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Adaptive Social Protection: Making concepts a reality

The Adaptive Social Protection Programme at the Institute of Development Studies has just released “Adaptive Social Protection: Making Concepts a Reality, Guidance Notes for Practitioners” (opens in pdf), written by Dr Katharine Vincent and Ms Tracy Cull.

Adaptive social protection is a concept that builds on the synergies between social protection, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction to ensure that the livelihoods of the poor are resilient in the context of changing climate and disaster risks. Interventions in the fields of Social Protection, Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction all aim to reduce vulnerability to such shocks. But so far these three communities of practice have worked in isolation. Adaptive Social Protection recognises that greater integration and knowledge sharing among these three communities of practice would increase the chance to have more impact on people’s vulnerability and help them escape poverty.

The guidance notes have been published at the end of the two year Adaptive Social Protection Programme, and translate research findings into tangible guidance aimed at practitioners in all three sub-disciplines who wish to expand their approach to one of adaptive social protection. Source: http://www.ids.ac.uk/project/adaptive-social-protection

The Adaptive Social Protection in the Context of Agriculture and Food Security Programme (ASP Programme) explores and highlights the benefits of an interlinked approach to risk reduction and resilience building in rural areas of developing countries. It takes into account evidence from social protection, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in order to help governments, practitioners and development agencies reduce poor people’s vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and other shocks. The ASP Programme is managed by and based at the Centre for Social Protection (CSP) which is based at IDS. It is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

The Giving Pledge reaches Africa

African Rainbow Minerals (ARM) chairman Patrice Motsepe announced on 30 January that his family would give away half its fortune to charity, as a part of Bill Gates and Warren Buffett’s The Giving Pledge. He becomes the first African to do so.

The beneficiary will be the Motsepe Foundation, which was founded in 1999 by the ARM chairman and his wife Precious. It oversees the philanthropic work done by the family, which includes education and health; the development and upliftment of women, youth, workers and the disabled; churches; the development of entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs; rural and urban upliftment; soccer including youth soccer development and music.

“I decided quite some time ago to give at least half of the funds generated by our family assets to uplift poor and other disadvantaged and marginalised South Africans, but was also duty-bound and committed to ensuring that it would be done in a way that protects the interests and retains the confidence of our shareholders and investors,” Motsepe said.

The give-away is a part of the Giving Pledge, which encourages wealthy people to donate their fortune to charity. Microsoft chairman Bill Gates and Berkshire Hathaway chairman Warren Buffett (formerly the world’s wealthiest man) founded the campaign in 2010 and have both committed large chunks of their sizable wealth to charitable organisations around the world. As of November 2012, 91 billionaires – mostly Americans – have committed to the pledge.

Motsepe said, “I was also a beneficiary of various people, black and white, in South Africa and in the US who educated, trained, mentored and inspired me and whose faith and belief in me contributed to my success in my profession, business and elsewhere. The same can be said about my wife, Precious, and we are deeply indebted to them and many more.

“Most of our donations have been private, but the need and challenges are great, and we hope that our Giving Pledge will encourage others in South Africa, Africa and other emerging economies to give and make the world a better place.”


Civil Society, public action and accountability in Africa

A very relevant, recent blog post by Dr Duncan Green, Head of Research at Oxfam GB and a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Development Studies. He is author of From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States can Change the World (Oxfam International, June 2008)

Emphasis added.

An important new paper from some big development names – Shanta Devarajan and Stuti Khemani from the World Bank, and Michael Walton (ex-Bank, now at Harvard Kennedy School) – directs a slightly fierce (but welcome) political economy gaze at donor efforts to strengthen civil society (one of the more recent developmental fads). As with most such papers, after a monumental literature review, one of the striking conclusions is how little we really know, but it gropes gamely through the fog of ignorance and confusion and arrives at some interesting conclusions.

First, the authors find that something significant is going on among Africa’s citizens: “a large shift in organizations among citizens. Village-level group formation in Africa increased dramatically over the 1990s when participatory approaches were emphasized in international development paradigms, promoted through aid, and adopted deliberately by country governments to deliver projects to communities.” Interestingly, that increased participation applies to both democratic and less democratic systems. The question is in what situations that upsurge in civil society has impact, and how (if at all) aid agencies can help.

The paper adds its support to the growing demand that aid interventions abandon futile searches for ‘best practice’ in favour of understanding what are the ‘best fits’ for any given context:

“In general, aid is most likely to be effective if it essentially organic, in the sense of (a) supporting existing domestic initiatives and pressures for change, and (b) in ways that are consistent with the initial state of the polity.”

But with that caveat, the authors give the thumbs up for some particular kinds of intervention. Italics in square brackets are my attempt at translating the rather academic language.

“There are a number of areas where there is a good prima facie case for support. This will typically be a function of the nature of overall polity. For example, there is the largest range of potential action for democracies with real political competition, albeit of a competitive clientelistic form, whether the regime is consolidated or fragile. [to have impact civil society needs to be able to get traction on the political process, and find potential allies within the state] Here are some categories.

- There is a strong case for general support on information-related initiatives—from information on politician performance, to school test results, procurement processes and so on.
- There is also a contingent case for support for local organizational initiatives that are working with and processing information that the evidence base suggests has potential in solving accountability problems. This domain can include NGOs working with right-to-information laws, think tanks analysing budgets or regulator behaviour, or service delivery outcomes, etc. [no point in supporting access to information if organizations aren’t able to use it or the information is not relevant to poor people]
- A related area concerns support for information for benchmarking of performance of local levels of government, e.g. municipalities; or across local service providers (schools; electricity and water supply), where service quality can be measured and compared [league tables can be effective in naming and shaming officials and politicians and otherwise galvanizing action]
- It often makes sense to support local client-power-related initiatives, but these are only likely to be fruitful if linked to broader change over the long route. [Bottom-up initiatives are good, but only if they can get traction on wider political process]
- Support for the strengthening of compact mechanisms is highly desirable if this has domestic political and technical support. [You need political leadership and/or influential allies within the state apparatus]
- There are two kinds of roles for civil society in the business sector:
  - Support for processes that provide mechanisms for both identifying and resolving conflicts between business investment and social and environmental concerns, especially in mining and urban development. [Dispute/conflict resolution]
  - Support for business associations working for public goods for business, e.g. agencies such as IFC that are concerned with private
business, with the important concern that this needs to take account of conflicts of interest in aid, since such agencies are also often engaged with particular investment projects and firms. [Enabling environment]

Finally, in all cases, there is a need to base any support in an analysis of the nature and functioning of civil society. Civil society can be a force for pressuring the state to be more responsive to citizens and more equitable, or can be a source of exclusion and the reproduction of inequalities. Civil society will also typically work very differently under more and less democratic regimes. [Power and context analysis has to include the power and politics of civil society itself – there are few selflessly altruistic Robin Hoods in real life]

In general, aid should not be focused on "money". This can be counter-productive. Rather, external partners can provide technical assistance in designing locally-grown interventions; they can play a role in financing information-gathering by local NGOs; and can finance experimental interventions (and their learning). Most valuable is likely to be support for a domestic process of innovation and learning involving a generalized approach of experimentation—of which RCTs are one, but only one, component. [Chuck big money at civil society initiatives is a good way to destroy them. Aid needs to be smart, and about ideas. Trial and error is a better way to pursue success than trying to roll out best practice at large scale.]

Can aid ever lead to transformational changes in accountability relations? Almost certainly not, if designs are hatched and brought in from outside. However, aid can potentially provide a supporting role if it is aligned with the flow of internal initiatives, is consistent with domestic political strategy, and supports greater accountability at the margins of major projects. An aspiration to effect some form of system change is admirable, for both internal and external actors. But for donors this needs to be blended with humility over the limits and unintended consequences of external action, and a central focus on helping domestic actors learn by doing.” [Domestic politics rules. Aid is a bit player, for good or ill. Get over it.]


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**ECONOMIC ISSUES**

Narrowing the farmer-worker gap – in an industrialised food system, neither has power

South Africa has experienced violent farm-worker unrest and strikes in recent months. This, together with the Marikana massacre, has [hopefully] served as wake-up call to the political and business elite. Below is an excellent, somewhat shortened, op-ed on the subject by Tracy van der Heijden, a PhD fellow at the Public Affairs Research Institute. Emphasis added

Labour unrest in the agricultural sector and farm worker demands for R150 (US$ 16.65) a day have raised a contradiction: the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy was requested by representative bodies to investigate the feasibility of the R150 a day wage demand.

Their recently released report contains two key findings. Firstly, many farms would become unprofitable if required to pay the R150 a day minimum. Secondly, even if workers did receive the R150 a day wage, they would probably still be unable to afford a nutritious basket of food.

I have no issue with the bureau's methods or conclusions but I do believe that there is a glaring omission in the analysis and the resulting media reporting: Why is it that farmers are unable to pay farmworkers a fair wage and, at the same time, why will these workers still go hungry even if they succeed in their wage demands?

Answers to both questions become clearer if we start thinking about the broader food economy within which farmworkers and consumers find themselves. This systemic approach is generally absent from both agricultural policymaking and popular discussions of the agricultural sector. When we consider the entire food system, from the farm to the consumer's plate, a different picture and different solutions emerge. A food-economy approach shows that outcomes in land reform, rural poverty and retail food prices are both interrelated and the result of particular systemic policy choices rather than any "inevitable" workings of the market. A modern, industrialised food system, the dominant system in South Africa, is characterised by distance between farmer and consumer, and long supply chains. Farmers and consumers no longer deal directly with each other but through intermediaries, such as processors, wholesalers and supermarkets. In these supply chains, the basic economic

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assumptions of demand, supply and equilibrium price seldom apply in neatly predictable ways. Instead, value-sharing and cost-sharing along the supply chain are determined to a considerable degree by who has power and who does not.

And, increasingly, it is neither consumers nor farmers who have power but the intermediaries (processors and supermarkets) that stand between them. Smaller farmers and poorer consumers tend to have the least power of all. Long supply chains in themselves add costs – logistics, marketing and the profit imperative of many stakeholders. This food-economy structure is the main reason many farmers cannot afford a decent wage, why small and emerging farmers struggle to make a living, and why the majority of South Africans cannot afford to buy basic, nutritious food, even when they are employed.

Food price reports issued by the National Agricultural Marketing Council illustrate clearly what is happening in our food economy, if only we would pay attention. Milk is a good example: the farm-gate price of fresh milk is about R3 (US$0.33) a litre but the average consumer price is close to R9 (US$1) a litre – a farm-retail spread of almost R6 a litre. The farmer share is only a third of the consumer price, although minimal processing is involved, and the farmer carries all the costs of producing raw milk. Between 1998 and 2012, about 5 000 dairy farmers went out of business, with estimated farm-worker job losses of 50 000. Many (mostly lower-income) consumers cannot afford this basic food item: research indicates that fewer than 60% of South Africans consume dairy products on a daily basis.

A food economy that works against both farmers and consumers is not a South African phenomenon but a global one. Declining farm incomes alongside rising retail food prices are seen in many places, including the United States and the European Union. The difference is that, all around the world, consumers, agrarian activists, farmers and governments are fighting back. But, in South Africa, where the results of the dominant food economy – widespread food insecurity and deepening rural poverty – are truly shocking, there is little public outrage and apparent policy apathy, despite the fact that the right to food is enshrined in section 27 of the Constitution.

| Lower food prices for consumers and more equitable access will reduce hunger and food insecurity, and increase the purchasing power of both wages and social grants. Higher farm-gate prices will facilitate higher wages for farmworkers and create better opportunities for smaller farmers and land reform beneficiaries. Both can be achieved in an alternatively structured food economy but we won't find better answers until policymakers start asking better questions. | Source: [http://mg.co.za/article/2013-01-25-narrowing-the-farmer-worker-gap](http://mg.co.za/article/2013-01-25-narrowing-the-farmer-worker-gap) |

| Some consequences of higher farm wages | So far only Western Cape farmers have been forced to face up to the reality of paying far higher wages in the near future. With the imminent announcement by Labour Minister Mildred Oliphant of a new minimum wage to apply from March, that reality will soon be something all farmers need to consider. The reaction can be expected to be explosive. | A new paper by researcher Ben Stanwix, of the University of Cape Town's development policy research unit, shows that agricultural wages in the Western Cape are typically higher than anywhere else in the country and are on average well above the minimum. Using labour force survey data from Statistics South Africa, Mr Stanwix shows that between 2000 and 2007 farm workers in the Western Cape and Gauteng received the highest wages of all farm workers in South Africa, at levels that were close to or above the rural minimum wage. But farm workers in North West, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Free State were the most poorly paid, with the average employee getting less than the minimum wage between 2003 and 2007. So what can the country's farmers be expected to do? One possible response is non-compliance. Mr Stanwix's paper shows that although wages have been increasing over time and more farmers are falling into line, compliance with minimum wage legislation has been weak.

This is because, he says, the chances of being visited by a labour inspector are small and the fines – based on a percentage of the underpayment – are insignificant. This might change in the near future. In the Western Cape, for instance, where trade unions have begun to gain a foothold on the farms since the strikes, the Department of Labour has been somewhat invigorated and, thanks to union networks, is better informed about where to go and when.

Given the political heat that has been generated, noncompliance will become a riskier affair and unions, political parties and the government can all be expected to play a bigger part. A second obvious response will be to shed labour. Following the introduction of the minimum wage in 2003, it is estimated that

| ... | ... | ... |

Southern Africa Horizon Scan, Issue 41, January 2013
aggregate employment on farms fell about 13%, Mr Stanwix says.

Commodities such as beef and maize, which are both highly mechanised, will be less affected by a sudden escalation in wages than vegetables and fruit, which are dependent on human labour.

Agri SA president Johannes Moller says particular difficulties can be expected in the vegetable sector in Limpopo, which is both labour-intensive and steeped in a low-wage business model.

He predicts that these commodities are likely to migrate over the border to Mozambique, where some Limpopo farmers already have cross-border operations. The Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy, a collaboration between researchers at the universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria, states frankly that the new wage structure for agriculture will be the catalyst for the “structural adjustment” that the sector must inevitably experience.

The bureau’s paper, research conducted at the request of the Employment Conditions Commission, says: “South Africa’s agricultural sector has long been dependent on cheap and unskilled labour. However, it is becoming clear that this system will not survive into the future, which will be characterised by fewer, more skilled and better paid workers. The transition between these two production systems is already in motion.”

But the outlook for employment in agriculture is not all bleak, says the bureau. It strongly endorses the vision contained in the National Development Plan that if South Africa picked “the winning industries” and expanded the exploitation of its natural resources, there is the potential to create 1-million jobs.

Mechanisation is an inevitable and long-term trend, it suggests. Rather than viewing this as negative and “a threat against manual labour, it should rather be thought of as an opportunity”, in which productivity will increase, the agro-economic sector will be stimulated and “a favourable economic and political environment” will develop, the report says.

Whether a threat, an opportunity or both, what is clear is that agriculture is facing a period of accelerated change. Source: http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/labour/2013/01/29/farmers-must-face-reality-of-higher-wages

and diversification yet -- especially given the rapid spread and growth of supermarkets, together with the increased flow of agricultural investment, both public and private. Proactive food and agriculture policy interventions could make a difference and prevent a repetition of South Africa’s ‘mistakes’.

South Africa’s saving grace will lie in implementing recommendations made by its National Development Plan as mentioned in the article above. Some interesting initiatives are already afoot, one of the first being to initiate a ‘social contract’ (in South Africa also known as a ‘social compact’) between fruit farmers, farm workers, government and the fruit agro-processing industry. The South African Scan newsletter will monitor these developments.

Not that small-scale farming and a ‘non-industrialised’ food system holds the answers. See here http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97190/SWAZILAND-Farmers-struggle-to-afford-inputs for a long, detailed article about the challenges currently faced by Swaziland’s smallholder farmers. In a nutshell they face increasing difficulty making a living with traditional methods of growing maize, the staple crop. With no programmes to subsidize inputs, many farmers, unable to afford fertilizer, have seen their maize yields drop. Those who have received training in “conservation agriculture” and growing crops that are less rain-dependent than maize are faring better, but they are constrained by their lack of land tenure and inability to raise capital.

And see here http://www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/five-reasons-why-companies-and-small-scale-farmers-are-not-in-business-together/23079/?fullpost=1 for an interesting article on why African companies and small-scale farmers are not ‘in it’ together. This is, of course, a complex issue, which means in some cases the spread of supermarkets is actually good for small-scale farmers. See here for evidence of family farming in Angola supported by improved supply chain management.

### POLITICAL ISSUES

South African Riots: Repercussion of the global food crisis and US drought

A new study by the New England Complex Systems Institute (NECSI) argues that [the recent South African riots and labour unrest] have less to do with labour issues and corruption than the price of food. The

The industrialised nature of the South African food system, and the imminent ‘structural adjustment’ its agricultural sector is likely to experience, should bode as a warning for other sub-Saharan African economies that have not reached this level of development
The study’s abstract states as follows: “High and volatile global food prices have led to food riots and played a critical role in triggering the Arab Spring revolutions in recent years. The severe drought in the US in the summer of 2012 led to a new increase in food prices. Through the fall, they remained at a threshold above which the riots and revolutions had predominantly occurred. Global prices at this level create conditions where an exacerbating local circumstance can trigger unrest. Global corn (maize) prices reached new highs, and countries that depend largely on maize are more likely to experience high local food prices and associated pressures toward social unrest.

In this study we analyse the conditions in South Africa, which is a heavily maize dependent country, and we find that consumer food indices have increased dramatically. Coinciding with the food price increases this summer, massive labour strikes in mining and agriculture have led to the greatest single incident of social violence since the fall of apartheid in 1994. Worker demands for dramatic pay increases reflect that their wages have not kept up with drastic increases in the prices of necessities, especially food. Without attention to the global food price situation, more incidents of food based social instability are likely to arise.

Our analysis has shown that policy decisions that would have the most direct impact on food prices are decreasing the conversion of maize to ethanol in the US, and re-imposing regulations on commodity futures markets to prevent excessive speculation, which we have shown causes bubbles and crashes in these markets. Absent such policy actions, governments and companies should track and mitigate the impact of high and volatile food prices for citizens and employees.

Source:
http://necsi.edu/research/social/southafrica/
Download the study (in pdf format) from here http://necsi.edu/research/social/southafrica/sa_rts.pdf

Fears of Zambia food riots
South Africa is not the only ‘heavily maize dependent’ country in the region. Zambia’s President Michael Sata warned recently that high food prices could spark riots, which toppled a previous government, as he put pressure on millers to keep prices down. Speaking before meeting millers, who have been selling mealie (corn) meal at steep prices, Sata said the nation’s founding president Kenneth Kaunda lost power in 1991 over food riots.

“If you don’t protect the people, I am going to protect them myself. When people rioted during Kenneth Kaunda’s time, it’s the food riots …that caused him to be removed from power. I don’t want food riots,” Sata said.

Prices for staple food mealie meal rose sharply last December, from 45 kwacha ($8.50) up to 80 kwacha ($15) per bag of 25 kilogrammes in outlets in the capital Lusaka. Millers have argued that the high cost of maize from the government reserves, the Food Reserve Agency (FRA), sparked the price hike.

Source: http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/fears-of-zambia-food-riots-1.1448570#.UQFXx2eenSg

The Need for a sea change in Africa’s coastal laws
The African Union (AU) is in the concluding stages of fashioning an African ‘cabotage’ regime to ensure that only African-owned vessels can trade within the continent’s coastal waters. Many countries have cabotage regulations that restrict which carriers can conduct trade or navigate within their coastal borders. But Africa is only now taking action to legislate in a daring, though necessary, move to liberate African coastal waters from age-old foreign dominance, and take a significant step towards a more unified continent.

Despite the political changes in African countries since the granting of independence in the mid-20th century, however, little has changed in terms of cabotage laws. Non-African companies continue to dominate African coastal waters; African commodities and raw materials are still freighted aboard foreign vessels and exchanged for often sub-standard, over-priced, manufactured foreign goods; African coastal waters remain largely unregulated and any shipping vessel is, for the most part, free to sail from one coast of the continent to another; and African countries remain disadvantaged, economically and otherwise, under this enduring imperial arrangement.

The African situation contrasts sharply with other parts of the world where regulations govern the domestic transport of cargo by foreign-registered vessels. In China, for example, the Maritime Code states that “shipping and towage services between the ports of the People’s Republic of China shall be undertaken by ships flying the national flag of the People’s Republic of China”. While in the US, federal law demands that all “goods transported by water between US ports should be carried in US-flag ships, constructed in the US, possessed by US
citizens, and crewed by US citizens (75% at least)”. India’s cabotage regulations ensure that coastal trade is strictly restricted to Indian flag-bearing vessels, as this “contributes significantly to India’s economic growth”.

Africa’s maritime economy has been estimated at around $1 trillion a year, accounting for over 90% of the region’s entire commerce, and 38 out of Africa’s 54 countries have coastlines. But since Independence, African countries have mostly foregone economic advantages by allowing foreign vessels unfettered access to the continent’s coastal waters. Although a few individual African countries such as Nigeria have cabotage laws, these are difficult to implement due to inadequate infrastructure, a lack of skilled manpower, and high operating costs.


In all likelihood an excellent, long-overdue strategic move. However, Africa needs to also develop the capacity and capability to implement and enforce such a cabotage regime, together with protecting its coastal fishing waters – something the poor and vulnerable are much more reliant on. A recent report (opens in pdf) by the campaign group Oceana, warns of growing food insecurity, especially for poorer people, especially from oil-rich – and politically volatile – regions. The study used climate models created by the University of British Columbia to rank countries’ exposure to degradation of the oceans due to climate change and ocean acidification. About 1 billion people depend on seafood as their main source of protein. But some of those countries most dependent on fishing are expected to lose up to 40% of their fish catch by the middle of the century. The study looked at potential impacts in mid-century. But the first effects of climate change and the changing ocean chemistry are already evident, however, in Kenya where the loss of coral reefs is pushing down fish stocks and on the US Pacific coast which has seen a die-off of oyster beds in Oregon.

Joblessness is forcing millions of young South Africans into a perpetual adolescence

A recent study, by the Centre for Development and Enterprise, (CDE) aimed to find out how young South Africans cope with unemployment and look for jobs. It found that thousands of young people prefer to stay at home without work rather than take up menial jobs.

Dr Hylton White, senior lecturer in social anthropology at Wits University, conducted intensive research in northern KwaZulu-Natal. White’s research revealed that young people do not regard a job as a means to very basic subsistence.

“If jobs will not provide the means required to getting married and building a home, then many men are not very interested in either seeking or keeping such jobs,” he wrote in the study. “Hence the otherwise counter-intuitive phenomenon of young men walking away from low-paid jobs despite the mass unemployment surrounding them in their communities. “If patterns of life in KwaZulu-Natal are any indication, there are millions of young South Africans literally waiting for their lives to begin.”

The study also reveals that a substantial number of young people who come from poor neighbourhoods, with bad schools and little support, and whose parents have also never worked, are most likely to spend their entire lives unemployed.

It says in the report: “They have little, if any, access to social networks that could link them to job opportunities with their contemporaries, and their parents are likely to have been unemployed themselves for substantial periods of time.

“A growing number of young people are living in environments of multigenerational unemployment. As a result, the young people who find themselves in these situations are becoming increasingly resigned to never finding a job.”

In Cape Town, Jeremy Seekings, professor of political studies and sociology at the University of Cape Town, found that networks and connections played a critical role in helping young people get jobs. His work reveals that in the Cape metro, urban privileged young people, called “insiders” – who are predominantly, but not exclusively, white – almost always used their connections to secure jobs while studying.

Respondents from informal settlements were “outsiders”, many of whom had not finished their secondary schooling and who lacked the connections needed to seek and get jobs. “If they find work, they often struggle to retain it, and if they lose it they struggle to find new employment,” Seekings wrote. One of the biggest challenges facing the “outsiders”, Seekings found, was their lack of a work ethic and their lack of understanding of the labour market.

“Among young people in poor neighbourhoods who had left school without matric and were either looking for work or
said that they wanted work, a large majority said they would not take a job as a domestic worker at a wage of approximately R900 per month, but almost all would take higher-paid jobs. “It seems that outsiders may be pricing themselves out of the kinds of jobs that they are most likely to get.”


**Training gives youth more chance of a job**

School leavers should try their utmost to gain additional skills and training to improve their chances of entering the job market, economists say. A breakdown of South Africa’s unemployment statistics show people without matric [the term traditionally used to refer to the final year of high school and the qualification received on graduating from high school] have an unemployment rate of about 36%, while people with matric have the same unemployment rate as the average of about 25%.

The rate drops to roughly 13% for people with some sort of further qualification, for example a diploma or certificate, and to about 7% for those with university degrees, said Mike Schussler, economist at Economists.co.za. "This shows that any form of specialisation helps. As soon as you do something that distinguishes you from other people, it makes a huge difference in finding a job," Mr Schussler added.

Meanwhile the The African National Congress has backed the implementation of a state incentive to encourage employers to hire young workers at its Mangaung conference in December. Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan set aside R5 billion (US$550 million) for a youth wage subsidy in 2010, but this has not been implemented because of strong resistance from the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

Source: [http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/education/2013/01/06/training-gives-youth-more-chance-of-a-job](http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/education/2013/01/06/training-gives-youth-more-chance-of-a-job)

**ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

The Reforestation of Africa?

A recent article in the open access [South African Journal of Science](http://www.sajs.co.za/article.php?a_id=8) highlights the ambiguity and sometimes ignorance around deforestation (in this case reforestation) and land cover changes in Southern Africa. With ambiguity and ignorance, of course, comes major risk. Below is a shortened version of the article -- emphasis added and references appear as endnotes.

There is a global obsession with deforestation, and not without reason, given the lessons of recent human activity in tropical systems. With this in mind, a recent paper in Nature by Higgins and Scheiter poses a challenging question for African ecologists and environmentalists: **do we, in the subcontinent, face not a contraction, but a vast and inevitable expansion of subtropical tree cover**, driven by levels of CO₂ that have not been seen in the past several million years? Higgins and Scheiter’s paper warrants our attention because it projects, for the first time, the continent-wide implications of the decade-old hypothesis, originally formulated by South African ecologists, of CO₂-driven woody expansion in fire-prone savannahs⁹.

The paper supports concerns that the expansion of woodlands and forest may be an imminent threat to ecosystem structure, function and biodiversity across extensive landscapes in the sub-continent⁹. If its projections are correct, then we stand on the brink of massive ecosystem change in the ‘savannah–complex’ vegetation (i.e. tropical grasslands, savannah and forests) of Africa. But how credible are these projections?

Unlike more intensively researched temperate ecosystems, the vegetation structure and land cover of huge tracts of sub-Saharan Africa may be highly sensitive to increasing levels of atmospheric CO₂. Vast areas of the subcontinent are currently dominated by C₄ grasses – a photosynthetic mode that owes much of its competitive advantage to the low CO₂ levels of pre-industrial and, even more so, glacial times⁸. Grasses do not require the large amounts of carbon that woody plants do to support their photosynthetic tissue. This low carbon demand for growth allows grasses to outcompete woody plants under low CO₂ conditions by building up a flammable layer of grass fuel – the savannah fire trap – that immolates slower growing woody plants and maintains the system in its grassy state. Under high levels of CO₂, trees are thought to regain the advantage, escaping the fire trap and converting the system into forest. This mutable balance of trees versus grasses, mediated by atmospheric CO₂ levels and fire, results in ‘bi-stable’ systems⁶ in which either grasses or trees could dominate. These bi-stable systems are highly prone to the

What is particularly interesting is that the dramatic CO₂-driven ecosystem changes projected by Higgins and Scheiter are in stark contrast to a more traditional, climate-centric view of the world, where African vegetation appears to be highly stable⁶. Their model provides strong evidence that
the equilibrium, ‘one climate, one vegetation’ approach is inappropriate for Africa, where direct CO₂ effects on plants appear to be an important driver of vegetation.

Higgins and Scheiter’s study therefore prompts urgent consideration of several key questions. Are African C₄ landscapes doomed under elevated CO₂? Will we see a ‘reforestation’ of subtropical Africa in the coming decades? Or are alternative drivers like changes in land use or rainfall likely to oppose the CO₂-driven trend?

Currently, climate uncertainty and socio-economic uncertainty combine to create a murky view of the future. Only through an interdisciplinary approach can these knowledge gaps be spanned.

Recently, several funding initiatives in South Africa have emerged that promise to advance our understanding of African land-cover change. In 2010, strategic funding from the University of Cape Town initiated the formation of the Land Cover Change Consortium, vii a group of interdisciplinary scientists from across South Africa that examines land-cover change from an experimental, observational and modelling perspective. Research initiatives such as these are now benefitting from funding allocated through the Department of Science and Technology’s Global Change Grand Challenge, the National Research Foundation’s ACCESS programme and funding from multinational partners (e.g. Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management, www.sasscal.org) that will support research (and students!) in this area until at least 2020. Additionally, there is an upswing in experimental facilities and field sites targeting global change research nationally. For example, Rhodes University has just committed to co-funding a National CO₂ Research Facility for plant sciences. With the clear imperatives for science to address societal challenges, and the support of government and funding agencies for these initiatives, it is an exciting time to be involved in CO₂ and land-cover change research in South Africa.


Mozambique climate change development policy operation

Climate change poses a major challenge to Mozambique’s development. Mozambique is exposed to risks from multiple weather-related hazards, suffering from periodic floods, cyclones and droughts. In the past 30 years, 14% of the population has been affected by a drought or a flood/ storm. Coastal erosion, storm surges and rising sea levels threaten Mozambique’s coastal zone and cities - the largest cities in Mozambique are mostly located near the coast.

This Development Policy Operation (DPO) is the first in Sub-Saharan Africa to focus on policy and institutional reforms that address climate change risks. It culminates from a deepening dialogue on climate change between the Government of Mozambique, the World Bank and international development partners. That dialogue has its roots in a technical assistance dialogue that identified addressing the risks from climate variability and change as one of the three main environmental priorities in the country and in a key study, led by the National Disaster Management Institute that assessed the potential impacts of climate change for Mozambique in detail. The report can be accessed here.


IsiZulu goes sci-tech

IsiZulu will eventually become extinct because there are not enough books written in South Africa’s largest official language, and because schools are increasingly teaching in English, says Phwayinkosi Gift Mbuyazi. And those are not the only problems.

“I studied to be an engineer. One of the things I soon realised is missing from isiZulu and other indigenous [African] languages are words related to science and technology. IsiZulu is not keeping up with the language of new technologies,” he says. And so the 41-year-old writer, who was born in Obanjeni, in rural KwaZulu-Natal, is on an extraordinary mission to keep his mother tongue alive – and up to date. A short film has also been made about his work.

He has invented a dictionary of 450 brand new words in the Zulu language to explain contemporary terms instead of just reverting to English. Take the word “planet”, for example. “In isiZulu we have the word ‘umhlaba’ which refers to the earth but there aren’t any other words that refer to Jupiter, Mercury, Pluto and the like. “If you observe the movement of the planets, they appear to hover around the sun, which is why I named them ‘umzulane’ which means ‘going round’.” After all, he explains in a new documentary on his life and work, the English word is derived from the Greek “planetai” which means “to hover or wander”.

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The short documentary is called The Adventures of the Wiby Kid, named after the title of Mbuyazi’s first book – or Amayiphendleya, in isiZulu. The Adventures of the Wiby Kid from Hlumi Tlale on Vimeo. A gentle, stylish, Afrotourist affair, the documentary was produced by Little Pond. Mbuyazi is frustrated by the lack of visibility of his language. “Where I live there are not many Afrikaans speakers but there are six Afrikaans-medium schools. I go to Exclusive Books and there’s a whole rack of Afrikaans literature but almost no books in isiZulu.” So, for his part, Mbuyazi has become a language activist. “If you buy a TV the manual is in all these languages – Chinese and Swedish and the like. There is never an African language. We need to shake up our minds and take the right steps to spread our languages to all nations in the world.”

Source: http://www.citypress.co.za/news/isizulu-goes-sci-tech/

The ‘moral’ of the story above is that this is a beautiful example of Africa, with its 2,000 languages, adopting and adapting to science and technology. This adoption and adaptation process will over time create many thousands of jobs, not just in translation, but also in content production, i.e. isiZulu books, magazines, websites, films, apps, etc. So too with the myriad other African languages. It is necessary, though, for this creative / knowledge economy to have the requisite skills in place, and kick in before the so-called youth bulge consequences take over.

How innovators want to transform African media

The African Media Initiative announced the 20 winners of its African News Innovation Challenge, which aims to drive media innovation by investing $1 million in startup capital. Twenty winners will receive between $10,000 and $100,000, along with tech support and business development advice.

“Finding and supporting great ideas for improving news reporting was one of our chief aims,” said African Media Initiative Chief Executive Amadou Mahtar Ba. “But an equally important objective was to kick-start a pan-African community of news innovators and journalism technologists.”

This new community is developing home-grown solutions to some of the biggest challenges of the digital age: How do we know if the information we’re hearing, watching, or reading is accurate? How can we make sense of and find patterns in the tremendous amount of data we generate? How do we make sure all our voices are heard? And how do we hold our institutions accountable?

Here are four of the ways Africa’s innovators aim to solve these problems:

- **Creating better tools for citizen journalism:** Several winning projects want to make it easier for citizens to tell what they see and know -- and for news organizations to more easily share these reports with their audience. For example, citizen reporters will be able to use CorruptionNET on their mobile phones to file reports to newsrooms about corruption or misuse of public resources, while Citizen Desk will help news organizations incorporate citizen reports into their editorial workflow.

  Others will use crowd-sourced reports to tell stories in innovative ways. ListeningPost will launch Africa’s first social media newsroom. The cross-border LastMile Crowdmapping project will use maps to better explain complex investigative stories. It will show consumers where goods, such as chocolate and wood, originated in Africa’s supply chain.

- **Verifying media reports:** Crowd-sourced, non-partisan Africa Check aims to verify claims and identify errors -- whether from a source or a reporter -- in news stories. MoJo is creating user-friendly software to detect online censorship and expose plagiarism.

- **Spurring data-driven journalism:** Bringing data scientists into the newsroom is the aim of two of the projects. DataWrapper wants to accelerate the use of data visualization, including interactive infographics and data-driven visual news apps. The project will establish a network of data visualization desks in newsrooms across Africa. Code4SouthAfrica embeds data scientists and programmers into newsrooms to build news APIs and will train reporters in how to use data in stories. A South African team is building Oxpeckers, a narrative mapping project that will use satellite imagery and geographic data analysis to track logging, poaching, and ecological degradation. Its ultimate aim: to expose the cross-border crime syndicates that are inflicting the damage.

- **Creating better tools for investigative journalism:** The openAFRICA project will “streamline freedom of information (FOI) requests to government agencies” and “help journalists and the broader public assess these documents.” NewsStack will build a “reusable journalist toolkit” from cutting-edge data journalism tools and projects.
including DocumentCloud, Poderopedia and Mapa76. Then, a pan-African team from 10 media organizations will use the toolkit to investigate the continent's huge and influential extractive industries. For this new community of innovators, winning the contest is just the first step. "Now, people across the continent can work on collaborative projects that raise the skills and knowledge in the media industry," Ba said. Stay tuned.

Source: http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2012/12/how-innovators-want-to-transform-african-media361.html

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