

Youth in East Africa create their own jobs

There's far between the available job postings in the East African countries and even with a degree, it's difficult to get through. As a result, many youths are counting on starting their own businesses to secure a job and a salary they can live off.

There are thousands of little sheds with three walls and a tin roof top, when driving through the East African countries Tanzania and Kenya. The little kiosks or Dukas, as they are called in Kiswahili, sell everything from cold Coca Colas to fresh eggs and they are one of the many proofs that the desire to become an entrepreneur in the two countries is so big.

One of the young Tanzanians, who has also tried her luck with creating her own business is 26-year old Irene Que from Tanzania's capital Dar es Salaam.

Practical experience is crucial

For the young Tanzanian with a bachelor's degree in business and administration in development entrepreneurship, the choice landed on the root vegetable cassava, one of the most used root vegetables in the East African country.

"It was a really good business to resell cassava, which I bought directly from the farmers" Irene Que tells, who started her business from scratch shortly after graduating university.

"I didn't really have any experience with starting a business, when I began, and sometimes experience is needed in order to succeed. I ran into different challenges that I've learnt a lot from."

Through the organisation Open Mind Tanzania, supported by the Danish organisation FIC International, Irene has received training in the basic techniques such as how to write a business plan, marketing a business and how to pay taxes.

"What I learnt at university was very theoretical and far away from the practical reality. I was very inspired by the training, where I also met other youths who had created good businesses with even smaller start capital than me and without a degree to support them.

Teaching in entrepreneurship secures jobs

In both Kenya and Tanzania many youths have been taught by FIC International, on how to start a good business. The training has given 1.459 youths the courage to start their own businesses.

And the need for securing a job, is according to Erustus Ouko from FIC International, speaking to itself when looking at the statistics for the labour market in for example Tanzania's neighbouring country Kenya:

“There is between 800.000 and a million young Kenyans, who every single year step into the labour market with a degree hoping to get a job. But every year only 100.000 jobs are secured in the formal sector and therefore the informal sector has to absorb even more than it in any way can,” he tells.

The big gap between available youths and jobs is also on the political agenda in Kenya where it has been decided that an environment where youth become inspired to start their own businesses should be created. An environment offering classes in entrepreneurship and making programs where youths are offered the opportunity to lend money to start their own business.

Wants to secure jobs for other youths

Even though Irene Que is gathering her strength to restart her business with selling cassava, she’s in no doubts that she herself has to create her future workspace.

“I really like running my own business and the challenges I experienced with my first business, has given me good ideas on how I will start my next business,” she tells and maps out the next steps, which is writing a business plan and finding the capital to start the business.

“The goal is that I want to create work for myself and even more youths by helping the poor farmers selling their crops for a fair price in Dar es Salaam.”

Journalist Marie Torp Christensen has in cooperation with FIC completed a week communication seminar for youth in Kenya and Tanzania. This was one of the stories from Maria’s stay. There are more to come...

