

A REPORT ON GHANA NATIONAL LEVEL ACTIVITY

Submitted to the

INCLUDE Platform Meeting

Two National Policy Dialogue on “Youth employment challenge in Ghana: what do the policy Makers and politicians have to say?” held in July and September 2016.

INTRODUCTION

Ghana’s growth performance has been quite remarkable and robust particularly since the beginning of the millennium. Between 2000 and 2014, Ghana recorded an average growth rate of 6.4% annually. The extent to which the high growth is translated into job creation has however been a major concern. This has brought to the fore concerns about the issue of unemployment in particular and joblessness in general especially among the youth. Ghana went to the polls in December 2016 to elect President and Members of Parliament for new four-year term in 2017-2021. One topical socioeconomic issue that was on the lips of many Ghanaians besides high cost of living and energy challenge, which the opposition consistently threw at the government, was the problem of unemployment and joblessness among the youth. However, neither the government nor the opposition parties managed to show clear understanding of the phenomenon to come up with solution as part of their political discourse towards the general election. The discussions in the mass and on social media as well as other forums often focused on the problem based on observation without exhibiting clear understanding of the issue.

OBJECTIVES

In order to raise the youth employment discourse beyond media rhetoric and to get political parties, one of which would form government for a 4-year period of 2017-2021, to incorporate the ideas and suggestions of stakeholders for addressing the youth employment challenge in the country into their manifesto, the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) with financial support from INCLUDE organized two national dialogues on youth employment in 2016. The objectives are to:

- expose relevant stakeholders, particularly political parties, to knowledge on youth employment challenges and the dangers associated with these challenges
- engage relevant stakeholders in the discussion on youth employment challenges
- gain understanding of how youth employment is incorporated in the political manifesto and agendas of the parties participating in the 2016 elections

Other key Actors involved in the Dialogues are

- The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)
- The International Labour Organisation (ILO), Ghana Office
- The World Bank, Ghana Office

ACTIVITIES

Two national dialogues were held in Accra in July and September

▪ **First Dialogue in July 2016**

This was opened to all stakeholders to dispassionately discuss gather relevant policy recommendations to influence the preparation of policy document of political parties for the 2016 general election. The dialogue brought together a cross-section of Ghanaians including policymakers, political parties, youth groups and students, researchers and the academia, civil society organisations (CSOs), the Dutch Embassy and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Media. About 150 participants took part in the dialogue

The dialogue started with remarks from the chief economist of ACET, Dr. Yaw Ansu and the Netherlands' Ambassador to Ghana, Mr. Hans Docter, which was followed by representatives of partner institutions (World Bank, NDPC, ILO and Ghana Employers' Association). Putting the issue of youth employment challenges in perspective, Dr. Ansu, ACET explained that it was important for the country to give the youth the right skills, create the right policies that could create jobs or enable them to create jobs for themselves to ensure a bright future and urged politicians not to use issues related to youth unemployment for propaganda ahead of the November polls.

The Dialogue took the form of plenary and syndicate group sessions. Dr. William Baah- Boateng presented an overview of youth employment challenges in Ghana based on a background paper at the plenary session in the morning followed by questions, answers and comments. Coffee break followed the plenary session morning after which participants were ushered into three different breakout sessions – (i) skills training and dynamics of youth employment, (ii) growth strategy and employment response, and (iii) agriculture and youth employment. Policy recommendations emerged at the breakout session were presented at the afternoon plenary and adopted for the second dialogue in September.

A week prior to the dialogue, William had media engagement (interviews) on radio, television and print. The dialogue was open to all stakeholders. The dialogue witness over 150 participants.

▪ **Second Dialogue in September 2016**

The second dialogue organized in September was a follow up of the first dialogue with political parties as key actors. Nine political parties participated in the second dialogue with one key opposition party represented by its National Chairman and one other by the General Secretary. The seven remaining political parties including the main opposition party, which eventually won the Presidential election, were represented by leading members of their respective youth league. Other participants include policy makers, researchers and the academia, youth groups and students, employers and industry and civil society organization (CSOs) as well as section of the media. The dialogue discussed the recommendations that emerged from the first dialogue and political parties agreed to adopt and incorporate as many as possible the recommendations agreed at the dialogue in their policy document – the manifesto and monitor them if they won power.

The programme began with a welcome remark from Dr. Yaw Ansu, the Chief Economist of ACET and chaired by Director of Research at ACET (Dr. Joe Amoakh-Tuffour). This was followed by a presentation of key recommendations that emerged from the first Dialogue by Dr. William Baah-Boateng. A plenary session moderated by Dr. Baah-Boateng, which engaged representatives of the political parties to discuss the recommendations and the feasibility of its implementation and the modalities and assurance of incorporating the agreed points into their policy documents followed.

OUTCOME

The two national dialogues gained much (media) attention and engaged all stakeholders, including political parties, in proposing effective solutions. The purpose was to engage the parties in a discussion before the presidential and parliamentary elections, so that a consensus had been reached on the labour market challenges. Indeed, “Job creation” became the main issue during the electioneering campaign to the extent that the main opposition party (which went on to win the election) titled their Manifesto “Change: An agenda for jobs”. Employment generation strategy in the document was anchored on industrialisation linked with modernised agriculture with two key campaign issues – “one district, one factory”, and “one village, one dam” alongside “planting for food and jobs” to show the party’s commitment to promoting employment generation of their government.

OUTPUT

- A Concept Note
- Background Paper on Youth Employment in Ghana
- Final Report of the Two Dialogues
- Stakeholders’ engagement forums
 - 13 July 2016, National Policy Dialogue on Youth Employment Challenge in Ghana. Read a report based on the dialogue [What do the Policy Makers and Politicians have to say?](#)

- 28 September 2016, [National Policy Dialogue on Youth employment challenge in Ghana: what do the policy Makers and politicians have to say?](#) The dialogue was reported in the media as follows:
 - Ghanaian political parties propose solutions for youth unemployment;
 - ACET engages political parties on youth employment
 - Youth Unemployment Ghana's Major Challenge-ACET;
 - Parties agree on policies to address youth unemployment