

# **Youth Position Paper**

## **\_Second National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS 2)**

**May 2007**

## **Abuja Youth Statement on the Second National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS 2)**

We the young people of Nigeria, after due consultations and review of the NEEDS 2 document in the 6 geopolitical zones, gathered here in Abuja on the 17th day of May 2007, at the United Nations House, to harmonize and adopt a final youth position paper, do hereby make the following declaration.

- That the theme of NEEDS 2 focus on young people;
- That a separate chapter on youth be created in the NEEDS 2 document that captures cross cutting youth development issues in addition to youth issues addressed in each thematic area, with specific targets, timelines, indicators and budgetary allocations;
- That young people be included in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation, mechanisms of NEEDS 2;
- That NEEDS 2 should provide a framework for the establishment of the National Youth Development Trust Fund;
- That we will mobilize our colleagues across the country as we have done in the development process of NEEDS 2 to ensure that youth-led initiatives support the achievement of NEEDS 2;
- That we will work towards the establishment of a National Youth Expert Panel on NEEDS 2 to monitor and evaluate the implementation of NEEDS 2 across Nigeria.

## **I. Background**

Young people make-up two thirds of the Nigerian population! These young people are faced with numerous challenges ranging from unemployment, HIV/AIDS, poverty and a myriad other challenges. As a result, national development planning needs to take into consideration the critical needs of the youth. The development of NEEDS 2 is a strategic opportunity to ensure that youth development priorities are integrated into Nigeria's broad development goals and to ensure that action is taken to advance youth development and empowerment in Nigeria.

Youth are critical stakeholders in development processes! They have diverse needs and development priorities. Experience from the zonal consultations with the National Planning Commission from May 3-10, 2007, has shown that the development priorities of the youth in each geopolitical zone do not differ remarkably and thus NEEDS 2 should be tailored to effectively address these needs. What do young people want? investments in Agricultural development, youth entrepreneurship, ICT education and a market demand driven educational system, opportunities to participate in the development of their country and investments in health strategies and programmes targeting key challenges like HIV/AIDS, malaria and youth friendly reproductive health services.

Many international frameworks have continued to point to the important needs and challenges of young people in Africa and across the world and strategies to effectively address them have been developed. The most recent is the African Youth Charter which was adopted by African Union heads of State and Government in July 2006. The Charter identified 16 youth development priorities with relevant actions needed to effectively address them. This is consistent with the National Youth Policy and its implementation strategy. The World Programme of Action for Youth developed by the UN has also continued to provide a framework for youth development since 1995.

This youth position paper is a result of youth consultations held during the National Planning Commission's geopolitical zonal consultations on the second National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy in Lagos, Owerri, Asaba, Kaduna, Bauchi and Makurdi. The paper is a synthesis of the various thoughts and priorities presented by youth at the zonal consultations and reflect the diverse perspectives of the young people in all the zones. In developing this paper and in order to avoid repetitions of what already exists in the document, a critical review of the draft NEEDS 2 document was carried out. A final team of 14 young people were invited to Abuja on May 17, 2007 to review the final document and make inputs as necessary.

This process was supported by the United Nations Population Fund and implemented by Development Partnership International and the Nigerian Youth Network on the Millennium Development Goals.

## 2. Status of the youth in Nigeria

A youth as defined by the National Policy on Youth Development is any individual who is a citizen of the Federal republic of Nigeria, between the ages of 18-35. Between 1991 and 2006, the youth population in Nigeria has grown from 22.5 million to over 30 million. Young people currently comprise over 25% of the Nigerian Population (National Youth Policy, 2001). In addition to the youth population, 32.40% of the total population are children below the age of 18 years. If these two groups are taken together, the population of Nigerians below the age of 35 comprise more than half of the population (NPC, 2002). In absolute numbers there are more young people in Nigeria than ever before.

From the 1991 census, 6.1 million young people between the ages of 12 -24 were illiterates (NPC, 2003) and a survey in 2003 shows that 10.4% male young people and 12.4% of these aged 20 –24 had no formal education (NDHS, 2003). Also, only 37% of youth aged 12 –17 attend secondary school. Over the last few years, due to the introduction of the UBE programme, school enrollment levels have increased significantly, yet there are concerns about the quality of the services delivered (Nigeria's EFA Report Card, 2004). Lack of access to information and communication technologies like the Internet has remained a major challenge to young people in Nigeria. A recent study shows that 331 persons per 1000 use the Internet in Europe, 92 per 1000 use it in Latin America and just 15 per 1000 in Africa use the Internet (WYR, 2005). The Internet is a key tool for communication, education and entertainment. If ever there was an area where young people are the leaders, not only of tomorrow but also today, it is in the fields of Information and communication technology (ICT) (WSIS Youth Caucus Strategy, 2001).

13 percent of Nigeria's population is unemployed and 70% of those who are unemployed in Nigeria are young people (MDG, 2004). Over 200,000 Nigerians apply for American Visa every year (The Punch Newspaper, 2006), majority of who are young people. Young people often want to travel to other countries to seek better employment, education and means of livelihood (State of the World Population Report, supplement on youth, 2006).

In absolute terms over 67 million people are living in abject poverty in Nigeria, that is on less than \$1 per day (UNDP, 2004), majority of these are young people who are most often dependent on poor parents and live in rural communities.

The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria is about 5.4% translating to over 3.5 million people. The highest rate (5.6%) of infection is among young people aged 20-29 years.

Despite the fact that more than half of Nigeria's population are young people below the age of 35, this population finds it extremely difficult to participate in policy and decision-making on issues that affect them. However, being a major stakeholder, youth want to sit at the table to develop policies and programmes that most effectively address their needs and aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Culled from DPI (2007). Meeting our every needs: young people' reflection on NEEDS

### **3. Purpose of this present position paper**

- To articulate the priority needs of young people highlighted at consultations held in the 6 geopolitical zones;
- To make recommendations on youth development priorities to be integrated into the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy 2 (NEEDS 2);

### **4. Recommendations by thematic areas**

In each of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, priority issues raised by youth were: employment/entrepreneurship/vocational development, youth participation in policy making processes, agricultural development, information and communication technology (ICT), HIV/AIDS/ Sexual reproductive health and educational development. However, for the purpose of this position paper, five themes will be presented.

#### **4.1 EDUCATION**

- a. Governments at all levels should put in place policies to ensure that education is free and accessible at basic and secondary levels, that such educational services are of good quality;
- b. The educational curriculum should be broadened and reviewed to enable young people acquire mandatory entrepreneurial skills that will empower them to be self employed, self dependent;
- c. Educational support and incentives for young girls and women should be increased in order to encourage communities and poor families to send their girl children to school;
- d. Government at all levels should see Universal Basic Education as a fundamental human right and therefore enforce the provisions of the Child Rights act of Nigeria to ensure that all children within school age have access to schools;
- e. Government should train, retrain and provide incentives to teachers regularly to ensure that teachers are up-to-date with contemporary information and knowledge.
- f. Provide incentives to encourage boys and girls from minority groups, particularly the physically, the nomadic groups and those from educationally disadvantaged states, to go to school to the highest possible levels;
- g. Government should strengthen or re-establish the bursary and scholarship programmes and also create an avenue for students to access low interest loans, at both state and national levels, to support students' meet their educational needs;
- h. Build new Basic and secondary schools in all communities in order to ease travel distance for children particularly those in difficult terrains;
- i. Science education should be strengthened in order to increase the number of young people studying in the various fields of engineering and other sciences;
- j. Government should invest in special education programs for the almajiris, physically challenged, the gifted and people with special needs;
- k. Government should invest and promote education in dual languages to enable young people who go to school to acquire necessary skills;

- l. Government should harmonize fees in public tertiary institutions in order to eliminate the various illegal charges that make university education too expensive for youth;
- m. Work during vacation schemes should be established to enable students find the resources to support their bid to stay in school;
- n. Invest in programs to promote early childhood educations and pre-primary education should be incorporated in the Universal Basic Education program;
- o. Government should train and deploy guidance counselors to all basic, secondary and tertiary institutions.

## **4.2 EDUCATION QUICK WINS**

- i. Government should scale up the school feeding program as this has been known to increase school retainer-ship levels amongst young people;
- ii. ICT education should be integrated into the three phases of education (primary, post primary and tertiary education) to ensure that youth are equipped to face challenges and take opportunities in the information society.
- iii. By 2011, 80% of tertiary institutions should be equipped with broadband internet access to facilitate e-learning, research and access to information for students and lecturers;
- iv. The Computer for all Nigerian Initiative should be re-focused to ensure that young people especially students can buy computer systems at subsidized rates and installmental payments;
- v. By 2011, Computer education should be a compulsory subject in the West African Examination Council, National Examination Council and other certification examinations at pre-tertiary levels.

## **4.3 EMPLOYMENT**

- a. Existing micro finance schemes should be tailored to support young entrepreneurs in establishing private businesses;
- b. Vocational and Technical skills training should be creatively, innovatively and attractively designed with modern technologies and teaching methods to encourage young people to study them;
- c. Establish special business schools in all states at the secondary school level that would be responsible for the implementation of youth friendly entrepreneurial and business incubation programmes as well as offer free consultancy services to young entrepreneur;
- d. The government should make agricultural loans easily accessible to young people who want to go into agro-business;
- e. Government should put in place an enabling law to set a standard for the students industrial work experience scheme to promote equal access to such training opportunities for all Nigerian youth;
- f. Government should review the existing employment policies, such that discriminatory and gender insensitive components should be abolished e.g. 5-10 years experience in a particular field.

## **EMPLOYMENT QUICKWINS**

- A one stop shop where young people can register their own private businesses with ease should be created;
- Government should reform the power sector and ensure that electricity is available for a minimum of 20 hours a day by 2009 as 95 % of small businesses depend on electricity for business survival and growth;
- By end of 2008, put in place a database to track all investments of governments at the federal, state and local government levels on youth empowerment, entrepreneurship and employment.

### **4.4 HEALTH**

- a. Increasingly train and engage youth as peer educators to stop AIDS and pregnancy, and to serve as care givers to people living with HIV/AIDS;
- b. Provide free and friendly HIV counselling and testing services to youth particularly those in rural communities, as well as ARV for positive youth;
- c. Strengthen public health education programmes through capacity building training for lecturers and review of curriculum to accommodate current realities;
- d. Establish more youth friendly reproductive health centres and clinics in order to provide youth with the opportunities to find services that meet their peculiar needs;
- e. Invest in culturally acceptable reproductive health programmes that protect young girls from harmful traditional practices and the attendant health challenges.
- f. Comprehensive reproductive health services should be provided and given prominence within the health sector reforms and made accessible to youths.

## **HEALTH QUICKWINS**

- a. By 2011, the HIV/AIDS/ Family Life education curriculum should be implemented in schools in all 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital territory;
- b. By 2010 provide free insecticide treated Mosquito nets to all young people in secondary schools and tertiary institutions hostels to protect them from Malaria;
- c. Government, development partners and stakeholders should invest more in capacity building training for the youth organizations working in the field of HIV/AIDS and sexual reproductive health to ensure that their efforts effectively complement ongoing government and other programmes to improve the sexual reproductive health status of young people.

### **4.5 YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

- a. Reserve a 30 percent quota for youth participation in political and policy development processes;
- b. Include youth in delegations to national and international meetings by relevant ministries and agencies on issues affecting them.
- c. Engage youth as professionals and not just as recipients of agendas.

#### **4.6 AGRICULTURE**

- a. Review the land use act to make special concessions that will enable youth to acquire land for the purposes of farming;
- b. Provide agricultural credit scheme, tools, seeds and equipments to support youth who are engaged in various kinds of farming;
- c. Establish special schemes that will enable youth access loans from both commercial and agricultural banks to access resources required to establish their own farms;
- d. Invest in special educational programmes for mobile youth engaged in fishing and re-establish the agriculture extension programmes and services;
- e. Promote and expand the establishment of exchange and commodities commission to all states in Nigeria;
- f. Government should encourage young people to form cooperative societies so that such platform can be used to train, build capacities of young people and raise awareness on agricultural initiatives and projects like the FADAMA and the presidential initiatives on Cassava;
- g. Interest rates on Agricultural loans for young people should be reduced or subsidized;
- h. Government should ensure that the process for accessing agricultural subsidy like fertilizers and micro loans should be open, fair and transparent;
- i. Government should work with the insurance sector to develop a crop insurance scheme to ensure that the crops of farmers are insured against drought;
- j. Information dissemination on agricultural research should be extended to the local farmers through agricultural extension scheme.

#### **AGRICULTURE QUICKWINS**

- Create special agricultural commodity exchange markets in all states to ensure that young farmers have ready markets for their farm produce at fair prices;
- Reestablish the school to land programme to provide hands on training for youth who want to establish agro-businesses;

### **5. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of NEEDS 2**

In order to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of youth related aspects of the NEEDS 2, the following recommendations are being made:

- Establishment of a Nigerian Youth Expert Panel on NEEDS 2 to work with the various state implementation and monitoring committees on SEEDS and NEEDS, to ensure that youth specific indicators in the various thematic areas are being integrated;
- Members of the proposed Youth Expert Panel on NEEDS, should be integrated into the National Joint Committee for SEEDS to ensure that youth development programmes in their states are documented and reported on in the SEEDS benchmarking exercises;
- Youth representatives should be included in the proposed Independent Monitoring Committee and the National Monitoring and Evaluation working group, to ensure that their issues are effectively covered and progress or otherwise in youth development

programming at state and national levels are reflected based on specific, time bound indicators proposed under needs;

- Document and share best practices in youth development and empowerment efforts at the national, state and local government levels through NEEDS, SEEDS and LEEDS;
- Specific youth development indicators should be integrated as part of the core National indicators in the National Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for NEEDS 2.

## **6. Cross cutting recommendations for NEEDS 2**

- a. That a separate chapter on young people be created which will address the cross cutting issues affecting young people across Nigeria, and provide significant insight into what strategic provisions have been made to address youth development in NEEDS 2.
- b. The theme of the 2007-2011 NEEDS 2 should be focused on youth, taking a cue from the World Bank's World Development Report 2007;
- c. Young people be involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NEEDS 2;
- d. That particular attention be paid to strategies to invest adequately in education, employment/ entrepreneurship/ micro-credit for youth, HIV/AIDS/ Sexual reproductive health as well as investment in sports and facilities for youth leisure time activities;
- e. Youth-related strategies in NEEDS should have an implementation plan, with clear costing and budgetary allocation from all relevant ministries and parastatals;
- f. Youth development indicators should be developed for all ministerial departments working on the various issues affecting youth and at least 20 percent of each Federal Ministry or Agency's resources should be devoted to youth development programmes/projects;
- g. Other relevant laws to support the implementation of NEEDS 2, like the freedom of information bill should be made by the National Assembly to afford youth the access to information on government's development programmes targeted at young people;

Baseline surveys should be carried out and targets set for quality assurance management in monitoring and evaluation of youth related interventions;

## 7. Youth Development Priority Index

Purpose	Target	Outcome	Indicator
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Review and strengthen educational curriculum	Entrepreneurship education should be integrated into the three phases of education by 2009	More young people will acquire necessary entrepreneurial skills	% of young people trained by 2011
	Every public primary and post primary school should be equipped with functional and science laboratory	Increased number of youths studying science related in higher institution	% increase in the number of students studying science related courses in higher institution.
	Government should design a special programme that would encourage and promote the education of the Almagiris, physically challenged and young people with special needs	Increased knowledge of numeracy and literacy in Almagiris, physically challenged and young people with special needs	% of Almagiris, physically challenged and young people with special needs in school by 2007
	Increase the number of nomadic schools along the nomadic corridor	Increased number of educated nomadic people	% of nomadic enrolled in school by 2011
	Expand implementation of the HIV/AIDS and family life education	Behaviour change among young people in their sexuality	% of young people adopting safe behaviours in National HIV/AIDS surveys
Establishment of scholarship scheme	Strengthen/re-establish the bursary and scholarship programs at both state and national level	Underprivileged students would have the opportunity to finance their education	% number of students that would have benefited from the scheme by 2011

<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>			
Create Micro finance schemes to support young entrepreneurs in establishing private businesses	By 2011, 80-90 percent of youth who apply for loans should have access to funds for their businesses	Viable youth businesses established	No of youths that have been reached/accessed credit.
Vocational and Technical skills training should be made to be creative, innovative and attractive to young people	By 2011 80% of youth from age 18 to 35 should have gained creative and innovative vocational/ technical skills	Youth equipped with vocational and technical skills	No of youths trained
Government should reform the power sector and ensure that electricity is available for a minimum of 20 hours a day by 2009	By 2009 electricity should be available for a minimum of 20 hours a day	Availability of electricity and Small businesses survival and growth greatly improved.	No of megawatts of electricity generated.
Establish special business school in each geopolitical zone of Nigeria that would be responsible for the implementation of youth friendly entrepreneurial and business incubation programmes	By 2011, special business school should be established in all geopolitical zone in Nigeria to implement youth friendly entrepreneurial and business incubation programme	Youth equipped with Special business skills.	No of schools established
Create mentorship and internship schemes to support youth businesses	By 2011, 70 percent start-up youth entrepreneurs should have undergone/ be receiving mentoring.	Youth mentored to start up viable and sustainable business venture	No of young entrepreneurs mentored and businesses groomed to maturity.

<b>HEALTH</b>			
Increasingly train and engage youth as peer educators to stop AIDS and pregnancy, and to serve as care givers to people living with HIV/AIDS	By 2009, youth peer educators should be trained in all schools in the geo-political zones should have been trained	No of youth peer educators trained and empowered	No of peer educators trained.
Establish HIV/AIDS degree programmes and provide formal training for HIV/AIDS teachers at tertiary levels	By 2011, at least 10,000 HIV/AIDS teachers would be trained	Tertiary teachers would have well trained on the issue of HIV/AIDS	No of teachers trained
Establish more youth friendly reproductive health centers and clinics in order to provide youth with the opportunities to find services that meet their peculiar needs;	By 2009, every local government would have a youth friendly sexually reproductive health centre.	Adequate Youth friendly services rendered to youths	No of youth friendly centers established
Invest more in capacity building training for the youth organizations working in the field of HIV/AIDS and reproductive health	By 2011,80% of youth organization working on HIV/AIDS and sexual reproduction health would be adequately trained.	Adequate investment would have been made on the youth organization working on HIV/AIDS and sexual reproductive health.	No of youth organization training

## Appendix: Frameworks for Youth Development

### *Frameworks for Youth Development<sup>2</sup>*

<b>WPAY</b>	<b>AYC</b>	<b>MDG</b>
Education	Education and skills development	Achieve Universal Primary education
Youth employment	National Youth Policy	
Globalisation	Poverty eradication and socio-economic integration of youth	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Health	Health	Improve maternal health
HIV/AIDS	Sustainable livelihoods and youth employment	Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
Girls and young women	Girls and young women	Promote gender equality and empower women
Youth and drug abuse	Mentally and physically challenged youth	Reduce child mortality
Juvenile delinquency	Law enforcement	Develop a global partnership for development
Youth in armed conflict	Peace and security	
Youth participation in decision-making	Youth and culture	
Information and communication technology	Youth in the Diaspora	
Youth and the environment	Sustainable development and protection of the environment	Ensure environmental sustainability
Youth and leisure time	Leisure, recreation, sportive and cultural activities	
Intergenerational issues	Elimination of harmful social and cultural practices	

#### Contacts:

Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima  
 Development Partnership International  
[dabesaki@developmentpartnership.org](mailto:dabesaki@developmentpartnership.org)  
 08055182526

Rotimi Olawale  
 Nigerian Youth Network on the Millennium Development Goals (NYNM)  
[rotimi@peacemedia.eu](mailto:rotimi@peacemedia.eu)  
 08057704111

<sup>2</sup> Culled from Mac-Ikemenjima and Adebayo (May, 2007): AU TVET Workshop Monrovia

