The Looming Youth Employment Challenge in sub-Saharan Africa

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Outline

• Looming youth employment challenge-
  – Youth bulge

• Youth livelihood options
  – Thoughts

• Policy implications
Definitions: youth

- **Youth**: Defined as persons aged between 15 and 24 years
- **Young adults**: Defined as persons aged between 25 and 35 years
Looming employment challenge in SSA

Rural population continues to rise past 2050 in SSA

Source: UN 2013
Looming employment challenge in SSA

Youth Bulge in SSA

Age pyramid: rural SSA, 2015

- 62% < 25 years old
YOUTH LIVELIHOODS OPTIONS
62% < 25 years

40% Non-farm

10% Successful non-farm

30% Struggling non-farm

60% Farming

50% Struggling farm

10% Successful farm

60% - 80%

Pulled out of agriculture
- In jobs with high barriers to entry
- Post-secondary education
- Invested in skills

Pushed out of agriculture
- Relatively unskilled / limited education
- Limited access to land / finance
- Mainly informal sector / wage workers

Pushed into agriculture
- Few productive assets
- Poor access to land, finance, knowledge
- High concentration of poverty

Pulled into agriculture
- Good access to land, finance, etc.
- Favorable market access
- Favorable infrastructure
- Diversified income sources
Successful livelihood options for the youth

- **40% Non-farm**
  - **10% Successful non-farm**
  - **30% Struggling non-farm**
- **60% Farming**
  - **50% Struggling farm**
  - **10% Successful farming**
- **60-70% Successful non-farm**
  - **30-40% Successful farming**

**YOUTH LIVELIHOODS OPTIONS**
62% < 25 years
Successful livelihoods - policy suggestions

YOUTH LIVELIHOODS OPTIONS
62% < 25 years

40% Non-farm

10% Successful non-farm

30% Struggling non-farm

50% Struggling farm

10% Successful farming

60% Farming

70% Successful non-farm

30% Successful farming

BLUE Policies

GREEN Policies
What should government do?

• Central plank of a comprehensive youth employment strategy: interventions to raise agricultural productivity growth
  – Create new opportunities in farming
  – Multiplier effects: performance of farming will influence the pace of growth in non-farm jobs

• Agricultural sector policies must anticipate and respond to:
  – Resources needed for youth to succeed in farming (e.g. access to land, finance, etc.)
  – Distinguish between “trying to keep youth in agriculture” vs. “giving youth viable choices”

• “Crops growing people” vs “people growing crops”
Strategic policies include [GREEN PATH]

- Invest in R&D and institutional capacity building to generate new knowledge
- Develop robust and effective extension systems to facilitate access to productivity enhancing technologies
- Improve coverage and quality of physical infrastructure (energy, road, communication, etc.)
- Develop youth-centered programs to make farming profitable for young people
- Facilitate access to productivity enhancing inputs (e.g. fertilizer), market, and resources (e.g. land, finance, labor---saving technologies)
- Promote mentoring by successful farmers (youth mentors)
# Ranking of Alternative Investments: Meta-Study Evidence from Asia and Africa

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Ranking with respect to *agricultural growth*: Evidence from Asia

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Ranking with respect to poverty reduction: Evidence from Asia
Strategic policies include [BLUE PATH]

• Invest in education and skill development to upgrade skills of the labor force
  – Prepare youth to “spot” and take advantage of new job opportunities
  – Regular update of educational curriculum and approaches
  – Invest in actionable research to address the data gaps on labor market issues and impact evaluation, what works well and how?

• Strengthen youth voice on decisions concerning them
We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future
– Franklin D. Roosevelt –

Thank You

Source: Traub, Lulama et al. (2017)