

Regional Integration Policies to Support Job Creation for Africa's Burgeoning Youth Population

By:

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Abstract

Africa is going through a youth bulge with more people under 25 than above 55 in all of its countries. Creating gainful employment opportunities for the burgeoning number of youth is a challenge that cannot be solved only at the country level. Regional integration policies that expand the opportunity space by increasing the size of economies and markets will be critical. Also needed are regional policies that can support the development and enhancement of innovation systems including investment in science and technology education to speed up the creation of a cadre of young people that can lead the transformation of stages of production from dependencies on primary products and extraction. Policies and programs that can transform the agricultural landscape and support effective creation of value chains that enhance the value added from agriculture that can excite youth back to the agricultural sector would also be needed. This paper explores the challenges facing countries in Africa in relation to its demographic transition, investigating the types of policies that would be most effective to address the challenges. The subset of policies at the regional level are given special attention due to their opportunity expanding nature. Concrete examples of what has potential from observed results in other regions of the world are provided. The paper is targeted at policy makers and practitioners responsible for regional policy as well as advisors to heads of state and heads of national institutions responsible for policy setting.

Key words: Africa, regional integration, youth employment, agricultural transformation