



How policymakers can tackle the youth unemployment crisis in Gabane, Botswana^a

By Happy Siphambe, Malebogo Bakwena, Lexi Setlhare, Mavis Kolobe, Itumeleng Oageng, Keamogetse Setlhare, Tshegofatso Motswagae

Key messages

- High youth unemployment in Gabane, Botswana, needs urgent action by policymakers so young people can find work.
- Information about government support programs is not reaching target beneficiaries, resulting in low uptake.
- Access to training does not currently improve young people's job prospects because the skills taught do not match industry needs.
- Job prospects are worse for women in Gabane. Policymakers need to tackle discrimination, broaden opportunities for women, and help reduce unemployment.

Youth unemployment remains high in Botswana



Unemployment in Botswana, is relatively high (23%) and even higher for youth (26%) using the narrow definition of unemployment. Despite the concerted efforts of the government of Botswana, uptake of youth employment programmes remains relatively very low.

While the ups and downs an economy goes through inevitably affect the job opportunities available, an individual's characteristics, such as their gender, level of education, skill set, and age are important factors too. These characteristics influence who moves into particular jobs, and the likelihood that individuals will lose and/or find work.

There are currently no studies in Botswana into the level to which these socio-economic characteristics determine the decisions employers make about who they appoint.

The analysis

To test the impact that factors such as socio-economic circumstances have on young people's job opportunities after leaving school, a team of local PEP researchers used the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) to collect data from the village of Gabane in Kweneng District. Gabane was chosen because the 2011 Population and Housing Census found that unemployment was high in the village (17.4%), and because of its proximity to Gaborone, where the research team is based.

This research project also set out to analyse how well

Gabane is performing in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level to inform proposals for policy developments and generate indicators and corresponding disaggregation on the status of the SDG. Part of this research is a first attempt in terms of analysis and monitoring of the SDGs at the local level through the implementation of a CBMS¹ given the lack of disaggregated data.

For this study, people in Gabane were asked about their experience of finding and maintaining work during similar time periods in 2016 and 2017.

¹ Siphambe, H., Bakwena M., Setlhare, L. et al (2018). "CBMS Design Paper: Case Study of Gabane Village in Kweneng District in Botswana.

Key findings

The majority of Gabane's population are young people (55.4% aged 15-39 years old) and **the unemployment rate is relatively high** at 23.3%.

- Women represent 63% of those unemployed in Gabane.
- The unemployment rate is higher among young women (29.9%) than men (21%).
 - This may be due to gender inequality, and the fact that women are considered to have a lower social standing than men in African culture.
 - There are also fewer job opportunities for women nationally.
- Young people are the most affected by unemployment in Gabane.

Taking part in government programs reduces the likelihood of unemployment but the majority of young people in Gabane do not engage with the programs designed to support them.

- 99% young people (3767 out of 3802) did not participate in any programs in 2017.
- Only 28 young people (1%) participated in these programs:
 - Youth Development Fund (YDF), National Service Programme (NSP), Young Farmers Fund (YFF), National Internship Programme (NIP), and Government Voluntary Scheme (GVS).
- The main reason given for not engaging with the programs was that they did not know about them.
 - Other reasons cited include rejection following application, or insufficient information about the programs (4% for both).

- More women (over 0.6%) participated in government programs than men (over 0.3%).

Being male significantly increases the likelihood of getting a job in Gabane, compared to being female.

Being at the older end of the youth age spectrum increases a young person's chances of finding employment. This characteristic also reduces their chances of becoming unemployed.

Higher levels of education and training do not increase the likelihood of a young person in Gabane finding employment. The more training a young person in Gabane undertakes, the more likely it is that they will remain unemployed.

- This may reflect the skills mismatch in the Botswana job market, and that there are few jobs for skilled (trained) workers with no job experience.
 - Training institutions provide higher levels of training than industry needs. Those who have undertaken high levels of training often cannot find suitable jobs, while those with less training can get the available jobs that require low-level skills.

The more people are paid, the higher the chances are that they will remain in employment.

- When higher wages are on offer, young people are more encouraged to apply for jobs, than remain unemployed.
- Some may be put off applying for roles when the wages offered are lower than their reservation wage (the lowest wage below which a worker chooses not to participate in the labour market).

Conclusions and policy implications

Unemployment - particularly amongst young people - has reached crisis point in Gabane and urgent policy attention is needed.

- Young people are not taking advantage of the support programmes provided such as Youth Development Fund (YDF) and this needs to be looked into and addressed immediately.

Work experience programmes, such as NIP and GVS, need to be improved to help young people move from school into jobs, and help cut down youth unemployment.

- Policymakers should require training institutions to involve business in the design of their training programmes to make sure that people leave with the skills employers need.

- A platform could be created for industry to communicate to institutions what they need from prospective employees.

In addition, more and better job opportunities need to be created for women in Gabane.

- Women have worse job prospects than men in Gabane despite participating more in government programs.
- Policymakers need to do more to tackle discrimination and help more women move out of unemployment.
- Creating targeted programs for women could help address the barriers preventing them from finding employment.



Canada



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