

# Policy Brief

## Youth Development In Osun State: The Case For A Youth Commission

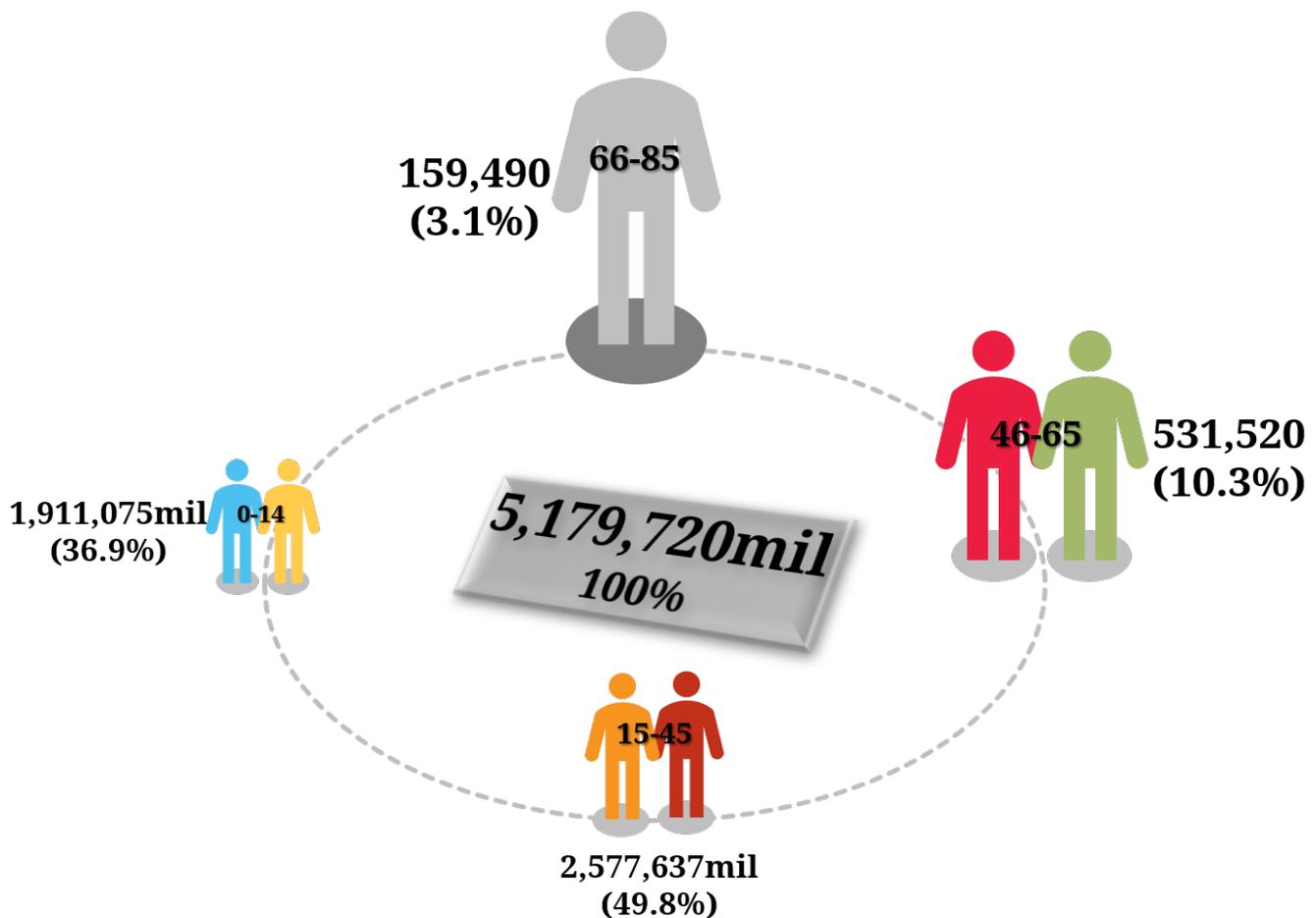
### Introduction

Youth development is the process whereby the creative potentials of young people are harnessed to enable them make pragmatic decisions and engage systems and institutions to improve their lives and contribute to societal development. It ranges from social, ideological, educational, technological and political/leadership empowerment to keep the youths gainfully engaged in productive activities<sup>1</sup>. Development is a process, not a goal. People continue to develop throughout their lifetimes. Therefore, promoting youth development is an enduring, overarching purpose, not a one-off goal. Federal Government of Nigeria (2001) on National Youth Development Policy asserted that: “Youths are the foundation of a society: their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labor power, a nation makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments”<sup>2</sup>. The above statement acknowledges the role of youth, as the most active segment of any society, not only in determining the spate of security, peace, economic and political stability needed for developing a nation, they are also the dominant population in countries across the world<sup>3</sup>. Irrespective of their population, energy, creativity and passion to better their lives and contribute to the development of their state, Osun youth face daunting socio-economic challenges. These include, declining educational and healthcare standards, high unemployment rates and poverty. This policy brief provides recommendations for effective youth development program and policy formulation, implementation and coordination using legislation and a strategic framework.

### Key messages

- Osun population as estimated in 2019 by National Population Commission (NPC) was 5,179,720 million. 2,577,637 or (49.8%) of the estimated population are young people between ages 15-45. This is the age range when productivity is highest<sup>4</sup>. If this huge number of energetic youth are developed intentionally, one can predict with some degree of certainty a more transformed and developed economy in Osun State.
- The socio-economic issues affecting Osun State cannot be disassociated from the experience of the youths, who are faced with a glaring mismatch between their hopes and aspirations and the opportunities available to them. This is clearly demonstrated by Youth unemployment (70%)<sup>5</sup> and second highest underemployment rates in Southwest Nigeria (14.2%)<sup>6</sup>. The debt servicing obligations of Osun State reduces funds that could be dedicated to youth policy. Similarly, addressing challenges with ease of starting a business remains critical in the promotion of youth entrepreneurship.
- It is imperative to enact a legislation that would drive policy on the socio-economic needs of Osun youth. An Osun Youth Development Commission/Agency (OYDC/A) enactment Act is being advocated for by the OYA campaign to ensure youth policy alignment and inter-agency coordination. The Commission will be guided by a clear strategy.

Figure 1: Distribution Of Osun 2019 Estimated Population Based On Productivity  
 Source: National Population Commission, 2019



Youth development is providing young people with the agency to make decisions about their lives and to have access to resources, opportunities and training that will position them to successfully engage with systems and institutions that help them to realise their dreams and goals, while meeting their needs and living meaningful lives. It is the understanding that youth aren't just the future, they are now.” – Keresa Arnold, from Jamaica

<http://www.yourcommonwealth.org/youth-policy/youth-development/youth-development-as-defined-by-young-people/>

## Need For A Youth Development Commission

*“Osun State ranked 35 out of 36 with an average distance to frontier score (DTF) of 72.48 in starting a business, according to Doing Business in Nigeria 2018 by World Bank Group”*

- Youth Centred Policies And Development Plan**

Osun State neither has an operational youth policy, nor possesses a youth development plan that could catalyze transformation in skills development, job creation,

improved agriculture, integrated health services and local economic development as well as opportunities to become involved in competitive businesses and industries through Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The absence of this only leaves the youth with options such as involvement in anti-social behaviour, civil despondency and delinquency.

Hence, implementing a strategic autonomous youth framework such as the Osun Youth Development Commission will ensure policy alignment; guaranteeing that youth aspirations are integrated and mainstreamed into the development policies and planning processes of the state at all levels.

- **Youth Focused Intervention**

The largest demographic which is the youth population since the reintroduction of democracy has been handled based on a roller-coaster principle where the ministry in charge of the largest demographic is either merged with another ministry or as a subset of another ministry with little or no significant attention to Youth Development or Growth Plan. Having a critical look at the Osun state huge youth demographic, not having a stable institution will only leave our youths to be disoriented, frustrated and marginalized which in turn would not have implications for their own lives alone, but also on the societies they will build. Hence, the need for a clear, autonomous and the strategic Youth Development Commission in Osun State that will be less affected by government transition and will give more stability to youth development issues. Ultimately, complementing the efforts of the Ministry of Empowerment and Youth Engagement in its development programs.

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- **Gainful Youth Employment**

Since the inception of Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYES) in 2010, the scheme has been the only way the youth receives attention from the government. Comparatively, using the NBS characterisation as a touchstone, OYES modalities can be said to be one of the foremost reasons Osun State with 14.6% ranked second in South-West Nigeria after Ondo State (17.6%) in Underemployment according to the Labour Force Statistics released by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in April, 2019<sup>6</sup>. Osun State 10-year State Development Plan (SDP) stated the unemployment rate in the state is 70% as revealed by its baseline survey in 2017 before the SDP was developed<sup>3</sup>. These only talks about the need for a clear, autonomous and the strategic Youth Development Commission in Osun State that will see to the establishment of a trust fund that will be targeted at creating economic opportunities and gainful employment.

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- **Fully Tapped Youth Potentials**

In starting a business, according to Doing Business in Nigeria 2018 by World Bank Group, Osun State ranked 35 with an average distance to frontier score (DTF) of 72.48<sup>7</sup>. Most young people that would have become an entrepreneur that could even become employer of labour and contribute to the state's GDP are finding it difficult to do business due to lack of ease in doing business. These social and economic potentials are not fully tapped. As the energy of these colossal numbers of youth is used on civil unrest. The youths are full of restiveness and civil despondency. Hence, the need to implement a strategic autonomous youth framework such as the Osun Youth Development Commission that will as a matter of policy alignment provide leadership on how the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) will be domesticated in Osun State thereby ensuring that youth aspirations are integrated and mainstreamed into the development policies.

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## **Recommendations**

*Osun Youth Agenda campaign recommends that the Government of Osun State should support the implementation of the strategic autonomous framework for sustainable youth development processes in Osun state by establishing OSUN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (OYDC).*

The Osun Youth Development Commission (OYDC) in her mandate shall exclusively address the priority developmental needs of Osun youth by ensuring Positive Youth Development Program such as quality education, promoting agriculture, improving health care delivery as identified by the Youth Priority Need Survey and the consultative approaches, creating jobs & economic development opportunities.

OYDC in its mandate shall be the policy-making coordinating body of all youth-related institutions, programs, projects and activities of the government, providing leadership in the formulation of policies and in the setting of priorities and direction of all youth promotion and development programs and activities; OYDC will complement government appropriations for youth promotion and development with funds from international donor community.

OYDC will have departments under its power: these shall include, but not limited to

- Policy Support / alignment and Research Department (Think Thank)
- Integrated Health Department that will have units like - The Drug Abuse Response Unit, which will provide Primary (Education and Sensitization), Secondary (Treatment e.g. drug abuse cessation programs) and Tertiary (Rehabilitation and reintegration) interventions to curb the menace of drug abuse in the state.
- Mental Health Unit and Sexual Reproductive Health Unit.

- Sustainable Development and programs department that will have units like
  1. Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Unit
  2. Technical and Vocational Education Training
  3. Re-Orientation and Public Awareness Programs
  4. Youth Agricultural Development Department
  5. ICT Department

The Commission will have coordination desk officers attached to different MDAs to facilitate effective communication and coordination on policies, programs and projects that concern youth.

## Policy Issues

### Ministry of Empowerment and Youth Engagement

The recommendation doesn't seek for cancellation, scrapping of the Youth Ministry or threaten the means of livelihood of any of the ministry staff. The ministry workers can be deployed to the development commission. There are other jurisdictions that have considered this policy recommendation and they still have their Youth Ministry intact, these jurisdictions include:

- Kogi Youth Development law 2019<sup>8</sup>
- Lagos State Employment Trust Fund Law 2016<sup>9</sup>
- Oyo State Agency for Youth Development Law 2002<sup>10</sup>
- A bill for the establishment and management of Akwa Ibom Youth Development Fund<sup>11</sup>

### Fund Mechanism

Having the understanding of the debt servicing obligations that has made Osun State to continue struggling financially, this proposal doesn't seek entirely from the state government to spend 100% on implementing the commission's mandate. There is some existing government structure that can be converted into office space for OYDC. Osun Youth Development Commission will take on special youth development issues as addressed in the Osun Youth Agenda by attracting counterpart fund to also run its operations with little financial involvement from the state government.

Just as the Lagos State Youth Employability Support Project implemented by UNDP and the Lagos State Government through Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF). The project, now its third year of implementation, has undertaken training activities targeted at youths in Lagos State in market-demanded skills in sectors like construction, manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality, entertainment, finance and tailoring<sup>12</sup>.

## Additional Resources

- UN Youth Development Indicators: these sets of indicators that could monitor and measure youth development over time. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-development-indicators.html>
- International Youth Sector Policy: <http://www.youth-policy.org/mappings/internationalyouthsector/overview/>

## References:

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11. <https://www.yafnet.org/campaigns/active/1/AKWA-IBOM-STATE-YOUTH-DEVELOPMENT-FUND-BILL-%28AKYFD-BILL%29->
12. <http://www.ng.undp.org/content/nigeria/en/home/presscenter/articles/2019/over-3-500-certified-from-undp-and-lagos-state-employability-sup.html>

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