

**I spoke at
#WD2023 Concurrent Session
on Fighting the Gender pay
gap in the Health and Care
Sector**



Spaces
Solidarity
Solutions



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9.30 – 11.00



Kigali Conference Centre, room MH3.1



Women Deliver Speech

**Speech given at Women Deliver 2023 in Kigali, Rwanda
Concurrent Panel: Fighting the Gender Pay Gap in the Health and Care Sector
Sponsored by: ILO & the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)**

Thank you so much for the opportunity to discuss a crucial topic that affects millions of women and youth around the world: fighting the gender pay gap in the health and care sector. As an advocate for youth empowerment, I believe that this conversation must be inclusive of young people because this sector has become the largest employer of youth, with employment rates rising faster for young people, primarily for young women, in this sector than any other age group. The International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 report indicates that prior to the pandemic, the care economy employed 33.6 million young women or 20.2% of all young female workers and 14.2 million young men, 5.1% of all young male workers.

Challenges

However, as highlighted in the Global Employment Trends for Youth report, the projected 40 million new health and care worker jobs by 2030 do not guarantee quality employment. Existing issues such as jobs within the informal sector, limited opportunities for contracted roles, and socio-cultural barriers currently persist. Informal and temporary work is a challenge that youth in this sector face. Focusing on young women, in lower income countries, 53.8% of young women are informally employed in the health and care sector; 33.7% in middle-income countries; and 21% of young women in upper-middle-income countries are in the informal health and care sector.

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Employment stability is provided through public employment and permanent contracts—however, a majority of young people are concentrated in the informal sector and are only temporarily contracted for employment in this sector. This contributes to significant pay gaps between young workers and their adult counterparts in low and lower-middle income countries. To provide an example, in some high-income countries throughout Europe, Canada, and Chile: while 80% of adult workers have a permanent contract within this sector, only 40-60% of young people also have permanent contracts. This disparity is highlighted within some high-income countries but the gap widens among developing countries.

We also know that gender norms and discrimination persist for young women, with societal expectations prioritizing marriage and child-rearing over careers for women. Even though women make up approximately 70% of the health and care workforce, only 25% occupy senior roles. This statistic can be discouraging for young women and early career professionals who work hard to gain the credentials needed to advance in their careers and yet are constantly faced with barriers to upward mobility. As noted by the report released by ILO & WHO entitled “The gender pay gap in the health and care sector: A global analysis in the time of COVID-19”: we also see that familial responsibilities, unpaid labor contribute to this statistic, and overwhelming demands of childcare often lead to a drop in women's workforce participation around the age of 30.

Steps Needed to be taken

Steps that need to be taken to mitigate systemic and socio-cultural barriers for young girls and early career professionals include:

Support and guidance to transition young professionals from the informal sector to the formal sector through increased opportunities for public employment and for permanent contracts. If we put pressure on public employers to be transparent in their salary wages, we can hold them accountable to reduce the youth and gender pay gap. There are countries that have already imposed pay transparency measures and reports on companies within the public sector: for example, as highlighted in a 2020 Policy Brief on Collective Bargaining & Gender, Austrian companies with 150+ employees have to submit bi-annual wage reports related to gender and wages. We can expand this model to be inclusive of young and early career professionals.

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As recommended by the report released by ILO & WHO entitled "The gender pay gap in the health and care sector" report, we must provide skills enhancement programs that allow young women to renew competencies that lapsed or became obsolete during absences, such as maternity leave or familial career responsibilities. Scholarships and reentry programs can provide the necessary support for young people who wish to begin or resume their professional journeys if they became inactive for reasons beyond their control. The "One young person, one solution" program in France serves as an example, providing comprehensive support for vulnerable young people through hiring subsidies, training, counseling, and mentorship. Similar initiatives have been launched in other countries, emphasizing the importance of investing in the future of our young workforce.

Initiatives that focus on career transitions and mentorship must be provided specifically for the health and care sector, a major employer of young girls and early career professionals. By encouraging young girls to discover their passions and seek out mentors, we can help them create a blueprint for their careers and advocacy efforts. Through mentorship, we can challenge societal limitations and broaden young girls' perceptions of their capabilities and open their minds to the diverse and often unknown career paths within the health and care sectors.

Through these actions, we are telling young girls this powerful message:

In Kinyarwanda: "*Birashoboka.*"

In French: "*C'est possible.*"

And in English: "*It is possible.*"

It is possible to create spaces, solidarity, and solutions for young girls and early career professionals in the health and care sector. Thank you.



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