



THREE INSIGHTS

FUTURE OF WORK: BUILDING INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO REBUILD BETTER FROM COVID-19

DATE: WEDNESDAY 23/09

FORMAT: WEBINAR #2

SPEAKERS

■ **Chike Aguh**,
Head of Economic
Mobility Pathways,
Education Design Lab

■ **Marcela Escobari**, Senior
Fellow, *The Brookings
Institution*

■ **Susan Muigai**, SVP
International People,
Walmart International

Moderator: *Katie Hyson*,
Director, Thought Leadership,
Business Fights Poverty

IN THIS SESSION OUR PANELLISTS DISCUSSED THE THEME OF THE DAY, *SURVIVE AND THRIVE*, IN RELATION TO THE ROLE OF BUSINESSES IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AROUND THE TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS TAKING PLACE IN THE WORLD OF WORK.

Our speakers touched on topics related to the benefits of investing in technological training for their employees; how multi-sector partnerships are crucial to build a future of work that is inclusive; and what companies can do to create good jobs and ensure people have the skills to get them.

KEY INSIGHT #1

TRAINING PEOPLE FOR THE SKILLS OF THE FUTURE IS A WIN-WIN FOR COMPANIES AND WORKERS

Marcela Escobari drew a detailed picture of the technological transformations shaping labour markets, consumer preferences, and the processes of skills formation. She argued that these changes can have a negative effect on low-skilled and low-wage workers, who

already face severe difficulties with skills upgrade and upward mobility. For Marcela, it is vital that companies and governments collaborate to create good jobs, ensure people, especially the most vulnerable, have the right training to access these jobs, and that social protection is encompassing so that workers have the favourable conditions needed to develop their careers. As an example, Susan Muigai cited several initiatives at Walmart that offer employees opportunities of reskilling and upskilling. In her words: “our people are building their digital skills; we are ensuring that they have access to the technology that they need to serve our customers and to grow their own career, whether they choose to stay in retail or take their skills to a different field. We want our people to be better off for having worked with us. As retailers, we have the opportunity to help in formalizing local economies and offer new career opportunities not just inside Walmart, but right across the supply chain.”

"THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GOVERNMENTS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO WORK CREATIVELY TO SOLVE THESE BIG PROBLEMS WITH COMPELLING SOLUTIONS."

Marcela Escobari, Senior Fellow, *The Brookings Institution*

KEY INSIGHT #2

COMPANIES, GOVERNMENTS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY MUST WORK TOGETHER TO GUARANTEE THAT THE FUTURE OF WORK IS EQUITABLE

Chike Aguh reminded us of the grave economic effects of COVID-19, how the pandemic has accelerated digital transformations for companies and workers, and that ethnic minority groups and the most vulnerable have been hit disproportionately by the virus and its consequences. On top of that, he continued, the ongoing technological change is revolutionising large parts of the economy and it could force entire industries out of business. However, the new world of work does not need to be a future of even greater social exclusion. Companies, governments, and civil society have proven during the pandemic that they can join forces to support communities survive and thrive through the most acute crises. In order to transform the labour force into the successful workers of the future, collaborative initiatives must combine the development of human skills, like communication and discernment, with technical expertise, and help workers with these skills to find the jobs that demand them. As Marcela commented: "there is an opportunity for governments and the private sector to work creatively to solve these big problems with compelling solutions."

KEY INSIGHT #3

COMPANIES HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING PEOPLE GETTING PROPER TRAINING AND BETTER JOBS

Susan Muigai pointed out that Walmart has been capable of keeping up with increasing demand during the pandemic because the company has continuously invested in training their employees in digital skills and making technology an indispensable tool in operational processes. For instance, the rise in the use of tablets in warehouses took place seamlessly when logistic operations needed to accelerate with the impact of COVID-19. So, embedding technology training in companies' missions is a decisive step to build a more inclusive and fairer society. In this respect, Marcela presented evidence about the importance for equity of companies radically increasing the opportunities of internal mobility for their employees. As she put it: "firms must do whatever they can to increase mobility; stories of the clerk becoming CEO or the mailman moving to head, we don't see those stories anymore... the only clerk becoming CEO is the son of the CEO."

THANKS

We are grateful to our panellists for giving their time and expertise.

RESOURCES

[Creating new ways to work](#)

[Workforce of the Future Initiative](#)

[For executives, a pledge for racial equity](#)

[Jobs lost, jobs gained: What the future of work will mean for jobs, skills, and wages](#)