

Forum : Citizen's forum of Labour

2026

Theme : Empowering the youth to drive/ thrive/ embrace and match the requirements of the future labour market

Name of the citizen : Isabella Bottoni

Family situation • Married / dating ○ Single ○ With kids, if so how many _____	Education level ○ Primary • Secondary ○ University
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1. How are you concerned by the subject?

As a counsellor on the Nigerian Council for Social Work, I work face to face with struggling families, people who live in poverty without access to healthcare, children without the opportunity to go to school. Nigeria is a country with so much potential, our population is young, with 65% under the age of 25, and one of the fastest growing in Africa with a population of 242 million. However, our people are struggling. When it comes to the labour market, our biggest issues are high youth unemployment and a work force which is primarily informal.

Due to poverty and poor education quality, 70% of children lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills, meanwhile, 1 in 5 primary aged children are not even in school. Our young population isn't being trained for the formal sector, especially not a rapidly changing job market. As a result, the majority of jobs include street vending, small-scale farming, artisanship and transport workers. In 2024, 93% of employment was informal. Having a huge informal workforce means many workers contribute significantly to the economy without having the same protections as formal employees. This is also a problem because the government does not receive taxes, and the workers do not receive benefits like health insurance, pensions and maternity leave. Informal jobs are unstable and often underpaid, which creates a downward spiral of a population living in poverty, without healthcare. This means that the government can't afford to meet people's basic human needs because it lacks the taxes to fund essential services such as hospitals and schools. Our people deserve better, they deserve healthcare when they're sick and education for their children, as recognised in the UN sustainable development goals 3 and 4.

2. What do you suggest on your scale ?

I work with struggling people who, for example, are sick and can't afford healthcare due to their low-salary jobs. As a member of the council, I would like to tackle these problems by proposing the following.

Using technology, including AI, in schools to personalise learning and make education more accessible. Only 36% of the population have access to internet. Therefore, funding the distribution of digital infrastructure in schools and public spaces is vital. On top of that, using AI to improve the training of teachers would contribute to raise the education quality. Our aim is to raise our children with a better education which would open their possibilities to higher paying jobs in the formal sector, especially facing the creation of new jobs and the shift away from the traditional jobs.

What is more, I suggest we use AI courses to retrain struggling workers to help them adapt to a changing and increasingly digital workplace. AI is transforming employment, and if Nigeria modernises its labour market without protecting its people, economic progress could increase inequality rather than reduce it. We need to view AI as a tool for improvement, of course while also maintaining human oversight.

Formalising the informal sector will not happen overnight. However, creating a better education system for future generations is a step towards new opportunities for Nigerian workers. We must also give recognition to the smaller-scale informal jobs and facilitate the process of registration. For example, portable social protection where workers are given access to health insurance, pensions, maternity leave even if they change employers or move between jobs.

While the labour market is transforming, we must ensure that developing countries change too, to avoid the risk of creating even bigger inequalities. This means it is essential that the education system grows to become more accessible with higher quality learning, with the help of AI. My hope is to unlock the potential this young and dynamic country holds by bringing education to all children and protection to hardworking people for a better future.