

The Issues & Prospects of African Youth in the Labour Market across the Border between Africa and China

Charles Okeke PhD - International Law (Candidate)
University of International Business & Economics (UIBE), Beijing

Abstract:- There is little or no doubt that adequate attention has not been paid to the conundrum of the African youth in the labour market as the number of young people continues to grow with a few job openings available for them. There is no unique determinant of the youth employment challenge in the African region. Rather, a combination of factors contributes to compound a situation that has become a top socio-political priority for the region.

Africa has the youngest population in the world and over 10 years from now, 30 million young people from the region are likely to enter the African labour market each year.¹

The African population is very young and therefore, one could say that the employment challenge is, in effect, also a youth challenge. Young people are between 1.5 and 2.5 times more likely to be out of work than older adults in most of the countries on the continent.

Africa's unemployment question is such that those in vulnerable employment and those underemployed in informal sectors are not always in the calculation when assessing the dangers of lack of jobs for young people.² Youth find work but most often than not, in places where the pay is very low with lack of opportunity for skills development and job security.

This is so, partly because most African countries have not been able to fundamentally transform from low productivity agriculture to higher productivity non-agriculture sectors and when coupled with high fertility and low infant mortality, the result has shown little improvement in the building of sustainable employment structure.

Over the past few years, researches have been carried out on several dimensions of China's education,

training and labour relations with Africa. In spite of China's discourse about the parity and importance of win-win in China-Africa engagement, many still think that China has not paid sufficient attention to the issue of job creation for the young people in Africa, considering the number of investments the country has in the continent.

Many Chinese companies operating in Africa have a negative assessment card. Beyond the claim of asymmetric relations and debt-trap diplomacy, when it comes to their employment record, some observers accuse the Chinese of mainly employing their citizens for projects in Africa, depriving the locals of potential jobs. When they do hire locally, the accusation is that the wages are very low and come with little or no training. But this view has come largely from the West who hitherto has not seen anything good in the Sino-Africa relations.³

This paper therefore will try to examine how far this relationship has gone, the challenges and prospects, going forward. It is expected that the two partners will close ranks in the coming years to improve this aspect of their relationship.

Keywords:- Africa, China, Development, Employment, Government, Labour, Opportunities, Underemployment, Unemployment, Youth.

I. INTRODUCTION

The word youth has no universally accepted definition. The understanding, however, is that youth depends on ages, social positions, and functions they carry out in a place, era, etc. The time of youth could be agreed to be between childhood and adulthood; it is a transition period with non-definite boundaries.⁴ The transition from youth to adulthood is usually within the ambit of issues

¹ "Youth Employment in Africa (Africa)." Youth Employment in Africa (Africa), www.ilo.org/africa/areas-of-work/youth-employment/lang--en/index.htm.

² "Africa's Jobless Youth Cast a Shadow over Economic Growth | Africa Renewal." United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-youth-2017/africas-jobless-youth-cast-shadow-over-economic-growth.

³ "Africa: Study Reveals Chinese Companies Pay & Train Workers to Similar Standards as Non-Chinese Companies." Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 17 July 2019, www.business-humanrights.org/en/africa-study-reveals-chinese-companies-pay-train-workers-to-similar-standards-as-non-chinese-companies.

⁴ "Emerging Adulthood." Noba, nobaproject.com/modules/emerging-adulthood.

such as physiological, psychological, social, and financial freedom. There are numerous ways to attaining adult status, and we can see the possibility of an increase in the transition ages. To that effect, youth represent a very heterogeneous group.⁵

Presently, Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world. It is believed that one of five persons in the region falls within 15 and 24. As of 2010, the age group of youths in Africa reached 205 million and could reach nearly 437 million by 2050, or 33.3% of all people age 15–24 in the world.⁶

In spite of the increasing number of rural-urban migration, close to 70% of Africans still live in rural areas.⁷ The problems young people encounter in becoming a part of the work-force and develop the required skills to ensure gainful and productive employment is crucial in the development and prospects for the growth of any society.

Africa, particularly South-Sahara Africa has the youngest region people in the world, and this is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. The average age is 18 now, which is 7 years younger than South Asia, with the second youngest population in the world and expectedly will rise to 24 by 2050.

Africa's youth category is large and growing rapidly. Between 2000 and 2015, the 15 and 24 age group grew by 2.6% each year on average. According to UN estimates, there were 190 million in this age group as of 2015, and this number is expected to increase at an annual rate of 2.5–2.7%, reaching 249 million in 2025, and 311 million in 2035.⁸

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will assist in an adequate understanding of the relationship between Africa and China as it relates to the labour market. It is anticipated that with a careful explanation of the scope of this relationship will help guide policy makers and members of the academia on how to understand and improve the relations. This may help strengthen and sustain the relationship that has so far been hailed by many observers.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Développement, Agence Française de, and Objectif-Developpement. "Supporting Youth Insertion into the African Labor Market." Issuu, issuu.com/objectif-developpement/docs/youth_insertion_web.

⁷ Betcherman, Gordon, and Themrise Khan. "Jobs for Africa's Expanding Youth Cohort: a Stocktaking of Employment Prospects and Policy Interventions." SpringerLink, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 12 July 2018, link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40176-018-0121-y.

⁸ Betcherman, Gordon, and Themrise Khan. "Jobs for Africa's Expanding Youth Cohort: a Stocktaking of Employment Prospects and Policy Interventions." SpringerLink, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 12 July 2018, link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40176-018-0121-y.

A. Research methodology

The research made use of the qualitative research paradigm. The qualitative and quantitative paradigms are well established aspects to research. Other related literature on this topic will be explored and evaluated to give credence to this paper.

It will also take advantage of works that have previously been carried out along with elements of past researches, observations and evidence available on this subject. The use of secondary data obtained from books, papers, articles and journals from various websites would be used in the course of compiling this paper.

This thesis will examine the relationship between Africa and China in the area of labour exchange and human resources, the hiccups experiences so far; the efforts made hitherto by both parties to improve this aspect of their blossoming relationship will be carefully dissected, while preferring solutions to improve the relationships.

This study is largely a gauging research; therefore it will try to stay as closely as possible to academic accepted standards of research methodology.

B. Literature Review

➤ Purpose of literature review

Literature review plays a significant role in justifying this study and this is because analyzing past research works allows for the identification of gaps in the literature, which this paper attempts to fill.

This review will contribute to the foundation of this research since the idea behind it is to build upon thoughts and existing research with additions from my personal findings. By looking at the arguments of previous theses, this paper will adopt the appropriate methodology and analytical techniques necessary for the findings.

➤ General overview of labour market across Africa

For Africa to experience labour growth among the youth, the government should encourage young people to become self-employed and back them up with the required capital to start and sustain their businesses. The need for tax-cuts is also important as it will not discourage the youth from taking bold steps to start a business.⁹ This idea was shared in 2018 in South Africa by the founder of Alibaba.com, Jack Ma while addressing the issues of Africa-China labour relations and bi-lateral investment engagement between the two partners.

In Africa, the trend over the years has been such where young people after graduating from the university, find themselves in the informal sectors of the economy,

⁹ Shapshak, Toby. "To Create Jobs In Africa Encourage Young People And Give Startups Tax Breaks -- Alibaba's Jack Ma." Forbes, Forbes Magazine, 8 Aug. 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/tobyshapshak/2018/08/08/to-create-jobs-in-africa-encourage-young-people-and-give-startups-tax-breaks-alibabas-jack-ma/#56ebc9ed73e4.

while those that feel it is not right for them, seek greener pastures overseas.¹⁰ Another troubling issue is that of women, where they are viewed as contributing family workers,¹¹ without being properly utilized in a better productive way for the greater good of the economy.

The statistics coming from the General Administration of Customs of China says that in 2018, China's total import and export volume with countries in Africa was US\$204.19 billion, a year-on-year increase of 19.7%, outstripping the total growth rate of foreign trade in the same period by 7.1 percentage points. Additionally, China's exports to Africa were US\$104.91 billion, up 10.8% and China's imports from Africa were US\$99.28 billion, up 30.8%; the surplus was US\$5.63 billion, down 70.0% year on year.¹²

Youth unemployment has been viewed as a lack of failing of the government particularly in the area of structural change;¹³ this argued was advanced by Page who affirmed that despite noticeable growth in the continent, it has had very little to show in the area of structural change. Many countries in Africa have a relatively low rate of youth out of job but the majority of them are found in the informal sectors, leaving them susceptible and within the working poverty bracket he concluded.

In Africa, Chinese firms have created different labour opportunities associated with different sub-sectors particularly in constructions; this Chinese involvement no doubt has helped expand the industrial and construction investments in Africa while also creating jobs in the non-agricultural sector across the board in the continent.¹⁴ With this, other construction firms from other parts of the world are forced to challenge the Chinese in Africa and the gross effect is that it continues to open up the labour market and help the youth in the continent get meaningful employments.

The engagement of Chinese firms in Africa continues to grow by the year and to that effect their employment model and relations has drawn attention from not only policy makers but scholars as well. In the review of Huang

and Ren, they posited that there are some suspicions when it comes to how Chinese firms engage with Africans on the issue of labour.¹⁵ They summarized these concerns into two points and these are: those Chinese investments in Africa are not designed to provide enough jobs for the locals, stressing that their focus is to employ Chinese.

Secondly that Chinese investments in some African countries has created more jobs to the local population, yet the quality of this employment is below par when compared with those from elsewhere, particularly the West.

In a report submitted by Mbamalu, he made reference to a South African Based Resource Watch which revealed that Chinese firms in Africa were perpetrators of unethical labour practices, citing the harsh conditions mining workers undergo when working for the Chinese in countries like Zimbabwe, Zambia, The Democratic Republic of The Congo; placing the blame squarely on the Chinese for not improving labour conditions.¹⁶

Xiaoyang's report on labour relations in Africa did not suggest anything very different from Mbamalu. In his thesis, he highlighted that many Chinese firms prefer to bring workers from China and feel uncomfortable working with those from the host country. He cited countries like Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya as examples. This he argued contributes to the already dreadful labour conditions in Africa. He mentioned low wages and unfair working conditions also as issues of concern; in his comparison with other countries outside the continent, he stated that the wages are among the lowest in the world.

However, he went further to suggest that these reports are based on individual experiences or asymmetric case studies that lacked proper empirical proofs. Even from the government departments, there have been no clear reports of these claims; stakeholders are divided on the actual situation on the ground. This divisive school of thoughts has often led into resentments from the locals when issue of Chinese investment is brought up.¹⁷

¹⁰ Facing the growing unemployment challenges in Africa. (2016, January 20). Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS_444474/lang--en/index.htm.

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² "Ministry of Commerce People's Republic of China." Statistics on China-Africa Trade in 2018 Statistics, english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/statistic/lanmubb/AsiaAfrica/201901/20190102831255.shtml.

¹³ Page, John (2012), Youth, Jobs, and Structural Change: Confronting Africa's "Employment Problem" Working Paper Series N° 155 African Development Bank, Tunis, Tunisia.

¹⁴ Oya, C., C. Wolf, and S.K. Cheng (2018) 'Chinese Firms and Employment Dynamics in Africa: A Literature Review'. Working Paper n. 04. Industrial Development Construction and Employment in Africa. SOAS, University of London.

¹⁵ Huang, M. and P.Q. Ren (2013) 'A Study on the Employment Effect of Chinese Investment in South Africa'. Discussion Paper No. 4/2013. Stellenbosch: Centre for Chinese Studies.

¹⁶ "Plight of African Workers under Chinese Employers." African Liberty, 27 Sept. 2018, www.africanliberty.org/2018/09/27/plight-of-african-workers-under-chinese-employers/.

¹⁷ Tang Xiaoyang 'Does Chinese Employment Benefit Africans? Investigating Chinese Enterprises and their Operations in Africa. Studies Quarterly | Volume 16, Issue 3-4| December 2016 <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v16/v16i3-4a8.pdf>

III. WHY IS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AN IMPORTANT TOPIC FOR AFRICA?

Unemployment for young people is a global epidemic and Africa cannot be isolated when we discuss the problems that are associated with it. However, the case of Africa is our focus in this paper, importantly, because the number of youth in the region is on the rise and that might spell doom if the labour market does not have what it takes to accommodate this number.

African countries are diverse but they have some tendencies in common, and one of them is a strong demographic growth; a large number of young people in the continent are continuously seeking for an improved welfare and financial independence which the labour market is expected to provide, to a large extent, this dream is far from realized.¹⁸

Young people in Africa, both in the urban and rural concentrations need jobs, the potential is there but the opportunities are mostly lacking. The limited education system also has impaired the expansion of the labour market, leaving a lot of young school leavers in little or no demand. While the continent looks up to the youth for growth, the social and professional fitting is presently unstable amidst an increasing level of poverty.¹⁹

This debacle presents real issues for politicians, who first of all, need to tame urban-rural migration while cautiously managing the possible fallout of social and political unrest that might ensue when the youth get fed-up with their plight. We have seen that in some countries in the region with the rise of crimes such as kidnapping and terrorism among others.

IV. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Young people in the continent just like elsewhere in the world face a doubtful future in the labour market because of technology, and lack of adequate attention to vocational training and the non-existent of jobs to match their qualifications, this argument was put forward by the ILO in a March 2020 report. The report further stated that the situation is not getting any better as the number of young people currently not employed, or having any sort of education in the area of training education keeps rising, and the females are the more affected ones in Africa.²⁰

¹⁸ “Facing the Growing Unemployment Challenges in Africa.” Facing the Growing Unemployment Challenges in Africa, 20 Jan. 2016, www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS_444474/lang--en/index.htm.

¹⁹ “Africa’s Jobless Youth Cast a Shadow over Economic Growth | Africa Renewal.” United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-youth-2017/africas-jobless-youth-cast-shadow-over-economic-growth.

²⁰ “Youth Exclusion from Jobs and Training on the Rise.” *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Youth Exclusion from Jobs and Training on the Rise*, 9 Mar. 2020,

The fear of the imminent fallout of youth unemployment has prompted the crafting of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which is determined to achieve full and productive employment for young people within the timeframe. The youth is at the heart of this initiative and tackling their major problem which is a lack of a decent job has become a national and international development priority.²¹

African youth face almost twice the unemployment rate of adults, with some exceptions here and there; but the problem has highlighted earlier is not just that of unemployment but also underemployment and efforts to alleviate this problem have to come with the right information and data on the number of young people and their job status. Many African countries struggle with this information as their governments are not doing adequately enough to gather the right figures of young people in their countries to ascertain those that are employed and those that are not.

In the book, “The Industrial Experience of Tanzania” edited by Szirmai et al it was contended that the empirical analysis of employment in sub-Saharan Africa is only derived from household surveys, such as labor force surveys and living standards measurement surveys. In many countries of Africa, regular surveys are not conducted except for Tanzania, South Africa, and Mauritius. The others don’t have national coverage to ascertain the employment rate.

Recently, efforts from international organizations such as the World Bank, International Labour Organization, and African Economic Outlook, etc. to harmonize existing household surveys have been relied upon when discussing the subject of youth employment among the various countries of the continent.

Youth employment in Africa, however, holds its own when compared to other regions around the world. The unemployment rate among the young population is below the rate in many places except for South and East Asia and the ratio between the youth and adult unemployment rates is the lowest among all regions.²² A higher percentage of young people in the continent participate in the labor force and employed more than what can be obtained in other regions.

www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_737053/lang--en/index.htm.

²¹ “The Challenge.” *What Works In Youth Employment*, 20 Jan. 2017, www.wwinye.org/evidence/the-challenge.

²² idrc.ca/sites/default/files/sp/Documents%20EN/Youth_Employment_Sub-Saharan_Africa_WEB_FINAL.pdf

V. OBSTACLES TO BETTER JOBS FOR AFRICAN YOUTH

The big issues facing Africa today are not youth-related. Lack of infrastructure, good leadership, lack of proper accountability, access to credit among many others;²³ but the irony is that these problems somehow affect the level of job opportunities in a country because a low level of development means a low level of jobs in the market. For instance, in lower-income economies where the people depend largely on agriculture, low productivity would be a major constraint to a good livelihood.

Rural and urban designs are a huge problem in Africa; the continent currently has the world's smallest population of urban settlers. In comparison to 14% living in urban areas in 1950, by 2015, 45% of residents in sub-Saharan Africa will live in urban areas. The implication is that employment strategies have to take these changes into consideration and calculate carefully when including rural areas with smaller economies of scale and connection to markets; it should also take into account the peculiar obstacles behind urban employment and the possibility for youth exploitation in the urban areas.²⁴

Population growth and social inequality can be hurdles: In sub-Saharan Africa, 10-12 million new workers seek employment every year. This means a growing number of youth will rely on rapid growth in economies for new jobs. Even though six of the fastest-growing countries in the world are in Africa, broad-spanning inequality and corruption stand in the way of access to jobs and employment.

An improved result in youth engagement in the labour market will require an effort on the demand side if there is going to be a flourishing economic environment, be it in agriculture or micro-businesses, or even in the wage sector of the economy. These could be seen as general problems, but these demand impediments can boomerang and the youth will be the ones to pay the ultimate price. For example, credit may be difficult to get in many African countries, but the fact remains that the chances for young business people to access it are remote;²⁵ furthermore, lack of well-equipped schools, job opportunities by the government and private sector and improved labour laws should be looked into and corrected.

²³ "Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa." World Bank, www.worldbank.org/en/programs/africa-regional-studies/publication/youth-employment-in-sub-saharan-africa.

²⁴ "7 Trends Shaping Africa's Youth Employment Challenge." Business Fights Poverty, 1 June 2018, businessfightspoverty.org/articles/7-trends-shaping-africas-youth-employment-challenge/.

²⁵ *ibid*

VI. YOUTH IN AFRICA AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY SINO-AFRICA RELATIONS

Of the over 10,000 Chinese companies operating in Africa, only a few rely on the locals, most of the others recruit minimal local labour, they instead rely tremendously on Chinese migrant labour in their infrastructure and public construction jobs. This school of thought has been countered by some academics who argue that there are no empirical figures to back the claim, stressing that it is not easy to get the exact numbers of African workers in Chinese companies due to the lack of official statistics.

The Ministry of Finance of Angola published a report, which featured the make-up of employees in 30 infrastructure projects completed by Chinese companies around the country. In a total of 3136 workers, 1872 were Angolans, making up 59.7 percent of the entire work-force. Buttressing the argument that the number of Chinese workers is still relatively high since it is over 40 percent.²⁶

Reports on the construction of the Chinese-funded Imboulou dam in Congo Brazzaville witnessed as many as 2,000 locals, 400 Chinese and 20 German workers. Employment statistics in five operating Chinese economic zones reiterated the numbers in line with records from other quarters.²⁷

There is no gainsaying that China has become the partner of choice of many African countries. More and more Chinese firms are trooping into the region and the reception has been very warm just like in the past.

The main areas of Chinese investments in Africa are in infrastructure, agriculture, mining, finance, transportation, and trade. Many African leaders say the presence of China in the region is a good thing considering that most investments are carried out with no political strings like those coming from countries in the West. As Africa is reported to be the fastest-growing economy in the world, China has played a significant role in making that reality of our time.

As Africa is hailed as rising, there is still plenty to worry about and most disturbing is youth unemployment and underemployment which keeps rising in many countries in the region. Currently, it is reported that 70 percent of unemployed people in Africa are young people.

Commentators believe that China can play a big role in bolstering the labour market in Africa. Chinese companies are encouraged to invest more in the youth by allowing them to do the jobs that many Chinese are brought

²⁶ Adams AV, Johansson de Silva S, Razmara S. Improving skills development in the informal sector: strategies for sub-Saharan Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank; 2013.

²⁷ "China-Africa Ties Should Create Jobs for the Youth." www.sidint.net, www.sidint.net/content/china-africa-ties-should-create-jobs-youth.

in as expats to do; all it takes is to develop their technical skills and prepare them for the work ahead.

Recently, China signed a deal with the government of Kenya which has been lauded as progressive as it targets the young population in the country. The Kenyan National Youth Service popularly dubbed the NYS was created in 1964 shortly after independence when education opportunities were largely limited.

The support from China has raised some bit of hope among the youth in Kenya as the NYS is about to be resuscitated and put back to the state it was many years when it was conceived. Observers are excited and hopeful that the revived NYS will help tackle the problem of rising youth unemployment in the country.

In the area of manufacturing, China was ahead of many countries for so many years; however, things are beginning to change as the country begins to witness the rise of industrial labour cost. Presently, most factories see this rise in cost as the main impediment for continuous production.²⁸

This latest development could offer a great opportunity for a region like Africa which can provide relatively lower labour cost and an abundance of raw minerals for production. Some analysts have predicted that if just 1 percent of China's production of garments is moved to Africa, the continent production and export of garments would be bolstered by at least 47 percent.

One of the countries that have benefitted from this situation is Ethiopia; the East African country has started an ambitious industrial park development project to provide the infrastructure and incentives for investors in light manufacturing industries.

At the moment, four parks are already operational, with many others still under construction. The country expects to maximize every opportunity that comes with China's "going out" policy by building at least 30 industrial parks by 2020.²⁹ Official government reports say about 28,000 jobs have been created for the young people since the inception of the first park.

In 2018, the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping stressed that future Sino-African cooperation should focus on the youth. He used the occasion of the Forum on China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to emphasize the importance of the alliance to develop young people in Africa.

In the first quarter of 2018 for example, the unemployment rate among South Africans aged 15–34 was

²⁸ Cleland, J. (2017). Population growth, employment, and livelihoods: the triple challenge. *Journal of Demographic Economics*, 83(01), 51–61

²⁹ Tilman Altenburg Head, Transformation of Economic and Social Systems Programme, German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)

38.2%. In the same age group across the rest of the continent, nearly a third is unemployed, according to an African Development Bank report. This situation, which can be seen in many other countries within the continent prompted China to make the promise of working with African leaders in training and empowering young people.

VII. HOW AFRICAN YOUTH CAN FURTHER CAPTURE JOBS CREATED BY CHINA

The World Economic Forum's Human Capital Index report themes: The Future of Jobs and Skills in Africa, Preparing the Region for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which was made public in 2017 reported that sub-Saharan Africa currently uses 55 percent of its human capital potential, compared with a global average of 65 percent.³⁰

The report further stated that most employers across the continent identify lack of skilled workforce as a big drawback on the growth of their businesses, the report carried out its survey in Tanzania with 41 percent of all companies in that country reporting the trend, 30 percent in Kenya, 9 percent in South Africa and 6 percent in Nigeria.³¹

This pattern needs to change if the youth are to grab the opportunities that will come with more Chinese investments in the region and trade. Capacity building is paramount to bridge that gap which has impeded the success of industrialization in Africa. Governments need to concentrate more on capacity building and as it would be the panacea to good economic performance in the short and long run.

African governments have been alerted by pundits that they are running out of time if they fail to capture the abundant jobs outsourced by China in recent times in the wake of the fifth industrial revolution.

According to the World Bank projection, the rising wages in China, as well as the government's commitment to upgrade its manufacturing industries, will see the country release around 83 million to 85 million jobs, providing unequaled industrialization opportunities for low-income economies, particularly for Africa.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In many countries in Africa, the service industries are growing. Some countries however still rely heavily on commodity production (oil, gas, gold, copper, iron ore, etc.), but the world is witnessing changes in this area. The more diversified countries are helping to bridge the schism between domestic and international consumer needs for goods like processed agricultural products, cosmetics,

³⁰ 胡雨濛 . "JOBS FOR AFRICA." JOBS FOR AFRICA - World - Chinadaily.com.cn, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201803/31/WS5abe80aba3105cdf6515763.html.

³¹ *ibid*

textiles, and clothing. No doubt African investors, like their counterparts everywhere else, are always interested in new and profitable sectors of the economy.

Most of these investors are putting lots of capital in industries such as telecommunications, fashion, marketing, and branding for leading international corporations and the food industry, among others.

Africa needs to work more closely with their Chinese counterparts to create more job programmes and opportunities along those lines as highlighted above. They could start by creating short-term job opportunities, including community services programme for unskilled youth, and a graduate internship scheme, which will help university graduates to acquire work experience in private-sector businesses.

Africa's development is under threat if the issue of youth unemployment and underemployment is not critically addressed. The continent cannot afford to exclude young people from economic opportunities that will encourage them to propel to the next orbit and contribute to the economic growth of their countries.

Politicians in Africa should approach the youth unemployment dilemma in two crucial ways; which is by helping to improve the business environment to boost more private investments, and equally by investing more in the training of young people.

For China to continue to achieve great things in Africa and sustain the flourishing relationship it enjoys with the region, the government needs to put youth at the heart of all its cooperation. They need to encourage them by pushing Chinese firms to engage more young Africans when they undertake their investments in the region and also to relax some of its employment rules in China to allow more fresh African graduates to have opportunities to be a part of the work-force in the country.

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