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Youth Program Launch Conflict Prevention, Peace and Economic Opportunities for Youth in Lamu, Kenya

Today, on Wednesday, 15 March 2017 youth representatives, the County Government of Lamu, European Union, Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), Agha Khan Foundation (AKF), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) joined by Government and civil society representatives will launch a youth program in Lamu, Kenya.

The program contributes to increased peace and stability by supporting inclusive socio-economic opportunities for youth in North East and coastal Kenya.

Funded by the European Union (EU) under the Emergency Trust Fund, for “stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa,” the programme will support young people in nine counties across Kenya, among them, Lamu, Garissa, Kilifi, Kwale, Mandera, Mombasa, Taita Taveta, Tana River and Wajir. These are counties that face high unemployment rates among the youth in Kenya.

Mukhtar A Ogle, Secretary, Strategic Initiatives, Cabinet Affairs in the Executive Office of the Presidency states that *"We thank the EU for its timely support in community peace building and resilience through such innovative and inclusive partnership in implementing alternative livelihood programs for vulnerable youth and communities. This shall hopefully lay the foundation for a compelling community peace enterprise, deter violent extremists and mentor the youth that there is no dignity in violence"*

The Governor of the County Government of Lamu, Issa Timamy welcomed the EU programme saying alleviating poverty will have positive ripple effects. *"The programme will address some of the underlying factors that have the potential to motivate youth to resort to violence including grievances such as the feeling of exclusion, lack of opportunities and inequality. They will be able to focus more on income generation opportunities which thrives a peaceful environment."*

In Kenya, youth unemployment is estimated at 35 per cent compared to the overall national rate that stands at 10 per cent. Of the unemployed Kenyans, 80 per cent constitute individuals below the age of 35.

The EU representative, Mr Vincent de Boer, highlighted the importance of jointly addressing the lack of opportunities for young people. He stressed that providing perspective for youth at the fringes of society will contribute to harness the energy and talent of Kenya's youth to build stability and opportunities.

Unemployment is a global concern. According to a report released by the World Bank in March 2016, Kenya's growing work force is not being put into productive use, which in turn is hurting growth. The report further states that the share of the working age population rose from 47 per cent in 1990 to 56 per cent in 2014, and expected to reach 62 per cent by 2050.

"Focus will be placed on options available to the youth in engagement with key stakeholders and continuous support will be provided in the form of guidance and livelihoods support," said de Boer. The EU has committed €17 million, an equivalent of Sh1.7 Billion towards the programme. Part of the four-year project outcome

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is to address the unemployment and inadequate inclusion of young people. The project will focus on providing livelihood skills and vocational training for youth in the nine target counties.

The project will facilitate youth dialogues in a bid to engage them in discussing issues affecting them and propose solutions. There is no ultimate solution to the issues affecting the youth as both the needs and context are complex.

Editor's Notes

The specific objective of the implementing partner **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)** GmbH is that a greater number of youth enters the job market as a result of being provided with market-oriented skills and with support for self-employment opportunities by integrating enterprise development in the training context, as well as with awareness and orientation in career guidance.”

The **Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS)** focuses on addressing underlying causes of conflict that have the potential to motivate youth to resort to violence. This will be achieved through creating an enabling environment for youth inclusion, providing market oriented skills to promote self-employment and thus curb youth unemployment in the target areas, financing of Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and linkages to microfinance institutions, creating awareness and engaging youth in dialogues with the aim of seeking sustainable solutions.

The **Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)** will improve the capacity of civil society to facilitate meaningful, results-oriented dialogue between youth and county government. We will conduct a market and value chain assessment to understand current and emerging industry needs in target geographies. Based on these results, the technical and organizational capacity of partners will be enhanced to deliver high impact youth economic livelihoods programming. Finally, we will strengthen the capacity of Technical Vocational and Educational Training Institutes to deliver a market-led vocational

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