beyond the numbers
GLOBAL GIVE BACK CIRCLE

2026 Learning Series / Question 1



R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Find Out What It Means To Me.

How do marginalized young women in rural Kenya define dignity, fulfillment, and respect, and how do these definitions influence the work they pursue?

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THE PARTNERSHIP BEHIND THE LEARNING

In 2023, Global Give Back Circle partnered with Mastercard Foundation and Perur Rays of Hope to pilot the HER Lab model in West Pokot, graduating **142 young women.** Today the model is being scaled up across Kenya. In a county where women face persistent barriers to land, resources, and independent income, their answers offer a perspective that economic measures alone cannot capture.

KEY FINDINGS

01

Respect outranks pay.

69% say feeling respected at work is very important

43% say the same about earning enough to provide

02

Dignity is gendered, but women are challenging the divide.

Wealth and leadership are more readily associated with men, while some women already claim earning, influence, and public standing as part of dignified womanhood.

03

Fulfillment extends beyond income.

43% link fulfillment with supporting their families, communities, and others.

RESPECT RUNS THROUGH IT

Respect sits at the center of a dignified life. It is earned through character, reinforced through work, and reflected back by family, colleagues, and community. It also reveals a tension: wealth, leadership, and public standing are still more readily associated with men, even as some women are beginning to claim those same qualities as part of dignified womanhood.

DIGNITY & RECOGNITION

Dignity Is Lived Inside — and Confirmed Outside

Character matters. So does being seen, heard, and taken seriously.

HOW WOMEN DEFINE DIGNITY

Participants describe dignity as both internal and relational. Honesty, trustworthiness, self-respect, and doing the right thing when no one is watching form its inner core. But dignity also becomes visible through repeated interactions that reflect a person's worth back to her.

> ***"Dignity to me means things that I do in my life that make me worthy of other people's respect and honor."***

HOW RESPECT BECOMES VISIBLE



Dignity begins within for most participants. More than half **(55%)** define it primarily through character, integrity, and self-respect, while **32%** pair these inner qualities with how others treat and regard them. **Twelve percent** define dignity primarily through recognition from others.

BEING HEARD IS PART OF DIGNITY

When participants recalled moments of respect in school or work, **40% described appreciation or recognition.** Across responses, being heard, taken seriously, and not dismissed appears as a core part of both dignity and respect.

> ***"When I speak before my colleagues, they listen to me, and here I know I am respected and I respect them too."***





Celebrating achievement at HER Lab graduation.

VOICE IS ALSO A WORK SKILL

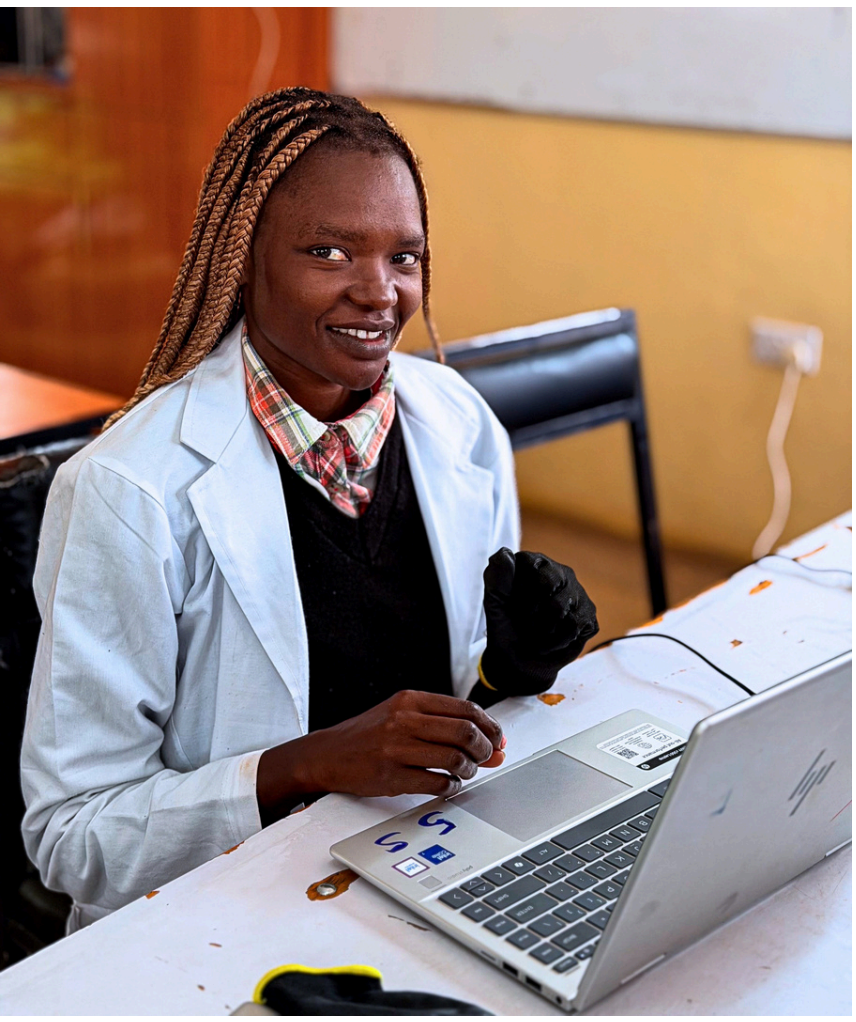
Communication skills — especially listening, careful observation, and speaking clearly — were the most frequently named everyday work skills, mentioned by 25% of participants.

Respect, Purpose, and Recognition Outrank Pay

Work changes more than what she earns. It changes how she is seen.

SALARY RANKS FIFTH

When participants describe the workplace they want, **respect ranks first,** ahead of every other response.



Building digital skills in the ICT classroom.

01 **69%** RESPECT AT WORK

say feeling respected in the workplace is very important.

02 **54%** RESPECT FROM COMMUNITY

say having their work respected by people they care about is very important.

03 **53%** ROLE-MODEL STATUS

say being seen as a role model at work is very important.

04 **48%** PURPOSE

say having a sense of purpose through their work is very important.

05 **43%** SALARY

say earning enough to support themselves and their dependents is very important.

For these young women, dignified work carries social as well as financial value: **it changes what they can provide, how they see themselves, and how others see them.**

> ***"Having one's own business that brings in profit especially if you're a lady earns you respect and a position in the society."***

THE REACH OF RESPECT

The top three answers share a thread: each is a form of recognition, and each brings her worth into a wider circle.

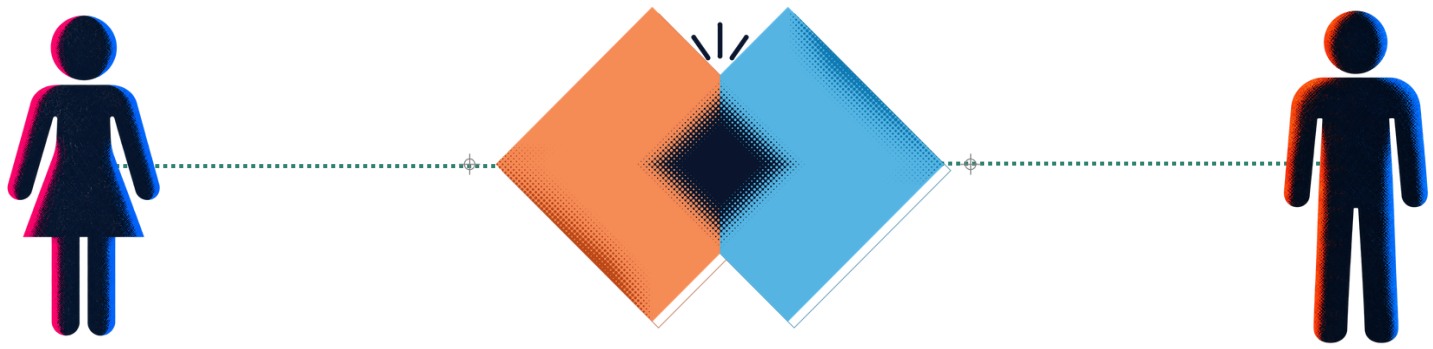


How Does Dignity Look Different For Her vs. For Him?

The same idea of dignity takes on a different form depending on whether participants are describing women or men.

HOW SHE IMAGINES DIGNITY FOR EACH GENDER

We asked women to describe dignity in both men and women. Their answers share a common core, but the qualities they emphasize for each gender begin to diverge. Wealth and positions of leadership are still more readily associated with men, while women are often judged through conduct, family roles, and respectability.



HER

30%
decent dressing

17%
domestic & family roles

15%
purity before marriage

THE COMMON CORE

self-respect

respect for spouse

provision for family

compassion / care

role model

HIM

37%
providing financially

13%
respecting women

9%
wealth & status

TWO PORTRAITS OF A DIGNIFIED WOMAN

The Traditional Woman

The Working Woman



A fashion participant puts her skills into practice.

These two portraits are not mutually exclusive. For some women, traditional markers of dignity sit alongside earning, leadership, and public standing.

The Recurring Theme Is Not Wealth for Its Own Sake But *Having Enough*

So what does having enough look like for young rural women?

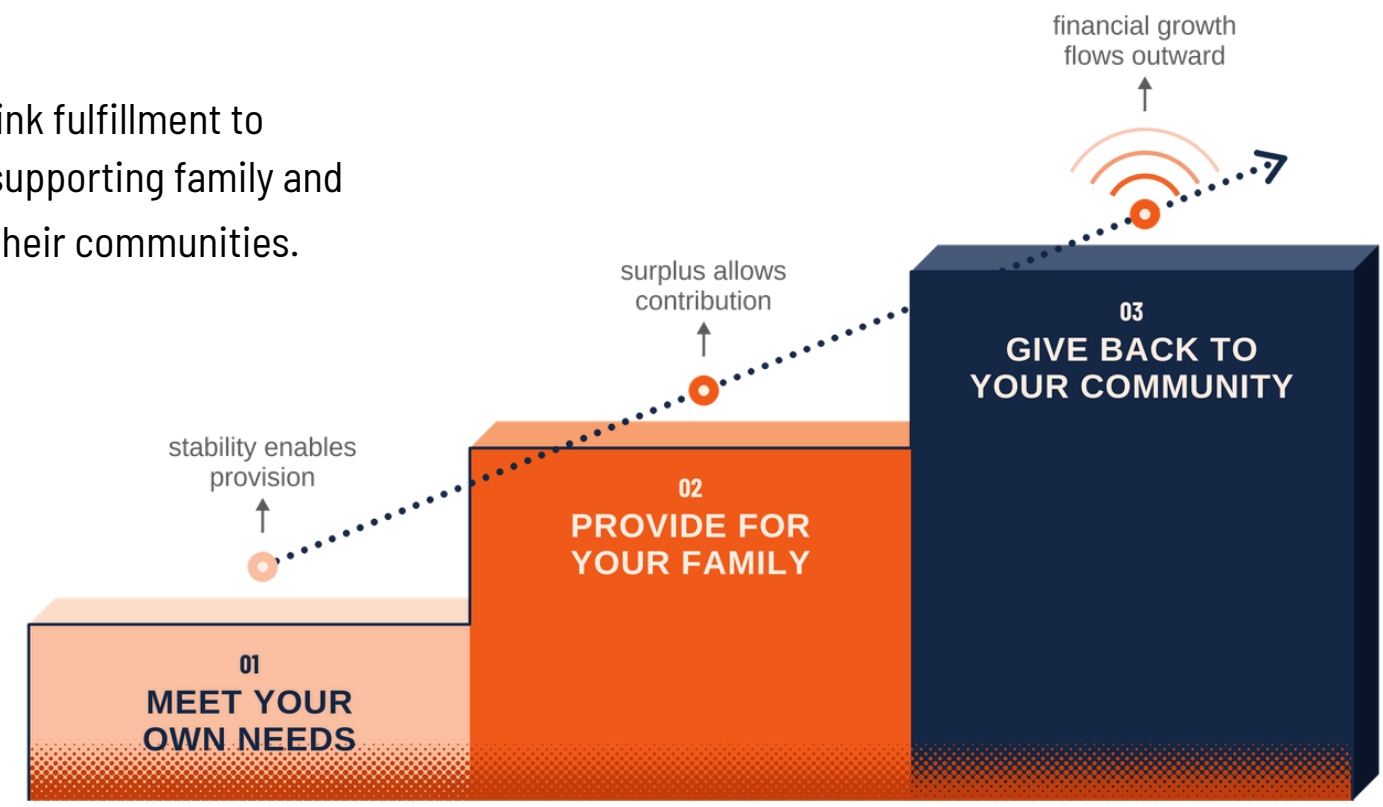
BEYOND MAKING ENDS MEET

Paid work sits at the center of how participants imagine a fulfilling life because it can provide both purpose and financial stability. For about **75%**, fulfillment is still something they are working toward. Having enough changes her role as well as her standard of living. She can shift from needing support to becoming someone others can rely on.

42%	Immediate family lives better
45%	Immediate AND extended family live better
8%	Immediate family's basic needs are met
3%	Immediate AND extended family's basic needs are met

WHAT HAVING "ENOUGH" LOOKS LIKE

43% link fulfillment to supporting family and giving back to their communities.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE WORK SHE PURSUES

Across the responses, young women are seeking work that can do all three. That helps explain why respect ranks ahead of pay, why purpose and role-model status matter, and why "enough" extends from meeting one's own needs to supporting family and community. The work they pursue is tied to who they want to be, what they want to make possible for others, and the respect they hope to earn along the way.

Global Give Back Circle's Research Methodology

STUDY DESIGN AND PURPOSE

Global Give Back Circle uses a longitudinal mixed-methods approach to evaluate young women's economic empowerment in rural Kenya, with a focus on marginalized women living in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). The methodology examines program implementation, participant experiences, and outcomes related to education, workforce readiness, livelihoods, economic empowerment, agency, professional networks, and family and community support. Quantitative monitoring and outcome data are integrated with qualitative participant narratives to examine what changes, how participants experience change, which barriers persist, and the conditions that enable dignified and fulfilling work. Findings support monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL), program evaluation, adaptive management, and learning across the women's economic empowerment field.

Participants and Study Population: Participants in Global Give Back Circle's HER Lab program are marginalized rural young women aged 18-35 living in participating ASAL communities in Kenya, currently West Pokot and Kajiado counties.

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Data are collected at multiple points across the participant journey using complementary quantitative and qualitative sources, including baseline and follow-up progress surveys, program tracking data, and qualitative journal responses. Journalizing provides repeated first-person reflections on learning questions related to women's economic empowerment, gender equality, education, employment, workforce readiness, and barriers to dignified and fulfilling work. Data collection instruments are administered in participants' preferred language wherever feasible, with appropriate translation, oral administration, transcription, or low-literacy accommodations. Collection minimizes respondent burden and includes only information necessary for implementation, evaluation, reporting, learning, or participant follow-up.

ETHICS, CONSENT, AND SAFEGUARDING

All data collection follows applicable ethical research, safeguarding, and Kenyan data-protection requirements. Global Give Back Circle maintains relevant research approvals, including oversight through Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) processes, and operates under the Kenya Data Protection Act (2019) and applicable requirements. Participants provide informed consent before data collection. Consent procedures explain the purpose and use of the data, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality protections, voluntary participation, and participants' rights. Participants may decline individual questions or withdraw from data collection without penalty or loss of access to programming. Research on potentially sensitive subjects is trauma-informed and linked to established safeguarding and referral procedures.

DATA MANAGEMENT, PROCESSING, AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Data are maintained on approved password-protected systems with role-based access controls. Prior to analysis, qualitative and quantitative datasets undergo quality review, including checks for completeness, duplicates, missing or inconsistent values, and participant ID matching. Data-quality issues and analytic decisions are documented to support transparency. For external reporting, Global Give Back Circle uses anonymized, pseudonymized, or aggregated data and obtains additional consent for any identifying information, including quotes or photographs.

DATA ANALYSIS AND TRIANGULATION

Quantitative analysis uses descriptive statistics and, where appropriate, longitudinal, subgroup, and multivariable analyses to examine participant characteristics, program reach, implementation, and outcomes over time. Results are disaggregated where sample size and confidentiality permit. Qualitative data are analyzed using systematic thematic analysis and narrative synthesis, combining participant-led inductive coding with interpretation informed by the Theory of Change. Coding procedures include a documented codebook, double-coding, and reconciliation of discrepancies. Analysis distinguishes between lived/current experience, participant-perceived change, aspiration or intention, and analyst inference. Participant-reported change is not automatically interpreted as program impact; causal or contribution claims require appropriate longitudinal evidence and triangulation across data sources.

INTERPRETATION, VALIDATION, AND USE

Quantitative and qualitative findings are triangulated to identify convergence, divergence, and contextual explanations. Where feasible, findings are validated with participants, site teams, and implementation partners. Results inform program adaptation, participant support, curriculum and pathway design, community engagement, work-linkage strategies, scale-up, women's economic empowerment programming, and future research.

For questions on Global Give Back Circle's research methodology, contact Marissa Watkins at marissa@globalgivebackcircle.org

RESPECT RUNS THROUGH IT

This edition of Beyond the Numbers explores how young women in rural Kenya define dignity, fulfillment, and respect, and how those definitions influence the work they pursue.



Beyond the Numbers is Global Give Back Circle's Learning Series, translating research and participant voices into concise insights for partners, practitioners, and supporters.

Read more at:
globalgivebackcircle.org