

---

## The Nigerian Youth Story

---

Dr. George Mavrotas (G.Mavrotas@cgiar.org)

---

**Dr. George Mavrotas** works at International Food Policy Research Institute. He is Senior Research Fellow in the Development Strategy & Governance Division at IFPRI HQs in Washington DC and is also the Program Leader of IFPRI's Nigeria Strategy Support Program in Abuja. He holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Oxford.

---

**During the last 4 years, employment creation and youth development have been core pillars of the Transformation Agenda of the Nigerian Federal Government to address the challenges of unemployment and poverty. This article looks at the main policies in favor of the youth in Nigeria.**

**This article was published in French in *Grain de sel* n°71 (January 2015).**

---

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this publication are those of the author alone and are not necessarily representative of or endorsed by the International Food Policy Research Institute.

This article is based on the following documents:

- National Youth Policy (2009). "Second National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2009", Abuja, Nigeria.
  - NBS (2014). National Bureau of Statistics (2014b). "National Job Creation Survey: Selected Tables from Job Creation and Employment Survey 3rd Quarters 2014". Abuja, Nigeria.
  - FMARD (2013). Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Youth Employment in Agriculture Program (YEAP) - Program Design Report, Abuja, Nigeria.
  - Youth and Gender Division of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria (2015), Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- 

In 1986, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to provide vocational training to the youth and give direction for youth empowerment and development. In 1987, the Better Life Programme was created to empower women, especially female youths in the rural areas through skills acquisition and healthcare training. The Ministry of Youth Development was established in 2007 for skills acquisition through Youth Development Centres and developed an explicit National Youth Employment Action Plan to address youth unemployment across all economic sectors. The National Action Plan on Employment Creation (NAPEC), approved by the Federal Executive Council in 2010, targets the implementation of key policies and programmes. The employment creation programmes under the NAPEC are mainly implemented through the NDE. The Second National Youth Policy and African Youth Charter are key frameworks to strengthen and consolidate efforts to empower young people.

During the last 4 years, employment creation and youth development were core pillars of the Transformation Agenda of the Federal Government to address the challenges of unemployment and poverty. The **Agricultural Transformation Agenda** (ATA) of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) provided the framework for the

agricultural sector, taking a value chain approach in order to increase productivity, income, create jobs and pursue partnerships with the private sector. The expected medium-term impact from the ATA included the provision of over 3.5 million jobs, increased production of key food staples by 20 million metric tons, and increased food security. Several government initiatives to address youth employment creation, namely **Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme** (YEAP) launched in 2014 and the Subsidy Reinvestment Programme (SURE-P) introduced in 2002 have been carried out. Also at the regional level by organisations like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and at the State level by respective State Governments, youth support programmes have been implemented.

Despite the increasing level of unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria, between 2012 and 2014, over 3.1 million jobs were created in the formal, informal and public sector in Nigeria (NBS, 2014).

The **National Youth Policy** of 2009 represents a declaration and commitment of the priorities, directions and practical support that Nigeria intends to provide for the development of its young men and women. While the UN and ILO define the age range for youth to be between 15 and 24 years, the age range used for defining youth in Nigeria according to the National Youth Policy is between 18 and 35 years.

The **African Youth Charter** (AYC) was endorsed on 2 July 2006 by the African Union Heads of States and Governments meeting in Banjul (Gambia) and entered into force on 8 August 2009. The African Youth Charter serves as the strategic framework for African States.

The key initiative for meaningful youth participation and equal partnership in driving the youth development agenda in the agricultural sector is the YEAP. YEAP was designed in a participatory manner by youth to create jobs for young people. Several consultations were held with youth groups for the development of the design of YEAP. The specific objective of YEAP is to create decent rural employment for young women and men along value chains. YEAP is meant to empower two subsets of youth, in a gender equal way: i) **Nagropreneurs**, i.e. young and innovative medium-scale entrepreneurs active along priority value chains, acting as intermediaries/pullers and service providers (knowledge, inputs, mechanization, etc.) between market-oriented producers and large agro-industries and/or wholesalers; and ii) **local farming youth**, i.e. those interested in market-oriented agricultural production, small-scale processing, input supply and marketing. YEAP aims at targeting 18 500 nagropreneurs (500 per state) and 740 000 market-oriented producers (20 000 per state) by 2020. By December 2014 the programme had trained and provided starter packs (including grants) to a total of 6 618 youth.

The Youth Employment in Agriculture Program (YEAP) has **three main components**. The first component is in line with the agricultural transformation to create enabling environment for youths through policy dialogues among both national and international stakeholders, development of knowledge and finance policy and rebranding of the agricultural sector. The second component would give support to youths through training and finance and then a third

component is for monitoring and evaluation of the program through state steering technical hubs. The announced budget for 2015-2020 was Naira 37 billion (about Euro 175 million).

For most rural youth, the most accessible employment opportunities are in the agricultural sector or the informal sector through self-employment. Given the current context of relatively high food prices, huge potential for growth in area and yield, and markets for processed products, agriculture and agro-allied enterprises are immediate means of increasing incomes and providing gainful employment for large numbers of young people. The ATA aims to inculcate in the minds of people that "**Agriculture is a Business**".

YEAP promotes employment creation and enterprise development along **priority value chains** (Rice, Aquaculture, Poultry, Maize, Tomato, Wheat, Sorghum, Apiculture, Soya bean, Cassava, Groundnut, Oil Palm, Snailry, Grass cutter and multiple value chains like welding and fabrication, repair and maintenance) to strengthen the ability of young people to effectively engage in business-oriented agricultural production, value addition and marketing activities. Support to young women and men has to be provided across the five capitals necessary to operate successful agricultural businesses for improved rural livelihood, namely human, natural, financial, physical and social capital. The approach has a strong focus on: (i) skills acquisition for youth with different educational backgrounds, including agricultural, business and life skills; and (ii) set-up of agricultural enterprises along the value chain, including production, service provision, processing and marketing. It is expected that youth will be well integrated in the Program with improved access to land, credit windows, agricultural inputs and research and development; it is also expected that this will integrate well equipped and business-ready youth into the agricultural sector (FMARD 2013).

One of the main risks for the programme is poor information on **youth employment status**, which could severely constrain the ability to assess labour market outcomes in Nigeria. The agricultural information system in terms of youth employment and sectorial analysis in Nigeria is still poorly developed. There is a need to develop a proper national information and data collection system for youth that enter into the job market annually to show inflow into employment for both formal and informal sectors of the economy.

#### **FIDA's initiative in line with YEAP in Nigeria: CBNRMP (by Atsuko Toda)**

The Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme in the Niger Delta (CBNRMP-ND) started at a time of rising youth militancy in the region. Youth unemployment was recognized from programme design as an integral to the achievement of the CBNRMP objectives. The needs of the youth were identified as lack of livelihood or vocational skills, and skills related to behaviour and social interaction to guide them into the labour market.

CBNRMP placed a high priority in bringing important skills and building capacity. Initially, CBNRMP-selected youth were given training in a variety of skills/trades: welding, soap-making, hair dressing, auto mechanic, tailoring, shoe-making, barbing, fashion design, etc. By midterm

review of CBNMRP, participation of women and youth was high in the various vocational skills, involving an estimated of 2,994 youths.

A refocus on sustainable agricultural development was made during the midterm review and the challenge for the programme became how to integrate the youths into this new focus. The programme refocussed specifically on promoting higher value agri-enterprises (fish production, snail production, piggery, poultry, etc.) with a focus on specific skills, such as in processing, marketing, machinery, operation and repair, transport, logistics, and quality control.

CBNRMP has created a compendium of emerging enterprises (with associated practical guide for users) for replication and up-scaling by interested persons/groups. It has engaged service providers to improve technical and 'business oriented' enterprise management backstopping to the beneficiaries, and link them to output and credit markets. The partnership with the Songhai Centre has been successful to engage more youths and women in gainful jobs.

Most agri-enterprises face significant challenges in getting to adequate scale for economic profit and do need an initial injection of capital to initiate, particularly for youth, who have usually no/little land and/or are unable to access financing. CBNRMP provided seed capital as resources to youth to start business in enterprises of their choice. Seed capital can be in form of cash or in-kind. There is usually 10-20% beneficiary equity contribution, and the recovery is 50% of cost of the business after 12 months. The use of seed capital has served as an effective instrument for beneficiary empowerment and business start-up, as the risk of adoption can be high till the enterprise is proven, especially for big investments such as oil palm and rice processing mills.

More information about CBNRMP : <http://www.fidafrique.net/rubrique494.html>

*By Atsuko Toda, the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) Country Programme Manager for Nigeria.*