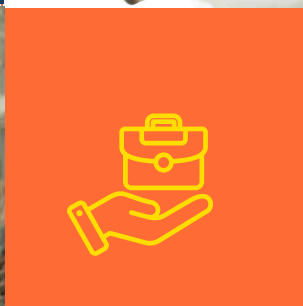
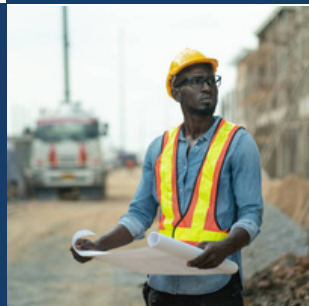
Enhancing access to dignified and fulfilling work for the youths in Kenya



August 20, 2025



Raddison Blu Hotel,
Upper Hill, Nairobi.





Introduction

Rising youth unemployment problem

Youth employment is one of Africa's most pressing development priorities.

While the continent's young population continues to grow rapidly, job creation has not kept pace. As a result, many young people face unemployment or are trapped in low-quality, insecure work. This challenge is compounded by structural barriers in our economies, fast-moving technological changes, and the constant evolution of labour market demands. In Kenya alone, an estimated one million young people enter the job market each year—many without the skills that match available opportunities.

With the future of work changing so quickly, the risk is clear: if we do not act decisively, the youth unemployment crisis will deepen. Meeting this challenge requires more than just expanding education, training, and skilling. We must transform how education, skills development, and employment systems connect with real-world labour market needs. This means that government, private sector, training institutions, and civil society must work together to ensure that learning and work are aligned.

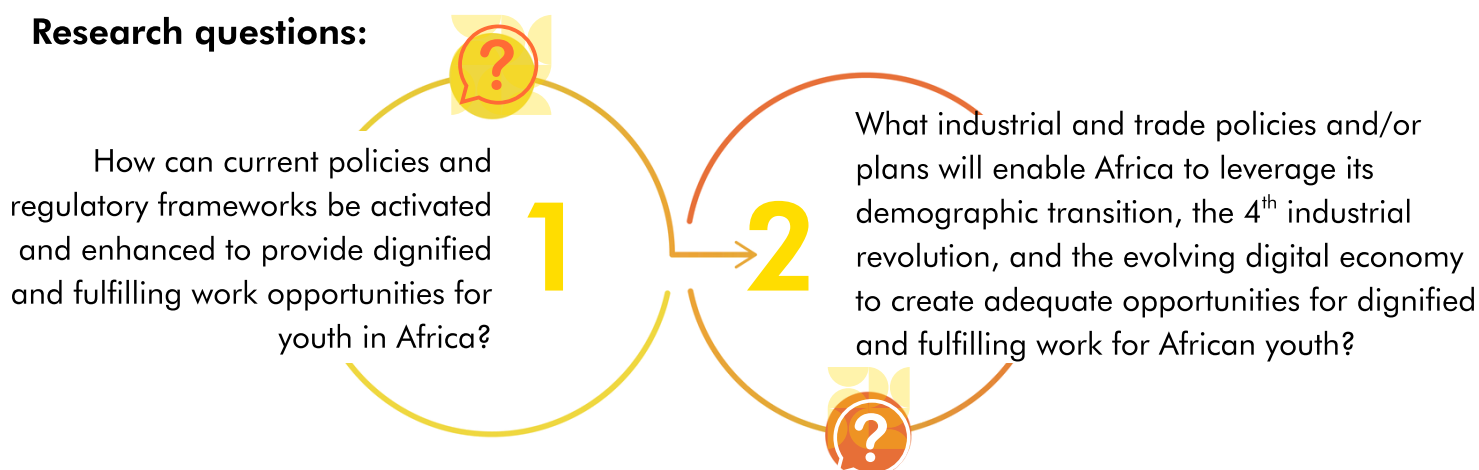
However, the problem goes beyond a simple skills mismatch. Socio-economic inequalities, political constraints, and limited access to networks and resources all interact to limit young people's chances of finding dignified, fulfilling work. Africa's growing youth population offers a historic opportunity—a potential demographic dividend that can drive growth, innovation, and prosperity. But without deliberate investment in skills, job creation, and inclusive economic policies, this opportunity could turn into a source of instability and lost potential.



About the Youth Futures Project

The youth futures policy research project aims to generate robust research on how current policies and regulations can be activated to enhance access to dignified and fulfilling work for youths in Africa. The research seeks to uncover how political interests, institutional arrangements, and regulatory frameworks shape youth labour market outcomes. The research further explores what industrial policies and investments are needed to harness the youth potential in the wake of the 4th Industrial Revolution and the evolving digital economy. The research is implemented in eight countries, namely, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Senegal, South Africa. This work is funded by the Mastercard Foundation.


Research questions:



Research design: The research will employ a participatory action research design using a political economy analytical approach, and draw on foresight analysis and implementation research approaches.

Expected Outputs: The research will produce a set of outputs including: eight country political economy analyses of youth employment; a case study of the gig economy in Kenya and its potential to provide fulfilling and dignified work for youth; a policy scenarios report forecasting impactful industrial and digital trade plans, policy and regulatory frameworks that will enable Africa to leverage the demographic transition, 4th industrial revolution, and the digital economy; and, a set of investment cases for implementing forward-looking industrial plans and digital trade plans for each of the three study countries.

The outcome the research seeks to contribute to: This research seeks to transform the landscape of youth employment in Africa by addressing persisting gaps in the formulation and implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks that are effective in enabling dignified and fulfilling work for young people.

A photograph of two people in a meeting. On the left, a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt, is looking towards the right. On the right, a woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue blazer over a light-colored shirt, is gesturing with her hands while speaking. They are in an office setting with a laptop in the foreground and a blurred background showing other office elements. A large, semi-transparent blue diamond shape is overlaid on the image, and the title text is centered within it.

Rationale for Dialogue

This inaugural policy dialogue under our Youth Futures Policy Research project in Kenya seeks to realise four objectives:

- ✓ Establish strategic partnerships for impactful implementation of the project – we will introduce our project as well as learn about relevant ongoing work by other stakeholders. This will provide initial opportunities that we will build on beyond the dialogue to establish strategic partnerships for this work.
- ✓ Enrich the design and responsiveness of our proposed research the needs of key state and non-state stakeholders working to enhance youth employment in Kenya – we will present our proposed research and receive input into its design, which will greatly enrich our research design and provide insights that will ensure our research is responsive to the needs of government and other key stakeholders
- ✓ Validate the results emerging from our desk-based review relevant policies and other literature on youth employment in Kenya – we will present the results emerging from the desk-based reviews that we have conducted of policies relevant to youth employment, and receive stakeholder feedback on the results.
- ✓ Learn about other ongoing initiatives implemented by key stakeholders to enhance youth employment in Kenya – apart from stakeholder reactions to our work, we will provide sessions for stakeholders to share their work through presentations and panel discussions. This will enable to learn about ongoing work to avoid duplication and enrich our work.



20.08.2025

08:00 AM - 01:15 PM

WEDNESDAY

Guest Arrival and Breakfast

08:00 AM

Welcome, Introductions & Dialogue Objectives

9:00

Session Chair: Benson Macharia (CAP Youth Empowerment Institute), Dr Joshua Magero (AFIDEP)

– 9:15 AM

Opening Remarks

9.15

- Dr. Rose Oronje, Deputy Executive Director, African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)
- Ndung'u Kahihu, Executive Director, CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (CAP-YEI)
- Dr. Purity Ngina, Commission Secretary/CEO, National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC)
- Charles Mwaniki - Deputy Director, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports

– 9:45 AM

Session Chair: Benson Macharia, CAP Youth Empowerment Institute

Introduce the Youth Futures Policy Research Project

9.45

Session Chair: Dr. Cleopatra Mugenyi, AFIDEP

-9:55 AM

Keynote Address & Official Opening of the Dialogue

09:55

Session Chair: Fikirini Jacobs Katoi Kahindi, PS, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports

-10.25 AM

Health Break & Group Photo

10.25

- 10.45 AM

Research:

10:45

- Results of a desk-based review of policy and other literature on youth employment in Kenya (10min)
- What works for Youth Employment in Africa: A review of youth employment policies and their impact in Kenya (10min)

- 11.05 AM

Session Chair: Dr. Joshua Magero, AFIDEP & Peter Nderitu, Senior Programme Manager, Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP)

Panel Session on Youth Employment in Kenya:

11:05

– 11:50 PM

1. **Mary Njugi** - Director, State Department for Technical, Vocational Education and Training
2. **Odiwa Jack Jeconia Owaga** - Assistant Director, Enterprise Development (Policy) - State Department for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development
3. **Charles Mwaniki** - Deputy Director, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports
4. **Jemimah Njai** - Researcher, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)
5. **Nancy Githigia** – Director, Vocational Training (Mombasa County Government)

Session Chair: Cleopatra Mugenyi, PhD

Q&A / Discussions (10min)

10:00 - 10.25 AM

Presentation

12:00

Creating sustainable employment pathways for youth-bridging skills gaps, enhancing productivity, and aligning with market demands.

– 12:10 PM

Session Chair: Elijah Kingutu, Program Specialist, Kenya Private Sector Alliance

Panel Session II: Youth Employment Interventions and Implementation in Kenya

12:10

– 12:55 PM

1. **Judith Oyoo** - Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) Member
2. **Mr. Ken Mwenda** - Co-Founder and Managing Director, eMobilis Mobile Technology Institute/Ajira Digital Programme
3. **Edson Mpyisi** - Chief Financial Economist and Coordinator, ENABLE Youth Program
4. **Caroline Njuki** - Chief technical adviser on jobs and education, International Labour Organization
5. **Nyamai Wambua HSC, MAAK** - CEO, Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Association (KNFJKA)

Session Chair: Dr Cleopatra Mugenyi, AFIDEP

Youth Discussants on the Panel Submissions

12:55

Plenary Reflections

– 01:20 PM

Session Chair: Benson Macharia, CAP Youth Empowerment Institut



Closing Remarks

01:20

– 01:30 PM

- *CAP Youth Empowerment Institute*
- *African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)*
- *The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC)*
- *Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports*

Session Chair: Dr. Joshua Magero, AFIDEP

Lunch and Departure

01:30 - 02:30 PM

Session Chair: Benson Macharia