



# Lynk

## Lynk addresses inclusion in the informal sector

The United States has Silicon Valley. Kenya has the Silicon Savannah—a regional and, increasingly, a global hub of information and communications technology (ICT). Since 2016, Kenya’s ICT sector has grown an average of 10.8 percent annually.<sup>1</sup> The past decade has also witnessed a gradual increase in platform-driven work in Kenya, providing relief and alternative sources of income for the estimated one-fourth of the working population who are unemployed and for the country’s informal sector, which accounts for 83 percent of the labor force.<sup>2</sup>

As one of such platforms, Lynk connects informal workers to work opportunities and entrepreneurs to customers through two major offerings:

- An online job-matching platform that connects blue-collar professionals (referred to as Pros<sup>3</sup>) and artisans with relevant work opportunities.
- An online store allowing artisans to showcase and sell their products to prospective buyers.

Launched in 2017, the Nairobi-based start-up currently supports more than 1,000 Pros and artisans. As part of Digital2Equal, Lynk realized it could support women’s entry into better paying but male-dominated industries by (a) gaining a better understanding the challenges and needs of women Pros and those in male-dominated trades in particular; (b) providing added training on business, customer service, tools use, and industry codes; and (c) subsidizing loans for the purchase of high-quality tools and materials.

### UNDERSTANDING WOMEN PROS ON THE LYNK PLATFORM

Lynk’s first step in addressing equal access to opportunities and earnings was to better understand women Pros on their platform. In an initial review, Lynk found that 38 percent of Pros are women. Collectively, they have completed half of the 20,400 jobs on the platform, but only earned roughly 16 percent of total incomes generated—a significant 68 percent wage gap.

When Lynk looked to explain the earnings gap, the company found that labor force segregation—the concentration of women in certain sectors—was a root cause. Analysis showed that women Pros represented 84 percent of bookings in care-related trades such as cleaning, childcare, hospitality, and beauty, but only a minority of installation, repair, and maintenance (IRM) roles. This division meant women were not participating in the largest creator of jobs and income on the platform: over two years, the IRM sector accounted for 43 percent of all jobs and 82 percent of revenue on the Lynk platform, while care-related jobs represented 4 to 8 percent

#### Quick facts about Lynk

Lynk is an online platform that partners with Kenyan artisans to showcase and promote their products and services.

**Founding year:** 2017

**Footprint:** Kenya

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

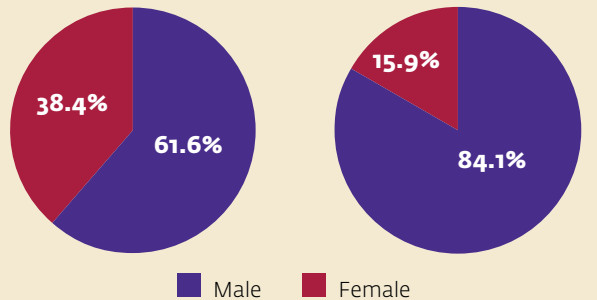


*Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities*

## Case Study: LYNK

**Figure 1: Lynk Pros by gender and Pro income by gender**

(a) Number of Pros on the platform (b) Income by gender



SOURCE: LYNK PRO DATA

of jobs. This segregation reflects a national challenge; Kenyan women make up 30 percent of enrolment in technical and vocational training programs, but only 5 percent go on to work in high-earning fields such as engineering-related trades and building construction.<sup>4</sup>

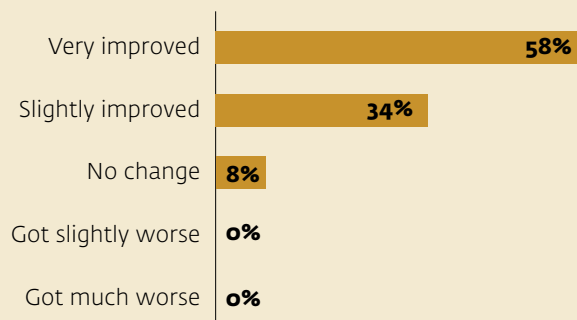
The survey also revealed specific areas where women Pros felt they were limited in their earnings and ability to explore fields of interest, including access to educational opportunities, limited start-up capital, lack of skills training programs, and lack of support in operation setup such as company registration and licensing.

### INCREASING EARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN MALE-DOMINATED SECTORS

Lynk decided to take steps to address the wage gap by charting paths for women in male-dominated trades where incomes are higher. One such program is Fundiworks, a small business incubation pilot targeting Pros in furniture manufacturing. Fundiworks tackles the key barrier of fixed cost overheads by providing access to a shared work space with state-of-the-art tools and machinery. The program also provides access to marketing and sales support, subsidized high-quality material inputs, entrepreneurship mentoring, and business development services such as micro loans.

**Figure 2: Perceived change in quality of life for Pros using the Lynk platform**

Question: Has your quality of life changed because of Lynk?  
% of respondents, n=74



#### VERY IMPROVED

"Since I joined early this year, my life has improved because I can [now] comfortably pay my rent, afford food and other basic [needs] that I wasn't able to afford before."

#### SLIGHTLY IMPROVED

"It is an avenue for extra income. Repeat clientele are good for business and referrals."

#### NO CHANGE

"In the recent months, I have not received any new jobs or customers, meaning I'm not able to earn enough money to improve my life in any kind of way."

SOURCE: INDEPENDENT IMPACT EVALUATION OF LYNK PLATFORM, 60DECIBELS (2019)

## Case Study: LYNK

About one-third of the pilot's 15 participants were women, and already there is evidence that women Pros learn, adapt, and produce high-quality pieces that sell just as well and, in some cases, even better than their male counterparts. In an independent survey of Pros in 2019, all Pros from the furniture segment experienced increased earnings on Lynk, compared with 73 percent in beauty and 88 percent in the IRM segment.

Lynk has since also instituted a culture of consistent learning about its Pros, their experiences, and their challenges on the platform, in line with better measuring the effects of their inclusion efforts. In the latest independent evaluation of Lynk Pros, 93 percent of respondents agreed that being on the Lynk platform had improved their quality of life, and 64 percent said they had gained new skills.<sup>5</sup>

Lynk continues to play a significant role in constructing a digital identity for many of its workers. It does so through its accrual of data on jobs completed, earnings, and other efficiency-based metrics that support the growth of Pro businesses and the development of additional value-added service lines. Those service lines include loans, industry-specific training, and dissemination of e-learning content—significant contributors in ensuring the opportunities and benefits from the Silicon Savannah are equally shared and attainable for all.



- 1 Mercy Corps Youth Impact Labs, *Towards A Digital Workforce: Understanding the Building Blocks of Kenya's Gig Economy* (Nairobi: Mercy Corps, August 2019), [https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Youth\\_Impact\\_Labs\\_Kenya\\_Gig\\_Economy\\_Report\\_2019\\_o\\_o.pdf](https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Youth_Impact_Labs_Kenya_Gig_Economy_Report_2019_o_o.pdf).
- 2 World Bank, *Informal Enterprises in Kenya* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/262361468914023771/pdf/106986-WP-P151793-PUBLIC-Box.pdf>.
- 3 Pros represent a variety of informal workers such as skilled plumbers, electricians, tailors, carpenters, chefs, and beauticians, and so forth, who are recruited and vetted by Lynk's targeted recruitment strategies.
- 4 Pauline N. Chege and J. N. Kariuki, "Increasing Women Access in TVET Through ODL Programme: A Case of Thika Technical Training Institute in Kiambu County, Kenya," Pan-Commonwealth Forum, 2016, <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2573>.
- 5 This information is from an internally commissioned impact evaluation for Lynk in 2019.