



The Employment Potential of Women and Young People in Sectors and Branches of Economic Activity in Mali

*Ousmane Z TRAORÉ, Lansine SOUNTOURA
and Aoua Saran DEMBÉLÉ*

February 2022 / No.GSYE006

Context

Unemployment is a major challenge in most African countries. In Mali, in particular, unemployment rates are highest among women and young people. According to statistics from INSTAT/EMOP, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 35 was 20.2% in 2019. Women (6.1%) were more affected than men (4.9%). The rate was twice as high in urban areas (8.7%) as in rural areas (4.3%). Similarly, vulnerable jobs were predominantly held by women (55%), by people with no formal education (81%), and by those living in rural areas (80%). The distribution of unemployment in Mali also

shows regional disparities, with comparatively high rates in the regions of Gao (30.5%), Koulikoro (13.1%), and Kidal (10.7%), and low rates in Sikasso and Ségou (2.1%), and Timbuktu (1.2%). It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated unemployment; it led to a loss of employment estimated at 12% of previously available jobs (INSTAT, June 2020). To address the challenges of unemployment among women and young people, the government of Mali has implemented several projects and taken other measures over the past two decades. For example, since 2004 the Youth Employment Promotion Bureau (Agence pour la promotion de l'emploi des jeunes, APEJ) has been implementing the Youth Employment Programme (Programme emploi jeunes, PEJ) to address the issue of unemployment among young graduates. This programme contributes to the creation of jobs for young people aged 15 to 40 in rural and urban areas, mainly by enabling them to have access to the formal labour market and to credit. As part of the programme, APEJ runs a vocational training course which used to be called "Volontariat de l'APEJ" (APEJ-sponsored Volunteer Work". This programme has cost CFAF 12bn and benefited 11 cohorts of young Malian graduates that brought together a total of 43,162 trainees, 51% of whom were women.

Research problem

Despite the Malian government's efforts to tackle unemployment among women and young people, rates of this unemployment clearly remain relatively high, due to several structural and/or economic-situation factors. Among these are the mismatch between academic training and labour market needs, the young people's low level of qualification and professional experience, their difficulty in having access to finance, and the low level of their absorption into the public service and the private sector. In addition, the current employment policy programmes and instruments in Mali do not seem to have been developed by taking into account the specificities of sectors/branches of economic activity, of regions, of types of economic actors, and of the nature of barriers. Yet, unemployment affects women and young people differently in the different sectors/branches of economic activity, regions, types of economic actors on the labour market, and types of barriers. This study examines the sectors and branches of economic activity with the greatest potential for creating employment for women and young people in Mali. It used a methodology combining both the quantitative and the qualitative approach. Regarding the quantitative approach, descriptive statistics for central tendency and dispersion were first calculated and represented in graphs. Then econometric estimations were done of a stochastic production function of the Cobb-Douglas type for thirteen branches of economic activity in order to determine their production potential and the associated employment potential. Descriptive analyses of the structure of potential jobs were then used to identify the branches of economic activity that had the greatest potential for job creation for women and young

people. For its part, the qualitative approach to analysing the barriers to and the opportunities for the employment of women and young people in Mali was based on the framework proposed by Chakravarty et al. (2017). Further, content analysis was done of data from the literature and from qualitative surveys conducted with nine key informant groups.

Background

The employment policy programmes and instruments currently in force in Mali have not been developed by taking into account the specificities of the different sectors of economic activity, of regions, of types of economic actors, and of the nature of barriers. Yet, it appears that unemployment affects women and young people differently depending on sectors or branches of economic activity, on regions, on types of economic actors on the labour market, and on the nature of barriers. That is why identifying those specificities and taking them into account while developing employment policy programmes and instruments can help to promote the professional integration of women and young people in Mali.

Findings

This study is based on both quantitative and qualitative data from various sources. The quantitative data come from the EMOP databases (2013-2020), from national accounts (2012-2020), from the World Bank (World Development Indicator, WDI) and from the International Labour Organization (ILOSTAT statistics for 1990-2016). They cover three sectors and twenty-one branches of economic activity. These quantitative data have been complemented with data from the literature and from qualitative interviews conducted with nine key informant groups.

The descriptive statistics indicate that unemployment and vulnerable employment mainly affect women, young people aged 15 to 35, people with no formal education, and people living in urban areas. Inequality in women's access to jobs persists in all sectors of the country's economy. However, this inequality is greatest in the industrial sector. When it comes to the branches of economic activity, inequality in access to jobs affects women strongly, if not very strongly, in 14 out of the 21 branches of economic activity. It affects young people very strongly in 7 out of the 21 branches, and young women are significantly more affected than young men.

The difficulties of women and young people in getting a job have to do with factors directly related to the supply of labour (technical and economic barriers, social norms, political and institutional barriers) and indirectly to the demand for it (access to finance, political instability, informal sector practices, and access to electricity). Job opportunities become available mainly when there exist youth employment

programmes and development partners who are willing to invest in the training of women and young people designed to enable their socio-professional integration. For example, there are programmes aimed at training and integrating rural women, widows, and out-of-school girls. In addition, there exist a functional institutional framework and instruments such as the youth employment tax and the vocational training tax.

The study found that there was a real potential for job creation for women and young people in 9 of the 13 branches of economic activity studied. This potential is relatively high in the agricultural, the trade, the transport, and the storage industries. However, it is non-existent in the financial and insurance sectors, as well as in the information and communications and public administration sectors. Investment and the professional integration of women and young people in these latter branches of economic activity will require the government of Mali and its development partners to remove several structural and economic barriers directly affecting the supply of labour and indirectly affecting the demand for it.

Policy recommendations

The present study suggests that effective employment policies for women and young people in Mali could be achieved by implementing programmes and instruments that are based on the specificities of the different sectors/branches of economic activity, regions, types of economic actors, and the nature of barriers. Taking these specificities into account can contribute to the professional integration of the country's women and young people. More specifically, the study makes the following recommendations:

- Mali's public policies to combat inequality in access to jobs should target young people aged 15 to 35 and women, especially those with no formal education and living in urban areas.
- While policy interventions are needed in all sectors of Mali's economy to fully achieve equal access to jobs for women and young people, they should focus on removing the barriers to the insertion of women in the industrial sector.
- In the short term, interventions to promote equal access to jobs for women and young people should focus on reducing or removing barriers in the 9 of the 13 branches of economic activity that have the potential to create jobs for young people aged 15-35 and for women.
- In the medium to the long term, training policies and internship programmes should facilitate the integration of women and young people into the more

productive branches of economic activity, namely the financial and insurance sectors, as well as the information and communications and public administration sectors.

- Measures to promote investment and job creation in the services sector should focus on achieving political stability, fighting corruption, and eliminating unfair competition from informal-sector enterprises. In addition, they should effectively promote investment and job creation in the industrial sector by improving the provision of electricity. Policies aimed at facilitating access to finance could be very useful for the two economic sectors.



Mission

To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

The mission rests on two basic premises: that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy, and that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed group of locally based professional economists to conduct policy-relevant research.

www.aercafrica.org

Learn More



www.facebook.com/aercafrica



www.instagram.com/aercafrica_official/



twitter.com/aercafrica



www.linkedin.com/school/aercafrica/

Contact Us

African Economic Research Consortium
Consortium pour la Recherche Economique en Afrique
Middle East Bank Towers,
3rd Floor, Jakaya Kikwete Road
Nairobi 00200, Kenya
Tel: +254 (0) 20 273 4150
communications@ercafrica.org