



The Scary Youth Unemployment

Policy Recommendations

1. There is an urgent need for de-politicization of welfare interventions. It should not be based on patronage.
2. There is need for better prioritization of practical skills acquisition. Education and the industries should have a synergy.
3. There is need to diversify the supply of electric power for better service delivery. Building of industrial hubs with clusters of firms will make it easier for provision of alternative energy sources.
4. Youth involvement in crimes affects Nigeria's opportunity as investors destination in Africa.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD.

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Recent data from the [UK Financial Times](#) reveals that Nigeria's unemployment rate has soared since 2015 – [increasing from 8.2 per cent to 23.1 in the third quarter of 2018](#). Young persons within 15-35 years bracket are the worst hit as 55.4 per cent members of this cohort are either unemployed or chronically underemployed. The prospect of a bail out is diminished by the appalling GDP growth rate of two per cent in the last two years. Yet data compiled by the Central Bank of Nigeria shows that the country has [earned net revenue of N41.038 trillion from oil](#) between 1999 and 2016. Regardless of this 'ghost prosperity', the incidence of mass poverty continues to climb. And a number of researches have demonstrated that an increasing youth population amidst socioeconomic deprivations (a phenomenon known as [youth bulge](#)¹) is a timed bomb waiting to explode. Following these conditions, this edition of Nextier SPD Weekly examines the implications of Nigeria's army of unemployed youth and suggests recommendations to address this deficit.

Jobless youth are a [security threat to the rest of society](#) because of the instrumentalization of deviance by a number of them. From the Niger Delta to the North-East, Nigeria exemplifies an insurgent state where deprived youth have held the society to ransom in the name of environmental

protection and Islamic religious piety. Besides insurgency, a number of disgruntled Nigerian youth have [embraced criminality as a survival strategy](#)² in the face of atrocious unemployment. From hooliganism to political thuggery, armed robbery to kidnapping, and internet fraud to [ritual murder](#) amongst others, the criminal ingenuity of unemployed Nigerian youth has remained boundless to both local and international condemnation. It is no surprise that the bulk of bandits operating in the North-West are from this age bracket, and so also is the majority of the population which forms the support base of IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra), an insurgent group operating in the South-East region of the country. However, government efforts aimed at arresting the phenomenon have often taken the form of [social welfare policy](#)³ as typified by Babangida's National Directorate of Employment, Obasanjo's National Poverty Eradication Programme, Jonathan's Sure-P, and current Buhari's N-power Programme amongst others. Nevertheless, [these interventions have not only failed](#) to prioritize vocational training and entrepreneurial skills, but have also politicized the selection of scheme beneficiaries based on the logics of [neo-patrimonial networks and cultural corruption](#)⁴. In many instances, like some youth empowerment schemes in the Niger-Delta, they became "[a matrix of concentric circles of payoffs and](#)

1. Henrik, Urdal (2006). "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence", *International Studies Quarterly*, 50 (3): 607-629

2. Iro, Aghedo (2017). "The Ubiquity of Violent Conflicts in Nigeria", *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 106 (1): 97-99

3. Kura, Kabir (2008). "Youth and National Development: Opportunities and challenges"

4. Osumah, Oarhe (2013). "Tonic or Toxin? The State, Neopatrimonialism, and Anticorruption Efforts in Nigeria", *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies*, 28(1):111-134



Armed robbery suspects

[rewards built on blackmail and violence](#)⁵” Worse still, programme recipients and several other people have remained jobless even after skills acquisition because of epileptic electric power supply in the country.

Flowing from the above analysis is the need for effective policy measures to address the challenges of mass youth unemployment.

1. There is an urgent need for de-politicization of welfare interventions. Most social welfare policies fail in the country because they are used as a patronage thus benefitting the wrong people outside the target group.
2. There is need for better prioritization of practical skills acquisition. The training of Nigerian youth is largely focussed on the acquisition of ‘white collar jobs’. This orientation needs to change. In the UK and other industrialized countries, more emphasis [is now placed on STEM \(Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics\)](#)⁶. Teachers and students are motivated by tailored incentives. Government should initiate changes that [make the entire education landscape function better, enabling traditional and alternative providers to participate in creating the future of education alongside industry](#)⁷.
3. There is need to diversify the supply of electric power for better service delivery.

Nigeria gropes in the dark because of lack of competition in the supply of electric power across the states as in the case in the mobile telephone industry. This monopoly needs to be broken so that youth who have acquired vocational skills and other small and medium enterprises can survive. Government and the private sectors should work towards building industrial hubs with clusters of firms as it is easier to seek other alternative source of energy to power such industrial hubs.

4. Nigerian youth should desist from [using crime as a survival strategy](#)⁸. The excessive involvement of jobless youth in violent crimes such as armed robbery, internet fraud, kidnapping, and ritual murder is condemnable and inexcusable. Effects of such criminal activities are that they affect international investments, as investors consider the risks involved in such investments.

Nigeria’s teeming unemployed youth are a timed bomb as already obvious from the restive oil patch in the Niger Delta, the sprawling North-West where bandits hold sway, and the terrorist enclave of the North-East that has been in the grips of Boko Haram for almost a decade. The state must create the enabling infrastructural environment for youth development and creative absorption by both public and private sectors. As shown by the [Arab uprising](#), the estate of the wealthy is not safe when the youth are deprived, hungry and angry.

5. Ibeanu, Okechukwu (2002). “Janus Unbounded: Petrobusiness and Petropolitics in the Niger Delta.” *Review of African Political Economy* 91: 63–167.

6. Amyas, Morse (2018). “Delivering STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills for the economy.”

7. Deegan, Joe & Martin, Nathan (2018). “Demand Driven Education, Merging work & learning to develop the human skills that matter.”

8. Abayomi, Adebayo (2013). “Youths’ Unemployment and Crime in Nigeria: A Nexus and Implications for National Development”, *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 5(8):350-357