Employment Creation Policies and Strategies in Zambia, Prospects, Challenges and Future Outlook


By:

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Zambia has been facing the challenge of high unemployment since the early 1990s.

The problem of unemployment is more prevalent in Urban Areas and amongst the youth, women and people with disabilities.

In addition, there is a significant number of people in low paid and insecure jobs who work in unsafe working environments.
Poverty levels have remained significantly high despite the economic growth the country has recorded in the past years.

Some of the causes of the high unemployment levels include:

- Low manufacturing and industrial base
- Weak forward and backward linkages within the economy i.e. Between SMEs and Multi-National Corporations
- Weak entrepreneurial culture
- Low levels of economic diversification and productivity
- Weak education system that doesn't support practical work related skills
- Lack of investments in areas of high potential for employment generation E.g. Agriculture
- Focus on primary/raw products exports due to lack of investments in value addition
Despite some initiatives under Successive Governments, there has been lack of a well coordinated approach of addressing the unemployment problem.

The PF as a party recognised the problem of unemployment even before it ascended to power.
In this regard, the party through its Manifesto prioritised employment creation for the Zambian people

Specifically, PF plans to promote pro-poor growth with focus on job creation, skills training, self employment opportunities and improving the quality of jobs

Now that the Party is in Government, we strongly feel it is time to act decisively on the issue of unemployment
Currently, a number of policies and strategies exist that aim at addressing the challenge of unemployment. These policies and strategies are spread across various sectors of the economy.
The notable policies that address employment issues include:

- The crosscutting Employment and Labour Market Policy;
- The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Policy;
- The National Youth Policy;
- The TEVET Policy;
- The Gender Policy;
- Agricultural policies; and
- The Decentralisation Policy.
In addition, there are strategies being implemented by different institutions aimed at addressing unemployment, they include:

- The Citizens Economic Empowerment Fund;
- The Youth Empowerment Fund;
- Business Development Support programmes under various Ministries such as Community Development, Commerce, Agriculture, Gender, Youth and Sport, Mines, Education, Science and Technology among others.
Amongst the key challenges that need to be addressed are the following:

- Uncoordinated efforts that result in duplication;
- Poor Management of the strategies;
- Implementation of piece-meal activities that do not address the problem in its entirety;
- Poor programme/activity design;
- Relatively poor funding towards the initiatives;
- Implementation of strategies that result in dependence on Government as opposed to real empowerment;
- Lack of consistency or continuity to ensure sustained results; and
- Weaknesses in employment and labour related legislation and system of labour administration
4.0 FUTURE PROSPECTS

- Notwithstanding the weaknesses in the current system, there are a lot of reasons to be optimistic. One of these reasons is the presence of a new Government with the political will to address the challenge of unemployment and promotion of decent work and rights at work;

- The PF Government wants to be systematic in the way it handles the unemployment challenge in order to assure sustainability of outcomes;

- Overall, the future for employment creation lies in the review of the current Employment and Labour Market Policy and development of a well integrated and coordinated national employment creation strategy. The overarching aim should address promotion of decent jobs in the informal sector and expansion of formal sector employment;
From the Government perspective, possible issues that can be considered in formulating the strategy include:

- Appropriate institutional arrangements for effective implementation;
- Implementation of programmes in resource rich sectors such as agriculture, tourism, mining, forestry, lands and water and construction among others;
- Sustainable Resource mobilisation plan;
- Implementation of labour intensive programmes in selected geographical areas and sectors;
- Revising some of the functions and policies/legislation under some public institutions;
- Provision of practical skills, on-the-job training or apprenticeship particularly for the youth;
- Promotion of real community empowerment; and
- Mainstreaming of cross cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS, Gender and Environmental Management.
5.0 CONCLUSION

- In conclusion, I would like to state the following:
  
  - The future is in our hands;
  
  - The process we have started today must make a difference in the lives of the currently unemployed by putting money in their pockets;
  
  - As Government, we will offer the Leadership, Political will at all levels and all the necessary support and we shall expect no less from all those with the responsibility to implement our decisions;
  
  - Henceforth, Let us act to ensure progress.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!