

APPOINTMENTS

Experts decry absence of social security in Nigeria

EXPERTS have warned that the widening gap between the rich and the poor may not abate until government introduces workable social security to take care of dependent groups.

Speaking recently in Abuja at a National Dissemination Workshop on National Transfer Accounts of Nigeria: Implications for Social Policy, a Professor of Economics at the University of Ibadan, Adedoyin Soyibo, said the neglect of the poor as shown in the total absence of social security in Nigeria added that there is absence of cash transfer in Nigeria.

He also stressed that systems be put in place to transfer cash to the dependency groups such as children below 18 years and aged from 65 years of age. According to him, bursary and scholarships that are seen as avenue for redistribution of national wealth is on the decline in Nigeria. "This dissemination workshop on national transfer accounts for Nigeria is to see how government and individuals can transfer through families, government, institutions so that the young and the old can be taken care for the overall reduction on the number of dependants that we have in Nigeria. There are no enough cash transfers such as scholarship and bur-

saries. All these have disappeared and we are saying that these should return to ensure social justice. Many of the transfers from government are in kind; they are not cash. For example, the classification of pension as part of social security is not true because it is only those who have worked and retired that can access it. However, we are happy that conditional cash transfer has started in the country," he stated.

Soyibo hinted that while it is within the democratic tenets for the people to demand good governance from their political leaders, he however, posited that payment of tax by the citizens is a pre-requisite for good governance.

He said: "It is a good thing for the people to demand qualitative representation but under our present circumstances we cannot because we are not paying tax. Government does not place emphasis on payment of tax because of free petroleum money. This petroleum money will dry up some day. Government must encourage Nigerians to pay tax from their income. It is only when the people pay their taxes that they are in proper position to demand how such money is spent by those they elected into public offices."

Commenting on the possible effects of the global crunch on the employment

situation in Nigeria, the Lead Social Protection Specialist at the Nigeria Office of the World Bank, Prof. Foluso Okunmadewa said while some levels of impact may be felt, the slow integration of Nigeria into the global economy may prevent a noticeable effect.

His words: "When investors have their money trapped in banks, it is expected that there will be no money to invest and therefore, firms will not be able to engage more people because they may have to cut back on their productions. I believe that this is one area that the World Bank dialogue with the Federal Government will focus on and that is how to plug possible areas that the crunch will affect the production sector of the Nigerian economy. I think now is the time for government to even do more than they have been doing because government is the last insurance for firms and is expected to bailout firms when they can no longer go on in their activities for the betterment of the economy."

While lauding the economic team from the University of Ibadan that included Dr. Olawaju Olaniyan and Mr. Akanni Lawanson for organising the workshop, Prof. Okunmadewa opined that the national transfer accounts have implications for development work

From Collins Olayinka, Abuja

because the account of a country shows the areas that incomes are coming into the economy and what expenditures and being embarked upon.

"The national transfer account once operational will show to which area Nigeria is spending money and then we can clearly know what direction development target government is heading. The account will show what different age groups of the population needs to realise their full potential for the national growth and if the productivity level of the active population is not properly looked after, then the country's inflow will be much than outflow and that can be dangerous to Nigeria's economy," he said.

Presenting a paper on the implications of national accounts on policy, Olaniyan stated that income generation in Nigeria is predominantly from self-employment, which is mostly in the informal sector. This, according to him, suggests that to boost labour income, appropriate incentives including building and developing institutions should be given the attention they deserve. Besides, the share of formal sector employment needs vigorous boosting, in the medium to long-term in the country. "Policies aimed at reducing

the burden of the poor in human capital building in health and education is important in this regard. There is need to improve government expenditure in education and health. In education, improving the flow of funds from government to its citizens through scholarships and bursaries, and loans can lighten the burden on the poor. In health, transfers to the poor through well-operated drug revolving funds will need to be intensified. Besides, the resource-pooling and risk-

pooling functions of health financing using health insurance (which now exists in the country) and perhaps earmarked taxes need being strengthened. In the case of health insurance because of the large informal sector, there is the possibility of excluding a large segment of the population if it is not extended to informal sector. It is therefore, important that the implementation of the informal sector health insurance which has already been designed, be

expedited to cover as many Nigerians as possible," he submitted.

Policies aimed at facilitating the building of asset income would enhance the generation of income to meet the requirements of funding the Life Circle Deficit (LCD) generated during the periods of child and adult dependency. These include improved contract enforcement laws, provision of facilities and incentives that improve the investment climate, among others.

Virgin Nigeria restructures, appoints Olumide as chief commercial officer

VIRGIN Nigeria has announced a major restructuring and appointment of new personnel.

Under the new structure, Dr. Yemi Osindero, will become the chief strategy officer, responsible for the company's Programme, Loyalty Affairs and Product Development. The erstwhile Chief of Operational Services, Kevin Dudley will now be known as chief operating officer in line with industry usage, and Dapo Olumide joins the company as its chief commercial officer with responsibilities for sales and distribution, commercial planning, and outstations.

Announcing the new structure in Lagos, the Chief Executive Officer of Virgin Nigeria, Mr. Conrad Clifford said: "As a forward looking organisation, Virgin Nigeria is constantly in search of excellence and this new, flatter structure will boost the airline's strength in becoming a leading global airline based in Nigeria."

An Aviation professional for over 28 years, the new chief commercial officer, Olumide, earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida, USA in 1980 after which he joined Aero Contractors in 1982. Following many successful

years, he was appointed the deputy managing director in 2002 at which point he transformed the original company vision from an exclusively B2B model to the more demanding and more modern B2C approach.

Prior to joining Virgin Nigeria, Olumide has been a banker with the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC), specifically in the area of equipment (ships and aircraft) Financing and Transport Infrastructure Projects Development. In his new position as the chief commercial officer, Olumide will oversee various functions, including sales and commercial planning.

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