



LEARNING BRIEF: GENDER INEQUALITY: HARAMBEE'S LESSONS IN THE LABOUR MARKET



INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This learning brief provides an overview of Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator's learnings on gender inequality from nine years of work in the South African labour market. Harambee has gained a deep understanding of system-level constraints for young women work-seekers, including issues around education, access, policies, mental models, safety, and more. We have designed for these, including working with strategic partners

to address these issues, influencing employer behaviours, and designing interventions for inclusion. Furthermore, we have involved women in the design of our interventions, so that they are agents of change and not merely beneficiaries. We have learnt a significant amount from this work, yet we acknowledge that there is more that we can do to address gender inequalities, and we outline some of these actions as next steps.

Key Takeaways



1

Women face disproportionate barriers on their pathways to work.



2

Harambee has experience of certain interventions that work well for gender inequality, including changing employer behaviour, provision of transport subsidies, partnering with other organisations to address gender-based violence, provision of social protection and childcare, advocacy and promotion of women in leadership.



3

These interventions have led to improved outcomes for women in the Harambee network such as increased economic empowerment, access to the labour market and improved employability and self-confidence.



4

Research on other interventions can provide insights on what further work is required to address gender inequalities in the labour market. These include programmes which simultaneously address multiple constraints; skills development and training which includes gender sensitivity modules; public employment programmes; promotion of women's entrepreneurship; facilitating access to credit for women as well as implementation of improved social protection measures (even more vital in the current pandemic).



1 WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE



Young women are at a disadvantage compared to young men in terms of capacity to find work, get paid and progress in their careers. Over two thirds of young South Africans are not in education, employment, or training (NEET); and more than half are young African women. According to Stats SA's 2020 data, the unemployment rate for women is 32,4% while for men it is 28,3%. The pathway from school, to higher

education, to a first job is broken, and for young work-seekers, women are 8% less likely to find work than men¹. A lack of information, skills, networks, and social capital to secure work, leaves young women discouraged and locked out of the economy—a situation further compounded by pervasive social norms or the risk of gender-based violence.

1 Of the 1M+ young women and men entering the labour market each year, nearly **two-thirds** of are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Each year the population of youth grows by ~1M and the number of NEETs continues to grow.

44% are inactive or discouraged

18% continue to further studies

18% become unemployed work-seekers

20% enter employment (while others exit employment)

2 Women are **~30% less likely** than men to be employed.

63% of **economically inactive** youth who are not in education, unemployment or training (NEETs) are young women

62% of young women who are not in education, employment or training are **inactive because of childcare responsibilities**

3 Even pre-COVID, youth unemployment was **double** that of adult unemployment (29% vs **58%**).

57.8M people in SA

20.4M South Africans are between 15 and 34

58% youth unemployment in South Africa

4 The proportion of young people in employment has **fallen** from 35% at the start of 2008 to 29% in 2020.

9% decline in number of young people who have jobs over 12 years (**before COVID-19**)

33% of people aged 24 had jobs in 2018

¹ Harambee, 2019, "Breaking Barriers - Gender Penalty" <https://harambee.co.za/breaking-barriers-august-2019/>



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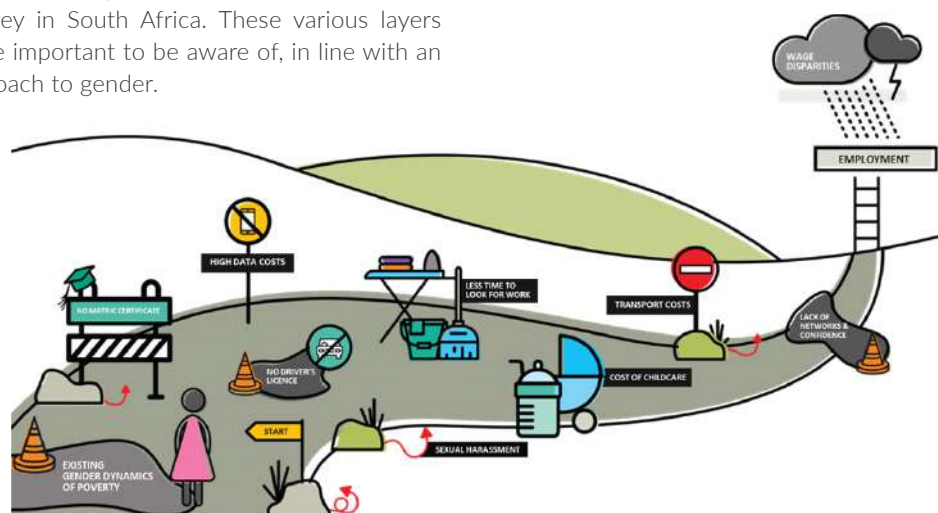
Across many factors which affect work-seeking, women are already starting from a position of disadvantage; without focused attention, they could fall further behind. Women experience the additional burden of caregiving due to social pressure and norms; 62% of NEET young women are inactive because of caregiving responsibilities.² As the economy has begun to reopen after an economic lockdown caused by the pandemic, women have also struggled more than men to resume economic activity³, largely due to the extended closure of schools and the additional burden of childcare.

Gender norms about what jobs are “acceptable” for women impact wage equity and access. Further, 30% of working women experience sexual harassment in the workplace⁴. Women are forced to navigate practical gender barriers, such as safety when utilising public transport, and entrenched beliefs around the gendered nature of certain industries. In 2014 there was a gender wage gap of 16% between women and men. While this has decreased since democratisation, it is still significant⁵. However what remains concerning is that due to the gendered nature of roles, women are often paid less because the types of work that women do is under-valued.

When addressing gender inequality, it is important to also highlight race and class inequality. Research on poverty over time in South Africa found that 68% of African (Black) women were poor (with a poverty line of R515 per month) compared to 4% of White women in 2008⁶. Similarly, African women have higher unemployment rates compared to any other female population groups according to data from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey in South Africa. These various layers of disadvantage are important to be aware of, in line with an intersectional approach to gender.

More recently, with South Africa’s move into lockdown as a response to the COVID-19 crisis, female employment has been disproportionately affected compared to men. Outcomes from Wave 1 of the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile (CRAM) survey indicate job losses have been concentrated amongst the already disadvantaged, with women accounting for two-thirds of the 3 million net job losses recorded⁷. Considering the already gendered nature of employment in South Africa with women contributing less than half (47%) the workforce in February 2020, this also reflects an increased lack of job security faced by women. These issues pose a significant threat to any gains made in gender equality in the labour market, and increase the urgency with which gender inequalities must be addressed.

Women are worse off across many different measures, and in the interests of creating an equitable society, these issues must be addressed- but there also exist multiplier effects of investing in women’s empowerment. Research has found that investments in women have wide-reaching impacts. Investing in women, leads to improvements in outcomes for their households, specifically, better outcomes for children around health and education⁸. And research shows that having more women in the workplace can lead to gains in both productivity and growth⁹. The result is that the pathway from school, to higher education, to a first job is broken and many barriers exist for young women entering and staying in the labour market.



² De Lannoy, A., Mudiriza, G., 2019, "A profile of young NEETs: Unpacking the heterogeneous nature of young people not in employment, education or training in South Africa" Cape Town: SALDRU, UCT. (SALDRU Working Paper No. 249).
³ Rankin, 2020, "Analysis of Harambee Employment Journey Data."
⁴ <https://www.news24.com/fin24/Economy/dismaying-level-of-sexual-harassment-in-corporate-sa-survey-20180901-2>
⁵ Posel, & Casale, 2019, "Gender and the economy in post-apartheid South Africa: Changes and Challenges". Agenda, 33(4), 3-10
⁶ Leibbrandt et al., 2010, "Changes in income poverty over the post-apartheid period: An analysis based on data from the 1993 project for statistics on living standards and development and the 2008 base wave of the national income dynamics study".
⁷ Spaul, N., Ardington, C., Bassier, I., Bhorat, H., Bridgman, G., Brophy, T., . . . Zuze, L., 2020, "NIDS-CRAM Synthesis Report Wave 1" Retrieved from <https://cramsurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Spaul-et-al.-NIDS-CRAM-Wave-1-Synthesis-Report-Overview-and-Findings-1.pdf>
⁸ Duflo, 2012, "Women Empowerment and Economic Development"
⁹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/economic-gains-from-gender-inclusion-even-greater-than-you-thought/>



2 WHAT WE KNOW - INSIGHTS FROM HARAMBEE'S WORK THAT HIGHLIGHT THE COMPLEXITY OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Having worked with over 820 000 young people over the last nine years, we have learnt how these barriers impact women's capacity to find and secure work¹⁰.

- **Young men are 8% more likely than young women to be employed, however, once in employment, young women perform at the same level¹¹.** A range of 'gender penalties' contribute to this difference in employment rates and even earnings (young men can earn up to 10% more). These include access to social networks, gender role stereotypes, the location of the job, transportation, and the type of work available.
- **Our data also shows that young men are 1.5 times more likely than young women to have completed their matric or high school qualification.** In comparing the employment outcomes for Harambee youth who have completed their secondary schooling versus those who have not, we see that those with a high school qualification are more likely to be active in the economy.
- **Young men spend more time searching for work than women – up to 1.5 times more.** Research on the Harambee network shows that young women have less time available for job search because they are 17 times more likely to do

unpaid care work, which affects the time they have available to search for work. Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, 58% of women vs 43% men reported spending over four additional hours on childcare a day during South Africa's lockdown¹².

- **In a recent survey of over 300 000 young people, young men were 5-6 times more likely to have a driver's licence than young women.** For a growing number of entry-level jobs, a driver's licence is becoming prerequisite, which then excludes many young women from these job opportunities. Reasons for this may include social norms around driving and power dynamics within families and gender roles, where young women are expected to carry out care work.
- **Men are more likely to find employment through social networks than women¹³.** Finding employment opportunities through one's social network is an important job search strategy. We find that young men and women are equally likely to use social networks to search for work. However, women who use social networks as their only job search strategy are less likely to find employment through this channel than men who also only use social networks. The additional burden of unpaid care work and tighter social networks may limit the impact of social networks in finding work.

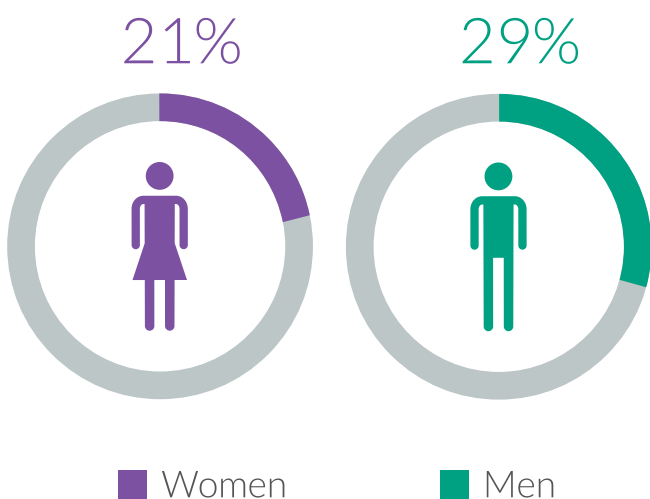


Figure 1: Likelihood of finding employment

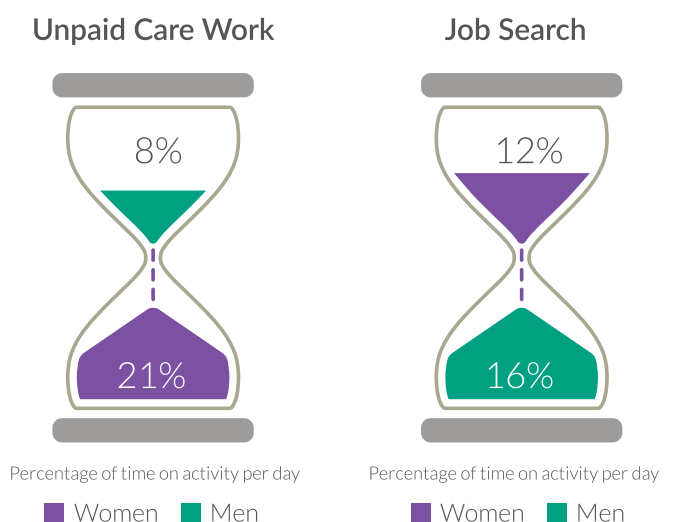


Figure 2: Time spent in care work and job search

¹⁰ The data in this section is based on internal Harambee research on our network published in our 2019 Breaking Barriers – Gender Penalty report, unless otherwise specified.

¹¹ Harambee, 2019, "Breaking Barriers – Gender Penalty", Available: <https://harambee.co.za/breaking-barriers-august-2019/>

¹² Spaul, N., Ardington, C., Bassier, I., Borat, H., Bridgman, G., Brophy, T., . . . Zuze, L., 2020, "NIDS-CRAM Synthesis Report Wave 1". Retrieved from <https://cramsurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Spaul-et-al.-NIDS-CRAM-Wave-1-Synthesis-Report-Overview-and-Findings-1.pdf>

¹³ Harambee, 2018, "Breaking Barriers – Gender Penalty", Available: <https://harambee.co.za/breaking-barriers-august-2018/>

3 WHAT WORKS – CHANGING THE SYSTEM FOR YOUNG WOMEN

While Harambee has always been focused on inclusion, we have managed to attract significantly more women than men to our network. Even though women make up 49% of the total youth population in South Africa, the majority of our network are young women (63%¹⁴.) And although women are about 8 percentage points less likely to be in work than males in the South African labour market, in Harambee's network this drops to 4.6 percentage points—demonstrating that women benefit substantially from Harambee's interventions. Our experience in improving inclusivity in the labour market for young women is that this is achieved when barriers are addressed at a systems level. These include:

3.1. Shifting how employers hire

Harambee has advocated for change in the assessment criteria and measures used to judge employability and make hiring decisions by using an assessment process to measure cognitive learning potential, rather than simply grades and qualifications. These assessments are much more aligned to a candidate's true ability to perform on a job relative to using grades and qualifications as a signal of ability. Furthermore, young women are less likely to have completed high school than young men, and therefore could face prejudice from a traditional recruitment process that values grades and qualifications. We have and continue to use this insight to advocate and shift the recruitment practices of over 500 employers in our network¹⁵.

3.2. Advocating for transport stipends and salary advances

Harambee has reduced barriers to work for young women by employing a very tailored approach, listening to the challenges women face and partnering with employers to address them. For example, we have advocated for employers to pay a portion of their salary up front in the first month of work so that first-time workers can get to work without going into debt. Transport stipends for training programmes help young women manage their other responsibilities such as childcare. Transport subsidies are especially important because women can face greater mobility challenges than men because of their childcare responsibilities.

3.3. Partnering to address gender-based violence

Harambee has partnered with community-based organisations to help young people address existing issues in their communities. In the Eastern Cape, Harambee partnered with Masimanyane, an organisation focused on addressing gender-

based violence, and helped young people who showed drive to put together projects to address issues of absent fathers and gender-based violence. Similarly, Harambee has partnered with Afrika Tikun in Johannesburg to run a programme where young people developed projects to address issues of drug abuse, depression and gender-based violence.

3.4. Social protection and childcare

Research finds that unpaid care work and other domestic responsibilities have the largest influence on the ability of women to access the labour market¹⁶. Affordable early learning programmes prove to have a triple impact for gender equality, as they create jobs, unlock labour potential for caregivers (often mothers), and they improve economic outcomes for caregivers¹⁷. Supporting programmes that aim to provide affordable early learning and childcare can lead to exponential gains for gender equality.

Harambee has partnered with SmartStart to increase access to early learning. SmartStart is an early learning social franchise aimed at increasing access to quality early learning for those who cannot afford the traditional Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre fees. SmartStart supports young women and men to become early learning facilitators with training and membership to the SmartStart network. For the first year, SmartStart provides a subsidy to allow the centres to establish themselves. Harambee provides assistance with sourcing and matching young people to become early learning facilitators through SmartStart. Over four years, Harambee has sourced over 4000 young people to be part of the SmartStart programme. The people accepted into the programme are provided with training and learning materials. SmartStarters are able to generate their own income thus reducing their dependency on others for money.

¹⁴ We believe there are a number of factors that account for this such as a higher number of young women looking for work, and the safety and reliability of our network to overcome barriers to work-seeking associated with gender.

¹⁵ "Harambee Mid Term Evaluation Covering The Period Between April 2015 & March 2018."

¹⁶ Coovadia, 2019, "Caregivers and gatekeepers: The gendered constraints to conducting job search for young black South Africans"

¹⁷ Evans, Jakiela and Knauer, 2020, "The Impact of Early Childhood Interventions on Mothers and Others: A Systematic Review"



3 WHAT WORKS – CHANGING THE SYSTEM FOR YOUNG WOMEN

3.5. Enabling the entry of young women in male-dominated industries

Harambee aims to place young people into roles that are in demand. In some instances, we have worked with employers who have traditionally only hired men for certain roles. Plumbing and heavy machinery operation are two of these examples. In both of these cases, Harambee was able to challenge the social norm that only men could perform in these roles.

In 2017, Barloworld, a large equipment, automotive and logistics company, approached Harambee to assist with the sourcing, training and placement of female candidates for roles in heavy operating machinery – physically intense positions that are traditionally filled by men. Seeking to address entrenched gender stereotypes and assist Barloworld’s hiring difficulties, Harambee designed a bridge (tailored training program) to prepare young women physically and mentally for both the role and male-dominated work environment post-placement. For these roles, Barloworld required candidates to be able to carry a 25 litre oil drum up a ladder one-handed. This subsequently became an important benchmark for readiness. Fitness training was included in the bridge, whereby Harambee asked all candidates to complete these tasks wearing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to appropriately simulate the work environment. Both men and women were graded to the same standards so that only those who could cope with the physical requirements were interviewed for the opportunity. This assisted in both breaking down held perceptions that female candidates would be weaker than men and also advocated for gender equality in the role, showcasing the capability of young women.

The work readiness programme included a personal development module, which was important to not only address the preconceived ideas young women had about their own ability, but to also equip them to confront these gender stereotypes after they had been placed. Once in their work environment, many of the young women experienced some form of gender bias from line managers who thought they were there to perform traditional female roles (e.g. in administration or hospitality). Using the skills they had learnt from the bridge, candidates were able to confront these biases and prove their ability.

To date, we have placed 116 apprentices with Barloworld Equipment in Johannesburg, Polokwane, Middleburg and Kathu. 77% of the appointments were females who took a spot in what many call a “men’s world”. Harambee was able to develop innovative solutions to address barriers for young women to access this opportunity. These learnings can be applied in other contexts, advocating for improved choice and participation in the labour market.

3.6. Supporting women within the organisation

Harambee supports gender equality within the organisation. The makeup of the organisation is mostly women with 62% of the leadership team being women. Harambee has promoted tackling gender inequality issues explicitly within the organisation with various initiatives, from a series of events in women’s month, to an ongoing dialogue amongst men, aimed at personal reflection and introspection to address issues around toxic masculinity – an initiative called ‘We-men’.

Harambee also has a deliberate strategy to assign more women than men to run our work-readiness programmes as Bridging Managers. Bridging Managers are Harambee staff who are closest to the work-seekers in Harambee’s network and act as managers and mentors thus supporting participants throughout the process. The female Bridging Managers also predominantly have similar backgrounds as the work-seekers. This was a deliberate attempt by Harambee believing that female managers from a similar background would be better equipped to empathise and provide relevant support to its work-seekers (predominantly women). Hiring young people in the Harambee network to be employees and work on the design, implementation and tracking of our projects allows us to incorporate the voices of young women into everything we do. We also keep in touch with work-seekers and we interview young women on our daily stand-up Zoom call where the entire organisation dials in to hear their voices and engage with them directly.

This focus on women’s empowerment within the organisation has an impact on the young people we support. Seeing women in leadership positions in the workplace gives young women a wider imagination for possibilities in their futures. This belief is backed by research conducted by MIT which proves that the presence of female politicians boosts aspirations of young women .



¹⁸ <http://mastercardfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MCF13027-ODI-Gender-Paper-Digital-Download-vFF-2-accessible2.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://news.mit.edu/2012/female-politicians-0113>



5 LEARNING FROM OTHER INITIATIVES

While there is no one solution to address gender inequality, research shows that certain approaches have shown improved outcomes. These approaches are:

- **Programmes** which simultaneously address multiple constraints (e.g. economic empowerment, behaviour change training and childcare support). An example of this is the Empowerment and Livelihoods of Adolescents (ELA) programme in Uganda, which offers **community-based, safe-spaces, including girls' clubs, training on life-skills, vocational training and financial literacy, savings and microfinance for young women** age 12 to 25. "The ELA program increased the likelihood that girls engage in income generating activities by 72 percent (driven by increased self-employment). Adolescent girls were 62 percent more likely to have some earnings from self-employment; and self-employment earnings increased by three times their baseline level."
- **Active labour market policies** which also address multiple constraints faced by women such as skills training and microcredit. Evidence indicating that these policies support women's employment is the most compelling for skills training programmes (outlined below), but there is also some evidence that job-search assistance, hiring subsidies and start up grants also make an impact.
- **Skills development and training** which includes gender sensitivity modules. Gender sensitivity training for staff, targets for a gender balance, and removing stereotypes from training material have been shown to have positive effects on the participation of women in skills training programmes²³.
- **Public employment programmes** which include provision of transport; targets and quotas for women; ensuring equal pay for equal work; flexible working hours or opportunities for part-time work; and provision of childcare. There is also evidence that expanding the scope of public works programmes to include social sector activities has increased the participation of women in these programmes. In the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa, women's participation was reportedly increased through paid community care services, as well as a quota of 55% for women, separate toilets for men and women, and payments based on tasks rather than time, which provided some flexibility for women to manage work and domestic responsibilities. Evidence from both South Africa and Madagascar has shown that gender sensitive public works programmes benefit not only the actual workers but female supervisors, contractors, and entrepreneurs.
- **Promotion of women's entrepreneurship** through collective organisations to strengthen bargaining power, provision of subsidies for women-headed start-ups; facilitating access to credit for women; promoting professional and technical training; and targeted coaching and mentoring.²⁴
- **Social protection measures** are widely recognised as beneficial for empowering women economically, but they need to be carefully designed to avoid inadvertently reinforcing gender stereotypes such as 'women as mothers and carers' and should focus on addressing gender inequality and gendered social norms, along with empowering women.²⁵ Social protection is all the more vital in the context of the current pandemic where health insurance is vital. Further, informal workers, a significant number of which are female, are at risk during economic lockdown and require income support²⁶. Reducing the eligibility requirements of schemes and social protection can mean that more women and girls qualify to access support.²⁵

²³ Chakravarty, Das, and Vaillant, "Gender and Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa."

²⁴ Kring, 2017, "Gender in Employment Policies and Programmes: What Works for Women?"

²⁵ Ulrichs, 2016, "Informality, Women and Social Protection: Identifying Barriers to Provide Effective Coverage."

²⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/3/news-women-and-covid-19-governments-actions-by-ded-bhatia>

²⁷ Mastercard Foundation, 2020, "Learning Brief: Gender and Covid-19"



6 WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

6.1. Doubling down on our investment in young women

While we have been successful in supporting young women work-seekers, there is more to be done. Next steps in our work to address gender inequality include:

- Embedding specific objectives and outcomes for young women at every point in our strategy.
- Improving and strengthening existing Harambee initiatives to specifically address the barriers and constraints faced by young women.
- Strengthen and leverage existing partnerships and build new ones to support women in entrepreneurship, social enterprises, and micro and small enterprises.
- Measuring and evaluating outputs and outcomes of these initiatives to improve the evidence base on 'what works' for supporting young women.
- Keep the systemic changes which are required to address gender inequalities at the center – unpacking societal norms on gender roles and unpaid work.
- Continuing the organisational strengthening and culture of supporting women internally and including young women's voices in the design, implementation and evaluation of our work.
- Catalysing demand for early learning services to increase jobs in childcare and reduce the burden of unpaid care work for women.

6.2. What we still need to know

While gender has been on the global development agenda for many years, there are still gaps in knowledge and understanding of gender inequalities. Key areas where research is required include:

- **Skills:** More evidence is required to understand which skills (technical, life skills, business acumen etc.) are the most important for improving labour market outcomes for young women, and how they can be delivered in a cost-effective manner.
- **Capital:** A better understanding of how young women start their own businesses, how their access to capital might be limited, and how this is different to the experience of adult men and women is required.
- **Time, family formation and care responsibilities:** More research from African contexts is required to better understand whether providing childcare could increase the earnings of young women and allow them to make different occupational choices.
- **Occupational choice:** Research is required to understand the mechanisms which could encourage and enable young women to enter more lucrative occupations or those which are traditionally male-dominated.
- **Networks:** although networks are considered to be a useful factor in accessing the labour market, there have been few rigorous evaluations supporting this claim.
- **Discrimination:** the extent of discrimination against young women in the labour market also needs to be better understood.²⁸
- **Crisis response:** the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the potential for crises to further exacerbate gender inequalities. Research is required to understand what interventions are most relevant when crisis hits.

Harambee is committed to furthering the body of research on what works in dismantling the barriers that young women face in terms of entry into the workforce, and what enables young women to stay and thrive in the labour market.

²⁸ Chakravarty, Das, and Vaillant, 2017, "Gender and Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa."

