

CHALLENGE  
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YOUTH  
EMPLOYMENT

# Digitally Enabled Jobs



How the Digital Economy  
can promote decent  
livelihoods for Youth;  
Insights from Kenya

Youth-Led Research, Kenya

## Foreword

Youth-led research is integral to shaping interventions where youth are the final consumers. This research focuses on digitally enabled jobs (DEJ) in the context of the Kenyan labour market. Digitally enabled jobs are an emerging and dynamic technological trend and it is hoped that this report will help shape labour markets in countries where their potential is yet to be fully developed.

According to Digital Ecosystem Country Assessment (DECA), Kenya's digital economy is thriving because of expanding ICT infrastructure, with more than 95 per cent of the population covered by at least 2G (second generation) networks, 88 per cent by 3G, and 61 per cent by 4G (fourth generation) or more, with plans to roll out 5G (fifth generation). Making the Digital sector highly sought-after and an important one in tackling unemployment. The diverse platforms for online and offline work have provided immense potential for opening new livelihood opportunities for youth, hence calling for a better understanding of the sector. Four Youth Champions conducted this research: Fridah Okomo; Felix Angaira; Caren Kimeli; and Mohamed Almas. They represented regions across the country and incorporated diverse youth perspectives. This report is written by the Youth Champions, with support from CFYE.

We deeply appreciate the unwavering support of individuals who guided and contributed to the success of this research. This includes Charles Mankhwazi (Restless Development); Majina Mwasezi (VSO); Reuben Mbuve (VSO); Jenn Otieno (Jobtech Alliance); and Christopher Maclay (Mercy Corps).

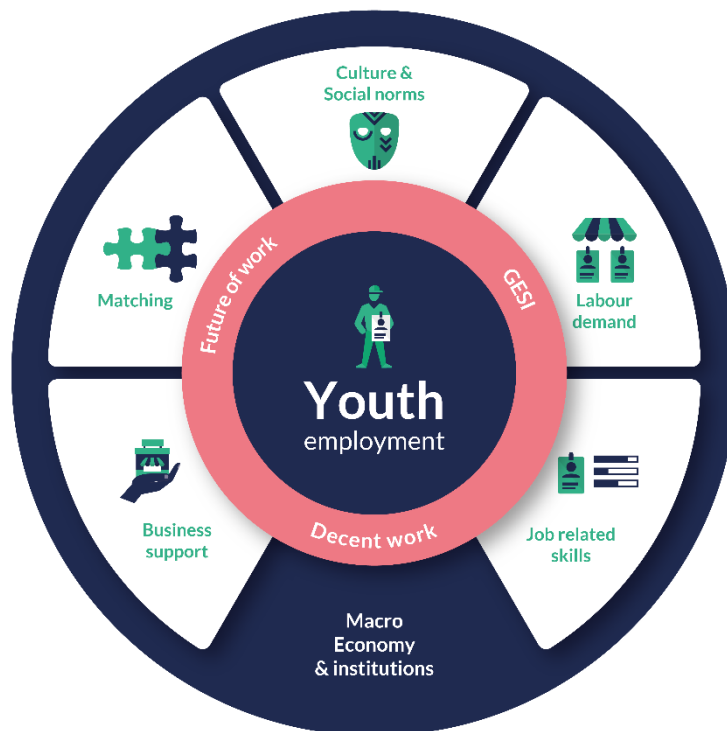
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# Executive Summary

This research was conducted to bring the youth perspective into the design of the Jobtech Learning Lab, which aims to understand and improve digitally enabled jobs (DEJ). The research identified key themes that could be used in establishing an adequate measure of their quality and focused on three categories of actors in the Jobtech ecosystem: Service Providers (users, freelancers, technical workers, retailers); Intermediaries (start-ups/platforms owners); and Clients (those who benefit from the services offered).

The research found differences between urban and rural youth in their awareness of DEJ: 9/10 of urban youth had a good understanding of DEJ, compared to 5/10 of rural-based. Overall, approximately 60% of the respondents displayed a good understanding of the concept of DEJ and the use of digital platforms for offline work. Non-availability of resources such as laptops, internet, data bundles etc were mentioned as some of the biggest challenges for youth accessing digitally enabled jobs. The Internet remains crucial in DEJ and it is mostly urban youth who can access opportunities, compared to rural.



The findings outline an understanding of the 'decency' elements of DEJ; with pay rates, pay waiting time, payment channels, choice and flexibility, opportunities for skills growth, and legitimacy of jobs ranked as the topmost aspects that attract youth to DEJ.

The research found that urban youth prefer flexible ways of working to conventional full-time working hours, unlike their rural peers who prefer conventional working hours. 80% of youth respondents mentioned that they are only able to access entry-level jobs due to a lack of skills and experience to unlock more advanced skills. Young mothers find DEJ favourable to them, in securing their livelihoods and allowing them to still provide childcare duties.

The research also found out what risks DEJ poses to youth. Approximately 30% of respondents highlighted that they are subjected to exploitation in DEJ, in part because of the pay, as well as scams, where some platforms ask for registration fees, yet no tasks are given. Unclear job descriptions, where youth are subjected to tasks that are not only outside the job description but also unethical. There are also significant barriers due to perceived youth capabilities, 80% of youth are only able to access entry-level jobs due to a lack of formal skills and experience.

Regarding the future of work, youth believe technology will be key and disrupt ways of working, types of jobs, and experience of decency. Youth are keen on building their knowledge of technology to remain relevant in the advancing tech world. 70% of respondents felt prepared for the future of work, and that they have attained some skills that enhance their confidence, are proactive and continually upskill.

Recommendations have been generated and focus on improving the quality, access, and value of DEJ. They are targeted to different audiences to facilitate action and effectiveness.

# Chapter 1 | Overview of the Research Goals

This chapter introduces the organisations commissioning this research, as well as the methodology undertaken.

## Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE)

Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE) project aims to create income opportunities for 200,000 young women and men in the Middle East, North Africa, Sahel & West Africa, and the Horn of Africa by supporting youth employment initiatives in these regions. To provide decent work opportunities for youth, CFYE provides grants and technical assistance to implementing partners which are private sector companies or NGOs with a link to the private sector or self-employed youth. 68% of the solutions developed by CFYE's implementing partners are tech-enabled and Jobtech plays an important role to enable CFYE to reach its target.

## Jobtech Alliance

Jobtech Alliance is a community of start-ups, funders, solution builders, and policymakers collaborating to help build the Jobtech ecosystem in Africa. CFYE partnered with Jobtech to design a Learning Lab (the 'Jobtech Learning Lab') with the purpose of understanding, measuring, and improving DEJ.

Through the Learning Lab, CFYE and Jobtech aim to:

- ✘ Enhance the direct inclusion of youth voices in shaping the digital sector;
- ✘ Inform a framework to measure the quality of DEJ;
- ✘ Create better insight into the quantity, quality, and inclusivity of DEJ offered by Jobtech;
- ✘ Enhance the quality of DEJ being provided by Jobtech actors;
- ✘ Create the appropriate enabling environment to enhance the business value and inclusivity of Jobtech;
- ✘ Enhance the direct inclusion of youth voices in shaping the digital sector;
- ✘ Create a Jobtech learning hub for Jobtech actors and implementing partners;
- ✘ Respond to the systematic constraints and opportunities in the sector to make Jobtech solutions more impactful and inclusive to young jobseekers.

## Methodology

The researchers sampled 30 counties, reaching a total of 180 young people through 65 key informant interviews (KIIs), and 20 focus group discussions (FGDs), with 223 respondents reached through 1 survey.

Looking at the characteristics of the sample, it is interesting to note:

- ✘ 5% of the research respondents were drawn from existing youth networks, youth working in Jobtech platforms, and youth in tech spaces;
- ✘ 50% of the respondents were freelancers who frequently do online gigs that included transcription, data entry, content writing, forex trading, data annotation, social media management, data analysts, software developers and academic writing;
- ✘ 30% was made up of young people who own digital marketing firms that involve work such as web development, videography, and graphics designing;
- ✘ And 10% were respondents who utilize the platforms to facilitate offline work, especially in the informal sector such as skilled artisans, domestic workers, and vendors.

The research focused mainly on three categories of actors in the Jobtech ecosystem. The largest segment of the research focused on youth who are service providers or job seekers in the Jobtech ecosystem. The categories of actors were:

- ✘ Service providers - these are users, freelancers, technical workers, retailers etc.;
- ✘ Intermediaries - these are the start-ups, platforms owners, drivers etc.;
- ✘ Clients - those who benefit from the services offered in the Jobtech Alliance's Jobtech taxonomy.

This research prioritised the inclusion of marginalised groups – targeting young people in different geographical areas (rural, peri-urban, and urban), as well as young mothers and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Out of the 180 respondents from the KIIs and FGDs, 25 were young mothers and 8 were PWDs. The sample size was average to allow a good representation of the youth population and manage the data analysis.

The research questions focused on the decency of work, future of work, inclusivity, accessibility, and general experiences of youth working with Jobtech platforms.

## Chapter 2 | Summary of the Key Topic Findings

This research prioritised the inclusion of marginalised groups – targeting young people in different geographical areas (rural, peri-urban, and urban), as well as young mothers and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Out of the 180 respondents from the KIIs and FGDs, 25 were young mothers and 8 were PWDs. The sample size was average to allow a good representation of the youth population and manage the data analysis.

### Decency of DEJ

- ✘ Good pay, flexibility, legitimate (legal) tasks, plus recognition and awards are key factors in determining decency. Without these, youth can feel exploited and disoriented.
- ✘ Building youth capabilities are also core to decency – young people need to be equipped with skills such as digital literacy, and online marketing, as well as soft skills such as negotiation, communication, and time management.
- ✘ Inclusive working hours were particularly referenced for young mothers.

### Pay rates, waiting time, and payment channels

- ✘ Rates of payment per task, payment channels, security of payment systems, accountability for non-payment, hidden platform costs, and the duration taken to process the transactions are important to youth from all geographic locations.

### Choice and flexibility

- ✘ Urban youth prefer flexible ways of working to conventional full-time working hours, while rural youth appear to prefer conventional hours. This is attributed to the fact that urban youth have income-generating options unlike rural youth who have fewer opportunities, be it online or otherwise.
- ✘ Young people prefer choosing jobs they are passionate about, this enables them to deliver quality work. This is in contrast struggling with tasks they are not happy about, but have to do because they need the income.



## Access to ethical work

- ✘ High unemployment rates make youth vulnerable to many vices. Some clients disguise illegal activities in job descriptions that may look desirable to young people with high levels of technical skills. Usually, such kinds of tasks are lucrative in pay but risk them conflicting with local laws.

## Preparedness for the future of work

- ✘ Young people relate the future of work with an increase in technological advancement.
- ✘ 70% of respondents felt prepared for the future of work, and that they have attained some skills that enhance their confidence, are proactive and continually upskill. 25% of respondents felt inadequately prepared.
- ✘ More than 50% of respondents are willing to take their own initiative, take up courses, and read more to keep up with the emerging trends in the future of work. However, many face financial constraints.



## Inequalities and inclusivity of access

Young people from different backgrounds face different levels of benefits and challenges when it comes to access. The distinction came out between those

who are urban-based and the rural-based, and between those who have undergone higher education versus those who have not.

- ✘ Urban centres provide the advantage of stronger internet and mobile networks, reliable electricity, and digital hubs that can facilitate learning and delivery of DEJ.
- ✘ Rural youth who have been privileged to attend institutions of higher learning is perceived to be exposed to the same kind of facilities that urban-based youth enjoy.
- ✘ PWDs and young mothers who are weaning babies are not perceived to be at the same level of effectiveness and timely work delivery as a youth.
- ✘ However, many face financial constraints.

## Skills Growth

- ✘ 80% of youth are only able to access entry-level jobs due to a perceived lack of skills and experience.
- ✘ Entry-level jobs are overcrowded, leaving most of the advanced jobs with low supply.
- ✘ Advanced jobs with better benefits are locked away from young people due to a lack of experience and skills.

# Chapter 3 | Young People's Understanding of Digitally Enabled Jobs

This chapter outlines the research findings in more detail, specifically young people's understanding of what DEJ is.

## ✂ Technology

These jobs use all kinds of technology from simple tech to advanced levels of technological resources. These include the hardware and software depending on the desired level of efficiency. Modern technology like the use of phones, laptops, tablets and computers has been key in propelling these jobs and the youth expressed the need to continuously upskill themselves to remain relevant in the digital market. It was clear that some opportunities require the use of the internet while others can be done offline.



Key terms from  
young people's  
understanding  
of DEJ

## ✂ Remote working

These jobs allow you to work from anywhere. It gives the freedom to allow when and how to work if the objectives are achieved. With the use of the internet, the youth agree that they can create workspace and work from home. This came out strongly from the young mothers, because it gives them the liberty to work, and at the same time support their children with caregiving.

## ✂ Use of digital platforms

These are avenues where the opportunities can be easily accessed and explored. They assist in breaking several barriers allowing the inclusion of youths from across the world. Young women mentioned that using the platforms has contributed to them thriving in the digital economy without being dismissed because of the burden of unpaid caregiving work. With platforms such as e-commerce and social media platforms, youths can get access to jobs online and offline.

## Digital Literacy

Some youth, mainly from urban areas, were able to give a more nuanced description of DEJ – going beyond ‘online jobs’ to ‘jobs enabled through technology’. They indicated that DEJ is those that have aspects of technology and digital literacy infused in them.

For example, offline workers can access both low and high-skilled jobs through digital platforms; this requires only a basic level of digital literacy but is an essential means of accessing an opportunity. In contrast, performing well in an online or digital job requires a much higher level of digital literacy. So basically, youth described DEJ as those enabled by technology and can either be offline or online.

## Geographic Influence

Our findings show that urban and peri-urban youth are more familiar with DEJ, compared to their counterparts in the rural areas. The table below shows the significant difference in awareness and accessibility of DEJ in the different areas.

**Youth Familiarity With Digitally Enabled Jobs  
Across Regions**

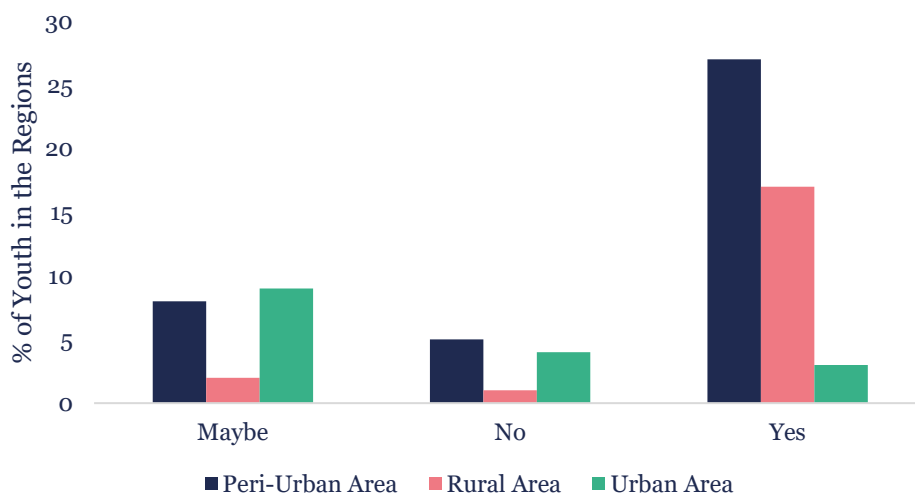


Figure 1 A bar chart illustrating the spread of youth who are familiar with DEJ across different geographical regions in Kenya

## Factors Influencing the Attractiveness of DEJ

Young people identified three factors that **most attracted** them to DEJ: payment rates; convenience; and flexibility.

In Kenya, there is a major transition from the traditional way of working, where most jobs required physical presence in the office from 8 am to 5 pm, to the hybrid mode of working. The pandemic in 2020 propelled this major shift that reshaped the employment sector where employees have different modes of working.

**Payment rates, convenience and flexibility are the most appealing**

**Unfriendly registration processes and potential scams reduce DEJ attractiveness**

Overall, 80% of young people attest that the jobs are appealing, while 10% are undecided – holding a 50:50 view that they are both appealing and not appealing subject to key characteristics. The appealing side was described as **flexible working conditions; linkages to offline jobs; diversified income; and opportunities for personal development**. In contrast, the unappealing side

was illustrated by the **unfriendliness of some of the platforms** in their registration process, which are long and require high skill level qualifications, as well as the possibility of being **scammed**.

Again, there were key differences between the attitudes and experiences of youth in urban, peri-urban, and rural settings.

- ✘ 80% of Urban youth are attracted by the flexibility and convenience of DEJ, the wide and guaranteed market, and the efficiency.
- ✘ Peri-urban youth find DEJ appealing because a lot of work can be done without necessarily meeting the clients and the services are rendered to the satisfaction of the customer. They can save time, and the jobs can be done anywhere and at any time. This enables them to gain more knowledge related to digital technology and opens a space for online networking with other people.
- ✘ 70% of youth in rural areas do not find DEJ appealing because they lack internet access and buying data bundles is too expensive. They also state the lack of reliable electricity and the fact that most of them are computer illiterate. The lack of information on the available opportunities in the DEJ is also a big barrier.

It should be noted that 71.44 % of the Kenyan population has access to electricity (World Bank collection of development indicators, 2020) and the internet penetration rate stands at 42% of the total population ([Digital 2022 Global Overview Report](#)).

This research also noted a shift in how traditional offline jobs are perceived once they have been connected to a digital platform. As a social worker, Edwin describes:

*“ I can say it has been a journey because, in the previous years, jobs like being a house help were not seen as jobs but of late people are getting attracted to such kinds of jobs (being offered through the platforms) and I think it's becoming easier for people to engage in. ”*

## Key Risks for Youth in DEJ

Tedious registration processes, meagre payment rates, and exploitation are turn-offs to most youth. Most of the urban youth mention that DEJ is exploitative and full of scams.

A segment of youth who are experts in the tech field mention that they are exploited especially for doing illegal jobs or tasks outside the job description. Some said the jobs that they get on the platforms are not what was in the job description, while there was no structured way to get paid for working overtime or doing tasks outside the job descriptions.

*“ What makes it not appealing, depending on like the platform, there a certain level of like exploitation that comes with it, because most of the online digital job platforms are unregulated and do not stick to labor laws, most of the times so there a lot like under payment for the work that people are working for. ”*

*Bernard, Freelance Software Developer*

*“ I would say it's not appealing because the amount of work and hours do not match the amount of pay or remuneration. For example, in academic writing, you spend so much time researching, typing, and editing. Then they end up paying you KES 250 per page, which is so little for the work done. ”*

*Lina, Remote Freelancer*

# Chapter 4 | How Young People Are Accessing Digitally Enabled Jobs

This section presents how youth can access this DEJ, the resources they use to find and deliver these jobs, and the level of inclusivity offered.

## Job Awareness

Young people generally find DEJ on a range of online platforms and through mediums like social media. Most of the young people also noted awareness and referral as one of the main ways they find these jobs. However, the quality and variety of these platforms can be limited.

Most respondents indicated their awareness of platforms for both online and offline work, and that both are key in accessing and facilitating awareness of job opportunities.

“I have been using LinkedIn for the longest time to look for jobs. I feel like COVID really played a part in making some of these jobs very, very accessible. But there needs to be a framework which has to do with quality and ethics.”

Tedd, Data Analyst

### Platforms Used By Youth To Access Work

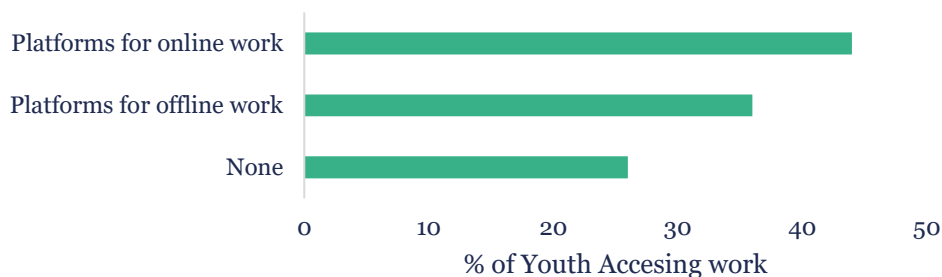


Figure 2 Bar chart illustrating the number of youth who are aware of offline and online platforms for accessing work

The majority of young people who access and thrive in opportunities found on online platforms are mainly in urban and peri-urban areas in Kenya. The

table below illustrates the number of youth who accessed work through online platforms in different geographic regions.

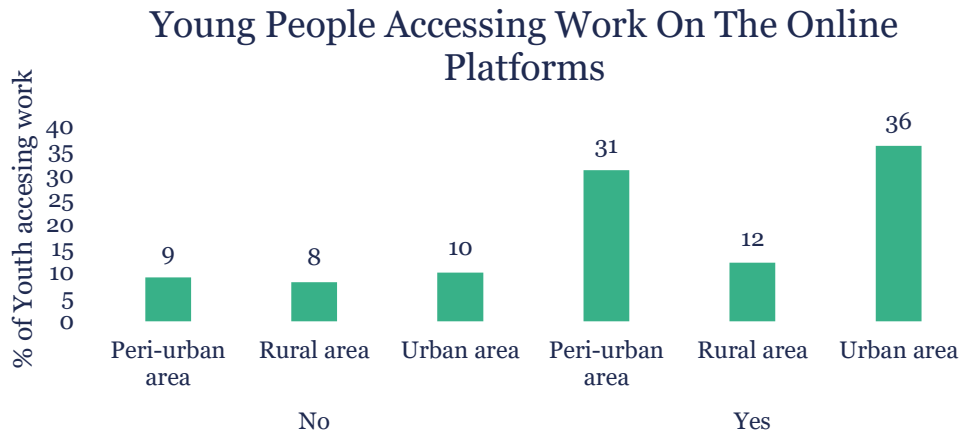


Figure 3 Bar chart illustrating the number of youth in different geographic regions that accessed jobs through online platforms

## Job Types

The jobs that came out as **easily accessible** are those that involve simple tasks such as data entry, typing, and using mobile applications to facilitate offline work. 85% of the young people interviewed fell into this category and **appreciated the role of tech in facilitating efficiency**. Note, the remaining 15% of young people interviewed have advanced technical skills, such as software development, coding, programming, graphics designing and videography.

**Jobs dominated by data entry, typing, and using mobile apps to facilitate offline work are the most accessible**

## Youth Capabilities

Lack of digital skills was cited as the biggest obstacle by 90% of the youth. For youth with basic **digital literacy**, only 30% attended formal training, while 70% relied on self-learning through platforms such as YouTube. For youth with advanced digital literacy skills, 25% relied on self-learning and apprenticeship, while 75% attended formal training.

Young people's level of **formal education** also influenced their access. 60% of the respondents in peri-urban were of the view that college and university students were **better positioned** to access digitally enabled jobs, compared to those who never proceeded from high school. Monica, a self-taught data analyst, with no degree in the field, highlights her frustrations in getting a job. She once applied for a job and one of the requirements was a university degree. Since she hadn't gone to the university, she could not be accepted,



because to get the job permit, she needed to have completed a degree from a recognised institution.

Introducing the use of technology during **primary and high school** education would better prepare the youth to advance in the tech world. Sharing information about available opportunities through platforms is very important.

“Most of the times people tend to assume that young people can self-learn and self-teach themselves, however there are several skills that need to be enhanced and learned. One fundamental one around tech education is looking up information on the internet. There is an assumption that most young people, know how to search for information. But the truth is, they cannot do that effectively. Hence there is a lot of information that needs to be passed down to young people.”

Ian, Platform Founder

“The first thing that comes to mind is just education around tech and the tech jobs. Uh, I think education is one of the most powerful things. Subsidized education also, because you get people coming from lower income backgrounds who genuinely have the passion and the talent and the competency to get into these roles.”

Andrew, Tech Recruiter

## Marginalised Groups

This research was particularly focused on two marginalised groups: people with disabilities (PWDs) and young mothers.

80% of the respondents held the feeling that **PWDs are disadvantaged** when it comes to delivering quality work, something that makes employers not consider them for work. 20% were steadfast that there are a variety of options that can be considered to suit different disability needs. For instance, someone with a hearing impairment can choose to do data entry which involves the transfer of manual data instead of audio transcription. Awareness came out as

a key tool towards connecting PWDs to specific jobs that would work for them.

60% of those interviewed declared that **DEJ favour young mothers** because they offer flexible work which can allow them to tender their children from home. They also believe that there is a wide variety of DEJ that young mothers can pick from based on specific convenience.

**60% of young mothers said they did DEJs because they were flexible**

40% of the respondents highlighted the **struggle for young mothers** to balance tough deadlines with having to take care of their children. They also said their capacity to handle pressure is reduced, which makes them vulnerable to depression whenever they come across tasks that are difficult and take a lot of time to complete.

“Most of the platforms are not suitably designed to meet the needs of young mothers. I used to do online work but when I became a mother, I forgot about the job. Because first being a mother, it's so demanding, you can't even concentrate. There are tight deadlines, so online work for young mothers is hectic. Also, it may be difficult because online work is not scheduled and having a kid who is not yet or doesn't really have a sleeping pattern so you're dealing with two unscheduled things. Work and the baby, it's not ideal.”

Tabitha, Young Mother

## Policy and regulation

The ICT bill in Kenya may hinder youth who are passionate and want to access DEJ.

The **informality** of the DEJ equates to a lack of welfare for young people in the digital space. Robert, an urban youth, mentions that he used to get jobs out of the blues with no schedule, making it hard to deliver quality work. How young people understand quality on these platforms is key to enhancing their possibility of getting more jobs.

“When we start to put in barriers for people to have this thing and that thing, you know, like one needing to have a four-year degree, it makes it distasteful and inhibits innovation.”

Andrew, Tech Recruiter

“There are so many scammers, and it is difficult to verify beforehand. And because young people are desperate, there are no jobs, so they'll just go and pay the registration fee then later they get disappointed.”

Tabitha, Young Mother

Exploitation is a huge risk and deterrent. It is hard to know if an online job is legitimate unless it's coming from a website that is already established. No system can verify if a job is legit or a scam. Through unverified jobs,

youth are vulnerable to not being paid for the services they render or getting underpaid contrary to an initial agreement with clients.

## Smart Tech

“One of the challenges is the accessibility of the laptops. Good laptops are expensive. Some people would really like to do these jobs, but they don't have gadgets like laptops. I think it is a way to embrace these jobs.”

Access to **digital devices** has a significant impact. Employers can support through the provision of tech at work and youth can actively contribute to purchasing their own laptops to boost credibility (when affordable).

## Geographic Influence

It came out clearly that urban-based youth were at an advantage, compared to rural-based youth, in terms of access and delivery of digitally enabled jobs.

## Rural-based youth

Accessibility in rural areas was generally characterised by **inadequate digital infrastructure** to facilitate internet and mobile network, **limited access to digital skills learning opportunities**, and **lack of awareness** of DEJ.

Many rural areas lacked access to **reliable electricity** and the internet. They have also faced high data costs and other unaffordable network services in the past decade.

**Digital connected centres** are largely located within urban centres. It is costly for youth to commute every day from their rural home to the town centre to access learning opportunities.

### Challenges facing rural-based youth in accessing DEJs

1. Poor penetration of electricity and internet
2. Lack of education
3. Lack of exposure
4. Cost of data

Young people also find it difficult to **afford smartphones** and other devices. So, even if the internet is available, rural-based youth underutilise it because of the underlying challenges brought about by economic inequalities.

“Through referrals from friends who have had an experience of the digital enabled Jobs. Through this, we get real jobs and feel more confident taking them up.”

Young Man in Nairobi

## Recruitment

Most youth experts in the digital space mentioned **unclear job descriptions** as the main barrier. They are subjected to tasks that are not only outside the job description but also

“There are some apps where you get offline jobs the same way you get online jobs. Like script writing or online writing. You can get them through apps or social media referrals.”

unethical. Byron also adds of digital employers mostly pay people in terms of their geographical location, he states, “let people be paid according to their expertise and not according to their geographical region”.

“Tell us what we are getting into so that if it's something that I don't agree with or something that I feel is unethical, I don't take it up.”

Byron, Tech Expert

## In summary

### Groups of youth with high access to DEJs

- ✕ Most urban areas position the youth population with greater proximity to good exposure, opportunities, and a great support system, enabling them to thrive best. Urban areas have leveraged a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation. For example, Nairobi is

home to nearly two dozen hubs and incubators focused on the role of local content and attracting investors.

- ✘ University students and graduates can access and own devices such as laptops, tablets, and good smartphones. University can also expose youth to diverse job opportunities. In addition, it is at this time when the youth learn to be independent and proactive in exploring viable sources of income to support themselves.

## Category with low access to DEJs

- ✘ Most Rural youths suffer from unreliable electricity, limited awareness of job opportunities, and connectivity issues.
- ✘ PWDs face additional barriers as they are perceived to be less effective and reasonable adjustments are not made.
- ✘ Young mothers face additional barriers as they balance the needs of their family with work commitments.
- ✘ Youth with low levels of education and from informal settlements are blocked by their literacy levels, exposure, and skill level.

For all youth with low access to DEJ, given a chance with the right kind of information and support, they would thrive alongside their high-access counterparts.



# Chapter 5 | Young People's Experiences with Jobtech Platforms

## From Young Platform Owners and Recruiters

In as much as DEJ platforms are providing spaces for young people to drive innovation, there is a **conflict** on the main aim of the platform, which is to drive the growth of the business. With this, there is a risk of the platforms not making a profit. Ian, a founder, notes that

*“It's always a question of whether the platforms could do more to acquire more work than to be able to put more young people into work.”*

## Experience of employers in employing youth on digital platforms

When the employers, founders, and tech recruiters were asked about their experience employing youth, Andrew, a tech recruiter, said:

*“Young people are very energetic and innovative. It's good to see young people who just left campus or just left high school, sort of building their life for themselves. They're able to stand on their own feet to support their families.”*

However, some note that employing young people has its downsides too. In as much as young people are innovative and energetic, they cannot be trusted with management roles, and they are too unpredictable and cannot stay in a single job for a long time. Andrew highlighted the need to work with a youthful workforce with a hint of older experience:

*“It can get a little bit too erratic, or it might be difficult to make very high-level decisions for them, especially if they're catapulted into management roles. They might lack the experience and the information to make big decisions.”*

# Chapter 6 | Young People's Perceptions of Decency of Work In DEJ

## Youth view decent enabled jobs as:

- ✘ A productive activity that enables youth to generate a source of income to sustain their lives;
- ✘ Not having many errors, it can be challenging, but must be well planned;
- ✘ Giving an opportunity to do business without being pressured;
- ✘ Fulfilling and giving to new markets globally, getting new ideologies on their product, and expanding them;
- ✘ Having a safe and friendly environment, quality services, and a secure and safe mode of payment.

Some of the dominant themes on what makes up a good job that came from the youth were as follows.

## Convenient pay

One of the outstanding aspects of a good DEJ according to young people was the convenience to pay, this was brought out in four different ways as below.

- ✘ **Good rate of pay:** This ranked top as one factor for a decent DEJ - it must be a well-paying job in the sense that the pay matches the volume of work assigned.
- ✘ **Pay that matches skill:** Respondents highlighted that sometimes the platforms pay less than the value of the work done and the skill required to complete it.
- ✘ **Clear method of payment:** After considering the rates of pay, young people regard a good DEJ as one with secure, and efficient payment processes.
- ✘ **Prompt and easy payment:** For young people, a good DEJ must provide prompt and convenient payment. They value instant payment or payment that can be easily accessed.

“Most of the DEJ are paying well because consider that most of the costs are cut down, you don't have as many costs, you don't have to travel to the office and back. You don't have to do much as long as you have the Internet and the laptop or computer, you're good to go.”

## Growth opportunity

Young people termed a good DEJ as one that **focuses on them as the workers** by providing opportunities to grow, not only in the job but to keep up with the market trends. They highlighted that most of them get into DEJ with basic skills and would want to grow skills-wise to be able to advance and get higher-level job opportunities. Some respondents highlighted that **variety** was important in keeping them engaged and helping them to grow within DEJ.

“ I value the variety, the fact that DEJ are very diverse. I'm talking sector, area focus, topics. I'm talking to geographical locations. So that is very critical. I value that most about it. ”

## Flexibility

For young people, a good DEJ should provide flexibility, so that they can plan their time easily and incorporate other commitments, such as social life. Plus, the time given to complete work should be negotiable.

“ Most digital jobs are very flexible in nature in the sense that I'm also able to work from wherever I want to, provided I'm delivering on the work. I'm able to manage my life, accordingly, feel happy at the same time. So that also means a lot to me. ”

## Easily accessible

For young people, a good DEJ should be easily accessible to all. They mentioned that some DEJ platforms are very hard to enrol with, as they have long procedures to be followed when registering and getting acquainted with the platforms.

## Social Impact

For some youths, a good DEJ has an aspect of a domino effect, and **others are benefiting** from what they do. That excites them because they believe they are doing something beyond themselves and leaving a legacy.

## Keys Risks for Youth in DEJ

Some key risks to job decency and areas to fundamentally improve DEJ were outlined by respondents.



- ✘ **Policies:** there should be better policies, for example, specific labour policies for online jobs and an association for DEJ, just like other sectors. This will bring together digital workers and will help in setting standards and regulations for particular job types, for instance, an association for gig platform holders.
- ✘ **Insurance and medical cover:** young people, especially those who were experts in the digital space, mentioned that they would like insurance cover to feel safe and secure while doing DEJ.



## Quotes: What are young people willing or not willing to trade off in DEJ?

“Value and Impact of the DEJ is more important to me. I want to do more. I want to do more. That's all”

“I cannot give up a positive work environment. I have worked for a toxic company and I think it was the worst mistake I ever made in my life. There was so much focus on the management rather on the employees who do the actual work. There was harassment, no opportunity for growth. My advice is that if that company focused more on the people, listening to other their contributions and creating growth opportunities, then they would expand more.”

“I currently spend 8 hours a day doing paid work. I would like to spend less time doing the work, 4 hours a day at least, so that I spend a similar amount of time on other things.”

“I won't give up pay. I won't give up the opportunity for growth. I can give up the aspect of ease in accessing the platforms. I will just push myself to whatever length and learn how to use the specific platform.”

“If the income, terms, and conditions are perfect, then I can sort the issue of availability of tools and resources to be able to deliver the work.”

“I can give up personal growth and accessibility. I cannot give up good pay and flexibility. We have so much to do.”

“A clear job description is a priority for me. I have worked for six companies now, and I there's one of those companies that I removed from my CV from, because I did so many things that didn't fit the role I applied for. In summary, what I value most is the income, a very clear job description, and a good working environment. If I am comfortable working with people, then that is how I will grow and work well.”

## Chapter 7 | Expectations on The Future of Work

This section reveals respondents' understanding of the concept of the future of work, their preparation for the future of work, and their role in it.

### Understanding the Future of Work

With increasing innovation in robotics, artificial Intelligence, and software development, some young people see the future as **disrupted**. They see it changing the normal chain of formal work, a larger shift from physical jobs to DEJ, and more people getting into self-employment, because of the flexibility of DEJ.

However, for Andrew, a young recruiter in the digital space, the future of work is not as high level as people set it to be, what is going to be integrated into the future of work is already being used.

*“The future of work is digital. The future work is exciting, the future work is flexible, all these is made possible through the digital spaces, the digital enabled jobs, and the Internet.”*

*“I think the future work is heavily based on competency. How well we're able to remove the bar entry to keep on being competent is now the question that we should talk about. If someone can do the job regardless of who they are or how old, they are that's the future work.”*

### Key factors in the future of work

- ✘ **Mode of working:** Ways of working is going to change and continue following the current trend of hybrid working
- ✘ **Major shifts in the employment sector:** Self-employment of youths will rise, for example through innovative tech start-ups, which will create employment opportunities and lower national unemployment levels.
- ✘ **Advanced tech jobs:** Technology will substantially reshape employment. It is anticipated that there will be automation and robotics which will take up the normal routine tasks.

- ✘ **Global interconnectedness:** Youths will be able to connect with other jobs beyond their countries. The youths need to have the right skills and knowledge to position them in accessing global opportunities.

## ‘Future of work’ jobs

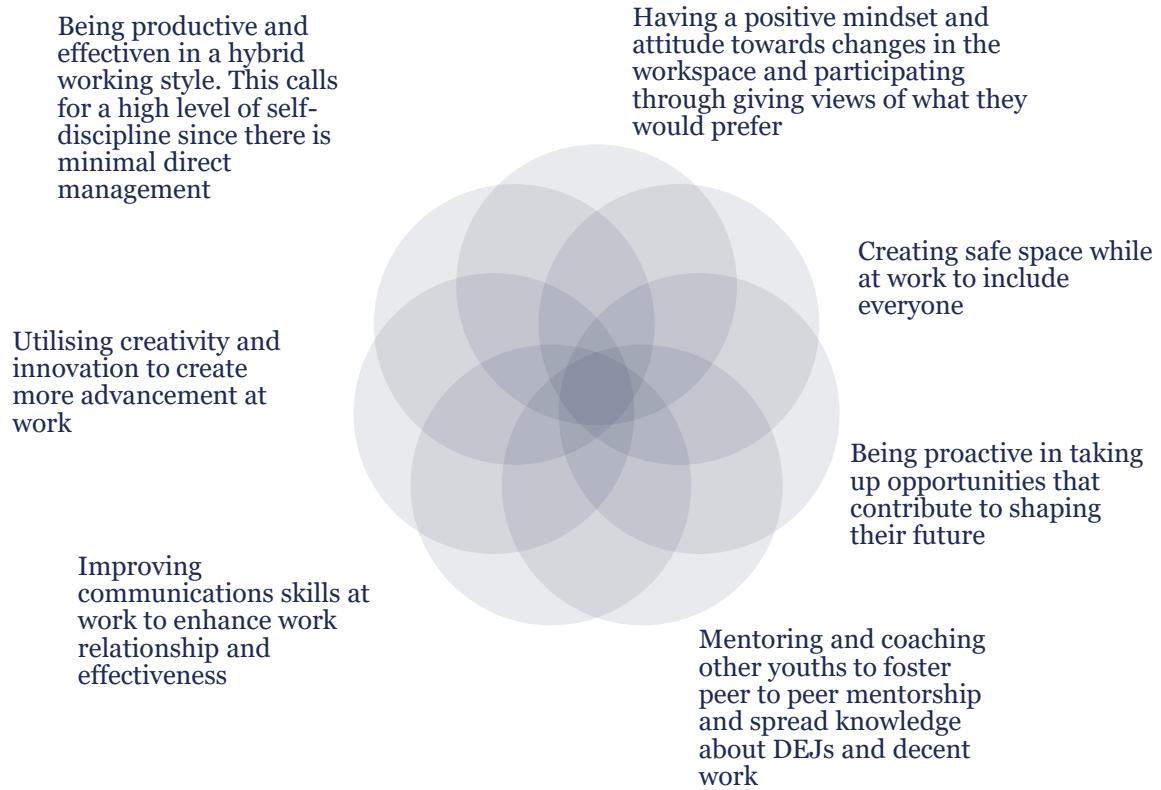
While describing the future of work, young people highlighted some of the jobs they wished to work in, in the future.

- ✘ **E-commerce jobs:** This will contribute to greater self-employment in the business sector by the youth.
- ✘ **Teaching and training jobs:** It is anticipated that more academic and life skills courses will be delivered virtually. This will contribute to creating more jobs for teachers and trainers.
- ✘ **Automation and Robotics:** Youths mentioned that there is a need for skills building regarding advanced technological prospects.
- ✘ **Wellbeing Services:** This is a growing industry and it is addressing several human needs. It came out from the discussions that there is a need for providing more counselling services online. E-counselling will be important in ensuring the mental health and wellness of the youth and enabling youth to be healthy and productive at work.

## Preparedness for the Future of Work

70% of respondents felt prepared for the future of work, and that they have attained some skills that enhance their confidence, are proactive and continually upskill. However, approximately 25% of respondents felt inadequately prepared for the future of work and need more support in terms of skills and knowledge towards the future of work. More than 50% of them are willing to take their own initiative, take up courses and read more to continually keep up with the emerging trends in the future of work, but face financial constraints.

## Respondents outlined what they are doing to be ready for the future of work.



## Chapter 8 | Recommendations

Recommendations for actors across the Jobtech ecosystem emanate from the research's findings. They have been grouped according to actor audience, but a multi-stakeholder response would enhance the sustainability of the impact and is strongly encouraged.

### For Jobtech Alliance (JTA)

- ✘ Help **advocate for Jobtech platforms to adopt the below recommendations** addressed to them.
- ✘ **Keep on building up the learning lab** to inform evidence-based strategies for best practices in the digital economy by all actors in the Jobtech ecosystem.

### For Jobtech Platforms

- ✘ Ensure **prompt payment** and use of payment platforms that are accessible, process payments quickly, and keep transaction fees minimal.
- ✘ **Review rates** of payments periodically to meet emerging economic changes. For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, increased rates of payment would have cushioned freelancers from the adverse economic impacts.
- ✘ Adopt the system of **fair/equal pay** across all service providers regardless of where they originate from geopolitically.
- ✘ Have clear **job descriptions** and terms of reference that relate to the actual deliverables to manage expectations between clients and service providers.
- ✘ Come up with effective **verification technologies** to protect clients and service providers from being scammed by enabling them to distinguish legitimate jobs from scams.
- ✘ **Regulate** opportunities provided in the digital space to focus more on skills and competencies young people have, rather than academic qualifications.
- ✘ Introduce features that promote **exchange learning** and **experiential sharing** amongst service providers to promote a cohesive Jobtech ecosystem.
- ✘ Improve **customer care** where service providers can easily raise complaints and concerns to improve service delivery.
- ✘ Provide **mental health and work stress management programs** to enable optimum support for overall well-being.

## For ILO

- ✘ Factor in young people's perception and aspirations of decent work as brought out in this research to **update the youth mainstreaming approaches** in their programs and **enhance rural youth access** to electricity and the internet.
- ✘ Fund programs that address **marginalised youth** and youth with additional needs that limit access to work and prevent quality delivery. This includes programs that **innovate assistive features** on digitised platforms that can enable, for instance, a blind person to access and deliver work.
- ✘ Champion the review and/or creation of **international policies** that **safeguard the rights and interests of youth** in the labour market across the digital economy. This includes setting a universal minimum wage for service providers as measured per hour, per task, or milestone depending on the nature of work.

## For Government Programs

- ✘ Establish more **ICT centres in rural areas** to increase access to information, skills development, and jobs for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- ✘ Improve of **digital and power infrastructure** in rural areas to facilitate more reliable electricity and stronger internet connectivity.
- ✘ Introduce digital literacy skills in the **school curriculum** from the foundational level to the advanced level to match skills with the dynamic technological evolution thus building a highly employable young generation.
- ✘ Review **labour policies** to ensure employers provide the necessary tools for young people to deliver digitally-enabled work. This includes providing assistive devices or services to Persons with disabilities (PWDs) and providing upskilling opportunities to young employees.
- ✘ Ensure that employers maintain **conducive working environments and policies** to enable young mothers to continue delivering work e.g. safe spaces for breastfeeding in offices, and improved maternity leave policies.
- ✘ **Ban platforms** that are vulnerable to scammers or have been red-flagged to contain scammers.
- ✘ Introduce new, or strengthen existing, policies around formulation boards that **regulate jobs** on digital platforms.

## For CFYE and other Donors

- ✘ Develop strategies for dissemination of this report in the most impactful model that will **inspire action** from all the involved stakeholders in the Jobtech ecosystem.
- ✘ Continue support to youth-led digitally enabled start-ups with innovative business models that **provide solutions** to address challenges captured in this report.
- ✘ Create platforms for **building youth capacity** to enable them to contribute positively to the Jobtech ecosystem.

## For Civil Society

- ✘ Form an **association/union** for digital jobs to enable people in the digital space to contribute to policy development. For example, in the way, SMEs have their association.
- ✘ Create awareness of **skills and work opportunities** for youth in the digital economy from the national to the grassroots level.
- ✘ Advocate for the upscaling and full implementation of **government digital learning and access programs** in rural areas.

## For Youth

- ✘ Accept the challenge that the **digital world is dynamic** and is influencing every aspect of life. This means that youth need to take part in existing opportunities to equip themselves with resilient skills and practices to keep up with emerging technological needs and impacts.
- ✘ Build movements for advocacy to **safeguard their interests and aspirations** in the digital economy. Youth should be proactive in voicing the challenges they face in the digital economy, plus leverage peer-to-peer support networks to access more opportunities in the digital economy.
- ✘ Be procedural and develop a **virtue of patience**, especially towards financial growth when doing digitally enabled work. This will discourage indulgence in illegitimate types of work.



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