

Economic Crisis and Women's Employment in Urban Kenya

by

Wambui Rose Wamuthenya

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Cover photo taken from Kibera slum where part of the fieldwork took place. Kibera slum is the largest of Nairobi's slums and the second largest urban slum in Africa. Copyright © UN-HABITAT

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Economic Crisis and Women's Employment in Urban Kenya

*De economische crisis en werkgelegenheid
voor vrouwen in stedelijke gebieden in Kenia*

Thesis

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by

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My interest in labour market studies arose from my previous work with IDRC and from an attempt (in 2000) to apply for a research grant from AERC. Although my work with IDRC did not involve carrying out research, it partly involved designing research projects with partners, reviewing research proposals for funding and evaluating funded projects. One of IDRC's main criterion for research funding was that a project encompassed a gender element, which exposed me more to and triggered my interest in gender issues in relation to the labour market and education.

For the AERC project, I wanted to investigate whether public sector employment crowds out private sector employment. For some reason, AERC's resource persons rejected this idea. However, AERC in keeping with its mandate of capacity building in sub-Saharan Africa and the need to develop young researchers, the resource persons encouraged me to develop another related research idea. Therefore, I consulted Professors Germano Mwabu, Arne Bigsten, Eric Thorbecke, and John Strauss (the resource persons at that time and to whom I am most grateful) on a brighter idea. They advised me to consider looking at the determinants of access to public and private sector employment. With this idea, and on a second attempt to apply for a research grant from AERC, I was awarded a grant whose output is in the publication pipeline of AERC. This topic laid the foundation for the proposal that I submitted to the IISS-EUR for PhD admission and expanded to the topic of this thesis and the various issues addressed in it. By becoming part of the AERC research network, I immensely benefitted from AERC's bi-annual research workshops and training seminars where I interacted with highly accredited scholars and researchers. Before joining the IISS-EUR, AERC funded my training in Stata (the statistical software used to analyse the data used in this study) and in econometric skills to handle and analyse survey data (which I owe to Professors John Strauss and Stephen Younger). I would like to thank AERC for the contribution to my academic career and for an additional grant to conduct part of this research work.

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Wambui R. Wamuthenya
2010

Dedication

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Acronyms

AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
CHE	Characteristics' Effect
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COE	Component due to Coefficients' Effect
CPI	Price Index
DFI	Development Finance Institution
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
EAC	East African Community
EPZ	Export Processing Zones
EPZA	Export Processing Zones Authority
ER	Employment Rate
EUR	Erasmus University, Rotterdam
FI	Financial Institutions
FLFPR	Female Labour Force Participation Rate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILFS	Integrated Labour-Force Survey
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IISS-EUR	International Institute of Social Studies International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University, Rotterdam
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate

LFS	Labour Force Survey
ME	Marginal Effect
MNL	Multinomial Logit Model
NASSEP	National Sample Survey and Evaluation Programme
NFP	Netherlands Fellowship Programme
NHE	Non-agricultural Household Enterprises
NSE	Nairobi Stock Exchange
OE	Operational Enterprises
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PE	Public Enterprises
RFLS	Rural Labour-Force Survey
RPED	Regional Programme on Enterprise Development
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TEM	Total Employment Manufacturing
ULFS	Urban Labour-Force Survey
UR	Unemployment Rate
VAT	Value Added Tax
WB	World Bank



Abstract

Traditionally, women have lagged behind men in terms of entering the labour force, and in many countries, their earnings lag behind male earnings. However, in recent years, many developed and developing economies have experienced transformations in their labour market structures due to trends such as globalisation and economic restructuring.

Indeed, the labour market in Kenya has undergone several changes since the country's independence in 1963. For instance, owing to a rapid expansion of its education system, the supply of educated labour has increased over time. Furthermore, since the 1970s, real wages have dropped steeply and the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) in 1980s has been accompanied by changes in the structure of employment, incomes and poverty. The economy has performed poorly as evident from low GDP growth and declining real earnings and standard of living. Both unemployment and informal sector employment increased (informal sector employment increased from 20.0 per cent in 1988 to 79.1 per cent in 2007) while formal sector or modern wage employment declined (from 77.5 per cent in 1988 to 20.2 per cent in 2007).

Set against a background of declining growth rates and in the context of the urban areas of Kenya, this dissertation examines three issues. First, it provides an assessment of various factors (human capital, individual and household characteristics) that influence the substantial increase in women's employment rate. The employment rate (ER) is treated as the effective Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) as virtually all women were participating in the labour-force by 1998 (87.2 per cent as compared to 58.4 per cent in 1986). Second, it examines gender differences in the incidence of unemployment. Third, it examines the factors that determine sector of employment choice (formal versus informal job attainment).

The empirical analysis presented in the thesis is based on two cross-section labour force surveys conducted in 1986 and 1998 and on primary data (mainly qualitative) collected in 2003. The Labour Force Survey (LFS)

data are slightly more than a decade apart and coincide with periods before and after implementation of SAP. While more recent labour force data would have helped provide a more contemporary account, the 1998 LFS is the most recent publicly accessible survey.

As far as the first issue is concerned, the analysis reported in the thesis shows that the bulk of the increase in women's insertion into the labour market comes from an increased participation of married women. While women's higher educational endowments, particularly the increase in secondary education, accounts for an improvement in their employment prospects, the period also witnesses a sharp decline in the importance given to education in determining employment and by 1998, university graduates were as likely to be employed as individuals with no education. The period between 1986 and 1998 witnessed civil service reforms, restructuring of the private sector, firm closures and increasing job insecurities. Notwithstanding the role of education, declining opportunities for males who in 1986 were the primary breadwinners and the accompanying income and employment insecurities within households seem to be the key factors prompting the sharp increase in the labour supply of (married) women.

Turning to gender differences in unemployment, the sharp increase in female LFPR does not accompany an increase in their employment rate. Consequently, unemployment among women remains a pressing problem. In contrast, male unemployment rates are substantially lower and do not increase over time. Using a Blinder-Oaxaca type decomposition framework, the thesis establishes that the overall likelihood of being unemployed is heavily influenced by sex, marital status, household-headship and human capital characteristics such as experience and level of education. The decomposition estimates display that for both periods, gender gaps in unemployment may overwhelmingly be attributed to the composition effect (around 81 to 84 per cent).

Finally, in terms of access to formal sector employment, the analysis shows that in both periods, experience and education are highly valued in the formal sector. Over time, the importance of education in securing labour market access increases by about eight percentage points (for both primary and secondary education). However, there are sharp gender differences. For men, the importance of education increases (from seven to 31 percentage points for secondary education) while for women it declines (from 49 to 39 percentage points for secondary education) suggesting the presence of labour market segregation. Over time, the negative effect of marital status on female formal sector participation declines reflecting the increasing insertion of married women in the labour market. Underscoring

the use of the informal sector as a last resort option, the analysis shows that declines in husbands' real earnings are associated with a sharp increase in women's participation in the informal sector. The increasing participation of women in the vulnerable informal sector is consistent with the feminist version of the structuralist characterisation of the informal sector.



Samenvatting

De economische crisis en werkgelegenheid voor vrouwen in stedelijke gebieden in Kenia

Vrouwen hebben bij de toetreding tot de arbeidsmarkt van oudsher een achterstand op mannen en in veel landen verdienen vrouwen ook minder dan mannen. De afgelopen jaren zijn er echter veranderingen ontstaan op de arbeidsmarkt in veel ontwikkelde en ontwikkelingslanden door trends als globalisatie en economische herstructurering.

Zo zijn er verschillende veranderingen opgetreden op de arbeidsmarkt in Kenia sinds de onafhankelijkheid in 1963. Dankzij een snelle uitbreiding van het onderwijssysteem is het aantal geschoolde arbeidskrachten bijvoorbeeld toegenomen. Verder zijn de lonen sinds de jaren zeventig sterk gedaald en heeft de invoering van structurele aanpassingen (*structural adjustment reforms*; SAP) in de jaren tachtig veranderingen in de structuur van werkgelegenheid, inkomen en armoede met zich meegebracht. De economie staat er slecht voor, wat blijkt uit een lage groei van het bbp en een daling van de inkomens en de levensstandaard. De werkloosheid en de werkgelegenheid in de informele sector zijn beide toegenomen (de werkgelegenheid in de informele sector is gegroeid van 20,0 procent in 1988 tot 79,1 procent in 2007), terwijl de werkgelegenheid in de formele sector of in dienstverband afgenomen is van 77,5 procent in 1988 tot 20,2 procent in 2007.

Dit proefschrift behandelt drie onderwerpen binnen de context van stedelijke gebieden in Kenia en tegen de achtergrond van dalende groeicijfers. Het onderzoek richt zich ten eerste op de factoren (menselijk kapitaal, individuele kenmerken en kenmerken van huishoudens) die de substantiële toename van de arbeidsparticipatie van vrouwen beïnvloeden. De arbeidsparticipatie wordt beschouwd als de effectieve participatiegraad omdat vrijwel alle vrouwen in 1998 deelnamen aan het arbeidsproces (87,2% in vergelijking met 58,4% in 1986). Ten tweede richt het onderzoek zich op sekseverschillen op het gebied van werkloosheid en ten derde worden de factoren

die bepalen in welke sector mensen werk krijgen (de formele of de informele sector) onderzocht.

Het empirisch onderzoek in dit proefschrift is gebaseerd op twee cross-sectionele onderzoeken onder de beroepsbevolking die gehouden zijn in 1986 en 1998 en op eigen (voornamelijk kwalitatief) onderzoek uit 2003. De onderzoeken onder de beroepsbevolking zijn ruim tien jaar na elkaar gedaan, respectievelijk voor en na de invoering van de SAP. Recentere gegevens over de beroepsbevolking hadden de actuele situatie beter weer kunnen geven, maar het onderzoek uit 1998 is het meest recente onderzoek waarvan de gegevens openbaar toegankelijk zijn.

Wat het eerste onderwerp van het proefschrift betreft, blijkt uit de analyse dat de toestroom van vrouwen op de arbeidsmarkt grotendeels toe te schrijven is aan een toegenomen arbeidsparticipatie van getrouwde vrouwen. Omdat het opleidingsniveau van vrouwen is gestegen, waarbij vooral het aantal vrouwen dat voortgezet onderwijs heeft gehad is toegenomen, hebben ze betere vooruitzichten op de arbeidsmarkt. Tegelijkertijd is in deze periode de invloed van het opleidingsniveau op het vinden van werk sterk afgenomen. In 1998 hadden afgestudeerden aan een universiteit evenveel kans op een baan als mensen zonder opleiding. Tussen 1986 en 1998 waren er reorganisaties bij de overheid en in het bedrijfsleven, sloten bedrijven hun deuren en kwamen er steeds meer banen op de tocht te staan. Ondanks de rol die de opleiding speelt, lijkt de sterke toename van het aantal (getrouwde) vrouwen op de arbeidsmarkt vooral verklaard te worden door de verslechterde vooruitzichten voor mannen, die in 1986 meestal kostwinner waren, en de onzekerheid over werk en inkomen die daarmee gepaard ging binnen huishoudens.

Op het gebied van sekseverschillen in werkloosheid zien we dat de sterke stijging van de participatiegraad van vrouwen niet gepaard gaat met een toename van het aantal vrouwen met een betaalde baan en dat werkloosheid daarom bij vrouwen een groot probleem blijft. De werkloosheid onder mannen is daarentegen aanzienlijk lager en deze laat ook geen stijging zien. Op basis van de decompositiemethode van Blinder-Oaxaca wordt in dit proefschrift vastgesteld dat de kans om werkloos te worden sterk bepaald wordt door sekse, burgerlijke staat, het feit of iemand gezinshoofd is, en door kenmerken van het menselijk kapitaal als ervaring en opleidingsniveau. Uit de decompositieschattingen blijkt dat sekseverschillen in werkloosheid in beide perioden grotendeels, in ongeveer 81 tot 84 procent van de gevallen, toegeschreven kunnen worden aan het compositie-effect.

Wat betreft de werkgelegenheid in de formele sector blijkt ten slotte uit het onderzoek dat ervaring en opleiding in beide perioden zeer belangrijk

geacht worden in deze sector. Het belang van onderwijs voor het krijgen van toegang tot de arbeidsmarkt neemt met ongeveer 8 procentpunt toe in de loop van de tijd (dit geldt zowel voor basis- als voortgezet onderwijs). Er zijn echter grote sekseverschillen. Voor mannen neemt het belang van onderwijs toe (van 7 tot 31 procentpunt voor voortgezet onderwijs), maar voor vrouwen neemt het af (van 49 tot 39 procentpunt voor voortgezet onderwijs). Dit wijst op een segregatie op de arbeidsmarkt. In de loop van de tijd neemt het negatieve effect van de huwelijks staat op de arbeidsparticipatie van vrouwen in de formele sector af, wat in overeenstemming is met de toename van het aantal getrouwde vrouwen op de arbeidsmarkt. Het onderzoek toont aan dat inkomensachteruitgang bij de echtgenoot samengaat met een sterke stijging in de arbeidsparticipatie van vrouwen in de informele sector, wat benadrukt dat de informele sector als laatste redmiddel gebruikt wordt. De toename van de arbeidsparticipatie van vrouwen in de kwetsbare informele sector is in overeenstemming met de feministische interpretatie van de structuralistische benadering van de informele sector.