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**Title: Tackling the urban youth employment crisis in Tanzania: Building inclusivity or enhancing agency?**

Young people are central to the Sustainable Development agenda as activists, targets of programmes and the next generation so dependent on sustainable solutions. While they will be makers or breakers of development outcomes globally, they are overlooked in policies promoting inclusion and development.

My research in Tanzania explores young people’s experience of urban poverty in Dar es Salaam and Arusha, using mixed methods (community surveys, FGDs, and 144 in-depth interviews). Its findings highlight the importance of moving beyond traditional conceptualisations of young lives. I draw upon developmental psychology to develop a new four-fold framework for understanding youth development. This shifts focus away from the outcomes that research, policy and practice have prioritised, to the implications of these on young lives.

The constraints of city life for young people in Tanzania must not solely be understood in outcomes of under/unemployment, poverty and hardship. Grounded analysis reveals how social, economic and political change in cities have undermined and eroded psychosocial processes of youth development, constraining the developmental assets and support structures that young people depend upon for wellbeing, resilience and success. These influences differ by age, gender and employment status, as we will explore.

This new conceptualisation highlights the complexity – and urgency – of the urban youth employment crisis in Tanzania. The devastating impact of taking up marginalised positions in cities undergoing economic stagnation and crisis, and of living in poor and disadvantaged communities within these (where traditional social norms and practices to build and nurture key developmental assets are changing), must be placed central to our understanding of urban youth – and our interventions to assist them. Yet a focus on youth agency often overlooks this; building physical skills and expanding access to capital to focus on employability and entrepreneurship being a central focus of the global youth agenda here.

My findings have critical implications for research, policy and programmes. Inclusivity is key; interventions in youth employment and entrepreneurship improve social, as well as economic, environments to build inclusive institutions that nurture the developmental assets and support networks that are so alarmingly missing from young lives in urban Tanzania.