

Youth, jobs, and structural change: Confronting Africa's "employment problem"

Type: Document

Content Type:

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Language:

Sources:

Topics:

Knowledge Products:

Publication Date: 29 Aug 2016

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Africa has enjoyed over a decade of sustainable growth where regional growth has exceeded the global average and per-capita income for the region is steadily increasing. During the past decade sub-Saharan Africa was home to six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world. However, there are signs that this growth turn-around has not resulted in robust growth of 'good' jobs particularly for the young whose share has been rising over time. The paper argues that sub-Saharan Africa does not face a severe employment problem but that of the absence of decent job opportunities. It argues that Africa's employment problem is symptomatic of its lack of structural change. The paper also explains that industrialization can boost formal job creation through labour intensive growth. Nevertheless, critical changes in the labour market and in the education system are needed to increase the employment intensity of growth in the formal economy. In the short run a number of interventions can be undertaken to improve the employment prospects of new labour force entrants: - Addressing open unemployment and helping the young find better jobs, - Building relevant skills, and - Reforming labor regulations and institutions.

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