

How can we transform informally acquired skills into formal qualifications?

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Women assume diverse roles both within and beyond their professional lives, often managing these roles simultaneously throughout their journey. They might be wives, mothers, students, employees, or entrepreneurs, striving for excellence in each domain while mastering the art of multitasking, delegation, prioritisation, and sometimes making sacrifices.



Image source: [dolgachov – 123RF.com](#)

Experts propose that [nations led by women](#) tend to exhibit improved social and economic conditions. In the corporate sphere, although a minority, there is a noticeable upward trend in the appointment of female CEOs who are steering major multinational brands to remarkable success.

The skills acquired informally within the context of homemaking and familial responsibilities mirror those cultivated in formal professional settings, including leadership, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, time and project management, creativity, operations oversight, and entrepreneurship.

Paradoxically, these competencies, proven to drive business accomplishments and goal attainment, are frequently disregarded and underestimated when obtained outside the conventional workplace. Even for employed women, while these skills are often applied in their jobs, their informal acquisition often goes unnoticed.

Acknowledgement

Unemployed women and stay-at-home mothers, envisioning a return to the formal workforce, confront the unsettling reality that their "soft skills" might carry little weight due to their origin outside the traditional workplace environment. This prompts the question: How can these skills developed outside the professional realm be acknowledged and reassessed? One potential solution might lie in the realm of social marketing.



Three streams

Broadly defined as "applying conventional marketing principles to devise research-backed solutions for societal issues, fostering individual and communal well-being," social marketing could be approached through three avenues: upstream, downstream, and midstream. The most effective interventions often integrate all three.

1. The **upstream approach** focuses on driving behavioural shifts among key players in the macro environment, such as policymakers, media influencers, and suppliers. Social marketers could play a pivotal role by influencing corporate organisations and hiring agencies to develop policies that recognise informally developed managerial skills.

Prospective candidates would still need to demonstrate these abilities during screening and interviews. Collaborating with educational institutions to establish programmes that validate skills acquired during unemployment, and promoting these initiatives through media channels, could reshape public perception and raise awareness.

2. The **downstream approach** targets individual-level behavioural change through campaigns, projects, and interventions. Social marketers could empower and boost the confidence of unemployed women and stay-at-home mothers (wishing to rejoin the workforce) by influencing their attitudes and behaviours. This encouragement could guide them toward pursuing education, employment, entrepreneurship, or any proactive path aligned with their aspirations.
3. Of interest to social marketers is the **midstream approach**, integrating upstream and downstream strategies. At this meso level, behavioural change efforts are aimed at the direct social environment of the target audience, including family and friends, community, local institutions, and public services.

This approach, as described by [Jeff French](#), entails implementing strategies that help individuals cope with adverse social conditions and immediate threats to family/community well-being. Specifically, since unemployment in women produces negative consequences such as depreciating mental health outcomes, destroyed interpersonal relationships and communal issues, the need for a midstream approach to social marketing is particularly relevant.

Qualification collaboration

In the journey toward reassessing women's roles and skills, social marketers could collaborate with educational institutions to design interventions that offer skills development programmes. These initiatives would enhance existing skills while granting women opportunities, depending on their educational background, to earn relevant certificates, diplomas, degrees,

and internships in their chosen fields. This would propel them toward their desired careers.

If women indeed possess the key to infusing workplaces with invaluable skills such as emotional intelligence, prioritisation, problem-solving, communication, loyalty, and interpersonal skills, social marketing could serve as the bridge, enabling women from diverse backgrounds to infuse resilience and logical thinking into their professional environments.

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