Powering Jobs Census 2022:
Focus on Kenya

POWER FOR ALL

The ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Good Energies BY PORTICUS

GET.invest Mobilising Renewable Energy Investments

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The Powering Jobs Census 2022 Series

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About

About This Report

Coordinated and led by Power for All, the #PoweringJobs campaign and the Powering Jobs Census 2022 are made possible through the generous support and encouragement of The Rockefeller Foundation, Good Energies Foundation, GET.invest, and a coalition of research and implementation partners.

About Power for All

Power for All is a stakeholder coalition campaigning to rapidly scale the deployment of decentralized renewable energy to achieve universal electricity access before 2030. Decentralized renewables, specifically solar appliances and systems designed for households, businesses, and productive use, offer the fastest, most affordable, and cleanest path to electricity access for all. Power for All brings together more than 300 business, finance, research, and civil society organizations to achieve that goal.

Acknowledgments

#PoweringJobs partners contributed to data collection and analysis, interpretation of results, and feedback on the report. Global and national steering committees and peer reviewers provided expert guidance.

Kenya Steering Committee

» Africa Minigrid Developers Association (AMDA)
» Don Bosco Development Network
» Fuzu
» International Labour Organization (ILO)
» Kenya Climate Innovation Center
» Kenya Renewable Energy Association (KEREA)
» Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kenya
» Practical Action
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» U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP)

1. Introduction

1.1 Report Objectives

Labor markets around the globe are currently facing many challenges. Existing vulnerabilities, such as high youth unemployment and widespread energy poverty, combined with severe pandemic lockdowns have worsened livelihoods and deepened socioeconomic crises in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Compared to the standard grid extension strategy, decentralized renewable energy (DRE) can provide underserved populations with faster, cleaner, and more affordable energy while also generating sustainable jobs that boost local economies. *Powering Jobs Census 2019: The Energy Access Workforce* was the first study of the prevailing employment landscape of the DRE sector and demonstrated the sector's great capacity to contribute to the creation of quality jobs [1], [2].

This study is part of Power for All's Powering Jobs Census 2022 series, which examines the labor market for the DRE industry in Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda. The DRE industry, which includes pico-solar appliances, solar home systems (SHS), commercial and industrial (C&I) standalone systems, and mini-grids, has an important role to play in the current global context. The technologies that comprise the DRE sector are essential to achieving universal energy access (Sustainable Development Goal 7), but the sector also contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8 through job creation.

Powering Jobs Census 2022: The Energy Access Workforce is a bottom-up count of employment in the DRE sector [3]. Through direct surveys of over 350 DRE companies, the study consolidates employment data for the period spanning 2019 to 2021 and also includes employment and sales projections for 2022 and 2023. Primary data from the surveys, along with existing literature on the DRE sector, was used to estimate total DRE employment at a national level. The data collection and analysis were complemented by five focus group discussions (FGDs), one in each focus country, that helped validate the census results and obtain qualitative information and context. For details regarding methods, sample characteristics, definitions, and scope of analysis refer to the global report [3].

This report breaks down the research results for Kenya, focusing on the country's DRE employment landscape, labor market features, and workforce profile. The latter includes the participation of women, skill levels and training in the sector, and compensation. The findings of this study can be used to raise awareness of the DRE sector's potential for job creation and to spark conversation about how to train the workforce for energy access. As Kenya's DRE market continues to grow and develop, so do the possibilities for employment generation within the sector.

1.2 DRE Sector Landscape in Kenya

Current Status of Electrification

Kenya currently ranks fifth in electricity access in sub-Saharan Africa, as 75% of the population had access to electricity in 2021—up from 36% in 2014 thanks to the growth of both grid-powered homes and solar-powered homes [4]. However, as in most countries in the region, access rates differ significantly between rural and urban populations. While more than 94% of people living in urban areas have electricity access, only 63% of those living in rural areas do [5], [6]. In addition, the main grid in Kenya offers poor reliability and presents frequent breakdowns, voltage drops, and extended outage restoration times [5].

Attempting to address this issue, the Government of Kenya created the Rural Electrification Authority in 2007 to accelerate the electrification rate in rural areas. The agency aimed to prioritize connections of public facilities, such as market centers, schools, and health clinics. However, the expansion of the grid proved to be too expensive, costing the government an estimated US$100 million per year between 2007 and 2014 [6]. In 2017, the government made a second effort at addressing electrification, this time launching the Last Mile Connectivity Project, which was intended to connect low-income and rural populations to the national grid. However, the high costs of household connections (US$398) prevented many rural families from being connected to the network [7].

Current State of the DRE Sector

The Government of Kenya aims to accelerate universal access to electricity not only through grid extension but also through the deployment of DRE technologies. Today, most of the existing off-grid electrification comes from small-scale standalone photovoltaic systems like SHS. Kenya is the largest market in Africa for off-grid solar products; an estimated 10 million Kenyans utilize off-grid solar technologies [5]. However, after several years of high growth, the off-grid market has stagnated and the uptake of SHS has become increasingly challenging. Reasons behind this plateau are mostly related to COVID-19, but also include market saturation in accessible locations, the cost of the technologies for the consumer, and the poor quality of the cheaper products that circulate in the market [5].

The Government of Kenya intends to advance the deployment of solar-powered mini-grids as affordable and sustainable solutions

over the long run, including plans for 158 new mini-grids to be built by Kenya's Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation (REREC) and operated by Kenya Power and Lighting Company Limited (KPLC) [7], [8]. In addition, several private developers and operators have entered the mini-grid industry in Kenya. On the private side, 130 mini-grids are currently under development, though at varying stages. Altogether, over 280 mini-grids will be built and commissioned by the end of 2022 to achieve the government's targets. As a result, the number of mini-grids in operation is expected to total 391 in 2022 (compared to 106 in 2018) [9].

Policy Landscape

In 2018 Kenya launched the National Electrification Strategy, a critical component of Kenya's Vision 2030. This strategy aims at achieving universal electricity access, with an acceptable quality of service, for all households and businesses by the end of 2022 [4]. In addition, the Government of Kenya plans to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix to 80% [10].

Kenya's Ministry of Energy creates, develops, and implements policies for the efficient operation and growth of the energy sector. Its core functions include energy regulation, renewable energy promotion, and the National Energy Policy development [11]. One of the flagship projects of the Ministry of Energy is the Kenya Off-Grid Solar Access Project, financed by the World Bank and aimed at providing clean electricity and cooking solutions for remote, low-density, and underserved populations in the country [12]. The project leverages off-grid solar technologies to electrify households (including host communities around refugee camps), small enterprises, community facilities, and water pumps [12].

The Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA), which replaced Kenya's Energy Regulatory Commission, incorporates a Renewable Energy Department responsible for planning, developing, implementing, and promoting the necessary structures for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency measures [13]. Together with private stakeholders, EPRA developed the Energy (mini-grid) Regulations in 2021 to provide mini-grid developers and operators with licensing requirements and tariff approvals [8].

Future Prospects for the Sector

Adequate access to electricity is essential for Kenya's social and economic transformation. Currently, renewable energy (mostly hydro and geothermal) accounts for almost three-quarters of the total installed generation capacity. However, the high costs of extending the national grid have hindered electrification efforts, particularly in rural and remote areas. In addition to off-grid solutions such as SHS, lanterns, and water pumps, mini-grids present an attractive opportunity for electrifying distant communities at significantly lower costs [8]. Estimates suggest that mini-grids will provide electricity to more than 34,000 households in Kenya by the end of 2022. The number of public and private mini-grids is also expected to grow significantly over the coming years in order to achieve the ambitious target of universal electrification in the country [8].

While Kenya has already made significant strides in attracting private investment for renewable energy projects, the Government of Kenya must continue supporting the development of these technologies in order to meet increasing demand throughout the country. For this purpose, relevant policies should aim for an integrated energy sector that leverages the benefits of both on-grid and off-grid technologies [4].

2. Labor Market Features

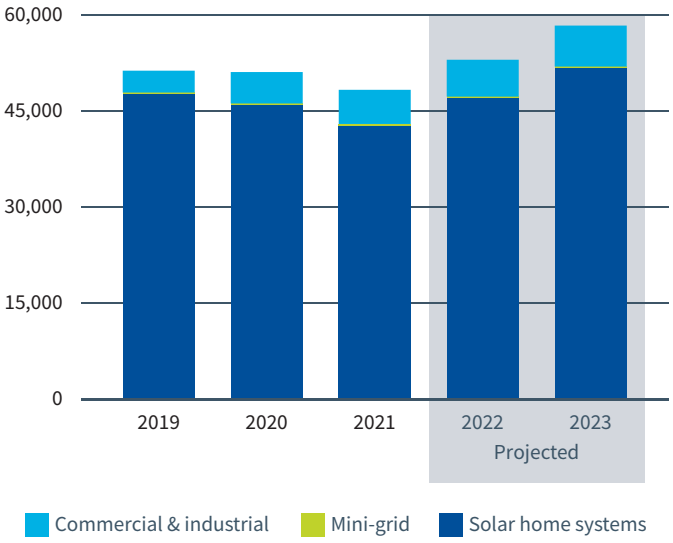
2.1 Employment Estimates

According to the Powering Jobs Census 2022, the Kenyan DRE sector was able to create over 48,000 jobs in 2021. Jobs in the DRE sector contracted in 2021, dropping by almost 3,000 compared to 2019 levels. The DRE sector is expected to bounce back to its pre-pandemic employment numbers by the end of 2022, with total jobs projected to reach 53,000. This growth momentum is expected to continue in the near future, and employment is projected to reach 58,000 jobs by 2023. Figure 1 illustrates the trends in the DRE sector employment between 2019 and 2023. In 2021, Kenya's estimated DRE sector jobs (almost 50,000) greatly outnumbered those of the KPLC, the nation's utility-scale power provider, which had only 7,000 workers [14].

The decline in DRE sector job creation in 2020 and 2021 was mostly a result of a decline in the sales of SHS products during the global pandemic. Kenya is the most developed DRE market in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for more than a quarter of the total annual sales of SHS products in the region [15]. Total sales of SHS grew by 17% annually between 2016 and 2019, but then declined by 5% annually between 2019 and 2021, directly affecting the sector's employment levels [4].

Multiple factors played a role in the decline of SHS sales in Kenya. The economic downturn and supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19 were detrimental to the SHS industry. In addition, while Kenya's macroeconomy overall seemed to have recovered rapidly

FIGURE 1. TOTAL DRE SECTOR DIRECT EMPLOYMENT IN KENYA



Source: Data from Power for All (2022); market size estimates from GOGLA (2022) and IRENA (2021)

from the COVID-19 contraction (with a GDP growth rate nearing 5% in 2021), the agriculture sector is still lagging behind due to both the pandemic and a below-average rainfall [17]. This lag in the agriculture sector (main source of income) affected DRE customers, who reported a lower ability to purchase lighting products as their disposable income declined [4]. Furthermore, the uncertainty around the price of DRE products (due in part to global supply chain disruptions) may have contributed to lower demand for DRE products. The Government of Kenya reinstated a 14% VAT on DRE products in 2020. This VAT levy was later lifted, but it raised the price of DRE products for a brief spell [16].

The DRE sector leveraged various strategies to cope with the effects of COVID-19 and its associated impact on employment. A strategy deployed by some of the largest companies was to pivot to the sale of solar appliances, like TVs, as demand for those increased during lockdowns (with Kenyans spending most of their time at home). Highlighting a second strategy, some of the DRE companies interviewed as part of the census spoke about how they used digital tools, such as social media and virtual productivity tools, to increase their sales and reduce costs. In fact, the widespread adoption of digital tools has led to the Kenyan DRE market's standing as one of the countries with the lowest direct labor intensity. In other words, compared to its market size, the Kenyan DRE market employs fewer workers than other countries' DRE markets. Finally a third strategy is observed in DRE companies that decided to either reduce their headcount or implement pay cuts to stay afloat.

By 2023, sales for SHS are expected to bounce back, thereby increasing total employment in the Kenyan DRE sector. There is still unmet demand for SHS products, especially from on-grid customers who are looking for backup options during blackouts and from populations in remote locations such as Northern Kenya. During the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), President Uhuru Kenyatta committed to a full energy transition by 2030 through the expansion of all renewable sources, including off-grid solar [18]. This expansion is expected to increase sales and distribution jobs for at least the next few years. In addition, FGD participants indicated that the remaining off-grid (and under-the-grid) populations live in remote locations and are hard to reach and to connect, and thus more likely to receive connections using SHS.

Another area of opportunity identified by DRE companies who participated in the FGD was the recycling of SHS products. As an early adopter of DRE, Kenya has legacy products that can be restored and refurbished. The Government of Kenya is in the process of passing a new law to regulate electronic waste. In addition, FGD participants believe that Kenya will develop the capacity to produce solar panels or solar-powered appliances/devices, which can create advanced and high-paying jobs in the sector.

Regarding large-scale systems, C&I and mini-grids are expected to become major job creators in the DRE sector in the longer term. Consumers have started to switch to larger appliances, especially ones that will support income generation, over pico solar mobile and lighting devices and small SHS [2]. Moreover, the demand for C&I products is expected to increase as companies look into backup power options due to issues of grid reliability. Participants in the FGD suggested that the lowest cost electrification option for Kenyan companies is a double installation, in which they will have standalone solar as the main source of power and a grid as a backup option. Note that while C&I and mini-grids tend to be less labor intensive than SHS, implying less direct employment in comparison, they generate most jobs through indirect and induced employment (shops in the villages that benefit from solar power, increased agricultural productivity that generates more income and jobs, etc.).

2.2 Employment Types

The SHS segment accounts for the majority of jobs within the Kenyan DRE sector, nearly 90% of existing jobs, while C&I accounts for

most of the remaining 10%. Mini-grids currently create little direct employment in Kenya. Figure 2 showcases the composition of employment by type of technology and formality in the DRE sector.

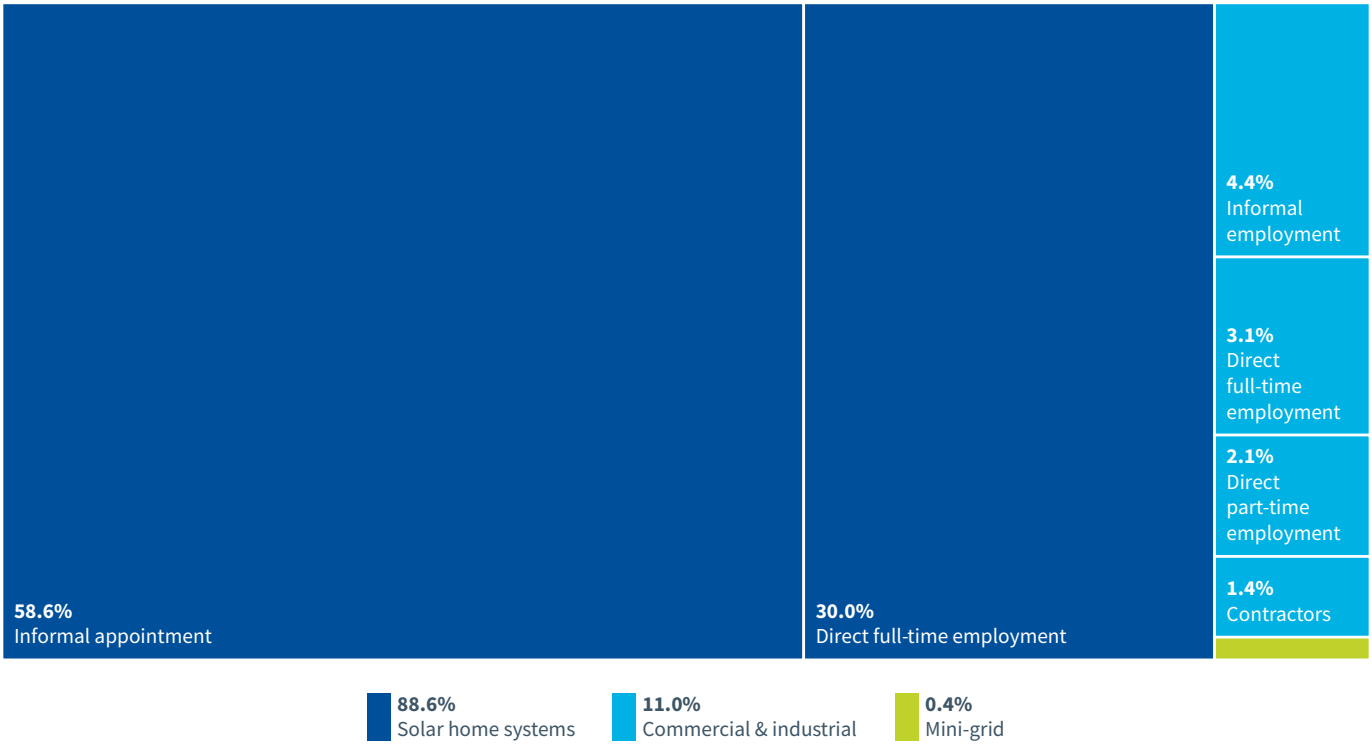
The Kenyan DRE sector is a source of employment for a lot of sales and distribution specialists, but also for engineers and technicians. Due to Kenya's diversified product and service offerings (such as cash and pay-as-you-go, or PayGo) the sector employs personnel with diverse skill sets [1].

Kenya is undergoing a slow but steady transition towards C&I and mini-grid technologies. Participants in the FGD indicated that they see a lot of opportunities for growth in the mini-grid space, but the main challenge has been the ban on mini-grid development within a 15 km radius of the national grid. They also shared that their companies are in conversations with the Government of Kenya to repeal this law, enabling developers to install mini-grids that integrate with the national grid. Similar to the SHS segment, the Kenyan mini-grid sector has been a leader in attracting donor and private sector financing. For instance, two Kenyan mini-grid companies have attracted US$36 million in investment [18]. With the realization of donor-supported and privately developed mini-grids, the sector is expected to create many indirect and induced jobs.

Similarly, the majority of the DRE companies interviewed for this report expects a faster prospect of growth for the C&I segment. Participating companies indicated that major industrial and service companies are quickly shifting to the adoption of a standalone system during the day. At night, those companies would tap power from the national grid. To address this increasing solar power demand, new companies that provide "solar as a service" have emerged. These companies install, operate, and maintain solar standalone systems and target smaller enterprises that lack the financial or technical resources to manage power by themselves.

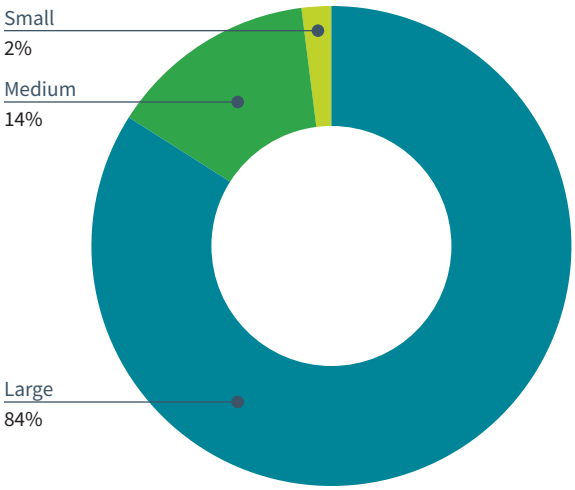
The Powering Jobs Census 2022 also looked at the level of formality in the DRE workforce. Among the focus countries, Kenyan DRE companies reported the highest level of informality at 63% [3]. This is slightly higher than the Powering Jobs Census 2019 estimate of 60% informal employment [1]. Nationally, informal employment in Kenya is over 80%—higher than the estimate for the DRE sector [19]. The difference in the share of informal employment at the national

FIGURE 2. SHARE OF DRE WORKERS BY TYPE OF TECHNOLOGY AND LEVEL OF FORMALITY IN 2021



Source: Data from Power for All (2022); market size estimates from GOGLA (2022) and IRENA (2021)

FIGURE 3. SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT BY SIZE OF FIRMS



Source: Power for All (2022)

level versus the DRE sector may be due to underreporting in the census. Participants in the FGD indicated that the actual ratio in the DRE sector is three informal workers for every one formal worker, which is closer to the national average. An interesting development in the Kenyan DRE sector is the growth of independent contractors. Participants in the FGD shared that DRE companies rely on independent contractors mostly for temporary work such as installation.

2.3 Size of Firms

The Kenyan DRE sector is represented by a plethora of companies of different scales and with various product offerings. The Powering Jobs Census 2022 classifies DRE companies in Kenya into three categories. The first category is large DRE companies, defined as those companies employing more than 100 full-time employees. The second category is medium-sized companies, which employ more than 25 but less than 100 workers. The last category is small companies, which employ less than 25 workers. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of DRE employment by the size of companies.

Large DRE companies dominate the employment landscape in Kenya, accounting for 84% of the workforce. This finding was validated by FGD participants who indicated that the top 25% of the DRE companies accounted for 80% of the total direct employment in the sector. They also mentioned that even though each foreign company on average hires more workers than local companies, most of the direct employment in aggregate is created by domestic companies.

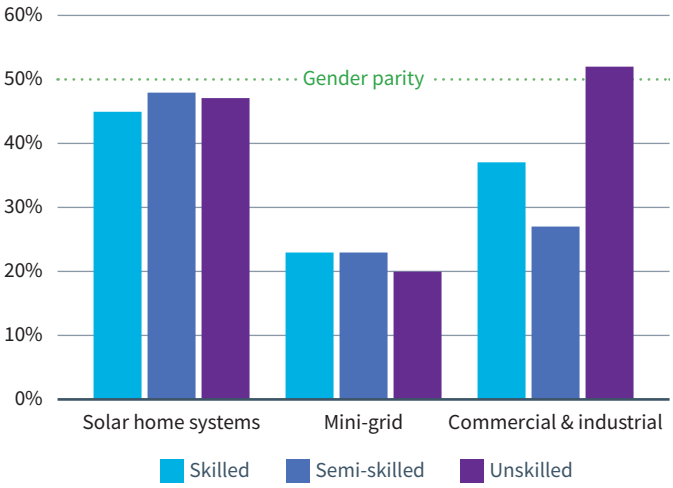
As one of the most mature markets in the region, the Kenyan DRE sector is expected to be dominated by a few large players, but COVID-19 might have accelerated the concentration of employment and consolidation of the market. Participants in the FGD claimed that larger companies increased their sales during COVID-19 as some customers shifted to DRE products due to frequent power outages. Not surprisingly, the number of small and medium enterprise solar companies is declining. An interview with a Kenyan DRE expert revealed that in 2021 the total number of companies that registered solar as their main business unit was only 500. In 2020, 1,000 companies were registered as solar companies.

3. Workforce Profile

3.1 Women's Participation

Women account for 41% of the Kenyan DRE labor force. While this is the highest rate among our Powering Job Census 2022 focus countries, it is lower than the average female participation in the national economy, which is 49% [3]. According to the Powering Jobs Census 2019 data, the participation rate for women in 2018 was 23%. Based on these numbers, Kenya has had great success incorporating women into the DRE sector [3]. While the main drivers of this increase in women's participation are yet to be determined, the increased market maturity and consolidation (as well as more foreign firm penetration) could be playing a role.

FIGURE 4. SHARE OF WOMEN WORKERS ACROSS DIFFERENT SKILL LEVELS AND DRE TECHNOLOGY

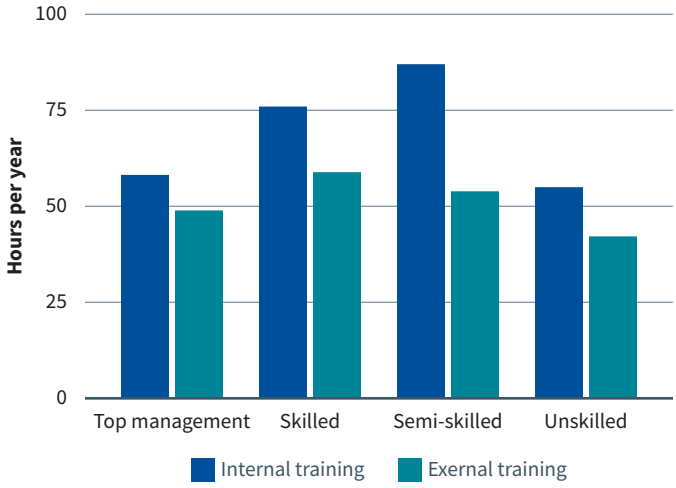


Source: Power for All (2022)

Examining the participation of women in the total DRE workforce, as shown in Figure 4, presents disparities depending on technology and skill level. On average, the participation of women is the lowest in the mini-grid segment, hovering between 20% and 25% for various levels of skill. On the other hand, women's participation is the highest within SHS (45%), which also accounts for 90% of jobs in the DRE sector. In terms of skill level, DRE companies reported that there is no significant difference in women's participation. For all levels of skill, the participation of women is close to 40%.

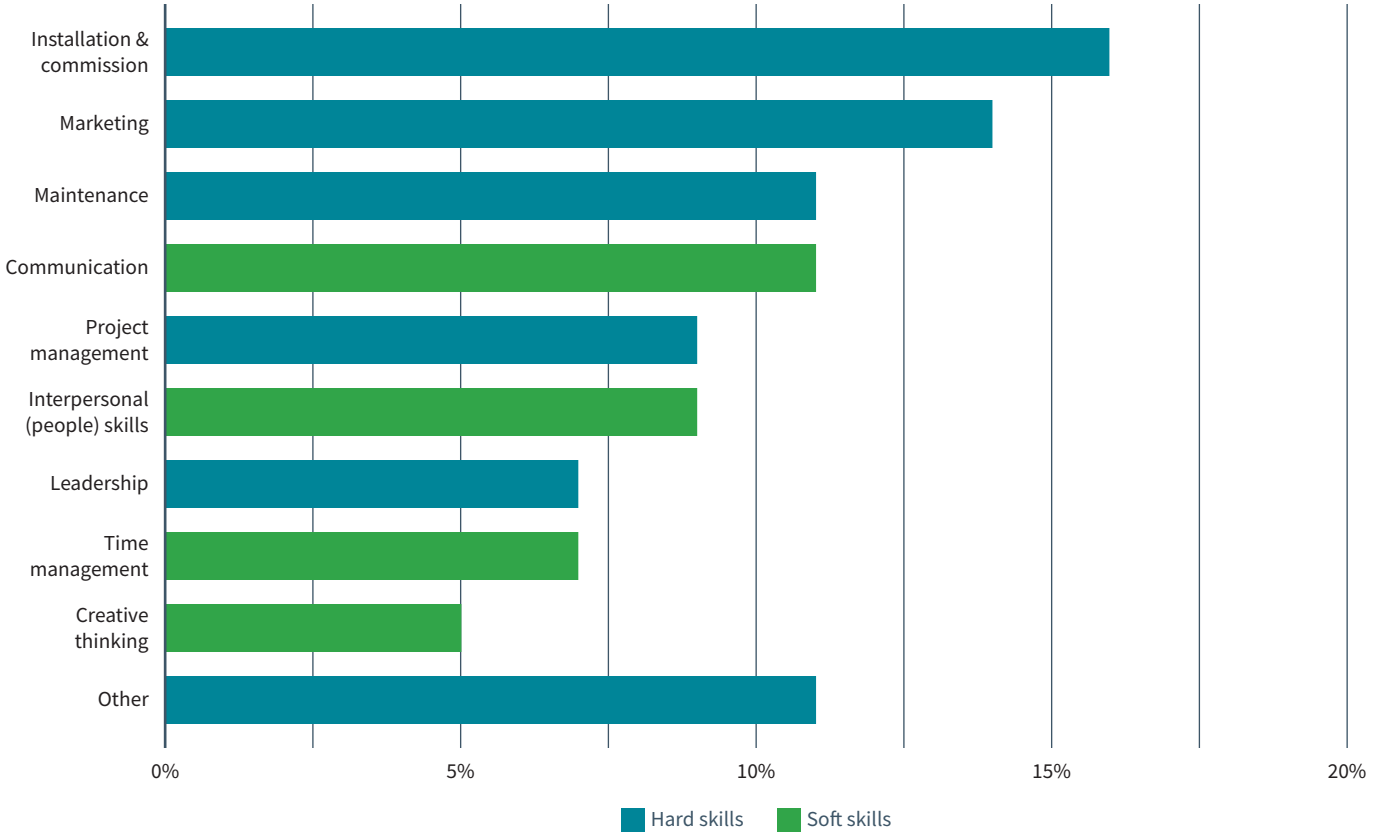
Participants in the FGD indicated that foreign companies employ more women than their local counterparts. In addition, participating firms expressed that, even though the survey highlights the high participation of women, the share of women managers is less than 30% on average. The main reasons identified for this are the limited talent pool of women with managerial experience and a mismatch in salary expectations. However, DRE companies expressed that they prefer hiring women candidates, particularly

FIGURE 5. AVERAGE HOURS OF TRAINING FOR COMPANIES SURVEYED



Source: Power for All (2022)

FIGURE 6. TYPE OF SKILLS DRE COMPANIES IDENTIFIED AS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THEIR STAFF



Source: Power for All (2022)

as sales agents, as women tend to have longer tenure and are more effective in achieving their targets.

Overall, the DRE sector can be considered more inclusive than the broader energy sector when it comes to incorporating women into its workforce. For example, within the Ministry of Energy women account for 35% of the total staff and 15% of the technical leadership positions [20]. The rate of women's participation in Kenya's energy sector is higher than that of neighboring countries (except for Uganda which has a similar share of participation in its Energy Ministry) but still lower than the DRE average.

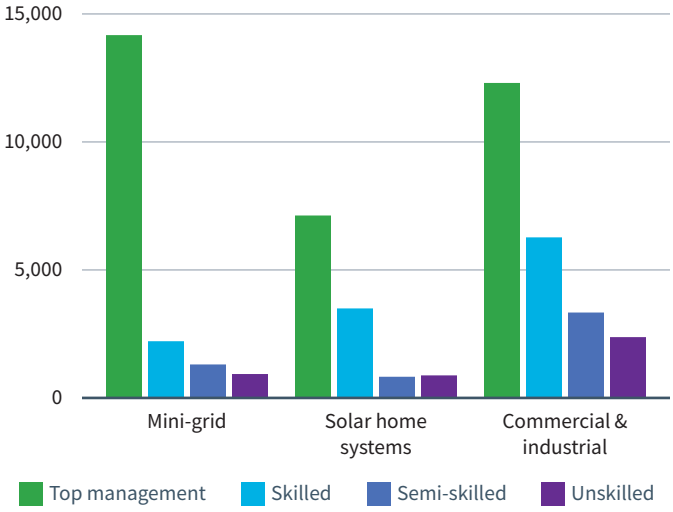
3.2 Workers' Skill Levels and Training

Based on the Powering Jobs Census 2022 responses, Kenyan employees in the DRE sector receive, on average, 69 hours of internal training and 51 hours of external training. Internal training is offered by the DRE company itself, and external training is any form of a skill-development program provided by the government, a non-profit, or the private sector. The training provided to Kenyan employees in the DRE sector is high compared to training provided by the other focus countries of the census. In neighboring Uganda, for instance, DRE companies indicated that they provide 51 hours of internal and external training cumulatively, which is less than half of what Kenyan DRE employees receive. In addition, about 65% of Kenyan DRE businesses stated that they provided training of some type to their employees, either internal or external.

The Powering Jobs Census 2022 asked DRE companies to rank the most important skill sets needed for their employees. Installation and commission were selected as the top skills DRE company leaders want their staff to possess. DRE companies shortlisted another ten skill areas to be considered for a skills development program. Some of them are soft skills, such as interpersonal skills and time management, while others are hard skills, like project management, installation and commission, marketing, and maintenance. Figure 6 presents the skills identified as very important by DRE companies.

Various initiatives for providing training to the DRE workforce exist in Kenya. One such initiative, managed by KEREA, aims to leverage the massive online content on solar technology and customize it to the Kenyan context, including translating the content into local languages. DRE companies will access the content through a paid subscription that is independent of the number of people trained. This model is expected to be more affordable than the traditional training model which is expensive for most DRE companies (programs charge per trainee).

FIGURE 7. AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE FOR DIFFERENT ROLES IN THE DRE SECTOR IN 2021 (IN US$)



Source: Power for All (2022)

3.3 Levels of Compensation

According to Power for All's Powering Jobs Census 2022, the average annual wage for the Kenyan DRE sector ranges from US$14,000 for top management positions in mini-grid companies to just over US$800 for unskilled workers in SHS companies. Figure 7 provides information on the average salary in the Kenyan DRE sector.

There is a significant disparity in pay amongst different levels of skill. A gain in skill level does seem to be accompanied by an increase in remuneration. On average, skilled workers earn four times more than unskilled workers. Additionally, there are differences in remuneration between different types of technologies. In Kenya, C&I companies have a higher pay scale on average than mini-grid and SHS companies. This is true for skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers. On the other hand, top managers of mini-grid companies earn, on average, more than top managers in other DRE companies.

There is also a sizable gender pay gap in the Kenyan DRE sector. According to the Powering Jobs Census 2022, women in DRE firms in Kenya earn, on average, 78% of what their male counterparts earn. This difference in payment is not adjusted for the types of roles women occupy. Hence, part of the pay gap can be explained by the fact that most higher-paying positions, such as managerial positions, are held by men. Considering Kenya's near-parity participation of women in the DRE workforce, especially in the skilled

workforce, workplace discrimination likely also plays a role in the difference in the average wage. Still, the gender pay gap in the Kenyan DRE sector is smaller than the average national gender pay gap of 69% [21].

4. Conclusions

In 2021 the Kenyan DRE sector employed over 48,000 people, a contraction of close to 3,000 jobs since 2019. However, the DRE sector is expected to recover to its pre-pandemic level of employment in 2022, with total jobs projected to reach 53,000. The loss in job creation was mainly a result of a decline in sales of SHS products. Due to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, total sales of SHS declined by 5% annually between 2019 and 2021 [4].

The SHS segment accounts for the majority of jobs within the Kenyan DRE sector, almost 90% of job creation. The C&I segment accounts for the remaining 10% of employment, while the mini-grid segment creates little direct employment in Kenya. As the DRE sector matures, a transition towards C&I and mini-grid systems is expected. This will have implications for DRE sector employment. While the level of direct employment may decline, C&I and mini-grids are expected to create large numbers of indirect and induced employment.

Kenyan DRE companies reported the highest level of informality among focus study countries at 63%. The reported level of informality is slightly higher than the Powering Jobs Census 2019 estimate of 60% of total direct employment [1]. The actual rate of informal employment might be higher due to (expected) under-reporting in the survey. Participants in the FGD indicated that the actual ratio in the DRE sector is three informal workers for every formal worker (or 75% of direct employment).

Large DRE companies dominate the employment landscape in Kenya, accounting for 84% of the workforce. As one of the mature DRE markets in the study, the Kenyan DRE sector is expected to be dominated by a few large players. However, COVID-19 may have accelerated the concentration of employment and consolidation of the market.

Women account for 41% of the Kenyan DRE labor force. According to the Powering Jobs Census 2019, the women's participation rate in 2018 was 23%. Kenya appears to have had greater success incorporating women into the DRE sector than other DRE markets, though it is still underperforming when compared to the national average of 49%). In terms of skill level, DRE companies reported that there is no significant difference in women's participation; for all levels of skill, the participation of women is close to 40%.

Kenyan DRE companies, on average, offer 69 hours of internal training and 51 hours of external training. Of the Powering Jobs Census 2022 respondents, 65% of DRE companies in Kenya stated that they provide some type of training to their employees, whether internal or external. The level of training offered by Kenyan DRE companies is high compared to the amount of training offered by other focus countries.

The average annual wage for the Kenyan DRE sector ranges from US$14,000 for top management positions in mini-grid companies to just over US$800 for unskilled workers in SHS companies. There are large disparities in wages according to the type of technology of the company. On average, skilled workers earn four times what unskilled workers earn. In Kenya, C&I companies were found to pay higher wages on average than mini-grid and SHS companies. Women in the Kenyan DRE sector earn, on average, 78 cents for every dollar a man earns.

Box 1: Kenyan DRE workers used digital solutions to expand business operations during COVID-19

Kenya is a leader in adopting and utilizing digital tools in the continent. Even in the DRE sector, Kenya's DRE was at the forefront of experimenting with PayGo, which now has expanded energy access to many communities where a cash-only based approach may not have been effective. It is no surprise that when COVID-19 hit, Kenyan DRE companies quickly adjusted to the constraints imposed by the pandemic using digital solutions. The Powering Jobs Census 2022 research team spoke with Kenyan DRE sector employees to understand their experience, and the benefits of digital tools were a recurring theme.

"During COVID-19 time, I increased our marketing activities using our social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn) and got more orders for sales."

Brian Onyango
CEO/Founder, Usafi Green Energy

"I was afraid in the beginning to lose my job, but with the use of several online platforms, I quickly learned to remain busy coordinating the company's operations and gained the new experience of working online. Using our solar-powered computer, we trained our staff to make more sales using an online platform."

Vincent Ubeling
Project Manager, Usafi Green Energy

"I appreciate the fact that through my job at PowerGen, I get to work on activities everyday that are geared towards solving a universal electricity access challenge that impacts millions of lives. COVID-19 made it seem like projects will come to a halt, but we leveraged on the existing technological infrastructure combined with an agile and ingenious team, and we were able to seamlessly work remotely without skipping a beat."

Judith Were
PowerGen Renewable Energy

Photos generously provided by: PowerGen Renewable Energy (p. 12), SolarAid/Corrie Wingate (cover), and Usafi Green Energy (p. 12).

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of funders or partners.

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