

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN THE GAMBIA: A CONCEPTUAL EXPOSITION OF THE NEDI EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The biggest challenge of youth and women in developing countries like The Gambia is lack of empowerment to generate income from gainful employment and or enterprise. National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDi) was thus expected to provide lending services, entrepreneurial training services and marketing and linkages services to empower youths and women to overcome their challenges helping in creating job opportunities and reducing unemployment rates as a result of growth of their enterprises. This paper assesses the roles of the National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI), especially its programmes and impact in line with policy on enterprise and entrepreneurship development. This is with specific reference to employment creation and the uptake of entrepreneurial pursuits amongst the youth and women in The Gambia. It finds that under plausible assumptions, extreme poverty will not be eradicated by NEDi, but it can be reduced to low levels due to NEDi's small scale of activities, low level of sustainable empowerment, employment opportunities and income generation can be achieved especially in the rural areas. Overall NEDi assessment reveals that the scope covered by NEDI was generally limited. It was established that NEDi loans/grants enhance growth of individually owned youth enterprises through increase of sales volumes, profitability, product diversification, customer base growth and conferring competitive edge to recipients over their competitors. It was also established that entrepreneurship training services offered by NEDi enhance record keeping skills, customer care skills (although knowledge of soft skills could be an added advantage), increasing sales volumes, understanding of their business, conferring business management skills, increasing profitability and general growth of individually owned youth enterprises. It was further found out that marketing and linkage support services provided by NEDi enhance sales, product marketing, customer base growth, product diversification and discovery of new markets for individually owned youth enterprises.

Keywords: Enterprise, Youth, Development, Empowerment, NEDI

Introduction

Worldwide youth has recorded the largest population in history. Precisely, 1.8 billion people, which translates to 42 per cent of the world population, have been found to be under the age of 25 years with about 90 per cent of all young people living in developing countries, where they constitute the largest chunk of the population (Serajuddin, *et al.*, 2017). Projections for Africa predict that youth populations (comprising those aged 15–34 years) will represent 46 per cent of the increasing labour force from 2015 to 2063, averaging 12.1 million a year. As 60 per cent of Africa's population is younger than 25 years, African Heads of State and governments designated 2017 as the year of 'Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth'. This also contributed to implementation of the African Union's (AU's) Agenda 2063 and responded to the need to mobilise and invest in human capital. Across the continent, it has been recognised that equipping young people with the skills and tools to drive integration, peace and people-centred sustainable development will help individual countries reap demographic dividends (Commonwealth, 2021).

According to GBoS (2013), The Gambia happens to be one of the smallest countries in Africa with one of the highest proportions of the young population globally, where about 1 million of the estimated population of 2.1 million was below 15 years while 1.2 million persons constitutes the population aged 15- 64 years out of which 39.1 % were young people aged 15 to 24 years. The Gambia's total youth labour force participation rate in 2018 was 44%, comprising 54.4% males and 45.6% females and slightly higher rate in urban (51.4%) than in rural (48.6%) areas. The youth unemployment rate was 41.5%, which was more pronounced for females (55.3%) compared to males (44.7%) and at a much higher rate in rural (69.4%) than in urban (30.6%) areas. Baase and Brikama were the two local government areas (LGAs) with the highest youth unemployment rates of 24.6% and 21.7%, respectively (GBoS, 2018a).

The scholarly work of Okoth et. al. (2013) corroborates the fact that young men and women in many developing countries like The Gambia have been faced with hardship due to unemployment and poverty since the formal labour market is grossly inadequate hence they have had to find solace by working in unregulated informal sectors of the economy where they are always being exploited one way or the other. In addition, it can be deduced from the records above that the situation of young population in The Gambia is also prone to problems like high rate of poverty, disempowerment, unemployment, lower female labour force participation, high rural unemployment, which is more pronounced for young females. The outcome of these precarious situations is reflected as absence of reasonable jobs and/or income opportunities which have invariably made the Gambian youths opt for migration “greener pastures” outside the shores of The Gambia in search of better opportunities, mainly to Europe, against all the odds, including illegal and dangerous journeys (Charles, 2018). In response to these socio-economic challenges and gender gap, various governments of most developing economies specifically Africa conceived the idea of introducing intervention programmes and subsequently advanced a number of initiatives aimed at empowering young people through transformation of education and skills development, human rights, health and well-being, and empowerment, as well as employment and entrepreneurship. According to Lucio, Freire & Kristian (2014), entrepreneurship development initiative efforts are intended to bolster the skills and techniques of youths, women and to an extent, the remaining segment of the population within rural and urban areas. The establishment of National Enterprise Development initiative (NEDi) by the Gambian Government, is one of such initiatives.

Conceptual Clarifications

Enterprises

These are legal entities having authority to do business all alone by itself. Such businesses include entering into contracts, owning properties, incurring obligations, and maintaining bank accounts. In terms of typology, it can occur as a corporation, a quasi-corporation, a nonprofit institution, or an unincorporated enterprise. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2022), enterprises can be categorized on the basis of sizes but the most frequent factor is the number of people employed. Thus, in small enterprise there are 10-49 employees and in medium enterprise there could be 50-249 employees whereas large enterprise may have 250 employees and upwards. European Commission classification of Enterprises stipulates that there are small businesses such as house building, food processing, services, equipment and other materials manufacturing which can be further categorized (based on three different factors namely level of employment, level of turnover, and size of the balance sheet) as Micro-enterprises, Small enterprises and Medium-sized enterprises. Literature reveals that the small and medium scale enterprises alone constitute over 90 percent of the whole population of enterprises in developing countries with 40-60 percent contribution share to the national economy (International Trade Centre, 2018).

The importance of enterprises (especially Small and Medium Scale segment) in any national economy cannot be underestimated. This is because they constitute the major part of the socio-economic activity especially in developing countries like Gambia where they are expected to play a key role in development particularly through empowerment of the youth which records have shown to constitute the larger chunk of the whole population (Abatan, 2020). In recent years, enterprises have been receiving a good share of the nation's policy attention with a view to alleviating poverty among youth both in rural and urban area, particularly in less developed countries like The Gambia, where the government is engaged in some sectors of the economy that has to do with youth empowerment, utilization of local raw materials, employment generation, encouragement of rural development, development of entrepreneurship, provision of avenue for self-employment and the provision of opportunity for training managers and semi-skilled workers.

Enterprise Development

Enterprise Development or ED is the act of investing time and money to assist others in starting, expanding, or improving their businesses. It assists the target audience in earning a living or alleviating their poverty, and eventually leads to long term economic growth of the individuals, their families and their communities. According to Enterprise Development Trust Corporation EDTC (2022), enterprise development is a process established to build/start microenterprises into viable small businesses that are positioned to scale. In other words, it involves engaging institutions like NEDi, micro-lenders and community-based organizations for developing systems/businesses to support/coach/train entrepreneurs and microenterprise owners including the unemployed in the skills needed. Entrepreneurship development is the process of strengthening an entrepreneur's knowledge and skills through classroom coaching, seminars, and training with the major goal of strengthening and expanding the number of entrepreneurs. This entrepreneur development method aids new businesses or enterprises in accomplishing their objectives, hence improving business and the economy of the country. Another important aspect of this process is to increase one's ability to manage, grow, and create a firm while keeping the dangers in mind (EDTC, 2022). In simple terms, the entrepreneurship development process includes assisting entrepreneurs in improving their abilities through training and coaching sessions. It motivates people to make better decisions and make more informed decisions in all aspects of their business (Abatan, 2020).

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship, according to Wickham (2004), has been existing for decades; it has been in existence from the biblical times of Adam and Eve. It is often used as a term in everyday dealings; more of a familiar term in the field of management and economics. It originated from Middle English word of Anglo-French; generated from 'Entreprenre' which means to "undertake". It is a synonym for business, firm, outfit, company and establishment. It was a term first used in the 15th century but became a general term in France by the 17th century. It is essential to know that entrepreneurship has been existing before the advent of the colonial masters. Subsistence farming, gold smiting, exchange of goods and services, arts and crafts are all different types of entrepreneurial activities which took the form of trade by barter system. It could be recalled that the exchange of goods or services was solely based on trade by barter until money was introduced as medium of exchange during the colonial era. Entrepreneurship is a means of empowerment and self-employment which is in form of small and medium enterprise. This type of employment contributes to the employment rates. The majority of this type of employment is in agriculture and other income generating activities which involved trading of goods and services. Pathetically, income generation capacity and the level of productivity of these economic activities are no doubt very low. The International

Organization for Migration (2016) emphasizes that the capacity of SMEs to generate income is limited. The simple analysis of this implies that household enterprises are major labour absorbers.

Agbeze (2012), cited in Emeh, Ikechukwu & Okechukwu (2012), identified areas of entrepreneurship activities such as agro-allied/agriculture for the production of foodstuffs; food vending/ restaurants; transportation for haulage and passengers. Entrepreneurship is beyond starting a business, it is a procedural act through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources; and also create value. Values are created by the identification of needs which are not met; therefore, an entrepreneur takes advantage of this situation and transforms it into opportunities for change and eventually becoming economic goods through actions and available resources. Worlu, Atayero & Amadu (2014) agree that youth empowerment through entrepreneurship development refers to the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured and institutional-building programmes geared towards increasing the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created. The authors stressed that entrepreneurship accelerates employment generations, economic development and poverty reduction. It also focuses on individual who wishes to start or expand a business. In essence, entrepreneurship accelerates employment as it concentrates more on growth potential and innovation. Aderemi and Gbenga (2011) documented the indispensability of entrepreneurship. They established the fact that it stimulates economic growth, employment generation and for the disadvantaged segment of the population such as the poor, people with disability and women. Shane & Venkataraman (2000) assert that entrepreneurship is an unrehearsed combination of economic resources instigated by the uncertain prospect of temporary monopoly profits. Since entrepreneurship focuses on skills acquisition and development, these skills are perceived as entrepreneurial spirit such as character, personalities and ability to start and own one's business. Undiyanmdeye and Otu (2015) opine that it is a type of education which has the ability to impact on the growth and development of an enterprise through technical and vocational training. Ilesanmi (2000) argues that education is the development of a person for the acquisition of all-round efficiency of skills and knowledge, intellectually, morally, socially, culturally, physically, economically; with the sole aim of earning a living.

Youth Empowerment

According to literature espoused by Adesopo (2020), the word 'empowerment' is a long-term strategy that targets social transformation and positive change in an individual being and/or community. Friedmann (1992) stated that empowerment can also be described within the development that involves a process of social and political empowerment whose long-term objective is to rebalance the structure of power within the society by making state action more accountable, strengthening the powers of civil society in the management of their own affairs and making corporate business more socially responsible. Oakley (2000) in his own explanation of empowerment asserted that social development as empowerment which does not see the individuals as being deficient and/or needing external support or entirely powerless but rather seeks to create an interactive and sharing approach to development in which people's skills and knowledge are acknowledged. According to him, people's empowerment can manifest itself as power through greater confidence in one's ability, or in terms of increasing relations meant to break their exclusion and to gain access to state or economic resources. Young people struggle to achieve livelihood and this is connected to the transformations in the nature of production, consumption and general community life taking place on a global level. When youths are meaningfully and productively engaged, they serve as a reliable source for national economy and could be drivers of sustainable socio-economic development and beneficiaries of poverty alleviation programmes. The concept of youth empowerment needs to be defined in order to emphasize the generic use of the term. Barker, Knaul, Cassaniga & Schrader (2000) view youth empowerment as a process

whereby the youth are engaged meaningfully and empowered by earning a future through good incomes by managing, controlling or driving entrepreneurial activities including income generating processes such as the small and medium business and owning an existing or upcoming economic venture and lastly, possessing marketable and sustainable skills. The indicators associated with youth empowerment have been identified as: (a) growth and well-being; (b) relational; (c) educational; (d) political; (e) transformative; and (f) emancipative.

A unanimous definition of the concept is based on activities and interventions to engaging and occupying young people's strength by getting them involved in decision making process as relating to planning and implementation of programmes; and also granting them active roles in matters that affect them. Empowering youths will enhance their citizenship and productivity as they move into adulthood as government structures and institutions will be strengthened, thereby resulting in stronger nations, poverty reduction and healthy individuals and communities. Meredith et. al. (2013) differentiate youth empowerment from youth development, stating that youth development is centered on developing individuals while youth empowerment is focused on creating greater community change building on the development of individual capacity. Empowerment of young people requires that they are assisted to remain involved or connected with the social process and to appropriate institutions revolving around production, consumption and community life, and the social and psychological experiences of disempowerment.

The National Enterprise Development Initiative – NEDI

NEDI is one of the satellites Institution under the Ministry of Youth and Sports as its enterprise arm. NEDI is mandated by an Act of the National Assembly to nurture, promote as well as facilitate the development of women and youth-led enterprises through trainings in skill acquisition, entrepreneurship and facilitate market linkages for youth and women entrepreneurs in the Gambia. Since it was created in 2004 and enacted by the National Assembly as government agency in 2013, the institution continues to respond to its core mandate of training and mentoring youth and women entrepreneurs in the areas of entrepreneurial development and employment creation. NEDI continues to respond to its core mandate to train and mentor young entrepreneurs and women in the areas of entrepreneurial development and employment creation (NEDi, 2022). NEDI strengthen and facilitate support to the established fourteen (14) Youth Agricultural service centers in West Coast Region, Lower River Region and Central River Region. The institution conducts General Entrepreneurship, Business Plan and Agro-food Processing Training in various regions and communities. It also participates with partners in supporting youths and women to showcase their product / services during the national and international Trade Fairs. The Institution through government support and partners trains and continues to provide coaching and mentoring services to the youth and women in horticulture and food processing, preservation, packaging and labeling within the intervention areas. NEDI has engaged various partners and stakeholders to execute programs that were planned for implementation. The activities were implemented in line with NEDI's strategic plan. The strategic plan of NEDI is aligned to the Ministry of Youth and Sports Strategic Development Policies and is also linked to the attainment of the National Development Plan Priority areas of the Government of the Gambia.

Like all state-owned institutions sub-vented by Government, NEDI is required to submit its annual activity report to the NEDI Board, Ministry of Youth and Sports and the National Assembly, all of which have an oversight function over the institution. NEDI's activities are in line with the strategic objectives, mandate, and Act of the National Enterprise Development Initiative as enacted by the National Assembly Act 2013 in accordance with other Government development policy documents. NEDI provides the platform for young entrepreneurs to explore opportunities and strengthen their entrepreneurial spirit. NEDI works with and through young people to enable them

re-position themselves as key players in the economic system. Over the years NEDI has worked with partners to re-focus the energy of young people and women in value chain sectors especially in agro-entrepreneurship as a vehicle for sustain growth and job creation for youths.

There are structures that administer governance, management and program implementation of the Institution, and it has (11) Board Members headed by the Chairman. The Board Members are appointed by the President of the Republic for every three years. The Membership of the board has permanent institutional representation and individual Membership whose appointment to the Board is based on their expertise, experience, achievement and expected contribution to the best management of the Institution. The Institution is headed by the General Manager, and supported by staff to execute the daily activities. The staff strength is twelve (12), and the staff profile includes graduates of various levels. The Institution has Program and Finance & Administration departments headed by Managers who take lead in their various departmental functions when it comes to program implementation. In addition, NEDI is also into collaboration with the other establishment such as International Trade Centre/Youth Empowerment Project (ITC/YEP), Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Instituto Marques de Valle Flor (IMVF), Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) and Food and Agriculture Sector Development Project (FASDEP) including Agro processing and creative arts for exports into the international market as new focus areas for youths in the rural setting aside from the traditional sectors such as Agriculture, agribusiness.

As an agent of change, NEDi was designed to support the development of the local economy by (i) enhancing employability and self-employment opportunities of youth, with a focus on vocational training and the creation of micro and small-sized enterprises; and by (ii) creating and improving employment opportunities in selected sectors through value addition and market linkages. Further operation of NEDi includes works with Micro, Small and medium enterprises (MSME) owned by youth and women entrepreneurs aimed at ensuring that they maximize their potentials for employability by conducting basic skills trainings for youth and women, while also ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability of basic commodities and creation of meaningful employment to the targeted sectors of relevant value chain. These SME's are key employers in the agri-food sector of rural labour such as wholesale, logistics, processing and retail. They are highly interdependent with rural family farmers which make their survival and growth more crucial with the benefitting youth and women (NEDi, 2020). According to the National Entrepreneurship Policy in The Gambia (2016) which was instituted in consonance with Government's effort at developing enterprises, with the mission of building a national entrepreneurship environment in The Gambia with a view to supporting inclusive and green entrepreneurship development through establishment of an enabling regulatory and institutional framework for entrepreneurial spirit to flourish, in order to create new economic activities, improve local productive capacities, solve environmental and social challenges.

The Gambia's National Entrepreneurship Policy came into existence with the purpose of ensuring The Gambia becomes a country which has "an enabling entrepreneurship environment with quality entrepreneurship education and a thriving entrepreneurial spirit embracing all parts of the country" by 2026. While the policy specifically addresses a number of constraints faced by entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem at large in addition to generating decent jobs for both rural and urban dwellers. Despite the initiatives put in place by this NEDi, it is the general belief that unemployment, lack of employability and poverty evidenced by the low entrepreneurial spirit among these vulnerable group of people (Youth and Women) is on the increase. This belief has been linked to the methods/approaches and programmes design being patronized by NEDi as well as some other unidentified challenges confronting this initiative, hence this study. This research intends to investigate this area in order to know

how different enterprise development initiatives have impacted on the socio-economic development of the Gambian youth and women as well as alleviating poverty among them. Therefore, the importance of evaluation of NEDi with respect to various indicators will be observed vis-à-vis enterprise growth and poverty reduction.

Youth Empowerment and Enterprise Development Situation in the Gambia

A study of the activities of NEDi over the past five years shows that over 2,000 youth and women entrepreneurs across the country have benefitted from its series of youth entrepreneurship training programme which includes providing business advice to youth and women entrepreneurs to ensure business sustainability. These exploits can be summarized as follows: ‘providing micro-loans in support of 150 Gambian youth and women enterprises mainly in the retail businesses, butchery, fishing, tailoring, restaurants/catering, food processing, preservation and labeling in addition to providing rice threshers, tractors, milling machines and power tillers to farmers and women groups for higher productivity in agricultural value chain through collaboration with Food and Agriculture Sector Development Project (FASDEP)’ (NEDi, 2020). NEDi has also been able to promote youths and women in becoming professional entrepreneurs as well as minimizing the rate of irregular migration such that between 2019 and 2020, 125 youth and women entrepreneurs from the Lower River Region on small scale enterprises were given training on programme activities such as food processing, preservation and labeling. Recently, the project has successfully recruited eighty-five (85) young men and women in Lower River Region (Jarra West and Central, Kiang East and Central) on agro-entrepreneurship such as food processing, preservation and labelling. These initiatives were funded by EU/TEKKIFFI project and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) (NEDi, 2020).

In addition, NEDi also provides the platform for young entrepreneurs to explore opportunities and strengthen their entrepreneurial spirit/potentials. NEDi works with and through young people to enable them re-position themselves as key players in the economic system of the country. NEDi has worked with some key partners, to re-focus the energy of young people in the value chain especially in agro- entrepreneurship and general entrepreneurship as a vehicle for sustainable growth and job creation for youth and women (NEDi, 2020). These include: Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) (national agency responsible for promoting and facilitating investment, business and export development and support MSMEs and regulation of designated export processing zones in the Gambia); Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS); Empretec (this program is being funded by UNDP and the Government of The Gambia but anchored by GIEPA. The program has turned out over 736 entrepreneurs including 264 farmers some of whom have started manifesting success in their business); **Nema Project** (this project was designed to increase income levels of the rural population, through the Capital Investment Stimulation Fund (CISF)) and the Start-up Incubator project (designed to support the successful development of young Gambian entrepreneurs through an array of business support services). It is perhaps noteworthy that International Trade Center (ITC) has been supporting the different Gambian Business Support Organizations (NEDi inclusive) in providing relevant support services to entrepreneurs. ITC-supported interventions have ranged from assessments of the ecosystem and support for coordination between different actors to training of trainers (TOTs), funding, and technical guidance for the delivery of a range of short-term trainings, boot camps, business development advisory services, mentorship and coaching programs, technical trainings for the enhancement of entrepreneurs’ productive capacities, market linkage activities, such as trade fairs; and access to finance schemes. According ITC country business report 2021, ITC, NEDi and other intervention organizations have provided entrepreneurship support to over 3,000 young Gambians.

In line with NEDi claims as stated above, its establishment, no doubt, has brought about improvement in skills and employability of many young men and women in The Gambia due to the support rendered on entrepreneurial training and support for micro, small and medium sized enterprises and job creation in selected sectors of the economy (including Agro processing) through value addition and provision of financial assistance. However, findings reveal that young men and women in The Gambia are faced with problems of unemployment, lack of employability, economic hardship and lack of good education (GBoS, 2013). Broadly, the objective of this research is to assess enterprise development initiatives as anchored by NEDi. This is in relation to job generation and poverty reduction among young men and women through growth and development of enterprises within The Gambia. The Gambia MDG status report has confirmed that poverty in The Gambia is mostly rampant among this vulnerable set of people. Extreme poverty is reported to be lower among the urban areas because of the availability of employment opportunities, both formal and informal as a result of activities of government organizations like NEDi in addition to other Non-Governmental interventions programmes.

In assessing youth empowerment and enterprise development situation in the Gambia, extant literature like Manzoor, Wei and Sahito (2021) revealed that a large number of young men and women in The Gambia are increasingly finding it difficult to sustain themselves in the small business they have started as yet, not to talk of moving to the level of employing people. In most cases some businesses due to lack of adequate finance operated as household enterprises before finally packing up as a result of factors like lack of support in terms finance, environment and government. The assessment of this initiative is based on the following criteria: conformity with standards / good practice programmes; achievement of specific and overall objectives; alignment with beneficiaries' needs, governmental and partners' plans; quality of entrepreneurship training/ apprenticeship, tools and; survival rate of enterprises; adequacy of human and financial resources; quality and adequacy of planning, monitoring & evaluation system;

Theoretical Framework

Youth are seen as a source of social change and therefore opportunities are offered to them to contribute to development processes at various levels, including personal, family, community and national. This work is anchored on the theory of change and the reason for this is that it is able to provide the best way of describing how programs/projects lead to evidences of desired outcomes. It also shows all the possible pathways leading to change, and how they are able to lead to change. It is appropriate for tool for program design and evaluation (Pirooska, 2014). This is because NEDi programmes are targeted towards socio-economic development of youths who reside in our communities. This set of youth are rather disadvantaged in terms of skill and access to finance and good life but are yearning for a change in their income level, social welfare and employability. Furthermore, the theory of change provides a framework for learning both within and between programming cycles. By articulating the causes of a development challenge, making assumptions explicit on how the proposed strategy is expected to yield results, and testing these assumptions against evidence including what has worked well, or not, in the past the theory of change helps ensure a sound logic for achieving change. The theory of change also helps make course corrections if the selected approach is not working or if anticipated risks materialize. New learning and lessons from monitoring and evaluation help refine assumptions and inform decisions on how an approach should be adapted to deliver planned results. Adjustments to the theory of change should also be made in light of changing circumstances, especially in response to crisis and shocks, as well as part of regular monitoring. Finally, the theory of change is increasingly being utilized as a means for developing and managing partnerships and partnership strategies.

Conclusion

The promotion and development of the SME is a formidable tool capable of alleviating poverty through job creation, in less developed countries. According the GBoS (2018), youth unemployment remained high at 36.7% in 2018 (approximately 64% in the rural areas) and the problem is deep-rooted among the female youth. NEDi's intervention has the potential to demonstrate what works in empowering youth. However, the coverage of NEDi is limited and needs are vast. For instance NEDi records revealed that over the past five years, only a little above 2000 youths and women across the country have benefited from entrepreneurship skills training programmes in both formal and informal sectors which include providing business advice to youth and women entrepreneurs to ensure business sustainability (ibid) even with NEDi's show of ability to work with quite a range of government agencies and partners to providing micro loans for retail business, butchery, fishing, tailoring, restaurants/catering, food processing, preservation and labeling including provision of rice threshers, tractors, milling machines and power tillers [to farmers and women groups] for higher productivity in agricultural value chain through collaboration with FASDEP. As stated above, youth unemployment remains stubbornly high, and there are no meaningful, sustainable jobs or income opportunities for the youth and women. Although NEDi has proven to have capability to deliver on its mandate as per entrepreneurship training however it still has a limited scope for enterprise development and support including sustainable job creation. At the moment, NEDi like many other national youth programs are under resourced.

Recommendations

The government should seek active collaboration with other development partners, including the African Development Bank (AfDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and bilateral agencies to adapt result-oriented framework for youth and women empowerment in the areas that are yet to be covered by NEDi. ITC and other financial institutions can play a significant role in contributing to support postharvest operations, skills development, MSMEs' business development, developing market linkages leading to the export of viable commodities, and creating sustainable jobs. The agency needs stock taking of what works and what does not in each sector. ITC has a comparative advantage of implementing similar activities and projects and can contribute to gains in project efficiency by consolidating activities across the projects so that the project can deliver intended outcomes. Project management could tackle cross-cutting priorities. The exercise should result in the identification of strategic partners that can effectively and efficiently deliver targeted outputs regularly. The potential for micro-enterprises to increase employment and reduce poverty remains small, because most of them are run as a family business or sole proprietors employing minimal external casual workers when needed as stated above. There is a need to work with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well so that new sustainable jobs can be created. SMEs including exporters have the potential to create new jobs with a better chance of increasing the size of the operation. The classroom size at the TVET institutions tends to be significant, and many do not provide enough equipment, which limits the learning abilities. Also, the capacity of other service providers tends to be limited, thereby constraining the scope of work. The majority of partner institutions is aspirational and commit to supporting youth. However, they are constrained by the investment required for improvement. There is need to strengthen the capacity of TVET institutions and other key actors in the sector value chain that has the potentials to create sustainable jobs. Lastly, the totality of NEDi should be revitalized in addition to the scope being expanded and/or

scaled up by channeling more resources from government budget and assistance from international intervention organizations towards the agency.

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