

Female Policymakers and Women's Well-Being in Africa

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Female Policymakers and Women's Well-Being in Africa

Maty Konte

1 INTRODUCTION

Gender equality—whether economic, social or political—is a value that promotes peace and inclusive prosperity for nations. Women, in particular, have specific characteristics and preferences that can boost economic development when they are involved in decision-making inside and outside the home. For instance, when they have control over household expenditures, which results in greater autonomy, a significant portion of the money is spent on, among others, health, child rearing, housing and food (see Ashraf et al. 2010; Duflo and Udry 2003). Research has also shown that women's political empowerment is directly reflected by an increase in income, savings and investments for women and their families, contributing to the economic growth of a country (Mutume 2004).

The type of public goods and services provided in a community depends strongly on the gender of the policymakers. As shown in the literature,

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female political leaders tend to invest more in goods and services linked to women's concerns, such as ease of access to water and public health provisions (Beaman et al. 2006) and local infrastructure (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras 2014). When women are included in decision-making, they advance the rights and the conditions of not only other women but also the population as a whole. Examples in Africa include the gender-based violence bill passed in Rwanda in 2006 and the sexual offence law passed in Kenya in 2006, both advanced by women policymakers in these countries.

Over the last decade, many African countries have encouraged policies that increase the number of women policymakers at the national and sub-national levels. The degree of implementation of such policies has varied across countries and also across regions within the same country for the representation at the local government level. However, little is known about the economic and social gains from promoting women policymakers in Africa and how increasing numbers of women policymakers shape the provision of public goods and services at the sub-national level. This chapter assesses the effects of women holding more seats in the national assembly on the improvement in women-friendly development indicators, measured at the local level across 50 African countries.

Data on the percentage of seats held by women in national assemblies across countries are combined with data on 11 local development indicators measured at the regional level. Measuring development indicators at the local level (i.e., regional level) allows one to take into account the differences that exist across regions within a country. The local development indicators considered in this chapter include girls' education such as enrolment rates, fertility rate, child mortality, childhood stunting, age at first birth, early marriage, age difference between wife and husband, and access to electricity.

The analysis includes 50 African countries for which data are available over the period 1997–2016. The statistics show that despite the increase in the number of seats held by women in the national assembly in most of the countries, women policymakers occupy fewer than 50% of the seats. Rwanda, where around 64% of seats are held by women, remains an exception. Most interestingly, the empirical analysis reveals that regions that are located in countries where women hold a higher percentage of seats in the national assembly are also the regions that record the lowest fertility rate, higher age at first birth, lower incidence of early marriage and lower age difference between husband and wife. Also, these are regions in which a higher percentage of people have access to electricity. This suggests that promoting women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities

for leadership in national assemblies will positively contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal targets 1.B (on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies), 3.2 (on infant and child mortality) and 4.5 (on girls' school enrolment), among others.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a brief literature review of women's political empowerment and development. Section 3 presents the data used for the analysis. Section 4 presents the empirical analysis and discusses the results obtained. The last section, Sect. 5, concludes and provides some policy guidance.

2 WOMEN IN POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT

There are various ways in which women's political empowerment can lead to development. First, it has been shown that when women are included in the decision-making process, they tend to favour and pay greater attention to the provision of social services for the population (Brollo and Troiano 2016). A research study conducted in India shows that women who were locally politically empowered provided better access to drinking water and invested more in water facilities than men (Beaman et al. 2006). Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras (2014) show in a study conducted in India that women politicians tend to invest more in village-level infrastructures, leading to a reduction in neonatal mortality. The same study also demonstrates a correlation between women's representation and an increase in the quality of public health. Women are also more likely to get involved in the community and voice their concerns when leadership positions are held by women. This shows the positive impact of women's political empowerment on women's participation in civil society (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

Second, women in politics are more likely to allocate more resources towards education and health and human rights issues (European Union 2016). The presence of women also leads to significant improvement for communities and children, with a reduction in the gender gap in primary school and an increase in the immunisation rate of children (Beaman et al. 2006). Research conducted by Li-Ju (2008) shows that government spending on education increases when there are more women in parliament. The correlation reported in this paper supports the idea that women's political empowerment is necessary for development, as education is a key factor to reach this goal. Women also focus on families, and when given political power, they will work for the benefit of families and children (O'Neil and Domingo 2015).

Third, women in power promote the rights of marginalised people, including women's rights, which pave the way towards gender equality (International Alert 2012). Women bring their issues to the political agenda and promote different policy priorities. They act in the interest of other women and try to develop policies that will improve their daily life (Duflo 2012). Policies developed by women in politics are aimed at addressing women's needs (Grown et al. 2005). In Rwanda, women who were involved in decision-making passed a bill against gender-based violence in 2006. In Rwanda, the bill against gender-based violence passed by women policymakers is considered as a major change in society, as women contributed to changing a social norm (Wilber 2011). Similarly, women legislators in Kenya passed a sexual offence law in 2006. These two laws passed in Kenya and Rwanda show that women in politics act for the interests of other women and contribute to gender equality, which contributes to development.

It is also worth noting that women's increased political participation can improve the quality of institutions and lead to good governance. This helps to ensure a stronger political and legal system to achieve development. A study conducted in Latin America shows that the involvement of women in politics led to an improvement in the government and a growing trust among the population for the government (Grown et al. 2005). Including women in politics also allows institutions to be more democratic, as there is a better representation of the population (Revenga and Shetty 2012). Evidence has also shown that having women in politics helps to reduce the level of corruption (Dollar et al. 2001).

Finally, another strand of the literature has demonstrated that including women in decision-making positions leads to a change in the perception of women and what they can achieve. A study conducted by Beaman et al. (2009) in India shows that there is a reduction in the gender bias in politics once voters realise that women politicians demonstrate leadership qualities. Districts where women hold leadership positions are more likely to elect more women because the social perceptions of women have changed. The study also shows that people from these districts were more likely to associate women with leadership positions rather than with domestic positions (Beaman et al. 2009). The change of social perceptions also occurs through the impact of women's leadership on girls' aspirations. Girls in Indian villages where women hold political positions have fewer

aspirations to become housewives or have their occupation determined by their in-laws (Beaman et al. 2012). This can be explained by the fact that women in leadership positions serve as role models for young girls and help to develop policies to empower them, allowing them to make their own choices.

3 DATA DESCRIPTION

3.1 *Measuring Women's Political Empowerment*

For the empirical analysis, data on women's political empowerment and data on local development are taken from different sources and combined together. The data cover the period 1997–2016 and include all African countries for which data on political empowerment and local development indicators are available. The main measure of women's political empowerment is the percentage of seats held by women in the national assembly. These data are taken from the World Development Indicators and is available for a wide range of African countries. Over the last decade, many African governments have made remarkable efforts in terms of gender-inclusive political participation, thereby increasing the number of political positions for women. For instance, there has been a significant increase in the number of seats allocated to women in national assemblies. Such an inclusive policy is expected to have a positive effect on women-friendly policies, be they at the national or local level. The scope of this chapter is to investigate the effect of women holding more seats in the national assembly on meeting women's needs at the local level.

Table 18.1 shows the percentage of seats held by women in different African countries. Data for both the years 1997 and 2016 are reported in order to measure progress over this time period. A number of countries have made significant move from 1997 to 2016 in terms of the number of women that have a voice in the national assembly. It can be noted, for instance, that Algeria has increased its percentage of female legislators from 3.2% in 1997 to 31.6% in 2016. These values are 2% and 38.8% for Ethiopia, 5.6% and 31.1% for Cameroon, and 11.7% and 42.7% for Senegal respectively. Rwanda has broken the record by moving from 17.1% to 63.8%, achieving an increase of 46.7 percentage points in the proportion of seats held by women in the national assembly. It is also worth noting that many African countries have surpassed the most advanced countries

Table 18.1 Women representation in national assembly in Africa in 1997 and 2016

<i>Country</i>	<i>Women_seats [1997]</i>	<i>Women_seats [2016]</i>	<i>Change [2016–1997]</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Women_seats [1997]</i>	<i>Women_seats [2016]</i>	<i>Change [2016–1997]</i>
Algeria	3.2	31.6	28.4	Sao Tome & Principe	7.3	18.2	10.9
Angola	9.5	36.8	27.3	Senegal	11.7	42.7	31
Benin	7.2	7.2	0	Seychelles	27.3	21.2	-6.1
Botswana	8.5	9.5	1	Sierra Leone	–	12.4	–
Burkina Faso	9	9.4	0.4	Somalia	–	13.8	–
Burundi	–	36.4	–	South Africa	25	41.8	16.8
Cape Verde	11.1	23.6	12.5	South Sudan	–	28.5	–
Cameroon	5.6	31.1	25.5	Sudan	5.3	30.5	25.2
Central African Republic (CAR)	3.5	7.2	3.7	Swaziland	3.1	6.2	3.1
Chad	2.4	14.9	12.5	Tanzania	17.5	36.6	19.1
Comoros	0	3	3	Togo	1.2	17.6	16.4
Congo Democratic Republic	–	8.9	–	Tunisia	6.7	31.3	24.6
Congo Brazzaville	–	7.4	–	Uganda	18.1	33.5	15.4
Côte d'Ivoire	8	9.2	1.2	Zambia	9.7	18	8.3
Djibouti	–	12.7	–	Zimbabwe	14.7	31.5	16.8
Egypt	2	14.9	12.9				
Equatorial Guinea	8.8	24	15.2				
Eritrea	21	22	1				
Ethiopia	2	38.8	36.8				
Gabon	8.3	14.2	5.9				
Gambia	2	9.4	7.4				
Ghana	9	10.9	1.9				
Guinea	7	21.9	14.9				

(continued)

Table 18.1 (continued)

Country	Women_seats [1997]	Women_seats [2016]	Change [2016–1997]	Country	Women_seats [1997]	Women_seats [2016]	Change [2016–1997]
Guinea Bissau	10	13.7	3.7				
Kenya	3	19.7	16.7				
Lesotho	4.6	25	20.4				
Liberia	–	11	–				
Madagascar	3.7	20.5	16.8				
Malawi	5.6	16.7	11.1				
Mali	12.2	8.8	–3.4				
Mauritania	1.3	25.2	23.9				
Mauritius	7.6	11.6	4				
Morocco	0.6	20.5	19.9				
Mozambique	25.2	39.6	14.4				
Namibia	22.2	41.3	19.1				
Niger	1.2	14.6	13.4				
Nigeria	–	5.6	–				
Rwanda	17.1	63.8	46.7				

Source: World Development Indicators

Note: This table shows the percentage of seats held by women at national assemblies

in terms of closing the gender gap in politics. Countries like Rwanda and Senegal are at the top of the list of countries around the world with a high proportion of women holding national assembly seats.

Despite the positive performance observed in many countries, unfortunately there are still countries that have not made significant progress. These include Benin, which has kept the same percentage between 1997 and 2016; Burkina Faso, which has a change lower than 1 percentage point; and Botswana and Côte d'Ivoire, which have a positive change, but limited to 1 and 1.2 percentage points respectively.

It is worth noting that some African countries have experienced a decline in the percentage of seats held by women in the national assembly. For instance, in Mali, this percentage has gone down from 12.2% to 8.8%, recording a decline of 3.4 percentage points. The decrease is greater in Seychelles, where the number has fallen from 27.3% in 1997 to 21.2% in 2016, a decline of 6.1 percentage points. Also, less than 50% of the seats in a given country's national assembly are occupied by women even in countries where there has been a remarkable increase in the proportion of national assembly seats held by women. The exception is Rwanda, where roughly 64% of the seats are held by women. This is one of the countries where women's political empowerment policy is strongly implemented.

Overall, the numbers reported in Table 18.1 show that a significant proportion of countries have made a positive change in the political empowerment of women by increasing their representation in the national assembly. One may wonder to what extent such positive changes may affect the development of African countries. This chapter attempts to shed light on this question, testing whether regions located in countries with a high proportion of seats held by women in the national assembly are more likely to have higher development, especially in terms of items oriented towards women's needs.

The analysis also considers a second measure of women's political empowerment compiled by Varieties of Democracy (V-Democracy) that provides a new approach to conceptualising and measuring democracy. It provides more than 350 indicators starting from 1990, and it covers 177 countries. Some of the indicators measure gender equality in politics and some of them inform us about the extent of women's political empowerment across countries. Women's political empowerment is defined as a process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency and participation in societal decision-making. To create the index of women's political empowerment three key elements are taken into account in

equal measure. These are fundamental civil liberties, women's open discussion of political issues and participation in civil society organisations, and the representation of women in formal political positions. We use the women's political empowerment index (V2X_gender). The index varies between 0 and 1, where a higher number means higher gender equality in politics and 1 indicates full gender equality.

3.2 *Measuring Local Development*

The data on local development are taken from the Global Data Lab (hereafter GDL), which provides a series of measures at the sub-national level for the majority of developing countries, including those African countries forming the study. Most of the sub-national data are provided at the first-level administrative units, often the regions. Rich information from various household surveys is used to provide aggregated measures at the sub-national level. The chapter focuses on 11 indicators, and many of them are women-friendly measures of development. These indicators are as follows: the percentage of girls aged between 6 and 8 years old who attend school during the year of the interview or attended school during the school year (Girls_6-8_Educ), the percentage of girls aged between 15 and 17 years old who attend school during the year of the interview or attended school during the school year (Girls_15-17_Educ), child mortality rate (Child_mortality) and infant mortality rate (Infant_mortality), the percentage of underweight children (Child_Under_weight) and the percentage of childhood stunting (Child_stunting), women's fertility rate (Fertility_rate), mean age at first birth for women (Women_Mean age first child), women's mean age at first marriage (Women_Mean age first marriage), mean age difference between wife and husband (Mean_age_difference_wife/husband) and, finally, the percentage of households that have access to electricity (Access_electricity).

For each of these measures of local development, the GDL provides the extrapolated data and the real values. Given that household surveys are not run on a yearly basis for most of the countries/regions, the extrapolated data enable one to have as many observations as possible. We will run our estimations using both the extrapolated and the real-values data, although the latter has the disadvantage of significantly decreasing the number of observations.

Table 18.2 shows the descriptive statistics of 11 measures of local development that we are going to consider in this study. The measures reported in the table are the average values over the period 1997–2016. Information

Table 18.2 Descriptive statistics for the indicators of local development

<i>Variable</i>	<i>No. of observations</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Girl_15-17_Educ	5185	53.979	23.058	0	98.8
Girl_6-8_Educ	5185	60.098	25.449	0	100
Child_mortality	4015	53.058	36.356	0	242
Infant_mortality	4673	75.485	30.221	3.75	216
Child_Under_weight	4401	19.238	10.615	0	63.3
Child_stunting	4431	36.085	11.415	5	68.1
Fertility_rate	3865	5.235	1.349	1.4	8.8
Women_Mean age first child	4185	19.346	1.152	16.9	23.5
Women_Mean age first marriage	4189	18.432	1.752	13.9	26.9
Mean_age_difference_wife/husband	4952	7.728	2.242	2.4	14.3
Access_electricity	5402	35.585	32.844	0	100
<i>Index of women political empowerment from V-Democracy</i>					
V2X_gender	7477	0.648	0.156	0.232	0.9

Note: This table shows the averages over the period 1997–2016 for the indicators of local development

from the data considered in this study show that there is a total of between 3865 and 5402 observations depending on the measure we consider. On average only 60% of the girls aged between six and eight years old attend school. For girls aged between 15 and 17 years old the school attendance rate is 54%, six percentage points below the former cohort.

This indicates an incidence of school drop-out of girls when they move to higher education. There are many reasons that may explain why girls abandon school and one of these is early and forced marriages, which prevent many girls from pursuing their education to a higher level. The mean age at first marriage as shown in our data is 18 years old, but depending on the region, the age at first marriage can fall to 13–14 years old. It is worth noting that for all these indicators of local development, the standard errors are quite high, indicating a high degree of heterogeneity across the different regions.

The age difference between husband and wife is a key determinant of the distribution of the bargaining power within the household. When the age difference increases in a society it might indicate that girls marry early, or they can be forced to marry older men to provide financial support to their family. In the sample, there is on average a difference of 7.7 years between wives and husbands. The region that has the highest value has an average age difference between husband and wife equal to 14.3 years.

The child mortality and infant mortality rates are 53 and 75 respectively, with significant differences across the regions as indicated by the

high level of the standard deviations. The percentage of underweight children is on average 19.2% against 36% for the percentage of stunted children. The fertility rate is 5.2, meaning that on average each woman gives birth to 5.2 children. The age at the first birth is around 19 years but can be as low as 16.9 in some regions. Regarding access to electricity, the data show that on average 35% of households have access to electricity across the regions, although the standard error is quite high, with a value of 33%.

The next section will discuss the effects that women's political empowerment may have on these local development indicators. Prior to the discussion, the section will first present the specification used for the empirical analysis.

4 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS ON THE EFFECT OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 *Model of Estimations*

The analysis tests whether regions that are located in countries where women hold a higher percentage of national seats are also regions that have a higher level of local development. The data on local development are measured at the regional level while the data on women's political empowerment are measured at the country level. The local development measures include women-friendly indicators relating to both the economic and the social life of women and girls. The data have two levels, where regions are nested within countries. A multilevel model that takes into account the nested structure of the data is proposed.

Let's denote by $local_{rct}$ the measure of local development in a given region r of a country c at time t . Let's define by $women_seats_{ct}$ the percentage of seats held by women in the national assembly in country c at time t . The model of specification is given by:

$$local_{rct} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 women_seats_{ct} + X_{ct} + \varepsilon_{rct} + \mu_c + t$$

The main parameter of interest is β_1 , which measures the effect of the percentage of seats held by women in the national assembly on the measure of local development. In some of the estimations, additional variables at the country level, such as the income per capita as a measure of the level of development, are controlled for. These variables are in X_{ct} , as shown in

the equation above. The term ε_{rct} is the region-level error term while μ_c captures the country specific effect. In some of the specifications, we use the second measure of women's political empowerment introduced in the previous section.

4.2 *Estimation Results*

Table 18.3 presents the estimation results using the extrapolated data. We only control for the measure of women's political empowerment, which is the share of national assembly seats held by women. In addition, the time, region and country fixed effects are also taken into account. The dependent variables are interchanged across the columns. In columns [1] and [2] the dependent variables are respectively the school attendance of girls aged 15–17 and the school attendance of girls aged 6–8 years old. The estimated coefficients on the variable women's political empowerment are positive and significant in both columns. The magnitudes of the coefficients are also very similar across the two columns. In fact, an increase of 1 point in the percentage of seats held by women in the national assembly increases both the percentage of girls aged between 15 and 17 years old and the percentage of girls aged between six and eight years who attend school by 0.8%.

Women's political empowerment in contrast significantly decreases child and infant mortality rates at the local level. In fact, the results in column [3] and [4] show that a 1-point increase in the percentage of seats held by women in the national assembly decreases the child mortality rate and infant mortality rate by 1.6 and 1.4 points respectively. The percentage of underweight children and the percentage of stunted children are reduced by 0.25% and 0.28 % respectively when the measure of women empowerment increases by 1%—see columns [5] and [6].

Regions that are located in countries with higher women empowerment are also regions that record a lower fertility rate, higher age at first birth and higher age at marriage, and lower age difference between husband and wife. These same regions record a higher percentage of people who have access to electricity.

In Table 18.4, we have included the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and the second measure of women's political empowerment taken from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Democracy) project, which captures women's civil liberties, women's open discussion of political issues and participation in civil society organisations, and the representation of

Table 18.3 Women-friendly development indicators and female policymakers (I)

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]
women_seats	0.819*** [0.035]	0.809*** [0.037]	-1.575*** [0.064]	-1.394*** [0.0578]	-0.246*** [0.0191]	-0.278*** [0.0230]	-0.0182*** [0.00322]	0.0191*** [0.00194]	0.0351*** [0.00292]	-0.0240*** [0.00251]	0.441*** [0.0462]
Constant	42.85*** [2.672]	48.39*** [3.084]	75.97*** [5.010]	96.35*** [3.754]	23.58*** [1.344]	40.10*** [1.454]	5.563*** [0.175]	19.03*** [0.142]	17.99*** [0.223]	8.030*** [0.296]	28.58*** [3.992]
Time effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of observations	4869	4869	3809	4417	4130	4154	3678	3954	3958	4655	5106
No. of countries	49	49	39	47	46	46	39	39	39	48	50

Notes: School attendance of girls aged 15–17 is the dependent variable in [1] while school attendance of girls aged 6–8 is the dependent variable in [2]. Child mortality is the dependent variable in [3] while infant mortality is the dependent variable in [4]. Underweight children is the dependent variable in [5]. Stunted children is the dependent variable in [6]. Fertility rate is the dependent variable in [7] while age at first birth is the dependent variable in [8], age at first marriage in [9], age difference between husband and wife in [10] and, finally, access to electricity in [11]. Standard errors are within brackets. * is the significance at 10%, ** at 5% and *** at 1%

Table 18.4 Women-friendly development indicators and female policymakers (II)

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]
women_seats	0.605***	-1.386***	-0.229***	-0.0136***	0.0290***	0.638***	-1.550***	-0.236***	-0.014	0.0390***
	[0.0566]	[0.104]	[0.0317]	[0.00505]	[0.0047]	[0.120]	[0.196]	[0.0609]	[0.00926]	[0.00887]
v2x_gender	40.31***	-0.0344	2.857	-0.579	0.732	30.63**	22.42	-3.47	0.635	0.375
	[8.248]	[15.55]	[4.607]	[0.658]	[0.700]	[15.43]	[30.03]	[7.766]	[1.161]	[1.300]
income_per_capita	0.0021**	-0.00617***	-0.00270***	-0.00021***	0.00069***	0.0039***	-0.0076***	-0.0031***	-0.0003***	0.0008***
	[0.0009]	[0.0018]	[0.0005]	[0.0000]	[0.0000]	[0.001]	[0.0026]	[0.0007]	[0.0001]	[0.0001]
Constant	15.74***	81.53***	24.18***	6.076***	16.87***	18.83*	71.05***	29.04***	5.377***	16.92***
	[5.981]	[10.63]	[3.105]	[0.439]	[0.472]	[10.07]	[19.55]	[5.042]	[0.751]	[0.846]
Time effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of observations	3024	2583	2656	2462	2637	648	551	614	513	561
No. of countries	36	32	35	32	32	34	30	33	30	30

Notes: School attendance of girls aged 15–17 is the dependent variable in [1] and [6]. Child mortality is the dependent variable in [2] and [7]. Children underweight is the dependent variable in [3] and [8]. Finally, age at first marriage is the dependent variable in [5] and [10]. In columns [1]–[6] we use the extrapolated data while in columns [7]–[10] we use the real-values data. Standard errors are within parentheses. * is the significance at 10%, ** at 5% and *** at 1%

women in formal political positions. In addition, columns [6]–[10] used the real-values data instead of the extrapolated data. This reduces significantly the total number of observations available in the sample because survey data are not collected on a yearly basis.

Overall, the results point in the same direction as the previous findings, where seats held by women in the national assembly increase the provision of women-friendly goods and services at the local level. It is however important to note that some of the estimated coefficients are lower than the coefficients obtained in the previous table. For instance, an increase in the percentage of national assembly seats held by women increases school attendance of girls aged 15–17 by 0.6 while this value was 0.8 previously. The second measure of women's political empowerment is significant in few cases, and when it is, the sign of the effect is similar to the ones obtained with the main measure of women's political empowerment, which is the percentage of seats in the national assembly held by women. We can also note that the level of development matters too. Regions that are situated in countries with a high level of income per capita are also regions that register a high level of local development.

Overall, the empirical analysis has provided evidence that women's political empowerment boosts local development, and particularly it enhances women's and girls' well-being such as school attendance, child and infant mortality, fertility rate, age at first birth, early marriage and age difference between husband and wife.

5 CONCLUSION

The role of women in the process of development has been confirmed in various studies, and evidence has strongly demonstrated that greater bargaining and decision-making power for women is accompanied by higher human development. Inclusiveness towards women is also much needed in the political arena, where many women still lag behind their male counterparts. Women's access to politics and their involvement in public policy decision-making is very limited in many African countries. Over the last decade significant progress has been made by many African governments in terms of increasing the number of women politicians and the number of policymaking decision positions for women. Indeed, the distribution of public resources across sectors depends strongly on the gender of the policymakers, and therefore, including different segments of the population may ensure that development is inclusive and benefits the society as a whole.

One of the policies for women's political empowerment in African countries has been to increase the number of seats held by women in national assemblies. However, despite anecdotal evidence on the effect of such a policy on development, there exist few studies that have empirically documented the effects of having more women policymakers on the provision of public goods and services. This chapter focused on this policy and tested whether having more women in the national assembly increases the provision of public goods and services that are friendly to women. For the empirical analysis, data on the percentage of seats held by women in national assemblies at the country level are merged with data that measure local development at the sub-national level. These measures of local development include variables that are related to women's needs such as girls' schooling, fertility, child and infant mortality, and early marriage. The findings show a beneficial effect of having more women in parliament on all the indicators of women's well-being. The empirical analysis reveals that regions that are located in countries with a higher percentage of seats held by women in the national assembly are also the regions that record a lower fertility rate, higher age at first birth, lower incidence of early marriage and lower age difference between husband and wife. A higher percentage of people residing in these regions have access to electricity.

The results in this chapter have many implications for a number of SDGs, since promoting women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership in national assemblies will contribute positively to the SDG targets 1.B, 3.2 and 4.5, among others. The SDG target 1.B seeks for sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies. Results in this chapter have shown that more gender-inclusive national assemblies may help to advance gender-sensitive human development. The SDG target 3.2 seeks for the prevention of deaths of newborns and children under five years of age. This chapter strongly supports that including more women in the national assembly helps to eradicate child and infant mortality. Moreover, the results have shown that women's presence in the national assembly promotes more enrolment of girls at school, a key target in SDG 4.5.

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