**Dr Godfrey Asiimwe, Associate Professor, Development Studies, Makerere University** *“The Paradox of Unemployment amidst Growth: Tracking youth unemployment under neo-liberalism in Uganda, 1990 - 2015.”*

This paper interrogates the paradox of persistent youth unemployment amidst reported economic growth under neo-liberalism in Uganda. After adopting Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) reforms in the late 1980s, Uganda, like some other African economies, recorded high economic growth. By 2015, the consistently growing economy had matured yet youth unemployment and underemployment continued unabated. Government was compelled to undertake targeted interventions to leverage youth unemployment, which however, escalated. How then was the growing economy absorbing the youthful labour force? This paper pinpoints the interplay of constraints within the complex structure of neo-liberalism and the reconstituted state. SAPs led to a skewed architecture that enabled few winners, as major traditional labour absorbing public and production sectors contracted. Celebratory growth was largely in informality, narrow service sector ‘enterprises’, casualization, import consumerism. We argue that Neo-liberal’s quasi capitalism did not transform the domestic and global economy to position the growing labour force for meaningful employment. This leads to an interplay of youth agency on the socio-political landscape, as they strive for better repositioning in the economic sphere.