
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT

*3rd December 2015
Transcorp Hilton, Abuja*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Job creation has been a central theme in the policies of every administration from as far back as 1979. In recent times, several intervention programmes have been initiated by government in order to ameliorate the malaise of youth unemployment. Government has also created an enabling environment for the private sector to drive economic activities that will in turn create jobs. Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN!) is an example of an initiative which involves partnership of government, private sector and donor agencies. It is imperative to note that not all the initiatives (from 1979 – 2015) have been ineffective due mainly to policy U-turns and lack of continuity by successive government.¹

The new government has emphasised its commitment to employment and inclusive growth, which will focus on diversification, including agriculture and manufacturing. In the new APC government's manifesto, it promises in its Strategic Change Promise (2) to; *“create gainful employment for young people and enhance their contribution to economic and national development”*. Strategic Change Promise 3 goes further to highlight that it will develop agriculture and strengthen its contribution to economic growth, job creation and rural development.

Focus of the Summit

As part of its contribution towards supporting the Nigerian Government in pursuing and implementing policies that lead to poverty reduction, UK's Department for International Development (DFID) seeks to bring together key stakeholders in the private sector, government as well as other donor agencies to take stock of what has been done in the area of Job creation.

Organised as a one-day high-level summit on youth employment in Nigeria, the event was hosted by the Policy Development Facility Phase II (PDF II) in collaboration with the Federal Public Administration Reform Programme (FEPAR) on 3rd December 2015. Representing His Excellency, the Vice president, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo was the Honourable Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Mr James Ochoi (SAN). The event which started at 9:30am and was rounded off at 3:05pm, witnessed the participation of about 120 summiteers drawn from the public and private sectors, development agencies, business community and members of the press.

Key Activities of the Summit

Following its proposed agenda, the Summit featured the following key activities:

- Networking in the 'Market Place for Ideas'
- Welcome Address by Richard Ough, DFID Country Economist/ Lead Adviser for PDF II

¹ Nigeria Governors' Forum Youth Unemployment Brief, June 2014

- Keynote Address by the Honourable Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Mr. James Ocholi (SAN) representing His Excellency, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Youth Unemployment and Job Creation Schemes in Nigeria by Ben Arikpo, FEPAR Nigeria
- Employment Impacts of Government Policies by David Mckenzie, World Bank
- Panel Discussions:
 - a. The Degree to which Government can Sustainably Create Jobs with Private Sector Participation
 - b. Youth Employment and Implications for Northern Nigeria
- Filling of Evaluation Forms including Takeaway Points
- Question and Answer sessions

Key Issues and Emerging Themes:

- Inconsistent policies majorly due to change in administrations have grossly affected the implementation and sustainability of programmes.
- Government alone cannot tackle unemployment and government should not burden itself with creating jobs but rather continue to strengthen the enabling environment for the private sector to thrive.
- Many policies and youth employment programmes have failed due to poor conceptualisation resulting in poor implementation, corruption, lack of transparency, weak monitoring and evaluation components as well as poor funding.
- The Successful YouWiN programme was generally perceived as elitist, as it failed to capture many youth groups, especially the uneducated youths and those who cannot access the internet.
- The creation and continuation of youth employment programmes will not alone solve the challenge of unemployment, as the number of jobs created through such programmes is usually far off from the target of two million jobs needed annually. Rather, the overall strengthening of a vibrant and growing private sector is the required approach to tackle unemployment in the long run.
- There are many instances of duplication and weak coordination among several MDAs saddled with the responsibilities of youth employment which also impair the successful delivery of programmes.
- There is a huge dearth of educational infrastructure and unskilled teachers resulting in poor outputs into the labour market.
- Career counselling opportunities, business management and entrepreneurship skills are grossly lacking in the youths resulting in their inability to access jobs or become productive as employees or business owners.
- Besides the gross challenge of unemployment, there are other regional peculiarities in the north including; cultural, religious and gender issues which if not well considered, may impede employment and job creation efforts. Interventions and efforts should therefore take account of regional dimensions of the unemployment issue, and not follow a one-size-fits-all approach.
- A larger percentage of engaged youths operate in the informal sector but unfortunately, the sector has not received commensurate development attention

Key Recommendations

- Equity and fairness measures must be put in place to avoid political interferences, institute merit-based recruitment and increase transparency in selection processes. Only candidates who meet the set criteria would be recruited into the job creation schemes and selection criteria and processes are also made publicly available.
- Improve monitoring and evaluation and Introduce anti-corruption measures in the design of the programmes.
- Involvement of youth and relevant private sector organisations from design stage of programmes and the inclusion of sustainability models should be inculcated so as to continue to create jobs through the lifetime of the programme.
- As noted by Ministry of Labour and Employment, the coordinating forum for all youth employment issues should be commissioned soonest, so as to eliminate duplications, overlaps and waste as well as pave way for synergies of efforts.
- The government should be constantly reflecting on innovative ways including review of regulations, policies and laws to make the business environment conducive for private sector to create jobs.
- With focus on the north, efforts should be put in place to establish and strengthen business clusters and hubs for small businesses as they have the potential to generate networking opportunities, grow businesses and create employment
- Higher institutions should improve on their governance structure, accountability, annual reporting and make known the sectors they are targeting, as this will attract support and funding from respective sectors to fund researchers and inventions.
- Following a report that more than 90% of secondary school leavers do not continue to higher institution but end up in the labour market, soft skills should included in the curriculum of secondary schools so as to better prepare the youths for the market place.
- Investing in teachers' technical capacity, soft skills and welfare must be deliberate and vigorously pursued in order to ensure the optimum outputs.
- Following the intent of government and the private sector to grow the agricultural sector, business management and entrepreneurship should be introduced at higher institutions and taught alongside the science and practice of agriculture.
- There is need to standardize skills learning and acquisition by relevant authorities by establishing and strengthening skills centres with the private sector, in order to clearly define what makes for an employable youth.

- In addition to efforts geared towards agriculture, industrial efforts should be deployed into other sectors such as entertainment, technology and advertising, as these have proven potentials to create massive employments.
- Employers in the public and private sector need to be re-oriented not to undervalue non-university qualifications and to seek the engagement of vocational skills too.
- There should be the improvement of vocational training centres and the development of a regulatory framework to stimulate demand side of vocational training.
- Key stakeholders should deploy strategic plans to anticipate future market needs and commence with the identification and development of matching skills in the youths.
- Especially for northern Nigeria, there should be identification of inherent and peculiar skills and robust skills development packages including short low-cost training programmes to focus on different categories of youths including; uneducated, school drop-outs etc.
- The north is rich in mineral resources: massive investment and industrialisation efforts should be deployed to explore the opportunities which can result in large employments.
- As posited by NESG, there is need to review reports and documents that outline education and employments issues, and follow up on the recommendations.

Wrap-up and Conclusion

In conclusion, the organisers committed to ensuring that the report of the Summit will be developed to capture and synthesize all key issues and recommendations. These will be shared with the government and all key stakeholders and partners which is expected to galvanise a policy direction with matching actions from all parties

1. INTRODUCTION

The Youth Employment Summit was organised by DFID's Policy Development Facility Programme Phase II (PDF II) in collaboration with the Federal Public Administration Reform Programme (FEPAR) and hosted on Thursday 3rd December, 2015 at the Transcorp Hilton Hotels, Abuja.

The high-level event was graced by His Excellency, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo (SAN), who was ably represented by the Honourable Minister of State, Labour and Employment, Mr. James Ocholi (SAN). The event witnessed the participation of about 120 summiteers drawn from the public and private sectors, development agencies, business community and members of the press.

The event started at 9:30am with interactions and networking at the 'Market Place for Ideas'. The Market Place showcased budding entrepreneurs displaying their products and services, as well as development partners who were at hand to engage summiteers with their various youth development projects.

The formal segment of the event commenced by 11:00AM with the entry of the Honourable Minister and the recitation of the National Anthem. Earlier, the Honourable Minister had taken time to tour the Market Place and interact with the exhibitors, asking questions and getting to understand the success stories and challenges of the young entrepreneurs as well as financial and technical opportunities for the entrepreneurs.

Facilitating the event, Mr. Akin Sawyerr commended the various exhibitors at the Market Place and participants who have had the opportunity to network and interact with the entrepreneurs and development organizations. He then went on to guide summiteers on the agenda of the event and welcomed all participants, as he facilitated the activities of the Summit.

2. WELCOME ADDRESS

Richard Ough, DFID Country Economist/ Lead Adviser for PDF II

Giving his welcome address, the DFID Country Economist and Lead Adviser for PDF II, Mr. Richard Ough stated that the Summit is a long needed one and that it was about time the issues around youth employment were tabled. He noted that youth employment is huge in terms of scale and composition, adding that the entry of youths into the labour market is estimated at two million annually.

According to Richard, the Government alone cannot handle the herculean task of unemployment and therefore, a vibrant private sector will be critical in reducing the unemployment burden on the nation. He argued that government should not be saddled with the task of creating jobs but rather focus on improving the enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

He urged the panel discussions during the Summit to address the huge challenge of job creation; taking into consideration the host of complexities of the subject matter. Richard added that the unemployment challenge would only be solved by a battery of solutions with the private sector driving the process.

3. KEYNOTE ADDRESS

His Excellency, Vice President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo (SAN)

The Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo who was ably represented by the Honourable Minister of State, Labour and Employment, Mr. James Ocholi, commended the organizers of the Summit for the initiative to contribute their quota to ongoing efforts to solve the current precarious unemployment situation in the nation. He also commended other development partners for taking active interest in addressing the enigmatic challenge of unemployment, which has averaged 11.45% between 2006 and 2015.

The Minister explained that a shift to inclusive and sustainable development would only be possible when millions of people are given the opportunity to earn a living in conditions of equity and dignity. Mr. Ocholi, who noted that the current administration had placed the issue of youth unemployment on the front burner, highlighted some of the initiatives and steps undertaken by the government to address the alarming unemployment situation in the country as follows:

- The renaming of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in a bid to reposition the ministry to efficiently address employment creation and coordination challenges.
- The directive to the National Planning Commission to include job creation as the 8th priority programme under the economic policy trust of the current administration.
- Designing strategies that anticipate future labour supply and strategize proactively to match it with demand.
- The Ministry of Labour and Employment is concluding the review of the National Employment Policy with a focus on youth employment.
- The development of a National Policy on Entrepreneurship Development by 2016.

The Honourable Minister assured summiteers that the government would rely on the recommendations of the Summit alongside other documents, to refine its employment generation strategies.

He called on development partners and private sector operators to partner and support government efforts in addressing the unemployment challenge.

The Honourable Minister then declared the Summit open and wished the participants fruitful deliberations.

4. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATION SCHEMES IN NIGERIA

Ben Arikpo, FEPAR NIGERIA (Federal Public Administration Reform Programme)

Representing DFID-FEPAR, Ben Arikpo, in a presentation agreed with earlier speakers that the unemployment statistics in Nigeria pose a grave challenge which needs to be addressed immediately. To illustrate the enormity of the problem, he noted that the total number of unemployed youths in Nigeria is more than the overall population of two of its neighbours (Benin and Togo). He then briefly gave a quick assessment of some government youth programmes.

4.1 Subsidy Re-Investment Programme (SURE-P): 2012-2015

The aim of this programme was to provide a social safety net, developed with savings made from the reduction of fuel subsidies. Youth programmes under SURE-P included the Community Services/ Women and Youth Employment (CWYE) Programme, Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Technical Vocational Educational Training Programme and the Public Works Scheme. An assessment of the programme revealed that it provided temporary employment for unskilled unemployed youths in urban and rural areas.

However, it was noted that SURE-P was hurriedly put together to pacify Nigerians on the removal of fuel subsidies and not necessarily to create jobs. The programme was therefore overtaken by corruption and personal gratification by those entrusted to manage the initiative. Among other issues, some youths were not paid their full entitlement while others who were accepted into the programme did not turn up for work. The Graduate Internship Scheme did not work well and there was generally poor monitoring and evaluation of the entire programme.

4.2 National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP): 2001-2014

One of the core programme areas of NAPEP was youth empowerment and it was set up to provide youths with skills and access to micro credit. According to the presenter, NAPEP was obviously a good concept on paper with laudable objectives but met very poor implementation with high levels of corruption. The distribution of tricycles to youths also known as “Keke NAPEP” till date was probably the most popular benefit from the programme. This initiative also faced several underperformances as it was difficult for youth to access loans. There was also no feedback to youths that were not shortlisted on why they could not benefit from the scheme and NAPEP generally lacked funding for implementation.

4.3 Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWiN!): 2011-2015

The aim of this initiative was to support young entrepreneurs who possess innovative business ideas through a business plan competition. The programme included providing training on writing business plans, selection/ short-listing processes and provision of one to ten million naira grants to successful awardees.

The programme was implemented through a multi-stakeholder collaboration of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communication Technology (CT), the Ministry of Youth

Development, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development with technical support from international development partners (World Bank and DFID).

The YouWiN programme has generally been applauded and this can be attributed to its meticulous design and implementation. It has been adjudged to be merit-based as well as having a multiplier effect for job creation. There was also a high level of transparency in the selection of winners, and adequate publicity given to the programme.

One of the areas the programme has been faulted is the fact that it was not grass root-oriented in its design. The structure of the programme seemed to be elitist as not everyone can write a business plan, and youth in rural areas seldom have access to the internet which was the sole platform for engagement on the programme.

4.4 Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme (YEAP): 2014 – present

The most recent of the youth empowerment schemes, the YEAP has a funding of N37 billion and was set up to provide decent jobs to rural youths engaged in agricultural business by making 740,000 young Nigerians become market-oriented agricultural producers in 5 years.

Implemented by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the programme which is open to both graduates and non-graduates in the rural areas is still evolving and is at its early stages of implementation. So far, it can be termed to be a well-designed programme, tailor-made to support agriculture.

However, the programme is yet to fully take off due to funding constraints. It also does not have clearly defined criteria for selection and so can easily be hijacked by politicians.

The following recommendations were suggested for improving the delivery of youth empowerment programmes in Nigeria:

- 1. Institute merit-based recruitment** – Only candidates who meet the set standards and criteria should be recruited into these schemes
- 2. Increase transparency in the selection process** – Selection criteria and processes should be made publicly available
- 3. Target youth effectively** – Youth employment programmes should be well conceptualised and tailor-made to suit the different needs of the youth
- 4. Introduce anti-corruption measures** – Anti-corruption measures should be mainstreamed into youth employment programmes
- 5. Improve monitoring and evaluation** – Introduce strong monitoring and evaluation systems in the design of these programmes
- 6. Design sustainable youth programmes** – Designing more programmes that will continue to create jobs beyond the lifetime of the programme
- 7. Introduce participatory approach in the design and implementation of the programmes** – Involve the youth (potential beneficiaries) and relevant private sector organisations from the design stage till implementation

He concluded his presentation by stating that youth employment programmes alone would not solve the problem of unemployment and under-employment which young Nigerians are currently facing but rather a vibrant and growing private sector. He however noted that the proper design and implementation of youth empowerment programmes would go a long way in improving the living standards of some very poor young Nigerians who are unemployed or underemployed who may find it difficult to compete in the labour market.

A video showing youths reacting to the various youth empowerment schemes of the Federal Government was played after the presentation. The varied testimonies confirmed the assessments made by FEPAR on the various programmes.

5. EMPLOYMENT IMPACTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES

David McKenzie, World Bank

In his presentation, David McKenzie of World Bank, spoke about the impacts of government policies and how the World Bank is able to calculate whether a government policy, like the ones examined earlier has achieved the set goals and to what extent the goals have been successful.

With graphical representations, David explained in details to the participants how Randomized Control Trials work and how this system was used during the YouWiN programme to assess its impact on the growth and sustainability of SMEs as well as job creation. He observed that firms tend to remain at small scale and are not able to grow, usually due to the many regulations and fiscal demands.

From the YouWiN assessment and the Randomized Control Trials conducted on this programme, David noted that about 7,000 jobs were created from YouWiN 1 which would not have been created but for the programme. He added that though other firms would have still hired but not as much.

5.1 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

At this point the facilitator invited participants to ask questions on issues highlighted during the address of the Vice President as well as the other presentations.

The questions and responses were as follows:

Comment/Q1 (Akin Sawyerr): A big challenge is the fact that the laws and regulations keep changing with each administration. Is there no way to ensure consistency of laws, regulations and policies between administrations which would enable businesses grow?

The Minister's response: Labour laws in Nigeria are yet to be fully developed in terms of applications. There are several issues of labour law that the current administration is reviewing in order to conclude the policy framework for employment.

As shown in FEPAR's presentation, many schemes have been attempted in the past and failed due to the involvement of politics and politicians. It is therefore important to properly manage and monitor to what extent politicians should interfere with development programmes.

The administration is also putting a mechanism in place to review existing youth empowerment schemes, identify challenges and improve on them. This will ensure continuity, sustainability and yield long term benefits.

There are pending Bills with the National Assembly and deeper collaboration with the legislature is crucial to review bills which are already obsolete and also advocate for speedy passage of all the Bills.

Comment/Q2 (Ndidi Nwuneli): Youth employment is such a cross-cutting issue involving several Ministries, Departments and Agencies. For instance, we have written to schools and the number of approvals required from various agencies have often slowed and even stalled our programmes. What can be done to have a coordinating body that will ensure easy interface with all stakeholders?

The Minister's response: Coordination was the first issue discussed as soon as the Minister for Labour and Employment resumed. The plan is to have a coordinating forum domiciled in the Ministry of Labour with representatives from all relevant MDAs. To this effect, a harmonized committee will be set up to warehouse all the ideas and issues around job creation and make recommendations. The President is also focusing on employment and employment creation schemes.

Comment/Q3 (Richard Ough): In your presentation, you mentioned that 7,000 jobs were created through the YouWiN programme, which is very admirable. However, there are 2 million youths joining the labour market every year. What is the key message to the Nigerian Government?

David McKenzie's response: It is not the job of the government to create 2 million jobs each year. The government just needs to fix the infrastructure and get out of the way for the private sector to create employment. The government should be constantly reflecting on innovative ways to make the business environment conducive for people to create jobs.

6. PANEL DISCUSSION 1: THE DEGREE TO WHICH GOVERNMENT CAN SUSTAINABLY CREATE JOBS WITH PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

The panel was composed of the following:

- **Dr. Peter Bamkole**, Enterprise Development Centre/ Pan-Atlantic University
- **Mr. Laoye Jaiyeola**, Nigeria Economic Summit Group
- **Mrs. Ndidi Nwuneli**, LEAP Africa, ACE Foods, Sahel Capital (FAFIN)
- **Mrs. Detoun Ogwo**, Skills Development Practice

Following introductions, each panellist spoke briefly on what areas they have been working on with regards to youth development in Nigeria.

Mrs. Detoun Ogwo introduced herself as a researcher with UCL. She stated that she had done a lot of the work in the area of building the capacity of youths to be employable. Her passion and the work she has been doing are aimed at getting young people to speak the language of the employers. She added that for Nigeria to be effective, efforts must start from the education system through which critical assessment skills should be introduced into the education curriculum.

Mrs. Ndidi Nwuneli manages a fund for agri-business (FAFIN) which enables them create jobs for youths and rural dwellers. One of their investments is in a dairy company. According to her, there is a need to invest in catalytic firms.

On her work with LEAP Africa, Ndidi noted that they have been working for the past 14 years with life and leadership skills for the youth especially in secondary schools. She added that this would help youths create jobs rather than look for jobs.

Reviewing the potentials in agriculture, Ndidi noted that when 60% of the population is involved in agriculture and the agriculturists are equipped with business skills, job creation would no longer be a huge challenge. She further stated that even at the universities, the knowledge of the business management in agriculture has been absent, resulting in huge failures in the business environment. Therefore, business management must be introduced in the curriculum and taught alongside the science and practice.

Mr. Peter Bamkole from the Enterprise development Centre, Pan-Atlantic University was also involved in the implementation of the YouWiN programme. He noted that one of the reasons for the success of YouWiN is that every partner on the initiative treated each other with respect and listened to one another as they embraced team work. Everyone agreed there must be a high level of transparency so that the programme stands the credibility test.

He added that when there is transparency and when people understand the rules, creativity would follow. He explained that the burden of youth unemployment would continue to weigh on society unless the agencies in charge of coordinating youth empowerment programmes imbibe the principles of transparency and accountability. This will encourage the youth to have faith in the government-led youth empowerment initiatives.

Peter who is also an advisor at the Mastercard Foundation said they are looking at the entire value chain in services which will ultimately result in the creation of series of jobs and engage a lot of young people. He added that in the last YouWiN, a third of those who won were in the agriculture sector, which shows that agriculture is the way to go for youth empowerment.

Mr. Laoye Jaiyeola noted that the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) which serves as a meeting point for the public and private sectors, knows for a fact that the problem of unemployment is too enormous for the government alone to tackle.

He added that similarly at a recent summit of the NESG which focused on education, it was reiterated that the various issues on education were not new and have been discussed at several meetings and conferences. According to him, the solution is not in talking about them but in implementing the various recommendations already made. He added that the jobs are not available and the few ones available are inaccessible to the youths due to lack of adequate skills.

Laoye noted that the NESG is also looking at ways to address the stigma around vocational skills and the related jobs. He suggested that there be a total review of the curricula, training and retraining of teachers as well as raising awareness on vocational jobs, which he said would reduce the unemployment burden on the nation.

Mrs. Iyaduni Olubode, Executive Director for LEAP Africa reiterated the work they do to empower young people and change their mindsets to become problem-solving oriented. She added that at LEAP, they discovered that only 9% of secondary school students end up in higher institutions and the majority of school drop-outs go directly into the labour force. It was based on this statistics that they identified the need for soft skills to be included in the curriculum at secondary school level so that these categories of school drop-outs can easily integrate in the society, be employed and create jobs.

Iyaduni also noted that engaging the private sector to drive youth employment in the nation is very critical, such that the private sector is properly enlightened on the opportunities and skills set of youths out there. Another concern to her would be to figure out how to structure organizations, so that young people can aspire to work in them even if they are not degree holders or are in the process of getting one.

6.1 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS/ RECAP OF KEY ISSUES

Comment/Q1 (Peterson – Mafita Project):

“From all that has been said, we have a problem with our systems. When you look at the various colleges of education, there are no equipment, skilled teachers, infrastructure etc. The starting point for us will be to look at changes in the system so that we can begin to build skills for the future. We can do curriculum development but when the system is not in order, what do we do?”

Comment/Q2 (Ogo Ifeoma Akagbogu – Bank of Industry):

“Most inventors, research scientists are not funded. When they come to the Bank of Industry, they expect us to give them loans to develop what they have created. Researchers and inventors don’t need loans but grants. The Pan-Atlantic University, World Bank, DFID and other development partners can institute a fund to finance researchers and inventors.”

Comment/Q3 (Chinyere Emekawuna – ILO):

“We’ve been talking about youth job creation. We need to look at capacity building for the teachers. If you don’t have the right people to teach the right curriculum, there will be a problem.”

“We also need to standardize the skills. A lot of organizations have different entrepreneurship training. Some give these trainings for 2 days, others for 2 weeks or 2 months. It will be very useful for the organization in charge of skill acquisition in the country to standardize the trainings.”

“I attended a workshop on e-waste. This is an excellent opportunity that can be explored to create jobs. Other sectors that have the potentials to create jobs should also be looked at.”

“With the statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics, a lot of jobs are created by the informal sector. What can be done to enable the private sector create jobs that youths will be eager to have?”

Comment/Q4 (Susan Essien – GEMS 4):

“We’ve said jobs aren’t enough and we don’t have sufficient skills to match the jobs available. Sadly, we don’t have the systems to engage even the skilled job seekers.”

Members of the panel agreed to speak generally and touch on the various issues that were raised by participants.

6.2 PANEL RESPONSES

Mr. Peter Bamkole

In his response, Mr. Bamkole said that in our society, there is a tendency for employers to place more value on university degree holders than other school leavers. He noted that with the current fiscal situation of the nation, employers need to begin to change this mindset.

On the capacity of teachers, Mr. Bamkole said there is a need for everyone to rev up themselves in order to push the youth employment agenda forward. The example of the illiterate school teacher in Edo State, which went viral, showed that there are people who have no pedigree to teach others and yet they do.

He added that beyond agriculture, there are several sectors that young people can go into which includes; entertainment, technology, digital media and advertising.

Mrs. Detoun Ogwu

Mrs. Ogwu remarked that there is a huge role the tertiary institutions have to play in facilitating the transition of youth from school to work. She gave the instance where there are no career orientation/counselling sessions for students in universities, which leaves graduates with very limited options.

She also said there is a need to start facilitating the process and the link between employers and the labour market, so that when 100 young people with the right skills set are ready, there would also be employers ready to absorb them.

Mr. Laoye Jaiyeola

Speaking on the first question, Mr. Jaiyeola noted that there is a crisis as far as structures are concerned. For all the questions raised, he reminded the audience that there is already a document produced by the Nigeria Economic Summit Group, which outlines solutions and a roadmap to most of the education and employment related issues.

Mr. Jaiyeola, speaking on the issue raised by a participant on the need for grants to universities for researchers and inventors, he advised that universities have to be accountable and transparent in order to attract more funding. He suggested that universities and other tertiary institutions can start by publishing their annual reports, which would show how much they have received and how they spent the funds.

According to him, this level of transparency and accountability would definitely attract funding from the private sector and donor organisations. He added that universities should improve on their governance structure, and make known the sectors they are targeting, as this will naturally attract funding from respective sectors.

He noted that there are almost 400 technical schools in Nigeria but are dysfunctional. According to him, teacher education is critical to the conversation of youth employability. Laoye added that today, people take to teaching out of unemployment and they are not well paid. He suggested that this needs to be reviewed so that only the best hands are chosen for the teaching profession while their remuneration is also well structured and commensurate.

Mrs. Iyaduni Olubode

Responding to job skills issues in general, Iyaduni said matching people to jobs is an area which is still untapped and presents a great opportunity for the private sector to explore. She added that the private sector should explore partnerships to develop vocational training which will also be benefitting to the private sector human resources.

6.3 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations provided by the panellists include the following:

- There is need to standardize skills by establishing skills centres in order to clearly define what makes for an employable Nigerian – *Detoun*
- Government should create an environment that promotes venture capitalists, an ecosystem that supports creativity and innovation – *Peter*

- Investing in teachers must be deliberate and vigorously pursued – *Iyaduni*
- There are available reports with the Nigerian Economic Summit Group. They should be reviewed and recommendations implemented – *Laoye*

7. PANEL DISCUSSION 2: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTHERN NIGERIA

Members of this Panel:

- Mr. Peter Bamkole– Enterprise Development Centre/Pan-Atlantic University
- Mr. Laoye Jaiyeola – Nigerian Economic Summit Group
- Mrs. Ndidi Nwuneli – LEAP Africa/Sahel Capital (FAFIN)
- Mrs. Detoun Ogwo – Skills Development Practice
- Mrs. Angela Adeboye-Attah – Managing Partner, AG Partners
- Dr. Mohammed Sagagi – Mafita Project

The panel looked at the geographical dimensions of the challenge of job creation with particular focus on Northern Nigeria.

Mrs. Angela Adeboye-Attah

Before joining the strategy consulting firm, she was a banker and a proud product of the Nigerian education system. She agreed that there is a gap in the system that has to be bridged by developing the skills of students to think out-of-the-box. According to her, employment and employability are major issues that should be addressed. There are also other peculiarities in the north like cultural, religious and gender issues.

She suggested that since the labour force in the north is mainly involved in the informal sector, it would be beneficial to create and promote business hubs and clusters for specific enterprises. She gave the example of hubs for dairy farmers, where they are brought together to share ideas, challenges and explore new opportunities. She argued that it is easier for entrepreneurs who belong to a hub to support each other, network and explore business prospects for communal growth.

Dr. Mohammed Sagagi

Dr. Mohammed Sagagi stated that the Northern region of the country is ridden with peculiar challenges which require a comprehensive and holistic employment strategy. He explained that apart from the massive insecurity issues, one of the peculiarities of the north is the fact that 60% of the labour force is employed in the informal sector, and the economy is largely subsistence in nature. According to him one cannot start talking about creating employment when the business owner is barely surviving in the business.

He advised that when developing a framework for an employment strategy in the north, it is important to take these realities into consideration. He added that it is not only about creating new jobs but improving existing ones for increased productivity and growth.

Dr. Sagagi noted that there have been over 200 youth empowerment programmes in the north but have not yielded the expected results because they have been politicized and were not properly drafted to include long term strategies. He advised that short low cost training programmes for youth who have dropped out of school can be put in place to address the very high unemployment situation in the north.

Mrs. Detoun Ogwo

Detoun Ogwo said her initial experience with the north was as a recruiter, adding that there is a need to first attract and then engage. In coming up with a framework, it will be necessary to find out what are the inherent skills of the people there and then build it.

Detoun remarked that efforts must be made to also get the methods of instruction right. According to her, “we live in a society where we hand down the solutions to young people instead of asking them what they can do”.

Dr. Peter Bamkole

Bamkole noted that when there is a conversation about the youth, young people who constitute the major stakeholders should also be involved which was not being noticed at the Summit. He gave an instance of the MasterCard Foundation, which had organized an event to discuss youth empowerment. According to him, more than half of the people in the hall were young people who actively joined the conversation as critical stakeholders, and gave insightful perspectives to the discussions.

In terms of resources, he noted that the north is very rich in mineral resources and this is a sector that can be hugely developed at scale, resulting in the creation of small to large businesses as well as large numbers of youths productively engaged.

Mrs. Iyaduni Olubode

Mrs. Iyaduni said that LEAP Africa had done some work in the northern part of the country which involved working with schools in the area of skills development. She explained that they have written to several schools but with little or no show of interest from the north as against their southern counterparts, they have not been able to engage with the north.

7.1 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Comment/Q1 (Sampson Ebimaro – Ministry of Budget and National Planning):

“The issue of sports should be considered in this conversation about youth empowerment. On the issue of job creation, the National Planning is collaborating with FEPAR to develop policy guidelines.”

Comment/Q2 (Ebere Okogwu – Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment):

“Manufacturing should be given attention. When one looks at products; imported products in Nigeria outnumber the ones manufactured in Nigeria. It is sad that we have resorted to importation and this is not good for job creation in the nation.”

“Mr. Laoye spoke on the Economic Summit, which had focused on education. What was the outcome of the Summit? Did the NESG share the report and recommendations with the Federal and State governments? Was there any action taken after the Summit as follow-up?”

Comment/Q3 (Enene Ejembi - GEMS 4):

“One thing is clear. There is a supply and a demand side to vocational training. What is the role of the government to stimulate the demand side for vocational skills? There should be a ready market for the skills through regulatory framework.”

“In schools, youth are taught subjects but they are not taught what to do with the knowledge acquired. To what extent can government partner with the private sector to look into this?”

7.2 PANEL RESPONSES

Mrs. Angela Adebayo-Attah

She noted that there is a growing flight to quality, which means there is a preference for those who can perform above those who cannot.

On the issue of manufacturing, Mrs. Angela noted that once the government fulfilling its role of creating the enabling environment, the organized private sector will be able to focus on creating the jobs without waiting for the government.

Dr. Mohammed Sagagi

He noted that despite the challenges identified in the north, there is still a lot that can be done but they should be done systematically. According to him, the focus should be about improving competitiveness and ensuring that firms operating in the north can be competitive and still make profits.

Mr. Laoye Jaiyeola

Speaking on the report from the Nigeria Economic Summit on education, he noted that policy briefs were given to the various Governors based on the recommendations made at the Summit. He explained that sadly, when the elections came, the Governors could no longer pay attention to the document. However, with the change in administration in various states, the NESG has started speaking with the Governors again on what needs to be done to reform the education sector and boost youth employment.

Mrs. Iyaduni Olubode

“The challenge is to build a value-creating mindset in young people, inspire them to think about which problem in their communities they want to address and proffer solutions.”

8. RECAP AND VOTE OF THANKS

Programme Manager for PDF II, Dr. Titilola Akindeinde offered the vote of thanks for the event. She thanked the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who was ably represented by the Minister of State for Labour and Employment for his keynote address, effort and support towards the Summit.

She expressed her gratitude to all facilitators, participants, exhibitors and partners for attending the summit and for making rich contributions to the ongoing conversation on youth employment.

She noted from the discussions at the summit, that it is clear that the challenge facing the Nigerian economy in having to create 2 million jobs every year is not one that the government alone can meet. All hands must be on deck to tackle the issue she added.

Dr. Titilola went on to say that the summit provided an avenue to know what is working, how we can learn from success stories and address the challenges. She added that lessons from the presentations and discussion at the summit would be crucial in designing the right programmes going forward. She noted that, one of the main pillars for future job creation programmes as highlighted in the summit are – good conceptualisation of programmes that builds in transparency, sustainability (including funding) without which the programmes inevitably fail.

Finally, she thanked DFID Nigeria for funding the initiative and making the summit possible while assuring participants that the summit will not be concluded as a talk shop but that the recommendations from the event will be sent to key ministries, organisations and participants for appropriate action, and the commitments made in the summit feedback forms would be followed up.

8.1 CONCLUSION

The event was brought to a close at 3:05pm with a brief closing remark from the Event Facilitator, Mr. Akin Sawyerr as he urged participants to fill out the provided Evaluation Forms and include their takeaway points as well. Participants were also encouraged to take along brochures and resource materials of exhibitors and development partners from the Market Place of Ideas.