



Understanding the gender dimensions of youth livelihoods programming

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This forthcoming study, commissioned by The MasterCard Foundation, examines the extent to which interventions supporting young people’s access to employment or entrepreneurship opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa are tailored to address gendered barriers. The analysis includes primary research conducted on a selection of MasterCard Foundation programs.

Several interrelated gendered barriers to young people’s livelihood development were identified:

- ***Differences in levels of education and skills development:*** Young women generally have lower levels of education and skills, and therefore access lower quality and lower paying jobs.
- ***Domestic and care responsibilities:*** As a result of their domestic and care responsibilities, young women have less time than young men, restricting the types of jobs they can access and the time they can dedicate to paid work.
- ***Discriminatory social/cultural norms that result in poorer outcomes for women:*** These include gendered job segregation; mobility constraints; and safety and violence concerns, including in and around the workplace.
- ***Barriers to key assets:*** Young men and young women have unequal access to assets, including information, financial services, land and other productive assets, with young women tending to face greater structural barriers such as inheritance norms and gender bias in the provision of financial and other services.
- ***Specific barriers for young men:*** These include pressures on young men as sole or main income earners; the perception that unemployed young men are involved in illegal activities; negative peer influences; and, in conflict and post-conflict settings, barriers linked to armed recruitment or demobilization.

Overall, the review finds that the youth livelihood programs examined have positive effects on both young men’s and young women’s income-generating opportunities. However, the relative lack of evaluations following participants for more than six months after graduation means that evidence of long-term impact on incomes, business sustainability, and young people’s well-being is limited. Almost all the programs reviewed, including the small subset of programs focused on supporting agricultural livelihoods, provided training aimed at enhancing young people’s skills. These programs integrated skills training, work placements, access to finance, and in some cases, ongoing business support in different combinations. In terms of skills, these programs typically include vocational, entrepreneurship and/or work-readiness skills, but relatively few provide catch-up basic education. Given that a lack of basic education is often a barrier to labour market success, particularly for young women, this is a notable gap.

The review found that few programs are designed or adapted based on a systematic gender analysis, but when they are, program responses to gendered challenges showed positive results. Only a few program evaluations and research documents reported systematically on gender-differentiated impacts. Without specific responses to gendered barriers, programs generally did not maximize their impacts on young men and young women. Gender adaptations to programming resulted in more gender-balanced results. However, analysis of gender-related

components in program design found that in many of the interventions, gender adaptations were relatively minor, and the impacts relating to these design features were often not documented in enough detail to draw conclusions regarding their impact.

Primary and secondary research, including on a selection of MasterCard Foundation programs, demonstrate that the main programmatic responses to gendered barriers include:

- Quotas for equal participation of young women and young men, achieved through active mobilization.
- Curriculum adaptations, including life-skills training, sexual and reproductive health and rights, confidence building, and time management.
- Strategies to build young women's self-confidence and skills levels.
- Childcare support options.
- Flexible training schedules to allow young women to fit participation around domestic and childcare responsibilities.
- Role modelling so participants can see that they have options beyond traditional 'care giving' roles.
- Challenging gender-based job segregation through community and individual sensitization, and work with potential employers and trainers.
- Supporting business and employment activities that can be done from home or close to home.
- Sensitization on gender equality in paid work, and promoting collaboration in the domestic sphere.
- Promotion of equal contracts/equal conditions upon job entry.
- Promotion of equal treatment in classrooms and active participation of both women and men.
- Providing special support for particular groups of young people who are excluded (e.g., young mothers, young men involved in substance abuse, young female entrepreneurs).

Programs promoting youth livelihoods opportunities, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, are a welcome response in contexts with poor educational performance, high unemployment, and few formal sector opportunities. Even programs that are not specifically gender-responsive can have important effects on the young women and young men reached, given the dearth of opportunities available to them.

Based on the limited gender analysis available for this sector, the study concludes that gender-responsive programming can have positive results on gender equality in participation and performance, and therefore on opportunities. Gender dimensions of youth livelihoods are, however, not sufficiently researched and evaluated. A more focused effort is needed to ensure gender-disaggregated data is generated, contextual gender analyses are conducted, and gender responsiveness of programs is assessed to strengthen the evidence base in this field, leading to better program design, and stronger outcomes for young women and young men.

A full report will be published later in 2017.

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