

## **High Fertility is no Longer a Dividend: The Dynamics of a Big Young Population and Unemployment<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

The problem of youth unemployment has been discussed many times in the current development debate. Pro-natalists like Professor Kamuzora have argued that a youth population is the ultimate resources for Africa for all time. The idea that the high rates of population growth (which lead to high population density) can be compatible with economic growth was advocated by Boserup. The paper considers the limitation of the assumed compatibility between high fertility and development in Tanzania. It is argued that the rapid increase of the many young people in the population is not compatible with their rapid upward social mobility. Youth unemployment is likely to remain a principle social economic problem for a long time because of high fertility. Some solutions to youth unemployment like vocational training and agricultural development are critically considered.

### **Introduction**

The problem of unemployment is widespread in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA). Unemployment of young people is different from unemployment of adults. Young people need to build professionalism, and this implies that a sizable section of the youth must join the labour force if a country is to take off (i.e., to experience an industrial revolution). Unemployment in Tanzania and other SSA countries is not exactly the same phenomenon as unemployment in those countries that have gone through their (successful) industrial revolutions. In the latter countries we can define unemployment as frictional, structural, or cyclical. (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000: 742-743).

Frictional unemployment occurs when workers change jobs but do not move immediately to their new job. Structural unemployment occurs when jobs are available and there are workers looking for employment, but those seeking employment do not match the jobs. This occurs when unemployed workers do not live in areas where suitable jobs are available. (i.e., regional employment). Structural unemployment also occurs when the unemployed lack the appropriate skills or qualifications to fill vacancies. In cyclical unemployment the number of the unemployed exceeds the number of vacancies. This means the supply of labour exceeds the demand for workers (ibid: 743).

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In Tanzania, the big problem with the youth is cyclical unemployment. There are too few jobs compared to the number of young people. Due to persistent high fertility, the country's population is young, and there are many young people joining the labour force every year. The youth population (15-24 years) has remained between 19 to 20 percent from 1988 to 2012. If the age of young people has increased from 24 to 35, the population of persons aged 15 to 35 was 35 percent in 2002, and 35 percent in 2012 (URT, 2014: 25-30).

When we consider the official working age in the 2012 census (15 to 64 years), the working age population increased slightly from 50 percent in the 1988 census to 52 percent in the last census of 2012 (URT, 2014: 31). The problem of unemployment is complex. For example, there are many working children in Tanzania. There are also many children in child labour and in hazardous work. Out of 14,700,000 children aged 5-17, nine out of ten (89.3 percent) work as agricultural and fishery workers. Most of these children (90 percent of boys and 87.1 percent of girls) work as unpaid family members (URT, 2016c: XXI).

Child labour is also widespread in Tanzania. There are 4,200,000 children in child labour, which is 28.8 percent of all children. The child labour rate for boys is 29.3 percent, and for girls it is 28.4 percent. The rate for rural areas is 35.6 percent, and for urban areas it is 18 percent. However, child labour increases with age, and the highest rate is in age group 14-17, which has a child labour rate of 40.7 percent (URT, 2016c: xxi-xxii). The high rate of working children (90 percent) for the country is misleading as it does not lead to apprenticeship where most children (especially those who cannot get wage employment) will graduate in family farms, and continue to become professional agriculturalists.

### **Rapid Population Growth and Youth Unemployment**

Tanzania has many young people relative to adults. However, the problem of unemployment extends to children below 18 years. Out of the total population of children (5-17) of 14,666,463, some 4,433,098 children are not attending school. The reason is not age because out of those not attending school 405,795 are in the age group 12-13 years, and 1,702,659 are in the age group 14-17 years. These two groups (2,108,454) are not likely to go to school, and thus they will join the ranks of unemployed youths. Some of the rest (the 2,324,644 in 5-11 age group) are also not likely to go to school and will join the ranks of unemployed youths. It is important to note that most of these 4,433,098 children not attending school will join the labour force as unskilled or semi-skilled youths when they reach 18 years of age (URT, 2016c: XV).

The total population of the youth (15-35 years) in Tanzania is 15,587,621 or 34.7 percent of the total population (URT, 2014: 28). By definition, the youth population in the 2012 census was 15-24, which as noted above was 20 percent of the population, or 9,857,847 individuals (URT, 2014: 28). The important thing to remember is that the problem of unemployment extends to those above 24 and

those below 15. We are only here treating the youth as a special group for analysis because of many reasons. For example, people become adults at 18 when they are supposed to join the work force. They should also graduate from school and college/university before 24. At this age they are supposed to be very or most productive, in terms of learning new knowledge at school and in learning job skills. It is this age category (15–24) that has the highest unemployment rate in Tanzania, with over 500,000 unemployed youths joining the ranks of unemployed labour force annually by 1999. Given the rapid growth of the country's population, this figure could now be over 1,000,000 youths joining the reserve of unemployed labour force annually (Mjema, 1999). The problem of youth unemployment is increasing in Tanzania and globally. Youth unemployment in Tanzania increased from 13.4 percent of the youth in 2001, to 14.9 percent in 2006 (Msigwa & Kipsha, 2013: 68). With a high population growth rate of 2.7 percent per annum, and a high total fertility rate of 5.2, the problem could easily escalate to dangerous levels (URT, 2016a: 106; URT, 2016c: xxi).

The presence of many youths in Tanzania is also indicated by large school enrolments. Education is meant to create an educated and job-skilled population. Such a population can create industry and thus its own jobs and markets. However, before these jobs are created, educated people who cannot find jobs form a frustrated cohort with unmet expectations.

In 2016, Std. VII (the last year of primary education in Tanzania) enrolment was 799,894. In the same year, Form IV (last year of O-level) enrolment was 351,951. Form VI (last year of school) enrolment was 64,738. In 2015/16 the enrolment for all universities combined was 145,054 for bachelor's degree. This means an annual enrolment of around 40,000 (BEST, 2016: 20, 56–57, 144). There is also enrolment in technical education from basic technician certificate to master's degree level. These include fields like teaching, business, tourism, planning, technology, health, and applied sciences. The total enrolment here (all years) in 2016 was 117,067 (ibid: 124). Enrolment in folk and vocational education and training was 196,091 in 2015/16 (ibid: 134). These were students enrolled in short courses of six months or one year, and few of this kind of training has courses reaching two years of training.

The above figures indicate that many school leavers get some chances for training, but many also leave school without any kind of training. Because of the high number of children born each year, there is also pressure in improving quality and increasing enrolment.

Some studies indicate that young people contribute a very small percent of those employed. For example, a study by Mjema (1999) indicated that teenagers (15–19 years) constituted only 13.9 percent of the employed labour force, while young adults (20–24 years) constituted only 14.2 percent of the same. More rural young adults were also less unemployed than urban young adults. The unemployment rate of young adults in rural areas was 23.5 percent, while that of urban areas was 10.7 percent. Urban teenagers had an unemployment rate of 30.7 percent, while rural teenagers had an unemployment rate of five percent (ibid: 18).

### **The Youthful Population Debate**

The idea that high rates of population growth (which leads to high population density) can be compatible with economic growth was advocated by Boserup (1985), who has followers in Tanzania like Kamuzora (1999), and Baregu (1987). These pronationalists argue that a high rate of population growth could be an engine for economic growth and transformation in Africa (Baregu, 1987: 29–30).

The scholars have been influenced by Marx who, with Boserup, is always cited by pronationalists to support their arguments. Boserup became a strong proponent of the idea that population growth is the trigger for economic development by advancing that eventually a growing population is more likely than either a non-growing or a declining population to lead to economic development. The argument was developed by Clark (1967) who argued that population growth is the only force powerful enough to make agricultural communities in underdeveloped area to change their methods and eventually transform them into much more advanced and productive societies.

If population growth was compatible with rapid economic growth, and if it was a powerful force to make farming communities change their agricultural methods, there would be no problem as many jobs would be created in agriculture. In reality, however, the thesis that rapid population growth is compatible with rapid economic development does not have empirical foundation (Weeks, 1999: 449). High population densities have not resulted in intensive agriculture in Tanzania. Hankansson (1989: 13–14) has found out that even in areas where intensive farming was practiced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intensive methods are hardly practiced now, and they are experiencing food shortages.

Part of the problem of youth unemployment in Tanzania is agricultural decline since the 1970s, which occurred despite rapid population increase since the 1950s. Agricultural decline has gone hand in hand with environmental destruction. The relationship between population growth and agricultural intensification has become the reverse of what Marx and Boserup's model postulates. The population growth thesis is not equipped to explain why many areas of current high population densities in Tanzania have not experienced intensification of cultivation through soil conservation methods. On the contrary, Hankansson has observed many densely populated areas of Kenya and Southern Tanzania where the soil is exploited with methods that reduce its fertility and facilitate erosion (1989: 13–15).

The idea of a youthful population being an asset does not consider recent examples, like China, where population growth became a bottleneck. This line of thinking also ignores the point that in SSA there are too many children relative to the economically productive population. In Tanzania, 54.2 percent of the population is below 20 years of age, and only 4 percent are aged above 65 (URT, 2014: 22–31). However, there are many who are above 19 years who are not economically active because they are students, or are unemployed. This

situation of having too many children in a population makes the provision of necessary services, like education and health services, very heavy burdens on parents and the government.

### **Causes of Continued Youthful Population in Tanzania**

When we look at the 2015–16 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey and Malaria Indicator Survey, and the 2012 Population and Housing Census, there are no indication of the onset of a demographic transition in Tanzania. High fertility may thus persist for quite some time, and the burden of many children and high unemployment rates will persist.

Most (70%) of Tanzanian parents live in rural areas, where the total fertility rate among rural women is 6.0 children. The total fertility rate for urban women is 3.8 children (URT, 2016(a): 106). It is this high fertility in Tanzania and other SSA countries that has historically resulted to very rapid population growth rates. The growth rate is higher than Europe during its transition from stage two to stage three of demographic transition. This negates Demeley's (1968 cited in Weeks, 1999: 95) demographic transition theory that in "... traditional societies fertility and mortality are high. In modern societies fertility and mortality are low. In between, there is demographic transition."

Our demographic transition is accelerated and our economies are not able to create many jobs to absorb a large young population. It is necessary to explain the persistence of this big young population. The theory of the value of children -- which view children as labour and security -- and wealth flow can no longer explain why (poor) parents in Tanzania keep on having many children. A large share of agricultural work in rural SSA is done by women and children who start working at a very young age. Thus, a large family is viewed as an economic advantage in the provision of labour. Also, children in rural villages provide social security when the parents are sick or old. Similarly, children are viewed as a form of insurance against risks like droughts and poor harvests (Weeks, 1999: 200).

In the wealth flow theory, Caldwell draws from the rational choice theory. Here, the essence is that human behaviour is a result of individuals making calculated cost-benefit analysis about how to act and what to do. For Caldwell, there is no ceiling in traditional societies to the number of children who would be economically beneficial. According to him, in Africa wealth flows from children to parents: children are a source of income and support for parents throughout life, and they produce far more than they cost the parents. Thus, parents have incentive to have many children (Caldwell et al., 1992; Weeks, 1999: 98).

The theory of value of children and wealth flow cannot explain the persistence of high fertility in Tanzania. There has been very limited vertical and intergenerational social mobility in the country since independence in 1961. Rural-urban migration can be classified as horizontal because most of the people who migrate from villages to towns end up in occupations that are not

industrial, which can be classified as rural or transitional. Many residents in small- and medium-size towns are engaged fulltime in rural types of occupation like peasant farming, artisanal fishing, and herding animals (Maghimbi, 2012: 80). Most of the 70 percent of Tanzanians who live in rural areas are peasants who cultivate small plots of land owned by households. The average household farm never exceeds two acres, and quite often it is not in one continuous plot.

Very limited vertical and intergenerational mobility in Tanzania produces a value system that can be termed as long-run fatalism. This is not innovative thinking. It is the assumption that the range of possibilities open to one's grand children would be just what it had been for one's grandparents (Rostow, 1990: 5). Long-term fatalism is a direct outcome of the lack of vertical and intergenerational mobility for a long time. Long-term fatalism is conducive to high fertility as members of a society plagued by this fatalism have no hope of upward social mobility, or have given up. The idea of the quality of children for such people is irrelevant. They have not seen many people with few children who got out of absolute poverty and moved up to a higher standard of living. Even if they see a few of such people, their view of the world does not lead them to lower their rates of reproduction. These people have actually seen poor neighbours who have gone down in the social ladder. They may know that these people are poorer economically than their parents because they had to divide farms to tiny plots or they divided considerable wealth (e.g., animals, money) to small portions and became poorer than their parents. This may not help these people to change their attitude and practice in having children. At best, they may treat high fertility as a kind of genetical lottery for securing children's labour and old age security. This also is an illusion as increasingly their children cannot provide such labour and security.

The situation in the Tanzanian countryside now is that it is only a few children that can supply labour, money, or other security to their young or old parents. Children must now go to school. When they start work, wages are so small that a few can have a surplus to provide to their parents. Early marriage also means that many children do not have considerable savings before marriage. The median age at first marriage is 19.2 years for women age 25-49, and 24.3 years for men age 25-49 (URT, 2016a: 87).

Land is very much parcelized out in small plots and most peasants with end up being very poor even if they have the support of children. The tiny plots owned by households cannot produce any surplus. These tiny plots, which look like *microfinchas* in Latin America, cannot create jobs to attract young people migrating to town.

The reasons why peasants in Tanzania keep on having many children is not because of the value of children or wealth flow. Many parents know that given their economic condition, no input of child labour will make them move out of their economic condition, and no wealth will ever flow from their children to

them. Actually, some may even know that they will be more worse off economically by having many children. However, the cultural values and beliefs of these people, which is determined by their surroundings and fatalistic outlooks, make them entertain the idea of having many children. They also have many children because they see (poor) neighbours with many children.

Other factors that have contributed to high fertility in Tanzania include removing poll or head tax. This was a tax paid by every adult male, but was abolished soon after independence. As such young men now have nothing to restrict them from marrying early and having (many) children. The tax had acted as a push factor to make young men more responsible: they had to grow cash crops or work as labourers in plantations and big farms to earn some cash. Currently, however, many cash crops have been abandoned because of the lack of the head tax as a push factor. These include coffee and tree crops in Kilimanjaro, West Lake, Coast, Tanga, and other regions. The abolition of the head tax is an example of a measure that can enhance high fertility, and which makes people less hard working and less responsible as citizens.

#### **Traditional Approaches to the Youth Unemployment Problem**

The traditional solution to the problem of youth unemployment is to put emphasis on education generally, and more specifically on vocational training. The second solution has been to put emphasis on agriculture as the sector which can rapidly absorb labour.

Vocational training is well advanced in Tanzania. However, as we saw earlier the places for training are few when compared to the large number of school leavers that is a consequence of rapid population increase caused by high fertility. The current policy of industrialization is pertinent and should be linked to vocational training focusing on creating more jobs and more productive jobs.

The bigger problem here is the idea on developing agriculture to create jobs. Peasant agriculture hold the children of a household for some time at the household economic unit. Quite often no wage is paid to household members and production is for survival rather than for making profit. Peasants also have a culture of abandoning their farms when they think they have discovered greener pastures they can move to (Maghimbi, 1992).

The problem of focusing on agriculture is that, this has always been the focus for creating many jobs but rural urban migration is also growing. The rural population is also growing rapidly. Economic growth cannot be translated into development unless the population is growing slower than the economy, (Weeks, 1999: 453). Thus, policies to improve agriculture must go hand in hand with policies to make family planning more acceptable.

Peasants' children are not trained to remain in farming. Therefore, some important old cash crop growth areas have declined in terms of crops production. For example, coffee output dropped from 54,000 tons in 2004/05 to 48,800 tons in

2013/14; and according to the BoT (2015: 43), no major crop has made a breakthrough in production. Peasant farms are too parcelized and most of them do not qualify as collateral. A kind of land consolidation programme is needed to help improve farming. Even within the current situation, more jobs can be created when peasant farmers are encouraged to train their young children to take up farming as a vocation. A farmer need not target all his/her children to take up farming. Even focusing on one child to accept farming as a profession is a step. This will help arrest the current situation where some whole households have abandoned their farms and moved to towns. This is a growing phenomenon in the old cash crop growth areas like Kilimanjaro, Pare, Bukoba, Tukuyu, and Ngara.

Plantations can create more jobs for young people if they are well managed and linked to the current industrialization programme. Actually, it is these large-scale farms that made the country to have labour shortage since the colonial days up to the 1960s. Tanganyika used to import labour for her large sisal plantations from neighbouring countries like Mozambique and Burundi. The demise of these plantations contributed to the current unemployment crisis in the country. Few people realize that the largest farms in human history were cultivated in Tanzania, and these include sisal plantations and groundnut scheme farms of the 1940s. For instance, one farm near Moshi town has over 30,000 acres and employs thousands of people. This farm belongs to the famous Tanganyika Planter's Company (TPC) that produces sugar.

The problem with plantations came after 1967 when most were nationalized. Many collapsed as parastatal farming was not feasible. Some were sold to private planters but all are not operational, and some sisal can still be seen in the bush in unattended farms. Also, some have been partitioned. When large farms are broken down jobs may be lost especially when the new owners are poor peasants or other poor people. These will work their new plots for subsistence, i.e., new owners will work their new farms and at the same time look for wage employment. In many cases they may not know how to farm profitably. The idea that everybody can farm is *argumentum ad ignorantiam* (argument out of ignorance) because in reality not everybody can farm profitably. Thus, such moves should target peasants and other people with entrepreneurial skills to help create more wealth and jobs for the rapidly increasing young population.

### **Motivating Young People to Create Jobs**

Nowadays in Tanzania, locals and even foreigners complain about how hundreds of thousands of young people are seen chatting in groups in their daily chatting places, known in local parlance as '*kijiweni*' ('stone place' – the jargon comes from the custom of sitting on stones in some African villages). Those who complain will show some land or other resources in the same area where the youths are 'sitting on stones' chatting or playing pool. The question is why are these youths not engaging themselves in useful economic activities



while resources like land, livestock and water are available. This problem cannot be explained by conventional economics or sociology. It is a problem that may have something to do with childhood training and the system of the country. Systems of equality encourage overpopulation while private interest stimulates exertion, prevent waste, and check undue increase of population (Lloyd, 1833: 10-11). The property laws of Tanzania encourage overpopulation because in many places there is an open regime in important areas like land ownership and access to pastures.

Many psychological factors are important in explaining the indifference of many youths when it comes to hard work and the need to achieve upward social mobility. Many of Tanzanian youths lack an achieving culture and the blame rests squarely on the society. A society with a generally high level of motivation for achievement will produce more energetic entrepreneurs. These energetic entrepreneurs will in turn produce more rapid economic development. Motivation for achievement means the motivation to do well (Higgins, 1968: 214). The motivation to have many children is not a motivation to achieve, and quite often a household with many children becomes poorer when its resources are thinly spread among children.

The motive to achieve promotes economic growth. Accord to McClelland (1961: 205) (who coined the concept of *n*-achievement, i.e., the motivation to achieve or do well), the source of motivation to achieve or do well is the family environment. Childhood training shapes the behaviour and thoughts of a person. A poor household with five or six children is not likely to produce highly motivated children. Such a household does not have the necessary resources like a well-educated mother and money for the children's education. Even training at home may not be rigorous because the principle focus of such a household is sheer survival.

To avoid poor and middle households from being caught in vicious cycles of income poverty and low motivation to achieve, policies focusing on quality (not quantity) of children must be formulated. Well-defined property regimes, which will attract some members of peasant households to remain in the countryside and lead an achieving life, must be institutionalized. Households and schools must focus on implanting the culture of achieving in children.

### **Conclusion: Strengthening Institutions to Serve the Youth in Tanzania**

Our behaviour takes places in institutions. We act in organizations that are created to take advantage of institutions (Plateau, 2000: 122-123). The paper can be summed up by arguing that the country is in the state it is, in terms of youth unemployment, because its institutions are weak.

For many youths to be motivated to achieve or do well, work must start at home when the children are young. Equally, the work must continue at school. Equipment and money put in the hands of unmotivated individuals may not

produce profits and jobs. The young population in Tanzania is likely to continue growing fast for a long time because of the persistence of high fertility. Young parents are having many children because institutions like family planning, property rights, the household, and education are weak.

The problem of the youth and unemployment in Tanzania is a complex question with many facets. Strengthening vocational training and education generally may help. Young people have been brought up in a culture that encourages them to leave home and seek wage employment. To encourage them to consider farming as a vocation requires a lot of effort in socialization at the household and school levels. This must be matched with creating the necessary institutions like well-defined property rights, e.g., giving young people secure land ownership. There is still plenty of unoccupied land in Tanzania, and this should not be farmed in traditional ways that lead to parcelization and low productivity. Focusing on processing like making sesame and corn oil may help create more jobs for young people. Government policies should attempt to ensure that ownership falls in the hands of these young people who will be able to pay taxes and employ more young people.

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