

Land and Opportunity Access: Migration Drivers for Youth and Young Adults in Rural Zambia

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INTRODUCTION:

Migration is an issue of interest for policy makers in Zambia and around the world. Factors like urbanization, changing weather patterns, land constraints, and a growing nonfarm sector all provide incentives for people to shift from their current location. These changes in where people live have implications in how government spends money, how the economy grows, and how people's livelihoods are made.

Several international and intergovernmental groups have taken interest in migration, especially among youth and young adults (YYA). We follow the lead of the UN in defining youth to be aged 15-24 and young adults to be aged 25-35. Because this age group represents a large productivity potential for a country, the opportunities available to them and their decisions on where to build their lives are important for policymakers and family members alike. As agriculture becomes a less desirable livelihood for the YYA population, migration out of rural areas becomes more common as people look for non-farm opportunities elsewhere (AU 2006; de Brauw, Mueller, and Lee 2014).

In Zambia specifically, the issue of youth migration has some unique characteristics. Given the relative land abundance Zambia has, the usual narrative of new generations getting squeezed out of farmland may not fit the evidence. Additionally, recent years of changing weather conditions, especially in the traditional agriculturally intensive areas of the country, may trigger some YYA migration to more suitable land (ACAPS 2019). If such a redistribution is occurring it is important for policymakers to be aware of it, because it can inform the debates on land rights and how best to equitably allocate land

Key Findings

- Participation in business activities are associated with a lower likelihood of migration, especially among youth;
- Wage or salaried employment in the private nonagricultural sector is associated with a higher likelihood of migration;
- When broken out by age group, however, participation in a high-return wage or salaried activity is associated with a lower likelihood of migration among youth;
- Overall participation in business or wage and salaried employment is quite low among the youth and young adult population;
- The perceived ability to buy and sell land is associated with a higher likelihood of migration among youth and those who choose to move to another rural destination; and
- Access to titled land is negatively correlated with likelihood of migration to rural areas among young adults.

KEY FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MIGRATION:

We are primarily interested in how the following factors affect likelihood of migration among youth and young adults.

Land Access: There is conflicting evidence on how land reforms (like converting previously customary land to titled land) change access to land for different subsets of the population (Deotti and Estruch 2016). However, factors like wealth and social connections may make land much more accessible to wealthier and/or older community members when it is possible



to purchase it, thus crowding out those with a greater need for the land but fewer resources available to purchase it (Ho and Spoor 2006). However, the ability to buy, sell, and rent land may allow youth and young adults to leave home if they do not intend to continue farming (Holden and Otsuka 2014).

We test household perception of ability to obtain land through purchase from others or allocation by village leaders. We also test household ownership of titled land and household rental of land.

Business and Wage/salaried Employment Access:

We are interested in how access to alternative forms of employment affect the migration decision of YYAs. Lack of employment opportunities outside agriculture have been shown to lead to outmigration, especially among YYA (Beegle, de Weerd, and Dercon 2011). We hypothesize that the type of employment, and not just the fact that someone has non-farm employment, will be important distinctions in how individuals make their migration decisions.

For activities that require local knowledge or social capital to run, like small scale businesses, we expect that the costs associated with moving and starting over somewhere new are higher than the benefits that can be gained by moving locations (Haggblade, Hazell, and Reardon 2010). We expect this will be especially true of moving to other rural areas where earning potential in such businesses would likely be the same. However, we expect that participation in salaried employment will provide individuals with the ability to more easily accumulate the money that is necessary to migrate, as well as the transferrable skills that will help them find employment in their future destination (De Brauw, Mueller, and Lee 2014). We expect that this will hold especially true for migration to urban areas.

We test individual participation in different categories of business and wage or salaried employment as follows:

Business Activities

- Agricultural input/outputs processing
 - Construction
 - Value added food
 - Private non-agriculture
 - Natural resources
-

Business Activities

Wage/Salaried Activities

- Farm labor
 - Private non-agriculture
 - Government
 - Tourism
 - Agricultural value added
-

We also test the net income the individual makes through their employment, categorized as low return or high return for wage/salaried and business activities. Returns are calculated with a simple income minus cost equation for businesses that require the individual to bear costs, and simply the amount earned in salaried or wage employment.

DATA SOURCES:

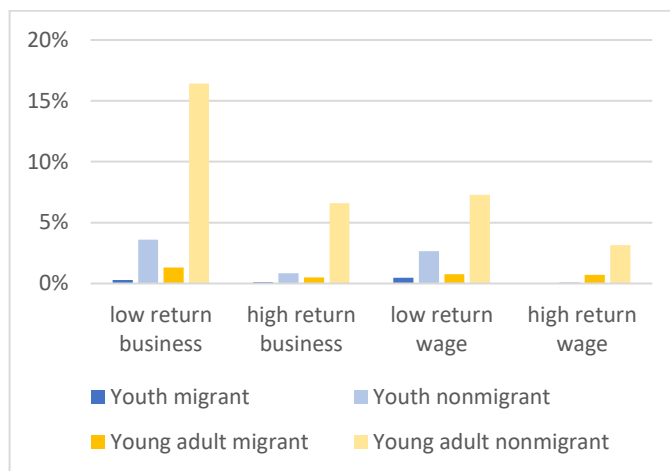
This research used the Rural Agricultural Livelihoods Survey, a panel dataset that collects repeat surveys from the same households multiple times (IAPRI 2012; IAPRI 2015). Our information on household characteristics comes from the 2012 wave of the survey, and we use information from the 2015 wave to determine whether or not YYA individuals migrated. Our survey sample comes from all individuals in the YYA category who were captured in the 2012 survey wave and whose respondents were successfully re-interviewed in the 2015 survey wave. The research also uses weather data from the Tropical Applications of Meteorology using Satellite (TAMSAT) and Famine Early Warning System Network Land Data Assimilation System (FLDAS) databases.

Model Estimation: We first test the relationships between our factors of interest and likelihood of migration with a logit model. We take migration decision as our outcome variable and use our key explanatory variables as well as controls to predict likelihood of migration. Because we know whether the destination the migrants left for is urban or rural, we also conduct a multinomial logit analysis that examines the relationships between our key variables and likelihood of migrating to a rural or urban destination. For both models, we expect that there will be differences between factors that influence the decision of youth and young adults, so we model these age groups separately and together.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Among YYA in successfully re-interviewed households, 12% migrated between 2012 and 2015. We immediately notice a difference between youth (15% migrants) and young adults (9% migrants), which further encourages our age-group specific analysis. Our descriptive analysis shows that the prevalence of titled and rented land, two parameters of interest, are still low in Zambia. We find that 8.5% of the sample's households own at least one titled field and 6.7% of households rent or borrow at least one field. We also find participation among YYA in business or wage/salaried activities to be below 4% for any individual category, although when measured by return, we find participation in lower return business activities is as high as 16% among non-migrant young adults (Figure 1). We also find that participation in such activities is markedly higher among non-migrants than among migrants across both age groups.

Figure 1: Participation in Off-Farm Activity by Migration Status and Age Group

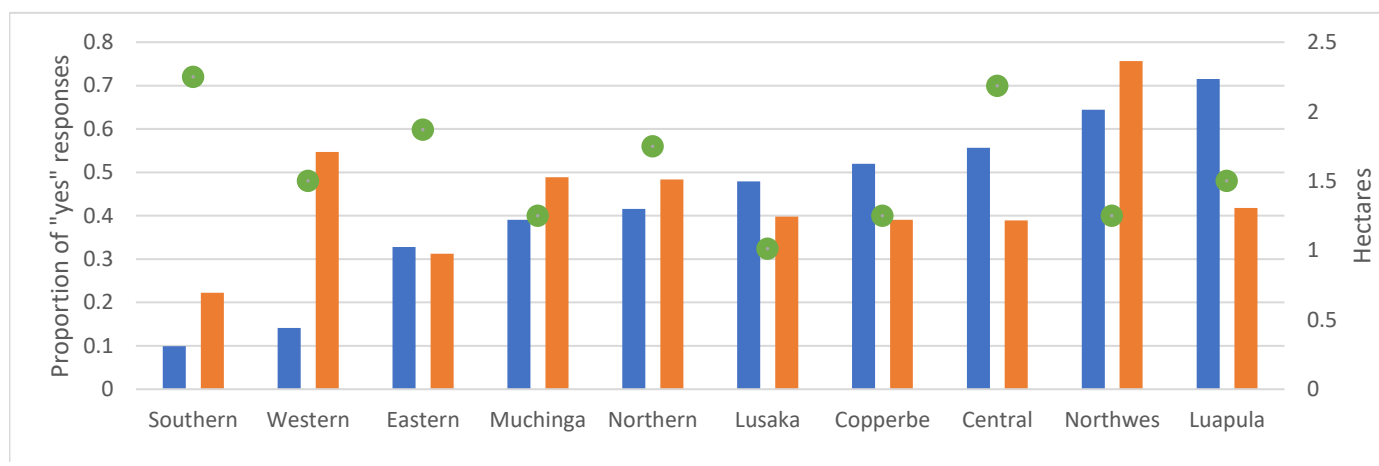


Source: Generated by authors.

In our descriptive analysis, we also find differences between provinces in terms of perceptions of land availability and transferability, as well as in terms of household land endowments (Box 1).

Box 1: Here we compare how perceptions of land access and actual endowments vary among different provinces. We note especially that the province with the highest median landholding, Southern, is also the province with the lowest proportion of “yes” responses to the ability to buy and sell land. It is also the only province that is significantly associated with an increased likelihood of migration.

Percentage of Households That Perceive That Land in Their Village Is Transferrable or Available and Median Farm Size (Ha), by Province



Source: Generated by authors.

For our empirical analysis, we find that youth in households who perceive that they can buy and sell land, either as customary land or by converting it first to titled, is associated with a 15% higher likelihood of migration. This may be because land that can be bought and sold and, thus, may be less accessible to young people with less financial ability to make large purchases. It may also help the household sell off extra land that they no longer have the labor for if the individual leaves. However, we interpret this result cautiously because titled land still only makes up about 7% of all surveyed fields, and purchases account for only 5% of all types of land acquisition, so this method of land transfer is still quite uncommon as of 2012.

We also find that participation in business activities such as construction, agricultural inputs or processing, and private non-agricultural endeavors are associated with lower likelihoods of migration, especially in youth and in individuals who are migrating to rural areas. These correlations range from a 34% to 89% decreased likelihood of migration if an individual is engaged in such activities. This supports our hypothesis that many of these activities require a large time and knowledge investment by the individual running them, which would discourage the individual from leaving their businesses behind. Additionally, such businesses rely on local conditions like knowledge of the area and social connections to work, and thus, would not be readily transplanted to other areas. Our results are also supported by the fact that the earning potential for small businesses in rural areas is likely steady, and it would be difficult to assess if there were significant differences in expected business income of a rural area without moving there first. Therefore, the effort and threshold level of capital and resources that migration require would not necessarily be worth spending to someone who can count on their source of diversified income at home.

In keeping with our expectations about wage and salaried employment, we find that participation in private non-agricultural salaried or wage work is associated with a 93% higher likelihood of migration. We propose that this is due to two factors: individuals who have steady salaried employment can accumulate the capital needed to migrate and successfully establish

oneself in a new area, and the salaried employment often generates learning of transferrable skills that can be readily applied to jobs in urban areas where the earning potential tends to be higher. We also find that employment in farm labor, a wage activity, is associated with a 63% lower likelihood of migration. This is not contrary to our expected results because that kind of wage work is not a differentiated skill and does not generate acquisition of new transferrable skills. Contrary to our hypothesized results, we find that employment in wage or salaried work among youth is associated with a 48% lower rate of migration to either rural or urban areas. We attribute this in part to the fact that youth have likely had less time to accumulate the necessary funds to migrate, but are cautious in our interpretation because we know that youth are not frequent participants in salaried or wage employment, so it is likely a small number of individuals who are driving this result.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Given the significant associations that off-farm employment has with likelihood of migration, we focus our discussion of policy implications primarily on these results. Local leaders and policymakers whose goal to retain their younger populations to ensure future productivity may benefit from initiatives that encourage participation and investment in independent businesses. This can be facilitated by setting up competitive financing options to start businesses, either through state- or self-sponsored microfinance programs. Additional investment to ensure that there is a market for the goods and services that businesses provide can also help develop this sector. This can include investments in roads to help inputs and outputs travel into and out of the community, as well as investments in local sources of electricity to help extend working hours for businesses.

For employment that is associated with increased likelihood of migration, local leaders can set up mentoring programs before people leave their post to reduce knowledge loss that may accompany the outmigration of employees.

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This Brief is a synthesis of the FSP Working Paper No. 160 *Correlations between Land and Opportunity Access and Migration Status among Youth and Young Adults: Evidence from Zambia* by Bellinger, M, M. Muyanga, D. Mather, H. Machina, and N. M. Mason.

This work was made possible by the generous support of the American People provided to the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy (FSP) through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-L-13-00001 (Zambia Buy-In). This work was also supported by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Michigan AgBioResearch [project number MICL02501]. Additional support came from the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI). The contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Michigan State University, FSP, IAPRI, USAID, USDA, the United States Government, or Michigan AgBioResearch.

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Published by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, Justin S. Morrill Hall of Agriculture, 446 West Circle Dr., Room 202, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.