Nina Tellegen

Rural employment in Sub-Saharan Africa

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the rapidly growing population in Africa, more and more pressure is exerted on arable land. Therefore, many households are no longer able to live on agriculture alone. In order to relieve the resulting pressure on the environment, to stop further subdivision of fertile lands and to keep people from migrating to towns, it is generally agreed that more attention needs to be given to the generation of rural employment opportunities.

After Independence, most African governments aimed at the generation of economic growth and the creation of employment through the development of a large-scale industrial sector. During the seventies it became clear that this sector could not achieve either of these goals. Therefore, the present focus on rural employment is oriented towards small-scale industries.

This bibliography concerns the existing scientific literature on different aspects of rural employment and has been compiled in support of the research programme on rural employment of the African Studies Centre, Leiden. Although the discussion on rural employment started during the seventies, the bulk of publications have been published in the last decade. The bibliography contains 301 references, listed in alphabetical order. The references are either of a general nature or concern the situation in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Also included are subject and country indexes. A description of the method of compilation is given in the Appendix.

In the rest of this introduction, the material collected will be discussed from different viewpoints. First, the range of study approaches to the subject matter are outlined. Next follows a review of different terms and definitions. Further attention is given to: the importance of employment generation in rural areas, the major constraints concerning rural enterprises, the linkages of the non-agricultural sector, women and rural employment and the development of rural enterprises, respectively. Finally, this introduction offers some concluding remarks.
1. Approaches

Three approaches can be distinguished in research on rural employment. The most common one, to which most references in the bibliography belong, is the so-called industry approach. The subjects of study are rural industries, small-scale industries and rural enterprises, although sometimes concepts such as non-farm and off-farm activities are used as well. The main issues discussed are the intrinsic characteristics of rural industries, the differences between small-scale and large-scale industries, the role of rural industries in the economic development of a region or a country, the type of rural industries able to expand and the development path of rural industries. For reference, use the subject index: 'rural industries and enterprises' and 'small-scale industries and enterprises'.

The second approach that can be distinguished is the so-called household approach. This approach takes the household as the unit of analysis. Rural employment is mostly described in terms of non-farming, off-farming or non-agricultural activities. These activities are seen as parts of strategies of households to diversify sources of income in order to spread risks. Many authors pay attention to labour allocation and the sexual division of labour within households. Research often focusses on the role of these activities in the livelihood of rural households. For reference use the subject index: 'households'.

A third approach is the one whereby the entrepreneur or businessman/woman is taken as the unit of analysis. Attention is usually focussed on characteristics of entrepreneurs such as sex, age, educational level and social background in relation to the type of activity they are involved in and the rate of success of their business. For reference, use the subject index: 'entrepreneurs'.

2. Terms and Definitions

A wide range of definitions is used in the conceptualisation of rural employment. Most authors do not define the term rural, and only a few make an effort to distinguish rural areas from urban areas. Liedholm and Mead (1987), using the definition of the United Nations, regard as rural all villages and towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants. Haggblade et al. (1989, p. 1174) argue that rural areas include "...any locality that primarily exists to service an agricultural hinterland...", and Weijland (1990, p.9) defines rural areas as areas in which "agriculture is the single most important source of income".

The most common terms in describing rural employment are: off-farm activities, non-farming activities, rural industries and small-scale industries.
• Off-farm activities are usually defined as remunerative activities outside the farm by household members residing on that farm, including both self-employment and wage labour (Burger 1990).
• Non-farming activities are either defined as all income-generating activities outside agriculture (Haggblade et al. 1989), or as all income-generating activities apart from fishing, hunting, forestry and agriculture (Dijk 1981) or defined as self-employment type of activities only (Liedholm 1973). Saith (1992, p.14) has a completely different definition and argues that non-farm activities are those non-agricultural activities or any other type of industrial enterprise, located in or outside rural areas, which generate significant developmental linkages with the rural resident population.
• Rural industries include industries processing primary products, manufacturing industries and related repair services (Chuta & Sethuraman 1984) or all industries in which a majority of the employees and customers or clients come from a rural area, excluding transport, trade and services (Weijland 1985).
• Small-scale industries or enterprises are mostly defined as industries with less than 50 employees whereby a further sub-division is made into 'micro' (up to 10 employees) and 'small' (10-50 employees) (Livingstone 1991). Others argue that small-scale industries have less than 10 employees (Schmitz 1982).

It is often argued that most non-agricultural activities take place in the informal sector (Freeman & Norcliffe 1985, Poyck 1985, Pedersen 1989, Dijk 1981, Hayes 1986). Informal sector activities are labour intensive, small-scale, require little capital investments, have a low technical level, are highly competitive, have flexible opening hours, and do not adhere to regulations concerning wages, taxes and permits (Hayes 1986, Hansohm 1987 and Livingstone 1991). The discussion on the importance of the informal sector for people residing in both urban and rural areas, which started after the publication of an ILO report on Kenya in 1972 (ILO 1972), have had a major impact on the rural employment debate, because of the attention paid to small-scale, self-employment type of income-generating activities (for relevant references, use subject index).

Despite the large number of definitions, in general, rural employment is considered in terms of employment outside agriculture, in other words the cultivation of crops and/or the keeping of cattle is excluded.
3. Importance of employment generation in rural areas

Despite the different terminologies, arguments in favour of the generation of rural employment outside agriculture, are rather similar. The most important one is of course the generation of work and income for people residing in rural areas. Furthermore, the presence of means to generate income will stop people from migrating to urban areas (Chuta & Sethuraman 1984), and can also stop a skill drain from rural areas (Saith 1992). Another argument is that rural enterprises can generate economic growth and rural development (Byerlee 1977). An advantage particularly mentioned in relation to small-scale enterprises, is that they may be more efficient in the use of capital, labour and resources compared to large-scale enterprises (Page & Steel 1984, Haggblade et al. 1990). A sixth argument used is the fact that rural enterprises are important for all types of rural households. For the poor they provide employment and income, for the rural 'middle-class' they provide cheap goods and for the rural 'rich' they provide means to invest the money earned through agriculture (Freeman & Norcliffe 1985). Moreover, through the development of non-agricultural activities, income differences within rural areas and between rural and urban areas are expected to decrease (Liedholm 1986, Chuta & Sethuraman 1984). Another important advantage is the fact that in most cases little capital and little schooling are required to start a non-agricultural enterprise (Liedholm & Mead 1987). Finally, non-agricultural activities are undertaken by rural households and it is therefore expected that profits will remain in the rural areas and few leakages to the city will take place (Chuta & Sethuraman 1984).

4. Constraints concerning rural enterprises

One of the major debates in the literature on rural employment concerns the obstacles people face in rural enterprises. Most often mentioned are constraints on the demand side (the lack of purchasing power of the rural population) and constraints on the supply side (lack of starting capital, absence of infrastructure, lack of appropriate technology, insufficient knowledge of management and (seasonal) labour shortages) (Haggblade et al. 1989, Due 1992, Binswanger 1983 and Teszler 1989). Not all authors agree on the importance of the various constraints. Schmitz (1982), for example, argues that conclusions on lack of capital and labour are often drawn too easily. According to this author, an important characteristic of small-scale enterprises is the fact that it concerns family enterprises, which are flexible in the use of labour and capital. Hunt (1984) is of the opinion that lack of capital and technical skills may be important obstacles in the development of larger-scale non-agricultural activities, but that household-based activities are not as much hampered by these constraints as is often argued, since little capital and technical skills are needed to start activities like, for example, the selling of roasted maize.
or the brewing of beer. A critical remark on the lack of infrastructure comes from Gasper (1988). He makes clear that the improvement of infrastructure in rural areas could very well lead to the disappearance of rural industries due to increased competition from urban produced goods.

5. Linkages of the non-agricultural sector
An important issue in debates on rural employment is the influence of the non-agricultural sector on other sectors of the economy and vice versa, through different types of linkages (for references, see index). Most authors focus on the relation between the non-agricultural and the agricultural sector (Weijland 1987, UNIDO 1991, Byerlee et al. 1977, Haggblade et al. 1989, Liedholm & Mead 1987, Ranis 1990). The types of linkages distinguished are: production linkages, consumption linkages, labour linkages and investment linkages.

- Backward production linkages, like the processing of agricultural products, are considered to be much stronger than forward production linkages, such as the production of agricultural inputs (Haggblade et al. 1989, UNIDO 1991). This indicates that relatively few people in rural Africa are involved in, for example, the production of agricultural tools.

- Consumption linkages are usually defined as the relation between income earned through agriculture and the demand for non-agricultural products. Some argue that these linkages are the most important factor in the development of rural areas (Ranis 1990, Harriss 1987; see also section 7).

- Examples of labour linkages are farmers who use their labour for non-agricultural activities in periods of the year when agriculture requires little attention (Haggblade et al. 1989).

- Investment linkages concern the investment of money earned through farming, in non-agricultural activities (backward linkages) and vice versa (forward linkages) (Weijland 1985).

Hirschman (1981) extends his focus beyond the agricultural sector to the market sector as well. He stresses the importance of linkages of the non-agricultural sector for the local economy, taking account of the origin of inputs and the destination of outputs of rural enterprises. Whenever inputs come from outside the local economy, non-agricultural enterprises have weak backward linkages. Whenever the output is sold at local markets only, they have weak forward linkages. In that case they can not play a major role in the development of the local economy. However, enterprises using local resources and selling their output at both local and non-local markets have strong backward and strong forward linkages and must be able to generate economic growth.
Linkages mentioned in relation to small-scale enterprises are those with large-scale enterprises. This so-called sub-contracting, whereby small-scale enterprises take over part of the production process of large-scale enterprises, hardly exists in Africa, mainly caused by lack of transport infrastructure. However, it is quite common in other parts of the developing world, like Southeast Asia (Byerlee et al. 1977, Liedholm & Mead 1987).

6. Women and rural employment
A substantial number of books and articles on the topic of women and rural employment has been published in recent years. In most of Sub-Saharan Africa women are responsible for food production, food preparation and all other domestic tasks. Since non-agricultural activities can be done in and around the house they offer many advantages for women, because they can perform their other tasks at the same time. Especially for the growing number of female-headed households, non-agricultural activities form an important source of income, because these women are often the only people in their households able to generate income (Hilhorst & Oppenooorth 1992).

Apart from special advantages as regards non-agricultural activities, women are confronted with special difficulties as well. In general they have received less education, possess less bargaining power, have less access to resources, fewer contacts with bureaucrats and restricted access to credit and training facilities compared to men. Furthermore, women are hampered by a division of labour which causes them to be mainly involved in less rewarding activities (Hilhorst & Oppenooorth 1992, see also Tellegen et al. 1992). From research in several parts of Africa it appears that women's enterprises are generally smaller and less remunerative than those of men (Carr 1990). However, this is not always caused by specific constraints. Several studies have shown that whenever a woman's enterprise becomes profitable, men take over (Buvivic 1990 & van Dijk 1989). Therefore, some women may deliberately keep their enterprise small and controllable.

7. Development of rural enterprises
Many authors agree on the ideal development path of rural enterprises. A rural non-agricultural activity starts as an activity undertaken within the household during seasons in which farming requires little attention and develops into an enterprise outside the household making use of hired labour and employing household members full-time (Liedholm & Mead 1987, Haggblade et al. 1989). In many countries reality is different. The number of enterprises with one or two workers increases fast, but most enterprises do not grow further in size (Livingstone 1991, UNIDO 1991).
Economic development of rural areas -and thus an increase of the income of the rural population- is often regarded as the engine for the development of the non-agricultural sector (Purdoel 1987, World Bank 1977). However, not all authors agree on the relation between rising income and increasing demand for non-agricultural products. Hymer and Resnick (1969) for example state that rising incomes will lead to the demand for urban produced goods, because rural produced goods are said to be inferior and therefore rural entrepreneurs will vanish in the long run. Other authors are less pessimistic and are of the opinion that agriculture oriented activities (Weijland 1990) or activities using local resources and requiring little capital and labour during the wet season (Caron & Flach 1989) have chances to survive. Finally, Carlsen (1980) argues that part-time subsidiary household activities will be taken over by specialised full-time enterprises. On the basis of budget surveys carried out in Kenya, he concludes that increasing incomes hardly effect the demand for rural produced goods like furniture and agricultural inputs, but lead to a decrease in the demand for other rural products such as lamps, because people start buying higher valued urban products. Other research done on the income elasticity of the demand for rural-produced goods show similar results. Some products will disappear but a large number seem to be able to survive competition from large-scale urban producers (Haggblade 1989, Byerlee et al. 1977, Liedholm & Mead 1987, UNDP et al. 1988, Liedholm 1986, Kilby 1982).

8. Concluding remarks
Despite the wide range of subjects and viewpoints included in the debate on the generation of rural employment, several interesting issues have been disregarded. Some of these issues are briefly described here.

The generation of rural employment is often seen as the solution to all sorts of problems in rural areas, like poverty, unemployment, decreasing agricultural production and the position of female-headed households and women in general (Carr 1984, Trouve 1984, Freeman & Norcliffe 1985, Helmsing 1987, Caron & Flach 1989, Mbanefoh Nkechi 1991, Bech-Ocansey 1988). Sath (1992), in his overview of the non-farm sector, points to the fact that no attention is paid to the negative aspects of rural industries, like primitive and hazardous working conditions, long working days, no insurance, no security of employment and often very low wages. If rural employment creation has to act as the solution for the problems described above, more attention for and research on rural employment is needed. Otherwise, rural employment creation could lead to a worsening of the situation of some groups of the rural population, especially the poor.
Most contributions on the development of non-agricultural activities concentrate on the consequences of an increase in agricultural or rural income (World Bank 1977, Carlsen 1980, Kilby 1982, Hunt 1984, Liedholm & Mead 1985, UNDP. et al 1988, Haggblade 1989, Weijland 1990). Due to the economic crisis in large parts of Africa it seems more opportune to also focus on the consequences of economic stagnation or economic decline for the development of non-agricultural activities. In 1993 and 1994 research on this subject will be carried out by the author, entitled: Rural entrepreneurs and economic stagnation: the development of non-agricultural activities in two districts in Malawi.

A final remark concerns the numerous generalisations made on aspects related to the generation of rural employment. The large differences concerning, for example, welfare level, presence of urban industries, economic and social structures, and norms and values in rural areas within and between African countries, require more empirical research in order to get insight into different conditions and their implications for the possibilities of generating rural employment in Sub-Saharan Africa.
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APPENDIX

Bibliography: sources and structure
Publications listed in the bibliography have been collected in several libraries within The Netherlands, the most important being: the library of the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, the library of the African Studies Centre, Leiden and the library of the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. Key searches were made on the following: 'rural employment', 'small-scale industries', 'enterprises', 'entrepreneurs', 'informal sector', 'non-farming activities', 'off-farming activities', 'women' and 'households'. Furthermore, the bibliography of the Livelihood and Environment Research Programme of the Faculty of Environmental Sciences of the University of Amsterdam has been used. This bibliography started in 1990 and comes out six times a year. It gives an overview of articles and book reviews in different journals on social, economic and developmental studies. All bibliographies published so far have been reviewed.

The Abstract Journal of the African Studies Centre is published four times a year and contains reviews of articles from about 80 magazines and journals on Africa and developing countries in general. All Abstract Journals published since 1970 have been reviewed.

In November 1951, a visit was paid to UNIDO in Vienna, because of their involvement in small-scale industrial development. Material collected there is included in this bibliography.
THE AFRICAN STUDIES CENTRE

The African Studies Centre, an inter-university foundation is based in Leiden and cooperates closely with all the Dutch universities. The Centre is subsidized by the Ministries of Education and Science; Foreign Affairs; and Agriculture and Fisheries. The aim of the Institute is to promote scientific research in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular in the field of the social sciences in the widest sense of the word.

The Institute goes out from the premise that the research which is carried out in Africa must be of such a nature that the results are directly or indirectly relevant to the population in the country concerned. Other objectives include the systematic promotion of research and education covering the afore-mentioned areas, and also the spread of the knowledge of African societies and cultures.

The Centre has formal agreements with Institutes and Universities in Africa, viz., the Ministry of National Planning and Development and Egerton University in Kenya; and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research in Cameroon and the University of Yaounde.

In the Netherlands, the Institute has similar agreements with departments of various universities, viz., Human Nutrition of the Agricultural University of Wageningen; Marketing and Market Research of the Agricultural University of Wageningen, Social Geography of Developing Countries of the University of Utrecht and Cultural Anthropology/Non Western Sociology of the University of Leiden.

The research and teaching activities of the Centre take place within the framework of these agreements. The Centre has two research departments, viz., the department of Social and Economic Studies and the department of Political and Historical Studies.

The main emphasis of the department of Social and Economic Studies is on rural development, food and nutrition and trade in agricultural products. The research is policy-oriented; the most important programme for the period 1989-1993 is the Food and Nutrition Studies Programme which has as its main objective to analyse contemporary trends and future needs concerning Food and Nutrition in Kenya.

The department of Political and Historical Studies concentrates on pure scientific research. The main emphasis is on the ideological and economic aspects of the State in Africa. Research takes place within the framework of the Cameroon programme, and in conjunction with the socio-economic department of the Centre. Important subjects are wage labour in the rural areas, land law problems, in particular in the neighbourhood of the larger cities, ethnic articulation and regional incorporation; comparative study of effects on rural development of French and British colonial administration.

The department also has a programme focusing on Southern Africa. Here the main objective is to analyse developments in political economy and culture and the effects of these on neighbouring areas. A part of the research in this department falls outside the scope of these regional programmes, viz., the research into peasant movements in general and legal pluralism in Africa.

In addition to the research departments, the Institute has a library and a documentation section. The library holds the only specialized collection of books on Africa in the Netherlands. There is also a film library. The films are available on loan for educational purposes. A catalogue with descriptions of the films and a list of titles of films of other collections in the Netherlands in Dutch is available from the secretariat.

The Centre is responsible for a monograph series which is published by Kegan Paul Int., London. Other research reports and working papers are published by the Institute itself. Periodic publications include an Abstracts Journal with summaries of articles from recently published journals and collections; a list of the latest library acquisitions; and a Newsletter on African Studies in the Netherlands containing an annual survey of research concerning Africa in the Netherlands, which is published in cooperation with the African Studies Association.

The African Studies Association cooperates closely with the African Studies Centre in promoting research and education relevant to African studies in the Netherlands. The Association advises the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO) on applications for research funding in the social sciences and the humanities concerning Africa. The secretariat is based in the Institute's offices.

The library is open to the public on weekdays between 9.00-13.00 and 14.00-17.00, tel. 071-273354.

A list of publications, annual reports and research programmes of the respective research departments as well as surveys of current research are available free of charge from the secretariat, tel. 071-273372.

Information on the loan of films is obtainable from the secretariat.
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