

UNDP Africa Regional Initiative

United Nations Development Programme



Gender Equality and Women's Economic and Political Empowerment



Photo: UN

1. Context

African countries are making strides in trying to close the gender gap.

Elected female representation in parliaments has doubled in the last 10 years to an average of 20.9%.

Progress has also been made in the areas of health and education. Gender parity in primary schools equals 40% of African countries although completion and transition rates to secondary and tertiary institutions remains a challenge.

Despite national, regional and international commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment, gender-based inequalities with respect to women's participation in decision-making, economic empowerment, and violence against women still persist.

Women's economic empowerment through productive employment beyond agriculture remains low as

women constitute only 39.6% of paid employment outside of the sector. The gender gap in women's participation in the labour market translates to a reduction in economic output equivalent to an annual economic loss exceeding USD 60 billion for sub-Saharan Africa.

The challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment include: unequal access basic services, resources and assets, discrimination in the workforce, very low levels of participation in decision making, and high levels of maternal mortality, and violence against women and girls. Women are often more severely affected by man-made and natural crises.

2. Approach

UNDP supports the continent's women's equality agenda by enhancing women's 1) political participation and leadership, 2) economic empowerment, and 3) engagement in peace and security.

In this context, UNDP's work builds on several regional frameworks such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the African Women's Decade, to put in place an enabling environment for women and men to effectively contribute to Africa's economic structural transformation.

UNDP's work has a strong research and analysis component which seeks to identify gaps and good practice to inform advocacy and policy work on gender.

UNDP's approach is anchored in strong partnerships with the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, parliaments and political parties, civil society organisations, and think tanks, as well as South-South and Triangular cooperation.

3. Areas of work

Political participation and leadership

- UNDP is helping to develop an action agenda that identifies gaps in existing regional and sub-regional legal frameworks and addresses obstacles to women's effective political participation.
- UNDP is working on a toolkit for mainstreaming gender perspectives into constitutional and electoral reforms in order to expand women's voice, their effective participation, representation and leadership at all levels.

Economic empowerment

- UNDP is supporting the implementation of regional and sub-regional policies, laws, and programmes which aim to reduce and eliminate barriers for women's economic empowerment. This includes regional policy and legislative reforms that ensure women's equal access to and control over productive assets such as land.
- UNDP is working with public and private institutions to incorporate gender perspectives into macro-economic frameworks and strategies in the context of the continent's broader structural economic transformation agenda, especially the agricultural sector.
- UNDP is providing platforms for knowledge and information exchange to ensure women contribute to, and benefit from, extractive industries, agro-based value-addition and climate change financing.

Engagement in peace and security

- UNDP is providing advisory services to the national domestication of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on the role of women in conflict management and resolution, and sustainable peace. UNDP also supports the development and implementation of sub-regional and national action plans to increase women's participation and representation in peace processes.
- UNDP is also providing technical advice on sub-regional and national action plans to prevent and protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and to strengthen the capacity of women's networks to advocate against SGBV.
- UNDP is providing advisory services to regional and national actors to ensure justice and security

systems protect women against SGBV, including through support to enabling laws, increased awareness of law enforcement agents on gender issues, justice for survivors, and advocacy for legal aid.

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Project Details

Project Period: 2015-2017

Executing Entity: UNDP Regional Service Centre

Implementing Partners: African Union Commission, Regional Economic Commissions, Parliaments and Political Parties, UN Women, Private Sector, and Civil Society Organisations

Total resources required: USD 11,000,000

Total allocated resources: USD 6,000,000