

Support for innovation must be key

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"Service sector is growing but it is technology driven. If government is to create jobs, there must be substantial investment in agriculture and industrialisation," he says.

The created jobs do not compare well with the number of young graduates that are released from higher institutions of learning annually.

Within the same period (2012-2016) more than two million students were released from higher institution of learning onto the job market which meant that for every created job there were at least eight young graduates competing for it.

According to data, more than 400,000 graduates are released onto the job market per annum. Of the two million, according to Enterprise Uganda, about 151,600 ventured into entrepreneurship and innovation over the period.

However, less than 30,000 were able to turn their innovations into real income and taxable jobs. Majority, data shows, joined retail trade, which is mostly captured as informal setting since it is difficult to estimate earnings from such businesses.

The above figures present the grey areas of Uganda's job dilemma that has either slumped or stagnated, amid raising employable

youth numbers exacerbated by rapid population growth.

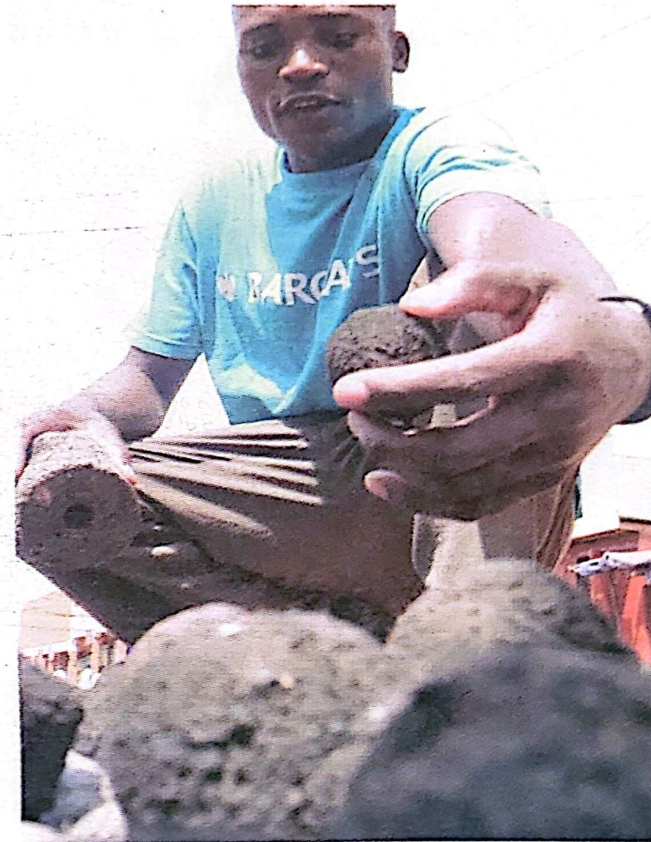
Uganda has a population growth rate of 3.3 against an average growth rate of or below 4.5 per cent. The growth rate, moreover in a poor economy, clearly cannot support the high population growth rate, which might explain why more Ugandans, many of them young graduates, have slid into poverty over the last five years.

According to the Uganda National House-hold Survey 2016/17 released by Uganda Bureau of Statistics last month, more than 3.4 million people slide into poverty, raising the number of Uganda's income poor to about 10 million between 2012 and 2017.

Majority of the poor practice agriculture, which employs more than 80 per cent of Ugandans, but has stalled at an average growth of one per cent over the last decade.

The rate of growth, according to Christopher Kibanzanga, the Agriculture state minister, is still low but there is concerted efforts which have allowed the sector to grow by 3.2 per cent in the last financial year.

"Our target is to raise it [growth] to 5.6 per cent as stated in the National Development Plan II," he says and is aware of the importance of the sector in Uganda's employment and wealth creation agenda.



Priority areas. Youth innovations, many of which start small, must be supported up to maturity stage. FILE PHOTO.

WAY FORWARD

Support to innovations

Therefore, there is urgent need to boost growth in the agricultural sector to create employment.

Projects such as Naads must be well apportioned to go to intended beneficiaries through which new jobs can be created.

Critical support to youth projects such Youth Livelihood Fund must be emphasised to create jobs. Government must also encourage a streamlined education review that responds to the challenges of today and tomorrow. Currently, Uganda's education system focuses on the white collar and formal jobs instead of science, innovation and enterprise that would encourage the creation of a robust manufacturing sector.

According to Uganda Export Promotions Board, balance of trade continues to worsen with exports standing at \$3b (Shs10.7 trillion) against imports of \$6b (Shs21.5 trillion). This imbalance does not augur well with a country that is struggling to create jobs for its people through manufacturing and industrialisation.

SUPPORT

Seek:
Intervention:
Government must support youth innovation programmes to spur enterprises which will in turn create jobs.