

Youth blog by Baaba Grant

Baaba Grant is a delegate of the Young Diplomats Ghana and a postgraduate student at Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Center. She participated in the stakeholder engagement session of the APD on youth employment interventions in Ghana on 9 September 2020.

My passion to fight against poverty ignites in me the desire to empower extremely poor young girls through vocational skills training to enable them to create a means of livelihood for themselves. My experience working with Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) in 2017 opened my eyes to the need for productive, inclusive programs in various parts of Ghana to promote self-employment among the poor and the youth. In my opinion, the surest way to eradicate poverty in Ghana is to provide employment, especially for the youth as the country is dominated by young people. However, the employment constraint has been a major setback for our beloved country. The objective of the meeting on the way forward for Sustainable Youth Employment in Ghana aligns with my deepest concern for the youth in Ghana. As such, it was a great opportunity for me to be present to learn and share my thoughts on this particular issue.

Baaba Grant is my name, I am a postgraduate student at Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre, reading Conflict Peace and Security, and a delegate of Young Diplomats of Ghana. I have a personal business I run alongside schooling; I make wig caps and sell ladies products. I developed the interest in learning a vocational skill after my undergraduate program at the University of Ghana, Legon. This was probably as a result of my background in vocational skills education from Wesley Girls High School Cape Coast, where I studied visual and vocational skills. I strongly believe in securing a job through vocational skills because it can never be taken away; it is a permanent skill that is acquired and can only be improved on. One way to ensure that one always has a means of livelihood is through sustainable employment, and I believe that the only way to have a sustainable job is to create one. I earnestly desired to be part of this meeting because of my personal interest in sustainable employment and the prominent people who were put on board to discuss youth unemployment and the way forward in tackling this pressing issue.

I was particularly overwhelmed by the in-depth information provided by Prof. William Baah Boateng during his presentation. According to the presentation, youth unemployment as of 2015 accounted for 73.1% of total unemployment, climbing to 77% in 2017, with the rate being higher in urban than in rural areas. Males had a higher unemployment rate than females in 2015, but lower in 2017. This information clearly points out the urgent need for rapid sustainable solutions, as the youth population keeps increasing and the rate of unemployment keeps escalating with it. Based on the discussions that went on, Prof. William Baah-Boateng raised a vital point which I strongly attest to. He suggested that a platform that can link employers and job seekers would be prudent in decreasing unemployment as the system would be flexible.

The involvement of participants during discussions brought to light how much unemployment is of concern to everyone. A participant from the University of Ghana, Legon raised a question on why the university educational curriculum hasn't been reformed, since some

courses offered in the university do not easily open job opportunities for its graduates. I think there is great need to make our educational system more pragmatic in this era where students invest in education for years and are not able to find work related to the theoretical aspect of their studies. Also, the education system has to promote technical education among the youth. An advice given by Prof. Baah-Boateng was that there is a need for the youth of Ghana to be innovative. I share in this sentiment because innovation would help us improve the available opportunities and create new opportunities for ourselves. With this, I strongly believe we can attain sustainable employment for the youth.

During the meeting I noticed a high percentage of participation of the young group, which was a great call because involvement of the youth in decision making allows them to explore and eventually build themselves for leadership roles. The key speakers were knowledgeable in their respective fields, which made the meeting very educative. I was highly impressed by how the meeting was set up and the attentiveness in focusing on the particular issues under youth unemployment. The presence of people from various groups enabled me to network with people from different fields. I enjoyed sharing ideas and listening to the views of others.

One aspect of the meeting I enjoyed most was the round table discussion where I was placed in the political group. A participant stressed the need for a national development plan specifically focusing on implementing plans which have been laid out. Also, one way to create a program to favour all youth is to start from the community level and the establishment of more technical institutions.

It is my desire that the mindset of people concerning vocational and technical skills would change, as the majority of people have insufficient interest in this sector. Underutilizing our potential as youth would continue to create youth unemployment.