

Fallout from Youth Unemployment

Reports generated across the world suggest that there is a growing incidence of crime and violence. There is evidence which confirms the involvement of young people in the age group of 15 -35 in this scourge. The data collected for the Caribbean region shows that individuals in the age group 15 to 35 account for over 60% of violent crime victims. The data also indicates that homicide stands as the leading cause of death among adolescent boys across the region. This is alarming and disturbing information. It triggers the need to investigate the extent that there is a connection with youth unemployment at the global and regional level.

The facts are that the global youth unemployment rate for workers aged 15 to 24 hovers at approximately 13%. This is computed as nearly three times higher than the adult unemployment rate of 4.3%. When a comparison is made based on gender, the global statistics provide a picture that the rates remain uneven across genders. The evidence reveals that young men record an unemployment rate of 12.4%, as compared to 12.3% for young women. Additional information shows that younger workers in OECD nations experienced an unemployment rate of approximately 11.2%, during the main measurement periods of 2025. In balancing this statistical information, the fact is that globally, approximately 13.0% of young people were actively seeking work.

Based on this information, the high incidence of youth unemployment across the region must be a real cause for concern. While for some it may be far-fetched to arrive at the conclusion that being unemployed can contribute to an engagement in a life of crime and violence by some in the age group 15-35, it cannot be dismissed that poverty remains an underlining factor which gives rise to such anti-social behaviour.

The fact is to be bemoaned that more than 60% of gun-related and violent arrests in parts of the Eastern Caribbean, involve males aged 16 to 29.

In capturing the data on youth unemployment, consideration ought to be given to those who are not in employment, engaged in educational or training programmes. The Information for the Caribbean region reveals that upwards of 43% of youth under age 30, fall into the category of not in employment, or engaged in education or training, thus, making them highly vulnerable to gang recruitment and organized crime.

The problem of youth unemployment is a matter which ought to arouse the interest of trade union leaders, from the point of view that the major outcome of unemployment is economic desperation. It is seemingly apparent that young men for the most part, who are unable to access stable work, tend to resort to illicit activities. It is vital that young men coming out of the school system are recruited into employment, rather than to have them remain part of the idle community; thus becoming easy recruits into gang related activities.

Trade unions are required to respond to the challenge of reducing the incidence of youth unemployment, by lobbying government to create youth employment schemes and programmes and to push back against layoffs and redundancies in both the public and private sectors.