



Barriers to Young Women's Employment

Young African women face many significant barriers and constraints in the world of work, especially with regards to working conditions, limited opportunities for career advancement, and a lack of access to critical resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated and underlined women's vulnerability in the labor market, while also accelerating the demand for workers with advanced digital skills.

There is a serious risk that women will fall even further behind in terms of access to the world of work if the skills mismatch is not resolved.

Outlook of women in the world of work

- Although the employment-to-population ratio for women in sub-Saharan Africa is relatively high at **57%**, women are heavily overrepresented in the informal sector
- In Ghana and Senegal, **90%** and **94%** of women entrepreneurs operate in the informal sector respectively
- In Senegal, women are more than three times as likely to be unemployed than men

What's stopping women from entering the world of work?

Constraints facing young women are often a result of differential access to key employment-enabling resources such as skills, time, and capital. Real life examples capture the experience of women in Ghana and Senegal.



High and unequal domestic burden

"Most of the house chores are done by the girls ... there were times in the evening when you want to study, but you have to go and wash the dishes and your brothers will be reading."

Mavis, 34, banker in Kumasi, Ghana



Workplace stereotyping and harassment

"[A]s hotel manager in Ziguinchor, I was considered as 'the 25-year-old girl who comes from Dakar and who wants to impose things on us'."

Ivana, Senegal



Skills development challenges

"The nearest school here is 2 km away and we don't have transport to go there, it's not even safe for a girl."

Daba, Senegal



Lack of career guidance and mentorship network

"You can stay in the same position for years without really progressing. It's a bit discouraging but you don't have a choice."

Fanta, Senegal



Financial hardships and lack of access to capital

"My husband is the head of the family, so I cannot take financial risks without asking his consent."

Sokhna, Senegal



Impact of COVID-19

"We will certainly have to close [shop] for a while and many young girls will lose their jobs."

Ms. Ndiaye, Senegal

What are the enabling factors?

Real life examples demonstrate that being supported to pursue their career goals is one of the biggest enabling factors for entering the world of work. When women are morally, psychologically, financially, and materially supported by their families, teachers and mentors, the barriers to entering the world of work are minimized.



Supportive family environment

"My parents were not educated, but one way or another they understood the importance of education, especially my mom. She didn't want us to end up like her not being educated, so she invested in our education."

Lawrene, 34, working in the frozen foods sector in Accra, Ghana



Support from teachers, mentors, and peers

"My mentor made me realize you can't always get what you want, but you should grab opportunities that come to you."

Lawrene, 34, working in frozen foods in Kumasi, Ghana



Support from the public and private sectors

"I was lucky enough to receive funding twice from the National Agency for Youth Promotion and Employment, and from the 'Dare to Undertake' program, and subsequently I decided to continue."

Aida, 34, Senegal

Where are the skills mismatches?

There is a pervasive mismatch between education and skill requirements for the future world of work. Educational system produce graduates who are ill-equipped for the labor market, particularly in the ICT sector and for professions that require technical or vocational skills. This is greatly affecting the way women transition into the world of work.

AGRICULTURE

- Lack of training centers and vocational schools for young women, especially in rural areas
- Lack of continuing training adapted to enable women farmers to combine work and studies
- Lack of training around agriculture-specific production, processing, and marketing skills and knowledge of new market opportunities in the sector

BPO & ICT

- Inadequacy and mismatch between labor demand and supply in the BPO sector
- Few women in the sector tend to be involved in marketing, sales, and website and software development
- Perception that such roles are too difficult for women and require more personal investment than responsibilities at home would allow

TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

- Lack of key skills required in the sector such as fluency in foreign languages, especially English
- Lack of knowledge and know-how in management
- Reduced ability to adapt to a digital global ecosystem (such as virtual tours)

How do we fix it?

✓ Improve learning environments for girls & women

- Reduce the unequal domestic burden and improve home learning environments for girls
- Modernize schools to become all-inclusive, dynamic learning centers that can train young girls and women in the technical and digital skills required for the future world of work

✓ Improve career guidance and workplace for women

- Provide more support guidance, mentoring, and coaching opportunities in education and the world of work
- Encourage stronger gender-sensitive policies and an adaptive workplace
- Promote accessible digital training programs for formal and informal workers

✓ Improve the policies around women in the world of work

- Address labor market barriers
- Encourage entrepreneurship among young women
- Support additional research on barriers facing young women in the world of work