



PUBLIC POLICY BLOG

Youth unemployment in Papua New Guinea: Causes, effects and way forward

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Building a nation is synonymous to inclusive approach of engaging all citizens in building social cohesion, economic prosperity and political stability in a country. This suggests that all citizens should be involved in developing a nation. The youth play a vital role in nation building and their involvement in the development of Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a must.

In PNG, one of the most common issues that hinders economic development and contributes a lot to law and order issues is youth unemployment. PNG's unemployment rate increased from 2.70 percent in 2020 from 2.40 percent in 2019. According to [Trading Economics](#), unemployment rate in PNG is expected to reach 3.50 percent by the end of 2021. From the total population, youth unemployment was reported 62.0 percent in 2020. Young people are more likely to be unemployed compared to adults. It is apparent that PNG faces a challenging future because of its youth unemployment issue.

Some causes of youth unemployment

Youth unemployment is an increasingly pressing social and economic concern in PNG. Some causes of youth unemployment in PNG include the following:

Poverty. About 39.9 percent of Papua New Guineans live below the national poverty line. Poverty in PNG is closely associated with a lack of access to education, health services and income-earning opportunities. Some of the youth live in poverty, therefore, unable to find a job.

Inadequate formal education. Most youth graduated from recognised institutions but they cannot speak and write good English due to poor start at basic level of education in PNG. In some cases, students are taught

in their own language or Tok Pisin rather than English. Low qualified teachers, tribal fights, gender discrimination and poor road networks are contributing factors to young people not having appropriate skills and knowledge.

Corruption. PNG's national goals and directive principles seem to have been suppressed over the years by corrupt practices resulting in high rate of youth unemployment. Nepotism and bribery downsized the possibilities of graduates and youths in the labour force.

Recruiters consider work experience. In PNG, more students graduate from universities without work experience, which recruiters often need. Some firms find it difficult to invest in the training of new graduates because they see it as an added cost of doing business. Thus, most graduates continue to find it difficult in getting employment.

Effects of youth unemployment

Several socio-economic issues that are associated with youth unemployment include:

- **Use of drugs and alcohol** – Some unemployed youth involve heavily in consuming drugs and alcohol and become addicted to it, creating a lot of socio-economic issues.
- **Stealing** – Some unemployed youth are involved in break and enter, pick-pocketing and sniffing of bag snatching to support themselves financially.
- **Rape** – Some of the unemployed youth frequently roam around in groups and may be involved in rape when they see girls walking alone.

- **Violence** – Some of the unemployed youth are involved in family violence, which include beating-up their relations, parents and siblings when their demand is not met.
- **Prostitution** – Some unemployed women engage in prostitution to make money to survive.

Way forward

The concern of the issue of youth unemployment is within the space of both national and sub-national governments. Government should put emphasis on empowering the youth so that they can contribute towards achieving the national goals. In fact, building young people is indirectly building a strong and healthy nation. Government should consider the following.

Provide more opportunities for learning. It is learning that makes the world a better place to live. Improved learning will have much impact on youth unemployment in the country. It is ideal for the government to:

- Establish more technical and vocational education training (TVET);
- Provide more Flexible and Open Distance learning (FODE); and,
- Improve the quality of learning in all levels of education by providing adequate facilities.

Create job opportunities. To minimise and ease gap of youth unemployment in PNG and involve all active youth in the labour force, the government should consider:

- Providing more conducive environment for the construction of factories and businesses for domestic processing of products;
- Engaging unemployed youth in community services and pay them fortnightly to have a safer community; and,

- Provide more fund for agriculture activities. It has the potential to minimise the number of unemployed youth.

Providing good governance. Government should investigate the official corrupt practices in every department and organisations to ensure transparency and honesty. All people implicated in corrupt practices should be held accountable. The capacity of judicial branch of the government and law enforcement agencies should be strengthened by providing adequate fund for the purchase of modern facilities, training of their staff and recruitment of more experienced staff. The independency of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies should be promoted so that they can conduct their works without fear nor favour.

Conclusion

Youth unemployment rate is increasing exponentially in the rural and urban areas of PNG. Thus, poverty and law and order issues are rising. This is really a threat to the economic and human development of the country. Government should consider promoting the practice of good governance in all sectors of the economy. It should create employment opportunities for all youth, irrespective of their gender, educational level and region they come from so that they can contribute to nation building. Government should provide facilities needed for quality education and healthcare, rehabilitation centers, and expand the base of downstream processing. This can ease the issue of youth unemployment rates in the country.

About the Author

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