



WOMEN IN AFRICA
INSTITUTE

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UNDP'S AFRICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2016

Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa

Published by	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Originality	Adopts a political economy approach to gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa. Presents a clear agenda for action.
On	2016	Main findings	Far too many African women are trapped at the lower end of the spectrum of economic opportunities, which often perpetuates the same socio-economic status for their own families. Empowering women is not only an ethical duty in its own right, but is also a rational economic decision. Gender equality is not achieved by having gender-specific ministries or women-only projects and programmes, but rather, by tackling gender equality as a wide-ranging effort across multiple sectors that engages all segments of society.
Motto	« Only by ensuring that women receive the same economic, social and political opportunities by shifting from legal to substantive gender equality can governments assure that their progress in economic growth and human development is fully inclusive and sustainable. » Abdoulaye Mar Dièye	Web link to the document	http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/2016-africa-human-development-report.html
Scope	54 countries in Africa divided in 5 sub-regions: North, East, West, Central and Southern Africa.		
Target	African policymakers and practitioners, other development organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, and Africa's citizens.		
Vision	Review the ongoing efforts of African countries to accelerate the pace of assuring women's empowerment through all spheres of society Encourage policy debate and discussions on what further steps are needed to ensure that gender equality is more fully integrated into national agendas and ongoing policy dialogues across Africa. Provide a framework for operationalizing SDG 5 on gender equality, in particular, and all the SDGs, in general.		

GENDER EQUALITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA



Africa as a whole has seen more than a decade of robust economic growth and increasing integration in the world economy, which has resulted in the expansion of social investments and notable strides in women's rights. According to the Human Development Index, for the 2000-2010 period, Africa's change in the index was equivalent to the rate of change in East Asia and the Pacific, just behind South Asia and well above the average for all developing countries.

However, women in sub-Saharan Africa still achieve 87 per cent of male human development outcomes and face constraints in all the aspects of their countries socio-economic development.

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF GENDER INEQUALITY

HEALTH-RELATED GENDER ISSUES:
Despite major reductions in maternal mortality in most countries, many women face severe deprivations in their health due to such factors as early age marriage, sexual and physical violence.

→ Over the 1990-2015 period, there was a reduction in maternal mortality by 45 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 59 per cent in North Africa even though the continent is home to 16 out of the 18 countries in the world with the highest maternal mortality ratio and the biggest contributors to the global population of missing women.

→ Policy decisions encouraging public-private partnerships, innovations in health funding, inclusion of local knowledge and performance-based budgeting have shown their effectiveness in several countries, especially in Rwanda which achieved a 77.1 per cent maternal mortality reduction between 1990 and 2013.

EDUCATION-RELATED GENDER ISSUES:

Near gender parity has been achieved in primary school enrollment, however, gender discrimination is still significant in secondary and tertiary education.

→ Sub-Saharan Africa achieved primary education completion rate of at least 70 per cent in 2012 thanks to adequate legislation, gender-sensitive policies encouraging girls' attendance, and engagement in community initiatives around awareness-raising.

→ As of 2013, only 22 per cent of females and 32 per cent of males aged 25 and older have at least some secondary level of education. In addition, tertiary enrollments have maintained a strong male bias in total enrollments over time in some sub-regions.

→ Closing the gender gap in educational attainment requires acknowledging the systemic discriminatory environments affecting girls such as inadequate female teachers; sexual harassment and lack of sanitation facilities.

WOMEN IN AFRICAN ECONOMIES

ACCESS TO ECONOMIC ASSETS AND MEANS OF PRODUCTION:
Both legal frameworks and social norms make it difficult for women across Africa to own assets.

→ Land ownership or title represents an important source of equity and collateral for women in obtaining credit and accessing other forms of productive assets.

→ The expansion of the economy as a whole, and the eradication of poverty in particular, are critically dependent on implementing gender in land ownership and agriculture.

WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET:
Significant economic and workplace disparities between men and women continue to be the norm rather than the exception in many African countries.

→ In North Africa, the male participation rate is more than 50 percentage points higher than the female rate, compared to an average gap of 12 percentage points for sub-Saharan Africa.

→ Due to difficulties to combine work and child-care and a limited access to education resulting in a mismatch between their skills and those demanded by the labour market, women are heavily clustered in the informal economy and low paid occupations.

WOMEN'S WORK AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

Environmental degradation, deforestation and resource depletion intensify inequalities in livelihoods through their adverse impacts on already disadvantaged women.

→ Due to gender-based job delineation which make women and girls in Africa responsible for water collection, depletion of water sources increases inequalities by aggregating walking distance and time to the chore, which affects educational advancement for girls.

→ Economic initiatives with environmental risks require an assessment of the potential impacts on women and girls in terms of their health, their access to arable land and safe water, and changes to their traditional livelihoods.

AFRICAN WOMEN IN POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP

WOMEN IN POLITICS:

Existing social and political structures still proscribe women's full potential to equally shape the national and local political and policy agenda.

→ Since 1995 African citizens have witnessed the election of their first female presidents and an important increase in the number of women in parliament, with 14 countries surpassing 30 per cent representation. While political parties are no longer a male-exclusive institution, there is still considerable room for more female participation.

→ The expansion and strengthening of a multi-generational network and pool of women leaders across the Continent would multiply achievements in engendering democracy.

LEADERSHIP IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS:

Progress in achieving gender equity is still lagging due to a combination of political, economic and social resistance to change.

→ Equal participation in the public service, which constitutes an important employer in many countries, must be ensured through anti-discrimination policies and legislation, and inclusion of women in 'hard core issues' around which masculine culture still prevails.

→ Though Africa performs fairly well in comparison to Developed Asia and the Pacific, Latin and North America in the number of senior positions held by women in the private sector, the percentage of firms with a female top manager still ranges between 7 and 30 per cent.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING:

In Africa, women tend to influence the peace process not as participants at the negotiating tables or mediators, but as advocates from outside.

→ Historically, women have mostly supported peace-building through informal channels and strategies such as behind-the-scenes lobbying, demonstrations, than formal mediation, negotiation and signing of peace agreements.

→ Only inclusive engagement of both women and men is likely to lead to sustainable peace, as wide representation will better ensure that the emerging peace is owned by both females and males, and their needs and perspectives are included.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS IMPACTING GENDER EQUALITY

LEGAL NORMS AND STANDARDS:

Accelerating the pace toward gender equality calls for governmental action to ensure that regional standards are assimilated into national laws, fully implemented and enforced.

→ There is need for a more concerted effort to bring many more countries into alignment with the African Union's three key instruments on human rights and women's empowerment.

→ In an estimated 28 per cent of African countries, customary law is considered a valid source of law – even if it violates constitutional provisions on non-discrimination or equality. Gender-sensitive reviews of existing legislation and mechanisms are needed to reconcile any gaps between statutory, customary and religious law in the protection and realization of the rights of women and girls.

SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER EQUALITY:

Social norms that are detrimental to gender equality are manifest across the Africa region in the form of job and education discrimination, physical and sexual violence and early marriage.

→ Women are often at a systematic disadvantage in their ability to make effective choices, including decisions at home, on employment, on whether or when to get married, on how many children to have and on whether to become politically active.

→ African governments often feel apprehensive about moving too quickly for fear of alienating different political constituencies, socio-economic groups and customary and religious leaders.

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION TO ACCELERATE GENDER EQUALITY

A GENDER-FOCUSED AGENDA FOR ACTION:

Gender equality should be the organizing policy lens for formulating, planning and implementing the development agenda.

→ African governments should move beyond establishing thematic ministries for women and ensure that all policies and programmes are intended to achieve equal outcomes for both men and women through adequate budget prioritization.

→ South-south cooperation on gender equality should be focused on sharing tools, strategies and experiences across sectors and not only include gender specialists (often women dialoguing with women), but also key male senior managers and ministerial officials capable of shifting the policy debate.