

## **Factors that Influence Effective Communication of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund to the Youth in Kabianga Division, Kericho County, Kenya**

**Chepngeno B. Judy**  
University of Kabianga  
P.O Box 2030-20200, Kericho  
Kenya

**Biwott Edith Jelagat** (Corresponding Author)  
Phd Student, Department of Communication Studies,  
Moi University  
P.O Box 7536-30100, Eldoret  
Kenya

### **Abstract**

*Information provision facilitates development in any country. The government should, therefore, ensure that policies are communicated well so that the target audience is reached and the objective achieved. This Paper sought to find out the factors that influence effective communication of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) to the youth in rural areas. The study was carried out in Kabianga division of Kericho County. The study targeted all youth within the age bracket of 18-35 years in Kabianga division. A total of 210 respondents participated in the study. The main tool of data collection was survey-questionnaires for statistical analysis. However, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used to complement with qualitative data. Lack of access to media, unavailability to use media, individual's educational level, language used in dissemination were some of the major factors hindering effective communication to the youth in rural areas. Other factors that influenced adoption of innovations were personal characteristics. It was concluded that the youth who had received the information and acted upon it by forming youth groups were: educated, of low socio-economic status, had a more favourable attitude, willing to take risks, had higher exposure to the outside world among others. From the study findings, the paper recommends that the government should establish infrastructures in the rural areas to make these resources easily accessible to the people.*

**Keywords:** Effective, Communication, Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Kericho, Kenya

### **1. Introduction**

Governments all over the world are facing growing problems of organizing national programmes that can cater for the needs of young people to enable them to participate effectively in national development (IMF report, 2007). Many sessional papers that have tried to articulate strategies of poverty eradication have not targeted the youth and yet they also need employment opportunities, training and basic necessities of life.

A report by UNSNRDFS (1997) points out that more than 850 million people in developing countries are excluded from a wide range of information and knowledge, with the rural poor in particular remaining isolated from both traditional and new information and communication technologies which would improve their livelihoods. One characteristic of rural areas, especially in Kenya, is lack of knowledge. This is partly why targeting the youth can succeed if the ways of communication are carefully chosen, if the youth are empowered with the skills and their enterprises monitored for regular guidance. Murugu (2008) states that the youth are the most socially active and energetic segment of the population fully endowed with creativity and dynamism in any society. The population age bracket of 30 years and below, constitutes about 75 percent of the Kenyan population and 67 percent of the unemployed are the youth.

In Kenya, the government launched the Youth Enterprise Development Fund to help spur entrepreneurial culture among the youth so that many of them could embrace and join the micro and small enterprise sector and subsequently, stimulate economic growth.

The Kenya Entrepreneurship Empowerment Foundation (2007) report, states that the purpose of the fund is to increase young entrepreneurs' access to loans rather than increasing the supply of loan funds. However, with the development of YEDF, most youth have not actively taken part in it. The inability to acquire information by the rural population is attributed to the problem of information dissemination as the rural youth is composed of both literates and illiterates.

Information provision facilitates development in any country. The government should, therefore, ensure that policies are communicated well so that the target audience is reached and the objective achieved. In many occasions, the government utilizes one-way communication process where messages are transmitted from policymakers to the general public using linear communication channels. The assumption is that information will be received uniformly by all people. This is not usually the case in that information impacts differently on people because of differences in status, gender, age, location, educational status and access. Some may not even receive it at all due to limited economic and social opportunities. In some cases the government uses special communication media like sessional papers, which have to be purchased from only one outlet in the country (government printer). It also uses Kenya gazette, which is a special communication medium for government policy; paid for announcements in electronic and print media, posters and extension services through Barazas among others. The question is whether the government is aware of the dynamics of the channels used to communicate its policies. This paper thus seeks to find out the factors that influence effective communication of the YEDF to the youth in the rural areas of Kabianga Division in Kericho County.

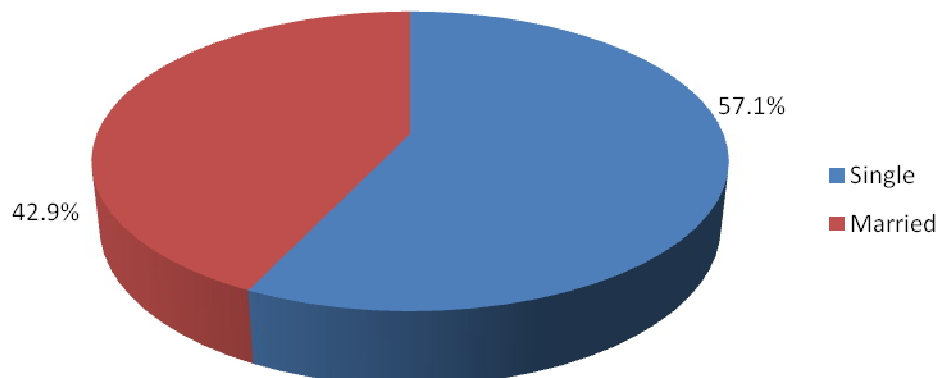
## 2. Materials and Methods

This study employed descriptive cross-sectional research design. It was carried out in Kabianga division of Kericho County. The study targeted all youth within the age bracket of 18-35 years in Kabianga division. This age bracket was chosen since they were the group entitled to get the Youth Enterprise Development Fund according to the then Ministry of Youth Affairs. Using purposive sampling, 3 sub-locations which have poor roads and communication network system were chosen out of the 15 sub-locations in the division. From the 3 sub-locations chosen, convenient sampling was used to obtain 70 respondents making a total sample size of 210. The main tool of data collection was survey-questionnaires for statistical analysis. However, Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used to complement with qualitative data.

## 3. Findings and Discussions

### 3.1 Marital Status of the Respondents

In the study, 120 respondents (57.1%) were single while 90 respondents (42.9%) were married. This is shown in figure 1.



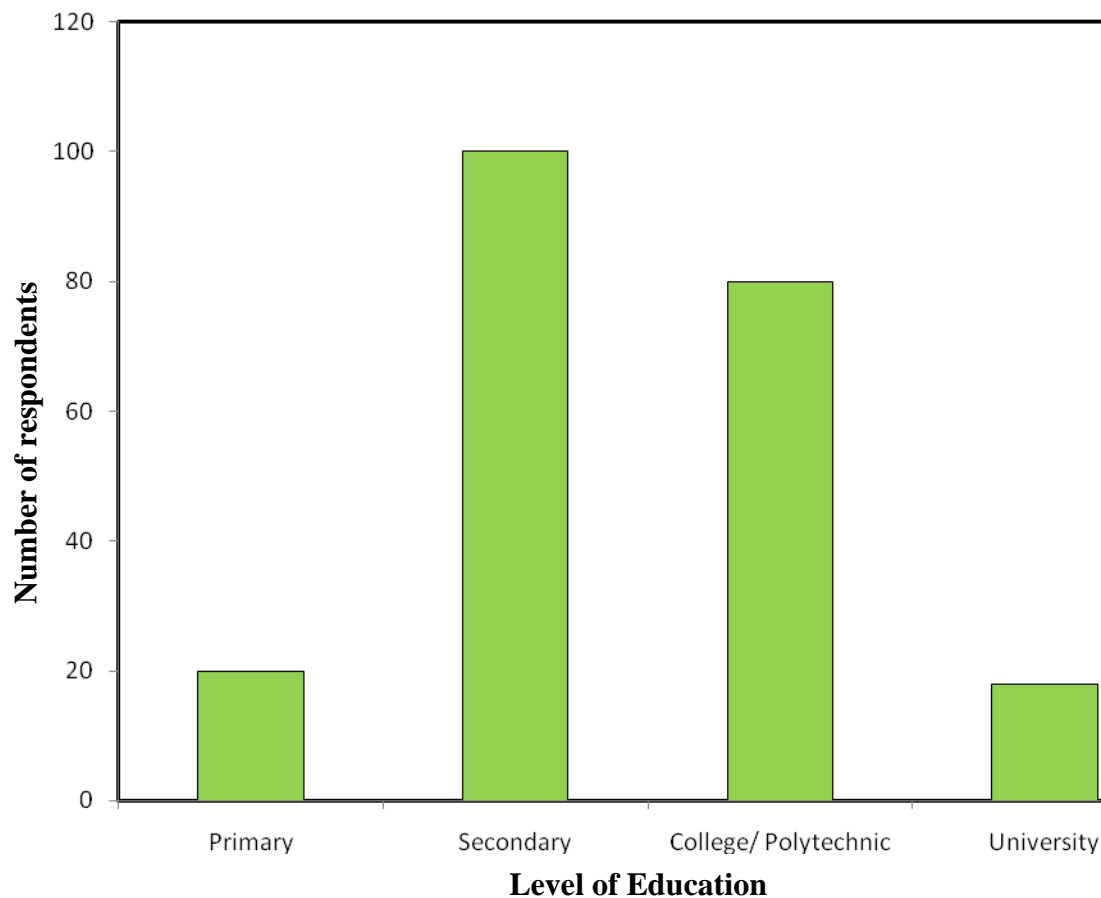
**Figure 1: Pie Chart Showing Respondents' Marital Status**

As shown in figure 1, there was a high representation of the singles in comparison with the married. The singles, who were mostly younger, were more willing to participate in the study. They were observed to be interested in matters concerning youth thus could be involved in issues affecting them.

Most of the singles interviewed claimed that they received Youth Fund information through their peers. The married on the other hand interpreted the term “youth” to mean “unmarried man or woman” such that they claimed they no longer belonged to that category (youth) therefore they showed little interest in participating in the study. Effective communication by the use of appropriate channels would have served to clear such misconceptions and more would have likely been involved in joining youth groups for the purposes of applying for YEDF.

### 3.2 Educational Level of the Respondents

Education level was considered in order to determine the literacy level of the respondents. It was noted that the highest level of formal education of the respondents was secondary education with 101 (48.1%) cases. This was followed by post secondary college/polytechnic level education 76 (36.2%). Those who had primary level education were 19 (9%), while only 14 (6.7%) had attained university level education. This is presented in figure 2.



**Figure 2: Bar Graph Showing Respondents' Educational Level**

It is evident from the graph that the sample drawn from the population of the study was fairly educated thus, literate. Accessing and utilizing information obtained to a large extent depends on one's educational level. Chalmers (1995) posits that education has a bearing in the ability to identify and use communication resources. The more educated one is, the better placed he or she is to seek and utilize these resources. Communication of information requires a certain amount of literacy partly because of the languages used and the fact that some of the media are relatively technical. The importance attached to information is also commensurate with education level. The higher the level, the more one is likely to value information that originates from beyond the village. Basing on this fact, the sample selected was therefore in a position to acquire and utilize information on Youth Enterprise Development Fund. Information gathered from interviews revealed that indeed some were fairly educated (at least with secondary level education) but were not employed thus could not afford to buy the communication resources. Others claimed that some of these resources such as newspapers were not always available since it was hard for them to be availed to the rural set-up.

### 3.3 Employment Status of the Respondents

Among the respondents, 66 (31.4%) were those employed while 144 (68.6%) were unemployed at the time of study. This shows that the majority of the respondents did not have jobs. This can be attributed to the age bracket of the respondents (18- 35) when most of them have just completed secondary and college education and are engaged in seeking jobs. These jobseekers claimed that they did not have the money to buy and read newspapers, listen to radio or watch television so the majority were probably not aware of the existence of YEDF or how to access it.

In order to determine the factors influencing effective communication of YEDF, the respondents were asked to state whether the factors listed in the questionnaire hindered effective communication of YEDF or not. The respondents who were in agreement were as follows: language used 136 (64.8%), lack of access to media 176 (83.8%) and individuals' unavailability to use the media 170 (81%) This has been summarized in table 1.

**Table 1: Factors Hindering Effective Communication of Youth Fund information in Rural Areas**

Factors	YES		NO	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Language used	136	64.8	74	35.2
Lack of access to media	176	83.8	34	16.2
Individual's unavailability to use the media	170	81	40	19

The majority of the respondents 176(83.8%) considered lack of access to media a leading factor that hindered effective communication of YEDF.

Newspapers, television sets and internet services among others which could provide detailed information were rarely available in the rural areas. This is due to their high cost of purchase. For the few that were having television sets in their homes, few channels could be accessed. The fact that the region had no electricity further limited their access to these channels. The cost of constant purchase of batteries is quite high such that even those who owned the electronics could not use them at times due to lack of batteries. This posed a great challenge since information about the fund was relayed through these channels.

Information from key informants revealed that the Ministry of Youth Affairs to a large extent utilized mass media channels and few interpersonal channels in relaying information on YEDF to the youth. This may have been very effective to the urban population since these channels could easily be accessed but, a large majority in the rural areas missed out. Most seminars were conducted at higher level (County and Constituency) and not on the grass root level. This implies that the youths who could not manage to attend these meetings could not receive adequate information on the YEDF. The other 74 (35.2%) respondents did not consider lack of media accessibility a problem. They claimed that they had received the information from varied sources but did not have the interest in forming youth groups.

Individual's unavailability to use media is another factor that 170 (81%) respondents considered to hinder effective communication of YEDF information. Although some respondents could access media like radio and television, their duties called for their absence from home for many hours each day. Others claimed that their occupations could not allow the time. This applied to businessmen /women, students, teachers, craftsmen and those in the armed forces who work away from home. Even the farmer or driver who could carry his radio with him would not have the opportunity to listen to the radio while at work. Thus, most respondents could listen to radio or watch television after work. Those who did not consider individual's unavailability to use the media a hindering factor were 40 (19%). They stated that they had time to interact with the available channels but were not keen on all the programmes aired.

Lastly the choice of a language to use in disseminating information was considered a hindering factor by 136 (64.8%) cases. Language used appeared to account for poor credibility of most mass media channels like radio and television as most broadcasts are in English or Kiswahili. This is line with Lingamneni, (1981) who states that the type of language and relevance of the messages aired on media channels has an implication on the adoption of new ideas and technologies in developing nations. Those who did not consider the choice of a language a problem were 74 (35.2%). They claimed that the individual relaying information to a large extent influenced whether an idea was going to be adopted or not. It was further observed that remoteness and isolation of communities limit interactions, leading to a lack of sharing of new information and consequently hampers uptake of development practices such as formation of youth groups in order to obtain YEDF.

Information gathered from key informants revealed that opinion leaders have a crucial role to play in ensuring effective communication of ideas in an area. They are informally influential people in a social system and they act as entry point for technological dissemination. This is because, opinion leaders in most cases are respected people in a social system, more exposed to sources of information and have higher status than other members (Rogers ,1995). Innovations approved by opinion leaders in a social system are more likely to be adopted by followers irrespective of their risks and uncertainties (Guerin & Guerin, 1994).

Rogers (1983) states that the personal characteristics of an individual influence adoption of innovations. This was therefore, considered as a factor in the study. Cross tabulations of various variables and information obtained from interviews conducted were used to identify the characteristics.

The first set of variables considered was the respondents’ level of education and joining a youth group. Out of 67 respondents who had formed groups, 7 had attained primary education, 27 had secondary level education, 31 had college/polytechnic education and 2 had university education. The findings have been presented in table 2

**Table 2: Cross Tabulations of Level of Education and Belonging to Youth Groups**

		Do you belong to a youth group?		Total
		Yes	No	
Highest level of Education	Primary	7	12	19
	Secondary	27	74	101
	College/polytechnic	31	45	76
	University	2	12	14
Total		67	143	210

In table 2, the majority of the youth (31) which represented 40.7% of those with college/polytechnic education had joined youth groups. From the interviews conducted, these youth were observed to be venturesome individuals who were eager to try new ideas. This was attributed to the fact that they have a high degree of exposure to the outside world thus have had more experiences to learn from. They further have the ability to understand and apply complex technical knowledge out of the various training that they have undergone. This enabled them to adopt the idea of forming youth groups and come up with various projects that they would undertake. This is in line with Opuka (2003) who states that education allows individuals and societies to unlock their potential, to expand their horizons and adapt to a changing world. It plays a key role in the advancement, transfer and application of new knowledge. Mutiso (1991) adds that education enlarges a person’s capacities, developing his or her intellect and natural abilities. It broadens one’s intellect about the world, including awareness of all social, cultural, economic and political forces of one’s existence. It can then be concluded that the youth who were more educated were more likely to be the first to adopt new innovations.

The second set of variables considered was the respondents' employment status and joining of youth groups. Out of 66 respondents who were employed, 17 had joined groups while 49 had not. Among the unemployed, 50 had formed youth groups while 94 had not. The findings are shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Cross tabulations of Employment Status and whether they belong to Youth Group**

		Do you belong to a youth group?		Total
		Yes	No	
Are you employed?	Yes	17	49	66
	No	50	94	144
<b>Total</b>		<b>67</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>210</b>

Table 3 shows that majority of the youth 50 which represented 34.7% of the unemployed had joined youth groups while 17 (25.8%) of those who were employed had formed youth groups. Their low socio-economic status necessitated them to look for ways of generating income. Forming groups seemed to be one way of starting businesses. This shows that those who did not have jobs were likely to form groups in order to start projects thus curbing unemployment problem. The employed on the other hand seemed to be committed with their duties which called for much of their time.

The interviews conducted revealed that most of the group members were friends and had joined the groups through social networking. They were likely to influence each other in making decisions. The members of the various groups were observed to be having a more favourable attitude toward the idea of starting projects with the hope of receiving funding in the future. This was seen by their willingness to make contributions to enable them start up the businesses. The members further were seen to be willing to take risks (for instance in case their projects not being funded) and they showed readiness to face uncertainty that comes with investing in business. The study revealed that lack of access to media was a leading factor. Newspapers, television sets and internet services among others which could provide detailed information were rarely available in the rural areas. Unavailability to use media was another factor that was cited. Although some respondents could access media like radio and television, their duties and professions called for their absence from home for many hours each day thus not receiving some information. The choice of a language to use in disseminating information was also considered a hindering factor. Language used appeared to account for poor credibility of most mass media channels like radio and television as most broadcasts are in English or Kiswahili. The personal characteristics of the youth who had joined youth groups were also considered as factors that influenced effective communication. The study revealed that the youth who were more educated were more likely to be the first to adopt new innovations. They seemed to be venturesome individuals who were eager to try new ideas. Those with low socio-economic status as a result of joblessness looked for ways of generating income therefore they formed groups as one way of starting businesses thus curbing unemployment problem. Group members were further observed to have a more favourable attitude toward the idea of starting projects with the hope of receiving funding in the future. Lastly the members were further seen to be willing to take risks (for instance in case their projects were not funded) and they showed readiness to face uncertainty that comes with investing in business.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Lack of access to media, unavailability to use media, individual's educational level, and the language used in dissemination were some of the major factors hindering effective communication to the youth in rural areas. This finding concurs with that of Moemaka (1985) who observed that the elite are only focusing on the modern channels of communication that are available and appropriate to the urban population in information dissemination while totally forgetting the rural setting where modern communication facilities are near zero. Other factors that influenced adoption of innovations were personal characteristics. It was concluded that the youth who had received the information and acted upon it by forming youth groups were: educated, of low socio-economic status, had a more favourable attitude, willing to take risks, had higher exposure to the outside world among others.

### **5. Recommendations**

The government should establish infrastructures in the rural areas. This includes improving transport and communication network and rural electrification in order to make these resources easily accessible to the people. Secondly, more seminars and workshops where training on entrepreneurial matters are offered can serve to empower all the youth irrespective of their social, educational and economic backgrounds.

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