Experts tip govt on job creation for youth

BY JONATHAN ADENGO
jadengo@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. Scholars and private sector actors have asked the government to focus more on skilling the youth in order to fight the high unemployment rate in the country.

The Uganda Bureau of Statistics report 2016, indicates that the national youth unemployment rate stands at 6.2 per cent, with 4.7 per cent for men and 7.5 per cent for women.

Prof Wasswa Balunywa, the principal of Makerere University Business School (Mubs), asked government to focus more on vocational education in order to churn out ready and employable students.

Mr Balunywa, who was delivering a keynote address during a symposium on the paradox of economic growth and unemployment in Uganda organised by Mubs, said: "The success of developed economies has come from putting emphasis on vocational skills."

> "The youth unemployment focus is being misplaced, we need to look at it against the data coordination by addressing tomorrow's problems using today's solutions."
>
> **MARIA KIWANUKA, FORMER FINANCE MINISTER**

Prof John Jean Barya, the interim chairperson of the Society for Justice and National Unity, an independent think tank, said every year, universities graduate more than 400,000 mostly young Ugandans into the job market, but only about 100,000 of them are absorbed into meaningful employment.

Mr Ramathan Ggoobi, a lecturer of Economics and convenor of the Economic Forum at Mubs, urged the government to invest more in manufacturing, saying countries with strong manufacturing centres have created more low-skilled jobs for their populace.

According to Ms Jolly K. Kaguhangire, the executive director of Uganda Investment Authority (UIA), the organisation is targeting one million jobs in the next five years.

Mr Ggoobi said statistics show that at 10.5 per cent, the industry sector was one of the fastest growing in Uganda in the 1990s.

Uganda's industry boasts of manufacturing, construction, mining and quarying, electricity and water.

Mr Ggoobi said in the last 30 years, agriculture has been the slowest growing sector compared to the industry sector.

He challenged government to invest more in agriculture, where Ugandans have the greatest comparative advantage and agriculture employing almost 80 per cent of the population.

He regretted that most of the produce was for domestic consumption and not for commercial purposes

Ms Maria Kiwanuka, the former Finance minister, argued that unemployment should be looked at holistically and not broken into segments.

"The youth unemployment focus is being misplaced, we need to look at it against the data coordination by addressing tomorrow's problems using today's solutions," she said.

Ms Kiwanuka said government needs to carry out a structural transformation so that more high value jobs are added for more Ugandans across the country.

She said skilling Ugandans, especially for the Oil and Gas sector, will create more jobs for the people who can work as wielders, and support staff in the incoming oil and gas activities.

The symposium brought together scholars, private sectors actors, and government technocrats to deliberate on why Uganda's economic growth has not matched the challenge of creating jobs for the large army of unemployed, especially the youth who yearly enter the job market in large numbers.

CamScanner