

**BOOSTING
DECENT
EMPLOYMENT
FOR AFRICA'S
YOUTH**

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YOUNG, FEMALE AND AFRICAN: BARRIERS, INTERVENTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN AFRICA

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Acronyms.....	iii
Executive summary.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
Background	1
Defining ‘youth’	2
Synthesis framework	2
2. Overview of female youth employment in Africa.....	3
Overview	3
Africa’s focus on employing young women	4
3. Barriers to employment of young women in Africa.....	5
Barrier 1. Social and cultural	5
Barrier 2. Economic.....	6
Barrier 3. Conflict and fragility	7
Barrier 4. Skills development.....	7
4. Existing employment interventions - the evidence?	9
Social and cultural	9
Economic	10
Conflict and fragility.....	12
Skills development.....	13
5. Emerging employment opportunities	15
Mobile telecommunications and the digital economy.....	15
Informal economy.....	16
Secondary education	17
Labour migration	18
6. Findings.....	19
Overall findings	19
Additional findings.....	21
7. Recommendations.....	24
For researchers.....	24
For policymakers	25
Annex 1. African country classification by region.....	28
Annex 2. Research protocols	29
Annex 3. Demographic trends	31
Annex 4. Gender-specific social indicators in Africa.....	32
Annex 5. Challenges in data gathering	33
Regional context	33
Data.....	33
References	34

ICT	information and communication technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Labour Organization
NEET	not in employment education or training
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UN	United Nations

Young women are an integral part of Africa's growing youth population. **While Africa as a whole struggles with an employment deficit for both men and women, and in both formal and informal sectors, women are consistently more disadvantaged than men in terms of their economic ability as well as their access to employment in many sectors.** This evidence synthesis paper attempts to extract and document the evidence from the existing literature on **how and why this is so by identifying the key barriers that prevent young women in Africa from joining the workforce; the sort of interventions that currently exist to address these barriers; and what future opportunities are likely to emerge for young women to enable them to become equal and productive members of Africa's workforce.** This paper focuses on young women in Africa, between the ages of 15-29 years, the age group selected to represent youth for the purposes of this study. The methodology adopted was chosen to highlight the evidence and its analysis for the five geographical regions in Africa: West, East, Central, North and Southern, as this allows for a more coherent presentation of results to inform policy and programme decisions.

Four key barriers were identified as standing out in the literature. The first is '**social and cultural barriers**', which include early marriage, lack of education, negative attitudes towards women, lack of access to land, and the care economy, which were seen in all five regions in varying forms. The second, '**economic barriers**', consist mainly of lack of access to finance for young women, while the third, '**conflict and fragility**', has resulted in a vulnerable population of young unemployed women. The final barrier, '**skills development**', refers to the lack of resources to train and guide young women in gaining suitable employment.

The most successful interventions in addressing these four barriers were found to be a combination of those that support wellbeing, capacity building and access to jobs for women, as well as entrepreneurship. In addition, two emerging areas of opportunity were found to hold great potential for employment: **mobile telecommunications and the digital economy, and the informal economy.** Both require greater attention from policymakers and researchers.

The barriers and interventions identified are based on the available literature and are not necessarily reflective of the entire continent. Evidence on women's employment is available for some regions in Africa, particularly for East and West Africa, on which there is substantial information, but not necessarily other regions, such as Central and Southern Africa, for which information is limited. This, however, does not mean that there are no, or insufficient, interventions in these regions, rather, merely insufficient evidence and documentation. Some key findings have nevertheless emerged:

- **Interventions that focus on providing women with access to, and control over, finance**, such as through financial management training, access to savings accounts and digital funds, ensure greater success for women starting and maintaining businesses.
- Likewise, **a combination of interventions, including access to childcare services, women's wellbeing and economic support**, are best able to ensure that women are able to stay in employment longer.
- In studying the barriers that impact on young women's employment and how these can be overcome, there is a need to focus on regions other than East and West Africa, particularly Central and Southern Africa. While North Africa is also relatively understudied, it nevertheless attracts a higher level of interest from researchers and policymakers.
- **Africa's restrictive regulatory environment clearly favours men over women in business**, e.g. women do not have the same access to loans and are not extended the same services to set up businesses. This automatically creates a bias against women who wish to enter the labour market.
- **Cultural barriers** such as early marriage and an inherent negative attitude towards women, particularly in terms of what their role in society should be, prevents women from playing a key role in the labour market.

- **Female education, or the lack of it, plays an extremely important role** in providing women with economic opportunities, as it sets the stage for young women to enter the formal labour market.
- **The care economy has still not found its way into official employment policy**, despite the impact it has on the ability of women to seek and retain employment. Without adequate support for enhanced social services, women will continue to be restricted to the home, unable to balance care and paid work responsibilities.
- **The rural/urban divide has a major impact on women's employability** - women in rural areas have far fewer opportunities to access formal employment or new innovations in the labour market than women in urban centres.
- **The lack of gender disaggregated data and analysis on labour market** barriers and employment opportunities for women hampers the design and implementation of interventions in both formal and informal labour markets.

In light of these findings, this synthesis paper makes **the following recommendations:**

For researchers:

- **More in-depth regional and gender disaggregated data collection and analysis** on young women in the labour market, across regions and income distribution levels, is necessary to gain a clearer picture of the state and potential of employment opportunities for young women in Africa.
- Conduct **in-depth analysis of whether or not, and how, two emerging sectors, namely, the digital economy and high-skill professions**, can contribute to encouraging young women's employment.
- Study **the impact of urbanization and migration on the employment opportunities** available to young women in both formal and informal sectors.
- Study **different forms of conflict and their impact on young women** and their access to, and use of, the labour market to rehabilitate themselves after conflict.

For policymakers:

- While there is a great need to **develop and enforce legislation in specific areas to aid employment, such as in the informal sector and secondary education**, none of this is possible without **overarching legislation at the country level that specifically targets and addresses discriminatory practices against (young) women**.
- **Recognize that the informal sector provides major labour market opportunities** for young women and explore how to include this in official data.
- **Ensure that financial institutions offer equal access to formal services to both men and women** and that economic programming takes into account women's need to separate funds for household and business use.
- **Encourage better data collection, harmonization and analysis on women's work**, including greater access to gender disaggregated data on labour market variables.
- Focus policies and practice on **improving access to, and retention of, young girls in secondary education** as a stepping stone to future employability.
- Consider **designing employment interventions for young women at a regional level, rather than on a country basis, based on the context of each region**, e.g. some regions are affected by conflict, others have a number of emerging economic opportunities.

1. Introduction

Background

Women are an integral part of Africa's growing youth population. In 2018, International Labour Organization (ILO) data for Africa estimated female labour force participation to be 54.4% of females 15 and above, which is predicted to increase to 55.3% by 2030¹. This is a negligible increase for a group that constitutes almost half of the continent's labour force.

Overall, women are more constrained in accessing opportunities than men in the African job market for a number of reasons. These include, among other things, constraints on mobility and less access than men to financial resources and financial institutions such as banks (ILO, 2016; Filmer & Fox, 2014). More importantly, social norms with respect to childcare duties and the desirability of being employed strongly shape women's labour force participation on the African continent. Gender inequalities in employment also result in lack of access to social protection acquired through employment, such as pensions, unemployment benefits and maternity protection. However, despite employment opportunities for women receiving greater attention in the region over the past decade, few programmes have emphasized the importance of targeting young women in employment (Chakravorty, Das & Vaillant, 2017).

Africa is currently experiencing not just a youth bulge, but also a major surge in the economic output in many of its regions. Against this backdrop, women are facing a 'triple burden'², as they struggle to balance paid employment, the unpaid family care economy, and maintaining social and community networks; in rural Africa, they face the additional triple burden of being young, female and rural (Baliki, 2019). These burdens prevent the active inclusion of women in the economic productivity of African countries. Known as 'smart economics', the inclusion of women in the workforce is widely advocated for by the World Bank, which sees equality as a means to achieve other goals, including gender equality and poverty eradication (World Bank, 2006). This position is especially applicable in the African context. Young women, in particular, have the advantage of contributing to their country's economy and society by being part of an education system that prepares them for entering the labour force, rather than being restricted to the home. Investing in youth from an early age provides them with the opportunity to enter the workforce with the skills, guidance and resources needed for productive and decent employment. For young women, this also provides them with a 'voice' to influence decision-making processes directly related to labour market outcomes, as well as their domestic responsibilities.

The inclusion of young women is of major advantage to the global economy. Therefore, this synthesis paper concentrates on Africa's young women. It does so by looking at what type of employment opportunities young women in Africa have available to them; what prevents them from accessing these opportunities; and what kind of new opportunities they could have access to in the future. At times, this synthesis paper also refers to women in Africa in general, i.e. those not falling within the official definition of youth (see following sub-section). This inter-changeability is relevant, because many of the barriers and opportunities that are faced by young women are also faced by all women, who carry such burdens from youth into adulthood.

¹ ILO Modelled Estimates, accessed at, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/browse-by-subject/>

² This term is commonly used to define the burden women face in many developing countries from balancing their gender, their household demands and the demands of financially supporting their families.

Defining 'youth'

According to the United Nations (UN), the typical definition of youth is the age-group between 15-24 years, which recognizes that apart from this statistical definition, the “meaning of the term ‘youth’ varies in different societies around the world” (United Nations, n.d.)³. In Africa, however, while there are other definitions of youth, the most prominent is that in the African Youth Charter of 2006, which defines youth as those aged 15-35 years (African Union Commission, 2006)⁴. This extreme variation in the definition of youth in Africa has serious implications for programming for this group, both males and females. Many programmes that, for instance, look at the school-to-work transition, include youth above the traditional 15-24 years, but still under the age of 30 (Elder & Koné, 2014; Elder & Kring, 2016). As we will see, many programmes that work to provide economic stability for young women in employment, such as enterprise development, also target a group that exceeds the United Nations definition.

Therefore, for the purposes of this synthesis paper, the age group 15-29 years will be used to define youth, as it allows for more flexibility in assessing the various employment interventions.

Synthesis framework

A qualitative desk-based approach to data collection and analysis was used for this research, focusing on research and reports on gender and employment from approximately the year 2000 onwards. A research protocol and accompanying synthesis framework were designed to support the evidence gathering process (see Annex 2) with three key areas identified to support the regional classification: existing barriers, types of interventions seeking to address these barriers, and new areas of opportunity for young women across the five regions.

In order to analyse and understand the scope and nature of interventions for young women’s employment, the most appropriate unit of analysis was seen to be the regional division of Africa, based on the United Nations classification of Africa into five distinct regions (see Annex 1): North, West, East, Central and Southern. This was firstly because most of the interventions and existing evidence were available on a country level. And, secondly, regional classifications tend to show a more coherent picture, as the unit of analysis is contained within a geographic boundary. Therefore, the regional division of Africa produces a clear picture of what sort of employment opportunities are available and possible within each context for the purposes of policymaking and programming⁵.

3 The same age-group for youth is reinforced by General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/117 in 2001, Commission for Social Development Resolution E/2007/26 & E/CN.5/2007/8 in 2007 and General Assembly Resolution A/RES/62/126 in 2008.

4 Several African countries define their youth population differently. For example, Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa define youth as 15-35 years of age; Nigeria and Swaziland define them as 12-30 years; and Botswana and Mauritius define them as 14-25 years (Betcherman & Khan, 2015).

5 This approach itself has not been without its challenges (see Annex 5).

2. Overview of female youth employment in Africa

Overview

According to the latest African Economic Outlook report, Africa's working-age population is projected to increase from 705 million in 2018 to almost 1 billion by 2030. At this rate of growth, Africa needs to create almost 12 million new jobs annually to prevent rising unemployment (AfDB, 2019). Currently, projected population growth rates across Africa vary greatly among the five regions (see Annex 3). The most populous region by 2050 is predicted to be East Africa, followed by West Africa. This ties in to the prediction that Sub-Saharan African will constitute almost 52% of the world population by 2050 (UNDESA, 2019). Interestingly, the population of men and women between the ages of 15-24 will be almost equally distributed across the five UN-designated regions of Africa over the coming decades (*ibid.*).

In Africa, women's work tends to be concentrated in the informal sector⁶, which is dominated by agriculture. Africa has the highest estimated rate of informality in the world, with 89.7% for women and 82.7% for men (ILO, 2018c). There is an especially high rate of informal employment among youth: 94.9% of those aged between 15 and 24 (*ibid.*). As shown in Table 1, West, East and Central Africa have incredibly high rates of informal employment among young women (even excluding agriculture), whereas North and Southern Africa have relatively lower levels of informal employment⁷.

Table 1. Gender disaggregated informal employment in Africa, 15-24 years (%)

	North Africa	West Africa	East Africa	Central Africa	Southern Africa
Men	68.5	89.8	89.1	87.1	38.4
Excluding agriculture	59.7	81.0	72.3	73.2	34.4
Women	62.2	95.0	94.0	95.2	42.4
Excluding agriculture	41.5	92.3	82.1	88.2	38.2

Source: ILO (2018c)

Inequality and normative cultural practices exist in many regions of Africa, adding further to the obstacles to employment experienced by young women. For instance, gender-based violence is prevalent in many regions of Africa. The literature claims that the practice of female genital mutilation, a form of gender-based violence, is highest in West Africa, with close to 50% of countries in the region following this practice. Similarly, in Central Africa, 60% of women have experienced some form of domestic violence (Anderson, Beaman & Platteau, 2018). Gender-based violence can prevent women from leaving the home for employment for fear of retaliation by male family members. Women receive the least legal protection against domestic violence in North Africa, which also has extreme inequality in terms of inheritance rights for women. In West Africa, only a third of adult women are able to read and write (*ibid.*).

Annex 4 shows the variation in a range of cultural and social practices across the five regions of Africa. To take only one example, female genital mutilation, data shows it to be highest in West Africa and lowest in Central Africa, with no data available for Southern Africa. Conversely, the prevalence of violence against women is highest in Central Africa and lowest in West and Southern Africa. Such data illustrates that each region requires observation within its own regional context when trying to paint a picture of attitudes towards young women and women in general, as the prevalence of one element in one region does not necessarily mean the same in another.

⁶ The formal sector in Africa is primarily dominated by men.

⁷ As we will see, Southern Africa usually has the lowest aggregate figures among the five regions, primarily because of the inclusion of South Africa within this region. As an emerging and upper middle-income economy, this tends to skew the data for the region. Due to this, World Bank data, for instance, includes data for Southern Africa excluding South Africa.

However, some analysts have noted that the existing data shows a complementary relationship in some situations. For instance, countries with overall low levels of gender inequality tend to have higher levels of human development, while countries that have higher levels of gender inequality tend to have lower levels of human development (Mukherjee *et al.*, 2017). This points to the fact that ensuring adequate levels of gender equality in all walks of life will invariably lead to higher human development outcomes.

Africa's focus on employing young women

Given the overview above, the current policy dialogue in Africa is clearly focused on job creation, especially for youth. In 2017, the African Union declared its annual theme to be 'Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in Youth'. Likewise, 2010-2020 was marked as the 'Decade for Youth' and one of the African Development Bank's High Five Priorities, as expressed in its 10-year 'Jobs for Youth in Africa' strategy for youth employment (AfDB, 2018). Likewise, the European Union, which is Africa's largest trading partner, proposed the new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs in 2018, which proposes to look beyond the agricultural sector and strengthen the capacity of women and youth. This includes European support for gender-sensitive regional and local initiatives and innovation hubs (European Commission, 2019).

This is further bolstered by Agenda 2063 'The Africa We Want', in which the African Union clearly outlines the continent's aspirations for the next 50 years: "Youth unemployment will be eliminated, and Africa's youth guaranteed full access to education, training, skills and technology, health services, jobs and economic opportunities, recreational and cultural activities as well as financial means and all necessary resources to allow them to realize their full potential" (African Union Commission, 2015). Aspiration 6 in that document specifically speaks of gender equality and the empowerment of women and youth.

The commitments in Agenda 2063 have been followed by a number of youth employment programmes that were funded either publicly or by international/non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs) (Ismail, 2018a). To date, the evidence from such programming shows that women generally derive less benefit from youth employment programmes than men (Ismail, 2018b). This leads us to the need to identify why this is so and what sort of barriers prevent young women from taking advantage of opportunities for meaningful employment.

3. Barriers to employment of young women in Africa

The previous chapter identified a series of gaps at both the policy and implementation level in terms of access to employment for young women in Africa. This chapter takes those gaps a step further by identifying the nature and scope of the barriers that led to such gaps. Based on the available evidence in the literature, four key barriers have been identified that reflect the constraints faced by young women: social and cultural, economic, conflict and fragility, and skills development. These barriers relate to access to mostly formal employment. However, in some cases, they can also be associated with informal wage-earning activities.

Barrier 1. Social and cultural

Social and cultural practices can disadvantage particularly young women in exploring their potential as economic contributors. These include inequalities in access to education, early and forced marriage, negative attitudes towards employment for young women, inequalities in access to land, and the expectation that women are responsible for unpaid care work. These are described below.

Education

While considerable progress has been made in female primary education in Africa, there is still a substantial gap when it comes to secondary education, or what is known as a secondary 'deficit'⁸. Overall, female secondary enrolment ratios in most regions of Africa never reach even 50% and secondary school attendance is only 25% (Goldstone, 2019). Some possible reasons for this sudden drop in higher education attainment levels for young women could be existing cultural barriers, such as girls being removed from school for early marriage, and the impact of conflict, which is prevalent in many African countries⁹. With lower levels of education attainment, young women have less chance of finding decent, well-paying jobs.

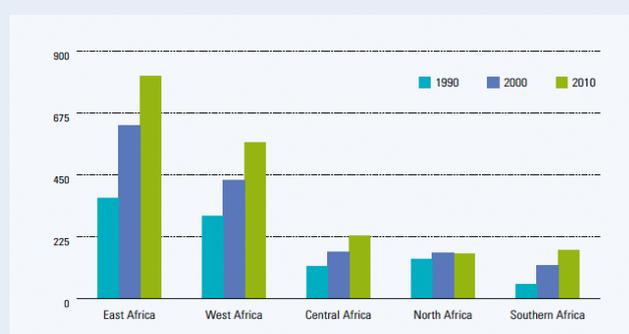
Early and forced marriage

Early marriage limits a young woman's ability to pursue and complete further studies and/or seek gainful employment. Early marriage not only leads to low education attainment rates for girls, but also to poor health outcomes due to early childbirth (see Box 1). Early marriage in Africa is double the world average of 13% (Bouchama, 2018). Early or forced marriage also has a negative multiplier effect on women. For example, in order to escape from early or forced marriage, many young women are exploited by men and male employers and easily manipulated into prostitution or trafficked as sex workers. In the worst situations, they are beaten, badly fed, poorly paid, and turn to prostitution (Min-Harris, n.d.).

Box 1. The missing women of Africa

The concept of 'missing women', originally introduced by Amartya Sen, relates to the female population that could be expected if men and women received similar care in health, medicine and nutrition. It represents the deficit of women and girls who have died prematurely compared to a benchmark population distribution. Africa, as a whole, is one of the biggest contributors to the global population of 'missing women', and the number is increasing. This could be more challenging in the years ahead, given the high fertility rates in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

Figure 1. 'Missing women' in Africa, by sub-region (in '000's)



Source: UNDP, 2016

8 Women responding to a survey in Ghana noted that lack of education and training were key barriers to career progression. One-third of the women surveyed had not been promoted and 40% cited lack of education as the main reason (BSR, 2017).

9 Overall, net secondary attendance for young women in Sub-Saharan Africa is only 34%. Even in countries where female primary attendance is over 80%, such as Tanzania, Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda, female secondary attendance falls to 25% or less (Goldstone, 2019).

Negative attitudes towards employment for young women

Negative attitudes towards employment for young women in Africa is one of the most common barriers in equal and non-discriminatory access to employment for women. For instance, in Nigeria's private sector, many employers force young women to sign job contracts stipulating that they will not become pregnant for the first three years of their employment (Bouchama, 2018). Likewise, according to a Gallup and ILO survey, only 24% of men would prefer that women in their families have paid jobs and 51% - the highest percentage worldwide - would like to see them stay at home (ILO, 2017).

Access to land

The predominance of discriminatory customary laws and poorly enforced legislative frameworks governing land and property ownership are also a major barrier to the financial and legal security of young women¹⁰. Many young men and women in Africa are locked in agrarian systems in which land tenure and farm management are under the control of elders. Women are particularly disadvantaged within this system due to legislative hurdles that do not allow them to own or inherit land directly from their male relatives (European Commission, 2019). This not only impacts on their ability to control resources, but also to financially benefit from the productivity of those resources. It also prevents young women from entering employment opportunities directly pertaining to farming that may exist within their households and where they do not have to look elsewhere for work.

Unpaid care work

Unpaid care work is work done without monetary reward by unpaid carers. It includes activities such as looking after babies/children and nursing an ill partner or relative, as well as indirect care activities, such as cooking and cleaning (ILO, 2018d). Most unpaid care work falls to women. Due to the constraints it puts on a woman's personal time, unpaid care work is key in determining whether women can enter into, and remain in, employment (*ibid.*).

Results from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) programme show that programmes designed to increase women's opportunities to earn an income are typically hampered by inadequate provision for childcare, leading to increased economic stress and longer work days¹¹. Likewise, studies of young women's transition to the labour market in six Sub-Saharan African countries found that in all the countries studied, the presence of young children in households reduced the likelihood of a young woman receiving a good education and obtaining a well-paying job, irrespective of whether the children were her own or those of another female household member (Marcus, 2018). This may reflect demands on young women and older girls to care for children regardless of their status in the household, making care considerations an important factor to consider.

Barrier 2. Economic

Economic barriers, although expansive in scope, primarily include the lack of access that women have to finance in terms of wage-related employment, as well as financial support for entrepreneurial or business related self-employment. For instance, it is common practice for banks to demand guarantees that women can rarely provide or a husband's signature for routine services like opening a bank account, which has implications not just for the management of finances, but also for women seeking to start their own business. Illiteracy and lack of business knowledge also complicate women's access to finance and loans for business or home-based work (Bouchama, 2018).

¹⁰ According to World Bank estimates, in Kenya, only 6% of women hold title to land, although 96% of rural women work on family-owned farms. In Malawi, only 3% of women are registered owners of commercial land, but represent 70% of the workforce. In Uganda, women own only 5% of land, yet account for the largest share of agricultural production (UNDP, 2016).

¹¹ Studies under the IDRC GrOW programme also confirm the impact of discriminatory social norms on girls' education and work outcomes. For example, in Kenya, a strong negative correlation was seen between marrying or having a child before age 18 and the level of education attained. In Uganda, it was found that women who married or gave birth before the age of 20 were less likely to be in professional, technical and managerial positions and were more likely to work in subsistence agriculture. In Ghana, the connections between early work, early marriage and childbearing, lost education opportunities, and reduced labour market participation have been highlighted (Marcus, 2018).

Young women also face economic barriers within households. For instance, qualitative studies in Ethiopia have identified the importance of family and personal networks in ensuring enough collateral for large loans, in the absence of formal lending systems. However, these networks view men and women differently, and the former more favourably (Campos & Gassier 2017). Women, unlike men, fear that they will not be able to control any income that they generate, if faced with pressure from household members to share or transfer this income. Furthermore, qualitative studies on households in Ethiopia confirm the importance of cooperative husbands for women building their own business (*ibid.*).

The gender pay gap, which is defined as the relative difference in the average earnings of women and men¹², is also pervasive across all forms of employment, both formal and informal. While there is little literature that closely studies the wage gap between young women and their male counterparts, women in Africa work mostly in low paying sectors, such as retail and wholesale trade, as well as community and social services, accounting for over 40% of total employment (Brixiová & Kangoye, 2016). The majority of 'feminized' occupations, such as clerks, teachers and nurses, also suffer from acute wage gaps, where women are paid less than men (UNDP, 2016).

Barrier 3. Conflict and fragility

Between 2015 and 2017, the majority of armed conflict in Africa took place in the Horn of Africa, South Sudan and northern Nigeria, while violence against civilians was much more widespread across the whole continent (Baliki *et al.*, 2019). In conflict settings, it is mostly rural youth who are affected, both young men and women: the former due to their participation in violence and need to migrate voluntarily, the latter as victims of violent conflict or those 'left behind' by their male counterparts. Conditions for young women are particularly bad in remote fragile and conflict-affected areas, especially with regard to access to farm land. Exposure to violence also increases infant mortality, reduces birth weight, harms child health, damages human capital accumulation, restricts performance in education and interacts negatively with labour market opportunities (*ibid.*).

Conflict and fragility also impact on the labour force participation rates of men and women. In fragile and conflict situations, for instance, young women are often withdrawn from education and not allowed to work outside the home for safety reasons. In addition, fertility rates among young women increase as households attempt to replace lost children (IFAD, 2015).

Barrier 4. Skills development¹³

Lack of skill development is one of the major barriers to employment promotion in many countries of the world. In Africa, women are more likely to be found in vulnerable employment, with weak regulation and limited social protection, due to the mismatch between women's skills (or lack of them) and those demanded by the labour market. This pushes women into the informal economy. This analysis rings true given that women constitute the majority of informal workers in Africa.

One way of determining the skills gap is to assess the proportion of 'youth not in employment, education or training' or NEET, a broad measure of the untapped potential of youth¹⁴. The assumption in NEET is that due to lack of access to employment, education and training, the future employability of youth (men and women) is at risk, in terms of both labour market and social exclusion. Gender disparities are obvious in this area. In Africa, the NEET rate is 20% for men and 35% for women. In North Africa, the NEET rate is 22% for men and a far higher 42% for women, compared to 19% and 33%, respectively, in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP, 2016).

12 Two main factors are responsible for gender pay gaps: unequal access to opportunities such as education, due to traditional norms and value systems; and women's primary responsibility for home-care work, which channels them towards similar work areas in the labour market, called the 'selection effect'.

13 Skills development is distinct from, and must not be confused with, education as a barrier. The former pertains to a range of technical and vocational skills that are taught outside school, whereas the latter refers to literacy and formal and informal schooling.

14 The African Human Development Report (UNDP, 2016) identifies unequal access to education and skills training, early marriage rates among female youth, and responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work as some of the factors contributing to the high NEET rate among young women - all of which have been identified as barriers in this synthesis.

The nature of work is also changing faster than ever, creating a demand for new sets of skills. Rural areas are being swiftly transformed due to technological advancements in the agri-food and value-chain system and competition among farms. Rapid technological progress is reshaping the future of work by increasing the demand for different types of human capabilities such as working with information and communication technology (ICT) and artificial intelligence (AI). In order to adapt to these complex demands, training must focus not only on basic technical skills, but also advanced cognitive skills (critical thinking and problem solving) and non-cognitive skills needed for the successful employment of both young men and women (Baliki, 2019). This is particularly so in the agri-food and value chain system, which primarily employs young women.

4. Existing employment interventions – the evidence?

A range of employment interventions attempt to address the barriers identified in the previous chapter. This chapter contains an overview of such interventions, as identified in the literature, for each of the barriers outlined in the previous chapter. Where possible, interventions have been categorized according to the overall nature of their programming.

Social and cultural

The evidence shows that social and cultural barriers can be targeted with a very specific range of interventions. The most successful are those that combine a number of approaches, such as structural interventions, and those that target the care economy, which largely consists of unpaid domestic and care work.

Structural interventions

Structural interventions are those that combine skills, income and personal health interventions. They have been used fairly consistently in Africa over the last decade to address social and cultural inequality and the overall wellbeing of women, and according to the literature have shown promising results. For example, the World Bank's Adolescent Girls Initiative in Liberia addressed constraints on women's employment beyond skills, including the inadequacy of networks and care and capital constraints, thereby tackling multiple constraints simultaneously, with promising results (Chakravorty *et al.*, 2017).

Another example of comprehensive structural interventions are community-based 'safe space' programmes¹⁵. The only experimental evidence of a community-based safe space programme in Africa to date comes from the Empowerment and Livelihoods of Adolescents programme in Uganda. This programme offered community-based girls' clubs, life skills training, vocational training, financial literacy, savings and microfinance to young women aged 12 to 25 years. It was found that the programme increased the likelihood of girls engaging in income generating activities by 72%, as a result of increased self-employment (Chakravorty *et al.*, 2017).

In Kenya, the Ruiru Rose Farm was likewise designed to provide its female employees with a combination of childcare, nutrition and health services. This led to a reduction in women's absenteeism and unplanned annual leave to care for sick children, resulting in increases in productivity and the company's output delivery. Overall, childcare improved education outcomes for children who attended the nursery and for their older siblings who might otherwise have been kept at home to look after their younger siblings (UNDP, 2015)¹⁶.

Similarly, in an evaluation of a female economic and social empowerment programme in Uganda, it was found that there were quantitatively large and beneficial impacts on both economic and social empowerment. The programme provided adolescent girls with vocational skills to enable them to start small-scale income-generating activities and learn life skills to enable them to make informed choices about sex, reproduction and marriage. Results showed that of those who participated in the programme, young women were significantly more likely to be engaged in self-employment activities, report improved business skills and have higher monthly expenditure, while adolescent girls were significantly less likely to become pregnant and more likely to delay marriage (Bandiera *et al.*, 2015).

15 This increasingly popular model to promote young women's empowerment and employment involves the formation of girls' groups that meet regularly over an extended period of time; it aims to concurrently address their safety, capital, networks, care, and skills constraints.

16 The Women@Work programme in East Africa funded by the Government of the Netherlands similarly aims to improve labour conditions for women working in global horticulture supply chains through fair wages, security in the workplace and good working conditions, as well as reduce women's burdens at home so that they may participate in the workplace (see <https://east-africa.hivos.org/program/womenatwork/>).

Care economy

The care economy has strong implications for young women's employment opportunities.

Research under the IDRC/GrOW programme has shown that separate interventions need to be implemented for women to help them manage the demands of unpaid care/household work and employment opportunities, as each has different implications in terms of the demands on women's time (Khan, 2018). GrOW research in an informal settlement in Nairobi, for instance, showed that childcare centres could improve women's income-earning opportunities, with broader implications for other areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (Folbre, 2018).

However, Rwanda's Umurenge Programme, a national social protection scheme that combined public work, credit provisioning, and unconditional cash transfers, appeared to intensify rather than mitigate women's work burden. It demonstrated that improvements in women's income and position in the household do not necessarily help them reduce the demands of unpaid care and domestic work, as it does not contribute to reducing such responsibilities, leading to increased stress and time pressure. Women greatly valued the income provided by the project and increased expenditure on food, education, and health. However, they also described longer work days, which undermined their health and general wellbeing (Folbre, 2018).

Box 2. Interventions targeting social and cultural barriers - what works

- Structural interventions have been used fairly consistently in Africa over the last decade to address social and cultural inequalities and enhance the overall well-being of women and, according to the literature, have shown promising results.
- Research on the care economy has shown that separate interventions are needed for women to help them manage the demands of unpaid care/domestic work and employment opportunities, as each has different implications in terms of the demand on women's time.

Economic

Entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship, including the establishment of small businesses, is a common employment intervention for women in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, entrepreneurship is considered vital for women's livelihoods, representing almost 50% of women's non-farm labour force participation (Campos & Gassier, 2017)¹⁷.

Successful interventions in this area focus on supporting women to start and maintain a business. In Malawi, where 93% of businesses are not registered, the World Bank conducted an experiment offering a simplified business registration system, which identified the need for an intervention 'package' that combined outreach and support in formalization and banking services for the benefit of female entrepreneurs (Campos, Goldstein & McKenzie, 2015). In particular, sessions on banking information, which also included sessions on the connection between work and household responsibilities and finances, led to an increase in the short-term perceived capacity of female entrepreneurs to borrow from financial institutions to start their own business (Vossenbergh, 2016). However, the evidence also shows that while in theory business formalization could help increase women's control over assets, access to financial services, and access to networks, recent impact evaluations indicate that demand for formalization tends to be limited (*ibid.*).

¹⁷ A finding from a women entrepreneurs survey conducted in Egypt, where female and male-owned enterprises operated in the same business environment, found that women lacked the necessary human and financial capital, were more tied to cultural norms that prevent them from leaving the home, and faced greater challenges with business registration. Furthermore, women entrepreneurs in rural and remote areas faced mobility challenges in reaching business registration offices, as opposed to men (ILO, 2016).

There is also growing evidence of the importance of psychosocial skills for female entrepreneurs in Africa. An entrepreneurship programme for women in South Africa found positive impacts on profits and sales six months after the completion of such training, as well as improved motivation and confidence. Similarly, a programme in Togo comparing personal initiative training¹⁸ with managerial training found positive and significant effects on the sales and profits of both men and women-led micro enterprises that focused on personal initiative training in combination with managerial training, while managerial training alone had little impact (Campos & Gassier, 2017).

Other programmes, such as the ILO's GET Ahead for Women in Enterprises, while targeting women above the age of 30 in various parts of the developing world, including in some African countries, addressed the needs of low-income women in enterprise by strengthening their basic business and people management skills. According to an evaluation conducted in 2015, the overall results of the programme showed that women absorbed and put into practice several key skills and reported improved economic wellbeing for themselves, their families and, in some cases, their businesses. However, accessing loans to expand their business was a major challenge for women entrepreneurs (Fritz & Farley, 2015).

In Ethiopia, the Women's Empowerment Program, or WORTH, used savings groups as a starting point for increasing women's role in family decision making. The programme built its savings groups' training programmes around literacy, whereby members learnt to read and write and do basic accounting. Participating women reported that what they valued most about the programme was the increased status they had in their communities and their increased self-confidence from being literate and able to generate income (UNDP, 2016).

Several African governments have introduced entrepreneurship support programmes in collaboration with ILO and multilateral agencies, which although they do not focus explicitly on young women are still important to highlight. Some programmes target subsistence entrepreneurs who have limited potential for growth and job creation, while others focus on 'transformational' entrepreneurs or 'gazelles' who can expand and employ others. For example, ILO has implemented the Start and Improve Your Business programme in over 100 countries. An assessment of the project in Uganda, where young entrepreneurs were given loans, cash grants and training, found that six to nine months after the programme, self-employed entrepreneurs reported a 54% increase in profit (Ismail, 2018b)¹⁹.

Access to finance

One of the most prevalent factors in discouraging female employment in Africa is the inability of young women, and women in general, to easily access various forms of capital, either through loans and grants, or simply through the opening of a bank account. In a survey of women entrepreneurs in Egypt, over 70% of respondents reported that access to finance presented a challenge in getting their business started and 73% expected that this would be a problem in growing their business further (ILO, 2016).

Interventions that have been successful in providing women with access to various forms of finance show that the creation of business bank accounts on top of formalization processes for women has had significant impacts on women's ability to separate funds for household and business use. In Kenya, in areas where mobile payment provider M-PESA has expanded the most, a rise in consumption in female-headed household came hand-in-hand with an increase in savings and a shift of 185,000 women from farming to business occupations (Campos & Gassier, 2017).

Likewise, an evaluation of the Tanzania Business Connect programme revealed that a higher proportion of married women who participated in the mobile savings programme reported that they were the sole decision makers in relation to their own personal expenditure, compared to married women who did not participate in the programme. Thus, the mobile savings programme had unexpected empowerment outcomes for women in terms of their personal decision making (Siba, 2019)²⁰. However, while the mobile

18 Training that seeks to foster self-starting, future-oriented and persistent behaviour.

19 Disaggregated results unavailable.

20 Interventions that have had limited success have surprisingly been the popular microcredit services. A first round of six microfinance experiments in Sub-Saharan Africa showed modest impacts on business investment and performance, as such loans tend to be used for household expenditure rather than business investments, a trend similar to that observed in many cash grant experiments (Campos & Gassier, 2017).

savings programme substantially increased savings, it did not have an effect on female-owned enterprise profits or sales, even when combined with hard business and management skills. These combinations did, however, have a positive impact on male-owned microenterprise profits and sales (*ibid.*).

Similarly, an impact evaluation of the MEDA Maroc training programme '100 Hours to Success' in Morocco, which targeted men and women between the ages of 15-24 years, found programme participants were considerably more likely to have established a savings account and maintained it more than two years after the end of the intervention. However, there was evidence that the effect of the training was conditional on an enabling environment that allowed young people to implement this knowledge. Likewise, the effects for young people and women from low-income backgrounds were much smaller compared to those for men and young people from more affluent backgrounds (Bausch *et al.*, 2017).

Studies also suggest that women face additional constraints, which need to be overcome in order to increase their return on investment. Mothers, for instance, tend to spend more on food, clothes and health for the household, compared to fathers. They may also face greater pressure from family members and relatives to share their often limited financial resources leaving them little to invest (Grimm & Paffhausen, 2014).

Box 3. Interventions targeting economic barriers - what works

- **Successful interventions in female entrepreneurship focus on supporting women to both start and maintain a business.**
- **Successful interventions in providing women with access to various forms of finance show that the creation of a business bank account, on top of formalization processes, has significant impact on women's ability to separate funds for household and business use.**

Conflict and fragility

Political and armed conflict is a common feature in many countries across Africa, an analysis of which goes beyond the scope of this synthesis. However, as the previous section on barriers showed, women bear the brunt of these conflicts, leading to fragility when it comes to their personal safety and wellbeing. Creating opportunities for youth - both men and women - in such a vulnerable and security-prone context, has nevertheless, been a strong focus of many organizations seeking to help enhance economic and social equality in such regions.

The International Finance Cooperation's approach, for instance, is to support youth employment in fragile and conflict-affected states. Working with public and private sector partners, and especially through its Conflict Affected States in Africa Initiative (CASA), the International Finance Commission has helped a number of African countries implement reforms for sound economic growth²¹. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, International Finance Commission is exploring the possibility of an investment and advisory programme in the turbulent east of the country that would help young people, particularly young women, find work and gain skills in the extractive industry. In North Africa, they have launched a joint investment and advisory initiative that is preparing young students (men and women) for work in fields like tourism, logistics and ICT (Botzung, 2017).

Indeed, an overview of the evidence synthesized by ILO's Decent Jobs for Youth initiative has found that, in fragile settings, a combination of technical and non-technical skills is crucial to the improvement of attitudes and behaviours. In addition, interventions such as cash transfers, skills development, cash-for-work schemes and employment programmes that combine multiple instruments can maximize their impact on labour market outcomes for youth (ILO, n.d.).

²¹ Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone have ranked among the best reforming fragile states in Africa, according to the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 report (World Bank, 2019).

An evaluation of the Women's Income Generation Support programme, or WINGS, which gives cash grants and basic business skills training to the poorest and most excluded women in northern Uganda²², saw monthly cash earnings double from 16,500 to 31,300 Uganda shillings within a year. However, although these results lead to relatively large increases in income and wealth, no effect was seen from this reduction in poverty in terms of women's psychological or social wellbeing, or freedom from intimate partner violence (Blattman *et al.*, 2013).

Field research in Liberia and Sierra Leone has also shown that despite the accrued knowledge of such programming in conflict and fragile areas, youth employment programming is not changing rapidly enough. For instance, despite extensive evidence of women's participation in Liberia's armed conflict in the 1990s and 2000s, the focus continues to lie on young men as at risk of being pulled into violence and conflict (Batmanglich & Enria, 2014)²³. This ignores the impact that conflict has on young women, who are more vulnerable and easily recruited in situations of armed conflict.

Box 4. Interventions targeting conflict and fragility - what works

- In fragile settings, the combination of technical and non-technical skills is crucial for the improvement of attitudes and behaviours.
- Creating opportunities for youth, both men and women, in vulnerable and security-prone contexts has focused on reconstruction and economic and social equality.

Skills development

As evidenced earlier, simply providing women with finance or better business skills is not enough to warrant success. The provision of soft skills, such as leadership, awareness training and mindset considerations, is also pivotal in helping them manage and retain their positions in the workplace. Moreover, programmes that concurrently address socially-imposed gender roles increase women's understanding of the inhibitions that pose barriers to their economic and social growth.

Launched in 2011, the Kenya Youth Empowerment Programme, known as Ninaweza, was a 24-month youth employability programme targeting young women living in the informal settlements around Nairobi. The impact evaluation found that the training component of the programme succeeded in providing the participants with technical knowledge in ICTs and life skills that they would not have otherwise acquired. The impact evaluation also established that the programme bolstered confidence among participants, who had not previously been confident in their skill set (Global Partnership for Youth Employment, 2013).

Liberia's training programme Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women²⁴, which targeted young women between the ages of 16-27, included office and computer skills and provided safe locations and free childcare for female entrepreneurs. Evaluations of the programme found an increase in the earnings of female entrepreneurs and positive effects on their self-confidence and self-assessed entrepreneurial ability. A significant finding was that survey respondents reported that they were more likely to think that both men and women should take care of household responsibilities (Siba, 2019). An interesting finding from an earlier evaluation of this programme was that participants' aspirations for the future were far from being simply content in continuing the vocation in which they were trained. Rather, they repeatedly expressed the intention to use this vocation as a 'stepping-stone' to higher goals such as medicine, business, nursing and politics (Adoho *et al.*, 2014).

22 Twenty years of war and widespread displacement has left the majority of the population in northern Uganda impoverished. Young women, especially those with children or orphans to care for, are in most need of assistance. This includes a disproportionate number of formerly abducted young mothers, most of whom do not return to school (Blattman *et al.*, 2013).

23 In Sierra Leone, for instance, the economic marginalization of young people was recognized as having played a fundamental role in creating a large pool of young men and women available for recruitment. Indeed, the war has been characterized as a 'crisis of youth', where economic exclusion compounded social marginality, political grievances and intergenerational strife (Batmanglich & Enria, 2014).

24 This project is part of a larger Adolescent Girls Initiative administered by the World Bank with support from the Nike Foundation and the governments of Australia, the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

Similarly, the Neqdar Nesharek programme in Egypt was launched with the goal of enhancing young women's transition to work in rural communities in Upper Egypt. While the labour market outcomes, economic aspirations and business knowledge of women improved, decision-making capacity and attitudes to gender equality did not. Evaluations showed that while training interventions have the potential to help women achieve economic empowerment, binding constraints arising from social norms can still hinder social empowerment (Elsayed & Roushdy, 2017).

An impact evaluation of the MEDA Maroc training programme '100 hours to Success' in Morocco, found that beneficiaries required continued support if they were to build their own business, while the lack of role models and mentors was seen as a major disadvantage by young people. It was not just beneficiaries, but also trainers who felt that they could play a greater role in helping participants transition between the programme and working world (ILO, 2015).

Box 5. Interventions targeting skills - what works

- The provision of soft skills, such as leadership, awareness training and mindset considerations, is pivotal in helping young women manage and retain their positions in the workplace.
- Programmes that concurrently address socially-imposed gender roles increase women's understanding of the inhibitions that pose barriers to their economic and social growth.

5. Emerging employment opportunities

While the evidence outlined chapters 3 and 4 point to a number of factors that need further exploration by policymakers and researchers, there are some sectors of employment that have emerged as being quite favourable for young women across Africa, providing opportunities for employment and growth.

Mobile telecommunications and the digital economy

The mobile telecommunications industry has helped advance gender equality by enhancing access to opportunities, information, and services, not just for women working in the sector, but also for the women it serves, and is one of the key emerging sectors of opportunity for women in Africa (BSR, 2017). Despite women's smaller share of mobile Internet access in comparison to men, women tend to use their mobile phones almost as often for business purposes as men in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (AfDB, n.d.-a)²⁵.

This has made the digital economy one of the three focus sectors in the African Development Bank's 'Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy' (AfDB, n.d.-b). It is estimated that the mobile sector creates over 4 million direct and indirect jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa alone. Likewise, funding for technology start-ups increased almost tenfold between 2012 and 2014, and the online outsourcing industry is expected to employ at least 30 million registered workers by 2020 (Dekker *et al.*, 2018). Estimates show that 314 technology hubs have been established in 42 African countries. Kenya, for instance, has pursued several initiatives to leverage this potential, aimed at ICT skills training and development and in support of hubs and incubators (*ibid.*).

This is an opportunity for young women to enter a thriving potential market, and some strides have already been made²⁶. The Federation of Women Entrepreneurs and Businesswomen of Togo, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Employment Agency, created the first business incubator support system for current and prospective women entrepreneurs, under the INNOV'UP programme. The programme promotes women-owned or operated businesses in the informal sector by providing female entrepreneurs with high-speed Internet connections, IT services and group workspace (UNDP, 2016).

Similarly, an ILO project targeting young female tanners in Senegal's informal sector uses Weebi, a start-up company operated by young people that has allowed female tanners in Dakar to engage more formally with customers and access more formal markets through professional means (ILO, n.d.). However, the challenge still remains to connect more young women to technology within and outside of the work environment and, indeed, to integrate ICT awareness and skills as part of their education at the high-school level²⁷. In addition, further research needs to be conducted to assess whether or not current economic and youth employment policies in different African countries can ensure the absorption and retention of young women in this promising sector.

25 There is no disaggregation in terms of age to identify how often young women use mobile technology as opposed to adult women.

26 Reports such as the World Economic Forum's *The Future of Jobs and Skills in Africa* (2017) predict that 41% of all work activities in South Africa are susceptible to automation, as are 44% in Ethiopia, 46% in Nigeria and 52% in Kenya. These figures do not specifically address how many of these could be jobs held by women, demonstrating the lack of gender-based data-gathering in the ICT sector.

27 In Egypt, the main challenge preventing women entrepreneurs from using ICT is the lack of awareness about its benefits for women. Existing projects are more focused on specifically integrating ICT into women-owned enterprises or improving the ICT skills of female entrepreneurs, rather than helping women become aware of technological advances, and how they could use them for their businesses (ILO, 2016).

Box 6. High-skilled professions

Despite the fact that the data on women with graduate degrees in many parts of Africa is extremely scarce, high-skilled professions, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), engineering and management, are growing in popularity among African women. This is not just because of the progressive career path that such professions can offer, but also the fact that many African governments are looking towards such professions to advance technologically .

For instance, skills development agencies in South Africa, such as merSETA, have been piloting schemes aimed at improving diversity in engineering apprenticeships. Likewise, the establishment of new technical colleges and universities to train students in vocational and core engineering disciplines from the age of 14 has been proposed. Despite the general belief that women will marry and ultimately leave their professions, women, including young girls, are now getting some support from the government and other organizations to pursue their ambition of becoming engineering professionals (Ijagbemi, Kanakana & Campbell, 2017). This is a major point of entry for young girls into these fields and clearly ties in to the need to focus on education from a young age and the introduction of STEM subjects in school, which can encourage young girls to pursue such professions.

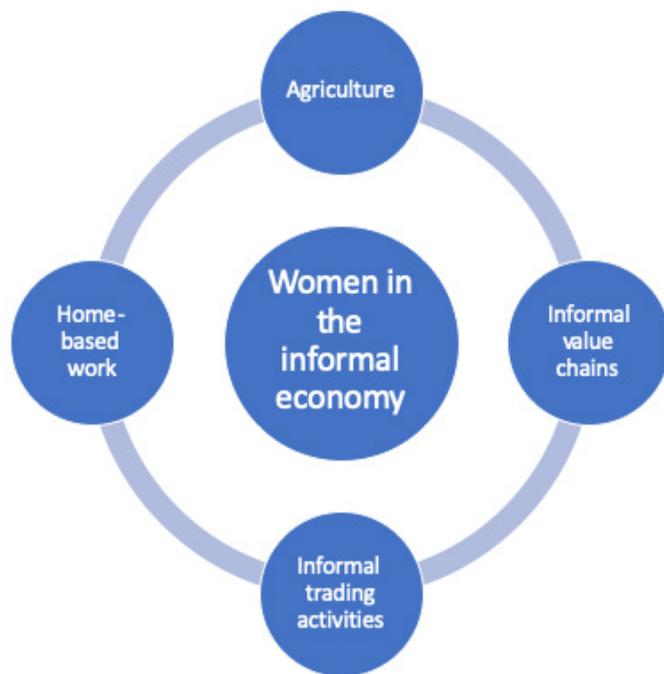
Informal economy

With low levels of formal wage employment available for women, self-employment in informal household enterprises or home-based work is a necessary alternative for women to generate income. Informal household enterprises are a key component of most Sub-Saharan Africa economies, contributing 25-65% of gross domestic product (GDP). It is estimated, that by 2020, roughly 45% of all new jobs will be created by household enterprises (Dekker *et al.*, 2018).

While the formal sector in Africa is primarily dominated by men, women's work tends to be concentrated in the informal sector, mainly in smallholder agriculture, with strenuous and sometimes dangerous jobs and limited access to health care and social protection. Africa has the highest rate of informality in the world, with 89.7% estimated for women in comparison to 82.7% for men (ILO, 2018c). Youth have an especially high rate of informal employment at 94.9% of persons between the ages of 15 and 24. Almost all of the agricultural sector in Africa is informal and young rural women face additional constraints in obtaining jobs because in rural areas social and cultural norms often outweigh economic and technological progress (Baliki, 2019).

In Ghana, informal workers make up more than 85% of the workforce with numbers increasing. A number of these informal workers are women who work as street traders, also known as 'market queens', and are part of powerful social networks, including traders. Yet, these women are not recognized as economic and social leaders, despite the fact that they respond to formal market regulations, such as paying government taxes and rent for their stalls (Hendricks, 2017).

Figure 2. The reach of the informal economy



Therefore, this sector - which engages an enormous, and perhaps potentially the largest, number of women across various trades and occupations (see Figure 2) - is not just an opportunity for policymakers in terms of targeting the majority of women in Africa, but more importantly, in recognizing the importance of the informal sector and its contribution to overall social and economic productivity²⁸.

Secondary education

An area that cuts across each finding and an emerging sector of opportunity for equipping young women for employment is education and schooling. As the evidence has shown, education for young girls has a direct impact on several variables: better work opportunities, better wages, and even better management of care responsibilities. It decreases the chances of early marriage and can help reduce fertility rates²⁹.

The connection between higher education attainment among young women and better employment opportunities is also clear. For instance, a recent study of senior high school education and labour market outcomes in Ghana found that those who completed four years of senior high school were 5.6 percentage points more likely to be employed in the short-term, compared to those who had only three years of senior high school. Upon gender disaggregation, the data showed that the positive effects on being employed were mainly concentrated in the female sample (Abekah-Nkrumah, Opoku Asuming & Yusif, 2019). Likewise, education attainment was also found to impact on employment attributes, such as wage levels among young women. A study of secondary school students in Sub-Saharan Africa found that an additional year of primary school for girls could increase future wages by 17.5%, each additional year of secondary school could lead to an additional increase of 12.7%, and each additional year of tertiary school could lead to an additional increase of 21.3% (BSR, 2017).

²⁸ The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) measures the empowerment, agency and inclusion of women in the agricultural sector. Using this tool to measure rural women's empowerment in Tunisia, it was found that only minor differences existed in terms of economic empowerment between women below 30 years of age and those above 30. However, in the areas of leadership and time use, younger women show higher empowerment rates. They also had smaller workloads and more leisure time than their older counterparts (ILO, 2018b).

²⁹ An evaluation of the impact of free secondary education in Ghana for boys and girls conducted by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) found that young girls who were offered scholarships also delayed childbirth and marriage relative to their peers who were not offered scholarships. Female scholarship winners were also more likely to have a bank account, an email account, and a social media account. However, the study also claimed that it is too early to definitively report on long-term impacts on labour market outcomes (J-PAL, n.d.).

The fact that both the digital economy and high-skilled professions, such as STEM, also seek to educate and empower students at the college and university level is evidence that education must be a priority not just at the secondary level, but several levels above as well if young women are to take full advantage of such opportunities. Therefore, while not necessarily an emerging opportunity in terms of a sector of work, it is an emerging opportunity to get more women into the formal workforce.

Labour migration

Labour migration, a key factor contributing to employment, is also primarily dominated by men, both within Africa and internationally. But women too are forced to leave home in search of employment due lack of decent livelihood opportunities. Studies show that, more and more, women are becoming part of intra-African migration and are increasingly migrating either alone or as heads of households (Andall, 2018). Meanwhile, this labour market too remains largely unregulated for women.

Migration also plays an important role in the gender differential between male and female participation in the labour force. For instance, as urbanization increases, it facilitates a move out of the agricultural sector. But despite the fact that women dominate the informal agricultural sector in Africa, men benefit more from this process. By migrating, men gain a significant number of wage-related jobs, while opportunities for women remain roughly the same, in some cases even drop slightly. This pattern suggests that when a family decides to migrate, priority is given to better job perspectives for males in the households, sometimes at the price of sacrificing female career plans (Dieterich, 2016). However, the impact of migration on female employment is mixed. In Rwanda, for instance, female migrants increase their chances of wage employment more than men. In contrast, in Ghana the pattern is reversed (*ibid.*). This points to a number of variables that need to be further explored in assessing the impact of labour migration on women's employment opportunities and the various decision-making processes employed in households to do so.

Migration also impacts especially on rural youth, as in Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, rural youth are more likely to migrate in search of jobs than rural adults (Baliki, 2019). As the majority of the informal labour market in rural areas is supplied by women in agriculture, this has the potential to increase female labour migration, both domestically and regionally - if young women are given the opportunity to migrate by their families. Climate change is expected to further amplify migration trends, as is the digital revolution, which will push rural youth further into cities (*ibid.*). The impact of this on young rural women is immense, as they will either be left behind to care for families and survive in an informal environment, or they will be left out of the workforce altogether.

6. Findings

The previous chapters have identified a series of interventions that are directly related to providing young women with employment opportunities, including new emerging sectors. What prevents these interventions from fully allowing young women to be financially and socially independent has also been pointed out. Table 2 illustrates the intersectionality of the four main barriers with the type of interventions and opportunities.

Table 2. Synthesis of evidence

	Barriers identified			
	Social and cultural	Economic	Conflict and fragility	Skills development
Interventions	Combined/multiple approaches focusing on household care duties and income generation	Business development and management and access to finance	Immediate financial relief and skills development	Combination of technical and life skills
Opportunities	Secondary education; labour migration; informal economy	Digital economy; labour migration; informal economy	Secondary education; labour migration; informal economy	Secondary education; digital economy; informal economy

This chapter uncovers the findings emerging from these interventions that require further exploration.

Overall findings

Because of severe monitoring and evaluation challenges, many donors have been constrained in their ability to identify changes in gender equality (AfDB, 2012). In their study on youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa, Betcherman and Khan (2015) pointed out that interventions to support young women in employment are hampered by a lack of evidence as to their effectiveness. This is not only true of more innovative forms of programming, but also more established interventions such as employment services, agricultural productivity and even wage subsidies. The findings from the evidence gathered in this synthesis echo this, as the majority of existing programmes lack clear evaluations.

Based on the evidence gathered, and using the evidence synthesis framework, a pattern has emerged which clearly shows the regional focus/location of barriers, interventions, and opportunities in female youth employment. Table 3 presents the overall evidence of this study across the five identified African regions that form the basis of the analysis³⁰.

³⁰ This is an entirely qualitative assessment based on the information gathered in this report. The examples of barriers, intervention and opportunities for each country were manually collated based on the countries that form each of the five regions in Africa to obtain a snapshot of each region. As a result, there may be some missing elements that require more in-depth analysis.

Table 3. Evidence synthesis framework

	North Africa	East Africa	West Africa	Central Africa	Southern Africa
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and cultural • Economic • Conflict and fragility • Skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and cultural • Economic • Skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and cultural • Economic • Skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and cultural • Conflict and fragility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and cultural • Skills development
Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial savings and training programmes • Women's transition to work programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural interventions collectively targeting childcare, women's employment, and wellbeing • Care economy • Business registration and formalized packages • Women's economic empowerment programmes focused on training • Mobile savings/access to finance programmes • Income generation • Life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural interventions collectively targeting childcare, women's employment, and wellbeing • Care economy • Public/private partnerships in conflict states; income generation • Life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/private partnerships in conflict states; income generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal initiative training/skills training
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Labour migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital economy • Education • Labour migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital economy • Education • Labour migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital economy • High-skilled professions

In analysing Table 3, North Africa clearly faces all four of the barriers identified in this synthesis. Similarly, East and West Africa dominate in terms of possessing the most barriers to young women's employment, as well as the most interventions. This does not necessarily mean that similar barriers do not exist in other regions. Indeed, barriers cut across the continent as a whole. However, these findings are based on the evidence available primarily at the country level. The most common barrier that cuts across all five regions is social and cultural. However, each region may not experience all the sub-categories of this barrier, such as discriminatory laws, lack of access to education, early marriage and so forth, but rather several combinations of these.

A clear picture emerges in terms of Central Africa. Most conflict-affected states can be found within this region and the barriers, and interventions to mitigate these, clearly fall into the conflict and fragility category. In Southern Africa, however, there is little evidence of specific barriers and interventions, which perhaps sets it apart from other regions. Again, this does not mean that barriers do not exist, but rather evidence is not readily available.

In terms of interventions, North Africa shows interventions in the area of financial accessibility and savings, and skills training related to this, while Southern Africa has interventions more focused on skills training and a combination of technical and life skills. Once again, East and West Africa form the bulk of the focus among implementing stakeholders, with the most variance in the type of interventions³¹. These range from structural interventions to address social and economic stigma, to income generation, skills training and the care economy. East Africa is targeted more than West Africa for such interventions. It is interesting to note that these are also the only two regions that have some evidence of interventions focused on the care economy, an increasingly important consideration for young women.

Not all opportunities cut across all regions, barring education, particularly secondary education. For instance, Central Africa is lacking in terms of digital employability and high-skilled professions due to its greater exposure to conflict and unstable economies. Likewise, North Africa also lags behind in this area, perhaps due to stricter social norms for young women. High-skilled professions are perhaps the most prominent opportunity in East Africa and Southern Africa, due to the number of emerging African economies in these two regions.

Labour migration is a cross-cutting theme that affects virtually all regions. Each region includes countries that are at varying levels of economic and social stability. Therefore, each region has the potential for the migration of people in search of better opportunities elsewhere. In particular, this impacts on agrarian economies the most, where women form the backbone of the informal economy.

Additional findings

Women’s economic empowerment programmes, which typically take the form of women’s enterprise development, form the bulk of interventions across Africa. This is followed by skills training, which builds on the need for women to start and maintain their own businesses and access to finance as the key milestone for women to access liquid capital. Interventions to support young women are least common in conflict affected areas. Figure 3 illustrates these findings.

Figure 3. Emerging findings



³¹ An analysis of the stakeholders who manage interventions was not conducted for this synthesis. However, even a cursory glance shows that most interventions have been initiated and are managed by international agencies such as the World Bank, ILO, and International Finance Commission etc., with the support or collaboration of respective country governments. ILO is the most prominent among these stakeholders.

The success of employment programmes for young women in Africa depends on a myriad of factors, not the least of which is the **restrictive regulatory environment**, which favours men over women, such as not extending them the same services to set up businesses or access loans. It does not engage with the fact that the personal contexts of men and women differ, i.e. women are often unable to leave their homes to manage a business and also continue to shoulder the burden of household responsibilities alone, even when they work.

This brings us to the importance of the **care economy**, which consists of unpaid care-giving and domestic work, which has not found its way into official employment policy or interventions in Africa. As Khan (2018) points out, the care economy is not merely important because of the time-share burden it places on women, but also because women cannot be encouraged into employment without considering their household and care-giving responsibilities. In addition, without the provision of infrastructure to support women in their unpaid care-giving roles, women will never be able to balance their household, personal, care and paid work responsibilities. Such infrastructure would include subsidized day-care services, care facilities for the elderly and enhanced social protection.

This further relates to the finding that **cultural barriers**, such as early marriage, are directly related to low education attainment levels, higher fertility rates, as well as an increasing burden of unpaid care work. Patriarchal attitudes still exist in many regions of Africa, while at the same time, poverty is on the increase, as is household expenditure. The resistance to young women's employment from within the household is both a cause and an outcome of these culturally-imposed barriers, which see women as homemakers and not equal earners.

Related to this is the finding that **female education**, or the lack of it, plays an extremely important role in being able to provide women with economic opportunities. And that this must begin from the primary level and extend into higher education, at least till the post-secondary level. As the evidence has shown, secondary education correlates with higher wages and better opportunities for women, more than for men. Yet, data also shows us that as girls grow older they are less likely to remain in school. This barrier intersects with cultural opposition to women being employed, leaving the household, or competing in the workplace for higher wages.

The **rural/urban divide** also has a major impact on women's employability. Given that women are largely part of the rural agricultural sector, which also happens to be mostly informal, young women in rural areas have far fewer opportunities to engage in both formal employment and new innovations in employment, as opposed to women in urban areas. The fact that men from rural areas migrate to more urban areas in search of work, leaves not just a void that women have to fill, but also places a far higher burden of household and care responsibilities on them.

What also hampers this is the **lack of data analysis** on women and work in different regions of Africa, which constrains the design and implementation of appropriate forms of intervention, as well as the contextualization of these interventions based on regional disparities. Data does exist in various forms, but it is not consistent regionally. Rather, in the majority of the evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, Africa is distributed largely among two regions: Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa (see Annex 5). This does not necessarily indicate a bias in the way the continent is viewed, but it does ignore the subtle variations that may impact on how women are perceived and their chances of decent employment.

Box 7. Key findings

- There is a need to focus on regions other than East and West Africa, particularly Central and Southern Africa, in studying the barriers that impact on young women's employment and how these can be overcome. While North Africa is also relatively understudied, it nevertheless attracts a higher level of interest from researchers and policymakers.
- Interventions that focus on providing women with access to, and control over, finance, such as through financial management training, access to savings accounts and digital funds, ensure greater success for women starting and maintaining their own business.
- Likewise, a combination of interventions that include access to childcare services, women's wellbeing and economic support ensure that women are able to stay in employment longer.
- Africa's restrictive regulatory environment clearly favours men over women, such as not extending to women the same services to set up a business or access loans as men. This automatically sets up a bias against women who want to enter the labour market.
- Cultural barriers such as early marriage and an inherent negative attitude towards women, particularly in terms of what their role in society should be, prevent women from playing a key role in the labour market.
- Female education, or lack of it, plays an extremely important role in being able to provide women with greater economic opportunities, as it sets the stage for young women to enter the formal labour market.
- The care economy has still not found its way into official employment policy, despite the impact it has on the ability of women to seek employment. Without adequate support for enhanced social services, women will continue to be restricted to the home, unable to balance care and paid work responsibilities.
- The rural/urban divide has a major impact on women's employability - women in rural areas have far fewer opportunities to access formal employment or new innovations in the labour market than women in urban centres.
- The lack of gender disaggregated data and analysis of labour market barriers and employment opportunities for women hampers the design and implementation of appropriate interventions in both the formal and informal labour markets.

7. Recommendations

What constitutes a successful intervention for young women's employment based on the evidence gathered is summarized in Box 8. These successes are tied in to a number of overarching gaps that require greater consideration by researchers and policymakers in order to replicate the successes. This includes better legislation, better data collection and analysis, a recognition of the external factors affecting female employment, understanding regional variations and improving access to finance.

Box 8. Summary of employment interventions for young African women who work

- Structural interventions have been used fairly consistently in Africa over the last decade to address social and cultural inequalities and enhance the overall wellbeing of women and, according to the literature, have shown promising results.
- Research on the care economy has shown that separate interventions are needed for women to help them manage the demands of unpaid care/domestic work and employment opportunities, as each has different implications in terms of the demand on women's time.
- Successful interventions in female entrepreneurship focus on supporting women to both start and maintain a business.
- Successful interventions in providing women with access to various forms of finance show that the creation of a business bank account, on top of formalization processes, has significant impact on women's ability to separate funds for household and business use.
- In fragile settings, the combination of technical and non-technical skills is crucial for the improvement of attitudes and behaviours.
- Creating opportunities for youth, both men and women, in vulnerable and security-prone contexts has focused on reconstruction and economic and social equality.
- The provision of soft skills, such as leadership, awareness training and mindset considerations, is pivotal in helping young women manage and retain their positions in the workplace.
- Programmes that concurrently address socially-imposed gender roles increase women's understanding of the inhibitions that pose barriers to their economic and social growth.

Based on these examples of 'what works', there are several recommendations that policymakers and researchers need to consider. Some of these recommendations overlap, while others remain exclusive to each domain.

For researchers

One of the biggest gaps in studying employment interventions for young women is the **lack of analysis** of data on female employment and the labour market. Gender disaggregated data exists in various forms, but varies based on region and age. There is a need to do more extensive research using both quantitative and qualitative data on whether the barriers and opportunities identified in this synthesis exist uniformly across the five identified regions, or whether each region exists within its own unique context. While some of this has been addressed in this report, a more intensive and in-depth analysis is required. Employment and wage data across the different regions, for instance, needs to be studied more closely to see if higher wages for women will attract more women into the labour force equally across all regions, or only in select regions. Likewise, a cross-sectional analysis dividing the continent into income groups could be conducted to see if it has any impact on the type of interventions that may be successful for young women. This can also lead to deciding whether or not new data should be collected on young women to help policymakers design more targeted programmes.

The **emerging sectors** identified in this report require further research into the cost-benefit of introducing young women to such sectors, particularly the potential that the digital economy can hold for young women in gaining access to resources, as well as if these sectors will create new networks of human capital for young women and improve not just financial stability, but also household decision-making power.

There needs to be further research into the **impact of urbanization** in African cities and how this impacts on young women. There has been little evidence in this area in terms of interventions, but it is directly connected to inter and intra-regional migration within Africa due to issues such as climate change, conflict and lack of opportunity in the agriculture sector for young men. How this impacts on young women 'left behind', and whether this can lead to increasing opportunities for them due to the void left in the labour market, is an important area to study – as is whether or not opening up the labour migration market to young women will yield positive results.

We also need to study the impact of employment interventions for young women who are either survivors of **various forms of conflict** or who live among such survivors. Conflict must be clearly defined in each of these cases, e.g. domestic or gender-based violence, armed conflict, etc. As the majority of countries in Africa are either currently experiencing some form of violent conflict or have recently emerged from such situations, it is vital that this be seen as an important area to support and encourage young women.

For policymakers

While there is a great need to develop and enforce legislation to aid employment, such as for the informal sector, secondary education and so forth, none of this is possible without **overarching legislation at the country level** that specifically targets and addresses discriminatory practices against (young) women.

One of the biggest areas for policy consideration is the official recognition of the **informal sector** as a valid form of work, especially in Africa. In national policies particular attention should be also paid to the care economy. Evidence has shown that, in many countries, because most women work in the informal sector, they can also bring about innovations in the labour market with the use of ICTs and by open up emerging markets. The experience of women in this sector, is extremely valuable in terms of designing gender-specific policies in employment interventions.

It has been established, that unless women have both access to, and control over, finances, capital and income, they will not be able to benefit from employment opportunities. Policymakers need to ensure that financial institutions offer **equal access to formal services** to both men and women and that economic programming takes into account women's need to separate funds for household and business use.

Better **data collection** on women's employment outcomes is an area that is connected to both research and policy. Without better data, better policies are not possible. To ensure effective data collection, new forms of data may need to be collected and analysed, for instance, in accordance with the five prescribed regions within Africa.

Policymakers must focus on **girls' secondary education** across Africa as a whole. The correlation between higher education attainment and better employment for young women cannot be ignored. Although this may differ slightly according to region, policy wise it is a universally accepted that encouraging girls to stay in school longer will discourage discriminatory practices such as early marriage and early pregnancy.

Policymakers must clearly keep in mind **the regional variation in approaches** to required interventions relevant in particular contexts. Using qualitative research and quantitative data analysis, policymakers must construct interventions based on context, rather than on the popularity of the intervention. For instance, in regions suffering from conflict and fragility, interventions must be designed based on data that demonstrate the vulnerability of young women to conflict and the impact that it has on them. Likewise, interventions such as financial literacy and skills training may not be applicable in regions that already have a high level of economic activity, where interventions should perhaps focus on allowing young women access to more high-skilled markets.

Box 9. Key recommendations

For researchers:

- More in-depth regional and gender disaggregated data collection and analysis on young women in the labour market, across regions and income distribution levels, is necessary to gain a clearer picture of the state and potential of employment opportunities for young women in Africa.
- Conduct in-depth analysis of whether or not, and how, two emerging sectors, namely, the digital economy and high-skill professions, can contribute to encouraging young women's employment.
- Study the impact of urbanization and migration on the employment opportunities available to young women in both formal and informal sectors.
- Study different forms of conflict and their impact on young women and their access to, and use of, the labour market to rehabilitate themselves after conflict.

For policymakers:

- While there is a great need to develop and enforce legislation in specific areas to aid employment, such as in the informal sector and secondary education, none of this is possible without overarching legislation at the country level that specifically targets and addresses discriminatory practices against (young) women.
- Recognize that the informal sector provides major labour market opportunities for young women and explore how to include this in official data.
- Ensure that financial institutions offer equal access to formal services to both men and women and that economic programming takes into account women's need to separate funds for household and business use.
- Encourage better data collection, harmonization and analysis on women's work, including greater access to gender disaggregated data on labour market variables.
- Focus policies and practice on improving access to, and retention of, young girls in secondary education as a stepping stone to future employability.
- Consider designing employment interventions for young women at a regional level, rather than on a country basis, based on the context of each region, e.g. some regions are affected by conflict, others have a number of emerging economic opportunities.

Annex 1. African country classification by region

Table A.1. Country classification into regions in Africa

East Africa	West Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa	Central Africa ³²
Burundi	Benin	Algeria	Botswana	Angola
Comoros	Burkina Faso	Egypt	Eswatini	Cameroon
Djibouti	Cabo Verde	Libya	Lesotho	Central African Republic
Eritrea	Cote d'Ivoire	Morocco	Namibia	Chad
Ethiopia	Gambia	Sudan	South Africa	Democratic Republic of Congo
Kenya	Ghana	Tunisia		Equatorial Guinea
Madagascar	Guinea			Gabon
Malawi	Guinea Bissau			Sao Tome and Principe
Mauritius	Liberia			
Mayotte	Mali			
Mozambique	Mauritania			
Rwanda	Niger			
Seychelles	Nigeria			
Somalia	Sierra Leone			
South Sudan	Senegal			
Uganda	Togo			
Tanzania				
Zambia				
Zimbabwe				

Source: UN Population Data <https://population.un.org>

³² Also referred to as Middle Africa

Annex 2. Research protocols

I. Key synthesis questions

In order to understand the nature and scope of employment interventions taking place in different regions of Africa for young women, this synthesis paper used the following questions as a template to identify and analyse available evidence.

1. What is the state of gender disaggregated demographic trends, with a focus on young women, in Africa?
 - What are the most competitive sectors that provide tangible opportunities for young women to thrive?
 - What are the substantial differences between sectors that create job opportunities for young men and women?
2. What are the barriers, challenges and constraints that young women face in entering and participating in the labour market in Africa?
 - What role do social and cultural norms play in preventing young women from entering the workforce vis-à-vis their male counterparts?
 - What is the impact of state fragility and conflict on barriers to employment for young women?
3. What are some possible solutions for tackling the main barriers, challenges and constraints that hold young women back from entering and participating in the labour market in Africa?
 - What are some examples of effective programmes, policies and interventions to break gender segregation in youth employment?
 - How can some of the social and gender norms that reinforce inequalities for young women on the labour market be tackled?
 - What are the main actors behind the existing employment interventions for young women? What are best practices for each of them?
4. What are the recommendations for more innovative policies and programming to increase the participation of young women in the workforce and who could be the key partners?
 - In addition to existing conventional sectors that employ women, especially young women, in Africa, are there any other opportunities that have not yet been explored?
 - What are some of the major gaps in evidence and recommendations for future research?

An evidence synthesis framework was developed in order to analyse the gathered, as shown below.

Table A.2. Evidence synthesis framework

	North Africa	West Africa	East Africa	Central Africa	Southern Africa
Barriers					
Interventions					
Opportunities					

II. Evidence gathering

This paper has used a qualitative desk-based approach to collect and analyse data. Existing research and reporting on gender and employment formed the basis of this approach. Using the framework designed for this paper and the questions outlined above, evidence on employment interventions for young women was sourced using a two-pronged approach:

- Evidence that may exist based on the regional classification of African countries
- Evidence that may exist based on employment interventions for young women

The search for evidence was further sub-categorized based on:

- Programming documentation of employment interventions
- Evaluation or impact studies of employment interventions

Using these two parameters, an online search was carried out of the existing documentation that was available based on key stakeholders/implementers and included, but was not limited to, the following:

- African Development Bank publications
- IDRC GrOW programming research reports and syntheses
- INCLUDE documentation and impact reports
- ILO publications
- ILO impact evaluations³³
- 3ie/ILO Evidence Gap Map³⁴
- World Bank publications
- J-PAL-MIT

The documents included: project documents, research studies, quantitative survey reports, policy briefs, evaluation reports, and journal articles.

In order to organize the search within realistic parameters, quantitative data was analysed based on availability from approximately the year 2000 and projections were provided up to the year 2050, based on existing database parameters.

For additional analysis using quantitative data on population and labour force statistics, the following databases were consulted:

- <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>
- <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>
- <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/>

³³ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/projects/evaluation/impact-research/reports/lang--en/index.htm>

³⁴ <https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/youth-employment-evidence-gap-map>

Annex 3. Demographic trends

Table A.3. UN projected population for age 15-24 years (in thousands)

		2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
East Africa	Total	51,725	68,575	92,108	116,116	137,169	157,810
	Female	25,976	34,438	45,960	57,711	68,109	78,369
	Male	25,749	34,137	46,148	58,405	69,060	79,441
Central Africa	Total	18,673	25,619	35,089	49,025	61,636	74,721
	Female	9,329	12,793	17,515	24,404	30,653	37,188
	Male	9,344	12,826	17,574	24,621	30,983	37,533
Southern Africa	Total	10,751	12,008	11,419	13,157	13,342	13,117
	Female	5,366	5,977	5,675	6,532	6,619	6,509
	Male	5,385	6,031	5,744	6,625	6,723	6,608
West Africa	Total	46,846	59,701	79,038	104,640	128,617	153,274
	Female	23,253	29,532	38,968	51,485	63,268	75,443
	Male	23,593	30,169	40,070	53,155	65,349	77,831
North Africa	Total	35,704	40,223	40,643	50,914	56,824	57,126
	Female	17,575	19,795	19,878	24,860	27,794	27,953
	Male	18,129	20,428	20,765	26,054	29,030	29,173

Source: Extracted from <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

Annex 4. Gender-specific social indicators in Africa

Table A.4. extracts some key social indicators affecting women's status across the five regions of Africa. Anderson, Beaman and Platteau (2018), demonstrate the rate of prevalence of these indicators across the five regions based on: discriminatory social norms, discriminatory legal rights and discriminatory marriage indicators. The authors have used their own computations, which are based on unweighted averages across the countries in the UN sub-regions, with data taken from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Gender, Institutions and Development Database.

For instance, the son bias index combines measures of the incidence of missing women, a male-biased fertility preference, and son preference in education. Similarly, the restricted mobility index estimates the decrease in women's freedom of movement and access to public spaces, while violence prevalence reports the percentage of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner at some time in their lives. Each computation measures a rate between 0 to 1 to indicate least to most, respectively.

Table A.4. Gender-specific social indicators in Africa (%)

Indicator	North Africa	East Africa	West Africa	Central Africa	Southern Africa
Genital Mutilation	0.36	0.22	0.48	0.08	-
Son bias	0.26	0.16	0.17	0.08	0.15
Acceptance of polygamy	0.50	0.60	0.82	0.92	0.65
Restricted mobility	0.50	0.35	0.39	0.58	0.20
Widows inherit	1.00	0.57	0.60	0.50	0.50
Daughters inherit	1.00	0.61	0.64	0.62	0.40
Violence laws	0.89	0.45	0.72	0.78	0.45
Rape laws	0.61	0.43	0.45	0.53	0.35
Harassment laws	0.75	0.37	0.65	0.62	0.55
Early marriage	0.12	0.22	0.29	0.30	0.07
Divorce initiation	0.79	0.08	0.37	0.36	0.30
Violence prevalence	0.33	0.46	0.24	0.60	0.24
Land ownership	0.04	0.17	0.07	-	0.28
Political representation	0.30	0.28	0.14	0.16	0.26
Literacy	0.58	0.59	0.31	0/60	0.75

Source: Compiled from Anderson et al. (2018)

Annex 5. Challenges in data gathering

Several challenges were faced when designing and searching for evidence for this synthesis paper. These can be categorized into two main types: providing a regional context to the evidence and analysis, and accessing consistent statistical data for analysis.

Regional context

Structuring an applicable analytical framework was a key challenge in putting together this paper. This was primarily because finding evidence for Africa as a whole would lead to too vast and generalized an analysis for something as specific as employment for young women. Therefore, a methodology had to be found that would break down the unit of analysis into something that would be both manageable and provide more concrete evidence and recommendations for policymakers and programmers. Thus, it was decided after discussion with INCLUDE that dividing Africa into the five UN-recognized regions would be the best way to proceed.

While, by and large, this was a useful way of collecting and analysing the evidence, it was not without its challenges. The main reason for this perhaps is that the topic of women's employment has never been analysed from this perspective and so existing evidence is fairly scattered and mostly synthesized at the country level. Where evidence was available at a regional level, it did not necessarily reflect regions in this way. The most commonly available evidence was distributed among only two regions: Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. In the case of the latter, this was often conflated with data from the Middle East or Middle East, North Africa (MENA) region. Furthermore, different sources of literature on different sub-sets of the topic, did not necessarily distinguish between these five regions. Information about one topic, e.g. women's access to finance, was not present in all regions, not necessarily because it did not exist, but because it was not presented regionally. Likewise, it was not possible to find many sources that specifically broke down evidence based on the five regions.

This posed challenges in developing a holistic analysis, as much of this had to be done manually by collating the evidence that was available from different countries, which was then manually distributed among the five regions (see Table 3). It also meant that not every sub-set of analysis would have information from each of the five regions.

While these challenges were addressed as much as possible, providing a regional distribution of Africa proved to be a useful tool in terms of looking at the similarities and differences in a more context-specific way. It also alerts researchers and policymakers to the fact that there needs to be a more detailed study of the situation in each of these regions independently, to be able to reach a consensus of what works where, how and why. It is hoped that this paper has created a foundation for such an approach, which can be built upon further by researchers.

Data

The second challenge faced in this paper is related to the first - that of gathering relevant quantitative data and statistics to support the evidence. Once the decision had been taken to use a five-region approach for analysis, it was important to find quantitative data that reflected this as well. However, here too, the challenge was that most data for Africa was limited to different sets of regions depending on the database in question. The World Bank data, for instance, allowed gender disaggregated data to be compiled by the five regions, but a lot of this data was incomplete.

ILOStat data on the other hand, the main database used for this paper, provided data on only two regions (Sub-Saharan and North Africa) and country-wise. Extracting key employment data for the five regions would mean having to manually extract data for 55 countries in the desired variables, distribute them into the five regions and then average the collected data for each region across the required timespan. Datasets for each variable were also available for different timeframes, with no consistency, leading to overlapping or inconsistent timelines for analysis. This would not have created an accurate statistical picture, but rather an inferred one. The UN Population Database was the only one that provided statistics specifically according to the five regions.

This again demonstrates the need for greater clarity and harmonization in how raw data should be collected and analysed. While raw data definitely exists in various forms, including gender disaggregated data, ready data was unavailable in many cases to fit the regional profile.

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About INCLUDE

INCLUDE was conceived in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote evidence-based policymaking for inclusive development in Africa through research, knowledge sharing and policy dialogue. INCLUDE brings together researchers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and governments to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better research-policy linkages for inclusive development in Africa. Since its establishment, INCLUDE has supported more than 20 international research groups to conduct research on inclusive development and facilitated policy dialogues in Africa and the Netherlands.