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NIGERIA STABILITY AND RECONCILIATION PROGRAMME

WINNERS OR LOSERS?

Assessing the Contribution of Youth Employment and Empowerment Programmes to Reducing Conflict Risk in Nigeria

About NSRP

The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) is a five-year programme (2012-17) aimed at supporting efforts to manage conflicts non-violently in Nigeria and reduce the impact of violence on Nigerians.

The programme supports peace initiatives at the national level and in eight target states (Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers and Yobe) across four zones worst affected by violence (Middle Belt, Niger Delta, North East and North West). NSRP aims to reduce violent conflict through four inter-related areas of work – each taking place at Federal, State and Local Government levels.

Security and Governance: Strengthening the performance of - and public trust in - the way Nigeria manages violent conflict by helping the responsible organisations become more coordinated, participatory, inclusive and accountable.

Economics and Natural Resources: Addressing grievances around employment and resource competition.

Women and Girls: Reducing the impact of violence against women and girls and increasing their participation and influence on peacebuilding.

Research, Advocacy and Media: Disseminating impartial, independent, expert research and analysis to assist Nigerian decision takers and policy makers to develop and deliver policies to reduce violent conflict, at the same time supporting these actors as well as Nigerian media organisations to adopt conflict-sensitive approaches.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ATA	Agricultural Transformation Action
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CSWYE	Community Service Women and Youth Empowerment
DFID	Department for International Development
EDC	Entrepreneurship Development Centres
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FERMA	Federal Roads Maintenance Agency
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GIS	Graduate Internship Scheme
GWEPS	Graduate Work Experience Placement Scheme
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JAS	Jama'atu Ali Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Juhad (known as Boko Haram)
KSI	Key Stakeholder Interviews
LGA	Local Government Area
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goal
MSME	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDE	National Directorate on Employment
NEDEP	National Enterprise Development Programme
NIP	Nigerian Implementation Plan
NSRP	Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme
NSS	National Statistics System
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
RSSDA	Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency
SMEDAN	Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria
SURE-P	Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UEDP	University Entrepreneurship Development Programme
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
YCS	Youth Cohort Study
YEAP	Youth Employment and Agriculture Programme
YESSO	Youth Employment and Social Support Operation
YouWIN	Youth Enterprise with Innovation In Nigeria

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), a five-year programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) that has the overall goal of reducing violent conflict in Nigeria. The report's intended purpose is to answer the question: whether Nigeria's youth – and by extension the country as a whole – stand to be winners or losers from the overall government response to unemployment at different tiers. Specifically, it is concerned to establish whether the portfolio of programmes referred to as youth employment and empowerment initiatives, are actually likely to contribute to a reduction in violent conflict. The report provides evidence and recommendations for future programming that incorporate lessons from both the successes and challenges of existing interventions. It will serve as a platform on which NSRP can build its own interventions over the next four years, and is also intended as a contribution to the urgent task of renewing Nigeria's effort to tackle its youth unemployment challenge, so as to foster peace and stability.

Nigeria's pattern of development reveals what the World Bank has termed a '*puzzling contrast between rapid economic growth and quite minimal welfare improvements for much of the population*'.[1] The Nigerian economy grew at a rate of 7% during the last decade – with growth concentrated particularly in trade and agriculture, which would usually suggest substantial welfare benefits. However, unemployment doubled during the same period. The poverty rate stands at 54.4%, twice its level in 1980,[2] with women and girls particularly vulnerable throughout the country.[3] Progress toward the fulfilment of most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been slow. Nigeria is ranked 153out of 186 countries in the 2013 UN *Human Development Index* and 118 out of 134 on the Gender Inequality Index.[4]

Official measures of unemployment in Nigeria were as high as 23.9% for 2011,[5] rising to 27.4% in 2012[6], while a 2012 UN report asserted Nigeria's youth unemployment figures were the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa.[7] With a total population of 167 million, estimates of the country's total number of unemployed given by government officials in the media during 2012 and 2013 ranged between 20.3 million and 67 million.[8] Meanwhile Nigeria's death toll from acts of armed violence has been on the increase in what was already the most violent country in Africa that is not at war. Best estimates suggest an average of 3,000 conflict-related deaths each year between 2006 and 2011.[9] Violence against women and girls is high. Hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced by conflict.

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1 World Bank (2013) (a). *Nigeria Economic Report. Abuja: World Bank.*
2 British Council (2012). *Gender in Nigeria: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria.* Abuja: British Council.
3 Ajani, O. I. Y. (2008). *Gender Dimension of Agriculture, Poverty, Nutrition and Food Security in Nigeria*. Abuja: International Food Policy Research Institute; Nwadiaro, E. C. C, C. U. Okoroafor (2011). 'Gender Roles and Access to Material and Economic Resources in Nigerian Rural Communities', *Research Journal of International Studies,* 18, pp. 27-34.
4 British Council (2012), op. cit.
5 NBS (2011). *2011 Annual Socio-Economic Report.* Abuja: NBS.
6 Quoted in Federal Government of Nigeria (2013). *Mid-Term Report of the Transformation Agenda*, p. 20. Abuja: FGN.
7 UNECA (2012). *African Economic Outlook: Promoting Youth Employment.* Addis Ababa: UNECA.
8 Compare'20.3 Million Unemployed', This Day Live, October 2012; with 'Over 67 Million Nigerian Youths Unemployed', *Nigerian Tribune,* 27 September 2012; and 'Unemployment: Nigeria Sitting on Keg of Gunpowder', *The Vanguard*,17 November 2012; '67 million local youths jobless': *Leadership* 3 May 2012 .
9 Data gathered during NSRP design phase.

Link between unemployment and violent conflict

Unemployment and lack of economic opportunities are widely considered, both popularly and among academic and policy discussants, to be significant factors aggravating conflict and increasing the chances of young people being drawn into violence as both perpetrators and victims. Unemployment increases individuals' vulnerability to being mobilised both by rebel movements and urban gangs: evidence consistently points to the lack of alternative sources of livelihood as a motive for youth's joining such groups.[10] The destructive, long-term psycho-social effects of such inequality in economic opportunities, has also been documented, whereby periods of unemployment are profoundly demotivating, limiting future prospects.[11] The relationship between large numbers of unemployed young people with different forms of violence is highly context dependent, and it is clear that youth unemployment does not directly cause violence – rather it is an enabling factor.[12] However, where youth feel that power structures exclude or marginalise them so that they are unable to gain the economic and other resources necessary to achieve financial security, features of adulthood and social recognition, violence can offer opportunities to gain control.

> *'If you do not have anything doing and you cannot access any job, conflict is inevitable because an idle mind is the devil's workshop, if they [youth] do not have anything doing they will definitely be involved in conflict. If they are just idle, it will create opportunity for them to be engaged in violence'.*
> **NSRP FGD participant, Yobe state, 2013.**

Consistent with global trends, there is in Nigeria evidence of a close correlation between youth unemployment and rising armed violence.[13] The World Bank identifies the increasing magnitude of youth unemployment as one of two key indicators of the declining welfare status of Nigerians in recent times.[14] High unemployment in Nigeria is associated with a growing gap between rich and poor, and there is evidence that such polarisation in itself reflects and fuels structural grievances.[15]Unscrupulous political leaders and “winner-takes-all” power politics exacerbate feelings of inequality and exclusion when ethnic or religious divisions are manipulated in electoral campaigns at national, state and local levels. Politically mobilised violent gangs, recruited from unemployed male youths and sometimes beyond the control of their original patron, are widespread across different conflict contexts in Nigeria. Retaliatory attacks between armed groups, or armed groups and security forces, can then occur, leading to a continuing cycle of violence.[16]

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10 See World Bank (2011). *World Development Report 2011*. Washington: World Bank, p. 6, 9. Academics have expanded on the inter-relationship between lack of economic opportunity and youth involvement in crime and violence. See Gurr, T. (1970). *Why Men Rebel*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

11 See World Bank (2010). 'Youth and Employment in Post-Conflict Countries: the Psycho-social Dimension', *Child and Youth Development Notes,* Vol. 4, No. 2, September 2010; and Omotosho, J. A. et. al (2009). ' Problems and Counselling Needs of Unemployed Youths in Nigeria', *Open Area Studies Journal,* Vol. 2.

12 Moser, Caroline, D. Rodgers (2005). *Change, Violence and Insecurity in Conflict Situations*. London: ODI; USAID (2010). *Politics by Other Means: Nigeria Conflict Assessment.* Washington: USAID.

13 Okafor, E. E. (2011). 'Youth Unemployment and Implications for Stability of Democracy in Nigeria', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 13, 1.

14 World Bank (2013) (b). *YESSO Project Appraisal Document.* Abuja: World Bank.

15 NSRP (2012). *Conflict Mapping Studies for Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States.* (Unpublished); Aigbokhan, B. E. (2008). *Growth, Inequality and Poverty in Nigeria* (2008). UNECA: Addis Ababa.

16 The term 'youth' is often used as shorthand for young men. The effects of exclusion and unemployment on youngwomen, and the ways in which these influence conflict dynamics, are seldom considered. However, not only do young women participate in violence, directly or through support roles, but in addition, structural gender inequalities, roles and socialisation practices can be key drivers of violence.

The deepening crisis of security apparent across several regions, as well as the riots and violence which followed both the 2011 elections and the government's announcement in January 2012 of dramatic reductions in fuel subsidies, have drawn the attention of the public, as well as policy makers, to the risks associated with high levels of youth un- and under-employment. Nigerian community leaders and government officials have frequently made such links when speaking of their own society and local communities. Two of the prominent traditional rulers in northern Nigeria, the Shehu of Borno and the Sultan of Sokoto, have linked youth unemployment to post election violence and the activities of Jama'atu Ahlisunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (commonly known as 'Boko Haram') respectively.[17] Similarly, in Rivers State, the Ministry of Youth Development states:

> *'The long neglect of the youth development sector has resulted in youth restiveness, militancy, unemployment, etc. and if not properly addressed may lead to national insecurity and chaos hence the need for a comprehensive plan and programmes for youth development.'*[18]

Overview of policy response to youth unemployment

Given Nigeria's large population, which is growing at just under 3% per year, 4.5 million new jobs are needed every year to absorb new entrants to the labour market.[19] This demand represents an enormous challenge to government, yet without concerted progress towards it as a target, youth unemployment will present an ever-growing obstacle to development as well as enlarging the pool of potential recruits for violent actors. At the same time, it is important to recall that these same demographic features can be viewed positively, representing reserves of power, energy, creativity and vitality, on which astute political leaders can draw for lasting benefits to Nigeria, West Africa and beyond.

Successive governments have invested substantially in employment generation and economic empowerment programmes. Often these programmes are explicitly framed as interventions that will reduce levels of violence, through providing young people with a larger stake in society. The *Transformation Agenda* of the present government places a central emphasis on tackling youth unemployment, and since coming to power, President Goodluck Jonathan has announced a number of new programmes and initiatives. This report reviews in some detail the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria Programme (YouWIN!), and the Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO). Others announced within the last few years include the Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme, the Agricultural Transformation Action Plan, the National Enterprise Development Programme, the University Entrepreneurship Development Programme, as well as the Integrated Youth Development Initiative.[20]

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17 See, 'Shehu Tasks Jonathan on Youth Unemployment' accessed at http://www.momentng.com/en/news/2410/shehu-of-borno-tasks-jonathan-on-youth-unemployment-.html. And, 'Sultan to Northern Governors: Address Youth Unemployment' accessed at http://leadership.ng/nga/articles/5633/2011/09/25/sultan_northern_governorsaddress_youth_unemployment.html.

18 See http://www.riversstate.gov.ng/government/a-z-list-of-mda-s/538-ministry-of-youth-developement.html

19 This figure was put forward by the Ministry of Youth Development in 2008, in its Nigeria Youth Employment Action Plan. Federal Government of Nigeria (2008). Nigeria Youth Employment Action Plan. Abuja: FGN

20 During the interim between the primary phase of this research and its publication, still more, initiatives have been launched. These include programmes led by the office of the Special Assistant to the President on Job Creation..

In addition, various other departments and agencies summarised in this report were established by previous governments to address youth unemployment, reporting to several different ministries – many of which are long-standing. At the state level, too, there are numerous initiatives relating to employment, ranging across in-kind contributions and business-start-up interventions, skills acquisition, public works schemes, among others.

Notwithstanding the number of such schemes and the resources that have been poured into them, the fact that both youth unemployment and levels of insecurity continue to grow in Nigeria raise questions as to the overall quality and impact of programming in this area, given their often expressed intention to mitigate violence. While the potential for employment and income generation programmes in conflict settings to reduce violent conflict is globally established, the approach adopted in delivering these is also known to be critical to success given the link between perceived inequality in access to economic opportunities and conflict.[21] In the worst cases, programmes may have the opposite effect. In the view of many young people interviewed for this research, programmes have served to further exacerbate a sense of exclusion and frustration, with opportunities perceived to be unjustly distributed, largely ineffective or otherwise beyond reach. Such perceptions are compounded when, as is often the case, young people themselves have not been involved or consulted in the design, implementation and monitoring of these programmes

Youth perception of government youth unemployment programmes

- 39% agreed the government publishes information on the selection process
- 26% agreed programmes had contributed to reducing the overall rate of youth unemployment.
- 79% agreed that only youth close to politicians are selected
- 64% thought that female youth are discriminated against.

(Source: NSRP research in Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers and Yobe States)

Analysis

There appears to be real recognition across the tiers of government of the seriousness of the youth unemployment challenge as a potential source of insecurity, which could threaten development gains. This recognition has prompted a multi-faceted policy response including some innovative and promising new initiatives. In the context of a continued agenda of reform, accompanied by public investments to achieve job creation, economic diversification and more effective governance, the area of policy and programming referred to as 'youth employment and empowerment' policy has the potential to significantly reduce conflict risk.

21 See UN (2009). *United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment, Income Creation and Reintegration*. Geneva: UN; and World Bank (2011), op. cit.

However, in assessing whether the current policies and programmes will translate into real gains and enhanced security for Nigeria, this research points to a number of serious concerns.

Chief among these is the inconsistent quality of programme design, outreach and delivery. Despite some important innovations, some serious areas of under-performance emerge. These include a dearth of labour market assessment or private sector engagement informing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) interventions as well as poor quality control and performance management of provider institutions; weak systems for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) across the spectrum of types of intervention; corruption and misuse of funds; as well as flawed outreach and beneficiary selection processes that are seen to leave opportunities open to manipulation by officials according to political, ethnic or religious affiliations. Such quality challenges directly reduce the contribution of many programmes to reducing conflict, and may even cause them to indirectly exacerbate tensions.

Added to this, and in part informing it, is a culture of limited consultation with young people whose views and priorities are for the most part excluded from the design, implementation or monitoring of government programmes. Lack of gender analysis and responsiveness, and lack of conflict-sensitivity – despite the rhetorical recognition of a link between youth unemployment and violence – is also apparent, again to the detriment of overall quality and impact. Indeed, politicisation of youth employment and empowerment initiatives – and of young people themselves – emerges as a practice that actively feeds into conflict dynamics.

Research also identified challenges in institutional coordination and leadership hindering effective policy-making and implementation, and, lastly, a tendency of initiatives to address the symptoms rather than causes of youth unemployment, noting the deeper economic, development and social sector priorities that are at the root of the problem. As a result, initiatives such as YouWIN! and SURE-P, which currently are the focus of media attention, are treated with some scepticism, as somehow incidental to real priorities around making the economy work for the majority. With politics added into the picture, and cynical instrumentalisation of Nigerian youth for political ends rife in the run-up to 2015, the effectiveness of government's response to the youth unemployment crisis, despite genuine effort, is liable to be undermined both in its real impact and in the eyes of the public. In the worst cases, programme delivery may actually work against the goals of conflict reduction and empowerment, and create further exclusion and disaffection.

Recommendations to policy-makers and other stakeholders: towards enhanced contribution of youth employment and empowerment programmes to conflict risk reduction

FOR GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

- **Ensure better planning and coordination of the youth employment sector**
- Bring a focus on youth job creation as an overarching goal in economic planning at all levels
- Stick to one clear roadmap to steer government response (whether federal, state or LGA), rather than proliferating initiatives
- Ensure a strategic mix of 'demand' (working with markets and employers) as well as 'supply'
- side (e.g. skills training) interventions, through policy coordination at macro and micro levels

- Convene all arms of government on a regular basis to ensure joined-up approaches and maximum impact
- Invest in greater coordination and strategic leadership of the sector, with top-level political authority – whether under the lead of a newly mandated actor, or existing committee, agency or official

Enhance programme effectiveness and results-based management

- Invest in an urgent overhaul of M&E capacity across all MDAs engaged in youth employment programming, making results-based management and monitoring of impact a requirement of programmes' continuation
- Draw on lessons emerging from improved M&E to inform future policies and programmes
- Embark on an urgent review and overhaul of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, conducting a national labour market survey, revising the curricula of existing skills acquisition centres and setting new performance standards
- Conduct in-depth conflict-sensitivity assessments of key programmes
- Collect gender-disaggregated statistics across all programmes to track inclusion and impact and inform the development of more gender equitable practice
- Strengthen the National Bureau of Statistics to develop and disseminate data related to youth employment and programming impacts quarterly, to aid planning and implementation

Reduce risk of programmes themselves fuelling grievances, through ensuring inclusion, fairness, transparency and accountability

- Ensure opportunities in the sector are well-publicised and accessible to all, regardless of political, ethnic, religious or other affiliation
- Develop and enforce internal programme and sector-wide codes of conduct to guide and raise standards of fairness, transparency and accountability in youth employment and empowerment programming
- Improve inclusiveness by ensuring allocation does not perpetuate gender inequities and including all young women (as well as marginalised groups such as those living with disabilities) among beneficiaries
- Minimise instrumentalisation of youth, welcome those exposing this, and raise awareness about civic engagement and electoral best practice
- Demonstrate a renewed commitment to inter-generational dialogue and collaboration in design and monitoring of policy response to youth employment, through creation of an apolitical standing youth policy forum
- Ensure involvement of independent civil society and youth associations in all major programme and intervention committees and administrative structures

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY, INCLUDING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND MEDIA

Active citizenship improving performance in the youth employment sector

- Actively monitor the design and implementation, as well as impact, of key youth employment programmes and initiatives, promoting greater accountability in the sector – and involve young people in doing so
- Conduct advocacy for constructive inter-generational and state/civil society engagement
- Engage media to discourage stereotyping and make youth empowerment key in the elections
- Expose and reject political instrumentalisation of young people and the issues affecting them

INTRODUCTION

The deepening crisis of security apparent across several regions of Nigeria, as well as the riots and violence which followed both the 2011 elections and the government's announcement in January 2012 of dramatic reductions in fuel subsidies, have drawn the attention of the public, as well as policy makers, to risks associated with high levels of youth unemployment and under-employment.

Nigeria's pattern of development reveals what the World Bank has termed a 'puzzling contrast between rapid economic growth and quite minimal welfare improvements for much of the population'.[22] The Nigerian economy grew at a rate of 7% during the last decade – with growth concentrated particularly in trade and agriculture, which would usually suggest substantial welfare benefits. However unemployment doubled during the same period. The poverty rate stands at 54.4%, twice its level in 1980,[23] with women and girls particularly vulnerable to poverty throughout the country.[24] Progress toward the fulfilment of most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been slow. Nigeria is ranked 153 out of 186 countries in the 2013 UN Human Development Index[25] and 118 out of 134 on the Gender Inequality Index.[26]

Official measures of unemployment in Nigeria were as high as 23.9% for 2011,[27] rising to 27.4% in 2012,[28] while a 2012 UN Report asserted Nigeria's youth unemployment figures were the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa.[29] With a total population of 167 million, estimates of the country's total number of unemployed given by government officials in the media during 2012 and 2013 ranged between 20.3 million and 67 million.[30]

Even these figures are thought to underestimate the real scale of the problem as they do not include the large number of 'hidden unemployed', defined as the under-employed and those that have given up looking for work. They also overlook security of work and the number of people who work under poor or precarious conditions. Of the 6 million young women and men that enter the labour market every year, only 10% find jobs in the formal sector, of which only a third are women. [31]

Young people, defined in Nigeria as aged 18-35, represent 60% of the total population while the median age of Nigerians is 14%.[32] The average youth unemployment rate is 38% although this

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22 World Bank (2013) (a). *Nigeria Economic Report. Abuja: World Bank.*
23 British Council (2012). *Gender in Nigeria: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria.* Abuja: British Council.
24 Ajani, O. I. Y. (2008). *Gender Dimension of Agriculture*, *Poverty, Nutrition and Food Security in Nigeria.* Abuja: International Food Policy Research Institute; Nwadiaro, E. C. C, C. U. Okoroafor (2011). 'Gender Roles and Access to Material and Economic Resources in Nigerian Rural Communities', *Research Journal of International Studies,* 18, pp. 27-34.
25 UNDP (2013). *Human Development Report.* New York: UNDP.
26 British Council (2012), op. cit.
27 NBS *(2011). 2011 Annual Socio-Economic Report*. Abuja: NBS.
28 Quoted in Federal Government of Nigeria (2013). *Mid-Term Report of the Transformation Agenda,* p. 20. Abuja: FGN.
29 UNECA (2012). *African Economic Outlook: Promoting Youth Employment.* Addis Ababa: UNECA.
30 Compare '20.3 Million Unemployed', *This Day Live*, October 2012, with 'Over 67 Million Nigerian Youths Unemployed', Nigerian Tribune, 27 September 2012; and 'Unemployment: Nigeria Sitting on Keg of Gunpowder', *The Vanguard,* 17 November 2012; '67 million local youths jobless': Leadership 3 May 2012.
31 British Council (2012), op. cit.
32 World Bank (2013) (a), p.7.

varies across the country, being particularly high in northern states (Benue 64%; Kano 50%; Niger 47%).[33] Two thirds of the urban unemployed are aged 15-24.[34]

Defining the unemployed

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the unemployed as numbers of economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost jobs or voluntarily left work. According to the ILO's recently released *2013 Global Employment Trends for Youth* report, an estimated 73.4 million young people globally are out of work, representing 12.6% of the youth population, against a global adult unemployment rate of 4.8%. It concludes: *'The long-term impact of the global youth employment crisis will be felt for decades, creating a generation at risk.'*[35]

The definition of the unemployment rate used in Nigeria is the proportion of those who were looking for work but could not find work for at least 40 hours during a week, as against the current active labour force (currently active between 15-64). This is the standard definition of unemployment that has been used to compute the unemployment rate and has been adopted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the National Statistics System (NSS) to conduct labour force surveys. These definitions exclude the under-employed, who are working in low quality, irregular and low wage jobs often in the informal economy, and/ or what are referred to by economists as 'discouraged' workers who are no longer actively looking for employment. According to the *African Economic Outlook 2013* report published by the United Nations, '*more youths [across Africa] are discouraged than unemployed, suggesting that the youth employment challenge has been underestimated. Discouraged youth are more disadvantaged than unemployed youth and must be included in any meaningful labour market analysis. Unfortunately, often they are not*.'[36]

Link between unemployment and violent conflict

> '*If you do not have anything doing and you cannot access any job, conflict is inevitable because an idle mind is the devil's workshop, if they [youth] do not have anything doing they will definitely be involved in conflict. If they are just idle, it will create opportunity for them to be engaged in violence'*.
> **NSRP FGD participant, Yobe state, 2013.**

Nigeria's death toll from acts of armed violence has been on the increase in what was already the most violent country in Africa not at war. Best estimates suggest an average of 3,000 conflict-related deaths each year between 2006 and 2011.[37] Violence against women and girls is high. Hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced by conflict.

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33 NBS (2011), op. cit.
34 Okechukwu, O. A. (2012). 'Rising Youth Unemployment and Violent Crime in Nigeria', *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities,* pp.315-321. UN Habitat found that 70% of unemployed in Lagos state were aged 15-24, see UN Habitat (2008). 'Crime and Violence versus Employment Opportunities in Cities and Towns'.Background Note presented at 2nd African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, July 2008, Abuja.
35 ILO (2013). *Global Employment Trends for Youth: A Generation at Risk.* Geneva: ILO.
36 UNECA (2012), op. cit.
37 Data gathered during NSRP design phase.

The incidence and causes of violence differ significantly among Nigeria's 36 states. Some states have proven remarkably resilient, while others have seen violence erupting much more frequently. A fundamental problem relates to the ethnic and religious make-up of a state, and the distinction often drawn between so-called 'indigene' and 'settler' populations – groups originally from other parts of Nigeria who may however have lived in the area for generations. There is widespread, systematic discrimination against non-indigenes, preventing them from access to government jobs, education scholarships and other services. As 'indigenous' status maps on to ethnic and religious differences, states with sharp inter-group divisions become particularly vulnerable to violence.

All zones experience violence as a result of disputes over land and water, access to resources including jobs, and over chieftaincy titles.[38] Each zone also shows its own characteristic configurations of violence. Religious tensions and militancy amongst both Muslims and Christians have been particularly pronounced in the North but is negatively affecting inter-group perceptions in all parts of the country.

Long-standing sources of instability are being exacerbated by the threat from the militant Islamic group commonly known as 'Boko Haram'. Efforts of state security forces deployed in response to terrorist acts have had little success. There are widespread accusations of human rights abuses that have generated significant resentment among local populations. Many civilians are falling prey to inter-communal reprisal attacks carried out in a climate of increasing ethno-religious polarisation. Comprehensive strategies to tackle the root causes of conflict are lacking.

Consistent with global trends, there is in Nigeria evidence of a close correlation between youth unemployment and rising armed violence.[39] The restricted distribution of economic resources and opportunities – including employment opportunities – leads to anger and resentment that can quickly turn violent.[40] The World Bank identifies the increasing magnitude of youth unemployment as one of two key indicators of the declining welfare status of Nigerians in recent times.[41] Unemployment and lack of economic opportunities are widely considered, both popularly and among academic and policy discussants, to be significant factors aggravating conflict and increasing the chances of young people being drawn into violence as both perpetrators and victims. Unemployment also increases individuals' vulnerability to being mobilised by both rebel movements and urban gangs: evidence consistently points to the lack of alternative sources of livelihood as a motive for youth's joining such groups.[42] Further, high unemployment is often associated with a growing gap between rich and poor, and such polarisation in itself reflects and fuels structural grievances. The destructive, long-term psycho-social effects of such inequality in economic opportunities, has also been documented.[43] Unscrupulous political leaders and "winner-takes-all" power politics exacerbate feelings of inequality and exclusion when ethnic or religious

38 NSRP (2012). *Conflict Mapping Studies for Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States.* (Unpublished).

39 Okafor, E. E. (2011). 'Youth Unemployment and Implications for Stability of Democracy in Nigeria', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa,* 13, 1.

40 Aigbokhan, B. E. (2008). *Growth, Inequality and Poverty in Nigeria* (2008). UNECA: Addis Ababa.

41 World Bank (2013) (b). *YESSO Project Appraisal Document.* Abuja: World Bank.

42 See World Bank (2011). *World Development Report 2011.* Washington: World Bank, p. 6, 9. Academics have expanded on the inter-relationship between lack of economic opportunity and youth involvement in crime and violence.See Gurr, T. (1970). *Why Men Rebel*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

43 See World Bank (2010). 'Youth and Employment in Post-Conflict Countries: the Psycho-social Dimension', *Child and Youth Development Notes,* Vol. 4, No. 2, September 2010; and Omotosho, J. A. et. al (2009). 'Problems and Counselling Needs of Unemployed Youths in Nigeria', *Open Area Studies Journal,* Vol. 2.

divisions are manipulated in electoral campaigns at national, state and local level. Politically mobilised violent gangs, recruited from unemployed male youths and sometimes beyond the control of their original patron, are widespread. Retaliatory attacks between armed groups or armed groups and security forces can then occur, leading to a continuing cycle of violence.

The relationship between large numbers of unemployed young people, with different forms of violence, is highly context dependent, and it is clear that youth unemployment does not directly cause violence – rather it is an enabling factor.[44] However, where youth feel that power structures exclude or marginalise them so that they are unable to gain the economic and other resources necessary to achieve financial security, features of adulthood and social recognition, violence can offer opportunities to gain control.

Nigerian community leaders and government officials have frequently made such links when speaking of their own society and local communities. Two of the prominent traditional rulers in northern Nigeria, the Shehu of Borno and the Sultan of Sokoto, have linked youth unemployment to post election violence and the activities of Jama'atu Ahlisunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (commonly known as 'Boko Haram') respectively.[45] Similarly, in Rivers State, the Ministry of Youth Development states:

> *'The long neglect of the youth development sector has resulted in youth restiveness, militancy, unemployment etc. and if not properly addressed may lead to national insecurity and chaos hence the need for a comprehensive plan and programmes for youth development'.*[46]

Given Nigeria's large population, which is growing at just under 3% per year, 4.5 million new jobs are needed every year to absorb new entrants to the labour market.[47] This demand represents an enormous challenge to the government, yet without concerted progress towards it as a target, youth unemployment will present an ever growing obstacle to achievement of peace, security and development.

Gender considerations

The term 'youth' is often used as shorthand for young men. The effects of exclusion and unemployment on young women, and the ways in which these influence conflict dynamics, are seldom considered. Yet, young women at times participate in violence, directly or through support roles.[48] In addition, structural gender inequalities, roles and socialisation practices can be key drivers of violence. Where gender norms oblige men to provide bride price and be the family breadwinner, frustration at their inability to meet these social expectations and the thwarted

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44 Moser, Caroline, D. Rodgers (2005). *Change, Violence and Insecurity in Conflict Situations*. London: ODI; USAID (2010). *Politics by Other Means: Nigeria Conflict Assessment.* Washington: USAID.

45 See, 'Shehu Tasks Jonathan on Youth Unemployment' accessed at http://www.momentng.com/en/news/2410/shehu-of-borno-tasks-jonathan-on-youth-unemployment-.html. And, 'Sultan to Northern Governors: Address Youth Unemployment' accessed at http://leadership.ng/nga/articles/5633/2011/09/25/sultan_northern_governorsaddress_youth_unemployment.html.

46 See http://www.riversstate.gov.ng/government/a-z-list-of-mda-s/538-ministry-of-youth-developement.html

47 This figure was put forward by the Ministry of Youth Development, in its *Nigeria Youth Employment Action Plan.* Federal Government of Nigeria (2008). *Nigeria Youth Employment Action Plan.* Abuja: FGN.

48 Women consist of 10-30% of armed forces and groups worldwide. Some examples of indirect (coerced and voluntary) support provided by women include domestic labour, encouraging children to fight, spreading propaganda, being combat trainers or enforcing group loyalty through marriage ties. Hilker, Lindsay, E.M. Fraser (2009). *Youth Exclusion, Violence, Conflict and Fragile States*. London: Social Development Direct.

transition to manhood that results, can promote involvement in types of violence that offers livelihood opportunities or capital accumulation. This is reinforced in contexts in which images of masculinity are tied to aggression, including against women. Where older men hold power and the traditional routes to 'manhood' are blocked, young men may see violence as the only means of proving their masculinity and achieving power and social status.[49]

Explaining the appeal of JAS to its members, Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State stated:

> '*The late Boko Haram leader, Mohammed Yusuf, despite his misguided ideology, retained the loyalty of his supporters by providing one meal a day to each of his disciples. Yusuf also had a youth empowerment scheme, under which he helped his disciples to go into petty trading and wheelbarrow porters. He also arranged inexpensive marriages between sect members, which enabled many of them to marry and gave them personal dignity and self-worth*.'[50]

About this report

Given the association of unemployment with violent behaviour and conflict, successive governments have invested substantially in employment generation and economic empowerment programmes. Often these programmes are explicitly framed by government officials and policy-makers as interventions that will reduce levels of violence, through providing young people with a larger stake in society. The *Transformation Agenda* of the present government places a central emphasis on tackling youth unemployment, and since coming to power, President Goodluck Jonathan has announced a number of new programmes and initiatives, many of which are now into implementation. In addition, various other departments and agencies were established by previous governments to address youth unemployment, reporting to several different ministries. At the state level, too, there are numerous initiatives relating to employment, ranging across in-kind contributions and business-start-up interventions, skills acquisition, public works schemes, among others

Notwithstanding the number of such schemes and the resources that have been poured into them, the fact that both youth unemployment and levels of insecurity continue to grow in Nigeria raises questions about effectiveness and impact – given their often expressed intention to mitigate violence. While the potential for employment and income generation programmes in conflict settings to reduce violent conflict is globally established, the approach adopted in delivering these is also known to be critical to success, given the link between perceived inequality in access to economic opportunities and conflict.[51] In the worst cases, programmes in Nigeria may only have served to further exacerbate youths' sense of exclusion and frustration, with opportunities perceived to be unjustly distributed, largely ineffective or otherwise beyond reach. Such perceptions are exacerbated when, as is often the case, young people themselves have not been

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49 See Francis, Paul (2008). 'Some Thoughts on Youth Livelihoods in Post-Conflict Situations: Marginality, Trauma and Employment', Paper presented at conference *Youth Exclusion and Political Violence: Breaking the Link and Engaging Young People Positively in Development,* December 2008. Oslo: PRIO; and Barker, G, C. Ricardo and M. Nascimento (2005). *Young Men and the Construction of Masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa* Geneva: World Health Organisation.

50 See, 'Shettima, Boko Haram and the Bermuda Triangle' accessed at http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=155952:shettima-boko-haram-and-the-bermuda-triangle&catid=18:inside-politics&Itemid=19.

51 See UN (2009). *United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment, Income Creation and Reintegration*. Geneva: UN; and World Bank (2011), op. cit

involved or consulted in the design, implementation and monitoring of these programmes.

This report was commissioned by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), a five-year programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) that has the overall goal of reducing violent conflict in Nigeria. The report draws on analysis and research in this sector, the perspectives of federal and state-level stakeholders across government and from among civil society as well as, crucially, the perspectives of young people themselves. The intended purpose of the report is to answer the question in its deliberately provocative title: whether Nigeria's youth – and by extension the country as a whole – stand to be winners or losers from the overall policy response to unemployment. It provides evidence, recommendations and pathways for future programming that incorporate lessons from both the successes and challenges of existing interventions. It will serve as a platform on which NSRP can build its own interventions over the next four years, and to contribute in a modest way to the urgent task of renewing Nigeria's effort to tackle its youth unemployment challenge, so as to foster peace and stability.[52]

Following this introduction, the next section of this report provides an overview of current policy and programmes geared at youth employment and empowerment. The report then moves to analyse the overall efficacy of this sector of government activity, highlighting a number of challenges. The final section provides conclusions and recommendations – to government institutions as well as to non-state actors.

POLICY REVIEW: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

The policy review conducted for this report focused on initiatives explicitly addressing youth unemployment, bearing in mind that a far wider array of policies and programmes indirectly impact.The report does not consider other sectors, such as those comprising the wider economic agenda of government, as well as education and health, which are also relevant to youth unemployment. Nor does it give attention to the many employment programmes or interventions that have already been discontinued.

As no single government institution leads on the issue of youth unemployment, research was conducted across a broad institutional front, including interviews with approximately 30 public officials from a range of federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other concerned stakeholders, complemented by a review of literature including internet sources. State-level research was conducted in Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers, and Yobe states.[53] In order to complement the relatively small sample sizes of people interviewed for this report, extensive literature, policy document and news sources were also consulted. This report was also peer-reviewed in draft form by several individuals with broad knowledge of the sector. Thus, while not claiming to be an exhaustive account of the enormous range of

52 NSRP does not intend to add to the existing employment and empowerment programming sector in Nigeria by designing new programmes, but will work in support of a cross-section of stakeholders both to improve quality and accountability of existing initiatives, and to advocate for more effective responses, in order to contribute to a reduction in conflict.

53 This consisted of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with approximately 30 young people in each state (a total of 240 young people in FGDs), and Key Stakeholder Interviews (KSIs) with a further approximately 15 relevant individuals (a total of 120 KSIs). The emphasis of the state-level research was on perspectives of young people against a sampling of policy and programming in each state. As part of its continued work in this field, NSRP is now embarked on more detail research into policy and programmes offered by state governments.

employment programmes in the country, the authors are confident that the paper presents a reasonably comprehensive account of government programming in the sector[54] at the time of its drafting. In so doing, it is intended to contribute to the quality and focus of the government's response, as well as to wider stakeholder awareness and debate on policy options, issues and dilemmas. [55]

Given the data available, it was not possible to fully assess the extent to which design and implementation of any of the structures or programmes considered below address issues of gender – although some issues do emerge, and it is clear that gender-specific monitoring and reflection about gender issues related to unemployment and insecurity, warrant further attention.[56]

Policy framework – overview of MDAs and long-standing programmes

The Government's *Vision 20: 2020* sets out steps and targets for Nigeria to become one of the world's leading 20 economies by the year 2020, with the twin objectives of '*making efficient use of human and natural resources to achieve rapid economic growth*' and translating '*economic growth into equitable social development for all citizens*'. It includes '*generating employment and protecting jobs*' as one of several priorities contributing to improved well-being and productivity of Nigerians, as well as a number of other targets geared towards developing the key sources of economic growth and sustaining social and economic development.

The first *National Implementation Plan (NIP),* covering the period 2010-13, lays out further specific objectives and targets around creating job opportunities, improving the implementation framework for productivity improvement, formalising the informal economy and enhancing industrial peace and harmony and worker protection.

The present administration's *Transformation Agenda 2011-15* builds on the *Vision 20: 2020* and the *NIP*, and is targeted at three strategic goals. One of these is '*creating decent jobs in sufficient quantities to address the protracted problem of unemployment and reduce poverty*'.

Three specific policies emanating from the overarching *Vision 20:2020* and *Transformation Agenda* are particularly relevant to youth employment, summarised below.

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54 The report does not include detail on programmes offered by development partners except where these take place directly under government's lead. It also does not map out initiatives implemented by either international or Nigerian non- governmental organisations (NGOs); or the foreign or domestic private sector.

55 It has not been possible to obtain exhaustive or completely consistent comparative data on the overall financial envelope, number and gender/ age disaggregation of beneficiaries, geographic reach and other variables defining the different interventions. The gap in centralised data and information underlines a need for greater coordination as well as ongoing research effort to analyse and understand the total effort of programming on youth unemployment as a whole, that are highlighted by this report in later sections.

56 Such gender impact analysis will need not only to examine whether young women are able to fully participate in programmes, but also to consider the impact of the kinds of opportunities offered on gender norms. Are young women and men being offered particular kinds of opportunities that only serve to perpetuate regressive gender norms, for example with young men being enabled to become *okada* riders while young women are taught soap- making? Consulting with CSOs in Kaduna, for example, NSRP learned that some are advocating that young women be given *okadas*, citing not only gender-prity but also security of women who are likely to feel safer being driven by a female driver.

Policy	MDA	Summary
National Action Plan for Employment Creation (NAPEC) – approved in 2010	Ministry of Labour	Blueprint for employment creation with articulated policies, programmes and projects – though most youth employment programmes being implemented outside it
National Youth Policy, 2009-14	Ministry of Youth and Development	Youth employment features as second pillar, but its attendant 'Action Plan' has not advanced due to lack of funding. Youth employment interventions largely take place outside it
National Policy on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), approved in 2013	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency Nigeria (SMEDAN)	Target of increasing the total number of MSMEs from 17.2 million to 50 million Council drawn from federal and state ministries, with each state encouraged to establish a dedicated MSME council

Several important federal ministries are relevant to youth employment. These include: Ministry of Trade and Investment; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Labour and Productivity; Ministry of Youth Development; the Ministry of Agriculture; and the National Planning Commission. In some cases, these ministries are responsible for the implementation of youth employment-related programmes, while in others they act as joint stakeholders. Others, such as the Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Housing, Lands and Urban Development; and the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, also have important roles to play. No single ministry can be said to have the overall leadership on youth employment: the responsibilities and mandates of ministries, and within them of their directorates and divisions, overlap considerably. A central finding of this report is that the proliferation of responsibilities and actors, together with weak coordination, may work against coherence and effectiveness in youth employment programmes.

In addition, there are a number of parastatals implementing related programmes, mostly with a presence in all six geo-political zones and numerous state-level offices, as summarised below.

Parastatal	Mission	Activities	Recent programming issues
National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) 2001- present	Poverty eradication	Training for youth in vocational trades, providing micro-credit programmes and conditional cash transfers (CCT), distribution of goods and equipment (e.g. scooter taxis)	N2.8bn was released via NAPEP to House of Assembly members to benefit unemployed youth [57] NAPEP will track results of CCT programmes undertaken as part of YESSO (discussed further below)

57 Projects will be implemented by the Ministry of Special Duties: 'FG releases N2.8bn – Constituency Projects to Reduce Poverty', *Daily Times,* 17 July 2013. In the recent report produced by the Presidential Committee on the Rationalisation and Restructuring of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions, led by ex-Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Steven Oronsaye, NAPEP was among 52 other parastatals found to have undue overlaps with other MDAs. Specifically the report recommended its merging with NDE.

Parastatal	Mission	Activities	Recent programming issues
National Directorate of Employment (NDE) 1987-present	Combatting mass unemployment	Programmes and training (e.g. National Open Apprenticeship Scheme, Start Your Own Business, Rural Agricultural Development Training) Contribution to related policy developments Maintain data bank on employment and vacancies for use by job seekers	Current budget significantly reduced and capacity to monitor limited but involvement in new youth unemployment initiatives, suggests revitalisation
National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) 1973-present	Encouragement and development of common ties among youth and promotion of national unity	NYSC Service Year – graduates complete modules, and undertake community service and work placements Participation by all graduates of universities and polytechnics is mandatory	The NYSC was founded as a response to civil conflict in Nigeria. Renewed insecurity in Nigeria suggests the need for revitalisation of its activity in response, although no evidence of a re-positioning emerged from this research
Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency Nigeria (SMEDAN) 2003-present	As the apex institution for all matters related to development of MSMEs, to establish a structured and efficient MSME sector	Articulate policy for growth and development Link SMEs to internal and external sources of financial Provide technical and technological support	Implementing agency for 2013 MSME policy as above

Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs), overseen by Central Bank of Nigeria 2008-Present	To support entrepreneurship	Training for young people, mainly high school leavers and graduates in entrepreneurship	New EDCs opened

Recent federal initiatives and new programmes

The President announced the creation of a National Committee on Job Creation soon after taking office in October 2010. Housed in the Ministry of Finance and chaired by businessman Alhaji Aliko Dangote, the mandate of the Committee was to develop a road map for job creation. Convening many of the key MDAs, this initiative represented an important attempt to create synergy and coherence, although its presence across the portfolio of interventions has yet to be felt. It presented a seven-volume report with an action plan for the creation of 15 million jobs over the coming five years, by 2015. A key recommendation was the creation of a coordinating office to take forward the roadmap, to be headed by a Special Assistant to the President for Job Creation.

The President duly appointed a Special Assistant for Job Creation who is overseeing a number of initiatives. In addition, he has recently appointed a Special Adviser on Youth Empowerment and a Senior Special Adviser on Youth and Student Matters. These appointments reflect the political priority being accorded to youth and employment issues. One appointee promised in the media to deliver 15 million jobs within the five years envisaged in the roadmap; another is quoted to have made 5,000 jobs available in one month alone.[58]

Three of the most important among the new federal initiatives designed to tackle youth unemployment are considered in detail below. These are the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P); the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria Programme (YouWIN!); and the Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO). Other components of the new cycle of programmes undertaken by the present government are:

- Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme (YEAP): objective to create 740,000 young commercial farmers and entrepreneurs able to stimulate job opportunities across the agricultural sector
- Agricultural Transformation Action (ATA) Plan: considered to have stimulated job opportunities on a significant scale, with government claiming the creation of 2.2 million jobs in its first year[59]
- National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP): intended to generate five million new jobs by 2015 by creating new clusters of businesses based on the competitive and comparative advantages and raw materials available in all 774 local governments[60]

58 See 'FG to Empower 15 million Youths through IYEP', Hallmark News, 17 June 2013; and 'Jonathan's Aide Promises to Create 5,000 jobs', Channels TV, 21 September 2012.

59 FGN (2013), p. 95.

60 It has a similar aim as the 2005-11 MSME Nigeria project implemented by the government and the World Bank through the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), although interviews for this report seemed to suggest that a phase 2 of MSME Nigeria may also be in the pipeline.

- University Entrepreneurship Development Programme (UEDP): aimed at providing mentoring for recent graduate entrepreneurs, so as to create a new generation of future entrepreneurs
- Integrated Youth Development Initiative: intended to create 1 million jobs every year
- A new Job Fair, launched by the Minister of State for Trade and Investment: targeting industries, companies, schools and youths to team unemployed youths and showcase successful entrepreneurs.

Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P)

In January 2012, the announcement of removal of subsidies from petroleum products led to widespread protest, followed by a partial retreat by government. The announcement of SURE-P, through which the federal government share of savings from the reduced subsidy would be allocated to critical infrastructure projects and social safety net programmes, was an attempt to mitigate the unpopularity of the move.

There are two broad categories of federal SURE-P programmes:

1. Social Safety Net (Community Service, Women and Youth Empowerment Programme (CSWYE), Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), maternal and child health care, public works, vocational training; mass transit)
2. Infrastructural Development (roads and bridges, Niger Delta Project (East – West Road), railways)

	Scheme	Aim	Process	Activity
Social Safety Net	Community Service, Women and Youth Employment (CSWYE)	Temporary employment for up to 185,000 youth a year (at least 30% women)	Selection via community consultation and ward nomination	Skills training and equipment provided and work undertaken on community priorities Payment based on work
	Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)	Enhance employability of up to 50,000 unemployed graduates	Selection on merit No zonal quotas	Links unemployed graduates and employers (public and private) and provides N25,000 stipend
	Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programme	Provide training for youth in vocational skills and enterprise support	Will use established vocational training centres	Specific areas of focus for training identified per political zones in first stages, corresponding to anticipated employment opportunities
Infrastructural Development	FERMA Public Works, Road Maintenance and Skills Acquisition	Create jobs and social safety nets and provide skills and economic empowerment	Pilot to create biometric profile of beneficiaries to avoid bias	Maintenance of public infrastructure, especially pavement treatment to roads to prevent deterioration

The President inaugurated a SURE-P Committee charged to `*deliver service with integrity*' and `*restore people's confidence in the government*'. The Committee consists of serving ministers and other senior political figures, along with a handful of independent figures drawn from across civil society. It is intended to ensure probity, transparency and accountability in the use of funds. A secretariat was created to provide oversight, technical, administrative and information support and is supported by external partners. Project Implementation Units (PIUs) within each participating MDAs have the overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of all SURE-P funded projects.

Given its scope and ambition, SURE-P has the potential to make a meaningful contribution across its results areas. In the heightened political context of its implementation, early controversies around SURE-P also reveal various threats to its success. These have included:

- Composition of the Committee provoked allegations that members were selected for their allegiance to the President rather than their suitability for the role. The decision that the Committee should report to the President, rather than to a dedicated Commission reporting to the Senate was also contested.
- Political wrangles over budget approval led to delays in the first year of implementation. This opened the programme to criticism of performing below expectation. [61]
- The fiscal formula to ensure sharing of the subsidy savings, allocates 41% to the federal level, with the 36 states and 774 Local Government Areas (LGA) sharing the remaining 59%. This has created tension in some states where the distribution of budget allocations is a highly contested matter. Funds allocated to state and LGA level are under the management and control of officials at those respective levels, rather than the federal government. There have been allegations of misappropriation of SURE-P funds in at least two states (Kaduna and Plateau)[62] and at the federal level.[63]
- The appointment of coordinators and members of the Jonathan 2011 Presidential Campaign State Committees as the chairs of the SURE-P State Implementation Committees have raised allegations of politicization.[64]
- The level of representation of civil society and youth on SURE-P committees also varies considerably across states.

Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria Programme (YouWIN!)

YouWIN! is a collaborative initiative involving the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry for Information and Communication Technology and the Ministry of Youth Development, supported by bilateral donors and private sector organisations. It takes the form of an annual Business Plan competition for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Its overall objective is to generate jobs by encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial youth to develop and execute business ideas that will lead to job creation. It is anticipated that three annual cycles will generate 40,000-50,000 new jobs for currently unemployed youth. While modest against the scale of unemployment in Nigeria, the programme is intended to pilot an approach and serve as a signal of government's intent. *'It is also intended to develop a fair and open competition in a country where these attributes are not normally associated with public spending'*.[65]

61 See 'Jonathan's SURE-P is a Drain Pipe on Nigeria's economy', *Vanguard* 28 November 2012.
62 See 'Assembly Blackmailing Yero with N560 million SURE-P Fraud Report' *National Mirror,* 26 June 2013; and 'Plateau Assembly Proves over Missing N5 billion SURE-P funds', *This Day,* 19 August 2013.
63 See 'N500 Billion SURE-P Funds not Missing, Okonjo-Iweala Says', *Premium Times*, 19, November 2013.
64 See 'Nigeria: 2015 – Jonathan Men take over SURE-P', *African Seer,* 10 February 2013.
65 Based on 'YouWIN Administrative Review', February 2013, provided by DFID PDF, as well as NSRP interview with PDF manager, Abuja, July 2013.

Considerable effort has gone into design of its delivery structure to provide equal opportunity to applicants from all regions, ensure a scale sufficient to ensure 1,200 awardees in each of the three rounds and create a transparent and fair process of selection that cannot be unduly influenced, reflecting international best practice. To this end, a substantial investment has been made in the internet-based model for the programme. Day-to-day coordination and management is provided by its secretariat, which is contracted out to a consultancy firm. Grants range between N1-10 million. They are managed through a dedicated fund and allocated according to merit, with a minimum quota from each political zone. The programme has a quantitative and qualitative results' monitoring framework in place that seems set to yield meaningful analysis of overall impact.

There were 24,000 applicants for the first round of YouWin!, and, due to the low number of female applicants, the second round was open only to female entrepreneurs, reportedly on the direction of the Minister of Finance herself.[66] There were 66,000 applicants in the second round and the third round is expected to attract up to 100,000 applicants. All selected applicants participate in training programmes and finalists also benefit from post-award training, mentoring and other support.

During the lifetime of the programme, a total of 3,600 entrepreneurs will be supported in implementing and monitoring the success of their business plans. Additional benefits include networking among beneficiaries, the development of a database of aspiring entrepreneurs across Nigeria and the generation of new business ideas. In addition, the scheme is expected to raise the profile of entrepreneurship.

At the time of writing, the management team was considering next steps for the programme, including possible activities with 'non-winners' in recognition of their entrepreneurial potential. As the third and final round is due to be completed before 2015, the continuity and future scale of YouWIN!, will most likely await the results of the elections.

Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO)

The Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO), which was launched in September 2013, applies a social safety-net approach to youth unemployment. It is financed through a USD30 million loan from the World Bank and is a response to low overall federal spending on social protection overall.[67]

YESSO aims to support the government in developing a social protection system focusing on public works, skills for jobs and CCTs. The programme will support the development of a central administrative arrangement (including a unified registry of potential beneficiaries) that will coordinate and harmonise the various safety net interventions across states. It is expected to provide unemployed youths from the poorest households, aged between 18 and 35, with opportunities for work and skills training and improved access to social services for the vulnerable.

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66 See 'You Win: Why We Focused on Women – Jonathan', *The Sun*, 4th September 2012.
67 World Bank (2013) (b), op. cit.

Participation is open to all states implementing similar schemes for a minimum period of two years with established budget lines. Participating states are also required to sign a subsidiary credit agreement with the Federal Ministry of Finance and adopt the generic YESSO operational framework. In participating states, community leaders rank poor households, in order to develop a unified register of beneficiaries. Participants are then selected from the database in a deliberate effort to make the process transparent and trusted by the community. The community-based poverty targeting approach, and the production of poverty maps of each state, also represent innovations in poverty programming in Nigeria.

Qualifying households are entitled to regular cash transfers to improve family health and schooling. Beneficiaries receive a CCT that can be exchanged for health or education, skills training and work on public works schemes.

The World Bank and NBS conducted a labour assessment targeted at the very poor at the outset of the programme – which as will be discussed below, does not apply to most programming in this area. A further positive innovation is the programme's assessment of existing Vocational Training Centres in participating states. Intended results (which will be disaggregated by gender), include:

- Youths receiving cash payment in return for working in public works programmes in each participating state
- States using the unified register for selecting eligible beneficiaries
- Trained youths from selected households have jobs one year after completion of intervention
- School-age children from beneficiary households who attend school for at least 80% of the school year during participation in CCT intervention
- Women from benefitting households who use health facilities during participation in CCT intervention.

YESSO financing is linked to results, deliberately intending to amplify and encourage state programming in this area, with a view to establishing practices which could be scaled up and implemented by state and federal authorities. At the time of writing, seven states are getting started following an intensive start-up phase.

Sample review of states' programming on youth employment

The following discussion provides a sample review of three selected states' programming on youth employment, based on the field research conducted for this report.

Borno

Borno has experienced serious conflict in recent years involving significant loss of life, displacement, forced abduction of women, destruction of property and other forms of violence. This has had severe negative consequences on livelihoods. Farming and fishing around Lake Chad, previously a major source of income has been disrupted due to insecurity. Livelihoods such as bus conducting, hairdressing salons, hawking and the operation of state owned companies have been affected by JAS attacks. Due to security concerns, motorcycle taxis have been banned, hitting young men particularly hard and marking the beginning of massive JAS youth recruitment. Youth are economically poor and politically marginalised by ruling elites. Political activity to make quick money is on the rise, with many involved either in JAS or as political thugs, providing protection and support to politicians before, during and after elections for money. There is a real danger that any gains made through the youth unemployment initiatives are undermined by such practices particularly as the 2015 election looms.

State youth empowerment programmes:

- All government contractors are required to purchase and use building materials produced by young people. However, the programme is oversubscribed, and there are complaints that only youth close to politicians obtain opportunities and the initiative remains restricted to Maiduguri, the state capital.
- Approximately 1,500 youths are employed to plant trees and sweep streets in Maiduguri. However as mostly older women and men clean streets, many young people refused to participate, considering the work shameful.
- Market shelters are being built along major streets in Maiduguri, with a view to these being handed over to youths to use for selling vegetables.
- Grant, loans and equipment have been disbursed to thousands of poor, unemployed and vulnerable youth alongside training in trades to ensure self-reliance.
- The revival of skills acquisition centres across the three senatorial districts of the state is being prioritised. However, some scepticism was encountered about these plans, as previous initiatives in this direction had been thwarted by the leakage of funds.

Kano

Kano has been affected by violent conflict in recent times, notably the 2004 ethno-religious crisis, and electoral violence following the 2011 presidential election, leading to loss of life, significant destruction of property and disruption of commerce and investment. Despite its abundant mineral resources, agriculture sustains most households in the state directly or indirectly, being the main occupation of around 75% of the total working population. Women run only 1/3 of small and medium enterprises and only one in three factories employ any female employees or managers. Poverty is at 64%, illiteracy at 47%, whereas 37% of the population have not attended formal schooling, and a total of 60% are unemployed – among whom a majority are youths.

Kano sponsors undergraduate and post-graduate studies within and outside Nigeria and has over 25 institutions that train youth across different sectors such as:

- The *Lafiya Jari* initiative offers training, empowerment and micro-loans to graduates of health institutes to become self-employed and provide quality drugs at affordable prices.
- The Kano Poultry initiative trains young women and men in modern poultry management and operations and provides graduates with 70 chicks each.
- The State Informatics Institute aims to empower youth through providing qualifications in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Politicised beneficiary selection and failure to take needs and priorities of young people themselves into account in design were identified as the key problems. Stories abound of beneficiaries selling their business start-up packages after training exercises, and suggest failures of programme design and monitoring.

Rivers

The Niger Delta has experienced extreme levels of violence since 1999. Murder, political and cult clashes, gun running, rape, theft, rioting, pipeline vandalism, militancy and illegal oil bunkering have all been widespread. Rivers accounts for more than 48% of Nigeria's oil production, and thus has one of the largest economies in Nigeria. However, farming and fishing remain the main livelihoods of its population despite the impact of environmental degradation on these occupations. Youth militant groups are active, motivated by the ideology that oil companies and governments extracted so much from their land but returned little in investment, services or opportunities. There is growing apprehension that politicians are recruiting youths to be used against political opponents as the 2015 election approaches.

Federal and state governments have introduced a range of conflict management responses:

- The Niger Delta Development Commission established to enhance sustainable development and train youth in skills such as solar energy installation, welding and maritime studies.
- The Amnesty Programme announced to disarm and rehabilitate militants. It has contributed to a significant reduction in violent conflict but in recent times, there has been an increase in insecurity involving young people.
- The Songhai Rivers Initiative Farm aims to create employment opportunities, promote enterprise development, promote research in new agricultural techniques and varieties, encourage skills transfer and adoption of appropriate technology by local farmers and diversify the economy by moving away from dependence on oil and gas.
- The Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) has a Graduate Work Experience Placement Scheme to enhance employability through work experience and an overseas scholarship programme. However, some of its beneficiaries continue to look for work.

ANALYSIS OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

It is clear from this mapping of government initiatives that an extensive and multi-faceted effort to tackle the problem of youth unemployment is underway in Nigeria. This comprises a mix of interventions that are both directed at short-term needs of the unemployed and vulnerable, and longer-term constraints confronted by the labour market, with efforts to address both supply and demand-side issues in improving employment options including:

- Public works schemes geared at reducing the vulnerability caused by unemployment
- Support to small businesses and entrepreneurs
- Vocational training for youth
- Job placements, particularly for graduates.

A review by the World Bank found youth employment initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to show an emphasis on labour market supply-side training and entrepreneurship schemes and a dearth of interventions to make the labour market work better for young people (such as wage subsidies and public works programmes). It also found youth employment programmes depended almost entirely on donor funding.[68] Nigeria's current portfolio of youth employment programmes thus sets it apart from the wider region SSA. Nigeria has a broader mix of programmes and a strong government lead in financing and implementation. The contribution of development partners to these programmes have been mostly in the form of provision of technical support.

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68 World Bank (2007) 'International Experience on Youth Employment Interventions: the Youth Employment Inventory', Washington DC, World Bank, p.11.

While government investments in employment programmes are commendable, there are concerns about the transparency, operational effectiveness, politicisation and actual benefits of some of the programmes. These challenges have implications for the prospects of the programmes contributing to reducing youth unemployment and conflict risk. The following analysis clusters the challenges that emerged through this research under seven headings.

1. Inconsistent quality of programme design, outreach and delivery

There is evidence of high-quality programmatic innovation reflected in several of the newer youth employment programmes. However, this research also found examples of less original approaches to programme design and delivery, which fail to take account of past lessons: a particular area of weakness is in the area of TVET. Despite the positive overall mix of programmes, there is a preponderance of activity in TVET as against other areas, particularly at the state level, often implemented through long-standing curricula and training centres. Most parastatals tend to place greater emphasis on the supply-side of the labour market (largely training) rather than demand-side interventions, even where the latter are envisaged in their mandates (this limitation applies to NDE and SMEDAN for example).

While it was beyond the scope of this research to make a full evaluation of the TVET sector, interviews pointed to several challenges shared across federal and state MDAs:

- *Failure to undertake labour market assessments which could inform and ensure relevance of training areas and content.* There was no evidence of best practice labour market assessments being conducted to inform training module design. Several officials expressed awareness of this gap but had not been successful in identifying resources to address it. While macro-level federal investments have been made in sectoral growth plans intended to contribute to job creation, linkages between these plans and the actual day-to-day curricula of TVET institutions are lacking.

- *Lack of engagement with the private sector as potential employers in determining priority courses and approaches.* While there is some evidence of an increasing move to engage with the private sector as a key stakeholder to the youth unemployment agenda, there remains a discernible gap in partnership between government TVET initiatives and the private sector in developing course modules and setting priorities for training institutions.[69]

- *Poor quality control and performance management of provider institutions*. With the welcome exception of the YESSO programme, which plans to rigorously assess training centres in pilot states, a lack of oversight and substantive review of the performance of institutions is clearly apparent. One official interviewed for this study argued that the bias has been towards capital expenditures for the construction of new training centres, rather than ensuring their operational capacity to deliver results. Findings from the state-level FGDs showed that some trainees concluded their training but did not get the promised start-up packs and that some beneficiaries sold their starter-packs. These raise serious questions as to overall effectiveness of the programmes.

Linked to these challenges are other design and implementation issues which undermine the quality not only of TVET programming but also other types of youth employment programming across the sector:

69 The extent to which the private sector has been actively engaged by government in addressing youth unemployment in the different states, was not a specific aspect of the state-level research, and warrants inquiry

- *Weak systems for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of impact.* Poor quality control of TVET programming is the inevitable result of wider weaknesses in M&E across the sector. With the exception of YouWIN! and YESSO which have provided for elaborate and meaningful results frameworks and assessments for future M&E throughout their programme cycle, most of the programmes did not have rigorous evaluations across current interventions. Even where MDAs have dedicated units for M&E, officials interviewed tended to think of M&E more in terms of visits from Abuja-based officials to programmes rather than expertise dedicated to that purpose. Others were able to point to data in the form of numbers of people trained. Rigorous analysis of impact and longer-term results was notable for its absence.[70]

- *Corruption and misuse of funds.* In the worst cases, it could be said that youth employment and empowerment programmes represent a source of funds to mobilise political support. Respondents consistently expressed the view that funds received were frequently misused. In addition, the failure of programmes to live up to the (sometimes extravagant) promises made by politicians and officials – in part the inevitable result of the misuse of funds – feeds further cynicism and feelings of marginalisation on the part of young people, eroding any potential contribution to reducing risks of conflict.

  'The introduction of Keke-NAPEP by the Borno state government was delayed even when it was finally brought in: corruption, favouritism and marginalisation marred the distribution process as only youths close to "godfathers" got it. In several cases, the kekes were instead given to well-to-do elites in the state who gave them to youths at a higher cost.'
  FGD participant, Borno State

  '*In my LGA as I know very well, the chairman usually calls some of his executive members to say this is what is on ground, and asks them to bring names of the people they want to be empowered. That was how one of my uncles, an account manager in the council, fixed my brother. So, it is not open: rather, it is a man-know-man affair'.*
  FGD participant, Rivers State

- *Weak processes for outreach and managing beneficiary selection.* Linked to the above, several officials noted very familiar patterns of 'beneficiary recycling' and 'ghost workers'. From the federal government's perspective, officials claimed such practices were beyond their control where beneficiary selection for federal programmes is left to state authorities and may be subject to political patronage at that level. Research in all eight states identified consistent scepticism as to the fairness of beneficiary selection for youth employment programmes, which was perceived as either politicised or based on ethnic or religious affiliations. This state of affairs risks exacerbating, rather than reducing, conflict tensions where perceptions of exclusion are a factor.

  'We used to hear that government provides support to individuals and groups to start a business but truly we don't know how it is done, we want it to, you see?'
  FGD participant, **Kaduna State**

70 NDE can provide figures on numbers of trainees (e.g. since 1987, there have been 886,000 beneficiaries of the national apprenticeship scheme), but admit challenge in follow-up – being unable to provide evidence of how many actually then go on to use their training to gain and secure employment. As the first 'graduates' of the CSWYE scheme are just completing, plans to monitor and follow-up still seem to be defined. The ongoing TVET programming of the Ministry of Labour does not have a defined process for monitoring, while the Ministry of Youth Development TVET programmes are unable to provide any data on impact.

While it is to be hoped that the new generation of federal programmes may augur a different future, there remains a considerable distance to go in ensuring the equitability of selection processes for youth employment programmes. Exacerbating the nepotism, corruption and other forms of favouritism influencing beneficiary selection, are poor information flow and outreach, which further hampers the widening of opportunity. In Rivers State for example, of the youth interviewed, none had but the vaguest awareness of SURE-P, despite the claim that 3,000 youth have already been recruited in rural communities in the state.

2. Limited consultation with young people

Another factor affecting the quality of programme design and implementation is the limited communication between policy-makers and young people in designing and delivering interventions. Nearly all of the youth and civil society representatives interviewed for this report pointed to this as a major obstacle. State-level research revealed the same picture, with youth participants in FGDs highlighting inadequate participation of youth in formulation of initiatives supposedly designed to assist them. Youth have the best understanding of the realities and challenges they face, and so are well placed to help determine what will and will not work. Including young people at every stage of the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes would ensure that interventions have greater legitimacy and ownership, encourage active participation in society, and help mitigate frustration, apathy and social exclusion. It would also ensure that policies and practices are more targeted, context-specific and thereby more effective.

Plans by the Ministry of Youth Development to conduct a study of Nigeria's youth population's perspectives on key issues to help inform policy have never been realised. Occasional stakeholder outreach events such as a youth retreat that was convened by SURE-P in early 2013, bringing together 200 different youth organisations, representatives from each state and state commissioners on youth, and plans to reconvene a smaller working group of youth stakeholders in 2014 to feed into SURE-P annual plans and priorities are positive developments. However, one-off events are insufficient to address the deficit in mutual inter-generational trust and national dialogue on an issue as critical to Nigeria's future as youth unemployment. When young people themselves are not involved in policy making and implementation, stereotypes and related mistrust of youth are more likely to fester. More sustained fora that bring young people into the policy-making and monitoring process on a more regular basis, are urgently needed. The country's demographic and the relative seniority in age of the majority of politicians compared to the average age of the population reinforces the need for greater levels of cross-generational dialogue and representation.

In research conducted by NSRP in a different study, the gap between youth employment programming and confidence of youth themselves in this sector emerged starkly as shown in the next page.

Youth perception of government youth unemployment programmes

- 39% agreed the government publishes information on the selection process
- 26% agreed programmes had contributed to reducing the overall rate of youth unemployment.
- 79% agreed that only youth close to politicians are selected
- 64% thought that female youth are discriminated against.

(Source: NSRP research in Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Rivers and Yobe) [71]

A more robust national debate involving young people would help address other challenges widely noted in interviews, specifically the need for a wide-ranging public debate on the nature of employment, including the whole idea of 'what is a job'. There is need to address the perception the tendency for people to conflate 'employment' with 'white collar government' posts. This is because, the realities of the economy indicate that new jobs will largely be created within MSME sector as discussed further below.

3. Lack of gender analysis and responsiveness

How gender inequality hinders economic opportunities and advancement for young women

Lack of human and financial capital, reluctance to hire women and patriarchal land ownership are identified as common constraints faced by young women in the economy. In the public sector nationally, women fill less than 30% of positions and 17% of senior positions, despite a 35% quota.[72] Although women are 80% of the farming workforce, men are five times as likely to own land with women's land ownership ranging from 4% of the land in the northeast to 10% of the land in the southeast.[73] Not surprisingly, only 6% of women farmers have access to credit, of which 80% said this was insufficient. [74]

Young women have a more difficult transition to working life than young men, with barriers including sexual harassment and abuse at work, early marriage, gender disparities in education which impact employment chances, labour market discrimination, limited access to information channels and job search mechanisms, lack of women's toilets and prayer rooms, being asked for sex during the recruitment process, and norms around women continuing work after marriage and children.

For example, in Anambra state, a study of girl hawkers found that 69.9% had experienced sexual abuse and 93% had experienced verbal abuse, with accompanying pressure to sell sexuality to get noticed and attract customers.[75] A study on Kano found that girls often dislike hawking because it exposes them to disrespect, assumptions of sexual availability, sexual violence, transactional sex, theft and reduced marriage prospects is not surprising.[76]

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71 This data is extracted from a separate annual Youth Cohort Study (YCS) being conducted by NSRP to gauge adjustments in youth perceptions around several key indicators closely related to the programme's intervention areas. The first year's YCS had just concluded as this report was being finalised.

72 British Council (2012), op. cit.

73 Ibid.

74 Action Aid (2011). *Invisible Farmers: Baseline Research on Status of Smallholder Women Farmers in LRP Communities.* Abuja:Action Aid.

75 Ikechebelu, J. I. et. al. (2008). 'Sexual Abuse among Juvenile Female Street Hawkers in Anambra State Nigeria,' *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 12(2).

76 Girl Hub Nigeria (2011). Girl Hub Nigeria Communications Insight Report. Abuja: Girl Hub Nigeria.

While women experience discrimination and disadvantage across the country, the contours of gender inequality vary according to other identity factors such as geographic region, ethnicity, disability and religion. In the north, social norms limit access to services and assets and limit women's voice, influence and ability to engage in the workforce.[77] However, women in the north are also seen as economic agents within the home and increasingly in farming. [78]

Programming to address youth unemployment should be for both male and female youth and sensitive to the differing gender needs and challenges confronting each. The FGDs conducted for this report highlighted in several states that a stark gender division exists in the types of work deemed appropriate for young men or young women.

> *'Female youth engage in jobs like hairdressing, fashion designing, petty trading, selling provision, roasting of corn, while male youths engage in, sassabya (truck loading in the market), okada (commercial motorcycle riding), furniture etc. I have seen only one lady driving taxi in Bokkos. Both male and female farm.'*
>
> **FGD, Plateau State**

It was also noted in one discussion that commercial sex workers are excluded from many of the alternative youth opportunities available in that area. Further obstacles to young women participating in traditional TVET and other typical intervention areas are well documented internationally and best practice requires carefully thinking through how young women can be accommodated and benefit as intended, particularly given their domestic and child-minding responsibilities.[79] It was beyond the scope of this research to fully assess the degree to which specific initiatives respond to these needs. This area warrants further inquiry and policy priority. However, what did emerge was a gap in female participation in some of the federal programmes reviewed, prompting in the instance already referred to, the Federal Minister of Finance herself to intervene and insist that the second round of YouWIN! be open only to women, to compensate for the dearth of female applicants in the first round. More attention is needed to ways in which women can be supported to engage in income-generating activities from the home, ensure they are part of programmes that operate in the public space and protect girls and young women, including those who hawk products, from abuse and exploitation. This is necessary not only for the protection of rights but also to create an enabling environment so young women are supported in their economic activity and are safe in doing so.

4. Lack of conflict-sensitivity

The idea of conflict-sensitive approaches to delivering development interventions in situations affected by or at risk of violent conflict is increasingly well-established in international development theory and practice. Recognising that injecting resources into societies where power and economic access may be contested can often fuel and aggravate pre-existing tensions, conflict-sensitivity requires deliberate analysis of conflict dynamics, actors and issues in order to anticipate how a given intervention might negatively, or positively, interact.[80]

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77 British Council (2012), op. cit.

78 Zakaria (2001).'Entrepreneurs at Home: Secluded Muslim Women and Hidden Economic Activities in Northern Nigeria', *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 10 (1), pp. 107-123; and Rahman, S.A. (2008). 'Women's Involvement in Agriculture in Northern and Southern Kaduna State, Nigeria', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 17 (1), pp. 17-26.

79 See for example, Okojie, C. (2003). 'Employment Creation for Youth in Africa – the Gender Dimension', paper prepared for Expert Group Meeting on Jobs for Youth, Geneva, Switzerland. See also IFC (2013). *IFC Jobs Study: Assessing Private Sector Contributions to Job Creation and Poverty Reduction.* Washington: IFC.

80 The concept of conflict-sensitivity as a tool to be used when implementing development interventions in conflict-affected environments is well established among OECD donor countries. See OECD DAC (2007), *Principles for Good Inter national Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, at* https://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/45/38368714.pdf; and Saferworld, International Alert et. al. 2003 *Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack.*

Responses to violent conflict

There are three recognised approaches to working in conflict environments:

- Working around conflict. Agencies avoid the issue of conflict or treat it as a negative externality. Response limited to measures to ensure the safety of their personnel.
- Working in conflict. Agencies recognise the need to be more sensitive to conflict dynamics and adapt programmes accordingly. Response includes ensuring programmes follow 'do no harm' principles, and may also identify ways to contribute to conflict prevention or management within the scope of their sector activities.
- Working on conflict. Agencies have an explicit programmatic focus on conflict management, resolution and/or peacebuilding either as their sole purpose or as an additional lens to other interventions which in turn are designed to maximize potential contribution to peace.

Source: Goodhand, J. 'Working 'in' and 'on' Conflict, in Hanlon, J. and Yanacopulos, H., (eds.) (2006). *Civil Wars, Civil Peace.* Milton Keynes: Open University.

While the framing of government youth employment and empowerment programmes may regularly refer to the link (also made in political rhetoric) between unemployed youth and the risk of conflict, the potential of the programmes themselves to reduce or exacerbate conflict is scarcely ever analysed in specific terms. Programme design and implementation is not informed by internationally established practice on conflict-sensitivity. Some officials said that they ensured their programmes were *not* taken to areas where there was open conflict – corresponding to 'working around' conflict. Conversely the CSWYE component of SURE-P, which boldly decided to work in areas with a high incidence of conflict (six out of 14 pilot states), also reported being caught unawares by the deteriorating security situation, and was obliged to suspend activities.[81] Well-intentioned though intervention into at-risk areas may be, programme design appears not to have been based on any analysis of conflict dynamics in this case. One example of a quite serious unintended negative impact has been the perverse effect of the ban on motorbikes in Borno state, which, though decreed with the intention of improving security, appears to have directly exacerbated violence. The need of conflict-sensitivity emerges as a crucial priority in youth employment programming, since, without it, investments in promoting youth employment may well fail to achieve intended impacts.

5. Politicisation of initiatives– and the youth

A particularly troubling aspect of youth employment programmes is their susceptibility to politicisation and thus to exacerbating, rather than reducing, the risks of conflict. Some observers criticised what they saw as political point-scoring between and within parties over job creation. This is most evident in controversy surrounding SURE-P as discussed above. Regrettably, recruiting and paying of unemployed and vulnerable youth as 'political thugs' is a widespread and established practice by politicians. This was starkly apparent in all of the eight states where research was conducted for this report. The dangers of political temperatures rising in the run-up to the 2015 elections and of more and more young people being drawn into politically motivated violence were raised repeatedly. This political *modus operandi* profoundly undermines government investment in

81 NSRP interview with Ministry of Labour official.

youth employment policy and programmes, eroding any other gains and meaningful efforts to economically empower young people. Further, politicisation of youth in this way corrodes the democratic electoral process while fuelling violence and the potential for future cycles of conflict. (The picture revealed in the state research is echoed at national level in the controversy over the alleged political capture of youth organisations such as the National Youth Council).

6. Challenges in institutional coordination and leadership

A major challenge identified undermining the effectiveness of these initiatives lies in their overall institutional coordination and leadership. At the federal level, there are some positive instances of collaboration under specific programmes such as SURE-P (where the NDE is involved in the GIS), YouWin! (where Ministries of Youth and Finance collaborate) and YESSO (which includes NDE and NAPEP participation).[82] However, there is also clear evidence of overlapping mandates, blurring of responsibilities, and failures of coordination. Some of the MDAs report dwindling budgets even while the issue climbs the list of political priorities. For instance, NDE used to recruit 2,000 applicants per state annually for their programmes but this has fallen steadily and NDE now struggles to accept 300 (against a far larger population) due to budget constraints.[83] Meanwhile, 90% of the Ministry for Youth Development's budget is swallowed by NYSC, in which only young people with access to higher education participate, leaving very little for other initiatives.[84] The resulting lack of capacity of key agencies officially mandated to address youth unemployment, while others are better resourced, creates unevenness and inefficiencies. Officials also complained of a lack of coordination, rivalry and lack of clarity as regards responsibility for day-to-day strategic leadership of the sector. While nodes of new and strategic thinking were also identified, translating their insights and experience into effective policy action, and marshalling the numerous MDAs involved in a coherent direction to improve government's responsiveness and performance with regard to youth unemployment, remains a challenge. Top-level political authority to achieve such coordination, invested either in an existing committee, office or specially convened agency, is urgently required (at federal level and ideally replicated as a way of working on youth unemployment, within states).

7. Addressing symptoms rather than causes of youth unemployment

States affected by youth-related violence frequently find themselves in 'firefighting mode', responding to violence that has already occurred, rather than operating strategically and preventively. There is also a tendency for policy responses to focus on the symptoms, rather than the causes, of youth unemployment. Key stakeholders consistently highlighted this tension between the symptoms and causes of youth unemployment: the distinction as some express it, between 'youth empowerment' and 'job creation'. Interviews revealed a broad set of challenges that needed to be addressed to get at the root causes of Nigeria's unemployment crisis. These included:

- Addressing weaknesses in the education system so as to ensure a basic level of education for all young people, and the nurturing of entrepreneurial talent [85]

82 The state-level research did not go into this level of detail in its policy mapping to surface how different agencies of state government relate to each other in delivering youth unemployment interventions, although this will be focus of ongoing NSRP work on this topic in focal states.

83 NSRP interview with NDE official, June 2013.

84 'Bolaji Abdullahi's Tenure as Youth Minister', *Youth Hub Africa*, 28 May 2012.

85 According to the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey about two-thirds of the Nigerian population has a primary or less than a primary education (these figures vary across regions). Cited in World Bank 2013 (b), op. cit.

- Policy reforms in the agriculture sector, including enhancing productivity, improving access to markets, and land reform – so as to make agriculture more attractive to young entrepreneurs
- Upgrading the power supply so as to unleash entrepreneurial capacity
- Improving access to financial and other services for the informal sector; and
- Strengthening measures to ensure that investors employ Nigerians over foreign labour.

These concerns reflect a shift in international perspectives on the issue of job creation. For too long, there has been a false assumption (informing development policy at large) that growth necessarily translates into job creation. As Nigeria's case testifies, this is not always true. The World Bank now advocates 'moving jobs centre stage' – promoting a strong position based on global data-sets and research that 'development happens through jobs' and that a 'jobs lens' is needed across all areas of policy.[86]

Another, often overlooked, reality is that as many as half the people at work in developing countries are farmers or otherwise self-employed, and so fall outside the formal labour market (the figures are higher in Africa). The catalysts for job creation therefore, may be *'policies that make cities work better, help farmers access and apply appropriate agricultural techniques, or allow firms to develop new exports'*.[87] These are likely to have more far-reaching effects than the typical skills acquisition or other types of youth unemployment schemes.

There is frequently an awkward fit between the expectations of job-seekers and the reality of work opportunities that the economy can offer, and policy and programmes need to be addressed to the real economy, rather than an imaginary one in which there are formal sector jobs for all. The problem analysis in the *Nigerian Vision 2020* 2010-2013 implementation plan seems to fall into the trap of more traditional approaches to the issue, focused as it is on the formal labour market and 'industrial relations' which have only limited application against the overall employment challenge in Nigeria.

Self-employment can be economically insecure, and is certainly not the sole answer to Nigeria's unemployment crisis. However, given lack of jobs in the formal sector, more effective support is needed in this area. Policy measures could include financial sector reform to favour small businesses, other forms of support to entrepreneurs, and the removal of administrative and other barriers to registration and operation.

In Nigeria, while government is clearly active across wider-ranging policy areas as part of the business of governing the country, the extent to which job creation is guiding its approach to growth, rather than the other way round, is not clear. Job creation is certainly an overall objective of the *Transformation Agenda* and some important interventions are now being implemented. However the sort of purposeful 'whole of government' drive and leadership required to ensure strategic prioritisation of tackling youth unemployment, including through achieving an overhaul of the quality and impact of the entire portfolio of youth employment interventions, has yet to make itself felt.

86 See World Bank (2013) (c). *World Development Report 2013.* Washington: World Bank. Available at http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?contentMDK=23044836&theSitePK=8258025&piPK=8258412&pagePK=8258258

87 Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria has made great economic and governance strides over the past decade, boasting vastly improved macroeconomic management, significant progress in the management of its oil wealth, and impressive growth rates. However, growth and sustainable development seem to be working against each other, as poverty has deepened in tandem, and basic social indicators put Nigeria on a par with far poorer countries. The mounting inequality that is accompanying Nigeria's growth has created the conditions for mounting insecurity across the country, which, coupled with Nigeria's challenging demographic context, pose very real, and increasingly tangible, threats. Taking steps to ensure that the widest possible constituency shares in the benefits of prosperity will contribute to the prevention of conflict escalation, and in turn a safeguarding of progress.

There appears to be real recognition across the tiers of government of the seriousness of the youth unemployment challenge as a source of insecurity, threatening development gains. This recognition has prompted a multi-faceted policy response including some innovative and promising new initiatives. In the context of a continued agenda of reform, accompanied by public investments to achieve job creation, economic diversification and more effective governance, the area of policy and programming referred to as 'youth employment' policy has the potential to significantly reduce conflict risk. However, in assessing whether the current policies and programmes are likely to yield *'Winners or Losers?'* – the question posed by this report – a number of serious concerns must be raised. In the worst cases, programme delivery may actually work against the goals of conflict reduction and empowerment, and create further exclusion and alienation.

Meaningful efforts to assess the impact of initiatives, take stock, and ensure a coordinated policy response to the root causes of the problem are urgently required. Given the youthfulness of Nigeria's population, broader structural efforts to nurture and unleash economic opportunity across the economy, including in the informal sector, will also benefit young people and their prospects of employment. Initiatives such as YouWIN! and SURE-P, which currently are the focus of media attention are treated with some scepticism, as somehow incidental to real priorities around making the economy work for the majority. With politics added in to the picture, and the cynical instrumentalisation of the youth for political ends emerging in the run-up to 2015, the effectiveness of government's response to the youth unemployment crisis, despite genuine effort, is liable to be undermined both in its real impact and in the eyes of the public.

Newspaper articles repeatedly refer to the Nigerian youth unemployment situation as a 'ticking time-bomb'. Yet it is important to recall that these same demographic features can also be viewed positively, representing reserves of power, energy, creativity and vitality, on which astute political leaders can draw for lasting benefits to Nigeria, West Africa, and beyond. A first step in changing the conversation from forecasts of doom towards a brighter vision of the future, is to proactively engage youth in dialogue about Nigeria's economy, the employment opportunities it offers, its need for a new generation both of entrepreneurs and political leadership, as well as in the design and monitoring of youth employment or empowerment initiatives themselves. The following recommendations to policy-makers, as well as other stakeholders, draw on this analysis.

Recommendations to policy-makers and other stakeholders: towards enhanced contribution of youth employment and empowerment programmes to conflict risk reduction

FOR GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Ensure better planning and coordination of the youth employment sector

- Bring a focus on youth job creation as an overarching goal in economic planning at all level
- Stick to one clear roadmap to steer government response (whether federal, state or LGA), rather than proliferating initiatives
- Ensure a strategic mix of 'demand' (working with markets and employers) as well as 'supply' side (e.g. skills training) interventions, through policy coordination at macro and micro levels
- Convene all arms of government on a regular basis to ensure joined-up approaches and maximum impact
- Invest in greater coordination and strategic leadership of the sector, with top-level political authority – whether under the lead of a newly mandated actor, or existing committee, agency or official.

Enhance programme effectiveness and results-based management

- Invest in an urgent overhaul of M&E capacity across all MDAs engaged in youth employment programming, making results-based management and monitoring of impact a requirement of programmes' continuation
- Draw on lessons emerging from improved M&E to inform future policies and programmes
- Embark on an urgent review and overhaul of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, conducting a national labour market survey, revising the curricula of existing skills acquisition centres and setting new performance standards
- Conduct in-depth conflict-sensitivity assessments of key programmes
- Collect gender-disaggregated statistics across all programmes to track inclusion and impact and inform the development of more gender equitable practice
- Strengthen the NBS to develop and disseminate data related to youth employment and programming impacts quarterly, to aid planning and implementation.

Reduce risk of programmes themselves fuelling grievances, through ensuring inclusion, fairness, transparency and accountability

- Ensure opportunities in the sector are well-publicised and accessible to all, regardless of political, ethnic, religious or other affiliation
- Develop and enforce internal programme and sector-wide codes of conduct to guide and raise standards of fairness, transparency and accountability in youth employment and empowerment programming
- Improve inclusiveness by ensuring allocation does not perpetuate gender inequities and including all young women (as well as marginalised groups such as persons with disability) among beneficiaries
- Minimise instrumentalisation of youth, welcome those exposing this, and raise awareness about civic engagement and electoral best practice
- Demonstrate a renewed commitment to inter-generational dialogue and collaboration in design and monitoring of policy response to youth employment, through creation of an apolitical standing youth policy forum
- Ensure involvement of independent civil society and youth associations in all major programme and intervention committees and administrative structures.

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY, INCLUDING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND MEDIA

Active citizenship improving performance in the youth employment sector

- Actively monitor the design and implementation, as well as impact, of key youth employment programmes and initiatives, promoting greater accountability in the sector – and involve young people in doing so
- Conduct advocacy for constructive inter generational and state/civil society engagement
- Engage media to discourage stereotyping and make youth empowerment key in the elections
- Expose and reject political instrumentalisation of young people and the issues affecting them.

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