

Qualitative Research Report of findings

Exploring Key Issues in the Domestic Worker
Financial services market



Report of findings

Domestic Workers Research Report
August 2021
By: Global Research Insights©

List of abbreviations

GRI – Global Research Insights®

FSD- Financial Sector Deepening.

FGD- Focus Group Discussions

IDI- In Depth interview

KII- Key Informant Interview

MoL- Ministry of labour

GoK- Government of Kenya

KUDHEHIA- Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers

ILO- International Labour Organization

CDTD- The Center for Domestic Training and Development

HCM- The Home Care Management

NSSF- National Social Security Fund

NHIF-National Health Insurance Fund

COVID-19-Corona virus disease

CAPI- Computer Aided Personal Interviewing

SPSS- Statistical programme for Social Sciences

ToR- Terms of Reference

WEL- Women Empowerment Link

WHO- World Health Organization

BoP- Bottom of the pyramid (low-income consumer)

QC- Quality Control

The Treasury- The National Treasury (Kenya)

KRA- Kenya Revenue Authority

KNBS- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics



Summary & Objectives

The financial services study among domestic workers was designed to employ different techniques within the wider proposed qualitative research methodology retained for the study. In preparation for field work on the financial status of domestic workers in Kenya, Global Research Insights (GRI) conducted a preliminary Desk research to determine the current financial standing of domestic workers in Kenya: their opportunities, their challenges, their financial needs and how technology can be used as a panacea, trends in the development of domestic work as well as the impact of Covid-19 on this segment. The findings from this phase informed the design of the next phases of the data collection.

General Objectives

To find out how domestic workers in Kenya leverage formal and informal financial solutions in managing their daily obligations, invest for the future and mitigate risk.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Identify challenges/opportunities that domestic workers have in the real economy and what role finance plays.
2. Establish formal/informal financial solutions they use (advantages and disadvantages)
3. Identify unmet domestic worker's financial needs. (How Homecare (HCM) App. and Power App. can address these needs)
4. Review power's financial offering and FSD Kenya's credit risk fund support.
5. Find out key trends and developments in the Kenyan domestic work industry. (Impact of Covid 19, digital platforms similar to HCM available and how technology can be used to innovate more value enhancing financial status).





Methodology

This study was conducted through a qualitative research methodology. The choice of methodology was informed by the need to delve into the lives of the domestic worker in Kenya. The qualitative methodology was further designed to offer a 360-degree outlook of the domestic worker. Hence our approach included:

- Desk/ secondary data research phase
- Focus group discussions (FGDs) among workers
- Ethnography observations of the workers
- Key informant interviews (KIIs)
- In-depth interviews (IDIs)

The multiple research techniques employed in this study served to better understand and clearly explain observed behaviour, claims from the workers as well as understand the policy perspective guiding the domestic worker sector in Kenya.

Sampling design & Coverage

The various methodological technics involved in this study were majorly **Qualitative** in nature. All assertions and claims in this report are further backed by data from the desk research phase of the study. The study ostensibly covered the major cities of the country in order to understand regional, economic as well as other cultural differences that may influence attitudes towards financial management among the domestic workers.

Sample and Coverage

The study was conducted via 4 distinct methodological steps. i.e.

1. Desk research, covering documented secondary data from various sources
2. Focus Group discussions (FGDs) with target persons (domestic workers)
3. In depth interviews (IDIs) with employers and key informant interviews with other stakeholders
4. Ethnography follow up with domestic workers

The tables below show the **persons** interviewed at every stage of the study.

Desk research:

The Desk or secondary data research was conducted by sourcing information from institutions, NGOs, published information on labour, legal and welfare issues of domestic workers in Kenya. The sources of information are quoted and acknowledged in the Desk research report.

The sample selection was undertaken carefully with consultation with the partner research team who included FSDA, FSDK, CDTD.

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Focus group discussions (FGDs)

| Description | Number of FGDs | Age | Gender | Level of education | Range of income |
|----------------|----------------|-------|--------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Living in-home | 2 | 18-30 | Female | Group 1: up to primary school | Group 1: 5000/= and below |
| | | 18-30 | Male | Group 2: past primary school | Group 2: over 5000/= |
| Living in-home | 1 | 31-40 | Female | Group 1: Up to primary school | Group : over 5000/= |
| | | | | Group 2: past primary school | |
| Living out | 2 | 18-30 | Female | Group 1: up to primary school | Group 1: 5000/= and below |
| | | | | Group 2: past primary school | Group 2: over 5000/= |
| Living out | 1 | 31-40 | Female | Past primary school level | 5000/= and above |
| | | | | | |
| Full time | 2 | 18-30 | Female | Group 1: up to primary school | Group 1: 5000/= and below |
| | | | | Group 2: past primary school | Group 2: over 5000/= |
| Full time | 1 | 31-40 | Female | Post primary school level | 5000/= and above |
| | | | | | |
| Part time | 2 | 18-30 | Female | Group 1: up to primary school | Group 1: 5000/= and below |
| | | | | Group 2: past primary school | Group 2: over 5000/= |
| Part time | 1 | 31-40 | Female | Post primary school level | 5000/= and above |
| | | | | Post primary school level | 5000/= and above |
| Full time | 1 | 18-30 | Female | All within CDTD network | |

In-depth interviews (IDIs) and Key Informant interviews (KIIs):

| KII respondent | Number of respondents | Region |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Employers (Mid & High income) | 6 per Location | Nairobi, Kisumu & Mombasa |
| 2. Social welfare consultant | 1 | Nairobi |
| 3. Informal financial services expert | 1 | Nairobi |
| 4. Financial services expert-Banking | 1 | Nairobi |
| 5. Union official (KUDHEIHA) | 1 | Nairobi |
| 6. CDTD Representative | 1 | Nairobi |
| 7. Power HC representative | 1 | Nairobi |
| 8. Microfinance representative | 1 | Nairobi |
| 9. Chama representatives | 1 | Nairobi |
| 10. Labour law expert | 1 | Nairobi |
| 11. Digital trends expert | 1 | Nairobi |
| 12. NGOs dealing with domestic worker issues | 1 | Nairobi |
| 13. NEA,NITA | 2 | Nairobi |
| 14. NSSF/NHIF | 2 | Nairobi |

Ethnography follow up sessions:

The ethnography phase of the study was conducted among domestic workers. The sample mirrored the target respondents selected in the FGDs, with each respondent providing information on their behavioural patterns over a 10-day period.

| Description | Number of participants | Age | Gender | Level of education |
|----------------|------------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|
| Living in-home | 4 | 2- 18-30 | 2 Male | 2-Upto primary school |
| | | 2- 31-40 | 2 Female | 2- past primary school |
| Living out | 4 | 2- 18-30 | 2 Male | 2-Upto primary school |
| | | 2- 31-40 | 2 Female | 2- past primary school |
| Full time | 4 | 2- 18-30 | 2 Male | 2-Upto primary school |
| | | 2- 31-40 | 2 Female | 2- past primary school |
| Part time | 4 | 2- 18-30 | 2 Male | 2-Upto primary school |
| | | 2- 31-40 | 2 Female | 2- past primary school |

Background:

Definition:

According to section 2. of both the *Employment Act* and *Labour Relations Act*, an employee is a person employed for wages or a salary and includes an apprentice and indentured learners. Domestic workers are also employees within the meaning of the law.

Domestic work is thus defined as “work performed in or for a household or households”. The term “domestic worker” means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship. (ILO Convention 189). Domestic work can therefore be deduced as work that is done in a household with payment in exchange of services rendered.

Domestic workers work round the home. They include, but not limited to: cleaners, cooks, drivers, bakers, baby sitters, guards and gardeners.

Domestic work has been an International Labour Organization (ILO) concern since 1948 when it adopted a resolution concerning the conditions of employment for domestic workers and later in 1965 adopting a resolution calling for normative action in this area.

In realizing the lack of clear guidance on how to address the specificity of domestic work, in June 2010, the ILO convened governments, workers and employers from more than 180 member states for its annual International Labour Conference (ILC) with the aim of discussing among other things new international labour standards for domestic workers.

Recent years have witnessed increasing attention being paid to domestic work globally. In 2008, the ILO estimated that 100 million people work in domestic service globally. According to the ILO, the increasing number of people involved in domestic work can be explained by the ageing of societies, the intensification of work and the frequent lack or inadequacy of policy measures to facilitate the reconciliation of family life and work.

In 2006. The World Bank observed that the rate of population growth in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is the highest in the world. In another study it was found that young people make up 30% of the fastest growing proportion of Africa’s population.

Objectives:

The objective of this study is to conduct baseline analysis of how domestic workers in Kenya leverage formal and informal financial solutions in managing their day-to-day obligations, invest for the future and mitigate risks. This research will therefore explore:

1. The challenges and opportunities that domestic workers face in the real economy and what role does finance play?
2. Formal and informal financial solutions/ instruments they use and what advantages and disadvantages these present?
3. The unmet domestic workers' financial needs and how both the **Homecare app** and **Power app** can be used to address these needs? This should look at even strengthening some of the informal services.
 - a. The Power App. solution will be reviewed with clear recommendations on what should be changed or added in order to make financing work for the target sector with clear solutions and the process (operability).
4. Review Power's financial offering and FSD Kenya's credit risk fund support. Identify paths to sustainability and scale-up by leveraging commercially available de-risking instruments that are readily available such as the government's SME credit guarantee fund as well as other relevant lines of finance?
5. Identify key trends and developments in the Kenyan domestic work industry? Specifically;
 - a. How has Covid-19 impacted this segment?
 - b. Which digital platforms akin to the HCM app are currently available?
 - c. How can technology be leveraged to innovate more value enhancing financial solutions for this segment?

Scope of work:

The full scope of work was shaped during the briefings and discussions at the initial phases of this project. The key activities included:

1. Definition of key hypotheses and research design
2. Desk top research to map out the following;
 - a. The state of the domestic workers segment in Kenya and its contribution to GDP and its importance.
 - b. Key technologies and platforms that currently target domestic workers creating a gig economy
 - c. Summary of findings in an inception report
3. Field research to:
 - a. Understand the financing dynamics of domestic workers, i.e. how they interact with formal and informal finance.
 - b. Establish their access to smartphones and other internet enabled digital devices.
 - c. Establish how they are able to get gig placements pre and post Covid 19 period.
 - d. How do they enroll/regularize their NSSF and NHIF in enhancing their social security?

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- e. Do they have access to insurance services or how do they handle medical and other emergencies?
- f. Understand their financial literacy levels on matters: Investing, Saving and Access to Finance.
- g. Understand social dynamics offered by informal financial solutions, potential impact that digitizing finance would have and how to mitigate them.
- h. Review **Power's platform** and identify ways through which the platform could meet the financing needs of domestic workers.

Main Findings

1. Challenges/opportunities faced by domestic workers

Challenges:

The key challenges experienced by a vast majority of the domestic workers across the 3 cities sampled were;

1. Informal nature of employment:

Most of the domestic workers decry the fact that their employment terms are unilaterally determined by their employers, and they make no contribution towards this. This leads to unfair treatment with some indicating that at times their employers “punish” them by deducting money for breakages from their salaries which are way below the minimum wage level. Domestic workers are therefore forced to seek other means to bridge the gap between their needs and the salaries or wages they draw from their employers.

“...I just take whatever my employer is offering. Usually, they determine the pay and if you try and negotiate, they will tell you they will get someone willing to work for the amount they are offering.” - Female DW, Kisumu

“...for us (DW), we are used to being exploited. But what can one do if you have to survive, you need the money to feed your children, take care of your family, however small it is. The employers sometimes deduct your salary without notice, even when it’s a case of an unavoidable accident leading to breaking of utensils...” -Female DW, Buruburu- Nairobi

“...You know we are employed very casually. The same way they offer us the job is the same way you wake up and they ask you to leave their house...that’s what we are used to, there is no written agreement and if you insist on one, they will not employ you.” -Female DW, Likoni Mombasa

“We are so used to the small money with heavy work we do in the home...for me, its like one of my many hustles to make ends meet at the end of the day. Like I have a small kibanda where I have my sister selling vegetables and fruits that I buy from marikiti (wholesale market). – Female DW, Westlands, Nairobi.

“I also sell second hand clothes, sell female beauty products on top of my house help job, so it’s one of the many things that we can do to survive.” - Female DW, Kisumu

2. Financial constraints:

The majority of the domestic workers (DW) opt for the house help jobs for “lack of a better” job. Most of the DW in this study indicated that for them, the jobs they hold are only temporary and are hopeful of getting “better” jobs in the future. The nature of the house help jobs are such that the DW’s are already psychologically prepared to receive very low wages or salaries. The pay, which in most cases is well below the government prescribed minimum wage is offered on a “take it or leave it” basis. Most employers interviewed also claimed that they offered what they can afford as their incomes are equally low or erratic in nature.

“It’s good to also understand that we (employers) are not paid a lot of money. We also have to juggle in taking care of many things and yet the money is not enough. For example, I have 3 children all in school, I have parents to take care of at home (rural), rent to pay, medical bills for the family and many others within a month. So you can see even having a house help

and paying them the minimum wage, I just can't....my husband and I are equally.. **-Female employer, Kahawa West, Nairobi.**

"Even for us working for government, I can tell you what the same government pays us is hardly enough. If they want to enforce these minimum wage rules, that must start with themselves, pay us enough so that we can also pay the house help better...that's how it goes...we are always on strike asking government to increase our salaries but they claim they have no money...and yet they are the government, what about us?" **- Male employer, Umoja, Nairobi.**

"...you can always get someone who is willing to work for the amount you are willing to pay. We also understand it's little but we are both tolerating each other. What you don't pay them in cash, they are paid in kind because you are taking care of them like a family member in the home" **- Female employer, Rongai-Nairobi area.**

Minimum gazetted monthly wages in Ksh.

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Type of Employee | | | | | |
| Unskilled employees | 5,437 | 5,437 | 6,416 | 6,736 | 6,736 |
| Stockman, watchman, herdsman | 6,279 | 6,279 | 7,409 | 7,779 | 7,779 |
| Skilled & semi skilled employees | | | | | |
| House servant or cook | 6,207 | 6,207 | 7,224 | 7,585 | 7,585 |
| Farm foreman | 9,808 | 9,808 | 11,574 | 12,152 | 12,152 |
| Lorry driver/ car driver | 7,967 | 7,967 | 9,401 | 9,871 | 9,871 |
| Average industry minimum wage | 7,284 | 7,284 | 8,585 | 9,014 | 9,014 |

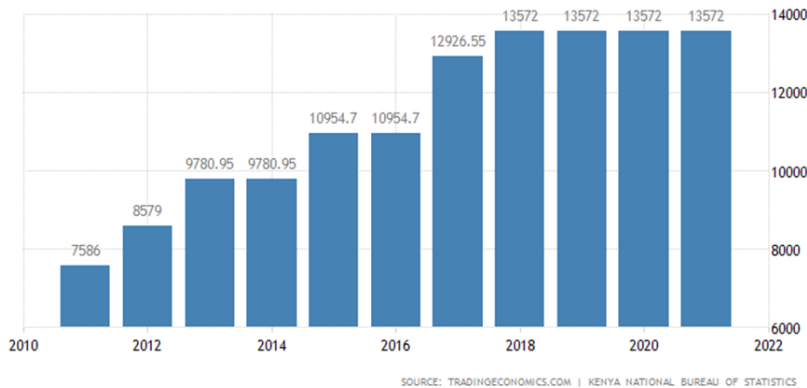
Source: Economic survey, 2015-2019, Kenya National Bureau of statistics (KNBS)

The actual paid wages and the gazetted minimum wages in the main urban centres where this study was conducted showed a consistency as there is a demand in these types of jobs. Despite the demand in DW jobs, there has been no increment in the minimum wages in the past two years hence the reluctance by employers to effect actual increments for the domestic workers.

Minimum gazetted wages in urban centres in Ksh.

| Type of Employee | NBI, MSA & KSM Cities | | All former Municipalities and Town Councils of Mavoko, Ruiru and Limuru | | All other towns | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------|---|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2018 | 2019 | 2018 | 2019 |
| General labourer including cleaner, sweeper, gardener, children's ayah, house servant, day watchman, messenger | 13,572.88 | 13,572.88 | 12,522.72 | 12,522.72 | 7,240.96 | 7,240.96 |
| Miner, stone cutter, turn boy, waiter, cook, logger, line cutter | 14,658.84 | 14,658.84 | 13,005.67 | 13,005.67 | 8,366.35 | 8,366.35 |
| Night watchman | 15,141.95 | 15,141.95 | 14,037.98 | 14,037.98 | 8,636.30 | 8,636.30 |

Source: Economic survey, 2015-2019, Kenya National Bureau of statistics (KNBS)



Generally, the minimum wages for workers have remained unchanged in the past 5 years. The situation is worse as the domestic workers are directly affected by the minimum wage policy.

3. Unfavourable working conditions

The study established that a majority of DW's across Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu claimed to work under very difficult conditions. Apart from the low wages/salaries offered, the general work environment in the home is "unbearable" for many of the workers. The social stigma associated with the domestic work jobs weighs heavy on those that elect to do these kind of jobs.

The majority of the female DWs intimated that they went through horrific experiences in homes where they worked. Some of these experiences include:

a. Sexual harassment by males in the home:

The female domestic workers claimed they are subjected to sexual advances by male family members who promise monetary compensation in return. Conflict ensues when their female employers discover these arrangements with the domestic workers suffering the consequences of summary dismissal usually without being paid their dues.

b. Delayed pay of the already low salaries:

The delays in payment of salaries in homes was claimed to be rampant among middle income homes where employers willingly or unwillingly withhold salaries with no regard to the DW's need for their due pay.

"I used to work for this family in a rich area here in Kisumu...but they started owing me my money claiming it's because of Corona (Covid19), that their incomes have been cut etc...sometimes you stay on since you hope that they will pay you once they stabilize."- Female DW, Kisumu.

c. Cases of verbal abuse and sometimes physical violence:

There is claimed cases of degrading treatment by employers by being made to do humiliating work such as cleaning innerwear, working long hours, experiences of food rationing etc. are part of the challenging aspects of their jobs.

d. Extended working hours (claims of waking up at 4am and sleep past midnight)

“...in homes where you have small children, they make you wake up as early as 4am to prepare the family breakfast, prepare the children to school....and in the evening, you work late cleaning up.”-Female DW, Mombasa.

Most female domestic workers claimed to have dependants who they struggle to take care of with their meagre pay. In most domestic work places, the fact that they are not allowed to report to work with their children places a huge burden on them. They also have to find people to look after their children, usually their aging parents who also need care themselves.

e. Exposure to harmful chores- dangerous work in the home

The domestic workers claim that they are exposed to unfavourable working conditions in the homes since they equally in need of the “little” money they are offered. The high rates of unemployment among the youth has led to the exploitative nature of the domestic work sector.

“...sometimes when you see house girls do some of the things they do to employers in homes, it could be the pain of what they are going through in the homes. Sometimes these people (employers) don’t see us as fellow human beings...” Female DW, Mombasa

“There are those who forget that we are also human and we have feelings...we also have families, we have people that depend on us. They should just treat us as human beings- That is why you hear of serious cases of house girls assaulting employers.”- Female DW, Kisumu.

“...the thing is...just pay me my dues however small but leave out all the other mistreatment. For me that is why I prefer the day time job, you know living with the employer also brings a lot of issues like mistrust, contempt and it always doesn’t end up well. In any case I also have my children to take care of after work”- Female DW, Mombasa.

4. Lack of job security:

In all the cases encountered, the domestic workers claimed that none of them had a secure engagement in their employment. The nature of the jobs in the sector tends to create a low perception of the domestic work industry. It is one of those jobs that no one wants to openly identify with according to the domestic workers.

The sector has one of the highest dropout rates due to the arbitrary nature of the jobs. In most cases, employers only have the DW’s ID card as security yet there are no documented rules of engagement in form of an employment letter. In such a scenario, employers either drop off the domestic workers at will, just as the domestic workers can leave at will without notice. This makes the relationship very shaky because of the suspicious nature each party holds towards for the other.

“The reality is that majority of the people who accept to do house work in other people’s homes are either school drop outs or people that the society sees as failures. May be that is the reason even employers treat us the way they do- That is their mentality and its wrong. We also have gone to school, its lack of better opportunities.”- Female DW, Kisumu.

“...the house girls seem to have an unwritten rule...when they want to quit the job, they will do it in a way that looks like they want to punish you, the employer. There are some that leave in the dead of the night, others will pack and leave with your belongings, yet others are outright thieves...I have once lost some money to a house girl. After they leave, they cannot be traced.”- Employer, Rongai, Nairobi Metropolitan Area.

Opportunities in the domestic work sector:

The evolution of the domestic work market has been gradual and consistently become a key sector of the economy. The relative ease that people are able to get the domestic worker jobs may be an indicator of an overwhelming demand from the employers.

The Kenyan informal sector covers mainly small-scale activities that are normally semi organized, unregulated and use low and simple technologies. With the shrinking job creation in the formal sector, majority of the youth who exit from learning institutions and individuals who leave formal employment easily join the informal sector. As shown in Table 3.11, the informal sector has registered steady growth in employment over the last five years. In 2019, the number of persons estimated to have been engaged in the informal sector went up by 5.4 per cent to 15.1 million. However, this was a slower growth compared to the 5.5 per cent registered in 2018. (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2020)

**Persons in informal sector by activity-
'000**

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Manufacturing | 2,438.8 | 2,596.2 | 2,728.9 | 2,878.8 | 3,044.9 |
| Construction | 307.2 | 322.9 | 348.6 | 367.8 | 385.2 |
| Wholesale, Retail trade, Hotel & Restaurants | 7,196.6 | 7,612.5 | 8,111.3 | 8,557.1 | 9,005.6 |
| Transport & communications | 376.2 | 399.7 | 422.3 | 445.5 | 470.2 |
| Community, social & personal services | 1,168.5 | 1,239.0 | 1,316.1 | 1,388.2 | 1,462.5 |
| Others | 549.5 | 579.7 | 612.6 | 646.2 | 683.2 |
| TOTAL | 12,036.8 | 12,749.9 | 13,539.6 | 14,283.6 | 15,051.6 |
| Urban | 4,271.4 | 4,511.8 | 4,801.9 | 5,070.7 | 5,337.4 |
| Rural | 7,765.4 | 8,238.1 | 8,737.6 | 9,212.9 | 9,714.2 |

Source: Economic survey, 2015-2019, Kenya National Bureau of statistics (KNBS)

The loss of formal employment by many workers in the past 5 years has been confirmed by the DWs in this study. As sizeable number of these workers found themselves in the informal low skills domestic work sector after losing their jobs in the formal sector. This trend is expected to be sustained in the near future as the economy sheds jobs in the formal sector with no new jobs created in the formal economy.

Over the years, there has been a trend in urban settlement across the country. Growth in population with the need for families to engage in economic activities outside the home has seen a growth in demand for domestic workers to do chores that the homeowners cannot attend to.

“You know as someone who cannot do without a house girl, I can tell you it’s really hard if you have to go to work and take care of the children and make sure the house is well kept,



we just can't live without them especially when you have a small child in the house.”- Employer, Buruburu, Nairobi.

The relative high demand for domestic workers from homes has therefore meant that domestic workers are in high demand especially among young families with growing children. Despite the claims of mistreatment, domestic work is perceived as an “easy in-easy out” kind of job.

“This is one of the most available jobs...no qualifications, no application letters...if I leave my employer's place in the morning, by evening I will have another job- They need us but they treat us like trash”- Female DW, Mombasa.

“...even when you treat them (DWs) like your own child, they will still leave like you were enemies. The DW employment bureaus are the ones behind this behaviour, they entice these girls to leave their current jobs for a promise of better pay in another home...so employers continue having a high turnover of these girls”- Female DW, Mombasa.

5. Lack of skilled DWs

The single most challenge that seems to dog the industry is the lack of requisite skills among those who opt to work in the industry. There is a shortage of trained DWs as noted from the study. The majority of the DWs have no formal training in skills that could easily be applied in their daily work.

“...the reason why I looked for this job is because I don't have to have certificates. This is an easy job to learn and do. The employer will just tell you what they want you to do and you adapt.”- Female DW, Mombasa.

“...as an employer, I also want someone who understands to do the house work like ironing, first aid in case of a domestic accident, fixing a few things and the like...but if you get one that can do these things, you will have to cough a lot for the services.”- Female employer, Ngong Road, Nairobi.

“If I get that certificate, I will look for a job in a Mzungu's house because they pay well...but for them, you also must know your job. They will always ask for qualifications but you will be paid even 20K.”- Male, DW, Donholm, Nairobi.

Opportunities:

It is evident that the disorganized nature of the DW industry has tended to breed some bad experiences for some employers. The unregulated nature of engagement of DWs by employers seems to have adverse effects on the DW and the employer as their relationship has ended up being one where both parties are suspicious of each other.

There is therefore a clear opportunity space in the sector hence the sprouting of numerous domestic worker bureaus and agents in every urban centre in the country. It is evident that with a growing population of unemployed youths, the domestic work sector will continue seeing a consistent growth in the coming years.

There is consistent feedback from the DWs across the sample areas that there is need for a regularized system for them to be able to effectively participate in the sector. The domestic workers strongly felt that the unchecked nature of the industry has in part contributed to the “bad” treatment of DWs since





they do not have any formal recognition as workers. Further, the perception of the DW industry and jobs in the sector has tended to make would be employers have no regard for these employees. As a result, there has been a push back in some cases, from these DWs who have gone to extremes in dealing with cases of employee harassment and mistreatment.

It is therefore clear that the sector still holds a lot of potential for growth in a structured manner. Both employers and employees in the sector tend to agree that it is a sector that homes cannot do away with any time soon. However, there still needs a lot of house cleaning for the sector to attract would be investors in either training, human resource management or general management of the DW market.

Some of the open opportunities as seen from the DWs in the market include;

1. **Training opportunities:** There is a need for training potential and current DWs in domestic chores to enhance efficiency and add credibility to the sector.
2. **Welfare management of domestic workers:** There is a strong feeling among DWs that they operate from hand to mouth hence no access to welfare services like saving for the future, having a decent pay and on time when due, having a decent and respectful work environment etc.
3. **Healthcare management of DWs:** In the absence of a fully functional national healthcare system, there is an open space in addressing this basic need. The feeling that the government health scheme at 500/= per month is too expensive stems from the lack of commitment from the National Health Insurance Fund to effectively provide services when needed and lack of an effective health care facilities has compounded the perception of a pointless effort to join the scheme.

“...I understand the NHIF asks for 500/- for membership per month...that is too high for me. I’m paid 3,500/-, from which I have to pay my rent, buy food, pay for my children’s fees, sometimes send my mother something for upkeep...where will I get 500/- every month for NHIF. I have been told they only send you to government hospitals which don’t have medicine....what is the use?” – Female DW, Kisumu.

Due to the arbitrary nature of their employment terms, domestic workers are faced with the burden of shouldering their medical needs. Most employers do not insure their workers and do not cater for their medical needs even when they fall sick at their work places.

4. Management of HR issues of DWs in a structured manner:

In the absence of formal engagement of employers and DWs in most homes, it becomes difficult to enforce any adherence to the employment rules and regulations. In a sector that specialized Human resource practitioners have shied away from taking up, it’s therefore an open space for these professionals to enter into with the aim of managing large pools of DWs that can be centrally managed on behalf of employers. This may, in the long run address the challenges associated with job security in the sector.

Job security for domestic workers is solely at the discretion of their employers who are not obligated to offer either notice or monetary compensation to laid off employees. Domestic workers operate in an environment of uncertainty and therefore do not invest their emotions and energies in their workplaces. A centralized DW Human resource management system may address some of these challenges as they will have a security of tenure from the HR managers.





5. **Upgrading of employment** from domestic front to formal institutions (Hotels & restaurants, schools, offices etc.). This aspect of employment upgrading was seen as a reward system that the DWs can look forward to. Working in homes is seen by the majority of the DWs as basic and did not require any specialized skills to perform what was seen as a “normal” expectation of doing household chores.



2. Formal/informal financial solutions DWs use in Kenya.

The confirmation of the low salaries that the DWs in the homes earn sheds light on the DW's financial behaviour. The majority of these workers earn as low as 3,500 KES. With an average live in domestic worker being paid between 5,000KES. and 12,000KES. Most respondents in the study felt that with these amounts being lower than the established government minimum wage, it is difficult for them to manage the finances effectively and still have a saving. However, the DWs claimed they have come up with innovative ways to get around their financial difficulties.



1.1 Formal financial solutions:

The study established that across the 3 sample locations, there was a similarity in their financial behaviour and especially how these workers interacted with money. They unanimously tend to agree that their incomes are low and hence required of them to be prudent managers of the same.

Whereas a majority of these workers claimed not to have formal financial solutions like actual bank accounts, we established that actually did own a mobile money account on Safaricom's MPESA. This account they claimed had enabled them to transact and make savings and for most of them have access to micro loans from the mobile money lending Apps.

"...these days I can get a loan from the mobile lending Apps because I have some money passing through my MPESA."- Female, DW Kisumu (Earning 5,500KES.)

"MSHWARI is good but they don't give you a loan that easily. They sent me a message that I must first save with them. So when I get some money, I put in my Mshwari account. It is



better than opening a bank account...that is expensive and we don't have that kind of money to operating a bank account.” – Male DW, Ngong Road, Nairobi

There is a strong perception among the DWs groups that formal banking system is very expensive for them and only targeting “rich” people or people with a regular income in formal employment. They do not feel domestic work is part of the sectors that allow them to own a bank account.

A few of these workers have claimed to have a savings and Cooperative society account but due to struggle making regular savings in them, they have lapsed in usage of these channels.

“...sometimes we want to save but it gets to a point where you can't even manage to save even 200/-. Our salary is just for survival for the basics...” - Female, DW, Mombasa (Over 5,000/-) salary.

The formal interaction with mobile money has exposed most of the domestic workers to formal financial management. In fact, ownership of mobile phone is compelled by the need to have a mobile money account for ease of financial transactions.

1.2 Informal financial solutions:

Most domestic workers claimed that they felt safe making financial transactions via their mobile phone platform. However, for the majority of the DWs interviewed, any form of saving was majorly done through the informal groups i.e. *Chamas*. These informal groups were seen as safe for most of the members as they were almost assured that they will have regular money to cater for “bigger” needs through rotational savings.

In some areas like Kisumu, the study established that the workers who had a close proximity to their rural homes maintained a savings group with people in their rural homes. This group served as a social safety net for them since they claimed their incomes were inadequate for all their needs.

The social groups that some of the domestic workers belonged to draw their membership from;

1. Old school mates
2. Fellow tribesmen (rural community members)
3. Work place friends and colleagues
4. Neighbours
5. Similar profession mates

In the absence of sufficient financial means to cater for their needs, the social groups also doubled up as financial safety nets in cases of emergencies including illness for family members and in other cases, bereavement of a member.

“In my area where I live, we have this small chama that we formed for people who work in the same field. The group has helped me a lot since we even lend to each other...no one has defaulted since we started 7 years ago.” – Male DW, Westlands, Nairobi.



3. The unmet domestic worker's financial needs

1.2.1 Savings

Among the DW's, saving is perceived as a difficult option for many of them. They claimed that majority of them are financially constrained to put aside any amount for future use. However, there are a few of them who claim that they are able to save through their informal groups or *Chamas*. These are seen as short term savings that enabled them access funds at short notice unlike in other formal financial institutions. Savings for this groups meant having finances that they can draw for major spending items like children's school fees or medical emergencies.

There is also an adoption of mobile banking as an avenue for saving with the promise of accessing quick mobile loans. This is however not seen as an automatic saving platform, majority of these workers felt the requirement of leaving a certain amount of money for a fixed term limit constrained them when they had emergencies and needed to draw from these savings. It therefore becomes unpopular for the group that claims they live from hand to mouth every month.

The discrepancies in wage payment among the DW group has been heavily due to the obtaining economic situation in Kenya. The figures of the percentage of workers earning reasonable salaries in the economy still remain low as shown in the Economic survey figures below;

1. Lower income group Households with a monthly income of Kshs. 23,670 and below;
2. Middle income group - Households with incomes ranging between Kshs. 23,671 and Kshs. 119,999
3. Upper income group enjoys remunerations of above Kshs. 120,000.

The Upper income class represents a paltry 2.9% of the working population. The majority (over 80%) of the workers are within the Middle and Lower income bracket hence constraining their efforts to improve their domestic workers' salaries.

1.2.2 Health and Medical care

A major need that remains inadequately addressed is the health/ medical care space. The DWs feel that with a non-functional government health care system with a challenged national health care insurance, they can only rely on their family and social networks to plug in whenever they encountered a health care emergency. The critical mass of people in this sector can provide a platform for launching a workable health insurance scheme.

"...for us, when one gets sick, we call on family and friends to raise funds for the person, that is better as one can be taken to a local private clinic for medication. We all know we have challenges with government health facilities so personally, I don't bother going there." - **Male, DW, Nairobi.**

1.2.3 Education/school fees

The domestic workers, like other workers in the lower social economic class have placed a premium on the education of their children. This has meant that individuals in this sector have made it a priority to pay for the education of their children. It is not uncommon to have these workers send their children to private educational institutions as they believe the children will get a quality education. The belief that the children will graduate in future and have a better paying job and move the family up the economic ladder is a strong push to finance the children's education despite their low incomes.



"I would not want my child to work as a domestic workerits a thankless job and I will do all it takes to have them succeed in their studies and get a good job in future." - **Female Domestic worker, Kisumu.**

1.2.4 Social/family welfare

There are very few DWs in the study that can lay claim to having a stable financial safety net. Outside their social networks, the DWs do not have a reliable source of assuring their own welfare. Their basic needs tend to take up most of their spending and hence the struggle to have something extra for their needs.



4. Key trends and developments in the Kenyan domestic work sector

There has been changes in the domestic worker industry over the past years. The first remarkable change in the industry has been the growth of domestic worker agencies popularly known as house girl bureaus. This is a trend that has taken root in the market signaling the demand for the domestic workers has grown over the years. The growth in demand can therefore be attributed to the rural-urban migration where young families find themselves in the urban areas where they have to work to fend for their families. This effectively means less time to attend to household chores including tending to their own children.

The need to have someone to act as a caregiver for young children has also grown exponentially over the last two decades. The pressure of making ends meet for families has meant that the need for a dedicated person in the home to care for the home and children has become the norm than an exception.

In the period post 2020 when the first declaration of Covid 19 as a global pandemic was made, there have been drastic effects in the Kenyan economy. The study with the Dws confirms that most of these workers either had to work without pay for many months, others had to look for another similar job after being laid off while others had to work for half the pay. These changes occasioned by the Covid 19 pandemic brought in challenges to this segment of workers who are already deprived due to their low pay.

"I used to work for an Arab family here in Ganjoni (Mombasa), they used to pay me well despite the excess work I was doing...but after Corona came, they started owing me money, they pay once every 2 months...but since I was staying with them, I understood. The reality is that I couldn't continue working for them since I also have needs. I left to look for another job but no one was willing to pay me what the Arab family was paying me." - Female DW, Mombasa.

The following are key trends identified in the domestic work market in the recent past;

1. **Employment shedding-** due to a poor economy and due to Covid 19. The evidence from the Kenya economic survey data reflects the situation in the country that affects the DW worker market most. Depressed earnings in the industry over the past 5 years mean less disposable income for DW's to save after addressing their needs.

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Wage employment | 4.6 | 3.3 | 4.1 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| Average earnings at current prices | 3 | 6.1 | 2.5 | 7.6 | 8.1 |
| Consumer prices (Inflation rates) | 7 | 5.8 | 9.2 | 4.3 | 5.7 |
| Real average earnings | -6.6 | 0 | -2.6 | 3.2 | 2.3 |

Source: Economic survey, 2015-2019, Kenya National Bureau of statistics (KNBS)



2. **Hustle identification via social media-** The growth of social media as a platform for job searching and sharing of opportunities within DW's in the market
3. **Part time hustle-** There is a growth in part time, multiple engagements by the domestic workers rather than opting for full time domestic engagements
4. **Live in vs. Full time-** More and more opting for multiple hassles than live-in engagements

The emerging trend among employers in the domestic work sector point at preferences in having flexible domestic workers for families with school going children. The current economic situation in the country has impacted negatively on employers' incomes. Families have had to make difficult trade off decisions as incomes reduce substantially. In many employers' homes, the option of having a live-in domestic worker is now becoming a luxury many claim they can no longer afford. Similarly, the domestic workers claim to have better management of time and can work on several assignments within the week, hence make more money.





5. Mobile phone landscape among DWs in Kenya

The study shows a near universal access to mobile phones among the domestic workers. The fact that the study sampled urban areas of Mombasa, Kisumu and Nairobi skews phone ownership to every individual who was selected for the study.

The ownership of a mobile phone among the DW's is corroborated by the World Bank's pointer of mobile cellular subscriptions, which as per the latest data in 2019, places the figure at 104%. The Kenya Government's Communications Authority defines mobile users by SIM penetration, and as of June 2020, reported a 119.9% mobile penetration, a 10% growth from the previous period. We must note that the extra penetration rate is driven, to no small extent, by the ownership of multiple SIM cards, as price-sensitive consumers take advantage of the different offers of the various mobile network providers.

As of 31st March 2021, the number of active mobile subscriptions (SIMs) stood at 62.0 million representing a 0.9 percent increase from last quarter. Subsequently, mobile (SIM) penetration stood at 130.3 percent up from 129.1 percent recorded in quarter two.¹

Mobile Money

Kenya leads the world in the adoption of mobile money services, which enable sending and receiving of money through mobile-based accounts, with 96% of households owning a mobile money account. Apart from the mobile phone being an indispensable tool for the domestic workers, it has become a necessary tool of trade for the majority of them. Getting "gigs", part time jobs, receiving and making payments are some of the key uses of the mobile phone. The mobile phone is seen as opening opportunities for this cadre of workers.

For the DW in Kenya, mobile money is almost synonymous with M-Pesa (which means mobile *money* in Swahili). Safaricom's M-Pesa holds a nearly universal market share of 98.9% of the Kenya mobile money market. Since its launch in 2007, M-Pesa, and by extension other mobile money providers, have contributed positively to Kenyans' financial inclusion. Transactions performed on mobile money providers include paying for commodities and services, taking out loans, opening savings accounts, making payments for government services, and betting, among others. The domestic workers regard the mobile phone as a key part of their lives as it allows them to conduct their personal and business activities.

According to the Communication Authority of Kenya, it is noted that in an otherwise severely unbanked population, 73% of adults were financially included in 2017 alone; and of these financial account holders, 98% held mobile money accounts.

Mobile internet

The study established that majority of the DW's sampled have ever accessed internet services via their phones. Despite the proliferation of affordable mobile smart phone devices, there are still some workers that do not have access or own a smart phone. Mostly, this is age dependent as the older workers tend to own a basic feature mobile device.

The Kenya Digital Report found that 97% of all internet users in Kenya access the internet on mobile phones, with Kenyans spending over 4.5 hours every day using the internet on their phones.

¹ Communications Authority of Kenya





As a segment of the overall population, GSMA places the mobile internet penetration rate in Kenya at 27% of the people, representing one of the highest five-year growth rates in Africa.



6. Financial Applications assessment and review

The study exposed potential consumers or users to the HCM App. as well as the Power App. These two Apps were evaluated independently among participants for their views and assessment of the perceived advantages, disadvantages, ways of improving them etc. Overall, the HCM App. was seen as useful to the domestic workers who saw it as an opportunity to eliminate the employment agents or bureaus that they claimed short changed them on their negotiated wages. The App. is expected to provide a direct negotiating platform for them and hence offer an opportunity to negotiate better salaries with employers.

Overall Evaluation of the Applications

1.3 Homecare management App.

The HCM application is viewed as step in the right direction by both the experts and domestic workers we interacted with.

"The Homecare management Application can save our members from the unscrupulous employers who offer very bad terms to domestic workers. At the end of the day, you know these people also have families to support and paying them peanuts is unacceptable. This Application must be made to work and I don't see any willing domestic worker refusing to use the Application to get a job." - **Ministry of Labour representative (Anonymous).**

"...this is something I can use...the kind of mistreatment we go through and the trouble of even getting a job especially after Corona outbreak last year, I believe this is the best way to cut off those people from the bureaus. They take advantage of our situation and they send you anywhere....with this, they seem to be promising someone that she can choose the place and the person who is employing her." - **Female domestic worker, Buruburu Estate, Nairobi.**

"The only thing is...do they mean only someone with a smartphone can access the App.? Most of us can't even afford a smartphone..." - **Male, Domestic worker, Uhutu Estate, Nairobi.**

The employers and experts in various fields considered this an improvement from the referral and bureau system used to acquire domestic worker. It is their overall view that this is a breath of fresh air into the industry.

"We have had so many challenges with employment of these cadre of workers not just abroad where we have a lot of terrible stories about their plight, but also locally in Kenya. We must support this transparent system of domestic workers' accessing potential employers and even for the employer, there is more trust in such a system because it has the potential employee's information." - **Kudheia union representative, Nairobi.**

"...Its easy to use, since we are already used to social media sites like facebook, more people with a phone will use it...and then again the benefits outweigh the cost of having a phone. Afterall, this will be the office, no agents." - **Male domestic worker, Doonhom estate, Nairobi.**

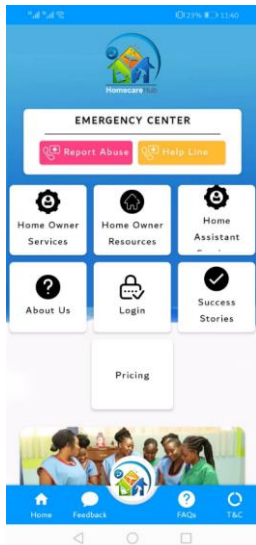
Domestic workers are of the overall view that the Apps. can reduce their interaction with unregistered persons or brokers who most of the time do not have their interests at heart. The domestic worker employment agents or bureaus have been seen as the exploiting agents in the DW employment field. The DWs accuse them of negotiating deals that are lopsided without the involvement of the workers. The HCM App. and similar Apps. are believed to offer direct links between the employee and the employer, hence enabling the employee get maximum benefit from



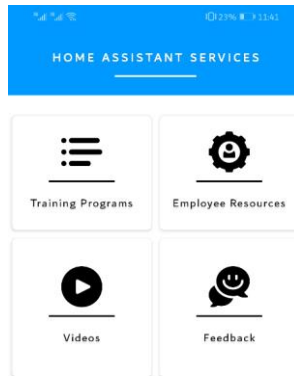
their employment without the involvement of the agents who are likely to get a commission from the placement.

“...normally, the bureau owner will ask for half your salary after placement. This is normally in addition to the registration fees that we are asked to pay in cash before they even link you with a potential employer.” - Female domestic worker, Westlands area, Nairobi.

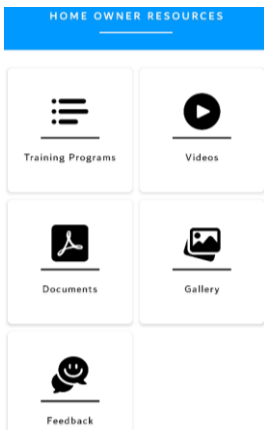
The perceived pros and cons of this application are as listed below;



Easy to access HCM App, offers hope of a transparent system to potential employees



The training bit was seen as an important component of the HCM App.

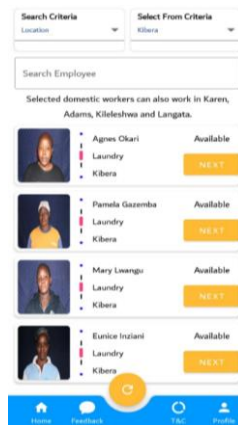


The HCM App. is perceived as sufficient source of recommendation of a potential employee to the employer.





The HCM App's offers a feedback platform for both employers and employees hence seen as a water tight system to check employer/employee excesses.



The HCM App's inclusion of visual information of employees offers more trust to the employers and a way of initial validation of potential employees.

Advantages of Homecare Hub (HCM App.)

Training opportunities:

The training material and availability of training sessions once a domestic worker joins the project is seen as a positive step towards making the segment more professional. Employers and domestic workers believe this is likely to improve the trust between them. The proposal to have the training done through audio visual means will have a lasting effect.

Direct employer/employee access:

The fact that the application can be accessed by both the employer and employee was seen as being useful to both parties. Domestic workers see this as an advantage on their part since they will know who their potential employer is even before signing the contract. The domestic workers particularly saw the possibility of engaging the potential employer's temperament via the HCM App as a plus. The DW's also felt that the exact location where they will be working was an important detail for a potential worker.

"...I would like to know where I will be going to work...imagine being taken to Thika and your family is here in Milimani? This is important information to have." - Female, Domestic worker, Kisumu.

The HCM App. on the employers' part was viewed as an effective tool to get an employee. The large pool of registered domestic workers is seen as an advantage since they will have a wide variety to choose from. The availability of employee CVs in the App. which they can peruse before settling on the domestic workers to interview is seen as a positive move to avoid dubious characters infiltrating the industry. By having prior information on the employee, they say they will have a say on the experience and qualification of the persons working for them and gauge if they fit their employment needs.



Availability of rating capability:

Employers claim the rating of potential employees is a good innovation since they can check the history of the employee before trusting them to work in their homes. In an industry that has been affected by mistrust and low levels of trust among domestic workers, they see this is one way that will make the employer feel safe leaving the home in the care of a domestic worker they can trust from the onset.

Presence of location:

The inclusion of the domestic worker's place of residence is seen as a powerful way of placing workers to specific addresses. Most employers claim they have difficulties locating domestic worker's homes in the event they leave in unaccepted circumstances. The presence of location where the domestic workers come from and a team of referees who can vouch for them is perceived a positive capability that is likely to build trust in employees sourced from this site. This was felt to be useful in the event that the domestic worker leaves without notifying the employer they feel safe since they can locate them.

Domestic workers see the application as capable of reducing discrimination in the industry. Currently, the employers feel they do not have adequate time to vet the domestic worker hence they find themselves with workers they do not appreciate. This has in effect led to a high turnover. They claim employers' participation in selecting them from the pool of domestic workers and then having an interview with them will go a long way in building a trust relationship from the onset. Domestic workers believe this Application will help make their work more professional and not one they go for as a last resort. They believe that as soon as one is able to document their experience and qualifications from regular training sessions, they will have better chances negotiating their salaries. They believe they will be in a position to earn more.

Emergency and Help line services:

Domestic workers are happy that the availability will help them feel safe if they can report this anonymously. They felt that they had an avenue to air their grievances and even share recordings which may act as proof via WhatsApp. The open forum and nature of the App. is seen as a way of creating checks and balances for both parties.

"...if an employer knows they got you through this App., they will be very careful how they treat you because they know they will be shamed via social media...even for us workers, we will be careful because if an employer gives a bad rating for you, they can spoil your chance of future employment." - Female, domestic worker, Likoni, Mombasa

Disadvantages of Homecare Hub

Language used in App:

Language is felt to be a major disadvantage by most of the domestic workers. Most of them claimed that most of them will not use the application since it was in English language. This confirms the issue of the industry being a reserve of illiterate or semi-literate individuals. They say the application has been designed for those who have gone past secondary education. However, even among the respondents who had attained the secondary school certificate, it was clear that they struggled to interact with the App. on their own. Having more of videos will help especially if these are in Kiswahili.

Registration by email:

The fact that the App. requires an email address to register, which most domestic workers do not have, they felt that this would be an obstacle to using the HCM App. Most domestic workers





believe setting up an email address and interacting with the application needs some knowledge in technology which most of them claimed they lack.

On the part of the employers, they felt that this is an avenue that might make it too expensive to hire domestic workers. They feel that the domestic workers will know too much about their rights and also their value that it will become too expensive to engage them. The employers therefore felt that there was a likelihood that the employer will be compelled to pay the government minimum wage to employees sourced via the HCM App.

Domestic workers unanimously agree that the App. is a good innovation that will ease their job searches. Furthermore, the fact that the App. gives them to statutory benefits would mean that the employer has to pay the basic minimum wage as stipulated by government.

Commented [u4]: Can we list this as an advantage?

The profile searches allow the employer direct access to the employee, hence cutting off the middlemen or agents in the employment bureaus. Whereas physical meetings are important when searching for jobs either through recruitment bureaus or by referrals, the App. enables the employer to identify the employee based on their qualifications as stated under their profiles.

Commented [u5]: This too also looks like an advantage

"It becomes easier while searching for a job because the employer just checks your profile and directly has access to you." - Female Domestic Worker, Kisumu

For the potential domestic worker, there is a belief that finding the exact type of work matching skills and experience has been made easier. They see themselves engaging in activities they are best suited for unlike when they are "fixed" by an agent. Similarly, the DWs feel they are able to choose the type of environment they desire to work in whether corporate or domestic.

Commented [u6]: This also highlights an advantage

"...if I get a job and a place that I have personally selected, I will give it my best. It's like I will also be interviewing the homeowner, if we agree, we can live together and we will both be happy." - Female domestic worker, Kisumu

App. may be prone to abuse:

There was open fear from the domestic workers that given the openness and access of the App. to many people, most of whom who may not want to employ them, there is a fear that they may be exploited by unscrupulous "employers". The trend by some employers taking in domestic workers and refuse to pay at the end of the month but instead sack the employees is feared might take root as the would-be employers have access to their details.

Some domestic workers feared that during the pandemic period, the App. could be misused by people exploiting the desperation of domestic workers. There are reports that some employers look for the domestic workers with ill motives like engaging them in unlawful or unethical activities. However, the App. clearly states the terms of engagement between the parties with a code of conduct to be followed before any contract is entered in to. Most participants in the study claimed that enforcing some of the rules and regulations may be challenging hence expose the workers.

Exposure to cyber-crime:

There is fear among domestic workers that the information they post on the app can be hacked and used against them. The workers also fear that some employees or referees may not give a positive referral hence the possibility of being adversely affected by such appraisals.

There is also a fear that their profile photos on display could be used in cases of identity theft.

According to the workers, online communication is not considered an effective measure of gauging ones' character as a face-to-face interview would be.

What should be done to improve the functionality of the application?

There are suggestions for improvement of the HCM App. to make it even better;





- An alternative USSD number should be included for those who do not have smartphones. Most DWs felt that in most cases, the poorly paid workers cannot afford the cheapest smart phone. They therefore felt that the App. could also be accessed through a USSD number.

“This one...it means someone must have a smartphone? I have no smartphone...its very expensive and the money I get cannot but one as I have children to take care of.” - Male, Domestic worker- Donholm, Nairobi.

- It should be accessed without the internet connectivity- Due to the concerns of accessing the App. through the internet being felt to be expensive, most domestic workers strongly felt that an SMS based App. would be easy to access.

“...this looks like I have to buy credit and bundles from Safaricom every time. It's expensive but if you are looking for a job, it is fine.” - Male, domestic worker, Nairobi.

Conclusion

The overall assessment of the HCM App excites potential users and is affirmed by those already enrolled and are using the App. The DWs in the CDTD panel confirm the perceived benefits of the App. Whereas the HCM App. offers better access of potential employees to the employers, the general agreement across the study locations is that the App. manages to offer the worker a better leverage in terms of negotiating with an employer. Further, most of the workers not exposed to the App. felt that the App. cuts off the undesirable agents that often ask for a cut for the worker's placement.

1.4 POWER APP.

The Power App. was viewed as being like any other mobile money application with a few improvements aimed at helping the domestic workers manage their finances better. Whereas the Power App. concept resonates well with the domestic workers, most workers felt the App. was a shadow of the MPESA solution.

Some DWs explored the features of the Power App. and felt that it would effectively help them manage their finances and even take overdraft facilities based on their ability to pay.

This was seen as a good initiative given that majority of these workers did not have sufficient financial resources to meet all their needs.

Advantages of POWER APP

Financial management tool:

The domestic workers believe that the application will help them know how they use their money and how they can spend it better. It's seen as a financial management tool by some workers who saw the pull to informal savings schemes as prone to abuse and eventual collapse if not managed well.

Saving, borrowing and paying options:

These options are seen as an improvement of existing applications. The domestic workers believe the presentation of these features is friendlier and it's easy to access. They believe they will use this application to try and manage their resources especially after gaining financial literacy skills during training.

Transactional history. Domestic workers believe this is a great way to receive their payments/salaries. They believe the transaction history will act as evidence in the event that the employers fail to pay.





Disadvantages of POWER APP

Language used:

The domestic workers believe that English language is more technical and hence not all domestic workers will be comfortable using this Application. It would be beneficial to have other language options where users can use Kiswahili as well.

Training:

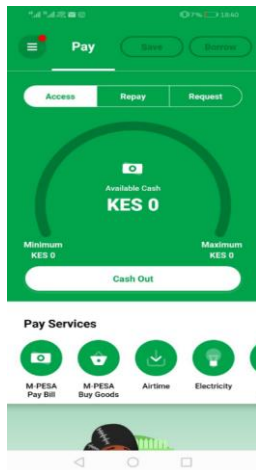
The majority of the domestic workers in the study believe that they do not appreciate the importance of this application if they are not trained on its functionalities. They claim they will view it as any other application used to transact money, and as a result continue using the traditional methods that they understand like Safaricom's M-Pesa.

Desired improvements:

There is a unanimous agreement on areas that need to be improved in the Power App. for it to be impactful to the target group. The most urgent recommendations include;

1. Inclusion of Kiswahili language option for ease of operability.
2. Provide clear instructions on use- is it linked to bank accounts (most of the workers do not have an account)
3. Create a differentiation between Power App. and the known mobile money solutions.
4. Provide an option for opt in and opt out for some payments e.g. NHIF and NSSF

Assessment of the Power APP. features:



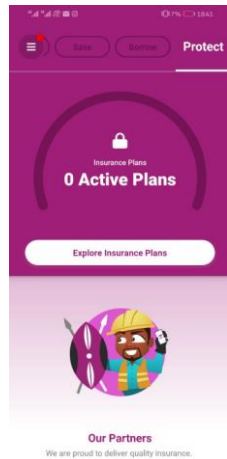
The “Pay” option is seen as the most important capability and most relevant for the domestic workers. This feature is seen as directly offering the Mpesa type of service and users felt that it needed to be

differentiated for them to sign in. The majority of the DWs who are already using Mpesa claim they would consider the Power App. if they see “value” in terms of affordability.

The fact that App. promises to link the customer to the various service providers like the bank, insurance (NHIF) and the statutory social protection fund, NSSF sound compelling to the DWs but would effectively mean their salaries are deducted at source to pay for these services. There is fear that with the low wages and salaries, the DWs will be left with very little money to survive on.

“How is this one (Power App.) different from the Mpesa we use? Unless it can give us cheap charges, it would be hard to convince someone like me. I’m used to Mpesa...”
Female domestic worker, Kisumu



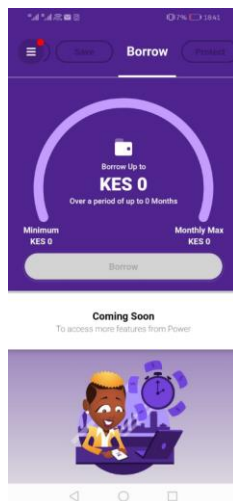


There is some apprehension on the insurance feature of the Power App. as most DWs felt that it is “not for them”. The perceived barrier is the low wages the DWs are paid which they do not see as being able to support payment for insurance.

Insurance, by its very nature is not popular among the DWs group. The only insurance some of them are aware of is the government run NHIF – National health Insurance Fund. However, most of these workers feel that the NHIF contributions of KES. 500 is way too high for someone earning less than KES. 10,000.

Whereas the insurance proposition is positive for those that would consider it, the target group of domestic workers strongly feel they need more education and a reassurance that it actually works. Investing some KES. 500 every month in insurance was seen as very costly.

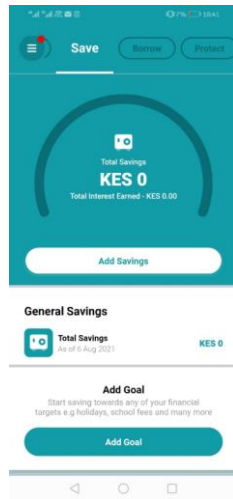
“...some of us are paid like 6,000 KES and that is all we have to use for rent, food, school fees and other needs. Mandatory payment of NHIF or any insurance is just too expensive from such a low family.” - Female domestic worker, Buruburu estate, Nairobi.



There are very close similarities between the Power App. and the Safaricom App. For most of the DWs, the App. that promises to offer a “borrow” function is perceived as competing with the existing mobile money solutions.

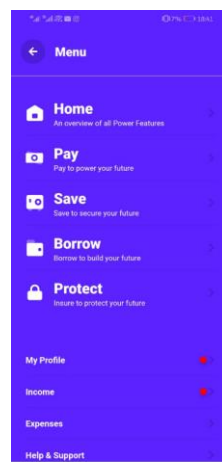
“...for me I use M-shwari to put in my money and they allow me to borrow up to 2,000/= which I can access any time when I'm in need.” - Male domestic worker, Nairobi

The target DWs see a lot of similarities with existing loan Apps. In order to be attractive, they claim the Power App. needed to compete by offering affordable rates to access services like loans.



use is a key consideration in their financial behaviour.

“...personally, I feel my money is safe with our savings group (chama) because no one can even think of playing games with the members’ money. There are serious consequences for such an act, if it ever happens.” - Female, domestic worker, Mombasa



Generally, the presentation of the Power App. was felt to be straight forward despite the language challenge for some workers. The simplicity of the App. on its home screen is appreciated as it offers an easy way to access the required service.

“...this one is easy to use like Mpesa but for some of us, if it was provided in Kiswahili it would be very useful and easy to understand.” - Female, domestic worker, Mombasa

The culture of saving for the DW group is a carefully thought out process. Given the low wages in the industry, most workers felt that they needed to be sure that their savings, when they decide to save must be secure. The fact that majority of the domestic workers earn low salaries means they are very careful about their money. The issue of trust in the places where they put their money for future

Conclusion

Generally, the Power App. proposition is acceptable to the majority of the workers exposed to its functionalities. The App. is welcomed as direct benefit to the worker who is already exposed to several other mobile money Apps. The fact that workers have interacted with a mobile money product either on their feature phones or some through their smartphone devices meant that the concept proposition does not alienate potential users. Safe for the suggestions offered by the workers, the Power App. is widely equated to the popular M-Pesa money transfer offer in the market. All the workers have an M-Pesa account hence Power App. providing a ready platform



for consideration. Integration of the Power App. to the HCM App. seems an open proposition as the Power App. promises a better financial management system for the worker. The Power App's linkage to the domestic worker's HCM account offers a clear inclusion into financial services system as they can save and borrow against their savings and their incomes.

Live-in conditions

The "Live-in" domestic workers normally have to contend with long working hours since the employers are out of home working. The live in domestic workers have to do all the house work as well as tend to the small children. The live in workers are therefore left with very little time for them.

The close proximity of employers and their employees in the case of live-in domestic workers was felt to often result in conflict. Since there is increased scrutiny of the activities of live-in domestic workers, it always results in conflict when work is not deemed up to standard by the employers. There is therefore little time to go for personal shopping. Despite being able to save up more than their live out counterparts, the live-in workers have less time to engage in personal activities including shopping. Most of them find it convenient to take days off during weekends. Otherwise, their financial activities are mostly on the mobile platforms like Mpesa.

The live-out workers commuting to and from their homes encounter the extra burden of paying bills, working in their own homes, and taking care of their own personal expenses such as food. This in turn eats into their little salaries leading to job dissatisfaction and sometimes into pilfering from their employers' homes for their own survival.

"...I cannot even save anything since all my money has been apportioned to some kind of commitment. You know, living with an employer you can save on transport, food and other things that need cash but the freedom you have with your family means you have to spend more and yet you have no money." - Female domestic worker, Westlands, Nairobi

In general, among the female domestic workers, whether live in or living outside the employer's home, they tend to undergo more challenges than their male counterparts. Some of the issues they go through include;

1. Stress related issues that are majorly suppressed. In most cases, the employers are unapproachable, and the workers find themselves having to hold in their disappointments and frustrations. There is fear that expressing any of these will be met with dire consequences among them loss of jobs.
2. Some have to put their reproductive rights on hold since they are summarily dismissed when discovered to be pregnant and in severe cases are not even allowed to have intimate partners.
"...for me as a young woman, I also have a boyfriend and also need to be looked after. But if I go to work for my employer, there is nothing I can do, I can't even think of falling pregnant. The day I decide to get pregnant, I will just have to quit." - Female domestic worker, Mombasa
3. Mistreatment of workers including in some instances, being denied food or only allowed to eat after everyone has had their fill.
4. The male domestic workers claim they are not provided with proper working gear. They are compelled to use their regular clothes while carrying out their duties. They also engage in risky work like taking care of domestic animals that are sometimes vicious especially dogs.
5. The workplace injuries arising from their jobs are more compared to their female counterparts. Whereas these injuries are not acknowledged by employers they claim they are never compensated.





According to income data from the Kenya Revenue Authority, employed worker salaries for men tend to be higher than for their female counterparts. For instance, about 63.4 percent of employed men or 50,749 of them earned more than Sh100,000 compared to only 29,233 women in this club, a gap of 21,516, which is roughly maintained in the other income bands.² The situation is even worse among the lower income jobs including the domestic worker sector.

Live-out conditions

The domestic workers who commute to and from work have the advantage of spending time with their families unlike their live-in counterparts who only leave their workplaces on Sundays and might not have enough time to visit their families. Similarly, these workers have the advantage of going to markets and personally managing their daily finances unlike their live-in counterparts.

*“I am a single parent, so it allows me to bond with my child and learn his challenges.” -
Female Domestic Worker, Mombasa*

The live-out workers have the luxury of resting in their homes after a long day’s work when they retire to their homes. They can also actively engage in household activities in their own homes.

*“It gives you enough time to rest at night because when you are a live-in there are some jobs that may come up unlike someone who goes back home and rests.” - Female Domestic Worker
Nairobi*

For DWs living outside the employer’s home, they see an opportunity to engage in other extra income generating activities and others enrol for further education or learn new skills. Live-out employees commonly referred to as “day scholars” enjoy more free time once they are done with their daily duties and can easily engage in aside jobs. Some offer additional laundry services, engage in hair dressing activities while others do make-up.

² Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) income data- 2018



2 Covid-19 Related Challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic presented financial and social challenges to both most employers and domestic workers.

According to the domestic workers in the study, they claim some of their employers lost their jobs and closed businesses hence were not able of keeping their workers employed. Most of the employers were therefore forced to either let the domestic workers go or reduce their salaries as they now had more time to dedicate to their homes. There are also cases of some employers relocating to their rural homes and others to cheaper rental houses just to cut down their expenses.

“I know of somebody who lost her job when the employer decided to flee from the country after corona (Covid19) set in... this lady remained jobless, she could not pay rent, could not pay fees and at times struggled to feed her family because she had depended on that job. She had to re-strategize because the landlord was threatening her, schools were asking for school fees...I understood the situation. The kids were also asking for gifts because it was the festive period. It was a big challenge and still is because she does not have a job till now.”- Female domestic worker Kisumu



*“The Corona virus made me lose my job with my former employer...I now work for part time”-
DW, Mombasa*

“...when Covid started, Mombasa was everywhere in the media...and its true many people got sick and others died”- DW, Mombasa

The study has shown the extent to which the domestic workers, especially the live-in workers who were ‘lucky’ to still have their jobs underwent long periods without pay. They claim that their employers constantly reminded them that they were lucky as they were still providing for them.

There was increased social stigma associated with the disease. This led to domestic workers being subjected to rigorous hygiene measures that led to their feeling ostracized in the homes they worked in. There were claims of others who were required to shower and change their clothes once they entered the employer’s house, while others were made to work from outside the house.

The live-in employees’ movement was greatly monitored with threats of termination of employment if they ventured out. There was a general feeling of frustration with the domestic workers bearing the worst kind of treatment in the homes.

“...where I worked before my current place, I was asked to leave because the employer kept seeing me as a health risk to the family. They told me I could not go to see my children over the weekends because they felt I could contract Covid and infect them. It was painful..”-Female domestic worker.

The Covid 19 pandemic has brought about a lot of changes. The government declared lockdowns that required people to work from home, this was also a challenge to domestic workers. The employers having lost their jobs and incomes were left with no option but to stay at home and this therefore meant that there was no longer need for domestic workers.

In homes where the employers decided to maintain the house helps, there was an increase in the workload since schools were closed over a long period of time.



“Covid 19 has affected our work...it’s no longer the same when we easily got a job as a house help, families now opt to live without a house girl because they have no money”- DW, Kisumu

“...our jobs were the first to go, the employers were confined at home, so they do their own chores”- DW, Buruburu, Nairobi

Among some participants in the study, they claim some of their peers who lost their domestic jobs were forced to opt for anything to get money to fend for themselves and their families. There were claims of some of these going into prostitution. The fact that most of the domestic workers regard their jobs as steppingstones to their final destinations of “better” jobs, it meant some of those that lost these “temporary” jobs could not manage moonlight as no one was employing. The strong perception of domestic work being regarded as a reserve of poorly educated and desperate individuals who cannot engage in any other types of work compounded the situation as those that retained their jobs reported a lot of mistreatment.

3 Coping Mechanisms

The effects of Covid19 have seen a lot of creative ways from both employers and domestic workers on how to make ends meet. The domestic workers agree that they resorted to other ways to make ends meet. Some of the initiatives they engaged in were;

- a. Moonlighting on several jobs- The DWs started doing multiple jobs to survive as they found themselves without regular employment. Multi-tasking became the norm as the DW could no longer choose what jobs to do; from washing clothes to cooking for single persons.
- b. Micro businesses- Many took to exploring their talents like plaiting hair in the estates, selling second-hand clothes, selling groceries in the estates etc.
- c. Teaching- some of the domestic workers who had not been open about their skills started teaching in churches voluntarily
- d. Relocation to affordable areas- Due to the decreased incomes, most of the domestic workers say they had to relocate to even cheaper areas, especially in the slum areas to be able to survive.
- e. Moving families to the rural homes to remain in the urban areas to be able to survive.

The prolonged effects of the Covid19 pandemic may also mean an evolving manner in which the domestic workers navigate through the economic challenges. The DWs who depend on the employers directly for their jobs have unanimously claimed that the pandemic has had affected them adversely, to the extent of some having to relocate from the urban areas.



4 Modes of Salary payment

In the domestic work sector, the most preferred payment of salaries/ wages is via Mpesa and cash payments. The employees prefer these modes of payment as it is fast and assures them of cash at hand for immediate use. The DWs see the mobile phone as a critical tool in their work. This therefore means with the growth of the influence of mobile phones, it has become an acceptable tool that can be leveraged on to have contacts for getting domestic work gigs.

Preference for Mpesa payments is partly driven by the ease with which the solution works. Irrespective of someone's academic status, they can use Mpesa easily.

On the part of the employers, they prefer Mpesa payments due to the fact that it makes it easier for them to keep records of payments made. In case of disagreements, the employer will have records for reference.

There was a feeling that having money in the Mpesa wallet kept them off spending due to limited Mpesa payment options in most informal businesses where they shop. This was seen as a way of saving for the domestic workers who could be impulse buyers.

"When I have instant cash, I don't plan for it, I use it to do impulse buying. I don't budget for it, but when it is on Mpesa, it would take some time before I withdraw and use it"-

Female domestic worker, Mombasa.

The Covid19 pandemic presented unique challenges, cash handling being one of them. Cash is considered unsanitary resulting in higher preference for making payments through other means. Cash handling is now considered risky hence the preference for non-cash payments.

This section of workers tend to be very careful about their spending. This tends to influence their financial behaviour and how they interact with the little finances they have. The fear of cash being stolen or getting lost is reduced when dealing with mobile phone transactions.

The mobile money option of payment is popular among the DWs across the study locations since they use this as a means of saving. Similarly, it is seen as an effective way of sending money for family when in need.



5 Financial Solutions used by Domestic Workers

A majority of domestic workers are members of '*chamas*' defined as informal cooperative societies normally used to pool and invest resources. *Chamas* have gained notoriety over the years with an estimated 300,000 *chamas* controlling up to a total of 300 billion Kenya shillings.

Domestic workers group together to form their own *chamas* where they contribute a certain amount usually between Kshs.500 and Kshs.1000 depending on their salary. Contributors receive the pooled funds on a rotational basis. The funds are in other instances used to buy household goods on wholesale basis which is significantly cheaper and split among the group members. The *Chama* phenomenon is preferred as it depends on strong social networks, hence low chances of failing through refusals by members to pay back borrowed money.

Mobile phone loan applications also provide financial aid to domestic workers when they are faced with deficits. The most commonly used are Safaricom's M-Shwari and KCB Mpesa loan applications. These are easily accessible and the loan repayment terms are not as punitive as those of other unregulated mobile loan providers. A couple of domestic workers describe their borrowing habits as cyclical in nature such that soon after repaying their loans they apply for new ones. Some are unable to repay the loans and have consequently been blocked from borrowing and blacklisted.

The Fuliza mobile loan App that offers payment for goods and services once funds from mobile wallets are exhausted. This loan option is gaining ground as an emergency funding option. The interest rate is however regarded as punitive and the fact that money is automatically deducted once it is sent to the mobile wallet deemed out of the user's control. However, the DWs see this option as better than other borrowing Apps.

The mobile loans from the lending Apps. are however perceived as expensive as they attract very high interest rates while the unregulated ones use unorthodox means to get their beneficiaries to pay off their debts.

"They can at times con someone or even threaten someone, they can call even at night to ask for money or even call the relatives because they can access your contacts through the permission granted when borrowing"-Female Domestic Worker, Kisumu

A small number of domestic workers have side jobs which provide them with additional funds. Most work with family members in starting small businesses such as animal rearing and selling of second-hand clothes while others send money to trusted relatives in their rural homes to save on their behalf.

There are cases of some domestic workers having benefits from their employers. For example, some employers take care of the DW's health needs when they fall sick, buy them personal items and occasionally give bonuses thus lessening their financial burdens. This usually comes as a pack in their employment although rarely stipulated in a written agreement.

Among domestic workers who live away from their workplaces, there is a trend in making arrangements with shopkeepers near their homes to take goods on credit basis for payment later. This ensures their basic needs are adequately covered. The fact that the DW's have a job irrespective of the salary paid, they become creditworthy in their neighbourhoods.

In Kisumu, an organization known as Shofco buys household goods for individuals who make a monthly contributions of Kshs.100 each month. The organization also caters for members medical and burial expenses for family members. Most domestic and low income workers have been attracted to the organization as members as a safety net for themselves and their families.



N.Y.A, is also mentioned as being helpful in assisting this cadre of workers in managing their finances in Kisumu region. They operate like a SACCO where members receive small loans based on their share value.



6 Savings Culture among Domestic Workers

There is a low saving culture among the domestic workers in the country. The DWs confirm that they face serious challenges with their income as they are often paid incomes that are lower than the stipulated minimum wage. Whereas saving for the future is an aspiration for majority of the DWs, financial constraints have hampered this prospect as most of these workers claim that they live from hand to mouth.

Saving money, however little was seen as a way of being prudent in the management of their finances. The use of mobile wallets as a means of saving money has equally grown in popularity among the domestic workers. The workers intimated that saving on the mobile wallets like Mpesa serves to grow their loan limits whenever they need to take a loan.

Despite the popularity of mobile phone wallets, the workers see it as limiting in cases of emergencies. The money in the mobile wallet is usually locked and the user can only access it after a given period of time. This therefore means that the owner cannot easily access funds whenever there is an emergency. Nonetheless, these workers see the mobile wallets as the best way to save.

It is clear from the study that the women tend to either save less due to their extended responsibilities for the family or have insufficient finances after paying the basics in the homes. The participants in the study also agree that on average the men are paid more than their counterparts due to the perception that the men do harder, manual jobs or the men are assumed to have more responsibilities paying for the up keep of their families. There seems to have a quiet agreement that the men can be paid more their female counterparts.

It is clear that the DW's believe the men are able to save if they wished to, since they earn more. The female DWs who have families claim that their husbands still offer them money for their informal saving schemes. The perception that male DW's are paid a bit more is confirmed by the fact that most of the men who accept to do these jobs are provided with housing and other basic amenities which reduces their out of pocket expenses. They also enjoy medical benefits when injured in the line of duty.

Saving through institutions such as banks is generally shunned by both the domestic workers as it is perceived as expensive to maintain an account due to the bank charges and more so the perception that bank accounts are a preserve of highly salaried individuals.

7 Investments

It was established from the study that majority of the domestic workers aspire to have some form of investment for a “rainy” day. Some of the popular investments that the DWs mentioned include;

- a. Owning a small business aside their regular job e.g. keeping poultry and cows in the rural homes
- b. Opening a bank account
- c. Owning a plot of land- whether in the village or in town
- d. Having some liquidity in a savings scheme.

There has been a growing apprehension in the formal savings schemes that the DWs see as schemes they do not fully understand and that are tailored with complexities that may lead to loss of their money. The reasons advanced for not having any form of investment amount most of the workers include;

- a. Lack of sufficient finances to invest
- b. Lack of time off their work to scout for potential investments
- c. Low knowledge levels on forms of investment
- d. Perceptions of mistrust in formal savings schemes

There is a clear investment preference between men and women workers. The women tend to prefer investments hospitality (food kiosks and catering), beauty and nursing. They however cannot engage in any of these ventures while still engaged actively in the domestic sector due to time constraints.

Their male counterparts express interest in the sale of clothes, shoes, motor vehicle repair and maintenance work in and around the home. Their restrictions are more or less similar to those faced by the females though they enjoy more spare time. Those who have ventured into these forms of investment employ their kin to look out for these business investments.

There is a small number of domestic workers who claim they have invested in family businesses remotely, mostly in the rural areas. They see this a sure way of earning from them despite the fact that they are not physically present to run them. These section of DWs tend to rely on trust within the family set up to earn from their investments.

8 Job Recruitment

The recruitment of domestic workers into the industry is mainly through referrals and through employment bureaus. The live-in workers are particularly recruited on firm recommendations and referrals since the employers feel they need someone who they can trust in their homes. However, the workers commuting to and from their work-places use different means including pooling together near workplaces and waiting for passers-by to pick them for work. The younger workers confirmed that they have created online groups such as WhatsApp groups to share available opportunities.

“I’m in a WhatsApp group with my friends in the field and whenever there is an opening somewhere, they post it here and anyone interested can apply to the employer. It has worked for us so far..” - Female domestic worker, Kisumu

Employers are more comfortable acquiring domestic workers through people they know and who can vouch for their character. Trust is the single most critical benchmark for a live-in employee and most of them are employed through referrals. Those referring the act as guarantors.

The informal nature of the domestic work market, make it difficult for employers to entrust their most valuable assets with total strangers. To minimize the risk to their children and properties, employers prefer employing people who they can track down through reliable sources.

The domestic workers’ bureaus have become popular sources of employment for the industry. Both employees and employers have recognized the role these bureaus play. The bureaus play the role of brokers where either party can be served at a fee. Both parties pay a service fee with the employer required to pay the full amount and deduct the employee’s portion from the first salary or as both parties agree to. There is increased scepticism however when dealing with bureaus because most people view them as money minting enterprises that do not do any due diligence on either parties and hence a potential danger to the industry.

Over time, in the urban set ups, the potential employees seeking employment through pooling and waiting outside residences are engaged for short-term services like cleaning services. However, the challenge faced with this group of domestic workers is that they are not in control of the nature of work they are engaged in. They also do not have access to information on who they are going to work for on that particular day.

There has been a growth of online employment opportunities. However, there is apprehension from a majority of the DWs who are either digitally illiterate or who cannot afford smartphones. The female domestic workers who are older in age claim they cannot afford the smartphone which they also see as being for youths. This makes it difficult for them to access employment opportunities advertised via the Apps. like WhatsApp. The male domestic workers however have a likelihood of owning a smartphone as they seem to have more resources than their female counterparts.

Insurance

A large number of domestic workers are aware of insurance services offered by insurance companies. A small number of them however, have access to these services. NHIF (National Hospital Insurance Fund) is the most recognized health insurance scheme among domestic workers. With the exception of a few, the scheme is regarded as a reserve of the 'rich'. According to the workers, the monthly fee of Kshs. 500 is prohibitive as it comprises a significant percentage of their salaries.

Most of the domestic workers are not aware of the mandatory requirement that their employers make contributions towards NSSF (National Social Security Fund) and NHIF. The arbitrary nature of their engagement to their employers makes it difficult for the domestic workers aware of this requirement to claim for it.

The few who are under the NHIF scheme do not know how to make their payments through the phone and even for those who know, delay in updating the status of their membership makes it necessary for the workers to go to the NHIF offices in person to make payments.

Unfortunately, even for workers who make regular payments to the NHIF kitty, there are claims that the services offered under the scheme are unsatisfactory and cumbersome. The requirement that outpatient services are only available in one health facility chosen by the member is restrictive when someone is taken ill outside the specified area or for their dependants who may live far from them.

A number of domestic workers have struck relationships with healthcare facilities and pharmacies and obtain medical services for credit and pay at the end of the month when they are paid. Others receive advance salary payments for medical purposes by their employers and deducted later. Yet others have signed up with medical research facilities to be used in their medical trials for free medical assistance.

A small minority of domestic workers have spouses enrolled on the NHIF medical scheme by their employers. They therefore enjoy the benefits by virtue of being dependents.

1 Understanding the domestic worker- A day in the life of...

Carol, House girl (DW), Kasarani, Nairobi



"I do all the household chores...like cleaning the house, washing clothes, prepare the children for school and even cooking....I rarely have time during the day until the weekend on Sunday when I go for my off day."

Geoffrey, Domestic worker, Uhuru Estate, Nairobi



"I work in Donholm in a residential home where I take care of the compound, clean and feed the dogs, sweep the compound and also do maintainance and repairs in the compund....I want to also do driving so that I can be promoted to be a driver..."

The type of chores the domestic workers are involved in have a similar trend across homes in the 3 sample locations. The female workers tend to be preferred for inhouse chores while the men are assigned the outdoor jobs e.g., security, grounds men, etc.

2 Conclusions

The domestic work sector is perceived as an easy come, easy go sector by the DWs. These workers believe that this is the easiest job they can enter into without much requirements requested from them. The industry is open to abuse partly because it has been penetrated by persons of dubious character seeking employment as domestic workers. Similarly, there have been cases of employers who have taken advantage of the unregulated sector to exploit the workers.

There are clear distinctions between the forms of domestic work these employees are hired to perform. Whereas domestic work is seen as best suited for women, the men are more engaged in the heavier manual jobs within the homes. From the study, there seems to be a strong belief that women can earn less than their male counterparts. This belief has compromised efforts by the female workers to negotiate for better salaries when being hired.

Due to the unregulated nature of the domestic worker market, the employees have been exposed to serious forms of abuses including violence, sexual harassment, poor working conditions and general mistreatment by employers. There are no known formal channels for addressing these challenges and the workers suffer from stress related issues. In the absence of dispute resolution mechanisms, workers share their frustrations with family and fellow domestic workers who may not be in a position to resolve these issues.

The declaration of the Covid19 pandemic in 2020 has impacted heavily and negatively on the domestic worker sector. There has been loss of jobs, destabilization of families, and relocation of families to rural areas, growing cases of violence including sexual violence in the domestic front among other challenges. The effects of the pandemic continue to be felt in the domestic workers market to date as there has been a very low uptake of DW services by employees.

Recruitment of domestic work is usually through firm recommendations and referrals by family and friends or by subscription to recruitment agencies commonly known as bureaus. The growth of bureaus as one-stop shops for domestic workers has come in to plug a felt need. However the challenges in these bureaus operating in an unregulated manner still affect the industry negatively. There is therefore opportunities in participation in the sector by formalized engagements or by organizations that operate within the Ministry of labour laws.

The domestic workers have exhibited similarities across the study areas of Kisumu, Mombasa and Nairobi in the way they relate with and manage their finances. Whereas the general agreement is that this cadre of workers are grossly underpaid, more often well below the set basic minimum wage, the workers have creatively devised ways of managing their “little” resources. Apart from adopting to new mobile technologies among the younger workers, the DWs are open to any form of financial management especially anything or proposition that allows them to save for the future despite their low salaries.

The assessment of the Homecare Management App. (HCM) has shown the DW’s enthusiasm in being in control of their employment in the homes. Majority of the workers see the HCM App. as a welcome idea that directly offers them access to potential employers. The employers also view the HCM App. as a welcome idea which is likely going to address the issue of low trust levels in the industry between the worker and the employer. The HCM App. is therefore perceived as a trusted in-between that both the employer and the employee can rely on to give accurate information about the worker and the potential employer.

The use of mobile money as means of payment of salaries and wages in the industry has almost become the accepted norm. The domestic workers are either paid by cash or through mobile wallet



services via Safaricom's Mpesa services. Both parties have their preferred modes of payment based on the modalities of sending and receiving.

Proposals of the financial management App., "Power App." was widely seen as a lookalike of the already existing Safaricom Mpesa money transfer solution. There are strong perceptions that the Power App. must be seen to do more by way of offering affordability of services to the segment of workers. Whereas other stakeholders hold a positive view of the Power App. solution, there are perceived drawbacks of the App. being wholesomely adopted by the DW segment since they see it as employer driven. There are reservations on how the App. will help users who do not have a bank account. However the single most important consideration in the App. would be to offer the accessibility in Kiswahili for the DWs to easily understand it at first sight.

3 Recommendations

The outcome of the qualitative study has shown that the domestic worker market in the country has a deep need for reorganization. On the workers' perspective, there were some suggestions that were felt to be urgent in streamlining the Domestic worker industry;

- a. A trial period should be set up for the applicants to familiarize themselves with the tasks expected. Domestic workers would prefer to first assess their job requirements before committing themselves.
- b. Most domestic workers cannot afford android phones. They would therefore prefer that the App. be made available on all phone types. They also decry the high cost of internet data as a limiting factor to accessing the proposed App. services.
- c. Registration to the HCM App. needs to be made simpler. Requirements of an email address could be replaced with a phone number since most domestic workers do not operate email accounts and find it complicated and unnecessary.
- d. Consideration of the HCM App. and Power App. language options for ease of access by the DW segment.
- e. The analysis of DW's that are enrolled within the CDTD programme show a strong affinity towards self-management of their employment as domestic workers. This offers them some form of needed empowerment in managing their professional life and by extension, some dignity. The proposed HCM digital platform therefore offers this benefits to would be users.

GRI therefore proposes the following as a result of the feedback obtained from the domestic worker market:

- i. Leveraging on already existing digital financial awareness to gain access to the domestic worker group.
- ii. Undertake a clear sensitization program and consumer education of the digital platform to gain user confidence and enhance consideration for uptake of the service.
- iii. Have a clear value proposition to the end-user despite challenges of sustainability of incomes and jobs in the economy.
- iv. Leveraging on the emerging trend in the "gig" economy where domestic workers see value in part timer engagements as opposed to permanent employment with relatively low wages.

-End-