

Policy Brief

Background

Despite efforts to ensure equal access to education for all, school-to-work transition for women is still low in Kenya. The study on transferable skills for Kenyan women and girls sought to enhance women and girls' skills development and employability through evidence-based influence on gender policies. Previous studies have highlighted significant gaps that need to be addressed in Kenya. Among the gaps identified are low emphasis by employers on transferable skills during recruiting [38% of employers considered transferable skills important when recruiting new staff], limited programs inculcating transferable skills in their program [14% of vocational training programs in Kenya offered courses on transferable skills], low quality of existing training programs that focus on transferable skills, and low employer trust on the preparation of graduates with transferable skills for the job market, [26% of employers believed that vocational training institutions adequately prepared graduates]. This is reflected in the high youth unemployment rates in Kenya which stood at 22.4% in 2020 (World Bank, 2020).

Methods

This study evaluated a programme, CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (CAP YEI) that uses the Basic Employability Skills Training (BEST) model to contribute evidence and generate lessons on the type of skills needed to enhance women's economic empowerment. Using a sample of 518 respondents comprising 204 Beneficiaries randomly selected from the 2019 cohort for the beneficiaries and 314 non-beneficiaries control with matching characteristics, the study employed the propensity score matching method to analyze the data.

Highlights

CAP YEI was introduced in Kenya in 2008
Target: Out of school and school dropout youth aged 18-35 years;

Model: Basic Employability Skills Training model (BEST)

Training Approaches:

- *Training: using VTCs and national Polytechnics.*
- *Capacity building for trainers. works with more than 100 VTCs in 25 Counties in Kenya on capacity building.*
- *contributing to Blue Economy- training young people and linking them to employment in blue economy.*

Since its inception the programme trained 10,000 graduates per year before 2020 and 4000-5000 per year thereafter. In 2022, the number is 1500 due to COVID 19.

The Gaps

Despite the acquisition of skills through vocational training, many women face challenges in effectively utilizing these skills in the job market. The study found that, despite high participation rates, many women do not apply their acquired skills in daily life or business. Factors such as education level, family chores, and home ownership negatively influence employment status. This highlights the complexity of translating skill acquisition into practical employment and the need for supportive measures to help women utilize their skills effectively.

Besides, beneficiaries of CAP YEI earn less on average compared to non-beneficiaries meaning that although the training program successfully increased engagement, it did not lead to higher incomes. This is largely attributed to entry behavior of the learners some of them having dropped out at primary school. There is need therefore to integrate these skills with cognitive skills development to enhance employability of women TVET graduates in Kenya.

Findings

Qualitative analysis indicates that over 70,000 people have either directly or indirectly benefitted from the programme. From the programme implementers, from inception till 2020 up to 70 % -75% of the graduates' (both male and female) transit to formal employment while 10 % transit to self-employment. However, due to covid-19, the transition rate was reduced to 50%. Further, skills attained under the programme have enabled young people to recover after COVID-19 owing to the transferable skills offered.

The respondents also indicated that 46% of the trainees were women. However, due to women taking up women-friendly courses, they tend to receive less pay compared to men. Women do not have the flexibility to go where opportunities are.



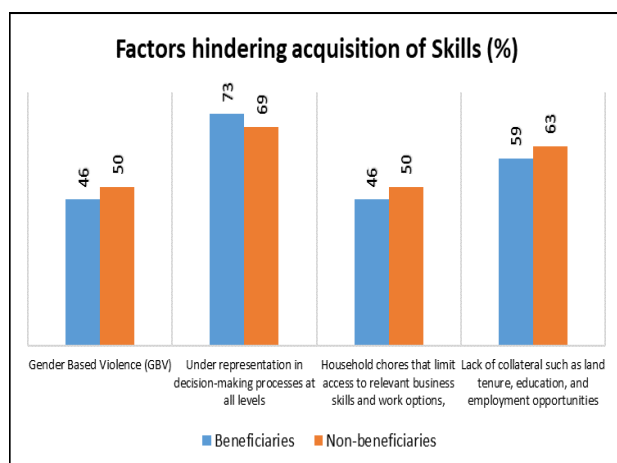
Integration of Transferable Skills into TVET Level for Employability of Women in Kenya

CAPYEI attempts to link trainees with opportunities anywhere across regions. It was observed that many employers include CAPYEI in their growth plans by considering the graduates.

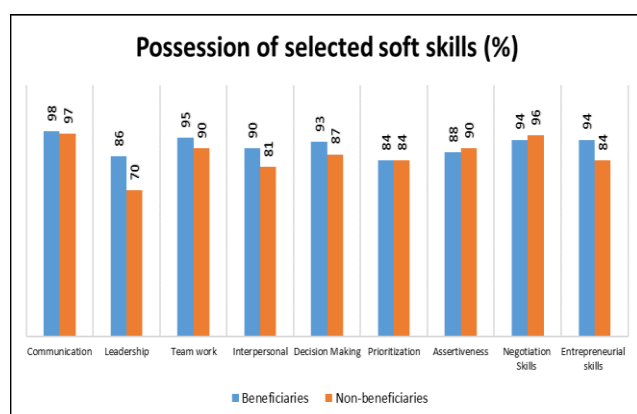
and non-beneficiaries indicated that they acquired their skills from observing mentors. This finding underscores the central role of education institutions in providing useful skills with this the need to integrate them into formal curriculum.

The results also indicate that about 50 percent of the respondents (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) identified household chores that limit access to relevant business skills and work options and lack of collateral such as land tenure, education, and employment opportunities as hindrances to the acquisition of skills

In terms of the nature of support provided to the trainees by the institutions, over 65 percent received training, 36 percent were supported in finding a job, 35 percent were linked with institutions, 14 percent were supported with income generating activities and 10 percent were supported to start micro businesses.



Other findings show that over 90 percent of both the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries indicated that they were exposed communication, teamwork, negotiation skills while over 80 percent indicated that they were exposed all the other skill with only 70 percent of the non-beneficiaries indicating that they were exposed to leadership skills.



In regards to skills acquisition modes, 89 and 53 percent of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries indicated that they acquired their skills from interaction with tutors, 68 and 54 percent of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries indicated that they acquired their skills from interaction with peers who had been trained, 51 and 46 percent of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries indicated that they acquired their skills from reading books, 53 and 34 percent of the beneficiaries

Policy Recommendations

Capacity Building

1. Invest in teacher training and curriculum development to deliver high-quality transferable skills education.
2. Introduce mentorship programs where female students can interact with successful women in technical fields. This can inspire and motivate them to pursue and excel in these areas.

Incentivize Vocational Training Programs

Provide subsidies or grants to institutions that adopt comprehensive transferable skills training.

Enhance Employer Partnerships

1. Encourage employers to co-design and support training programs, ensuring alignment with labor market demands.
2. Carry out regular assessments of employee and industry needs to ensure that TVET training aligns with the diverse needs of both learners and employers.

