

Nigeria's Youth: Turning Challenge into Opportunity.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you here today in the setting of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. This is a major event and a dream fulfilled opportunity for me to have face to face interaction with the very sophisticated and educated people of the south eastern part of Nigeria. Let me say it right away that I was very keen not to complete my tenure in Nigeria without visiting a major University in the Eastern part of Nigeria having had opportunities to visit universities in other regions of the country. I am equally happy to have opportunity to speak on one of the important issues in the Country today: **Nigeria's youth: turning challenge into opportunity.**

Few topics in today Nigeria deserve more attention than the pressing issue of youth employment. As economic problems lead to social tensions, it is youth that are the most powerful conduit of discontent. Disillusionment in the face of joblessness is all the greater when one has never had a job before, and the search for a job seems hopeless. Not having the chance to take one's place in society leads to deep disenchantment with that society – and with its governing structures. We know that unemployed youth can be a destabilizing factor within fragile societies, and we can see – from far away Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, and to the Niger Delta - how finely balanced social stability is when society's economic values are threatened. No value can be more important than a job.

The Nigeria Youth Policy Document defined youths as persons between ages 18 to 35 years. However, for the purpose of this paper and in line with international practice, “Youth” is defined as person between the ages 18 and 24 years. In Nigeria, any person who reaches the age of 18 is legally considered an “*adult*” with voting rights. These are persons who normally would have completed secondary education, and would either be in tertiary institutions such as the university, striving to secure employment, or be already employed. This group of persons would need post secondary education, employment, and reproductive health information and services. In this paper, I will highlight the challenges facing the youth in Nigeria and quickly enumerate the elements of an agenda for action plan for resolving the youth “bulge”.

Nigerian youth and emerging challenges

I would like to present the challenges facing our youth as a global menace. The issue has remained a major focus of international discuss. At one of the recent Spring Meetings of the World Bank, a high-level round-table meeting was organized for leaders from all over the world to come together to share views on the nature of the challenges that the youth now face, and especially on possible solutions. At the regional level, you may be aware that Africa faces a pressing problem of youth unemployment. Steadily worsening over the years, youth unemployment on the continent is now assuming crisis proportions, particularly in the wake of the current global economic recession. But Africa and in particular Nigeria cannot wait; it has to explore potential options and take action now to respond in the short-term to the impact of the global recession, while also putting in place programs to address the structural causes of the problem.

Youth constitute not only a formidable demographic force, but also make up the next generation of parents, workers and leaders. Their well being, therefore, has implications not only for their own lives, but also for the societies they will build and maintain. Their ability to play these roles effectively depends on the support of their families, communities and on the commitment of their governments to their development. Meeting their needs is a major continuing public policy challenge which calls for constant re-thinking of policies, re-assessment of priorities, commitment of adequate financial resources, and effective implementation of programs. More efficient and equitable resource allocation and improved policy formulation and implementation can only be achieved with a better understanding of their needs.

Many writers see youth as a potentially destabilizing force, especially in African countries. It is a quasi-Marxist theory that replaces class conflict with age conflict. Marc Sommers (2006, 2008) presents a number of authors who advance this theory. He cites writers struck by the large numbers of unemployed men to whom, for example, “a societal madness begins to occur; detribalized young men, lost souls wandering ...the streets of downtown Nairobi in the middle of the night” (Shoumatoff, 1988). Kaplan (1994), also cited, describes the “out of school, unemployed male youth” as “loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threatens to ignite”. Sommers notes that even African writers see cities as places of immense cruelty where youth are filled with “anger, a sense of hurt and revolt...[where] it is a small step from the culture of violence to its actual practice”. However, Sommers (2006) warns that such characterization can lead to dangerous generalizations and the demonization of peaceful majorities.

Phillipson (2009) cites Henrik Urdal (2006) who also argues that youth bulges provide greater opportunities for violence through the abundant supply of young men, who have low opportunity costs and stronger motives for violence as a result of “cohort crowding” around fixed resources. Jared Diamond (2006) has presented evidence to show that the genocides in Rwanda and Burundi were not so much ethnically inspired as responses to rural overcrowding and an unsustainable demographic explosion. Without jobs many youth, especially young men, will not be able to play a useful role in society. They are effectively excluded from mainstream society, unable to achieve “manhood” and remain “youth men”. Some members of this group may turn to escapism through drugs and alcohol. Others migrate to urban areas in an attempt to remake themselves in an anonymous setting. In areas of political and social fragility, others will achieve adulthood by joining rebel groups or armed militant gangs. Even after a conflict there is always the possibility of ex-combatants returning to an armed struggle if their demands or aspirations are not met. This is why youth employment is seen as a vital ingredient in maintaining social stability and supporting nation building initiatives throughout Africa.

Dimensions of Youth Problems

There are several dimensions to the problem of youth unemployment. If young people are provided with employment opportunities they can become productive assets and take their part in mainstream society offering the best of their skills and talents. If this opportunity is not forthcoming there is a chance that disaffected youth will quickly turn

to crime and violence in order to survive. There is the societal readiness dimension. I read an article on the situation of Nigeria youth in one of our dailies and the submission is quite worrying. It was revealed that Nigerian undergraduates spend an average of six years for a four year course before they come out with a degree which compares very poorly to similar degrees from other countries, where education is given the respect it deserve. If you quantify this in terms of monetary costs it is, no doubt, alarming. In other societies, full costing is applied to this type of waste including direct costs and opportunity costs, but we seem not to have reached this stage in Nigerian. Most times when Universities are shut- and it is even estimated that students spend more time outside the university system than within while pursuing their degree courses. In those times they are out of the university campuses, they are idle as there is no employment or any meaningful voluntary job to do during legitimate and “forced” vacations, occasioned by strikes and other exigencies. These costs monies and at worst these idle hands can get engaged in crimes for as they say “an idle hand is the devil’s messenger.”

Each year about a one million qualified students apply through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for entry into Nigerian universities and only about 200,000 (20%) of them get admitted to all the universities in Nigeria and the remaining 800,000- all qualified with adequate number of required WAEC credits- will keep trying in search of JAMB admission for another 3-5 years to get admissions at a time they should have graduated. Again this has huge monetary costs in addition frustration and psychological damage to the youth; economic and financial loss to the young person; their families and the national economy.

Then the greatest pain is the long wasted years of searching for non-available jobs after graduation. Young graduates are being abused daily basis, especially the women folks who are forced into all kinds of exploitation in the name of getting them jobs, which they hardly get not even after they have fulfilled their own side of the bargain. The jobs are simply not there, for a growing economy that is battling to survive yet churning out graduates in hundreds of thousands annually. The government has not been able to cope with the demand and yet to put in place policies that will enhance job creation or a conducive environment that will lead the private sector to create jobs for the teeming youth roaming the streets, hundreds of thousands of them with second degrees but without a job, for upwards of 5-6 years after graduation and national service (NYSC). Put all these wasted years and the psychological impact of such frustration by young persons in Nigeria together and you will understand the enormity of the wastages and loss to the Nigerian economy as a whole. No country with a view to any form of future prosperity would allow its youths to such wastage.

Then there is a labor markets dimension. The rate at which young people find jobs depends on how prepared the labor market is to receive them, and how ready they are for the labor market. Experience worldwide has shown that no nation has achieved a technological and socio-political advance where less than 15% of its qualified young citizens have access to tertiary education. The US has achieved over 80% access while in Europe the average is 35%. In emerging economies like South Africa and Brazil—which Nigeria seeks to emulate—the percentage of access to tertiary education is 18% and 25% respectively. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that potential employers in Nigeria as well as elsewhere say that our institutions aren't graduating people with the skills they need to enhance their success. This means there is need to fundamentally address the skills gap, as well as the skill mismatch. The abilities of job-seekers are falling short of the ambitions of industry.

This Africa-wide problem is also reflected in Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria's youth unemployment situation is particularly serious. A recent survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that overall unemployment rate amounted to 19.7% of total labor Force in March 2009, indicating a sharp increase from 14.9% in March 2008. When disaggregated by sector, gave 19.2% for urban and 19.8% for the rural. The young make up 37% of the working-age population in Africa, but 60% of the unemployed. Decomposition of the composite unemployment rate by age group showed a pattern with rates decreasing with increasing age up to age 59 years old and increased for persons aged 60-64 years implying that unemployment affected the younger and older age groups. Thus the age group 15-24 years had the highest rate of 41.6%, whereas the age group 45-59 years had only 11.5% and age group 65-64 years had 16.7% (See Table 1). This pattern was maintained when the rates were considered within the urban and rural sectors separately. Gender-wise, unemployment rates were higher for females than their male counterparts. Young people are more likely to work longer hours under insecure work arrangements, characterized by low productivity and meager earnings. Females face particularly strong challenges in entering the labor force, due to early motherhood and lack of education.

Table 1: NIGERIA UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE GROUP AND SEX (March 2009)

Age Group	Unemployment Rate
15-24	41.6
25-44	17
45-59	11.5
60-64	16.7
Gender Analysis	
Male	17
Female	23.3

The survey also confirmed that the rate of unemployment was highest in the eastern states.

Another important challenge is the sheer size of the population and the obvious high proportion of youth. This alone is capable of rendering programs of government and

international agencies mere tokenistic gestures. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has not been able to provide the needed succor to the unemployed youth. Even the older one, the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC), is currently unable to absorb the recent graduates of the country's tertiary institutions. There are fundamental problems which finance alone cannot address satisfactorily. Most of the graduates from the Nigerian system have received education with limited skill. This is why fresh graduates are finding it difficult to secure gainful employment. Skill training must be incorporated in all aspects of education at all levels so that the products will be equipped for employment or be able to seek alternatives in business and entrepreneurship. Increasingly, youth are being dis-oriented by the get rich-quick syndrome of politics and the accompanying corruption engendered in the last two decades. The most disheartening trend is that many of them are beginning to share the view that hard work does not pay in this country. These educational and socioeconomic issues must now be confronted by government so as to provide the enabling environment.

Youth unemployment, tertiary education and public sector jobs

Given the theoretical relationship between education and labor market outcomes, we would expect unemployment rates to be inversely related to educational attainment. Indeed, in OECD countries the unemployment rate decreases with the level of education (O'Higgins, 2001). However, in developing countries it has been argued that the better educated can experience higher unemployment rates, the so-called "educated youth hypothesis" (Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni, 2004). The premise is that youth from more privileged backgrounds focus their job search on better paid public sector positions, and are as a consequence willing to "queue" for such jobs and remain unemployed. Poorer educated youth do not have the financial means or support to endure unemployment, and therefore, seek work in lower paid, poorer quality jobs in the informal economy.

Secure public sector jobs in particular attract queues, but may represent a waste of talent and labor. While salaries in the Nigeria public sector are low, duties are light, while opportunities both for rent seeking and running business activities on the side are high. This is likely to have created excessive incentives for Nigeria's youth to go to universities (for those who can afford it) to enable them to pursue such openings, as well as reducing the demand for useful skills to be taught there. However, as a consequence of structural and other economic reforms, there are now fewer employment opportunities in the Nigerian public sector. At the same time, graduates of low quality higher education courses do not have the skills which are demanded by the private sector.

Increasingly, these young people end up unemployed or working in the informal economy, with many of them still "queuing" or waiting ever longer for a job in the public sector. As a result of preference for public sector work by Nigerian youth, the youth will always be the most adversely affected by any public sector policy changes, as they had less power in the organizations in which they worked and government always implement a 'last in – first out' policy. There is abundant evidence indicating that rather than entering the informal sector, many new graduates simply remained unemployed after graduation.

Skills and Training

The graduate queues described above are an example of skill mismatch, where educated youths fail to acquire the skills that are demanded by the labor market. This is, in fact, a much broader concern across Africa. In Nigeria, for example, a weak vocational training sector means that, despite a large and growing construction sector, skilled construction workers are usually imported from neighboring countries. Boateng (2002) lists the determinants of such mismatches as: the type and quality of curriculum; career and academic advisory services; admission and evaluation policies in the tertiary sector; and the role of faculty boards and employers' associations in the delivery of education services. In the study, the particular experiences of Ghana and Nigeria are presented, two countries where tertiary enrolment rates have increased substantially over recent years. For example, in Ghana the total number of tertiary students more than doubled from 21,000 in 1994 to 50,000 in 1999 (Boateng, 2002). According to 1999 figures presented in Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong (2001), there was an excess supply of Ghanaian graduates in arts/social sciences and agriculture, while there was a shortage of young people with degrees in administration/management, medical/health sciences and engineering/technical subjects.

Skills mismatches are exacerbated both by rapidly changing skills needs, and by the reluctance or inability to update university courses. Basic skills in information technology are now essential for young people to gain a foothold in the labor market in developed and increasingly in developing countries. One approach to tackling the problem of a skill mismatch is to combine formal education with work-based training. This combination can either be sequential, where training follows the completion of school, or it can be undertaken concurrently.

While I have pointed out the reality of the challenge, let me now turn to the latent opportunity. If effectively managed, this “youth bulge” could become one of Nigeria's drivers of economic growth, delivering significant demographic benefits—as it did in some of the Asian tiger economies. It was Churchill who said, “The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” Which one will help our situation?

An Agenda for Action

We clearly need an agenda for action to address these challenges and let me propose some of its possible components. First, policy makers have a duty to build capable states with the clear purpose of not only expanding economic opportunities but also effectively and efficiently delivering basic services to citizens. This means every Nigerian Naira spent on education, health and other basic services must deliver commensurate value.

Growth is best sustained by creating policy predictability as well as a political and investment climate that encourages investors to make long-term commitments, even across election cycles. Although improving the investment climate is not necessarily

youth specific, it can have a significant impact on the young by creating more and better jobs. A poor investment climate limits the rate at which new businesses start, the rate of growth and the ultimate size of a business. If the rules governing businesses are too onerous, unpredictable, opaque or costly, economic activity and thus employment is constrained. New investments must be targeted at improving the human skills base of Nigeria as well as providing the basic infrastructure that citizens need to thrive. It is not just inappropriate rules and regulations. Business growth and job creation could be severely constrained by poor infrastructure and limited access to finance and other business services. The burden of maintaining electricity generators in Nigeria where mains power is unreliable has made the difference between competing effectively in international manufacturing markets and closure.

The burdens of a weak investment climate, including access to infrastructure, land, finance and services, fall more heavily on young investors and business people, as well as on young job-seekers. Youth are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to finance, for example. Without credit history, their schemes are less likely to attract formal financing. Without the networks and experience of their elders they will find it more difficult to find and negotiate the government and commercial services required to support their operations. Such disadvantages exist in the most advanced markets; however, systems such as entrepreneurial training, incubation grants and guides to accessing services seek to minimize those constraints in more developed economies.

Another important policy direction is in targeting youth based sectors for development. Governments have a choice of working with the sector in which most of the youth are currently employed (typically agriculture) or / and working in sectors in which the youth could be employed in the future. The process of selecting high-potential industries can begin with a wide review of the leading sectors of the economy. A high level review (in both the formal and informal sectors) can identify employment intensity, staff profiles, export earnings, industry growth rates, key drivers, long term enablers, taxation potential and skills levels of workers required, amongst other things.

This process was recently undertaken in Nigeria for a large selection of 30 industrial sectors for the ‘Growth and Employment in States’ (GEMS) program, to be funded by the World Bank and DFID. The results of the analysis were plotted against two major criteria:

- (i) The potential to offer strong upside in terms of growth, employment and spillovers (cost discovery and economic linkages); and
- (ii) The feasibility of successful interventions in terms of ability to bridge the competitiveness gap, likelihood that policy failures could be addressed and the presence of a private sector able to address market failures.

This process of analysis resulted in the selection of six major sectors: ICT; entertainment, tourism and hospitality; meat and leather; construction; and wholesale and retail trade. In each sector an in-depth value chain analysis was completed to benchmark the industry against international best practice to identify bottlenecks and areas for improvement.

Some of these issues will be addressed by the public sector while others must be tackled by the private sector, or by a combination of the two.

Which are the youth intensive sectors?

Three of the sectors above have been identified as youth intensive, and so have particular potential for addressing youth unemployment. A fourth, agri-business, can also be considered to have youth intensive characteristics. The following sets out some of the reasons why these sectors can justifiably be labeled as such.

ICT: Starting from a very small base a little more than 10 years ago, India has managed to develop its IT and IT-enabled services into a \$100bn per year business that continues to grow at 30 percent per annum. Call center operations are being established in South Africa, Egypt and Ghana. Crucially, for our topic, they mainly employ school leavers and young graduates. In a typical call center operation about *50 percent of the workers hired will be starting their first jobs*. The remaining 50 percent will have between 1 and 5 years experience. Given suitable contexts, including English language skills, internet infrastructure, governments such as Nigeria's should be able to kick-start the industry by investing in IT parks, smart villages and incubators – as well as in time spent with the private sector to identify industry specific regulatory, coordination or information failures that create obstacles to growth. Experience strongly suggests that initiatives with private sector investment and management are usually the most successful.

Entertainment: Music and films are again heavily dominated by youth cohorts both on the production and consumption sides. This is an area that has not traditionally been seen as a growth industry by government officials. However, Hollywood represents the second largest component of American exports. Some African countries could begin to emulate this success, especially Nigeria whose film industry, known as Nollywood, is the most prolific in the world producing no fewer than 40 movies per week. The value of the Nigerian film industry is estimated to be \$250 million per annum. The music industry is estimated to be of similar size. Strong demand domestically and from consumers in Sub-Saharan Africa and the large African diasporas is driving growth. Employment in the entertainment industry is estimated at 500,000 formally and a much larger number informally.

Growth could be much faster if the loss of revenue from piracy, which deprives the industry of up to \$1 billion in revenue annually, can be addressed. Developing a formal export path will not only help defeat piracy but also contribute foreign earnings. Government can also strengthen formal marketing and distribution channels together with the private sector, work towards increasing access to equity and loan finance, host film festivals, and support the organization and mobilization of a strong industry body.

Hospitality (Tourism and Restaurants): The largest employers in the US are the Army and the US Postal Service but in the private sector it is Wal-Mart and McDonalds. Although Wal-Mart employs more people than McDonalds, the latter boasts the fact that almost 1 in 8 Americans have worked in McDonalds at some time: for many it was their

first job. Changes in demographics, especially more urban women entering the workforce, are driving a tremendous growth in fast food in Africa too. Convenience foods are also becoming a lifestyle choice with burgeoning bukkas and roadside eateries popping up in a variety of African cities. They are typically staffed by young women. The hospitality industry is therefore one that could potentially absorb large numbers of lower skilled African youth (although the industry still demands basic primary and often secondary educations). The industry is growing quickly internationally, albeit with a brief hiatus during the financial crisis in 2008/9. It is likely that this growth will continue in the future.

Countries that can attract international tourists can earn foreign exchange; provide young people with jobs and exposure to international best practices in services, marketing and sales and management. The private sector need to mobilize for product delivery (a good tourism product requires several players coming together such as museums, attractions, shops and restaurants) service standards (establishing the star rating system) and package deals as well as joint marketing and promotion. This is not something that can happen spontaneously as there are too many stakeholders to coordinate. Governments must adopt a pro-active approach to in an effort to promote such youth-based industry.

Agribusiness: Agribusiness is also a youth based sector. Agriculture accounts for the bulk of GDP in Nigeria, and probably employs a higher absolute number of youth than any other sector. However, its full potential is rarely exploited. In much of Nigeria agricultural land lies fallow due to restrictions on land titling, state ownership of productive land and lack of incentives. Lack of supporting infrastructure makes production and transport of agricultural goods to market unviable. Moreover, many rural markets have become dysfunctional following years of misguided government intervention that has destroyed the rural credit culture, and misallocated basic inputs such as irrigation, fertilizer and extension services. The high amount of un- and under-utilized land, and the scope for technological development, suggests a strong potential for employment creation.

Youth employment – the way forward

This paper has established that youth unemployment is a growing challenge for all in Nigeria today. Policies to tackle youth unemployment have tended to focus on how youth are different from other workers (they are less skilled, less experienced and have limited business contacts) and attempt to compensate for these deficiencies. Thus skills training and vocational education have taken center stage in the vast majority of interventions to date. However these training programs have been met with “very moderate and rather disappointing outcomes” (Betcherman et.al. p6) while direct job creation programs in the public sector have led to wasted resources.

Youth unemployment in Nigeria is more of a demand side problem. There are not enough jobs to go around. The key problem is not that today’s youth are poorly educated, have poor skills that are not in great demand, or are ill-equipped for the workforce. Indeed, today’s youth cohort is healthier and better educated than ever

before. However, while these gains must be protected and built upon, they have not been enough to cut youth unemployment for one major reason: there are not enough jobs being created.

Until recently, demand-side interventions were based on macroeconomic analysis. The argument went that countries that achieved macroeconomic stability - that brought their budget deficits under control, tamed inflation and achieved a stable exchange rate - would grow quickly and therefore create jobs. This is now recognized as necessary, but not sufficient, and policy-makers are now looking at the micro level changes that need to be tackled to support increased job creation. No doubt, the urgency and scale of youth unemployment called for more targeted support to specific sectors with strong employment growth potential.

What can policy-makers do?

Many relevant policy priorities are already well understood, this paper only adds to calls for their implementation. These include:

- **Human Development interventions:** In the medium term, government must focus on improving health outcome indicators and empowering women to achieve their desired family sizes. Improving access to, and the quality, of education, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, will be important as experience has shown that it is very difficult to overcome basic educational deficiencies through second chance programs. It is becoming increasingly clear that tertiary, and certainly vocational, education should be made more relevant to the market place through industry linkages and joint ventures. Entrepreneurial skills have been overlooked at both school and working ages.
- **Gains in macroeconomic stability** must be protected and developed further. While stability may not be sufficient for growth, recent gains in Nigeria must not permit us to forget that a lot more need to be done to sustain the tempo.
- **Develop a financial market that supports SMEs:** The challenges and returns to improving access to finance in Nigeria do not need repeating here beyond demands for continued focus, and a particular focus on the challenges faced by young entrepreneurs with few connections, no credit history and scant knowledge of financial markets.
- **Creating a labor market that works better for the young:** Solving the youth unemployment challenge will require recognizing that young workers are unfairly disadvantaged in the labor market. Governments should embark on policy that will promote apprentice schemes to help young people develop experience, networks and reputation; and encourage manufactured exports where youth, women and part-timers are disproportionately represented. The limitations of best practice labor regulations must also be taken into account.

- **Establish a conducive investment climate for the young:** Only the private sector can create productive and sustainable new job opportunities. Governments who are interested in creating large numbers of jobs must first create the right investment climate. As this paper shows, this is an area where most states in Nigeria are not doing well and where the most effort should be focused in the short to medium term. In addition to tackling the investment climate broadly, governments should pay increased attention to specific areas that may bias against the youth such as labor regulations and the judicial and customary laws that bias against female entrepreneurship.
- **Target youth-specific sectors:** The demonstration effect of the East Asian miracle and new thinking around industrial policy have led to an emerging consensus that government, guided by the private sector and market signals, can play a role in supporting key sectors of the economy. A high level review of formal and informal business sectors can identify employment intensity, staff profiles, export earnings, industry growth rates, key drivers, long term enablers, taxation potential and skills levels of workers required. Government can then adopt a market enhancing value-chain approach to overcome the binding constraints to growth in particular youth-led sectors, which might include ICT, entertainment, tourism, and agribusiness, amongst others.

In addition, leaders must clearly communicate in word and deed that public probity will be rewarded and impunity or misuse of office, predictably, will be sanctioned. We must focus on developing micro, small and medium enterprises as a credible springboard from which to canvas for Foreign Direct Investment. International investors follow the lead of local entrepreneurs. In Nigeria, as much as 30% of the value of sales is lost due to crime, insecurity, power outages, bribes and inadequate transport. These costs are higher than in other East African countries, and 6 times the comparable cost in South Africa.

In addition, it is the duty of policy makers to modernize the curriculum, sponsor programs to assess and re-equip youth, so they have the skills the market will be looking for tomorrow. They must also aim for expansion of tertiary and university education, explore public private partnerships by producing skilled personnel that will meet the manpower requirement of the private sector, and take advantage of technology to innovate and expand education beyond their walls.

What should the private sector focus on?

Develop functional industry associations: Many potentially successful value chains require a tremendous amount of coordination between public and private sector players. The private sector can organize and present its own views to government. Industry associations can get together to determine the public and private sector market failures and put together a plan of action for overcoming them. This process can also be supported by government and the donor community.

Become active partners in training: The evidence indicates that few training programs support “soft skills” and internships. The most successful training appears to be cluster based basic managerial training in areas such as business planning, marketing, sales and record-keeping. There is often a disconnect between the skills training on offer, and industry requirements. Cluster based training is one way to ensure effective industry relevant skills acquisition; another may be to increase private sector partnerships with the tertiary and vocational education sectors. This is particularly the case with entrepreneurship programs: The private sector understands entrepreneurship better than the public sector or academia. Getting them involved in creating and delivering entrepreneurship programs is vital.

What the Bank and other donors can do to support

Currently the Donors have treated youth unemployment largely as a supply-side problem. Donor approaches have tended to focus on disadvantaged youths and overcoming skills mismatches and more generic challenges to the education system. Few of these interventions have achieved their desired objectives. The evaluations that have been conducted show that the skills training, capacity building and mentoring programs are not cost-effective and fail to produce a long term outcome. Entrepreneurship programs have been tried less frequently but appear to be more successful as does providing financial support along with entrepreneurship training. The World Bank and other partners should be encouraged to focus assistance on developing the financial sector, supporting the improvement of the Investment Climate, investment in growth pole and value chain projects, improving monitoring and evaluation of youth employment programs, working with national programs to improve Public-private linkages, encouraging South-South learning linkage, and targeting gender based programs.

Conclusion

In concluding, though, Nigeria’s vision 20:2020 sets an ambitious target to become one of the top 20 economies in the world by 2020, attaining this goal would not only require uninterrupted growth of 13.8% per year, but will also demand citizens with globally-competitive skills. The foundation of all of this is the commitment of government to build consensus on how to tackle what I have identified as the two chief enemies facing the country’s development: poverty and corruption. In this regard, the vision 20:2020 has been designed to look at two broad objectives over the medium to long term: optimize the Nation’s human and natural resource potential to achieve rapid and sustained economic growth; and to translate economic growth into equitable social development that guarantees a dignified and meaningful existence for all her citizens.

While there are challenges, Nigeria also has proven potentials. It has a dynamic private sector, a vibrant civil society; it is making its mark on the global stage in mobile technology innovation and it is strong in the service sector. The ingredients for a rebound are in place. But success will also require managing the risks and establishing strong systems of social accountability.

Second, our communities must get involved. Our schools and colleges are fertile soils:

we can choose to sow the seeds of our future success or let them become swamps of neglect. We all need to be part of the solution; this is not just the government's problem; if we bury our heads in the sand, it will soon become our problem. It was Margaret Meade who said, "The solutions to adult problems tomorrow depend, in large measure, on how children grow up today. There is no greater insight into the future than recognizing that when we save our children, we save ourselves" Third, I have a message to the youth. Your generation must realize you are living on the cusp of a revolution. Just like those who saw the dawn of the agricultural or industrial revolution, you who are living in this unique moment of history must learn how to leverage ICT. Use this platform not just to update your Facebook page but to close the knowledge gap since access to ICT bring together people of all cultures.

In Nigerian, repositioning youths for the eradication of unemployment, require that we transform them into confident, aggressive and purposeful individuals. The ideal profile for emerging professionals (products of our ivory towers) with respect to entrepreneurial education, this would include a strong scientific, technical and factual base with good background information and research skills. The individuals who opt for non-degree training in skill acquisition with entrepreneurial background are also not left out. All must have a high level of creativity and innovation and the ability to think about the future and relate these ideas to his/her business. The "dream-youths" should have strong skills in business planning, finance and accounting, as well as ability to create new and innovative marketing plans that utilize modern communication technology. Desired attitudes for Nigeria would-be entrepreneurs include a respect for democratic principles and the legal processes of our nation and the highest level of integrity and ethics. The Nigerian youth therefore need to learn that life is partnership in which the individual strives to fulfill himself/herself with the active support of others. that is, he/she needs to realize the fact that he/she needs to develop his/her potentials and to contribute his/her talents to the common good of all (Etuk, 2000). With the spirit of collaborating, inter-existence and the desire for collective survival of all, there will be a steady growth of development, mutual support and networking.

The biggest change that our youth need to make is in their mindset; shifting from that of job seekers to job creators; from writing good bios to writing great business plans. It also means transitioning from being provincial to thinking regionally and yes, even globally; from waiting for change to becoming the drivers of change. We must all aim for nobility of character and eschew ignoble wealth acquired by dishonest means. Theodore Roosevelt once said "I wish to preach not the doctrine of ignoble ease but the doctrine of the strenuous life; the life of labor and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes, not from the man who desires mere easy peace, but the man who does not shrink from danger, hardship or bitter toil and who, out of these wills the splendid ultimate triumph. We admire the man who embodies victorious effort." Our youth should shun easy-way-out life option. Roosevelt equated a life of ignoble ease to that of "peace that springs merely from the lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things".

As the youth of Nigeria strive towards bringing about change, their citizenship of Nigeria should be a constant reminder of the divine call they all must have to sacrificial service to your nation. It must also be a reminder that character is after all the destiny of individuals, families, communities, firms, organizations, and nations; and service that prioritizes personal benefit above the common good is contemptible and ignoble.

Our youth's role model should be in the caliber of Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google, who said, "Everyone wants to be successful, but I want to be looked back on as being very innovative, very trusted and ethical and ultimately making a big difference in the world." Finally, you have all you need within you to create the Nigeria of your dreams. A new Nigeria – known for its world class citizens. That, the good young people of Nigeria, is your destiny. And remember, Character is Destiny.

