▶ Assessment of Public Employment Services in Nigeria

Assessment Report and Recommendations

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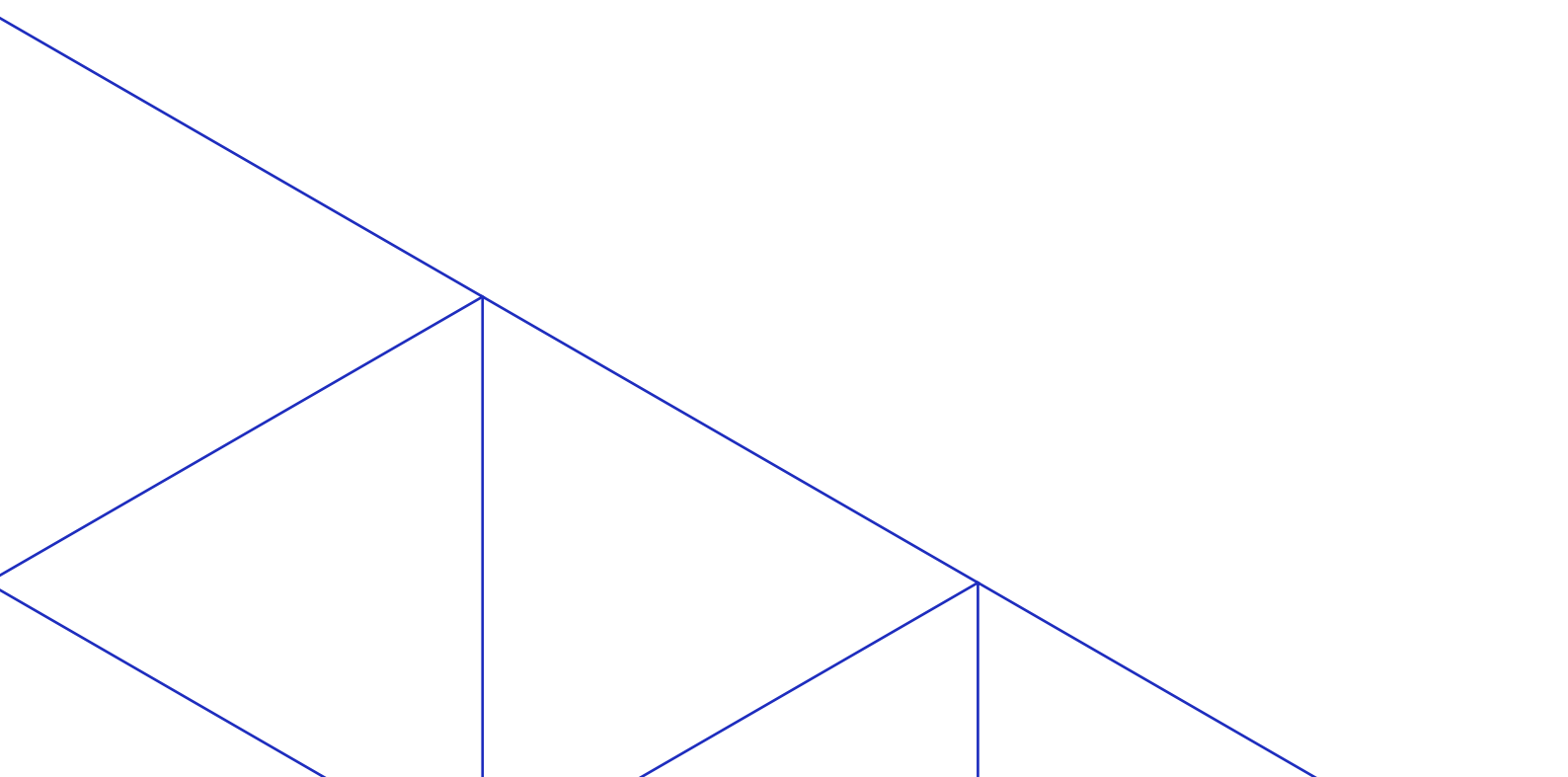
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Foreword

 The International Labour Organisation considers Public Employment Services essential to a well-functioning labour market system. The ILO Convention on Employment 1919 (No. 2) promotes the establishment of PES, and the Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88) elaborates on its role. To this effect, Nigeria's Federal Government has a physical employment service infrastructure underpinned by a digital job-matching portal. The National Electronic Labour Exchange (NELEX) matches labour supply and demand, providing users with a source of labour market information (LMI). Through the National Employment Policy (NEP), the Government has made commitments to create or strengthen units within FMLE and related agencies to collect and collate appropriate LMI and improve social cooperation with its partners.

Against this backdrop, the GIZ, with technical expertise from the ILO, funded this initiative to enhance the institutional capacity for providing labour market information and services (LMIS) under the Promoting Employment in Nigeria (PEN) project. The partnership aimed to understand Nigeria's current employability service ecosystem at all administrative levels and study the operations of the Federal Government's digital job-matching portal, known as the National Electronic Labour Exchange (NELEX). Precisely how it interacts with other labour market stakeholders to deliver services, and its potential to be modified into a tool to gather Labour Market Information (LMI).

The project relied on the ILO clustered PES capabilities framework, a systems approach to diagnosing readiness and responsiveness of the service to clients' needs and expectations. The clusters provided a tool to assess compliance with the 'practical plan' set out in the 2017 NEP to build an interconnected employment service network at all administrative levels. This project revealed that the building blocks to enable other actors to contribute services, particularly sound LMI, links to skills development actors, and digital connectivity, were only in the starting blocks. The project recommendations addressed governance structures for partnership development and performance management; reforming the organisation and management of NELEX; more efficient employment information services; pooling resources of wider labour market stakeholders, and adopting a performance management framework.

I thank our project donor the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH ; the German agency for international cooperation. My appreciation also extends to tripartite partners of the ILO – the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria, Nigeria Labour Congress and the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association – for their reliable support. I am particularly grateful to all representatives of agencies who submitted data, statistics, and reports and took their time to partake in key informant interviews and shared the survey instruments, facilitating the collection of data and information on time.

The intellectual contributions to the creation of this report have come from Anton Eckersley and Omolola Olarinde, who served as external consultants on this assessment. It is also important to acknowledge the effort of the Promoting Employment in Nigeria project team

It is my hope that this study contributes to strengthening Nigeria's employment governance framework.

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Foreword

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), public employment services play a pivotal role by the establishment of labour market policies and the matching of job seekers with employers. In this light, the system´s functioning is key in fighting youth unemployment and raising productivity.[1]

The Promoting Employment in Nigeria (PEN) Project is an ILO project financed through GIZ "Skills Development for Youth Employment – SKYE" grant agreement. The collaboration between the ILO and the SKYE project started in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic with the goal of promoting the national governance framework and support the availability and accessibility of labour market information to enhance the integration and reintegration of job seekers into the labour market. The focus areas are the building of the evidence-base, the acceleration of policy implementation, the improvement of multi-stakeholder collaboration and the support of employment service providers.

SKYE is a vocational training and employment promotion programme which commenced in May 2018 and is funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The objective of SKYE is to increase the prospects of gainful employment for Nigerian youth aged between 15 and 35 and for returnees in the selected sectors of the economy.

This comprehensive report covers challenges when building labour market information and a labour market service system on a policy, managerial, labour market, partnership, and performance level. The detailed key recommendations are a guide and a call to action for partners and stakeholders to establish functioning systems to improve the current situation, especially for young Nigerians in the job market. One intervention of GIZ SKYE is the support of government partners in the establishment of labour market information systems (LMIS) on a federal level and in different states. Stakeholders in the private and public sectors as well as representatives of employers and employees must be included to collect and process reliable data for informed decision-making and effective labour market measures.

In this spirit, we would like to encourage decision-makers to use this report as a basis for the design and implementation of meaningful policies, effective job-matching processes, and relevant trainings.

We would like to thank the ILO and the consultant for contributing to this important discussion with this in-depth assessment and practical solutions.

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1. International Labour Organisation, Strengthening Public Employment Services in English Speaking Africa, https://www.ilo.org/emppolicy/projects/W-CMS_758000/lang--en/index.htm

Introduction

Despite having Africa's largest economy and a growing youthful population Nigeria's employment and labour productivity growth is low by international standards. A number of challenges including the structure of the economy, poor labour market transparency and chronic skills mismatches have contributed to perennially high rates of unemployment, underemployment and low productivity (Salihu, 2021).[1]

Nigeria's Federal Government has recognized the importance of building an effective skills and employment service ecosystem to help overcome these challenges and to build an inclusive, sustainable labour market fit for the twenty-first century. In 2002, it set out a range of measures in a National Employment Policy, revised in 2017, which included equipping citizens with the skills demanded by the economy, improving the matching of labour supply and demand and improving labour market transparency though better data gathering.

An important plank to facilitate employment growth centered on the **development of a physical employment service infrastructure underpinned by a digital job-matching portal,** the National Electronic Labour Exchange (NELEX), with the aim of matching supply and demand, providing a source of labour market information to users and generating labour market information to guide strategy and planning.

▶ Purpose and Objectives of the Assessment

This assessment sits under the overarching *Promoting Employment in Nigeria project* (PEN), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the German agency for international cooperation), which was launched to *'enhance the institutional capacity for providing labour market information and services (LMIS) in Nigeria'.* Specifically, the Report will:

▶   Provide a bird's-eye view of the **current employability service ecosystem** in Nigeria at federal, state and local levels. This will include both public sector-anchored bodies like Job Centers, Migrant Resource Centres and training centres as well as external stakeholders like employers' and workers' organizations, private interim agencies and community/non-governmental organizations.

▶   Give consideration to the operation of the **National Electronic Labour Exchange (NELEX), the Federal Government's digital job-matching portal,** the way it interacts

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1   Salihu, A.H. 2021. Unemployment in Nigeria: Policy Review and Recommendations. Electronic Paper. Rethinking Economics The Uploaders (RETU).

with other labour market stakeholders to deliver services, and its potential to be modified into a tool to gather Labour Market Information (LMI). This is particularly against the backdrop of increasing digitization of Public Employment Services (PES) in other parts of the world.

▶ Assess whether, and if so to what extent, **NELEX functions in respect of the policy intent set out in Chapter 4.7.6 of the National Employment Policy (NEP)** to improve infrastructure and systems, and to identify how social dialogue, collaboration, partnership and governance between the different labour market stakeholders might be improved to deliver better outcomes.

▶ Context and Overview

Nigeria has Africa's largest economy with a real GDP of 20.33 trillion Nigerian Naira (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS),[2] around US$488 billion, in Q4 2021 and a population of 214 million (National Population Commission (NPoPC), 2022).[3] At current rates, Nigeria's population is expected to double in about 25 years.

Crucially, it will take up to 40 years for its GDP per capita to also double. With an annual population growth rate of around 2.5 per cent and with over 44 per cent of its population under fifteen, Nigeria is well placed to harness a demographic dividend if it is able to *'promote job creation and entrepreneurship to harness the productive potential of the large youth population'* according to the Johns Hopkins and the Gates Institute Demographic Dividend Index Report (2020).[4]

In order to grasp the economic and social potential afforded by its innate economic heft and youthful population the Nigerian state faces a number of fundamental challenges. Foremost among these is its comparatively low stock of human capital. Most of the country's labour force is low-skilled. About 30 per cent of workers have never attended school and some 50 per cent have only a primary education or less. Among workers aged 15–24, only 59 per cent of women are literate compared to 71 per cent of men (World Bank 2019).[5] This large skills deficit holds back the country's ongoing shift away from the primary sector into potentially more growth-enhancing secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy.

This deficit likewise contributes greatly to Nigeria's large productivity gap compared to its inward investment competitors like South Africa, Ghana and Ethiopia (Global Data 2021).[6] Importantly, low productivity feeds into higher levels of unemployment (27 per cent), poverty (40 per cent) and growing inequality that affects the country's citizens (AFDP 2021).[7]

High population growth, low economic growth, and low productivity are in turn recognised as some of the key **drivers of informality.** Nigeria has an estimated 54.6 million informal workers which represents some 53 per cent of the workforce, the majority of whom are women (World Bank 2019).[8] Even before the impact of the Global Pandemic, an estimated 75 per cent of all new jobs in Nigeria were informal. Informality negatively impacts productivity and growth, thus creating a downward spiral which can be difficult to reverse.[9] The labour market in Nigeria is also characterized by large **mismatches between**

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2 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). 2021. Nigerian Gross Domestic Report Q4. Abuja. February 2022 available at < https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241137>.

3 National Population Commission (NPopC). 2021. Abuja. Available at < https://nationalpopulation.gov.ng/statistics/>

4 Bill and Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, John Hopkins Centre for Communications Programs and National Population Council, Nigeria. 2020. Demographic Dividend Effort Index Report: Nigeria. Available at <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aa-id:scds:US:aa3057f3-9e1f-4755-b1ea-2864693e1eab#pageNum=2>

5 World Bank. 2019. World Development Indicators. Literacy rate, by sex, adults as a percentage of total population, Nigeria. The World Bank. Washington.

6 Global Data. 2021;   7 AFDP 2021   8 Ibid.

9 World Bank, 2019, Global Economic Prospects, A flagship report. The World Bank. Washington, DC. Available at <https://www.ioe-emp.org/index-.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=146859&token=a7ba39c29c938e5f11e4756c2c82e5888a99fa68>.

the qualifications of workers and the needs of employers. The **Nigerian Educational Development and Research Council** (NEDRC) which is responsible for the academic curriculum from basic to secondary levels of education, and the **National Universities Commission** (NUC), which is responsible for tertiary education, are thus both crucial labour market stakeholders.

The formal **Technical and Vocational Education and Training** (TVET) system in Nigeria has a relatively modest coverage of below 200,000 graduates per annum, (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2021 p. 16).[10]   The **Industrial Training Fund** (ITF) also operates a **National Apprenticeship Scheme** regulating the quality of apprenticeships across sectors, but its coverage hovers below 100,000 apprentices. About a quarter of all school leavers in Nigeria take up apprenticeships (Government of Nigeria and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), 2017).[11]

The National Directorate for Employment (NDE) also delivers a large number of **training and skills acquisition programmes** to improve employability. There are a number of state-level academic reports evaluating the impact of the NDE, but no publication showing the coverage of the scheme. The **Department of Skills Development and Certification,** part of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE), reported issuing between 9462 (in 2018) and 14,750 (2016) certificates nationwide with an average of 12,158 per annum excluding years with outliers.

The years 2020, affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic when only 4,560 certificates were issued; and 2022 with incomplete data were excluded when determining the average. In addition to these certificates, the Department of Skills Development and Certification trained 9,558 beneficiaries between 2009 and 2022 in eight of its skills upgrading and vocational training centres nationwide. However, data collected on trade tests or skills development was not published in any routine report or paper and was obtained on the basis of a request made to the Department of Skills Development and Certification.

Training conducted and trade test certificates issued were often announced only in media publications.[12] This practice suggests that the size of the employability ecosystem might be underestimated, thus further contributing to the confusing plethora of apprenticeship programmes that exist for employers and participants to navigate. Ongoing efforts to produce validated credentials are still insufficient to cover the wider labour market. This makes it difficult for employers to assess the true worth of qualifications for significant numbers of informally trained workers when they make respective job offers.

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10 Government of Nigeria. 2021. Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan. Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development. Abuja.
11 UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization). 2017. Skill Gaps Assessment in Nigeria.
12 An example of announcements of trade tests certifications issued https://von.gov.ng/2021/07/16/anambra-state-issues-trade-test-certificates-to-500-youths/

The Overarching Policy Framework

The Federal Government has long acknowledged the importance of creating a strong skills and employment service ecosystem to overcome the country's labour market and productivity challenges. The first National Employment Policy (NEP) was adopted back in 2002 to create an overarching strategy and implementation framework to achieve this.

In 2017, a revised NEP was agreed with the social partners and other stakeholders that set out a "vision and a practical plan for achieving the country's employment goals".

The revised NEP articulated the steps needed to reach the goal of full and equitable employment by bringing together *"various measures, programmes and institutions that influence the demand and supply of labour and the functioning of labour markets"* (Information Box 1).

▶ Information Box 1 - The 2017 National Employment Policy

▶ Goal
Create an enabling environment for productive, inclusive, and employment-intensive growth

▶ Key Objectives

- ▶ Promote the **goal of full employment** and enable all men and women to attain a sustainable livelihood through full productive and freely chosen employment

- ▶ Enable each worker to **qualify for** and to **use his/her skills** in a job for which he/she is well suited, irrespective of race, sex, religion , political opinion, physical disabilities, national extraction, ethnic or social origin

- ▶ **Support collective responsibility of key stakeholders** in different sectors to harmonize efforts towards employment growth

- ▶ **Strengthen the institutional framework** for the promotion of employment, and sustainable livelihoods

- ▶ Develop programmes to **link education and training** to employment

▶ Information Box 1 - The 2017 National Employment Policy

- ▶ **Promote skills and competencies** for those in the **formal and informal** sectors especially in rural areas; create the right conditions to help private sector employers transform the informal sector into the formal sector

- ▶ Enhance the **integration of migrants** into both the Nigerian and West African sub-region labour markets

- ▶ Focus on the **needs of vulnerable groups**

- ▶ Develop and maintain a **functional Labour Market Information System (LMIS)**

- ▶ Recommend an effective strategy for the effective implementation of national employment policy through a **harmonized monitoring and evaluation mechanism**

The FMLE is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the NEP at the national level (6.1) through the **National Employment Council (NEC)**, the same coordination mechanism used to manage progress towards achieving full employment under the first NEP. The NEP made clear the crucial role to be played by the **social partners** and other state and non-state actors to achieve its objectives, and emphasized the importance of creating an *"enabling environment"* to facilitate their contributions.

The NEP recognised that **programme monitoring and evaluation** of past employment promotion initiatives had not been effective. It therefore foresaw FMLE, with the support of other stakeholders, undertaking a 'minor' review during the first year of policy imple-mentation followed by a 'major' review at the five-year mark (NEP 5.4). The Government made commitments to **create or strengthen units within FMLE and related agencies to collect and collate appropriate Labour Market Information.** Similarly, the NEP called on the social partners to strengthen their own monitoring and evaluation capacity and to share information with FMLE.

The production of granular LMIS was of central importance to successfully monitor progress made against **Key Indicators** (set out below) and to produce **Implementation Progress Reports** (NEP 5.3.).

- ▶ Appreciable reduction in unemployment from graduates in tertiary education
- ▶ Reduction in youth unemployment
- ▶ Increase in female employment and labour force participation
- ▶ Increase in formal employment
- ▶ Increase in registration of SMEs
- ▶ Increased supply of workforce equipped with skills demanded by employers

The Public Employment Service Ecosystem

Substantive progress towards implementing the 'practical plan' to build an interconnected employment service network set out in the 2017 NEP has been patchy. The keystone of the envisaged ecosystem has yet to emerge. This pertains to FMLE's modernization programme of the Employment Exchanges and Executive Registries in each State, and the development of Community Employment Centres providing employment services in each of Nigeria's 744 local government areas. Likewise, the building blocks to 'enable' other actors to contribute services – in particular sound LMI, links to skills development actors and digital connectivity – remain in the starting blocks.

Glimpses of what might tangibly be achieved, despite considerable hurdles, can be seen in some of the emerging collaborative services between FMLE and GiZ and the evolving State-managed offers.

▶ Federal-Level Public Employment Service

The **Public Employment Service** (PES) in Nigeria is regulated through the **Labour Act of 1990, as amended in Cap 1. LFN 2004.** The Act designates the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE) as the provider of employment services at the national level. FMLE has a network of 42 Employment Exchanges and 17 Professional and Executive Registries located in the 36 states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (ILO Country Review 2015).[13] Their reported service offer includes vacancy information, job matching and some vocational and employability training.

The Field Study confirmed that each state has an **Employment Exchange and Profession-al and Executive Registry**. FMLE had previously reported that it had been 'upgrading' these to create model 'Job Centres', as outlined in the NEP, including the computerization of systems and connection to the NELEX electronic portal. To date, the upgrading process has been limited to only seven states, one in each geopolitical zone of Nigeria and one in the Federal Capital Territory.[14]

Since 2017, FMLE has also begun delivering a range of employment service measures to outward migrants and returnees through a network of **Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs),** three of which have been co-located in NELEX premises.[15] In addition to the NELEX

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13   ILO (International Labour Organization). 2015.
14   While employment registers are maintained in each of the 36 states, computerized NELEX-equipped facilities are currently limited to Anambra (SS), Bauchi (NE), Delta (SS), Edo (SS), Kaduna (NW), Lagos (SW) in addition to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja (NC).
15   MRCs are located in Edo, Lagos and Abuja and rendering a wide range of services to all migrant categories including, but not limited to aspiring, actual and return migrants as well as immigrants in Nigeria in need of labour advisory services, labour interventions, referrals and other services.

services accessible to mainstream jobseekers, MRCs also deliver psycho-social support, counselling and referrals to partner agencies such as the **National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons** and other related matters (NAPTIP) and **the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons** (NCFRMI).

FMLE collaborates with other Federal-level bodies to deliver services, including the **Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development** and its parastatal, or government-owned agency, the **National Directorate of Employment** (NDE). Their collaborations include skills programmes to improve employability. The NDE has reported almost 250,000 beneficiaries of various strategies to combat mass unemployment as at 2019.

The NDE deserves special attention as it is a parastatal of the FMLE. It lists four strategies towards achieving its mandate, which are as follows: Vocational Skills Development (VSD), Small Scale Enterprises Programme (SSE), Rural Employment Promotion (REP), and Special Public Works (SPW). These are geared towards providing employment for at least 774,000 young Nigerians for three months.[16] Each of these strategies include a number of initiatives towards meeting their objectives.

▶ The VSD comprises six initiatives, namely :

- ▶ The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS);[17]
- ▶ The School on Wheels Scheme for youths, which provides mobile vocational training facilities to rural areas, especially to local communities with a dearth of competent craftsmen;
- ▶ The Vocational Skills for Physically Challenged, which provides training programmes that range from 3 months to 1 year for the self-employment of persons with special needs;
- ▶ The Resettlement Loan Scheme that provides startup funds to eligible beneficiaries who have completed the programme;
- ▶ The Partnership in Skills Training and;
- ▶ Community Based Training Schemes. The NDE reported that between 2017 and 2019 the VSD initiative trained 15,258 women in cosmetology. This significant coverage was as a result of the short duration (3 months) and lower costs of the cosmetology course when compared to other vocational skills.[18]

▶ The SSE initiatives cover

- ▶ Business training for graduates of tertiary institutions and artisans which include school leavers and retirees;
- ▶ Enterprise start up and Development Training;
- ▶ The Microbusiness Skills Training Scheme; and
- ▶ The NDE Enterprise and Finance Counselling Clinic which is delivered in collaboration with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

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16 Jimada, I.M. 2020. National Directorate of Employment and Various Initiatives Implemented. A paper presented at the National Employment Council Meeting, Blue Spring Hotel, Abuja, 12 March, 2020.

17 For example, the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme A (A-NOAS) and its more advanced level B-NOAS.

18 Jimada, I. M. 2020. National Directorate of Employment and Various Initiatives Implemented. A paper presented at the National Employment Council Meeting, Blue Spring Hotel, Abuja, 12 March, 2020.

▶ On Rural Employment Promotion, four initiatives exist, namely

- ▶ The Rural Agricultural Development Training Scheme (RADTS);
- ▶ The Rural Handicraft Training Scheme;
- ▶ The Integrated Farming Training Scheme; and
- ▶ The NDE Agricultural Park Project (APP).

  The APP consists of three schemes of its own:
  - ▶ The Agricultural Value Chain (AVC) scheme
  - ▶ The Agricultural Enhancement Scheme (AES) and
  - ▶ Food Processing and Packaging (FPP) Scheme.

  These three APP schemes empowered 7,178 beneficiaries in 2019.

▶ The SPP has five initiatives which are as follows:

- ▶ The Graduate Attachment Programme (GAP) Scheme;
- ▶ The Environmental Beautification Training Scheme (EBTS);
- ▶ The Community Development Scheme;
- ▶ The Graduate Coaching Scheme, and
- ▶ The Renewable Energy Development Training Scheme.

In addition, the NDE has also been offering Trainers Capacity Upgrade which provides physical infrastructure to trainers to facilitate training delivery.

▶ State Interventions to Public Employment Service Infrastructure

FMLE is on the **Exclusive Legislative List of the Nigerian Constitution**, and thus operates Employment Exchanges in each of Nigeria's 36 States. All of them maintain manual registers, with only seven being equipped with additional digital NELEX infrastructure.[19] The FMLE reported that the Federal Government had committed to remodeling all job centres and upgrading FMLE offices in each state so that they are connected to the NELEX portal.

Several Nigerian states, such as Ogun, Delta, Edo, Kaduna, Lagos, and others have their own **State-managed Jobcentres**, reporting directly to the state Governor. Feedback from the field interviews suggests that the **state-run employment services were well-organized and -managed.** They reported registers of tens of thousands of users who were able to access a wide range of services including job matching, legal and human resource

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19 In Anambra, Bauchi, Delta, Edo, Kaduna, Lagos, and FCT.

clinics for businesses, entrepreneurial support such as startup tool kits and startup funds, business mentorship programmes and employability services and training. Several of these initiatives benefit directly from donor funding that supports employment promotion in the state.

State-managed Employment Centres reported using **performance management** tools with **Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) and **targets** set at the beginning of the year. Their reports included **outcome measures** such as job placements, number of jobs 'created' (disaggregated by direct and indirect jobs with clear conceptualizations of each category), as well as the number of jobs saved and the employability training beneficiaries. Some states differentiated these by gender. Evaluation at the state-level also included **score cards**, with in-built processes to provide technical support towards meeting project targets. However, state-level PES reflected that reporting focused on quantitative measures whereas improving labour market performance called for more qualitative evaluation to determine skills gaps and the state's role in filling them.

State-managed PES reported **using key LMI in their work**, with data-driven labour market interventions using reliable (though high level) national data sources from the **NBS** and the **Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency** (SMEDAN), as well as collecting basic administrative data through their own operations. The ability to exploit wider data sources through open data and data sharing remained a challenge as indeed it does at all administrative levels in Nigeria. State-level agencies reported that the data they collected was used for administrative decisions and was available to others outside their agencies on request. A marginal number of field surveys had been conducted at the state-level to collect LMI, but their cost was deemed to be a barrier to regular reporting. State-level agencies were unaware of the data requirements of other employment agencies or service users.

▶ **Information Box 2 - Frequently Collected Labour Market Information by State-Level PES**

- ▶ Graduate output
- ▶ Gaps between graduate output and employability
- ▶ Technical sectors with skill gaps disaggregated by gender
- ▶ Wages and hours of work by sector, education and gender
- ▶ Workforce needs of the labour market
- ▶ Sectors the government intends to fund
- ▶ Impacts of government-funded programmes
- ▶ Employed persons disaggregated by sex, sector, age group
- ▶ Recommendations on formalization of the informal sector
- ▶ MSMEs and SMEs registered at all levels of government
- ▶ Information on social security contributions and social benefits

Source: Interlocutors, ILO PES Assessment in Nigeria 2022

State-managed employment services reported **inter-agency collaboration at the state-level,** but **marginal collaboration and partnership with FMLE**. The main reason cited for this was the **absence of any coordination mechanism,** which, it was recognized, frustrated both the sharing of data and information and had the unintended effect of excluding state levels, which have a lower administrative position in relation to the federal structures. There was a realization that this results in a duplication of tasks among agencies.

The ability to **draw on data from disparate sources** is accepted in many PES circles as being beneficial, including by helping to validate outcomes between different agencies in different locations (e.g., the German PES uses a system of 'statistical twinning' to benchmark and monitor individual offices and regions with those elsewhere in the country that share similar characteristics of demography, economy etc.). During the course of this project, FMLE reported initiating meetings with Edo State Skills Development Agency, commonly called Edo Jobs, towards collaborating on LMI and Industrial Training.

State-managed PES were warm to the idea of using the NELEX Portal, recognizing the benefits of a central overarching employment service function to provide a national view of the labour markets and occupational and geographical mobility. There was, however, a clear realization that the NELEX Portal's poor reliability and functionality made this challenging.

▶ Public Employment Service Infrastructure at Local Level

The NEP (4.7.7) committed to delivering employment services closer to the people by establishing a minimum of two federally funded **Community Employment Centres** (CECs) in each of the country's **744 Local Government Areas**. These Centres were geared to deliver core employment services including vacancy information, job matching, career counselling, training and signposting to other external services like health and debt management. Jobseekers' access to these services was envisaged either via face-to-face or via digital channels, including via remote kiosks. Interlocutors recognised the importance of including **local communities** in skills and employability development, particularly in larger states with communities geographically distant from the administrative centre. It is possible that the global Covid-19 pandemic may have delayed implementation, but this report found no evidence that any CECs or remote kiosks have opened and that there has been any increase in geographical access.

▶ Other Stakeholders Delivering Employment Services

Outside the main federal and state-level PES infrastructure, the skills and employability ecosystem in Nigeria comprises a wide range of other **public, private, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international development/donor organizations.** The Labour Act as amended in Cap. 1 LFN 2004 sets out the regulatory framework through which the Federal government collaborates with such organizations. Prominent among this group is the *Nigerian-German Center for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration* which is man-

aged through a **document of partnership intent**. Their services include job matching and placement, career counselling and some Vocational Education and Training (VET). In some respects, the Nigerian-German center offers a glimpse of what PES might achieve elsewhere with the right political support, adequate funding, planning, training, and performance management

▶ Private Employment Interim Agencies (PEAs)

In most countries, Labour Ministries increasingly encourage **cooperation between PES and private employment agencies (PEAs)** to improve the number of, and access to vacancies and to support labour market transparency. In Nigeria, the Labour Act as amended in Cap. 1 LFN 2004 sets the regulatory framework for these agencies. There were 1,481 private employment agencies licensed by the FMLE since 2018 and over 554 with valid operational licenses at the time of the study. A distinction was made between those registered to operate on the national level and those focusing on the international market.

There are an **unaccounted number of unregistered agencies** operating in Nigeria without practice licenses, including some well-known recruitment agencies. Stories of poor or even criminal recruitment practice are widespread. This seems to have placed the focus of FMLE's engagement on the need for better regulation in the PEA space[20] rather than on building effective cooperation to improve service and outcomes.

FMLE, in conjunction with the **National Employers' Consultative Association** (NECA) facilitated the establishment of the coordinating body for recruitment agencies in Nigeria, the **Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria** (HuCaPAN). Collaboration between FMLE and PEAs is facilitated by HuCaPAN through a variety of engagements including periodic training in effective labour market practices, completion of quarterly reports to the FMLE by PEAs and recruitment agencies and collaborative job fairs. The majority of NELEX-branded offices, however, reported limited collaboration with HuCaPAN, citing that the latter's centralized structure tends to favour collaboration at the FMLE HQ level.

PEAs have the potential to provide valuable Labour Market Information to the FMLE, though it was reported that better mechanisms for cooperation would be required to facilitate this. PEAs reported 'stable' collaboration with NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Faith Based Groups (FBGs), but volumes could not be determined. Job service portals are predominantly free of charge or entail a cost at point of service delivery only. This leads to jobseekers frequently signing up with multiple job search platforms which is a poor use of limited resources.

PEAs welcomed the 'idea' of feeding vacancies and other data into the NELEX platform in this context, but reported only limited collaboration with FMLE and, since a significant number was not registered, they had often never used or heard of NELEX services. The FMLE reported that the licensing procedures for PEAs requires that forms and documents be taken from the NELEX website. Whilst the market profile of private job portals is growing, only a small proportion of the total labour force is subscribed to a job portal. The largest private job search portal, Jobberman, reported less than five per cent of the labour force using their services.[21]

20   Recent cases on Nigeria Electricity Regulation Commission https://nerc.gov.ng/index.php/media-library/public-notices/589-disclaimer-notice-of-false-recruitment; Nigeria Lottery Regulation Commission https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/02/fg-alerts-nigerians-on-recruitment-scam-at-nlrc/ Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation/Chevron Nigeria Limited vanguardngr.com/2021/03/well-not-respond-to-enquiries-about-false-recruitment-others-chevron/

21 Jobberman. 2021. Jobs Bulletin January to July 2021. Jobberman. Lagos. Available at https://www.jobberman.com/research

Labour Market Information

The 2017 NEP recognised that robust **Labour Market Information (LMI) is essential for the Government** to understand how the labour market is functioning and to be able to undertake evidence-based policy design and implementation to support employers, jobseekers and labour market stakeholders. Building a transparent view of those areas of the economy that are developing fastest, where labour demand is growing, and identifying what skills are needed to meet this demand forms the bedrock of measures to meet the NEP's vision of generating full and inclusive employment in Nigeria.

The NEP established the NEC as the coordinating mechanism and a networking mechanism to drive implementation. In principle, its membership of 22 organizations with roles and functions cutting across all areas of the labour market should have meant that it was ideally placed to support the collection and dissemination of granular LMI. Diagram 1 depicts the processes set out in the NEP. While these are well-specified and while the interviews with interlocutors suggest that those responsible understand required tasks, in practice LMI has not been collated or made available to stakeholders. The challenge lies in visualising the entire labour system as interdependent and reliant upon feedback loops from various agencies. Going forward, the NEC will need to come to terms with the significance of its coordinating role related to labour market outcomes.

▶ **Diagram 1. Information Interchange for LMI Gathering and Open Access**

A	Determine infomation gap ▸ State PES feeds LMI needs to NELEX ▸ NEC members feed LMI needs ▸ FMLE units in other ministries feed LMI needs to NELEX
B	State PES and NEC members collate LMI
C	Coordinate information gathering ▸ NBS, and FMLE coordinate granular LMI
D	Information sharing at state level
E	FMLE generates database of LMI from all LM reports
F	Feedback loop exists on LMI

Source: *Authors, ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, 2022*

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) is responsible for the overarching **Labour Force Survey** which is conducted quarterly. Data is collected on age, gender, educational level, employment, unemployment, underemployment, wages and hours of work among other indicators. This is supplemented by the **General Households Survey** (GHS), an annual survey in which the sample of households is divided into monthly sub-samples (NBS). FMLE has also collaborated on **National Integrated Establishment Surveys**, but reported that resource constraints have prevented regular publication[22] thus limiting their practical value.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) which, like NELEX, comes under FMLE, has responsibility for more granular vacancy-related LMI as part of its wider policy formulation and implementation remit at federal and state levels. Established in 1989, the NDE's Board is comprised of representatives from a number of stakeholders including the Social Partners, the Nigerian Universities Commission, and the National Board for Technical Education. The **National Directorate of Employment Act N0. 24** empowers it to

▶ Obtain and maintain a databank on employment and vacancies, in collaboration with other government agencies

▶ Articulate policies, design and implement employability programmes

The revised NEP committed it to **"*fully equip"* the NELEX platform to provide LMI on a regular and timely basis to planners and jobseekers.** It also committed to the "disaggregation of data by age, gender or other designated cohort" to help measure equality of access and opportunity both for domestic and migrant labour (4.7.6. & 4.8.3.) and for cohorts identified as disadvantaged in the workforce.

On a parallel LMI track, the NEP committed the **Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE)**, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to identify the ***"workforce needs of the Nigerian labour market"*** (4.1.1). The aim was to identify the skills demanded by the economy so that the education and training community could deliver the right skills and competencies demanded by employers.

To achieve these aims FMoE was called on to

▶ Conduct **regular skills-mapping exercises** in conjunction with the social partners and other labour market stakeholders with a view to creating training and career pathways that better link to the labour market

▶ Produce data on the **number of graduates** each year broken down into disciplines

▶ Facilitate **work experience** opportunities to expose young people to the world of work

▶ Establish a feedback mechanism for employers to feed into **curriculum planning**

Progress towards collecting, collating and disseminating LMI in line with the NEP intent appears to be sporadic. In 2014, a hopeful sign of progress could be seen with the introduction of a **Labour Force Survey** and a **Quarterly Employment and Unemployment Report**, *'The Job Creation Survey'*. The poor regularity and relatively low level of detail was not, however, sufficiently granular to be of great practical use to policy planners focusing on employability measures, or jobseekers seeking detailed information on, for example,

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22 FMLE has demonstrated its capacity to garner commitment to data collection from other ministries as well as from outside the government. For instance, data collection from PEAs has been enforced by tying data submission to licence renewals.

careers pathways. FMLE also reported that *"LMI data are collected through secondary information from other government and partner agencies [and] there is also access to data internally from different departments of the ministry"*. Despite these assertions, **no evidence could be found to suggest the kind of comprehensive labour market data collection and analysis** envisioned in the revised NEP that would support the Government's plans

▶ Four principal challenges have been identified

▶ **Limited ability to collect data.**

One of the key challenges centres on the lack of coherent guidance and standards for the different labour market stakeholder 'touch points' to support data collection.[23] This suggests that even where data of some sort is being collected, it exists in silos with no defined mechanism to channel it to FMLE or onward to NBS.

The NELEX Portal does not have the capacity to provide comprehensive and reliable data in its current state. Whilst it can collect and publish periodic data by extrapolating the information it holds on job seekers and job matches, it is constrained because it has to be executed manually. This 'double handling' of data wastes valuable human resource that should be dedicated to more productive tasks like job coaching. NELEX would need to transition fully into an electronic matching system to handle the volume of data required for statistically robust job creation surveys as the traffic and activities are insufficient at the moment. More traffic would be required to enable the platform to perform its data collection task effectively and this will only be possible if employers and jobseekers can be encouraged to use it.

▶ **Poor coordination between key data source stakeholders.**

The most relevant data sources for understanding how the Nigerian labour market functions rest with the FMLE and FMoE. Whilst there is no reason why the two data collection exercises should not be conducted separately, it is important that they are closely connected. The former data sets essentially focus on vacancy and labour flows broken down by key cohorts to ensure that vacancy taking, job matching, and Active Labour Market Programmes support the smooth functioning of the labour market. The latter focus on identifying the skills demanded by the economy to ensure the education and training community shapes and delivers the right skills and competencies so that Job Counsellors can focus on sectors where labour demand is growing.

In practice, there appears to be a fundamental disconnect between employment and education sourced data, both at a strategic policy level and at a practical operational level. Technically, the NEC's coordinating role should bring the two together to provide a coherent bridge between skills demanded, skills supplied and the counsellors that steer users towards the opportunities. The reasons for this disconnect include the **fragmented nature of the vocational and skills communities**, the **gaps in issuing accepted qualification standards** arising from the lack of uniformity in informal training, and **low levels of IT connection between actors**.

Likewise, agencies have no open data policies and few data sharing mechanisms. Most respondents said that data could be made available by request only. Despite the **Nigeria Data Protection Regulation 2019**, it was reported that Nigeria has no strict

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23 The NEC reported that its members had agreed to submit their data through an electronic data collection portal that was being designed.

data protection statute [24] to underpin efficient data management in the skills and employment services sector.

▶ **Limited scope to analyse data.**

As well as difficulty collecting data from a sufficiently wide pool of actors, respondents suggested that there are a number of issues that make like-for-like analysis difficult. These include the **lack of uniform data practices** that meet international standards, **inconsistent definitions**, and the widespread use of **local office workarounds in administration and record-keeping** (e.g., using local non-standard Excel spread-sheets) which create non-comparable data.

Whilst some data is disaggregated into formal and informal sectors there was **little evidence of a standard structured format** that would provide stakeholders with consistent labour market analysis for planning and programme purposes for specific groups of disadvantaged cohorts. Whilst FMLE reports that it has a team of statisticians that work in close collaboration with NBS, the ongoing challenge with collecting and using LMI suggests that there is a good case for further improvements in the organization of internal resource and capacity to better analyse and deploy data.

▶ **Irregular reporting and limited access.**

Whilst the NEP committed the FMLE and FMoE in particular to produce *"regular and timely"* data, this intent has not been achieved. The last **Job Creation Survey** for example was published in 2016 Q3. Data on gender, youth and poverty often appear to be out-of-date which makes it difficult to get a clear picture by cohort of whether Government measures are working. Outside the quarterly LFS other available data is not published in a user-friendly format through any of the responsible Ministry portals. PEAs report that they send Quarterly Reports to FMLE for collation on the number of workers on payroll, salaries and earnings, and the number of workers recruited & enrolled for pension and insurance purposes. The information is not published after being processed and analysed.

Given the centrality of LMI to understanding and tackling many of the labour market's underlying challenges in Nigeria, there has been a longstanding policy intent to upgrade the NELEX Portal to a one-stop-source for LMI. This was unanimously agreed by delegates at the National Conference on Employment Promotion held from 11–12 October 2021, reflecting ILO Conventions 88 and 181 which note the crucial role of PES in collecting LMI. The FMLE stated that the agreement requires all producers of LMI, including the NBS, to *"harmonize their digital infrastructure and networks and share data with the NELEX platform"*.

Given the complexity of the task and some of the past challenges bringing together different LMI sources into an effective resource, FMLE may want to give some thought about how best to support other data-producing stakeholders to contribute to the exercise by standardising definitions, formats etc. This will ensure that the volume and depth of LMI meet the necessary critical mass to be useful for users. An incremental 'test and learn' rather than a 'big bang' approach to improving LMI would be more mindful of the resource and capacity constraints under which the stakeholders operate.

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24 Kuti and Abraye, 2022. The Employment Law Review, Nigeria. The Employment Law Review, 13th edition in E.C Collins ed. The Law Review. Camden and Newark https://thelawreviews.co.uk/title/the-employment-law-review/nigeria

Detailed Overview of the Nelex Portal and Jobcentres Using the ILO PES Capabilities Framework

The **National Electronic Labour Exchange** (NELEX) was established in 2006 to facilitate the Federal Government's vision to promote full and inclusive employment and high productivity in Nigeria by developing modern, digital job matching operations and digitally sourced and maintained LMI.

NELEX is essentially an electronic job matching and information platform that allows employers to place vacancies and jobseekers to apply for openings and look for job-related information. Beneath the hood it also has a functionality that allows the collection of labour market data, as yet underdeveloped (FMLE, 2021).[25] Although the NELEX Portal is a digital tool, some physical employment service infrastructure has evolved over the last sixteen years, which functions under the brand of **'NELEX Jobcentres'**. A number of interlocutors have used the term NELEX interchangeably with NELEX Jobcentres. This Assessment will differentiate to some degree between the **NELEX Portal** which is a tool **and the physical NELEX Jobcentres** (i.e., PES as commonly understood).

The first **NELEX branded office** opened in Abuja (NC) in 2006, with others opening between 2014-2018 in a further six states: Anambra (SE), Bauchi (NE), Delta (SS), Edo (SS), Lagos (SW), Kaduna (NW). They normally operate within the same building as the Ministry of Labour in the state, with a designated space consisting of a few rooms. Two of the states have distinct office locations with space ranging from one large hall to two office rooms. Whilst NELEX-branded offices have a physical footprint in each geographical area of the country it is clear that they are able to serve only a tiny fraction of Nigeria's workforce of some of 62 million people (World Bank, 2021)[26] across its 36 States and 774 Local Government Areas.

Between 2016 and 2018, **NELEX Jobcentres were progressively co-branded as NELEX-Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs)** or **NELEX/MRC Jobcentres** in three locations - Lagos, followed by Abuja and then Edo State, with funding from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union (IOM NELEX, Call for Tenders 2019). These

25 FMLE (Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. National Electronic Labour Exchange. Newslink updated 2021 available at <https://labour.gov.ng/national-electronic-labour-exchange-nelex/#.

26   World Bank, 2021. World Development Indicators. The World Bank. Washington DC.

States have a longstanding history of emigration. Lagos for example generates 76.5 per cent of arrivals and departures from Nigeria[27] and Edo state is often linked to irregular migration. The other states that currently still employ a distinct NELEX Jobcentre brand reported being asked to consider providing a better migration service offer.

It is fair to say that MRCs have not replaced **NELEX Jobcentres, rather they have added an additional service offer to a new cohort of migration-related jobseekers under a modified brand (i.e., NELEX/MRC Jobcentres).**

27 NBS (National Bureau of Statistics). 2018. Total Labour Force. Nigeria. Immigration Statistics, Abuja available at http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfup-loads/Immigration_Statistics_-_2017.pdf>

Governance Model and Functions

The NELEX Portal and Jobcentres fall under the responsibility of FMLE through the **Department of Employment and Wages in the International Labour Migration Desk (ILMD) Unit**. The 2017 NEP committed FMLE to establish an **Administration and Coordination Board** comprising the Social Partners and other stakeholders tasked with strategic and policy formulation and operational oversight. **The Social Partners Advisory Board (SPAB)** was inaugurated on 24 November 2021 and had its inception meeting on the 4 April 2022. The current 22-member National Employment Council (NEC) was inaugurated in February 2018, chaired by the FMLE[28] and tasked with cross-government co-ordination.

The FMLE uses a **Management Board** model of governance empowered to set the strategic direction of NELEX services and to steer its activities through hierarchical reporting lines. State offices of the Federal Ministries of Labour report to the headquarters in Abuja. The reporting mechanisms place FMLE officials in each state under the **authority of the State Controller** and under zonal coordination, with six zonal offices - one per geopolitical area. The State Controller of Labour is the State Authority or the Head of the State Office of the Ministry of Labour in charge of labour matters.

Being a federation, **Legislative Lists** provide for division of power between federal and state levels in Nigeria (Anya, 2021).[29] Under the Exclusive Legislative List there are 68 areas, including labour, under which only the Federal Government can legislate. Consequently, the FMLE is represented in each state, including the Federal Capital Territory, under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal government.

28   ILO, 2018. Nigeria's Minister of Labour and Employment Inaugurates National Employment Council. ILO Press briefing of 9 February 2018. Available at < https://www.ilo.org/africa/about-us/offices/abuja/WCMS_617412/lang--en/index.htm>.

29   Anya, Blessing. 2021. Nigeria: The Exclusive Legislative List and the Concurrent Legislative List - A Case for Restructuring or Constitutional Defect? Mondaq law repository. Bristol.

Organization and Management

▶ Staffing recruitment and training

Managers and staff members working on NELEX functions are drawn from officials in the **Department of Employment and Wages** in the FMLE. Their tasks include initiating and implementing the employment and wages policies of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The activities of the Department are geared toward combating poverty, improving and creating decent employment, including conducting labour inspections, and facilitating orderly, safe and regular migration. Officials are recruited through a common civil service entrance exam. As officials working on NELEX services come under the ILMD Unit and have the status of civil servants they can be required to undertake other job roles within the Department's remit, including related work in Migrant Resource Centres.

Although it is not uncommon for employment service staff in some anglophone countries in Africa to be drawn from the Labour Ministry staff pool, in most parts of the world the role of Work Coaches or Labour Officers is considered to be specialist and is usually restricted to specialist/dedicated functions. Having dedicated staff and developing the right internal skills and competencies is ultimately a better use of resources and leads to better outcomes than using generalists.

The NELEX Portal and NELEX Jobcentre services have staff 'allocated' to them, ranging from five per cent to 35 per cent of the total FMLE staff in that state (Table 1). There was **no indication that NELEX staff resources went through a dedicated recruitment or selection processes.** Whilst some ad hoc training was reported, depending on the opportunities available at the centre where they served, all centres reported that the **training was insufficient.** It was reported that Labour Officers (Job Coaches) often 'gravitated' towards NELEX front line jobs because they were seen as more interesting than working in Labour Inspection, but that they did not receive substantive training in career coaching or job matching to carry out their roles.

Labour Officers linked to MRCs fared better, possibly because of the external funding. IOM trained some Job Coaches in 2018 as part of the launch of MRCs in Lagos, Abuja and Edo State to provide information to prospective migrants and returnees. In 2019, the ILO/-GiZ trained up to 8 FMLE officials to deliver training for the *Start and Improve Your Business*

(SIYB) programme in MRCs and in Financial Education under the GIZ-funded Initiative for Labour Migration Employment and Reintegration.

Whilst FMLE reports that there is a budget subhead for the NELEX Portal and Jobcentres, the fact that this does not result in dedicated or ringfenced staffing and resources with dedicated objectives within the Department of Employment might make it less easy to focus consistently on its core objectives and performance. FMLE uses Labour Inspection and other reports to detail the activities of each NELEX centre (at quarterly, bi-annual, or annual intervals) to FMLE Abuja. These reports are however not always regularly submitted. They detail the volume of activities in each state over the reporting period, including the number of labour inspections, training sessions, career counselling sessions, and the number of users. Given the multiple reporting items, it would probably be difficult to measure whether public investment represents good value for money as there is no direct link made between inputs and outcomes.

The experience of countries in Eastern Europe where most PES were established less than 20 years ago contains possible lessons. Countries like Estonia that developed more autonomous PES structures, invested heavily in staff recruitment and training and developed highly 'systemised' skills and employment pathways for jobseekers have generally achieved better labour market outcomes at a lower cost (as a percentage of GDP) than many of their neighbours.[30]

Outside the Department of Employment and Wages structure, there does **not appear to be any formal alignment of performance objectives** (even high-level ones) **with other stakeholders** in a way that would suggest that they are working towards common goals and/or towards the Key Target Indicators as set out in the NEP (i.e., reduce graduate unemployment, reduce youth unemployment, increase female employment and labour force participation, increase in formal employment, increase in registration of SMEs, increase supply of workforce equipped with skills demanded by employers- NEP 5.3).

In terms of resource allocation, **no evidence could be found showing that funding could be targeted or modulated** according to the priority or need of a particular cohort (e.g., that a female jobseeker with caring responsibilities might attract more help (i.e., resources) than a young, singe male graduate jobseeker). Interlocutors at NELEX Jobcentres reported that they served all clients equitably but did not make special efforts to target disadvantaged groups as did some state-level jobcentres and PEAs.

▶ Funding

The FMLE is responsible for funding the NELEX Jobcentres. Since 2018, the **International Organization for Migration (IOM) and European Union (EU)** have contributed to funding for the three offices where NELEX Jobcentres and MRCs have been co-located (though it is uncertain whether this is partly or fully) and have also supported the **'administration and management' of the NELEX web portal** *(EU Delegation Report on Migration and Border Management 08/01/2019).* In these examples, FMLE appears to fund the office building and some FMLE-sourced staff whist IOM/EU as well as the German Development Agency (GiZ) fund equipment, programmes and additional staff.

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30   OECD. 2019. Labour Force Statistics. Public Expenditure and Participant Stocks on LMP. OECD.stat https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSet-Code=LMPEXP

The three NELEX/MRCs specify their target audience as *'returnees, students, migrants and the general public'*. Whilst there is no explicit implication that this is in priority order, there may be an argument that the funding received from the IOM/EU might steer services in a certain way if the funders require reporting on positive outcomes. The combination of MRC and NELEX services derives from the linkages between migration and development[31] and the EU policy stance, for example through the European Union Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF), to tackle the root causes of migration by curbing unemployment at the source country.

Consequently, migration-related funding can be said to be linked to employment promotion in Nigeria to some degree, with several NELEX Jobcentres jointly reporting migration and employment service performance. The field study confirmed that office **performance reports are often combined for NELEX and MRCs under International Labour Migration Desk (ILMD) services.** This would suggest that, on the ground at least, the portion of external funding earmarked for ILMD is not treated as a separate bolt-on service to mainstream NELEX services, but can be used flexibly.

On the ground, interlocutors reported that training, career counselling and other Active Labour Market Measures are available to all beneficiaries regardless of their migration aspirations. Although this makes it hard to discern the specific impact of measures for each group, it could be argued that distinguishing between them for programme eligibility purposes is less relevant as unemployment is a significant push factor for migration in Nigeria; job seekers aspire to work whether it is in Nigeria or outside it. Indeed, finding a job in Nigeria may shift migration aspirations and cause aspiring migrants to stay.

It is possible to infer from the larger number of activities and service offers delivered by the combined NELEX-MRC offices that they enjoy better financing (and management) than their purely NELEX-branded offices. A recurring theme for the latter was the lack of funding for basic infrastructure, power generation and internet services to deliver routine activities, which was within the purview of the national budget.

Although labour migration services are closely linked to NELEX services, especially in co-branded facilities, for the purposes of this study some effort was made to differentiate between the NELEX Portal, and NELEX Jobcentre services which form a distinct service with an extended MRC service offer. The latter is layered on top of an existing NELEX-branded facility rather than completely replacing it.

Where physical NELEX infrastructure exists, unstable electric power supply and inadequate internet access were reported to inhibit their operations. NELEX Jobcentres and the NELEX Portal adapt to the power supply challenges by using alternative power generation measures such as standby generators and/or solar panels. Additional challenges include inadequate internet provision (which respondents link to a lack of funding to procure the necessary bandwidth), and the maintenance of donated equipment.

31 See for example Latek , M. 2019. Interlinks between migration and development. European Parliament Briefing. European Parliamentary Research Service PE 630-351, available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/630351/EPRS_BRI(2019)630351_EN.pdf

Labour Market Services

FMLE promotes the NELEX Portal as an innovative electronic platform that provides a range of services including:[32]

- ▶ A robust database of vacancies and employable manpower to facilitate job matching and labour mobility
- ▶ An information 'store' on skills demand [to] create a link between employer needs and skills supply
- ▶ Provision of pre-employment and soft skills in collaboration with stakeholders
- ▶ An updated repository of job creation activities and support for self-employment
- ▶ A source of real time information on employment and job placement services [to] facilitate Labour Market Information Systems
- ▶ Information on migration and re-integration support for returnees
- ▶ Employment standards and protection

The range of labour market services offered by the seven NELEX-branded Jobcentres varies considerably with Abuja, Edo and Lagos providing the most. (Table 1). Of notable distinction is that

- ▶ Whilst all seven offices report registering jobseekers and five registering employers, only four of them offer job search support and only three offer job placement help. This represents a significant disconnect in the job seeker journey towards job placement (See Diagram 2 below.)

- ▶ Seven offices offer training, but without a subsequent helping hand to find a job, experience from other countries suggests that training alone is often a poor return on public investment.

- ▶ The number of staff reported to be working on NELEX services is low in general and specifically poor in Anambra, Bauchi, Delta and Kaduna. If there is no planned resource increase, it is advisable that FMLE radically prunes its service offer to match NELEX's very limited capacity and focus on a few core tasks.
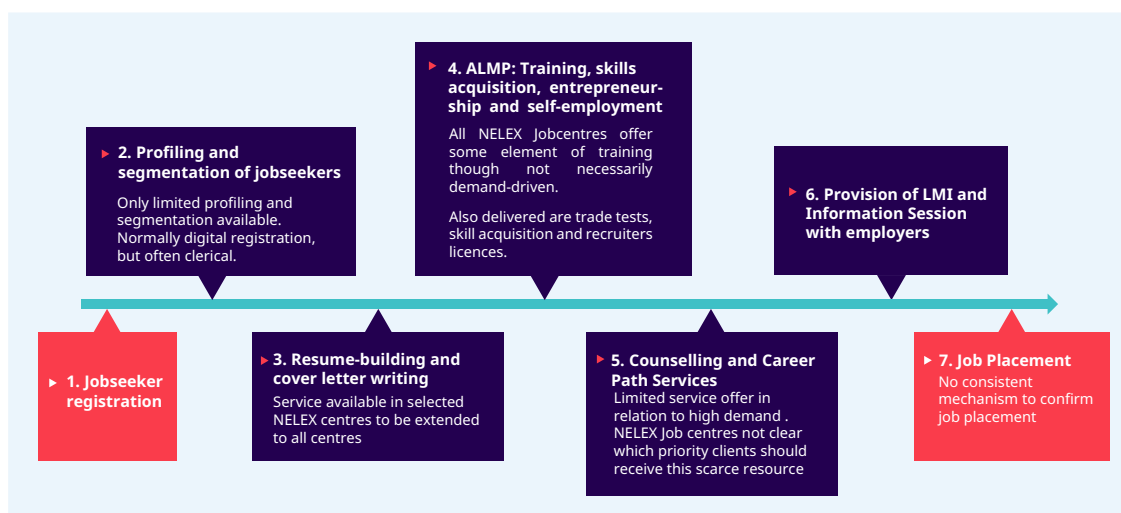
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32 Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. National Electronic Labour Exchange. Online publication of the FMLE. Abuja, available at <https://labour.gov.ng/national-electronic-labour-exchange-nelex/#>

▶ **Table 1. Activities and estimated staff working on NELEX by State**

	Number of staff	Staff dedicated to NELEX	Estimated percentage dedicated to NELEX (%)	Estimated number of registered users	Registration of Job seekers	Training	Career Counselling	Employment] Advisory Services	Job search Support and Matching	Job Placement	Career Path Services	Information session with employers	Profiling of employees	Work regulations	Registration of employers	Preselection of suitable candidates	General information on the labour market
Abuja	70	25	35	11,500	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	x
Anambra	103	3	3	20	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Bauchi	70	3	4	18	√	√	x	√	x	x	x	x	√	√	x	x	x
Delta	240	18	8	354	√	√	x	x	√	x	x	x	√	√	√	x	x
Kaduna	236	11	5	2,000	√	√	x	√	x	x	x	x	√	√	x	x	x
Edo	73	10	14	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	x	√	√	√	√	x
Lagos	339	40	12	15,000	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	x

Source: Interlocutors: ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, 2022

▶ **Diagram 2. Process Map for PES for Job Seekers and Employees**

2. Profiling and segmentation of jobseekers
Only limited profiling and segmentation available. Normally digital registration, but often clerical.

4. ALMP: Training, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and self-employment
All NELEX Jobcentres offer some element of training though not necessarily demand-driven.
Also delivered are trade tests, skill acquisition and recruiters licences.

6. Provision of LMI and Information Session with employers

1. Jobseeker registration

3. Resume-building and cover letter writing
Service available in selected NELEX centres to be extended to all centres

5. Counselling and Career Path Services
Limited service offer in relation to high demand. NELEX Job centres not clear which priority clients should receive this scarce resource

7. Job Placement
No consistent mechanism to confirm job placement

Source: Authors, ILO PES Assessment in Nigeria 2022

The ILO Nigeria PES/NELEX Assessment project conducted a **customer feedback survey** to complement the reported activities of NELEX services in Table 1 by viewing services through the **prism of the jobseeker**. For this activity, an electronic link to the self-administered survey was circulated across all NELEX offices in the country (See Appendix 1 for coverage.). There were 395 respondents: 162 (41 per cent) were female, 220 (56 per cent) were male, and 13 (three per cent) did not indicate their sex. Jobseekers formed the highest category, comprising 266 persons (67 per cent). They were followed by the 99 persons in work (25 per cent), and 30 employers (8 per cent). Females were underrepresented in approximately the same proportion as employers, yet in the count of persons who had completed post-graduate studies, there were marginally more females than males. Females were similarly underrepresented in all employment-type categories with a great-

er variance from males among job seekers and employees than among employers. This study highlighted a **missing gender equality plan** as part of the NELEX service guide.

▶ **Table 2 - Description of Respondents**

Sex			Employment			Level of Education			
	Number	Percentage	Employee	Employer	Job Seeker	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Post Graduate
Male	220	56	57	18	145	1	30	151	36
Female	162	41	37	12	113	0	17	103	38
Others	13	3							
Total	395	100	94	258	258	1	47	254	74

**Source:** ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, Survey, 2022

Most respondents were educated beyond the secondary school level, with there being 63 per cent of persons who had completed a tertiary level of education, and 19 per cent who had a postgraduate degree. 12 per cent were educated at the secondary school level. Only one respondent had a primary school level-education as their highest qualification. A job seeker's level of qualifications can be distinct from their marketable skills. Interlocutors suggested that users of NELEX were sometimes highly qualified but required career counseling to support them in the transition into the labour market.

Respondents were mostly between the ages of 30 and 39 (43 per cent), with a significant proportion in their 20s (36 per cent). This is consistent with entry-level career users who need assistance from employment services to enter the labour market. The minimum age set for respondents was 18 and only 3 per cent were below 20. This was consistent with the finding that most NELEX users had above a secondary school level of education, but also implied that a significant proportion of informally educated workers were not covered by NELEX services. There was no maximum age specified in the survey, nonetheless all respondents were below the age of 60 except one outlier who was 74.

The respondents were mostly unemployed with a lower proportion who were underemployed and in casual work, or in unpaid services. NELEX could usefully examine its services in relation to the proportion of the labour market wishing to switch jobs or careers. Set 2 indicated that only six per cent of NELEX users were accessing career path services. The study did not measure motivations, but it could be loosely inferred that NELEX services were not significantly targeted towards this labour market segment.

▶ **Set 1. Demographic data of respondents**

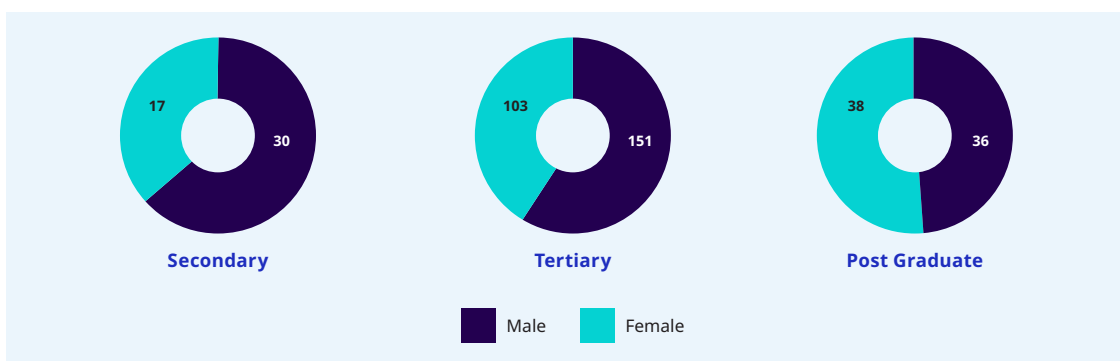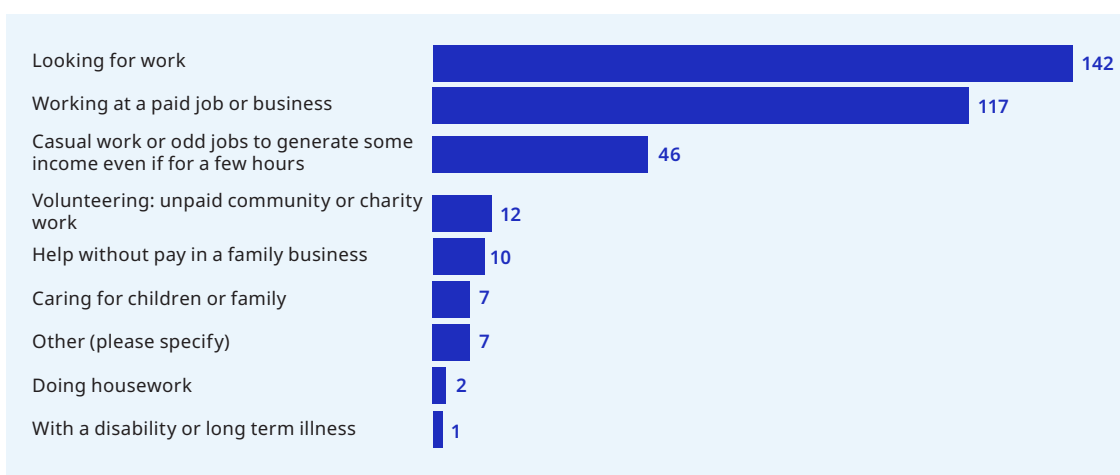**Respondent by Sex and Age**
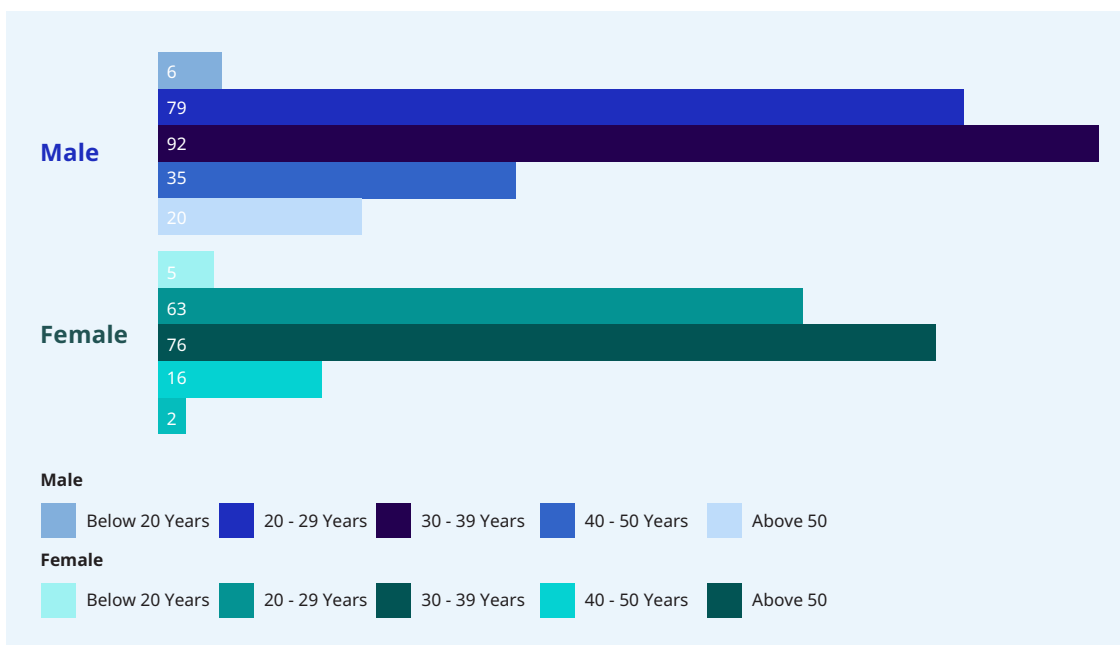
Employment Status

There was **no evidence of any eligibility requirements being applied to access NELEX services**. Users include unemployed as well as employed people seeking to switch jobs through their services. While all centres reported engaging in some form of jobseeker profiling (Table 1), the field work could not ascertain the criteria used, whether it was consistent across offices or whether the results were used to steer users towards a particular offer (user 'want' and user 'need' can of course be very different). A significant proportion of NELEX users reported in the survey that they never used profiling services, with only 13 customers (3 per cent) indicating that they were profiled (Set 2, ILO PES Survey in Nigeria, 2022).

Level of education

17 30
Secondary

103 151
Tertiary

38 36
Post Graduate

■ Male ■ Female

Employment situation of respondents

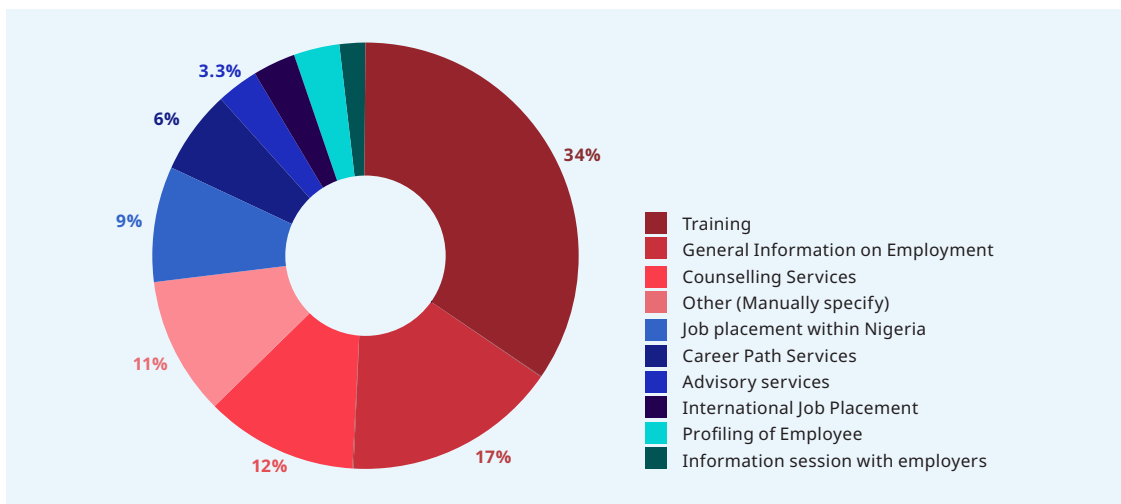|	
Looking for work	142
Working at a paid job or business	117
Casual work or odd jobs to generate some income even if for a few hours	46
Volunteering: unpaid community or charity work	12
Help without pay in a family business	10
Caring for children or family	7
Other (please specify)	7
Doing housework	2
With a disability or long term illness	1

Source: ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, Survey, 2022

Employers were less significant users of NELEX services. Whilst this might reflect a general employer reluctance to respond to surveys about public services, those that did respond indicated that they used only three types of services (Set 2, ILO PES Survey in Nigeria, 2022). Whilst the survey results can only hint at employer perceptions and behaviors, taken together with feedback from field interviews, it seems clear that NELEX would need to improve the number of employers hosted and both the range and quality of services offered to them.

The most popular services provided by the NELEX Jobcentres and Portal were training (34 per cent), **general information on employment** (16 per cent) and **counselling services** (11 per cent). This is in marked contrast to the disproportionately low interactions with employers (2 per cent), and job placement activity (cumulatively about 16 per cent). This suggests a relatively low probability of NELEX service users directly finding a job.
The margin between training services and other services is significant enough to suggest that NELEX centres have peak periods of organized training activities (Set 2, ILO PES Survey in Nigeria, 2022). The absence of detailed performance matrices made it impossible to understand how frequently NELEX services were accessed.
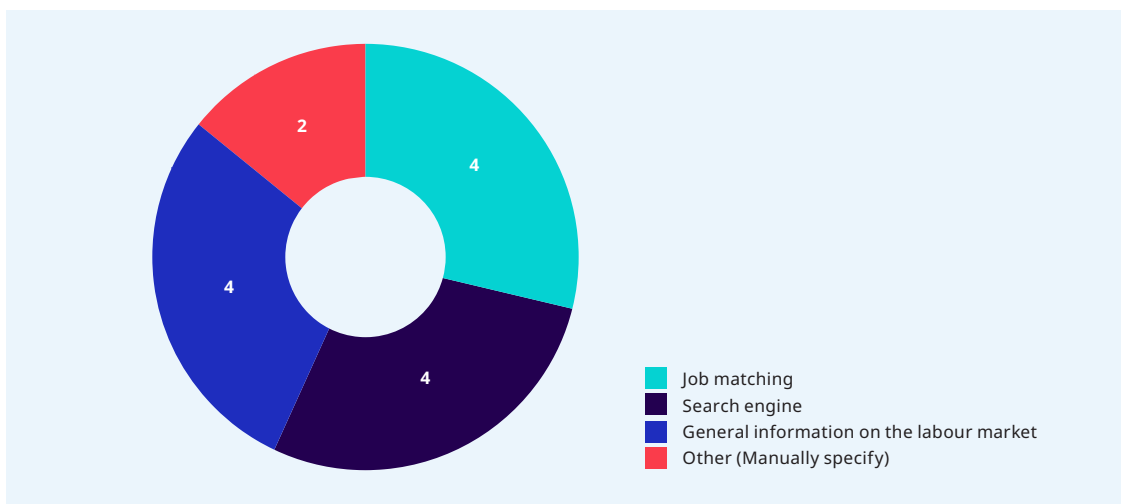
▶ **Set 2 . NELEX Jobcentre & Portal services, by type of user**

NELEX services used by job seekers and employees

Legend:
- Training
- General Information on Employment
- Counselling Services
- Other (Manually specify)
- Job placement within Nigeria
- Career Path Services
- Advisory services
- International Job Placement
- Profiling of Employee
- Information session with employers

Source: ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, Survey, 2022

NELEX services used by employers

Legend:
- Job matching
- Search engine
- General information on the labour market
- Other (Manually specify)

Source: ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, Survey, 2022

In theory, users are required to first register their details on the NELEX Portal before they can use the Portal to access information or apply for jobs. In practice, it was reported that those without access to IT were helped to complete paper application forms, although this would create parallel work systems requiring more resources. The limited service offer in some NELEX offices would suggest that resources used to 'register' jobseekers might be better used if no support is subsequently given. NELEX users also reported being able to apply using other channels (telephone/smart phone, in writing or in person at NELEX/MRC

Jobcentres) or via the use of social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook or Twitter. As these channels are not digitally connected to the NELEX Portal this approach would lead to double handling for matching purposes, which would be a further waste of resources.

Taken together, this suggests that **access to vacancies may not be optimal or equitable**, particularly as NELEX has no integrated SMS function to support users of older mobile phones and is not formatted for smartphones, the most popular digital tool in Nigeria with around 49 per cent of the population owning one (Statista, 2022).[33] Equally, using social media channels would not facilitate the tracking of outcomes for LMI, such as successful job offers. During the field work activities (February and March 2022) the NELEX Portal was offline, which made a more detailed assessment of its functionality impossible.

Profiling and segmentation of users are widely employed by PES throughout the world to help channel scarce resources and services to optimum effect. Reports of user **profiling or segmentation as a tool to access the most appropriate NELEX services were patchy**. Without this filter it is highly likely that even rudimentary customer journeys will not be properly tailored and there is a risk that scarce resources will be overwhelmed. In principle, face-to-face counselling is the most labour intensive and costly service in the PES toolbox and in most countries it tends to be 'rationed' out to specific target groups who face the greatest barriers to entering work. In the context of Nigeria, the priority group attracting greater resources might not necessarily be the most disadvantaged. Young unemployed graduates are rather deemed to be a priority by the social partners.

▶ Active Labour Market Programmes

Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) comprise support that help people find, keep, or progress in work. As there is no formal link between receipt of any benefit for unemployed people and looking for work in Nigeria, participation on ALMPs is voluntary. The survey showed that training and general information constitute the largest programmes (22 and 17 per cent respectively: See Set 2). A rule of thumb suggests that training with an employer generally produces better job outcomes than training and then trying to find work. Although this study found little evidence that this more effective 'place and train' approach was actively promoted in NELEX offices, the Nigerian-German centers reported making headway in this regard.

Research also shows that **active job search** is an effective and cost efficient labour market measure to find work. The very low survey results for employer contact (2 per cent) and job placement activity (cumulatively about 16 per cent) indicate very low job outcomes achieved through the NELEX platform or offices and point to the likely main reason for low jobseeker take-up. According to interlocutors, the **NELEX database does not include candidate profiles of highly skilled and qualified candidates** that might meet the demands of employers seeking professional staff. This is not unusual in an international context and arguably should not be used as a measure of efficiency or user satisfaction in the Nigerian context. In most parts of the world these types of cohorts tend to prefer using specialist private agencies rather than PES to find work.

Training provision and **career guidance** which are often partly linked are normally predicated on good LMI and a clear idea of the skills and competencies being demanded by

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33   Statista 2022. Number of Smartphone users in Nigeria (2014-2025). Statista. Hamburg.

employers. The absence of consistent and granular LMI generated by FMLE or its connect-ed agencies/departments, and the absence of **skills mapping** from FMoE or its connected agencies/ departments suggest that any guidance delivered by PES is likely to be fairly general in nature. There was no indication of any agreement or mechanism that would allow employer bodies or sectors to actively contribute data to FMLE/NELEX to help shape information on job roles or pathways of use to jobseekers.

Given the large number of young jobseekers in Nigeria, the relatively low provision of targeted **career guidance services** or **job placement support** to support education to work transitions, either online or in person, is notable. This would appear to be a signifi-cant gap in service provision that could be relatively easy to fill with the right information, although interlocutors reported that NELEX coaches did not have the training to advise clients on wider job or career issues.

Interestingly, most NELEX users tended to be **early career-level jobseekers** (67 per cent) or in work (25 per cent) with an average of ten years and a median of 8 years of work expe-rience (ILO PES in Nigeria survey, 2022). Although the surveys were administered through the NELEX office network, less than 30 per cent of respondents had used NELEX services, **with 73 per cent stating that they had never used the service**. Although the findings are indicative rather than definitive, they suggest that some thought needs to be given to what services this largest user group might need compared to the potentially more politi-cally significant group of young recent graduates (or other target groups).

The majority of NELEX users were accessing services online (59 per cent) rather than face-to-face (41 per cent). This figure highlights the potential of technology to deliver NELEX's core service offer and underscores the importance of ensuring the availability and reliability of the NELEX Portal. Indeed, many respondents reported ease of access of online services, despite the portal being offline whilst the field work was undertaken. Lagos served more users than any other state, and Kaduna state showed impressive service coverage using the same resources as the other centres, despite the absence of visible external funding or MRC activity. This higher productivity infers better manage-ment and organization of limited resources **(see Set 3)**.
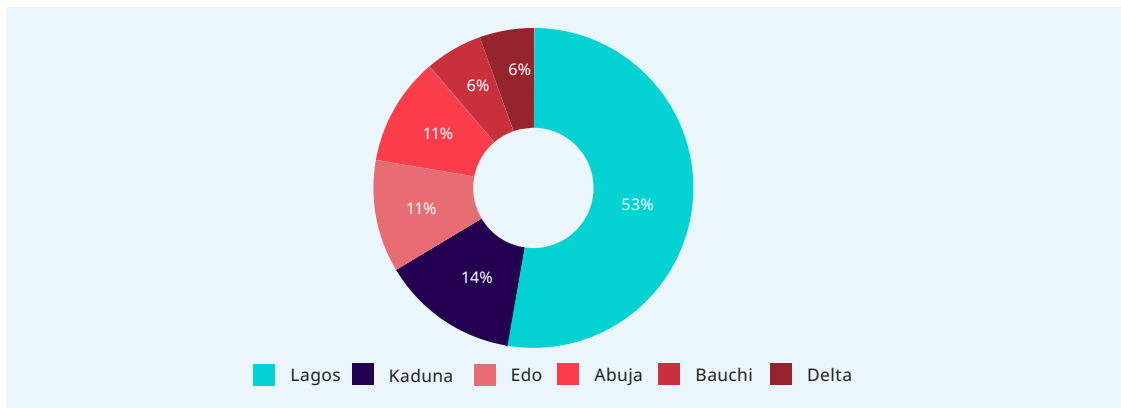
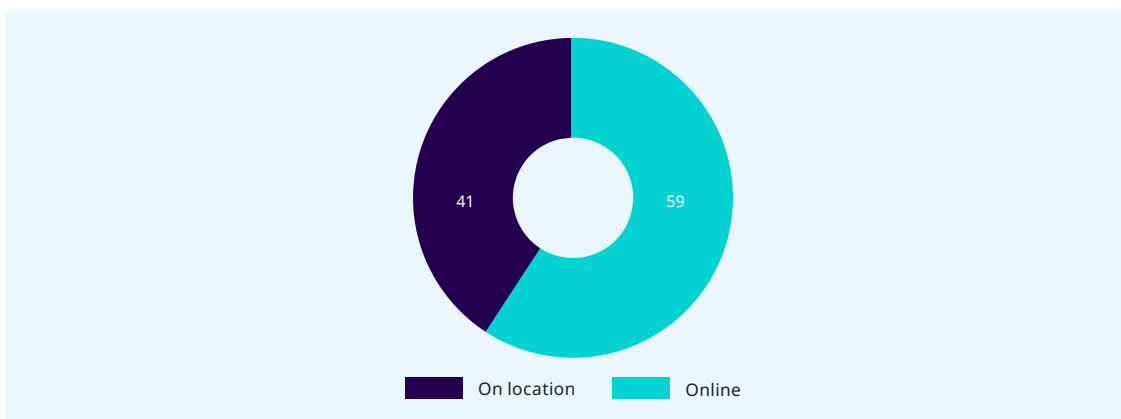▶ **(Information Box 3) Sample of MRC/NELEX Online Promotional Material**
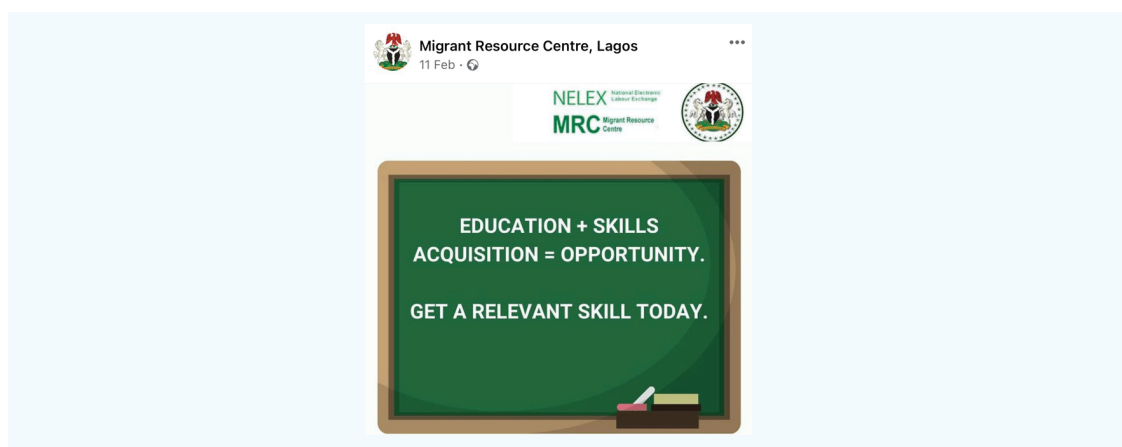
Source: Social Media Page of the Migrant Resource Centre, Accessed February 2022

▶ Set 3. NELEX service use by state, mode of access and ease of use

NELEX services used by job seekers and employees

Lagos　Kaduna　Edo　Abuja　Bauchi　Delta

Mode of accessing NELEX services

On location　Online

Ease of access to NELEX by Access Mode

	On location	Online
I easily accessed NELEX	5	18
I had never heard of NELEX until I was referred	4	3
I could not easily be connected with the services that I needed	1	1
I had to wait for over an hour to be attended to	1	
Other (manually specified - "Good")	1	
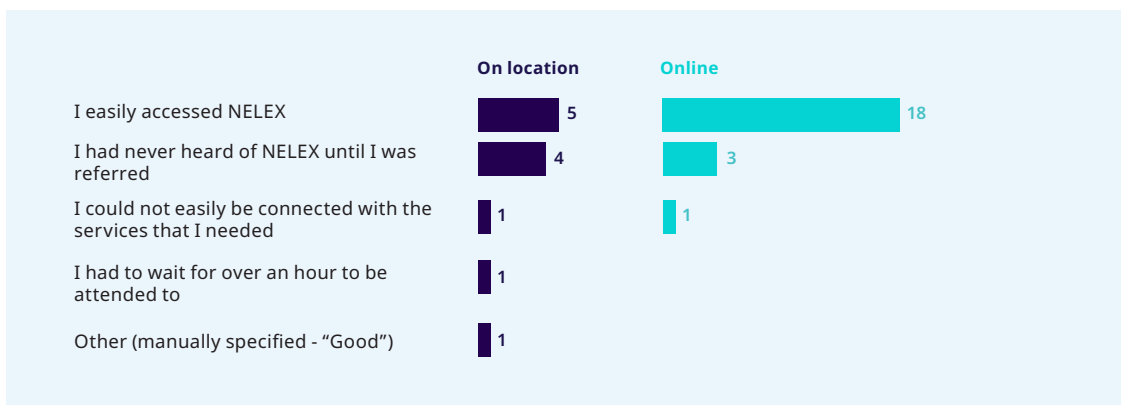
Source: ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, Survey, 2022

▶ Workforce relocation and mobility

The NEP called for improved programmes for **migrants and returnees** (NEP 4.8.1). The service offer linked to co-located MRCs is fairly coherent and includes dispersing information through online forums such as webinars and other social media platforms, training (e.g., Start and Improve Your Business) and skills development. Most of the survey respondents using NELEX services were from Nigeria with less than five per cent from other countries, including the ECOWAS region.

Good geographical and labour mobility is associated with supporting better matches between workers and employers. **Occupational and geographical labour immobility are among the barriers sustaining structural unemployment in Nigeria,** with security concerns being among the top factors limiting internal geographical mobility, and with poor-quality education and training affecting occupational mobility. Internal migration has tended to receive less attention than international migration, but there is an argument that facilitating internal migration could be very helpful in reducing constraints on employment.

The implementation of **standardised certification processes** would be an important step to achieving better occupational and geographical mobility of workers. The FMLE reported using Trade Tests to provide validation of skills for artisans and other informally trained workers, through its **Department for Skills Development and Certification**. The NELEX Portal was intended to serve as an electronic register to reduce barriers to mobility within the country, but any potential role for it in this context could not be determined because of the absence of relevant recorded outcomes on the system.

Interlocutors informed the project that **'training for Trade Tests'** vary between 3 months, 6 months, and 2 years in duration. Those starting from the basics spend two years studying, while those who already have some training, are issued Skills Upgrading Certificates. Users are usually apprentices that have acquired some informal 'on-the-job' training such as mechanics, and the test ranges from grade III to grade I, depending on their level of competence. Grade I is the highest level and is conducted as a written and practical test. Grade III is limited to a practical test, which allows for participants who may lack literacy skills.

Skills development is a nation-wide activity that takes place in all state offices and major towns in Nigeria. FMLE reported that around 12,840 persons did Trade Tests in 2021 with an average of 11,477 persons per annum since 2011.[34] Skills development and certification have not been linked with NELEX functions, and thus the main help delivered to jobseekers through the Department of Skills Development and Certification is through certification.

PEAs, however, reported using 'clarity coaching' tools to streamline jobseekers' aspirations towards careers that met their personal career goals. These processes sometimes resulted in more specialised career choices or switching between job sectors. In principle, NELEX could contribute to workforce mobility through a similar online function, provide career counselling services to users and information sessions for employers, or take advantage of existing services to enable workers to pick services that they need.

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34 The document of the FMLE showed that since 2011, apart from 2020 in which output of only 4,560 reflected the impact of COVID-19, the minimum output on trade tests was in 2018 at 9462 people and the maximum in 2016 at 14,750 people.

The success of such strengthened collaboration depends on feedback mechanisms, which are currently missing, between other employment agencies and NELEX to ensure that the services are truly complementary. Interlocutors reported job seekers hopping between programmes to benefit from free services. Such actions take up limited resources with little, if any, added value for outcomes. **A digital interface through which programmes can jointly report on beneficiaries and show records on individual employability might smooth the interaction between service providers**.

Although FMLE maintains that the number of NELEX users and their activities are reported (e.g., job search, information), official data on user volumes on the Portal or at the NELEX Jobcentres was not available. Strikingly, the NELEX Jobcentres reported a significant variation in the number of registered users ranging from less than 20 to as many as 15,000.

This sits against a recurring refrain from respondents that there is a **lack of awareness about the NELEX Portal and NELEX/MRC Jobcentres** and that it had not clearly articulated its 'value proposition' to its users. FMLE reported that it has **embarked on an information campaign for NELEX/MRC** through the production and distribution of information, education, and communication materials (e.g., brochures, notebooks, calendars, hand bills and posters) with different types of messages and branding on commercial vehicles to create awareness on its activities.

Following user feedback, the argument can be made that if user volumes are low it may not simply be due to some jobseeker and employer users seeing NELEX as having a poor market profile, but more a **'perception' that NELEX is not 'fit for purpose'** in its current form. This reflects trends seen in many other countries where the overall share of vacancies registered or brokered by PES is declining (EU Joint Employment Report 2020). In particular, administrative and professional cohorts rarely appear on PES databases as they tend to use sector-specific services provided by the private sector.

In an age of marketing where messaging, backed by strong visuals is prized by customers, the NELEX website can be said to be poorly presented and lacking in detailed information and tips for jobseekers. As FMLE does not appear to undertake any kind of **customer insight exercises** for either employers or jobseekers it is not possible to ascertain user experience or whether any preference to use other channels is real or anecdotal. Such questions need to be raised.

Likewise, **improving user volumes may not simply be a question of better advertising. Word of mouth**, particularly among young people, is the single most important marketing tool for employment services. If users perceive the service as poor, it is unlikely they will recommend it to friends. It is hard to argue that the quality and user-friendliness of the NELEX job portal is optimal, particularly compared to its commercial rivals. This is likely to negatively influence the views of young and disadvantaged jobseekers, in particular, who are likely to be disproportionately large users of the service.

Another reason for NELEX's **poor market profile** may be due to its **co-branding with MRC**. Where it co-brands with MRC, the NELEX Portal may be seen more as a resource for returnees and migrants in the eyes of employers and jobseekers. Similarly, **where NELEX Jobcentres are co-located in larger FMLE premises** respondents reported poor signposting, which made it hard to distinguish them from the Ministry's other services delivered in the same premises.

Diagram 3 shows a sample process map covering the identification of labour gaps by employers until the post is filled. The field work revealed a lapse in following through some of the processes, in particular collecting LMI. For instance, NELEX offices could not accurately report on how many jobs were created. Services to employers (Set 5) were not equally consistent with the process map, with no evidence of employer assistance. The element of the process map that NELEX interlocutors identified with most closely was the quality assurance check for genuineness of employment opportunity (i.e., process rather than outcomes).

▶ **Diagram 3. A Sample process map for employers**

Source: Authors, ILO PES Assessment in Nigeria, 2022

▶ Mainstream Support to Employers

In common with other emerging economies, the Nigerian PEAs face a number of **challenges in providing a strong service offer to employers**, not least because many operate informally (53 per cent, World Bank 2019) *and some 96 per cent are Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (NBS). A 2013 Survey on MSMEs conducted by the NBS, in collaboration with the* **Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria** *(SMEDAN, 2013)*, underlined both the challenges and the high employment creation potential of MSMEs.[35]

FMLE reports that a core service offer to employers is the ability to register vacancies **directly on the NELEX Portal.** No data was available to clarify the volumes of jobs regis-

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35   SMEDAN (Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria). 2013. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Survey. SMEDAN and NBS collaborative survey. Abuja. Available at
< https://www.smedan.gov.ng/images/PDF/2013-MSME-Survey-Summary-Report.pdf>.

tered, the sectors they were in, or their geographical location. As the Portal was not functioning at the time of writing it was not possible to ascertain the information required in the vacancy registration template, the quality control measures applied to ensure quality and equity of access, or the number of genuinely live vacancies on the system. Seven NELEX Jobcentres reported registering employers, but only three (Abuja, Edo and Lagos) reported a service to put forward suitable candidates – an obvious disconnect (Table 1).

The experience for PEAs suggests that the **procedure for listing vacancies on NELEX may be suboptimal and should be reviewed**. Speed of posting and vacancy filling is a critical issue for most employers and a key selling point for any job portal, whether public or private. Whilst FMLE reported that licenced PEAs can advertise vacancies directly on the NELEX Portal with no additional validation process, feedback from PEAs suggested that, compared to private job portals, NELEX's job-posting process was 'perceived' as slow and non-competitive.

As the service is web-based it will require a level of digital literacy and the ability to 'articulate 'clearly the requirements of a particular vacancy. Given this reality, it could be argued that the **NELEX Portal effectively narrows its target employers towards larger or better-resourced employers.** The 2013 NBS-SMEDAN study highlights that the overwhelming majority of employers in Nigeria fall into the MSME category, which are less likely to have the resources and confidence to post vacancies. NELEX offices report conducting background checks on employers before posting their vacancies. Depending on the approach used, this is **likely to limit the availability of NELEX services to the informal sector** since, by its own nature, it is unregulated and often unverifiable. NELEX Jobcentres are considering the possibility of working with Workers' Associations in the informal sector to mitigate against this.

Only three NELEX Jobcentres reported using systematic application filters or **pre-screening services** to ensure employers receive the most appropriate applications. Their effectiveness or the employer satisfaction with this service could not be ascertained. Given the NELEX Portal's lack of functionality to automatically match jobs and applicants using job classification codes or competencies and the relatively small number of NELEX staff on the front line it is **likely that employers are inundated with high volumes of poor-quality applications.** If this is the case it is unlikely that employers will have much faith in the Portal, which will result in fewer vacancies being registered, and which in turn is likely to further reduce NELEX's market share.

A limited number of FMLE offices in respective states provided information about **employer engagement** aimed at increasing either the number of vacancies or filling skills gaps within the funding and capacity limitations under which they worked. NELEX reported that their employer support services were equitable, but there was no indication of any measures that supported the business case for firms to hire underrepresented cohorts like women and persons with disabilities.

Partnerships to Deliver Services

There is a growing policy trend in most countries recognising that **PES need to work in partnership with other labour market stakeholders** in order to build sustainable and inclusive employment (Hieble and Hempel, 2019).[36] There are many examples in emerging economies that highlight the value of bringing together social partners, civil society and other external stakeholders towards increasing employment and social outcomes, irrespective of the level of resource and infrastructure available to operate the national skills and employment ecosystem.

The revised NEP committed to the establishment of a **National Employment Council (NEC)**, based in the FMLE, to support networking and to coordinate the work of labour market stakeholders to deliver policy (NEP 5.1). FMLE reported that the NEC has met quarterly since 2018, but it is difficult to see whether they have developed a shared vision with partners to grow employment or have driven progress to reduce service duplication and to co-ordinate activities among partners as outlined in its mandate. **The National Labour Advisory Council (NLAC)** is the overarching body responsible for coordinating NELEX-related partnership frameworks at the federal level, and transmitting stakeholders' decisions to the Ministers and the Federal Executive Council (FEC).

The 2017 NEP also committed FMLE to establish a **Board of Social Partners and other stakeholders** to **administer and coordinate NELEX** (4.7.6) and to **support collective responsibility of key stakeholders** in different sectors to harmonize efforts to achieve employment growth. The **Social Partners' Advisory Board (SPAB)** was inaugurated on 24 November 2021 with a remit to coordinate activities among the social partners. It has not been possible to ascertain what form of operational agreements it may have put in place with stakeholders, if any (e.g., contracts, MOUs, SLAs, informal agreements). Nonetheless, one member of the SPAB reported initiatives to strengthen the website to promote social partnership with NELEX. It was envisaged that for this to be optimal it would need to be multilateral, with a robust IT interface with NELEX that permitted feedback on job opportunities and social partnerships.

FMLE and NELEX/MRC services have their strongest external links with training providers, particularly for what might be termed short pre-employment courses. Training constituted the biggest single NELEX service offer with 22 per cent of respondents accessing it, including in NELEX/MRC Jobcentre facilities. Training opportunities advertised on the NELEX Portal were available to participants within a geopolitical zone although they

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36 "Hiebl, Julian; Hempel, Kevin. 2019. Improving Public Employment Services Through Partnerships with Non-Public Providers: Synthesis of International Experience and Implications for Kosovo. World Bank, Washington, DC. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34180 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO."

were being conducted at NELEX state offices. This means that access to training was better for people who resided in a NELEX state. It was not possible to ascertain whether the choice of training provider or the training content was directly driven in any way by LMI or, for example, through skills mismatches identified by employers. Given the general lack of robust LMI it may be safe to assume that choosing training providers and content is not particularly evidence based.

Interlocutors described services focusing on computer literacy training and career orientation workshops, reporting that many of the beneficiaries were uncertain about their career choices. Relationships appeared to be largely contractual and fee-based, rather than outcome-based. Further, best practice sharing seemed *ad hoc*. **Performance monitoring** appeared to largely measure inputs and participant flows rather than outputs, although examples were seen of training providers employing **customer satisfaction surveys**. It is thus **difficult to know whether training leads to positive employment or self-employment outcomes, or whether the training measures represent good value for money**.

Outside the orbit of the state, Nigeria has a vibrant skills and employability ecosystem that includes private employment agencies (PEAs), faith-based groups (FBGs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private skills providers (PSPs) and services linked to doner agencies. Whilst there is no publicly available data covering the volumes or cohorts of service users, employment outcomes or respective market shares, it is likely that PEAs form the largest single group of non-state actors.

FMLE's relationship with PEAs appears to be largely based on ensuring **regulation and standards** rather than building a strategic dialogue or partnership to deliver a better user experience and higher outcomes for employers and jobseekers. Agreement was reached with the **Nigerian Employers' Consultative Association** in 2011 on a Code of **Conduct for Private Employment Agencies** which was revised in November 2021. FMLE reports undertaking annual capacity-building workshops with PEAs to strengthen cooperation and to improve their compliance with statutory provisions and awareness of decent work. When funding is short, as in 2021, these workshops are held collaboratively with the **Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria** (HuCaPAN).

There are **no reports of any wider 'formal' cooperation agreements between NELEX services and other employment service providers.** State- level agencies recognised the benefits of a national network of employment services but reported limited mechanisms for collaboration. They further reported limitations arising from the reliability of the NELEX platform, the scope of services offered and the visibility of initiatives for collaboration. FMLE indicates that PEAs are 'encouraged' to advertise job vacancies on the NELEX Portal but there was no evidence of a digital interface between them to facilitate this. Likewise, even if activity were done manually, there was no indication of data covering the volumes and types of vacances involved, the processes put in place to manage vacancy quality, or any collection or exploitation of LMI to target particular growth sectors.

The Assessment Survey mapped common employment service operators. Set 4 shows that jobseekers use a variety of platforms to look for work, some of them interchangeably. PEAs had a sizable number of subscriptions on the market, with Jobberman having the strongest market profile, and with online platforms like LinkedIn also garnering demand.

Lagos, Edo, Kaduna, and Ogun featured among the locations for popularly used state-level employment services (Set 4). NELEX was well known among survey respondents but this could be a reflection of the sampling strategy used for the survey as this reality did not correspond with other reports of its poor market profile.

▶ **Set 4. Share of employment services used by respondents**

Employment services used by respondents
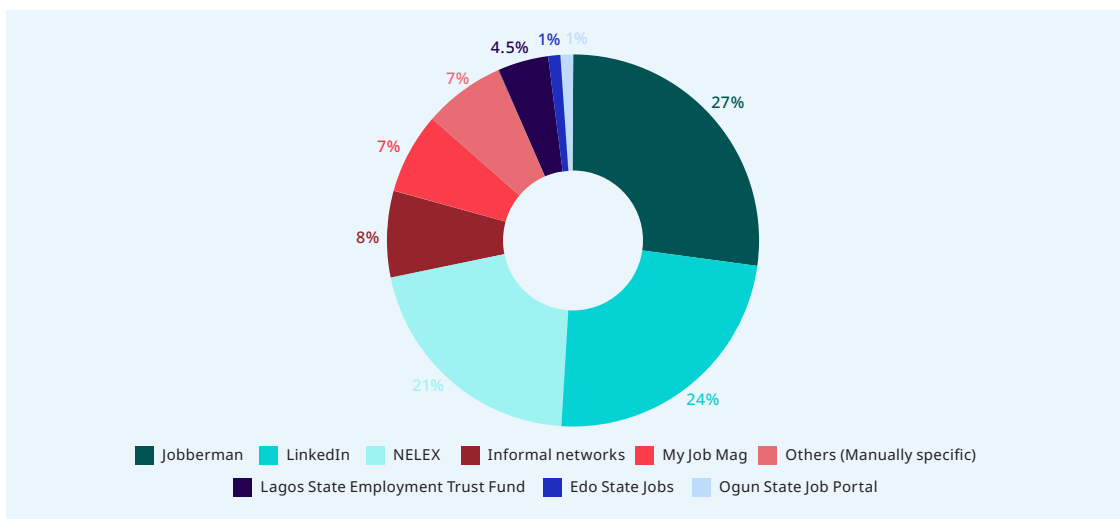
Other employment services used
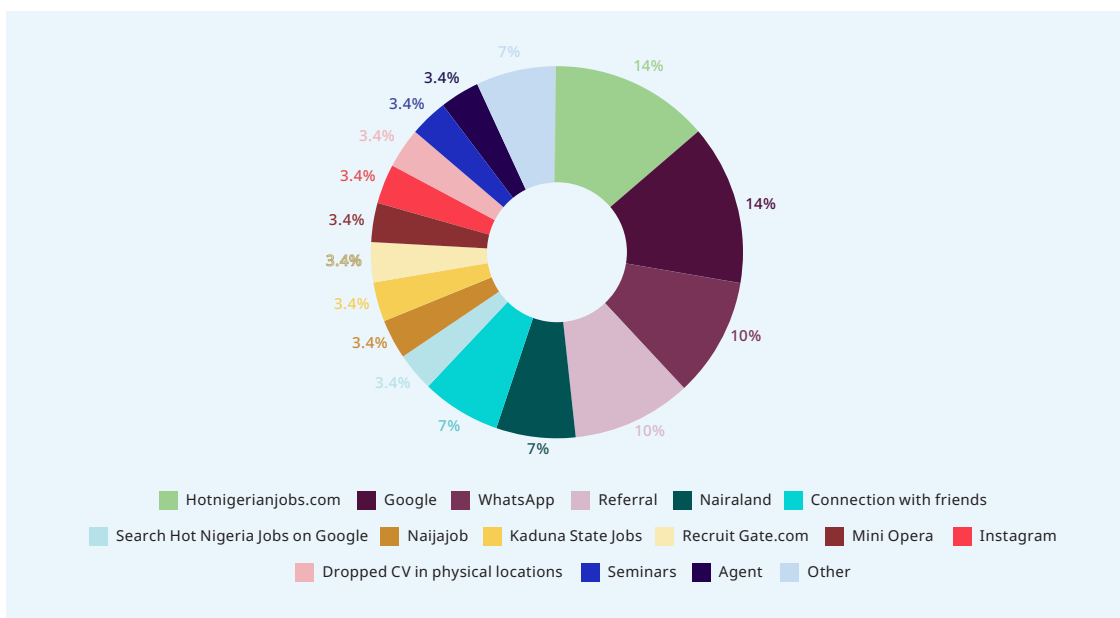
Source: ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, Survey, 2022

NGOs and Faith-Based Groups (FBGs) have a long tradition of delivering social and community services in Nigeria. In some countries they also play an increasingly important role in delivering skills and employability services. In Australia for example, the Salvation Army and Brotherhood of St Laurence have capitalized on their experience of social and community work to become important (and effective) employment service providers contracted to the Australian state. In Nigeria, the **Justice, Peace and Development Commission** (JPDC) has been actively involved in social services. Interlocutors commented on the reliability of FBGs which are part of organized structures promoting employment opportunities among their members.

There is a strong indication that **FBGs have been filling a service gap** in some communities to provide core skills and employment-related services. Whilst they appear to operate largely in silos and may lack operational experience, they nevertheless provide an important resource to jobseekers given the scale of the demand. FMLE did not report any activities to register or map services delivered by FBGs/NGOs or to develop collaborative service models with them. There is no record of specific FBG/NGO partnerships with NELEX/MRC branded offices or of such organizations actively using or promoting the NELEX platform to support their own job matching operations.[37] All NELEX offices reported conducting awareness and advocacy campaigns with FBGs, but how this affected outcomes is uncertain.

GiZ is currently delivering pilots in Abuja and Lagos to test the feasibility of harnessing this potential resource by improving and scaling-up operational capacity among FBGs through its **Outreach Programme**. The aim is to eventually train and support up to 1,000 **Community Outreach Counsellors** and to link them to the closest state-managed Jobcentre where other training or job help can be delivered and where outcomes can be collected and LMI collated. Outreach services are already an established feature of healthcare provision in Africa and there are good examples of it being successfully rolled out in NGO-led employment coaching in a number of countries (Middlesex District Council, UK).[38]

If public investment in skills and employability infrastructure and services is likely to remain uncertain **there is a strong argument for federal and state authorities to adjust their service delivery models to incorporate FBGs and other NGOs into a wider ecosystem.** This would help scale-up services for a more modest financial outlay. It would, however, require a concrete commitment to improve governance and operational management – particularly involving the introduction of common standards, a minimum quality-level of service, and transparent performance and LMI collection. In practical terms, it would also require state authorities to train and certify work coaches to ensure common service standards across geographies.

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37 Only Lagos state reported collaboration with the Catholic Church, but a governance and operational model for collaboration with FBGs needs to be established.

38 Middle Sussex District Council. 2021. New jobcentre plus outreach service to start in Middle Sussex, available at <https://www.midsussex.gov-.uk/about-us/press-releases-and-publications/new-jobcentre-plus-outreach-service-to-start-in-mid-sussex/>

Performance Management

Performance Management in PES has grown in importance since the 2008-10 Global Financial Crisis as governments have had to increasingly **demonstrate a return on taxpayer investment in public** services to voters. In those public sector cultures that have no tradition of performance management, or those that are used to funding through block grants, agreeing on objectives, setting targets and indicators, and producing good data to monitor progress can be a challenge. Measuring customer satisfaction as outlined in Set 5 below is also a component that is worth adding to the performance mix as it provides a more general view of user perceptions.

The NEP set out the **cross-government monitoring and evaluation scaffolding** under which a performance management framework and lower-level outcome targets for FMLE and NELEX should sit (NEP 5.2).
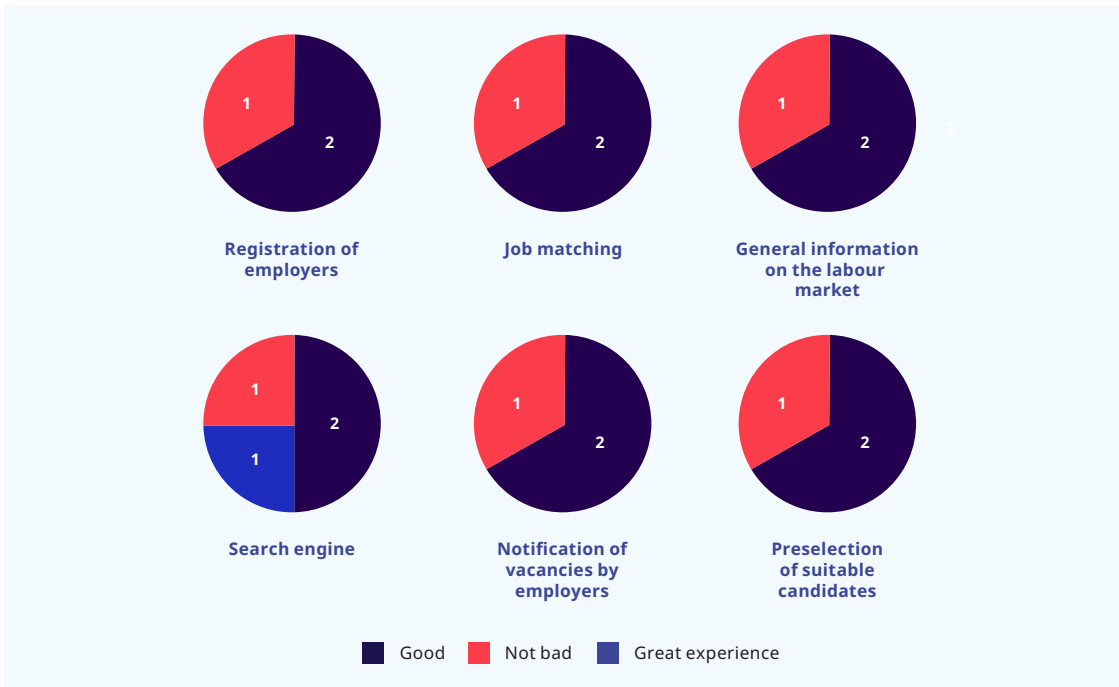
The Key Indicators of most relevance to NELEX include the following:

▶ Increase in SME registration

▶ Increase in wage employment and the reduction in casualization of employment

▶ Decrease in informality

▶ Reduction in youth unemployment

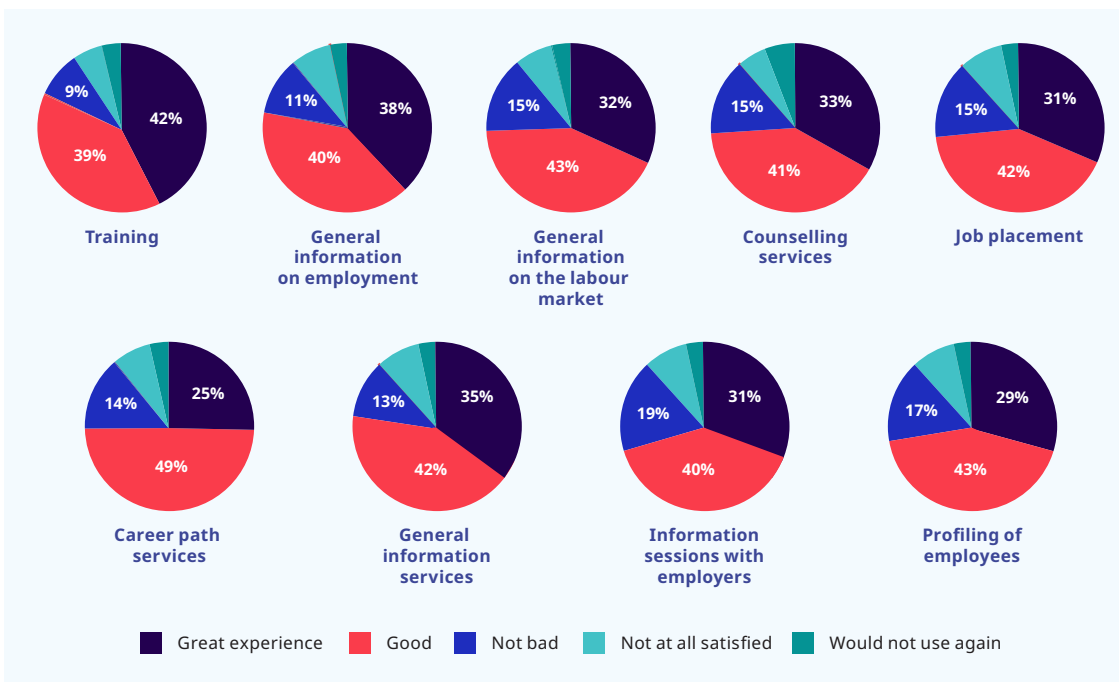▶ Increase in labour market participation of women

Survey respondents were happy overall with NELEX services, however the performance from the perspective of employers was recorded as just 'quite fair' (Set 5). Employers indicated that the services were 'mostly good' in the same proportion for all services, but a third of them thought that the services were 'not bad'. Jobseekers and those in work reported better services, with more considering that they had a **'great experience' related to training services** in particular. More respondents indicated a 'not so good' experience for the array of job placement, career path, counselling and information sessions with employers, which formed the mid and end processes on the map (Diagram 2). This might reflect a lack of training and expertise among NELEX officers regarding the offering of employment advice.

▶ **Set 5. Customer Satisfaction with NELEX services**

Customer satisfaction by employers

Registration of employers

Job matching

General information on the labour market

Search engine

Notification of vacancies by employers

Preselection of suitable candidates

■ Good   ■ Not bad   ■ Great experience

Customer satisfaction by employees

Training

General information on employment

General information on the labour market

Counselling services

Job placement

Career path services

General information services

Information sessions with employers

Profiling of employees

■ Great experience   ■ Good   ■ Not bad   ■ Not at all satisfied   ■ Would not use again

Source: ILO Assessment of PES in Nigeria, Survey, 2022

There was no evidence that the overarching indicators set out in the NEP have been translated into specific, measurable performance targets for FMLE or NELEX services, or that they are routinely measured along the PES delivery value chain (i.e., from client registration on the NELEX Portal, to coaching to finding work).

There were examples showing inputs being measured at office- and individual counsellor-levels, and of NELEX/MRC inputs being tracked and reported up the line (e.g., the number of workshop participants). There was, however, no indication that performance outcomes are compared between individual staff members or offices or that performance variations are analyzed to determine what lessons can be learnt from high performers. Mechanisms to centrally collate successful job placements were nonexistent, although such information was collected by the state-level PES and by employment agencies. No collated total performance against any specified target was made available.

The strongest reported challenge was in dealing with the **informal sector**. Efforts to organize informal workers into unions showed good results, although the significant size of the informal sector posed visibility challenges. Parallel measures to reduce the size of the informal sector by facilitating and simplifying the documentation of informal businesses, or by providing basic business management workshops (e.g., how to reduce purchase costs by grouping together with others) should be examined.

State offices of the Federal Ministry of Labour kept dossiers of inspection forms and a summary sheet of labour issues that had been dealt with. The report format included the number of applications registered on the NELEX Portal, disaggregated by biological sex, and level of education. Other state-level agencies, outside of the Ministry of Labour, reported having Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for labour market services such as trainings and job placements. These were not publicly available as data could only be viewed on a request basis.

Key Recommendations to Improve the Delivery Of Public Employment Services in the Context of the Nelex Platform

Although the range of measures set out in the 2002 and the revised 2017 *National Employment Policies* to improve the matching of labour supply and demand and progress labour market transparency were articulated, progress in attaining their vision has been patchy.

The recommendations and scenarios below have been formulated to support a reflection on implementing the general policy intent, and in particular a potentially larger role for the NELEX Portal. They are based on feedback from interlocutors and draw on experiences from PES reforms in other parts of the world.

They have been predicated on three givens:

▶ **Funding is always likely to be tight, as is the case for most PES in Africa and indeed worldwide.** Suggestions will therefore focus on doing more with the same budget or less, including maximising the efficiency of the current infrastructure and systems; pursuing organizational change to streamline decision-making and improve accountability; and developing synergies with other actors. Above all, the suggestions will aim to be proportionate and sustainable.

▶ **Linked to the funding challenge, institutional capacity and staff competencies in the ministries are likely to be constrained.** FMLE and its sister agencies/departments tend to be staffed by generalists rather than employability specialists. Any organizational change or development of new services for PES must respect this and work with it.

▶ **Informality is an important part of the economy and needs to be folded into any reform process.** This requires a balance between providing practical support on the one hand, whilst gradually nudging informal workers into a more formal status on the other hand.

▶ **Box 1. Governance and Strategy**

Challenges	Recommendations
There is **no dedicated governance structure for NELEX** within FMLE and thus no voice to champion its cause in the wider business of the Ministry. This may mean it is seen as a lower priority which leads to less-informed decisions on investment, partnership development and performance management.	• **Establish a distinct self-managing or autonomous NELEX Agency with either a separate 'legally mandated' or 'advisory' NELEX Board** within the Department of Employment and Wages. This should be incorporated into the Long-Term Strategic Goals of the NLAC so that NELEX's status as an autonomous agency can be recognised by law. • The NLAC should advocate for a **distinct, ring-fenced budget line for the agency** through which it can invest in new evidence-based services (pro-active planning) and build new partnerships (expand resources through others). • If the legal hoops to create a distinct agency are likely to take time, NLAC should, in the shorter term, allow FMLE to at least recruit, train and develop distinct NELEX staff to begin building appropriate experience in the skills and employability sector. • Given the perennial challenge of having adequate financial and human resources, the NLAC should also commit to assisting the NELEX Board in having the **flexibility to attract external funding from donors and other external players** to supplement funding. • There should be a direct and measurable link between the NEP policy intent, investments in services and infrastructure **(inputs)** and results **(outcomes).** The Board should have clear objectives set by FMLE and be **accountable for performance**. (NEP 4.7.6).
Whilst the NEP (2017) is a coherent policy document, the Assessment highlighted that a number of **individual ministries, agencies and wider stakeholders are unsure of where they fit in,** and how to articulate their roles to meet the overall objectives of full and fair employment.	E**stablish and promote common understanding of the overarching objectives to support policy awareness and implementation at the ILMD Directorate level.** Extrapolate short, easy to understand 'headline' summaries from the NEP that are relevant for each ministry/agency/stakeholder (e.g., using infographics showing how skills link to employability, or example cases). They might take the form of the wider 'vision, mission and values', but can also drill down to operational matters. They should be communicated widely, and prominently displayed on ministry and stakeholder websites and in internal & external communications.

Challenges	Recommendations
There is no clear view of what makes up the employment service ecosystem to support wider governance and strategy at federal, state and local levels, the actors involved and their roles. This hampers the ability to drive and coordinate policy implementation goals, and makes it hard for users to navigate services.	• The NEC should commit to conducting a **comprehensive service mapping exercise** in order to establish a clear understanding of who does what, how and where. This should form the basis of a national **'service catalogue'** that lists actors, what they do and how their work links to the NEP objectives. It should help identify geographical & programme provision gaps and cut duplication. • This exercise should also form the foundation for a **'partnership catalogue'** that will allow FMLE to approve or licence only actors who agree to work under an MOU or similar agreement with shared minimum standards, transparent governance & performance management frameworks and LMI sharing. The NEC should be supported by the SPAB and the NLAC to achieve this.

▶ **Box 2 - Organization and Management**

Challenges	Recommendations
The organizational structure fails to properly differentiate between the NELEX Jobcentres and the NELEX Portal. This means there is no clear 'line of sight' for managers from the NEP's strategic objectives through to service delivery. The NELEX Jobcentres are the physical manifestation of PES and offer face-to-face services. The NELEX Platform is one of several service delivery channels used by the Jobcentres. The Assessment suggests that this lack of differentiation means that users struggle to recognise it as a distinct and effective public employment service.	Linked to potential changes in governance, FMLE should also consider from a **management perspective** whether to either • **Make NELEX 'services' (i.e., both the Portal and the Jobcentres) a distinct self-managing or semi-autonomous unit** with an allocated budget and staffing with key performance indicators that link to the NEP objectives. This would allow space for NELEX managers to shape a more integrated service model, develop a distinct identity, and promote its core business (i.e., a national Jobcentre network with an overlaid digital job-matching tool) or, • **Separate the NELEX Portal as a distinct federal-level digital labour market platform** which can be developed to 'overlay' all the public, private and NGO skills and employability services actors in the national, state or local ecosystem that want to use the system and are

▶ **Box 2 - Organization and Management**

Challenges	Recommendations
	registered on the 'partnership catalogue'. This would partly mirror the National **Career Service Portal** model that has evolved in India where the state electronic platform provides the digital architecture for PES and other ecosystem players to work on shared objectives. Both options (1) & (2) would arguably help drive service development, performance and LMI collection by delineating responsibilities and accountabilities more clearly. • Similarly, **NELEX could opt for an 'open platform' approach** which would allow all accredited partners secure online access for their specific service offer (e.g. the Belgian PES – VDAB). Under this option stakeholders enjoy a lot of flexibility to design and deliver new products and services whilst FMLE would be ultimately responsible for the data management. • Options (1)–(3) are predicated on NELEX having a flexible functionality that allows new services to be built. Technological capabilities have progressed considerably over the 16 years since the NELEX Platform was established. If any future analysis suggests that it may not have the right functionality to meet Nigeria's needs for skills, employability and LMI generation, **there may be an argument for fundamentally reviewing IT needs to ensure any online service is future-proofed**. There are many off-the-shelf digital tools on the market, In all the above scenarios **FMLE/NELEX would need to actively engage with stakeholders**, but, crucially, most of the LMI generated by actors on the platform would be digital and thus easier to collect, collate and analyse.
Staff working on the NELEX Portal and NELEX Jobcentres are 'generalists' that may be called to work on other roles like labour inspection. They are not recruited with the kind of skills & competencies required for their PES roles in mind. This affects service quality and outcomes.	Regardless of whether NELEX services become distinct entities, their **staff should be 'ring-fenced' from other FMLE activities (see governance)**. The recruitment, learning and development systems in the Department of Employment and Wages (DEW) needs adapting to ensure they **hire and train the right people for the job and that the career paths for PES staff are separate from other staff**. They need to develop counsellor training and performance management

▶ **Box 2 - Organization and Management**

Challenges	Recommendations
	systems that can evolve to meet new ways of delivering service (e.g., for 'Outreach' Advisors working out in the field, community centres, informal workers, etc.).
Conflating the NELEX Jobcentre network with Migrant Resource Centres (whether officially or not) makes financial and perfor-mance reporting and account-ability fuzzy and makes it harder for employer and jobcentre users to discern the core services offered (i.e., Is it a resource for everyone, or for migrants & returnees?).	**The FMLE needs to simplify branding and link all structures under one universal umbrella body** available for all users (i.e., use one simple brand like 'Jobcentre Nigeria' rather than 'NELEX Jobcentres or 'NELEX/MRC Jobcentres' and do not outwardly differentiate between mainstream jobseeker cohorts, and migrants as target 'customers'). This will help decision-makers, managers and staff members to coalesce around a core vision and tasks that are applicable to all user cohorts and will simplify the measurement and reporting link between funding (inputs) and performance (outcomes).

▶ **Box 3 - Labour Market Services**

Challenges	Recommendations
Demand for skills and employ-ability services far outstrips the resources and ability of the NELEX Portal and Jobcentres to provide an effective service.	• Using 'customer insight' surveys, identify who the customers are, what they need and then **tailor a 'minimum core level of service'** to meet it. In the short term this might mean focusing on basic Employment Information Services for occupations, training institutions and self-employment opportunities rather than on advertising the very limited number of (formal) job vacancies available. The latter service remains core business for PES, but it could be developed over a longer time frame as employer and jobseeker users see the added value of the platform. • **Develop a 'channels strategy' to make sure services are targeted and not overwhelmed.** This could be done by using a basic profiling technique to segment jobseekers into different service offer channels. This might mean, on the one hand, ensuring core services like information are accessible to all whilst simplify-ing time-consuming activities like jobseeker registration (particularly where no services are

Challenges	Recommendations
	subsequently offered) or 'rationing' resource-intensive services (e.g., job coaching) on the basis of need and priority. In the Nigerian context, tension arises from the fact that most formal jobs registered with the PES are blue collar jobs, amidst the claim that graduates are a political priority.
Lack of labour market information to inform policy, training and service design. FMLE and NELEX have found it difficult to collect, analyse and disseminate LMI consistently and in statistically relevant volumes and have been unable to coordinate efforts with related state and non-state bodies.	Given the working assumption that the necessary organizational reforms to collect robust LMI remain ineffective, a **more radical solution could involve working with new tech-based actors to provide more immediate data.** • **Both Google and LinkedIn** are piloting labour market data gathering exercises in a number of countries that harvest the data from smartphone users to provide real time information on vacancies, growing sectors, skills mismatches and training provision. If NELEX's functionality is hard to re-configure, these providers might provide a workable alternative. • Given the fragmented nature of Nigeria's ecosystem, even if improvements to the NELEX platform increase employer and jobseeker traffic to more statistically robust volumes, gathering **data generated from other partners (especially the FMoE) will remain crucial**. This will require agreeing common standards and **creating buy-in to collect and report data.** • The complexity of centralising and linking LMI from disparate sources means this role is **often undertaken by the main National Statistics Agency** in many countries. This could be considered in the Nigerian context. If, however, FMLE/NELEX is to successfully take this role forward it will need to boost its current capabilities to co-ordinate data reporting lines both internally across ministries, and externally. • **Given FLE/NELEX's limited capacity**, consideration could be given to (a). adding human resource/support from the ILO to train officials in international standards; (b). the NBS adopting the stat [39] data collection and analysis platform in collaboration with the ILO, OECD and the Statistical Information Systems – Collaboration Community (SIS-CC). Such a move should be subject to meeting certain

39 The ILO stat data collection is the leading source of labour statistics globally. It collects and reports a number of widely used labour market indicators and has the advantage of uniformity in definition.

Challenges	Recommendations
	capacity and quality conditions.
	• Further, this adjustment would require NBS, policy-makers' and employers' and workers' organizations to establish an overarching **LMI Advisory Panel** that links to the NDE.
	• Establish a **database** link between FMoE and FMLE to bridge the gap in skills demanded and skills supplied.
Lack of user faith in the NELEX Portal and disappointing user volumes are based, in particular, on poor reliability, restricted access and poor content (i.e., few jobs, programmes and lack of information);	• **The task of improving trust and reputation rests primarily with the PES and not the employers or jobseekers. This means, above all, improving NELEX's reliability, functionality and access** (e.g., integrated SMS function, kiosks in public/civic spaces).
	• **Manage user expectations better**. Rather than promote NELEX as something that it is not and lose trust, focus improvements on providing core services well (better information, training, workshops and traineeships) to 'empower' users to market themselves, rather than on jobs per se (i.e., information on sectors, CVs and start-ups rather than vacancies). In most labour markets, over 70 per cent of jobseekers find work through connections. There may be more value added if the NELEX Portal & Jobcentres offer users basic information and a helping hand that is 'fit for purpose', than consistently poor information and a low volume of vacancies.
	• **Promote more widely and cleverly.** Use employer/ jobseeker 'champions' to promote NELEX services (e.g., on social media), and make the system more user-friendly. Be clear about the digital tool's 'market purpose'.
	• **Improve the ease of vacancy management for employers**. Review vacancy posting regulations for employers who have previously been verified and have used NELEX services regularly by granting them 'trusted employer' status, and by providing them with a differentiated level of support in return for regular vacancies (e.g., offer premises for the conduct of interviews).
	• Focus on **reforming and standardizing TVET/apprenticeships** so that skills and training investments send an accurate/trusted signal of a worker's value to an employer

Challenges	Recommendations
Given the size of the human capital challenge in Nigeria the **skills community is confusing, and lacks common standards and validated credentials,** making it hard for employers and jobseekers to assess what skills are in demand and their true worth.	- Focus short term efforts on **improving information about training opportunities within the current labour market** whilst working on longer-term improvements to skills mapping and course quality. **Transfer responsibility for the collection and collation of skills mapping data to the NBS working through FMLE, education & skills bodies etc.** Securing accurate and regular skills data is the foundation for wider improvements to the system and can be rolled out progressively. - Conduct an **audit of all skills providers and qualifications** to create a central 'provider register' - Use the register to **simplify understanding and access for employers and jobseekers** (e.g., grouping around sector skills). **Standardize credentials** regardless of the issuing body (e.g., by using a registered kitemark). **Create a stronger link between skills and jobs** by promoting easy-to-understand job pathways that build on early exposure to workplaces and work experience. These can begin with high volume sectors and be expanded over time.
The NELEX Portal provides only a limited service to employers, workers and sole traders in the **informal sector**. This is particularly because it is based online and requires IT access and digital skills to use it.	**Use 'customer insight' surveys to learn more about the specific needs of informal workers.** **Improve online access by incorporating SMS (standard on older non-smart phones)** into NELEX functionality. - Develop **closer collaboration** with artisan organizations to improve access to the informal sector. - Develop **outreach workshops** aimed at 'nudging' people to become more 'formal' (e.g., how to access loans/credit, how to pool purchasing power, low-level marketing). - Develop easy-to-collect **input indicators** in the first instance (e.g., number of training events) with a view to introducing some output ones (e.g., number of new trading licences applied for).

Challenges	Recommendations
Although the NELEX Portal & Jobcentre operate under inclusive, non-discriminatory policies, its passive behaviours **are inadequate to tackle the labour market disadvantage experienced by women** (e.g., with sectors traditionally reserved for men) and provide inadequate opportunities for persons with disabilities.	• **Engage proactively with traditionally disfavoured groups** to improve access, content and inclusiveness. • Use the NELEX Portal and Jobcentre services to **incentivise female participation** in sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and technical professions. • Improve access to NELEX services for persons with disabilities by reserving appointment slots for them, developing more relevant workshop material, and holding educative sessions with employers on the benefits of working with disadvantaged groups.

▶ **Box 4 - Partnerships**

Challenges	Recommendations
The lack of finance and human resources hampers the ability of online and physical NELEX services to provide accessible and effective support. This challenge particularly exists at the local level where it has not been possible to establish and develop Community Employment Centres. There is no clear view of the employment service ecosystem at federal, state and local levels, its actors and their roles. This leads to potential service duplication, a waste of resources in some geographies, and no/poor service in others.	• **Actively pool the resources of the wider labour market stakeholders** to widen and deepen the PES geographical footprint and services offered (see governance & strategy). This means bringing disparate services loosely under **one umbrella** through MOUs or similar, whilst respecting local differences. It could also mean **co-locating services** to share resources. Working out how best to achieve this should be the prime focus for FMLE's discussions with stakeholders. • Establish a clear understanding of who does what, how and where through a comprehensive **service mapping exercise**. This should form the basis of a national **'service catalogue'** that lists actors, what they do and how their work links to the NEP objectives. It should help identify geographical & programme provision gaps and cut duplication. • This exercise should also be the foundation for a **'partnership catalogue'** that will allow FMLE to approve or licence only actors who agree to work under shared minimum standards, transparent governance and performance management frameworks, and share LMI.

Challenges	Recommendations
	FMLE should work with stakeholders to come to an agreement on what common LMI and performance data is most important to their work and either pilot or progressively roll out a mechanism. It must be kept simple, and its delivery must be timely.
Lack of strategic or operational direction to build partnerships and to convince stakeholders to work through NELEX services	**Give the NEC and the new Social Partners Advisory Board (SPAB) a clear mandate** within a more autonomous NELEX administration to leverage the power of wider partnerships as per the NEP (4.7.6). The Board's remit should be practical and focused on operational and perfor-mance management issues (e.g., establishing formal or informal agreements/mechanisms to bring partners together, agreeing on common reporting standards)
Poor understanding of shared objectives, whether linked to the NEP or not, at all levels and among all stakeholders.	• **A comprehensive and ongoing communica-tions strategy** should be developed that generates a common, boiled-down 'mission, vision, and values' message that links the work of all stakeholders. • FMLE should take the lead in delivering **work-shops** for groups interested in partnerships so as to understand the practicalities of different approaches (e.g., MOUs, SLAs, etc.)
Although FBGs and NGOs deliver a range of often much-needed services, they often work in silos. Their work quality and outcomes are not collected or collated. This makes it difficult to capture LMI, measure their potential added value, and scale-up the better performers.	• If the NELEX Portal's reliability, functionality and content can be improved, FMLE could offer it as an **'open platform' tool to 'quality-assured' and certified FBGs/NGOs.** This would allow them to add content securely to a common platform, thus increasing the provision of information, programmes, and measures at little extra total cost even if registered job volumes remained low. • Whilst retaining their autonomy, certified partners would need to agree to **adopt some standard processes and reporting indicators** to support data/LMI capture.

▶ **Box 5 - Performance Management**

Challenges	Recommendations
There are a variety of different performance management measures applied both between and within PES at federal, state, and local levels.	**Introduce basic Standard Performance Indicators across all employability organizations** to measure inputs (e.g., spending on staff, equipment and programmes), outputs (referrals to training providers), or outcomes (job placements). These Indicators could ultimately link to the objectives in the NEP – e.g., reduce youth unemployment. This can be done progressively as reporting systems mature.
Currently, there is no functioning system that enables FMLE, NELEX staff and stakeholders to understand what they need to do in their jobs (inputs) and to measure how well they do it (outputs) and how to improve outcomes (e.g., job placements).	Establish a **simple, user-friendly Performance Management Framework** (PMF) to support organizational learning by helping staff and stakeholders to perform to the best of their abilities by continuously improving their skills, behaviours and contributions. As NELEX staff are not ringfenced, the PMF could be administered at the office level, rather than at the individual officer level. To ensure consistent standards, monitoring could either be delegated to a mobile internal team within FMLE or to an external body with clear KPIs. Remedial training needs could focus on standard online/blended training.
A highly fragmented ecosystem among NGOs, FBGs and the skills and training sector means that stakeholders often work in silos.	• Build and communicate **strategic alignment** measures to help stakeholders understand the high-level vision and strategy. Partners should be clear about "why I am doing this job.". • Create **common high-level indicators** for all stakeholders that will help benchmark performance. • Establish a **'model ecosystem'** comprised of a 'coalition of the willing' to test out innovative, user-friendly approaches to performance-led partnership that is working, before disseminating. This approach might more likely attract donor or external support to help build capacity.

▶ **Box 6 Action plan in a Logical Framework Approach (LFA) matrix for strengthening the capacity of the NELEX online portal**

Overall Goal	Impact Indicators	Risks and Assumptions
Purpose Strengthen the capacity of the NELEX portal in support of the National Employment Policy to promote full and inclusive employment	Increase in user volumes to a level that would make LMI capture statistically robust	**Sufficient funding and system capacity** to improve NELEX reliability and functionality for users (including data capture, storage and presentation) in order to foster trust
Results • Smoother employment transitions for people during their working lifecycle • Improved labour market transparency to help employers, jobseekers and policy makers Lower levels of informal work	• Larger volume of employer & jobseeker users accessing NELEX services • Improved evidence-base for policy makers and stake-holders to design and evaluate programmes	• Sufficient capacity to work with increased volumes. May require a funding link between number of users and a per capita budget. • Sufficient in-house capacity and competen-cies to collate, analyse and deploy LMI in policy and service design
Outputs • Provide a robust online NELEX portal to support employers find labour, and for jobseekers to find and progress in suitable, quality work • Create an online function-ality that allows the collection and collation of key labour market data	• Increase in vacancy registra-tion, job outcomes and programme outcome figures against agreed benchmark • Monthly publication of appropriately disaggregated key performance data.	• **Development of stakeholder networks** both to widen programme and job service offers to jobseekers and • To channel key data to NELEX to generate sufficiently large user volumes to ensure robustness of data sets captured
Activities • Improve NELEX reliability, functionality and access (a). Ensure system reliability through connection to solar power (b). Widen access via smartphones and use of SMS (c). Activate enabling software for key data capture	• **Reliability, functionality, access** (a). NELEX portal operational 24/7 for users (b). Measurable increase in system traffic against benchmark, especially for youth (c). Monthly dissemination of key LMI to stakeholders (d). Satisfaction survey among managers & officials	• **Reliability, functional-ity, access** Sufficient resource, capacity and competen-cies to develop and manage the back and front of house opera-tions • **Employer Offer** (a). Adequate IT Func-tionality to allow direct

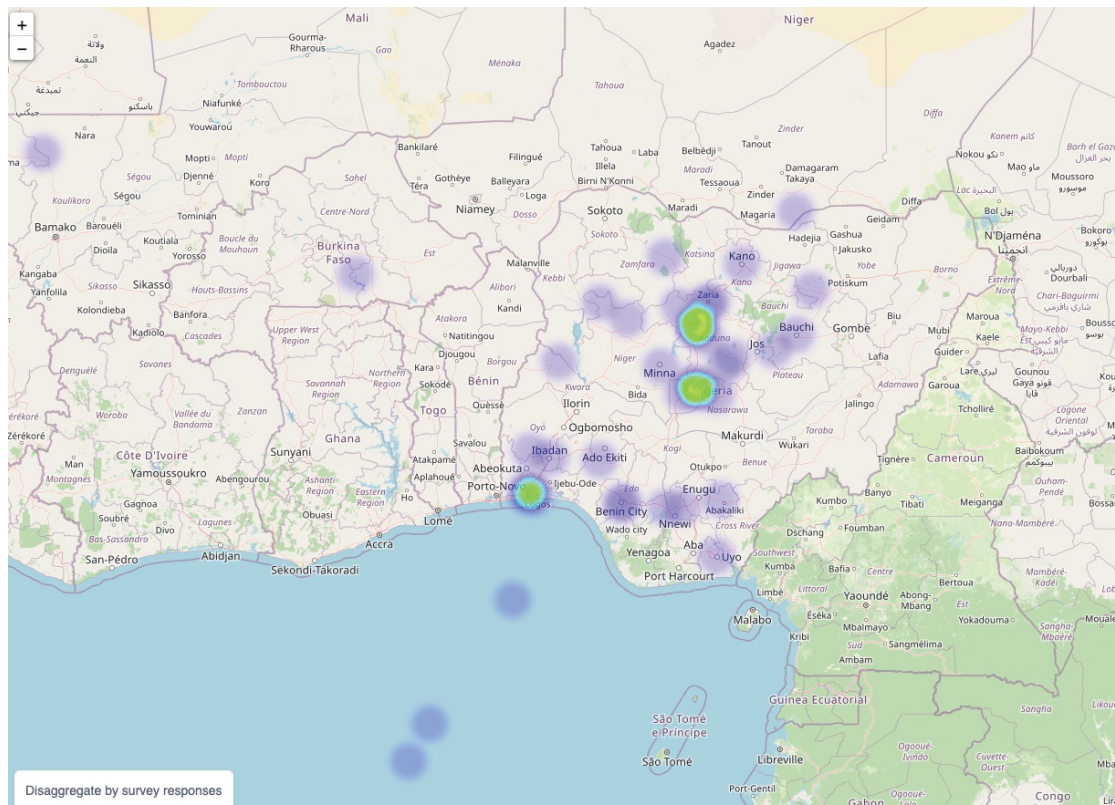| Overall Goal	Impact Indicators	Risks and Assumptions
(d). Create user-friendly performance management/LMI dashboard • **Improve employer offer by:** (a). enabling and simplifying direct vacancy registration on to the system (b). Providing a differentiated 'gold star' service to employers willing to place a large quantity of vacancies on NELEX that suit local jobseeker cohorts (e.g., by filtering CVs or allowing them to interview on NELEX/MRC premises, offering internship/training packages). (c). Targeting MSMEs and the informal sector on how to use NELEX, and provide information on steps to grow and formalize enterprises. e.g., outreach workshops • **Improve jobseeker offer by:** (a). Capturing user 'insight' to develop good content for online information to reduce in-person calls (b). Profiling and segmenting services to ensure users get the most appropriate help based on need (c). Increasing the volume and range of programme and training offers to reduce pressure on limited job offers and empower jobseekers to 'self-market' (d.) Developing a rich menu of in-person/online workshops based on customer insight and satisfaction	measure usage volumes • **Employer Offer** (a). Measure increase in volume of vacancy input (b). Measure range and 'fit' of vacancies and positive job and programme outcomes. (c). Measure number of workshops delivered and demonstrable outcomes (e.g., micro-finance loan taken out, trading licence application) (d). Measure employer satisfaction. • **Jobseeker offer** (a). Measure volume and correlate outcomes of insight surveys (b). Measure volumes of users using self-help, group-help, one-to-one measures (c-d). Measure volume of info access and satisfaction levels	and secure user access to input vacancies (b). Sufficient physical and human resources to provide differentiated offers and outreach services. (c). Successful reduction of red tape to encourage use • **Jobseeker Offer** (a). Adequate IT Functionality to allow direct user access to information and job & programme opportunities to build trust in the service (b). Robust partnership network developed to standardize systems & definitions, reduce duplication and focus available resources on agreed stakeholder priorities, and coordinate offers (c). Sufficient resources and internal staff competencies to develop user material and collateral

▶ Appendix 1. List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
EUTF	European Union Emergency Trust Fund
FEC	Federal Executive Council
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FMLE	Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment
FMoE	Federal Ministry of Education
GIZ	German Development Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HuCaPAN	Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria
ILMD	International Labour Migration Desk
IoM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organization
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LFN	Laws of the Federation of Nigeria
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LSETF	Lagos State Employment Trust Fund

▶ **Appendix 1. List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

MDA	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NEC	National Employment Council
NECA	Nigeria Employers Consultative Association
NELEX	National Electronic Labour Exchange
NEP	National Employment Policy
NLAC	National Labour Advisory Council
NLC	National Labour Congress
PEA	Private Employment Agencies
PEN	Promoting Employment in Nigeria
PES	Public Employment Services
PSP	Private Skill Providers
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NCCPEA	Nigerian Code of Conduct for Private Employment Agencies

▶ **Appendix 2. Heatmap of PES customer feedback coverage in Nigeria**

Note: areas outside a land location indicate respondents' use of a Virtual Private Network (VPN).