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YOUTH

DIGITAL

ENGAGEMENT

POLICY BRIEF

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Facilitated by

Action Aid Nigeria and DANIDA
Youth Digital Engagement (YDE) Project

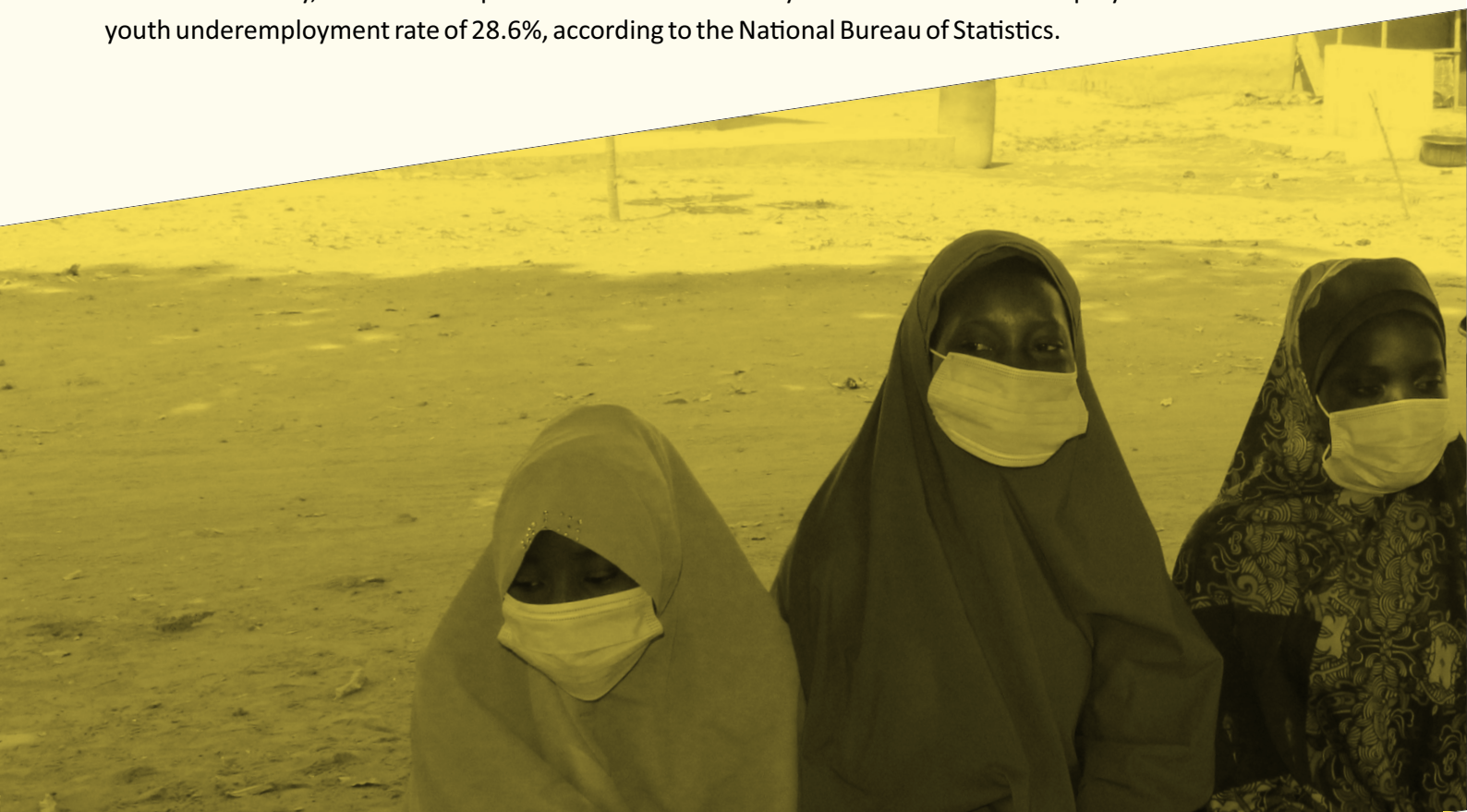
INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the livelihood of many the world over. For young persons, the pandemic led to more job losses and widened the already terrible social exclusion gap. Available data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that Nigeria's unemployment rate rose to 33.3% in the fourth quarter of 2020 compared to 27.1% in the second quarter of the year 2020. The unemployment rate among young persons (within ages 15 – 34 years), which is higher than the national unemployment rate, increased to 42.5% in 2020 Q4 from 34.9% in 2020 Q2.

One way through which the government sought to ameliorate the hardship faced by many with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic is through the administration of Social Investment Programmes and palliatives. Understanding how the COVID-19 affected young persons, and their access to government livelihood enhancement programmes, would therefore form a useful basis on how their welfare can be improved in the post-COVID-19 era and beyond.

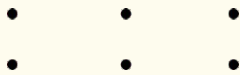
A central theme of the Post-2015 Development Agenda is Youth inclusion and empowerment. Connected as never before, young women and men are increasingly influencing the course of their communities and countries through digital means. Despite their capacity to shape social and economic innovations, young people are increasingly left out in access to livelihood enhancement programmes put in place by governments. Addressing the factors hindering young people's access to programmes aimed at empowering them, increasing their inclusion in Civil space and helping them to cope with the challenges of environmental issues and climate change, would remain vital.

Young people under the ages of 24 account for one-third of Nigeria's nearly 200 million people. According to the United Nations, nearly 14 million young people are out of work in Nigeria, which has one of the world's largest youth populations, with more than a third of its 200 million people aged 24 or under, according to United Nations data. A report by Reuters noted that youth unemployment in Nigeria has risen five consecutive times to about 14% in 2020. Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has added more youths to the Youth unemployment number. With a youth underemployment rate of 28.6%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.



The strategies to achieve better outcomes for Youths in the SDGs have been conceptualized across the goals. Nigeria's National Youth Policy also maps out how better development outcomes can be achieved for youths across five thematic areas. The methodology of the YDE project does not only help in fostering the achievement of these policy objectives but also provides a platform to examine how young persons were affected by the impacts of COVID-19 and how to sustain their access to government projects and programmes using digital engagement.

The Youth Digital Engagement (YDE) project is a DANIDA funded project implemented by ActionAid Nigeria in collaboration with partners at the subnational level. The data was collected by Community Champions and ActionAid Activistas in collaboration with other partners in Abuja, Akwa Ibom and Gombe States using the MagPi app. The analysis was done using MagPi App, MS Excel and STATA software's by the YDE Nigeria In-country Researcher, Terfa W. Abraham (PhD Economics).



Issues for Advocacy, Campaign and Engagement

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the livelihood of many around the world. This report finds evidence that young people were the most affected group in emerging economies like Nigeria. For a country with nearly 200 million people with more than 50% as young people, finding inclusive ways to engage them towards getting the governments to tailor development programmes that meet the needs of young people, will be vital, if the SDGs are to be achieved. The YDE project offers the avenue to conduct evidence-based research in order to identify how you engage youth across the spectrum. Using questionnaires that were disseminated using MagPi application through Community Champions and Activistas, the survey data was administered to a determined sample size of 7,068.61 respondents. They were drawn from states that would reflect the socio-demographics of the country. As such, states covered in the survey are Abuja (FCT), Akwa Ibom and Gombe States. The number of valid responses was 6,408. The findings show that:

- i. The age distribution of the data collected shows that young persons within 18–35 years account for 81.45% of the respondents, while elderly persons account for 18.55%.
- ii. Female accounted for 51% of the respondents while the proportion of male is 49%.
- iii. When asked if they were engaged in any form of employment, only 26% said “YES,” while 74% said “NO.” There are also more male that are employed relative to female. This implies that unemployment is higher for female than male. 6 out of 10 female in the working population are without jobs.
- iv. 4 out of 10 persons agreed that the COVID-19 has a severe impact on their livelihood. 5 out of 10 agreed that the effect was moderate, while 1 out of 10 thought the impact was minimal. This implies that for every 10 persons, COVID-19 eroded their means of livelihood and exposed 5 more to uncertainties.
- v. PwDs account for 18% of respondents (1,104 out of 6,201). This implies that 2 out of the respondents are PwDs. 42% of PwDs are female while 58% are male. 8 out of 10 of PwDs are also young persons.
- vi. The data shows an average of 4 out of 10 female are out of school and 3 out of 10 for male.
- vii. Though, there is a designated health care facility meant for most communities, 4 in 10 respondents agree that it is not within reach for pregnant and nursing women. More so, 9 in 10 families have a poor conception of family planning.
- viii. More young people have suffered cases of abuse (verbally, sexually or physically). When asked if they have been abused verbally, sexually, or physically, 76% of persons less than 35 years said “YES.” Cross tabulating this response with the response on the effect of COVID-19 showed that there is a higher proportion of abuse related to exposure to the pandemic.
- xi. Young people have the least access to government programmes. The major medium of government programmes to the people during the COVID-19 lockdown was through the various channels of National Social Investment Programmes based on the existing social register of poor and vulnerable persons as recorded in the National Social Register.

Many poor and vulnerable persons were, however, not captured in the register to allow for effective distribution and access to palliatives in a manner that was consistent with COVID-19 protocols. On top of that, data obtained from the YDE Nigeria project shows that people's awareness of government programmes such as N-Power and CCT programmes were low and the proportion of persons that have benefitted from the programme are even lower. 28% of the respondents agree that they are aware of the N-Power programme while 19.34% of those who are aware said they had benefited. The situation is the same with the CCT programme as 39% are aware, but only 24% of those who are aware, had benefited.

x. The share of persons that have been captured in the National Social Register as of February 2021, only accounts for 31% of persons living below the poverty line. Through digital engagement, more young persons who bear the brunt of exclusion and poverty will be reached. Many youths who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic would only require meagre sums of money for capital to bounce back. Access to such loans/credit, however, is hard to come by. Empowering youths through access to finance, would therefore help create jobs and support existing efforts to achieve sustainable growth.

xi. Despite some cases of abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic and earlier, there is hardly the presence of police in the communities. The availability of dispute resolution mechanisms within the communities was also weak as 5 out of 10 respondents said they were not aware of such mechanisms.

xii. Evidence on land grabbing shows that 23% of the respondents agree that they experience issues of land grabbing in their communities. 66% of those who are affected by land grabbing are farmers, 25% are persons who engage in agricultural /farm related trade while others in other occupation account for 9%.

xiii. By gender distribution, male respondents are more exposed to the issue of land grabbing. Across age, younger persons are most exposed to the adverse effect of land grabbing. Perhaps, a sustainable approach on how best to address the issue of land grabbing will help address issues of violence, youth exclusion and job creation.

xiv. Access to COVID-19 palliatives and spendings by people in communities is about 13%;

xv. 8 out of 10 youth in these communities have phones thereby, serving as a vital tool for digital engagement;

xvi. 5 out of 10 persons do not have a bank account. Access to finance/credit is vital to empower young people. Addressing the issue of financial exclusion (having a bank account) would be a useful start;

xvii. Although, 4 out of 10 persons have access to a computer, only 3 out of 10 persons can operate one; and

xviii. Despite the openings for Youth Engagement through digital means, the willingness to learn how to use a gadget for empowerment purpose is 37%. Building the capacity of youths to use digital gadgets (including their phones) for empowerment purpose would be useful.

xix. The priority area for the YDE Project, as determined from the data collected, identifies employment and Gender Responsive Public Service, as the major areas requiring intervention and engagement.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The issue of exclusion of PwDs must be addressed by expanding their access to job opportunities.
2. Deliberate efforts must be made to expand Social Investment Programmes for all unemployed or underemployed young people, irrespective of their sex, marital status, education level, ethnic origin, or other characteristics.
3. Gainful employment and Gender Responsive Public Service must be given at top priority at the national and sub-national levels.
3. Build the capacity of, and support, youth to engage in COVID-19 response coordination with other actors, access funding, and design and deliver programmes for empowerment purpose would be useful.
4. Pull together capacity-building resources and deliver them via digital platforms. Consider using local radio/flyers and low-resolution content on how to counter common misconceptions, rumours, and myths spread offline and online about COVID-19.
5. Fund youth-led organizations' COVID-19 mitigation initiatives, including PwD-led organizations and young women's collectives, and ensure that funding streams are reliable, transparent, sustained, and flexible.
6. Empowering youths through access to finance, would therefore help create jobs and support existing efforts to achieve sustainable growth.
7. Creative and motivational approaches should be adopted to close the financial inclusion gaps among youth.
8. A sustainable approach of Environmental, Socio-Economic, Human Rights Impacts Assessment of land grabbing will help address issues of violence, youth exclusion and job creation.
9. There must be special programming or considerations for the youth living in poor and excluded communities in the spirit of leaving no one behind.
10. Top priority must be given to effective Local Governance as a key contributing factor towards achieving robust Gender Responsive Public Service.

Photo Gallery

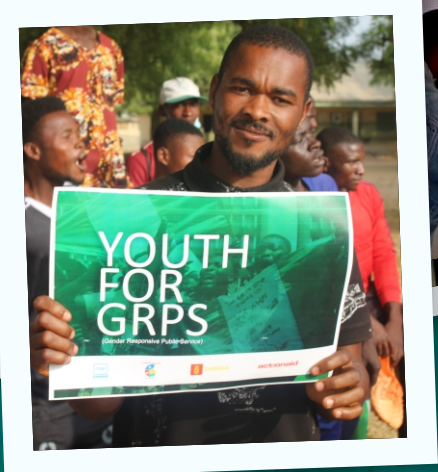


Photo Gallery





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