

Right to Work and Access to the Labour Market

Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights claims that "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work". The right to work is vital for every human being. It provides everybody with the right to have access to a decent job that enables each person to live with dignity as well as to earn a good living. Nevertheless, apart from constituting a legal condition to accessing the labour market, this right does not guarantee Mauritians sustainable jobs with fair and rewarding working conditions. Over the last decade, many Mauritians have denounced the challenges related to their professional integration. Not to mention the poor and precarious working conditions as well as low wages and discrimination that some employees from both the public and private sectors have to face.

Although the decrease of unemployment rate in the recent years, passing from 8.8% to 6.9% throughout 2007 to the first quarter of 2019 (Statics Mauritius, 2019), it should be noted that unemployment among young people under the age of twenty-five is rising steadily. According to figures provided by Statistics Mauritius, the youth unemployment rate increased by 0.2 of a percentage point over the 2017-2018 period, passing from 24.9% to 25.1%.

Access to employment is in real deterioration due in particular to the gap between the required qualifications and the posts filled. The labour market is in constant evolution due to the new technologies. As a result, this has fostered the emergence of new professions that request many more transversal as well as diversified skills. So, to fight unemployment among people and to reduce the spread of insecure employment, it is necessary that both public, as well as private actors, draw up practical measures that are in line with the current world trends, in particular in terms of employment policies and high-quality education. The Right to work is defined and easier. But how about its application in the context of thousands of Mauritian job seekers who are unfortunately not well equipped with the necessary skills as well as qualifications to fill the positions filled by the employers?

Access of Mauritians to the labour market in figures:

In 2018, the Mauritian labour force stood at 583800 people, 352800 men and 231000 women. Of these numbers, only 45.5% of women had access to a job compared to 73.1% of men (Statics Mauritius, 2018).

From 2005 to 2018, the activity rate of men remains higher than for women. But it should also be noted that this rate has dropped considerably over the years, falling from 78.8% in 2005 to 73.1% in 2018, while that of women has increased substantially over the last decade, from 41.6% in 2005 to 45.5% in 2018 (Statistics Mauritius, 2018)

Also, despite these satisfactory and rewarding figures, access to the labour market is steadily decreasing as well as very competitive, in particular for young people aged 16 to 24. In 2018, almost half of the active population was out of work. The unemployment rate was measured as 6.9% which represents approximately 16700 men (4.7%) as compared to 34,400 women (10.1%). Thus, unemployment among women is more significant than for men.

Moreover, it is mostly young people aged 16-24 who are inactivated. The unemployment rate is estimated at 30%, that is 29.3% for females as compared to 21.7% for males. Again, women are still at the forefront, even though they have more access to higher education than men.

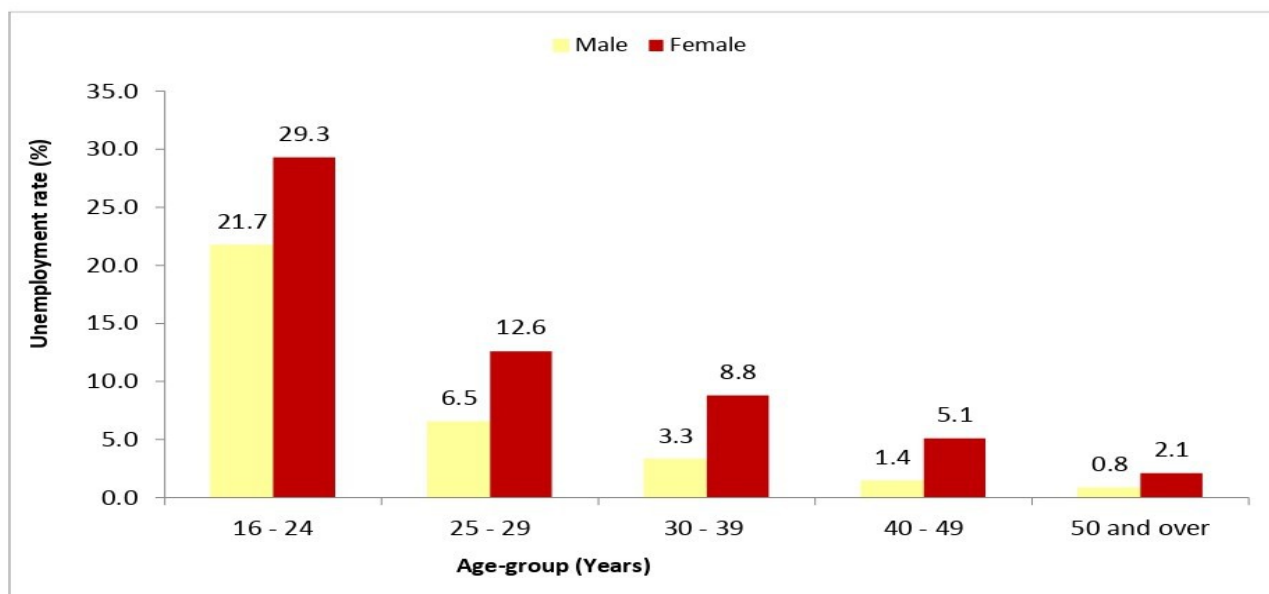
According to Mauritius statistics, jobless women are more skilled than their male counterparts. A total of 29.1% among unemployed women had university degrees versus 22.2% among unemployed men.

Unemployed persons by educational attainment, 2018 (Statics Mauritius,2018)

Educational attainment	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Primary	1,900	11.4	2,600	11.1
<i>Below CPE</i>	1,400	8.4	2,200	9.4
<i>Passed CPE</i>	500	3.0	400	1.7
Secondary	11,100	66.5	14,000	59.8
<i>Form I - V but not passed SC</i>	6,800	40.7	6,700	28.6
<i>Passed SC</i>	2,100	12.6	3,900	16.7
<i>Passed HSC</i>	2,200	13.2	3,400	14.5
Tertiary	3,700	22.2	6,800	29.1
All Educational attainments	16,700	100.0	23,400	100.0

In summary, as far as employment is concerned. Women are the most affected from unemployment, and this without mentioning the wage discrimination they undergo once they become employees.

Unemployment rate (%) by age-group and sex, 2018(Statics Mauritius, 2019)



According to Statics Mauritius (Statics Mauritius, 2019), for the same job, female workers are paid on average about 55,1% to 76,2% of the salary of their male counterparts.

Faced to the rise of the unemployment and the issue over gender inequalities, YUVA has set up concrete actions that focus on education, empowerment and job creation.

What YUVA does to empower Mauritians, in particular, the youth?

Since its founding until now, the Youth United in Voluntary Action (YUVA) has been committed to serving the Mauritian community through social actions in the areas of health, education, empowerment and job creation to reduce unemployment and thus, break the cycle of poverty.

Over the years, YUVA implemented the YUVA Academy, a social enterprise that offers educational programs focusing on entrepreneurship, leadership and innovation. Through these programmes, not only YUVA supports young people by developing technical skills, but also promotes an entrepreneurial culture that enables them to launch into a new business to create jobs and therefore to facilitate the professional integration of youth.

Furthermore, YUVA provides scholarships for vulnerable and poor young people that enable them to access elementary school, secondary school and also university. Moreover, YUVA supports young people in their job search. Through training and

orientation programs, YUVA connects young people with the professional world through an application of job vacancy, organises workshops of Curriculum Vitae and Cover Letter as well as puts young people in contact with potential employers.

So far, about 5000 young people have benefited from leadership and entrepreneurship programs that help them acquire various skills for their future professional integration. At YUVA, the aim is to train the leaders and entrepreneurs of tomorrow who, with their vision of change, will be able to create new opportunities that will lead to economic activities which will create more jobs to overcome the unemployment and ensure a better future for the next generation.

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