

What is good work? Perspectives of young workers in Nairobi

Briefing Note

May 2020

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“You know if a job is good, it is also rewarding...so money is tied to a good job. It pays you more. So I can say a good job is that one which pays a reasonable amount. And also a good job is also that one which rewards depending on what you’ve done.”

Summary

The Mastercard Foundation has committed itself to ensuring 30 million young people in Africa, particularly young women, secure dignified and fulfilling work. This is not an easy task in countries with very few formal jobs and where export manufacturing—traditionally known for creating mass employment—may not be a viable pathway for African countries competing global markets. In this paper, we examine what “dignified” and “fulfilling” work means to young people themselves, identifying key work attributes that matter to young workers. We find that adequate pay and pay matching one’s contributions are central to good and fulfilling work. “Dignified” and “fulfilling” work does not overlap with all the elements of “good” work that matter to young people. When examining existing work opportunities against these criteria, we find that formal employment often scores poorly compared to self-employment experiences. While job-matching platforms can further enhance self-employment livelihoods, they come up short in their potential for economic transformation and shifting the realities of work in the labor market at large.

Background

Africa has an employment problem. In many economies across the continent, there is widespread unemployment and very few formal “jobs” in the way we imagine full-time work, with a salary, taxation, and certain protections and benefits. In Kenya, only 16% of workers have formal jobs, and this share has been decreasing over time as growth in the informal sector outpaces that of the formal. The ILO (2018) estimated that across Africa, 70% of workers have “vulnerable” work, working for themselves or their families. The youth population bulge means that the slow pace of job creation is becoming an even larger problem. Twelve million youth enter the workforce each year (AfDB, 2018).

While a number of Asian and Latin American countries have expanded employment rapidly through labor-intensive industrialization, the same opportunity does not exist in most African countries. High nominal wages (but low “real” wages) and limited infrastructure (in part due to lower population density) make many countries uncompetitive as large manufacturing destinations. Further, many have resource endowments that create a comparative advantage against manufacturing.¹

¹ Rodrik, McMillan, and Sepulveda, *Structural change, fundamentals, and growth*; African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction, and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, “The Future of Work: Regional Perspectives”; Jerven, *Africa*.

So what should African governments do to create viable livelihoods and advance economic development in this context? Economists recognize that new technologies are creating opportunities for productivity gains in service sectors.² These opportunities could layer on top of what is already a strength in many African economies: large pools of vibrant, self-employed workers.

Previous research demonstrated both the opportunities and constraints around self-employment livelihoods:

- In the Kenya Financial Diaries follow up study in 2015, starting or expanding a business was the most important determinant of increased incomes for study households.³
- Cumulatively, the author's own research in Kenya reveals that self-employment there is viewed as an aspirational livelihood, a huge improvement over casual work (typically ad-hoc manual labor) and even often preferred to formal jobs, which can be a way to accumulate capital to invest in a business.
- The Kenya Financial Diaries showed that self-employment is both a livelihood and a safety net, in the absence of a welfare state. Individuals started businesses with a median of \$6 in capital, helping them get back on their feet after a shock. Anthropologist, James Ferguson argues that if there are 20 vendors selling identical products, all together in the same market, that looks much more like redistribution than a competitive market.⁴
- However, when small businesses in Africa try to grow, they hit a series of bottlenecks stemming from their inability to reach a larger market, even when capital constraints are resolved. This means that many have a portfolio of income sources to meet basic needs in the absence of robust demand or market access.⁵

Platform⁶-mediated livelihoods have the potential to leverage the asset of Africa's entrepreneurial, young workers while 1) addressing demand bottlenecks by better matching buyers and sellers of goods and labor and 2) by growing overall demand by reducing prices. The end result *could be* more jobs, more productive jobs, and more contented workers. This could be particularly relevant for young people. In the US, 16% of people aged 18-29 work in platform work, compared to 8% of adults overall.⁷ Platforms may represent a route to increasing formality of the workforce, which—if managed well—may offer greater benefits to workers and governments as well.

But these technologies are new, and governments world-wide are grappling with what they mean and how they should be managed and regulated. Private actors are also still making sense of the new opportunities and risks emerging alongside Africa's new digital economies.

² Pathways for Prosperity Commission, "Charting Pathways for Inclusive Growth: From Paralysis to Preparation"; African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction, and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, "The Future of Work: Regional Perspectives."

³ Zollmann, "Trickling Down and Climbing Up: Economic Trajectories of Financial Diaries Households Two Years On."

⁴ Zollmann, "Small 'b' Biashara: Self-Employment and Economic Advancement in Financial Diaries Households"; Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish*.

⁵ Zollmann, "Small 'b' Biashara: Self-Employment and Economic Advancement in Financial Diaries Households."

⁶ I use the Caribou Digital definition of platforms: companies that connect many buyers to many sellers through a network. According to Caribou, platforms undertake four productivity-enhancing activities: aggregation and distribution, transaction facilitation, credibility, and information and analysis.

⁷ Smith, "Technology-Enabled Gig Workers and Labor"; Gallup International, "The Gig Economy and Alternative Work Arrangements."

This project sought to explore these issues in a single city, Nairobi, where platforms were already beginning to reconfigure labor markets.⁸ We examined the labor market experiences, expectations, and aspirations of youth working in four sectors impacted by platforms: transportation, work for hire, retail, and digital task outsourcing.

Methodology

We selected 52 individuals ages 18-35⁹ working in four key, platform-affected sectors in Nairobi. We spoke to those working on job-matching sites and those in the same business, but not using the sites. As shorthand, we considered those workers “offline,” though some, especially in retail, marketed their goods and services on social media, more general platforms that less closely control the terms of exchange. We sampled purposively, looking for respondents who fit our criteria and represented a range of experiences working in each sector. Many of these online services were small and it could be difficult to locate potential respondents. In some cases, platforms provided introductions. In others, we recruited through Facebook groups, cold calling e-retailers, and by approaching *boda boda* (motorbike) drivers in their parking areas in targeted parts of Nairobi (Kangemi, Kahawa West, Uthiru, Kasarani).

Table 1: Overview of sample.

	Online		Offline		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
On Demand Labor	3	3	3	3	12
Digital outsourcing	5	6	3	3	17
Retail	5	3	2	3	13
Transport (boda boda)	5	0	5	0	10
TOTAL	18	12	13	9	52

We met respondents in areas convenient for them (often coffee shops, borrowed office spaces, and small cafes) and had in-depth 1-1.5 hour conversations about their work experiences. We used a qualitative interview guide to lead the discussions, recorded and transcribed the interviews, and analyzed both transcripts and researcher notes. As part of the interview, we generated experience maps plotting each individual’s employment journey. We talked extensively about all work experiences online and offline to understand more about young people’s employment options and the key ingredients of “good” and “bad” work experiences more broadly.

Understanding “Good” work

Across the board, when workers talked about the features of work that made an experience “good,” they mentioned **compensation**. Good work must have good pay, they explained. Pay is the main reason anyone works, they reminded us.

Good pay had two key attributes. One, it was sufficient to cover all of your needs, beyond survival basics. In a context in which there are many workers, and few jobs, many types of work do not cover all

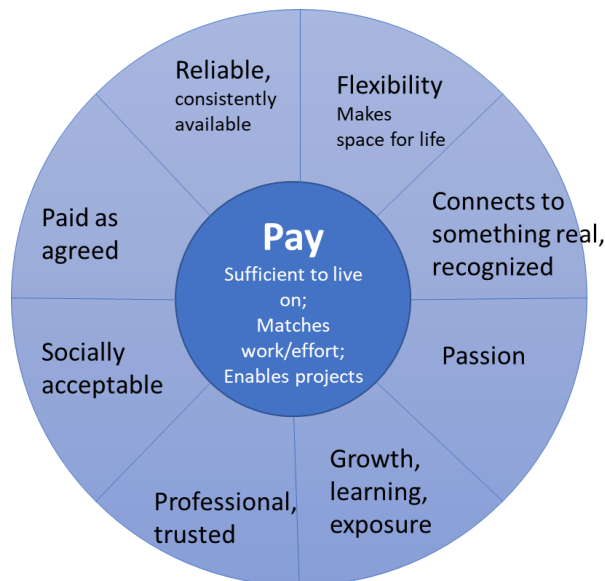
⁸ Onkokame, Schoentgen, and Gillwald, “What Is the State of Microwork in Africa? A Fiew from Seven Countries.”

⁹ We also interviewed two older respondents, both 49, to have some perspective on the experiences of young people.

of your needs. “Good work covers more than food,” we were told, and removes the stress from figuring out how to pay for rent, send money to elderly parents or younger siblings still in school. It is even better if it allows for savings so that one can invest in personal projects that make them feel they are advancing financially, such as buying livestock, plots of land, building houses, or investing in a family farm.

Second, to be paid well was to have pay that was commensurate with your effort. If you work more, you should be paid more, people felt. Very few formal jobs lived up to this expectation. Many talked about working very long hours, often six or seven days a week, but being paid a flat salary, regardless of the hours worked or the earnings of the business they supported. One worker raved about his work at a business process outsourcing company, simply because he was paid by the hour and not a fixed amount, where the employer extracted as much of his time as they could. Self-employed options, such as riding a motorbike, got much closer to this ideal of commensurate pay. Riders could work as much or as little as they wanted to in order to hit personal earnings targets.

Figure 1: Good work has pay at the core.



While other work attributes also matter to a worker’s happiness and level of commitment, it is not possible for a job to be truly “good” without sufficient and commensurate pay.

Workers also placed a high value on **flexibility**, meaning that their working hours should make space for them to manage other parts of their lives, including child care, family time, social lives, church, sleep, and leisure. Fixed schedules with long hours were very hard to accommodate, even for men with few at-home responsibilities. They complained about work that required them to leave home before sunrise and return home late at night after navigating Nairobi traffic. Flexibility did not necessarily mean working at any time the worker wanted to be working or earning extra cash. Many workers were content with reasonable fixed schedules and moveable shifts in formal jobs and also valued the ability to set their own schedules when working independently or through a platform.

In theory, platforms offer flexible work options. This is an attribute many [platforms](#) vocally [trumpet](#). However, workers told us that surface-level “flexibility” can be a mirage. Ride hailing drivers in our complementary study told us that in order to pay for their asset, they were forced to work very long hours at least six days per week. No, you don’t have to show up, but if you don’t you can’t pay the car owner or the bank for your car loan.

Those working in digital outsourcing talked about needing to work long, unusual hours, usually overnight, to communicate with clients, complete assignments on time, and do revisions within required windows. They were constantly on call. In order to have a social life at all, many young men in this field live together in large flats with work stations provided by the account holders they work under. The only people they can socialize with are their colleagues who keep similar, unpredictable work hours. Young women were not allowed in these shared accommodations, with group leaders worried it could put the young women at risk or cause disorder in the business operation.

One platform used to connect domestic workers to clients purchasing home cleaning services. This offered workers—often women—flexible hours, typically taking one client per day starting around 8 or 9am. When this platform changed to offering cleaning services to offices and other commercial properties, those clients demanded cleaning start before office workers arrived, around 6am. For one of our female respondents with two children at home, including one with special needs, this was impossible. She couldn’t get both of her kids to school by this time. Though she would still be able to turn down jobs, there were no longer any that fit her schedule. The work was no longer “flexible.” Similarly, others working in this on-demand labor space, like plumbers and electricians, had to work around their clients’ schedules rather than their own, even if there were some space for negotiation. If clients had full time jobs, the plumber might have to come late in the evening or even on a weekend to do their work. Genuine “flexibility” requires the ability to sometimes turn down work and still earn a sufficient living. Not all platforms can deliver on that.

“Even if I get to work late, nobody will ask me or shout at me asking why I am late. That is why I love it. Sometimes I am called for other meetings just when I was about to go to clean. So, I have to call a client and tell them, I can't come to clean now, because I have a meeting in school, and I will come at this time...That is why I love this job because it is not like an office job whereby if you are told you should report at 8, you have to be there at 8. That is challenging.”

“Academic writing is just, sometimes it is very stressful. Sometimes a client will wake you up at night for a revision. If you don't revise, all that work is cancelled, and maybe you already spent like two days working on it.”

The young workers we met also appreciated work that gave them **exposure** to new geographies, new cultures, and people who were outside their normal social networks, especially people who were wealthier than them. When young people had work that allowed them to travel to new cities or even fancier neighborhoods, it helped them to imagine how their own lives could be different. It felt inspiring. One young man, commenting on the struggles of youth in his informal settlement thought government should invest more in exposure, showing young people something new, giving them new ideas and affirming their dignity as people—citizens!—worthy of travel. When a worker took a job for the first time, he or she might be introduced to people from different religions, wealth levels, or parts of

the country for the very first time. They looked back on those experiences grateful to have learned to cooperate with others, to accept them, to bridge socio-economic divides.

“This is a job that is free, at least you explore. By the way, it opens your eyes. You get a request, maybe you are going to Karen.¹⁰ You see the nature there or [a nice house or] something, and you feel like you are also interested. At the end of the day, it opens your eyes and you develop that mind of wanting to make something like that. It gives you determination and then at the end of the day you still see that you are earning. It helps you to pay the bills.”

“A lot of people are giving up. They end up doing drugs, drinking whatever little they’ve earned. [Government should] take this youths to the Coast, show them another life. Train them to clean the beaches. They could take those ones from Mombasa to Nairobi. Reshuffle them. Give them a new environment, and give them a new lease of life. They have never been to Mombasa. I am sure they will be happy and at the coast they will have no idea where that can get the drugs from. But if you give them a kibarua (casual work) here in Kangemi when they get payment they will go back and drink.”

Jobs that enable **learning** were also highly valued. Even if the job didn’t measure up as “good” (usually because of the pay), workers could look back fondly if it taught them new information or technical skills. Jobs that didn’t require much engagement, much skill, or new challenges were considered monotonous and not very helpful in building a career, which is on the minds of many young people. Learning was not a feature of some platform work, like driving a boda boda or working in retail (for some). Some workers even worried that being on their own made it hard to learn, to force themselves to learn new things without the company requiring it of them.

“[In my electrician attachment,] it was perfect. I improved on speed and the way I think. They told me many things, yaani, yaani, ‘Your head has to go faster than a clock. You have to have speed with your hands. Your hands must go as fast. You don’t do what the mind has told you.’”

I: So between the transcription and the data entry that you do every day which one do you enjoy?

R: I think transcription is much better.

I: Why?

R: Because you see you can get transcription that is talking about a particular subject, and maybe you never knew about the subject. You get to learn something from it. While for data entry it is just the same thing over and over again.”

Young workers recognize that they don’t have all the skills and experience they need to build lifetime careers, but they are looking for the possibility of **upward mobility**. If they are in a job, they hope that job offers promotions, chances to move up a career ladder by becoming a supervisor or moving into a bigger job. In many situations, though, this is not possible. A restaurant, for example, often has only one manager position. Retail shops typically have none.

In self-employment, upward mobility can be achieved through expanding the existing business, enabling investment in other businesses, or enabling personal investments in things like a home, a motorbike, a

¹⁰ An upmarket suburb of Nairobi.

piece of land, or farming activities. Boda boda riders confided that—though their work rarely changed—they earned enough to save. They earned more than people thought, often on par with middle class “office jobs,” and the savings that enabled allowed them to feel they were growing even if they did the same work for years on end. While platforms were not really designed for career laddering, some workers are building this in themselves by recruiting and managing teams to work with them to service clients on their online accounts.

“I got a chance to lead a team of like 20 people. I liked that experience a lot, because I learned something different.” [temporary, back to old job after]

“With academic writing, there are no promotions. There are no, what do you call them,...the experiences. Other than writing and reading, there are no other experiences and at the end of the day. You will not get a certificate. You will not put this on your CV.”

Workers also appreciated work environments where they were **trusted** to do a good job, where they felt their work was valued, and they were treated with kindness. By contrast, workers were quickly frustrated in situations where there was overbearing supervision or employers seemed to cater only for the demands and needs of clients rather than also caring about the needs of workers.

“Bad work is where you are not given room to do work by yourself, where there is constant supervision, supervision that means that you can’t be trusted with work. That’s bad work, and, usually, again it is work that has very little payment.”

“A good job is also that one which takes care of both the client and the worker. You know there are some jobs which are only client oriented. So the boss doesn’t care about the worker...If he takes care of you as a worker and the client also, it’s good.”

While they were less of a priority, workers also preferred work that:

- Allowed for personal **growth** and developing soft skills like confidence, problem solving, and communication;
- Offered **perks** like tips, product samples, or educational opportunities; and
- Was **not physically demanding**.

Only one respondent in the entire sample seemed to value the typical package of employment **benefits** on offer in Kenya. This includes remittance of pay as you earn (PAYE) tax, health care (NHIF), and a government pension (NSSF). Everyone else felt these benefits were not very important. They were viewed as an unhelpful tax on already low wages. Workers did not think they offered reliable benefits. They are aware that oftentimes companies deduct PAYE tax from workers without remitting the funds to the tax authority, putting workers in a double bind. They felt that NHIF was often low value, could be paid for outside of employment, and often failed to pay out in the case of real need. Similarly, several felt like workers never got their savings back from NSSF after retirement. Even if you have benefits, you need strong back up plans to cater for health emergencies and retirement.

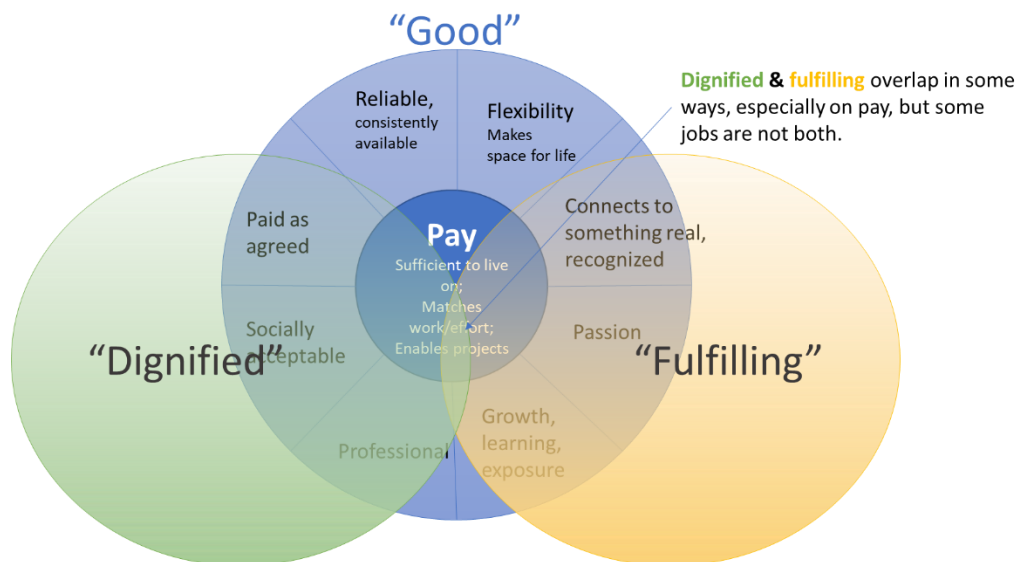
“What I don't know is whether you benefit from that NSSF after retirement. No one has ever told me that you are actually given the money.”

“About NHIF, NSSF benefits, for me, no. It is not a must because I don't think I need NHIF. I just need to get a good job, I get enough money I can get private insurance, because NHIF nowadays is a scam.”

Dignified and Fulfilling Work

When we specifically probed workers' views on what made for “dignified” and “fulfilling” work, we saw that there were many attributes that overlapped with understandings of “good” work. But we also saw that “dignified” and “fulfilling” did not cover everything that mattered in terms of good work. We heard that some work is fulfilling without being dignified, and vice versa.

Figure 2: “Good” work covers more than dignified and fulfilling work.



Again, compensation comes into the picture whether we are talking about “good,” “dignified,” or “fulfilling work.” Working for pay is part of human dignity. There’s something righteous people felt about taking care of their own financial well-being and earning “honest” pay rather than claiming resources from others through social networks or theft. Similarly, work could be “fulfilling” when it rewarded workers’ efforts, covered their basic needs, and allowed them to advance financially, particularly in visible personal investments.

When respondents talked about **dignified** work, they told us that it involves:

- **Working for pay**—Able to meet your needs, you have financial independence, you earn from ‘honest’ labor;
- **Doing things that are socially respected**—Activities that are considered legal and morally upright; if you have a university degree the work should fit your social status;
- **Fair treatment**—You are treated with respect, paid in full, as agreed, and on time; humanity and personal needs are acknowledged;

- **Professionalism and integrity**—You are able to do the work to a high professional standard;
- **Solving a real problem**—Addresses a real need, rather than being something trivial or just enabling laziness; and
- **Being easy on the body**—Not viewed as “dirty” or overly taxing on one’s body.

“Cleaning and washing gives me dignity. I consider it dignified because that is what gives me everything.”

“R: The way they were handling us was not good. I told my mother that let them change me and take me to another place.

I: Why are you saying that you were not handled well?

R: You know in these places, the way you are always talked to is in a mean way. You can work with somebody, and he refuses to pay you knowing very well that there is no place you will take them, something like that.”

Work is **fulfilling**, they said, when the work:

- **Pay enables projects** – Earnings are sufficient to save and invest in personal projects that display financial advancement in life;
- **Is able to satisfy others**—Makes customers happy, feel proud of jobs well done, get feedback and acknowledgement of your work;
- **Connects to passion**—Is related to worker’s passions, ambitions, talents, and skills; it suits the worker and makes them feel they could hone their skills and become “the best”;
- **Advances capabilities**—Constantly learning, growing technical and business capacities; and
- **Allows for accomplishment**—Are able to face and overcome challenges; there is some space for creatively solving problems and recognizing opportunities in the market.

“A fulfilling job is one that gives you good money. Like when I was selling muguka (miraa) in Uganda illegally. The person who introduced me said I could sell a batch for 90 shillings but each time I went I raised the price by 20 shillings until I sold a batch at ksh180. Dignified work is like this one for selling clothes. It’s legal.”

“What makes work fulfilling? When I see my clients are happy. When I see that feedback from the client. They say wow! This is it! I feel so good. I feel content and satisfied. That’s my biggest joy, to see the client happy. For example you might have googled a thing. ‘Make for me this table,’ and I come and I make it the way it actually is. Perfectly. Oh, the clients feels...she is happy or he is happy. I feel good, I feel—wow!—I am contented. That’s it.”

Our respondents told us that no amount of dignity or respectability can make up for low compensation. Many respondents worked as teachers temporarily. They talked about how rewarding this was for them emotionally and how much respect they received for this work. People would call them “mwalimu” (teacher) in public, and it felt good to be involved in students’ lives. But, the pay was very low. They simply felt the work was unsustainable and offered little hope of getting to a place where earnings would ever be sufficient.

At the same time, many others engaged in work they felt was in a moral grey zone. Many with university degrees now struggle to find jobs during and after their programs. They often get involved with the large, well-paying academic writing market, doing homework for students in Europe, Australia, and North America. They twisted themselves in knots justifying the morality of their work. Many workers talked about some moment in their history where they felt forced to take some kind of job that sacrificed their dignity in some way, but they rarely looked back with remorse. Dignity was a luxury. Sometimes it was your interpretation of “dignity” that had to change rather than the work itself.

“When I was a mechanic, I used to think I can't ride a motorbike for a living. I would have been ashamed. Now I am depending on it.”

“I don't know how I would understand the issue of dignified work, because there are some jobs that you can do while lying to yourself. It is very difficult for somebody like me who has been wearing those suits and everything to come here and stand in this place and say he is a boda boda rider.”

“I: Is there any kind of work that you look at and then you are like I can never do that?”

“I: You don't feel guilty [about doing assignments for students in the West]?”

R: It depends. You cannot tell in life, life is funny. You cannot say I cannot do this job. You can say I cannot do it then the next day you find yourself doing it.”

R: I could, but now the economy is not allowing me to.

I: The economy doesn't allow you to feel guilty?”

R: But in a way you also understand the clients, because it's not an exam I am doing for them; it's just these normal assignments. Ten marks, twenty marks, thirty marks...things that only contribute thirty percent of his degree or final grade so...”

How do work options measure up?

Many of the employment options available to young Kenyans score poorly on workers' own criteria for good, dignified, and fulfilling work. With so few jobs available, employers can set terms that few workers find acceptable and still fill the roles. Often a young person's first job is obtained through a family member, and that seems to make them even more vulnerable to being forced to work very long hours for poor pay. Formal jobs are often not particularly stable or reliable, either, meaning employment is not an escape from risk and income volatility. The most highly desired jobs for young people without university degrees are in big institutions like government or large factories where careers can be built. But young people complain that one must have political connections or be able to afford large bribes to obtain those jobs.

For those with university degrees, jobs are very scarce, and employers seem to demand five years of professional experience first before a worker is eligible for a job. Getting that experience is extremely difficult. Internships or “attachments,” as they are called in Kenya, rarely result in employment offers. Many young people have to do unrelated work just to survive, blocking paths to more professional careers. Many of those doing academic writing just after university are relieved that they can make a decent living—often upwards of \$500 per month—but they worry that this experience can't go on their

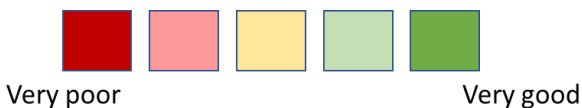
CVs and is not preparing them for the careers they hoped for. They are often ashamed about being unable to find and hold onto more “career-oriented,” white collar jobs. They feel their parents and others who financed their educations are disappointed in what they have become even if their earnings surpass what might have been possible in employment.

Still, they tend to be very happy that they finished university. Even if it didn’t place them in a career, it “opened their minds,” built their networks and confidence, and taught them important research and communication skills.

Self-employment—at all levels of education—seems to score much better on criteria for “good work.” The biggest challenge, though, is making sure one has sufficient client numbers to sustain the work. Without clients, workers would prefer employment, even if it’s low paying. Self-employment with sufficient customers could deliver much better scores in terms of adequate and commensurate pay, flexibility, learning, upward mobility, and trust. The odds of landing “good work” were much higher in self-employment. Young people knew this, and even when working in employment aspired to self-employment livelihoods.

Figure 3: How employment and self-employment tend to measure up against “good” work criteria

	Typical Employment Experience	Self-employment Experiences
Pay		
Flexibility		
Exposure		
Learning		
Upward mobility		
Growth		
Perks		
Trust & Empathy		
Mental, not physical		<i>Depends, but allows savings and mobility away from pure labor-based work</i>



Towards better work

Job matching platforms can make self-employment options more accessible for many, offer better work options, and partly address the productivity challenges of an atomized work force. First of all, platforms aggregate demand and solve the central problem of so many workers: accessing sufficient client volumes. Being able to solve this problem for large numbers of workers requires delivering sufficient efficiencies to lower the marginal price of services, thereby growing total demand without harming worker wages. While this appears to be happening in the *boda* sector, the impact on wages is less clear for ride hailing drivers. In other sectors, this may not be possible, and platforms face low limits on scale

by serving only upmarket clients. This is still very good for workers, who benefit from the steady stream of clients who are able to pay for quality services. But, it means few workers may be absorbed.

Whether platforms deliver flexibility depends on their scale and design. Right now, there are few truly flexible platform opportunities available that cater to women workers, fitting around their domestic responsibilities while still offering a livable wage. There are more options for women with higher levels of education who can participate in more sophisticated markets, like e-commerce.

Platforms can enhance worker dignity by connecting them with clients outside their normal social circles, ensuring the terms of the work engagement are clear, protecting workers from clients who try to underpay, providing training that enhances professionalization, and providing things like uniforms and titles that advance this professional image.

Still, we should be very cautious about thinking that platforms are the solution to bad work in Kenya. Such an extremely atomized workforce can have disastrous consequences for macro productivity. Even better self employment options can make it hard for firms to attract and retain the best talent at market rate salaries.

Creating good work for millions of young people rather than thousands demands a different approach, one that addresses the systemic barriers that make it so difficult to grow large, productive firms. To do that, government likely needs to address many systemic barriers to business growth, including widespread corruption, periodic negative demand shocks surrounding elections, abrupt policy changes that kill certain businesses overnight, the proliferation of bureaucratic regulation, extortive enforcement of such regulation, and the opacity of regulatory procedures, in particular poor management of the port. Without genuine commitment to these systemic challenges, gains in worker welfare from platforms offer only marginal improvements to young workers.