

## **Youth Training and the Gender Challenge in Africa: Case of Safaricom Foundation Scholarship Programme, 2020**

John Mugo, Purity Ngina, Eunice Kibathi and Ogada Elisha

### **Abstract**

Youth unemployment is a leading crisis in Kenya. Recent evidence establishes that youth unemployment correlates with gender, geographic location, level of education and household socio-economic status. In some areas in Kenya, over 80 percent of youth from the lowest wealth quintile are unemployed. The lack of access to information exacerbates the situation, especially given that two thirds of youth in rural areas receive information through informal avenues of grapevine or word of mouth, and only a third through all the other media combined. Against a background of the foregoing evidence, Safaricom Foundation, a Kenyan Foundation has established a scholarship programme to counter the prevailing crisis. The programme focuses on the most excluded youth and uses evidence to define these. The program then targets partnerships with two civil society organizations, 13 training institutions and over 100 industry actors to equip 700 youth with skills, train them in life skills and employability competences, place them into internships and link them to industry for employment. Among the key markers of success are a 60:40 gender ratio in favour of female, and at least 5 percent disability target. This paper shares the intricate challenges to female youth's availability to the scholarship programme, between the target (60:40) and the achieved (57:43). The paper moves on to share gendered narratives from youth not in employment, education or training, while tracing these limitations to cultural, economic and educational challenges facing women on the continent. The evidence and the stories provided by the paper is expected to open up space for discussion and solution seeking to encounter the gender limitations, based on three key questions: (a) Which challenges are limiting female youth from participating in fully-sponsored and gender-focused training programmes, and how do the youth themselves engage with these? (b) Which mobilization methods might work in locating and nudging participation in sponsored training programmes? (c) How to counter could the prevailing social, cultural and economic blocks to accelerate the economic empowerment of women on the continent?

**Keywords:** Safaricom Foundation, Youth, Gender, Mobilization Process.

## **1. Introduction**

It cannot be said often enough that the future of a nation or society depends on the preparedness of its youth to stand up to the socioeconomic challenges ahead of them. So much so that a nation is poised to fail or prosper according to the level of empowerment of its youth. Moreover, empowerment will only have a meaningful impact across the society if it is balanced across the gender divide. Any other way threatens to occasion an increasingly unequal society where socioeconomic prejudices reign supreme thereby hampering material progress.

The youth employment crisis is currently one of the greatest development challenges facing countries globally, including Kenya. Currently, Kenya has 13.7 million young people aged between 18-34 out of which 39% are unemployed (Nason, 2019; Ponge, 2013; Staff, 2011). Youth unemployment is largely a function of several factors including education or training, attitude, availability of employment opportunities, linkages, culture, national policies and politics of the day. These, indeed, are also vital metrics of empowerment. Anytime any of these variables is not sitting properly in the general scheme of things, it is difficult not to register substantive phenomenon of unemployment.

The high unemployment rate in Kenya is further compounded by the absence of relevant Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET) skills that are marketable in the eyes of the private sector. These challenges include unmatched needs between the industry and courses offered by TVET; rapid changes in technology rendering acquired skills irrelevant; and the limited ability of TVETs to make capital-intensive purchases to meet market needs, due to the high costs of investments in technology. The lack of access to information further exacerbates the situation, especially given that two thirds of youth in rural areas receive information through informal avenues of grapevine or word of mouth, and only a third through all the other media combined (Adolwa et al., 2012; Cherotich, Saidu, & Bebe, 2012; Dupas, Green, Keats, & Robinson, 2012).

Against the aforementioned challenges, Kenya's national development plan is anchored on the Big 4 Agenda whose main focus includes: Manufacturing, Affordable Housing, Universal Health Coverage and Food Security (GoK, 2017) that the President of the Republic of Kenya launched in December 2017. To support this agenda, the government revitalized the TVET subsector in education and rolled out a funding

to subsidize the cost of education at the TVET institution, with a massive recruitment of tutor staff at the institutions.

Predicated on the foregoing premise, Safaricom Foundation, a Kenyan not-for-profit organization established a scholarship programme to help counter the prevailing crisis. The programme focuses on the most excluded youth, and uses evidence to define these.

Since education is a key component of employment requirements, and the two forming a huge part as indicators of empowerment, the reasons for gender disparities such as reflected above, and which in fact, represents imbalances in other education subsectors, should be investigated. There is a dire need to determine challenges that are limiting female youth from participating in fully-sponsored and gender-focused training programmes, and how the youth themselves can be made to engage in these initiatives as vehicles of socioeconomic empowerment. Secondly, there is urgent need to find out about the mobilization methods that might work in locating and nudging participation of the female youth in sponsored training programmes. Thirdly, seek strategies for countering the prevailing social, cultural and economic bottlenecks in a bid to accelerate the economic empowerment of women across the continent.

### **1.1 Purpose and Methodology**

The purpose of the paper is, therefore, twofold. First, this paper delves into the intricate challenges to female youth's availability to the Safaricom Foundation scholarship programme. Secondly, the paper explores the gender-related barriers faced by young women especially when it comes to access of TVET training programmes including sharing gendered narratives from youth not in employment, education or training, as well as cultural, economic and educational challenges facing women.

The study uses both an existing data approach (EDA) and an open-ended qualitative approach. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following three questions: (a) Which challenges are limiting female youth from participating in fully sponsored and gender-focused training programmes, and how do the youth themselves engage with these? (b) Which mobilization methods might work in locating and nudging participation in sponsored training programmes? (b) How to counter the prevailing social, cultural, and economic blocks to accelerate the economic empowerment of women on the continent?

The EDA quantitative data was obtained mainly from Safaricom Foundation scholarship programme TVET admission records while qualitative data was obtained from existing literature both published and unpublished. The analysis draws on the wide spectrum of insights and inferences from the data and literature.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

Liberal Feminism theory advocates more for the inclusion of women in all social life aspects. The Liberal feminist theory argues that women like other human beings have a natural right to the same opportunities and freedoms. These rights are the same as what men have. The theory of labor market discrimination suggests that employers may have prejudice against women. This occurs through disparities in hiring rates between males and females. However, where laws that prevent discrimination exist, it is exercised through differential hiring rates. Gender differences in unemployment may be explained by various factors from theory.

One of the dominant explanations is that social, cultural and structural barriers negatively influence female participation in the labor force. Besides young women especially in rural areas, face challenges including early marriages and childbearing and nurturing responsibility that limit the freedom of movement. Issues such as gender based violence, retrogressive cultural activities and prevalent misogynistic attitude among a huge majority of male folk remain alive (Vuluku, Wambugu, & Moyi, 2013). Furthermore, institutional forces like labor unions and minimum wages, and other labour regulations may also have greater adverse effect on female than male employment. Politically, women are not involved in decision-making process. Women who attempt to raise their voices are humiliated and physically assaulted. In addition, women hardly exercise their freedom of movement, expression, association or even address men in public.

Cultural impediments such as the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced early marriages as rites of passage contribute to the stagnation of many young girls' education. Economically most women lack entrepreneurship skills and capital to run a business. They lack access to markets due to a restricted lifestyle. Environmentally, females lack easy access to schools and electricity to study; lack of water and sanitation exposing them to unhygienic conditions especially during menstruation leading to absenteeism from school.

## **2. The challenges to female youth's availability to the Safaricom Foundation scholarship programme**

A review of the Safaricom Foundation programme on-going work that focuses on Building Communities and Transforming Lives shows, they have invested heavily on Health, Education and Economic Empowerment. Safaricom Foundation TVET program aimed at supporting 700 youth to access quality education in the year 2020 - 2021. This was informed by the emerging notion that education in TVET is one of the primary means to build the capacity and transform lives especially of the poor people.

Safaricom Foundation partnered with select civil society organizations, 13 TVET institutions and 100 industry actors to equip 700 youth with skills, train them in life skills and employability competences, place them into internships and link them to industry for employment. Among the key markers of success was to achieve a 60:40 gender ratio in favor of female, and at least 5 percent disability target. This was premised on the fact that many policy makers both in the private and public sectors are working on addressing the issue of gender equality in youth employment by proposing gender responsive programmes.

It is noteworthy pointing out that a total of 452 youths applied for the Safaricom Foundation scholarship opportunity; out of these 258 (57%) were males and 194 (43%) were female. Based on the conditions for qualifying for the scholarship, 333 were shortlisted; 156 (47%) females, 177 (53%) males. Of these, there were 292 (88%) singles, 42 (12%) married and 16 (5.3%) persons living with disabilities. The interview process in its requirements produced 300 successful applicants for the training scholarship program with distribution disaggregated across gender as given in the following table 1.

Out of 152 unsuccessful applicants, 47 (31%) were males while 105 (69%) were females, an indication that more girls than boys failed to make the cut for admission. The reason behind this should be of interest.

Among the recruited youths included 147 males and 153 females. Overall, the programme also reached youth living with disabilities who accounted for 5% of the total thus achieving a key criterion for measuring success. At the very onset, the TVET program target of (60:40) in favor of females to males. This was not achieved rather the program realized 57:43. Disaggregated data across eight counties shows that the 60:40 ratio was realized only in Nairobi, which is largely urbane with different variations across other counties.

County	Isiolo	Kirinyaga	Kisumu	Kitui	Kwale	Mandera	Marsabit	Nairobi	W. Pokot
<b>Total No' of Females</b>	5	8	10	12	14	6	11	60	13
<b>Total No' of Males</b>	14	6	8	18	9	12	13	40	10

Table 1: Gendered Scholarship Enrolment per County

In addition, the data shows presence geographic disparities, the incidence of Safaricom Foundation scholarship uptake was higher in urban Nairobi. In this regard, youths in Nairobi are more likely to participate in the scholarship programme than those living in rural settings. Another significant pattern that emerged from the Safaricom Foundation scholarship data shows a significant preference by females for food and beverage skills training over plumbing, welding and electrical installation, traditionally considered male domains.

<b>GENDER OF THE STUDENT</b>	<b>TVET COURSE OF STUDY</b>				<b>Total</b>
	Electrical Installation	Food and Beverage	Plumbing	Welding	
<b>Male</b>	49 (61%)	18(18%)	50(69%)	31(67%)	148(49%)
<b>Female</b>	31(39%)	83(82%)	23(31%)	15(33%)	152(51%)
<b>Total</b>	80	101	73	46	300

Table 2: Distribution of males and females Across Course

Among youth living with disability there was also a strong preference for food and beverage technical skills over other courses.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Food and Beverage</b>	<b>Plumbing</b>	<b>Welding</b>	<b>Electrical Installation</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>No. of trainees</b>	7	2	4	3	16

Table 3: Inclusion of Persons with Disability per Course

## 2.1 Importance and Characteristics of Gender Equality in Youth Employment in Kenya

Gender disparities in terms of access to opportunities such as education and employment and the participation of female youth in economic activities underscore the need for targeted programmes. In particular, women constitute a majority of the poor and are often the poorest of the poor. The societal disadvantage and inequality women face, shapes their experience of poverty differently from that of men, increasing their vulnerability and making it more challenging for them to climb out of poverty(Dalberg, 2019). In Kenya, women in poor households will often sacrifice their health, nutrition, education and that of their daughters, by recruiting them to take care of siblings or share in other household tasks. This has continued to widen the gender gap.

### 2.1.1 Gender and Education

It is important to recognize that a certain reasonable minimum level of literacy is required before one enrolls in a TVET training program. The government launched a campaign and an active agenda for 100% transition into the various levels in the 8.4.4 cycle of education, especially from Primary school to high school and from secondary school to the higher levels including university and TVET. However, the sample data collected under the Safaricom Foundation reveals this feat is still far from being achieved. Consider the following gender disaggregated data from the Safaricom Foundation program:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Finished School</b>	<b>High Dropped Out In High School</b>	<b>Finished Primary</b>	<b>Dropped out of Primary School</b>
<b>Male</b>	188	19	46	17
<b>Female</b>	127	13	29	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>29</b>

Observe that of the 32 candidates (7%) did not conclude high school, while another 29 candidates (6%) did not conclude primary schools. This implies that about 13% could not conclude the two cycles of education from primary to high school. Also note that about 17% of the entrants could not transition from primary into high school. While the reasons for dropping out or not transitioning greatly vary from one situation to another, it is obviously correct to conclude that the phenomenon impact adversely on the very goal of youth-gender empowerment, with education being a key bargain resource. Therefore, practical strategies that are gender-specific and diverse in household handling need to be pursued aggressively so that the goal of the desired transition levels across all the cycles of education are attained.

The national grand development agenda, The Vision2030 has been under implementation through a series of successive five (5) year medium development plans. Each of them has had equity as its greatest pillar of development, and one of the areas has been on the cultural and gender score. The first of the medium term plans MTP1 formulated under the grand coalition government in 2008-2012 had its objective being to realize a higher and sustainable growth of the economy in a more equitable environment, accompanied by increased employment opportunities. (GoK, 2008; Mwenzwa & Misati, 2014)

The Second Medium Term Development Plan (MTP2) 2013-2017(GoK, 2013), whose theme was to transform Kenya through devolution, socioeconomic development equity and national unity, identified

key policy actions, reforms, programs and projects that the government would implement over the next five years in line with government priorities, The Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the national Vision2030. It set out the agenda to increase the scale and pace of economic transformation through infrastructure development and strategic emphasis on priority sectors under the economic and social pillars of Vision2030. In education and training, the plan was to focus on improved financing, expansion, responsive curriculum review, ICT and affirmative action. The affirmative action sought to correct the cultural and historical inequalities, physical segregation and regional imbalances with a view to promoting and facilitating equity in access to education. Issues of special needs and disabilities received due attention in the scheme of things.

Under the banner of gender, youth and vulnerable groups, the government through MTP2 set out to implement a national policy on female genital mutilation (FGM), developing a national policy on culture, implementing adult and continuing education policy and developing a national policy for youth polytechnic and vocational training.

As part of the Third Medium Term Development Plan(MTP3) and Vision2030 national development agenda, the President of the Republic of Kenya in December 2017 launched the Big 4 Agenda whose main focus included: Manufacturing, Affordable Housing, Universal Health Coverage and Food Security(GoK, 2017). Moreover, to support this agenda, the government revitalized the TVET subsector in education and rolled out a funding to subsidize the cost of education at the TVET institution, with a massive recruitment of tutor staff at the institutions. In addition, the government launched universal health coverage (UHC) program across the nation and put together an improved maternal health care program through the “Linda Mama” initiative. This was based on the understanding that as a nation seeking industrial revolution and socioeconomic transformation, the health of citizens, especially the active youth, would be paramount.

Therefore, at least in policy and principle perspective the issues of gender and youth empowerment have received national government attention. And efforts have been made towards achieving some desirable measure of empowerment among the youth through education, health and employment opportunities (Kibui, Athiemoolam, & Mwaniki, 2015; Mwenzwa & Misati, 2014; Salon & Gulyani, 2010). It must be noted that education, health and availability of opportunities of employment for the youth, male or female at equal levels, is key indicator of empowerment.



According to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) all countries were to ensure that by 2015 all children: girls and boys, completed a full course of primary school education, and eradicate all forms gender disparities in both primary and secondary schools by 2005, and indeed at all levels by 2015 (Archer, 2005; Ojogwu, 2009). It is on the foregoing that the Kenyan government launched free primary education in 2003 and free secondary education (more particularly for day secondary schools) in 2008 (Amunga, Musasia, & Maiyo, 2010). Observe that gender parity is an extremely important indicator of the advancements made towards the UNESCO driven global achievement of education for all. Parity can only be said to have been achieved when the same proportion of girls and boys enter the education system, achieve educational goals and advance through the subsequent cycles of education. This implies equal and more access to education for both girls and boys. It cannot be gainsaid that there is tremendous evidence that the education of girls has a crucial impact on, among other equally important things, empowering women and reducing poverty in society (Amunga et al., 2010; Archer, 2005; Unterhalter, 2014). However, eliminating the disparities remain elusive and more effort still needs to be made on the strength of changed approaches to the issues that occasion the disparities.

Education and vocational training are central pillars of youth employability and sustainable enterprise development. Skills development is key in stimulating a sustainable development process. It is also essential in seizing emerging opportunities and tackling challenges to meet new demands of a changing economy and new technologies in the context of globalization. An effective education and skills development system—which connects education to training, training to labour market entry, and labour market entry to sustainable employment—can help sustain productivity growth and translate that growth into more and better jobs.

Across the world, women who constitute one half of the world's population, and represent two thirds of the world workers, yet, ironically, earn one tenth of the world's income and own one hundredth of property. Such inequalities have been associated with unequal access to training opportunities. Female underrepresentation in TVET is an issue both in developed and developing countries although the statistics in Africa are even more dismal. Fewer women enroll and even fewer complete their studies. This phenomenon continues to exist in spite of the existing gender policies and some of the interventions at play. Evidence from Nigeria shows that female participation in TVET and Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) is low despite attempts to recognize and give it status over time.

In many instances across the world male students outnumber female students in 91% of countries globally. In Kenya, an analysis of TVET trends revealed that the male enrolment from 2010, 2011, 2012,

2013 average male enrolment was 83%, 89%, 90% and 90.5% respectively. While the average percentage of female enrolment remained low with 17%, 21%, 9% and 9.5% during the same period. Enrolment of males continued to increase after 2013 to an average percentage of above 90% while the female percentage staged low to an average percentage of 4.5 in 2017 (Najoli, 2019).

Some of the challenges facing the TVET sector in Kenya according to Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 include an insufficient number of trainers with pedagogical competency and inadequate number of TVET centers. Other challenges include poor geographical distribution of TVET institutions, negative perception of TVET among the high school students and the general Kenyan population and low enrolment of females in SET courses. There is also lack of policies on gender mainstreaming or emphasis on the need for such policies that promote empowerment, equal and full participation of women in science, technology and innovation activities.

As a result, the underutilization and underdevelopment of women's capacity in science and technology persist. Technical education is, therefore, considered the domain of the males. Although there have been campaigns to have girls embrace technical courses in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) field, their continued poor performance and participation in Science, Mathematics and Technology subjects right from primary education level creates a barrier.

Until recently there was a lot of focus towards expanding university education. As a result, the number of universities more than tripled from about the 10 Kenya had in the early 2000s to about 25 public universities, 14 chartered universities and 13 others with Letters of Interim Authority. In the course of these expansions, some technical colleges were transformed into universities. This led to an influx of degree holding graduates into an ever sliming job market. The number of middle level technical and vocational colleges (TVETs ) that could have produced a cadre of workers that the country sorely needs to spur engineering and industrial take off in accordance with Vision 2030, launched in 2008, severely plummeted. Moreover, the challenge of gender inequality across the country's educational institutions persisted.

### **2.1.2 Gender and Productive work**

A report commissioned by Women UN, UNICEF and the Government of Kenya entitled " Women's Empower In Kenya; Developing a Measure 2020"(KNBS, 2020) indicates that only 29% of Kenya women have the capacity to fully participate in economic, cultural and political life. However, that even then this participation is predicated on the circumstances of their households. This implies that there are a number

of other realities on the domestic front that hamper proper empowerment of women so as to guarantee their inclusion and participation in the real issues of the nation. The report goes on to say that only 40% of women in urban areas are more empowered compared to 22% of the rural womenfolk. This dismal performance of the rural female folk is attributable to among other issue: lack of ready access to information, lack of exposure to opportunities that could lead to socioeconomic empowerment and technological advancement, lack of exemplary role models and the usually rather phlegmatic and slow pace of village or rural life.

In addition, women from households where heads, whether male or female, have attained a high school education level are nearly four times more empowered than in places where households heads have no such advantage, and the rates go up tremendously where the head has post-secondary education (Huyer, 2006; KNBS, 2020). In fact, only 10% of women who come from households where the head has not completed formal education are empowered compared to 62% of empowered women where household heads have completed formal education. Such disempowering factors are attributable to household dependencies. Moreover, only 7% of women coming from poor households are likely to be empowered compared to a case where 53% of women from wealthy households are likely to be empowered; this is associated with lack of economic muscle to afford and sustain educational and/or skillset attainment.

### 2.1.3 Gender and Reproductive work

A huge bulk of our girls and women have simultaneous and competing demands for productive (market) and reproductive (household) labor time, which includes caring for children, cooking, cleaning, and other household tasks (Natasha et al, 2016), thus remain permanently locked into the reproductive roles(Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; Grown, Bahadur, Handbury, & Elson, 2006; Kabeer, 2005). For instance, the Safaricom Foundation data as shown below shows that 73 of the female applicants, that is, about 40%, have children. About 56 of the singles that is 14% have children, while all the Widowed/divorced candidates have children.

<b>Females with Children</b>	<b>Married Candidates with Children</b>	<b>Singles with Children</b>	<b>Males with Children</b>	<b>Widow/Divorced with Children</b>
<b>73</b>	43	56	28	2

Table 4: Candidates with Children

Reproductive roles in many ways constrain females' time and ability to undertake productive work (EARUF, 2012). Several considerations have to be made by the females around the children before they can think about applying for or taking up a training or job opportunity, especially if the opening is to take them a good distance away from home. For example, the females would be overly concerned about the care of the children in their absence, where food for children will come from, the security of the young ones, among other things.

It is observed that women's time-poverty and income-poverty often reinforce each other. These reproductive labor demands at home often restrict women from working far away from home, thus limiting their opportunities to engage in paid work (EARUF, 2012). Furthermore, there are evidences that factors such as marital status also determine levels of empowerment with single and married women likely to be more empowered than widowed and divorced women and this is primarily a socioeconomic factor (Grown et al., 2006; KNBS, 2020).

Moreover, there is evidence of the impact of harmful cultural practices on the empowerment of youth, especially the girl child. Practices such as Female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages impact on the educational attainment of girls and future participation in productive work. In Kenya, about 4 million girls and women have undergone the FGM; up to 27% of women aged between 15-49 years have been subjected to FGM and the risk of FGM range from girls and women living in the rural areas, coming from poor households, with less education and ethnic extraction (Rahman & Toubia, 2000; UNICEF, 2016, 2020). Given the foregoing background on FGM, Agenda 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG,5) aims to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all girls and women. In this effort, it seeks to eradicate all forms of harmful practices, cultural or otherwise, such as child, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation by 2030. The Agenda is framed on the understanding that there is no meaningful development agenda that can succeed and be sustained without the inclusion and participation of empowered women folk. This position is as much a reality on the global arena as it is on the domestic front, here in Kenya.

Another cultural barrier includes the lack of women professionals who are role models in STEM related professions that girls can look up to. This has reinforced the notion that certain trades and professions are for males and not for females. When it comes to the structure of STEM curricula, representation of STEM environments including the text and pictures all show men as the strong gender and women as spectators. Cultural expectations make matters worse by representing the woman as a weaker individual who should just be at home looking after her family. This is perhaps what partly explains the preference and

appreciation for courses such as Food and Beverage as reflected by the data of entrants into the Safaricom Foundation Scholarship.

Other considerations that need to be relooked as possible areas that could hamper the uptake of such sponsored training at the TVET level include such issues as the national policy around TVETs, especially with regard to access, availability, adaptivity and utilization. Considerations such as whether or not it would be possible to offer part or whole TVET training online need be explored. In addition, much as minimum entry requirements are important, education should be treated as a resource. So that such requirements as birth certificates should not be made so important that it becomes a basis for declining a candidate qualification for training and empowerment.

Furthermore, there is the issue of packaging. The manner in which most of the youth empowerment programs have been packaged, not only locally but even across the continent, has made many youths frown upon the initiatives. Consider, the *Kazi kwa Vijana* initiative rolled in 2008 in Kenya. Most of the jobs involved sweeping markets and clearing bushes, things that a big majority of youth deem so lowly. The question many youths ask is whether or not that is all that there is to their empowerment! This kind of packaging of empowerment efforts is likely to generate undesirable results related to perception.

### **3. Mobilization Strategies for Enhancing Participation in Sponsored Training Programs**

Mobilization in this context is largely a process of reaching out to different sectors, linkages, forums, contexts and organized administrative units, both formal and non-formal, within and outside the community to create partnerships whose focus is to ultimately deal with whatever challenge that connects directly or indirectly with youth and gender empowerment. The current context deals with mobilization for participation in sponsored training. Noteworthy, whatever strategies chosen must be region specific, gender sensitive, adaptive to the power dynamics within different aspects of households and sensitive to the political and/or cultural climate or reality within the target community. The variable of household power dynamics is a huge determinant given that generally, whenever a woman begins to generate some income or achieve some reasonable level of empowerment, she immediately becomes a threat to the men. And so any mobilization strategy that does not include the males or that does put the male gender, especially among married women, into perspective is likely to be counterproductive, and may foment gender-based violence; The process is likely to end up with women who start the training process but do not complete the training cycle due to marital complexities. It is also important to engage a mobilization strategy for training that involves the industry so that the market is prepared for the people

being trained. Hence, the inclusion industry players, stakeholders (both private and public) and relevant government institutions is very important.

In addition, as the youth are mobilized into training programs another very important consideration is the aspect of sustainability, stability, and continuity of the programs, especially where the training is taking place in private technical institutions. The question that then arises is whether the program has linkage with universities for further advancement; there is also the issue of accreditation by the relevant government body, because this lends to the credibility of the certificate so obtained.

Having addressed the foregoing considerations, the following mobilization strategies may be considered for purposes of enhancing uptake of sponsored training opportunities:

(i) **Engagement of Community Mentors:** This is a cadre of experienced community development workers who have a clear understanding of the importance of the program, career development and progression and how the training opportunities tie into the job market and who also understand and appreciate the community's or region's socio-economic-political dynamics (Edwards & Stern, 1998; Forrester, 2012; Schulman, 2006). They provide capacity building to other mobilizers and community groups through workshops, seminars, barazas and other forums. They also contribute to self-sustaining empowerment programs within the village.

(ii) **Tapping into the strength of Community Based Organizations (CBOs):** This comes across as small self-help groups of community members of mixed gender that have gained and appreciated the benefits of empowerment (Schulman, 2006). Reaching out to the youth through them can be very effective if properly engaged.

(iii) **Use of Community Mobilizers:** These come from target communities and are identified during the process of community profiling. Their qualifications, profiles, tasks and levels of responsibility must be carefully considered for greater impact. These fellows are guided by community mentors, and may receive some form of reimbursement from the supporting program for any expenses incurred in the course and process of mobilization process for a specific period of time (Djalalinia, Tehrani, Afzali, Peykari, & Eftekhari, 2012; Weissman, 1969b).

(iv) **Engagement of Partner Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** It is important that Community mentors, CBOs and community mobilizers within the community are supported in the advocacy efforts by non-governmental organizations and other program partners (Weissman, 1969a, 1969b). This assures the

sustainability of the processes involved. These organizations will provide such advantages as access to networks, mentoring, training and other resources required for the success of the efforts made.

(v) **Partnering with Local Administration:** The work of community mobilizers has a very limited impact if it is not integrated with the planning processes of the local public administrations. This ensures strengthened impact and sustained participation and benefit by the vulnerable groups in the society due to assured security(Forrester, 2012). The involvement of the local public administration also grants the programs a sense of legitimacy, for the public believes that the government cannot throw its weight behind phantom programs.

(vi) **Engagement of other Stakeholders, Industry Players and Civil Society Organizations(CSOs):** These interests must carefully be identified and engaged, especially those that offer opportunities for employment post-training or alliances for achieving empowerment goals(Ramey, 2013; TREND & Holder, 1997).

(vii) **Forging Alliances with Program Supporters or Securing National Support mechanism:** Mobilization at the community level may not be a spontaneous process. It might have to do with some external motivation or stimulation, involving resource and capacity development (Forrester, 2012; Parker, 1996). The principal target of this stimulation may be the NGOs involved and the public institutions. This may need a wider national program to help provide mobilization funding, guidance and coordination. The interaction of the community level stakeholders with the national support mechanism or program supporter usually comes through community mentors and Community mobilizers. This integrated approach to mobilization in sponsored training is likely to avail greater success.

(viii) **Use of local schools (Primary and Secondary Schools):** This involves engaging the local primary school and high school administrations in the process. Availing resource materials about the programs to teachers, especially career masters, so that the information about the program is disseminated right from school would be a big plus.

(ix) **Use of Program Ambassadors:** This where the funded program managers enlist the services of the those who have successfully gone through the sponsored training and who through that process have risen to become success stories in the locality. This group for all practical intents and purposes should be as heterogeneous as possible for gender balance, in order to achieve the desired impact across the gender divide. Avoid using elites who have no practical connection to the program.

(x) **Involve Clergy or Churches:** Let the church administration be capacitated in terms of information so that the leadership can be used not only as channels to disseminate information but for the identification of genuine cases for intervention.

(xi) **Engage the Local Political Leadership:** History is replete of funded programs that have failed because the political leadership in the region was excluded either in terms of information or participation. For proper adoption and acceptance, it is important to engage in political leadership. The politicians having positively appraised the matter will preach about in every available forum; rallies, funerals etc.

(xii) **Engage Media (Social media, TV, Radio, Newspapers, Posters, Infomercials Caravans):** This will ensure that no opportunity to reach as many as possible with the information is spared. The information through these media channels must very clear.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Despite progress made over the years, many gaps, barriers and inequalities persist. The data from Safaricom scholarship for instance shows that past challenges and biases associated with TVET training still persist. Foremost is that TVET training still suffers from a reputation risk given that it is still does not come with the prestige associated with traditional four-year university courses. Whereas the scholarship programme set useful targets towards realizing greater female participation, again traditional biases associated with female fear of pursuing skills in male-dominated trades and professions such as plumbing, welding and electrical installation. A similar pattern is observed with regards to the uptake of trades by youth living with disabilities. Discrimination and marginalization in enrolment to the so-called male dominated technical and vocational education and training (TVET) courses continue to widen the gender gap. Many young women shy away from taking part in technical training out of unnecessary fear.

Quantitative data indicates that global percentage of the number of women taking STEM disciplines is small. This largely attributed to their continued poor performance and participation in Science, Mathematics and Technology subjects right from primary education level with the situation locally, in Kenya, worth worrying about. Further, the absence of female role models in TVET not only reinforces the stereotype of male dominance but also means there are few female mentors employed to facilitate motivation and mentoring roles.

#### **5. Recommendation**



1. Rebranding TVET to enhance their image and reputation through media campaigns making it attractive to the youth especially female as a suitable place to build a career and a number-one choice for higher education needs;
2. Address the dilemma of poor performance and dismal participation of female gender in Science, Mathematics and Technology subjects that continues to disadvantage girls especially in poor families. This sad reality underscores the need to have programmes that promote the relevance of STEM courses because they are marketable and recognizable internationally;
3. Enhance the collaboration between the TVET institutions and the industry, and further the engagement of institutions of higher learning for possible progression to further studies through the route of TVETs.
4. Promote gender equality in the workplace and incentivize employers to create female-friendly work environments. It is important to develop initiatives and protective policies guaranteeing the rights of girls and females in the workforce, and the need to collaborate with employers to ensure that workplaces are supportive of young women employees.
5. Explore cultural and systemic barriers to vocational education that cannot be properly explored without deeper reflections and outreaches, to understand the challenges and come up with how to circumvent their negative effects on women.
6. Package youth and gender empowerment programs to come with dignity, respect, promotion of self-esteem, encourage involvement in environmental conservation efforts through a public participatory approach.
7. Integrated in the programs there should be an aggressive promotion and exposure to digital literacy, financial literacy and psychosocial support so that the youth engage fully.

## 6. References

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