



# Decent Work Matters for Women and Girls

POLICY BRIEF

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# Time for Action - Key Messages



Women contribute substantially to economic and social development but are discriminated against in the world of work.



Invest in gender equality and women's economic empowerment, more jobs and decent work for women because it is the right thing to do, and it promotes sustainable growth and development.



Promoting decent work requires a comprehensive policy implementation



Implement development strategies, policies and programs that generate more jobs and ensure decent work for women particularly in the informal sector.



Promote women's leadership in public and corporate economic decision-making and in employer's and worker's organizations.



Promote a culture of equality and shared responsibility between men and women in paid and unpaid care work.



# Why create more jobs, promote decent work and women's economic empowerment?

The key findings from the critical analysis on the status of women and girls' participation in the labour force with a focus on decent work presents why more jobs should be created. The objective of the critical analysis was to assesses the level of women and girls' participation in labour force in rural and urban areas and make policy advocacy to ensure gender equality in labour market in Rwanda. The policy brief aims to provide a basis for discussion with policy makers on the mechanisms to enhance and improve decent work in Rwanda and promotion of gender equality through decent work.

Further, there is need for strong policies to enhance equal employment in decent work for both men and women, boys, and girls towards a more sustainable economy. A sustainable economy with inclusive economic growth can drive progress, create decent jobs for women and girls and improve living standards. In addition, the dignity, hope and sense of social justice derived from having a decent job helps build and maintain social peace in communities.

Unemployment has increased and women account for 46 percent of the labour force in Rwanda<sup>1</sup> but the overall female labour force participation rate currently stands at 46.9 percent, but majority of women and girls do not have a decent job, a decent wage, a secured future, and have no social protection measures in place. The dimension of women participation in labour force is a problem that calls for coordinated and comprehensive action at national level and across all the sectors.

The transformation of workplaces and adhering to the labour laws by the employers, offers opportunities for Rwandan population especially women and girls, and may also create new opportunities for increased labour force participation towards sustainable labour productivity.

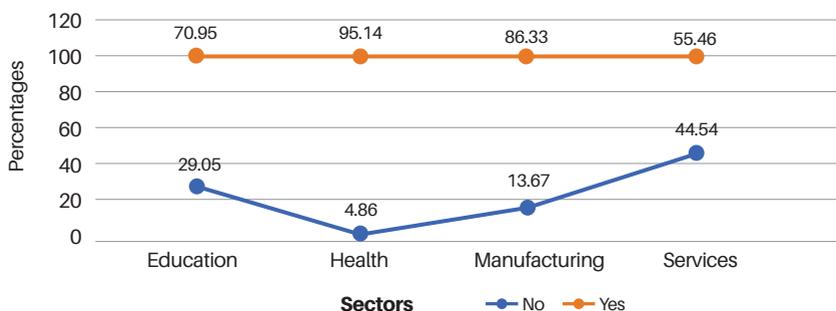
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<sup>1</sup> Labour Force survey annual report 2021

# Some Facts

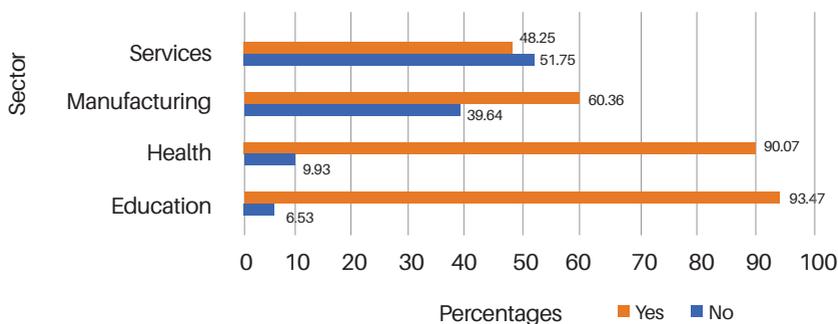
The present participation of women and girls in paid labour market activity is a subject of discussion to provide permanent, reliable, adequate, responses to the existing challenges and gaps in the labour market for decent work. In addition, the growing and high unemployment rate, with a larger informal sector shows that the labour market is not creating sufficient jobs and suggests that the SDG's target to achieve full and productive employment and decent work is challenged in Rwanda.

## Employees access to protective equipment



Women and girls are vulnerable to accidents at workplaces with no sufficient or limited access to protective equipment. With limited medical insurance coverage, risks are much more higher with not enough protective equipment and measures in place. In addition, the majority employed are not covered by unemployment protection schemes, paid less wages, and have no job security.

## Pension entitlement



Instead, many women at 33.3 percent have joined casual or informal activities as a survival strategy to be able to earn for a living. Proving for decent work is relevant to the challenges posed to the future of work especially the effective enforcement of legislation in private sector, where majority of the employees are informally employed.

The private sector still lags behind in placing their employees in the pension schemes, which presents doubts on the future of the women and girls. Promoting decent work requires a comprehensive policy response that includes economic, fiscal, and social policies geared towards full employment and income equality, a regulatory framework to reduce and ultimately eradicate work challenges and greater efforts to empower workers by promoting the extension of collective bargaining. This will ensure that all workers can access and exercise their right to decent work, and to bargain collectively for wages, freely, and without fear. The need for a comprehensive social protection floor and efficient policies to combat the erosion of the employment relationship are of paramount importance to limit precarious employment, indecent working and living conditions and ensure basic income security.

## What are the existing labour market policy gaps?

Gaps still exist, mainly in the implementation of the labour law regulating labour markets in Rwanda. Thus, a need to focus on increasing the advocacy on the proper implementation of the existing labour market policies.

### GAP # 1.

The Law regulating labour in Rwanda, applies to employment relations based on an employment contract between an employee. ***However, the policy implementation still renders some gaps where institutions and employers have failed to implement the provisions of the law such as limited provision of social protection to employees, lack of paid leave and others.***

#### GAP #2.

Article 8 of the labour law in Rwanda prohibits sexual harassment of any kind and in any form against the supervisee and it is prohibited to dismiss an employee for having reported or testified to sexual harassment committed by his/her supervisor. However, ***an analysis of the findings from the assessment conducted from the sample of women and girls employed, indicates that sexual harassment is still a big issue in most places of work and especially in private sector.***

#### GAP #3.

Article 9 of the law regulating labour in Rwanda clearly provides for protection against discrimination at workplace. The law stipulates that an employer must give employees equal opportunities at the workplace and employers are prohibited from the discriminating employees on basis of sex and physical. ***The analysis on the implementation of the law, based on responses from the respondents, highlights that women and girls are discriminated especially in the private sector, where the majority of the women and girls indicated that they are not provided the same opportunities as men, for example in jobs that slightly pay higher and require a slightly more physical possession.***

#### GAP #4.

The law provides that an employment contract between an employee and employer should be concluded in written or unwritten form. ***Most of the private sector employers have chosen to have unwritten contracts which, have some gaps.***

#### GAP#5.

The analysis indicates that the law regulating labour in Rwanda provides for most of the benefits for the employee ***but the implementation of the law specifically in the private sector is still adamant and not founding. There is need to advocate for change in the implementing of the law in the private sector that employs majority women and girls.***

# What are the challenges faced by women and girls in paid labour market?

Women and girls in labour force activity have identified challenges within the sectors of education, health, manufacturing, and services in Rwanda, which were sampled for the analysis. The key challenges are:

- ▶ Women faced a different working patterns linked with their career break such as giving birth, breast-feeding and other home responsibilities, which can lead to gender pay gap among the girls and women employees, harassment, career opportunity, work life balance, care responsibilities, and gender stereotypes.
- ▶ A large portion of women and girls are employed informally in sectors which limits their accessibility to job entitlements as stipulated by the Rwandan labour law.
- ▶ Most of the women and girls are employed in the service sector with no formal contracts and other benefits. The services sector lags behind in providing employment contracts and this affects job security of women and girls.
- ▶ Some of the women and girls are employed formally across the sectors but still are not providing some of the on-job benefits like parental leave or sick leave and this limits their desire to keep the jobs and largely affects their incomes.
- ▶ Women and girls in the selected sectors of analytical study said that they face the challenge of corruption in terms of money and sex, discrimination once they are pregnant and a high level of competition. This affects the women's and girls' confidence in effectively doing their jobs as required.
- ▶ Women and girls in the paid labour force emphasized a challenge of cultural mindset of the employees who still believe that women and girls are incapable of doing the same jobs as men and thus are discriminated, which creates a wage gap between girls and women, and boys and men.
- ▶ Women and girls highlighted challenges of inequality in the management of staff, where some are provided with facilities and while others are left out.

- ▶ Sharing of information and updates on the jobs available and requirements was also advanced as a challenge to women and girls participating in the labour force. The respondents argued that promotions for some positions are not communicated to all and are mostly awarded to men and boys especially in the private sector.
- ▶ Some of the women and girls said they face a challenge of not being sure if they can possess the same job the following month, as termination of contract can take effect, especially if the girls announces she will be getting married or is she request for parental leave or leave of absence due to personal issues.
- ▶ The married women presented resistance from their husbands and family for them to work. It is still believed by some men that women should be available to provide care work for the household rather than take paid work.
- ▶ Most of the girls and women respondents claimed that they are paid less than their men and boys' counterparts especially those working informally, and they do not have pension for the future, which leaves them doubts how they will live in the future once they no longer have the capacity to work or they have retired.

## Time to Take Action!

The analysis provides some of the ideal recommendations on how to improve the working conditions of women and girls in the labour force. The following recommendations are outcomes from the final analytical report.

**1. Engage the private sector.** It is important that the government engages the private sector extensively with aim of implementing the Rwanda labour law to the benefit of the women and girls participating in the labour force.

**2. Ensure equality in employment benefits, including wages, annual leave, social security benefits.** Pro-Femmes /Twese Hamwe recommends the employers in all sectors to provide equal benefits to girls and women as to boys and men, which will reduce the levels of discrimination and improve the welfare of employed girls and women

3.

**Engage men at all levels.** Mechanisms to engage men need to be developed so as to reduce the stereotypes that women are only capable of working at home on unpaid care work. This could be implemented beginning with the household and further at community level. The understanding of men on the role of women in paid work, could improve the welfare of girls and women as well as their households. A policy on recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work should be developed and implemented across the country and sectors

4.

**Empower women and girls.** Proper mechanisms should be developed to empower women and girls to ensure they are competitive for the available job opportunities. This could be through better education facilities and skills enhancement at all education levels.

5.

**Reduce discriminatory acts.** The government should enforce anti-discrimination policies within the labour legal framework to protect women and girls in the paid labour force against work place discrimination and sexual violence.

6.

**Recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work .** There is need to change the social and economic structures and practices in order to recognize the value of care, reducing the disproportionate share of unpaid care work carried by women and girls at household and community levels, and redistributing care responsibilities equitably between women and men, boys and girls in households, and communities.





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