

# Africa Human Development Report 2016



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

## Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa



**SUMMARY**

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**Cover:** These patterns are a conceptual reference to societal growth and progressive policymaking. Their repetition reflects a structural foundation and the ascending colour blocks stand for growth and development within existing structures. The African fabric patterns represent a common traditional dress for men and women and a major source of trading activity for women in the Continent.

# Africa Human Development Report 2016

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**Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa**



## Foreword

This 2016 Africa Human Development Report on gender equality follows the 2012 Africa Human Development Report, which looked at the importance of assuring food security for all Africans. Both reports share a common objective of addressing what might be considered two unfinished agenda items on Africa's development trajectory. Both have long been recognized as important priorities for the governments and citizens of African countries.

This year's report on gender equality reviews the ongoing efforts of African countries to accelerate the pace of assuring women's empowerment through all spheres of society – in the home and community, in health and educational attainment, in the workplace, and in political participation and leadership. While significant progress has been made across numerous fronts in most countries, gender equality for African women and girls is still far from satisfactory. To address the gender gap, this report adopts a political economy approach to gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa.

A key message of this report is that giving more concerted attention to gender equality will be an important and long overdue stimulus to faster and more inclusive human development and economic growth for the entire continent. A policy and programming focus on harnessing the potential of women is an important economic and social driver for more inclusive and sustainable development. Policies and programmes that unintentionally leave out or disenfranchise women will never be successful over the long term. Nor can inclusive growth be achieved if women's empowerment is compartmentalized, or seen as a separate activity from what are traditionally perceived as the core functions of government.

Simply stated, accelerating gender equality is a core function of government, involving multi-sectoral efforts that include national and local government entities, non-governmental actors, civil society organizations and the

private sector. Similarly, addressing gender equality in such a holistic way dovetails with, and reinforces, the ambitious agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which African governments and the international community as a whole have set for the coming 15 years. A holistic approach to gender equality will also bolster the achievement of Agenda 2063 of the African Union. This 2016 Human Development Report therefore provides a framework for operationalizing SDG 5 on gender equality, in particular, and all the SDGs, in general.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that this report has been written to 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. The report has been prepared with diverse audiences in mind – African policymakers and practitioners, other development organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, and Africa's citizens, young and old. It is hoped that the report will engage and stimulate active discussion and consensus on the different pathways each African country can take in addressing this critical development challenge and fundamental human right – gender equality.



Helen Clark

*Administrator*

United Nations Development Programme

# Preface

On behalf of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, I am pleased to present this second Africa Human Development Report on the topic of Accelerating Gender Equality in Africa.

Gender equality is not a new development priority for African countries. Indeed, its importance has long been recognized, with the African Union and its predecessor, the Organization of African Union, taking a leading role in espousing the rights of women and girls dating back several decades. The African Union has designated 2016 as the year of Human Rights with a focus on Women's Rights, while 2015 was the year of Women's Empowerment and Development. However, progress in achieving gender equality has been slower than hoped and inconsistent for many African countries.

This report on gender equality is thus aimed at refocusing attention on what continues to be a critical development challenge, at a time when Africa has been undergoing a period of significant and unprecedented economic, social and political change. The fast pace of economic growth in some African countries only a few years ago has been dampened by the recent global downturn in demand for many primary commodities. Political and civil unrest driven by inequality, localized disputes and unmet expectations continue to affect many countries in Africa. Also, the Ebola epidemic of 2014 and drought in East, West and Southern Africa in 2015/16 demonstrate how vulnerable and fragile even rapidly improving African societies can be to unexpected shocks and downturns. Under such conditions, African women often bear a differentially greater burden as mothers, caregivers and family providers.

In the analysis that follows, the report highlights where progress has been made in addressing gender equality and what and where the remaining shortfalls and challenges are. It first provides a synopsis of Africa's

human development progress using UNDP's different human development indicators, with particular attention to the two indicators that measure gender development and gender inequality. The report further analyses gender trends and comparisons in terms of health, education, economic opportunities and barriers, as well as political representation and leadership. Attention is also given to the underlying and root causes of persistent gender inequality, including negative social norms in slowing the pace toward gender equality and the policy dilemmas that African governments face in reconciling legal norms and precedents with detrimental social customs and traditions.

The report further reviews the policy and institutional approaches that African governments have used to address gender inequality and accelerate the pace of women's empowerment and access to equal economic, social and political opportunities. Throughout the report, comparisons are made between African countries and between the Africa region and other developing regions, notably Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The final chapter of the report offers an agenda for action through a policy and strategic framework that places gender equality at the centre of the development agenda. Four broad 'pathways' are suggested that offer a policy and programme framework to accelerate gender equality and fully integrate gender into the broader development agenda.

These four pathways entail:

- supporting the adoption of legal reforms, policies and programmes to advance women's empowerment;
- supporting national capacities to promote and increase the participation and leadership of women in decision-making in the home, economy and society;

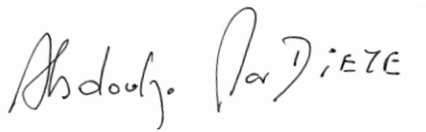


- supporting capacity to implement multi-sectoral approaches to mitigate the impacts of discriminatory health and education practices; and
- supporting women to gain ownership and management of economic and environmental assets.

The rationale for these pathways is that 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 for all their citizens and sustainable in the long term.

We hope that this report stimulates discussion and debate on what remains a critical challenge and unexploited opportunity for Africa's future.



Abdoulaye Mar Dieye

Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa

# Contents

Foreword	v
Preface	vi
Report rationale	1
Analytical approach	2
Progress and challenges in African human development	3
Social dimensions of gender equality	4
Women in African economies	5
African women in politics and leadership	6
The role of legal and social norms in gender equality	7
Policy and programme approaches to addressing gender inequality	8
An agenda for action to accelerate gender equality	9
Conclusion	12
Annex	14



# Summary

## Report rationale

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**From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 68 years ago to the Millennium Declaration 15 years ago and to the Sustainable Development Goals today, global attention remains focused on promoting human rights and eliminating discrimination and inequitable outcomes for women, men, girls and boys.** However, despite widespread recognition of women's rights and the benefits that accrue to all of society from equitable treatment and access to resources and opportunities for women and men, inequalities persist. At the regional and national levels, there is growing recognition that as African women attain higher measures of economic and social well-being, benefits accrue to all of society, yet despite this growing understanding, removing inequalities for women have not kept pace. Significant gaps between men's and women's opportunities remain a major challenge and a severe impediment to structural economic and social transformation that is still the goal of all African countries.

**The evolving development landscape – with its emerging opportunities, shocks and vulnerabilities– makes it imperative for Africa to accelerate the advancement of sustainable and equitable human development.** This can be achieved by building economic, social and environmental resilience for women and men, enhancing their productivity, and accelerating the pace of structural economic transformation in the region. This report explores where and how progress in gender equality has been made and how best to accelerate the pace of gender advancement in Africa. Its focus on gender equality comes at a time of tremendous change across the continent, including recent dynamics of social and economic transformation that have resulted in significant strides in Africa's human development.

**This report pinpoints the intersection between political and economic processes, and presents a clear agenda for action.**

The agenda provides an approach to help African countries more forcefully confront the challenge and accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. The agenda on gender equality can support progress toward Africa's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While SDG 5 focuses specifically on gender equality, addressing gender issues more vigorously and comprehensively will expedite efforts by governments and other stakeholders to achieve many, if not all, of the other SDGs due to the role and position that women play across all of society and all sectors.

## Analytical approach

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From UNDP's perspective, gender inequality from the standpoint of human development is addressed by improving women's capabilities and opportunities and contributing to better outcomes for present and future generations. As shown in figure 1, the nexus between gender equality and human development is based on three overlapping concerns:

- economic: more productive work at home and in the marketplace as employers, employees and entrepreneurs;
- social and environmental: better health, education, cessation of physical and sexual violence against women, and sustainable resource use for present and future generations; and
- political: more equal voice and representation in decision-making and resource allocation.

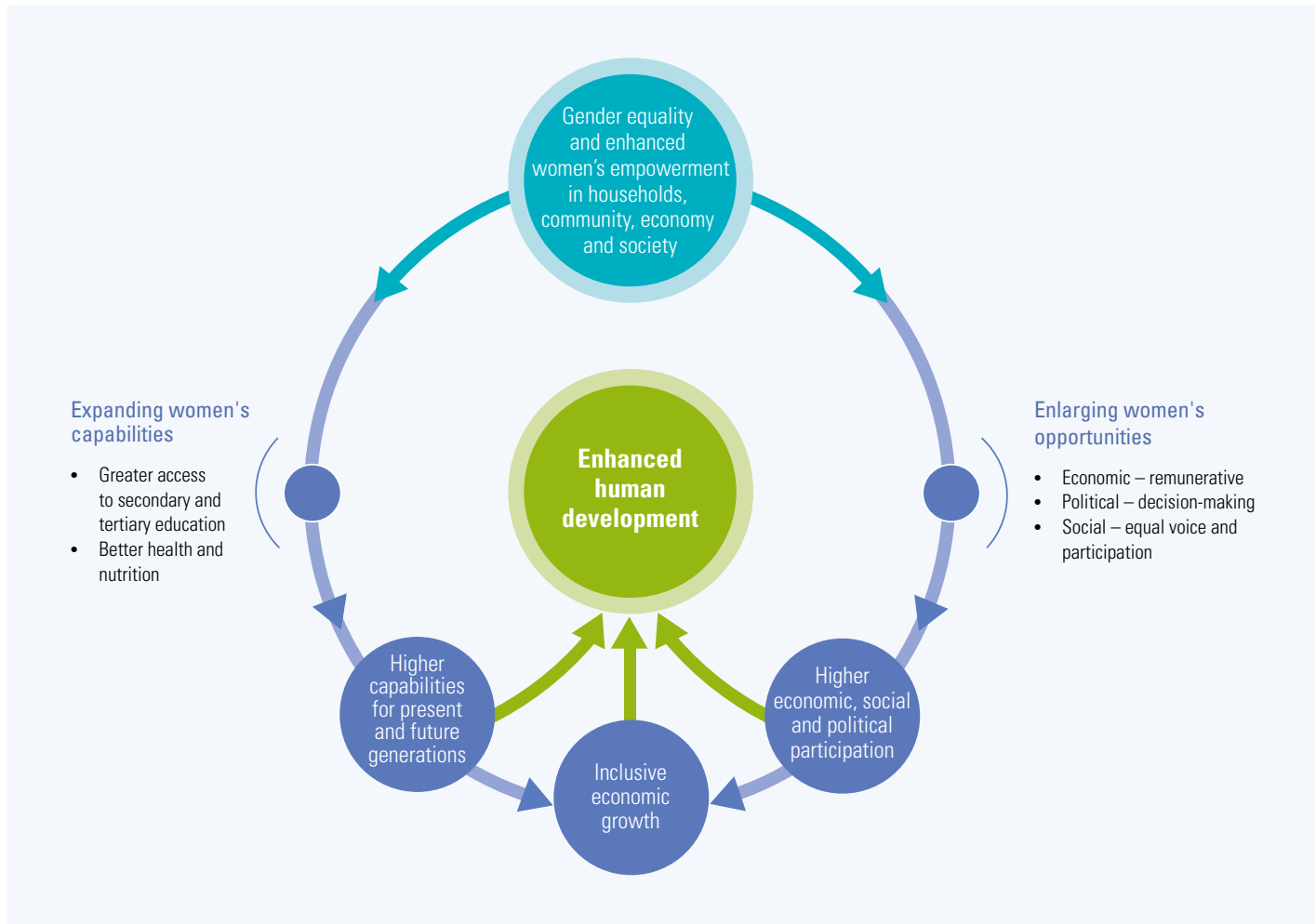
The analytical approach taken in the report is to examine the challenge of gender equality by pinpointing the interaction between

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Despite widespread recognition that as African women attain higher measures of economic and social well-being, benefits accrue to all of society, yet removing inequalities for women have not kept pace.

FIGURE 1

**Gender equality and enhanced women’s empowerment in households, communities, economies and society**



Source: Contributed by Selim Jahan, Human Development Report Office (HDRO), 2016.

The report examines the challenge of gender equality by pinpointing the interaction between political, economic and social processes that either impede or contribute to advancing women’s empowerment.

political, economic and social processes that either impede or contribute to advancing women’s empowerment. A ‘political economy’ perspective is used to understand the way ideas, resources and power are conceptualized, negotiated and implemented by different social groups in relation to gender inequality – whether in the workplace, the marketplace, or at home.

It is important to emphasize that the preparation of this Africa Human Development Report was a highly collaborative effort between the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, in close collaboration with the African

Union Commission, United Nations agencies, regional institutions, practitioners and researchers. As a result, it not only focuses on sub-Saharan Africa, but also includes the Arab states of North Africa. The report preparation process included in-depth quantitative research and analysis, a qualitative interactive study, consultations with numerous organizations throughout Africa, as well as an Africa-wide online survey.

The sections below highlight some of the key points found in the chapters of the full report.

TABLE 1

**Global HDI comparisons by region**

Region	HDI mean value by Region 1990	HDI mean value by Region 2000	HDI mean value by Region 2014	Change in HDI value (1990-2014)
East Asia and the Pacific	0.516	0.593	0.710	1.34
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0.651	0.665	0.748	0.58
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.625	0.684	0.748	0.75
South Asia	0.437	0.503	0.607	1.38
Africa	0.426	0.449	0.524	1.09

Source: Compiled by the Africa Human Development Report (AfHDR) Team.

## Progress and challenges in African human development

The report reviews current progress in African human development using the different indicators that UNDP has constructed to capture various aspects of human development, including gender inequality. Using UNDP's different human development indicators, there is wide variation in values and ranking across the African Region and between the different African sub-regions (table 1). Overall, Africa has one of the fastest rates of improvement in human development over the past two decades, but also has the lowest average levels of human development compared to other regions in the world. At the same time, not all African countries have low human development. Seventeen African countries across the five sub-regions have attained medium and high human development – five countries in Southern Africa, five in North Africa, four in Central Africa, two in West Africa, and one in East Africa. The highest human development levels in Africa are in Algeria, Libya, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Tunisia. Thirty-six African countries (out of 44 countries worldwide) are classified in the low human development group. Annex 1 shows the HDI values, rankings and trends over time for all African countries.

On average, countries with initially low levels of human development grew faster, thus making large gains, until 2010, when this growth began to slow down. The following countries have made the largest gains since

2000: United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, Mali, Zambia, Niger, Angola, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Rwanda and Ethiopia.

Table 2 is a summary table of the average values of each of the five African sub-regions. It highlights the considerable differences in HDI values among the African sub-regions and within the sub-regions. As noted in the table, North Africa is significantly above the Regional HDI mean, and even with Mauritania included, is above South Asia in a global regional comparison. Southern Africa is the only other sub-region above the African regional mean HDI value.

Countries with initially low levels of human development are making large gains. The following countries have made the largest gains since 2000:

TABLE 2

**Average HDI value by sub-region**

Sub-region	HDI Value 1990	HDI Value 2000	HDI value 2014	Change in HDI value, 1990-2014 (%)
North Africa	0.533	0.603	0.668	20.209
East Africa	0.337	0.403	0.497	32.193
West Africa	0.333	0.382	0.461	27.766
Central Africa	0.453	0.439	0.507	10.651
Southern Africa	0.481	0.478	0.570	15.614
Mean (average) HDI value for the African Region	0.426	0.449	0.524	18.702

Source: Compiled by the AfHDR Team.

On average, African women achieve only 87 per cent of men's human development levels.

African governments are generally well aware of the factors impacting the status of women as well as the kinds of policies and programmes that could make a difference, but budget allocations to support necessary policy and programmes have fallen well short of the targets set by the African Union for spending on the social sectors.

The United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, Mali, Zambia, Niger, Angola, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Rwanda and Ethiopia. Countries that began with initially low levels of human development are growing faster, on average, which indicates that they are catching up. However, the pace has slowed since 2010.

Calculations using the UNDP gender indices indicate notable gender inequality in almost every African country. Gender gaps in income and non-income dimensions result in lower human development by females compared to males. On average, African women achieve only 87 per cent of men’s human development.

### Social dimensions of gender equality

The social dimensions of gender equality, which involves trends in health and education, are key determinants of women’s equality and empowerment. Overall, gender inequality in social services translates into lower opportunities for the well-being of women in particular and society as a whole. In the last decades, citizens’ capabilities have expanded in many African countries in the basic areas of health, education and other social services. These improvements have included women

and girls, who today, have greater access to education at all levels, have better health, safely give birth to their children, and achieve higher life expectancy.

Women face severe deprivations in their health due to such factors as early age marriage (figure 2), sexual and physical violence, and the continued high incidence of maternal mortality. The most at-risk women are those of childbearing age. The prevalence of adolescent birth rate in many countries is slowing the pace of progress on human development. For example, a one percentage point rise in adolescent birth rate reduces HDI by about 1.1 percentage points.

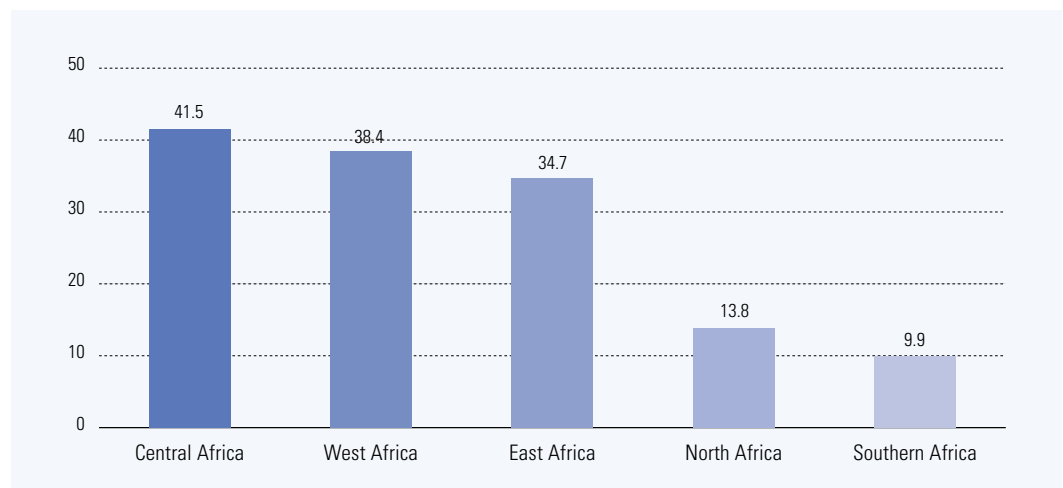
The spectrum of violence affecting women includes domestic violence, intimate partner violence, rape, female genital mutilation, intimidation, and additional threats to women’s personal security in periods of war and conflict.

With respect to education, it is remarkable that near gender parity has been achieved in primary school enrolment. However, gender discrimination is still significant in secondary and tertiary education. The reasons that children do not attend school vary, but they are often associated with poverty, ethnicity, social exclusion, living in a rural area or slums, geographic remoteness, disasters, armed conflict, lack of basic facilities and poor-quality

Unequal health and education outcomes are still evident across regions and between countries. Gender inequality in social services translates into lower opportunities for the well-being of women in particular and society as a whole.

FIGURE 2

Child marriage prevalence by sub-region (%), 2005-2013



Source: Computed by the AfHDR Team based on data from UNICEF Global Database 2015.

TABLE 3

**Female share in non-agricultural, informal sector employment**

Country	Survey year	% Female employment in non-agricultural informal sector
Mauritius	2009	6.7
South Africa	2010	16.8
Lesotho	2008	48.1
Ethiopia (urban)	2004	47.9
Zimbabwe	2004	53.1
Liberia	2010	65.4
Côte d'Ivoire	2008	82.8
Zambia	2008	70.3
Madagascar	2009	63.8
Uganda	2010	62.2
Tanzania (United Republic of)	2005/06	49.8
Mali	2004	79.6
Mali	2004	74

Compiled by the AfHDR Team from ILO, 2014. Maternity and Paternity at Work: Law and Practice across the World. Geneva.

education. These barriers often interact with gender to create even greater disadvantages in learning opportunities. All of these account for the low mean years of schooling across the various sub-regions (figure 3).

The good news is that countries in which a large share of the female population has obtained at least secondary education tend to perform better on HDI.

## Women in African economies

Another key determinant of gender equality is defined by women in the workplace and economic decision-making. Significant economic and workplace disparities between men and women continue to be the norm rather than the exception in many African countries. These inequalities are found across Africa in access to economic assets, participation in the workplace, entrepreneurship opportunities, and use of and benefits from natural resources and the environment.

In addition, women are more likely to be found in vulnerable employment with weak

regulation and limited social protection due to differences in education and the mismatch between women's skills and those demanded by the labour market.

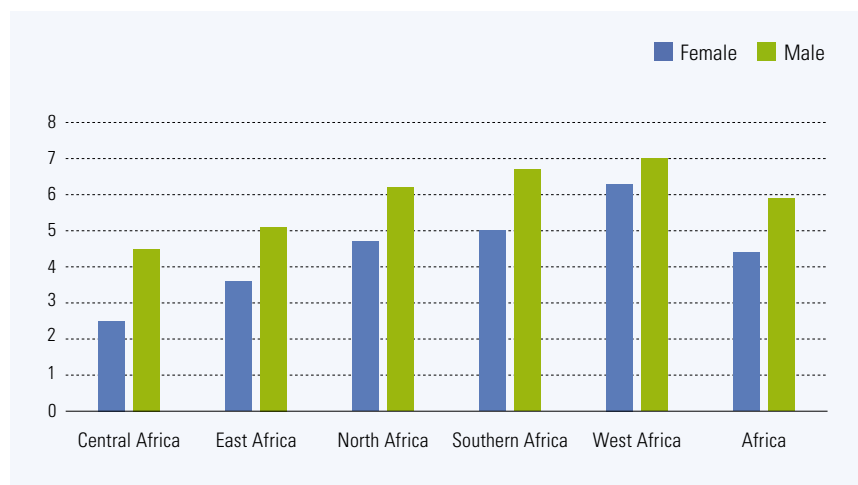
This in turn pushes women into the informal economy. It is estimated, using survey data for 2004 to 2010, that the share of non-agricultural informal employment in sub-Saharan Africa is about 66 per cent of all female employment. This varies across countries (table 3).

Increased female participation in the labour market has not meant increased opportunities in high paying jobs or enterprises. A gender wage gap outside agriculture is pervasive across all labour markets in sub-Saharan Africa, where, on average, the unadjusted gender pay gap is estimated at 30 per cent.

Thus, for every US\$1 earned by men in manufacturing, services and trade, women earn 70 cents. Gaps in earnings between women and men are influenced by parameters such as age, occupation type, education, parenthood and marriage.

FIGURE 3

### Mean years of schooling, 25 and older, by sex and sub-region, 2014



Source: Computed by the AfHDR Team based on data from UNDP 2015 Human Development Report. New York, USA.

Significant economic and workplace disparities between African men and women continue to be the norm rather than the exception. These disparities are found across the African region in terms of access to economic assets, participation in the workplace, entrepreneurship opportunities, and use of and benefits from natural resources and the environment.

On average, annual GDP losses between 2010 and 2014, due to gender gaps in the labour market, exceeded \$90 billion, peaking at about \$105 billion in 2014 in sub-Saharan Africa.

Closing gender gaps in public administration helps to ensure democratic governance, restore trust and confidence in public institutions, and accelerate the responsiveness of government policies and programmes.

Because social norms and beliefs assign African women and girls the primary responsibility for care and domestic work, women, on average, spend twice as much time as men on domestic work – child and elderly care, cooking, cleaning, and fetching water and wood. In sub-Saharan Africa, 71 per cent of the burden of collecting water for households falls on women and girls.

As the economic status of women improves, so does that of entire families – a major factor in reducing the blight of inter-generational poverty and low human development. For example, ownership or title to land represents an important source of equity and collateral for women in obtaining credit and accessing other forms of productive assets. Lack of access to land deprives African women of an important economic tool for improving their livelihoods.

There is a high economic cost when women are not integrated more fully into their respective national economies. According to this report, the estimated total annual economic losses due to gender gaps between 2010 and 2014 could exceed \$90 billion in sub-Saharan Africa, peaking at about \$105 billion in 2014. These results confirm that Africa is missing its full growth potential because a sizeable portion of its growth reserve – women – is not fully utilized.

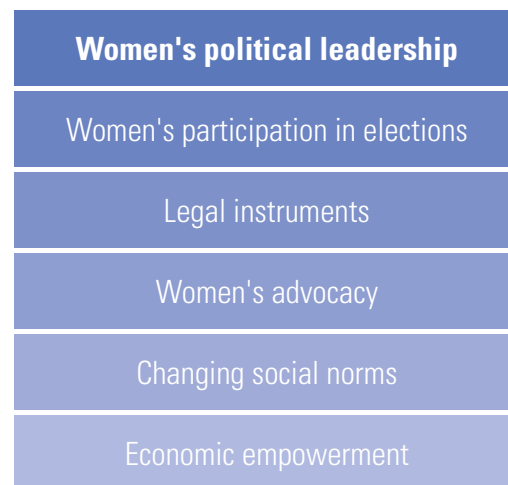
### African women in politics and leadership

Another key driver in advancing gender equality is the role of women’s political voice and leadership. Women’s political participation and representation in governance have long been taken as key indicators of the

Overall progress at the political and leadership level is still well below what is needed to have a demonstrable impact on attaining full gender equality in African countries. Existing social and political structures still proscribe women’s full potential in helping to equally shape the national and local political and policy agenda.

FIGURE 4

### Drivers for increasing women’s participation in politics in Africa



general level of effectiveness and accountability in a country.

To the extent that more women are involved in politics and leadership positions, then, women’s rights, priorities, needs and interests are less likely to be ignored or silenced (figure 4).

Significant progress has been made in advancing women’s participation in holding elective office and in positions of leadership in the public and private sectors.

Some countries have been highly successful in electing women to their parliaments and other elected offices, but existing social and political structures still proscribe women’s full potential in helping to equally shape the national and local economic, social and political agenda.

In addition to politics, women have also made advances in leadership positions in such areas as the civil service, trade unions and the private sector, but here again progress in achieving gender equity is still lagging due to a combination of political, economic and social resistance to change.

In the private sector, the general perception that male enterprises outperform female ones is not supported by data nor does it justify the gap in leadership. Although the trend is improving, the percentage of firms with a female top manager still ranges between 7 and 30 per cent. Narrowing the private sector leadership



gender gap hinges on an increase in the pool of women with tertiary education in science and technology-related fields.

Peace processes are another principal ground for decision-making and for the exercise of power and influence. Historically, women’s formal participation has been limited despite the profusion of peace agreements across the continent.

In the last decade, women’s roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding have shifted considerably from when they could only informally impact negotiations for the cessation of hostilities or peace agreements.

There is a growing recognition that women should be an integral and formal part of any peace negotiations process, given their role in securing and maintaining peace.

## The role of legal and social norms in gender equality

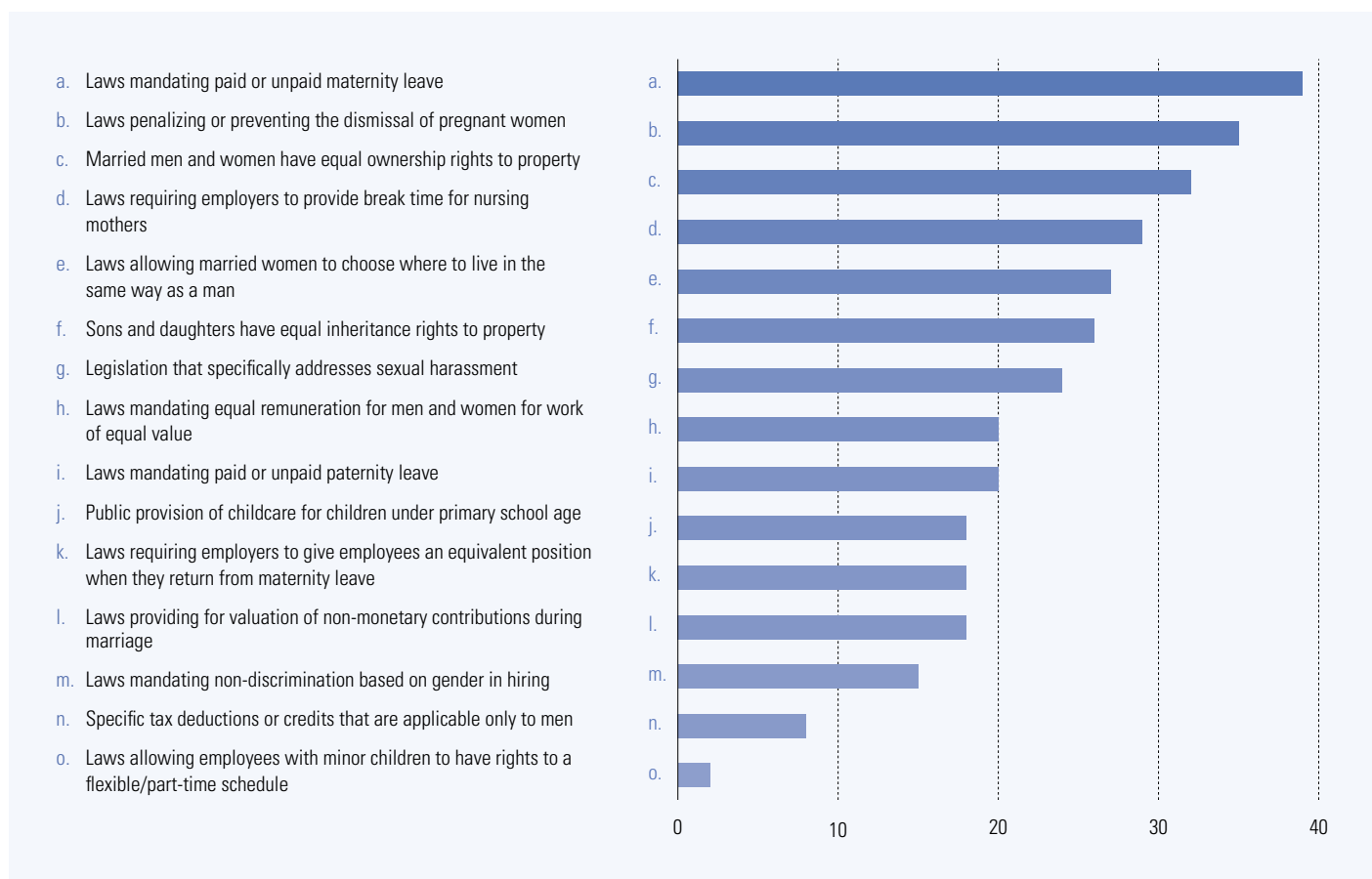
Existing legal and social norms, and the ways they interact have a major effect on gender equality and women’s empowerment. The underlying importance of legal and social norms cannot be overstated in such areas as access to economic services, health and education, as well as the role they play in influencing gender-focused violence, childhood marriage and other socio-cultural barriers to gender equality (see figure 5).

African states and regional bodies have put in place a wide array of legal norms, precedents and legislation promoting gender equality. The challenge is not in fine-tuning existing legal standards, but rather, ensuring

The challenge is not fine-tuning existing legal standards, but rather, ensuring standards are advocated, accepted and fully implemented and enforced.

FIGURE 5

### No. of African countries with non-discriminatory gender laws, 2014



Source: Compiled by the AfHDR Team based on World Bank, 2015a.



Social and institutional silence on violence against women combine to perpetuate systemic and normalized violence in Africa.

Gender-sensitive reviews of existing legislation in the areas of family law, land law, labour and employment law, and customary law are necessary to identify and remove ongoing gender discrimination.

that standards are advocated, accepted and integrated into national laws and regulations, and then fully implemented and enforced. It is the gap between legal rights and expectations, on the one hand, and prevailing practices and behaviours embodied in social and cultural norms, on the other hand, that pose a fundamental challenge for accelerating gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Many social norms have very important and positive roles in creating strong family and community bonds, as well as establishing conditions for trust and support in times of crisis and hardship. Other social norms, however, continue to have a negative impact on the attainment of gender equality, despite existing laws and standards.

Such prevailing social norms and gender stereotypes that assign different standings, roles and privileges for women and men hinder progress towards gender equality. According to a 2015 Afrobarometer survey, about one quarter of Africans do not embrace the concept of gender equality, i.e. they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the fundamental notion of equal rights between men and women. This calls for proactive awareness and advocacy on the imperatives of gender equality in Africa.

The impact of social norms that limit women has also been shown to have deleterious effects on men and boys, and communities

as a whole, essentially holding everyone back from achieving higher human development and impeding societies from realizing their full development potential.

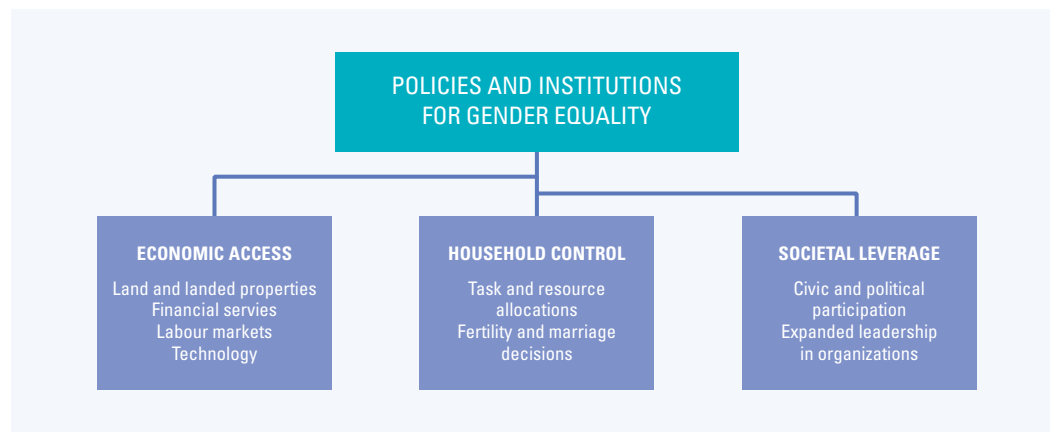
## Policy and programme approaches to addressing gender inequality

African governments have used a range of policy and programme approaches to address gender inequality. These include broad macro- and sectoral-level efforts that have sought to address gender inequality through a combination of policies and institutions. Examples include fiscal policy (including public expenditures and subsidies), legal and regulatory measures and set-aside programmes, as

A wide range of social norms continue to have a negative impact on the attainment of gender equality in Africa. Despite a number of international and regional laws and declarations concerning human rights and gender equality, these standards are often negated or diminished at the national and community levels because of pervasive social norms.

FIGURE 6

### Policy and institutional conduits for gender equality



Source: Adapted from WHO Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015. Geneva.

African countries have used a range of policy and institutional means to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. But the record of success is mixed, and there is ample room for expansion of such efforts both in scale and intensity of effort. In this regard, much can be learned from the experience of other regions, such as Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

well as other targeted interventions. But the record of success is mixed, and there is ample room for expanding such efforts, both in the scope and scale of such efforts. In this regard, much can be learned from the experience of Latin America and Asia.

Most African countries have followed international practice by setting up institutions for the advancement of women. These new organizational mechanisms for gender issues have taken many forms, including thematic ministries or ministerial departments for women, designated in some countries as lead institutional mechanisms.

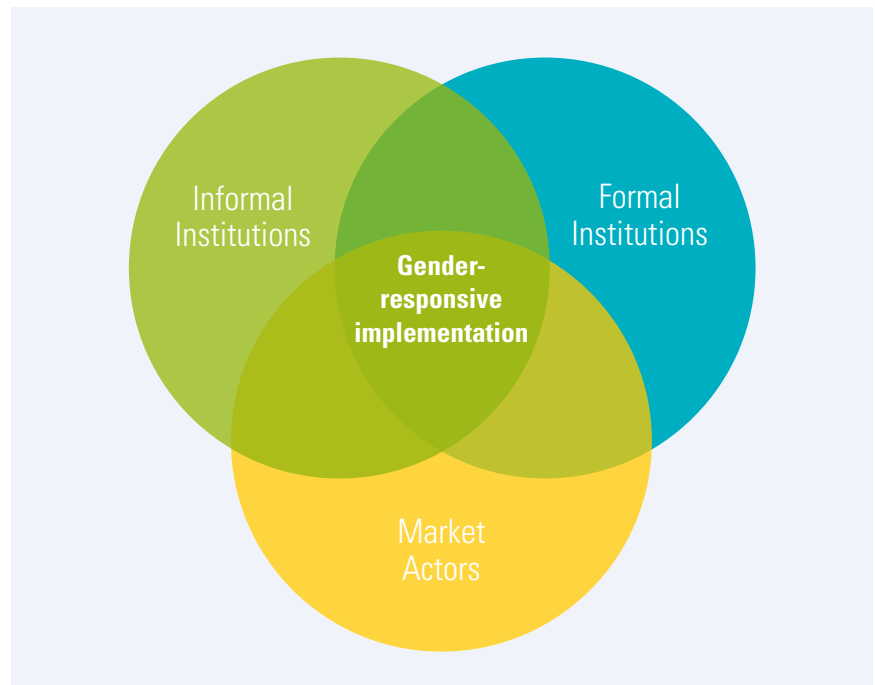
Developing effective institutional models towards more equal societies must be understood as a shared responsibility across multiple ministries and involving the private sector and civil society (figure 6).

African governments have begun using various kinds of social protection programmes (including cash transfer and subsidies) to promote gender equality and poverty reduction. Still, there is considerable room for expanding a number of cash transfer and social service programmes that would have a direct impact on improving women's economic and social well-being. These include paid maternity leave, provision of childcare services, and some form of income support or cash transfers for women's unpaid work, which usually takes place in the home or in the farm field.

Also, the legal environment within which women and men engage in society underscores the fact that more effective non-discriminatory labour institutions, family-friendly

FIGURE 7

**Institutional collaboration for gender equality**



Source: Designed by the AfHDR Team.

policies and work environment standards could contribute greatly towards reducing women's economic and social disadvantages (figure 7). 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.

In order to better apply international and regional legal norms for gender equality, many African countries may therefore need to more fully articulate, implement and enforce existing laws, statutes and regulations that could have a profound impact on improving women's access to equal rights and entitlements. Reconciling national laws and regulations with customary laws and traditions remains a monumental challenge.

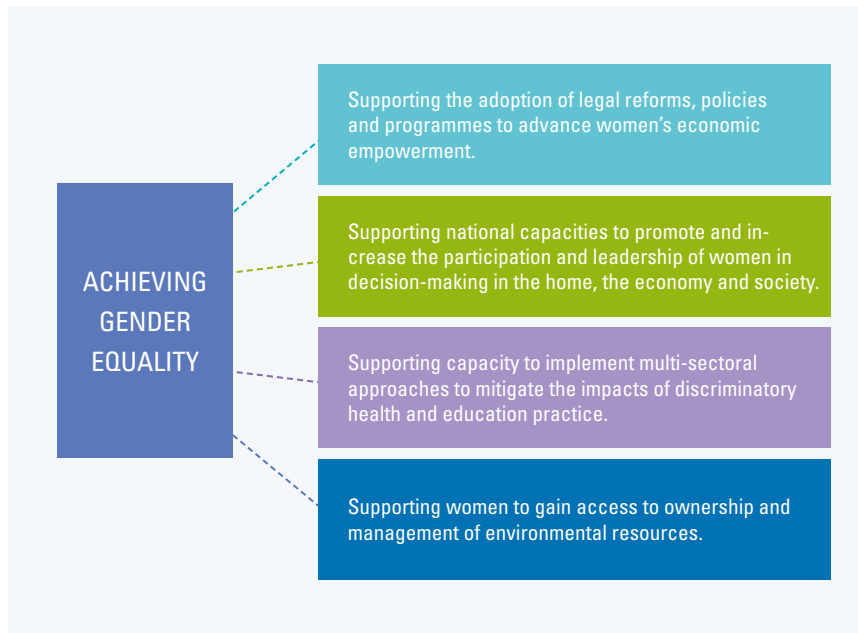
**An agenda for action to accelerate gender equality**

The 2016 Africa Human Development Report offers some key conclusions and

Public and private sector institutions as well as CSOs should commit to implementing the Gender Equality Seal certification standards.

FIGURE 8

**Strategic pathways for addressing gender inequality**



Source: Adapted from Changing with the World: UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017. New York.

overriding themes that provide a strategic framework and an agenda for action aimed at a more results-oriented and comprehensive approach to addressing gender inequality. Four broad 'pathways' are suggested that offer policy and programme guidelines to accelerate gender equality and fully integrate gender into the broader human development agenda and help achieve the SDGs and the African Agenda 2063. The four pathways are shown in figure 8 and highlighted below.

These four pathways entail:

**Pathway 1: Supporting the adoption of legal reforms, policies and regulations to advance women's empowerment** through the formulation and full implementation of a combination of laws and regulations, policies and programmes that provide equal opportunities for all, regardless of sex.

**Pathway 2: Supporting national capacities to promote and increase the participation and leadership of women in decision-making in the home, economy and society**, which can help tackle factors that propagate

socio-economic exclusions, poverty and inequality in the home, in the economy and markets, and in society. In this regard, public and private sector institutions as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) should commit to implementing UNDP's Gender Equality Seal (GES) certification standards in order to deliver transformational gender equality results in Africa.

**Pathway 3: Supporting capacity to implement multi-sectoral approaches to mitigate the impacts of discriminatory health and education practices**, which can generate collaboration across ministries and with the private sector and civil society.

**Pathway 4: Supporting women to gain ownership and management of economic and environmental assets**, which can help tackle factors that propagate socio-economic exclusion, poverty and inequality. This includes the establishment of an African Women Investment Bank and opening of women investment windows in development banks.

With these four pathways in mind, there is an overriding strategic question facing African governments wishing to accelerate women's rights and entitlements:

*Assuming the political commitment to do so, how can African leaders and policy-makers more forcefully address gender inequalities in the face of other competing national priorities?*

Due to the pressures on leaders and policymakers to maintain the pace of economic growth, diversify the economy for integration into global markets, meet the rising demands of a growing middle class, address shocks and vulnerabilities, and meet national security concerns, tough decisions must often be made in competing for the use of scarce resources.

To provide some policy guidance for African leaders concerned with this ongoing dilemma, six strategic considerations are offered as an organizational framework for action in addressing gender inequality. This organizational framework is in line with the argument put forward that accelerating gender equality

The establishment of an African Women Investment Bank is critical.

and women's empowerment simultaneously represents a practical operational approach for African governments to tackle the challenge of achieving the SDGs and move forward on the African Union's Agenda 2063. Addressing gender equality is not separate from addressing the SDGs. Thus, to the extent that gender inequalities are being addressed, progress is made across the wide spectrum of development goals found in the SDGs.

From this perspective, the six strategic considerations are outlined below.

***Using gender equality as an organizing policy lens for formulation, planning and implementation of the development agenda.***

It is a false assumption that giving higher priority to gender equality means giving lower priority to other development priorities. Focusing on gender issues is not a zero-sum choice, where choosing one priority comes at the expense of another. Whatever the policy objective – inclusive growth and economic diversification, revitalizing the agricultural sector, improving national health and education services, eradicating extreme poverty, tackling climate change – if 50 per cent of the population, that is, women and girls, are not benefitting equally from the policies and programmes, then the latter cannot be considered a success. Discarding this false assumption and addressing gender equality is no longer about 'adding' in special policies and programmes for women or having separate women's ministries or agencies, but, instead, ensuring that all policies and programmes are intended to achieve equal outcomes for both men and women.

***Tackling destructive social norms directly.*** It is no understatement that reversing the social norms that impede women's and girls' equal opportunities will be a long-term and difficult process. Pushing to deconstruct harmful social norms and cultural barriers is no doubt a morally demanding, socially difficult and politically risky course of action, or more precisely, multiple and overlapping courses of actions. African leaders and policymakers therefore need to understand the long-term

nature of deconstructing harmful social norms and replacing them with positive social norms. In many instances, the approach will entail reconciling legal and social norms.

***Using plans and budgets to prioritize gender equality.***

African governments will invariably need to identify and then implement a strategic set of policy and programme choices that are deemed priorities in the national context, that have the highest likelihood of making important changes, that can work synergistically, and that have the best chance of being successfully implemented. The objective is to suggest that African governments must have a prioritization process for achieving gender equality, given the tremendous needs and resource constraints facing each country. The task does not necessarily entail selecting and implementing a wide range of policy options, but instead, prioritizing, in an orderly and transparent process, among multiple (and often contending) policy options—all of which place competing demands on scarce public resources.

Three guiding questions are suggested for linking short- and long-term prioritization:

- What policies and programmes have the highest likelihood of improving the lives of women and bringing them into the economic mainstream through productive employment opportunities and improved social welfare?
- In what ways are the views and concerns of women, stakeholders and other recipients being factored into the decision-making process?

In situations where resources are shifted from one programme or initiative to another, can the shift be justified in terms of improved economic and social outcomes for women and girls than would otherwise have been the case?

***Strengthening adaptive policies and institutional capacities.*** Achieving gender equality and accelerating the pace of human

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Data collection and analysis should not be considered an afterthought, but rather a core function of government services, which require commensurate financial and political support.

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Development, if not engendered, is endangered. All policies and programmes must be intended to achieve equal outcomes for both men and women.

development will require African governments to commit to a strong, proactive and responsible social framework that develops policies for both the public and private sectors – based on a long-term vision and leadership, shared norms and values, and rules and institutions that build trust and cohesion. At the same time, governments will need the capacity for flexibility and adaptation. In complex societies such as in Africa, the outcome of any particular policy is inevitably uncertain. African governments will need to follow a governance framework that is pragmatic and able to problem-solve and adapt collectively and rapidly—as opposed to abandoning a course of action in the face of unintended effects.

***Adding value to data for improved decision-making.*** In order for African governments to fully address gender inequalities and understand the outcomes of chosen policies and programmes, more robust data collection and monitoring systems will be required. Effective capacity in statistics and monitoring and evaluation is the ‘lubricant’ by which governments are able to perform as an adaptive state and undertake necessary policy change and mid-course corrections. Data collection and analysis should not be considered an afterthought, but rather a core function of governmental services, which require commensurate financial and political support. Assessing capabilities for monitoring national development plans and budgets, and the SDGs, together with traditional economic and social statistics, is an imperative. This represents a window of opportunity for African governments to evaluate how their statistical agencies and line ministries can improve their data gathering, management and analysis functions in order to fully capture the gender implications of current policies and initiatives, and how, over time, they can be modified and improved.

***Prioritizing regional and South-South cooperation.*** It is important to underline the importance of regional and South-South Cooperation in designing and implementing gender-focused policies and initiatives.

African countries have much to learn from each other – both about what has worked and what has not. There are also many useful lessons that can be learned from the Asian and Latin American and Caribbean experience. The focus of such cooperation should be on sharing tools, strategies and experiences across sectors, from large infrastructure projects to community-based interventions – all of which need to drive innovation, learning and upscaling. There is considerable scope for expanding cross-national training and study tours, secondment of staff and other kinds of experiential learning opportunities that place managers and policymakers more directly in the fulcrum of on-the-ground change.

## Conclusion

In summary, the report focuses on the continuing problem of gender equality facing African women and girls. A key conclusion is that gender equality is not achieved by having gender-specific ministries or women-only projects and programmes (although they can be important), but rather, by tackling gender equality as a wide-ranging effort across multiple sectors that engage all segments of society. The report further emphasizes the inter-linkages between the social well-being of women and their economic opportunities for more productive lives. Underpinning all of these efforts will be the necessary but understandably difficult task of breaking down harmful social norms and cultural barriers that have a particularly serious impact on poor women and their families.

Another conclusion is that accelerating gender equality will entail highly collaborative efforts involving not only national and local local governments, but also non-governmental organizations, the private sector, advocacy groups and effective community-based organizations.

Finally, African governments must articulate time-bound benchmarks to measure progress, make adjustments as needed and maintain a national vision of the important ramifications that achieving gender equality has for the entire society. The peoples of

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African governments should break down harmful social norms and cultural barriers that have a particularly serious impact on women and their families.

Africa must hold themselves and their governments accountable for making progress on improvements within a timeframe that does not dilute the urgency for action. The 15-year timeframe of the SDGs and the first ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 represent viable timeframe to which African governments have already pledged themselves.

## Annex African Human Development Index (HDI) ranking, values and trends

HDI rank	Country	Human Development Index (HDI) Value						HDI rank		Average annual HDI growth %				
		1990	2000	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2013	Change	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2014	1990-2014
<b>Very High Human Development</b>														
<b>High Human Development</b>														
63	Mauritius	0.619	0.674	0.756	0.762	0.772	0.775	0.777	62	6	0.86	1.15	0.68	0.95
64	Seychelles	–	0.715	0.743	0.752	0.761	0.767	0.772	68	8	–	0.39	0.97	–
83	Algeria	0.574	0.640	0.725	0.730	0.732	0.734	0.736	84	4	1.09	1.26	0.35	1.04
94	Libya	0.679	0.731	0.756	0.711	0.745	0.738	0.724	83	-27	0.75	0.34	-1.07	0.27
96	Tunisia	0.567	0.654	0.714	0.715	0.719	0.720	0.721	96	-1	1.43	0.88	0.26	1.00
<b>Group average</b>		0.610	0.683	0.739	0.734	0.746	0.747	0.746	79		1.03	0.80	0.24	0.82
<b>Medium Human Development</b>														
106	Botswana	0.584	0.561	0.681	0.688	0.691	0.696	0.698	106	1	-0.41	1.96	0.61	0.74
108	Egypt	0.546	0.622	0.681	0.682	0.688	0.689	0.690	108	-3	1.31	0.90	0.33	0.98
110	Gabon	0.620	0.632	0.663	0.668	0.673	0.679	0.684	111	1	0.20	0.48	0.76	0.41
116	South Africa	0.621	0.632	0.643	0.651	0.659	0.663	0.666	117	4	0.17	0.18	0.87	0.29
122	Cabo Verde	–	0.572	0.629	0.637	0.639	0.643	0.646	122	2	–	0.96	0.66	–
126	Morocco	0.457	0.528	0.611	0.621	0.623	0.626	0.628	126	5	1.44	1.48	0.69	1.33
126	Namibia	0.578	0.556	0.610	0.616	0.620	0.625	0.628	128	3	-0.39	0.94	0.70	0.35
136	Rep. of the Congo	0.534	0.489	0.554	0.560	0.575	0.582	0.591	138	2	-0.87	1.25	1.61	0.42
138	Equatorial Guinea	–	0.526	0.591	0.590	0.584	0.584	0.587	137	-5	–	1.18	-0.18	–
139	Zambia	0.403	0.433	0.555	0.565	0.576	0.580	0.586	139	1	0.71	2.52	1.36	1.57
140	Ghana	0.456	0.485	0.554	0.566	0.572	0.577	0.579	140	-2	0.63	1.33	1.13	1.00
143	Sao Tome and Principe	0.455	0.491	0.544	0.548	0.552	0.553	0.555	143	-2	0.76	1.02	0.52	0.83
<b>Group average</b>		0.525	0.544	0.610	0.616	0.621	0.625	0.628	126	1	0.36	1.18	0.76	0.79
<b>Low Human Development</b>														
145	Kenya	0.473	0.447	0.529	0.535	0.539	0.544	0.548	145	0	-0.58	1.70	0.92	0.62
149	Angola	–	0.390	0.509	0.521	0.524	0.530	0.532	149	1	–	2.70	1.11	–
150	Swaziland	0.536	0.496	0.525	0.528	0.529	0.530	0.531	149	-5	-0.78	0.57	0.28	-0.04
151	Tanzania (United Republic of)	0.369	0.392	0.500	0.506	0.510	0.516	0.521	151	2	0.60	2.46	1.05	1.44
152	Nigeria	..	..	0.493	0.499	0.505	0.510	0.514	152	2	–	–	1.06	–
153	Cameroon	0.443	0.437	0.486	0.496	0.501	0.507	0.512	154	6	-0.13	1.07	1.32	0.61
154	Madagascar	–	0.456	0.504	0.505	0.507	0.508	0.510	153	-4	–	1.02	0.27	–
155	Zimbabwe	0.499	0.428	0.461	0.474	0.491	0.501	0.509	158	12	-1.53	0.75	2.50	0.08
156	Mauritania	0.373	0.442	0.488	0.489	0.498	0.504	0.506	156	1	1.71	0.98	0.92	1.28
159	Comoros	..	..	0.488	0.493	0.499	0.501	0.503	158	-1	–	–	0.75	–
161	Lesotho	0.493	0.443	0.472	0.480	0.484	0.494	0.497	161	1	-1.05	0.62	1.30	0.03
162	Togo	0.404	0.426	0.459	0.468	0.470	0.473	0.484	167	3	0.52	0.76	1.29	0.75
163	Rwanda	0.244	0.333	0.453	0.464	0.476	0.479	0.483	163	5	3.16	3.13	1.61	2.89
163	Uganda	0.308	0.393	0.473	0.473	0.476	0.478	0.483	164	-2	2.47	1.86	0.51	1.89
166	Benin	0.344	0.392	0.468	0.473	0.475	0.477	0.480	165	-2	1.33	1.78	0.64	1.40
167	Sudan	0.331	0.400	0.465	0.466	0.476	0.477	0.479	165	-5	1.90	1.52	0.74	1.55
168	Djibouti	–	0.365	0.453	0.462	0.465	0.468	0.470	168	0	–	2.17	0.97	–
169	South Sudan	–	..	0.470	0.458	0.457	0.461	0.467	171	..	–	–	-0.15	–
170	Senegal	0.367	0.380	0.456	0.458	0.461	0.463	0.466	170	-3	0.36	1.83	0.55	1.00
172	Côte d'Ivoire	0.389	0.398	0.444	0.445	0.452	0.458	0.462	172	0	0.23	1.12	0.98	0.72
173	Malawi	0.284	0.340	0.420	0.429	0.433	0.439	0.445	174	2	1.83	2.14	1.49	1.90
174	Ethiopia	–	0.284	0.412	0.423	0.429	0.436	0.442	175	2	–	3.78	1.78	..
175	The Gambia	0.330	0.384	0.441	0.437	0.440	0.442	0.441	173	-2	1.55	1.38	-0.02	1.22
176	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	0.355	0.329	0.408	0.418	0.423	0.430	0.433	176	3	-0.77	2.18	1.52	0.83
177	Liberia	–	0.359	0.405	0.414	0.419	0.424	0.430	177	1	–	1.20	1.50	–
178	Guinea-Bissau	–	..	0.413	0.417	0.417	0.418	0.420	178	-4	–	–	0.42	–
179	Mali	0.233	0.313	0.409	0.415	0.414	0.416	0.419	179	-3	2.97	2.73	0.61	2.47
180	Mozambique	0.218	0.300	0.401	0.405	0.408	0.413	0.416	180	0	3.25	2.96	0.94	2.74
181	Sierra Leone	0.262	0.299	0.388	0.394	0.397	0.408	0.413	182	0	1.32	2.63	1.59	1.91
182	Guinea	–	0.323	0.388	0.399	0.409	0.411	0.411	181	1	–	1.83	1.50	–
183	Burkina Faso	–	–	0.378	0.385	0.393	0.396	0.402	184	2	–	..	1.58	–
184	Burundi	0.295	0.301	0.390	0.392	0.395	0.397	0.400	183	0	0.20	2.62	0.66	1.28
185	Chad	–	0.332	0.371	0.382	0.386	0.388	0.392	186	1	–	1.12	1.37	–
186	Eritrea	–	–	0.381	0.386	0.390	0.390	0.391	185	-5	–	–	0.62	–
187	Central African Republic	0.314	0.310	0.362	0.368	0.373	0.348	0.350	187	0	-0.14	1.58	-0.84	0.45
188	Niger	0.214	0.257	0.326	0.333	0.342	0.345	0.348	188	0	1.85	2.40	1.69	2.05
<b>Regional average</b>		0.351	0.372	0.441	0.447	0.452	0.455	0.459	169	0	0.88	1.82	0.97	1.26

Source: Compiled by the AfHDR Team from UNDP (2015).





# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

<b>1</b> NO POVERTY 	<b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER 	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 	<b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY 	<b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 
<b>7</b> AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	<b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	<b>9</b> INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	<b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	<b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 
<b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION 	<b>14</b> LIFE BELOW WATER 	<b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND 	<b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	<b>17</b> PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	 <b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS</b>



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In the context of a changing world, the 2030 Development Agenda and the fact that women hold up half of the sky, the continent's development aspirations as articulated in Agenda 2063 would not be realized if half of humanity is left behind. The 2016 African Human Development Report draws from this perspective and provides a substantive contribution to the development discourse on gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa.

The report is a stark reminder that gender equality is a critical enabler of all development. If development is not engendered, it is endangered. Adopting a novel political economy approach by unearthing social norms, cultural practices and institutional settings that impinge on gender equality and women's empowerment, the report examines the political, economic and social processes that hamper African women's advancement and proposes strategies, policies and concrete actions.

As African women attain higher measures of economic and social well-being, all of society benefits. Giant strides have been made in improving African women's economic and political participation. Yet, the pace of accelerating gender equality has been slower than hoped for and more inconsistent than desired as limited progress has been made in addressing social norms and institutions that perpetuate gender inequality.

As a result, too many African women remain trapped at the lower end of the spectrum of economic opportunities, perpetuating the same socio-economic status for their families. Today, African women achieve only 87 percent of the human development outcomes of men. Gender inequality in the labour market alone cost sub-Saharan Africa about USD 105 billion in 2014 – equivalent to 6% of GDP.

Given such gender disparities, achieving the SDGs and Africa's Agenda 2063 would just be an aspiration, and not a reality. This report proposes an Agenda for Action with seven courses of action to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Adopt effective legislative and policy reforms for women's empowerment and using gender equality as the organizing policy lens for all development planning and implementation;
- Develop capabilities and accountability to increase women's participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels of society;
- Address the root causes of discriminatory health and education practices, breaking down harmful social norms and cultural barriers that impede gender equality;
- Support equitable access to land, financial services, equal pay and equal employment for African women including establishing an African Women Investment Bank and opening Women Investment Windows in Development Banks;

- Undertake strategic decisions and investments to create more capable, socially responsive, equally representative and agile institutions that lead to a more equitable and inclusive society;
- Pursue gender responsive analysis and development monitoring as well as more effective sharing of knowledge, tools and experiences across countries and regions; and
- Forge stronger alliances among all segments of society towards a common agenda for action to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa including the commitment of public and private sector institutions, civil society organizations to a Gender Equality Seal certification initiative for Africa.

*"It's not a choice, but an imperative: failing to address gender inequalities and discrimination against women will make it impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"* - United Nations Development Programme Administrator, Helen Clark

*"Unleashing the creative energy of women, by nurturing their aspirations, promoting their access to opportunities and resources and giving them a chance to become active citizens will contribute to making Africa the 21st century's next frontier for inclusive development"* - United Nations Development Programme Africa Director Abdoulaye Mar Dieye

*"History will judge us not by what we say in this moment in time, but by what we do next to lift the lives of our countrymen and women. It will judge us by the legacy we leave behind for generations to come"* - President of Liberia, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson

*"Central to African development, peace and prosperity is the participation of its women, especially their economic empowerment. The focus on woman is in addition to our traditional reliance on men, it is using not half, but our full potential"*- African Union Chairperson, Nkosazana Dhlamini-Zuma

*"There is no time to rest until our world achieves wholeness and balance, where men and women are considered equal and free"* - Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize Winner

*"The seeds of success in every nation on Earth are best planted in women and children"* - former President of Malawi Joyce Banda

*"Africa has made significant progress in many of its development goals, but more needs to be done to tackle inequality in all its forms, using gender equality as an accelerator to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals"* - United Nations Development Programme, Africa Chief Economist, Ayodele Odusola