

Chapter 2

Youth: A Time of Transitions

By definition, youth is a time of many transitions—from school, to work, through risky behaviors, to founding a family, and to exercising citizenship. These transitions, which are shaped by the opportunities available to each individual, as well as by social norms and aspirations developed during childhood and adolescence, have long-lasting consequences. For youths, the path from school to a livelihood in agriculture, household enterprise (HE), or wage employment can be particularly long. Young people in rural areas may work on their parents' farms for some time prior to establishing their own farm or HE. In urban areas, they may exit the labor force for a year or two and then spend several years seeking but not finding a wage job. They may also work in the family business to gain experience and save money to start their own HE or invest in a farm. Once young people start working in a sector—whether in agriculture, an HE, or a wage job—they tend to stay there, although mobility across sectors is slightly higher in urban than in rural areas. Migration can offer an opportunity to change these patterns and substantially increase earnings, but migration for employment is (perhaps surprisingly) low in Africa. For young women, the transition from school to high-productivity work entails additional challenges.

Often women's opportunities are circumscribed by social norms related to family responsibility, agency, and acceptable economic activities and by fears of harassment. Given these challenges, the pertinent policy question is how to make the paths to employment easier for young people to find and navigate.

Different countries and different institutions define youth differently. Broadly speaking, the United Nations defines youth as ranging from ages 15 to 24, the African Union defines youth as ranging between ages 15 and 35, and many Sub-Saharan countries apply their own definitions (such as ages 15–40 in Mali or ages 15–30 in Kenya). For this report, we do not define youth as a specific age range. Rather, we focus on the fact that youth is a period of transition—from school, to work, through risky behaviors, to founding a family, and to exercising citizenship (World Bank 2006). We present data for the various age ranges during which these transitions occur (most commonly ages 15–24 and 25–34). Generally we refer to the older group as “young adults” to distinguish them from the younger group.

The transitions of youth have long-lasting consequences. Clearly, the stage at which a young

person leaves the education system and starts working is a key determinant of that person's skill level and career path, but an individual's stock of human capital is also formed through early work experience. A prolonged period of initial unemployment or an initial job that offers no opportunities for learning and growth can potentially hurt an individual's future productivity. Similarly, decisions regarding health and family made during adolescence and early adulthood can have long-term effects on an individual's health and career.

Because adolescence is a critical period of development, including for socioemotional skills, economic or health shocks occurring during that time can have long-lasting consequences.

Work experience is important not only because it is needed to master skills but because it affects adolescents' expectations, goals, and confidence. In some settings (primarily upper-income countries where a wage job is the norm for first employment), prolonged unemployment during youth can affect mental and physical health, and it has been linked to stress, depression, and illness later in life (Lundberg and Wuermli 2012).

Many types of market or government failures could potentially constrain these transitions. Examples include labor market rigidities that lengthen the school-to-work transition, inadequate information on the risks of certain choices, and lack of access to finance for pursuing higher education or starting a business. The remainder of this report examines such failures in depth. Enabling youth to manage these transitions better—in particular, to develop pathways to higher productivity and higher-earning jobs—is the central challenge for promoting youth employment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Youth's Transition from School

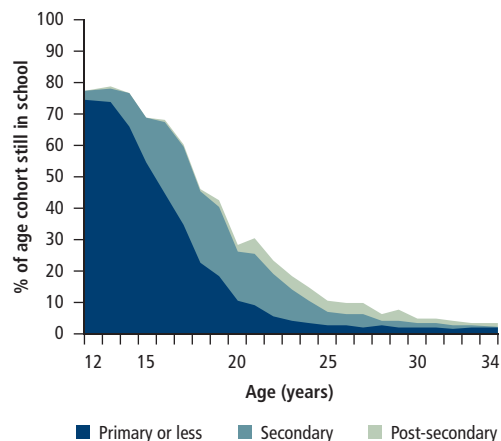
More than 80 percent of 12-year-olds in the developing world are going to school. As expected, this number declines with age until, by the age of 24, few people remain in school. In Sub-Saharan Africa this transition is slow. About 50 percent of 18-year-olds in Africa

are still in school, but half of them are still in primary school (figure 2.1). Of the 16 percent of 24-year-olds who remain in school, nearly three-quarters are still in secondary or lower levels. Thus, in addition to their many peers who never attended school or left it at a premature age, many Africans leave school only in their late teens or 20s—without having acquired much education.

For far too many young Africans, this mismatch between age and academic level means that years of childhood and adolescence that should be spent learning in the classroom are being used inefficiently. A large part of early adulthood that should be invested in learning on the job and gaining experience is instead being used to finish school.

Aside from slow advancement through school, an unusually late start to school and interruptions to schooling combine to ensure much the same result. Young people graduate at a late age, even though they have not spent enough years in school. Understanding why these failures are endemic is essential to devising a supportive youth employment policy. Lengthy yet insufficient schooling may arise from the same factors that prevent many children from attending school in the first place or that force them to leave school at an early age,

Figure 2.1 Many 18-year-olds in Africa are still in school, but half of them are still in primary school



Source: Based on standardized and harmonized household and labor force surveys (see appendix).

such as the poor quality of schooling, difficulty of access, and lack of financial resources.

Another key question is the extent to which lengthy yet insufficient schooling is caused by children or youths starting to work at an age when they should be in school. Child labor is

common in Africa (box 2.1), and strong evidence indicates that it is associated with lower school attendance and educational attainment. For some children, work marks a permanent end to schooling when they are still very young. For other children or young people, the effects

Box 2.1

Child labor in Sub-Saharan Africa

Many African children ages 5–14 engage in some type of work. Compared to other regions, Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest share of child labor (World Bank 2012b).

The worst types of child labor are unambiguously harmful to children and include all forms of slavery, bondage, military conscription, trafficking, and using, procuring, or offering children for prostitution, pornography, or other illicit activities. Extreme child labor leads to psychological and physical scarring, which in turn affects learning capacity and future earnings. For instance, in Uganda, child soldiering had a corrosive effect on human capital by keeping children away from school and creating high levels of psychological distress, especially among those who experienced the most violence (Blattman and Annan 2010).

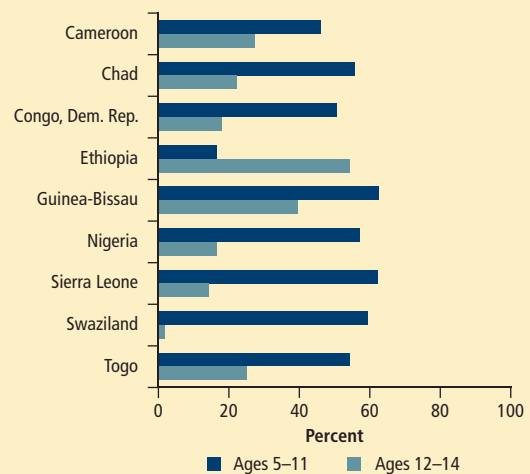
Most children are involved in other forms of labor, such as working on the farm while going to school (particularly in agricultural households) as well as performing domestic work, selling, begging, and engaging in some type of manufacturing. The most recent round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) collected data on child work. It defines child labor among 5- to 11-year-olds as being engaged in economic activities (working, paid or unpaid, for someone who is not a member of the household, or working in a family business, on the farm, or selling goods in the street) for at least 1 hour in the 7 days prior to the survey or being engaged in domestic activities (also described as household chores) for at least 28 hours a week. Among 12- to 14-year-olds, only those who engage in economic activity for 14 hours or more or in domestic work for 28 hours or more in the 7 days prior to the survey were counted as engaged in child labor. According to these definitions, child labor among 5- to 11-year-olds is typically around 40–60 percent; child labor among 12- to 14-year-olds is typically closer to 20 percent (figure B2.1.1). In both age groups, the results from these surveys show that the majority of children work “for the family business” in either the farm or non-farm sector.

Child labor tends to be more prevalent among poor households. Children in wealthier households may, in some settings, engage in labor if household assets and access to

finance, land, or other resources require more work from household members (World Bank 2012b).

Child labor is typically associated with delays in the accumulation of human capital, and it has been shown to reduce school attainment and school attendance (Beegle, Dehejia, and Gatti 2009). More limited evidence indicates that child labor leads to long-term “scarring” over and above its negative impact on schooling. Yet the long-term implications of child labor for young people’s ability to engage in more productive activities or for their welfare in general remain unclear. In Tanzania, working in childhood increased the probability that boys would be involved in farming 10–13 years later, and it also pushed girls toward domestic work and early marriage (Beegle et al. 2008). However, child labor was also associated with an increased likelihood of wage work, which could be linked to higher living standards (Beegle, Dehejia, and Gatti 2009).

Figure B2.1.1 Percentage of children working



Sources: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Reports (MICS), various years (circa 2010). Available at www.childinfo.org.
 Note: Child labor is defined as follows: (a) for ages 5–11, as economic activity for at least 1 hour a week or domestic work for at least 28 hours a week; (b) for ages 12–14, as economic activity for at least 14 hours a week or domestic work for at least 28 hours a week.

Figure 2.2 School and work are often combined

Source: Based on standardized and harmonized household and labor force surveys (see appendix).

of premature work may be less extreme but nonetheless limiting. Some children interrupt their schooling to perform intermittent work. Others engage in work that is “light” enough to allow them to attend school but that delays their progression through grades. Indeed, household surveys indicate that a sizable percentage of young people are both at work and in school; as many as 45 percent of 15-year-olds may fall in this category (figure 2.2). This work-school overlap becomes less common with age, declining to about 10 percent among 24-year-olds, presumably because they switch to full-time work.

As this discussion shows, for many individuals the transition from school to work is not a clearly demarcated progression from schooling to graduation and work. Often the transition is quite blurry—school and work overlap, or schooling is interrupted for work and then resumed—so policies that target only those who have just left school might not be enough.

For many young people in Sub-Saharan Africa, the transition from school begins relatively early. Although in most developing countries this transition can begin at any time between the ages of 12 and 24, it picks up after 18 years of age, crossing the 50 percent mark only among those in their early 20s. In contrast, more than 20 percent of 15-year-olds in Africa

are already working exclusively (not counting those who are at work and in school). The incidence of exclusive work then rises rapidly. By age 20, it is well above 50 percent, and by age 25, it is at 75 percent.

Because a sizable number of those who reach working age have worked while attending school, as many as 70 percent of African youths complete the transition to work by the time they are 18. With age, the ranks of working youth increasingly comprise those who are exclusively at work.

The incidence of concurrent schooling and work is especially high in agriculture, where almost 90 percent of such work involves youth working on the family farm. In this context, young people may have fewer opportunities to leave the farm sector.

At the other end of the spectrum, the transition from school to work appears to be excessively long for some young people. About 17 percent of 26-year-olds and 10 percent of 34-year-olds are not working. This pattern does not vary by gender, so lower female labor force participation is an unlikely explanation. Some of these people may be in a temporary phase of unemployment between jobs. That, too, is unlikely to be the main explanation for their delayed transition to work, however, given the low share of wage employment among youth. Identifying the groups most likely to experience such difficulty in starting work should be a priority.

Traditional policies related to the school-to-work transition often use informational interventions and other strategies to link job seekers to employers, but their relevance in Africa is limited. As the next section discusses in greater detail, even though most young people are already working by the age of 20, most have not yet left the family enterprise or farm. At 18 years of age, nearly 70 percent of working youths are occupied in farming. At 24 years of age, nearly 60 percent of those working are still on the farm, and about 25 percent are in a nonfarm family enterprise or some form of self-employment. Only for cohorts in their mid-20s and onward does wage employment represent a notable share (more than 15 percent) of total employment.

Traditional school-to-work transition policies may, however, be more relevant to those in their mid-20s and early 30s who are yet to start working and are possibly looking for a wage job. Evidence from firm surveys shows that the majority of such jobs are found through social networks, leaving those with weak networks at a strong disadvantage (see the discussion of figure 2.9 later in this chapter).

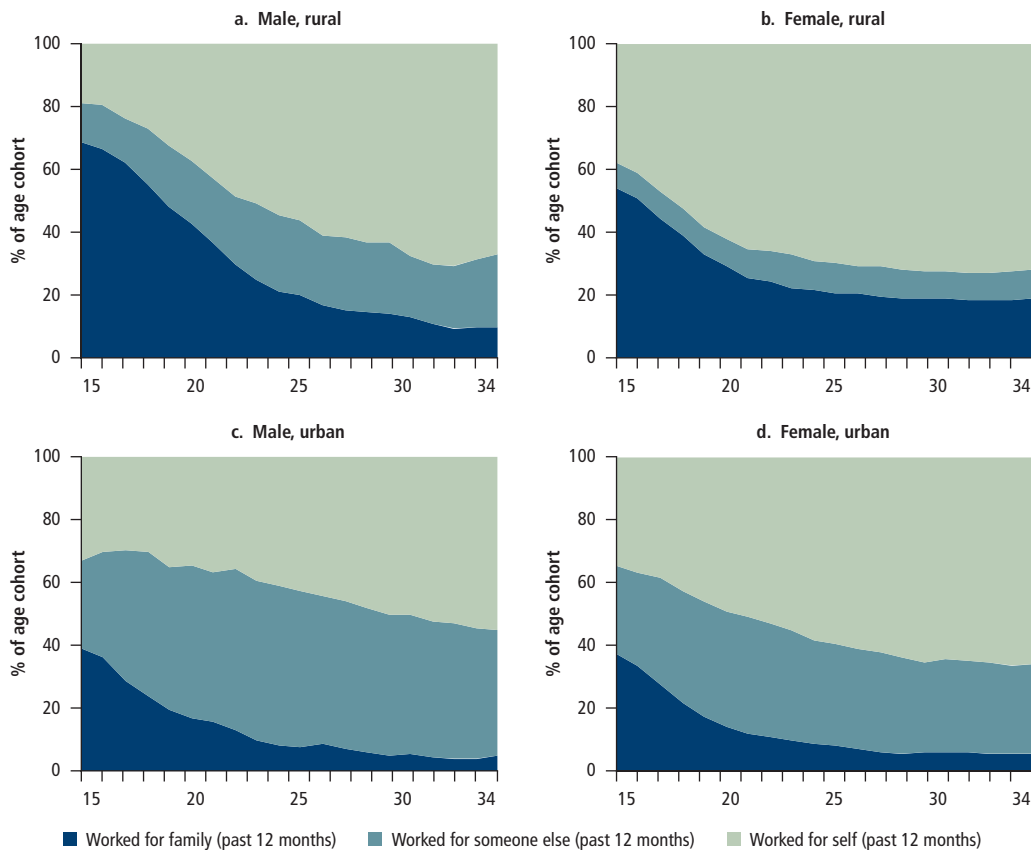
Youth's Transition to Work

As young people begin to work less for their families and more for themselves (figure 2.3), they increasingly leave the family activity and strike out on their own. The vast majority become self-employed. By their early 30s,

more than 60 percent of men and 70 percent of women are working for themselves. Working for someone else increases modestly as people age, reaching about 30 percent for men and about 20 percent for women.

Given the slow transformation of the structure of employment, even after they become economically independent from their parents most people end up working in the same type of economic activity as their parents (box 2.2). In part because of the slow spread of education into rural areas and limited opportunities to enter nonfarm sectors, males born to households where the father was a farmer tended to become farmers themselves. Those born into households where the father had nonfarm work tended to end up in the nonfarm sector—usually because they grew up in an urban area and

Figure 2.3 Most Sub-Saharan African youths start out working for their families and then become self-employed



Source: Based on Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data in 35 countries for females and 28 countries for males (see appendix).

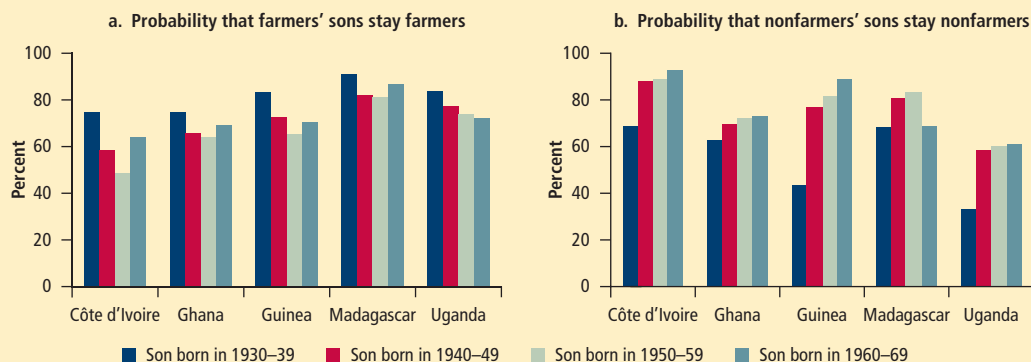
Box 2.2

Intergenerational transmission of occupations in Africa

The trend for young people to end up in the same activity as their parents has deep roots. A study covering five African countries reveals strong patterns in the intergenerational transmission of occupations from fathers to sons. A farmer's son is much more likely to become a farmer than to exit agriculture (figure B2.2.1, panel a). In Madagascar, 87 percent of farmers' sons born in the 1960s are also farmers at the beginning of their working life, as are 72 percent in Uganda, 70 percent in Guinea, 69 percent in Ghana, and 64 percent

in Côte d'Ivoire. In spite of the structural decline of agricultural employment, those numbers are not much lower than for previous generations. The intergenerational transmission of nonfarm employment is also substantial (figure B2.2.1, panel b). In Côte d'Ivoire, 93 percent of the sons born in the 1960s of nonfarmers end up being nonfarmers, compared to 89 percent in Guinea, 73 percent in Ghana, 69 percent in Madagascar, and 61 percent in Uganda. Overall, these patterns reveal limited intergenerational mobility.

Figure B2.2.1 Intergenerational transmission of employment sector in five African countries



Source: Based on Bossuroy and Cogneau 2013.

encountered better opportunities for education and nonfarm employment. Data from urban areas in West Africa collected in 2001–02 show that more than 60 percent of those who were self-employed had fathers who were also self-employed (Pasquier-Doumer 2013).

The limited longitudinal data available—from Uganda and urban Tanzania—suggest that once individuals enter a type of job—agriculture, household enterprise (HE), nonfarm wage—few of them switch to another type of job. Nationally representative panel data from Uganda suggest that, overall, 61 percent of youth ages 20–29 in 2005 who were economically active had the same type of employment five years later, with an especially high persistence in agriculture (73 percent). Persistence is lower in HEs and wage work, but nevertheless high (at around 50 percent). Women were more likely to stay in the same type of employment

over the two time periods—mainly because they were more likely to stay in agriculture.¹ In urban Tanzania, labor force histories collected from respondents who were 20–39 in 2005 showed that among those whose first job was wage employment, only 20 percent ever shifted into an HE (figure 2.4). The same survey reveals that those whose first job was in the HE sector (self-employment or family worker) also tended to stay in that sector. The transition that determines what type of job a young person will hold therefore occurs primarily when that person exits school, not through subsequent mobility across employment sectors.²

Moving into the Three Sectors of Employment

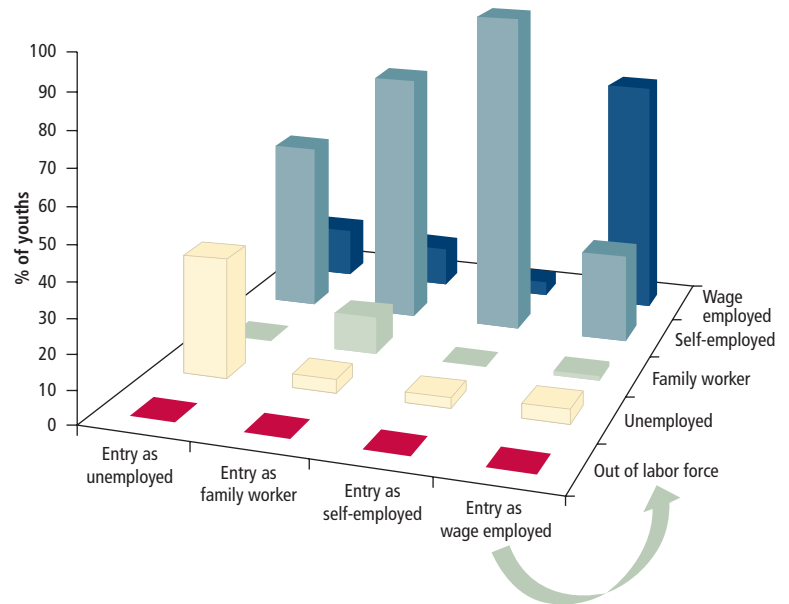
Given the relatively small amount of switching between sectors, the transition to the first type of work is key. But little is known about exactly

how young people transition into the three main sectors of employment. The cross-sectional data used in this report do not record individual histories and thus hide variation between cohorts as well as within cohorts on the timing and efficiency of the transition. Longitudinal data from Tanzania and Uganda provide some insights, as they track individuals over time. Focus group data collected from African youths help to fill out the picture. As noted, however, the understanding of how young people make key choices leading to a transition to stable employment is unclear. What is clear is that the pathways and constraints are different depending on the type of activity concerned and an individual's location and gender.

As discussed, the transition into agriculture begins early. The vast majority of teenagers who work are working in agriculture (figure 2.5). At age 15, of the 60 percent of those who are working, almost 90 percent are working in agriculture. The share working outside agriculture increases steadily with age, largely because young people who leave school at higher grades enter other sectors. In rural areas, where limited educational opportunities prevent youths from staying in school for very long, agriculture employs more than 90 percent of 15- and 16-year-olds, and about 80 percent of young people ages 24 and older remain in agriculture (although some who report agriculture as their primary activity also have a nonfarm activity as well). Women who work are more likely to work in agriculture than men—and unlike men their probability of working in agriculture does not decrease much with age. One reason why so many women remain in agriculture is that they leave school sooner, so employment opportunities are set much earlier for females than for males.

Although agriculture is primarily a rural activity, young people and adults in secondary cities and periurban areas report working in agriculture as well. For example, almost 50 percent of youth ages 20–29 in urban Uganda in 2010 reported working in agriculture as their primary job, and at least 60 percent of those had entered the sector five years before. Young people in urban areas are less likely to stay in agriculture, however; it is often a stepping stone to starting a nonfarm business (figure 2.6).

Figure 2.4 Youths in urban Tanzania are unlikely to move between employment sectors during their working lives



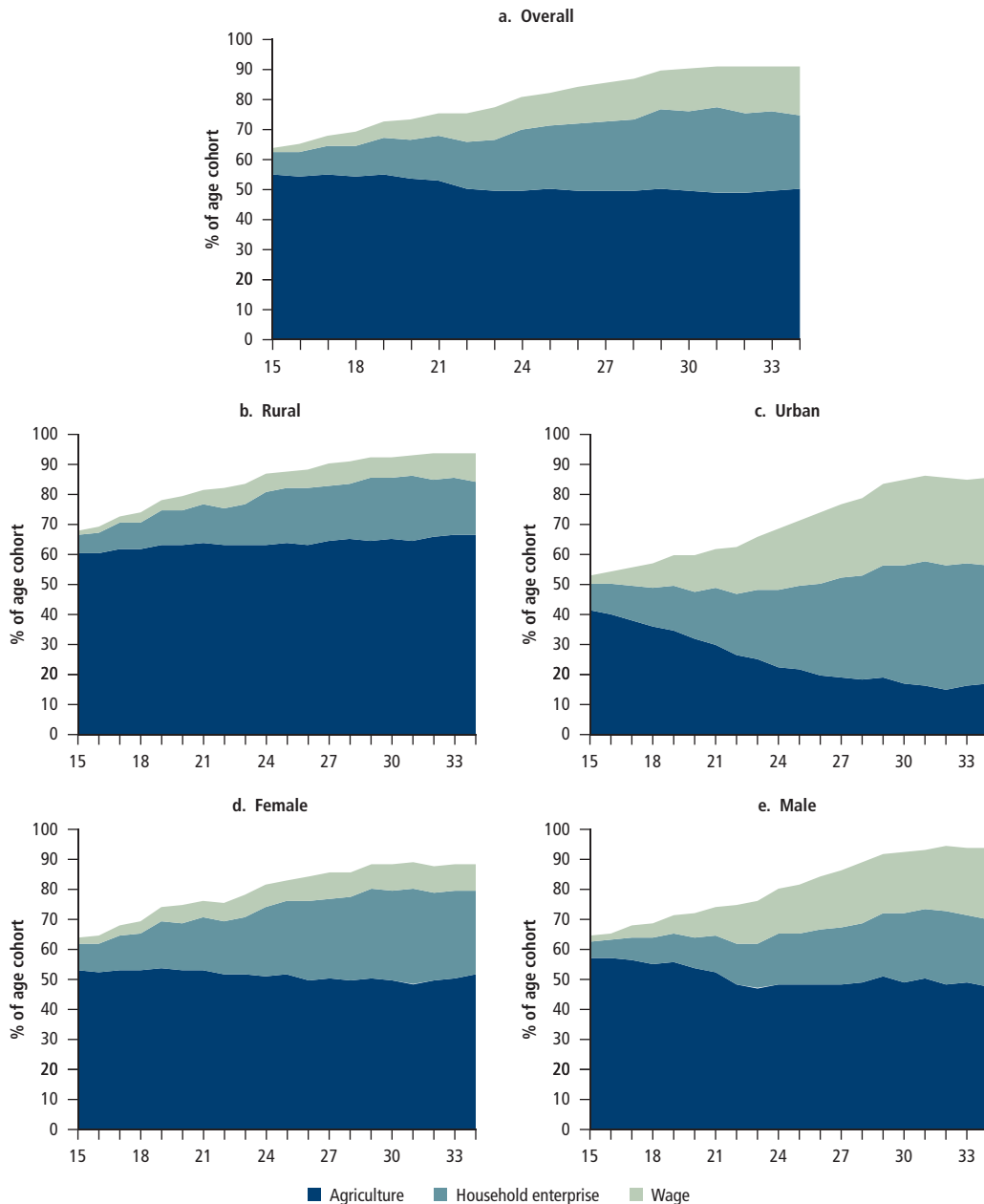
Source: Bridges et al. 2013.

Note: Sample includes youth ages 20–39 and in the labor force in 2005.

Like their adult counterparts, the young are more likely to work in an HE than in a wage job. At age 19, just over 5 percent work in an HE, while few work for a wage; by age 24, almost 20 percent work in an HE, and just over 10 percent are in a wage job; and by age 34, almost 30 percent work in an HE, and the share in wage work remains around 20 percent (figure 2.5). As they leave school, women, like men, who are not in agriculture are substantially more likely to work in an HE than to obtain wage employment. Longitudinal data from urban Tanzania suggest that many women enter this sector by helping out in a family business and then transitioning to their own HE. The same data also show that other women enter the HE sector only after a long period of searching for a wage job or failing to find one to their liking or with remuneration as high as they could earn in the HE sector (Falco et al. 2012).

Because it is based on primary occupation, which shows substantial persistence, this general picture conceals changes happening below the surface. Within the HE sector and agriculture alike, young people may start working with their parents and then acquire their own plot of

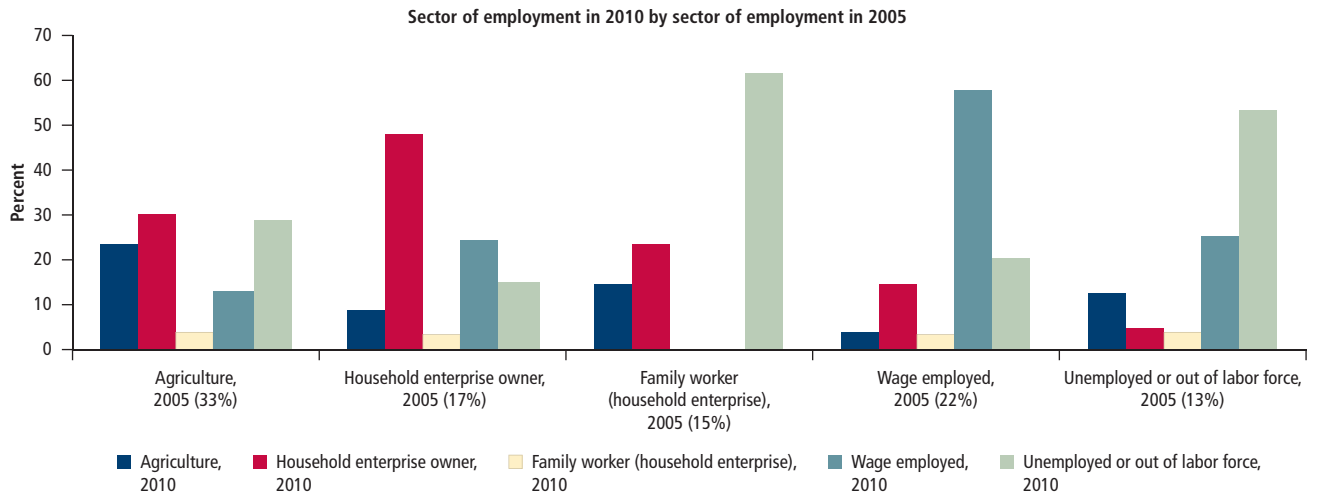
Figure 2.5 Youth transitions to sector of employment vary across urban and rural areas and between male and female youths



Source: Based on standardized and harmonized household and labor force surveys (see appendix).

land or start their own business. In both rural and urban areas, multiple jobs are common. A young person may start out in agriculture but add nonfarm work as a second job. Even young people with a wage job may start out in casual labor but move to a more stable wage job or

save enough money to start their own business. Labor force survey data from Tanzania indicate that by age 25 about half of those who had employment also pursued a secondary economic activity (figure 2.7). The probability of having multiple sources of employment is

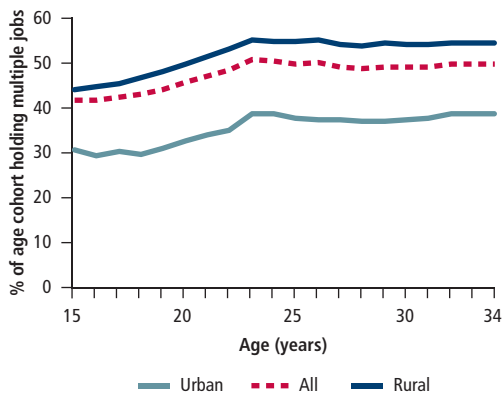
Figure 2.6 Sectoral mobility among urban youth in Uganda

Source: Based on standardized and harmonized Uganda panel survey (see appendix).

much higher in rural areas. Having multiple jobs helps the worker to minimize the risks associated with operating a farm or HE and to cope with seasonal variation in employment opportunities and income. The higher probability of having multiple sources of employment in rural areas also suggests that mobility may be higher in rural areas than the data on primary economic activity indicate.

Young people find it particularly challenging to enter into modern wage employment. Employment histories of urban Tanzanian youths suggest that most did not enter directly into a wage job (20 percent; figure 2.4). However, 69 percent of those who entered a wage job remained in wage employment—26 percent became self-employed, and 4 percent became unemployed. Among the few young people who work for wages, less than half have a contract. Only around 20 percent of African teenagers with wage employment have a contract; this rate increases to around 50 percent for those in their mid-20s and around 60 percent for 30-year-olds (figure 2.8). Young people are most often engaged in casual wage employment, which can take the form of part-time or seasonal wage work. These arrangements are often verbal and of very short duration.

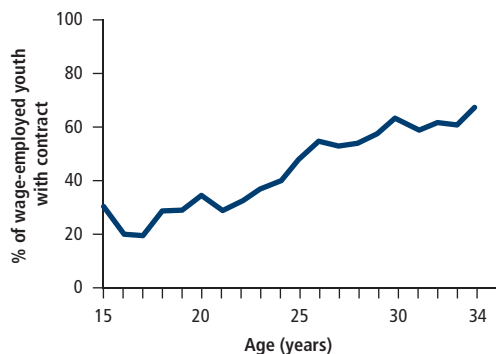
The desire for a wage job can lead urban youth to search a long time, without success. In urban Tanzania, young people reported hav-

Figure 2.7 In Tanzania, many work in two or more activities

Source: Based on standardized and harmonized Tanzania labor force survey, 2005 (see appendix).

ing experienced long periods out of the labor force or in unemployment before entering into stable employment. In the longitudinal data, the average age of leaving school was two years less than the average age of entering the labor force, suggesting that even those who did not report entering the labor force as unemployed (for example, searching for a wage job) spent time idle or doing odd jobs of very short duration (Bridges et al. 2013). Most of those who reported a significant period of unemployment (not working and looking for a job) did

Figure 2.8 Younger people are most often engaged in casual wage employment



Source: Based on standardized and harmonized household and labor force surveys (see appendix).

not end up getting a wage job. Only 25 percent of those who were no longer unemployed at the time of the survey had found a wage job; the rest went into the HE sector (family or self-employment). The average duration of unemployment before becoming self-employed was close to 4.5 years.

If a young person is hoping for a wage job but ultimately settles for self-employment, 4.5 years is a long time to search for work before realizing that “informal is normal.” The average duration of unemployment for those who entered the labor force as unemployed but managed to find a wage job in the end was 5.5 years. Youth entering as unemployed generally have higher education and come from wealthier families. Individuals who went through long spells of unemployment did not suffer an earnings penalty. If one makes it into wage employment, even a long job search can pay off, but the odds of finding a wage job are low (Bridges et al. 2013).

The importance of networks and contacts is one reason why the search for a wage job can be frustrating for youth. Across countries, most people get their jobs through contacts from family and friends, especially in the case of modern wage jobs. Almost 60 percent of enterprises surveyed in 14 countries report that their most recent position was filled through contacts with “family or friends” (figure 2.9). For a variety of reasons, including the difficulty of

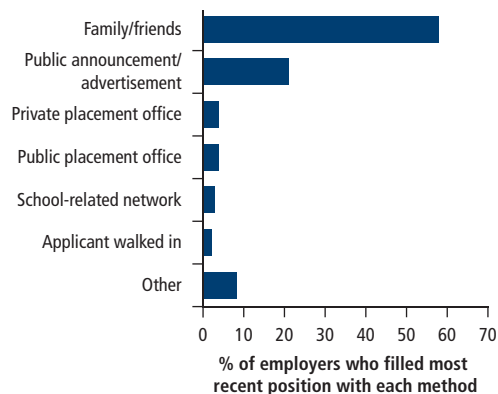
getting information on the work-related characteristics of youth and the need to have a trustworthy workforce, employers prefer to rely on contacts to attract new entrants. Urban youths who participated in focus group discussions in Kenya complained that either a personal contact from the same ethnic group or a bribe or both were required simply to get anyone in a private firm to look at their résumé, even for those with postsecondary education (World Bank 2012a). As long as firms have an ample supply of entry-level candidates, this behavior is not likely to change.

Networks are important beyond the wage sector. In a survey in Ghana, most youths cited networks as important for getting any type of work. Young men mentioned that friends would tell them about work opportunities, especially in petty trading, street vending, farming and fishing, and construction. Young women tended to get referrals from family members for jobs in an HE, in many cases with other family members.

Moving into Employment through Migration

Urbanization is fundamentally altering Africa. Even though the share of the population living in urban areas remains well below the share in the rest of the world, in Africa urbanization has accelerated over the past couple of decades.

Figure 2.9 Personal networks are key to finding a job



Source: Based on World Bank enterprise surveys (aggregated from surveys conducted in Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, The Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Uganda in 2006–07).

Census data from 42 Sub-Saharan African countries show that by 2010 two-fifths of Africa's urban population already lived in a big city (with a population of 1 million or more), while two-fifths lived in a small town (with less than 250,000 people; Dorosh and Thurlow 2013). The share of the population living in an urban area is expected to rise from 39 percent in 2010 to 57 percent in 2060 (Simkins 2013). Contrary to popular belief, fertility—not migration—still drives most urban population growth in Africa. After slowing from the 1960s to the 1990s, migration to urban areas has risen in recent years, but it is expected to constitute only about 30 percent of urban population growth between 2010 and 2060 (Simkins 2013).

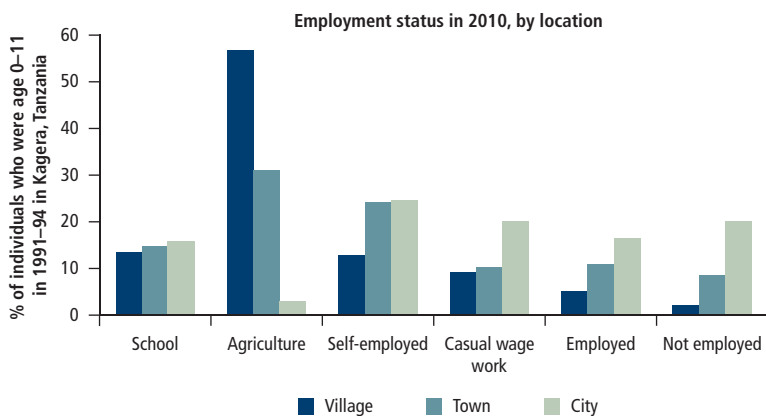
Urbanization can be beneficial if it creates agglomeration effects that can be a source of long-term growth and structural transformation. Africa's urbanization has not yet delivered many of these beneficial effects. One reason is discussed in chapter 1: the lack of a manufacturing sector. The beneficial effects of agglomeration are more often seen in lower-income countries with the development of industry, not services, but the economy of African cities is dominated by services. Where agglomeration benefits occur in service clusters, the sectors, such as information technology, tend to require higher levels of education than most countries in Africa have. As a result, agglomeration forces are weak, and Africa remains a low-density continent (see World Bank 2008). At the same time, urban growth rates in some capital cities are very high and difficult to manage.

Africans tend to migrate within their country of origin (Sander and Maimbo 2003; McKenzie 2007; Simkins 2013). Few migrants come to Sub-Saharan Africa from outside the region, and international migration within the region is limited to a handful of “magnet” countries, such as Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa (Simkins 2013). Most migration within countries occurs for purposes that are not directly related to employment, including education, marriage, or avoiding conflict or insecurity. Local moves in particular are often motivated by marriage. Longer moves, out of district boundaries, are more likely to be related to work. Much of the migration takes

place between urban areas or between rural areas. Seasonal migration between rural areas is common in some countries, Niger for example, where it can involve up to one-third of the population (Simkins 2013).

A snapshot of migration patterns and their implications for employment mobility is provided by a recent study from Kegera, Tanzania. The study followed individuals from the predominantly rural region of Kagera in Tanzania who were 0–11 years old in 1991–94 (De Weerd and Kutka 2013). Two decades later, in 2010, 56 percent of those individuals lived in the same or a neighboring village, 18 percent had moved to a village in the same region, 9 percent had moved to an urban area in the same region, and 8 percent had moved to another region. The main reason that young people had migrated was marriage (35 percent), followed by attending school (16 percent), looking for work (15 percent), and working (10 percent). Migration was associated with a substantial amount of employment mobility. Although 57 percent of youths ages 18–32 in 2010 who stayed in the village remained in agriculture, only 30 percent of those moving to a nearby town, and 3 percent of those moving to a city, were still working in agriculture (figure 2.10). Young people in cities were over three times more likely to be working for a wage and nearly twice as likely to be in nonfarm self-employment. These moves were associated with large increases in measured consumption. Young people who stayed in the village or moved to a local town saw incomes increase by 70 and 91 percent, respectively, between 1991 and 2010; those moving to a regional town had incomes 150 percent higher; and those who moved to a city had income gains of around 300 percent (De Weerd and Kutka 2013). Most of these gains were associated with the move outside of agriculture.

Clearly, urban growth and migration from rural to urban areas can be a powerful engine for transforming the structure of employment. To ensure that the economic infrastructure can support both indigenous population growth and migrants, however, forward-looking urban planning and investments are required as part of an overall development strategy.

Figure 2.10 Migration increases mobility across sectors of employment

Source: De Weerd and Kutka 2013.

The Parallel Transitions: Choices Influencing Health, Family Formation, and Civic Engagement

Certain decisions taken and habits formed during adolescence have lifelong consequences. Adolescence is when most individuals begin to have control over their own decisions and behaviors. It is also a period of experimentation, when youth start engaging in risky activities such as smoking and consuming alcohol. Youth is also the period in which sexual activity is initiated, family formation begins (figure 2.11) (see de Walque 2014). This is also the time when people begin to engage with society as citizens.

Taking Health Risks

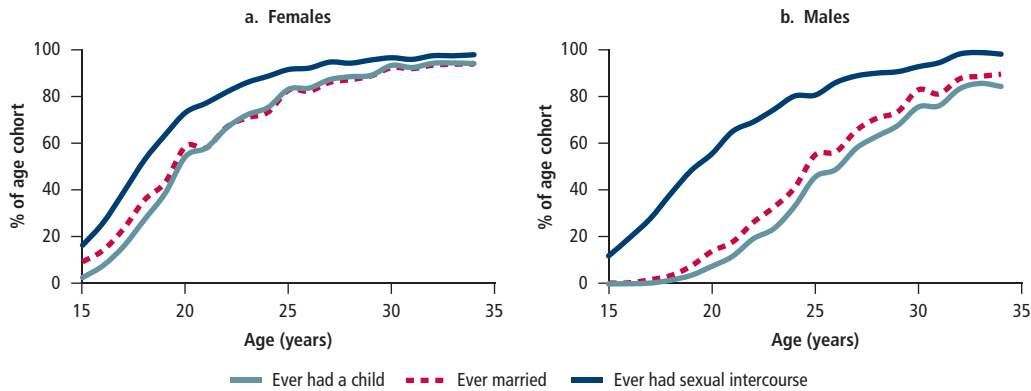
Smoking is one of the leading preventable causes of death worldwide, and youth is when it is most likely to develop into a habit. Less than 10 percent of boys ages 13–15 smoke cigarettes in most of Africa, except the southern tip—Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa (Warren et al. 2009). This rate of tobacco use is one of the lowest in the developing world, but even so, the potential for damage should not be underestimated. As countries grow richer, they tend to pass through a cycle of tobacco prevalence (Eriksen, Mackay, and Ross 2012). The second stage of this cycle is when smoking prevalence tends to rise sharply.

Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and teenage pregnancy are the two biggest dangers associated with teenage sexual activity, and both loom large in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region most severely affected by HIV. According to survey data collected between 2006 and 2011, the age-specific fertility rate for young women ages 15–19 (births per 1,000 women) was above 100 in all Sub-Saharan countries except Rwanda, and it surpassed 150 in Chad, Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, and Zambia—rates that are at the higher end compared to rates in other developing regions (United Nations 2007).

In thinking about policies to prevent risky teenage behavior, it is important to consider how such behaviors are connected with the other youth transitions. For example, given the evidence that stress and mental health problems are associated with risky sexual activity and substance abuse among young people, the stress from idleness or job dissatisfaction could increase the chances of engaging in risky behavior. Another example is the rising evidence that school attendance lowers teenage sexual activity and pregnancy. A conditional cash transfer targeting young Malawian women (13–22 years of age) provided incentives to current students and dropouts to attend school and led to large increases in school enrollment as well as declines in early marriage, teenage pregnancy, sexual activity, and risky sexual behavior (Baird et al. 2010). Similarly, a study in Kenya finds that reducing the cost of schooling (by paying for uniforms) reduced dropout rates, teen marriage, and childbearing (Duflo et al. 2006). Schooling is not the only determinant, however. In the Malawi study, girls who received an *unconditional* cash transfer—a transfer not linked to school participation and performance—also had large reductions in sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, and marriage (Baird et al. 2011).

Starting a Family

Along with starting work, starting a family is one of the biggest decisions taken during youth. By the age of 25, nearly 80 percent of women in Africa have married and given birth (figure 2.11).³ This transition happens later among men. While more than half of

Figure 2.11 Family formation starts earlier for young women than for young men

Source: Analysis of DHS data for 28 countries (see appendix).

all women are married by the age of 20, the majority of men are likely to remain unmarried before the age of 25 and to marry only in their late 20s or early 30s.

Decisions about employment and family formation are linked. The decision to start a family is often taken after securing the means to support a family, which could be the reason why most men marry late. The linkages are particularly salient for women. Economically active women may decide to postpone marriage, schedule births later in life, and have fewer children on average than women who are not economically active. For example, in Asia and Latin America, women's employment in the garment sector has been linked to later age at marriage and lower fertility (Amin et al. 1998; McLeod et al. 2005). In the other direction, there is evidence—albeit mostly from developed countries—that childbearing lowers female labor force participation (Bloom et al. 2009). In Africa, where most employment is with the family farm or enterprise, the nature of the relationship between work and family formation may be different. Early marriage or childbearing may not prevent work so much as trap young women in low-productivity activities performed in the household.

While the main drivers of fertility are largely economic, public policy has a role in supporting healthier family formation, as financial or informational constraints may lead young parents in Africa to underinvest in family planning or maternal health services. Early pregnancy, which can have a large adverse impact on the

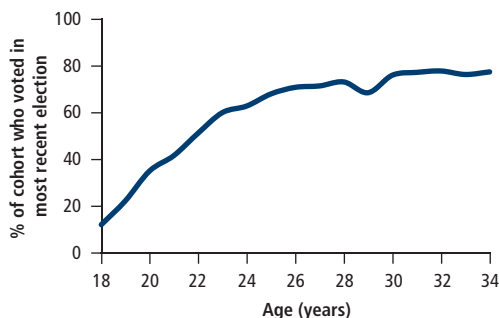
health of both child and mother, should be of particular concern to policy makers. How young parents invest in their children will have a large impact on the well-being of future generations. Evidence is growing on the range of interventions that could prepare youth for this transition (summarized in World Bank 2003). For instance, micronutrient supplementation and food fortification for children and for young women before and during pregnancy are known to improve birth weight and subsequent child development, as are conditional cash transfers for the use of preventive health services. Other interventions, such as information campaigns on reproductive health, safe motherhood, and child health, look promising.

Exercising Citizenship

Along with participating in the civic discourse on important social, economic, and other issues, citizenship means having certain rights and obligations, such as the right to vote, which African youths exercise in large numbers (figure 2.12). Youth is also when individuals begin to express themselves as citizens in other ways, such as attending community meetings, joining with others to raise issues, or taking part in demonstrations. Survey data from 2008 indicate that in the past year between 60 and 70 percent of African youth ages 20–30 had engaged in at least one of those activities.⁴

Civic engagement is necessary for governments to take young people's ideas and aspirations into account effectively when formulating

Figure 2.12 As they get older, young people increasingly engage as citizens



Source: Afrobarometer 2008.

policy. Such engagement is particularly relevant for policy to reflect an understanding of the types of work to which the young aspire and perhaps even to inform those aspirations. The common perception that the young are simply waiting for prized jobs in firms may have some truth, but it is unlikely to be relevant to most young people in Africa, who are predominantly rural and have little education. Some studies find that young people in low-income countries are concerned mainly about jobs that guarantee at least basic incomes and job security (Wietzke and McLeod 2012). But others suggest that the labor market aspirations of African youth are more heterogeneous. This complexity makes it all the more important to facilitate the civic channels through which the young can express themselves. If the young cannot engage as citizens, their frustrations about not being heard could foment economic and social instability. Civic organizations can also broaden access to economic opportunities for youth by providing better information and facilitating networks. This kind of action may be particularly important to previously excluded groups (such as women) and to youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Challenges for Females Transitioning to Work

Employment opportunities are more constrained for young women than for young men. Women are less likely to be able to leave

agriculture, and they are also less likely to gain wage employment. Women's employment opportunities are constrained not only by the fact that they tend to exit school earlier, but also by gender-specific constraints associated with marriage and fertility choices. Women's employment opportunities are also more likely to be constrained by occupational segregation, social norms, or the fear of sexual harassment.

Many young women in Africa have to decide at the same time whether and how to enter the labor market and whether and when to have children. For some women, marrying and having children (or marrying early) can be a means to escape from poverty by relying on men for economic support. Although recent analysis suggests that young women in Africa are delaying having children in comparison with previous generations, fertility rates for young women remain much higher in Africa than in other regions (Sneeringer 2009). Across Africa, 25 percent of females ages 15–19 have already had their first child or are pregnant.⁵ By the time they reach age 20, the average age at first job, they are already caring for young children.

Once faced with responsibility for child care, young women are constrained in their employment choices. They may choose not to work, they may work fewer hours than they otherwise would, or they may choose occupations that offer flexible schedules and home-based work. In Liberia, 41 percent of young women, compared to 31 percent of adult women and just 11 percent of young males, reported family responsibilities as a reason for "inactivity" (Ruiz Abril 2008). A time-use study in Guinea concluded that women, in particular, cannot increase the number of hours devoted to paid work because of their care duties (Bardasi and Wodon 2009). Where care options are limited, the need for flexible work arrangements pushes women from formal into informal work that can be combined with child care, such as HEs. The experience from developed countries suggests that while part-time work is often a good option for women seeking flexibility, it can often trap them in low-quality jobs even after that flexibility is no longer needed (World Bank 2011).

Gender segregation in jobs is evident throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, as in other

developing regions. Men are concentrated in manufacturing, construction, mining, and transportation, while women are concentrated in retail trade, education, health, and social work. Gender segregation has potentially large effects on overall productivity and economic growth by allocating labor in a less than optimal way. Labor force surveys in Africa consistently find that women are concentrated in sectors with low wages and low productivity. For example, the 2010 Liberia labor force survey found that women are underrepresented in the growth sectors of mining, manufacturing, construction, and services (LISGIS 2011). Even though women have made strides in entering the services sector in the past 20 years, they continue to lag in industry (ILO 2012). When women strike out on their own as entrepreneurs, they still tend to work in less productive, female-dominated sectors. In agriculture, plots controlled by women are much more likely to be used for less profitable staple food crops, while male-controlled plots are used for cash crops (see World Bank 2011, ch. 5). These patterns are reinforced by the fact that training for women is often concentrated in less lucrative female-dominated trades, such as arts and crafts, tailoring, and hairdressing (discussed in chapter 3; Fox et al. 2011).

Social norms strongly shape women's employment opportunities. Expectations with respect to child care duties, mobility and transport, and occupational choice all play a role. When women do choose to work outside of the home, they often spend more time traveling on slower modes of transport; as a result, they are limited to employment options closer to home (Uteng 2011). Lack of agency also restricts their options. In a focus group in Bombouaka, Togo, young women said that a husband would likely veto a job that requires a woman to travel outside the village (Petesch and Rodríguez Caillava 2012).

Domestic and child care responsibilities and concerns about their reputations and safety make it much harder for women to travel: "If a woman is gone for a few days, people would start making up all sorts of bad stories about her. The norm is that a woman should stay at home and raise her children and look after the home," says a young woman from Ezinyathini,

South Africa. In that village, another explains, "My parents would never allow me to go to other places. They think I will fall pregnant and bring shame upon the family name" (Petesch and Rodríguez Caillava 2012). A young woman who is well educated might be able to take a distant job—for instance, as a teacher.

Sexual harassment may also affect women's employment options. Nationally representative statistics on the prevalence of sexual harassment are hard to find, but smaller surveys have found that the perceived risk of harassment from bosses and other authority figures factors highly into a woman's choice of work. In qualitative assessments conducted in Liberia and Rwanda in advance of job training programs, young women reported a preference for self-employment or female-dominated industries because of the threat of sexual harassment.⁶ Surveys have found similar sentiments among female entrepreneurs in Tanzania (Holla, Leonard, and Wilson 2010). Negative experiences with teachers in school (for example, teachers trading sex for grades) can reduce the willingness of prospective trainees to participate in training programs. Risks of harassment are particularly high for women who work in other people's homes, where the isolation of the work and the dependence on the employer for housing and food can make workers especially vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, nonpayment of wages, limitations on mobility, and (in extreme cases) forced labor.

Cross-border traders are particularly vulnerable. A recent survey of traders on the border between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo documented high rates of threats, harassment, and violence such as beatings, stripping, and even rape among the predominantly female traders (Brenton et al. 2011). A survey of Liberian female cross-border traders in 2007 revealed that, in addition to traditional challenges such as high duties, lack of market information, and lack of capital, women also reported high rates of sexual harassment and rape. The survey also found that women were more likely than men to join or to form groups to jointly transport goods to reduce costs, improve safety, and collectively resolve disputes with border authorities (UNWomen 2012).

"For women, distance becomes a barrier because of lack of bicycles and a bad eye on women who ride bicycles."
Tanzania

"When I was looking for (secretarial) work here in Mombasa, I went to a certain company, and when I showed that boss my papers he said it was OK, but then I had to give him a date first."
Kenya

Facilitating Transitions from School, to Work, and across Sectors of Employment

In all likelihood, most young people who enter into employment over the next 10 years in Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to work in the same sectors as the previous generation, with some expansion into the HE sector, especially in market towns and rural areas near population centers. The transition from school to work will continue to be unstructured and often slow for these youths. Agriculture is the gateway to work and, for many, will become the sector of lifetime employment. If productivity and earnings in agriculture do not improve, the wider economy in rural areas, where the majority of the population still lives, will be depressed, and the options for youth will shrink.

Once youth start working—whether in agriculture, HEs, or wage jobs—they tend to stay in the same sector, with mobility across sectors being slightly higher in urban than in rural areas. Migration offers an opportunity to change these patterns and substantially increase earnings. For young women, the transition from school to high-productivity work entails additional challenges. The remainder of this report identifies ways to support young people in making these transitions, by equipping them with the skills that will be needed wherever they work (chapter 3) and by ensuring that the business environment and their human capital are conducive to high productivity in agriculture (chapter 4), HEs (chapter 5), and the modern wage sector (chapter 6).

Notes

1. Based on analysis of Uganda national panel survey data.
2. The study is based on the Tanzania household urban panel survey, which collects retrospective information on previous jobs (Bridges et al. 2013).
3. The percentage of women who have given birth can include unmarried women.
4. Based on analysis of Afrobarometer round 4 surveys (Afrobarometer 2008) in 20 African countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
5. Average across the most recent demographic and health surveys in Sub-Saharan Africa for which this indicator is available. Based on calculations using DHS StatCompiler.
6. In Liberia, 20 percent of those who reported a preference for self-employment mentioned avoiding sexual harassment as a reason for their preference (Ruiz Abril 2008).

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