

Digital Platforms and the Gender Gap

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About Me



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BACKGROUND

As rapid digital transformations happen, building inclusive digital economies is vital for inclusive growth and achieving gender equality. The platform economy should have a transformative impact that does not exacerbate gender inequalities. According to the 2021 GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report for instance, there are still 74 million unconnected women in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Women are also still less likely to own a mobile phone and are 37% less likely to use mobile Internet compared to men in the region.



Objectives

- ✓ Status/Participation overview

Are women producers and consumers in this economy and to what extent is their participation?

- ✓ Gaps and challenges

What are the gender gaps and challenges in the platform economy?

- ✓ Solutions/Recommendations

How can stakeholders resolve these gaps and challenges?

Priority SDGs for Digital Inclusion

All 17 SDGs are all important. However, these 4 SDGs are key to closing the digital gender divide and ensuring full inclusion.



What is a platform business?

A platform business can be defined as a multisided marketplace that enables the creation, trade and demand matching of micro-services between producers and consumers, through a digital platform.



- Social media platforms e.g facebook, linkedin, twitter
- Review platforms e.g YouTube
- Booking aggregators : booking.com, Expedia
- Retail platforms: Amazon, Etsy, eBay, Alibaba, Jumia
- Gig platforms: Upwork, five rr

Participation highlights

LABOUR PLATFORMS

Occupational segregation-Home care services and beauty work actually skew toward women workers.

Platform labour processes intertwined with economic and social capital and gender relations, gender norms and patriarchal expectations.

MICROTASKING

Far more men than women involved-It is the process of splitting a large job into small tasks that can be distributed, over the Internet, to many people

RIDEHAILING

Ridesharing/driving- skewed towards males .

Few women on the platforms and biases exhibited by some clients on their ability to ride motorbikes.

WOMEN & E-COMMERCE

Jumia/IFC Study-Women are active participants- 35 % of businesses in Côte d'Ivoire and 51 % of businesses in Kenya and Nigeria owned by women

COVID-19

Women disproportionately affected by COVID- 19 -7 % drop in sales.

Reversing this trend is key.

FLEXIBLE WORK

Women value flexible work yet there are few platforms offering that especially for those without high levels of education.

Participation highlights

ALGORITHMIC BIAS

Algorithms and online platforms are not neutral; they are built to frame and drive actions.

Platforms, algorithms, software, data-driven decision-making, and machine learning are shaping choices, alternatives, and outcomes.

CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS

Particularly strong for women workers to join freelancing work- chores at home
Division of labour by gender.

SKILLS GAP

Cloud Computing & AI skills are key.
Element AI research- only 12% of leading machine learning researchers were women and; only 18% of authors at the leading 21 conferences in the field are women
General digital literacy low for women

ASSET OWNERSHIP

Difficult to find female Airbnb owners
In some SSA countries, the gap of participation in gig work mirrors the gap in device ownership and access.

E-COMMERCE BARRIERS

The 'digital divide' (most of the population has no affordable internet access), the low purchasing power of potential consumers and expensive, poorly developed delivery systems.

'Digital gender divide, skills gaps and gendered division of labour are the main barriers to full participation'.

Business Case ?

If women's sales could reach parity with men by 2025, the e-commerce sector could add nearly \$15 billion to the African market by 2030 (IFC-Digital2Equal)

Early predictions put an estimated 2020 market size of regional (SSA) ecommerce at approximately USD 20 Billion, a 42 percent increase since 2019 (Statista 2020)

McKinsey's "Power of Parity" report estimates that narrowing the global gender gap in labour force participation could add US\$12 trillion in global annual GDP by 2025. Narrowing the gender gap in the ICT sector alone would open up a market of US\$50-70 billion.

Solutions Recommendations

PLATFORMS

Collecting sex disaggregated data

Helps in designing for women. Understanding which sectors women operate in and the barriers they face for evidence-based policy formulation.

Boost Trainings and Offerings

Jumia survey- most helpful- 48% of women, versus 40% of men

Leverage Platform Financing

Women are less likely to apply for financing through e-commerce platforms and other emerging fintech options.

Just 7% of women received a loan via Jumia, compared to 11% of men.

Paid Promotions Education

Men are 12 percentage points more likely than women to take advantage of paid offerings such as advertisements.

Encourage entry into High Value Sectors

e.g Jumia-Women performed well in segments like electronics- under-rep in offline stores-lower barrier by ecommerce

PRIVATE SECTOR

Collecting sex disaggregated data

Kenyan work platform Lynk- greater insight into its provider base by disaggregating data and operationalizing programs that increased women's representation in higher earning fields e.g construction.

Creating inclusive employment

Commitments to build gender-smart employment practices.
e.g efforts to hire, retain, or promote women; to provide employer-supported childcare etc
e.g LinkedIn increased women leadership to 56% in 5 years

Designing products and services

Enhance opportunities for women to engage in the digital economy. e.g GlobalX and partners Canva Design bootcamp - program to target and grow women-owned platform businesses and equip women with design skills for gig economy. GlobalX Women in AI Initiative with ITCILO etc

Supporting communities & building

ecosystems

e.g Jumia developed a program to empower 50,000 Nigerian women and youth through online entrepreneurship.

INVESTORS

Provide financing options that are conducive to MSMEs operating in the digital economy

Strategic partnerships with both traditional and alternative finance platforms.

Promote uptake of financial products among women and other underserved groups.

At the start-up stage where women were more dependent on personal savings when launching their businesses.

Holistic financing approaches that also build entrepreneurial capacity.

SME success by supporting entrepreneurs' pursuit of additional training and skills development.

POLICYMAKERS & DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

Expand financial inclusion among underserved groups and women.

African women lag behind men in use of financial tools and mechanisms across every indicator, including mobile phone ownership, mobile money use, and bank account ownership.

Collaborate with platforms to understand and address gaps.

Leverage private sector data to generate insights on gender gaps and to inform policies and programs to address them.

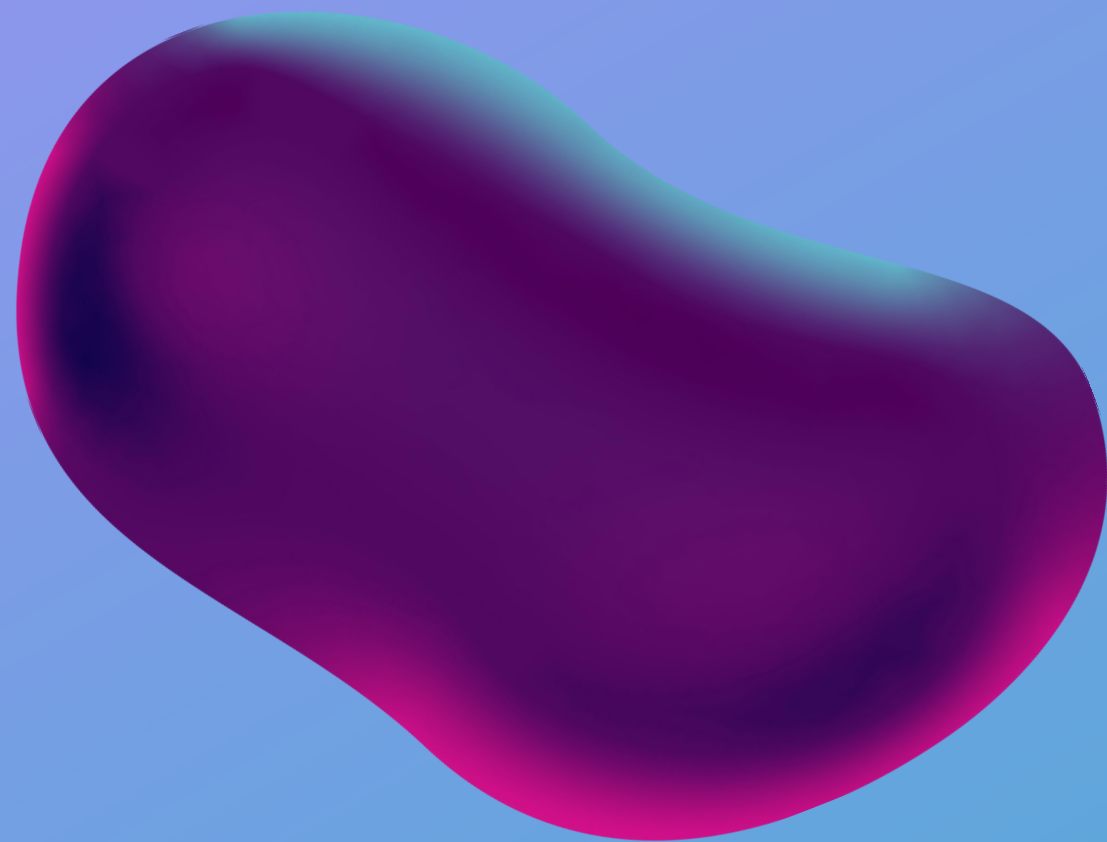
Support policies that expand internet access and reduce the cost of access.

Access, affordability and quality continue to be challenges for many people across Africa..

Only 28 % of Africans used the internet in 2020 (ITU 2020).

Recommendations

Continue to expand digital and internet access for women and girls.



Combination of measures:

- i. continual poverty reduction as digital affordability is a key reason for gender digital gap;
- ii. expansion of digital infrastructure to unserved and underserved communities, especially rural and remote areas e.g satellite
- iii. establishment of free or low-cost public access points that are safe and women-friendly;
- iv. Make Internet-capable devices more affordable for women.
- v. Foster low-cost Internet service packages for low-income people, especially women.

POLICYMAKERS & DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

SUPPORT GROWTH OF TECH ECOSYSTEMS

STEM programs and start-up incubators - impactful triggers for digital innovation.

In Kenya, it is estimated that for every incubator, 32 new companies are launched.

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS

Only six percent of countries in Africa have adequate online consumer protection laws (UNCTAD 2020).

Social protection, equal employment opportunities and labour standards for gig workers.

LOGISTICS CONSTRAINTS

Formal government policies aimed at reducing complications in last mile delivery-e-commerce-lack of addresses.

POLICYMAKERS & DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

MSMES

Promote an enabling environment for MSMEs to rebound from the COVID-19 economic shocks.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Formulate policies for the digital economy -not stifle creativity, innovation & warranted freedoms (internet shutdown).

SOCIAL NETWORKS

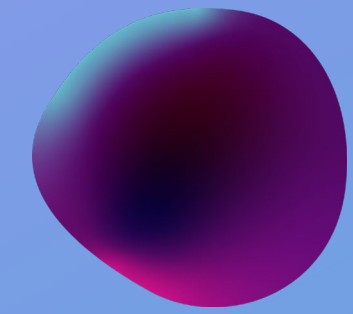
Creating a social network for illiterate populations-dignity in the design by using photos, videos, voice messages for communication.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Women NOT a monolith -understand how gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, indigenous identity, language minority etc interplay with access to and use of digital technology.

OFFLINE/HYBRID TECHNOLOGIES

e.g IVR, USSD where internet connectivity is a challenge no need to wait for available or affordable connectivity.



Recommendations

Supporting female digital entrepreneurship

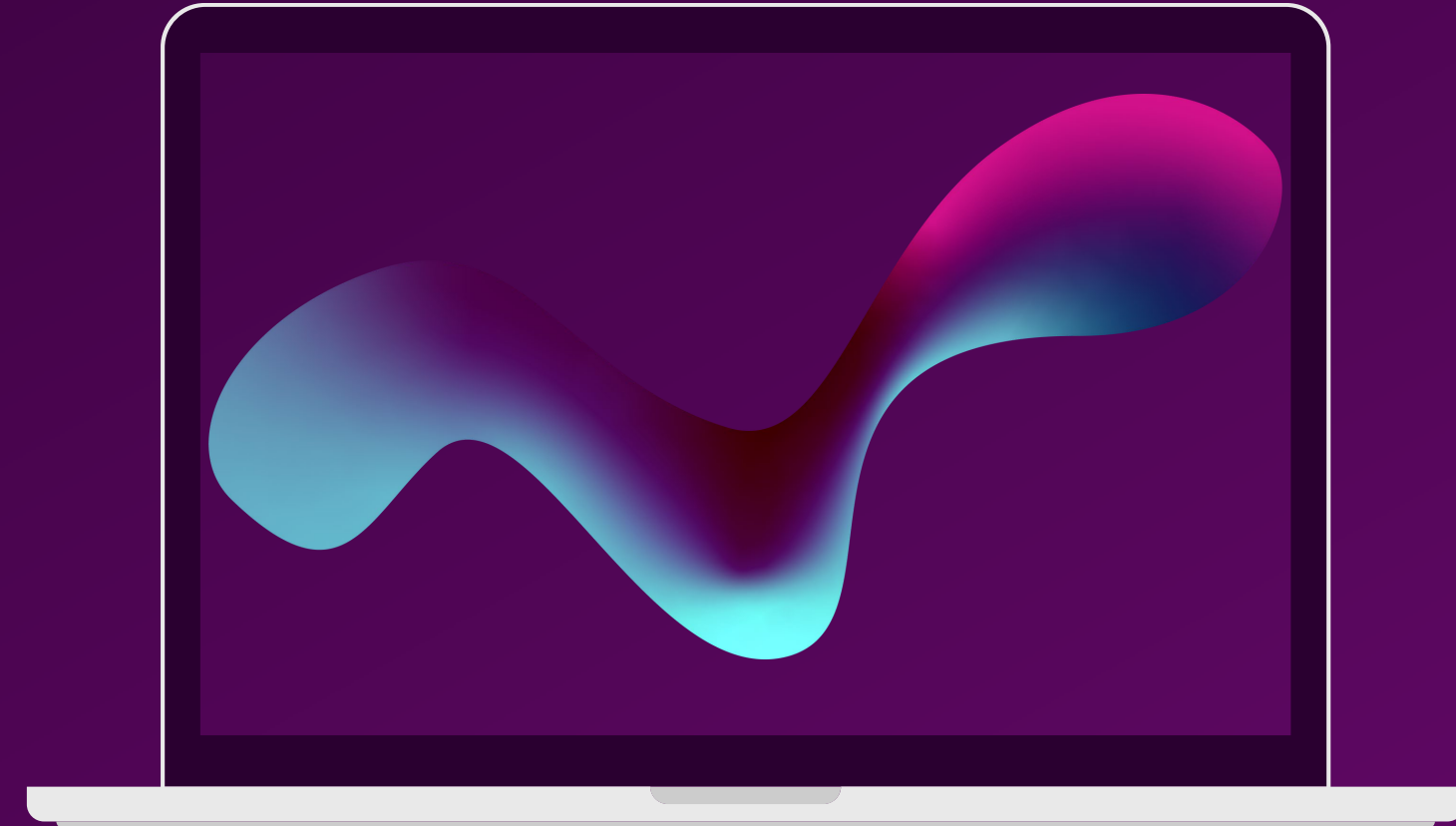
Providing more capacity building projects to help women entrepreneurs harness fintech, apps, mobile and digital platforms for their businesses, as this will help women entrepreneurs take advantage of digital loans etc.

Take measures to encourage women and girls' participation in STEM education

- Creating fund/grant schemes and prizes to assist and encourage women and girls in STEM
- Awards to recognize female role models in hi-tech, with a view to inspire more young women.
- Education scholarships.
- Teaching digital literacy, lifelong-learning and skills development for women and girls is the first step to bridging the gender digital divide.

The platform economy holds huge promise for addressing gender equality by providing alternative means for women to access jobs and start their own ventures.

Conclusion



A multi-stakeholder approach is required to ensure women are participating fully in the platform economy.

- 1) <https://www.gsma.com/r/gender-gap/>
- 2) https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/resources/women-and-ecommerce-africa
- 3) <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>
- 4) <https://www.platformlivelihoods.com/gender/>
- 5) https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/topics_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/gender+at+ifc/priorities/digital_economy_sa/digital2equal
- 6) <https://medium.com/@genderalliance/the-platform-economy-and-gender-in-africa-5029e20f3620>

Resources



Thank You

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