

Urban Youth, Poverty and Inequality in Tanzania

Promoting young people's well-being through a greater understanding of their social and economic needs.

The challenge

More than 60 per cent of Tanzania's population is under the age of 25 and one in three children born today will be living in an urban centre by the time they are 20 years old. Addressing the needs of young people is at the centre of Tanzania's development challenge. Insufficient jobs and rapid urbanisation has resulted in new forms of poverty, characterised by high rates of under- and unemployment, high levels of emotional, physical and sexual violence and high rates of HIV/AIDS infection.

The impact

Young people are overlooked in national policies and programmes, and those specific to young people are often based on inaccurate understandings. Knowledge and research on young people's needs is therefore critical to more effective policy-making, programme design and targeting.


This research in Tanzania (2013-2016) builds upon a Ugandan study that was well-received by NGOs, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and used by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development during revisions to Uganda's National youth policy. Our research will seek similar impact, working with participatory youth development NGO, Tamasha Vijana, to produce a national report on urban youth.

Early findings were used to present young people's visions for a poverty-free city in Tanzania at The University of Manchester's Policy Week, exposing our work to a range of geographers, planners, and other social science practitioners. This output will launch in February 2015, in English and Kiswahili, with an accompanying campaign to raise awareness of the research themes around the time of the Tanzanian elections in late 2015.

To sensitise key audiences on the research's key themes, youth entrepreneurship messages were publicised in social media, blogs and The University of Manchester's websites during Global Entrepreneurship Week, resulting in:

- Publication on The University of Manchester's and Brooks World Poverty Institute's news sites and The Conversation. The article was read by more than 6700 people.
<http://bit.ly/conversationbanks>
- Publication on The World Economic Forum blog aimed at private and public sector leaders
<http://bit.ly/wefbanks>
- A BBC World Service radio interview: World Business News with Russell Padmore, also broadcast across Africa on Uganda Radio 1, Nigeria Info 98, Wazobia FM and Cool FM (both in Nigeria).
<http://bit.ly/1xKZuEw>
- A working paper: 'What works for young people's development? A case study of BRAC's empowerment and livelihoods programme for adolescent girls in Uganda and Tanzania', which will also be a chapter in the forthcoming book 'What Works for the Poorest in Africa?'



Employment is but one outcome as young people create a critical mass and place themselves at the core of transforming their societies. 

Dr Nicola Banks in The Conversation
Starting a new Business is not the answer for most of the world's poor



Our research

Our research explores young people's experiences of urban poverty in Arusha and Dar es Salaam. It will adapt Anirudh Krishna's Stages of Progress methodology as a tool for exploring opportunities for social mobility among urban youth. In-depth interviews will further explore how young people search for livelihoods and adulthood in the city amidst endemic poverty, inequality and limited support. We consider:

- The extent to which urban youth are equipped to make a successful transition to adulthood through an analysis of the assets, institutions, practices and environments that affect their lives in the city.
- The strategies that young people deploy to enhance their prospects for survival and advancement amidst limited assets and support, and how these differ by gender, age and location.



Urban contexts and youth communities are relatively unexplored territories of huge policy and theoretical relevance.



Professor Anirudh Krishna
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Key people:

Dr Nicola Banks (University of Manchester)
Richard Mabala (Tamasha Vijana)

Further information:

<http://bit.ly/bwpiyouth>

Tamasha Vijana <http://www.tamashavijana.org/>



View young people's perceptions of a poverty-free city in Tanzania here:
<http://bit.ly/banksvideo>

Listen to Nicola on why policy makers must listen to young people at:
<http://bit.ly/banksinterview>

Research Impact

www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk