



YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION IN NIGERIA: A CHALLENGE TO DEVELOPMENT.¹

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Abstract

Globally, the state of the youth is characterised by widespread unequal access to job opportunities, health and education as well as poor political influence. In Nigeria, unemployment rates among youth have doubled in the past one decade. In response to these challenges, a multiplicity of Government programmes have been introduced to address youth unemployment. But there appear to be no significant outcome as unemployment rates in the country are still high. Despite the successful passage of the #Not Too Young to run# Bill by the National Assembly, youth are still disenfranchised particularly female youth as their high poverty levels preclude them from contesting for offices. In a highly gender unequal society, the dominant political parties are pegging exorbitant fees for the purchase of party nomination forms, thus constructively excluding the youth, particularly the female youth whose poverty levels are higher, from contesting. Based on these observations, the paper recommends among others, the entrenchment of youth citizenship that can give them a voice that was lost through the #ENDSARS movement. The Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan #SDGAction27901 initiatives needs effective implementation, monitoring and accountability to achieve youth inclusion and affirmative action.

Key words: Development, Employment, Gender, Political Participation Youth, Underemployment, Unemployment,.

Abstrait

À l'échelle mondiale, la situation de la jeunesse se caractérise par un accès inégal généralisé aux opportunités d'emploi, à la santé et à l'éducation ainsi qu'à une faible influence politique. Au Nigeria, les taux de chômage chez les jeunes ont doublé au cours de la dernière décennie.

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En réponse à ces défis, une multitude de programmes gouvernementaux ont été introduits pour lutter contre le chômage des jeunes. Mais il ne semble pas y avoir de résultat significatif car les taux de chômage dans le pays sont encore élevés. Malgré l'adoption réussie du projet de loi #Pas trop jeune pour exécuter# par l'Assemblée nationale, les jeunes sont toujours privés de leurs droits, en particulier les jeunes femmes, car leur niveau de pauvreté élevé les empêche de briguer des postes. Dans une société fortement inégalitaire entre les sexes, les partis politiques dominants imposent des frais exorbitants pour l'achat de formulaires de nomination des partis, excluant ainsi de manière constructive les jeunes, en particulier les jeunes femmes dont les niveaux de pauvreté sont plus élevés, de la compétition. Sur la base de ces constats, le document recommande entre autres, l'enracinement de la citoyenneté des jeunes qui peut leur donner une voix qui a été perdue à travers le mouvement #ENDSARS. Les initiatives du Plan d'action pour l'emploi des jeunes nigériens #SDGAction27901 nécessitent une mise en œuvre, un suivi et une responsabilisation efficaces pour parvenir à l'inclusion des jeunes et à l'action positive.

Mots clés : Emploi, Genre, Jeunesse, Sous-emploi, Chômage, Développement, Participation politique.

Introduction

The youthful age provides potentials for growth and development through deployment of physical, social, economic, psychological and intellectual capacities in productive and reproductive functions that are critical in directing societal growth and future. Globally, youth populations are significant with a youth bulge that can move society forward or present greater challenges when these potentials are not properly harnessed. The United Nations classifies youth as those within the age range of 15-24, while the African Union Charter gives a longer range of 15 – 35 years (Ooesterom, 2016 p. 9). The International Labour Organisation (ILO), using the UN classification estimated the youth population 15 – 24 to be 1.3 billion. However, less than half of the youth (497 million or 41%) are in the labour force, 68 million are unemployed, and 776 million are out of the labour force with a significant number (267 million), who are underutilised, not in employment, education or training (NEET). Even among employed youth, about 30% of them do not earn a living wage and are reported to live in moderate or extreme poverty (ILO, 2020 p. 22).

In Nigeria, the dynamics of socio-economic, political and cultural contexts provide attributes that are considered desirable to attain as a youth. Such recognition provide a justification for the expansion of the categorization of people 18 -35 years as youth in the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2009, Oduwale, 2015). The NYP was reviewed in 2019 and the youth age categorisation was reviewed down to 15 – 29 years. This was based on the justification that 15 years is internationally recognised as the age of puberty, which is used in the classification of youth, while just 5% of Nigerians still pursue an education beyond 29 years. Furthermore, the policy asserted that three quarters males and 90% of females are married by the age of 29; therefore the need to provide for the age categories requiring the most assistance since the age to seek elective positions have been lowered, especially for the Presidency, which has been constitutionally lowered to 30 years (NYP, 2019 pp 24, 25). The global population of youth 15 -29 years, which Nigeria has aligned to is estimated to be 1.8 billion, with 87 % living in developing countries.

The state of the youth is generally characterised by widespread unequal access to health and education, joblessness as well as poor political influence. In both developed and developing



countries, unemployment rates among the youth are more likely to double that of the adult population. The Commonwealth developed 18 youth development indices (YDI) for ranking the state of youth globally in 2016. The indices include health, education, and employment. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was the region with lowest YDI among the 9 regions in ranking, with 10 countries in the region ranked lowest in YDI (Commonwealth, 2016).

The ILO (2013) defined people who are unemployed as those who are economically active but without work and actively seeking work including those who lost the jobs or left them voluntarily for a period of five weeks. Nigerian definitions include people who are 15 – 64 years that are unable to work for more than 20 hours in a week. People that are unable to work for 40 hours a week, unable to maximise their full capabilities are considered underemployed (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2016, Adekola et al., 2016; NRSP, 2014).

Method and Theory

The paper used secondary data sources from Government sources, reports from international organisations and development agencies, researches within the field of youth employment and development, in writing this paper. Specifically, the UNDP report from 2005-2020 on the Human Development Report index on Nigeria and other notable publications from the United Nations, and the Commonwealth were used. The paper also adopts Pratto, Sidanius and Levin's Social Dominance Theory as cited in Uzor (2019, p. 15). The main tenets of the theory are that the different groups in society are hierarchically arranged; the structuring of the groups accords greater social status and power to one group that dominates the others. When the society's economy produces surplus, the structures, which are organised by age, sex and arbitrary rules determine the state of the society. Age accords greater power and influence on the adults than youth, the males over the female sex, but the arbitrary rules are culturally defined in diverse societies based on ethnicity, nationality, religion, and gender. In this context, the theory explains youth exclusion, which is growing from economic, political and civic activities, and have had constitutional backing as older populations have greater monopoly and polity. Furthermore, gender inequalities persists in the public and private spheres where females face greater marginalisation. However, these experiences do not affect all youth, as arbitrary rules based on ethnicity, religion and / or gender grants advantages to some of the youth over the others. Some of these issues have informed agitations for a more inclusive national life.

Unemployment, Youth Unemployment and Poverty

The current population of Nigeria is estimated to be 206 million with a largely youthful population of the median age of 18 years, which is far younger than that of Africa (20 years) and the global median of 29 years (Fayehun & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2020). *However, unemployment rates are rising, as a third (69.7 million or 33.3%) of the Nigeria population were unemployed as at December 2020, from 27.1% reported in the second quarter of 2020. Furthermore, 15.9 million did not work for up to 40hours a week, thus unemployment rates quadrupled in the last four years (Olorounbi, 2021).*

Unemployment rates among Nigerian youth have been described to be the worse in Sub Saharan Africa (NRSP, 2014). Youth unemployment doubled in five years (2006 – 2011) from 12.7% to 23.9%. In 2016, 38.2 million youth were in the job market and 15.2 million (42.24%) were unemployed (UNDP, 2016, p. 11). Unemployment rates witnessed a slight fall to 40.80 % in the second quarter of 2020 but rose 53.40% among over half the youth in the fourth quarter of 2020 <https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/youth-unemployment-rate>

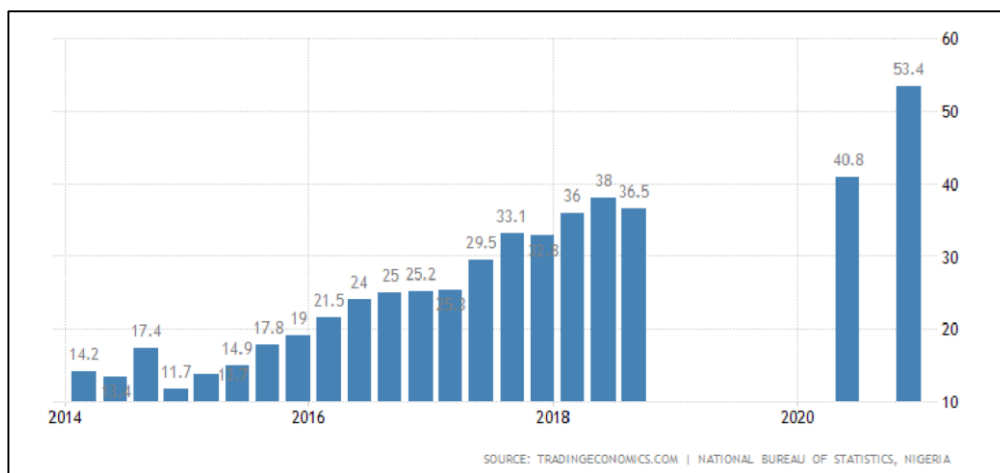


Figure 1: Trend in youth unemployment in Nigeria (2014-2020)

The data available for some quarters and years in figure 1 indicate a noticeable decline in youth unemployment when the economy of Nigeria was doing well around the 2014/2015 period. However, youth unemployment rates began to rise significantly and the current figures are an all-time high. The COVID-19 pandemic further distressed the economy, with many people losing their sources of livelihoods, especially in the informal sector coupled with growing inflation in the country.

We have opined from our theoretical framework that unemployed youth are not a monolithic group, but with diverse characteristics. There are rural-urban differences in unemployment of rural and urban youth. Unemployment in Nigeria rose from 4.8 million in 2010 to 9.3 million in 2012. About 33% of rural youth were unemployed compared to 28.3% among urban youth (HDR, 2015).

Gender variations also explain higher levels of unemployment among the gender. From 2008 – 2012, 50% of the unemployed were females. The females that were employed, were mainly engaged in informal work that was vulnerable, preferring low-risk occupations that pay less than those with greater risk. They also support their families from the living they eke out when the man is equally unemployed. About 25% of the female have had their first children between 15 – 29 years old, thus limiting their chances to further improve their capacities (Ooesterom, 2016).

Educational attainments also explain the unemployment rates; with about 50% youth with primary education or less forming the bulk of the unemployed (Akande, 2014). Gender gaps in education are more pronounced in the tertiary sector, both in numbers and poor representation of females in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and over representation in the Science and Arts courses (Jaja, 2013; Fapohunda, 2011; Oanda & Akudolu, 2010). Their poor access to tertiary education also explains their predominance in unemployment figures and the informal sector. Figure two below provides the estimates of youth unemployment by educational sector for four years:

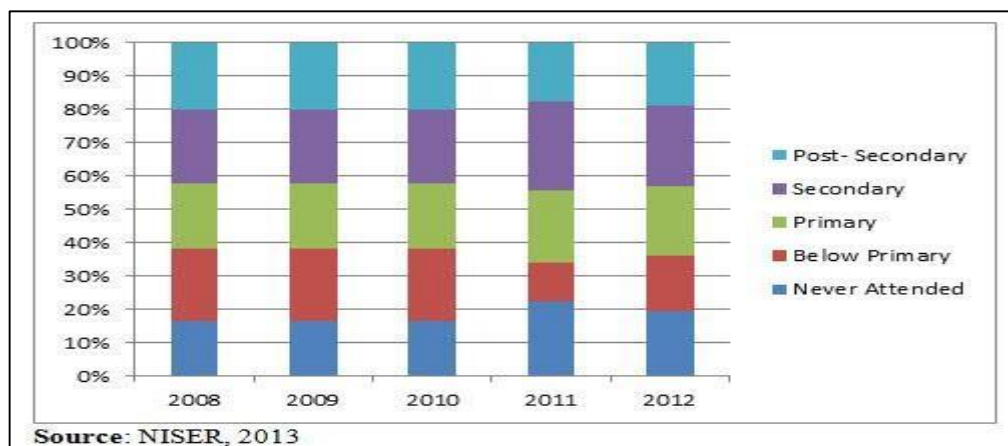


Fig. 2: Youth unemployment by educational level (2008 - 2012)

However, there is growing and significant unemployment among graduates and professionals and some are reported to be unemployed for up to five years (Adekola et al., 2016; Akande, 2014). Youth within 18-24 years age range constitute the bulk of the unemployed population, with two thirds unemployment rates among their category, increasing their vulnerability in being used for illegal activities as a source of obtaining livelihoods to meet their roles of bread winners (NSRP, 2014, p.12, 13). The marital responsibilities of unemployed youth can also become stress points in the relationship as inability to provide for family needs has been identified as one of the major sources of disagreements among couples (Best, 2016).

The UNDP's ranking of human development is computed using indices of life expectancy, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling as well as the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita to compute the Human Development Index of participating countries. In 2005, Nigeria had an HDI of 0.465. The 2013 Human Development Index placed Nigeria 153 out of 186 countries. The current HDI (2019) is 0.539, the highest ever attained so far. Nigeria's global ranking has further dropped in human development to 161 out of 189 countries, placing it at the low category of development, implying that other countries in the same category have improved more. A multiple dimensional index computation further confirms this position, using data from the 2018 set:

Nigeria, 46.4 percent of the population (90,919 thousand people) are multidimensionally poor while an additional 19.2 percent are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (37,659 thousand people). The breadth of deprivation (intensity) in Nigeria, which is the average deprivation score experienced by people in multidimensional poverty, is 54.8%. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/NGA.pdf

The 58% increase in GNI from 1990 – 2019 did not abate high poverty levels in about half the population with gross inequalities masked, particularly for the most vulnerable youth, whom as earlier indicated, mostly reside in low income countries. The poverty level in Nigeria is exacerbated by the fact that social safety nets for the poor and vulnerable are not properly coordinated and health social insurance is security is contributory, excluding the most vulnerable, who do not have formal employments (UNDP, 2016, p. 12; Adekola et al., 2016).



Job opportunities in the formal sector are constricting while more entrants are getting into the labour market. Those who have passed through the National Youth Service Corps, (NYSC) have gotten the opportunity to experience the labour post-NYSC experience. For graduates who are unable to secure a job or retention at their place of primary assignment, there is usually a period of depression, frustration, hostility or gradual drift into exerting illegal behaviours (Okafor, 2011; Obumneke, 2012) due to unemployment. Formal employment opportunities are available for just about 10% of the youth find and just a third of those go to females (NSRP, 2014, p.12). The Human Development Report, Nigeria (2016) shows slower growth of job opportunities in formal employment with a change of 1.27% (438,203) in new employments in 2013 compared to 432,720 in 2012. The informal sector had a 20.8% (759,896) growth in job opportunities in 2013 compared to 628,845 jobs in 2012 (HDR, 2015, p. 36). The report similarly found that having a job in the formal sector was one of the sources of personal security that people identified in the interviews. The totality of job growth rates is grossly inadequate for the growing population 3% requiring 4.5 million jobs annually to meet the need of new entrants (NRSP, 2014, p.6).

Massive and endemic corruption through theft of public funds, inefficient bureaucracy with demands for bribes, poor administration of public enterprises that lead to underperformance and lack capacity to employ youth similarly bedevil the country (Adekola et al., 2016, p. 4). Findings from the 2015 HDR equally show that Nigerians ranked corruption high, as the demand for bribes for a service are common. Unemployed youth are therefore further constrained by such demands that they are unable to meet in securing the limited opportunities in the public sector.

Youth Exclusion and Political Participation in Nigeria

Political participation includes membership of a party, vying for office, being part of an advocacy of pressure group, joining public protests and engaging policy makers and administrators on decisions they make (ActionAid, 2017, p.18). Youth are relegated by older men and women who superintend over political decisions and engage them to execute their wishes and plans. Political leaders have been widely acknowledged to sponsor violence, environments of insecurity, or electoral malpractices to their advantage using unemployed youth, who depend on such payments for livelihood in the face of hopeless poverty (NRSP, 2014).

The non-inclusion of youth in polity, particularly seeking for elective positions, has been due to the unregulated amount of funds that are used in politics. Political parties set prohibitive sums of money for expression of interest/nomination, which is beyond the financial reach of youths. Financial inducements are also commonly used by all and sundry in primary and secondary elections to buy votes by wealthier politicians or to influence electoral officers to manipulate elections to favour their benefactor (Ojo, 2008; Sha, 2008).

The Constitution itself created room for ageism and the exclusion of youth populations in the polity by setting age attainments of 40 years and above for people aspiring for the positions of President or Vice, Governor or Deputy as well as Senators. The candidacy of youth in the 2015 elections was mostly in the less known political parties and 4% vied for the Presidential ticket, 11% for Governorship, 10% for Senate, 29% for House of Representatives and 29% for houses of assembly (ActionAid, 2017, p 42) 27.7%. Youth participation during the 2015 General elections is estimated at 38.8% among those 18 – 29 years. The Youth Initiative For Advocacy & Growth Advancement (YIAGA) Africa, successfully ran a campaign #Not Too



Young To Run (NTYTR) to change age restrictions that excluded youth populations from contesting for key political positions of President or Vice, Governor or Deputy as well as Senators. Table 1 presents the gains of this move by gender

Table 1: Disaggregation of NTYTR success in 2019 by Gender

Group	Male	Female
Youth candidates for House of Rep (Age 25-29)	206	37
Youth candidates for House of Rep (Age 30-35)	896	123
House of Rep No of Seats Available	360	360
House of Reps No of Seats won	13	0
Elected as Speaker House of Rep	0	0
Youth candidate for House of Assembly	206	37
House Assembly No of Seats	991	991
House of Assembly Seats won	22	0
Elected as Speaker House of Assembly	4	0
Percentage of seat gain in House of Rep due to the reduction age Bill	3.7%	0%
Percentage of seat gain in House of Assembly due to the reduction age Bill	2.2%	0%
Candidacy Ratio by Gender in 2015	69%	20%
Candidacy ratio by Gender after Age Reduction Act in 2019	87%	13%

Source: Uzor, 2019 pp 5,6

Table 1 however shows that the change in the Law reducing the age to contest for political offices did not translate to gains for the female youth who did not win any seat, thus representation by gender is still a far cry for women particularly female youth. The 35% Affirmative Action included in the Gender Policy for appointive and elective offices in Nigeria has never been achieved at any tier of government.

ActionAid undertook a study on women's participation in decision making at community levels and local governance in eight states: Akwa Ibom, Delta, Bauchi, Gombe, Ebonyi, Ondo, Kogi and Kwara. Findings of the study showed low participation of women in traditional political institution and local government administration. Women low or no representation in local government affairs either as top management or as key stakeholders, no budgetary allocations and projects to meet their needs. In this context, formal requirements of inclusion and equity are flaunted. Women's participation in election was found to be 67% in the household, 16% in the Community and 16% in local government areas (ActionAid, 2012 pp. 15 -18).

The low participation of women in election is partly traced to poverty. Higher poverty levels among female youths incapacitate their political participation. Other factors are prejudices arising from patriarchal ideologies that seek to relegate women's activities to the domestic fair and at most to supporting the candidature of the males. God fatherism has also



been identified as a key factor determining who gets elected into political offices. In Nigeria, god fathers are said to strategically select politicians that would likely get power and make returns. Females generally do not qualify due to their perceived low social and economic capital (Ayoade, 2008; Best, 2008). Females equally face discriminations within their own political parties where they are pressured to step down for their male counterparts, who are considered more promising candidates in securing victory (ActionAid, 2017). In some instances, when parties had magnanimously waived the required fees to contest, it is used as a reason during party primaries to win votes since the ladies' ticket was 'free' (Best, 2008). Female contestants are also discriminated against if they are married outside their localities or states where they seek for political office. Their marital status is used against them both from their places of origin and their marital constituents to deny them support for not belonging (ActionAid, 2017).

The threat and or common use of violence in politics, particularly during elections has further served to discourage women's political participation. Political contenders in desperation to achieve their goals resort to violence (Smah, 2008). Women have been murdered, suffered injuries, humiliation including completely being stripped naked as a means of cowering them to silence. At other times, a moral slur is cast upon them in a bid to restrict their participation (Best, 2008).

Programmes designed to alleviate Youth Unemployment

Most youth employment programmes that have been designed problematize youth unemployment as either arising from the supply side of employment or the demand side of employment. The supply-side side of employment are based on the premise that youth do not have the requisite skills or qualifications required in the job market. Policies based on this philosophy plan different skill acquisition initiatives to meet this need. Those concerned with the demand side concentrate on greater job creation outlets for the youth. The critique of both perspectives is that supply side employment initiatives are not sustainable as training periods are not adequate, most do not provide the needed capital to start enterprises, nor help with markets, inadequate monitoring and evaluation; so most businesses fold up after a while. For some that do not receive any funding, the youth get trained to move them up the employment seeking ladder, granting them advantage over those that do not have such opportunities. The demand side initiatives may create opportunities for jobs that are low paid, risky and so youth continue to remain in poverty. Evaluations of both forms of employment generation has been found to be poor (Ooesterom, 2018).

Several policies and programmes have been introduced to create employment opportunities for youth. Some of the programmes that have been introduced to address the problem of youth unemployment from 2007 to the present mainly focus on the supply side of employment, and some on the demand side of employment, while some combine both. Major programmes introduced during President Jonathan's tenure to the present regime are discussed:

National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP): This programme was meant to provide vocational training, micro-credit, conditional cash transfers (CCT) to the most vulnerable members of society, selected through a transparent process involving community leaders and members. About 2.8 billion Naira was said to have been released to House of Assembly members to distribute to unemployed youth in 2013 under their constituency project. Such decisions created room for obtaining political loyalty for the perceived benefactors and actually exclude youth that have no access to politicians. Tricycles for commercial transportation were



also distributed but this was criticised for being too ambitious and thinned out, so that a substantial amount of the monies were directed at overhead costs, rather than the provision of soft loans and start-up funds for trainees. It only had a training component for young school leavers without employment opportunities (Akande, 2014).

The Subsidy Reinvestment and empowerment programme (SURE-P) was introduced in 2012 as a result of the general outcry against the removal of fuel subsidy. The programmes were introduced to reinvest the subsidy removal savings to enhance human security for graduates of tertiary institutions (Akande, 2014; ActionAid, 2012). The scheme made provision for programmes that could enhance the social safety for vulnerable community members. The jobs created include Community Service, and Women and Youth Empowerment Programme (CSWYE). About 185,000 employment opportunities for youth were created with at least 30% female youth, to work on community priority projects and payment made based on work done. The Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) was conceived to provide 50,000 graduates in the first instance, and a further 100,000 graduates with practical knowledge, skills and training. The major purpose was to improve their employability and pay them stipends of about 25,000 Naira for the duration of the internship. The scheme brought up other issues as only 293 of the 2000 firms met the stringent criteria that included: registration with the corporate affairs commission; evidence of VAT payments; registration, tax clearance and evidence that facilities matched the requested number of interns, as well as training and mentoring plans for interns. Successful companies enjoyed free labour and concessions on taxes and scheme considered part of their social responsibilities.

The second component of SURE-P was for infrastructural development of roads, bridges, railways, and the Niger Delta Project. It was to also provide unemployed youths with employment in a transparent and fair basis under the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA), to maintain public infrastructure, roads and pavements. The composition of SURE-P Committee, particularly at State levels was criticised for the political undertones informing membership and delays in release of funds for implementation with allegations of misappropriation of funds. The programme was equally criticised for not setting a uniform composition of committees to ensure the adequate representation of youth and civil society.

Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YouWin): The programme was introduced in 2013 under the Ministries of Information and Communication Technology and Youth Development, with technical support from international partners. The scheme supported innovations and entrepreneurship among the youth through awards of N1 – N10 million for the expansion of their businesses based on their business ideas in three rounds. It was envisaged to aid the young entrepreneurs to create between 40,000 – 50,000 jobs as part of the solution to unemployment (Akande, 2014; ActionAid, 2014). Participants were all trained before the selection and successful beneficiaries received further training and mentoring (Akande, 2014). In the first round, 1200 beneficiaries were selected but had poor female representation. Positive discrimination was employed in the second round to ensure gender balance, but only females below the age of 45 were allowed to compete (ActionAid, 2014). The Scheme supported a total of 3,900 beneficiaries. Evaluation of the scheme suggested that sustainability of the programme was not curtailed



(<https://tribuneonline.ng.com>). These initiatives have been criticised for bias in selection of beneficiaries tainted by political, ethnic, and religious identities. The initiatives have also been more favourable to the male gender, as only very few women participated in the programme.

One of the first initiatives of President Buhari's Regime was the National Social Investment Programme. One of the schemes is the N-Power, with 18-35 years old Nigerians as major beneficiaries to ameliorate unemployment through the provision of jobs for two years based on successful online assessment. The graduate schemes are the N-Teach, N-Agro and NHealth. Beneficiaries are employed in their various communities to provide specialised skills in teaching particularly STEM courses, agricultural services and enterprise and in health including preventive health. The beneficiaries in this scheme are paid a monthly stipend of N30, 000. So far, over 500,000 people in two batches have passed through the scheme, while the recruitment process for the third batch is on. The non-graduate scheme include the NPower Knowledge, aimed at expanding youth engagement in the knowledge economy under eight hubs to train youths for jobs under the supply side of employment, through N-Creative, N-Tech hardware and N-Tech software and hardware trained for 11 weeks and earn (N10,000-30,000). N-Power Build targets training to equip youth with skills for building services, utilities, construction, automotive built environment services, aluminum and glass planned for 75,000 youths. <https://nasims.gov.ng>

National Directorate of Employment (NDE): The NDE was established in 1987 to address the problem of mass unemployment. Components include the National apprenticeship scheme, training on business start-ups, rural agriculture development training, and to serve as an information job centre. The NRSP (2014) noted that unemployment rates have not been significantly reduced. President Buhari's regime has also introduced Special Public Works Programme under the NDE:

Public Works Scheme: under the NDE engage youth for skilled-semi-skilled and unskilled jobs for utility, infrastructural development and sanitation works. **Graduate Attachment Programme (GAP)** – provide transient jobs for mostly post NYSC graduates and also OND/NCE graduates. Participant are attached to willing corporate organisations for 6-12 months as interns expect it can lead to employment. **Graduate Coaching Scheme (GCS)** transient jobs for unemployed graduates especially those with education background, to coach people with deficiencies for WAEC/NECO/SSCE/JAMB-UTME for 3 months.

Graduate Special Training Programme (GSTP): In this programme, youth are exposed to specialised training in digital skills e.g. Dish and Satellite installations, V-Sat and internet installations and networking for 3-6 months. **Environmental Beautification Training Scheme (EBTS):** graduates, and non-graduates are trained for soft landscaping skills in erosion control and environmental beautification, protection and sanitation. The training include, landscaping designs, grading, raising nurseries, planting flowers, and seedlings of trees and shrubs and grassing for aesthetics and erosion control.

Those for hard landscaping were posted to acquire skills in different forms of construction/finishing companies. The trainees are offered three months training with starter packs. In the case of Solar Energy Training Scheme (SETS), the targets are unemployed graduates with preference for engineering and science backgrounds. They are trained for a week



on solar energy procurement, installation, and maintenance. Given two months' practical attachments for on-the job training with private companies, then opt for paid employment or loans to start off.

Community Development Scheme (CDS) involves a labour-intensive community-based infrastructural development in construction, rehabilitation and maintenance works through NDE's collaboration with local authorities, establishments and organisations, and target community for execution. Where the host communities fund materials NDE is expected to provide hand-tools, cost of labour and technical expertise. Areas – road construction, rehabilitation and maintenance; irrigation works; social services including building of schools, provision of boreholes, potable water supply, environmental protection works are programmes executed under the Community Development Scheme.. Target beneficiaries are skilled and unskilled members of host community for duration of project.

Labour Based Technology Scheme (LBTS): In this programme, Community Development Scheme engage and train different cadre of unemployed in construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of variety of infrastructure, using labour intensive methods with compatible light equipment yet with engineering principles in design, execution of works without compromising qualities. <https://nde.gov.ng>

The Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (#SDGAction27901) developed by the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development (FMYSD) for people 18-35 years aims to streamline the multiplicity of youth employment initiatives and create synergy among the different MDAs. The emphasis is on making the youth civil society groups key stakeholders for a more comprehensive and coherent approach. The focal areas are Employability, Entrepreneurship Development, Employment Creation and Equal Opportunity. This is to be achieved in partnership with ILO, ECOWAS and Fundacion Internacional para Iberoamerica de Administracion y Politicas Publicas as technical partners. The site however indicates that a progress report due in November 2019 is still being awaited with a time lapse of 20 months. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=27901>. We however wonder whether the age eligibility criteria for beneficiaries of youth employment programmes will be readjusted to reflect the new conceptualisation of youths as people aged 15-29 years.

Recommendations to integrate youth in economy and polity

1. Youth citizenship needs to be encouraged and cultivated, to ensure a more equitable environment to problem solving that give youth a voice on their lives and future. The regrettable repression of youth voices and tragic losses during the #ENDSARS campaign that was critical in engaging youths as citizens need to be addressed, redressed to provide the critical platform to move forward and stem the tide of degeneration.
2. Youth unemployment and relative disenfranchisement was earlier discussed as a global phenomenon. Youth need greater networking within and across national boundaries for experience sharing and adaptation of what works in their peculiar situations.
3. Youth who have already earned substantial incomes in other sectors such as in entertainment or sports need to be approached by young entrepreneurs to invest the needed capital into their businesses. Furthermore, the youth can network as a community to promote each other's products, particularly those in the entertainment and hospitality industries.



4. The principles of affirmative action as contained in the Gender Policy urgently need to be implemented using different groups and stakeholders to promote it. Gender awareness needs to be created among successive generations in communities particularly for the youth. It is hoped that as they are exposed to more issues that challenge stereotypical views of the genders, they will potentially realign their socialisation roles to promote gender equality and respect for all.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan #SDGAction27901 has great potential in stemming the tide of youth unemployment. It is hope that it will create opportunity for the youth as the agile population of a country's labour force, and ultimately empower them to participate meaningfully in the political space.

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