

DISCUSSION PAPER

# GENDER ANALYSIS OF LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES IN SUB- SAHARAN AFRICA:

Recent Evidence from Cameroon and Mali



No. 16, July 2017

**VIRGINIE COMBLON, ANNE-SOPHIE ROBILLIARD AND FRANÇOIS ROUBAUD**  
FOR PROGRESS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN 2015-2016

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# SUMMARY

Using micro data from two recent labour force surveys collected in Cameroon and Mali, this paper explores gender differentials in labour market outcomes covering key areas such as occupational segregation, informality, part-time work and gender wage gaps. While women's participation to the labour market is relatively high in Africa compared to other regions of the world, the examples of Cameroon and Mali suggest it varies significantly within the continent. The data also show that the differential between the two countries in terms of women's participation is driven by the differential in education levels. The analysis also reveals that noticeable gender differences can

be observed in the employment patterns: while men are more likely to be salaried workers, women are more often unpaid family workers. However, in both countries, informal employment is the norm for both sexes. Gender gaps in monthly earnings are found to be much bigger for self-employed than for wage workers, a result that is consistent with other studies. Although education of both women and men is likely to play an important role, social norms in general deserve to be studied more thoroughly in order to understand remaining differences and their evolution in a context of rising education levels.

# RÉSUMÉ

S'appuyant sur les microdonnées issues de deux études sur la main-d'œuvre menées récemment au Cameroun et au Mali, le présent document examine les différences entre les sexes dans la situation qui prévaut sur le marché du travail, couvrant des domaines tels que la ségrégation dans le marché, la précarité, le travail à temps partiel et les écarts de rémunération entre les sexes. Bien que la participation des femmes au marché du travail soit relativement élevée en Afrique par rapport aux autres régions du monde, les exemples du Cameroun et du Mali indiquent qu'elle varie considérablement entre les différents pays du continent. Les données démontrent également que l'écart de participation des femmes entre les deux pays découle de l'écart qui existe dans les niveaux d'éducation. L'analyse fait également

ressortir d'importantes différences entre les sexes dans le domaine de l'emploi : d'un côté, les hommes sont plus susceptibles d'être des travailleurs salariés et, de l'autre, les femmes sont le plus souvent des travailleuses familiales non rémunérées. Toutefois, l'emploi informel est la norme pour les deux sexes dans les deux pays. On constate que les disparités entre les sexes en matière de salaires mensuels sont plus importantes pour les travailleurs indépendants que pour les travailleurs salariés, ce qui vient confirmer les conclusions d'autres études. Malgré le rôle significatif potentiel que peut jouer l'éducation des femmes et des hommes, les normes sociales en général méritent un examen plus approfondi pour comprendre les autres différences et leur évolution dans un contexte de niveaux d'éducation en hausse.

# RESUMEN

Utilizando microdatos de dos encuestas recientes sobre la población activa realizadas en el Camerún y Malí, este informe explora las diferencias de género en los resultados del mercado laboral en lo que respecta a aspectos clave como la segregación profesional, la informalidad, el trabajo a tiempo parcial y las diferencias salariales por razón de género. Aunque la participación de las mujeres en el mercado laboral es relativamente alta en África en comparación con otras regiones del mundo, los ejemplos del Camerún y Malí sugieren que hay diferencias considerables dentro del continente. Los datos también muestran que el diferencial entre los dos países en términos de la participación de las mujeres depende de las diferencias en cuanto a niveles de educación. El análisis también

revela que se observan notables diferencias de género en los patrones de empleo: mientras que los hombres tienen más probabilidades de ser trabajadores asalariados, las mujeres con más frecuencia son trabajadoras familiares no remuneradas. Sin embargo, en ambos países, el empleo informal es la norma para ambos sexos. Las brechas de género en lo que respecta a ingresos mensuales son mucho mayores en el conjunto de trabajadores autónomos que en el de asalariados, un resultado que es coherente con otros estudios. Y si bien es probable que la educación de mujeres y hombres desempeñe un papel importante, las normas sociales en general merecen ser estudiadas más a fondo a fin de comprender las diferencias que persisten y su evolución en un contexto de aumento de los niveles de educación.

1.

# INTRODUCTION

This paper uses micro data from recent labour force surveys collected in Cameroon and Mali to explore gender differentials in labour market outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. The objective of this commissioned work was to inform and provide substantive input to Chapter 2 of *Progress of the World's Women* (UN Women 2015), focusing on livelihood and labour market insecurity.<sup>1</sup> While building on existing studies, it focuses primarily on direct analysis of micro data. It covers key areas most relevant to the understanding of gender differences in labour market outcomes, such as occupational segregation, informality, part-time work and gender wage gaps.

Among developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by relatively high levels of female employment-to-population (ETP) ratios. According to the International Labour Organization's recent report on global employment trends for women (ILO 2012), the ETP ratio stood at almost 60 per cent for the region as a whole, compared to 20 per cent in North Africa and 50 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. ETP ratios stood higher only in East Asia (at 65 per cent). As a result, the gender differential in terms of ETP is relatively small compared to other regions. Various explanations have been suggested for the observed high levels of female participation in the labour market. One is the high share of the working age population in the agricultural sector, where both women and men participate. Another explanation is related to the high levels of poverty in the region, which entail that women can generally not afford not to work. Despite the high levels of participation, a number of studies have shown that the ratios vary significantly within the

region from one country to another. For instance, in the case of seven West African cities, Nordman et al. (2011) show that the paid employment rate for females varies between 29 per cent (for Niamey, Niger) and 57 per cent (for Lome, Togo).

Concerning the two countries under study, a number of stylized facts deserve to be mentioned. Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country of Central Africa with a population of 21.7 million (2012), 53 per cent of whom live in urban areas. In 2012, its gross national income (GNI) per capita (Atlas method) was estimated at 1,170 USD. Cameroon has enjoyed a decade of steady economic performance, with its gross domestic product (GDP) growing at an average of 3.2 per cent per year. The country has high levels of gross primary enrolment for both boys (118 per cent) and girls (103 per cent). By contrast, Mali is a low-income country of West Africa with a population of 14.9 million (2012) and a GNI per capita (Atlas method) estimated at 660

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