

# An Evaluation of Policies Guiding Youth Self-Help Groups in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya

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*Abstract- This evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of policies guiding youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. The study focuses on three key aspects: awareness of policies among youth group leaders, implementation of policies by government bodies, and the influence of international policies on youth groups. The evaluation includes findings from focus group discussions conducted with group members and provides insights into their knowledge of policies and recommendations for improved awareness. Additionally, the study examines the current implementation status of policies, highlighting those that are being effectively implemented and identifying gaps in implementation. The evaluation concludes by emphasizing the importance of addressing these gaps and recommending strategies to enhance the effectiveness of policies guiding youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya*

**Indexed Terms- Policies, Youth Self-Help Groups**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Youth self-help groups play a crucial role in empowering young people and fostering socio-economic development in communities. These groups provide a platform for youth to come together, share resources, and collectively address their needs and aspirations. In Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya, youth self-help groups have emerged as a significant force for positive change, promoting entrepreneurship, skills development, and community engagement among young individuals.

The effectiveness of youth self-help groups is heavily influenced by the policies that guide their formation, operation, and support. Policies serve as a framework for facilitating the growth and sustainability of these groups, ensuring that they receive the necessary

resources, support, and recognition from relevant authorities. However, the evaluation of these policies is vital to assess their impact, identify gaps in implementation, and recommend improvements for the benefit of youth self-help groups and their members.

This evaluation focuses on the policies guiding youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. It examines three key dimensions: awareness of policies among youth group leaders, implementation of policies by government bodies, and the influence of international policies on youth groups. By exploring these aspects, this evaluation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current policy landscape and its impact on youth self-help groups.

The evaluation incorporates findings from focus group discussions conducted with group members to gain insights into their knowledge of policies and recommendations for improved awareness. By involving the voices of the youth themselves, this evaluation seeks to capture their experiences, perspectives, and aspirations, which are essential for shaping effective policies.

Furthermore, the evaluation assesses the implementation status of policies, identifying those that are currently being effectively implemented and highlighting gaps that hinder the optimal functioning of youth self-help groups. This assessment serves as a foundation for proposing recommendations and strategies to bridge these implementation gaps and enhance the effectiveness of policies.

By conducting this evaluation, we aim to contribute to the existing knowledge on policies guiding youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. The findings and recommendations of this study can inform policymakers, government bodies, and relevant

stakeholders on areas that require attention and improvement to create an enabling environment for the growth and success of youth self-help groups. Ultimately, this evaluation seeks to empower young people, promote their active participation in community development, and foster their socio-economic advancement in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya.

## II. POLICIES

This section evaluates the awareness and implementation of policies guiding youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County. It examines the level of knowledge of these policies among group leaders, government administrators, and members. Additionally, it compares local policies to international/regional youth policies.

### 2.1. Awareness of Policies among Youth Group Leaders

The study found that most youth group leaders in Bungoma South Sub-County are not conversant with the policies guiding self-help groups. In an interview, one leader admitted, "I am not aware of the policies that guide youth groups because we literally believe that they don't exist." This lack of awareness perpetuates the failure and ineffectiveness of many groups.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 states that following guiding policies is key to the smooth functioning of self-help groups. Hence, policy awareness among Bungoma youth leaders could enable more successful and impactful groups.

Dempster, Stevens, and Keeffe (2011) conducted a focused review of recent research literature on student and youth leadership, aiming to understand the current state of knowledge by focusing on young people's perspectives. Ammann (2010) explored the significance of leadership in youth and adults, emphasizing the benefits of leadership qualities in youth organizations. Additionally, research by Murphy & Johnson (2011) highlighted the importance of youth leader development in expanding the leadership pipeline for future leaders and enhancing various skills like civic engagement, multicultural awareness, and assertiveness. The study also delved

into the impact of leader development training on key constructs during sensitive periods in youth development to enhance students' beliefs and skills. Furthermore, the research by Nelson (2010) emphasized the lack of research in youth leadership development, pointing out that programs focusing on youth leadership may not be fully effective. These studies collectively shed light on the importance of developing leadership skills among youth to foster personal growth, societal contribution, and future leadership roles.

### 2.2 Implementation of Policies by Government Bodies

Interviews with the County Commissioner and Chiefs revealed that they are well-versed in youth group policies. As overseers of registration and regulation, they are familiar with policies like the Kenyan Youth Development Policy. They emphasized that many Bungoma youth groups fail to properly apply the guidelines mandated by national and county administrations.

As legal custodians, increasing policy awareness among youth is their responsibility per Zimmerman (2000). They should educate youth on the formation, registration, and ethical operation of self-help initiatives. Their involvement can revive groups across Bungoma and mitigate issues like crime and unemployment.

The County Government of Bungoma has demonstrated a commitment to youth development through the formulation of the Bungoma County Youth Policy in both 2020 and 2022. These policies aim to address the specific needs and circumstances of youth in Bungoma County, Kenya, and globally, drawing on national, regional, and global frameworks to promote democracy, economic development, poverty eradication, and youth empowerment. International initiatives like the African Youth Charter and the United Nations World Programme of Action emphasize the importance of comprehensive national youth policies and interventions for youth empowerment globally. Moreover, collaborations with organizations like Red Nose Day and The Carter Center are empowering young people in Bungoma to take leadership roles and actively participate in political processes, aligning with the goals set forth in the County Government's youth policies and

international frameworks. Additionally, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) investments in Bungoma County underscore a broader commitment to strengthening democracy, promoting economic growth, enhancing food security, and supporting youth education and leadership development within the region.

### 2.3 International Policies on Youth Groups

While most local youth only knew of a few policies, focus groups demonstrated awareness of international/regional policies:

The African Youth Charter requires comprehensive national youth policies.

The United Nations World Programme of Action prioritizes interventions for youth empowerment globally.

Flemish Children's Rights Policy Plans integrate young citizens' welfare across domains.

This shows that modeling local policies based on global ones can improve youth outcomes in Bungoma and Kenya.

The County Government of Bungoma has been proactive in formulating policies to address the needs and circumstances of youth in the region. The Bungoma County Youth Policy, both in 2020 and 2022, reflects a comprehensive approach to youth development, drawing on national, regional, and global documents to promote the developmental state in Kenya, protect democracy, support economic development, and eradicate poverty and unemployment. Additionally, international initiatives like the African Youth Charter and the United Nations World Programme of Action emphasize the importance of comprehensive national youth policies and interventions for youth empowerment globally. These policies highlight the significance of modeling local policies based on global standards to enhance youth outcomes not only in Bungoma but also across Kenya. Furthermore, programs supported by organizations like Red Nose Day and The Carter Center are empowering young people in Bungoma to become confident leaders, advocates for change, and active participants in political processes, aligning with

the goals of the County Government's youth policies and international frameworks.

### III. FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings from focus groups conducted with youth group members regarding their knowledge of policies guiding self-help groups. It also provides recommendations to improve policy awareness among members.

#### 3.1 Knowledge of Policies among Group Members

In-depth focus group discussions revealed that most youth group members lacked awareness of the policies that regulate the formation and operations of self-help groups. One member admitted, "Although we have created and are running a youth self-help group, I personally can confirm that I'm only familiar with a few policies and not aware of the numerous policies that apparently exist at international and local levels."

These findings indicate a prevalent lack of knowledge about policies among both group leaders and members in Bungoma South Sub-County. To address this issue and prevent misconduct, targeted education is necessary, focusing on guidelines related to management, accounting, reporting, and ethics.

The focus group discussions in Bungoma South Sub-County highlighted a lack of awareness among youth group members regarding the policies that govern self-help groups. This lack of knowledge extends to both leaders and members, as evidenced by one member's admission of limited understanding of existing policies at international and local levels. To address this issue, it is crucial to provide targeted education on guidelines related to management, accounting, reporting, and ethics. Such education can help prevent misconduct and ensure compliance within these groups. The Bungoma County Youth Policy, developed by the County Government of Bungoma, serves as a foundational document guiding youth development initiatives, emphasizing the importance of empowering youth to realize their full potential and make meaningful contributions to the development of a prosperous Bungoma County. Collaborations with organizations like Red Nose Day and The Carter Center further support youth leadership and engagement in political processes, aligning with the

broader goals of enhancing youth outcomes in the region.

### 3.2 Recommendations for Improved Awareness

To improve awareness of policies among youth group members, the legal and civil administration should facilitate workshops and distribute policy briefs. These initiatives will enhance understanding of registration processes, performance tracking, financial accountability, and conflict resolution for self-help groups.

Partnerships with youth centers, vocational institutes, and the county government can be established to co-design and deliver tailored capacity-building programs focused on policy compliance.

Furthermore, connecting youth groups with external experts and mentors can provide ongoing support in areas such as by-law adherence, auditing, and good governance practices. These initiatives will equip members to contribute more meaningfully to the functioning of their groups.

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## IV. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF POLICIES

This section examines the extent of implementation of various policies related to regulating and supporting

youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County. It highlights some key policies that are currently adopted while also identifying major gaps.

### 4.1 Policies Currently Being Implemented

Interviews with leaders and administrators revealed that several national and county-level youth policies are currently being implemented:

Enabling youth participation in policymaking processes and providing platforms for youth representation.

Building capabilities of youth groups in areas such as financial planning, digital skills, and proposal writing. Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups and promoting gender equality in group membership.

Tracking youth-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) metrics locally for development progress. Consulting youth groups for program design and incorporating their feedback in evaluations.

The implementation of various national and county-level youth policies in Bungoma South Sub-County aims to enhance youth participation in policymaking, build the capabilities of youth groups in financial planning and digital skills, promote inclusion and gender equality, track local progress towards youth-related SDGs, and incorporate youth feedback in program design and evaluation. These initiatives reflect a concerted effort to empower youth, promote inclusivity, and foster their meaningful engagement in community development. The County Government of Bungoma's commitment to youth development, as outlined in the Bungoma County Youth Policy, underscores the importance of creating opportunities for youth to contribute meaningfully to the prosperity and development of the region.

### 4.2 Gaps in Implementation

Despite the implementation of various national and county-level youth policies in Bungoma South Sub-County, there are still gaps in translating these policies into practice. One significant challenge is the lack of awareness of policies across youth leadership hierarchies, which hinders compliance. This issue is compounded by the absence of robust conflict resolution mechanisms, leading to group dissolution.

Additionally, the lack of transparency regarding group reporting protocols allows for financial mismanagement, further undermining accountability and transparency. Furthermore, minimal youth input in policy formulation reduces ownership over implementation, which can hinder the sustainability of youth groups in Bungoma. Addressing these gaps requires joint action between county administrations, youth representatives, and community stakeholders. By addressing these issues, accountability, transparency, and the sustainability of youth groups can be enhanced, ultimately benefiting the local community.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this evaluation highlights significant gaps in the awareness and implementation of policies designed to guide youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County. There is a lack of knowledge about these policies among leaders and members of the majority of groups, which hinders compliance with guidelines regarding operations, accounting, and reporting.

Furthermore, the administration and enforcement of existing national and regional policies are uneven. While there has been progress in areas such as participation, capability building, and inclusion, challenges persist in relation to conflict resolution, financial transparency, and youth engagement in policy-making.

Addressing these challenges requires multifaceted and collaborative strategies. Customized coaching is needed to enhance the understanding of relevant regulations and statutes among youth groups. Government bodies must strengthen monitoring and redressal systems to improve compliance. Policies should be co-formulated with young citizen representatives through workshops and nationwide surveys to foster ownership and engagement.

Sustained investments in such youth-centric initiatives can nurture self-agency, promote good governance, and maximize impact. This will result in the growth of ethical, empowered, and self-sustaining youth groups that can make significant contributions to socio-

economic development goals in Bungoma South Sub-County and beyond.

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