



African Development Bank Group - Economic Commission for Africa

PRESS CONFERENCE : THE AFRICA GENDER INDEX 2023

17:30 to 18:00 hours
East Africa Time

1 November 2024

UNCC Press Conference Room,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

LAUNCH OF THE AFRICA GENDER INDEX 2023

18:00 to 19:00 hours
East Africa Time

1 November 2024

UNCC Banquet Hall,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



AFRICA GENDER INDEX 2023

Analytical Report

African women in times of crisis

Summary

The Africa Gender Index (AGI) is an authoritative source of data on gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa. It draws together statistics from all 54 African countries across three dimensions (economic, social and empowerment & representation) into a single index. This enables African countries to track not only their own progress over time but also against regional peers.

This second edition of the Index, following its launch in 2019, comes at a particularly challenging time for African women and girls. Africa has emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic only to be confronted with complex new crises, including rising food insecurity, global economic turbulence and a looming debt crisis. Conflict and political instability are on the rise, and the accelerating impacts of climate change are taking an increasing toll on the continent. These shocks impact women and men differently and have the potential to undermine Africa's progress in empowering women. The theme of this report is, therefore, "African women in times of crisis".

On the whole, the AGI improved between 2019 and 2023, with significant variations across dimensions, regions and countries.

The Africa-wide gender index score for 2023 has improved to 50.3% (where 100% represents gender equality), from 48.6% in 2019. This indicates that, across the continent, African women enjoy barely half the social, economic and representation opportunities available to men. There is an urgent need to step up measures to close this gender equality gap.

Africa has made significant progress towards gender equality in the social dimension. This reflects long-term improvements in girls' access to education and in certain health outcomes for women and girls, despite some setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic. The other dimensions are less positive. The empowerment and representation dimension has seen a slight improvement since 2019, but from a very low base. In the economic and business dimension, the 2023 gender equality figures show a decline over 2019, as rising economic stress across the continent has disproportionately affected women.

There are wide variations across countries, with gender index scores ranging from 30.9% in both Guinea-Bissau and Libya to 88.3% in Namibia. Lesotho's gender index score also exceeds 80%, while there are 10 countries in the 60-80% range, and 29 between 40% and 60%. There are 14 countries with scores below 40% – many of which have experienced protracted conflict and instability.

In terms of sub-regional progress, Southern Africa leads the way, with an average score of 64%, while North Africa is furthest behind at 39.2% despite the substantial efforts recorded in the region.

In light of the mixed performance along the three dimensions, the report offers **a set of recommendations for African policy makers** to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Reduce sex-segregation in labour markets: Policy makers should review national laws restricting women's access to certain occupations or job families. They should undertake analysis of the informal barriers to women's participation across sectors and occupations, and develop tailored strategies for overcoming them

Tackling time poverty: Policy makers should press ahead with expanding access to basic infrastructure services, particularly clean water and energy, to reduce women's time poverty and provide more time for employment and livelihood activities.

Supporting "out-of-school girls": Policy makers should develop programmes to support young women who dropped out of school as a result of COVID-19 or other pressures to return to the education system. This should include tailored support for young mothers.

Investigating the barriers to boys' education: Policy makers should recognise that there are also gender-specific barriers to boys' education. They should commission more data collection and analysis to inform potential policy responses.

Strengthening reproductive health and rights: Policy makers should develop programmes to improve adolescent girls' awareness of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and improve their education about and access to contraceptives.

Reducing gender-based violence against women: Ensure that shelters and other essential services for survivors of gender-based violence are prioritised in national budgets.

Quotas in parliament and government: African countries should consider introducing quotas to strengthen women's participation in politics and government. Ideally, a system of quotas should encompass all levels of government and senior administrative roles. Where quotas are already in place, they should be reviewed regularly to identify opportunities to improve their enforcement and ensure they lead to meaningful participation.

Shocks and crises: When planning national policy responses to the shocks and crises facing Africa today, including health threats, food insecurity and climate change, African countries should ensure that women are engaged at every stage, to help mitigate the effects on women and to facilitate their contribution to building national resilience.

Data on gender equality: Given continuing gaps in national data on gender equality, and the growing threat to women posed by the shocks and crises facing Africa today, African countries should review their national statistical institutes from a gender lens, to identify hidden biases and to improve the generation of data, including on the gendered impacts of shocks and crises.