

Land Access, Tenure Security and the Fate of Rural Youth in Africa:

The Case of Mozambique

Creating productive employment opportunities for youths is the major concern for most developing countries in the world. The need for jobs is especially critical where the largest segment of the population is young and increasing number of this group seek for employment. Having a large and growing population of young people with little job creation in the formal sector, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) largely fits to this reality (Brooks et al. 2013) and Mozambique can be taken as a show case of the situation.

As it is recently highlighted by Mozambique's Ambassador and Permanent representative to the United Nations at the 48th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, it is estimated that around 46 percent of Mozambican are youth and youth unemployment is the most important challenge of the country. Like it is the case in most countries in SSA, the majority of youths in Mozambique live in rural areas where farming has been traditionally the main livelihood of the people. Although Mozambique is currently considered as land abundant country, there are problems related to access to land and tenure security. In a country where there are no land market and where there are no many large farms that can provide enough farm wage employment, access to farmland could be among the important factors that determines whether a rural youth can depend on agricultural livelihood as well as whether a rural youth would migrate or stay at home or whether a rural youth would be employed or unemployed.

Many studies indicate that issues like access to and equitable distribution of land, land transfer rights, land disputes and other tenure security issues have long been problems and points of serious controversy in Mozambique. Thus, answering the question that whether problems related to access to land and tenure security are drivers of youth unemployment and outmigration would have great policy relevance.

Literature and existing knowledge on the issues

There are range of both pull and push factors that make youths in the rural agrarian population to opt for or migrate to non-farm activities. The migration literature mention both 'pull' and 'push' factors as reasons for migration and present evidences supporting both forces (Ellis 1998). Ellis (1998) argues that the notions of push versus pull factors can be equivalently interpreted as involuntary versus voluntary as well as desperation versus choice as they are ways of broadly categorizing alternative sets of circumstances resulting in livelihood diversification. In practice, Ellis (1998) further argues, individuals change their livelihood strategy being influenced by multiple factors. Sometimes a single factor may dominate over all others factors for an individual in a specific context. But, usually a cumulative combination of factors represent challenges or/and opportunities for different individuals in order to make the later change their livelihood strategy.

Off-farm economic opportunities and wage income differentials between agriculture and non-agriculture sector are identified as the major 'pull' factor by many studies (see Rigg 2006). On the other hand, landlessness, market failures, erosion of assets (for example, land subdivision at inheritance), seasonality, risk, and disasters leading to livelihood collapse are identified as the major 'push' factors by several studies.

There are some studies that try to identify the underlying causes of rural-urban migration in SSA. However, most of these studies reached at conclusion simply by observing what is happening externally and without indicating the major underlying factors behind the observed phenomenon. Moreover, most of the youth migration studies in SSA reached at conclusion simply by asking the opinion of the migrants toward agriculture and without controlling for important factors that affect such opinion. Of course, there are few studies that have tried to identify the determinants of migration and agricultural labor participation among the SSA youths. However, these are not also without serious methodological limitations to reach at a conclusion of greater policy relevance.

Research questions

This paper hypothesizes that in the absence of vibrant labor intensive non agriculture sector, access to land is an important push-factor that drives youths in the rural agrarian society to look for non-agricultural livelihood options. In today's Mozambican context, it is not as such plausible to argue that population growth puts pressure on land. However, it is not also possible to argue that all the rural youth have easy access to land. There are restrictions in purchase, sale, leasing and mortgaging of land in the country. Similarly, there are ambiguities in transferability of land through inheritance, assignment under traditional rules, and government provision. And these render the rural youth to be underemployed and to look for non-agricultural livelihood strategies.

As indicated above, although there are some studies that try to identify the underlying causes of rural-urban migration in SSA, to the best of our knowledge, none of them attempt to examine the impact of access to land on youths' decision regarding livelihood strategy. In this study, controlling for other socioeconomic factors that pertain to rural-urban migration, we test the hypothesis that access to land is an important push-factor that drives youths in the rural Mozambique to migrate and look for non-agricultural livelihood options. Specifically, we test whether youths' actual and potential access to land have an impact on youths' decision on migration in Mozambique. By doing so, the study not only test the stated hypothesis but it identifies the underlying factors behind one's revealed livelihood strategy.

Dataset

This study uses two recent datasets: the Mozambique's nationally representative National Agricultural Household Survey of 2014 (also known as TIA (Trabalho de Inquerito Agrícola) 2014) dataset and IFPRI's Access to Land and Tenure Security Supplemental Survey (2015) dataset. The supplemental survey collected data from seven of the ten provinces of Mozambique by revisiting all households which were interviewed during TIA 2014. During the Supplemental survey around 4000 households of the total 6000 TIA-2014 households were revisited. To maintain the quality of the data, the data is collected using a tablet with CPro application. Moreover, all the tablets are prefilled with key household and plot identification information.

The supplemental land tenure survey is unique and rich in four important dimensions: first, it has very detailed information on plot characteristics, potential and actual access to land, public and private land insecurity, past insecurity experiences and future threats, land-related dispute experiences, land-related intra-household decision making practices, land-related investment practices, different modes of land acquisition, land loss and depositions experiences, land and assets inheritance practices, off-farm economic opportunities, migration practices, access to credit and etc; second, it is gender-disaggregated in order to capture the existing important intra-household variation in terms of key perception variables;

third, it captures information about two generations (i.e., information about heads/spouses of households and their siblings, information about children in the households, and information about currently non-residents past household members); and fourth, the dataset is consisted of information that are collected at the household, household member level, and plot level.

Methodology

In this study, using Econometrics, we test the hypothesis that access to land is an important push-factor that drives youths in the rural Mozambique to look for non-agricultural livelihood options. Specifically, it tests actual and potential access to land have an impact on one's decision to engage in agriculture in Mozambique. To this end, this study estimate a multinomial logit or probit model using a representative sample data collected from seven provinces of Mozambique from around 4000 households. By doing so, the study not only test the stated hypothesis but it identifies the underlying factors behind youth's revealed livelihood strategy.

Envisaged policy implications

We believe that the findings of this study would serve as important input for the ongoing land reform in Mozambique. To know whether it is because of the pull factors or the push factors that youths in the agrarian population look for non-farm activities or migrate to other areas have important differences in terms of their policy implication. Knowing the underlying causes of livelihood diversification of the rural youth helps to tackle the causes (if it is an outcome of distress and desperation) or to further stimulate the phenomenon (if it is an outcome of new opportunities and aspiration) by directing it in particular ways that enhance the opportunities it represents.