

# The Future of Work

## GENDER PARITY IN A CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

SIMON FAVOUR OTETA, NIGERIA

[favouroteta@gmail.com](mailto:favouroteta@gmail.com)

Profound transformations across labour markets in Africa will present important new opportunities to improve gender parity in the workplace. Africa has made poor progress towards gender equality over decades, but significant gaps persist in workforce participation and leadership positions. Major disruptions in the labour market have begun that could have profound implications for gender equality. Automation and artificial intelligence, for example, will displace many workers while, simultaneously, increasing investments, rising incomes or ageing population trends will create new jobs that require skills in short supply.

Depending on how it unfolds, the “future of work” could drive gender equality—or hinder it. Our new research shows that many dynamics could favour women, and that many challenges can and should be turned into opportunities. More important is that these shifts will present major new opportunities for women in some sectors that are likely to grow. For example, women in both countries are well-positioned in the growing health care and social assistance sector and will benefit from dominant positions in some of the sector’s occupations that will grow fastest, including health aides, therapists and physicians.

Women’s prospects are not as bright in some other sectors and occupations. In the professional, scientific and technical sectors, for example, women hold more than their current share in the overall workforce in occupations that we believe will shrink, such as clerical and office support, and are underrepresented in occupations likely to grow, such as computer engineering. They are also underrepresented in the manufacturing sector,



16km Harare/Bulawayo  
Road,  
P. O. Box 6097  
Harare



00 263 242 2210191-8  
00 263 712 616835



[arlac@arlac.co.zw](mailto:arlac@arlac.co.zw)



[www.arlac.co.zw](http://www.arlac.co.zw)



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especially in engineering occupations. To capture the growth opportunities in those sectors, they will need to master specific new skills and reorient their careers.

The demand for three skill categories technological, social and emotional and higher cognitive skills should grow the most over the next decade. While women overall have great strengths in these categories, they lag men in others, such as advanced technological skills and haven't yet captured their fair share of leadership positions.

Helping women gain the most valuable new skills "right-skilling" and ensuring that they are fairly represented in those efforts will require concerted actions by governments, educational institutions, companies and other public and private institutions. Leaders across these organizations will need to help their stakeholders understand the importance of right-skilling for both women and men and create transparency about major shifts in demand for labour.