

► Rural youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa: Moving away from urban myths and towards structural policy solutions

Bernd Mueller

►► A large share of the discourse of rural youth employment in Africa is dominated by a range of common ‘perceived truths’ or myths.

urban myth noun [UK], also urban legend: *story or statement that is not true but is often repeated and believed by many to be true* – Cambridge Dictionary

The agriculture sector is the largest employer in Africa. The majority of African youth live in rural areas, and their number is expected to increase for decades to come. As a result, the majority of youth in sub-Saharan Africa work in agriculture and in rural areas¹³⁵ (World Bank and IFAD 2017). Thus, any discussion on the challenges and approaches to youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa¹³⁶ must consider the realities of rural employment to inform any proposed solutions.

Yet, urban contexts and concerns tend to dominate discourses on youth employment in Africa in various ways. They tend to focus on occupations that are presumed attractive to youth, which mainly infers a focus on white-collar jobs, technology-intensive jobs or other occupations that generally depend on high levels of education and/or skill sets. Another common focus lies squarely on entrepreneurship development and the promotion of self-employment for youth. Similarly, rural-to-urban migration by youth – often claimed to be resulting from rural unemployment – and the stresses it brings to urban infrastructure, labour markets and safety are frequent topics of concern. Relatedly, there is

a common fear of ageing rural populations and a widespread lack of interest of youth in agriculture. Consequently, a large share of the discourse of rural youth employment in Africa is dominated by a range of common “perceived truths”, or myths.

These urban myths run across a spectrum, from the seemingly plausible to the outright ludicrous. Yet, unfortunately, many authors, policymakers, public servants and development practitioners too often seem to be struggling to circumnavigate these myths. Common misperceptions about rural African youth need to be exposed by juxtaposing them with evidence on the actual realities that many rural youths live with. The aim is to clarify and – ideally – arrive at a slightly more realistic description of their livelihoods and employment realities and ultimately to derive implications for policy solutions and technical support models to improve their employment outlooks. This is of particular importance because these urban myths can have substantial impact on what would be perceived as the best ways to advance the cause of youth employment creation in rural Africa.

¹³⁵ There is no standard definition of “rural”. As Losch (2016, 31) highlighted, rural areas do not have a positive definition but are defined as being all those places that are not urban. “According to the FAO, the rural population is the residual number after subtracting the urban population from the total population and this view is adopted by most countries in the world. [...] As a consequence, the vision of what is urban and what is rural is blurred by definition and the ongoing changes are only increasing the uncertainty – a major difficulty for action and forward thinking.”

¹³⁶ The term “Africa” is used as a synonym for sub-Saharan Africa, unless stated otherwise.

The discussion here centres on six common urban myths on rural African youth, arguing that they are based on misguided perceptions, which in turn shape predominant but ill-fitting policy, programme and project responses. These six myths:

1. *“Unemployment is a major issue for rural African youth.”*
2. *“Agriculture is unattractive to youth,” and “We need to make agriculture ‘cool’ again.”*
3. *“Rural population in Africa is ageing rapidly,” and “The average age of the African farmer is 60.”*
4. *“Rural-to-urban migration by youth is a major concern.”*
5. *“Rural labour markets are ‘thin’ and there are very few wage jobs.”*
6. *“Rural youth employment is best promoted by fostering self-employment and entrepreneurship.”*

The term “urban myths” is used not just as a pun but advisedly because these myths likely originated from the urban sphere and urbanized perceptions of rural youth. They appear throughout the published literature and are commonly encountered during public discussions on rural youth employment – discussions that, more often than not, tend to take place in invariably urban conference venues or other public fora. In these discourses, it is typically urban-based policymakers, academics or development practitioners (including this author) who deliberate on how to reduce the plight of their young compatriots and beneficiary communities living in rural areas. Regardless whether “international” or “national”, the majority of us experts and panellists invariably have benefited from an upbringing, education and life in urban spaces. Our perception of the youth employment realities and challenges has likely been shaped by our own as well as our families’, sons’, daughters’ and friends’ experiences and life trajectories, which predominantly are situated in urban spaces, schools, universities and workplaces. As an unsurprising result, this profoundly urban yet anecdotal set of experiences and reference points shapes and dominates the perceptions and suggested solutions that we are likely to develop.

This is a special type of “urban bias”, not unlike but slightly different from the one purported by Michael Lipton¹³⁷ in the 1960s and 1970s. A widespread symptom of this bias is an at-times lopsided focus on predominantly urban issues, such as graduate youth unemployment and the need for development of “white collar”, “new collar”, digital, soft or employability skills as well as entrepreneurship training to allow them to “create their own jobs”.¹³⁸ While these issues and approaches clearly bear some general value, their relevance applies predominantly to a particular subset of African youth: mostly urban and educated (graduate) youth, who “still represent only a tiny fraction (about 3–4 per cent) of the labour force, come from the richest households and have the best job prospects” (Filmer and Fox 2014, 5). For this reason, it is important to come up with a better understanding of the actual employment challenges, trends and outlooks for rural African youth rather than assuming that their goals and ambitions would be comparable with those predominant in urban contexts.

And let’s be clear: The fact that an analyst, commentator, policymaker or activist might not share the same experiences as their beneficiaries or subject matter does not in any way disqualify their work or views. That said, to hold relevance, our work requires a careful and analytical approach to prevent our perceptions from superseding evidence and primary information.¹³⁹ The propositions made here are based on several years of primary and secondary research on rural (youth) employment and labour markets across a range of African countries, but without claiming intimate knowledge of rural African youths’ thoughts, perceptions, wishes and ambitions. Yet, these propositions are based on an extensive and in-depth understanding of rural African economies and labour markets. The description of rural youth presented here is based on this research. It does not substitute closer engagement with them directly to yield the most precise and first-best policy solutions. For this, it will be indispensable for policymakers and programme designers to reach out, to empower and to listen actively.¹⁴⁰

137 At the time, Lipton found fault with the lack of attention devoted towards rural development as a result of the industrialization efforts, and he famously associated this period with what he termed “urban bias”. Urban bias refers to the perceived extraction of surplus from the “rural class” by the “urban class” through overtaxation, unidirectional resource transfers (including brain drain), unequal distribution of political power and prices skewed in favour of industries. See Lipton 1968 and 1977.

138 A notion that is comprehensively debunked by Flynn et al. (2016), as also discussed under the sixth urban myth.

139 Admittedly, this can be a tall order due to limited availability and quality of statistics in Africa in general and rural Africa in particular (Losch 2016). Nevertheless, statistics and data are available, and their quality is constantly improving, both in the form of official surveys and case studies. So, there is little excuse for fudging the issue and eschewing evidence-based strategies.

140 Achieving effective youth representation thus becomes more and more pressing.

Discussing six widespread urban myths on rural youth employment

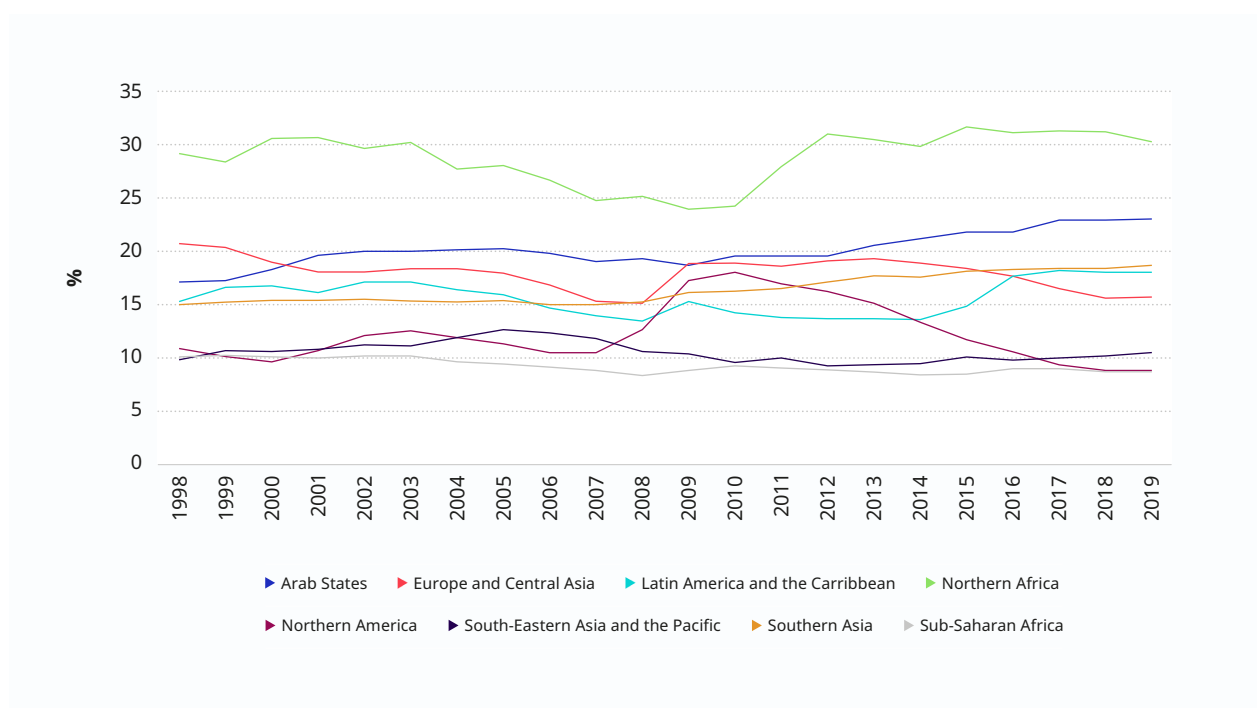
Urban myth 1: “Unemployment is a major issue for rural African youth.”

The first urban myth concerns the often-repeated idea that youth unemployment is a major problem and threat in most African countries. “Despite rapid economic growth in recent years, *youth unemployment in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, has remained stubbornly high*” (Chigunta 2017, 1, emphasis added). Without providing any source, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) claimed that a staggering 60 per cent of the 200 million African youth were unemployed. Garcia and Fares (2008) similarly painted a grim picture of the multiple labour market challenges that African youth face. They claimed (again, without sources) that in 2003, 21 per cent of all youth in sub-Saharan Africa were unemployed and that this rate would exceed that of any region, with the exception of the Arab States and Northern Africa.

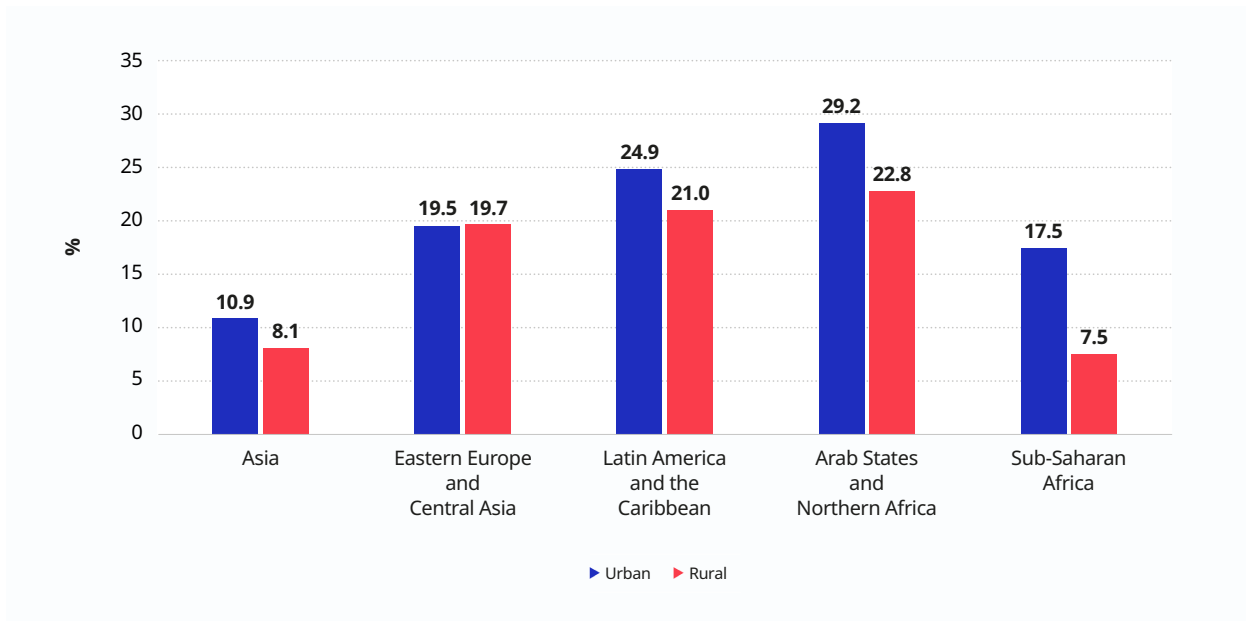
Unfortunately, these figures and statements do not sit well with the evidence. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa at 15.7 per cent in 2003. Consistently over the past 20 years, unemployment was only lower in Asia and Northern America (figure 1). In fact, until 2015, youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa had consistently decreased, whereas trends were much more volatile in all other regions. Of course, it is fair to point out that youth unemployment in rural Africa is higher than average unemployment overall. But this statement holds true globally for virtually any context and locality and therefore amounts to not much more than a tautological suggestion.

Looking closer at rural employment statistics, it is generally clear that unemployment is much lower compared with urban areas (World Bank and IFAD 2017). Based on data from school-to-work transition surveys in 28 countries, Elder et al. (2015) found that, with the exception of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, rural youth unemployment was generally lower than urban youth unemployment. This common gap was by far the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, with 10 percentage points difference between urban and rural youth unemployment

► Figure 1. Youth (aged 15–24) unemployment rate, by region, 1998–2019



Source: Author’s illustration based on ILO modelled estimates, using ILOSTAT database, <https://ilostat ilo.org/data/>, accessed 6 April 2020.

► **Figure 2. Youth unemployment rate (strict definition), by region and area of residence (% of labour force)**

Note: Rates are averages of available country results in each region (Asia: three countries; Eastern Europe and Central Asia: six countries; Latin American and the Caribbean: three countries; Arab States and Northern Africa: four countries; sub-Saharan Africa: eight countries).

Source: Elder et al. 2015, using the ILO school-to-work transition survey data for 25 countries.

rates. Generally, they found that rural youth unemployment in Africa was the absolute lowest across all regions included in the survey (figure 2).¹⁴¹

If youth unemployment is so low in rural Africa, why is it commonly described as a serious problem? Part of the reason lies in the definition of employment as well as the dire economic realities of most rural African communities. The official definition (ILO 2013) of “persons in employment” covers everyone of working age who, during a short reference period (usually one week), was engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit (usually for at least one hour). This measure provides a relatively low threshold for any work performed in a week, and it does not include any determination on the conditions of such work (for instance, whether it is formal or informal, let alone decent).

As a consequence, “most rural youth are either employed (waged and self-employed) or ‘not in the labour force’. Almost one quarter of young people live in households where income per head is less than one dollar a day. The unemployed are mainly

better-educated urban youth who can afford to engage in relatively protracted job search”; and “in countries without unemployment benefit systems, total employment is largely supply determined and employment elasticities tend to vary inversely with output growth. Consequently, an increase in the demand for labour is reflected in an increase in the quality rather than the quantity of employment: workers move from unpaid to wage jobs, from worse jobs to better jobs etc. Subsistence agriculture and informal sectors are ‘sponges’ for surplus labour” (Bennell 2007, 4, 6).

Although many analysts and commentators implicitly or explicitly refer to the youth employment problem as the “youth unemployment problem”, (measured) unemployment in low-income sub-Saharan Africa, and even in middle-income countries outside of Southern Africa, actually is not that high because most poor people cannot afford to be unemployed. In the absence of any public social security system or other safety nets, most rural Africans are “too poor to be unemployed” and thus must accept any employment activity for survival, no matter how poorly paid, dangerous or

¹⁴¹ This already indicates that especially in the context of rural Africa – with its many problems of economic hardship and (working) poverty – unemployment is not a useful measure for labour market performance.

insecure. Unemployment thus can be considered a luxury due to the unemployed person's ability to fund periods of job searching (Fox, Senbet and Simbanegavi 2016).

The challenges that rural communities experience thus might often be mistaken for unemployment by many commentators but are in fact more correctly defined as a combination of underemployment, low productivity, informality, vulnerable and precarious employment and generally low incomes and harsh working conditions. Or to bring all these together in one term: working poverty. In fact, a recent ILO *World Economic and Social Outlook* reports that around two thirds of workers in sub-Saharan Africa are working poor (ILO 2017).

This is not the same as saying that employment creation would not be important. A driver of underemployment and bad working conditions is the huge oversupply of labour in the face of few viable employment opportunities. Correcting this imbalance and reducing the gap between labour supply and demand ("tightening" the labour market) is an important element in resolving the situation. Creating a large number of jobs (of increasingly better quality) for the rural poor must be a major element of such a strategy, as discussed under urban myth 5 and in conclusion.

Urban myth 2: "Agriculture is unattractive to youth," and "We need to make agriculture 'cool' again."

This is an exceedingly common argument that can be found both in everyday discourses as well as the literature on youth employment: the idea that agriculture would somehow be inherently unattractive to youth, that youth are not interested in agricultural livelihoods, that there is a "youth and agriculture problem" in Africa or – bordering on the condescending – the notion that agriculture is simply not "cool". In its many variants, this probably is one of the most common tropes encountered in discussions about youth employment in (rural) Africa, as evidenced by a selection of quotes (all emphases added):

- "[A]griculture in its present state appears to be so *unattractive to young people* that they are turning away from agricultural or rural futures. As the Future Agricultures Consortium (2010) concluded for Africa: *Young Africans are increasingly*

reluctant to pursue agriculture-based livelihoods." (White 2012, 11)

- "The agriculture sector has huge potential to drive growth, but investments are needed to *make it attractive for young people.*" (Feed the Future 2017, blog entitled, "Making Agriculture Cool Again for Youth in Africa")
- "*Agriculture as a profession has failed to attract the youths.*" (IMoT Agri Forum 2018)
- "Today, *many young people in Africa do not find agriculture attractive* as a career and will largely migrate to urban areas." (Rukuni and Zvavanyange 2014)
- "*Let's make agriculture cool again.*" (González 2016)

As Sumberg et al. (2012) also demonstrated, there has been a great increase in the discussion of what they call "the youth and agriculture problem" in Africa, while evidence and contextualized analysis are gravely lacking.

First of all, this trope of how youth are fleeing agriculture due to its "unattractiveness" can be debunked on straightforward empirical grounds. "Agriculture is still the biggest employer of rural youth in most low- and middle-income countries. In [sub-Saharan Africa], agriculture employs a higher proportion of youth than adults, and a recent review of nine major countries in [sub-Saharan Africa] shows that farming is the largest employer of youth overall. Over the last decade, while farming's share of youth employment has generally declined [...] the absolute number of youth farmers are increasing at different rates" (World Bank and IFAD 2017, 9).

Similarly, Yeboah and Jayne (2016, 27) pointed out that agriculture will continue to be the largest sector of employment in a range of African countries for decades to come. They even showed that in several countries, new jobs for youth are primarily located in farming, and therefore they argued that "despite the conventional wisdom that young Africans are exiting farming in great numbers leading to an ageing of rural areas, the evidence presented [...] indicates that this view is greatly exaggerated". There is increasing evidence in the literature that many (educated) African youth consider a career in agriculture desirable under certain conditions (Melchers and Büchler 2019; Muthoni Mwaura 2017).

The result of the preoccupation with the "unattractiveness" of agriculture for youth is that it shifts the discourse and the nature of proposed solutions in a number of undesirable ways. First

of all, as some argue, this urban-driven discourse risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy because it (perhaps unwittingly) repeats and reiterates the notion of how urban lives and careers are more desirable. White (2012) spoke of an “assault on rural culture” and a “general downgrading of rural life” in this regard.

Even more damaging, youths’ lack of participation in agriculture might have less to do with any sense of attractiveness but more with a realistic appraisal of the actual (limited) opportunities and substantial constraints towards successfully and gainfully entering the sector. The discussion on the level of attractiveness overlooks that the decision to leave agriculture and rural spaces behind may not be driven so much by their relative attractiveness but much more by a lack of opportunities in agriculture and thus the compulsion to find a livelihood elsewhere. The youth struggle to gain access to land due to a combination of population pressures is well documented (Headey and Jayne 2014),¹⁴² both fragmentation and concentration of land (regarding the United Republic of Tanzania, see Mueller 2015; 2011b), large-scale land acquisitions (foreign and domestic) (White 2012) and intergenerational tensions over access to land, with parents taking longer

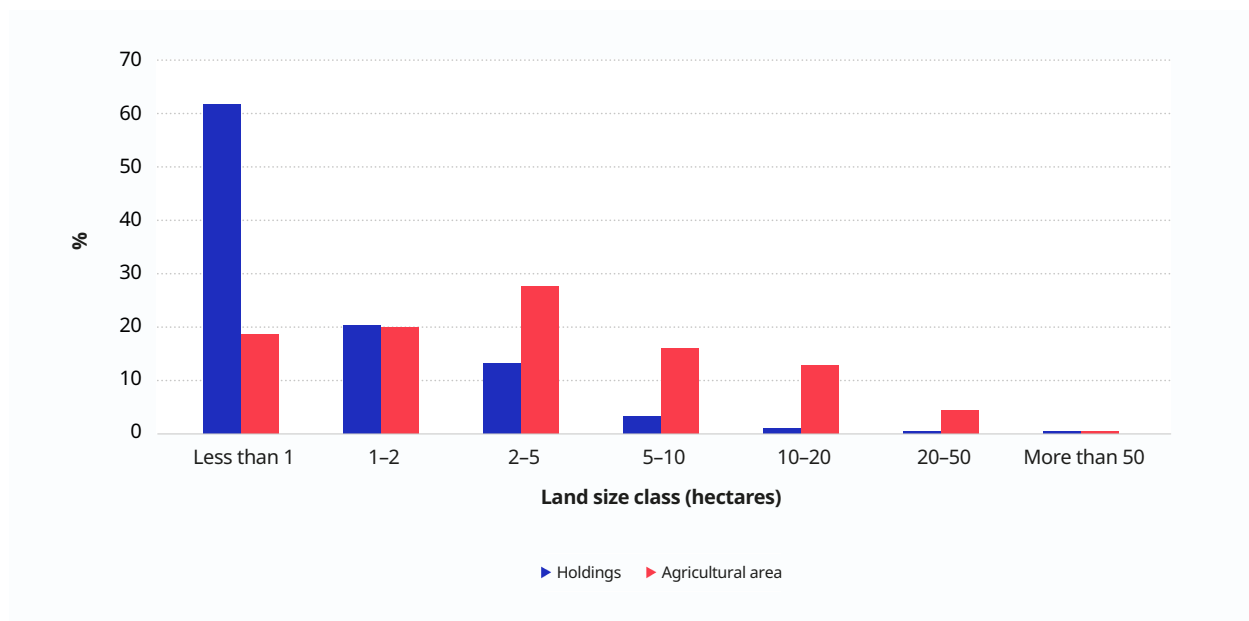
to inherit the land and inherited parcels becoming increasingly miniscule (Bezu and Holden 2014; White 2012). Also, numerous institutional and financial hurdles exist that prevent access to agricultural opportunities, such as commercial banks frequently hesitating to venture into rural areas or agricultural enterprises for a range of reasons, such as limited securities and collateral (Filmer and Fox 2014).

Additionally, the discourse on the attractiveness of agriculture has a general tendency towards portraying youth as without agency, having little self-determination and merely subject to external push and pull forces. Te Lintelo (2012, 93) highlighted how national youth policies also tend to portray youth either as “passive clients of government services” or as “constrained decision-makers”.

The most important argument for why the agriculture-is-unattractive proposition is disingenuous is that it is not agriculture itself that is scorned by youth. Instead, the unattractive element is nothing else but the widespread and often extreme poverty across rural Africa as a result of a profound lack of decent employment opportunities in rural areas.

The majority of agricultural production in Africa is small scale. According to a substantial estimation

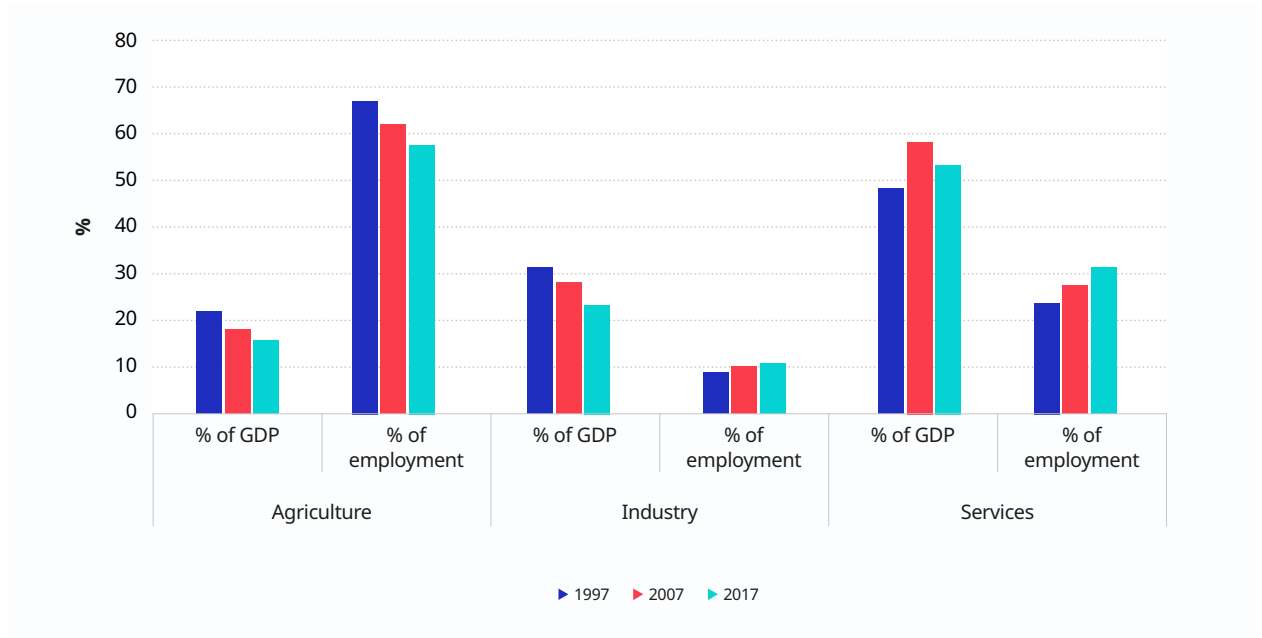
► Figure 3. Distribution of farms, by size of landholding, across sub-Saharan Africa



Source: Lowder, Scoet and Raney 2016.

¹⁴² More and more authors are doubting Boserup's (1985; 1965) famous thesis of population growth being the main determinant for technological innovation and advancement.

► **Figure 4. Comparing sector shares in gross domestic product and employment, sub-Saharan Africa, 1997, 2007 and 2017**



Source: Lowder, Skoet and Raney 2016.

based on agricultural census data, Lowder, Skoet and Raney (2016) calculated that around 80 per cent of farms in sub-Saharan Africa operate on less than 2 hectares of land and they occupy about 40 per cent of the total agricultural land (figure 3). Agriculture, and especially small-scale agriculture (including animal husbandry and pastoralism), has been and remains the single-most important livelihood source for rural Africans, and it remains the dominant mode of production across rural Africa (Gollin 2014). At the same time and most unfortunately – and keeping the importance of context in mind – rural African villages tend to be where incisive poverty is most prevalent. Poverty in Africa still is a predominantly rural phenomenon, and extreme poverty is more prevalent in rural areas (IFAD 2016; Dercon 2009;). The correlation between smallholder agriculture and deep poverty is not a coincidence.

Although this has been the subject of extensive and century-old debates,¹⁴³ it is becoming more and more evident that small-scale agriculture suffers from profoundly lower levels of productivity and that it provides limited scope for sustained escapes from poverty. This is evidenced by macro-level statistics, which consistently show that agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa contributes on average less than 20 per cent to gross domestic product while employing around 60 per cent of the labour force (figure 4). This is a direct manifestation of the productive inefficiency and resulting poverty of most African agricultural producers and workers. Simply put, a large share of the population across Africa (people living in rural areas and depending on agriculture) produce only a small share of the (already low) gross domestic product. Rural poverty is the direct outcome.

143 It is impossible to exhaustively cover here the debate on whether there exists an “inverse relationship” between farm size and productivity in agriculture. Debates on this general topic reach back centuries, arguably beginning with the works of classical political economists, such as Arthur Young, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, on mostly pre-industrial revolution agriculture. These were followed by a range of other debates, including: between Engels (1972, first published in 1894), Lenin (1899), Kautsky (1899) and later Chayanov (1966, originally published in 1925) on the peasant mode of production and the “agrarian question” of how the peasantry will be absorbed into the capitalist mode (for a summary, see Bernstein 2009); the heated academic disagreements between the likes of Terry Byres and Michael Lipton on the notion of “urban bias” (Jones and Corbridge 2010; Byres 1979; Lipton 1977) in the 1970s; the active debates on the inverse relationship in the second half of the twentieth century (kickstarted by Sen 1962; for a summary, see Fan and Chan-Kang 2005); and more recently, discussions on family farming (Garner and de la O Gender 2014; for a critical perspective, see Johnston and Le Roux 2007), contract farming and out-grower schemes as well as large-scale land acquisitions and so-called “land grabs” (Cotula et al. 2014; Edelman, Oya and Borras Jr 2013; Oya 2013b; Oya 2012). In various guises, all of these debates, which can display a general tendency of being ideologically loaded, pivot on the question of whether smallholder farming is efficient and inherently more productive than large-scale farming. For recent summaries of these debates, see Gibbon (2011), Mueller (2011b; 2011a) and, more prominently, Collier and Dercon (2014), who all come to the conclusion that the evidence base on the inverse relationship is at best shaky and that “a focus on smallholder agriculture for growth is not proven” (ibid, 98).

At the micro level, smallholders increasingly are squeezed out by competition from medium-sized and larger farmers who own a growing share of agricultural land but are much fewer in numbers (figure 3 and also as reported by Lowder et al. 2016; White 2012). The concentration of land in the hands of fewer farmers is a typical outcome, as observed in the United Republic of Tanzania by Mueller (2015). This means that agriculture is less and less able to create a direct livelihood for the majority of rural Africans,¹⁴⁴ and the consistently decreasing share of employment in agriculture is a direct result of this.

Agriculture, especially in its dominant smallholder form, is deeply associated with poverty. It thus appears entirely reasonable, but also disingenuous to lament, that youth may not be attracted to this particular “career path”. As Babbie (2016) reflected, “It is not that youth in [sub-Saharan Africa] are simply not interested in agriculture; it is that they are not interested in pursuing the *agriculture of their parents*” [emphasis in original]. The problem is that even their parents’ mode of agricultural production – smallholder farming – is increasingly under pressure and uncompetitive, at least at the scale and extent that it is currently undertaken across most of rural Africa. At the same time, there are few “newer” agricultural paths readily available for the majority of rural youth due to their constrained access to (sufficiently large) landholdings and capital. As Tadele and Gella (2012, 39) found in Ethiopia, “Although older farmers and officials were quick to lament that young people were too lazy and arrogant to acknowledge that agriculture can be a very lucrative livelihood, none wanted their children to follow in their footsteps.” Due to their struggles, “even the successful young farmers [...] who said they ‘thanked God’ for making them farmers instead of civil servants did not want their children to become farmers.”

Despite all this, the dominant policy recommendations that arise from the youth-are-not-attracted-to-agriculture myth is to promote pro-agricultural messages in schools and educational institutions and, as a major preoccupation of the majority of rural development efforts, to try to increase the incomes of farmers, particularly smallholders in various ways. Prominent academics and experts on rural youth employment, like

Losch (2016), Sumberg (2012) or White (2012), continue in some form or other to advocate for support to small-scale agriculture to address rural youth employment challenges. While this may be an understandable and valiant effort, completing such a development path is going to be an unrealistic uphill struggle due to African smallholder agriculture’s structural and close association with productive poverty. Based on careful and measured calculations, Gollin, Lagakos and Waugh (2013) estimated that in developing countries, value added per worker is four times higher in the non-agriculture sectors than in agriculture and still twice as high when controlling for potential measurement errors. Looking at the share of employment in agriculture across Africa, they concluded that there may be a substantial misallocation of labour.

Collier and Dercon (2014) summarized the argument to the point (emphasis added): “As a long-term poverty reduction strategy, it is then *not self-evident that agriculture is the sector that most effectively will reduce poverty* [...]. One could argue that the most intuitive process of closing this [productivity] gap would be to encourage more (labour) resources into the high return activities, taking away from the low return resources, as a means of bringing down this gap. *So we need growth that allows agriculture to start engaging in a process of releasing labour*” (p. 97).¹⁴⁵ “Even from the point of view of poverty reduction,” they continued, “the mere fact that a focus on smallholders is required because they are poor is not likely to be dynamically effective in reducing poverty. *Economic transformation will be required*, and a narrow focus on smallholders may not be a cost-effective route for transforming these poor peasants into a non-poor population. Instead, recognizing that *poverty reduction will involve creating opportunities to reduce the number of farmers*, [...] opens up a broader array of policy intervention options” (p. 99). In short, the important role of value addition and value chain development in creating job opportunities for rural youth cannot be understated.

The urban myth that agriculture is unattractive to African youth is, at best, incomplete and slightly condescending and, at worst, misleading and disingenuous. For decades and structural reasons, agriculture has been unable to provide an escape from poverty for the majority of rural Africans,

144 This is true, even taking into account the demand for more agricultural wage workers by the larger farms (see urban myth 5), which is unlikely to offset the reduction in agricultural own-account and family employment due to the continuing “squeeze” on smallholder farms.

145 The need for such a process to happen is virtually uncontested among development economists, and goes back to as early as Sir Arthur Lewis (1954), with several having repeated it since (for example, Mueller and Chan 2015; Szirmai et al. 2013). It seems obvious that this process must go hand in hand with some extent of (at least domestic) migration (see urban myth 4).

young and old. It should come as no surprise that younger generations are trying to escape this life of poverty. Even if they would favour an agricultural career, in many cases they may not be afforded any realistic, gainful employment opportunities in the sector, mainly due to a lack of access to land and capital as well as the lack of economies of scale in smallholder farming. (This discussion returns further on to the question of what alternative policy options can improve employment outcomes for rural African youth in and outside of agriculture.)

Urban myth 3: “Rural population in Africa is ageing rapidly” and “The average age of the African farmer is 60.”

Following on from the previous (and next) urban myth, its proponents tend to lament an alleged mass exodus of youth from rural areas in search of careers and fortunes in towns and cities. This directly leads to the argument that rural populations across Africa would be ageing rapidly (Schatz and Seeley 2015; Pillay and Maharaj 2012; National Research Council 2006; Kinsella 2001; du Guerny 1997). Sources concerned with this (allegedly serious) problem, consistently cite the rural-to-urban migration of youth as one of the main contributors to such ageing of rural populations.

But beyond academic discourses on demographic trends, the argument of Africa’s ageing rural population has culminated in a, frankly, stunning statistic: that the average age of African farmers is 60. To this author’s knowledge, this figure was first claimed in a 2014 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and has since been circulated and repeated widely. Supposedly due to its potential shock value as a headline figure, this statistic was repeated by a range of publications, blog posts and journal articles (for example: Nwanze 2018; Dahir 2017; Enkhtur 2016; Mis and Esipisu 2016; Vos 2014). All of these seem to trace back to the original FAO report.

It was even repeated in the specific context of Kenya by academics (Njeru 2017) and other international organizations (UNDP Kenya n.d.). Some publications escalated this figure and stated that the average age of a Kenyan farmer is 63 (Atieno 2016). An elu-

sive AgriSA study (Sihlobo 2016; 2015) claimed that the average age of farmers in South Africa is 62. What links all these figures is that not in a single case has this author been able to trace the original study or data source. And the seemingly “original” report by the FAO does not provide any source.

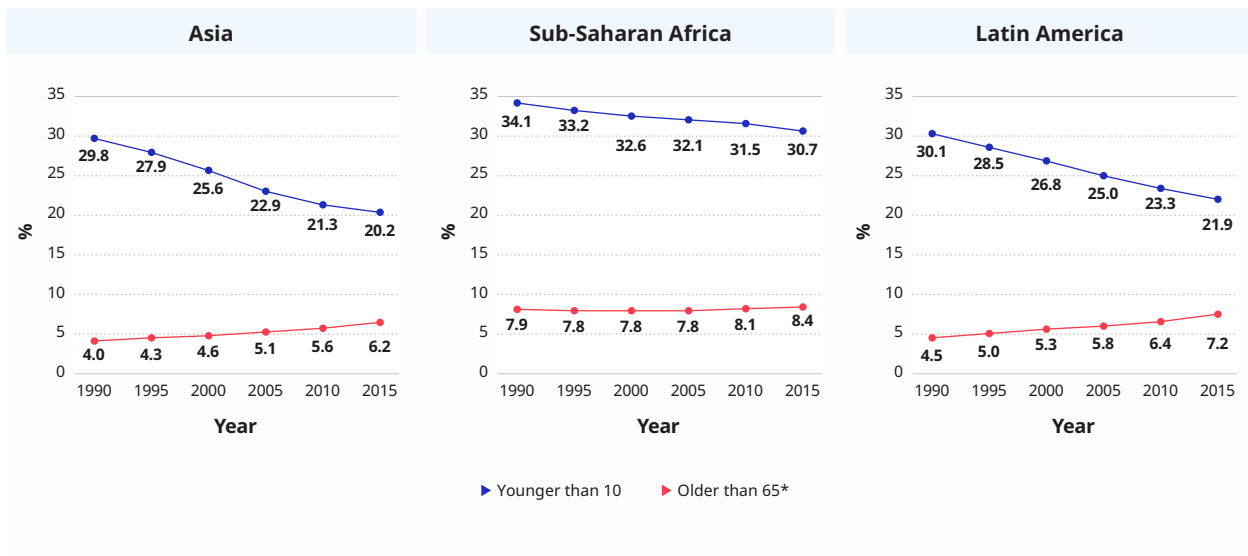
Statistically, these figures are extremely unlikely when viewed in combination with other demographic numbers. For example, life expectancy in Africa on average is 61 years for men (who according to common patriarchy are the majority of farm owners), 62.7 years in South Africa and 66.7 years in Kenya. For this reason, the referred-to statistic is entirely implausible when we consider that 60 per cent of the continent’s population is aged 15–24 years (United Nations 2017) and that a total of 57.4 per cent of all employment lies in the agriculture sector.¹⁴⁶ Given that African agriculture is dominated by own-account small-scale farming (as noted previously), it is impossible that the average age of the African farmer would be 60.

And indeed, a different report that transparently bases its findings on agricultural census data concludes that only 26.8 per cent of agricultural holders in Africa were aged 55 or older (Heide-Ottosen 2014). The report shows that, especially in comparison with Asia and Latin America, the ageing of rural populations is much less pronounced and dramatic in Africa than is often purported (as referenced previously). Over a span of 25 years, the share of persons younger than 10 years only decreased by 3.4 percentage points and was still much larger than in other regions. Conversely and over the same period, the proportion of persons older than 55 years only marginally increased, by 0.5 percentage points (figure 5). By these standards, it appears unjustified to speak of a dramatic ageing of the rural population in Africa.

The obvious alarmism behind the “African farmers are 60 years old” trope and general claims about the ageing of rural population has been instrumentalized to heighten the urgency of “attracting” youth back to rural areas and agriculture (see urban myth 2). Thus, the same policy conclusions tend to have evolved from it, and this third urban myth has been used to promote the agenda to reduce rural-to-urban migration (as well as, indirectly, structural transformation). Which leads directly to the next myth.

¹⁴⁶ See ILOSTAT database, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

► Figure 5. Rural population ageing in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, 1990–2016 (%)



Note: *=Due to the lack of sufficient disaggregated data for sub-Saharan Africa for persons older than 65, data for persons older than 55 were used.

Source: Heide-Ottosen 2014.

Urban myth 4: “Rural-to-urban migration of African youth is a major policy concern and must be reduced.”

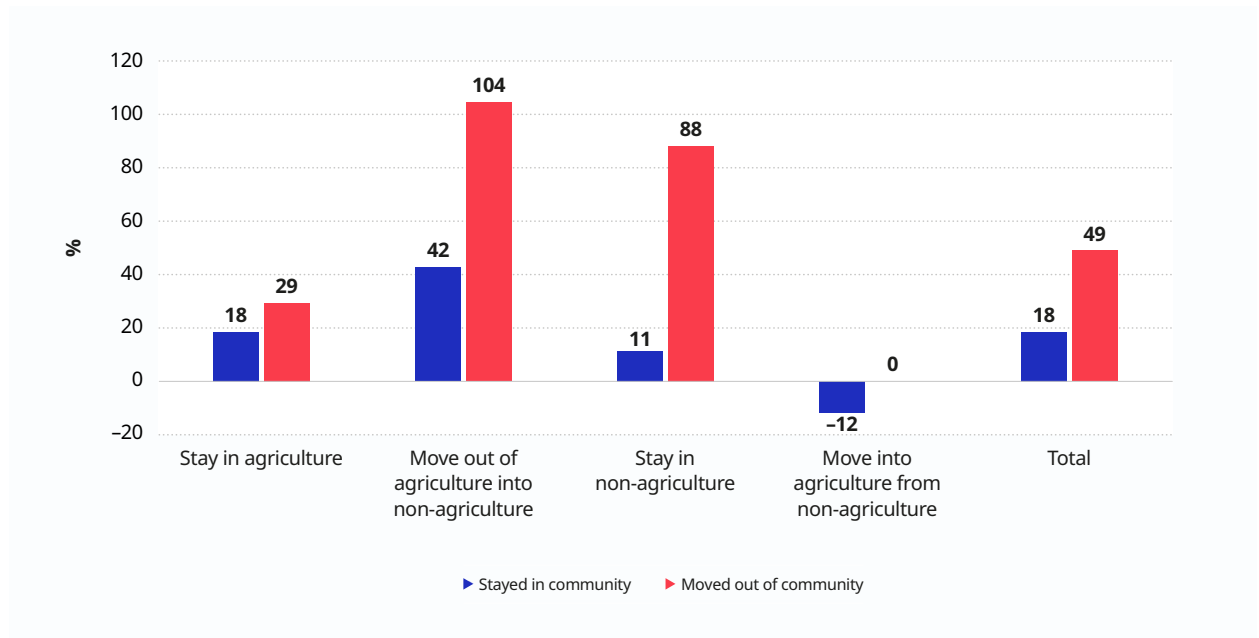
One common theme that appears to combine and run across the first three urban myths is that they seem to be motivated in part by a general fear of rural-to-urban migration, which is said to result in “overflowing” urban spaces and the “draining” of rural spaces. Rural unemployment (and resulting poverty) has consistently and for a long time been tagged as the main reason for the rural-to-urban migration and urbanization, both of which are often portrayed as major challenges (for early examples of this narrative, see Byerlee 1974; Singer 1973). At a somewhat recent joint African and European meeting, hosted by FAO, agricultural ministers were told to “address African rural youth unemployment now or they will migrate” (IPS World Desk 2017, emphasis added). Similarly, an FAO press release stated that “[m]aking agriculture more attractive to young farmers and creating decent employment opportunities in rural areas could reverse migration of youth to urban centres and abroad” (FAO 2017, emphasis added). And a synthesis report by the World Bank and IFAD (2017) also singles out rural youth unemployment as the main cause for youth exiting the rural sphere. This appears to be a com-

mon trend and fear, which again could be exacerbated by urban perceptions regarding the influx of rural migrants and the resulting stress on urban infrastructure.

Although youth have a greater likelihood of migrating to urban areas, the majority of young workers in sub-Saharan Africa still work in agriculture and rural areas, and the population of rural youth is expected to increase for some time (World Bank and IFAD 2017). Furthermore, the actual scale of the problem might be exaggerated, and the majority of new jobs for youth continue to be created in rural areas (Yeboah and Jayne 2016). As Fox (2012) pointed out, “The first (pervasive) misconception is that Africa is urbanising exceptionally fast due to intensive rural-urban migration. This is simply not true. Africa’s rate of urbanisation (i.e. change in the percentage of Africans living in urban as opposed to rural areas) is far lower than that of East Asia, for example, and not unusually rapid by historical standards.”

What is more, migration actively contributes to economic development, structural transformation and – above all – poverty reduction. It is closely linked with economic upward mobility. An innovative tracking survey in the United Republic of Tanzania’s Kagera region that followed individuals between 1991 and 2004 found that economic mobility strongly correlated with spatial mobility

► **Figure 6. Change of consumption expenditure between 1991 and 2004, Kagera Region, United Republic of Tanzania (%)**



Source: Author’s illustration based on Beegle, De Weerd and Dercon 2011.

(Beegle, de Weerd and Dercon 2011): (i) mobile respondents consistently were able to increase their consumption disproportionately, regardless of the sectors involved, but (ii) particularly those moving out of agriculture gained the most and (iii) those moving into agriculture were the only group that was worse off in 2004 than in 1991 (figure 6).

In addition, the study found that the type of migration matters, and the further anyone moved, the greater were their chances to move out of poverty. People moving out of the Kagera Region had the lowest initial poverty headcount, at 30 per cent, in 1991 but also reduced it the most, to only 7 per cent in 2004. People who stayed in the same village reduced their poverty headcount by only 4 percentage points (from 36 per cent to 32 per cent) in the same period.

People who migrate in search of jobs, both internally and internationally, typically do so seeking a pathway out of poverty. Migration often entails considerable investment to cover the cost of transport and living expenses during the job search.¹⁴⁷ Supporting poor household members to explore

employment options beyond their home village could have a big impact on poverty reduction. That said, although seeking better conditions than those obtainable in their region of origin, migrants often experience severe challenges of discrimination and exploitation in their destination areas. This in turn raises the need for targeted initiatives to protect them.

All this is not to say that urbanization, “slumification”, overstretched urban infrastructure and a rise in urban poverty are not serious challenges across Africa. But as argued, they must be seen in a context of structural transformation and economic development. It is not a given that rural-to-urban migration is the major cause or that rates of urbanization in Africa are disconcertingly high (by international and historical comparison). Instead, and as discussed further on, this migration should be recognized as an important element of development for a country, and rather than attempting to reduce it, focus on equipping towns and cities with the capacity to accommodate and productively employ their growing populations.

¹⁴⁷ The quoted study (Beegle, De Weerd and Dercon 2011) found that households who were already better off at the start of the survey were also more likely to profit from migration. However, even if this effect is controlled for the return of migration across the whole population, it still lies at approximately 36 per cent.

Rather than oversubscribing to fears of rural-to-urban migration, a more pertinent concern would be the quality of rural jobs and employment opportunities and whether they can lift rural workers, farmers, business owners and their families out of poverty.

Urban myth 5: “Rural African labour markets are ‘thin,’ and ‘There are few wage jobs.’”

This directly leads to the fifth urban myth. It concerns the labour market realities within rural economies and how these are commonly misconstrued. When it comes to understanding the livelihoods of the rural poor, whether young or old, “conventional wisdoms” and “stylized facts” have consistently featured strongly (Oya 2013a; 2010). Particularly with reference to sub-Saharan Africa, the most common is the conflation of rural poverty with small-scale farming (often mistakenly labelled as “subsistence” agriculture). Another misconception is the often-held view that the (informal) non-farm economy mainly comprises self-employed workers, particularly micro-entrepreneurs, own-account workers and contributing family workers. As a result, it is often assumed that wage labour is only of limited importance for the rural poor and that rural labour markets are “thin” or even absent (Mueller 2012; Sender and Johnston 2004; Sender 2003).

This urban myth is common, as illustrated by a range of quotes (emphases added):

- “Most of the world’s poorest people are subsistence farmers.” (Purvis 2014)
- “There is almost *no hiring or exchange of labour* among resident farmers during the peak labour season.” (Binswanger, McIntire and Udry 1991, 125)
- “The share of *agricultural wage income is very low* and its importance [...] did not increase over time because of the *thinness* of agricultural wage labour market.” (Estudillo et al. 2012, 7)
- “The distinction between formal and informal income opportunities is based essentially on that *between wage-earning and self-employment.*” (Hart 1973, 68)¹⁴⁸
- “All typologies of the [informal] sector agree that the *majority of workers in the sector are self-employed or family labour.*” (Potts 2008, 155)

► “Peasant farming dominates the economies of Sub-Saharan Africa [...]. Thus, *self-employment accounts for the major part of the labour market.* [...] The ‘informal’ sector is generally defined to also include some wage-workers [...]. But *the proportion of such workers is typically small.*” (Mazumdar and Mazaheri 2002, 3, at the opening of their book *Wages and employment in Africa*).

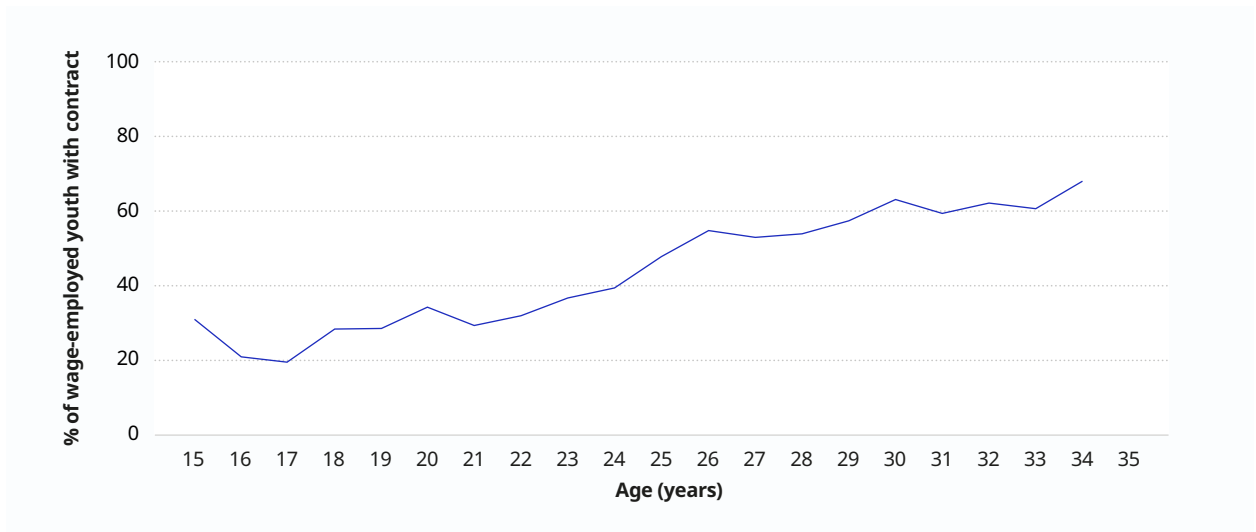
An increasing volume of published research, however, is challenging this notion of “thin” labour markets and the relative absence of wage employment in rural Africa. Studies across the continent (and beyond) are revealing that large shares of rural communities are heavily reliant on (often informal and casual) wage work (see Cramer et al. 2016; Mueller 2015; Oya and Pontara 2015; Oya 2013a; Cramer, Oya and Sender 2008). Here it is important to highlight that the majority of rural people do engage in a multitude of employment activities through what is commonly referred to as “livelihood diversification” (Ellis 2000; 1998). Consequently, several authors and practitioners continue to hold the notion that the farming and self-employed activities are the more important livelihood elements.

Methodological discussions have highlighted that because these own-account activities provide some sort of cultural and social identity, they are frequently over-reported in surveys while their real economic contribution to family income and livelihood might be smaller (Cramer et al. 2014; Oya 2013a; 2004). For example, Tadele and Gella found that many of their survey respondents in Ethiopia “were only “farmers by name” in the sense that they had little or no land to actually farm on” (2012, 35). Similarly, Mueller (2011b) reported that the majority of respondents in a Tanzanian labour market survey initially claimed “I’m a farmer” when asked about their employment but, on further probing, many of them said they relied mostly on casual and seasonal wage incomes for economic reproduction due to the marginal scale of their farming operations.

For these and a range of other methodological reasons, analysts argue that labour force surveys and other nationally representative surveys are largely ill-placed to disclose the full extent of wage employment, especially in rural areas (see Mueller and Chan 2015). More and more research reveal that it is in particular the poorest households who rely to a large extent on wage income. For example, Mueller (2012; 2011b) estimated, after finding that

¹⁴⁸ Keith Hart is commonly considered as the founder of the phrase “informal sector” and as pioneering the thinking in this area, specifically with regard to African economies.

► **Figure 7. Young people are most often engaged in casual wage employment (%)**



Note: Based on standardized and harmonized household and labour force surveys 1991–2010.

Source: Filmer and Fox 2014.

around 60 per cent of survey participants engaged in casual wage work (*kibarua* in Swahili), that the poorest quintile of the population derived around 65 per cent of their annual income from such work. This is even true in extremely deprived regions that are devoid of much commercial activity, as Mueller and Bbosa (2016) demonstrated for southern Karamoja in Uganda. This is a desperately poor area with nearly no commercial agriculture, but the authors nevertheless observed extensive wage work activities, especially among the youth and poor people.

Consequently, as a comprehensive stocktaking report on the topic concludes: “Rural wage labour, typically low-paid manual labour in agriculture and beyond, is the most important form of employment for the poorest households, both for bare economic survival and as a pathway out of poverty” (Mueller and Chan 2015, 2). In a joint report on rural youth employment, the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (2017, 9) argued: “The importance of agricultural wage employment is often underestimated. Wage employment is a key source of income for the poorest people in rural areas, as their assets, including land, are sometimes insufficient for their survival. Wage employment can also be a pathway to improved livelihoods. A recent synthesis of key features of agricultural wage employment, drawing on country case studies, indicates substantial underestimates of rural wage employment in official statistics; and shows

agricultural wage employment to be significant, heterogeneous and diverse, and to be dominated by casual and informal jobs.”

In summary, the notion of “thin labour markets” in rural Africa could not be further from the truth. It is young people who are particularly pursuing wage-labour activities in rural areas, both for survival and capital accumulation. They, however, tend to be the most vulnerable workers in rural settings, having to endure casual and insecure employment relations more regularly (figure 7 and Filmer and Fox 2014). Similarly, Mueller (2011b) found in the United Republic of Tanzania that 90 per cent of casual wage workers were aged 45 or younger (and 60 per cent aged 35 or younger), whereas wage workers with formal contracts tended to be much older on average.

So, unlike the common proposition that youth are best helped by supporting entrepreneurial and self-employment activities (see urban myth 6), there is a strong argument that strengthening their access to gainful, productive and freely chosen wage employment would be more beneficial. It is especially the poorest youth who rely on this type of work, and strengthening their job opportunities without reliance on land, start-up capital, entrepreneurial skills and so on is much more likely to be a sustainable route towards poverty reduction. As argued in the next section, promoting wage employment, both on-farm and off-farm, is a direct way of supporting the processes of structural

transformation and economic development in any economy.

Finally, this is not just an academic debate. Underlying labour relations and labour market realities are not easily observable but have profound impact on the incentive structures and constraints that a person experiences. By merely looking at young Africans weeding in a field of maize, it is impossible to determine whether they are tilling their own land as unpaid family workers or are employed as casual or seasonal wage workers. Yet, their actual employment relationship would have major impact on the best support mechanism to help them escape poverty. The own-account farmer might be interested in typical agricultural support systems (access to land, extension services, irrigation, seeds and fertilizer), while an unpaid family worker may have greater need for gender-responsive interventions that afford greater economic independence and self-determination and the wage worker would be mainly interested in more secure, safer and better-paid work. Thus, the optimal intervention to improve a beneficiary's life profoundly depends on the underlying employment situation (for a detailed discussion, see Mueller and Chan 2015).

Alas, it appears as if the default mode for most rural development programmes and policies is to assume that the vast majority of rural workers are self-employed. A subscription to urban myth 6 is the typical outcome.

Urban myth 6: “Rural youth employment is best promoted by fostering self-employment and entrepreneurship.”

Among policymakers and development professionals, there appears to be a dominant assumption that the best way to help youth gain productive employment is to steer them towards entrepreneurial self-employment (including in agriculture, such as farmers). For example, Sumberg et al. (2014) found that agricultural programmes are dominated by aims to increase self-employment for youth (such as in Ghana's National Youth Employment Program and Ethiopia's Youth Development Programme). Similarly, Flynn et al. (2016) observed that entrepreneurship development is a common intervention that is widely promoted by development actors. This preoccupation with entrepreneurship and

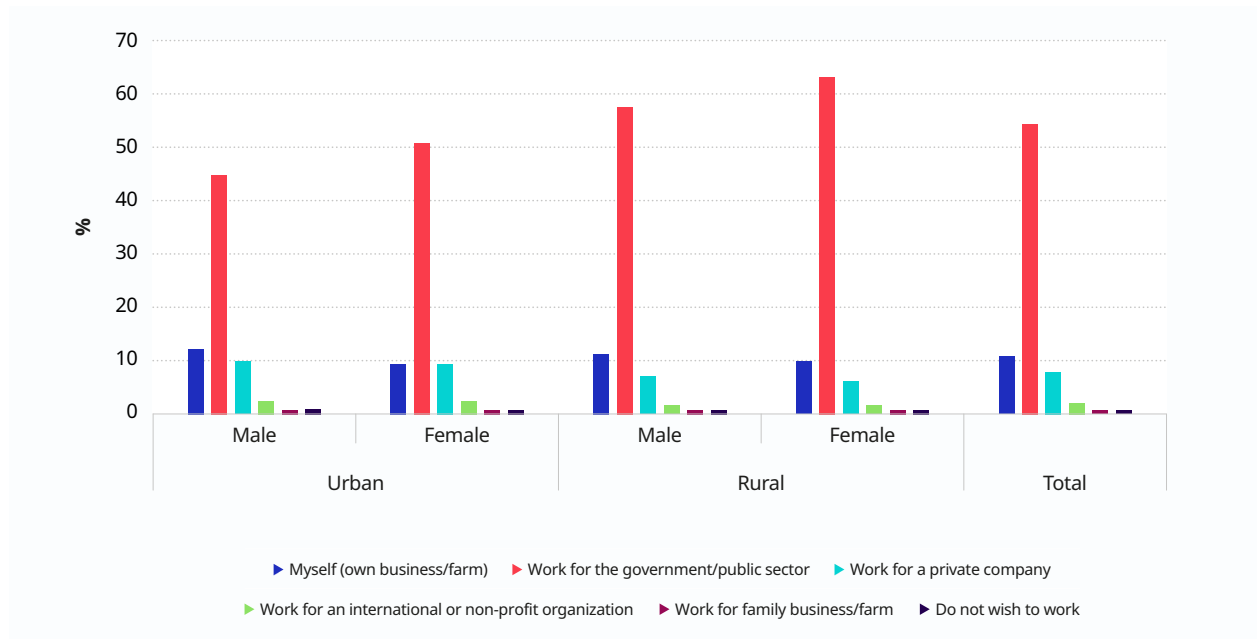
promotion of self-employment likely stems from two underlying assumptions.

First and as discussed and debunked earlier (see urban myth 5), there is an erroneous presumption that there are no or few wage employment opportunities in African economies, certainly in rural areas. Therefore, self-employment is seen as perhaps the only way to allow youth to “create their own jobs”, that is, to create demand for their own labour power. However, as Flynn et al. (2016, 26–27) eloquently argued, entrepreneurship interventions and promotion of youth business start-ups in fact are not demand-side interventions to create jobs for youth. They only seemingly tackle the demand side, but the actual demand-side constraints on their ability to sell their labour power remain and only resurface in other forms. “Contrary to what the term ‘self-employment’ may suggest, entrepreneurship does not (in some mysterious way) enable young people to create their own demand for their labour. Instead, self-employment entails using a small enterprise as a vessel for supplying labour to the market, in which young people must nonetheless navigate the structural constraints of the market. Rather than seeking payments from employers (wages), they instead strive to sell their labour to the consuming public directly, in the form of goods and services. Yet under conditions of poverty, the consuming public has very limited purchasing power.”

As a result, while it may help to formally reduce unemployment (as a statistical category), the respective interventions are unlikely to create sustainable and well-paid jobs or to have any transformational or structural effects on poverty reduction (Burchell et al. 2015; White 2012).

Second, the focus on entrepreneurship appears to be built on the assumption that youth actually want to be self-employed entrepreneurs. “For instance, some discussions hold young people to be essentially entrepreneurial, innovative, or needing more marketable skills, and deduce from this a need to support instrumentalist actions, such as providing skills training and access to finance” (Irwin, Mader and Flynn 2018, 1). Yet, the evidence is becoming increasingly clear that youth would in fact heavily prefer stable wage employment and only enter self-employment out of necessity (Fields 2013; White 2012). “‘Formal’ jobs are seen across many African societies as more prestigious than entrepreneurship, in spite of (or perhaps because of) small-scale entrepreneurship's prevalence” (Irwin, Mader and Flynn 2018, 16).

► **Figure 8. Who would you like to work for? Answers from youth across sub-Saharan Africa**



Source: Author’s calculations based on the ILO school-to-work transition data.

This is backed by quantitative evidence. The ILO school-to-work transition surveys show that, on the question of their preferred employer, only 10–11 per cent of African youth answered that they would like to run their own business. These answers were highly consistent across sex and rural-urban locations. By contrast, around 54 per cent of respondents preferred to work for government or in the public sector. Strikingly, this figure rises to 63 per cent for rural women, while a relatively low 44.7 per cent of urban men would like to pursue such a path (figure 8).

Finally, as discussed further on, promoting self-employment may run counter to wider structural trends of development, which would usually move people into more and better wage employment as structural transformation unfolds in an economy. Promotion of self-employment through various forms may not be effective because it arguably sets up a large number of budding youth entrepreneurs for intense competition among each other, in contexts of already small domestic markets. Instead, it is regularly forgotten that “[g]rowth in productive-sector wage employment is a source of dynamism in the labour market as a whole. *When wage employment increases, the self-employed in both rural and urban areas also face less competition for assets and customers, and enjoy an increase in the demand*

for their products. The regions that have been most successful recently in increasing demand for labour and reducing the incidence of poverty are those where the share of productive-sector wage earners in total employment has been rising” (Bennell 2007, 6, emphasis added).

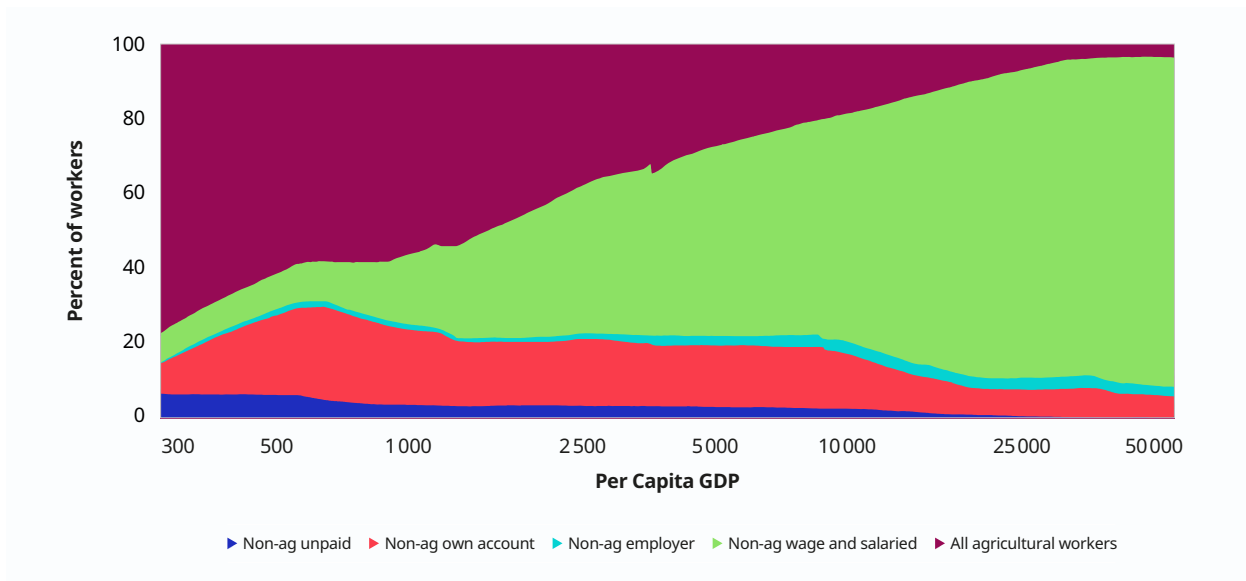
Reconciling the argument and deriving policy principles

The common misperceptions about the employment realities and structures of rural youth in Africa, as well as a range of policy conclusions that are commonly derived from these misperceptions, share a few underlying elements. These are countered by the following alternative arguments and policy recommendations.

The link between structural transformation and rural (youth) employment growth

The six urban myths are linked by a tendency to sideline structural elements of economic development and to focus solutions on the individual. In keeping with methodological individualism as

► Figure 9. Non-agricultural and agricultural work, by per capita gross domestic product level



Source: Gindling and Newhouse 2012, 29.

a central axiom of neoclassical economics,¹⁴⁹ the problem is described from the position of the individual (the jobseeker, farmer, entrepreneur, skilled or unskilled worker) rather than a structural problem of economic development. As White (2012, 11) aptly pointed out: “Structural problems require structural solutions, but in a neoliberal world, governments are not inclined to spend money on these things. The young are then forced to improvise their own survival strategies, and this is reflected in current policy shifts away from genuine ‘employment generation’ to an increasing emphasis on promotion of ‘entrepreneurial’ skills [...], thus a new kind of ‘do-it-yourself’ employment strategy for the young.”

The fundamental problem and challenge for rural communities across Africa is an insufficient demand for their labour power. While unemployment is mostly no option, the dominant results are informality, low productivity, underemployment, vulnerable or precarious employment and generally harsh conditions of work, income and poverty. From this angle, it is clear that the most important interventions for rural youth will be those that contribute to a “tightening” of the labour market by reducing the large gap between supply of and demand for their labour power. This will require increasing labour demand mainly by stimulating the number (and quality) of employment opportunities on offer

across all skill levels, while reducing the “undesirable” labour supply, such as removing children, school-age youth and older or unwell workers who would prefer to retire if they could from the labour market through adequate support and social protection systems.

This process is likely to rely fundamentally on the non-farm economy because, as structural transformation unfolds and labour productivity increases, the employment share of agriculture will inevitably drop. This trend is visible across all African economies. As Lanjouw (2007, 79) pointed out: “Growth of the non-farm sector, particularly the casual wage subsector, appears to be strongly associated with rising agricultural wages. The mechanism at work is likely to be a simple one of labour market tightening as the non-farm sector siphons labour out of the agricultural sector.”

This lies at the core of the process of structural economic transformation, which is generally agreed as the defining characteristic of the process of economic development and, for the most part, poverty reduction (Timmer et al. 2012). This process has been unfolding, particularly in Asia over the past few decades, leading to some well-founded optimism. This optimism is primarily driven by the Chinese success story in which the share of the rural

149 For a separate critique, see Fine and Milonakis 2009.

population has dropped from 80 per cent to 55 per cent within 20 years (Collier and Dercon 2014) while agricultural labour productivity has markedly increased (McErlean and Wu 2003). As a result, rural wages in Asia have increased sharply (Wiggins and Keats 2014). It appears that these trends are not isolated, and they reflect underlying structural labour market shifts. Going hand in hand, the evidence convincingly shows that, as development unfolds, increasingly more people rely on wage labour for their regular incomes and as a pathway out of poverty (Oya and Pontara 2015; Gindling and Newhouse 2012; Schaffner 1993) (figure 9).

Although the situation in the African context is still evolving, it is reasonable to expect highly positive spillover effects for its labour markets as Asian rural labour markets quickly mature (Wiggins and Keats 2014). This has yet to kick off at a meaningful scale, and currently the importance of small-scale agriculture and the low levels of productivity in rural Africa are undeniable. Several authors are concerned that Africa is “growing rapidly, but transforming slowly” (ACET 2013).

Many economists continue to argue that this process can only be fulfilled in Africa through the promotion of smallholder agriculture, reminiscent of Southern Asia’s “green revolution” (Mellor 2014; Dorosh and Mellor 2013; Lipton 2012). Others maintain that, although agriculture is important, it needs to be accompanied by growth in large-scale labour-intensive enterprises, including in agriculture and manufacturing (Collier and Dercon 2014; Foster and Rosenzweig 2004; Ashley and Maxwell 2001). Although the debate will not be resolved in this discussion (for a recent attempt, see Snodgrass 2014), there appears to be relative consensus on two points.

First, there is general agreement that agricultural growth and non-agricultural growth are concurrent events, without one preceding the other (Gollin 2010). Second, it is clear that the process of agricultural transformation, no matter how it is unfolding, will inevitably release redundant labour from (mostly small-scale) agriculture into urban and rural off-farm employment (Szirmai et al. 2013). This in turn will require an increase in employment beyond “traditional” forms of employment and thus increased attention towards and investment in higher-productivity labour-intensive sectors and subsectors. In the African context, there are signs that this process of transformation is unfolding and that it enables people to create pathways out of poverty. Consequently, a certain transition of

workers from rural to urban areas seems unavoidable (assuming that not all farmers and agricultural workers can be absorbed in the rural non-farm economy). Of course, it is rural youth in particular who drive this trend in Africa.

That said, the importance of agriculture and agricultural productivity, regardless of small or large scale, is undeniable for structural transformation and growth. “[As] agriculture intensifies and diversifies and economies develop, well-functioning rural labour markets and migration are crucial in reducing rural poverty and dampening rural-urban income disparities” (World Bank 2007, 221).

This process is already in full flow, as many observers are realizing. Rigg (2006, 195) expressed this trend most succinctly: “No longer can we assume that small farmers are better off than landless labourers. [...] No longer are agriculture and farming the desired, default position of rural households. [...] And no longer should we assume that agricultural development is the best way to promote rural development, and rural development the best means of raising rural incomes and improving livelihood.”

And as Inchauste (2012, 15) summarized: “More and better paid work is critical in lifting people out of poverty. More specifically, improving the returns to labour is critical in lifting people out of poverty. Whether additional labour income comes from greater diversification, higher earnings per hour, or a greater number of hours worked, jobs are at the core of what counts for poverty reduction.”

Policy principles for more and better youth employment in rural Africa

How can we reshape policy approaches for rural youth that take into account their complex living and working realities and challenges while promoting (rather than counteracting) the much-needed process of structural transformation? Here are four general policy principles.

1. Reducing the disparity between labour supply and demand should be the main priority. In principle, initiatives to promote skills and education are always welcome and provide a valuable good, especially when aimed at school-age youth and others towards the lower end of the youth age bracket. That said, in the context of rural African communities, there is no getting away from the fact that

labour supply vastly exceeds demand. To achieve labour market “tightening”, policy interventions should seek to stimulate demand for labour and suppress any unwanted supply of labour. In this regard, typical interventions to combat child labour and reduce school drop-out rates are helpful, not just for the educational outcomes they produce but for their tightening effect on the labour market. Interventions must therefore combine the supply and demand sides.

However, in the context of rural Africa, interventions that stimulate the local and aggregate demand for labour across all skill levels, but particularly for manual labour and elementary occupations (because these areas still constitute the mainstay of the rural labour supply), are often more important. This involves stimulating employment-intensive sectors and value chains, both on-farm and off-farm, to absorb the maximum number of (paid) workers. In most contexts, traditional small-scale agriculture is unlikely to fall into this category; instead, promoting emerging commercial mid-scale farmers and their ability to create more and better farmhand jobs would be more promising. Linked to this, economic policies that stimulate a range of rural off-farm sectors (not limited to agroprocessing) is necessary to absorb the growing number of farmers and farm workers who are likely to be released from the sector. As argued previously, this situation cannot be solved through entrepreneurship development and micro and small business support alone. Instead, it requires structural policy solutions that provide palpable incentives and support to employing enterprises to gain a foothold in nascent or underdeveloped sectors with large employment potential.

This principle is not specific to youth, because the rural labour market in sub-Saharan Africa suffers from the structural lack of labour demand as a whole and not just in its youth segment. That said, a particular focus on promoting youth-relevant sectors is certainly welcome. But at the same time, it is important to avoid urban assumptions of youth expectations, such as assuming a preference for highly tech-driven sectors that would require skill levels that may not be sufficiently available in most rural settings and thus would not benefit rural youth as much as hoped. Instead, a focus on well-paying, safe and – above all – stable jobs is likely to be a much more important factor. Prioritizing sectors that provide an evenly spread and predictable distribution of labour demand is likely to go a long way.

2. Promote structural transformation while managing and reducing its more disruptive effects through social dialogue.

Structural transformation is an integral part of the processes of economic development and poverty reduction. A core element of this structural transformation is the gradual transfer of labour from low-paying, unproductive occupations into gradually more productive and formal wage employment. The focus on wage employment should be emphasized and is not arbitrary because youth both prefer and aspire to stable wage employment rather than self-employment. And structurally, wage employment is more conducive towards facilitating structural transformation by stimulating domestic purchasing power for consumer goods as well as freeing market space and reducing the competition for viable businesses by reducing the extent of survivalist microenterprises.

For these reasons, rural youth employment should be promoted through emphasis on those sectors and enterprises that can create productive waged and salaried jobs. It is clear that “traditional” sectors and forms of production, such as smallholder farming – which is commonplace in rural development initiatives, are counterproductive in this regard. It is critical to highlight that this argument is not discarding the importance of agriculture, and investments in agricultural production are essential for economic transformations to occur. The emphasis lies in the types of agricultural businesses that are being supported; the focus should look to viable, competitive, emerging farms that operate at scale, which goes beyond a mere reliance on family labour.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that this process of structural transformation is intensely disruptive in its nature, and it is particularly the younger generations who can be caught in the midst of the changes (such as through reduced access to land), while perhaps holding the necessary dynamism to adapt to and profit from changing opportunities. It is absolutely vital to combine structural transformation measures with policy solutions that limit their adverse effects and protect vulnerable groups who are not in a position to benefit. Furthermore, the transformation must not end in wage dumping and the increased exploitation of workers; instead, it must manifest itself as a productive transformation that creates gainful employment and, ultimately, decent work. The role of strengthened workers’ and employers’ organizations that can keep up with the times and work beyond the strict confines of the formal economy also will be essential. Purposive skills development

with keen emphasis on new sectors and occupations as well as social protection systems for vulnerable groups are equally important elements.

3. Explore and nurture the synergies and linkages between rural and urban labour markets.

A significant share of the discourse of rural youth employment is preoccupied with the aim of reducing the rural-to-urban migration and making rural employment, and especially agriculture, more “attractive” to youth. Migration (especially domestic) is an integral part of economic development, social upward mobility and poverty reduction. Any rural employment strategy cannot limit its scope only to rural localities but must also find ways to expand rural youths’ access to gainful and productive employment opportunities in urban areas, especially tertiary and secondary towns. Ideally, these urban opportunities should establish sectoral linkages to the rural economy.

Limiting youths’ geographical mobility from rural to urban areas should not be a major policy concern. Instead, if the limited absorptive capacity of towns and cities is a concern, then adequate policies and investments to strengthen urban infrastructure are certainly important. For this, an employment lens should be applied, and any infrastructure investments should be carried out with maximum (youth) employment intensity. This will further increase purchasing power and stimulate local economies for a virtuous cycle of general business and employment growth that will take the strain off rural labour markets. Enabling youth to benefit from these heightened market opportunities through greater market access and support in building and maintaining sustainable and employing enterprises will further add value.

4. Promote innovative and localized forms of labour market institutions for more and better employment. Rural labour markets mostly rely on highly informal processes of matching and arbitration. National and formal labour market institutions and mechanisms are all but absent and ineffective in most of these contexts. As a result, patronage, nepotism, inefficient labour allocation, skills mis-

matching, incomplete market clearing and a lack of voice and representation of both workers and employers are common challenges.

Rather than dwelling on technical and enterprise-support systems (such as agricultural extension services and microcredits), turn to the lacuna of innovative project and policy interventions that promote a better functioning of rural labour markets. Possible examples include village and district placement services for (informal) agricultural and non-agricultural rural wage workers. Improve rural youths’ knowledge of job opportunities, not just in their immediate locality but provide them with coordinated labour market information, especially on the times, seasons and locations of peak labour demand across all skill levels. Transport and job-search allowances would greatly facilitate their access to such opportunities. These could be coupled with specific support and promotional schemes for employers to promote their ability and willingness to create more and better jobs. This could, for instance, involve rating and incentive systems that reward good employment practices while at the same signalling employers’ good practices and thus opening up their access to a more productive and loyal workforce.

Research demonstrates that even in the context of highly informal and casual employment relations, improved freedom of association and collective bargaining rights can have great impact for better working conditions and higher labour productivity (see Mueller and Chan 2015, chapter 6). Thus, promoting simple (and usually informal) forms of rural associations and unions that allow these highly informal workers to speak with one voice and fight for better conditions is likely to have big impact on their well-being and livelihood outlook.

Concentrating on these four principles stands a much better chance of yielding sustainable impact for decent employment creation across the region than what policymakers and the international development community can currently claim to be achieving.

References

- ACET (African Center for Economic Transformation) 2013. *Growing Rapidly – Transforming Slowly: Preview of the 2013 African Transformation Report*. Accra.
- Ashley, C., and S. Maxwell. 2001. "Rethinking Rural Development." *Development Policy Review* 19 (4). Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-7679.00141>.
- Atieno, M. 2016. "The Average Kenyan Farmer is 63-Years-Old: Government Wants to Make Agriculture Compulsory in Schools to Lure Youths." 16 August. Available at: <http://innov-8tiv.com/average-kenyan-farmer-63-years-old-government-wants-make-agriculture-compulsory-schools-lure-youths/>.
- Awogbenle, A.C., and K.C. Iwuamadi. 2010. "Youth Unemployment: Entrepreneurship Development Programme as an Intervention Mechanism." *African Journal of Business Management* 4 (6): 831–835.
- Babbie, K. 2016. "Rethinking the 'Youth Are Not Interested in Agriculture' Narrative." 12 October. Available at: <https://nextbillion.net/rethinking-the-youth-are-not-interested-in-agriculture-narrative/>.
- Beegle, K., J. De Weerd, and S. Dercon. 2011. "Migration and Economic Mobility in Tanzania: Evidence from a Tracking Survey." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 93 (3): 1010–1033.
- Bennell, P. 2007. "Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Rural Youth." IFAD Governing Council Roundtable: Generating Remunerative Livelihood Opportunities for Rural Youth. London: Knowledge and Skills for Development.
- Bernstein, H. 2009. "VI Lenin and AV Chayanov: Looking Back, Looking Forward." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36 (1): 55–81.
- Bezu, S., and S. Holden. 2014. "Are Rural Youth in Ethiopia Abandoning Agriculture?" *World Development* 64: 259–272.
- Binswanger, H.P., J. McIntire, and C. Udry. 1991. "Production Relations in Semi-Arid African Agriculture." In *The Economic Theory of Agrarian Institutions*, edited by P. Bardhan. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Available at: www.ingentaconnect.com/content/oso/556273/1991/00000001/00000001/art00008.
- Boserup, E. 1965. *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change Under Population Pressure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co.
- . 1985. "Economic and Demographic Interrelationships in sub-Saharan Africa." *Population and Development Review* 11: 383–397.
- Burchell, B., A. Coutts, E. Hall, and N. Pye. 2015. *Self-employment Programmes for Young People: A Review of the Context, Policies and Evidence*. Geneva: ILO.
- Byerlee, D. 1974. "Rural-Urban Migration in Africa: Theory, Policy and Research Implications." *International Migration Review* 8 (4): 543–566.
- Byres, T.J. 1979. "Of Neo-Populist Pipe-Dreams: Daedalus in the Third World and the Myth of Urban Bias." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 6: 210–244.
- Chayanov, A.V. 1966. *The Theory of Peasant Economy*. Homewood, IL: American Economic Association.
- Chigunta, F. 2017. "Entrepreneurship as a Possible Solution to Youth Unemployment in Africa." In *Laboring and learning*, edited by T. Abebe, J. Waters, and T. Skelton. Singapore: Springer.
- Collier, P., and S. Dercon. 2014. "African Agriculture in 50 Years: Smallholders in a Rapidly Changing World?" *World Development* 63: 92–101.
- Cotula, L., C. Oya, E.A. Codjoe, A. Eid, M. Kakraba-Ampeh, J. Keeley, and W.O. Nasha. 2014. "Testing Claims About Large Land Deals in Africa: Findings from a Multi-Country Study." *Journal of Development Studies* 50 (7): 903–925.
- Cramer, C., D. Johnston, B. Mueller, C. Oya, and J. Sender. 2014. "How to Do (and How Not to Do) Fieldwork on Fair Trade and Rural Poverty." *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement* 35 (1): 170–185. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2014.873022>.
- , —, —, —, and —. 2016. "Fairtrade and Labour Markets in Ethiopia and Uganda." *The Journal of Development Studies*: 1–16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2016.1208175>.
- Cramer, C., C. Oya, and J. Sender. 2008. "Lifting the Blinkers: A New View of Power, Diversity and Poverty in Mozambican Rural Labour Markets." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 46: 361–392. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X08003340>.

- Dahir, A.L. 2017. "The Future of Farming in Africa is Not Agriculture but Agribusiness." *Quartz Africa* 10 October. Available at: <https://qz.com/africa/1098438/to-improve-agriculture-in-africa-we-need-to-manage-farms-as-commercial-enterprises/>.
- Dercon, S. 2009. "Rural Poverty: Old Challenges in New Contexts." *The World Bank Research Observer* 24 (1): 1–28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkp003>.
- Dorosh, P.A., and J.W. Mellor. 2013. "Why Agriculture Remains a Viable Means of Poverty Reduction in sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Ethiopia." *Development Policy Review* 31 (4). Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/dpr.12013>.
- du Guerny, J. 1997. *The Rural Elderly and the Ageing of Rural Populations*. Rome: FAO. Available at: www.un.org/popin/fao/elderfao.htm.
- Edelman, M., C. Oya, and S.M. Borrás Jr. 2013. "Global Land Grabs: Historical Processes, Theoretical and Methodological Implications and Current Trajectories." *Third World Quarterly* 34 (9).
- Elder, S., H. de Haas, M. Principi, and K. Schewel. 2015. *Youth and Rural Development: Evidence From 25 School-To-Work Transition Surveys*. Geneva: ILO.
- Ellis, F. 1998. "Household Strategies and Rural Livelihood Diversification." *Journal of Development Studies* 35: 1–38.
- . 2000. *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Engels, F. 1972. "Die Bauernfrage in Frankreich und Deutschland." *Werke* 22: 483–505.
- Enkhtur, A. 2016. "Let's Make Farming Famous". FAO blog. Available at: www.fao.org/cfs/home/blog/blog-articles/article/en/c/449064/.
- Estudillo, J.P., T. Matsumoto, H.C.Z. Uddin, N.S. Kumanayake, and K. Otsuka. 2012. *Labor Markets, Occupational Choice, and Rural Poverty in Selected Countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa*. Background Paper for *The World Development Report 2013*. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTNWDR2013/Resources/8258024-1320950747192/8260293-1320956712276/8261091-1348683883703/WDR2013_bp_Labor_Markets_Occupational_Choice.pdf.
- Fan, S., and C. Chan-Kang. 2005. "Is Small Beautiful? Farm Size, Productivity, and Poverty in Asian Agriculture." *Agricultural Economics* 32: 135–146.
- Farm Africa. 2017. "Does Farming Need a Rebrand to Encourage More Young People into Agriculture?" 18 December. Available at: www.farmafrica.org/latest/news.
- Feed the Future. 2017. "Making Agriculture Cool Again for Youth in Africa". 30 October. Available at: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/making-agriculture-cool-again-for-youth-in-africa/>.
- Fields, G.S. 2013. *Self-employment in the Developing World: A Report to the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons*. Background Research Paper. Available at: https://www.post2020hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/Fields_Self-Employment-in-the-Developing-World.pdf.
- Filmer, D., and L. Fox. 2014. *Youth Employment in sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Fine, B., and D. Milonakis. 2009. *From Economics Imperialism to Freakonomics: The Shifting Boundaries Between Economics and Other Social Sciences*. London and New York: Routledge. Available at: www.dawsonera.com/guard/protected/dawson.jsp?name=School%20of%20Oriental%20and%20African%20Studies&dest=www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/AbstractView/S9780203880289.
- Flynn, J., P. Mader, M. Oosterom, and S. Ripoll. 2016. *Failing Young People? Addressing the Supply-Side Bias and Individualisation in Youth Employment Programming*. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). 2014. *Contribution to the 2014 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Integration Segment*. Available at: www.un.org/en/ecosoc/integration/pdf/foodandagricultureorganization.pdf.
- . 2017. "Bringing Youth Back to Agriculture in Southern Africa". Available at: www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/1052983/.
- Foster, A., and M.R. Rosenzweig. 2004. "Agricultural Productivity Growth, Rural Economic Diversity, and Economic Reforms: India, 1970–2000." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52 (3). Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24098178>.

- Fox, S. 2012. "Africa's Urban Transition: Challenges, Misconceptions and Opportunities." 13 February. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africatse/2012/02/13/africas-urban-transition-challenges-misconceptions-and-opportunities/>.
- Fox, L., L.W. Senbet, and W. Simbanegavi. 2016. "Youth Employment in sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges, Constraints and Opportunities." *Journal of African Economies* 25 (suppl_1): i3–i15.
- Garcia, M., and J. Fares. 2008. "Working in Bad Jobs or Not Working at All." In *Youth in Africa's Labor Market*, edited by M. Garcia, and J. Fares. Washington, DC: World Bank: 49–65.
- Garner, E., and A. de la O Gender. 2014. *Identifying the "Family Farm": An Informal Discussion of the Concepts and Definitions*. Rome: FAO.
- Gibbon, P. 2011. *Experiences of Plantation and Large-Scale Farming in 20th century Africa*. Danish Institute for International Studies Working Paper.
- Gindling, T.H., and D.L. Newhouse. 2012. *Self-employment in the Developing World*. Social Science Research Network Scholarly Paper No. ID 2149389. Available at: <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2149389>.
- Gollin, D. 2010. "Agricultural Productivity and Economic Growth." In *Handbook of Agricultural Economics* 4. Available at: <https://econpapers.repec.org/bookchap/eeehagchp/6-73.htm>.
- . 2014. *Smallholder Agriculture in Africa*. International Institute for Environment and Development Working Paper.
- ., D. Lagakos, and M.E. Waugh. 2013. "The Agricultural Productivity Gap." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129 (2): 939–993.
- González, A. 2016. "Let's Make Agriculture Cool Again." *HuffingtonPost* 18 July. Available at: www.huffingtonpost.com/arancho-gonzalez/lets-make-agriculture-cool_b_11043150.html.
- Hart, K. 1973. "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11 (1): 61–89.
- Headey, D.D., and T.S. Jayne. 2014. "Adaptation to Land Constraints: Is Africa Different?" *Food Policy* 48: 18–33. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2014.05.005>.
- Heide-Ottosen, S. 2014. *The Ageing of Rural Populations: Evidence on Older Farmers in Low-And Middle-Income Countries*. London: HelpAge International. Available at: www.helpage.org/silo/files/the-ageing-of-rural-populations-evidence-on-older-farmers-in-low-and-middle-income-countries.pdf.
- IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development). 2016. *Rural Development Report 2016: Fostering Inclusive Rural Transformation*. Available at: <https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/39155702/Rural+development+report+2016.pdf/347402dd-a37f-41b7-9990-aa745dc113b9>.
- ILO (International Labour Office). 2013. *Resolution Concerning Statistics of Work, Employment and Labour Underutilization*. Available at: www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/standards-and-guidelines/resolutions-adopted-by-international-conferences-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_230304/lang--en/index.htm.
- . 2017. *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2017*. Available at: www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2017/WCMS_541211/lang--en/index.htm.
- IMoT Agri Forum. 2018. "Why are the Youth Not Attracted Towards Agriculture?" 12 January. Available at: <http://imotforum.com/2018/01/youth-not-attracted-towards-agriculture/>.
- IPS (Inter Press Service World Desk). 2017. "Address African Rural Youth Unemployment Now or They Will Migrate".
- Irwin, S., P. Mader, and J. Flynn. 2018. *How Youth-Specific is Africa's Youth Employment Challenge?* Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.
- Johnston, D.Z., and H. Le Roux. 2007. "Leaving the Household Out of Family Labour? The Implications for the Size-Efficiency Debate." *European Journal of Development Research* 19: 355–371.
- Jones, G.A., and S. Corbridge. 2010. "The Continuing Debate About Urban Bias: The Thesis, Its Critics, Its Influence and Its Implications for Poverty-Reduction Strategies." *Progress in Development Studies* 10 (1): 1–18. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/146499340901000101>.
- Kautsky, K. 1899. *Die Agrarfrage: Eine Übersicht über die Tendenzen der modernen Landwirtschaft und die Agrarpolitik der Sozialdemokratie*. Stuttgart: Verlag von J. H. W. Dieck Nachfolger.

- Kinsella, K. 2001. "Urban and Rural Dimensions of Global Population Aging: An Overview." *Journal of Rural Health* 17 (4): 314–322. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-0361.2001.tb00280.x>.
- Lanjouw, P. 2007. "Does the Rural Nonfarm Economy Contribute to Poverty Reduction?" In *Transforming the Rural Nonfarm Economy: Opportunities and Threats in the Developing World*, edited by S. Haggblade, P.B.R. Hazell, and T. Reardon. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: 55–79. Available at: http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5QNHAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA55&dq=lanjouw+2007+rural+non-farm+economy&ots=aurC_x8Uyc&sig=aYTmXby7q2mSmM7K4XnoVACcpwQ#v=onepage&q&f=false.
- Lenin, V. 1899. *The Development of Capitalism in Russia: Collected Works*. Third edition. Moscow: Progress Publishers, reprinted 1972.
- Lewis, W.A. 1954. "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour." *The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies* 22: 139–191.
- Lipton, M. 1968. "Strategy for Agriculture: Urban Bias and Rural Planning." In *The Crisis of Indian Planning: Economic Planning in the 1960s*, edited by P. Streeten, and M. Lipton. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- . 1977. *Why Poor People Stay Poor: A Study of Urban Bias in World Development*. London: Temple Smith.
- . 2012. "Income from Work: The Food-Population-Resource Crisis in 'the Short Africa'." *British Academy Review* 22. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/income-work-food-population-resource-crisis-short-africa>.
- Losch, B. 2016. *Structural Transformation to Boost Youth Labour Demand in sub-Saharan Africa: The Role of Agriculture, Rural Areas and Territorial Development*. Geneva: ILO.
- Lowder, S.K., J. Scoet, and T. Raney. 2016. "The Number, Size, and Distribution of Farms, Smallholder Farms, and Family Farms Worldwide." *World Development* 87: 16–29.
- Mazumdar, D., and A. Mazaheri. 2002. *Wages and Employment in Africa*. Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate.
- McErlean, S., and Z. Wu. 2003. "Regional Agricultural Labour Productivity Convergence in China." *Food Policy* 28 (3): 237–252. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192\(03\)00035-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192(03)00035-6).
- Melchers, I., and B. Büchler. 2019. "Africa's Rural Youth Speak Out", 2 July. Available at: www.rural21.com/english/news/detail/article/africas-rural-youth-speak-out-00002495/?xttnews%5BsViewPointer%5D=9&cHash=bc3a18f792f009a6509dc8a948d1e391.
- Mellor, J.W. 2014. "High Rural Population Density Africa – What are the Growth Requirements and Who Participates?" *Food Policy* 48. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306919214000426>.
- Mis, M., and I. Esipisu. 2016. "Agriculture Needs a Makeover to Lure Young People Back to Farming." Reuters 22 August. Available at: www.reuters.com/article/africa-farming-food-idUSL8N1AR4WS.
- Mueller, B. 2011a. "The Agrarian Question in Tanzania: Using New Evidence to Reconcile an Old Debate." *Review of African Political Economy* 38: 23–42.
- . 2011b. *Working for Development? A Study of the Political Economy of Rural Labour Markets in Tanzania*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
- . 2012. "The Poverty of the Smallholder Ideal: Highlighting Tanzania's Rural Labour Market." *Development Viewpoint* 71.
- . 2015. "Tanzania's Rural Labour Markets: The Missing Link Between Development and Poverty Reduction." In *Rural Wage Employment in Developing Countries: Theory, Evidence and Policy*, edited by C. Oya, and N. Pontara. London: Routledge.
- Mueller, B., and S. Bbosa. 2016. *Wage Labor for Food Security in Southern Karamoja: A Labor Market Assessment for the Resiliency Through Wealth, Agriculture, and Nutrition in Karamoja*. Washington, DC: ACDI/VOCA. Available at: www.acdivoca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/RWANU-Labor-Market-Assessment-FINAL.pdf.
- Mueller, B., and M-K. Chan. 2015. *Wage Labor, Agriculture-Based Economies, and Pathways Out of Poverty: Taking Stock of the Evidence*. LEO USAID Report No. 15. Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development. Available at: www.ilo.org/empent/Projects/the-lab/WCMS_372897/lang-en/index.htm.

- Muthoni Mwaura, G. 2017. "The Side-Hustle: Diversified Livelihoods of Kenyan Educated Young Farmers." *IDS Bulletin* 48 (3). Available at: <https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/idsbo/article/view/2869>.
- Njeru, L.K. 2017. "Youth in Agriculture: Perceptions and Challenges for Enhanced Participation in Kajiado North sub-County, Kenya." *Greener Journal of Agricultural Sciences* 7 (8): 203–209. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15580/GJAS.2017.8.100117141>.
- NRC (National Research Council). 2006. *Aging in sub-Saharan Africa: Recommendations for Furthering Research*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. Available at: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK20296/.
- Nwanze, K. 2018. "Unleash the Power of Young Africans: Supporting the Farmers of Tomorrow." International Food Policy Research Institute blog. Available at: www.ifpri.org/blog/unleash-power-young-africans-supporting-farmers-tomorrow.
- Oya, C. 2004. "The Empirical Investigation of Rural Class Formation: Methodological Issues in a Study of Large- and Mid-Scale Farmers in Senegal." *Historical Materialism* 12: 289–326.
- . 2010. *Rural Inequality, Wage Employment and Labour Market Formation in Africa: Historical and Micro-Level Evidence*. Geneva: ILO.
- . 2012. "Contract Farming in sub-Saharan Africa: A Survey of Approaches, Debates and Issues." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 12 (1): 1–33.
- . 2013a. "Rural Wage Employment in Africa: Methodological Issues and Emerging Evidence." *Review of African Political Economy* 40 (136): 251–273. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2013.794728>.
- . 2013b. "The Land Rush and Classic Agrarian Questions of Capital and Labour: A Systematic Scoping Review of the Socioeconomic Impact of Land Grabs in Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 34 (9): 1532–1557.
- Oya, C., and N. Pontara (eds). 2015. *Rural Wage Employment in Developing Countries: Theory, Evidence and Policy*. First edition. New York: Routledge.
- Pillay, N., and P. Maharaj. 2012. "Population Ageing in Africa." In *Aging and Health in Africa*, edited by P. Maharaj. Boston: Springer.
- Potts, D. 2008. "The Urban Informal Sector in sub-Saharan Africa: from Bad to Good (and Back Again?)" *Development Southern Africa* 25 (2): 151–167.
- Purvis, K. 2014. "Live Q&A: How Can Development Support Family Farmers?" *The Guardian*, 10 October. Available at: www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/oct/10/live-qa-how-can-development-support-family-farmers.
- Rukuni, M., and R. Zvavanyange. 2014. "Re-configuring the Future of Africa's Workforce in Agriculture and Food Systems with Youth in Mind." *Nature and Faune* 28 (1): 26–29.
- Schaffner, J.A. 1993. "Rising Incomes and the Shift from Self-Employment to Firm-Based Production." *Economics Letters* 41 (4): 435–440. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-1765\(93\)90217-Z](https://doi.org/10.1016/0165-1765(93)90217-Z).
- Schatz, E., and J. Seeley. 2015. "Gender, Ageing and Carework in East and Southern Africa: A Review." *Global Public Health* 10 (10): 1185–1200. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2015.1035664>.
- Sen, A. 1962. "An Aspect of Indian Agriculture." *Economic Weekly* 14: 243–246.
- Sender, J. 2003. "Rural Poverty and Gender: Analytical Frameworks and Policy Proposals." In *Rethinking Development Economics*, edited by H. Chang. London: Anthem Press.
- Sender, J., and D. Johnston. 2004. "Searching for a Weapon of Mass Production in Rural Africa: Unconvincing Arguments for Land Reform." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 4: 142–164.
- Sihlobo, W. 2015. "Young Blood: A Prerequisite for Future of Farms". Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2015-08-13-young-blood-a-prerequisite-for-future-of-farms/>.
- . 2016, July 25. "Youth is the Key to Unlock Africa's Agriculture Potential". Blog 25 July. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2016/07/25/youth-is-the-key-to-unlock-africas-agriculture-potential/>.
- Singer, H.W. 1973. "Rural Unemployment as a Background to Rural Urban Migration in Africa." In *Manpower and Unemployment Research in Africa*, edited by P. Gutkind. Montreal: McGill University: 37–45.

- Snodgrass, D. 2014. *Agricultural Transformation in sub-Saharan Africa and the Role of the Multiplier*. Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development. Available at: [www.acdivoca.org/site/Lookup/LEO-Ag-Transformation-in-sub-Saharan-Africa-and-the-Role-of-the-Multiplier/\\$file/LEO-Ag-Transformation-in-sub-Saharan-Africa-and-the-Role-of-the-Multiplier.pdf](http://www.acdivoca.org/site/Lookup/LEO-Ag-Transformation-in-sub-Saharan-Africa-and-the-Role-of-the-Multiplier/$file/LEO-Ag-Transformation-in-sub-Saharan-Africa-and-the-Role-of-the-Multiplier.pdf).
- Sumberg, J., N.A. Anyidoho, M. Chasukwa, B. Chinsinga, and J. Leavy. 2014. *Young People, Agriculture, and Employment in Rural Africa*. Helsinki: World Institute for Development Economic Research UNU-WIDER.
- Sumberg, J., N.A. Anyidoho, J. Leavy, D.J. te Lintelo, and K. Wellard. 2012. "Introduction: The Young People and Agriculture 'Problem' in Africa." *IDS Bulletin* 43 (6): 1–8.0
- Szirmai, A., M. Gebreeyesus, M., F. Guadagno, and B. Verspagen. 2013. *Promoting Productive Employment in sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of the Literature*. Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology Working Paper No. 062. Available at: <http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/unmunumer/2013062.htm>.
- Tadele, G., and A.A. Gella. 2012. "A Last Resort and Often Not an Option at All: Farming and Young People in Ethiopia." *IDS Bulletin* 43 (6): 33–43.
- te Lintelo, D.J. 2012. "Young People in African (Agricultural) Policy Processes? What National Youth Policies Can Tell Us." *IDS Bulletin* 43 (6): 90–103.
- Timmer, P., M. McMillan, O. Badiane, D. Rodrik, H. Binswanger-Mkhize, and F. Wouterse. 2012. *Patterns of Growth and Structural Transformation in Africa: Trends and Lessons for Future Development Strategies*. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme Kenya. n.d. "Cultivating Youth Entrepreneurship Through Agribusiness". Available at: www.ke.undp.org/content/kenya/en/home/ourwork/inecgr/successstories/cultivating-youth-entrepreneurship-through-agribusiness.html.
- United Nations. 2017. *Revision of World Population Prospects*. Available at: https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/wpp2017_keyfindings.pdf.
- Vos, R. 2014. "Is Global Food Security Jeopardised by an Old Age Timebomb?" *The Guardian* 4 February. Available at: www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/feb/04/global-food-security-old-age-timebomb.
- White, B. 2012. "Agriculture and the Generation Problem: Rural Youth, Employment and the Future of Farming." *IDS Bulletin* 43 (6): 9–19.
- Wiggins, S., and S. Keats. 2014. *Rural Wages in Asia*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- World Bank. 2007. *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5990>.
- World Bank, and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development). 2017. *Rural Youth Employment*. Available at: www.bmz.de/de/zentrales_downloadarchiv/g20/Rural_Youth_Employment_-_WB-IFAD-Synthesis_Study_DWG.pdf.
- Yeboah, F.K., and T.S. Jayne. 2016. *Africa's Evolving Employment Structure*. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan State University, Department of Agriculture, Food and Resources.