Youth economic empowerment for sustainable development: Insights from Urban Ethiopia

Sindu W. Kebede1, Negussie Shiferaw, Netsanet Teklehaimanot, Atlaw Alemu, Getaneh Gobezie

1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Agenda of 2030 puts emphasis on quality education, productive employment and decent work for youth as the center of new development vision. In particular, targets under Goals 4 and 8 aim to increase the number of youth with special focus on technical and vocational skills; youth employment challenges; and pathways for consistent and focalized action on decent jobs for youth (UN, 2015). Regardless of these global initiatives, youth unemployment remains as the most pressing challenge for sustainable development in developing countries (ILO, 2017).

With an estimated population of 105 million in 2017, Ethiopia stands as the most-populous country in Africa with annual population growth rate of 2.4% (ILO and MOLSA, 2018). Given that more than 28% of the population is aged 15-29; the country has a critical task of creating jobs to absorb this huge and growing population. Youth unemployment in Ethiopia is estimated at 19.1% in 2018 which is much higher than the Sub-Saharan African average of 11.2% (ILO, 2017). The high level of unemployment is typically associated with outmigration stance in various directions. Unemployment in Ethiopia is by and large an urban phenomenon (World Bank Group, 2016). In particular, high youth unemployment is observed in the capital city, Addis Ababa, where 23.5% of households report an unemployed adult, versus 11% of households in other urban areas.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is one of the initiatives most commonly used in developing countries to tackle youth unemployment. Even if the education system in Ethiopia produces large number of University and TVET graduates, the absorption capacity of the economy is limited. It is observed that the labor force grows at a faster rate than job creation that it has become common to be unemployed for the first year after graduation (Tegnu, 2013; CBMS, 2018).

2. Contribution of the study

This study aims to contribute to the current state of literature on employment in general and urban youth employment in particular. Consequently, the major research questions include:

1. What are the major challenges and opportunities of youth employment (unemployment, underemployment, inclusiveness, and decent work) in urban setting of Ethiopia?
2. What are the key factors that could be tapped into to reduce youth unemployment?

1 Corresponding author: Sindu W. Kebede (PhD), Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany and Frontieri Consult GMBH, Berlin, Germany. Email: kebedesw@hu-berlin.de
3. What recommendations could be made given the existing policy framework on youth employment in Ethiopia?

3. Methodology

a) **Area of study and data collection:** The study aims to unravel issues of urban youth unemployment using both secondary and primary data sources. Quantitative data is employed from the 2018 Urban Employment- Unemployment survey (Central Statistical Agency (CSA), 2018). Qualitative data is obtained via key informant interview (KII) and Focus group discussion (FGD). The KII was conducted with key personnel from TVET institutions at federal level, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA), and Business incubators (such as ICE Addis). The FGD was conducted with unemployed youth in four sub-cities in Addis Ababa namely: Arada, Addis Ketema, Akaki-Kaliti, and Yeka, which are selected because of high concentration of unemployed youth and migration from rural areas. The composition of the FGD participants interviewed is diverse with male, female, and unemployed TVET graduates.

b) **Methods of analysis:** this study employs mixed approach namely both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The qualitative approach enables us to describe the complex situation of youth unemployment and its underlying factors in the study areas. For this, we transcribe the information collected from FGD and KII and analyze using Atlas ti software. We apply techniques such as coding, categorization and drawing generalization to analyze the data set. The quantitative approach employs viable econometric model to analyze the major factors that hinder or promote youth employment in urban settings of Ethiopia.

References


