

Introduction

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Maty Konte and Nyasha Tirivayi

[...] In many African countries there has been progress. Women have access to education, professional careers, even political life. But the progress has been slow. Women are 50 per cent of the population, so they should make up 50 per cent of business leaders, for example.

(Graça Machel, October 2011, News Metro International)

1 OBJECTIVE OF THE BOOK

This book sheds light on the progress made in empowering women in Africa over the last decade and the challenges that remain. It contributes to the discourse on women empowerment in Africa by providing a fresh perspective and strong multidisciplinary research evidence on diverse, timely, and relevant gender issues in various (and contextually different) African countries. The book is a collection of literature reviews, empirical studies, and policy discussions that inform policymakers and academics who are interested in the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and

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girls; this is an issue that was not fully addressed during the era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The following questions are answered in some of the chapters: What policies have worked and not worked during the MDGs era? What can be said about the effect of climate change on gender equality? What role does access to resources such as land and financial services, and migration play in determining the empowerment of women in Africa? What are the global and continental trends influencing the gender debates and action in contemporary Africa? Other chapters use new data and/or innovative methods to (re)examine the determinants of observed gender differences in specific areas and identify individual socioeconomic characteristics and hard-to-remove societal barriers that constrain women from realizing their full potential. In addition, other chapters assess the benefits that could be attained through women's economic, social, and political participation and empowerment. Policy recommendations are made based on quantitative and qualitative evidence obtained using secondary and primary data.

Expert African scholars and non-African scholars who understand the contextual and societal drivers of gender inequality in Africa have prepared the chapters. Most importantly, a significant number of the contributors are African women scholars—more than 98 per cent have PhD degrees—and they are based in either the continent or in the diaspora (but with strong links to their home countries). We believe that these women are well positioned to understand the causes and the meaning of the discriminatory norms that negatively shape the economic and political potential of many African women. The diversity of expertise and experience among these high-profile scholars provides a unique opportunity for the book to go beyond anecdotal and data-based evidence and capitalize on contextual perspectives. Although we study and discuss in the book's chapters various facets of women's economic, political, and social empowerment in Africa, the discourse itself is not intended to be exhaustive, given the breadth of the subject matter. Further research is still needed to build a comprehensive evidence base that informs the policies and actions aimed at enhancing gender equality.

The scope of the book is a large one—although not all issues can be covered in one volume—with a focus on the following issues: (1) climate change and gender, (2) women's land rights and agricultural productivity, (3) maternal health and education, (4) labour market participation and unpaid care work, (5) women's bargaining power and their households' well-being, and (6) women in politics and society. Crosscutting issues such

as domestic violence, migration, discriminatory social norms, and harmful practices are also addressed in some of the chapters.

2 PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES DURING THE MDGs ERA: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN AFRICA?

The third goal of the MDGs was dedicated to gender equality and the economic, social, and political empowerment of women. The *Africa Human Development Report 2016* (UNDP 2016) finds that many African countries responded positively to the MDGs by crafting a number of policies aimed at enhancing gender equality and empowering women and girls. One such success is the increased number of girls enrolled in primary education, thereby equalizing access to this level of education across the two genders in many countries. In addition, between 1990 and 2013, the maternal mortality ratio decreased by 49 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 57 per cent in Northern Africa (United Nations [UN] 2015). In the same period, the proportion of women using contraception increased from 13 per cent to 28 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and from 44 per cent to 61 per cent in Northern Africa. It is worth noting that the share of women involved in non-agricultural wage employment in sub-Saharan Africa also increased by ten percentage points (from 24 per cent to 34 per cent), whereas it remained stagnant at 19 per cent in North Africa (UN 2015). Likewise, many African governments have promoted women's political participation and increased their opportunities to attain leadership positions. Rwanda, Seychelles, and Senegal are among the countries that have recorded the highest levels of representation of women in their national assemblies, surprisingly surpassing many of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

Yet progress towards gender equality is not just about metrics; it is also about mind-set, requiring changes in individual beliefs, social norms, and institutions—aspects that still hinder women empowerment. Therefore, many African countries have formalized and implemented laws against those customary and informal rules and practices that affect women's and girls' daily lives and deprive them of autonomy inside and outside the home. Some of these laws have, for instance, targeted early and forced marriage, unfair inheritance and parental authority, and restrictions on access to resources and formal finance.

Despite these achievements and gains in gender equality and women empowerment during the MDGs era, Africa is far from closing the persistent gender gap. Girls and women remain disadvantaged in terms of access to income and non-income opportunities. African women lag far behind, achieving only 87 per cent of their male counterparts' human development level (see UNDP [2016]). An examination of the widely known Gender Inequality Index (GII), which measures gender inequality based on reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity, shows that among the 45 African countries for which data are available, the best score is 0.4 for Rwanda (see UNDP [2016]). The GII is measured on a scale ranging from 0 to 1, with the higher value indicating more gender inequality. The poor performance of African countries on the GII indicates that most of the countries in this region have not yet achieved gender equality and their full potential for higher and sustainable human development.

In the education sector, the high school dropout rates for girls, coupled with low transition rates from primary to secondary education, reduce the representation of girls in secondary and tertiary education and hamper their learning achievements. Turning to the health sector, maternal mortality in Africa is still high, and barely more than half of women access skilled personnel during birth (UN 2015). There are also significant disparities in maternal health-care service delivery between rural and urban areas (UN 2015). Women's participation in the labour market is also undermined by the persistent gender gap in wages, with women in Africa earning 30 per cent less than men earn (UN 2015). In terms of political empowerment, the low presence of women in top-level local government positions can affect local service delivery. In India, studies have found that local governments with more women leaders are inclined to prioritize women's needs in public goods and service delivery (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras 2014), and this is an issue that still needs to be researched in Africa.

Although important advances have been attained, the strong resistance against the enforcement of women-friendly laws exacerbates the gap between their *de jure* and their *de facto* successes. The road to gender equality is encumbered by discriminatory social institutions that emanate from long-lasting norms, traditions, and codes of conduct that find expression in customs, cultural practices, and informal and formal laws that guide people's behaviours and interactions (Branisa et al. 2014). Discriminatory social institutions hamper women's well-being and have negative repercussions on the economy. For instance, Ferrant and Kolev (2016) estimated

that in West Africa, income loss due to gender discriminatory social institutions is valued at USD 12 trillion.

3 WOMEN AS THE CENTREPIECE OF THE SDGs

The SDGs seek sustainable and inclusive development, and therefore they prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. The new SDGs continue the global development agenda by identifying new priorities and intensifying attention (and action) toward the outstanding gaps from the MDGs era. For instance, SGD 5 identifies harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, gender violence, and the continued unpaid work burden for women as persistent challenges that need to be eradicated (UN 2017). Furthermore, SDG 5, target 5.C, explicitly calls for “sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality.” The target indicator focuses on the use of transparent measures for tracking public allocations for gender equality and, therefore, implicitly encourages gender responsive budgeting, which has not yet been efficiently executed in Africa.

Sustainability and inclusiveness are unlikely to be attained if the policies used to achieve many of the remaining SDGs do not pay particular attention to women and girls, who represent about half of Africa’s population. For instance, the actions of SDG 13 on climate change issues would be questionable if they fail to take into consideration the challenges faced by the many women who represent a significant part of the agricultural workforce sector, a sector that is highly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.

Promoting gender equality in political and leadership positions while neglecting the number of girls attending secondary and tertiary education may not be efficient because the achievement of parity in political office is significantly dependent on women attaining advanced levels of education. Certainly, actions promoting SDG 4 on the quality of education need to address the poor quality of facilities in schools, which exacerbates absenteeism among girls. Policies aligned with SDG 4 also need to address harmful practices such as forced marriage because they reduce school completion and transition rates for girls in many African countries. In like manner, efforts to expand social protection coverage to end poverty will not have sustainable impacts if women are not targeted. Women are also central to the achievement of the targets for ensuring healthy lives and well-being (SDG 3), given the goal’s focus on reproductive, maternal, and

child health; HIV/AIDS; access to medicines and vaccines; and universal health coverage.

The SDGs era also faces a number of risks and threats. Armed conflicts have been identified as a serious threat to the achievement of gender equality and human development, and they not only cause displacement but also increase poverty rates and gender-based violence. Climate change and environmental degradation also threaten livelihoods and can reverse any gains in gender equality and human development. Yet there are opportunities that can be leveraged to accelerate the empowerment of women and achieve many of the SDGs. One example involves innovations that enable financial inclusion and access to information and communication technologies.

The achievement of gender equality and women empowerment remains a top policy priority within the global development agenda, as reflected in the SDGs, as well as in the African Union's Agenda 2063. Therefore, research that deepens understanding of the achievements and challenges in attaining gender equality and women empowerment in Africa remains vital for tracking progress during the SDGs era and for guiding the development of policies and strategies that eliminate gender disparities. This book contributes to this overall objective by providing timely and compelling insights on the status of gender equality and the empowerment of African women during the early stages of the SDGs era.

4 STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book is a collection of reviews of the literature, empirical evidence, and policy discussions that inform policymakers and academics who are interested in achieving the fifth SDG on the empowerment of women and girls. There are 20 chapters grouped into six parts, in addition to the introduction in Part I and the conclusion in Part VIII.

Part II addresses the relationship between climate change challenges and gender in Africa and comprises three chapters. It is vital that readers understand how women are affected by climate change, appraise the actions that have been taken, and learn from the key takeaway messages for the discourse on climate change and women empowerment in Africa. Archibong, in Chap. 2, examines the role of climate-induced diseases in widening the gender gap in human capital investment and identifies the mechanisms through which the effect occurs in Niger. In Chap. 3, Mbaye provides a literature review that extends our understanding of how

income-shocks induced by extreme weather events negatively affect the empowerment of women and girls. Mbaye also considers different measures of economic and social empowerment, including marriage and fertility decisions, exposure to violence, and economic independence. In Chap. 4, Schwerhoff and Konte's literature review focuses on women's vulnerability to climate change, gender differences in attitudes and behaviour towards climate change, and gender differences in climate change adaptation.

Part III focuses on women's land rights, which is a key element of SDG 5. Gender discrimination in access to and control over land is generally pervasive in Africa, but it is more pronounced in some regions/countries than in others. For instance, East Africa is one of the regions where land tenure is male dominated and cultural and religious norms and beliefs retard the acceptance of policies that promote the equal distribution of land titles to men and women. Mwesigye, Guloba, and Barungi, in Chap. 5, focus on Uganda and examine the status of women's land rights and their implications for agricultural productivity. In Chap. 6, Melesse and Awel examine evidence on the gender differential effects of land tenure security on productivity in Ethiopia and Tanzania.

Part IV explores areas related to the health of women and children and discusses gender gaps in education. Chapter 7 takes stock of the current gaps and challenges in achieving universal maternal health coverage (SDG 3); Sidze, Mutua, and Donfouet analyse women's access to quality maternal health-care and the financing mechanisms for maternal health-care provided by governments in 11 countries with high maternal mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa. In Chap. 8, Tirivayi focuses on the reproductive health of girls who married early, which is an issue the MDGs did not address. Early marriage remains a challenge that has adverse effects on not only reproductive health outcomes and gender equality but also on poverty, hunger, education, and economic growth (Girls Not Brides 2018). This chapter particularly identifies the barriers to and facilitators of contraceptive use among married adolescent girls in six countries with the highest rates of early marriage in sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, and Nigeria). Education was a key element of the MDGs, and it remains a priority in the global development agenda, as evident in SDG 4. Despite the positive progress achieved, there are still barriers that prevent women and girls from reaching their full potential in learning. In Chap. 9, Koissy-Kpein examines the progress achieved and challenges encountered in the education sector and discusses the social

and economic factors driving the gender gap in schooling between girls and boys during the MDGs era and the current SDGs era. In Chap. 10, Daffé and Diallo analyse gender inequality in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Senegal. They also examine the gender disparities in access to and use of ICTs such as mobile phones, the internet, email, and computers and the role of literacy and level of education.

In Part V, the authors tackle the issue of gender gaps in labour markets. The labour force participation of women in Africa is a complex situation with many drivers (and constraints). Although the existing gender gap in education significantly contributes to the persistence of the gender gap in the labour market, there are other formidable challenges that prevent many women from accessing decent jobs and earning wages equal to those of their male counterparts. Three different chapters discuss the labour market situation of women in Africa. In Chap. 11, Ntuli and Kwenda review the literature on gender gaps in wages and employment in sub-Saharan Africa. They identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing evidence, as well as the research gaps, to guide future studies. In Chap. 12, Simo Fotso, Somefun, and Odimegwi investigate how child health affects the labour force participation of family members in South Africa. Most interestingly, they test whether a child's serious illness/disability results in a gendered effect on labour force participation and whether the effect varies among married parents. Among the various factors that affect the participation of women in the labour market, a strong constraint is the considerable amount of unpaid care provided by women across African countries. Using the case of Senegal, Baldé, in Chap. 13, examines the effects of unpaid care work inequality on women's employment outcomes. Pickbourn, in Chap. 14, discusses the challenges faced by rural–urban women migrants in Ghana. She shows how the stigmatization of rural–urban migration and urban informal employment limits the potential of rural–urban migration to empower women.

Part VI explores autonomy in decision-making within the household and whether households benefit from empowering women through financial inclusion. Chapter 15, by Chisadza, Yitbarek, and Nicholls, examines how maternal empowerment through employment or autonomy in decision-making affects overweight or obese children in Comoros, Malawi, and Mozambique. Rates of overweight and obese children are

rising in sub-Saharan Africa, and at the same time, the prevalence of undernutrition remains high, which has resulted in the added burden of malnutrition. The issue of overweight and obese children is now explicitly targeted in SDG 2. Using data from Zambia, Nanziri, in Chap. 16, analyses the gender gap in access to and use of financial services and assesses the effects on the welfare and quality of life of households. In Chap. 17, Kponou analyses the effect of women's participation in household decisions on the standard of living of households in Benin, Mali, and Togo.

Part VII goes beyond the economic aspects of women empowerment to look at women's political empowerment and explore societal factors and trends that shape the achievement of full gender equality in Africa. It is worth noting that many African countries have increased the number of women in political and leadership positions, and anecdotal evidence suggests there have been positive economic and social benefits from this action. In Chap. 18, Konte empirically assesses the effects of women holding more seats in the national assembly on the provision of policies that are favourable to women's well-being—this is measured at the local level across 50 African countries. In Chap. 19, Maloiy uses data from face-to-face interviews with female politicians to shed light on factors that have empowered and enabled women to attain political leadership positions in Kenya. Chapter 20, by Merkle and Wong, explores the relationship between unfavourable attitudes towards female political leadership and the acceptance of corrupt behaviour using perception surveys from five sub-Saharan African countries. Finally, in Chap. 21, Moreno Ruiz utilizes a sociological approach to examine how the focus and framing of actions pushing for gender inequality have changed since the nineteenth century and how they vary across regions. The author also discusses how intersectionality between gender inequalities and other inequalities, such as the rural–urban divide and the wealth gaps, affects gender equality. The chapter concludes by identifying the emerging global and continental trends shaping the discourse on gender equality.

The final and concluding part of the book summarizes the findings of the chapters and links them to the targets of SDG 5 and the other SDGs that require the empowerment of women and girls to meet their goals and objectives by 2030.

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