



Addressing gender-based discrimination in social institutions

A Roadmap for Action in East Africa

October 2021

As part of the series of policy dialogues organised in East Africa, a range of stakeholders gathered virtually¹ on 22 and 29 June 2021 to discuss and identify good practice and priority policy options to address gender-based discrimination in social institutions and to improve women’s health, economic empowerment and political voice in the region. This roadmap for action is the result of these dialogues. Based on the priority policy options identified, it will feed discussions at the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Gender Equality in East Africa on 6 October 2021. The later discussion will aim to build a consensus on this roadmap and concrete efforts that various stakeholders can take to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the sub-region.

The roadmap will serve as a plan of action for East Africa with the objective of realising Sustainable Development Goal 5. It is aligned with the commitments made by the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for the region in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment. In 2018, the EAC launched its Gender Policy that is anchored in Article 6(d) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC, where Partner States committed to adhering to the principles of democracy, the rule of law, accountability, transparency, social justice, equal opportunities and gender equality. Furthermore, the IGAD has implemented its Gender Strategy from 2016 to 2020². The roadmap will also feed into the OECD Development Centre’s Social Institutions and Gender Index 2021 Regional Report for Africa, to be published in December 2021 and into the Africa Gender Index 2022 Regional Report to be published by the African Development Bank Group (AfDB) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

The tables below give an indication of which actor—governments, grassroots organisations or all actors—may be best positioned to implement the proposed policy actions. Nevertheless, most actions will require collaboration between a wide range of stakeholders to be successful. The legend for the table is included below:

		
Governments³	Grassroots organisations⁴	All actors⁵

¹ Participants to the workshops included: representatives from grassroots, civil society and research organisations, think tanks, gender experts and advocates as well as foundations for the workshop of 22 June; and national and regional policy makers as well as development practitioners for the workshop of 29 June.

² More information: <https://resilience.igad.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Gender-IGAD-Gender-Strategy-Vol-1-Implementation-Plan-2016.pdf>.

³ This category includes policy makers.

⁴ This category includes civil society and research organisations, think tanks, gender experts and advocates, as well as foundations.

⁵ This category includes policy makers, civil society and research organisations, think tanks, gender experts and advocates, foundations, as well as international and regional organisations.



General recommendations

This section presents overall priority recommendations to achieve gender equality in East Africa and should be implemented and mainstreamed across various sectors and at all levels of government, as well as through engagement with regional and local stakeholders, including civil society and the media.

<p>Mainstream gender as a cross-cutting theme and hold key institutions accountable</p>	<p> All Ministries should incorporate a gender equality focused approach and mainstream gender across all sectors as well as in other institutions at the national and local level, and in the internal structures of political parties</p> <p> Independent Commissions, Supreme Audit Institutions and advisory bodies such as Government councils should be established or strengthened to enhance transparency to implement gender-responsive policies across governments through accountability oversight mechanisms such as audit offices</p> <p> Foster collaboration across all actors – including government as well as non-state actors, foundations, the private sector and donor community – and sectors and avoid working in silos, for example by exploring linkages between women’s economic and political empowerment and health issues</p>
<p>Strengthen legal frameworks</p>	<p> Parliamentary gender mainstreaming mechanisms such as committees, caucuses, research bodies, secretariats and commissions should review the legislation and public policies to be grounded in a human rights approach and to be tailored to local contexts</p>
<p>Support gender-transformative interventions and intersectional approaches</p>	<p> Civil society and feminist organisations, as well international and regional organisations and donor communities including foundations should undertake local campaigns to raise men’s and boys’ awareness of gender-based violence and the negative effects of female genital mutilation to trigger social change</p> <p> Ministries of Gender, as well as grassroots organisations, should establish programmes targeted at traditional leaders that include a gender-transformative approach, to improve girls’ and women’s rights and access to resources</p> <p> All key regional and national-level development actors should ensure an intersectional approach in the development of policies, programmes and services</p>
<p>Invest in gender data gaps</p>	<p> Statistical units in line Ministries, National Statistical Offices, as well as other development actors involved in policy programming, should collect sex-disaggregated data that is comparable over</p>



EAST AFRICA

time to document progress made towards gender equality and improve the understanding of and monitoring of social norms

Women’s health deprivation, gender-based violence and restricted reproductive autonomy

This section presents the priority policy actions that participants deemed the most important to address the four goals listed below to improve women’s health and reproductive autonomy and eliminate gender-based violence.

Reduce maternal mortality rates



Ministries of Health should commit to the engagements of the Abuja Declaration, by allocating at least 15% of the annual national budget to improve the health sector



Ministries of Health should ensure women are at the front and centre of policy design and policy making when it comes to measures related to girls’ and women’s health



Ministries of Health and public health agencies, together with National Statistical Offices, should improve data availability of national indicators on maternal and newborn health to inform accountability mechanisms and strengthen the case for the use of more efficient resources



Ministries of Gender and Health, grassroots organisations as well as the private sector and foundations should raise awareness about the consequences of poor maternal health and nutrition among young women



Ministries of Health, as well as the private sector and foundations, and the donor community, should provide adequate funding to grassroots organisations working on the ground to address maternal mortality, including for training of health professionals in both urban and rural areas

Eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including child marriage



Parliaments should revise legal frameworks to prohibit female genital mutilation (FGM) and make strong political commitments and engagements, such as committing to zero cases of FGM by 2022



Ministries of Gender and Health, together with local grassroots organisations, should invest in the prevention of and support services related to gender-based violence, by strengthening social protection schemes to enable women to be economically self-reliant and providing “rural toll phones” for women needing assistance



EAST AFRICA

	 <p>All development actors, including the government, as well as foundations, the private sector and the donor community, should invest in community-based initiatives that favour locally-based solutions adapted to the reality, by providing flexible funding and sustained engagement to feminist and grassroots organisations</p>  <p>Foster private-public partnerships with civil society organisations and foundations to educate and raise awareness about FGM and trigger social transformation among women, for example by providing the relevant information and resources to women and girls and engaging with traditional and religious local leaders, as well as men and boys</p>  <p>Ministries of health, as well as statistical agencies, should strengthen data collection and data transparency from hospitals on the complications that women who have undergone FGM face when giving birth and use such data to inform awareness-raising campaigns, and/or support the creation of an index measuring the well-being of girls and women</p>
<p>Prevent HIV infection in women and adolescent girls</p>	 <p>Governments should adhere to global partnerships such as the Global partnership for action to eliminate all forms of HIV-related stigma and discrimination</p>  <p>Ministries of Health and Gender, grassroots organisations and health institutions such as clinics, family planning and health centres should provide condoms (female and male) and information on the consequences of risky behaviours, with an emphasis on sex workers</p>
<p>Provide secure access to family planning</p>	 <p>Ministries of Education should implement programmes that allow pregnant girls to return to school and pursue their education</p>  <p>Ministries of Education and Gender (especially local and regional authorities) and grassroots organisations should improve women's and girls' access to comprehensive sexuality education and information about family planning, especially in rural areas</p>



EAST AFRICA

Women's economic empowerment and access to productive and financial resources

This section presents the priority policy actions that participants identified as the most pressing to address the four goals listed below to realise women's economic empowerment and access to productive and financial resources

<p>Close the gender gap in labour force participation and ensure women have access to waged work</p>	<p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should support working mothers by investing in early childhood infrastructure, paid family leave and flexible working hours</p> <p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should design policies focused on domestic workers where women are highly represented but also more vulnerable</p> <p> Ministries of Education, Labour and Finance, together with the private sector and civil society actors should create platforms to strengthen women's skillsets especially in Information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enable them to benefit from technological innovations and foster their competitiveness on the job market</p>
<p>Reduce gender segregation across sectors of the labour market</p>	<p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should deploy labour inspection programmes that include a gender lens, in particular in areas and sectors dominated by high informality, such as rural areas, to better understand women workers' situations</p> <p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, in partnership with the private sector, grassroots organisations and the media should bridge the information gap by informing women workers of their rights and consequences of working in the informal sector, especially with regards to their social protection</p> <p> Ministries of Labour and Finance, through partnerships with the private sector, should implement educational programmes to recognise women's skills and favour their access to the formal job market</p> <p> Ministries of Planning and Finance, in partnership with the private sector and the donor community, should eliminate the financial and information barriers that hamper women's full access to quality infrastructures such as ICTs, transport and energy</p>

EAST AFRICA

Increase women's ownership of agricultural land and assets



Ministries of Agriculture should enforce laws that grant women's equal access and ownership to assets such as land



Ministries of Gender, in cooperation with Ministries of Agriculture, should design agricultural gender strategies to guide the actions of Ministries of agriculture in being gender-responsive



Ministries of Gender and Ministries of Agriculture should work together to close the gender gaps in agriculture through the promotion of gender-sensitive agricultural extension and advisory services⁶ to bridge the transformation of women's agricultural activities from food crops to cash crops

Foster women's entrepreneurship



Ministries of Finance should formalise unlicensed micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) where women are concentrated to improve their access to finance and formal contracts



Ministries of Education and Finance should invest in women's financial education by incorporating courses in school curricula and by coupling credit packages with compulsory financial education modules that include mentoring, networking and digital literacy trainings



Ministries of Finance should reduce the cost of regulations and procedures (such as licenses or transaction costs of data usage) to encourage women to join the business sector and facilitate the formalisation of women-led businesses, including online



Ministries of Planning and Development, in partnership with the private sector and the donor community, should improve access to quality infrastructure for women such as ICTs, transport, power, and logistics



Ministries of Finance should mobilise financial institutions to actively support women's access to finance through subsidised interest rates and the enlargement of accepted collaterals

⁶ [Agricultural extension and advisory services \(AEAS\)](#) refers to any organisation in the public or private sectors (e.g. NGOs, farmer organizations, private firms etc.) that facilitates farmers' and other rural actors' access to knowledge, information and technologies, and their interactions with other actors; and assists them to develop their own technical, organizational and management skills and practices, so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being. See Christophos. I. 2010. Mobilizing the potential of rural and agricultural extension. FAO. Rome.

Women's political voice, leadership and agency

This section presents the priority policy actions that participants considered the most important to address the four goals listed below to improve women's voice and leadership in political and public life.

<p>Achieve gender parity in representation at all levels</p>	<p> Parliaments should enact and enforce legislated 50% quotas at all levels, including in corporate and public institutions and strengthen enforcement measures in case gender parity regulations are not respected</p> <p> Ministries of Gender should incentivise political parties to be more inclusive and address cultural change and gender equality in their internal policies, procedures and election processes</p> <p> All Ministries should support the adoption, by law, of gender-sensitive broadcasting standards by public media, to ensure women's equal treatment in and access to the media</p> <p> Grassroots and feminist organisations, as well as local electoral bodies, should identify potential women candidates and involve them from the very start ahead of the election process</p> <p> Ministries of Gender, as well as the private sector, philanthropic organisations and the wider donor community, should invest in ongoing research on the benefits of having more women represented in governance functions</p>
<p>Eliminate gender-based violence in politics</p>	<p> Line Ministries should raise awareness of and sensitise law enforcers, such as the police, and relevant authorities in identifying and understanding the signs of political violence</p> <p> Ministries of Gender and electoral bodies should work with political parties and grassroots organisations to raise awareness on the issues of gender-based violence against women in politics and promote the adoption of specific provisions to address political violence</p> <p> Ministries of Gender and Health, grassroots organisations, as well as health centres and support services, should ensure women have adequate support when dealing with emotional and psychological political violence, for example through mentorship programmes</p> <p> Ministries of Gender should work with civil society and feminist organisations, to run women-led advocacy actions to end political violence</p>

EAST AFRICA

Achieve equal participation between men and women in public and political life



Ministries of Gender should facilitate clear guidelines and procedures and funding mechanisms for women to participate in public and political life, including funds that can be distributed as grants by political parties



Ministries of Gender and Parliamentary assemblies should work with grassroots organisations and the media to run campaigns to raise women's awareness on their rights, opportunities as well as access to resources to participate in public and political life



Grassroots organisations should leverage women's networks to bring new voices in the political arena, especially those of young women and women with disabilities, including through mentoring and establishing links with political parties



Ministries of Gender and Parliamentary assemblies should explore partnership opportunities with women's and youth organisations to develop programmes and trainings targeted at potential female candidates



Ministries of Gender, in collaboration with the private sector, civil society and the media, should use the media and communication campaigns to educate the general public on issues faced by women and recognise women's already existent leadership, especially at the community level and ensure women receive equitable treatment by the media

Incorporate a gendered perspective in all peace and security efforts



Ministries of Defence and Peace, and Ministries of Justice, together with parliaments and legislatures, should ratify national action plans to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325⁷, to ensure equal participation between women and men in peace-building processes, and highlight women's important role as peace negotiators



Ministries of Gender and Defence, as well as International, regional and national organisations and grassroots organisations, should involve community leaders in the process of solving conflicts

⁷ For more information: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000)).