

# Link jobs, growth to demographic realities

EDITOR: Uganda has stood high among the best in the world as a source of great minds.

Some of these intellectual giants were recently at the Kampala Serena Hotel, where they discussed: "Triggering Uganda's economy through sustainable growth with jobs". The rhetoric and choice of words wasn't different from the usual. Most, if not all the points raised on modernisation of agriculture, improvement of infrastructure, electrification, development of local content and reduction of public expenditure were not new.

What stood out most was the need to accelerate the economic growth from the current 4%, to figures above the 3.1% population growth the country is experiencing, with indications that Uganda will have a population of 60

million people in 20 years.

In order for government to achieve this, it should engage in deep conversation with the majority 80% of the population that is 35 years and below and identify what resonates with them best and how to tap into their skills, talents, energy and enthusiasm.

The Government should design and implement strategic programmes such as a national youth service for mindset change, vocational skilling and mentorship with developed countries, particularly the South East Asian.

While building tarmac roads is essential, it would be more beneficial to construct the information super highway for the Internet, through which education, healthcare, financial inclusion and peer-to-peer networking to the citizenry can be best achieved.

Seeing that over 80% of SMEs and the small scale commercial agricultural activities are run by the youth, the Government should set up a youth development bank, one which would deliver loans more sustainably.

Uganda is a young country in terms of demographic composition. It is further estimated by the World Bank that Africa will have the second largest population by 2050 and if this demographic dividend were to be well harnessed, it could generate 11% – 15% GDP growth by 2030.

Summarily, Government of Uganda should realign its strategies and priorities if it is to realize this potential and achieve the set middle income status by the year of 2020.

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PICTURE BY WILFRED SANYA