

YEEP YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

The Youth Employment and Empowerment Project is building on the groundwork done in previous projects as well as hinging on the country's vision to focus on addressing youth unemployment. It is springing from the previous strategy designed to strengthen national policy, strategy and coordination for youth employment. Achievements and lessons learnt in decent job creation initiative areas of enterprise development and facilitation of school-to-work transition through Career Advisory and Placement Services and the Graduate Internship Programme serves as reason for scaling up /continuity of the initiatives.

While this project will invest in enhancing the employability of youth through initiatives like the flagship Graduate Internship Programme which provide youth with opportunities to get work experience and a better understanding of work ethics required and appropriate skills acquisition, the young people themselves shall be empowered to be entrepreneurs and employers in a bid to matching the supply and demand needs of labour. This project also proposes youth contribution through the National Youth Service with aims to provide civic services, social cohesion and work experience opportunities for the youth. The youth councils and the various structures shall be supported to provide the much needed youth participation in decision making process and youth interest initiatives. The proposed programme will have the following objectives:

- To provide rapid employment opportunities and income generating activities for young people,
- To strengthen the capacity of the National Youth Commission and Ministry of Youth Affairs.

Business Development and Employment Services

The Commission and the Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNDP that provides programme interventions that targets youths in the area of Business Development Services.

- **Career Advisory and Placement Services (CAPS) centres** A major output of the youth programme is the promotion of youth employment through the development of business development services. Two Career Advisory and Placement Services (CAPS) centres have been established and launched at Njala and University of Sierra Leone campuses. A career advisory and placement centre is a comprehensive service offered by educational institutions to increase the potential of students to acquire jobs in study-related areas and to become high-performing employees – thus contributing to the country's economy. An employers' forum for 50 employers was also organized to acquaint them with CAPS operations at the two universities. This has given the employers the opportunity to make direct input as to work force issues and needs. Plans are also underway to open CAPS

Centres in Makeni (Northern Polytechnic), Bo (Njala University Bo Campus), Kenema (Eastern Polytechnic).

- **NAYCOM Business Development Services (BDS) for Youth:** The National Youth Commission, with the support of the UNDP is implementing a BDS for Youth Project through Restless Development. The project is targeting **1,200 youths** in 5 centres within the office premises of NAYCOM in Freetown, Newton, Bo, Makeni and Kenema. The project is implemented by NGOS as follows:
 - (i) **AID-SL:** NAYCOM BDS Centre National Stadium Swimming Pool, Freetown (Target- 200 youths)
 - (ii) **Restless Development:** NAYCOM BDS Centre, Obasajo Centre, Newton Waterloo (Target- 200 youths)
 - (iii) **AFFORD-SL:** NAYCOM BDS Centre, Teko Road, Makeni (Target- 200 youths)
 - (iv) **HELP-SL:** NAYCOM BDS Centre, Tikonko Road, Bo (Target- 200 youths)
 - (v) **CEPAD-SL:** NAYCOM BDS Centre, Kenema (Target- 200 youths)

- **National Youth Service:** A National Youth Service is an opportunity that the country can give to its youth to gain practical work experience by serving in programmes of development value to the country. The process of developing the necessary framework of the National Youth Service is spearheaded by the National Youth Commission and the Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports with the support of UNDP and Restless Development.

The Service is expected **to create opportunities for young people** to:

 - Get their first professional work experience; live and work in another part of the country thereby gaining an enhanced perspective of their own country; gain a practical understanding of the development challenges confronting their country; develop links and contacts with employers that become important during job search;

It is also expected to **support national development efforts** through:

 - Provision of trained manpower to supplement and improve existing levels of manpower in mainly the public sector; deployment of personnel for rural development and community action; instilling sense of discipline, spirit of nation building and integration in youth

- **Graduate Internship Programme (GIP.)** The Graduate Internship Programme (GIP) is an initiative of the National Youth Commission of Sierra Leone supported by UNDP. As

part of its mandate to empower the nation's youth, NAYCOM is committed to promoting decent employment opportunities for the young people of Sierra Leone.

NAYCOM identified a lack of work experience as a major obstacle for job-seeking graduates. With the technical and financial assistance of UNDP, the Commission initiated a structured pilot graduate internship programme that targeted qualified graduates wishing to acquire formative and productive work experience. Restless Development, as Sierra Leone's banner-carrier for youth-led development, developed a professional internship model and placed 142 interns within 18 private, public and non-governmental institutions throughout Sierra Leone. The GIP is a pilot for the National Youth Service and an employment facilitation programme for university graduates with a threefold objective: Increase the number of young people benefitting from productive internship opportunities nationwide; increase the overall quality of the internship experience, so as to actually contribute to the employability of the intern and to the maximization of both the social and private return of the initiative; and ensure equal opportunities to access merit based internship positions.

The duration of the placement was 3 months. The beneficiaries were certified on 8th February, 2013 at the Thompsonian Centre, Syke Street, Freetown. Some of the placements have been made permanent by some institutions. London Mining has agreed to absorb 10 of the interns who were placed with the company. The success of the GIP has warranted calls for its continuity and expansion. This is subject to resource availability, although the UNDP has express willingness to support a second phase of the programme.



Interns at the London Mining Company and the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank