

AFRICA'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE: NEW PERSPECTIVES



IDS Bulletin

Transforming Development Knowledge

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Publishing Manager/Bulletin Editorial Coordinator Alison Norwood

Marketing and Production Officer Gary Edwards


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Cover photo Nigeria, Lagos. Fashion designer Ejiro Amos Tafiri, 28, in her busy workshop as she and her team produce her latest collection for Lagos Fashion and Design Week. In 2014 she opened a flagship store in Ikoyi, an upmarket neighbourhood, and her clothes are worn by the rich and famous. Nonetheless she still caters for young women of more modest means.

Photographer Andrew Esiebo/Panos

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Advertising enquiries Gary Edwards, Marketing and Production Officer, IDS Communications and Engagement Unit, idsbulletin@ids.ac.uk

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Africa's Youth Employment Challenge: New Perspectives

Editors **Seife Ayele, Samir Khan and James Sumberg**

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Notes on Contributors

Seife Ayele is a development economist with over 20 years' experience in research, teaching and development practice, mainly in Africa and Asia. His work focuses on agricultural innovations and development, technology access and adoption, biotech crops regulation, and enterprise development. He is currently a Fellow in the Business, Markets and the State Cluster at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Prior to joining IDS, he directed programmes in Ethiopia providing access to and adoption of improved agricultural technologies by smallholder farmers. He was a Research Scientist at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, and a Research Fellow at the Open University, UK.

Bernard Bett is a Senior Veterinary Epidemiologist currently working with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi. His research interests focus on identifying drivers for zoonotic diseases and effective ways of controlling them. He also works with local and international institutions to train local veterinarians on a wide range of epidemiological techniques including risk analysis, risk mapping and mathematical modelling. He completed his PhD studies at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, and the University of Guelph, Canada.

Salome Bukachi is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya. She has a PhD in Medical Anthropology, with over 16 years' experience in teaching and research on socioeconomic and behavioural aspects in human and livestock health, including addressing community participation and gender issues on the same. She consults widely as well as providing technical backstopping on social aspects of infectious diseases for both local and international organisations such as the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, Malteser International, the African Union, the World Food Programme and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) among others.

Benson Estambale is Professor of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOUST), Kenya. He has been involved in various health research activities of public health importance including epidemiology and control of HIV/AIDS, malaria, lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, leishmaniasis, soil-transmitted helminths and other climate-sensitive vector-borne diseases such as Rift Valley fever. He is currently the Principal Investigator of the World Health Organization (WHO)/International Development Research Centre (IDRC)-funded project on Population Health Vulnerabilities to Vector-Borne Diseases in Kenya.

Eyob Balcha Gebremariam is a PhD researcher at the Global Development Institute (GDI) at the University of Manchester, UK, and a Matasa Fellow. His PhD research broadly focuses on the politics of development and state–citizen interactions in Ethiopia. The study specifically analyses different state and youth initiatives in Addis Ababa to examine their role in shaping developmental aspirations of the state and state–youth citizenship interactions. Eyob previously worked as a civil society activist facilitating African citizens' and civil society organisations' interaction with the African Union and Regional Economic Communities decision-making processes.

Samir Khan is Senior Manager, Research Policy and Communications at The MasterCard Foundation, Toronto, Canada. Previously, he spent almost ten years working in public opinion research, with a particular expertise in public health marketing and youth political participation. He holds a Bachelor of Journalism from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and is currently a candidate for the Executive Master of Public Administration at the London School of Economics.

Nicholas Kilimani is a Lecturer in the Department of Policy and Development Economics at the College of Business and Management Sciences, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, and a Matasa Fellow. He completed his PhD in 2016 at the University of Pretoria. His research interests are in the areas of environment and development economics in a developing country context. He previously worked at the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), a leading policy research thinktank in Uganda. He has provided technical support to government and non-government organisations, within and outside of Uganda.

Monica Lambon-Quayefio is a Lecturer and researcher at the Department of Economics at the University of Ghana, and a Matasa Fellow. Her work focuses broadly on human development, with a particular focus on child health, women's empowerment as well as migration and labour issues in Africa. She completed her PhD in 2014 in Economics at Clark University, Massachusetts, USA after her Bachelor's degree at the University of Ghana in 2006.

Jacqueline Halima Mgumia is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and a Matasa Fellow. She is currently finalising her PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, where her thesis is on youth and entrepreneurship in Tanzania. Jacqueline is interested in researching family relations and the working conditions of women and men from a feminist perspective, and particularly the intersections between youth, state intervention, development programmes and everyday lives.

Edna Mutua is a Graduate Fellow with the Food Safety and Zoonoses Team at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, and a Matasa Fellow. She is also a final year PhD student of

anthropology at the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies of the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Edna has a keen interest in intersections between gender and agriculture, and previously worked in a project that evaluated the impacts of livestock value chains and microcredit programmes on women's empowerment.

Grace Muthoni Mwaura is a non-residential Research Fellow with the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), Nairobi, and a Matasa Fellow. She completed her PhD in 2015 in Geography and the Environment at Oxford University. Her doctoral research investigated youth aspirations and subjectivities in the context of prevailing socioeconomic uncertainties, agricultural development and environmental change. Grace has eight years' experience of working with young people in different fields including climate change, education, conservation, intergenerational partnerships and leadership programmes across Africa and internationally. Her current research interests are in youth livelihoods and agency, inclusive development, and policy and governance.

Victoria Flavia Namuggala is a Lecturer at the School of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, and a Matasa Fellow. She recently completed her PhD in Women and Gender Studies at the School of Social Transformation, Arizona State University, USA. Her research interests centre on the multiple intersecting forms of oppression and privilege experienced in situations of forced displacement associated with armed violence. Specifically, she examines violence in relation to youthhood and unemployment drawing on northern Uganda, a region that has experienced over two decades of armed violence. Her research largely draws on feminist and indigenous epistemologies.

Isaac Nyamongo is a Professor of Medical Anthropology at the University of Nairobi. He has 30 years of teaching and research experience and has worked as a consultant with many organisations including WHO, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), the African Union and the World Bank among others. He has published scholarly books and peer-reviewed papers in reputable journals.

Ayodele Ibrahim Shittu is a Lecturer in the Department of Economics, University of Lagos, Nigeria, and a Matasa Fellow. He received a BSc and MSc degree in Economics from the University of Lagos and completed his PhD in 2014 at Soochow University, Suzhou, China. Ayodele specialises in the economics of entrepreneurship and innovation, and his research interests include entrepreneurial intentions and innovation competency building among adolescents, financial system innovations and university–industry collaborations. He is an active member of the African Network for the Economics of Learning, Innovation, and Competence Building Systems (AfricaLics).

Maurice Sikenyi is a PhD candidate in both Comparative and International Development Education, and Development Studies and Social Change at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, USA, and a Matasa Fellow. His thesis is on higher education and peace-building in Kenya. He has experience in international development, education, and peace-building, having worked in various capacities in project management, research design and implementation, capacity building, and programme evaluation. At the University of Minnesota, Maurice has served as a Lead Project Fellow for a longitudinal multinational evaluation on youth livelihoods in East Africa.

James Sumberg has been a Research Fellow at IDS since 2009 and leads the Rural Futures Research Cluster. His current research interests include rural young people and employment in Africa, agriculture and rural development policy, and the development implications of ongoing changes to the field of agronomic research. Previously he worked at The New Economics Foundation, the University of East Anglia, WARDA – the Africa Rice Center, the International Livestock Centre for Africa, CARE International and the Gambian Livestock Department.

Thomas Yeboah is an Assistant Research Fellow at the College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, and a Matasa Fellow. He is finalising his PhD in Development Studies at the University of Cambridge, UK, on how young people actively shape, negotiate and challenge their social worlds through rural to urban migration. More broadly, he is interested in youth migration and unemployment issues, microfinance and bottom-up development approaches, as well as analysis and interpretation of policy discourses. Thomas collaborated with the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC) on a Q-Methodology study of young people and work in Ghana.

Introduction: New Perspectives on Africa's Youth Employment Challenge

Seife Ayele, Samir Khan and James Sumberg*

Abstract This article frames and introduces the ten other contributions to this collection. First, the dominant narrative around Africa's youth employment challenge is set out, as are four key points of debate and discussion that are subsequently addressed by the various contributions. We then draw from the 'research into policy' literature and note that it says little about how young researchers move into a policy engagement mode, or how they can be helped to move in this direction. This sets the stage for an introduction to the Matasa Fellows Network, which was established to do just this, with a particular focus on the youth employment challenge in Africa. The articles in this *IDS Bulletin* are authored by the ten members of the first cohort of Matasa Fellows and are briefly introduced in the last section.

Keywords: underemployment, engaged excellence, side-hustle, precarious employment.

1 Introduction

Neither youth nor employment are new to development discourse and policy in sub-Saharan Africa. But while both have been on the development agenda at least since independence, over the last decade policy and programme interest in both youth and employment has increased dramatically. Specifically, the youth employment challenge provides an increasingly important focus for policy, intervention and research throughout the continent (as it does globally).

This renewed interest in youth and work reflects a heady combination of ideas, policy entrepreneurship, fear and crisis response, and was kicked off by the 2007 World Development Report, *Development and the Next Generation* (World Bank 2006). The report's primary framing is of young people as an 'investment opportunity', and the central argument is that governments and development partners should invest in youth because their situation presents an 'unprecedented opportunity to accelerate growth and reduce poverty' (*op. cit.*: 2), and that 'if they remain unemployed for long periods...



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they could be a drain on the economy' (*ibid.*). The notion of human capital is central to the report, and specifically how policy can be used so that this capital, as embodied in young people, is 'kept safe, developed, and deployed' (*ibid.*). The main part of the analysis is structured around five life transitions: continuing to learn, starting to work, developing a healthy lifestyle, starting a family, and exercising citizenship. The suggestion is that policy reform can most effectively help young people navigate these transitions by focusing on three strategic directions for reform: opportunities, capabilities and second chances. Despite the report's largely instrumental approach to young people, it does acknowledge that an important element of 'getting it [policy] right' is 'listening to youth', allowing them to exercise their 'client power'.

Two closely related ideas – youth bulge (Evoh 2012; Sommers 2011) and demographic dividend (Ahmed *et al.* 2016; Choi 2016; Eastwood and Lipton 2011, 2012) – figure prominently in *Development and the Next Generation*, and have since become key aspects of a now dominant narrative that both justifies and orients policy around youth and employment. A youth bulge refers to the situation that arises when countries reduce infant mortality but still have a high fertility rate, and as a result, a large share of the population comprises children and young adults. As these young people come into the workforce they give rise to a potential, one-time, demographic dividend – a boost in economic productivity when there are 'growing numbers of people in the workforce relative to the number of dependents'.¹ Whether or not this dividend is realised depends on the structure and dynamism of the economy – an economy that cannot provide productive employment to young people will forego any demographic dividend.

Another important aspect of the dominant narrative that was consolidated through the 2007 World Development Report is a concern with 'risky behaviours' among especially under- and unemployed youth, associated with unprotected sex, alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Related to the sense that young people can be drawn into situations and behaviours that put themselves and society at risk is a fear that in the absence of employment opportunities, the youth bulge becomes a threat to political and social stability (Urdal 2004, 2006). Playing on the image of idle young men as 'breakers' (Honwana and de Boeck 2005), the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991–2002), the violence following the December 2007 election in Kenya, the Arab Spring (2010–11) and other examples are used to demonstrate the clear and present danger posed by young people who lack gainful employment.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The next section introduces four key points of debate and discussion relating to youth and employment in Africa. Each of the articles in this *IDS Bulletin* address one or more of these points. Following this, we draw from the literature on how development research affects policy and note that it says little about how young researchers move into a policy engagement mode, or how they can be helped to move in this direction. This sets

the stage for an introduction to the Matasa Fellows Network, which was established to do just this, with a particular focus on the youth employment challenge in Africa. The articles in this *IDS Bulletin* are authored by the ten members of the first cohort of Matasa Fellows and are briefly introduced in the last section.

2 Four points of debate

In this section, we introduce four points of debate and discussion in the emerging ‘research–policy–intervention’ nexus around youth and employment in Africa. Not surprisingly, they are also important concerns of the articles in this *IDS Bulletin*. The four points are: ‘Who are the youth?’, ‘What is the problem?’, ‘Are entrepreneurship and self-employment the solution?’ and ‘What about youth aspirations?’.

The ‘Who are the youth?’ debate arises because different age-based definitions of youth are used within and across countries and development organisations, with implications for official statistics and cross-country comparisons. From a policy coherence perspective, the issue is not so much with the lower age cut-off, but rather the upper age cut-off and the resulting range. There can be as many as ten years’ difference between the oldest youth by some United Nations definitions compared to some national definitions. Further, a typical definition of youth lumps together individuals who span a range of 20 years, which begs the question: do a 15-year-old and a 35-year-old have enough in common to enable coherent policy? More fundamentally, the hard boundaries that are inherent to age-based definitions, and the resulting compartmentalisation of policy, provide little space for the notion of transitions that is now so central to modern understandings of young people’s lives (Locke and te Lintelo 2012). Related to this is the other – and perhaps more important – aspect of this debate, which is the tension between the age-based definitions from the worlds of law and policy, and more fluid cultural and lived-reality understandings of youth that may take account of markers like dependence and independence, marriage and childbirth. Again, do a 17-year-old dependent student living at home and a 17-year-old working mother have enough in common to enable coherent policy?

It is clear that there will always be a need for unambiguous definitions of the age at which young people can, for example, leave school, vote, marry, sign contracts, join the army or hold public office. It is not obvious, however, if or why policy relating to young people and employment must continue to be bound by arbitrary and overly broad definitions. Even if in a particular country anyone between the ages of 15 and 35 continues to be defined as youth, it does not follow that policy and interventions could or should not focus, for example, on either the lower end of the range, or those individuals who, regardless of their age, find themselves at a particular transition.

The ‘What is the problem?’ debate has two important dimensions. The first revolves around unemployment versus underemployment.

The fact that the official statistics estimate unemployment means that it is commonly used to frame the problem, with the absolute levels and differences between youth and adult, and rural and urban unemployment being most often cited. However, some observers argue that these figures are of little value, particularly in rural Africa, because unemployment is generally low, while underemployment, which is less often estimated or reported, is high (Gough, Langevang and Owusu 2013; Hino and Ranis 2014: see also ILOSTAT, the International Labour Organization (ILO) database of labour statistics). This matters because policy responses to unemployment and underemployment should be quite different, and a faulty framing of the problem will likely result in lost opportunities and wasted resources. The second dimension of this debate is reflected in the choice of related but subtly different terms, including employment, self-employment, job, work, entrepreneurship and career, and the additional complexity that comes from combinations like 'gainful employment' and 'decent work'. What are the explicit or implicit messages that accompany alternative framings like the 'the youth employment challenge', the 'youth jobs challenge' or the 'youth work challenge'? From the perspective of (some) policymakers and/or (some) young people, is wage employment in the formal sector the gold standard, while everything else is simply work, or 'waiting'? And where should, for example, domestic work and unpaid care work fit into our thinking about the youth employment challenge (Chopra 2015)? As illustrated by Victoria Flavia Namuggala (this *IDS Bulletin*), in some situations the boundaries between employment, socially unacceptable activity and criminal activity are becoming increasingly blurred.

The 'Are entrepreneurship and self-employment the solution?' debate, such as it is, remains extremely one-sided, with most policymakers and development professionals committed to entrepreneurship as the best (and only) response to the youth employment challenge. This commitment must be set against two observations. First, there has been a move from 'strong' to 'weak' conceptions of entrepreneurship, so that it is now considered synonymous with self-employment – any activity that is undertaken to generate income is considered entrepreneurship (Langevang *et al.* 2015; Singer, Amores and Moske 2015). This inclusiveness risks draining the terms entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour of any meaning. Second, by accepting that entrepreneurship and self-employment are synonymous, it forces one to take seriously the conclusions of a recent ILO review of self-employment programmes for young people, which concluded:

It is not clear, on the basis of the evidence and data reviewed, that the [self-employment] schemes that have been tried actually created new self-employed jobs, nor is it clear whether these jobs are of sufficient merit to be worth creating (Burchell *et al.* 2015: 40).

Yeboah *et al.* (2016) suggested that the commitment to entrepreneurship and self-employment as the main responses to the youth employment challenge in Africa indicates an 'imagination gap' between the

employment futures that policymakers imagine for young people, and those that young people imagine for themselves. A more explicit focus on the demand side of the youth employment challenge will be necessary if this gap is to be addressed (Flynn *et al.* 2017).

Reference to the imagination gap brings us to the closely related ‘What about youth aspirations?’ debate, which touches on a number of related concepts including aspirations, expectations, dreams and imagined futures (Hardgrove, Rootham and McDowell 2015; Leavy and Smith 2010). In a sense, the question is how seriously young people’s stated aspirations should be taken: for example, while some are adamant that it is not realistic to think that everyone can be a salaried professional, others applaud such imagined futures for their ambition, despite the fact that they may not be grounded in local or personal realities. On a practical level, their aspirations and imagined futures – however they are judged by adults – are the most important basis on which young people can engage with policy and programmes concerning their working futures. If the idea of bringing young people into discussions about how best to address the youth employment challenge is to move beyond rhetoric, taking the futures they imagine for themselves seriously will be an absolute necessity.

3 Research plus

Reflecting the broader influence of the evidence-based policy movement, the renewed interest in youth and employment in Africa has been accompanied by calls for evidence of what works. While the existing research base from which evidence can be drawn is quite limited, there are signs that the level of potentially relevant research and evaluation activity is increasing.

What are the chances that this research will actually be useful in informing policy around youth and employment, and how can these chances be improved? In recent years, much has been written about the ‘research into policy’ problem (Court and Maxwell 2005; Eames and McGeevor 2007; Stone 2009, 2013; van der Arend 2014; Young 2005). Approaches to this reflect different understandings of knowledge and evidence, and of the policy process. The research into the policy problem looks very different to those who see the policy process as linear and largely technical, compared to those who argue that both evidence and policy processes are always contested and deeply political. The research and policy in development (RAPID) framework (Court and Maxwell 2005; Court and Young 2006; Young 2005) for the analysis of impacts of research on policy draws from both the technical and political approaches. It highlights the need to understand context (i.e. forces that influence research uptake crucially include the extent of civil and political freedoms in a given country, political contestation, institutional pressures and vested interests; and attitudes and incentives among officials, etc.); the evidence (which needs to be credible and of high quality, timely and relevant); the links between policy and research communities (i.e. the importance of links with communities, networks

and intermediaries, the media and campaigning groups); and external influence (notably the impact of donors' actions on the research–policy–practice nexus and international politics and processes).

The notion of 'engaged excellence' (IDS 2015; Oswald, Gaventa and Leach 2017) is also relevant. In *IDS Bulletin* 47.6, Oswald *et al.* (2017) suggest that engaged excellence reflects a recognition that in development, the quality of research is dependent upon it linking to and involving those people who are at the heart of particular change processes. They also identify four interdependent pillars of engaged excellence, namely: delivering high-quality research; co-constructing knowledge; mobilising impact-oriented evidence; and building enduring partnerships. Crucially, an engaged excellence approach is based on an appreciation of the importance of knowledge politics and an ability to engage with and navigate the politics of policy processes in different fora.

There is another strand of literature that focuses more on the individual, and specifically the links between personal political commitment and scholarship. Along these lines, O'Connell described what he referred to as politically engaged scholars who 'entered research settings as change agents and openly admitted values into their scholarship' (2011: iii).

But significantly, these literatures say relatively little about how young researchers get into a policy engagement mode, or how they can be prompted or helped to move in this direction. For those in a university environment, criteria for promotion come into play, as these often prioritise publication over policy impact. There is also a particular challenge if new PhD researchers return to their universities to find they are heavily burdened with teaching and other duties. Understandably, learning the ropes of effective policy engagement often takes a back seat in these crucial early years, and regrettably, this may set a pattern that continues long into the future. The Matasa Fellows Network was designed to help address this challenge.

4 Matasa Fellows Network

The Matasa Fellows Network was launched in 2015 as a joint initiative by The MasterCard Foundation and IDS. It aims to develop a network of young African researchers with the commitment and skills to make a positive contribution to policy around youth employment in Africa. Ten Fellows, who either recently completed or would soon complete PhDs were selected from 222 highly qualified applicants. The Fellows' academic training covers economics and applied econometrics, anthropology, geography, development studies, international education, politics, women and gender studies, and migration. This breadth of disciplines reflects the complexity and multiple dimensions of the youth employment challenge.

Fundamental to the Matasa initiative is the proposition that no matter how innovative or rigorous the research, policy influence will seldom be achieved by bolting on a few policy recommendations or a short discussion of policy implications to a research report or paper.

Rather, influence requires careful reflection, strategy, planning and tactics, and above all, a nuanced understanding of the context and the politics that shape any given policy process. Unfortunately, this orientation, and the skills needed to put it into action, are seldom part of PhD training programmes. This is the gap that the Matasa Fellows Network seeks to address.

In September 2016, nine of the ten Matasa Fellows participated in a week-long workshop at IDS. Different aspects and understandings of the African youth employment challenge were explored, as were academic and practitioner perspectives on the policy process. A ‘walkshop’ over the Sussex Downs provided space to reflect on the value of concepts like ‘imagined self’ and ‘imagined future’ in addressing the youth and employment challenge, and also helped consolidate the group’s *esprit de corps*. The Fellows walked and worked together to develop their ideas for the articles in this *IDS Bulletin* – many of which were drawn from their PhD research. A second workshop was held in December 2016 at the University of Ghana at Legon, at which the articles were finalised and a series of policy briefs prepared. Two additional events provided valuable insights into workings of national public policy processes in Ghana.

5 Introduction to the articles

The articles in this *IDS Bulletin* address four core areas: the evidence on youth employment policy and interventions; the politics of youth policy; the changing nature of young people’s work; and promotion of entrepreneurship.

Setting the scene, Kilimani (this *IDS Bulletin*) provides an overview of the youth employment challenge across the developing world, with a particular focus on policies and interventions. This review identifies two critical factors that are commonly seen to limit employment opportunities for young people: human capital, including education, training and skills; and a business environment facilitating access to key resources such as credit, infrastructure and markets. But as many interventions are based on little more than faith and theory, as opposed to evidence, they generally fail to deliver jobs. Greater support for labour-intensive sectors and public works may be warranted. There is in any case strong arguments for more integrated and coherent policy across education, labour markets, financial services, and infrastructure.

Turning to the politics of youth policy, Gebremariam (this *IDS Bulletin*) provides a critical analysis of the development and contradictions of youth policy in Ethiopia. He charts a shift from government portraying unemployed youth as ‘threats’ and ‘vagrants’ to their incorporation into the emerging developmental state, reflecting a reframing of youth as ‘entrepreneurs’ and as the ‘seeds of democracy and development’. This shift reflected the role that young people played in giving the government a bloody nose in the fiercely contested 2005 national elections. An important conclusion is that context matters in shaping

youth policy and interventions, and that a focus on changing framings and narratives provides an extremely useful window through which to analyse these political and policy dynamics.

How young people find, access, create, combine and perceive work – how they navigate an increasingly precarious employment landscape – are the concerns of five articles. Using the notion of 'side-hustle', Mwaura (this *IDS Bulletin*) documents efforts by six educated young people in Kenya to generate income through agriculture. Their efforts challenge a number of important assumptions – that being employed means having one job; that individuals work in either the formal or the informal sector; that educated youth are not interested in agriculture; and that a choice to get involved in agriculture reflects long-term intentions. The diverse livelihoods, mixing and matching across formal and informal employment and agricultural entrepreneurship that characterise side-hustling can be read as young people successfully struggling against adversity. But Mwaura argues that more than anything else they reflect the failure of the state to uphold its end of the intergenerational bargain. Along similar lines, Namuggala (this *IDS Bulletin*) contrasts formal understandings of work and employment with the range of income-generating activities undertaken by young people displaced by the war in Northern Uganda. While the law and mainstream society criminalise or stigmatise sex work, gambling and dancing, for these young people they are among the few available forms of employment. To classify these young people as either unemployed or deviant is to completely misread their situations and motivations. This point is brought home in the fact that income generated through these activities is used to fulfil family and social responsibilities. Broader perspectives on the nature of work urgently need to be brought into public policy debate.

The links between young people, migration and work have generated significant research and policy interest, and Yeboah (this *IDS Bulletin*) engages with these debates with a particular focus on migrants' social networks. The article draws on interviews with 30 young migrants from rural northern Ghana who were working in and around Agbogbloshie market in Accra. Migrants draw on their social networks to obtain the funds to travel to Accra, and to secure work and navigate risky and precarious employment situations. But these same social networks are also associated with discriminatory and exploitative practices. Yeboah argues that the key policy challenge is not how to stop migration or strengthen migrants' networks, but rather how to enable young people from poor families and poor areas to remain in school, so that they can enter the labour market from a more advantageous position. The challenges facing young people in marginal rural areas are also addressed by Mutua *et al.* (this *IDS Bulletin*) with specific reference to livestock production and marketing in Baringo County, Kenya. Results of a survey are used to explore how social norms and micropolitics enable or constrain participation. This analysis indicates a disconnect between Kenya's youth policy which advocates for equitable distribution

of employment opportunities, and the reality at community level, where access to and control over livestock resources remains far from equitable. This poses particular challenges for livestock development programmes: can implementation strategies be developed that challenge existing barriers in ways that increase employment opportunities for male and female youth, without attracting backlash from other groups?

Continuing with the focus on rural areas, Lambon-Quayefio (this *IDS Bulletin*) takes a critical look at the common narrative that the rural non-farm economy has the potential to generate a significant number of jobs for young people. Reviewing evidence from Ghana, she concludes that rural non-farm enterprises are highly heterogeneous, and many function essentially as coping mechanisms. At the present time, these enterprises have little potential for growth or employment creation. Lambon-Quayefio suggests that a much more disaggregated understanding of the rural non-farm economy is needed, and in particular in relation to operators' motivations. In addition, policymakers must follow through on long-standing commitments to invest in rural infrastructure – without this, the rural non-farm sector will be of little interest to young people seeking productive employment.

The last three articles in this collection look at efforts to promote entrepreneurship as a response to the youth employment challenge in Africa. Sikenyi (this *IDS Bulletin*) questions the effectiveness of the Kenyan Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF). This flagship credit programme was meant to transform large numbers of under- and unemployed youth from 'job seekers' to 'job creators'. However, the eligibility criteria are such that few young people can qualify; but perhaps more importantly, the fund has been mired in accusations of political meddling, mis-management and corruption. Government credit programmes like YEDF are problematic by their very nature, but the possibility that they benefit under- and unemployed youth could be improved with more reasonable eligibility criteria and mentoring, greater accountability and transparency, and more effectively coordinated by state and non-state actors.

Shittu (this *IDS Bulletin*) focuses on the role of mentoring in promoting youth entrepreneurship. His main conclusion is that in order to address the scale-up of mentoring programmes, there is a need for much more research on in what situations and for whom group mentoring models can be made to work. Finally, Mgumia (this *IDS Bulletin*) draws on her PhD research in Tanzania to document the experience of 52 participants in a youth-oriented entrepreneurship programme. The programme tried to induce entrepreneurship through training and access to credit. However, this effort at 'programme-induced entrepreneurship' is shown to have been of limited relevance to participants who either aspire to salaried employment, or whose demanding family situations make it impossible to accumulate and effectively manage the capital required to establish a small business. This analysis strengthens the call for a more nuanced, contextualised and constrained approach to the promotion of

entrepreneurship and self-employment as primary responses to the youth employment challenge in Africa.

In summary, the contributions to this *IDS Bulletin*: first, underline the enormity of the youth employment challenge in Africa; second, demonstrate how politics and political context shape youth-related policy; third, illustrate the need for critical reflection on the multiple and divergent meanings of work and employment; and fourth, highlight an urgent need to rethink interventions that promote entrepreneurship and self-employment. The scope for quality research and effective policy engagement is tremendous.

Note

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1 United Nations Population Fund, www.unfpa.org/demographic-dividend.

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Youth Employment in Developing Economies: Evidence on Policies and Interventions

Nicholas Kilimani

Abstract Based on a synthesis of the existing academic and policy literature, this article undertakes a situational analysis of youth employment in developing countries. The article analyses existing interventions across sectors and provides insights into how they can be harnessed to generate employment opportunities, citing examples of specific projects. This has been undertaken with a view to bringing to light interventions that have been proven to work, as well as demonstrating the sources of failure. Finally, the article distils key emerging issues related to human capital and the business environment. These have been shown to be binding constraints to higher productivity, and can be used as inputs to shape policy discourse around youth employment.

Keywords: Africa, developing economies, underemployment, youth, employment policies, job creation skills.

1 Introduction

Full and productive employment and decent work were targets in Millennium Development Goal 1 to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty: employment is considered the main route out of poverty. Employment also features prominently among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were rolled out in 2015. The issue of employment for youth and women is of particular interest as these groups tend to be in the weakest positions in the labour market (Koehler 2013). In the analysis of youth employment outcomes, it is important to focus on job prospects over the longer term. This is based on the understanding that young people with diminished prospects of finding decent work at their entry into the labour market will likely face undesirable labour market outcomes over longer periods (see ILO 2012a). Studies on youth labour market dynamics show that unemployment during youth and early adulthood results in lower earnings, higher probability of unemployment, and lower health and job satisfaction in the future (see Kletzer and Fairlie 2003; Burgess *et al.* 2003; Bell and Blanchflower 2011).

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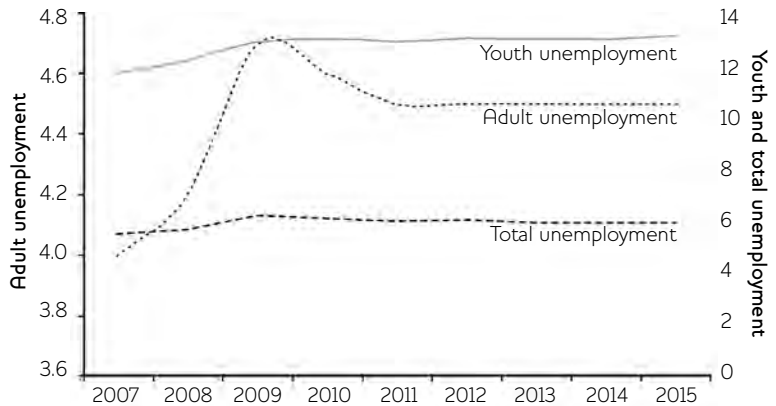
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This article is part of *IDS Bulletin* Vol. 48 No. 3 May 2017: 'Africa's Youth Employment Challenge: New Perspectives'; the Introduction is also recommended reading.

Youth comprise roughly a quarter of the world's population, and in many countries, especially in Africa and South Asia, young people make up nearly a third of the population (S4YE 2015). Because of this, not only do nations in the developing world share high age-dependency ratios – the ratio of dependents (people younger than 15, or older than 64) to the working age population (those aged 15–64) – they also have large populations under the age of 15. Projections suggest that a billion more young people will enter the job market over the next decade. Cleland and Machiyama (2016) present key demographic projections between 2015 and 2050 for sub-Saharan Africa. A critical result to note is continued population growth, albeit at uneven rates across age groups and urban–rural strata. Total population is expected to more than double. Given such trends, it is critical that sound policies and interventions are put into place to tap into this potential population dividend:¹ the cost of failure will be lost human potential and possible sociopolitical instability. In East Asia and the Pacific, the economic transformation witnessed between 1965 and 1990 was partly attributed to a rapidly expanding working-age population (see Bloom and Williamson 1998; Bloom, Canning and Malaney 2000). More importantly, the region had just over one working-age adult for each dependant in 1965, rising to almost two by 1990 (Filmer and Fox 2014). During that time, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the region rose from US\$1,300 to US\$3,300. East Asia's demographic is understood to have resulted in economic transformation through, first, the rise in output per capita; and second, the increase in working age population relative to total population, the result of which was a rapid decline in fertility.

For many programmes, identification of linkages between the dynamics in the labour market, entrepreneurship interventions and actual employment has largely been based first on faith, second on theory, and only lastly on evidence (see Blattman and Ralston 2015). Consequently, in many contexts such programmes have failed to deliver jobs, poverty reduction or stability. Most notable are standard interventions such as skills training and microfinance. Osmani (2002) provides insights into why, despite numerous interventions aimed at creating employment, many developing economies are not able to absorb new entrants into the labour market, especially the young. Among these is labour market failures and specifically the inaccuracy of information about the types of work that are available and the returns to labour that can realistically be expected from each. Even with microfinance programmes that provide start-up capital, access is often difficult for young people. This may be partly because of the high cost of reducing the uncertainty associated with lending to 'beginners in business', but may also reflect informational asymmetries. With respect to skills training, there is a gap in knowledge as to which skills are most profitable to acquire, and how and by whom they can be acquired. This article synthesises this literature and provides insights for policy direction. Specifically, it reviews the evidence on some of the most common policies: labour market interventions, entrepreneurship, and other social protection programmes. The focus of the article is on labour market and entrepreneurship interventions that primarily target youth in developing countries.

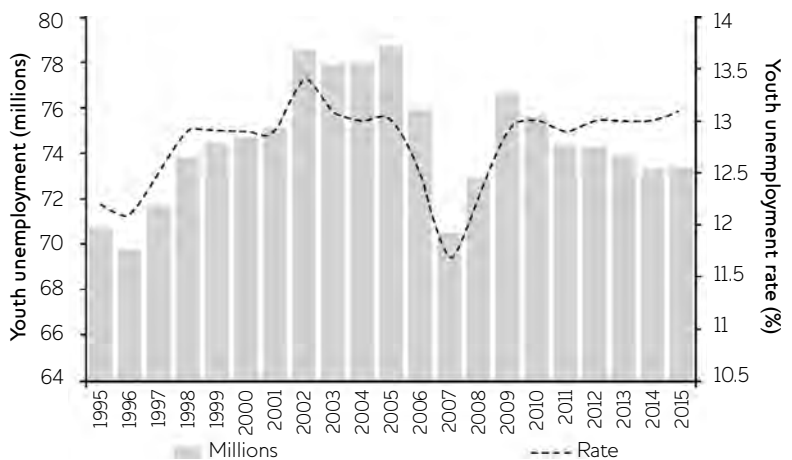
Figure 1 Global unemployment and unemployment rates (%), 2007–15



Notes Youth (15–24), adult (25+) and total (15+), 2007–15.

Source ILO (2015).

Figure 2 Global youth unemployment and unemployment rate, 1995–2015



Source ILO (2015).

2 Situational review of trends in youth employment

Data on various youth employment indicators show that low unemployment and inactivity rates are not necessarily signs of better youth labour market outcomes, as they mask high rates of underemployment, vulnerable employment, informal work, and working poverty (Pieters 2012). South Asia and especially sub-Saharan Africa face the largest youth employment challenge in terms of size and share of the youth population. These are equally the regions where vulnerable employment shares (self-employment and unpaid work) are highest. Middle-income countries in the Southern Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa have the world’s highest youth unemployment rates. Youth unemployment rates tend to rise with education and are higher in urban areas. Women fare much worse than men, both in terms of unemployment and vulnerable employment.

Figure 3 Analytical framework for Pathways to Youth Employment



Source S4YE (2015). Reproduced with kind permission of S4YE.

2.1 Global youth unemployment starts to recover

After a period of rapid increase between 2007 and 2010, the global youth unemployment rate settled at 13 per cent for the period 2012–14 and is expected to have remained stable in 2015 (Figure 1). While this rate is now on par with rates observed in the early 2000s, the number of unemployed youth has shown a significant decline over the same period: 78.7 million youth were unemployed in 2005, 76.6 million unemployed at the peak of the crisis in 2009, descending to an estimated 73.4 million unemployed in 2015. In the ten-year span between 2005 and 2015, the youth labour force declined by as much as 46 million while the number of unemployed youth dropped by 5.3 million. Figure 2 reflects the cyclical nature of youth unemployment and reminds us of the often repeated tenet that youth are among the most severely impacted by economic crises: they are the ‘first out’ as economies contract and the ‘last in’ during periods of recovery (ILO 2015).

Evidence from previous crises suggests that it takes an average of four to five years from the resumption of economic growth before overall employment returns to its pre-crisis levels (ILO 2009). Recovery of youth employment can take even longer. In fact, at this point in time, nearly ten years after the onset of the global economic crisis, the global youth unemployment rate remains well above the pre-crisis rate of 11.7 per cent. While the number of unemployed youth has declined in recent years, the global youth unemployment rate is proving more difficult to reduce.

Projections for 2015 through 2019 show no change at 13.1 per cent until 2019. Regional disparities are, however, likely to increase, as some improvement in youth unemployment rates in developed economies in the medium term will be offset by the increase in unemployment rates in other regions.

3 The link between employment programmes and actual employment

This article's framework for analysis is adopted from Solutions for Youth Employment's (S4YE) theory of change, which is presented in Figure 3. The S4YE Pathways to Youth Employment framework represents the current conceptual thinking on how to provide young people with pathways to economic opportunities and employment – and how stakeholders can work to achieve youth employment at scale. The framework depicts a youth's journey towards productive work, highlighting how underlying conditions combine with government and non-government efforts and interventions to shape her/his trajectory towards a dignified adult life. In doing so, it provides a road map for how interventions aimed at creating youth employment should be crafted. In fact, the framework is not meant to be static – it may change over time with shifting dynamics and new knowledge. Overall, the challenges constraining productivity and earnings for youth have to be articulated in order to provide an orientation for policies. Most importantly, the focus should be on activities with the ability to generate adequate employment for the growing number of youth.

The Pathways to Youth Employment framework needs to be interrogated in relation to three critical sectors. The first sector is agriculture. In many parts of the developing world and especially in sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture employs over 70 per cent of the labour force. In principle, it can therefore be a source of employment for many youth. However, prospects for growth as well as issues of value chain development are critical for the sector to generate the much desired capacity to absorb the increasing numbers of unemployed youth. The second sector is household enterprises. These are most often unincorporated, non-farm businesses owned by households, which include self-employed people running smallholder businesses using unpaid family labour. Third is the modern wage sector, which includes small, medium and large firms employing five or more workers. In many developing economies, approximately half of wage employment is in the public sector. However, given the inelasticity of employment in the public sector, the focus should be on the private sector where the prospects for growth, and hence job creation, are greatest.

The framework highlights two dimensions that are critical to engendering a pathway to productive work. The first of these is human capital, i.e. the supply side of the labour market, which includes individual abilities, education and training, skills, family connections, networks and other characteristics unique to an individual. Human capital is fundamental in enabling a person to find opportunities to be productive, increase earnings and achieve income security (Filmer and Fox 2014). Evidence used to identify externalities in education is derived mostly from agriculture. Externalities take the form of farmers learning from their neighbours, especially the more educated who are likely to adopt new technologies (Conley and Udry 2010; Rosenzweig 2010). The second dimension is the business environment. This is outside an individual or firm's control, but affects productivity. It includes access to

productive resources such as land, credit, infrastructure, technology and markets. In Africa in particular, insecure and ambiguous land rights, as well as constraints on rental markets are considered major impediments, especially for young people. Tenure security can be improved through systematic land registration. This can improve farmers' confidence to the degree that they undertake costly and long-term investments on the land. Furthermore, they can even use the land registration certificate as collateral. Evidence from Rwanda shows that the more secure the land tenure, the greater the investments in soil improvement, up by 9 per cent and 18 per cent among male and female farmers respectively (Ayalew, Deininger and Goldstein 2011). Registered and titled land provide a basis for the development of land markets which are shown to engender commercial farming and also increase productivity (see Morris, Binswanger-Mkhize and Byerlee 2009). Registration can also facilitate transfer to small-scale farmers (e.g. in Sudan, see Filmer and Fox 2014). Other aspects of a business environment include government policies, regulations and programmes which can directly or indirectly affect the choice of economic activity, and even how it is conducted.

This framework integrates a range of issues including skills acquisition, the employment options available to youths depending on the skills acquired, and the supportive interventions that ensure that youth can be absorbed into the workplace, right through to actual employment. In the framework, government as a stakeholder can develop the necessary policies, institutions, infrastructure and legal frameworks to engender youth employment, while non-governmental actors can influence youth employment through private investment which in turn has an influence on the demand for labour. Essentially, each stakeholder has their own contribution towards realising youth employment. These issues and the linkages between them are presented in Figure 3 and are discussed in the subsequent sections of the article.

4 Dynamics of determinants of youth labour market outcomes

To understand the major challenges bedevilling youth employment in developing countries, it is useful to first discuss the determinants of labour market outcomes as these form a basis for designing interventions. Labour market outcomes are reflected by a number of critical factors which are elucidated below.

4.1 Labour demand

Labour demand is largely driven by economic growth and structural change. Essentially, job creation depends on the growth and labour-intensity of production in the different sectors of the economy. In middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the services sector accounts for a high and growing share of employment, while the share of agriculture and sometimes even manufacturing has been on the decline (IMF 2012). The majority of developing country workers in the services sector are self-employed, for example in retail and transportation services. This trend of structural change, with an increasing share of the workforce in low-productivity activities,

can result from a lack of labour demand in high-productivity formal enterprises. Increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers in the agricultural sector would be one opportunity for generating youth employment. The growing demand for food locally and globally is a potential opportunity, and with its land and water resources Africa is well positioned to respond. If youth could be provided with access to agricultural resources in tandem with interventions to make agriculture more productive, some suggest that it would go a long way towards transforming livelihoods (Filmer and Fox 2014).

In Latin America, for example, productivity growth since the 1990s has been accompanied by a declining share of manufacturing in total employment, with workers moving into lower-productivity employment in services (McMillan and Rodrik 2012). In the Middle East and North Africa, jobs have been created in low-value-added sectors, such as construction and the public sector, while few have been created in manufacturing. Furthermore, job growth has not kept pace with growth of the working age population. The public sector accounts for a large share of the total wage bill in countries in the region, due to a high public employment share and relatively high public sector wages (World Economic Forum 2012). Public sector employment, including public administration and publicly owned enterprises, has especially dominated the market for educated labour. In Egypt for example, this was a result of public employment guarantees for secondary and post-secondary graduates. These guarantees proved untenable and were suspended in the early 1990s (Assaad 1997).

With increasing global integration of economies, the structure of (employment) growth is also affected by external factors. The impact of the 2008 financial crisis on GDP and consumption in the developed world indirectly affected developing countries through reductions in demand for their exports of goods and services. The global economic and financial crisis has particularly affected youth, and the decline in work opportunities has created immense friction in the school-to-work transition. As a matter of fact, young job seekers have worse prospects for decent formal sector employment than their parents.

The World Bank (2012b) highlights how employment challenges are interconnected through the proliferation of production fragmentation. For instance, jobs in both manufacturing and services are increasingly mobile. As such, the growing labour costs in Asia (in particular, China) could open up opportunities for other developing countries to jump-start industrialisation. What is critical to note is that when labour demand slows down, self-employment may be the only alternative opportunity. Thus, intervention to support self-employment may be needed.

4.2 Labour supply

The supply-side drivers of youth employment outcomes are the quantity, quality and relevance of education and skills. Skills are built through formal general education, formal vocational education and

training (VET) and apprenticeships, and through non-formal education and training. Access to primary education is a first requirement for basic literacy and numeracy skills, which are a precondition for ensuring access to decent work. Survey evidence shows existence of major failures in delivery of education. For instance, cases have been recorded of teacher absenteeism of 16–20 per cent on a given day in Kenya, Senegal and Tanzania. In these countries, learners are known to experience only two to three hours of learning a day (Filmer and Fox 2014). Improvements in basic education would lay a better foundation for improvements in productivity, by maximising young people's possibilities of successfully transitioning to remunerative employment.

Besides general education, youth can acquire work-relevant skills through VET, which can be integrated into compulsory schooling as an alternative to an academically oriented track, or can be part of several post-compulsory schooling options. Eichhorst *et al.* (2012) show that in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, VET is of limited importance. This is due to weak links between skills provided by the VET system and those that are demanded by the private sector. Other challenges include insufficient funding, poor monitoring and evaluation, stigmatisation, and lower returns to VET compared to secondary education.² In sub-Saharan Africa, the expected benefits from VET relative to general secondary schooling are not evident, and many view VET as an inferior alternative. Because the majority of firms and jobs are informal, traditional apprenticeships after primary education can be sufficient to gain employment (Pieters 2012).

The benefits of VET in terms of earning and social promotion vary across countries and influence its attractiveness. Returns to VET are higher than general secondary education in, for example, Cambodia, Indonesia (for older cohorts), Thailand and Turkey (World Bank 2010a). In other countries, such as Egypt, Indonesia (younger cohorts), Iran, Rwanda and Tanzania, returns to VET are lower than to secondary general education. Cross-country differences may be due to variations in implementation, labour market institutions and employers' willingness to invest in skills on-the-job (Eichhorst *et al.* 2012). Evidence from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries shows that the returns to vocational education decline with age. This is largely attributed to the idea that VET limits students' ability to adapt to technological change as their potential to regularly acquire new knowledge naturally diminishes with exposure, and age (Hanushek, Woessmann and Zhang 2011). In this case, good quality VET needs inbuilt capacity to prepare students for adapting to ever-changing technologies.

4.3 Migration

Across the developing world, labour supply in different places is also affected by rural–urban, rural–rural and international migration. Due to rural–urban migration patterns, urban labour supply tends to grow faster than the working age population, further increasing the pressure

on urban labour markets. Globally, about 25 per cent of urban growth is driven by rural–urban migration, although migration accounts for a larger share in countries that are still largely rural. This is particularly the case in East and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, but also the MENA region (Grant 2012). At the same time, economic crises induce high rates of return-migration when migrants lack social safety nets in the cities, shifting some of the labour supply back to rural areas.

Most rural–urban migrants are young people, who also make up a significant share of international migrants.³ Youth migration can serve to build human capital if the migrants attend school or gain work experience and income in the host region or country. There is evidence that international migration can help reduce poverty and contribute to economic growth in the migrants' countries of origin. According to the World Bank, an average increase of 10 per cent of emigrants in the total population of a developing country is associated with a 1.6 percentage point reduction in poverty. Furthermore, economic analyses show that an increase in temporary migration in developed countries, including low-qualified migrants, could produce gains amounting to US\$150bn each year, equally shared between developed and developing countries (Dayton-Johnson *et al.* 2009). However if migration leads to a significant loss of skilled labour to more developed economies (i.e. brain drain), international migration might have negative impacts on sending countries.

In this regard, policies toward international migration and employment in developing countries must be more coherent, given the many interactions between the two phenomena. Coherent policies require a much better understanding of the links and impacts between mobility, jobs and development. Given the current socioeconomic challenges, these policies should be pursued by means of stronger partnerships between origin and destination countries, with special attention to brain drain and circular migration issues. Of particular importance are remittances and their contribution to job creation in recipient countries: can policy help create stronger incentives to save and invest in migrants' home countries?

4.4 Labour market functioning

Youth employment outcomes are shaped by the institutions governing the matching of job seekers to vacancies, notably those institutions that are charged with the provision of labour market information, intermediation and regulation. Availability and quality of information plays a key role in the labour market, for job seekers to identify relevant opportunities and for employers to find adequate workers. Evidence from school-to-work transition surveys in Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Kosovo, Mongolia, Nepal and Syria (Matsumoto and Elder 2010) show that the most important channel for job searching by youth is social networks, and specifically family and friends. Reliance on informal networks and connections may be efficient when employers find it costly to assess competencies of potential employees, or when there are

no formal institutions mediating short notice hiring. However, it does mean that young job seekers are unlikely to find work outside their own networks, which limits social and intergenerational mobility.

Lack of information about job opportunities can contribute to skill shortages and mismatches, because parents and children are not well informed to assess the returns to education. Experimental evidence for India and the Dominican Republic has shown that giving information about job opportunities or returns to education increases the time children spend in school (Jensen 2010, 2012). The role of information also includes transparency in hiring practices. Labour market functioning further depends on regulation, such as a minimum wage, which exists in all developing countries for which institutional data are available. Unemployment benefit legislation is present in most countries in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Europe, North Africa, and the Latin American and Caribbean middle-income countries (Aleksynska and Schindler 2011).

5 Challenges by region

5.1 Latin America

Over half of the working youth in Latin America are in informal employment (against 30 per cent of adults), and this proportion is rising. Informality is highest among youth with primary education, but has recently increased rapidly among more highly educated youth, signalling a lack of formal private sector labour demand and/or a mismatch of skills obtained in secondary and tertiary education (Busso *et al.* 2012). Furthermore, figures for young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) are particularly high in Latin America compared to other regions. Besides a slow-down in growth and formal private sector labour demand, youth employment in Latin America faces major supply side challenges, in particular the quality and relevance of skills attained in secondary education. Large skill mismatches and poor quality of education and training mean that joblessness coexists with unmet demand for skilled labour. Where experience in informal employment serves as a training ground for formal wage employment, some have pointed to deficiencies in the education system (CEDLAS 2013).

A particular challenge related to informality in Latin America is the design of social insurance and social assistance systems. Formal sector workers pay mandatory contributions to social insurance schemes, which increase the cost of formal labour, while informal workers are covered by social assistance programmes, which effectively subsidise informal labour. Redesigning these financing mechanisms could have important impacts on the labour market (Ferreira and Robalino 2010).

5.2 Middle East and North Africa

This region has the world's lowest private sector investment contribution to growth, and most investment is directed to low-skilled, labour-intensive sectors (Gatti *et al.* 2013, based on foreign direct investment (FDI) data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and

Table 1 Employment composition: sub-Saharan Africa vs high growth counterparts

Income level and region	Wage job			Home enterprise	Agriculture	Total
	Industry	Services	All			
Low income						
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.3	10.0	12.3	18.3	69.4	100
Bangladesh	10.8	14.9	25.7	27.7	46.6	100
Cambodia	11.1	12.2	23.3	21.0	55.7	100
Low-middle income						
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.0	11.9	13.9	31.1	55.1	100
Bolivia	12.6	30.4	43.0	28.1	28.9	100
Lao People's Democratic Republic	54.0	8.1	13.5	19.0	67.5	100
Mongolia	5.9	33.4	39.3	16.0	44.7	100
Nicaragua	13.3	30.6	43.9	22.9	33.2	100
Philippines	12.6	36.1	48.7	19.5	31.8	100
Vietnam	14.3	17.5	31.8	19.1	49.1	100

Source Filmer and Fox (2014).

Development (UNCTAD) and World Bank World Development Indicators). Private sector dynamism is harmed by inconsistent and unpredictable policy implementation and poor access to credit. Distorted prices of primary factor inputs, such as energy due to the presence of fuel subsidies, increase the relative cost of labour (*ibid.*).

On the supply side, the major challenge is the mismatch between skills and expectations of young job seekers on the one hand, and skills demanded by the labour market on the other. Queuing for public sector jobs is often a rational strategy for highly educated youth, as public jobs are more secure and provide higher pay, with higher returns to education than in the private sector. Students choose academic programmes that are increasingly irrelevant to the private sector. The World Bank Enterprise Survey shows that about a third of firms in the region identify a lack of appropriate skills in the labour force as a major obstacle for their business (Filmer and Fox 2014).

A great challenge in terms of labour market functioning in the Middle East and North Africa is the lack of merit-based hiring processes. Meritocracy in hiring practices would secure greater equality of opportunity across socioeconomic backgrounds and, importantly, would improve signals from the market to education and training institutions.

Finally, the region stands out because of the large gender gap in youth labour market outcomes. Women do much worse on all quality and quantity indicators than men, and make up the majority of young NEETs. In many of the region's countries, social norms restrict women's mobility and access to work, with very few employment opportunities for young women. This results in high unemployment rates for the minority of young women who complete higher education (ETF 2012).

5.3 Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's highest youth population growth rate and the highest share of youth in the working age population. Still, the region's youth employment problem should be seen in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. This is especially true in low-income countries and for the most vulnerable groups: young women, youth in rural areas, youth from poor families, and those with no or little education. Despite high unemployment among well-educated youth, firms in many of these economies report difficulty in finding qualified personnel, an indicator perhaps that the skills being inculcated by the education system are not aligned with efforts to promote new economic activities (World Bank 2012a, 2013).

Employment creation by the private sector has been weak due to a low growth elasticity of employment, especially in resource-rich countries. The share of the labour force in private industry in sub-Saharan Africa is markedly different from the rapidly growing economies of Asia and Latin America (Table 1). Solid growth over the past decade has not led to a significant improvement in labour market outcomes and poverty reduction. A review of youth employment programmes in Cameroon established that although they addressed a wide range of specific challenges, they lacked coherence and were clearly not integrated within the country's broader policies to alleviate binding constraints to growth and employment (World Bank 2012b).

The informal economy employs up to 90 per cent of the working age population in low-income countries (AfDB 2012), and is a structural feature of economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Because of its pervasiveness, the informal sector has to be part of any policy addressing youth employment. Low labour productivity and earnings in self-employment and the informal economy are a limitation to sustained poverty reduction. In countries where the majority of youth are in rural areas, increasing agricultural productivity and non-farm rural activities is crucial. Low productivity is related to lack of learning opportunities for youth in the informal economy. However, in basic formal education, gender gaps in enrolment and the poor quality of education also remain an urgent challenge.

5.4 Asia

Most countries in South Asia are characterised by high vulnerable employment shares, informality and working poverty. Despite high growth rates compared to other regions, a large share of workers remain in agriculture, in the urban informal sector or in informal

jobs in formal enterprises. Employment growth in the formal sector is too low to absorb large numbers of young labour market entrants. Manufacturing still accounts for a small share of total output and employment, compared to other developing regions. This mostly affects low- and medium-skilled workers, who are still predominantly confined to working in agriculture and informal services (ILO 2013). Besides structural change towards more low-skilled intensive manufacturing production, increasing productivity in agricultural and informal activities is key to improving youth employment outcomes.

On the supply side, although primary school enrolment has increased, the transition rate from primary to secondary schooling is declining. Due to the poor quality of basic formal education and persistent gender gaps in educational attainment, the most vulnerable youth groups do not get much of a chance to obtain decent work. Another striking feature of youth employment in the region is persistently low female labour force participation. Southeast Asia has the world's highest youth-to-adult unemployment rate ratio; adult unemployment is very low (2.5 per cent in 2011 according to International Labour Organization (ILO) statistics) while youth unemployment is close to the world average (13 per cent in 2011). The main challenge for Southeast Asian countries is the poor quality of employment for the majority of workers; more than 60 per cent of the region's employed are estimated to be in vulnerable employment (Pieters 2012).

6 Policy direction and lessons for intervention design

Based on the foregoing analysis, the critical issues to engender youth employment revolve around empowering youth by enabling them to build human capital and providing them with opportunities for quality jobs. In this section we review a number of measures to guide the development, consolidation, and reshaping of existing policies.

6.1 Youth employment strategies

In order to address the youth employment challenge there is a need for integrated approaches involving different levels of government and multiple stakeholders, including relevant ministries, education and training providers and social partners. Because of the complex nature of developing country labour markets, and the diversity of income-generating activities that people undertake, the youth employment challenge requires policy action beyond basic education and labour markets, in areas such as credit markets, infrastructure, business regulation, and rural development. In addition to basic education, high productivity skills that can accelerate youth employment include those relating to processing, marketing, machinery operation and repair, commercial transportation (passenger and haulage), logistics and quality control. Responsibility therefore lies with governments to ensure coherence and coordination (ILO 2012b).

6.2 Growth

Promoting job-rich, inclusive growth is key to youth employment promotion in the long term. Although achieving job-rich growth is a

major challenge in general, strategies to expand labour demand are needed to complement interventions targeting more short-term and youth-specific goals, such as wage subsidies and skills training (IEG 2013). Thus, macro and growth policies need to stimulate private investment, especially in labour-intensive sectors or sectors with large employment multipliers (ILO 2012b). Examples of such policies for the MENA region are reducing relative labour costs and promoting more labour-intensive agricultural crops, rather than the traditional subsidies on fuel, energy and wheat (Gatti *et al.* 2013). Lin and Chang (2009) call for policies that enable firms and sectors to make use of a country's relatively abundant production factors. This means focusing on labour- and resource-intensive production activities, rather than prioritising capital-intensive industries. Harrison and Rodríguez-Clare (2010) call for so-called 'soft' industrial policy, aiming to facilitate collaboration between government, industry, and cluster-level private organisations, to reduce coordination failures in order to increase productivity.

6.3 Promotion of entrepreneurship

Promotion of youth entrepreneurship and self-employment requires increased access to credit by strengthening financial infrastructure, bank competition and non-bank financing. Youth micro-entrepreneurship also requires reform and more consistent enforcement of business regulation, in order to reduce red tape and increase transparency (ILO 2012b). The most effective entrepreneurship training combines 'core' business administration skills, such as accounting, with 'softer' entrepreneurial skills, such as problem solving. It is important to systematically screen youth for latent or active entrepreneurial characteristics, such as innovative thinking, leadership attributes, passion and results orientation. Programmes should clearly separate training and financing functions by forming partnerships with financial institutions to provide and manage credit for youth (MIF 2012). To improve entrepreneurs' ability to benefit from trade liberalisation and foreign investment, they also need skills for developing their networks and linking with higher levels of the value chain.

Various institutional arrangements and incentive schemes can be used to widen access to credit. In Uganda, the Development Finance Company of Uganda Bank Limited's (DFCU) credit facility is largely provided under a leasing arrangement. Evidence shows that having credit and financial services that are accessible to women is crucial for increasing their ability to save and start a business (Dupas and Robinson 2013). In Kenya and Uganda, M-Pesa and Mobile Money respectively have been central to providing financial access to a wide section of the unbanked population.

Some suggest that engendering entrepreneurship starts with a mindset change towards a culture which rewards competition and innovation. This entails addressing the beliefs, values and attitudes underlying behaviour and choices. Effective mindset change begins with identifying prevailing mindsets. As such, honest discussions can provide hypotheses to

be tested through surveys. While most economic development efforts shy away from explicitly addressing mindset change, this is an issue that some suggest is key to any real progress (The Brenthurst Foundation 2011).

6.4 Public works programmes

The most direct way to increase labour demand in the short term is through public works programmes (PWPs). PWPs create temporary jobs for the poorest and most vulnerable, with the primary goals of income smoothing, poverty reduction and asset building. Many PWPs are organised around infrastructure development, but there is significant scope for PWPs to provide social services. This is a highly labour-intensive sector and could be better targeted to increase young women's participation (ILO 2012b). Beyond providing a safety net, PWPs can also be used to improve participants' employability in paid jobs or self-employment in order to graduate from the programme. Examples are the Sierra Leone Cash for Work project, the Temporary Income Assistance Program in El Salvador, the Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa, and the Kazi Kwa Vijana programme in Kenya (Andrews and Kryeziu 2012; Subbarao *et al.* 2013). To increase employability, youth or other participants with high re-employment opportunities should receive skills training and education that may result in some type of accredited certification.

6.5 Skills

Addressing skills shortages and mismatches requires action on several fronts, including formal and non-formal general education, VET and apprenticeship training. Improving literacy skills through better primary education requires urgent attention in many low-income countries. Education policies should also aim to improve access to secondary education for disadvantaged youth. Disadvantaged youth are especially constrained by the cost of schooling and, in the case of young women, by social and cultural barriers. New technologies in education and access to open educational resources could enhance flexible course delivery and customised training for specific groups of youth. Policies that increase the permeability of education systems are also needed, to allow youth to move more easily between different levels and types of education. Mobility would also include allowing students to move between VET and other higher education tracks, which could increase the attractiveness of VET. Since the benefits of formal VET depend largely on the relevance of skills to actual demand in the private sector, a widely heard policy recommendation is to build public-private partnerships in the design and provision of VET. Almost by definition, however, formal VET policies cannot address challenges for the majority of youth in low-income countries working in the informal sector. It is crucial that skills development policies include youth in agricultural and non-agricultural informal employment, where poverty reduction is most urgent (Walther 2012). This could be achieved by improving and expanding traditional apprenticeship schemes, for example through local training committees and training schemes for agricultural (or agriculture-related) occupations.

6.6 Labour market information

When jobs exist, youth can be helped by providing information and employment exchange services through educational institutions, or by offering these in youth centres. Better access to information further requires the availability of transportation. For poorer youth and those living further from urban centres, offering transport subsidies may be necessary to allow them to benefit from employment exchange services. In predominantly informal labour markets, however, formal information channels may be of little relevance. We know little about the functioning of informal labour markets, but it is clear that informal networks are key in the job searching process. The use of new technologies, particularly mobile phone-based, could help in expanding job search networks for youth, linking formal and informal networks, and increasing the effectiveness of these networks. Where growth is weak and there is a lack of productive jobs, overseas employment programmes may be part of a solution.

6.7 Regulation

In countries with high unemployment among educated youth, particularly in the MENA region, there is a need to restructure public administration hiring and promotion processes, and to reduce public-private dualism in the labour market. This requires labour regulation and social insurance reforms and more social dialogue, including with youth organisations and representatives (Gatti *et al.* 2013). Wage subsidies and reduced social contributions for young workers can be used to increase demand for young workers, if targeted and provided for a limited period of time and with strong monitoring to avoid abuses (ILO 2012b). A minimum wage could be important for young workers to sustain a decent earnings level, while a lower youth minimum wage could be used to stimulate youth labour demand. In terms of employment protection, special first job contracts or reducing restrictions on temporary contracts have also been used in some situations to stimulate demand for youth labour.

6.8 Knowledge gaps

In low-income countries, youth will continue to be absorbed in agriculture, non-farm informal jobs and/or self-employment. Much of the existing analytical evidence tends to focus on formal employment in urban areas, where political interest and data can be found. Little is therefore known about the functioning of the informal and agricultural labour markets, and even less about the youth specifics of these labour markets. As such, investing in youth labour market data and analysis is an important first step in aiding policy and programme design. Improving data infrastructure in developing countries is furthermore likely to increase attention to the labour market situation of vulnerable youth. Even where policies can be and have been evaluated, impacts of interventions on non-targeted groups, spillover effects and other general equilibrium effects have been extremely hard to assess. Finally, a number of youth employment determinants and relatively new policy areas and programmes remain particularly understudied. Examples are the role of urbanisation and the location of jobs, new technologies in production and in job searching, micro-franchising for stimulating entrepreneurship, and green growth strategies.

Notes

- 1 A population or demographic dividend occurs when the proportion of working people in the total population is high as this indicates that more people have the potential to be productive and contribute to growth of the economy.
- 2 Returns here refer to the overall benefits that accrue to those that choose to undertake a given form of education and training.
- 3 Youth make up about one third of international migrant flows, especially flows towards developing countries (McKenzie 2008 – based on census data for 12 countries, including six developing countries).

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The Politics of Youth Employment and Policy Processes in Ethiopia

Eyob Balcha Gebremariam

Abstract Policy processes are inherently shaped by political contexts. One way of identifying the impact of politics on policy processes is by examining how policy narratives and framings evolve through time. This article examines youth employment-focused policies in Ethiopia between 2004 and 2015. It argues that policy narratives and framings driving youth employment policy are directly derived from the developmental orientation of the incumbent Ethiopian regime. The 2005 post-election political crisis also played a major role in streamlining youth-focused policy processes.

Keywords: unemployment, Africa, young people, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

1 Introduction

This article uses youth-focused policies in Ethiopia to demonstrate how politics and societal narratives shape policy processes. It does this by adopting two interlinked lines of analysis. The first explores the role of political context in shaping policy processes. In doing so, the primary focus is on how policy narratives and framings change depending on context and political dynamics. The second related line of analysis explores the relationship between broader social narratives and policy narratives. Here, the focus is on the two-way interaction between socially constructed positions of youth and youth-focused policies. The argument is that categorisations of youth such as 'vanguard or vandals' (Abbink and van Kessel 2005) or 'makers and breakers' (Honwana and De Boeck 2005) of society shape and are shaped by policy processes.

The analysis focuses on the period 2004–15, when Ethiopia registered significant socioeconomic developmental success. According to the World Bank, the average economic growth rate between 2004 and 2014 was 10.9 per cent (World Bank 2016). Furthermore, the poverty trend has also been declining significantly from 55 per cent in 2000 to 31 per cent in 2013 (UNDP 2014; World Bank 2016). At the same time, the country's political landscape also changed considerably. With three national elections conducted during this period, the ruling party, the

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), emerged as the dominant political actor in the country. One example of this dominance is the current parliament (2015–20) where the party controls 100 per cent of the seats. The article explores how these political and economic dynamics have been affecting youth-focused policy processes.

There are two questions that motivate the analysis. First, how does politics shape policies relating to youth employment? In answering this question, I will demonstrate that policy processes are not technocratic, linear and rational, but are rather driven by political dynamics and interests. Second, how do socially constructed positions of youth affect policies that address youth employment? Answering this question contributes to the understanding of how societal beliefs can be translated into policy frameworks and how politically crafted policies interact with social narratives. To address these questions, a legal document, two youth-specific policies and the youth-focused sections of three consecutive national development plans are examined.

Two core arguments are developed. First, dominant policy narratives and framings relating to youth are directly derived from the political orientations of the government, which in Ethiopia is building a developmental state through rapid economic growth. In line with the developmental orientation, policy narratives and framings have changed from portraying youth as 'vagrants' and 'threats' to society, or 'marginalised and victims of social evils', to seeing them as 'entrepreneurs' and 'seeds of democracy and development'. Second, with specific focus on youth employment, the policy process was driven by the need to respond to a political crisis.

The remainder of the article is divided into four sections. Section 2 introduces the two main ways of understanding the social position of youth, *viz.* as an age group or a transitional stage. Section 3 sets the context towards understanding the social position of Ethiopian youth. Hence, the section provides an overview of the political and policy context and implications for the social position of youth. Section 4 analyses the four policy documents in order to address two central questions. Finally, Section 5 discusses the findings and concludes.

2 The social position of youth

2.1 Age-based notions of youth

Age is one of the most crucial elements that shapes understandings of youth. One of the central features of age-based categorisation of youth is the assumption that there are 'clearly identifiable processes which are universal' (Wyn and White 1997: 53). Hence, when young people depart from the assumed set processes and behaviours, they are easily categorised as 'deviants' and 'abnormal' (*ibid.*). Age-based categorisations are often used to frame policy interventions in areas such as education, health and criminal justice. One important limitation of age-based understandings of youth is that they promote a categorical approach. Examples include the notions of 'adolescents' and 'juveniles' that link

the biological age of young people to their psychological and emotional status, and to their social identity and behaviour. This is critiqued for being 'biologically determinist' and reducing the experiences of young people at the individual level (Wyn and White 1997: 54–7).

However, one cannot ignore the crucial role that age plays in shaping the experiences, opportunities and challenges of youth. One way of broadening the understanding of youth is to examine how biological age shapes interactions between youth and the state as well as with other social institutions. For example, some argue that states use 'age statuses' to categorise youth as a 'discrete and distinctive social category' (Mizen 2002: 6), and that this categorisation provides a foundation for dominant policy narratives that subsequently shape the experiences of young people (Wyn and White 1997). Age also interacts with state institutions through, for example, the legal voting age, age-based eligibility to claim social and economic rights (such as minimum/living wage) and access criteria for state loans.

Age-based characterisation of youth plays a central role in policy narratives built around the notions of 'demographic dividend' and 'youth bulge'. 'Reaping the demographic dividend' essentially requires policy and institutional frameworks to make the segment of society within a certain age range healthier, educated and more productive (Bloom and Williamson 1998). Without age-specific characterisation, one can argue that all aspects of policy relating to youth will remain weak (Mizen 2002: 8). However, the experience of being 'a youth' is not only about belonging to a certain age group for a specified period – it is also about growing up and transitioning to the status of adulthood.

2.2 Transitional status of youth

Youth is not a permanent status, and some scholars argue that the meaning of youth is inextricably linked with the concept of adulthood (Wyn and White 1997: 11). Signs and processes associated with the transition to adulthood include school-to-work transition, economic independence, leaving the parental home and establishing a family. Processes of transition are complex, non-linear and context-dependent, which only complicates the job of much youth policy that aims to facilitate transitions into adulthood.

It is important to note that growing up is a social process that is contingent on the interplay of enabling and constraining conditions within a given context and society. State policies and institutions in particular have a direct impact on youth transitions. For example, the introduction of neoliberal policies impacted on the lives of many African young people (Caffentzis 2002). Withdrawal of state guarantees to rights and services in the areas of health, education and employment severely affected young peoples' transitions into adulthood. In some cases, the failure and degeneration of the state led to civil war and protracted conflict, with young people being both victims and perpetrators (Abbink and van Kessel 2005; Honwana and De Boeck 2005). More generally,

in contexts where the state fails to deliver the benefits of development, smooth transitions to adulthood are compromised.

Precarious socioeconomic conditions, civil unrest and institutional exclusion can also prolong the process of transition. Honwana developed the concept of *waithood* to explain this, with waithood being 'a prolonged period of suspension between childhood and adulthood' (2012: 1). The argument is that because of structural challenges which hinder social mobility there are multiple cases where youthhood has become a more permanent status rather than a transitional stage. Furthermore, in situations where transitions are prolonged, young people often engage in survival strategies while navigating the contours of waithood. Expressions such as 'eke out a living' or 'getting by' (Honwana 2012) and 'hustling' (Di Nunzio 2012) provide a flavour of this navigation. The key point is that this period of 'extended liminality' increases the vulnerability of young people (Honwana 2012).

In the following section, the article reflects on age-based experiences and transitional statuses of youth in recent Ethiopian socioeconomic and political contexts.

3 Ethiopian youth: political contexts, policies and changing social positions

This section sets the ground to understand the interplay between political contexts, policies and changing social positions of youth. It first discusses the notions of political context and politics. Then, after a brief historical overview, the methods of analysis used are presented.

In a nutshell, an appreciation of political context helps to understand *when* policy processes emerge onto the scene, *how* policy is crafted and *who* the leading or powerful actors are, both in policy formulation and implementation (Turner, Hulme and McCourt 2015). This approach contrasts with the 'stages' approach to the policy process, which focuses on technical processes (Jenkins 1978). Whilst examining the role of political context in policy processes, it is imperative to clearly set how the study approaches politics.

For the purposes of this study, politics is understood as 'the processes of conflict, cooperation and negotiation involved in the [ownership], use, production and distribution of resources' (Leftwich 1996: 17). In operational terms, this definition leads to a concern with how youth-focused policy processes trigger 'conflict, cooperation and negotiation' (*ibid.*) between the Ethiopian state and youth. Because of the interest in youth employment policy, economic opportunity and fulfilment of economic citizenship rights are crucial elements around which the processes of conflict, cooperation and negotiation occur. Political processes that affect the provision of economic opportunities directly influence how economic resources are accessed and claimed by youth. Furthermore, changing social positions of youth are also inextricably linked with the evolving political context, and affect the dynamics of conflict, cooperation and negotiation between state and

youth. Likewise, societal narratives about youth cannot remain insulated from the dominant features of politics.

Here it is important to sketch out how the changing political context in Ethiopia has affected the social positions of youth. After the EPRDF came to power in 1991, the country was forced to implement structural adjustment programmes by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Demissie 2008; Feyissa 2011). Despite strong ideological resistance from the EPRDF not to reduce the state to an ideal ‘night-watchman’ status as the neoliberal policies would have required, there was a considerable escalation of privatisation (Stiglitz 2002). The EPRDF tried its best to remain committed to its ideological aspiration of building a socialist economy. To this end, the party pursued its revolutionary democracy ideology to remain the politically dominant player in the country while strategically engaging with western donors (Feyissa 2011). The strength of the EPRDF’s ideological commitment was demonstrated by its determination not to relinquish state ownership of land and not to liberalise key sectors of the economy such as finance, telecoms, transport and energy. Nevertheless, other aspects of the stabilisation and privatisation programme were implemented.

The structural adjustment programmes had significant impact on society in general and youth in particular. Especially in urban areas, government employment, which was often considered ‘desirable’ (Mains 2011: 115) for young people joining the labour market, was severely affected. A reduced public sector as a result of privatisation, reduction of public expenditure and restructuration contributed to increased unemployment (Krishnan, Selassie and Dercon 1998; Demissie 2008). On top of limited employment opportunities, the number of high school graduates continued to increase. With a growing gap between the available employment opportunities and the number of new young jobseekers, the seemingly predetermined process of transition into adulthood started to derail, resulting in new societal problems.

Youth unemployment became a major problem starting from the early years of EPRDF’s tenure. A socioeconomic household sample survey conducted in 1994 revealed that young people below the age of 35 constituted 90 per cent of the urban unemployed (68 per cent between the ages of 16–25) (cited in Kebbede 2004). Another study argued that in 1994, 50 per cent of the male workforce below the age of 30 were unemployed in urban areas (Serneels 2004). The considerably reduced capacity of the state to offer employment opportunities was seen to explain urban youth unemployment. Furthermore, the mismatch between education and job openings was also a major factor. For example, another survey in 1994 showed that in Addis Ababa, 50 per cent of the unemployed youth were high school graduates (cited in Minas 2002).

In 2001, a decade after it came to power, the EPRDF went through a major ideological revision. The objective of creating a socialist society was dropped in favour of building a capitalist society

(Tadesse and Young 2003). As a result, the principles of free market economics were adopted, and there were more opportunities for private accumulation of wealth. The late prime minister called this new development strategy 'democratic developmentalism' (Zenawi 2006). The reform processes also endorsed the good governance agenda and established formal institutional and policy frameworks. As part of this, the first youth-focused ministry was established in 2000, and was mandated to formulate the first national youth policy.

The first post-reform election was in May 2005, and in a relatively open political environment, the ruling party suffered huge losses (Aalen and Tronvoll 2009). However, the EPRDF used its power over the military to squash both opposition parties and protest activities during the post-election period (Aalen and Tronvoll 2009; Gudina 2011). Following the wake of the post-election violence, EPRDF undertook a campaign of mass mobilisation, particularly targeting urban youth who participated in protest activities in significant numbers (Di Nunzio 2012). To this end, the EPRDF-led government started to invest heavily to address urban youth employment, and to reduce youth marginalisation through the introduction of youth participation fora.

Furthermore, the EPRDF controlled the post-2005 political context by putting in place institutions and politico-legal frameworks to guide the processes of conflict, cooperation and negotiation. These, combined with political repression, acted to constrain the activities of opposition parties, private media and civil society organisations (Aalen and Tronvoll 2009; Gudina 2011). At the same time, the ruling party enhanced its political power by establishing channels of mass mobilisation targeting women, youth, farmers and other segments of society. These served both as spheres of cooperation and negotiation as well as political control. In contrast to the early 1990s period of dismantling public services, the EPRDF expanded the state structure which also created massive employment opportunities. Mobilisation occurred hand in hand with recruitment into the party structure, which also involved resource distribution. Young people became crucial targets of the ruling party in these processes of cooperation and negotiation, which included controlled economic and political inclusion. For example, the ruling party established its youth league in May 2009 with 180,000 founding members, and reaching 2.3 million in 2013 (EPRDF 2013). At the same time, party membership also increased exponentially from around 700,000 in 2005 to 6.3 million in 2013. These efforts to manage conflict and promote cooperation and negotiation have been important aspects of the ruling party's agenda of 'democratic developmentalism'.

The remainder of the article uses discourse analysis to examine youth-focused policy documents. Narratives and framings are analysed with considerable focus given to the policy processes and context. Since the study relies on secondary data, it also refers to studies conducted on Ethiopian youth to provide additional evidence alongside the close examination of the policy documents.

4 Analysis of youth employment-focused policies

This section presents analysis of policy frameworks that address youth employment launched by the Ethiopian state between 2004 and 2015. The analysis is based on a review of one legal document, two youth-focused policy documents and three national development plans.

4.1 Vagrancy Control Proclamation

The Vagrancy Control Proclamation (VCP) (384/2004) came into force on 27 January 2004. The preface of the proclamation explains the rationale: ‘Vagrancy is increasing and wide-spreading in our country from time to time, thereby creating a threat to the tranquillity and order of the people’ (FDRE 2004: 2533). Hence, the purpose is ‘to permanently dispel this threat... to bring criminals to justice and create conditions for their social rehabilitation’ (*ibid.*). The objective of the VCP is ‘... bringing criminals to justice, imposing punishment proportionate to their crimes and to create conditions for their transformation into law-abiding and productive citizenry’ (FDRE 2004: 2534). The VCP defines vagrancy as ‘... whosoever, being able-bodied, having no visible means of subsistence’ but found committing actions restricted in the proclamation. Such restricted actions include ‘betting and gambling in a public place, substance abuse, disturbing on streets or around schools, participating in organized gang brawls’ (FDRE 2004: 2534–6). ‘Police’ and the ‘federal prisons commission’ are identified as being responsible for implementing the VCP. The proclamation also sets up a ‘centre’ for psychosocial and behavioural counselling as an institutional mechanism for providing ‘rehabilitation services to any persons convicted of vagrancy’ (FDRE 2004: 2534).

In terms of political context, it is worth considering two important factors that contributed to the emergence of the VCP. First, as argued earlier, the contraction of the public sector due to structural adjustment programmes significantly reduced potential job opportunities. The nascent private sector was not at the time mature enough to create employment opportunities for the increasing young population. As a result, young people, many of whom were high school graduates, remained unemployed for relatively long periods of time. But remaining unemployed defies societal expectations about youth. Since youth is considered as a short period of transition, moving out of this temporary status is essential, and not being able to complete this transition is deviancy. For example, Mains (2012) described how members of the wider society in Jimma town, south-western Ethiopia, felt insecure and threatened with the presence of ‘idle’ and ‘unemployed’ young men on the streets. For the young men, the ‘abundance of unstructured time’ (*ibid.*: 122) was a trap that they wanted to escape from if they could get job opportunities. With quite narrow job opportunities, as well as with limited skills acquired through education, the young men were forced to pass most of their time ‘hanging out on street corners, watching films, chewing *khat* (mild stimulant)’ (*ibid.*: 123).

Second, the VCP was introduced in the wake of large-scale unrest in the capital following Addis Ababa University student protests in April 2001.

The students called for the reinstatement of the independent students' union and newspaper, and replacement of armed campus police with civilian police (Balsvik 2007). The protest spilled over into the city and resulted in large-scale looting, ransacking and vandalism in major market and shopping areas. At least 40 people were killed. The government accused unemployed young people and opposition parties of being the main perpetrators of the violence and looting (*ibid.*): the blame was laid at the feet of 'unruly' and 'unemployed' youth.

The name of the Amharic version of the VCP can be literally translated into 'Dangerous Vagrancy Control Proclamation'. The use of such alarmist language helps to garner unconditional moral and normative support. The VCP argues that social 'order' and 'tranquillity' is compromised because of 'dangerous vagrancy'. Hence, 'punishment' and 'rehabilitation' need to be administered as remedies. With such interventions, the VCP claims it will restore societal order by 'transforming' criminals into 'law-abiding and productive citizenry'. Furthermore, the VCP strengthens the crisis narrative and the need for urgent action by adding both a space and time dimension. The proclamation depicts 'dangerous vagrancy' as 'wide-spreading', which implies it affects or will affect large areas and numbers of people, while the phrase 'from time to time' is ambiguous and provides no real indication of the prevalence of the problem (FDRE 2004: 2533–4).

Both the narratives and framings in the VCP correspond with societal narratives about 'idle' and 'unemployed' youth who pass most of their time on the street. These youth were perceived as deviants because of their failure to meet societal expectations of growing up and becoming independent adults. The VCP builds on such narratives, and making reference to occasional, large-scale incidents such as the riot in April 2001 links unemployment with crime. Furthermore, the VCP also claims moral superiority by stating its purpose as 'to bring criminals to justice'. In addition to the judiciary solution, the VCP declared its intention to change the values of vagrants through 'social rehabilitation', which was broadly defined as 'transformation into law-abiding and productive citizenry'. The components of social rehabilitation mentioned in the proclamation include education, vocational training, civic education, counselling and hard labour. The police, public prosecutor, courts and 'rehabilitation centre' were identified as key implementers of the VCP (FDRE 2004: 2538–9).

The VCP's link with youth employment can be seen in its targeting of unemployed youth. One of the key elements of the definition of vagrancy in the VCP is having 'no visible means of subsistence'. Particularly in a context where young peoples' transition to 'socially acceptable status of adulthood' (Honwana 2014: 29–31) is severely compromised, a dependence on activities in the informal economy is inevitable. Studies have indicated that young people with limited opportunities for social mobility rely on casual work and activities on the fringe of legality. These survival strategies are not considered 'visible means of subsistence' by the

VCP, which makes young people who are actively involved in the street economy (Di Nunzio 2012) prime targets of the proclamation.

Di Nunzio (2012) describes survival strategies of young people in poor urban neighbourhoods in Addis Ababa as including a combination of street activities, which are broadly defined as hustling. Hustling is 'being smart and finding a way to make money for survival' (*ibid.*: 443). Common street activities include brokering small transactions, running errands for a small fee, working as an informal tourist guide and grabbing any opportunity that would generate money. Sometimes hustling may involve illegal activities such as pick-pocketing, thieving and drug selling. It is important to note that hustling differs significantly from the notion of being 'idle' and 'unemployed'. Young people who are involved in hustling consider that their activities are 'tiring', and require skills, networking and different layers of interactions.

The VCP's focus on these young people became more pronounced during the highly contested 2005 elections. The government used the VCP as an instrument of repression when it targeted unemployed youth because of their support for the opposition during the tense pre- and post-election period. Opposition parties widely criticised the government for the high unemployment rate and for its criminalising discourse. The government labelled young people who participated *en masse* in pre-election demonstrations and post-election protests as 'dangerous vagrants', 'jobless' and 'unruly' young people (Aalen and Tronvoll 2009; Di Nunzio 2012). Furthermore, unemployed youth and particularly those surviving through hustling constituted a significant majority of the nearly 30,000 people detained during the post-election violence (Gebremariam and Herrera 2016). Hence, in the tense political context around the election, unemployment was not only associated with crime but also dissent and protest.

The VCP definition of vagrancy also unequivocally focuses on the individual – an 'able-bodied' person not having any 'visible means of subsistence'. The proclamation never mentions a single causal or contributing factor – social, economic, cultural or political. Thus it fails to recognise the multiple factors that can force young people into activities defined as vagrancy, including an ineffective education system, lack of work, and the expectations of society that young people quickly become independent adults (Miles 2003: 189). As discussed earlier, a political context which removes systems of direct and indirect support for youth employment pushes young people to the margins of illegal activities. When opportunities for transition into adulthood become narrow, young people engage in activities such as hustling. By focusing on the survival strategies of these economically marginalised young people, the VCP missed the root cause of the problem.

To conclude, the VCP came into being when the political context and limited economic opportunities had led a large number of unemployed youth to hustle for survival through a combination of legal and illegal

activities. Both societal narratives and the VCP perceived the survival strategies of the youth and the situation they were forced into as deviance; hence a threat that needed legal intervention (Mains 2012). However, the VCP was not the only approach that the EPRDF used to address youth issues. It also produced a youth policy that is discussed in the following section.

4.2 National Youth Policy

Endorsed on 12 March 2004, the National Youth Policy (NYP) is one of Ethiopia's most significant youth-specific state documents. It argues that an age-based definition of youth is 'most suitable for research and policy purposes' (MYSC 2004: 3), and goes on to define youth as people between 15 and 29 years. The NYP envisions 'creating [an] empowered young generation' (*op. cit.*: 19) with values incorporating a democratic outlook, knowledge, professional skills, organised engagement and ethical integrity. The objectives of the policy include: to 'bring about active participation of youth' (*ibid.*) in socioeconomic, political and cultural activities; and 'enable [youth] to fairly benefit from the results' (*ibid.*).

The VCP and NYP emerged at approximately the same time and within the same socioeconomic and political context. However, the NYP was produced based on a 'comprehensive study' (*op. cit.*: 1) which involved consultation with stakeholders including youth. The study conducted as a baseline for the policy identify pervasiveness of extreme poverty (44 per cent in 2004), high youth unemployment (67 per cent in 1999), high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and low enrolment in secondary and higher education as major challenges for Ethiopian youth. Furthermore, the country's long history of non-democratic politics is highlighted as a hindrance to meaningful youth participation.

There are two levels of narrative within the NYP: a broad narrative about the status of youth, and a narrative more specific to youth employment. At the broader level, high levels of poverty, economic and political marginalisation are identified as main factors restricting young people's 'potential energies and capabilities' (*op. cit.*: 5). The policy envisions changing the dire socioeconomic and political situation through 'active participation' (*op. cit.*: 19) of the youth. The government aims to play an instrumental role to help youth organise themselves and actively participate in 'development endeavours, building democratic system and good governance' (*op. cit.*: 21).

The narrative specific to youth employment issues has multiple layers. The NYP suggests that the government alone cannot 'resolve the problem of unemployment' (*op. cit.*: 12). Hence, the policy aims to create favourable conditions for the youth to 'create new jobs for themselves' (*op. cit.*: 26), and to enable the private sector to create job opportunities for them. It also advocates for policy interventions that shape both formal and informal employment opportunities, and suggests that these can help address the under- and unemployment problems among youth. With regard to rural youth, ensuring access to land and expansion

of off-farm activities are identified as part of the solution to youth unemployment.

One of the most important framings adopted by the NYP is an age-based definition of youth. While it is not the only document to use age-based definitions, taking an age-based definition has serious limitations. One of these is the tendency for homogenisation, despite important differences arising from gender, culture, socioeconomic status and geographic location. For example, the kinds of expectations, experiences, challenges and opportunities facing young men and women vary significantly despite age similarities. Mains (2012) for instance talks of 'barriers to adulthood' for young men in Jimma town because of limited economic opportunities to move towards marriage and fatherhood. In this case, young men are forced into a prolonged period of transitioning into adulthood. On the contrary, young women might be forced by cultural practices of early marriage, even as young as ten, which inevitably shortens their period of transition. It is also important to note the salient role that socioeconomic status and geographic location play in shaping young peoples' lives, despite belonging to the same age cohort. For example, young people from wealthy families may have better access to opportunities than other young people in the same age cohort. Likewise, social norms, values and practices based on age hierarchies among different cultural groups across the country also vary considerably. Hence, the age-based definition needs to be used with caution.

The other main characterisation of youth in the NYP is in terms of their receptiveness to 'new ideas', [their] 'potential capacity for creativity and productivity', and 'potential energies and capabilities'. This framing is supported by depictions of youth as 'nation builders' and positive 'agents of change'. While focusing on the potential capabilities of young people, the NYP also identifies present-day challenges that may compromise the future – for example, young people as potential victims of an unfavourable environment broadly categorised as 'economic and social problems'. Here youth are portrayed as marginalised and vulnerable members of society who are 'exposed to social evils' (MYSC 2004: 5).

In response to the crisis around the 2005 election, the government relied on the VCP instead of the NYP. As argued earlier, unemployed young people in the informal economy were targeted because of their direct involvement in the post-election violence. Furthermore, the highly technocratic approach of the NYP, with its stakeholder engagement and strategic plan, was not deemed to be useful in the short term. The EPRDF-led government faced a serious crisis of political legitimacy because of the post-election violence. It chose to address this among the youth through massive political mobilisation: the political priority was addressing the legitimacy deficit, irrespective of the existing youth policy framework.

In general, it can be argued that the NYP illustrated the case in which the political context becomes a vital factor in shaping policy processes. When

the NYP was formulated, the government was not under any immediate political pressure. However, when the political environment became tense, the NYP was not used to guide the political processes of cooperation and negotiation with the youth that the government badly needed. The political urgency required another policy framework, and as a result the government drafted and introduced the Youth Development Package (YDP) that directly serves the political interest of the government. The following section further elaborates on the YDP.

4.3 Youth Development Package

The Youth Development Package (YDP) was launched in September 2006. The associated documentation claims that the YDP reflects consultations with youth in both urban and rural areas (FDRE 2006: 6). Based on the consultations, the YDP was formulated to address three 'burning problems': unemployment, 'unavailability of well-equipped and youth-focused social services and recreational centres' and 'exclusion and lack of participation forums'. A number of 'strategic directions' are set out through which these issues will be addressed. Perhaps the key one is the endorsement of youth as the 'front-leaders' to solve the problems they are facing. Additional strategic directions include: 'enabling the youth to understand its leading role', 'facilitating [the creation of] youth participation forums', 'enhancing young people's educational, vocational and leadership skills for improved participation', and 'organizing the youth depending on their interests'. The package assigns the role of 'key supporter' to the state in addressing the 'burning problems'. The YDP adopts the age-based definition of youth set by the NYP and approaches the problems of urban, rural and pastoralist youth differently (*ibid.*: 1–19).

The YDP emerged as a response to the 2005 post-election violence: in effect, the government used the YDP to try to mend its relations with young people. The central narrative of the YDP focuses on the imminent risk associated with youth marginalisation. This narrative establishes a direct connection between the status of youth and both the existing and future socioeconomic and political orders. The central proposition – that the level of exclusion and desperation among youth has detrimental effects in the present and the future – suggests the YDP is mainly meant to mitigate 'serious risk'. Within this narrative, the YDP addresses youth as vital actors: in the present as nation builders, and in the future as 'inheritors' or 'successors'. Youth need to prepare themselves to be 'leaders of their time', while the government must play its role 'to prepare' the youth to become 'inheritors' (*ibid.*: 2).

Unemployment is identified as one of the burning problems that requires a coordinated response, and it is argued that the causes of youth unemployment in urban and rural areas have both similarities and differences. Some common causes are identified such as limited skills development and exclusion of those who are not in education, employment or training. It is also suggested that limited access to financial services restricts youth entrepreneurship. Two factors are

posited to contribute specifically to urban youth unemployment, with the first being the constraining environment that inhibits the private sector and specifically growth of micro and small enterprises (MSEs). The second factor is that the education system needs ‘to produce entrepreneurial youth with improved skills and mind-set’. The YDP argues that unemployment among rural youth is deeply rooted in the land tenure system, which excludes them and makes them ‘property-less’. The document notes that the national agricultural policy neglects the specific challenges of rural youth, which contributes to their ‘high economic vulnerability’. In order to address these problems, the YDP aims to expand off-farm employment and income-generating opportunities (*ibid.*: 5–8).

Two observations can be made about the YDP. First, it can be seen as an example of a policy process that responded quickly to a particular political crisis. Political expedience – the Prime Minister’s Office formulated the YDP and ordered the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture (MYSC) to implement it – meant that the finer points of policy formulation, like consultation, went out of the window. Broadly speaking, the YDP is fairly similar in its narratives and framings to the NYP. But it also has unique features: for example, despite adopting the age-based definition of youth, the YDP attempts to broadly categorise youth in terms of their geographical location and primary socioeconomic activities. In doing so, the YDP categorised youth as being either urban, rural or pastoral. Challenges and opportunities that correspond to these categories were also elaborated. Perhaps the long-standing EPRDF tradition of producing detailed political strategy documents came into play in the production of the YDP. Whilst the NYP followed the formal structure and presentation of a policy document, the YDP is produced in a detailed 90-page document similar to other political strategy and propaganda documents.

Second, while relying fairly on similar framings and narratives to the NYP, the YDP clearly acknowledged structural and institutional constraints on youth. The government did not stop at identifying the constraints; it also acted swiftly to address both economic and political marginalisation. For example, it highlighted the expansion of MSEs, and provided young people with financial and technical assistance to start their own businesses. Obviously, since the programme was primarily initiated to regain the government’s legitimacy, the sustainability and long-term impact must be carefully examined. However, the effort required to address youth unemployment with actual job creation programmes should be recognised. As part of the effort to address the political marginalisation of young people, the EPRDF also initiated Youth Forums, particularly in Addis Ababa, as a permanent consultation platform between youth and the government.

4.4 National development plans

Three national development plans have been adopted since 2005, and in different ways each addressed youth issues and particularly youth

employment. The Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) (2005–10) (MoFED 2006) emerged as part of the global effort to reduce poverty which had the effect of reducing any sense of ownership on the part of the Ethiopian government. With the subsequent Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP I from 2010–15, and GTP II from 2015–20), the government enjoyed more policy space to formulate its own approach and plans. After electoral defeat in several constituencies, the EPRDF engaged in mass mobilisation, effective political restrictions and huge public sector investment (Aalen and Tronvoll 2009; Gudina 2011). These activities contributed to the party winning 99.6 per cent of the parliament seats during the 2010 elections. The national development plans need to be examined in relation to the political context from which they emerge. Accordingly, in GTP I, the government officially declared its aim to build a 'democratic developmental state' (MoFED 2010: 22), and this was reaffirmed in GTP II. Both plans were preceded by national elections that gave the ruling party control of almost all parliamentary seats. Hence, the development plans were also commitments through which the ruling elite sought to consolidate its legitimacy.

PASDEP addressed youth employment by incorporating the narratives of NYP and the ten-year multi-sector and five-year strategic plans that followed the NYP. By aligning PASDEP and NYP, the government attempted to maintain some level of policy coherence. However, as noted earlier, once the YDP entered the policy scene, it replaced all other youth-specific policy frameworks. GTP I approached youth issues in tandem with sports, and youth-specific objectives were presented in broad terms: '[T]o increase the participation of youth in democratic governance and economic development processes' (*ibid.*: 112). The three identified 'GTP I targets for youth development' were increasing youth centres at district level; youth mainstreaming in development programmes; and increasing the number of youth volunteers. No clear indication was given as to how youth employment would be addressed. GTP II maintained the broad objective of enhancing meaningful youth participation in the socioeconomic and political arenas. GTP II defines youth as 'seeds of development and democracy' and aims to make them sources of 'developmental investors' through entrepreneurship schemes (MoFED 2015: 86) It further argues that youth employment is best addressed by organising young people in MSEs. The plan aims to integrate the job creation and entrepreneurship programmes with education and training and the manufacturing sector (*ibid.*: 127). To this end, it set a goal of organising 7.43 million young people in MSEs and 1.35 million in cooperative unions. These plans included making approximately £366 million available to young entrepreneurs.

In all three documents, the age-based definition of the NYP was the main departure point. Youth issues are also presented as 'cross-cutting' in the national development plans. At the same time, there is a shared portrayal of youth as a marginalised and excluded segment of society that needs coordinated support. GTP II in particular uses the phrase 'seeds of democracy and development' (*ibid.*: 86) to embed the

process of growing up into the political and economic discourse of the developmental state.

5 Discussions and conclusions

Three main learning points can be identified. The first is that context plays a critical role in influencing when a policy emerges, how it is formulated and implemented, and who gets involved. The VCP, NYP, YDP and the national development plans emerged in different contexts and these contexts are reflected in their respective narratives, framings and implementation. The structural adjustment period that caused the economic marginalisation of youth did not trigger a direct policy response. Rather, the resulting prolonged period of unemployment and transition was treated as a sign of deviance and a threat to society, and the VCP was crafted as a remedy. The NYP, while in many ways good intentioned, had minimum impact, and was quickly overtaken by the YDP and GTPs after the 2005 election crisis. The post-election crisis provided the EPRDF with lessons about the relevance of cooperation and negotiation, and as a result new framings were introduced that recognised the marginalisation of youth and the need for them to be included.

The second point is about how policies in turn affect the way politics is pursued. For example, the VCP with its narrow perspective arguably contributed to the 2005 conflict. On the other hand, policies with a different point of departure, which are not focused on criminalising youth – such as the creation of Youth Forums and promotion of MSEs – can promote political processes based on cooperation and negotiation.

The third point is that policies rooted in long-term developmental objectives and the political vision of the state tend to be consistent in their narratives and framings, and can be effective in identifying root causes and delivering tangible outcomes. As a result of its strong developmentalist orientation, the Ethiopian state can claim to have created millions of jobs and self-employment opportunities for youth.

In terms of addressing youth employment, two points need to be underlined. First, the challenges of youth employment cannot be addressed with categorical approaches to defining youth or with approaches that frame young people as isolated individuals. The VCP's criminalising narrative stems from detaching the individual young person from the socioeconomic and political context in which they live. Second, when broader socioeconomic and political contexts are taken into account, challenges of youth employment can be addressed systematically. The NYP, YDP and GTP II identified structural and institutional challenges, which set the stage for effective long-term intervention.

Finally, the analysis demonstrates that it is important to examine youth employment within the context of the broader socioeconomic and political dynamics of the state. How state elites pursue their political purposes determines the developmental orientation of the state. These broader political dynamics inevitably shape youth employment policy processes.

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The Side-Hustle: Diversified Livelihoods of Kenyan Educated Young Farmers

Grace Muthoni Mwaura*

Abstract Side-hustling – the engagement in diverse income-earning activities – has become a common phenomenon among Kenyan educated youth who are increasingly faced with formal employment uncertainties. In this article, I examine how aspirations and expectations of educated youth are formed within their opportunity space, involving their assessment of what is possible within their geographical, socioeconomic and political contexts, and given their own qualities and characteristics. Through the life stories of six educated young farmers interviewed in 2014, I show how side-hustling offered them an alternative livelihood strategy; a means for self-improvement; and a reconfiguration of their imagined futures. The article suggests moving beyond our deductive statistical analyses of who is employed and who is not; and instead utilising a youth livelihood framework which helps to understand how young people make meaning of themselves and opportunities around them in extreme socioeconomic conditions.

Keywords: Africa, agricultural livelihoods, entrepreneurship.

1 Introduction

The twenty-first century is marred with images of waiting youth (Honwana 2012) who have become marginalised through under- and unemployment and are increasingly disconnected from their life aspirations. Nonetheless, these youth are not just waiting; they continually develop new subjectivities that enable them to manoeuvre the changing labour markets. They choose to reconstruct their aspirations through a range of new social relationships (Durham 2007), multiple identities (Gough and Langevang 2015), new political formations (Honwana 2012), and entrepreneurial individuality (Thieme 2013). To fully comprehend youth responses to economic austerity, it is important to examine the nexus of the flexibility of protracted youthhood inspired by neoliberal reforms and resultant socioeconomic uncertainties, as well as other specific local changes.

In this article, I examine side-hustling in agriculture as one response by educated youth to economic austerity. I broadly view the side-hustle

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as that which young people do 'on the side' during their free time, on weekends or in the evenings, not merely to supplement their incomes but also as a capital accumulation strategy in preparation for other livelihood opportunities. These side-activities are conducted alongside schooling, while job-seeking (locally referred to as 'tarmacking') (Prince 2013), caring for the family, and even when employed.

The notion of side-hustling is important for understanding youth livelihoods in contemporary contexts for several reasons. First, side-hustling allows us to show what educated youth do when facing uncertainties about employment. Second, it suggests that youth employment should not be viewed through the lens of a single job. Thirdly, inasmuch as side-hustling is a supplementary source of income, it also fulfils other imaginations of young people such as attaining social markers of adulthood. Indeed, side-hustles illuminate how the aspirations of educated youth change when they anticipate or face livelihood uncertainties, and how they develop diversified career trajectories that potentially enable them to attain the desired social markers of adulthood, while also avoiding the stigma of being 'unemployed youth' (Prince 2013).

This article begins by providing an overview of youth employment and agriculture in Kenya. In Section 3, it contextualises side-hustling in the conceptual framework of opportunity space. Section 4 discusses the methods of data collection used. Section 5 presents six life stories of educated young farmers focusing on their variations of side-hustling. Section 6 analyses how side-hustling helps understand the everyday life of young people in terms of providing a livelihood strategy, shaping their identities and reconfiguring their aspirations. Finally, Section 7 concludes with implications for policy and recommendations for further research.

2 Youth employment and agriculture in Kenya

Although Kenyan youth¹ make up 60 per cent² of the working population (NCPD 2013), their contribution to economic development remains low, posing a great challenge to the sustained growth envisaged by government. For instance, in 2009, the *National Human Development Report* recorded a youth income index of 0.44, meaning a high dependency ratio and continued struggles for youth to earn a living (UNDP 2010). Even with an increasing number of young people completing primary and secondary education, only approximately 200,000 students per year proceed to higher learning institutions, with a small fraction of these completing university and securing employment afterwards (Njonjo 2011). This article is concerned with the role that education plays in configuring and reconfiguring the aspirations of young people in a context where the labour market offers limited formal employment opportunities for young people.

The idea that agriculture can provide significant numbers of jobs for young people is now accepted in most African countries. In Kenya,

it is part of a well-established policy narrative that supports informal sector work and self-employment in rural areas. However, this narrative is problematic for two reasons. First, it excludes educated youth who it is claimed reject rural-based occupations as dirty and demeaning, aspiring instead to white-collar formal employment. Second, it fails to consider the broader context of the Kenyan agriculture sector which has significantly changed since the structural reforms of the 1980s (Rono 2002). Even though agriculture contributes 25 per cent directly and 27 per cent indirectly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP), the national budget allocation to the sector remains at only 5 per cent of total expenditure (GoK 2013). As such, the sector fails to attract and retain skilled human capital capable of driving profitability and sustainability. Most youth are educated to leave the *maisha ngumu* (hard life) in the rural areas.

While some studies show that indeed young people in the past have been educated out of farming (White 2012), others argue that even with increased education, migration and urbanisation, many African youth will continue to live in the rural areas and thereby will rely directly or indirectly on agricultural livelihoods (Filmer *et al.* 2014). These studies underpin the youth in agriculture narrative that seeks to entice young people to become farmers by making agriculture 'cool', 'sexy' and 'lucrative' (AGRA 2015). Fundamentally, this narrative segues with neoliberal frames of entrepreneurship and has produced agribusiness – 'farming as a business' – as the new opportunity space for youth self-employment (Sumberg *et al.* 2014). In particular, agriculture is to be made attractive to educated youth through the combination of entrepreneurship and the potential to expand opportunities beyond the farm, including service provision, processing and marketing (Proctor and Lucchesi 2012).

While for some educated youth, agriculture could be an undesirable 'last resort or not an option at all' (Tadele and Gella 2012) or just boring (Lewa and Ndungu 2012), to others, agriculture provides quick incomes that facilitate a transition into other activities that promise social and economic gain (Berckmoes and White 2014). For instance, Okali and Sumberg (2012) found that young Ghanaians farmed tomatoes to build capital with which to meet other social and economic needs, attain economic independence, and then shift to other types of livelihoods. Fundamentally, the change in perceptions occurs when young people start re-imagining agriculture as an entrepreneurial venture facilitating their 'moving forward' and getting 'a total reward' (Fanthorpe and Maconachie 2010). What was once seen as a denigrated occupation, and not a first choice, becomes desirable because it allows investing in oneself and starting up something on your own (Gough and Langevang 2015). Here young people view themselves not as farmers, but as 'creative agents who try to seize the available opportunities to improve their positions' (Langevang and Gough 2012: 248). While the discursive frames of entrepreneurship and agribusiness camouflage the experience of under- and unemployment within precarious economies, they also set

the stage for side-hustling. This article will show how side-hustles allow young people to reconstitute themselves as subjects capable of offering products and services, which enable them to meet livelihoods needs, achieve elite distinction and transition into social adulthood.

3 Side-hustles and the opportunity space framework

Conceptually, side-hustles are different from hustling. Hustling has been described as the everyday survival strategies of marginalised young people to capitalise on every opportunity to earn an income or generate symbolic capital in extreme economic landscapes (Munive 2010; Thieme 2013). Munive's research with Liberian youth depicts hustling as a common phenomenon in African cities where young men and women work, for example, as load carriers, motorcycle riders, weekend farmers, petty traders or street food caterers. He argues that hustling is both a survival strategy to address material constraints, and a means of crafting an identity, creating a self-efficacious and meaningful existence. As Thieme (2013) observed among young men in the Mathare slums in Kenya, hustling can also be understood as a cumulative set of behaviours contesting existing structures of authority. Importantly, hustlers resist the identity given to unemployed youth by those in authority as being desperate and lacking opportunities; and instead view hustling as offering them a good life on their own terms, and enabling them to maintain a status in society even in difficult circumstances. Successful hustling reflects an individual's intentional strategies, ingenuity and social networks (Munive 2010; Thieme 2013).

Building on Thieme's and Munive's work, this article focuses on what my respondents referred to as a side-hustle – to pursue alternative livelihood activities on the margins of a constrained agricultural economy. A side-hustle might be income-earning in the present, or could lead to economic gain in the future. For the educated youth with whom I worked, side-hustling was seen as offering potential for upward social mobility (Mwaura 2016).

In the broader framework of youth employment and livelihoods, the inquiry of side-hustling is important because formal employment opportunities are severely constrained. There is, therefore, the need to understand how young men and women perceive and respond to this challenge. As work opportunities emerge (and others shrink), one's aspirations change and expectations are reformulated to reflect what is possible (Hardgrove, Rootham and McDowell 2015).

Sumberg *et al.* define opportunity space as:

... the spatial and temporal distribution of the universe of more or less viable [work] options that a young person may exploit as she/he attempts to establish an independent life. The opportunity space of a situated person is a function of global, national, and regional factors including institutions, policy, and demand; place; and social and cultural norms (2012: 5).

In this regard, young people's aspirations and expectations are determined by the existing broader circumstances, such as financial crisis, education, technology, migration, urbanisation, environmental change and social-cultural norms among others (Leavy and Smith 2010). Opportunity space can be analysed in terms of depth, diversity and dynamism, reflecting on one hand, the interplay of forces existing in the broader geographical, social-economic and political contexts in which these opportunities exist and on the other hand, the differentiated capabilities and dispositions of young people. The extent to which a young person is able to exploit a given opportunity is a function of their access to key resources; support from social relations and networks; information, knowledge and skills; attitudes (e.g. towards risk and travel); imagination, alertness and adroitness to judiciously exploit opportunities (Sumberg *et al.* 2012). In effect, opportunities range from last resort survival strategies to transformative livelihood strategies that result in real incomes, enhance capabilities, address social equity and exclusion, and offer livelihood diversification opportunities.

4 Methods

This article draws from my doctoral study carried out in 2014 and 2015 in Eastern, Western, and Central regions of Kenya investigating the changing aspirations and alternative livelihood options of educated youth. Educated youth were defined as those aged 18–35 years and with post-secondary education at degree, diploma or vocational certificate levels. I worked with a sample of 60 educated young farmers. First, I selected participants from social media platforms of young farmers who then referred me to other young farmers who met my criteria. Second, I utilised contact lists of organisations working on 'youth in agriculture' to reach out to young people benefiting from their programmes. Third, I attended various events on 'youth in agriculture' and selected participants based on their self-identification as farmers and their willingness to participate in the study.

The data collection process involved 60 open-ended interviews and field visits. I also followed the young farmers' online activity via social media to monitor any new information regarding their farming and other income-earning activities. I transcribed, coded and analysed the data using NVivo. This article presents the life stories of six young farmers to show how they pursued alternative livelihoods alongside or when seeking formal jobs. The six were selected on the basis of their mention of agriculture and other activities as 'side-things' they engaged in. I specifically analyse how these individuals perceived changes in the labour market and viewed the potential of their agricultural activities to provide the needed income, achieve elite distinction, and satisfy their responsibilities in society.

5 Life stories

The six individuals whose stories are given next belong to a generation born in the 1980s during a time of structural adjustment and economic liberalisation. By the 1990s, government spending cuts led to a

significant downsizing of the public sector. While educated youth of previous generations were socialised to expect white-collar employment upon graduation (Munene and Otieno 2008), this new generation finds few formal sector employment opportunities. Officially, although only an estimated 15.7 per cent of 25–29-year-olds (the age group coinciding with completion of tertiary and/or higher education) are unemployed, the rate of underemployment is very high, and it takes approximately five years for a graduate to secure a job (Njonjo 2011).

5.1 Wangechi

It is a side thing; I did it [farming, training young farmers, blogging, and writing farming manuals] for one year in 2013 close to full-time, because I had sponsorship from a women's organisation. Now that I am done with the fellowship, I am thinking of going back to work because I had actually quit my job to do this for a year. (Wangechi, female farmer, Central Kenya)

Wangechi (28 years old) was introduced as a strawberry farmer. When we met in 2014, she was leading a community-based organisation (CBO) in Kiambu County while undertaking postgraduate studies in one of Nairobi's public universities. In 2013, the CBO received a fellowship grant which enabled Wangechi to mobilise and build the capacity of young farmers in her county. She had successfully trained over 500 youth; developed one of the leading blogs on agricultural information and youth farming opportunities; and published manuals on modern farming practices. At the time of the interview, she had just completed the fellowship grant and was registering a company separate from the CBO through which she planned to continue offering the trainings for a fee and blogging, while she sought a formal job. However, Wangechi had quit strawberry farming after several failed attempts and had no intention of going back to farming. She viewed the trainings, the blogging and the publishing of farming manuals as her 'side-hustle' as she completed her postgraduate studies and searched for a formal job.

5.2 Wambaya

Wambaya (26 years old) was a telephone³ horticultural and dairy farmer in Western Kenya. He was also seeking a white-collar job while pursuing other entrepreneurial opportunities in Nairobi. After graduating in 2011, Wambaya had volunteered with several international organisations in Kenya, Ethiopia and Japan, but none of these experiences had led to a job. He then established himself as a freelance consultant offering online research training, volunteered with development organisations, and acquired new information and communications technology (ICT) skills. In late 2013, Wambaya invested in a greenhouse that was managed by his mother and a farm worker in Migori. He also bought two dairy cattle, which provided enough income through milk sales to pay the farm worker's wages. When I visited his farm, Wambaya's mother described her son as unemployed and viewed his investments in agriculture as security for when he would return to the rural areas after failing to find a formal job. During our interview in mid-2014, none of the farming projects were yet to turn a profit, and Wambaya had not travelled to

Migori. Nevertheless, he was determined to make agriculture a major income source and was already planning his next projects in fish farming and drip irrigation. His newly acquired ICT skills had enabled him to collaborate with a friend and invest in an online marketing business. While his goal was to use the profits from these ventures to expand his farm, he also intended to diversify into other enterprises: 'Like any other businessman will tell you, I will also invest outside farming. I want to diversify to cushion myself. Because you don't know what might happen in future.' Even though he referred to himself as a businessman, Wambaya was still seeking a formal job and intended to pursue a postgraduate degree the following year. Similar to Wangechi, he was using every opportunity in Migori and Nairobi to diversify his options and build capital in preparation for his desired future.

5.3 Cherunya

Oh my God, No! I was thinking of how I would become a diplomat, attend to political parties, and be fabulous. I did not imagine soil and stuff. It was never in my plan. But that happened during my transition when I got married... so I had to naturally blend into the culture. (Cherunya, female farmer, Western Kenya)

Cherunya (33 years old) was from a wealthy family in Western Kenya and educated at prestigious schools in Uganda and Kenya. Upon graduating, she worked with a policy thinktank in Nairobi where she expected to rise up the ladder into the diplomatic service. Nevertheless, on getting married, she acquired a new identity as a wife which meant 'blending into the culture' and so migrating to rural Kericho to assume the traditional roles of a Kalenjin wife. She cared for her ageing parents-in-law and like other housewives in her community, established a kitchen garden. However, given her knowledge and access to resources, Cherunya's kitchen garden included modern poultry rearing and a greenhouse, both of which were income-earning. She also opened a grocery shop in the nearby trading centre where she sold most of her produce. Despite assuming the traditional roles of a Kalenjin housewife, Cherunya also positioned herself in the community as a gender activist, soon establishing a women's empowerment group and becoming a local politician. While farming had not been her choice, Cherunya used her kitchen garden to teach the local women entrepreneurial skills, thereby achieving her goal of being politically active, while fulfilling her obligations as a housewife.

5.4 Musembi

After my internship, I tarmacked for like a year, that's when I was very busy with the farm. (Musembi, male farmer, Eastern Kenya)

Musembi (28 years old) was a diploma graduate, a development worker, and an online degree student living and working in rural Kitui, Eastern Kenya. Unlike other educated youth in his community who migrated to urban areas to seek formal jobs, after earning his diploma Musembi had returned to Kitui where he worked for a local organisation, enrolled for an online degree programme, and later married. He self-identified as a young

farmer growing horticultural and other crops on a piece of land inherited from his parents. He had started farming to 'finance the tarmacking' for a formal job after college, but even after he found one (it was seasonal and paid very low wages) Musembi continued farming as 'it supports me when I am not on contract'. The income from farming and the contract job enabled him to sustain his family and pay for his online degree course. Musembi was optimistic that the online course would help him find a well-paid job, but in the meantime, farming remained a significant source of income that shaped his identity as an educated man with responsibility to support his nuclear and extended family.

5.5 Joe

Joe (30 years old) was a full-time business journalist in Nairobi and self-identified as a young farmer, leasing five acres of land in Kajiado County in Central Kenya where he grew onions under a contractual arrangement with an international seed company. Our conversation started on the subject of his current occupation, business journalism; only later did it emerge that Joe had trained as a veterinary doctor but never practised:

I went to university because I passed with a good grade that could take me to university to earn a degree. But when I got there, I realised I was drawn to communications and not [veterinary] science. It was a long struggle... I didn't like it because we were doing it for a job... I don't really use it now... That's why we go to university; to identify what we really want to do... [So] when at the university I used to do a [radio] show on entrepreneurship and was encouraging young people to invest.

Joe realised his passion for journalism in his first year of university, but the administration and his parents did not allow him to change his area of study. He therefore went ahead to pursue veterinary science, but worked as a broadcaster at the university radio station for the four years. During this period, he developed an interest in business and planned his radio programmes around youth entrepreneurship. This experience landed him a business journalism job after university. From there he enrolled for a second degree in media studies. Even though he was aware that his progress as a journalist depended on his educational qualifications, Joe was disappointed that the education system had already failed to match his aspirations, or at least, enable learners to 'provide solutions to the society'. To get a pay rise or promotion at his workplace, Joe needed to earn a postgraduate degree and at the time of the interview, was considering enrolling.

Joe's drive was no longer in just becoming a journalist; he was now focused on wealth accumulation and promotion in the journalism industry, and success in his side-businesses were major parts of his plan. Only a few months into farming, Joe referred to it as a hobby: 'I am not a journalist on the weekends. I am in my wellies, my hat, and it's a lot of fun just like going to play golf.' However, he planned to eventually expand it into a large-scale farm for export purposes:

It [farming] is my pet project, and it is fun... It's a new thing, but it was not cool five years ago. If you look at it as a business, it's cool... This business needs to grow, because when you move into exports, you are talking big money. I am planning to go into farming for export.

Joe's income from journalism was split between supporting his family, saving for a postgraduate degree and investing in the farm. Similar to Wambaya, he viewed the current farming activities as experimental projects that would eventually grow into major investments.

5.6 Matei

Matei (34 years old) was educated in Machakos, Eastern Kenya, and lived and worked there for a development organisation. He identified himself as a successful young farmer and an entrepreneur: he had managed to purchase a plot of land, build a house, and marry. He had also inherited a piece of land from his father where he was farming sweet potatoes, cassava, mangoes and bananas. Alongside his formal employment, Matei was committed to earning extra income from his farm and other side-businesses (the nature of which he would not disclose). When I asked him why diversifying his income was important, he responded: 'I don't want my family to hustle', implying the need for him to move his family beyond survival mode. He also pointed to the fact that formal employment did not give him the independence he desired. Thus, agriculture and the other side-businesses were progressively opening up new opportunities for him to become financially independent while also accumulating capital.

His wife lived in Machakos town and refused to migrate to their newly constructed house in the neighbouring rural area. She argued that relocating to a rural neighbourhood would symbolise a meagre living, not in keeping with the expectations of society of an educated and modern family.

6 What's in a side-hustle?

Wangechi, Wambaya, Cherunya, Musembi, Joe and Matei are examples of how present-day educated youth in Kenya are re-imagining their futures and pursuing work opportunities in the absence of formal sector employment. Their transition from one activity to another shows how they seize contingent labour market opportunities while keeping an eye on possible future opportunities. Their strategies to remain employable yet entrepreneurially active are similar to the description of a side-hustle in a recent news feature:

A side hustle is a business people run while concurrently doing something else. The something else in many cases is a full-time job, so you operate your side hustle after working hours and on weekends. Or rather, that's what all employers would like to believe. Most probably, you sneak in a few logistical phone calls, emails, meetings, etc... The something else could be that you are in university or are a stay-at-home parent (Nduati Omanga 2016).

Indeed, side-hustling is how young people, given their differential capabilities, position themselves within and exploit the opportunity space. While Betcherman and Khan (2015) argue that youth livelihoods in agriculture reflect a variety of factors – including land tenure, lack of investments in technology and infrastructure, and limited profitability – the multiple identities of these six young farmers suggest a need to acknowledge that education changes the nature of livelihood opportunities for young people and in agriculture. Additionally, side-hustling is an indicator of the self-improvement strategies of young people and their continuous efforts to rework their work aspirations in a constrained economy.

6.1 A livelihood strategy

Side-hustling has become deeply entrenched in the Kenyan culture of work and it is fast becoming socially acceptable among young employed professionals, students and those seeking jobs and working in their first or temporary jobs. Journalists, teachers, civil servants, doctors and even politicians talk of side-hustles when informally sharing information about how they supplement their monthly income. Side-hustles shape one's identity as opportunities for self-advancement present themselves in a precarious social and economic context. *Ku⁴ – hustle* – is the new language and symbol for 'making ends meet' among the young people who use phrases like 'I also have a ka-farm⁵ back in the village' and 'I am thinking of my next hustle' to explain their supplementary income activities. While it is not class-based (even though class-based side-hustles exist), failing to side-hustle is construed as laziness or being too posh to earn extra income from presumably available economic opportunities. Nevertheless, side-hustles are often difficult, and can involve risk, loss and failure.

Among the educated young farmers, side-hustling exhibited the temporality and uncertainty of most agricultural activity as well as the possibility of having options beyond agriculture. Sometimes, as in Wangechi's case, side-hustles can be regarded as short stints of profit-making and ways of accumulating capital, contributing to attainment of social markers of adulthood. Even so, sometimes they are also opportunities of just moving around rather than moving up and away from the economic uncertainties and marginalisation that the young people face, for example in Musembi's case.

The choice of a side-hustle is determined by one's availability, expected gains, and access to necessary capital. The main goal is to earn an income. Those involved remain flexible to stop some or pick up new side-hustles as dictated by evolving challenges and opportunities. The educated young farmers I interviewed embodied an entrepreneurial identity that included a plan to maximise profits, adopt innovations, and improve the quality of their farm products and services, while coping with risk. This was the case for Joe, Wambaya and Matei. Many were also driven by a last resort instinct and an immediate need to accumulate capital that would propel their upward social mobility, to

support their families and to maintain certain distinctions in society. For example, Musembi's agribusiness provided the much needed economic and symbolic capital that helped him in his efforts to find a job; and Cherunya utilised her kitchen garden to empower women, hence creating the social capital for her transition into politics. These young farmers confirm previous studies indicating that, not only do entrepreneurs respond to static economic pressures, they also change and mould new opportunities in such difficult situations (Langevang and Gough 2012).

6.2 A self-improvement strategy

Side-hustling is an important marker of a young person's self-making efforts, allowing them to gain financial independence and social acceptability among peers and in society more generally. As formal employment is declining in number and in status, educated young people are choosing occupations that help them develop new subjectivities expressed as doing 'work for myself', hence drawing on the neoliberal ideologies of self-making (Durham 2007), competitive individualism (Standing 2011), and multiplicity of identities (Schwiter 2016). Matei and Joe's stories illustrate the creation of these new subjectivities.

On the other hand, side-hustling can also supplement formal jobs that young people find unsatisfactory due to their low wages, temporary contracts, skills mismatch, and sometimes lack of personal development opportunities. They turn to side-hustles to recreate work as something flexible and that allows them to exercise their agency. As a result, their everyday lives are characterised by creative use of space and time that allows self-improvement, re-working new identities, and re-imagining their futures. For instance, Wangechi, Musembi, Wambaya and Joe planned to pursue further education alongside their side-hustles to improve their skillset and remain competitive in their professional fields. In the absence of state social protection mechanisms, Matei, Musembi and Wambaya planned to utilise farming to accumulate capital – a valuable safety net if they lost their jobs. Musembi's formal job was contractual, and hence his farming activities provided an income when he was without salary, while furthering his education would, he hoped, position him for a well-paid job in the future. Similarly, Wambaya's ICT skills helped him operate online businesses, while Joe's journalism experience had landed him a job even without having the specific academic qualifications.

However, as in Cherunya's case, social norms and differences might block some opportunities while opening up others. Her hopes of becoming a diplomat were curtailed when she married and migrated to rural Kericho. Nevertheless, in this new location, given her education and access to resources, she was able to reposition herself and develop a new identity as an entrepreneur and gender activist. Similarly, even though Wangechi gave up farming strawberries, her experience of running a CBO had prepared her to consider establishing her own company through which she would continue offering the same services

at a fee. This, coupled with her postgraduate education, was her way of remaining competitive in the labour market.

6.3 A re-imagination of aspirations

Aspirations are an individual's desire to obtain a status or achieve a goal in the future (Hardgrove *et al.* 2015). They are developed and evolve in certain contexts that are influenced by social and relational factors (such as family background, peers, gender and norms) as well as the interplay of forces in the contemporary context spanning globalisation, urbanisation, migration, engagement in diverse labour markets, and connectivity offered by technology. For instance, while Wambaya had not succeeded in finding a formal job, his ability to start up other income-earning activities enabled him to reconfigure a future where he could have a sustainable livelihood. Likewise, while Cherunya had never imagined herself becoming a farmer; when tradition demanded that she live as a Kalenjin wife in a rural area, she found herself using the very traditional roles to re-imagine her future as activist and politician.

Even though side-hustling might be depicted as reflecting disenchantment with the education system and economic conditions, educated youth are using their education to develop alternative life trajectories. Joe's experience as a radio presenter helped him develop an interest in entrepreneurship which informed his drive to accumulate wealth. While journalism was his passion, he now aspired to accumulate capital which he associated with rising up the ranks in the journalism industry and investing in his side-businesses.

These examples of side-hustling also challenge existing notions of a good life (urban and employed), and instead portray the possibilities of a decent life even in the rural areas. Matei described disenfranchised urban job seekers as 'very many clean people coming from towns; but they have a lot of nothing, with a big phone, just for Facebook. Yet they are broke'. While migrating to urban areas offers educated youth a chance to acquire certain symbols of modernity such as a smartphone and new clothes, often these youth continue to struggle to find decent employment, and remain as vulnerable as those in the rural areas.

On the other hand, some young people brought up in urban areas are going to rural areas and assuming rural lifestyles, while keeping a close connection with their urban social networks – Joe and Cherunya are good examples. The rural space takes on new meaning when it offers opportunity for economic gain and social acceptability.

7 Conclusion: does a side-hustle employ?

This article illustrates several nuances with regard to youth employment. First, that educated youth, whether formally employed or not, earn a livelihood from more than one activity. The life stories of these educated young farmers depict their embodiments of multiple identities in response to opportunities emerging from the liberalised yet uncertain Kenyan economy. They are acting as self-disciplined citizens who, despite their disillusionment with unemployment, do not wait for the state to

take action. Rather, they have been socialised to take responsibility for dealing with their own problems and thereby also, defining on their own terms what is productive and respectable in society.

Second, while traditional conceptions of youth employment cover the informal and formal sector, they fail to explain instances where one sector is used as a safety net for the other. They also fail to inform us about the haphazard transitions of young people between formal and informal sectors that affect the existing categorisation of youth work opportunities. In the absence of formal work, young graduates become informal sector workers, not out of choice, but because opportunities open up through their education and other factors such as geographical positioning and social contexts. They use their limited capital to start farming, sometimes with an intention of transitioning into other income-earning activities or into a more established agribusiness. These somewhat unknown and unpredictable transitions should inform the basis of continued inquiry into youth livelihoods, especially in how we translate the information needed to guide the contribution of statistical analyses of the categories of youth work. Fundamentally, the concept of side-hustling begs further research questions on whether youth under- and unemployment should be addressed from the viewpoint of youth poverty, social organisation and public morality, urbanisation and rural depopulation, political unrest, or merely as a problem of effectively utilising the youthful workforce to contribute to national income and reconstruction of the country.

Third, the stories of the six young farmers challenge the popular assumption that those who are educated take up skilled jobs while those with little or no education end up in informal, unskilled and semi-skilled work (Bennell 2010). Educated young farmers are seen to retain their educational identities, while also acquiring and utilising a specialised skillset (often entrepreneurial and innovation-based) needed to succeed in agriculture. As a result, they may help transform the sector by introducing new technologies, by finding new ways of managing risks, and thus changing the opportunity space in which others might engage. Whether engagement by educated youth in agriculture will really help to address the youth employment challenge remains to be seen, but this possibility should not be discounted.

Fourth, efforts to diversify youth livelihoods through the agriculture sector engages with ongoing debates on the demographic dividend. There is a narrative that new and younger farmers are needed who will bring new ideas, energy and technologies into the sector. Nevertheless, the side-hustling described in this article portrays a sense of temporality about young people's engagement with the sector that should raise questions about this narrative.

Finally, a recognition of side-hustling should be brought into youth employment policy. Side-hustling challenges orthodox conceptions of employment and the youth employment challenge, as well as the

standard set of policy responses. It would be a mistake to see side-hustling as a vindication of youth employment policies that place the burden of job creation on the shoulders of the young people themselves. While side-hustling can be read as young people's struggle against adversity, more than anything else it reflects the failure of the state to uphold its end of the intergenerational bargain.

Notes

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- 1 The Kenyan constitution defines youth as those aged 18–35 years.
 - 2 Seventy-eight per cent of Kenya's estimated population of 46 million people are aged below 34 years (NCPD 2013).
 - 3 Meaning he transacted most of the farm activities over the mobile phone with his mother and a farm worker.
 - 4 Swahili for 'to'.
 - 5 'Ka' here means something small and on the side.

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Gambling, Dancing, Sex Work: Notions of Youth Employment in Uganda

Victoria Flavia Namuggala

Abstract Using the case of Uganda, this article explains how previously displaced youth conceptualise employment compared to what is formally understood as employment by national and cultural institutions. Using key informant interviews, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the study examined the experiences of formerly displaced youth in Northern Uganda. Findings indicate that in order to survive, these youth participate in socially and culturally unacceptable activities, some of which are criminal offences. This article focuses on these deviant forms of employment, arguing that the youth population has been framed as unemployed based on a formal understanding of work. Yet, in Northern Uganda, this disregards the complexities of the lives of the formerly displaced, leading to the criminalisation and pathologisation of alternative forms of income generation. This research concludes that these forms of work can be transformative and empowering for young people and thus deserving of attention from policymakers and development practitioners.

Keywords: Africa, gender, risky behaviour, conflict, sex work.

1 Introduction

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines unemployment simply as when people are without work, currently available for work and are actively seeking work (ILO 2010). The ILO in addition adopts particular indicators in reference to unemployment including hours worked, skills required and wages attained by doing a particular job. In this article, I argue that this approach to unemployment and employment disregards much of the work done by people who find themselves in difficult or irregular situations, such as formerly displaced young people from Northern Uganda. It is thus important to re-conceptualise what (un)employment means, taking into account contextually relevant factors including location, age and gender.

Besides unemployment, internal displacement is another challenge facing Africa generally. According to the Internal Displacement

Monitoring Centre, by the end of 2014, there were 38 million displaced people globally with the majority in sub-Saharan Africa (Lenard 2015). Sub-Saharan Africa suffers from protracted displacement,¹ and this hinders reintegration, resettlement and reconstruction, and thus development. Uganda has not escaped these dynamics of displacement. The country has been entangled in decades of civil violence in the post-independence period (Byamugisha, Shamchiyeva and Kizu 2014). The rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have particularly affected the northern part of the country. Their rebellion started in 1986 when the current government took power and it continued until 2008 (Dolan 2009). The civilian population, and especially young people, have been the rebels' primary target (Cheney 2007; Machel 2000).

This article draws on a larger qualitative study: 'Gender, Age and Violence: Complexity of Identity Among Returning Formerly Displaced Youth in Uganda' (Namuggala 2016). This doctoral thesis adopted an integrated approach to understanding youthhood. The approach moves beyond numerical age definitions (the Uganda National Youth Policy defines youth to include persons between the ages of 18 and 35 years) to reflect local functional and relational perspectives to human growth and development.

Throughout this article, therefore, unless otherwise stated, I use the term youth to refer to persons who identify or who the community identifies as such, irrespective of their numeric age. This population is heterogeneous in terms of gender, location, marital status and so on, and therefore an approach to youthhood based on the notion of intersectionality is useful (Crenshaw 2006). In addition, it unveils the ways interconnected domains of power organise and structure inequality and oppression and thus links research and practice (Dill and Zambrana 2009).

This study examined the experiences of youth affected by the war between the LRA and the Ugandan government in the Northern Uganda region. The research is informed by feminist scholarship, as well as by indigenous studies, childhood studies, peace studies and conflict studies. These interdisciplinary frameworks were crucial in the analysis of complex social issues like unemployment. For instance, by conceptualising unemployment essentially as a male youth challenge, youth bulge theory² gives a highly gendered perspective, which is open to a feminist critique. Also, local perspectives provide a contextually relevant counter to the official age-based construction of childhood, youth and adulthood (Chilisa 2012; Chilisa and Ntseane 2010). Such contextual relevance is particularly important for local policy reform.

The article begins by providing a general introduction to the understanding of unemployment and conceptualisation of youth especially in the context of displacement. Section 2 details the methodology that informed the data collection and analysis process. To provide a historical overview to the youth unemployment challenge, Section 3 explains and provides a critical analysis of Ugandan

government strategies and frameworks to address youth unemployment. With a clear understanding of the history informing current employment narratives, in Section 4 I discuss formerly displaced youths' understanding of employment in relation to the official understanding. This includes implications for their work options and choices, as well as for policy.

2 Methodology

This research was qualitative. Data collection methods used included in-depth face-to-face interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. In total, 50 interviews were conducted with 34 females and 16 males ranging between 10 and 35 years of age. Ten key informant interviews were conducted with non-governmental organisation (NGO) employees working as youth, local and cultural leaders. Six focus group discussions with the youth were also held.

Soroti District provided a good location for understanding youth experiences because it hosted a number of camps for internally displaced persons and a large number of returnees upon closure of the camps. Following the successful Juba peace talks which took place between 2006 and 2008, displaced people have returned to their communities. However, there have been land disputes, marginalisation and violence, which has at times resulted in secondary displacement – where formally returned populations are forced to depart again. The situation has been exacerbated by high unemployment, especially among young people. While the general national unemployment rate is high – ranging between 64 and 70 per cent (Magelah and Ntambirweki-Karugonjo 2014) – the situation is worse in Northern Uganda given the breakdown in social structures and systems as a result of the war.

Study participants were recruited using lists of formerly displaced persons provided by a community organisation called Community Integrated Development Initiatives (CIDI), which has worked in the region since 2007. Two gender-specific lists of young people were drawn up from which names were randomly selected until the desired number of participants was attained. These youth included those displaced from neighbouring districts but also those from Soroti displaced within the district, as well as those born and raised in the camps with nowhere to return to. Key informants included individuals working on youth issues through civil society, NGOs and government. Initial reflection on each interview informed subsequent interviews. Upon completion of the fieldwork, all interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed.

3 Overview of youth unemployment

Unemployment, especially as it affects the younger generation, is a long-standing development challenge in both developed and developing economies. Actors including states, international development partners such as the United Nations, World Bank, and civil society have focused on unemployment, but in Africa little progress has been made (Cleland and Machiyama 2016). Africa has the 'fastest growing and

most youthful population in the world' (AERC 2013: 1), but youth unemployment on the continent is also attributed to interrelated dynamics between economic underdevelopment, political instability, and a lack of political will (Opute 2015).

Given the diversity of situations and young people, dealing with unemployment in Africa requires a multifaceted understanding of work that privileges the different experiences and perspectives of young people themselves. For example, in Uganda, while the entire youth population is affected, the rate of unemployment among female youth is twice as high as that among males (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). In addition, female youth are more susceptible to vulnerabilities emanating from unemployment, such as sexual exploitation. Besides gendered differences, labour market experiences of rural and urban youth can also be very different.

The government of Uganda appreciates the challenge that unemployment poses and has implemented a range of policies to promote youth employment. These must be examined against the backdrop of major reforms implemented during the 1990s that resulted in the retrenchment of many civil servants and the privatisation of public enterprises. These reforms reduced the role of the state as an employer and the private sector is currently the biggest employer in the country (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). To encourage private investment, the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) was established in 1991 through a parliamentary act. It has, however, not delivered to desired standards and is critiqued for failing to create employment, especially for youth (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). In addition, the UIA is urban based – despite the majority of Ugandans residing in rural areas. For instance, youth in rural regions such as Northern Uganda could not access the investment schemes because they were urban centred, and because political instabilities meant that the youth lacked information and skills for self-employment.

Following disappointing results from the UIA, the government began to focus on enterprise development and particularly promoting self-employment among the youth. The Youth Entrepreneurial Scheme (YES) was established in the 1990s, under which youth were given loans to start businesses. YES proved unsuccessful because it was used as a political tool and the expected loan recoveries were not made (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). Other loan schemes implemented by the government included the Youth Venture Capital Fund (YVCF), the Graduate Venture Fund (GVF) and the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP). All of these prioritised urban youth; in addition, they had such stringent conditions and collateral requirements that relatively few young people could access them. While these schemes were gender-neutral in principle, they delivered gendered consequences. The stringent conditions hindered female youth, who generally have more limited access to resources including land, motorcycles and other household items, which could be used as collateral.

Besides promoting enterprise development, the government has also taken steps to upgrade the skills that young people bring to the labour market. This has been done through the Ministry of Education. For example, the government increased pay for science teachers and sponsorship for students taking sciences at higher education institutions. Skills promotion also involves curriculum review, and encouraging technical subjects, entrepreneurship and vocational training. Despite being a practical step to dealing with unemployment, this approach has been perceived negatively by some (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). For example, local communities see vocational training to be for academically weak students who may not be able to make it to higher education institutions. This has resulted in low recruitment and retention rates. Vocational training also suffers from gender biases. Female youth are expected to take on training in areas that are traditionally seen as ‘women’s work’; for instance, tailoring and catering, while male youth go for carpentry, motor vehicle mechanics and welding, among others.

It is clear that the government has not turned a blind eye to the youth unemployment challenge. Its policies and programmes, however, have not been effective. This is particularly the case in areas such as Northern Uganda that have been affected by armed violence. In assessing the state of livelihoods in Northern Uganda, scholars have shown that economic opportunities open to youth are abysmal, with the principal form of income generation being *leje leje* (casual labour). This kind of work is unprofitable, and ‘the median youth have just days of work per month at wages of 55 cents per day’ (Annan, Blattman and Horton 2006: v).

4 Re-conceptualising youth employment in Northern Uganda

In post-conflict Northern Uganda, young people have developed alternative forms of work that allow income generation and survival, but which have either been overlooked, not considered as legitimate employment or condemned as criminal. In some cases, these forms of employment can be transformational. I argue that in order to challenge dominant discourses that frame youth in Africa as violent and unproductive, rather than being socially pathologised, these forms of self-identified employment must be recognised and much better understood.

4.1 Sex work

Sex work is common in situations of conflict and displacement (Machel 2000) and despite the formal declaration of the end of conflict in Northern Uganda, it remains a survival strategy amidst food shortages, extreme poverty and unemployment. Scholars have referred to such sex work as ‘survival sex’ because if it is not performed, family survival may be curtailed (Mulumba and Namuggala 2014). Sex work is highly gendered and at the same time it is also age sensitive: in agreement with other scholars, my research showed it to be dominated by young women.

Factors explaining sex work in Northern Uganda include women’s limited access to communal resources and high rates of domestic

violence. Domestic violence takes the form of physical abuse and rejection of previously displaced youth by family and community members. Rejection can reflect a blaming of the young people for collaborating with, marrying and/or having children with rebels. While mothers were encouraged to return with their children, they have not received adequate support for reintegration (see Irin News 2015). Indeed, some female captives who gave birth during captivity returned to have these children labelled as 'rebel children'. Some former captives were drawn into sex work in the search for belonging, support and survival. Gendered victimisation in this case becomes a cause and a consequence of unemployment. While male youth might have fathered children during displacement, they do not go through the same experiences as females, especially relating to childcare.

Besides being perceived negatively by society, prostitution is also a crime in Uganda. As such, for their own safety sex workers operate under cover. Yet the income young women generate through it is used to fulfil important social and cultural responsibilities, for instance to pay for childcare and the care of elderly and/or disabled family members. One respondent, a young woman and mother of four noted:

People think because we get money from sex, we are not good people. But we use that very money to provide for our families, our children. If I cannot acquire basic needs like food for my children, what do you expect me to do? This is the only alternative... we are criticised for being loose but no one criticises us for putting food on the table.³

Sex work therefore becomes an accommodated form of employment among vulnerable female youth given the circumstances in which they live. These circumstances include their failure to attain a socially acceptable role in their communities. One female aged around 24 years explained the dilemma she encountered upon returning to her village following abduction:

Yes, I was abducted but I was confined and I did not kill anyone. I did not even hold a gun. I was married off and used to cook for others during the abduction... when we came back, people think we are all murderers and heartless. Neighbours mistreated me and no one wanted to talk to me. That's how I joined some other friends and we went to the [town] centre, and later started prostitution for food, money and other needs.⁴

The fact that the community labelled this girl as a 'murderer', and the resulting stigmatisation, discrimination and eventual isolation, led to a failure to re-integrate and unemployment. For excluded young women, sex work may be the only available employment option.

Although looked down on by the community, sex work is a form of employment that is potentially open to everyone and brings quick income for young women. Nevertheless, it comes at a cost since it is culturally and religiously despised, stigmatised and pathologised (Namuggala 2016). My informants noted that access to some public services such as education

and health, and loans, was thwarted when personal recommendations were required from opinion leaders and other community members. In these circumstances, and given the poor health service provision in Northern Uganda reflected in the shortage of health practitioners, drugs and outbreaks of preventable diseases like malaria, diarrhoea and cholera (Annan *et al.* 2011; Spitzer and Twikirize 2013), sex work becomes a source of livelihood. Survival sex may eventually result in long-term consequences including unwanted pregnancies, and exposure to sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the negative moral connotations associated with sex work, it runs counter to expectations about the temporal aspects of acceptable employment. In Northern Uganda work is expected to be done during the day. Sex work, however, is principally night activity, when societal gatekeepers are less vigilant. When local leaders and government officials observe youth sitting 'idle' during the morning hours, the assumption is that they are jobless and unemployed. For those who are sex workers, however, mornings are used as 'free' time after working nights. Because sex work is not officially acknowledged as employment, working conditions are unregulated and poor, resulting in risk, vulnerability and exploitation for those involved.

It is also important to highlight that, while cash is a dominant payment method for formalised employment, in some cases, young sex workers are paid in kind, for instance in the form of food including *posho* (maize flour), beans, groundnuts and millet. Such youth therefore understood employment broadly as work for survival, even if cash is not exchanged. Phrases like 'working for food' were commonly used. One youth explained that a way to tell if someone is employed or not is whether they are 'having food every day'.

4.2 Gambling

Gambling is another activity that youth consider as income-generating employment. It takes various forms with the most popular being playing cards – locally referred to as *zaala* or *matatu* – and sports betting. Unlike sex work, gambling is male dominated. It takes place round the clock, hence the popular phrase 'any time is gambling time'. Gambling is popular among young people because it has the potential to bring quick cash with little effort. Compared to ILO standards relating to time, skills and wages, gambling does not require any particular skills and thus is not considered work. The youth, however, consider gambling as 'working smart'. Asked about this work, one youth said:

Now what's wrong with that?? Whom have I cheated? We play I win. It takes the brain. You get money easily and quickly... Agriculture???? How long does it take and how am I going to survive? I have no land, I have no hoe and no seeds. We just work smart.⁵

In another interview, a youth explained sports betting as a type of employment:

Sports betting is a full-time job. It is not easy I'm telling you. You have to keep informed in sports. We listen to radio, read newspapers in order to bet right. You have to know how teams are performing in the season, which team is likely to win or lose. Otherwise you make losses.⁶

Young people believe gambling and sports betting are forms of employment: while they do not require the physical effort associated with local notions of work, they engage the brain. In this context, youth understand employment to require access to up-to-the-minute information locally and internationally, for example to track particular sporting teams or individuals. It also involves the ability to take short-term risks. Such an understanding of employment is individualised and not community focused. This deviates from common understandings of work and employment that emphasise the value of a relatively long-term community orientation, such as investment in agricultural activities like crop production and animal rearing.

Like sex work, gambling is illegal and youth can be incarcerated if they are apprehended. Local leaders believe that gambling reduces young people's productivity, and they use this to rationalise restrictions.

4.3 Contemporary dancing

Dancing is also used by some young people to generate income, especially, but not only, young women. Advertising companies hire both male and female youth to dance on advertising trucks, podiums and at promotional events and are paid in either cash or in kind in the form of phones, drinks or clothing. Informants noted that it takes practice and determination to get to the level where they can be hired. They also have to dress in 'trendy' ways and develop links with event organisers and promoters who provide access to information hiring and also recommendations. Once engaged, they must hang around town centres to ensure they can keep up with the trends in the form of songs, dancing styles and dressing. The young people reported that this work empowers them to make decisions affecting their lives, for example in the way they dress, act and express their sexuality. Also, since most female dancers are not expected to be mothers, many young women use contraceptives as a way of avoiding unexpected pregnancies, which they also see as empowering.

Although dancing might appear to be a more acceptable means of earning an income, and be a less risky occupation, most elders expressed disapproval of young women who dance: in their opinion, they dress 'indecently', but as a group their disapproval includes the use of drugs (especially marijuana), and their disrespectful language and behaviour. Also, such dancers are frequently away from home – at times for days – and travel during the night, which challenges parental control and dominance.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The previous section used examples of sex work, gambling and dancing to illustrate that formerly displaced youth in Northern Uganda do not necessarily see themselves as unemployed but rather as involved

in forms of gainful employment that are not recognised or legitimised by official definitions and frameworks, or by members of local communities. For example, they do not meet the ILO criteria relating to time, wages and skills. Because of this, their work is not acknowledged in international, national and local labour statistics, nor are their activities supported through youth employment policy and programmes. This undervalues young people's agency and frames them as vulnerable, idle and undeveloped.

The three forms of survival employment, though different, share some important commonalities. First, with their comparatively low barriers to entry, they are open to young people who have been rejected, victimised or marginalised because of previous displacement and/or association with rebels. Second, despite the fact that these forms of work allow them to earn an income and survive and to fulfil family, social and cultural responsibilities, they are all either illegal, seen as morally deviant or frowned upon by community elders. Third, they can be associated with the use of drugs. Some informants, for example, reported that the use of marijuana was common because it increases stamina, determination and endurance in distressing circumstances that included police brutality. Drugs are used at times in combination with alcohol and tobacco. Finally, aside from the individual income and in-kind benefits, these activities promote unity and solidarity among groups of young people who meet regularly. It was reported that if a particular individual does not appear for daily meetings consecutively, the group endeavours to reach out and help if necessary. Regardless of negative community opinion, for the youth involved, these activities may be seen as empowering and transformative in the sense that they made it possible for them to earn an income and survive in difficult circumstances, and in addition, those involved form a valuable support system.

These details make it obvious that these forms of income-earning activity are not to be seen as attractive career choices to be actively promoted among young people. Nevertheless, they must be seen as an integral part of any community-level post-conflict reconstruction in which the authorities engage. An important first step would be to bring the perspectives of the young people on their work into public debate with one objective being to ensure that they have access to essential services. This access must not be denied on the basis of public opinion. Local leaders, both male and female, along with other local actors must therefore be engaged in this public debate.

There remains the issue of criminality and illegality of these income-earning activities. Although this issue would appear to be a significant obstacle facing any attempt to legitimise or support these income-earning activities, this has been addressed in a number of countries in different ways and exploring these would seem to be a step in the right direction.

Acknowledging youth agency and resilience would be one way of encouraging attitudinal and behavioural change among the returned

population. Young people's ability to survive and cope amidst such distress is commendable. Youth have created their own support networks, which need to be accommodated institutionally. Since they are an especially at-risk population among the returned populations, health service centres can for instance come up with youth-friendly services targeting the vulnerabilities that youth face. They could also avail youth with information relating to HIV/AIDS, and reproductive health services such as birth control and family planning.

Notes

- 1 Protracted displacement is displacement that lasts more than five years (Lenard 2015).
- 2 Youth bulge theory is a theory of violence that conceptualises poor male youth as a security threat. High percentages of young people in the population poses insecurity since youth can easily use violent means as a way of engaging with the state hence their participation in armed and other forms of violence (Urdal 2004).
- 3 Interview, June 2015.
- 4 Interview, June 2015.
- 5 Interview, June 2015.
- 6 Interview, June 2015.

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Navigating Precarious Employment: Social Networks Among Migrant Youth in Ghana*

Thomas Yeboah

Abstract This article is concerned with the precarious employment situations of migrant youth and the supportive role of social networks. It draws on interviews conducted with 30 young migrants in Accra, Ghana. The empirical findings reveal that the precarious nature of young people's employment manifests in the uncertain nature of work, exploitation by clients and employers, as well as low and irregular income. These lead to socioeconomic hardships such as not being able to meet basic needs. The article further demonstrates how social networks strengthen young migrants' agency through the provision of financial resources that allow them to navigate hardships. However, exploitative practices are also inherent within these networks and this article exposes these, alongside the demonstrable benefits. Provision of financial support for rural young people to further their education, enforcement of laws within the informal sector and support for migrants' networks would help improve the situation.

Keywords: Africa, migration, informal sector, head porters, inequality, social injustice, economic survival.

1 Introduction

A decade and a half of economic growth across Africa, including Ghana, gave birth to the 'Africa rising' narrative (Obeng-Odoom 2015). Ghana has been lauded as something of a model. With almost two decades of consolidated democratic institutions and economic growth over 6 per cent, the country appears to have avoided many of the pitfalls of macroeconomic mismanagement afflicting other countries on the continent (Rexer 2015).

The irony is that while Ghana has experienced high growth rates, the creation of new formal sector jobs has not matched the number of new entrants to the labour market (AfDB 2014). Evidently, labour-intensive manufactured exports – the driving force behind economic transformation and employment creation in East Asian countries – is far from taking off in Ghana (Filmer and Fox 2014). This phenomenon

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of jobless growth has combined with globalisation, economic restructuring and transformation of labour markets in reducing employment opportunities for young people. Shrinking public and private sectors have limited the possibility for young people to secure wage employment (Langevang and Gough 2012). In 2010, official unemployment of young people aged 15–24 years was estimated to average 12 per cent, ranging from 18.1 per cent in Greater Accra to 5.8 per cent in the Northern Region (Osei-Assibey and Grey 2013). However, these figures may underestimate the magnitude of unemployment as they fail to capture the widespread nature of underemployment (Hino and Ranis 2013). A recent report by the World Bank (2016) dubbed *Landscape of Jobs in Ghana* suggested that 48 per cent of all young people aged 15–24 years are jobless.

Many young people find themselves in informal sector jobs, which is estimated to encompass approximately 90 per cent of the labour force (Baah-Boateng 2013). While statistics on the participation of different social groups in the informal sector are hard to come by, anecdotal evidence suggests that young people from Ghana's northern regions may be over-represented. Their movement to southern cities to participate in the booming informal sector is motivated by hopes of accessing jobs, earning income and increasing social mobility. These young migrants have few skills and are involved mainly in low-skill, easy-entry activities such as mechanical repairs, shoe mending, hairdressing, truck pushing, commercial payphone services, dressmaking, barbering, running errands, shop assistant work, photography, food preparation and sales, and repair works including garment, watch and clock repairs, as well as hawking and head portering (Gough, Langevang and Owusu 2013; Heintz and Pickbourn 2012). Their working days are marked by longer working hours, irregular income, insecurity and lack of written contracts (Yeboah *et al.* 2015). Youth researchers are now concerned with exploring young people's tactical and navigation strategies in negotiating multiple forms of transitions towards respectable social positions (Ng *et al.* 2016). For example, Hardgrove, Rootham and McDowell's (2015) work on young people in a precarious labour market in the UK revealed that experience and exposure to desirable occupations were important for transition to imagined future jobs. In her ethnographic account of young people's desire for social mobility and respectable adulthood in Madagascar, Cole (2011) reports entry into the sexual economy as a tactic employed by young women, although on the surface, this might appear to be a sharp break with traditional values and norms. While these studies give insight into how young people negotiate multiple forms of transitions, the ways in which social networks facilitate young people's entry into the labour market and help strengthen their agency in navigating socioeconomic hardship has received little research attention.

This article focuses attention on the precarious employment situation of young migrants working in the urban informal economy and the supportive role of networks. It draws on data from qualitative interviews conducted with 30 young migrants (aged 13–24 years) in Accra,

Ghana. The aim is to contribute to the literature by contextualising young migrants' employment situation within the social network and social capital literatures. This contextualisation helps us to situate the everyday employment struggles of young migrants. Policymakers could draw on the article's insights to: (1) learn more about young migrants' employment situation and the forms of social networks utilised, and (2) develop specific strategies to harness these social networks to reach migrant youth and support employment interventions.

The article starts by discussing the concepts of social capital and networks and their relevance in relation to young people's social mobility. Section 3 then provides a description of the research site and the overall methodology. Section 4 discusses the findings, focusing on the background of study participants, motivations for moving, pathways for entry into the labour market, precariousness of employment situation and supportive role of networks. Finally, Section 5 offers concluding remarks with some policy suggestions.

2 Social capital, networks and youth social mobility

The concept of social capital is well established in social science. It is rooted in the nineteenth-century classical social science of Durkheim, Marx, Toghiani and Weber (Woolcock 2010). In practice, it is linked to material and symbolic relations of exchange (Bourdieu 1983). While the concept is complex and has varied meanings, this article employs the definition put forward by Bourdieu as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (1983: 249).

Existing research has paid little attention to the ways that young migrants 'socialise in friendship networks... and generate their own connections for mutual benefit' (Edwards, Franklin and Holland 2003: 12). Youth researchers note that the fact that migrants of all ages are part of kinship and ethnicity networks obliterates the sense of social rupture espoused in sedentarist thoughts (Thorsen 2013). The scant scholarly attention given to young migrants' interaction with their networks is partly because the anthropological gaze moved away from structures, instead privileging practices and discourses (*ibid.*). It is partly also because trafficking and child rights dominated and framed the earlier debates about young people's spatial mobility. Even though the trafficking discourse has begun to recognise young people's migration as inexorable and legitimate, the ways in which young people utilise their networks to navigate precarious employment situations figure only marginally (*ibid.*). By using social networks as an analytic optic, we can better understand the ways in which young migrants draw on their multi-sited social contacts as a resource in the face of adversity.

Two main forms of social capital have been identified: bonding and bridging. The former occurs within groups while the latter is evident across groups. Bonding capital is when people have ties to others who

share common characteristics, including family members, close friends, neighbours and colleagues within the work place. Bridging capital on the other hand is primarily instrumental, links across groups, and generates a more varied flow of resources for advancing aspirations, hopes and expectations (Jørgensen 2016). This distinction matters because 'reciprocity exchanges' within groups of high bonding social capital may be facilitated or constrained by the totality of resources possessed by members within the group (Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi 2015).

Allen (2009) has argued that bonding social capital can offer young people an initial entry into the labour market, for example through employment in co-ethnic firms. Even though bonding networks may be limited to members of the same family or ethnic group, young people who are privileged to have such ties may be more likely to find jobs than those without. Bonding capital provides physical or emotional support in times of crisis and upholds identity and status. Nonetheless, bonding social capital and networks may also curtail opportunities for young people to access wider and more diverse networks beyond family, locality or ethnic group. De la Haye *et al.* (2012) and MacDonald and Shildrick (2007) analysed social networks among disadvantaged youth and discovered that bridging networks provided the support needed for economic survival, while those with bonding capital did not have access to the diversity of resources needed for realising employment aspirations. Flow of information within the bonding networks encouraged and supported criminal activities which suggest further marginalisation. Engagement in criminal activities including, for example, pilfering saleable items from garden sheds, motorbikes, cars and garages, emerged as street-based leisure activities in response to tedious days created by persistent school absence (MacDonald and Shildrick 2007). In Ghana, relatively younger migrants residing in slum areas may be more likely to join gangs and get involved in risky behaviour, sexual exploitation, pilfering and gambling.

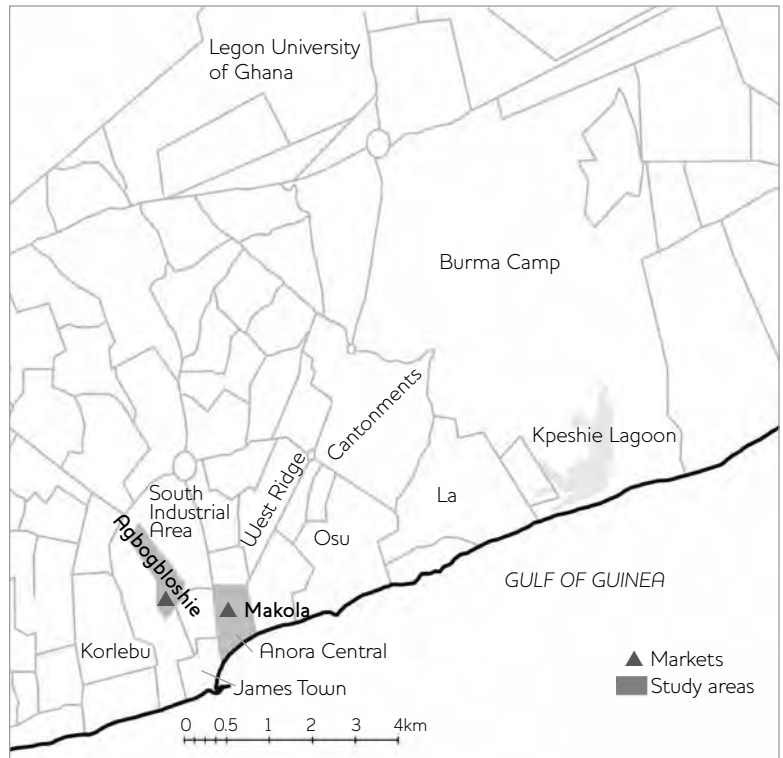
Lancee (2012) asserted that there is the possibility for young people to diversify their networks over time, and in this way, bonding capital will become gradually supplemented by bridging networks. Bridging networks create broader identities and reciprocity and are required to 'get ahead' (Putnam 2000: 21–3). Granovetter (1973) equates bridging networks with weak ties. Such ties serve as bridges to other networks and are essential to a person's integration in a new society. Young people with bridging networks may be able to access a wide range of informational resources connected with job placement through, for example, the diversity of people that may be part of the networks. In contrast, individuals with few bridging networks 'will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and confined to the provincial news and views of their close friends' (Granovetter 1973: 202). Bridging networks may therefore foster stronger connections across social divisions, thereby strengthening the collective ability of young people to undertake coordinated actions for a common goal. And this may further help facilitate vertical labour market mobility. Research

has found that conflict prevention between Muslim and Hindu groups in India hinges on the presence of bridging networks (civic organisation membership that cut across religious lines, for example sports groups and local business organisations of which Muslims and Hindus are equally represented) (Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi 2015).

In addition to bonding and bridging, a third type of social capital – linking capital – has been noted. This is concerned with ties to people in positions of authority – these links are essentially vertical, to people in key economic institutions, or who may provide access to political and other resources (Woolcock 2010). Someone with ties to people of higher socioeconomic status may be more likely to access employment avenues that are filled through word-of-mouth. Young people with secondary and tertiary education in Ghana complained that the ‘school certificate takes you nowhere’ (Langevang and Gough 2009: 745) because of lack of linking social networks that could connect them to employment in formal sector jobs. Linking capital may thus provide support that bonding and bridging networks may be unwilling or unable to offer to young people. In a study of how runaway and homeless youth navigate difficulties in transition towards adulthood, Kurtz *et al.* (2000) found that linking capital of professional social workers provided services including, for example, sending young people to hospital for treatment, counselling and shelter. Professionals assisted the young people in developing communication and anger management skills, in meeting basic needs and the provision of structures and positive activities, and helped them to plan for their futures. The homeless and runaway youth also learned how to manage feelings, desist from alcohol and drug use and improve family relationships.

A social network is neither given nor granted. Significant and continuing effort is required to establish and maintain lasting and useful relationships that can help secure material or symbolic benefits. Regular acts of communication, and the resulting mutual recognition, enhance a sense of belonging (Bourdieu 1983: 192–3). However, opportunity to build, access and participate in networks may be restricted by time and resources. Even when these barriers are overcome, Anthias (2007) notes that the benefits from participation in network activities may be unequally distributed. Along these same lines, Bourdieu (1983) speaks of a more dynamic and somehow less optimistic conception of social capital as a source of inequality and social injustice, given that some groups may be more privileged in accessing valuable networks and resources than others. The usefulness of social capital surfaces from the capability of individuals to convert it into other forms of capital (e.g. economic). Such transformation may be stratified by gender, class, ethnicity and other social factors. Convertibility may thus be problematic for individuals with a low stock of economic and cultural capital, as well as for those with lower social status (Ryan, Erel and D’Angelo 2015). These challenges may hinder the conversion of valuable social capital to economic capital and can hinder young people’s access to formal and informal sector jobs, wealth accumulation and social mobility.

Figure 1 Map of the Accra Metropolitan Area showing Agbogbloshie market



Source Redrawn from Wrigley-Asante (2013, Figure 2), reprinted by permission of the publisher Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research context

The research was conducted at the Agbogbloshie market in Accra (see Figure 1). The entire population of Agbogbloshie is estimated to be about 15,000 (Obeng-Odoom 2014), comprising mainly economic migrants from northern and other rural parts of Ghana. They live, work, eat and do almost everything in the market and surrounding area. Many of them sleep in wooden structures, uncompleted buildings, open spaces and lorry parks. Living conditions are unhygienic, and migrants have limited access to bathrooms, kitchens and sanitary facilities.

3.2 Methods

The empirical material for this article comes from a larger project investigating the ways in which young people actively shape, negotiate and challenge their social worlds through rural to urban migration. The study was conducted between December 2015 and August 2016. The total body of empirical material for the project included 42 individual interviews; three focus group discussions with young migrants; field observations and participatory activities (drawings and photo elicitation); policy-level interviews; and a questionnaire-based survey with heads of migrant households in Wungu, a poor rural community within West Mumprusi District of northern Ghana. This article draws

specifically on 30 individual interviews with the young migrants to illustrate their precarious employment situations and the supportive role of social networks.

The data collection exercise started with young migrants who are beneficiaries of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) called the Kayayei Youth Association (KYA). KYA is an association of young female migrants who work as head porters in the Central Business District of Accra. The snowballing sampling technique was employed to reach migrants who did not benefit from KYA programmes. This offered more scope to cover the diversity of young migrants in the urban informal economy. With prior permission, participants' interviews were recorded using a digital recorder device. These were transcribed verbatim and analysed using the thematic coding and analysis technique. The analysis also relied on narrative data from diverse sources which provided a framework for comparison of perspectives and triangulation of findings across sources.

4 Findings

4.1 Background and motivation for migrating

The 30 young people (18 females and 12 males) whose accounts are reported in this article are migrants from several rural parts of northern Ghana including Bimbila, Gushegu, Savelugu, Namumba South, Yendi, Karaga, Nakpali and Tamale. Their ages range from 13 to 25 years. The young migrants belong to large families ranging from three to 15 siblings. The data suggest that all of them are from poor rural socioeconomic backgrounds with parents engaged in low-income occupations including small-scale farming and petty trading. With large families and limited income, it was difficult for parents to meet the young migrants' educational and economic needs: 13 never had any formal schooling; five were junior high school (JHS) graduates or dropouts respectively; while the remaining seven were senior high school (SHS) graduates. Similar to findings reported by Langevang (2008), the young migrants bemoaned the fact that their families had failed to provide them with the resources needed to further their education or start-up capital to establish their own ventures:

If I get the sewing machine and money to sew I wouldn't have come here. My parents don't have money to buy it for me. I am here to make money. (Ishak, 20-year-old female, from Yendi)

A clear gender difference in educational history is evident. Except for two females who had completed JHS, all the females were either dropouts from school or had not been to school at all. On the other hand, all the seven SHS graduates were males. Gender differences in the educational outcomes of the young migrants is attributed to the socialisation processes and culture in much of rural northern Ghana. Largely confined to the domestic sphere, young women are viewed as temporary members of the household since they will invariably marry and move to their husbands' village (Hashim and Thorsen 2011). The preference of sons over daughters makes education a privilege for males and not females:

Table 1 Distribution of participants by type of work

Type of work	Number
Head portering (<i>kayayei</i>)	18
Construction work	5
Scrap dealer	2
Driver, driver's mate, bus station worker	2
Photographer	1
Repairer	1
Multiple jobs	1
Total	30

Source Fieldwork 2016.

I have never been to school before. I was staying with my mum and dad but my father said we are many so I should stop schooling and join them in the farm so that my brothers rather go to school. (Anasa, 15-year-old female, from Tamale)

Understanding young people's motivation to migrate is crucial for analysing and contextualising their lived experiences. Many of them (19) were motivated by the need to work, earn income and either restart or further their education, or establish a business:

I came here last year, my aim is to be able to establish my own business, so I came to look for money to establish my business back home.... If today I get 15 million as we speak I will go home but I am still planning towards it. (Mariam, 18-year-old female, from Tamale)

I came here to make money to continue school because I gained admission to Walensi SHS. I made part payment but the school authorities did not accept that. If they had accepted I would have been a candidate by this year. (Amaalu, 22-year-old male, from Bimbila)

The remaining 11 who are all females were interested in using migration to enter the world of work, in preparation for marriage. As key players in the domestic sphere, the young females are socialised to accept responsibility as the sole providers of household items such as basins and pots before marriage (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008). But their confinement to the domestic sphere where their labour is not remunerated makes it difficult if not impossible to procure these items. Migration in search of paid employment is the only viable option.

4.2 Sectors of employment and pathways to entry

Given their limited education and skills, the informal sector provides the only plausible avenue for these young migrants. The types of work they were engaged in at the time of the interviews are shown in Table 1.

Engagement in particular types of work is highly gendered: all of the 18 who reported doing head portering (*kayayei*) were females. Other researchers have suggested that while the young male migrants do multiple jobs, females are confined to head portering (Awumbila and Ardayio-Schandorf 2008; Yeboah *et al.* 2015). Engagement in multiple jobs by one male migrant is to ensure higher daily wages and insure against any non-payment by his employers. Thorsen (2013) suggested that this was also a way to develop new skills and broaden work experience.

As Allen (2009) has suggested, bonding social networks can help migrants' entry into the labour market, and the young migrants interviewed in Accra also emphasised the importance of networks for their entry into the informal sector. For example, the only requirement for starting work in *kayayei* is a head pan which costs on average GH¢30. The rest is about being physically fit. However, in order to overcome their limited finances, young females relied on families and friends for the money to secure a new pan, or the loan of an old pan: 'My sister assisted me to get head pan to start work. She gave me GH¢30 to buy the pan' (Alima, 16 years old, from Tamale).

The supportive role of networks in facilitating young migrants' transition to the labour market is consistent with Awumbila, Owusu and Teye (2014) who report that rural-urban migrants in Ghana mostly receive financial support and information about jobs in the destinations through social networks. Further, the initiation into the informal labour market via social relations is central to the creation of occupational niches. In Accra, most *kayayei* are from the Mumprusi and Dagomba ethnic groups, while almost all itinerant shoe-shiners in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) are of Bisa ethnicity (Thorsen 2014). However, there is a downside to this: for example, growing competition and market saturation in the *kayayei* business as a result of supportive social networks may reduce earning potential (*ibid.*).

Eight young female migrants demonstrated their agency through traversing and negotiating the structural constraints that might have hampered their migration and entry into the labour market. For example, Anasa, a 15-year-old from Tamale, said: 'I do *kayayei*. I came with money, I harvested groundnut to raise the money for my movement and head pan'. Thus, in contrast to the image of a passive or powerless actor, Anasa planned ahead and acted to make her migration successful.

Other jobs such as construction, scrap dealing and driving require no financial resources. Rather, social connections are critical: 'I do construction work with one Chinese firm. My friends assisted me to get that job' (Alhamo, 24-year-old male from Bimbila). Mahamadu describes how he combined schooling and work and this allowed him to develop skills as a mason, which became useful when he migrated to Accra after linking up with his friends:

I was learning mason after my JHS but I continued my education. Shortly after when my results came, I communicated with my friends in Accra who told me that I could use that skill to make a living in Accra. When I arrive in Accra I told them I was looking for a job, they took me to a construction company at Tema station and then they took me. (Mahamadu, 22-year-old male, from Yendi)

4.3 Young migrants' precarious employment situations

The work of the young migrants is characterised by complex interlocking difficulties. Findings on the precariousness of young migrant employment centred on uncertainty and exploitation by clients and employers manifested through lowering or non-payment of wages, all of which affect earning potential. This further results in an inability to meet daily consumption, accommodation and health needs. However, these experiences differed by gender and type of work.

The young migrants spoke of how every day they remained uncertain as to whether their services would be required. For the males who are engaged in construction for example, the possibility of going to work depended on whether their services would be required by their employers:

As for you being called to work, it depends. Sometimes my master will call me to come, other times he will not. When there is more work then you are sure that you will be called. (Mahamadu, 22-year-old male, from Yendi)

Female head porters experience uncertainty differently:

I wake up around 4am and goes straight to yam market. By this time the lorry from north will have arrived to offload yam. I go there to see if I will get some load to carry. Sometimes you will get something to carry. Other times, nothing. From there I go to the Makola market to see if I will get load. During the day, it is all about walking and walking. If you are lucky you will get every load, if you are not, you won't get anything to carry. I take break in the afternoon with my friends under a tree. We talk about our lives and how we can make it here and play. By 4pm I return to the market to look for some load to carry. (Asanafi, 13-year-old female, from Gushegu)

There is no assurance that her services will be required, and 'walking and walking' looking for something to carry inevitably leads to fatigue and stress. The possibility of getting a load to carry, which Asanafi argued depends heavily on luck, was keenly discussed by the other females interviewed. A few of the female head porters had developed connections with owners of larger shops or supermarkets, which provide some greater stability. Although Asanafi alludes to taking breaks in the afternoons and engaging in conversation and play with her friends when tired, for these young women, navigation of the cityscape in search of work is done individually.

Interview data reveal that the income that the young migrants earn in a day ranges from GH¢3 to about GH¢26 (US\$0.21 to US\$5.47), depending on the kind of job. Some, however, said that there were days

when they earned nothing. Susceptibility to low or irregular earnings is linked to factors such as the fortunes of the market, attitude of employers and clients, gender and power relations, as well as lack of written work contracts or standards:

I sometimes carry people stuff but they refuse to pay. They see me to be young. (Memu, 16-year-old female, from Tamale)

Initially it was difficult to get work or load to carry when I first came to Accra but now it is quite okay. The payment for our services is irregular. People don't treat us fairly. They pay any amount they want. Sometimes you can earn nothing. (Mariam, 18-year-old female, from Tamale)

The accounts of Memu and Mariam raises several issues. Firstly, because female head porters can be desperate to get something to carry, they may fail to agree a price with their clients beforehand. The lack of any guidance on amount to be paid allows customers to offer amounts that are not commensurate with the weight of the load or the distance covered. The latter part of Mariam's account further suggests that the lower income earnings of females are also enforced by issues of power relations and patriarchy embedded in the fabric of the local culture. The patriarchal structures dominant in Ghana often paint a picture of the ideal woman or girl as submissive, respectful and tractable. Thus, any articulation of dissatisfaction and expression of displeasure in their own language can be construed as an insult, resulting in reproach, intimidation and physical abuse:

I once carried the items of one man from Agboghloshie to Tema station. When we got to the station he did not give me any money. When I asked him why in my own language, he started to insult and beat me. (Alima, 16-year-old female, from Tamale)

Those who had been employed by companies had similar experiences. Some employers particularly in the construction sector fail to pay the wages of the migrants. Alhamo narrates how his employers – a Chinese construction firm – failed to pay the agreed monthly wage to him and his colleagues:

They normally pay us on monthly for the work through a time card. Just last month they misplaced my time card so they said they can't pay me about GH¢300, about five of us. There was nothing I could do. My problem now is getting new job. (Alhamo, 24-year-old male, from Bimbila)

Alhamo's experience is widespread among many informal sector workers in Ghana. This resonates with the findings of Thorsen (2013) in Burkina Faso, when she reports that employers, particularly in the food sector, deliberately introduce wage cuts or fail to pay young migrants when business slackens or when the young employees break or waste something. In addition to a sense of abuse and injustice, this kind of behaviour leads to socioeconomic hardship, including inability to meet daily subsistence needs and the symbolic culture of sending remittances home.

4.4 Social networks and navigation in times of economic hardship

The young migrants do not accept the situation passively but navigate it as best they can by drawing on their social connections. The role of social networks in young migrants' navigation of economic hardship manifested largely through the provision of financial resources in meeting basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, water and accommodation), encouragement and emotional support for those who encounter non-payment or lowering of wages by clients or employers. Young migrants' networks also enabled them to save part of their earnings. However, exploitative behaviours including, for example, pilfering and inability to retrieve savings from network leaders, were inherent within these networking ties.

Ethnic-specific bonding networks are thought to provide not only information about jobs and services, but also to help migrants to get by through the provision of financial, emotional and moral support (Sime and Fox 2015). Similarly, the young migrants interviewed spoke of how networks of families and friends from the same community or ethnic group are instrumental in providing financial support to meet basic needs:

We have a group whom sleep together. So, when I don't have money I borrow money from my group. Sometimes they will not give you, they will tell you to go and work for money. (Sarafina, 14-year-old female from Gushegu)

Most of them are full of praise for friends and family members for the financial help they provide. Some (15) of the participants also mentioned receiving encouragement and advice from their friends and family members not to give up when wages are not paid by clients or employers. The latter part of Sarafina's account, however, highlights the fact that support from social networks is not guaranteed. Very young migrants (less than 15 years old) may receive few benefits from these networks, and they do not necessarily provide them with support or protection. For example, it is common for young migrants to rent a single room, splitting the cost between them equally. While this reduces the cost of accommodation, it can have unintended negative consequences, including fighting and theft: 'My phone was stolen last week. I don't know who did but I suspect someone whom I sleep with at the mosque' (Alidu, 20-year-old male from Wungu).

The young migrants also spoke of involvement in savings groups. Each ethnic group has their own savings model, making them exclusionary. The groups are mediated by relatively respected older people who the young migrants could identify with and who are from their home town. Participation in such a savings model is said to be voluntary and out of free will; there is no set amount one must contribute. The principle is that the individual will request the savings to be returned at the end of the month. Nonetheless, in the event of circumstances such as lack of payment by clients or employees, the young migrants draw on such savings to meet subsistence needs: 'We have a *susu* [savings] group where I save some of my money. When I do not have money, I go to our leader to get some of my money' (Anasa, 15-year-old female, from Tamale).

Awumbila, Teye and Yaro (2016) have argued that under certain circumstances participation in social network activities may be a site for exploitation of young migrants. Consistent with this is an account of misunderstanding and tension among members in one savings group:

I was saving my money with our group but there was misunderstanding. The leader was one woman from the north who was keeping the monies. The woman was not staying with us in our room. One girl requested for her money, and the woman gave it to her. Other girl requested for her money and there was misunderstanding because the woman was not happy. I requested for my money and did not get. Since then I have not set my eyes on the woman again. I saved about GH¢50 but I did not get. (Faati, 20-year-old female, from Tamale)

5 Conclusion and policy implications

Young migrants' transitions into the labour market demonstrates the important role that their networks can play in providing the finance necessary for travel and to secure work. Their precarious employment situation involves considerable uncertainty and risk, and exploitation by employers and clients. Incomes are low and irregular, which brings additional difficulties in fulfilling daily subsistence needs. Some of these difficulties are mitigated through social networks. These networks are therefore fundamental in the life trajectories of young migrants, right from the time the decision to migrate is taken (see also Awumbila *et al.* 2016). However, they are also associated with discrimination and exploitative practices.

The empirical findings have implications for both research and policy. Future research could focus on young migrants' utilisation of linking social capital and the extent to which it supports their life trajectories. In relation to policy, there is the need for supportive systems that can provide an enabling environment for young people to realise their aspirations around education with the aim to gain decent employment in the formal sector. While schooling in Ghana is in theory free from primary to junior high school, there are school-related expenses which parents must pay. Moreover, at the senior high school level, fees become payable. While the fees vary between schools depending on the perceived status and desirability of the school and its nature (day-school or boarding school), they can be prohibitive for parents in rural northern Ghana whose livelihoods are dependent on rain-fed agriculture. One way to address this is to provide direct support to poor families for children's education: just as there is a youth employment fund, government could set up a school development fund for young people from poorer rural backgrounds to further their education.

Deliberate action is also needed by the state to better protect informal sector workers from exploitation by clients and employers. While laws such as the Labour Act (2003) are supposed to protect the rights of all workers (including migrants), they are only enforced in the formal sector (Awumbila *et al.* 2016). Thus, the vast majority of workers, who are, after all, within the informal economy, receive no protection.

The operations of Ghanaian institutions such as the National Labour Commission, the Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations as well as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection must now be strengthened and expanded to cover the informal sector.

Lastly, there is an opportunity for government bodies and NGOs to work much more closely with migrants' networks to better provide for the health, safety, education and wellbeing of young migrants.

Note

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Youth Participation in Smallholder Livestock Production and Marketing^{* **}

Edna Mutua,¹ Salome Bukachi,² Bernard Bett,³
Benson Estambale⁴ and Isaac Nyamongo⁵

Abstract Agriculture is a leading source of employment for rural populations in Kenya. Through a mixed methods approach, this study sought to investigate youth participation in smallholder livestock production and marketing in Baringo County. The specific focus is on how social norms and micropolitics enable or constrain participation of particular groups of young people. The study established that personal choice, preference for paid over unpaid labour and gender norms in asset access, ownership and control influence smallholder participation in livestock production and trade. This shows a disconnect between Kenya's youth policy which advocates for equitable distribution of employment opportunities and the reality at community level. Interventions that seek to improve livestock production and marketing, particularly involving young people, should therefore adopt strategies that recognise these norms as a first step to addressing social exclusion.

Keywords: Africa, transformation, empowerment, Kenya, Baringo, livestock production, livelihoods, participation, smallholder, markets, gender norms.

1 Introduction

In 2014, Kenya's agriculture sector employed three in every four workers in rural areas and contributed to 27.3 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), mainly from crops (19.7 per cent) and livestock (4.9 per cent) (MoALF 2015). Sixty per cent of the country's livestock is found in the arid and semi-arid areas which make up 80 per cent of the national land mass (MoLD 2008). The total monetary value earned from animal products in 2014 was US\$464.5 million from beef, US\$279.2 million from goat, US\$375.0 million from mutton, US\$331.8 million from poultry and US\$1.6 billion from milk (MoALF 2015). There is growing demand for meat and milk fuelled by increases in population, purchasing power and urbanisation (Delgado *et al.* 1999; MoALF 2015). It is estimated that in developing countries such as

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Kenya, 48 per cent of food protein and 20 per cent of food energy is derived from livestock (FAO 2009).

Despite agriculture being the leading source of employment, young people are often said to prefer employment in non-farm sectors. Negative attitudes towards agriculture have been associated with drudgery, low returns, poor access to markets and market information, limited credit, lack of prestige compared to white collar jobs and awareness of the disparities between rural and urban life (Afande, Maina and Maina 2015; Leavy and Smith 2010). Other factors include non-involvement of youth in policymaking processes (Afande *et al.* 2015). In Kenya, the constitution classifies persons between 18 years and 34 years of age as youth (GoK 2010). This categorisation is used in the remainder of the article, but it is critically important to recognise that even within this age range there is a tremendous level of diversity across the broad range of social and economic indicators (Leavy and Smith 2010).

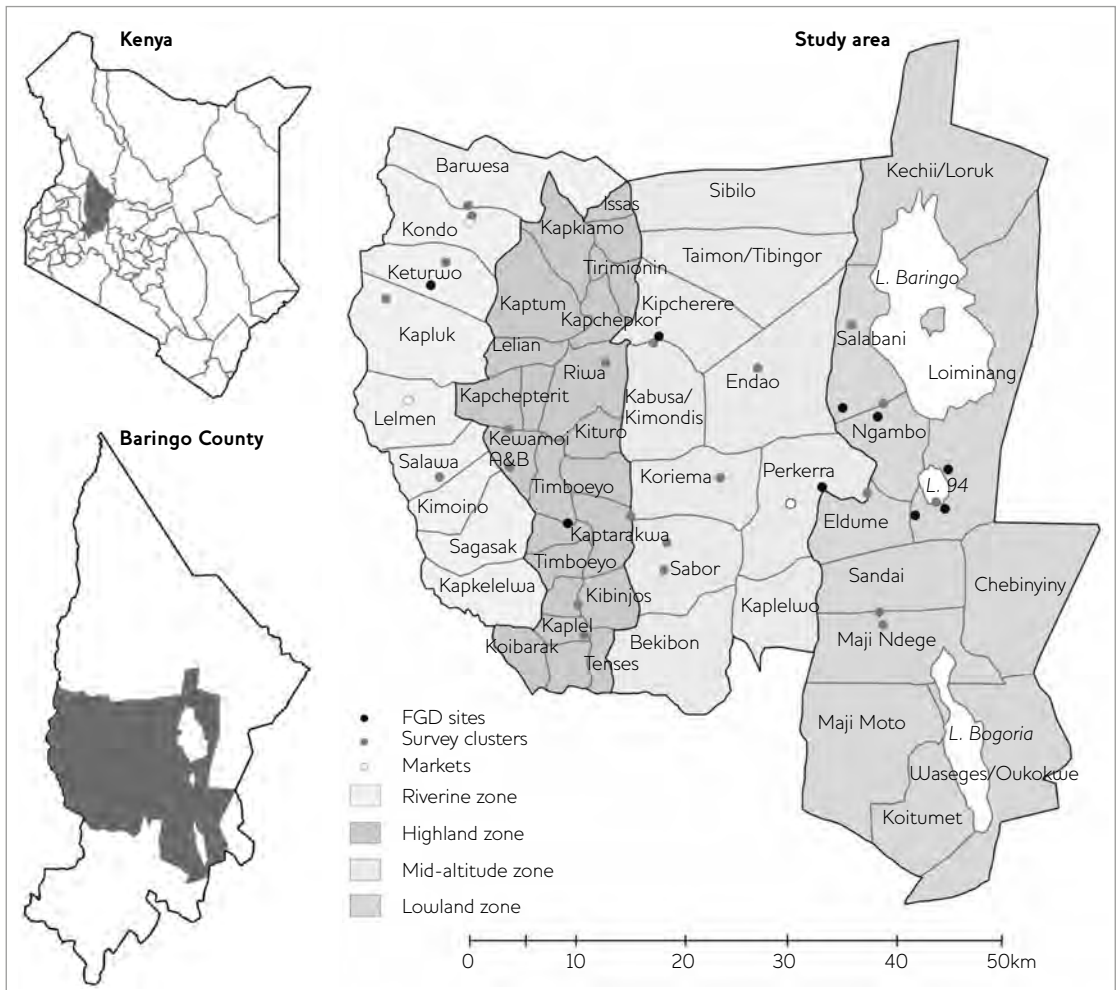
The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries 2013–2017 strategic plan proposes to draw youth into agriculture through the introduction of new farming technologies such as irrigation and aquaculture (MoALF 2013). However, the plan does not explain how youth engagement in livestock production and marketing will be improved. Similarly, the national youth policy advocates for equitable distribution of employment opportunities but does not explain how that will be achieved in the livestock sector (MoYA 2006). The government's Vision 2030 recognises Kenya's youth as an important segment of the population and the livestock sector as key to Kenya's economic growth but does not state how the youth can gainfully engage in the livestock sector (GoK 2007).

The research reported here sought to explore the factors affecting youth participation in livestock production and marketing in Baringo County, Kenya, and the implications of these for youth employment and livelihoods. At the heart of the study is the question: who participates in livestock production and marketing, and what are the social norms and micropolitics around participation?

2 Materials and methods

Baringo County is part of Kenya's semi-arid regions, and in 2014 contributed to 2.4, 3.5, 2.2 and 2.1 per cent of the country's chicken, goat, cattle and sheep populations respectively (MoALF 2015). The study was conducted in three sub-counties, Baringo Central, Baringo North and Marigat, which make up the central part of the county (see Figure 1). The study site was divided into four ecological zones, namely riverine, highland, midland and lowland. The highland zone, defined as an altitude greater than 1,500 metres above sea level (masl), is the most favourable for crop and dairy farming. The midlands are at an altitude of 1,000–1,500 masl and have a high goat population. In the lowland and riverine zones, irrigated crop farming and livestock production are practised in the Perkerra Irrigation Scheme and along sections

Figure 1 Map of study site



Source Redrawn from authors' original, from the project titled 'Early Warning Systems for Improved Human Health and Resilience to Climate-Sensitive Vector-Borne Diseases in Kenya'.

of the Kerio River, respectively. The highland, midland and riverine zones are predominantly populated by Tugen people who are mainly agro-pastoralist, while the lowlands are populated by the pastoral Ilchamus people.

A cross-sectional, mixed methods approach was used. Quantitative data was collected through two surveys that included 335 household heads and 203 livestock traders respectively. The household survey focused on household demographic characteristics, livelihood activities, types and numbers of livestock kept, and quantities of milk produced. Each zone was subdivided into five clusters, and households were selected through stratified random sampling. The trader survey was conducted on six different market days in November 2015 in three main livestock markets within the study site. All traders in the market were surveyed.

Data collection focused on demographic characteristics, types and numbers of livestock traded and trading frequency. Household survey respondents did not participate in the livestock traders' survey.

Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions and direct observation. Twenty-six focus groups were organised – half included only men and half only women. Each group had 7–10 participants, for a total of 231. Participants were selected purposively, with the following inclusion criteria: having lived in the county for at least one year, and being a livestock keeper or coming from a household that keeps livestock. The discussions covered livelihood activities, how individuals become livestock owners, types of livestock ownership, and division of labour in livestock production and marketing practices. Following Quisumbing (1999), dimensions of livestock ownership were categorised as management, access, withdrawal, alienation and exclusion. Direct observation techniques were used to collect additional data that would further contextualise the research findings.

Quantitative data was entered and cleaned with CSPro⁶ and analysed with SPSS⁷ using both summary and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was transcribed and coded into emergent themes using NVivo⁸ and analysed using the content analysis method. All respondents were of consenting age and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

This study gives a snapshot of the context within which different people engaged in livestock production and marketing. The study did not investigate whether the livelihood activities the respondents engaged in were a result of choice or necessity, or whether they were considered as long-term or short-term activities. The results cannot be generalised beyond Baringo County.

3 Results

3.1 Demographic characteristics

A total of 335 household heads, comprising 260 males and 75 females participated in the household survey. Just over a quarter (27.8 per cent) were 34 years old or less, while the rest were 35 years or more. Three quarters of the young household heads were male (75.5 per cent) while the rest were female. Among household heads aged 35 years and above, 78.6 per cent were male and 21.4 per cent female. The vast majority of both young (88.6 per cent) and older household heads (79.7 per cent) were married. There was a statistical difference between the education levels of the young and the older respondents, with the youth having more primary, secondary and tertiary education ($\chi^2=28.810$, $df=3$, $p<0.001$). Among the youth, there was a statistical difference in education levels between the men and women (Fisher's test $p=0.013$), with more men than women having primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Nearly half of the traders interviewed (49.3 per cent) were 34 years old or less, and most of these were aged 25–34 years. Traders of all ages were overwhelmingly male (96.1 per cent overall). There was a statistical difference between the education level of young and older traders,

with more youth having post-primary education ($\chi^2=26.948$, $df=4$, $p<0.001$). The study participants were predominantly Christian.

3.2 Livelihoods and livestock

The main livelihood activities in this region are crop farming, livestock keeping, self-employment in supply of goods (such as firewood, water and food items), wage and salaried employment. As primary livelihood activities, household heads reported engaging in crop farming (50.2 per cent), livestock keeping (19.1 per cent), goods delivery (15.4 per cent), wage labour (9.5 per cent) and salaried employment (5.8 per cent). Their main supplementary activities were livestock keeping (52.1 per cent) and crop farming (32.1 per cent). Compared to their older counterparts, young household heads were more likely to engage in goods supply, wage labour and salaried employment than crop or livestock production as primary livelihood activities ($\chi^2=10.610$, $df=4$, $p=0.031$).

A clear majority of households (83 per cent) reported keeping livestock, with 29.7 per cent having goats, 29.1 per cent cattle, 25.6 per cent chickens and 15 per cent sheep. Heads commonly reported that their households keep more than one livestock species. The livestock are mainly of indigenous breeds: few farmers kept cross-breed cattle, favoured for higher milk production compared to local breeds. Households headed by young people had on average 11.1 tropical livestock units (TLUs),⁹ slightly lower than the average for older household heads (13.0). Among the youth, male-headed households had more livestock TLUs (12.3) than female-headed households (9.4).

The animals were considered sources of food (meat, milk, blood, eggs and animal fat), medicine, income and prestige; as well as stores of wealth and means of social acceptance. For household heads, livestock keeping was considered an important indicator of wealth: households with few cattle, sheep or goats were perceived as poor and those with more were considered wealthy. The size of herds was also associated with the level of social capital and the respect extended to household heads and their families. Persons from households with a lot of livestock were more respected, had greater voice and were easily accepted as leaders. Inclusion and non-inclusion of women into groups locally referred to as 'merry-go-rounds' was partially determined by the members' perception of an applicant's individual wealth status, and thus livestock holdings mattered. 'Merry-go-rounds' are a form of rotating savings group in which members contribute savings at regular intervals with each member taking the pot in turn. Members with more livestock might be seen as less risky.

3.3 Sources of livestock and ownership

Men and women, young and old, reported sourcing livestock through purchase, gifting and loaning, as well as through the reproduction of animals already owned. Animals were purchased from friends, neighbours or from markets. The purchase was often done by the person that wanted the animal or a proxy assumed to be knowledgeable of prevailing market prices and skilled at selecting good animals.

Cattle, sheep and goat transactions were mainly handled by men, while chickens, eggs and milk were handled by women. A newer strategy of acquisition of cattle, sheep and goats by women was through the 'merry-go-round' groups.

Livestock were gifted to young persons as a result of good performance at school and at home. Boys were also rewarded for exhibiting bravery during circumcision, whereas girls were gifted animals upon getting married in a culturally acceptable way, and also after childbirth. Additionally, a bride's parents were gifted livestock by the groom's family (bride price). In some instances, the bride price was also shared with the bride's uncles and aunties, with the expectation that those who received these gifts would reciprocate when their children married.

Only sons were reported to inherit livestock from their parents, with the animals being bequeathed to the sons at a time of the father's choosing or after his demise. Traditionally, among the Tugen community, a father's livestock was only inherited by the firstborn son while the last-born inherited from the mother. However, this practice was reported to be in decline as sons press for equal shares of inheritance regardless of birth order. For girls, it was reported that inheritance of any kind of property encouraged insubordination and decreased the probability of getting and remaining married.

Sourcing livestock through traditional borrowing was reported as a last resort, when, for example, all other livestock had been lost. In this region, lack of cattle, sheep or goats is equated to nakedness, and the culture demands 'an individual borrows clothing to cover the shame'. Thus, an individual who does not have animals can borrow from one who has many, and utilise the milk in exchange for caring for the animal. Once the borrowed animal reproduces, the owner gives the caregiver a female offspring to start their own herd, then often repossesses the mature animal and any other young ones.

Livestock ownership was reported by men and women, but ownership has several different dimensions. For example, ownership claims are manifest in making decisions about livestock management (management); in determining who has access to livestock or their products (access) or not (exclusion), and which animals are sold, gifted or loaned, and to whom (alienation); and over the benefits accrued from the livestock and derived products (withdrawal). Management is the ability to make decisions on care of livestock. At household level, management of cattle, sheep and goats is primarily a male responsibility regardless of who or how the animal was sourced. Prior to marriage, cattle, sheep and goats belonging to male and female children are held in trust by their parents. According to focus group discussants, the majority of young women married aged 20–25 years while young men married aged 25–30, both well within the youth category. Upon marriage, most dimensions of ownership by young women are transferred to the new male head of household regardless of their age:

As a woman, you have nothing to say is yours. You won't say this livestock [cattle, sheep and goats] it is mine. (Female discussant, Litein4)^{10,11}

As far as livestock [cattle, sheep and goats] are concerned, women do not have authority to own or sell them. (Male discussant, Lorok1)¹²

There are those women who can buy cattle, but when it reaches home it does not belong to the woman because the home is the husband's, there is no home belonging to a woman. The home belongs to the man. So everything in the home belongs to the man. The children and the woman are his. Everything in that house is his. (Male discussant, Litein1)¹³

Despite these cultural norms, women still source and keep cattle, sheep and goats. However, their security of ownership depends on maintaining anonymity of who sourced the animal:

If you come to brag at home that you have [cattle, sheep or goats] he gets angry. He can sell or slaughter them. (Female discussant, Litein4)¹⁴

He [the household head] does not want you to tell others that you have [cattle, sheep or goats]. Even if they are full in the home and he doesn't have even one you don't tell anyone. You let it look like they are his. (Female discussant, Litein1)¹⁵

Chickens, milk and eggs are considered to be of less value than cattle, sheep and goats; they are mainly managed by women, even young women.

The average milk volumes reported by young and old household heads were 1.4 litres and 1.7 litres respectively, with the milk mainly being used for domestic consumption. Among the youth, male- and female-headed households produced nearly equal amounts of milk, on average 1.4 litres and 1.5 litres respectively. In cases where the volumes produced were high and milk value chains were commercialised, management claims reverted to men except in female-headed households:

There is no time men say that chicken are theirs. If someone comes to ask me [the man] for chicken, they will not be given because I am not the one that deals with chicken. I cannot take chicken and say I want to give this one out. For small things you ask the mother/wife because it is women who deal with chicken. (Male discussant, Borowonin2)¹⁶

Men consider chicken, eggs, milk as something small. Women are then ones concerned about them and when they are sold, nobody will question. (Female discussant, Kipcherere4)¹⁷

If the cow [you have] is a cross-breed that produces 3–4 litres of milk or more, it is the man who will decide whether it will be sold in a hotel or somewhere else. (Female discussant, Perkerra1)¹⁸

Access to livestock and livestock products is granted to all family members regardless of age. However, household heads can also deny access (exclusion).

In day-to-day activities related to the animals, men typically construct sheds, treat sick and injured cattle, sheep and goats, dip or spray animals infested with insects, brand or ear notch, castrate and slaughter. On the other hand, milking, caring for the sick, injured and those about to deliver, cleaning animal sheds and constructing sheds for young livestock are primarily female activities. Grazing and watering of livestock can be done by both men and women, who can be assisted by both male and female children. Girls do milking, while the care of chickens is left to women and children, with men rarely getting involved. Increasingly, women are involved in the treatment of sick livestock, particularly in households where the head stayed or worked away from home.

Decisions concerning the sale or lending of cattle, sheep and goats (alienation) and use of income generated from their sale (withdrawal) are predominantly made by household heads. Household heads may make these decisions before or after internal consultations with their spouses. Women independently make decisions on chickens, eggs and milk in non-commercialised systems. Consequently, in the study site, cattle, sheep and goats were considered male products while chickens, eggs and milk were for women, therefore influencing the types of livestock trade men and women engage in.

3.4 Market participation

Different livestock and livestock products are traded in different spaces and by different people. Cattle, sheep and goats are mainly traded by men in livestock markets where animals are publicly auctioned. Reasons provided as to why, despite a thriving livestock trade, only a few women participate include lack of market information and avoidance of male spaces:

Women do not know the price of cattle. So even if a woman is allowed to sell cattle, how will she sell? (Male discussant, Kipcherere2)¹⁹

Women don't trade in the livestock [cattle, sheep and goat] markets. They shy away the livestock section of the market. (Male discussant, Kipcherere1)²⁰

Market participation occurs at two levels. There are traders who are either selling cattle, sheep or goats to raise income to meet household needs, buying livestock for domestic purposes, or offloading stock to minimise losses in the dry season. These are essentially needs-driven traders and they comprised 44.8 per cent of all traders interviewed. The other 55.2 per cent of traders were those who derived a livelihood from livestock transactions. There was a significant statistical difference between the cattle volumes transacted by young traders and older traders, with the older ones trading larger quantities ($\chi^2=9.935$, $df=2$, $p=0.007$). For sheep and goats, there was no statistical difference in the volumes traded by young and old traders.

Most of the young male traders were aged 25–34 years, the age range within which most got married and assumed ownership of livestock. Of the eight female traders interviewed, only three were aged 34 years

or less, and two of these were aged 25–34 years. It appeared that half (4) were needs-driven and half (4) were regular traders. There was only one young female who worked as a regular trader. Three of the four regular female traders came from Trans-Nzoia County and Nairobi. They traded by negotiating with livestock owners before the animals were taken to the auction yard or by having male representatives or companions in the auction yard to help with sale or purchase. On livestock market days, women generate income indirectly from livestock trading through the sale of ropes for tethering livestock and ready-to-eat food items to the traders.

Livestock sales were not restricted to established markets and market days only. Traders and farmers also buy livestock at the farm gate for resale, slaughter and herd expansion. Potential sellers declare their intentions to neighbours and local butchers as a strategy for attracting buyers. The key benefits of selling at the farm gate as reported by focus group discussants are that a seller does not bear the cost of moving the animal and they could utilise their social networks as market sources. The key weaknesses of this strategy are that it results in lower returns compared to established livestock markets, and buyers might not always be readily forthcoming.

Chickens, milk and eggs are mainly sold by women at the farm gate or in local centres. Despite these products being considered of low value, sales were reported to be more regular than large stock. The incomes gained were used to meet small needs in the household such as food items, stationery and payment of school fees. Women valued these products because they could use their discretion in relation to when to sell, and exercise control over incomes earned:

When it comes to milk and chickens and eggs you don't have to ask. That is yours. (Female discussant, Perkerra)²¹

We [men] are just not concern with chicken, eggs and milk. Women sell them and use the money to solve small financial issues. (Male discussant, Lorok)²²

4 Discussion

Overall, the study shows that livestock farmers and traders are not homogeneous groups. Social norms introduce differences in claims and privileges based on gender and age, inhibiting women's ability to gainfully engage with livestock. A detailed analysis of the differences in choice of livelihood activity, livestock sourcing, ownership and marketing highlights the norms and micropolitics that affect the participation of different social groups. Caution must be exercised, however, as it is not straightforward to distinguish between statements of community norms from those describing individual behaviour.

In the study area, young household heads reported a preference for self-employment, wage or salaried employment, while those aged 35 years and above mainly engaged in crop and livestock farming. This

suggests that while young people may be unwilling to provide unpaid agricultural labour in their household, they would provide it if it was paid. Young people's choice is informed by the need for regular income which small-scale crop and livestock farming do not offer. An important research question is whether the employment aspirations of the young household heads will shift more towards farming and livestock as they grow older.

Young household heads and traders had more primary, secondary and tertiary education compared to the older ones. The difference can be explained by improved access to learning institutions and growing parental appreciation for the value of formal education. An emergent research question is how the difference in education achievement will shape youth employment aspirations, engagement in livestock production and marketing, and parental expectations.

The study has demonstrated that there are gender differences in how men and women acquire livestock. The differences emerge in purchase, gifting and inheritance. Ability to purchase is determined by availability of the money to invest. A strategy adopted by women to circumvent financial constraints is purchasing through 'merry-go-rounds'. Through combining savings from different people, an individual is able to afford an animal that would otherwise have been difficult to buy. While men can purchase cattle, sheep and goats without consulting their spouses, women are required to declare their intentions beforehand. This opens up a possibility that the resources planned for livestock purchase are diverted to other purposes by the household head. Additionally, a household head can block or encourage purchase of livestock based on their considerations around land use. In the study area, women and girls rarely own land. They can, however, access it through their spouses or fathers but rarely have any decision-making capacity regarding its use.

Norms and practice around gifting of animals are interpreted flexibly, influenced by personal choice, cultural norms or implied expectation of reciprocity. A parent who feels that their child has excelled and deserves a reward gifts the child voluntarily. The parent whose son successfully undergoes a rite of passage is compelled by local culture to reward him with cattle, sheep or goats depending on their livestock endowment. When parents marry their daughters, the groom's family is expected to pay bride price. When a bride's parents share bride price with relatives, it is with the expectation that they will also receive a similar gift in future. It is clear that young people can benefit from gifting, but it is less clear whether gifting constrains participation of particular social groups such as young women.

On the other hand, only sons gain access to livestock and land through inheritance, but of course this can only happen when parents have livestock. By default, this practice excludes young women from sourcing livestock through inheritances. Even in the case of sons, inheritance is at the discretion of the parents: children have no control over the time

when a parent decides to redistribute their resources and cannot with certainty tell how redistribution will be effected amongst siblings.

The study suggested a clear delineation of the livestock species that can be owned by men or women. Livestock assumed to be of higher value such as cattle, sheep and goats are in the male domain, while chickens, milk and eggs are in the female domain. While women do own cattle, sheep and goats, this fact is usually kept hidden. Pursuit of livestock ownership is a potential source of intra-household conflict because it can be interpreted as a strategy to challenge the head's control over household assets. Nonetheless, women still pursued livestock ownership, an indication of the desire to be involved in production. While this norm does not exclude women completely, it certainly constrains their participation in large-animal activities. This constraint is probably even greater for young women.

No matter who owns them or how they were acquired, with the exception of female-headed households, decisions relating to management, alienation, exclusion and withdrawal of cattle, sheep and goats rest with men. This potentially inhibits women's participation in production of large stock and by extension, limits their ability to pursue livestock production as a means of livelihood. While women can claim ownership of milk, the quantities produced are very low, and availability is periodic (i.e. dependent on having a lactating animal).

Relatively few women are engaged in cattle, sheep and goat trading. According to prevailing social norms, livestock markets and marketing are predominantly male spaces and activities. Consequently, most of the women that regularly traded in livestock came from outside Baringo County, away from their home areas where cultural inhibitions would be greater. Further, because the animals the female traders purchased were either resold whole or as meat and were never considered as part of the domestic herds, the women gainfully participate in the trade and could exercise more decision-making powers over the gained resources. That there was only a single female regular trader aged 34 or less indicated that livestock trading was either not an accessible or a favoured livelihood activity among female youth, probably due to the cultural inhibitions experienced in the county.

5 Conclusions and implications

Agriculture and livestock will remain important sources of income and employment for many people in years to come, especially in rural areas where youth under- and unemployment rates are higher than urban areas (White 2012). Gainful participation in agriculture is determined by an individual's ability to manage the barriers to entry (Coles and Mitchell 2011). This study has demonstrated that coming from a livestock-producing community does not necessarily result in gainful engagement in livestock production. Participation can be inhibited by social norms and micropolitics that affect the choice of livelihood activities and access to other requisite resources such as land. While

the Kenya national youth policy advocates for equitable provision of employment opportunities for youth by creating enabling environments, the current study shows a disconnect between this ideal and the reality on the ground. This implies that programmes to promote livestock production and marketing should be carefully designed so that they do not perpetuate or deepen inequalities, particularly among the young. The programmes might consider implementation strategies that challenge existing barriers in ways that increase employment opportunities for male and female youth without attracting backlash from other groups. Further research should also be conducted to inform policymakers as to how increasing education among the youth will influence their employment aspirations and engagement in livestock production and marketing.

Notes

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- 1 Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya; Food Safety and Zoonoses Team, International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 2 Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 3 Food Safety and Zoonoses Team, International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 4 Research, Innovation and Outreach, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Bondo, Kenya.
- 5 Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya, and Cooperative Development, Research and Innovation, The Cooperative University of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya.
- 6 Version 6.1, United States Census Bureau, Washington DC.
- 7 Version 22, IBM SPSS Statistics, Armonk, New York.
- 8 Version 10, QSR International, Melbourne.
- 9 The tropical livestock unit is a measure used to standardise across a number of different livestock species. According to Chilonda and Otte (2006), 1 cattle = 0.5 TLUs, 1 sheep and/or goat = 0.1 TLUs, and 1 chicken = 0.01 TLUs.
- 10 Interview, 3 August 2015.
- 11 The numbers relate to the order of focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in an area; for example, Lorok1 means the first FGD conducted in Lorok and Litein2 means the second FGD conducted in Litein. The number is also used to distinguish between groups where two male-only FGDs or female-only FGDs were conducted per location.

- 12 Interview, 19 August 2015.
 13 Interview, 31 July 2015.
 14 Interview, 3 August 2015.
 15 Interview, 31 July 2015.
 16 Interview, 27 January 2015.
 17 Interview, 18 November 2014.
 18 Interview, 20 March 2015.
 19 Interview, 13 November 2014.
 20 Interview, 13 November 2014.
 21 Interview, 20 March 2015.
 22 Interview, 19 August 2015.

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Non-Farm Enterprises and the Rural Youth Employment Challenge in Ghana

Monica Lambon-Quayefio

Abstract Non-farm enterprises have generally been perceived as a silver bullet solution for rural unemployment. This article therefore provides some insights on their potential to resolve the youth unemployment challenge in rural Ghana. Non-farm enterprises in Ghana are heterogeneous in nature based on type of enterprise, range of activities and productivity. Evidence suggests that motivations for operating these enterprises are mixed. Some households operate them as a coping mechanism to deal with household or agricultural shocks, while others may also be operated as business entities with the potential to grow sustainably and offer employment to young people. In order to harness the full potential of non-farm enterprises to address the rural youth employment challenge, it is imperative for policymakers in Ghana to identify specific sub-sectors that lend themselves to growth and have the capacity to offer sustainable employment avenues, and to critically interrogate and examine the primary reason of their establishment.

Keywords: Ghana, coping, policy, non-farm enterprise, rural, unemployment.

1 Introduction

Despite impressive economic growth, Ghana, like many other African countries, is confronted with a significant youth under- and unemployment challenge. Although the Ghana Statistical Service report on labour force (GSS 2013) pegged the unemployment rate of Ghana at 5.2 per cent, the same document reveals that unemployment among the youth (15–35 years) is 32.2 per cent. Additionally, the report indicates that urban unemployment is higher (6.3 per cent) than the national average as well the rural unemployment rate (3.9 per cent). The majority of youth who are employed in urban areas are engaged mainly in wholesale and retail businesses, as well as very low productivity service areas. In rural areas, many youth who are engaged in low productivity agricultural activities seek the opportunity to migrate. Given the relatively low levels of education and skills of most rural youth, a large

body of literature has hinted that non-farm enterprises have the potential to create the much-needed employment opportunities in rural areas.

This article examines and critiques the efficacy of existing policies and programmes in Ghana that are meant to promote non-farm activities in rural areas. It draws on existing research literature and relevant policy documents to evaluate the extent to which non-farm enterprises can serve as a solution to the rural youth unemployment challenge. This is important because non-farm enterprises are being promoted for their perceived potential to absorb surplus labour in rural areas. This is particularly important as the capacity for agriculture (in its current state) to provide a sustainable source of livelihood is low, and prospects for unskilled workers in urban areas have dwindled. The logic, therefore, is that non-farm activities like agro-processing and services are the next best alternative for rural youth.

The argument I present is that merely expanding non-farm activities in rural areas may not resolve the rural unemployment problem because in large part these are operated as coping mechanisms rather than as businesses. Although some evidence suggests that achievement of asset accumulation and upward mobility from diversification through the operation of non-farm enterprises within the rural economy is possible, this article suggests that such a benefit is not likely for most rural households in Ghana whose goal of survival is a more probable outcome of diversification.

The next section provides a description of non-farm enterprise in Ghana, and in Section 3 the capacity of the non-farm sector to absorb surplus labour in the rural economy is evaluated. Section 4 explores the motivation for households' engagement in non-farm enterprises, and Section 5 reviews existing youth policies and programmes geared towards the promotion of non-farm enterprises. Section 6 concludes and provides a set of policy recommendations.

2 Characteristics of rural non-farm enterprise in Ghana

In the income diversification literature, the terms non-farm, off-farm and non-agricultural activities are used interchangeably to refer to all income-generating activities aside from those gained directly from the farm. Nagler and Naudé (2014) use the term 'rural non-farm enterprises' to refer to small, informal household enterprises including agribusiness, trade and retail, tourism, rural industrialisation, construction and mining. Similarly, Haggblade, Hazell and Reardon (2010) describe non-farm activities to include mining, agro-processing, utilities, construction, commerce and financial services. Reardon (1997) points to a body of evidence that shows the common non-farm enterprises in most developing countries are mainly in commerce, manufacturing and services. The World Bank (2008) reports that 80–90 per cent of these enterprises rely exclusively on family labour. For the purposes of this article, I adopt the definition of rural non-farm enterprises provided by Nagler and Naudé (2014) which includes all

income-generating activities excluding income generated directly from traditional farming activities.

Data from the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GSS 2013) indicate that about 44.3 per cent of households in Ghana operate non-farm enterprises, of which more than half (50.4 per cent) are located in urban areas, with about 36.8 per cent found in rural areas. The survey report describes the main non-farm activities to include manufacturing, trading and other economic activities such as mining, construction and services such as education, hotels and restaurants. In terms of gender differences, about 70.6 per cent of non-farm enterprises are operated by women. The proportion of women operating these enterprises is slightly higher in urban areas (71.4 per cent) compared to rural areas (69.1 per cent). With respect to gender differences in non-farm activities in urban areas, a slightly higher proportion of females (69 per cent) than males (67 per cent) are engaged in trading activities. The reverse holds true in rural areas, where a marginally higher proportion of males (32.9 per cent) are engaged in trading activities than females (31 per cent).

With respect to people engaged in other economic activities, more males (53.5 per cent) compared to their female counterparts (35 per cent) are casual workers. For skilled workers who operate non-farm enterprises, about 51.7 per cent of females are in trading activities while 46.9 per cent of skilled males engaged in other economic activities. Contrary to expectations, relatively few skilled workers are engaged in manufacturing activities: 24.8 per cent and 24.3 per cent of skilled males and females, respectively, engaged in manufacturing activities are skilled workers. More unskilled females (45.5 per cent) than males (40.3 per cent) are involved in trading activities.

Household savings are the primary source of capital for the operation of non-farm enterprises in Ghana. According to GSS (2013), household savings constitute about 73 per cent of capital required for non-farm enterprises, followed by support from relatives or friends which make up about 14.6 per cent of funds needed. Borrowing from formal financial institutions constitute only 1.9 per cent. Other notable sources of capital for non-farm enterprises include funds from family farms (4.6 per cent) and informal money lenders (1.1 per cent). Some other minor sources of capital also include non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as religious organisations and cooperatives. Disaggregating source of capital by gender and activity, the data reveal that significantly more males engaged in manufacturing activities rely on household savings to finance their operations compared to females. A similar pattern is apparent for trading and other non-farm activities.

The data show that the annual average expenditure on inputs for households operating non-farm enterprise is very low at about GH¢110.40 (approximately US\$25.26). The highest average expenditure is incurred on raw materials and is about GH¢641.7 (US\$146.84), followed by purchase of articles for resale of GH¢387.8

(US\$86.68) and expenditure on fuel and lubricants, which is about GH¢316.8 (US\$72.49). The total revenue earned from all non-farm enterprises in the survey period was GH¢48,645.9 million (approximately US\$11,131.78 million), of which the highest contribution was from trading activities (GH¢31,134.3 million, US\$7,124.55 million), followed by revenue generated from other economic activities. Revenue received from manufacturing enterprises was the least at GH¢7,897.5 million (US\$1,807.21 million).

As suggested by Nagler and Naudé (2014), the majority of non-farm enterprises in Ghana are found in the informal sector, where women seem to be more engaged than men. These enterprises predominantly create employment avenues for family members, employing an average of five people. The sector is also characterised by relatively low skilled workers with a large percentage of casual workers, especially in manufacturing. Savings from households seem to be the main source of capital for its operations, especially in the manufacturing sector. As a result, these enterprises are less likely to have working relationships with financial institutions. This therefore reduces the possibility of good record-keeping of their business activities. The sub-sector that seems to generate much revenue is trading activities, despite the general perception that it creates relatively low employment opportunities compared to the manufacturing sector.

3 Coping strategy or a source of sustainable livelihood?

Ample evidence from Assan and Beyene (2013), Bryceson (2004), Barrett, Reardon and Webb (2001), Ellis and Bahiigwa (2003), and Hussein and Nelson (1998) suggests that income diversification is an important strategy adopted by rural households in Africa. The diversification options available to rural households include intensive cropping and/or marketing of non-conventional commodities and animal rearing (Aduse-Poku *et al.* 2003), commerce (Adi 2007), migration (Lay, M'Mukaria and Mahmoud 2007) and non-farm activities (Lay *et al.* 2007; Adi 2007). Others point to self-employment versus wage labour as another diversification option (Hussein and Nelson 1998; Ellis 2000; Barret *et al.* 2001).

Non-farm activities are clearly an important element of income diversification and employment generation. Empirical evidence from Haggblade *et al.* (2007, 2010) indicates that non-farm enterprises account for about 35 per cent of rural income in Africa. Fox and Sohnesen (2016) provide an optimistic projection of 38 per cent of new employment avenues between 2010 and 2020. However, while there is some consensus regarding the relative importance of non-farm enterprises in income diversification, there is debate about the incentives for participating in these activities and their ability to create employment avenues to absorb surplus labour from the agriculture sector.

The ongoing debate on rural livelihoods is inconclusive as to whether diversification into non-farm enterprises results in sustainable wealth

accumulation or is just a desperate strategy for survival within resource-poor societies (Assan and Beyene 2013). For example, Warren (2002) argues that diversification may be occasional, where the change in the household livelihood portfolio is temporary, or may be more strategic, reflecting a deliberate attempt to take advantage of changing opportunities and cope with unexpected constraints. Ellis (1998) identifies diversification to be an accumulation strategy which is likely to result in improvement in household incomes and assets. However, Whitehead and Kabeer (2001) and Dercon and Krishnan (1996) caution that accumulation through diversification may not be equally available to all rural households. De Janvry and Sadoulet (2001) report forms of accumulation in the rural non-farm service sector such as tourism and wage labour activities, conceding that the rural non-farm service sector has a better potential to enhance accumulation from diversification. These studies therefore suggest that the asset accumulation motive of non-farm enterprises is not uniform, but rather depends on other determining factors such as the initial wealth of the household as well as the specific enterprise operated by the household. Although Reardon (1997) agrees that diversification via non-farm enterprises offers a pathway out of poverty, he notes that available data are not clearly indicative of whether the strategy is about survival or purely an asset accumulation strategy which has the potential to offer the needed employment avenues for the rural labour force.

Some literature describes the diversification of rural incomes to be a coping mechanism, creating the opportunity to respond to a shock or contingency, and thereby spreading the risk associated with, for example, small-scale farming. Empirical evidence shows that in rural Africa, non-farm enterprise to a larger extent fulfils a risk management and survival function (Nagler and Naudé 2014; Rijkers and Costa 2012). In the same way, Whitehead and Kabeer (2001) and Ellis (2000) argue that as a result of previous experience with poor crop yields and food insecurity, households diversify in an attempt to spread the perceived risk of shocks on household consumption and other important household expenditure. Other push factors discussed in the literature may include: limited availability of agricultural land and environmental degradation. Neihof (2004) aptly describes diversification into non-farm activities as a stopgap or filler strategy which merely enables households to cope with economic gaps on a temporary basis. Similarly, Davies (1996) argues that a household's diversification into rural non-farm enterprises serves as insurance against indebtedness and borrowing, and boosts its ability to survive.

Specifically, evidence on Ghana from Ashong and Smith (2001) and Canagarajah, Newman and Bhattamishra (2001) suggests that rural households participate in non-farm enterprises mainly to escape food insecurity and poverty. Using data from a peri-urban area in Kumasi, Ashong and Smith (2001) note that during poor seasonal rains households may deplete their assets through sale of cattle in order to purchase food. However, relatively poorer households that are unable to

afford cattle are forced into non-farm sources of livelihood. Descriptions provided by the authors therefore hint that operating non-farm enterprises is the last resort for survival in most poor households. Assan (2014) also provides empirical evidence from southern Ghana which identifies diversification as a strategy for survival rather than asset accumulation as the predominant reason. However, the author makes an interesting observation with regard to households that operate non-farm enterprises. He observed that households operated more than one enterprise with the particular reason of ensuring income security. To achieve this, they engage in multiple enterprises with the ability to switch between enterprises should one fail. Using more robust empirical techniques and data from the northern part of Ghana, findings from Owusu, Abdulai and Abdul-Rahman (2011) indicate that non-farm work is a valuable source of income which helps in income smoothing, which is in turn useful for household consumption smoothing. Fox and Sohnesen (2016) disagree and suggest that these enterprises have existed for long periods and are therefore sustainable in the solutions they may proffer to the employment challenge. This argument may be problematic in the sense that enterprises may have existed for long durations but may still operate at the subsistence level, using low productivity technologies and largely dependent on family labour. Particularly for Ghana, despite the growth of the sector in the past few years, the characteristics described in the previous section give an indication of the low levels of investment by households as well as heavy reliance on family labour.

Diversification has also been viewed as a process which takes advantage of opportunities in the rural economy in order to maximise household income and other household goals. For example, Warren (2002) suggests that households may engage in non-farm activities to accumulate the resources needed to educate the younger generation and increase land holdings to assure prosperity and stability. Ellis (1998) supports the finding that diversification can lead to improved income and asset accumulation. Also, Whitehead and Kabeer (2001) and Dercon and Krishnan (1996) contend that non-farm activities may be a source of surplus income which can be invested in productivity-enhancing methods on farms, and other forms of capital or asset accumulation. Using data from Mozambique, Fox and Sohnesen (2016) argue that non-farm enterprises offer a particularly unique opportunity for upward mobility and consumption growth for households with relatively low education levels.

This review suggests that engagement in rural non-farm enterprises may be motivated by immediate need or may represent an active, forward-looking strategy. The dichotomy of survivalist versus strategic diversification may be of limited value. In most cases, households that diversify their incomes are able to enjoy greater flexibility and resilience compared to households that do not diversify (Warren 2002). In most cases, diversification is more dynamic than static, involving continuous rearrangement of the livelihood portfolios in response to changing

constraints and opportunities (Bigsten and Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1995). What starts off as a survivalist or a coping strategy may evolve into something more strategic, and vice versa.

Overall, although livelihood diversification strategies such as the operation of non-farm enterprises may eventually lead households out of poverty, the outcomes may not be unidirectional. Outcomes and effects may vary with geographical locations and type of activities engaged in. In essence, outcomes of diversification are not uniform with respect to derived benefits for households. Due to the diversity and dynamism within non-farm activities as well as across countries, it is imperative to have in-depth, sector-specific and country-specific analysis based on good quality panel data, before any conclusive generalisations may be put forward.

4 Capacity of non-farm enterprises to address the youth employment challenge

Haggblade *et al.* (2010), Rijkers and Costa (2012) and Fox and Sohnesen (2016) argue that non-farm enterprises play an important role in the rural economy, and its relative contribution to household employment and income continues to rise across the African continent. Estimates by Fox *et al.* (2013) suggest that these enterprises are expected to employ about 15 per cent of Africa's labour force; they are also expected to create millions of jobs in rural Africa over the next decade (Fox and Pimhidzai 2013; Fox and Sohnesen 2016). But what does the literature say about who is presently involved in the rural non-farm economy?

Evidence from Ackah (2013) and Dary and Kuunibe (2012) points to declining participation in non-farm enterprises as people grow older: younger people are more likely to take up opportunities in the non-farm sector than older people. This is in sharp contrast to findings from Nagler and Naudé (2014) who analysed World Bank data from Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria and Uganda and found that older cohorts were more likely to engage in non-farm activities, which might reflect the fact that many of those who are less than 25 years old are still attending school.

Using data from the Upper West region of Ghana, Dary and Kuunibe (2012) found that men were more likely to be employed in formal non-farm enterprises compared to women. This may be due to the relatively low levels of education among rural women. Aside from education, Gordon and Craig (2001) note that rural women's concentration in informal non-farm enterprises may reflect factors such as tradition, religion, childcare responsibilities and other social expectations.

In general, the levels of education and skills required for gainful employment in rural non-farm enterprises are not very high (Fox and Sohnesen 2016). Dary and Kuunibe (2012) provide evidence from Ghana that education increases the likelihood that people will engage in formal, rural non-farm enterprises. Also, de Janvry and Sadoulet (2001) show that even amongst educated people who participate in the

non-farm sector there is a significant association between level of literacy and type of enterprise: operators with more education tend to use more modern technology. Education may increase labour productivity in non-farm enterprises and in turn increase employment potential (Wennberg and Lindqvist 2010; Owoo and Naude 2014). Indeed, there is ample evidence of a correlation between education and return to non-farm employment. In Ghana, Jolliffe (2004) shows that the returns to education are higher in non-farm compared to on-farm activities.

Linking back to the discussion of survivalist and strategic diversification, it is important to note the observation by Nagler and Naudé (2014) that the motive for starting a non-farm enterprise may have implications for its productivity, and thus the potential to create employment.

Although the non-farm sector offers some potential to create jobs for the rural labour force, and particularly the youth, assessment of the rural investment climate reveals some significant challenges (Wang *et al.* 2006). Constraints include poor access to and high cost of credit, poor quality roads and infrastructure, as well as inadequate and unreliable supply of electricity, and weak governance structures in rural areas (World Bank 2008). Another constraint is low market demand. In most instances, about 70 per cent of non-farm outputs go to satisfy local demand – the rural non-farm sector can only thrive if the economy delivers inclusive growth. Resolving these challenges will improve the employment-generating capacity of rural non-farm enterprises, particularly towards the youth.

5 Youth policies and programmes in Ghana¹

Ghana, like many other African countries, faces a high youth population growth rate and a serious employment challenge. Despite this, Hoetu (2011) posits that with appropriate policies and interventions the unemployment challenge could be transformed into opportunities that could yield maximum benefit to the country at large. Due to the enormity and the complexity of the challenges that confront the youth, policymakers and government institutions that are responsible for youth programmes are at a loss as to how to proceed (Hoetu 2011). Policymakers therefore operate in an environment of despair and desperation in a bid to find solutions to these problems. This may often lead to a number of disjointed policies and programmes rather than more carefully planned and complementary policies. The following chronicles a number of youth policies that have turned out to be more duplicative than complementary.

The National Youth Authority, formerly known as the National Youth Council, was established in 1974 by an act of parliament to coordinate youth development activities. This authority was located in the then Ministry of Youth and Sports, but the ministry came under heavy criticism for focusing its attention and resources on sports to the detriment of youth development. The sense of neglect only deepened when responsibility for youth was split across various ministries, and programmes intended to benefit youth lacked coherence and

coordination. To address this situation, the National Youth Policy was formulated in 1999 and identified particular priority areas for action. However, this policy was never implemented, and in 2008 it was abandoned and replaced with a new National Youth Policy. Again, even though the 2008 version was backed by an implementation plan, the new government that took over in 2009 ignored the existing policy, opting instead to launch a new policy framework two years after taking office. The 2010 National Youth Policy for Ghana articulated new priority areas which included youth employment.

Prior to 2006, a nationwide survey by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) revealed the enormity of the youth employment challenge and made recommendations which culminated in the establishment of the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP). The main objectives of this programme were to provide the youth with employability skills, offer work experience after mandatory national service, and provide employment opportunities through various modules such as the youth in agriculture module, the community health module and others. While well intentioned, this programme provided relatively few jobs, and then only for a period of two years, with a possible extension of one year.

Under the new government in 2012, the NYEP was rebranded as the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Agency (GYEEDA). According to the new government, this repositioning was necessary to address the youth employment challenge in a more systematic way. After a few years of operation, the GYEEDA was mired in scandal: due to the fact that there was no legislative instrument to regulate the activities of the programme, implementation challenges were rife. In 2015, GYEEDA metamorphosed into the Youth Employment Agency (YEA), and the age bracket shifted slightly to cover all young people between the ages of 18 and 35, including those with disabilities. Among all the modules created by the agency, only community health and youth in agriculture are relevant to rural youth. Although the youth in agriculture has not yet been clearly spelt out, the community health module is somewhat geared towards absorbing educated rural youth. These two modules are particularly relevant to the rural youth due to the relatively low skillset they require and the demand for these services within rural settings compared to urban settings. Data from GSS (2013) show that the literacy rate in urban areas is higher than in rural areas. Also, the report suggests that the youth in urban areas have higher educational attainment compared to their rural counterparts. As a result, the skillset of the urban youth is relatively higher than the skillset of the rural youth. Given that agricultural activities in the context of Ghana do not require highly skilled personnel, this module suits the current skillset of the rural youth and has the potential to absorb them.

In order to improve on health indicators through improved access to health care (especially in rural areas where indicators such as maternal, infant and child mortality are high) the government of

Ghana, in partnership with the Japanese government, introduced the Community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) Compounds. As part of the policy, the Ghana Health Service and the Ministry of Health were responsible for posting health personnel to these communities. Uptake of posts in rural communities has over the years been very low due to the absence of critical social amenities and infrastructure required for the daily survival of the health workers. The community health assistant module is therefore very relevant in tapping into the relatively educated rural youth who can assist in providing the needed assistance to the few health professionals in the delivery of health care in rural areas. This is because these assistants hail from rural areas and are thus able to cope relatively easily. This, combined with the increasing demand for health professionals, creates a unique opportunity for the rural youth in respect of employment opportunities.

In contrast, other modules such as the youth in community service module, and the security services module, may not be relevant to the rural youth. This is because the services of such modules are needed more in urban congested areas where the youth in this module are deployed to ease traffic. Other modules such as youth in trade and vocation, and youth in entrepreneurship may seem to offer some opportunity for rural employment. However, their sustainability may be in question as the local rural demand to support these ventures in the long run may be very low due to the relatively low income levels of the rural population. Eventually, out of frustration, these ventures may be abandoned altogether as the same youth may resort to migration to urban areas as a livelihood strategy. Also, a major deficiency of the YEA is that it provides employment opportunities for a period of two years only, after which the beneficiaries are left on their own.

These efforts to address youth employment must be seen in the light of efforts to liberalise the Ghanaian economy under the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). With the removal of subsidies, the ERP had important implications for the viability of the agricultural sector, and the privatisation of the mining sector resulted in a massive laying off of workers. During this period, there was an economic and social crisis in urban areas due to the inability of the rural economy to provide employment opportunities for the rural labour force. Those who were unable to move to urban areas resorted to other subsistence endeavours in order to survive.

In response, in 1995 the government, in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), launched the Rural Enterprise Project (REP). With an initial limited coverage in only two districts, the goal of the first phase of the REP was to improve the lives of the rural poor through increased productivity, with particular focus on rural youth and women. In 2002, the project indicated its goal to increase coverage to 66 districts by 2011. The enterprises supported by this programme include rural non-farm activities such as soap-making, bead-making, textiles and clothing, artisanal services such as carpentry

and hairdressing, as well as value-addition agro-processing activities such as nut and oil processing, and juice processing among others. Due to its success, the programme attracted additional funding which led to a third phase, scheduled to run from 2013 to 2017, and intended to cover 161 out of the 171 rural districts. The goal of the third phase is to scale up the outcomes of the first two phases, with a particular objective of increasing the number of rural micro- and small-scale enterprises that generate profit, growth and employment opportunities.

The REP included four main components: business development services; technology promotion and dissemination; access to rural finance and institutional building; and programme coordination, monitoring and evaluation. The business development component aims to upgrade the technical and entrepreneurial skills of rural cottage, micro- and small-scale activities by providing access to business development services. The main objective of the technology promotion and dissemination component is to upgrade the technology used by rural micro- and small-scale enterprises. Under this component, the REP supports the rural technology facilities at the district level with the particular aim of strengthening the basic engineering and technology transfer capacity of the districts to improve product and service quality, as well as the productivity and competitiveness of the rural enterprises. Access to rural finance ensures that rural enterprises have access to finance, while the sub-component, which is institutional capacity building, ensures that they obtain the necessary support from institutions which have the potential to contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for the growth of rural enterprises.

The REP also supports other special initiatives to stimulate employment creation. For example, since its inauguration in 2009, the Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme has created about 12,000 new businesses. Another such initiative is the Northern Rural Growth Programme which began in 2009 and focuses on rural areas of the northern regions with the specific objective of working with the rural poor to develop income-generating activities to supplement subsistence farming. Ultimately, the programme aims to strengthen the linkages among actors in agricultural value chains. It makes use of District Value Chain Committees.

Government has taken other steps to use enterprise development as a tool for creating job opportunities for youth. The Youth Enterprise Support programme is a multi-sectoral initiative that aims to provide support to youth between the ages of 18 and 35 to transform creative ideas into business enterprises. This support was to take the form of interest-free loans to participating youth to be accompanied by mentorship. In addition, the initiative has a regular training component that is meant to upgrade the youth skillset so that their businesses remain competitive. Soon after its inauguration in 2014, a major shortcoming in the initiative was exposed – namely that the requirements excluded a large proportion of rural youth. The application process required

prospective beneficiaries to have a business plan and be able to effectively communicate in writing. This quickly created a sharp disconnect between educated urban youth and rural youth who might have good business ideas but not the skills to communicate them.

In response, more tailored sub-components were designed and implemented to support urban youth and rural youth. The rural entrepreneurship programme was piloted in the Upper East region with regular fora called business clinics to engage rural youth and to provide basic skills and training on how to combine local resources and knowledge about the market to create competitive business ventures. This sub-component is focused on rural value addition and other related ventures. A number of on-farm and off-farm activities are supported, including production of crops such as pepper, rice and cassava, as well as poultry and animal husbandry for the urban market. Other off-farm value-addition processing activities such as shea butter production, palm oil production, starch making, and fruit juice processing are supported.

As a public-private partnership which commenced in 2010, the Local Enterprises Skills Development Programme (LESDEP) is implemented by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in partnership with the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations. Its main objective is to alleviate youth poverty through employment creation, by providing youth with the necessary skills to be able to own, start and operate their own income-generating enterprises. The programme adopts a district-level service delivery approach, and has offices in 170 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies. Various skill development modules are offered based on a nationwide needs assessment of unemployed youth. Prospective beneficiaries are given training which lasts from three weeks to three months or more, depending on the module. After completion, they are given equipment for their chosen trade which they are expected to repay in instalments starting six to twelve months after commencing their business activities. Programme areas include crop farming, animal rearing and fish-farming, as well as value addition to the agricultural products through agro-processing.

In its relatively short lifespan, the LESDEP was reported to have achieved a success rate of about 85 per cent, creating a substantial number of new businesses across the country. Nevertheless, it became non-operational in its third year of operation due to reduced budgetary allocations, resulting in an inability to meet implementation targets. Second, the financial woes were deepened because the programme was unable to recover monies it had invested since 2011.

6 Conclusions and policy recommendations

Non-farm enterprises have been appraised as the next best alternative to traditional agriculture as an employment generator in Africa, with the capacity to absorb a large number of rural youth. This perception has governments and development agencies investing in a cocktail of policies

and programmes in a bid to provide the necessary environment and support for non-farm enterprises to develop and thrive.

Based on a review of research and policy literature relating to the rural non-farm sector, and with a particular focus on Ghana, a number of conclusions can be drawn and policy recommendations suggested. First, rural non-farm enterprises in Ghana are characterised by a high degree of heterogeneity based on location, range of activities, education of owners and productivity. As such, any policy geared towards developing the potential of this sector should be more targeted rather than a general policy or programme which puts all non-farm enterprises in the same category. For instance, given that all non-farm enterprises do not enjoy the same level of sophistication in terms of technologies employed, blanket policies such as the provision of interest-free loans to enterprise owners made to cover all categories of agro-processing enterprises may not yield the required impact as some of these enterprises may require different kinds of assistance in order to grow in a sustainable manner. Also, given the large proportion of females in the industry, gender-specific policies may be apt. There is therefore the need to disaggregate non-farm enterprises based on specific characteristics – this will allow more targeted and effective policy.

Second, if they are to be seriously considered as the solution to rural unemployment, a better understanding of the motivation to establish non-farm enterprises will be absolutely critical. Empirical evidence available does not lead to a firm conclusion on the main motivation for operating non-farm enterprises. In some cases, the motive is purely survival and one of mitigation against shocks and other household risks, while in other instances households operate these ventures for capital and asset accumulation. It is therefore difficult to distinguish which households are likely to operate under a particular motive. This therefore creates the added challenge of accurately recognising which enterprises to target as vehicles for growth. In effect, any policymaking in this area warrants a careful and circumstantial analysis if effective policy outcomes are desired.

Third, youth policies and programmes in Ghana are diverse and often disjointed. A review of policies and interventions indicate a lack of continuity, consistency and depth. Youth policies and programmes have been reformulated with each change of government. The resulting politics around them mean that consistent long-term programming is impossible. Also, there is little coordination when it comes to formulating policies and programmes to create employment opportunities for youth. New programmes duplicate the efforts of existing ones. In order to solve the problem of youth unemployment, it must be recognised that this is a challenge that cuts across all sectors of the economy and as such, a sustainable solution requires much more effective coordination. Specifically, with respect to policies on non-farm enterprises, despite the perceived potential to absorb the rural youth there is a dearth of specific policies and programmes which targets the

rural youth based on their skillset. At best, some of the policies and programmes offer accidental benefits to the rural youth rather than providing benefits through carefully planned policies and programmes.

Lastly, the government of Ghana, and indeed all African governments, should make concerted efforts to address the major constraints faced by rural non-farm enterprises. Even though some progress has been made in recent times with regard to rural infrastructure, more needs to be done to speed up development of rural areas. In addition, given the potential that it offers to the rural labour force and the rural economy, it will be beneficial for policymakers to draft a comprehensive, evidence-based policy in relation to the non-farm sector. This should be based on high-quality data, spanning a long period of time, which will allow a more rigorous contextual analysis, and accounting for the diversity in the sector. Such a policy would provide a road map for the development of the sector in ways that create good job opportunities for rural young people.

Note

- 1 Information for this section was obtained from the author's review of referenced and non-referenced material as well as interviews with officials from some of the youth agencies mentioned in this article.

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Does Kenya's Youth Enterprise Development Fund Serve Young People?

Maurice Sikenyi

Abstract This article analyses issues surrounding a state-supported self-employment and entrepreneurship programme in Kenya, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF). Analysis of secondary data in addition to youth interviews suggest that although the YEDF generated employment and income for some young people, the frameworks are narrow and lack supportive implementation structures. In particular, YEDF projects are marred by mismanagement of funds, corruption, and ambiguous eligibility criteria. Moreover, young people lack social networks, entrepreneurial skills and mentorship that would allow them to effectively participate in the YEDF. Inadequate support structures exclude young people from the YEDF. Future policies and programmes must consider flexible and transparent eligibility criteria, stringent accountability mechanisms to curb corruption, and development of business skills and mentorship.

Keywords: Africa, unemployment, livelihoods, youth bulge, education, entrepreneurship.

1 Introduction

The unemployment challenge is global and presents an economic and social crisis that threatens the dignity and livelihoods of millions of individuals, including young people (ILO 2010). Globally, over 75 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years are outside the formal labour market, yet they are looking for work (ILO 2010). A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that over 75 per cent of young people aged between 15 and 29 are involved in informal work as their primary economic activity (Elder *et al.* 2015). Many of the under- and unemployed young people are in the least developed countries (LDCs) in the global South (ILO 2010). In sub-Saharan Africa, young people constitute more than 50 per cent of the entire population (United Nations 2012); furthermore, it is estimated that 'each year between 2015 and 2035, there will be half a million more 15-year-olds than the year before' (World Bank 2014: 2). While the high numbers of young people

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present an opportunity for the continent, the 'youth bulge' also presents significant economic, social and political challenges.

With limited growth in opportunities for formal sector employment, state-supported self-employment and entrepreneurship initiatives have become increasingly common. As such, governments and development partners have developed and advocated for national youth policies, programmes and budgetary allocations aimed at supporting self-employment and enterprise development by young people (Anyidoho *et al.* 2012; Burchell *et al.* 2015; GoK 2008; Muiya 2014). In sub-Saharan Africa, successive governments and agencies have encouraged youth engagement in agricultural-related initiatives as a means to counter youth under- and unemployment (Anyidoho *et al.* 2012; te Lintelo 2012; Ping 2011). Other policies and programmes promote youth engagement with new technologies, vocational training and entrepreneurship (GoK 2007; te Lintelo 2012).

In Kenya, the government sought to promote youth employment and empowerment through the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) and *Kazi Kwa Vijana* (jobs for youth) initiatives. These aimed to transform youth from 'jobseekers' to 'job creators and employers' (GoK 2008). Despite these efforts to engage young people in the labour market, the majority of the youth in Kenya are still under- or unemployed, and vulnerable. The uptake of the YEDF is dismal among young people in both rural and urban settings. This conundrum calls for reflection on the efficacy of the YEDF in fostering self-employment and enterprise development by youth. Understanding young people's experiences with the YEDF, particularly those in rural areas and urban slums, and the extent that this programme shapes youth livelihoods is important for future policy and practice relating to youth employment.

It is against this backdrop that this article analyses the contextual, practical and policy-level issues surrounding and shaping state-supported self-employment and entrepreneurship initiatives in Kenya, notably the YEDF. The article argues that although the YEDF was established to increase young people's self-employment and entrepreneurship through greater access to credit, the programme framework is too narrow and the YEDF lacks supportive implementation structures. The inadequate support structures contribute to the exclusion of young people, especially in rural regions and urban slums.

The introduction of the YEDF moves the state's focus from being a direct employer, to a facilitator or enabler of employment opportunities for youth. This shift, though promising, is also problematic because it puts the central responsibility for youth employment on the shoulders of the youth themselves. Although some might argue that young people should be encouraged to shape their own destiny (including decisions about forms of employment), this article argues that the social and economic conditions that young people experience in rural areas and urban slums necessitates greater affirmative action and supportive

policies to better youth uptake of state-supported initiatives. In the wake of massive under- and unemployment in Kenya, access to credit is not enough to better young people's livelihoods. The YEDF is one of the biggest state-supported initiatives on youth employment, and commands an enormous budgetary allocation and elaborate legislative framework. However, because of mismanagement and ineffective implementation, it has done little to address young people's vulnerability and disillusionment.

The findings are based on a review of documentation, particularly YEDF progress reports and case studies. In addition, a limited number of interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted in October and November 2016. The semi-structured interviews involved three young people from Bumula, in Bungoma County, and the focus group discussion with five young people in Dandora, in Nairobi.¹ The young participants had varied levels of education, half having completed secondary education, and one having had tertiary-level training. While this article does not claim a generalised view of youth experiences with the YEDF, the document review raises important concerns about the YEDF that call for immediate attention.

The article proceeds as follows. To understand the genesis of the YEDF and issues surrounding it, I first provide an overview of youth under- and unemployment in Kenya. I then discuss the emergence of the YEDF and the issues surrounding this initiative. The last section concludes and provides some recommendations for policy.

2 Overview of youth under- and unemployment in Kenya

Many factors have contributed to unemployment in Kenya including the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), and the economic and political reforms that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank spearheaded during the 1980s and 1990s (Kipkemboi 2002). These institutions envisioned that SAPs would rapidly generate economic stability through private ownership, free markets and price liberalisation, and reduce government expenditure on social services including education and health (*ibid.*). Despite these intentions, studies suggest that the SAP in Kenya and other sub-Saharan African countries resulted in high-income inequalities, retrenchment and high unemployment rates that carried over into the 2000s (Heidhues and Obare 2011).

In 2009, the National Population and Housing Census found that there were 13.5 million young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years, constituting 30 per cent of the entire population (GoK 2010). With the labour force constituting only 40 per cent of Kenya's population, over 78 per cent of the unemployed in Kenya are young people (IEA 2011). The employment challenge weighs particularly heavily on youth.

The high population growth rate is not matched by the economic growth rate (Njonjo 2011). The Kenyan economy is generating only 150,000 jobs per year, and cannot absorb the over 500,000 youth that graduate

from school every year (Muiya 2014). As a result, there is a large number of young people seeking work, yet there are few opportunities for formal employment. Other studies suggest that education and training are not aligned with industry demands (Wambugu, Munga and Onsomu 2009), and that many college graduates lack the relevant skills and knowledge that employers demand (*ibid.*). Moreover, an examination-oriented curriculum that puts little emphasis on technical or life-skills, and negative perceptions of agriculture, contribute to graduates seeking employment as opposed to creating their own jobs (Njonjo 2010).

Youth under- and unemployment put enormous pressure on Kenya's economic, social and political stability. Studies on the effect of unemployment show that young people who undergo long periods of unemployment are likely to experience decreased wages and more challenges in future employment compared to others (Skans 2004). In particular, a 10–15 per cent wage 'scar' is attributed to early unemployment, and youth can experience wage losses for up to 20 years following early unemployment (Skans 2004; Vandenberghe 2010). Youth unemployment has contributed to disillusionment, frustration and despondency which have been linked to political instability. Some observers have suggested that disillusioned youth are more likely to engage in organised crime, political violence or join militant groups like Al Shabaab (Collier *et al.* 2003; Kriegler and Waki 2009; Muiya 2014). Similarly, prostitution, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS are prevalent in areas with high rates of poverty, and under- and unemployment (Muiya 2014). It is essential to understand the major government initiatives to address the youth employment challenge. The remainder of the article focuses on state support for self-employment and entrepreneurship, particularly the YEDF, and youth experiences with this intervention.

3 The Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF)

To address the challenges of under- and unemployment and poverty affecting young people, the government established a broad national youth policy framework (GoK 2002). A major initiative was the formation of the YEDF in 2006 (GoK 2002, 2007; Muthee 2010). The fund focuses on microfinance and enterprise development, with the aim of ensuring that young people (ages 18–35) have access to affordable loans so that they can grow their small and medium businesses (GoK 2008). The operational framework and objectives of the YEDF entail providing funds to financial intermediaries such as banks, microfinance institutions (MFIs), savings and credit co-operative organisations, and licensed non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to give loans to youth-run enterprises. It also supports the development of commercial infrastructure that can enhance youth enterprises, including the establishment of market spaces, model businesses and incubators. Additionally, the YEDF aims to introduce goods and services produced by the young people into local and international markets, and develop linkages between the youth-run small and medium enterprises with large enterprises. Lastly, the fund was to facilitate employment of young people in the international labour market (GoK 2007, 2011). As the

YEDF makes clear, national policy on youth employment has shifted from education and training, and private and industrial partnerships, to self-employment and enterprise development.

A report on the performance of the YEDF between 2007 and 2012 indicated that KSh94 million (US\$940,000) had been allocated to the 47 counties (GoK 2011). The fund targeted slightly over 13 million young people. However, by 2011, only 158,000 youth enterprises had received YEDF loans – only 1.2 per cent of the target. Almost half of the funds had not been distributed to youth groups.

Access to the YEDF is low in rural compared to urban constituencies. A study in Matungu Constituency showed that by 2015, only 83 young people had received YEDF funds (Barasa and Githae 2015). The mode of disbursement of loans to groups poses operational challenges. For example, when a loan of KSh45,000 is given to a 15-member youth group, each member receives only KSh3,000 (US\$30) to support their business. Such a limited sum cannot be expected to boost a business in a significant way. In many constituencies, only a few young people have received direct funds. In Bumula Constituency, for example, the direct funding mechanism where an individual young person receives between KSh100,000 and KSh2 million (US\$1,000–20,000) has not been made available to any youth since the establishment of the fund. Many rural constituencies experience low uptake of the YEDF and great disparities in the amounts allocated among youth groups (Barasa and Githae 2015; Mburung'a 2014). Moreover, the sector-oriented loans require that youth groups raise a deposit of 10 per cent of the loan amount (GoK 2012), which many groups find impossible.

Mismanagement and corruption are major issues. According to investigations by the Criminal Investigation Departments and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission of Kenya (EACC), senior officials diverted youth funds to their personal accounts (Agoya 2016; Kibet 2016). Furthermore, the EACC stated that 'senior leaders at the YEDF have been trying to cover up huge losses of funds' (Kibet 2016: 1). In other cases, well-connected adults have registered companies and used them to tender for youth funds. The Vision 2030 Youth Entrepreneurs Associates claimed that YEDF 'money had been irregularly awarded to family members' (*ibid.*). A recent court proceeding established that some YEDF managers conspired to 'defraud the Kenyan public through unlawful payment of KSh180,364,789 (US\$1.9 million) from the Youth Enterprise Development Fund to Quorum Limited for services not rendered' (Agoya 2016). Moreover, the directors of the YEDF were under investigation for irregularly receiving KSh64,654,789, which the YEDF channelled to their individual companies for services that they did not offer.

4 Does the YEDF serve young people?

4.1 Unclear eligibility criteria and stringent lending conditions

Analysis of primary documents, particularly YEDF progress reports and case studies, in addition to some interviews, revealed that the lending

procedure is convoluted with unclear eligibility criteria, strict lending conditions and inadequate support (Barasa and Githae 2015). The intermediary financial institutions do not provide youth-friendly products and services. In the focus group discussion, young people expressed concerns that the demands for collateral, recommendation letters from administrative units, and high interest rates make the YEDF inaccessible. In particular, contracted financial institutions require that youth groups raise at least a 10 per cent deposit of any loan, and the youth are also required to meet all the criteria to open a bank account. For example, one young woman who participated in the focus group stated:

It's hard for us to get loans, we do not have salary and items to give to secure the loan. They want us to produce some money and yet we are looking for the money... our parents don't have money to lend us. (Female 003, November 2016)

This quote highlights the fact that many young people have not accumulated assets that they can use as collateral. Moreover, youth groups could hardly raise the 10 per cent deposit fees or provide references. These factors make the YEDF inaccessible to young people. Furthermore, in rural environments young people have challenges completing the online applications, or developing their business plans and proposal. A young interviewee said that 'I finished class seven, now I am asked so many proposals that I cannot write. The officers at the YEDF can't help us' (Male 002, October 2016).

Moreover, the long waiting period for loan processing and approval at the financial institutions and constituency offices is a major issue affecting youth engagement in YEDF programmes. Young people have to wait between six months and one year in order to receive the funds. In some cases, they never receive any communication about the status of their application. A youth group participant stated:

It takes so long for one to receive the funds. We applied for the funds as group ya vijana hapa Dandora [youth in Dandora]. We gave them all the documents, the group minutes. We kept on going back to ask about it, but we were told they could not trace our application papers. (Male 002, November 2016)

4.2 Corruption

The unfriendly application process has opened up avenues for corruption in the dissemination of YEDF funds, especially at the constituency level offices. For example, programme officers and go-betweens extort funds from young people in order to help them 'win the youth funds'. The corruption surrounding the management and disbursement of YEDF funds has created a negative perception among young people to the point that some are unwilling to apply for the funds. As one youth stated:

There are some cartels, because you know, I can help you get the funds and even apply for tenders, but you have to give a percentage of funds to the cartels. They will even say they help you in the application. But if you give them half the money and you pay back the whole loan how do you make profit? (Male 003, November 2016)

Corruption has enabled well-connected individuals and some outside the eligibility criteria to access the YEDF. Although the YEDF policy states that the fund focuses on young people (ages 18–35), it is known that ineligible individuals have been awarded the funds and tenders. These individuals often have connections to the political class or the management of the YEDF at the constituency level. In the focus group discussion with youth in Dandora, a participant stated that:

The rules say 30 per cent of procurement must go to youth people. That the YEDF funds are for youth. But someone at 50 years gets the funds for youth. So, if you do not know anyone you can't get the funds. (Female 003, November 2016)

Another youth with a disability lamented that 'You do everything they require, but some people get funds without merit' (Male 001, November 2016). These sentiments concur with the findings of a report which showed that young people with disabilities had little knowledge about the YEDF application processes and some believed that the YEDF officers had exclusive authority to award whomever they wished, irrespective of any official criteria (Action Network for the Disabled 2012).

The YEDF eligibility policy is primarily based on age, following the Kenyan constitution definition of youth as all persons 'who have attained the age of eighteen years, but have not yet attained the age of thirty-five years' (National Council for Law Reporting 2010: 65). However, this fails to take into account the unique experiences among youth in various geographical regions in the country. Young people in pastoral communities, youth with disabilities, rural versus urban youth, or youth with different levels of education – all of these have implications on work transitions and successful self-employment. Moreover, the age-based definition of youth is inadequate because it does not account for the cultural, sociological and functional forces that also shape youth livelihoods in various contexts. For example, a teenage parent becomes an adult and might not qualify for community-level programmes or opportunities geared towards young people. An interviewee stated: 'I got a child after I finished primary school. I was 15 years. Now I am a mother. People do not see me as a youth. The village elders will not recommend me for the youth funds' (Female 003, November 2016).

4.3 Business skills development and mentorship

Entrepreneurship and self-employment are risky endeavours that many young people undertake due to the lack of alternatives. In some cases, there is no aspiration to become an entrepreneur. These young people may not have the entrepreneurial or business attitudes or skills to enable them to establish or run successful businesses. In the focus group discussion, young people stated that they need mentors to guide them on how to successfully navigate the business environment, particularly with knowing how to invest in the right products, increasing their sales and learning how to save:

I am teaching myself how to do business... it gets hard; I didn't study any business in primary or secondary school. Maybe it would be good to have an established business man to mentor me. (Male 001, October 2016)

Although the YEDF identifies business skills development as one strategy to enhance young people's success in self-employment, few programmes have been developed to train youth in proposal or business plan development, or provide skills in identifying and running an enterprise. Moreover, the education system at the primary and secondary levels does not have compulsory studies in business or entrepreneurship. Many young people start businesses that only act to exacerbate market competition, subsequently reducing the incomes of other operators. A young interviewee put it this way: 'I started a barber shop, but there were so many barber shops, I was not making any profit. I sold the shop to pay back the loan, I still owe them money' (Male 002, November 2016).

Inadequate business and entrepreneurial skills have enormous consequences for the youth enterprises as well as the repayment of any loans. In particular, loan repayments are affected when young people fail to effectively manage their enterprises and move towards growth and profits. This is where mentorship programmes should come in. A randomised controlled trial on the effect of grants, business training and mentorship on micro-enterprise development among women in Dandora, Kenya showed that mentorship significantly contributed to enterprise development (Brooks, Donovan and John 2016). Women were able to develop social networks and grow their business as a result of the mentorship that they received from established women entrepreneurs. A mentorship programme for young people taking YEDF loans might enable youth to learn about business opportunities and risks, as well as develop the social networks that are essential for running a successful business.

4.4 Social capital and social networks

Social capital refers to the set of resources and relations within families and communities that can facilitate actions for the development of individuals (Coleman 1988). According to Coleman, social capital is identified by its functions, and how these functions become resources for actors to use to achieve their interests and navigate social structures. He argues that social capital has a productive or instrumental component that results in the attainment of certain things that would otherwise be unachievable. Although Coleman aimed to conceptualise how individuals are socialised and their actions 'governed and shaped by social norms and customs' (*ibid.*: 95), and the ways that education systems enable this form of socialisation, social capital has emerged as an important consideration in youth enterprise development interventions.

Social capital plays a role in enabling young people to successfully place an application for YEDF funds, as well as set up an enterprise. Young people recognised that they need a social network to help secure the required recommendations from local religious institutions

or community-level officials. In other cases, social networks help in providing the required collateral or directly assist in developing the application materials. However, many young people in rural settings have social networks that are not conversant with YEDF procedures, or not powerful enough to influence the outcomes of the fund allocation process. One young interviewee stated that, '*sijui mtu yeyote huko wa kunizaidia kupata bisna au pesa ya YEDF* [I don't know anyone to help me in getting the business, funds or tenders from youth fund]' (Female 003, November 2016).

4.5 Politicisation of youth programmes

Programmes supporting youth enterprise are intertwined with party politics. While in principle state engagement is positive, in Kenya political parties propose policies on employment as a means to gain legitimacy and support from young people. As such, youth perceive the YEDF as a political project, a strategy to buy loyalty to a particular political party or regime – '*hii pesa ni ya politicians* [this is money for politicians]' (Male 002, October 2016):

I have always been here mataani [in the community], nobody tells us about the fund. We only hear it during campaign times. In fact, I will not apply because we didn't vote for the regime. How can it give us funds for empowerment?
(Male 001, October 2016)

The links between youth funds, political parties and government reduces the sustainability of state-funded youth initiatives. Creating a less political policy, and legislative documents to guide the implementation of national youth policies, is essential to ensuring both effective accountability and sustainability.

4.6 The potential of youth enterprise in Kenya

Although much displeasure has been expressed by youth in relation to the YEDF, there is clearly potential to develop successful young entrepreneurs. This is not to mean that states should see entrepreneurship programmes as the ultimate solution to youth under- and unemployment, but initiatives that enable self-employment of young people and financial independence can support youth livelihoods. For example, one youth stated:

I started a poultry farm through a loan that I received from YEDF. I now have tenders to supply eggs and chicken to schools and restaurants in town. It was tough to start but now I am liking the business. It is better than working for someone else. (Male 005, October 2016)

Other evaluations of youth and entrepreneurship in Kenya show that secondary school graduates prefer working for themselves to working for others (Nikoi *et al.* 2016). A five-year longitudinal study on youth livelihoods indicated that youth who have received entrepreneurial and life-skills training had self-confidence and the ability to start an enterprise while also working for others (*ibid.*). This desire for self-employment among young people can be strengthened through

providing an enabling policy framework that not only identifies young entrepreneurs but provides both the funds and the support services to enable them to thrive. While in principle this is exactly what the YEDF seeks to do, in practice its effectiveness has been blunted by poor implementation, mismanagement and corruption.

5 Conclusion

The YEDF was established in Kenya to respond to the problem of access to credit, particularly the need for collateral and the inflexible payment procedures that affected young entrepreneurs. The youth fund was also viewed as part of a strategic national policy agenda to introduce young people into the labour market, and thereby address high under- and unemployment. However, the fund also suggests a shift in state policy, where the state moves from being the primary employer, to a facilitator or enabler of employment opportunities for youth. This shift, though promising, is also problematic because it puts the central responsibilities of youth employment and livelihoods on the shoulders of the youth themselves. In other words, the state is not to blame for rampant unemployment – rather, the finger can be pointed at the limitations of individual youth capabilities, aspirations and efforts.

Analysis of issues surrounding the YEDF revealed that the implementation framework is too narrow and there is a lack of support structures. In addition, YEDF suffers from unclear eligibility criteria, mismanagement of funds and corruption. Further analysis indicates that many young people lack the social networks, entrepreneurial skills, and a supportive business environment, which would allow them to benefit from credit. The weak support structures around the YEDF not only contribute to the exclusion of many young people, but also reduce the success of the loans that are made. Overall, young people appear to have gained little from what is supposed to be a flagship programme.

What can be learned from this experience? Assuming the problems of mismanagement and corruption can be addressed, and youth policy can be depoliticised, the YEDF experience suggests three lessons for policymakers. First, development of entrepreneurial and business skills and provision of mentorship are paramount to the long-term success of these kinds of programmes. In other words, young people require more than access to credit through state-supported funds. If entrepreneurship primarily entails the application of skills, knowledge, creativity and innovation, as well as taking strategic risks with the aim of catapulting success of an enterprise business risk, then youth can only make effective use of YEDF funds when equipped with the relevant skills. As such, programmes designed to promote self-employment through business development must prioritise training and social network support, as well as create an enabling business environment for start-up businesses to flourish. Second, young people are key stakeholders who must be continually engaged in the implementation of state-level initiatives. In particular, state initiatives must pay attention to the pluralities and unique challenges that various categories of young people experience,

to avoid more homogenous national programmes that fail to address the needs of the population they seek to assist. Youth in rural areas and urban slums need specific policy initiatives that support their efforts at livelihood building. Third, and perhaps most importantly, governments and non-state actors must move towards a comprehensive, coordinated approach to youth employment and livelihoods that incorporates education and training, industrial partnerships and vocational training. This kind of approach will help counter the limitations of self-employment and entrepreneurship programmes like the YEDEF.

Note

- 1 Dandora is one of the urban settlements in Nairobi. It faces significant challenges with its housing, water and sewerage system. It also has major environmental problems as the primary dump site for Nairobi County. Dandora has been cited as one of the regions with high crime rates and drug abuse among youth, the majority of whom attained minimal education. The main sources of livelihood for young people in Dandora are self-employment through entrepreneurship initiatives (Huchzermeyer 2008).

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Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship: The Role of Mentoring*

Ayodele Ibrahim Shittu

Abstract The risks and rewards associated with mentoring young people for entrepreneurship are attracting growing attention among policymakers, development organisations and scholars. This article examines entrepreneurship mentoring relationships from the perspective of young people. Based on the model of youth mentoring, it explores how entrepreneurship mentoring can influence the entrepreneurial intentions of young people. Findings from the review of the literature show that mentoring relationships are beneficial whether they are formal or informal. The implications of mentoring relationships for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship are discussed.

Keywords: youth, unemployment, employment, Africa, entrepreneurship, group monitoring.

1 Introduction

Despite the dominant discourse that highlights the many inherent benefits associated with youth entrepreneurship (Chigunta *et al.* 2005; Brixiová, Ncube and Bicaba 2014), there can be issues and challenges which discourage young people from embracing entrepreneurship. For example, the short durations of youth empowerment initiatives, undue emphasis on supply-side training, insufficient or non-existent financial support, the tenuous linkage to viable market opportunities, and the strong focus on bringing together young people as a group rather than as stand-alone entrepreneurs can all be problematic (ILO 2012; Flynn *et al.* 2017). Yet, economic uncertainties, and the limited supply in formal paid jobs and other career opportunities, push young people into self-employment, what some have called ‘entrepreneurship by necessity’. However, they are neither prepared nor equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge needed to establish and manage a business successfully.

In terms of benefits, Chigunta *et al.* (2005) argue that youth entrepreneurship promotes employment opportunities, fosters innovation and resilience among young people, and increases their social and cultural identity. The suggestion is that these empower young people to contribute positively to their own development and the economic

development of their local communities (Gilmore 2009). Through employment creation, entrepreneurship can bring marginalised youths into the mainstream of economic activities. While evidence abounds that many young people, especially in developing countries, are pushed into entrepreneurship due to lack of or limited options for formal employment (Schoof 2006; Amin 2010), their motivations for establishing micro-enterprises also shift over time (Williams and Williams 2014). Indirectly, it ameliorates the socio-psychological position of jobless youths at large. The growth in the sense of community acceptance and appreciation among these young people, therefore, shapes their cultural and social identity, irrespective of their background.

Despite these benefits, there are constraints that impede young people from starting businesses. A few of the common barriers include access to information, access to credit, acquisition of relevant skills, access to market, and relevant institutional supports. While these barriers are common in both developed and developing countries, the perception of the severity of each barrier varies among the young people (Chigunta 2002; Gilmore 2009). When they persist unabated, these barriers pose serious threats to the promotion of youth entrepreneurship. The International Labour Office (ILO 2012) identified five measures for promoting effective youth entrepreneurship: (1) target specific barriers confronting the youth; (2) offer a broad range of services including mentoring; (3) embed entrepreneurship curricula in both secondary and tertiary education; (4) establish a favourable regulatory environment for promoting business expansion; and (5) undertake impact assessments for continuous improvement.

Three specific barriers that have received attention in the literature are: fear of failure; disengagement with entrepreneurship; and diminishing levels of awareness. Fear of failure is a personality trait that results in the avoidance of the possibility of failure irrespective of the prevailing circumstances. In relation to entrepreneurship, this has two broad dimensions (Singh, Corner and Pavlovich 2007). The first is the problem-focused dimension, which emphasises distress due to unemployment and financial pressures. This is associated with the strong dislike of shame, embarrassment, and loss of one's self-worth. The second is the emotion-focused dimension, which emphasises emotional reactions such as guilt, depression, anger and frustration. These set in when potential entrepreneurs pay too much attention to what their immediate family members, relatives, and other members of society think about their performance. In addition, the feeling of having limited entrepreneurial experience and skills, poor ability to plan and implement priorities, and low self-esteem can trigger avoidance behaviour among young people. When it persists, it becomes a potential barrier to youth entrepreneurship.

Young people can disengage themselves from entrepreneurship depending on the extent to which they perceive the barriers confronting them. Specifically, limited access to capital, loss of cultural identity, and weak institutional support capabilities can influence young entrepreneurs' decision to abandon their start-up efforts. This is also known as uninformed

entrepreneurial exit. Conversely, young entrepreneurs can exit the start-up process based on informed decision-making – for example, that the existing business is unlikely to succeed. This is also known as the intelligent exit. Whether the disengagement is voluntary or not, the importance of feasibility analysis as a learning tool cannot be overemphasised (Yusuf 2012).

Even though there are young people who have decided not to be entrepreneurs in a business sense (Chigunta *et al.* 2005), it is not enough to diminish the importance of entrepreneurial awareness in the pursuit of youth entrepreneurship. There are three channels to promoting entrepreneurial awareness: (1) improving entrepreneurial mindsets; (2) creating a sustainable climate for inspiring people to embrace entrepreneurship; and (3) raising motivation, and capacities to identify and take advantage of economic and social opportunities. Despite these, the paucity of information and limited access to professional networks or mentoring programmes increase the difficulty young people have in identifying, starting, growing and sustaining an enterprise. Consequently, the level of entrepreneurial awareness is not only low, but also the link between the realities and mentorship programmes is characterised by ambiguity.

Against this backdrop, this article focuses on the role of mentoring in the promotion of youth entrepreneurship, and specifically responds to the growing call for systematic inquiry into the relationships between entrepreneurship and mentoring from the point of view of young people (Bisk 2002; O’Neil 2005; Cull 2006; Tonidandel, Avery and Phillips 2007; St-Jean and Audet 2013).

2 Mentoring

Nigeria provides a useful context for an exploration of entrepreneurship and mentoring. The entrepreneurial attitude of young Nigerians is generally considered to be high (GEM 2013) and many observers assume that they are naturally ready to embark on an entrepreneurial journey. In fact, the GEM report, *Supporting Africa’s Young Entrepreneurs* (2015), states that 82 per cent of young Nigerians, irrespective of gender, are ‘potential entrepreneurs’. Yet their entrepreneurial activities are heavily oriented towards trading: 50 per cent prefer to invest in wholesale and retail activities; 24 per cent in consumer services and hospitality; and less than 7 per cent invest in the agro-industry. Further, more than 23 per cent struggle to develop a viable business (Amorós and Bosma 2013). This situation has led some to call for greater attention to entrepreneurship mentoring (Herrington and Kelle 2012; Schött, Kew and Cheraghi 2015). Mentoring is generally considered to be useful when starting a new business venture (Waters *et al.* 2002; Smith and Perks 2006).

In the last four years, there has been a surge in the development of formal entrepreneurship mentoring programmes. These programmes are meant to provide young entrepreneurs with access to sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments that are designed to enhance skills and improve the entrepreneurial

mindset. Generally, such programmes are based on the premise that mentoring is a purpose-driven channel for transferring entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and ability to young entrepreneurs (Taylor and Bressler 2000; Rhodes 2002; Rhodes *et al.* 2006; Wilbanks 2013), and to develop their entrepreneurial identity.

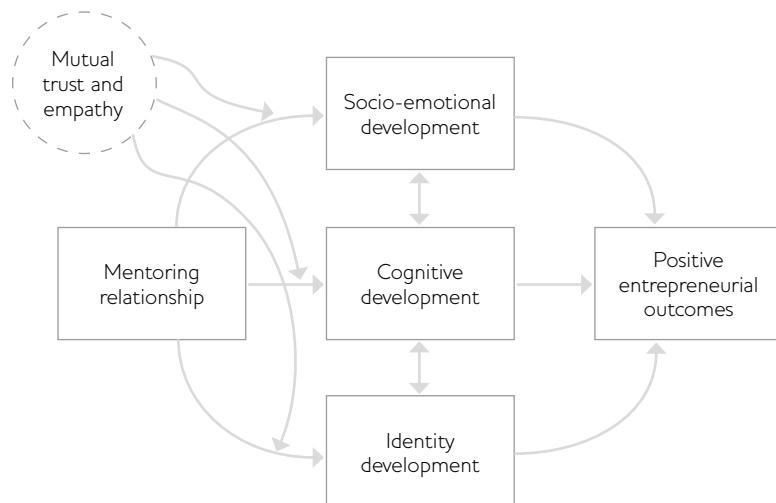
Nigerian commercial organisations have put forward a number of justifications for investing in entrepreneurship mentoring. The Bank of Industry, for example, suggested that mentoring is necessary to improve the quality of life of aspiring young nascent entrepreneurs (*Punch Newspaper* 2016), while the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) stated that mentoring can strategically help the nation to harness its youthful resources for its economic development agenda (Onuba 2016). The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) argued that mentoring is a means of investing in the future of Nigerian youths (Okon 2016) and the SABMiller Foundation claimed that through mentoring, the bright business ideas inherent in the teeming youths of south-east Nigeria can be turned into reality (Ogunfuwa 2016). There is clearly a belief that entrepreneurship mentoring can help nascent entrepreneurs develop into successful business operators.

The academic literature around mentoring is significant. Crisp and Cruz (2009) review this literature between 1990 and 2007 and conclude that neither mentoring nor a mentoring relationship has an operational definition. Tonidandel *et al.* (2007) discuss how to maximise returns on mentoring. O'Neil (2005) acknowledges that a mentoring relationship is, indeed, a complex set of helping behaviours and suggests the need for a distinction between the effects of formal versus informal mentoring. Fagenson-Eland, Marks and Amendola (1997) suggest that more research on mentor–mentee relationships is needed, particularly around structural factors.

In relation to mentoring within the entrepreneurship domain, St-Jean and Audet (2009) explore mentees' satisfaction with a mentoring programme for entrepreneurs in Quebec, Canada. Gimmon (2014) uses the case study approach to investigate mentoring and its influence on entrepreneurship within higher education. Turker and Sonmez Selcuk (2008) wonder why entrepreneurship mentoring is hard to find in Turkish universities. These studies focus more on formal entrepreneurship mentoring relationships with little or no attention accorded to informal relationships. Existing studies are yet to explore entrepreneurship mentoring relationships from the perspectives of recent university graduates. Schøtt *et al.* (2015) assert that skill development and/or market access is unlikely to produce a significant increase in youth entrepreneurial activity without a concomitant investment in mentoring.

3 Conceptual framework

Mentoring is one of a variety of interventions for promoting positive development of young people (Rhodes 2002; Grossman and Rhodes 2002). Despite its increasing popularity, the extant literature

Figure 1 Model of youth mentoring

Source Redrawn from Rhodes and DuBois (2008).

suggests that there is much ambiguity around the concept (Noe 1988; Crisp and Cruz 2009). Scholars approach mentoring from a number of organisational, educational and developmental perspectives.

Building on the work of Grossman and Rhodes (2002), Rhodes and DuBois (2008) provide a useful model of youth mentoring (see Figure 1). This model is particularly relevant because it spells out in clear terms the processes and conditions necessary for understanding the effects of a mentoring relationship on young people. Specifically, it posits that entrepreneurship mentoring can influence the entrepreneurial intentions of young people through three processes: socio-emotional development, cognitive development and identity development (see also Rhodes *et al.* 2006).

The ultimate goal of socio-emotional development is improved ability to relate to others. Following Erikson's (1950) eight stages of development and Etzioni's (1988) decision-making model, the socio-emotional capability of both the mentor and the mentee can be developed through shared value commitment and emotional involvement within a social space. This implies that a mentoring relationship that is rich in companionship, genuine care and proximal relationships can increase the chances of learning how to communicate, act, react, interact, and to interpret others' feelings. Thus, when the mentee learns how to get along with others, it increases his or her chances of making informed business-related decisions. Consequently, the exposure of the mentee to genuine care and companionship through a mentoring relationship should have a significant impact on his or her intention to be an entrepreneur, and indeed on subsequent outcomes.

Bandura (1993: 144) posits that individuals with a high sense of efficacy see difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered, and attribute failure to

Table 1 Differences between formal and informal mentoring relationships

Property	Type of mentoring relationship	
	Formal	Informal
Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put together deliberately by the organisation Requires intention to demonstrate interests by means of application Formal mentors are formally invited to perform the mentoring functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops on the basis of mutual identifications, perceived competence, and interpersonal comfort
Intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak emotional attachment Generally professionally managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very strong emotional attachment Natural and intrinsic commitment
Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visible to the organisation As such, they cautiously interact with the mentees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally less visible Relationship with mentees driven by impunity Strong tendency to 'stretch' mentees to achieve more
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organisation designs the focus of the relationship Socialises mentees into a given culture Lowers attrition Project coordinator drafts the goals and objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally focuses on the career and psychosocial development of the mentee Goals of this mentoring type evolves with time Goals built around the long-term career needs of the mentee
Durability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally time-bound Often lasts 6–12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally lacks time frame Often last 3–6 years

Source Compiled by the author.

insufficient effort, knowledge, and skills that are acquirable. This implies a positive correlation between perceived self-efficacy and cognitive development. Albert and Luzzo (1999) add that outcome expectations and goals can also make any given career option seem unattainable. So, when a mentoring relationship focuses on building both cognitive and affective capacities, it empowers the mentee with new skills and new approaches to effective problem-solving and decision-making (Rhodes *et al.* 2006). Consequently, higher cognitive development should have a positive impact on the intention of a mentee to be an entrepreneur.

Identity development helps to shift young people's order of consciousness (Komives *et al.* 2006), leading to a generational shift in aspirations towards a 'dream career' (Fernández-Kelly and Konczal 2005). With respect to entrepreneurship, development of an entrepreneurial identity is viewed as a dynamic process of self-identification (Jones, Latham and Betta 2007), self-definition (Vesala, Peura and McElwee 2007), or self-picturing (DeFillippi and Arthur 1994) that is associated with either the category of entrepreneurship or the role of entrepreneurs. The determinants of entrepreneurial identity include know-how competencies (*ibid.*), self-awareness (Komives *et al.* 2006), experience (Donnellon, Ollila and Middleton 2014), and social bonds and networks

(McKeever, Jack and Anderson 2015). On the one hand, a mentoring relationship impacts entrepreneurial identity (Rhodes and DuBois 2008); while on the other hand, entrepreneurial identity has a strong influence on the outcome of nascent entrepreneurship (Jones *et al.* 2007).

The relationships displayed in Figure 1 are indications that the path of influence between mentoring relationships and positive entrepreneurial outcomes may not necessarily be linear. For instance, the Rhodes and DuBois (2008) model of youth mentoring acknowledges that for mentoring relationships to have a significant effect on socio-emotional, cognitive and identity development, both the mentor and the mentee must share a strong sense of mutual trust and empathy. In addition, the model emphasises that when the odds of interaction between socio-emotional and cognitive development, as well as cognitive and identity development are high, the chances that the mentoring relationship will positively influence the expected outcome is also high.

Mentoring relationships have been broadly categorised into two types: formal and informal. While the former are often initiated by an organisation or programme, the latter arise through a variety of circumstances. Formal and informal mentoring relationships can be differentiated in relation to five properties: formation, intensity, visibility, focus and durability (Table 1).

Mentoring relationships within organisations can also reflect an element of formal supervision. Three specific forms of supervisory mentoring relationship are acknowledged in the literature: the traditional relationship with the mentor multiple levels away from the mentee; peer mentoring with the mentor occupying a similar level to the mentee; and step-ahead mentoring with the mentor one level ahead of the mentee (Tonidandel *et al.* 2007: 106). On the other hand, informal, non-supervisory mentoring relationships are often based on a personal relationship or commitment between the mentor and the mentee.

4 Evidence from the literature

This section reviews literature relating to different aspects of mentoring, with the objective of identifying insights relevant to the use of mentoring in youth entrepreneurship programmes.

4.1 Mentoring process

A mentoring process defines the various stages in the development of a mentoring relationship. Kram (1988) showed that a mentoring process is systematic, differentiated and complex. Its systematic nature is attributed to the developmental needs surrounding the evolution of a mentoring relationship. As seen previously, according to Rhodes and DuBois (2008), developmental needs include socio-emotional, cognitive and identity development, and these require different levels of structure, direction and support. As such, the differences in the ability of mentors to manage the inherent challenges associated with the developmental needs of mentees are critical. The mentoring process is also believed to be complex because the channel of leading mentees through levels of

dependency to autonomy and self-reliance is non-linear (Rhodes and DuBois 2008). Besides, understanding of the relational processes that underpin the mentor–mentee bond is relatively limited (Spencer 2006).

4.2 Mentoring functions and roles

Evidences from classical studies show that mentors perform a number of functions within a mentoring relationship. According to Schockett and Haring-Hidore (1985), mentors perform eight different functions in a mentoring relationship: as role model, motivator, counsellor, friend/colleague, educator, consultant, sponsor and protector. They also function as transitional figures. In their discussion of how adult relationships with peers offer opportunities for personal and professional growth in a work setting, Kram and Isabella (1985) highlight nine mentoring functions: sponsorship, coaching, exposure and visibility, protection, challenging work assignments, acceptance and confirmation, counselling, role modelling and friendship. They suggest that these functions can be categorised as either career-related or psychosocial. An empirical study of Noe (1988) lends support to the proposition that mentoring supports these two groups of functions. On the other hand, Jacobi (1991) proposes 15 mentoring functions that are broadly divided into three dimensions: emotional and psychological, career and professional, and role modelling. Scandura (1992) proposes three slightly different groupings of mentoring functions: vocational, role modelling, and social support functions.

Crisp and Cruz (2009) critically review and synthesise emerging empirical literature on mentoring with the broad objective of reframing and updating Jacobi's (1991) characteristics of mentoring. They show that for college students, the provision of support, role modelling, friendship, empowerment and career advice top the list of mentoring functions.

4.3 The mentoring relationship

Empirical evidence comparing the effect of formal versus informal mentoring relationships on mentoring outcomes is relatively scarce. Chao, Walz and Gardner (1992) conducted a field study with a view to comparing three measures of outcome (i.e. organisational socialisation, job satisfaction and salary) between individuals with and without a mentoring relationship. Their findings suggest that mentees in informal mentoring relationships enjoy more favourable outcomes than non-mentored individuals. Outcomes for mentees in formal mentoring relationships are not significantly different from: (1) mentees in informal mentoring relationships, and (2) individuals without mentors.

A comparative study of Ragins and Cotton (1999) shows that mentees who are in informal mentoring relationships are more satisfied than those in formal relationships. They are also more effective and earn more than those in formal mentoring relationships. Compared to non-mentored individuals, those in informal mentoring relationships also benefit more in career outcomes because they are more responsive to a mentor's career development capabilities. The duration of

relationship between the mentor and the mentee also accounts for the accrued benefits from informal mentoring relationships. Consequently, mentees in informal mentoring relationships enjoy improved commitment, motivation, trust, and communication with their mentors. In spite of these findings, the authors warn that formal mentoring relationships have inherent values that cannot be overemphasised.

Evidence suggests that individuals who engage in mentoring relationships, whether formal or informal, benefit one way or the other (Chao *et al.* 1992; Ragins and Cotton 1999). But formal and informal mentoring relationships are not equally beneficial: empirical evidence shows that the odds of a significant effect are higher for informal mentoring relationships than formal mentoring relationships. For instance, the findings of Noe (1988), Ragins and Cotton (1999), Scandura and Williams (2001) and Allen, Day and Lentz (2005) support the argument that organisations that expect mentees to have the same benefits from both formal and informal mentoring relationships will be disappointed.

5 Implications for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship

The results of this review suggest that mentoring can influence entrepreneurial intentions among young people. However, the literature that specifically addresses mentoring of young people in developing countries is limited, and does not provide a very clear picture of what kind of mentoring works, and for whom. This lack of clarity is a major constraint to policy and programmes promoting youth entrepreneurship.

Over 15 years ago, Chigunta *et al.* (2005: 15) noted that ‘even though the benefits of youth entrepreneurship are visible to all, there is little empirical data to show how the perceived benefits are realized in reality in Africa’. In the intervening period, the situation has not changed significantly, and the need for rigorous research into entrepreneurship mentoring among young people is even greater now.

One objection to investment in mentoring as a development intervention arises because of the potential expense of scaling up what are most often conceived of as intensive one-to-one relationships. It is one thing to identify and organise mentors for tens or even hundreds of young people, and quite another to try to address Africa’s youth employment challenge in this way.

Future research around young people and mentorship might focus on competing motivations for starting a business venture, and the relationship between mentorship and ‘temporally fluid motivations’ (Williams and Williams 2014). The gender dimensions of entrepreneurship mentoring in Africa also deserve attention. Future research might also explore the social and economic benefits and costs of mentoring initiatives for young people with different levels of education, and in rural and urban settings. Besides exploring the situations in which group mentoring can be successful, it is now imperative to situate the challenges of youth entrepreneurship training and mentoring within different African contexts.

Note

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Programme-Induced Entrepreneurship and Young People's Aspirations

Jacqueline Halima Mgomia

Abstract This article unpacks the experiences of 52 young men and women from relatively poor households who received a grant of US\$125 from a research project to start a business. Only 26 per cent aspired to be entrepreneurs while the remainder were either interested in business as a side activity or as a stepping stone towards employment. Using the concept of programme-induced entrepreneurship, the article explores interventions aimed at promoting entrepreneurship in contexts where young participants have a diversity of career aspirations, only some of which involve entrepreneurship. It argues that for those young people whose career aspirations do involve entrepreneurship, these interventions may be important gateways, whereas for youth whose aspirations do not, they are at best stepping stones and at worst distractions. As such, programme-induced entrepreneurship can fragment youth aspirations. The article calls for a more holistic approach to the promotion of entrepreneurship that takes explicit account of youth aspirations and family dynamics.

Keywords: Africa, Tanzania, unemployment, poverty, waithood, uncertainty.

1 Introduction

The general framework that informs most research on youth entrepreneurship in developing countries posits that the lack of capital (Chigunta and Mkandawire 2002; de Gobbi 2014) and business knowledge (Kourilsky, Walstad and Thomas 2007; DeJaeghere and Baxter 2014) explains, to a large extent, why innovative business ventures are not successful among poor people. As a PhD student in 2012, I participated in a microfinance research project known as 'Mechanics of Microfinance', which was designed within this framework. Specifically, it offered entrepreneurship training to youth coming from poor families who were likely to fail their secondary school final examinations. Its overall aim was to prepare them for careers as entrepreneurs once their academic paths closed. It is important to note that in Tanzania the term entrepreneurship (i.e. *ujasiriamali* in Kiswahili)

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is generally used to refer to starting and operating a small business; it is not used to imply innovation (see Schumpeter 1934). In the remainder of this article, therefore, entrepreneurship and starting, or operating, a small business are used synonymously.

It is also important to highlight that the Mechanics of Microfinance research project was rooted in a simple observation made by a beneficiary of Femina, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working on reproductive health, who stated, 'It's all good that we get information about reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, but we need jobs!' (Sekei 2011: 6). To address the challenge, in 2011 Femina collaborated with the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) to design a reality TV entrepreneurship competition, with 11 episodes aired over three months. The show offered entrepreneurship training by bringing six entrepreneurs together to compete around issues of finance, business skills, entrepreneurship knowledge and related attitudes (Sekei 2011). To measure the impact of the show, a randomised controlled trial was conducted with a sample of 1,918 students who were about to graduate from 43 public secondary schools. A treatment group (drawn from 22 schools) was provided with information and incentives to watch the 11 episodes of the *Ruka Juu* show, while a control group (drawn from 21 different schools) was encouraged to watch 11 films that were aired at the same time. One of the immediate outcomes was that 12 per cent of the treatment group and 8 per cent of the control group expressed willingness to pay money to attend future training on entrepreneurship. From these individuals, 60 were randomly selected and invited for two weekend training sessions on entrepreneurship at the University of Dar es Salaam Entrepreneurship Centre (UDEEC) in November 2011.

My study was thus designed to test whether the provision of capital to youth who had received entrepreneurship training would enable them to start and run small businesses successfully. To measure the impact of the training, capital was also provided to youth who did not receive any training. The capital injection, however, became an intervention in its own right as it incentivised youth to start up in business.

As I engaged with these youth in the initial stages of starting and running their business, I realised that there was a need to revisit the 'training + capital' framework because other factors seemed to be critical in determining success. For example, it appeared that family dynamics and participant aspirations were important in shaping their engagement with the entrepreneurship intervention and emergent outcomes. By family dynamics, I mean the give-and-take interactions between youth and other members of their families as the young people sought to access money and the family sought to meet basic household needs. In poor families, these dynamics can involve difficult trade-offs. I use the term 'youth aspirations' to refer to what youth were anticipating they would be and do in the future. I argue that aspirations and family dynamics impacted on the ways that young participants used the capital and training that they had received. As they engaged

in business, their aspirations and family situations interacted with, and played as important a role as the entrepreneurship intervention.

The body of this article is divided into three main sections. In the next section I present the Social Lab as a site and methodology for studying what I conceptualise as programme-induced entrepreneurship. Following this, I unpack the career aspirations of the youth participants in relation to family dynamics by looking at how they interacted with the entrepreneurship intervention. In the final section, I present a youth-centred framework for entrepreneurship promotion that puts family economic status and youth aspirations at centre stage.

2 Background

I use the notion of programme-induced entrepreneurship to refer to entrepreneurial behaviour that was stimulated by programmes such as the ‘training + capital’ intervention that was at the heart of the Mechanics of Microfinance project. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa there are now many programmes funded by government, NGOs and others with an explicit objective to induce entrepreneurial behaviour among under-resourced, and unemployed youth. The idea that entrepreneurial behaviour is or can be induced or stimulated among the poor is not new, as indicated by terms such as necessity-induced entrepreneurship, recession-induced entrepreneurship, opportunity-induced entrepreneurship, university-induced entrepreneurship and so on. The value of the concept of programme-induced entrepreneurship is that it brings into focus development interventions that are specifically designed to stimulate entrepreneurial behaviour and subjectivity among unemployed or disadvantaged young people, regardless of whether they had previously had any interest in entrepreneurship. Again, it is important to remember that in this context the key indicator of entrepreneurial behaviour is starting and running a small business in contrast to risk-taking or innovation. This means that much of the literature on stimulating entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour, which puts innovation and risk-taking at centre stage, is not particularly relevant.

In the Foucauldian sense of objectification and subjectification, programmes that seek to induce entrepreneurship are governed by discourses, i.e. ‘practices that systematically form objects of which they speak’ (Foucault 1972: 49). The process starts with identifying the ‘lack of something’ that is followed by identifying those who lack entrepreneurship skills, and culminates in encouraging and empowering them to acquire skills and support their entrepreneurial ventures. In collaboration with other actors, the Tanzanian government has created a framework for promoting entrepreneurship that seeks to produce an entrepreneurial subject through training and capital injection. It also promotes active research engagement. Although such interventions vary across actors and institutions, they all tend to present youth with only one possible future career – that of an entrepreneur. As such, they can run roughshod over other youth subjectivities and aspirations.

For my study, I selected 52 individuals, half women and half men, out of the 1,918 youth who participated in a randomised controlled trial to be part of an ethnographic study, using a method I refer to as the Social Lab. However, I only selected them from among those who were willing to pay for entrepreneurship training. Using a phone survey, I identified youth who had limited opportunities to continue with school and had shown an interest in starting a business. Individuals were selected to yield four equal groups, each having 13 young people: Group 1 had watched the entrepreneurship entertainment-education (edutainment) programme on TV, i.e. *Ruka Juu* Training; Group 2 had classroom entrepreneurship training, i.e. UDEC Training; Group 3 watched both the TV programme and attended the classroom training, i.e. *Ruka Juu* and UDEC Training; and Group 4 received no training. All participants in the study were between 18 and 23 years old, and all came from relatively poor families.

The project provided a grant of US\$125 to each of the 52 youth to enable them to start a business in urban Dar es Salaam. I observed their businesses from January 2013 to January 2014. Their ventures involved selling vegetables, snacks, second-hand clothes, electronics and beauty products. Some worked as street vendors, others set up at home or by the roadside, while a few managed to rent shops or other business premises.

My study used the ethnographic method to observe this economic experiment of how young people utilised a business grant. To do this, I set up a Social Lab, a methodological space that combines experiment with ethnography to capture how the participants interacted with real-life situations. Since one generally needs a lab to conduct an experiment and a field situation to do ethnography, I had to come up with a space that had some of the characteristics of both. Ethnographically, I thus used this Social Lab as a way to study the everyday lives of young people, tracking the money they received as it entered their businesses and households, as well as observing how these young people engaged with the microfinance project.

3 Aspirations and family dynamics

3.1 Setting the scene

In early January 2013 I was in Dar es Salaam to observe the young people starting their businesses. Within a period of two months, more than 40 businesses were up and running. The young people spent between 40 and 70 hours a week working. The profit they generated ranged from US\$1 to US\$3 per day, which is in line with expected earnings of small businesses in Tanzania (URT 2012). With these businesses, they generated pocket money and some financial support for their families. Yet when questioned about their employment status more than half of the youth responded 'I am just around', whereas less than a quarter said they were doing business. While some continued to run their businesses, others soon left them behind for low wage or salaried jobs as they promised a regular income, and still others went on to explore opportunities for further education.

It was then that I became curious about how these young people interpreted their engagement with entrepreneurship and, more critically, why only a few of them seemed to identify with entrepreneurship. How could it be that most of these participants in an entrepreneurship programme wished to stop being entrepreneurs or reduce entrepreneurship to a secondary activity?

3.2 Aspirations

Among the youth who participated in my study, I identified three groups in terms of their career aspirations. The first group, which accounted for 26 per cent of the study participants, were entrepreneurial youth for whom doing business was the first and perhaps only career choice. Although all the youth in my study came from poor families, relatively, the individuals in this first group tended to come from lower income families and had fewer other opportunities. They were more likely to start and run a business venture despite the challenges this entailed. For them, the provision of a business grant was an additional impetus that enabled them to realise their dreams. Hence, they were more likely to invest their money carefully to create a stable and profitable business. If their businesses failed, they tended to start another. One young woman who fitted into this group shared her aspirations:

After five years, I expect to have expanded my business by owning a large food store and as part of my plan I am saving for this. And I will buy another fishing vessel in the next five years and within the next ten coming years buy a boat with an engine.

In regard to the anticipated obstacles, she said:

The main challenge is that my parents might force me to get into marriage before it reaches that time, but in six to seven years to come if someone will be interested in marrying me I will accept as long as we both agreed to it. (FD, Dar, S1, 2012¹)

In fact, this young woman was married in 2014. However, prior to the wedding she agreed with her family and the spouse-to-be that she would marry only if she was able to keep her business, and her future husband agreed to hire someone to assist her. She was apparently successful in negotiating an arrangement that did not constrain her future business aspirations.

For three other participants who fitted into the first group, their businesses played a central part in their imagined futures:

In ten years, I expect to have more than Tsh30,000,000 and a manufacturing company. My income will be Tsh50,000,000 and my plan is to become a famous food producer in the world. (MD, Dar, S1, 2012)

In five years to come I believe I will be owning a business with a capital of Tsh7 million and in the next ten years I will be owning various business [sic.] that will round to a total of Tsh40 million in terms of capital. I have chosen to do business in my life. (MD, Dar, S1, 2012)

In five years' time, I will be having my own skills of making children's clothes and I think I will be married and with a child in my own house. In ten years' time, I think my business will have made a good capital and I will be running my life smoothly. (FD, Dar, S1, 2012)

While their current operations are on a small scale, they all imagine that their businesses and their capital will grow. They see the present as a time to gain the skills and experiences that will enable them to scale up their business and realise their aspirations.

In the second and largest group, 48 per cent of the participants were youth who thought they had multiple career options, with entrepreneurship being only one. They were more likely to come from households with parents who were employed. It was a sense of security and of having options that probably explained their willingness to abandon their business when another employment opportunity opened up, even if it paid less money. Stability and security of employment, and the assurance of regular pay, were particularly important for them and the risks inherent in running a business were acceptable only if they already had a job to meet basic needs.

One young woman in this group had a strong interest in being employed. In the first two months of running her business she hired someone to look after it while she attended nursing school. After six months of training, she started working as a nursing intern. While she earned less than what she would have earned from her business, she argued it was the beginning of her career and she hoped to make more money later. At the same time, she did not dismiss the possibility of running a business in the future '... in ten years if things do not go well on the employment side I will then be a big businesswoman in Dar and other regions' (FD, Dar, S1, 2012).

A young man in this group said: 'I will be a soldier as that is what my parents want me to be... but once I get my salary I will start a business' (MD, Dar, S1, 2012). This illustrates how family can shape young people's futures. His father pointed out to me that business was not a reliable form of employment, so he preferred his son to become a soldier like him so he can get government benefits. Reluctantly, the youth agreed, believing that it would help him get a permanent job and later assist him to start a business. Another young man imagined that in the future he would also combine employment and business: 'In five years to come I will be a procurement officer and will be paid Tsh500,000. In ten years, I see myself as a manager in a certain office. Later I will open a business' (MD, Dar, S1, 2012).

In the third group, 25 per cent of the participants were young people who were already employed and whose interest was to be employed in other jobs after attaining further academic credentials. They were continuously searching for opportunities or financial resources to continue with education. For them, doing business was only a

Table 1 Gendered aspirations of potential young entrepreneurs

Group	Young women	Young men
1 Aspire to be entrepreneurs	9	5
2 Aspire to be employed	14	11
3 Aspire to first continue with school	3	10
Total	26	26

Source Author's own.

temporary measure or a stepping stone towards their imagined futures as salaried employees. Specifically, it might help meet the cost of further education. Because they prioritised education and employment they were not likely to invest sufficient time in their businesses, and likely to drop out of business when other options arose.

Young people in this group were categorical about their priority being something other than business:

I will have acquired a diploma in five years to come and in the next ten years to come I think I will fight to acquire a degree that will help me in future life. To me education is the way through a good life for my family and me. (MD, Dar, S1, 2012)

My goal is to go back to school. So, I will do business until I get enough money to pay for school fees. I will study up to university. (FD, Dar, S1, 2012)

Well, I might have a diploma in the mentioned years to come. My plan is to apply for a position in the army and during my service time I can apply for studies as other students. (MD, Dar, S1, 2012)

All three of these young people left their businesses after a couple of months and went to school. Today, one of them is in her second year in law college. Another abandoned his business a couple of times to pursue educational opportunities that did not materialise, and the business eventually died. The third was finally admitted to the army after three years of applying.

The fact that 73 per cent of the participants were only interested in business as a side activity or as a stepping stone towards employment raises serious questions about the appropriateness of interventions that aim to induce entrepreneurial behaviour. In relation to young people in groups 2 and 3, are such interventions misdirected?

As indicated in Table 1, young women were more likely to be in groups 1 and 2, while young men dominated Group 3. Out of 52 youth, only 14 aspired to be entrepreneurs, nine of whom were young women. However, the imagination of entrepreneurship among these nine was largely confined to small-scale business in the informal sector: only three aspired to build a medium-scale, formal business. All the five young

men who aspired to be entrepreneurs were thinking of medium-scale businesses. As for the 25 youth who aspired to be in formal employment while running a business on the side, 14 were women and 11 were men. It is striking that of the 13 youth who aspired to continue with school and later be employed, only three were women. These differences underscore well-established gender patterns in relation to education and employment opportunities open to young women in sub-Saharan Africa (Bertrand and Crepon 2014).

Marriage also figured in the imagined futures of the participants and in this case, it was the young women who were more likely to think of getting married and having children within three years, while young men were thinking on a timescale of five to ten years. Over the 12 months of my study, four young women gave birth, four others became pregnant, and five got married (making a total of 13 out of 26 young women – 50 per cent). All of these moves had negative impacts on their business. For those who were doing well, their business declined and for those who were struggling, their business failed. With their new roles of wife and/or mother, these young women had to dedicate most of their time to domestic duties and they consequently had very little time for their businesses.

For young men, marriage aspirations were generally linked to their anticipated business success. During the fieldwork, two young men got married, two got engaged and two others were planning to have children with their girlfriends. Those who got married or engaged were among those whose businesses were doing really well. However, their new roles as husband or/and father also had negative impacts on their businesses. One business failed because the young man used most of his resources to care for his sick wife. Marriage slowed down the growth of another young man's business because he spent time caring for his wife when she got pregnant. Instead of investing money in his business as he normally did, this young man was supporting his expanding household. For the young men who were engaged, their businesses also experienced difficulties as they had to save money to finish paying bride price and prepare for marriage. After weighing the financial demands associated with marriage, one of them decided to postpone it until his business stabilised.

3.3 Family dynamics

The youth who participated in my study were still dependent – they lived with parents or guardians and depended on them for support (URT 1996; Mlamba 1999). The parents and guardians worked in the informal sector, were employed in private firms, owned small businesses or were unemployed. According to the URT's (2000) Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PSRP), people who work in the informal sector in urban areas tend to be poor. During the initial stages of my study, most of the youth said their families had limited resources to support their further education. So, what does this mean for a microfinance project that interfaced with these families by providing young adults with business start-up capital? And what factors influence the ways in which those youth used the money provided?

Although it was expected, in line with the Foucauldian notion of object and subject formation, that a person who attained business knowledge would apply it in practice, I found that this was not necessarily the case. During the early fieldwork, I observed that the youth who were participating in the study made no clear demarcation between business and private transactions. Some used money from the business grant to pay for school fees or health bills, and others used it to cater for basic needs such as transportation, communication and food for themselves and their families. Operating in the context of scarcity and extended families, youth were faced with the difficult choice between investment and spending. I thus argue that, when resources are scarce, capital and business knowledge are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the success of new small business ventures.

Initially, I thought youth had limited knowledge of business principles. To establish the level of their understanding, I conducted a baseline survey. The survey revealed that, of the 52 participants, 22 had a solid theoretical grasp of business principles as they scored between 90 and 100 per cent; 8 scored between 70 and 80 per cent; 11 scored between 50 and 60 per cent and the remaining 11 scored between 40 and 30 per cent. However, on the question of the challenges of separating business transactions from personal transactions, only ten said it was easy. The difficulty was not based on a lack of business knowledge but, rather, on the financial constraints of their families that meant that they had to use their business money to meet personal and family needs.

3.3.1 Meeting family needs through business

Most of the youth in the study were living in under-resourced households, which made their businesses a potential source of family income. For instance, when one received a business grant, her mother was struggling to pay school fees for a younger son who had just started Form 1. With no income herself, his mother relied heavily on her late husband's siblings to raise the funds. The youth and his older brother had to survive on the one meal a day that their mother could afford. During my preliminary field visit in December 2012, she seemed to be relieved by the fact that the programme would provide her son with money to start a business. 'I am so grateful,' she said, 'that you have decided to assist this young man for I was totally stuck... At least now he will be able to sustain himself and help me here and there.' Even before he had started his business, the young man was aware of the family's expectations: 'You see, my mother is not doing well financially,' he stressed, 'and her health is not good. My brother is struggling with school fees just like I did.' He then shared his aspiration: 'I hope, when I start my business, and make profit, I will be able to help at least with transportation money'.

Indeed, only a week after he started his business, this participant took on the main responsibility for providing transport, and later, he frequently paid for the family's food as his mother's income was not stable.

In the field, I saw participants spending between Tsh1,000 and Tsh3,000 per day or even per week to buy food for their families. This money was coming from their daily sales. During our evening walks to their homes, one of the young women regularly bought fruits to take home and sometimes responded to requests from her mother to bring something home to eat. This could be rice, maize flour, beans or oil. Another young woman, who was selling fruits in a market space had to bring some back to her family every day. Similarly, a young woman who had a vegetable stand nearby her house often offered vegetables worth Tsh1,000–2,000 to her family at least four times in a week. Moreover, there were youth who contributed money to cover siblings' school fees and sometimes even assisted parents in paying rent.

Most of my participants felt obligated to contribute something because they were still dependent. To illustrate this situation, one of them said: 'It might be true that I make money nowadays but I depend on my family for most things. Even the shack for my chickens belongs to my parents. Now, how do I refuse their request?' Others said there is no assurance in business but relatives tend to help in good and bad times so one cannot just ignore them if they are in need. There were also those who argued that since family members help to run the business in their absence, contributing money to meet their needs is just a way of paying them back. But most of all, they did so because everybody felt they had also become co-breadwinners.

3.3.2 Costs of transiting to adulthood through business

In the context of unemployment, having a business is conceived of as self-employment and hence a way of becoming an adult. For my research participants, this required them to abruptly transition to adulthood. This transition, however, comes with financial costs, not only to youths as individuals, but also to their nascent business.

In my analysis of their financial diaries, it was evident that there had been a significant decrease of the income the participants received from parents and relatives since they started their businesses. At the beginning, they would contribute between Tsh1,000 and Tsh3,000 per month, but from February 2013 their contributions to the basic daily needs of their family decreased to zero and the young people seemed to be financing their basic needs themselves. At this point their spending became constant, that is, there was a pattern in how much they were spending on basic needs and the amount varied little from week to week.

Basic needs included transportation, communication, food and clothing. In the field, I observed them financing their lunches at work places, paying for their transport and buying vouchers for their phones. Trying to understand these spending patterns, I conducted focus group discussions on cash flows and personal costs. Keywords coming from the discussions included *najisimamia* meaning 'I watch over myself', *najikimu* ('I meet my basic needs'), and *mambo madogomadogo* ('small basic needs'). In using these keywords, my participants were arguing that

Table 2 The costs of basic needs that young entrepreneurs incur

Item	Description	Cost
Food	Most youth have their meals while they are running their businesses or are out of the house between two and seven days a week	Tsh1,000–7,000 per day
Transport	Movement in the city is by public transport	Participants pay between Tsh1,000 and Tsh8,000 per week
Communication	Communication with clients, friends and family is mainly via family. However, to keep up with youth trends and information, one's mobile phone becomes a connection to the world of which they seek to be a part	Tsh500 per day
Health	The common diseases are headaches, malaria and stomach upset. The common treatment is self-medication using painkillers and/or antimalarial tablets	This happens at least once a month and the cost is between Tsh100 and Tsh2,000
Clothing	All youth are responsible for buying their clothes. Keeping up with the trend is costly but seems to be central to youth's outlook and self-esteem	Participants purchased at least one of these items every month: clothes, shoes, socks, vests, t-shirts, etc., spending between Tsh2,000 and Tsh15,000. The majority spend Tsh8,000–10,000
Beauty and hair	All youth use a salon to manage their hair	Males spend Tsh2,000 per month for a haircut; female costs vary between Tsh5,000 and Tsh15,000 per month

Source Author's own.

since they had received the business grant the financial responsibility of meeting their basic needs fell into their own hands, even before their business started making a profit. Recalling their financial situation before receiving the grant, one of the young women proudly said: 'I was depending on my mother for everything and when my mother did not have resources, I was asking support from relatives or friends'.

Hence once they started a business, things changed as they began to cater for their own needs: first, when they asked parents for support, they were asked 'What is the use of doing business if one cannot support oneself?'; and second, because they found a sense of self-actualisation by financing their daily needs. In my talks with their parents, they argued that cutting child support is not only the act of teaching them about living costs, but it also helps the child to learn about taking responsibility for her/his life. For instance, one of the mothers argued: 'If you make money without knowing your responsibility, you might forget the reason why you are working; but if you know you must eat and dress out of your business, then you take it seriously'. Most parents also argued that their economic situation did not allow them to continue supporting all their children. So, a young person having a business eases the financial responsibility of parents.

The youth, on the other hand, felt the transition from childhood to adulthood was too abrupt. Narrating her experience, one said the

transition was a confusing time: 'One day I got up sick', she recalls, 'and told my aunt that I suspected I have malaria'. Her aunt responded: 'It could be, go to the hospital and test'. Knowing that she normally gets money to go for check-ups, she prepared herself and waited for her aunt to provide the money. But no money was provided. After a long wait, she decided to knock at her aunt's door to tell her she was ready to leave, expecting she would give her money for the check-up. To her surprise, the aunt did not provide any money, saying: 'OK, make sure you came back early'. She then asked for money directly: 'Aunt, what about money?' Her aunt responded with a question: 'Aren't you doing business?'

This experience was not unique to this young woman who, by then, had been running her business for less than two weeks. Among the participants, transition to adulthood was generally marked by an income-generating activity that made one capable of supporting both oneself and one's family. Table 2 details the costs that the participants incurred in catering for family and personal needs.

4 Rethinking youth entrepreneurship

My research points to a disjuncture between (1) young people's aspirations that are rooted in a neoliberal imaginary that education can provide the route to a successful career and a good life, and (2) policy and programme objectives of promoting youth entrepreneurship. At the centre of this disjuncture is the fact that for many young people, establishing and operating a small business is not recognised as decent employment. Rather, it is a signifier of an inability to continue with further education and/or secure formal employment, and of low status. Business is acceptable as a temporary means of survival, but it is not what they imagine themselves doing into the future. Young people in the process of establishing and nurturing their businesses used the phrase 'I am just around', indicating that business was a temporary measure to be used to re-join the pathway to a salaried, middle-class future.

These observations are in line with and contribute to literature from anthropology and other fields on how the neoliberal economy has created uncertainty around youth futures (Honwana 2012; Cole and Durham 2008; Guyer 2007; Mains 2007; Hansen 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). As a response to social and economic exclusion, young people develop strategies to navigate the constraints and uncertainties of a precarious economy (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Cole 2004). There is also an emerging literature on the lives of unemployed youth and the strategies they use to deal with time, using various concepts such as teatime (Masquelier 2013), waithood (Honwana 2012), timepass (Jeffrey 2008, 2010), and killing time (Ralph 2008).

But what does this disjuncture mean for youth employment policy and programmes, and specifically for the current emphasis on the promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment? Over the last decade, there has been a mushrooming of entrepreneurship training, capital schemes and policy frameworks meant to build an entrepreneurial culture among

young people. However, these initiatives seldom start with, or take any account of, young people's family situations or what they imagine as their futures. Rather, they assume those futures can, should and will be based on entrepreneurship.

As I found during the course of my study, for many young people this assumption is simply not sustainable. The family demands put on youth from poor families are such that it is difficult for them to get a business up and running. On the other hand, while youth from relatively better-off families do not face the same demands, the work futures that the majority of them and their families imagine are based on salaried employment, not entrepreneurship. They are only interested in starting and running a small business to the degree that it furthers their progress along the pathway to education and salaried employment.

This implies that any programme that seeks to induce entrepreneurship among young people should take account of both their aspirations and the economic status of their families. Such an approach might entail providing cash transfers to poor families so that they no longer need to depend on the businesses of their young people. Recent studies indicate that poor families are capable of using cash transfers responsibly to cater for their basic needs (Aizer *et al.* 2016). Similarly, such programmes may focus on providing health insurance for poor families or scholarships so that the youth who are establishing a business do not have to pay school fees and medical bills for their siblings. Further research needs to be done to systematically ascertain the social support needed to enable youth entrepreneurship.

5 Conclusion

Throughout this article, I have attempted to show how youth who opted to be in an entrepreneurship programme did so while attempting to realise a range of aspirations. Their engagement with the programme was mediated by their family situations, which affected both their ability to manage business capital and how they imagined their future employment. In other words, success in inducing entrepreneurial behaviour was dependent more on the participants' family situations than on the finer points of the intervention. To date, however, the links between young participants in entrepreneurship programmes and their families have not been acknowledged. There is clearly a need for more contextualised approaches to entrepreneurship promotion among young people. If programmes are to be effective in inducing entrepreneurial behaviour among young people, they must start with them and their families.

Note

- 1 FD = female participant of the focus group discussion, MD = male participant; Dar = Dar es Salaam; S1 = Seminar Room 1, where the focus group discussions took place.

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Glossary

ACGS	African Centre for Gender and Social Development [US]
ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment [Uganda]
ACTS	African Centre for Technology Studies [Kenya]
AERC	African Economic Research Consortium [Kenya]
AfDB	African Development Bank [Abidjan]
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CBO	community-based organisation
CEDLAS	Centro de Estudios Distributivos, Laborales y Sociales [Argentina]
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research [France]
CHPS	Community-Based Health Planning and Services [Ghana]
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIDI	Community Integrated Development Initiatives [Uganda]
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa [Senegal]
CSO	civil society organisations
CYF	Canadian Development Foundation
DFCU	Development Finance Company of Uganda Bank Limited
EACC	Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission of Kenya
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme [Ghana]
ESL	Economics School of Louvain [Belgium]
ETF	European Training Foundation [Italy]
FAC	Future Agricultures Consortium [UK]
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization [Italy]
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDI	Global Development Institute [UK]
GDP	gross domestic product
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GERA	Global Entrepreneurship Research Association
GoK	Government of Kenya
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan [Ethiopia]
GVF	Graduate Venture Fund
GYEEDA	Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Agency
ICT	information and communications technology

IDRC	International Development Research Centre [Canada]
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs [Kenya]
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group [US]
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development [Italy]
IFAU	Institute for Labour Market Policy Evaluation [Sweden]
ILO	International Labour Office/Organization [Switzerland]
IMF	International Monetary Fund [US]
JHS	junior high school
KYA	Kayayei Youth Association [Ghana]
LCCI	Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry [Nigeria]
LDC	least developed country
LIC	low income country
LESDEP	Local Enterprises Skills Development Programme [Ghana]
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army [Uganda]
LSP	Livelihood Support Programme
masl	metres above sea level
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFI	microfinance institution
MIF	Multilateral Investment Fund
MoALF	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries [Kenya]
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development [Ethiopia]
MoLD	Ministry of Livestock Development [Kenya]
MoYA	Ministry of Youth Affairs [Kenya]
MSE	micro and small enterprise
MYSC	Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture [Ethiopia]
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission [Ghana]
NEET	not in education, employment, or training
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHH	Norwegian School of Economics
NYEP	National Youth Employment Programme [Ghana]
NYP	National Youth Policy [Ethiopia]
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [France]
OER	open educational resources
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty [Ethiopia]
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWP	public works programme
RAPID	research and policy in development
REP	Rural Enterprise Project [Ghana]

REPOA	Research on Poverty Alleviation [Tanzania]
S4YE	Solutions for Youth Employment
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHS	senior high school
TDR	Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases [World Health Organization, US]
TLU	tropical livestock unit
UCL	Université Catholique de Louvain [Belgium]
UDEC	University of Dar es Salaam Entrepreneurship Centre [Tanzania]
UIA	Uganda Investment Authority
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme [US]
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [US]
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
VCP	Vagrancy Control Proclamation [Ethiopia]
VET	vocational education and training
YDP	Youth Development Package [Ethiopia]
YEA	Youth Employment Agency [Ghana]
YEDF	Youth Enterprise Development Fund [Kenya]
YES	Youth Entrepreneurial Scheme [Uganda]
YLP	Youth Livelihood Programme [Uganda]
YVCF	Youth Venture Capital Fund [Uganda]

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