

guidance notes, and other resources curated to help youth employment practitioners design, implement, and scale programs.

### Knowledge Sharing and Learning

During 2023, S4YE has played a significant role in knowledge sharing and learning through active blogging, a new podcast series, and regular peer learning sessions. S4YE has published multiple blogs in partnership with other organizations and launched a podcast series on Women in Unconventional Jobs to highlight programs focusing on women in non-traditional professions. The initiative has also expanded its outreach through a multi-mode communications strategy, including the publication of a monthly newsletter and social media engagement to ensure efficient, engaging, and impactful outreach with stakeholders.

### Youth Engagement

Under the fifth and last pillar, S4YE activities are focused on youth engagement. S4YE expanded its Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to include over 120 young innovators and entrepreneurs from 65+ countries and launched the World Bank Youth Innovation Challenge: Water Solutions for a New Climate Reality to empower the next generation of youth aquapreneurs to address water gaps across low and middle-income countries.

### Jobs After Covid (JAC) Grants

Launched in 2021, the JAC Innovation Challenge Program pioneers solutions to job challenges in a post-pandemic context. The call for proposals focused on the medium-term job's agenda for low- and middle-income countries and covered the potential permanent shifts in the job's agenda. JAC grants focus on topics such as digital development, gender, the private sector, green jobs, and education. JAC Grants' progress and achievements during 2023 are summarized in this section.

### Digital Development

**Global Online Gig Jobs.** This grant informs and supports operational teams and policymakers in enabling vulnerable populations to access new forms of web-based digital work opportunities.

As part of the grant's activities, the team produced a global online gig study, [The Online Gig Economy Report—Working Without Borders: The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work](#). The report reveals that the online gig workforce is much larger than previously assumed, with an estimated 154 million to 435 million online gig workers around the globe. For the first time ever, the report mapped and tracked regional platforms and gig workers who work in languages other than English.

The report was [launched at a high-profile World Bank live event](#), followed by outreach initiatives to promote key findings with World Bank teams and external audiences. The report was presented at 13 high-level external and donor events, including the Marrakech World Bank Annual Meetings and G20 Roundtable, with audiences that included policymakers, industry, research, and staff from WBG regions. Several country teams have expressed interest in the report and are considering leveraging its insights to develop operational activities. Some organizations have also expressed interest in collaborating with the WBG team on future work. In addition, the report has generated significant interaction online on World Bank webpages and social media.

## BOX 1

### ONLINE GIG WORK: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR POLICYMAKERS

Good, inclusive jobs are crucial to reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity. New technologies that transform global economies can create job opportunities in the developing world. The 2023 global report “[Working Without Borders: The Promise and Peril of Online Gig Work](#)” addresses this challenge. The report highlights that the online gig economy of digital platforms that match workers to tasks posted by clients is a rapidly growing labor market segment, accounting for up to 12% of the global labor market.

This fast-rising segment is opening a new path for jobs, mainly in low and middle-income countries, for marginalized and vulnerable populations such as women, youth, other vulnerable groups, and those in remote areas, thus supporting inclusion. In addition, online gig work provides a much-needed source of income during periods of shock or transition, helps build the digital skills of younger workers, and offers flexible earning opportunities for all. Online gig platforms also provide a cost-effective source of talent for small businesses and startups, thus supporting firms to remain productive and agile and adapt to rapid shifts in market demand. However, online gig work also presents challenges.

Findings include the significant number of people not using the Internet, mostly in developing countries, and World Bank initiatives to bridge this digital divide through policy reforms, financing, and subsidy schemes. Other findings relate to the importance of building digital skills and the risks faced by gig workers, such as unstable incomes, poor working conditions, limited saving capacity, and limited social protection, particularly in low-income countries where over 90 percent of the workforce does not contribute to social insurance and remains outside the purview of labor regulations. The report also discusses the initiatives taken by governments to work with platforms and encourage workers to enroll and contribute to social insurance and retirement savings programs. Furthermore, the report highlights the need for modern forms of collective bargaining for workers outside formal employment, such as gig workers. Additionally, the report emphasizes the gender wage gap in the online gig economy and the flexibility it offers to women and highlights disparities in earnings between men and women in certain countries.

In this context, the report highlights the huge opportunities for developing countries to capitalize on the potential of the online gig economy and provides key recommendations to policymakers to maximize the benefits and address the challenges of online gig work.

The team also produced five country-specific assessments to inform operations on digital gig work in partnership with country teams in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kosovo, Malaysia, and Pakistan, which were integrated into the main global report. In addition, the team started a monthly short notes series to explore specific topics from the report and explore opportunities for future collaboration. Between September and December 2023, 4 notes have been published: (1) [Online Gig Work: A Potential Opportunity to Address Youth Unemployment?](#), (2) [Is Online Gig Work an Opportunity to Increase Female Labor Force Participation?](#), (3) [The Demand for Online Gig Workers](#), and (4) [Harnessing public-private partnerships to enhance social protection coverage of online gig workers](#).

As part of understanding the online gig ecosystem, the team partnered with several internal units within the World Bank and multiple external partners. The team engaged with 28 platforms to learn about their activity and user base and established partnerships with nine online gig work platforms to conduct surveys of online gig workers. Other partnerships include a joint survey with the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) on a large-scale platform survey; a learning exchange with *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH*—GIZ’s Flagship Gig Economy Project; a data collaboration with the Online Labor Index team and Fairwork; case study contributions from Microsoft Research India and NASA; financial and insurance organizations; foundations; and Non-Governmental Organizations.

**Liberia.** The [Recovery of Economic Activity for Liberian Informal Sector Employment \(REALISE\)](#) project increases access to income-earning opportunities for the vulnerable in the informal sector in response to the COVID-19 crisis in Liberia. The MDTF-financed JAC grant activities contribute to the support to small businesses component of the REALISE project, which gives grant support to vulnerable households to revive or start small businesses that would likely have survived without COVID-19 and that can continue to provide post-pandemic livelihoods. This component was implemented in fifteen communities within the Greater Monrovia area of Liberia’s capital. During 2023, the Jobs MDTF supported the REALISE project through a) final payment for 1,072 survey applicants who could provide evidence of substantial investment in business assets; b) presentation to the project management team of the results of the baseline survey; c) collection of the end-line survey of applicants between October and December 2023 covering applicants who had been surveyed prior to lottery assignment in 2022, thus including those who had not reached the final stages; and d) the piloting in April 2023 and roll out between June and August 2023 of an improved version of business connectivity measures, namely online group discussions that resulted in significant improvements in participation when compared to initial versions piloted in 2022. Preliminary results showed high interest in participating, low attrition rates, and strong engagement by discussion participants. Lessons from online discussion groups were also discussed at an internal World Bank workshop on entrepreneurship training.

## Gender

**Childcare policy indicators.** The Jobs MDTF supported a grant to design better childcare policies to increase access to more and better jobs, especially for women, through data and analysis on legal and regulatory frameworks for childcare services in 100 economies.

During 2023, as the grant came to a close, the team built on previously produced empirical evidence and knowledge on improving and prioritizing affordability and public finance in the childcare regulatory environment to promote higher female labor force participation and better-quality employment for women, including higher income, better job security, and more formal sector opportunities. Notably, the lessons learned from the pilot data collection exercise informed the formulation of a new fully-fledged childcare indicator officially launched as a part of the new [WBL \(Women, Business and the Law\) index](#) for 190 countries. The team also generated a set of analytical tools in 2023, including a [working paper](#) that established causal links between the enactment of childcare laws and women’s labor force participation. Finally, the team finished dissemination activities started in the previous year, including publishing a blog post on [childcare regulation and women’s participation in the labor force](#), a presentation at the WBG Gender Leads Meeting on Leveraging Developing Policy Operation

to Accelerate Care Policies, a [podcast episode for Foreign Policy](#), and a WBG Open Learning Course called “[Toward Available, Affordable, and Quality Childcare Services](#).”

## BOX 2

### GLOBAL CHILDCARE INDICATORS: INFORMING THE GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON CHILDCARE POLICY

Women undertake most unpaid care work within families and communities. The availability of affordable care services has significant implications for women’s economic inclusion, enabling them to enter the workforce, earn more, and fully harness their talents. Recognizing this challenge, the MDTF has been at the forefront of generating knowledge to inform gender-inclusive policies.

Under the [Jobs After Covid \(JAC\) Innovation Challenge](#), the MDTF supported the 2022 edition of Women, Business, and the Law on the global childcare indicator component. A [novel pilot dataset](#) on laws for childcare provision in 95 economies was developed, providing first-time insights into legal frameworks on the *availability*, *affordability*, and *quality* of childcare services globally. According to the dataset, the *availability* and provision of childcare services differ significantly across regions. In high-income OECD countries, Europe and Central Asia, states play an essential role in childcare provision, and public childcare is almost universally regulated. In contrast, the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia have the highest rates of private-sector or employer-regulated childcare. Regarding *affordability*, about 80 percent of economies with public childcare frameworks do not require it to be free. Despite no clear regional patterns, it is critical to continuously measure the *quality* of childcare services, as it affects early childhood development and influences parental decisions on childcare enrollment. Using these childcare indicators, a [working paper](#) supported by JAC quantifies the benefits of childcare legislation—the enactment of childcare laws increases women’s labor force participation by 2 percent and reaches 4 percent five years post-enactment.

This new data and analytics also serve as a unique foundation for policy practitioners to design interventions and advance childcare policy dialogue. In 2022, the Women, Business, and the Law childcare line of work became a key input for the World Bank’s [Invest in Childcare](#) initiative. Beyond the WBG, the Women, Business, and the Law edition has influenced the global discourse on childcare policies, reflected in [the Economist](#), [Hope Policy Institute](#), [Economist Impact](#), and [Korean Institute for International Economic Policy](#).

**IFC Gender Equality and Returns.** The Jobs MDTF JAC grant supported the adaptation of IFC’s training program “Gender Equality and Returns” (GEAR) from the garment sector to the agribusiness sector. The goal is to provide a foundation to scale GEAR as an IFC offering for agribusiness clients and contribute to strengthening the business case for approaches that simultaneously promote gender equality and business performance.

GEAR was successfully adapted and piloted for the first time in agribusiness with an IFC client, a large blueberry producer and exporter in South Africa. In 2023, a tailored training program was developed for the client for female participants and their managers. It included the four “core pillars” of GEAR: (a) training for female workers; (b) engagement with managers to promote cultural and

organizational change, help address gender biases, promote an enabling environment for women's career progression, and help managers better promote and retain female talent; (c) team building sessions to improve communication and collaboration across hierarchies and help managers act as coaches; and (d) coaching for female participants and continuous engagement with the client to empower women to apply their skills and monitor progress toward training goals.

The program combined different training methods, including experiential learning (such as highly participative activities, group exercises, role plays, and self-reflection) and more traditional delivery methods for the conceptual parts (management principles). In total, 33 female employees completed the program, and 10 farm-level managers were engaged in the program. Across all components, 39 sessions were delivered. Data collected to date indicates that the program achieved its desired outcomes related to improvements in awareness, knowledge, attitudes/behaviors/practices (of both women and managers). It also points towards improvements in productivity (qualitative feedback) and intentions to promote some of the women.

**Technology Adoption and the Gender Gap in Women-Led Businesses' Performance.** This grant, financed under the JAC initiative of the Jobs Umbrella MDTF, measured gender differences in technology adoption and the impact of technology use in male and female businesses.

In 2023, the team finalized a report leveraging the data collected in 15 countries for the Firm Adoption of Technologies survey. The paper explored new firm-level data to examine the gender gap in technology adoption and the associated effect on firm performance. The data shows a small difference in technology sophistication between female and male-managed firms but larger differences in terms of labor productivity. Firms with female top managers are just as likely to adopt the most sophisticated technologies for business functions that are common across all firms except for Enterprise Resource Planning. However, female-managed firms adopt advanced technologies less frequently for sector-specific business functions. The study also found that firms with higher technology sophistication tend to have higher productivity and that the returns to use more sophisticated technologies are larger in female-led businesses, which helps narrow the productivity gap between female and male-managed firms. A related [blog post](#) was also published.

**Mozambique.** The JAC Grant "Unlocking Women's Job-Creation Potential to Build Back Better", completed in 2023, aimed to improve the jobs and women's empowerment impact of the [Harnessing the Demographic Dividend \(HDD\)](#) project, which supports the Government of Mozambique to increase empowerment, access to education, and employment opportunities for targeted youth. The grant also informed the design of other WBG operations and other development partners' operations on women entrepreneurship in the context of economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis to build back better and with more gender equality.

Under the grant activities, the team conducted a randomized controlled trial in early 2023 to test different interventions to increase the likelihood of participants applying to the HDD's project national business plan competition with a focus on female and young applicants. Preliminary findings showed that the intervention increased the likelihood that participants apply, raised their awareness about business plan competition modalities, and created more positive attitudes compared to the control group. Overall, these impacts were more pronounced for men. However, the largest effect on women has been observed in women who received support to apply and watched the core informational video. These findings are useful for understanding the constraints men and women