

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

THE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND GENDER INDEX (SIGI) REGIONAL REPORT



The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) Regional Report for sub-Saharan Africa offers an in-depth analysis of the region's progress towards gender equality. The Report draws on SIGI's 14 indicators that measure gender-based discrimination in social institutions. It highlights the mixed progress across important areas affecting the rights and well-being of women and girls, and the need for long-term, holistic and gender-responsive policy approaches to catalyse social norm change. The region is characterised by strong performances in political participation, with among the highest percentages of women in the parliament in the world, yet faces stark challenges in securing women's land and property rights, ensuring their freedom from violence, and protecting girls from early marriage and other harmful practices.

The advent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 represent a unique opportunity for sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate progress on gender equality. Sub-Saharan Africa has signed up to two ambitious socially transformative agendas which boast great promise for gender equality. Successful achievement of these agendas will strongly rely on effectively addressing discriminatory social institutions. Putting social norm change at the core of future actions could be one of the most effective means to guarantee that the region will be on track to fulfil its promises on gender equality and women's empowerment. SDG 5 and Agenda 2063's Aspiration 6 aim to eliminate inheritance inequality, early marriage, gender-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), unequal access to productive resources and insecure land rights. The SIGI Regional Report offers new analysis and good practices to support countries in tackling these key areas and moving from commitment to progress on the ground.

What are discriminatory social institutions?

Discriminatory social institutions are formal and informal laws, social norms and practices that restrict women's and girls' rights, access to empowerment opportunities and resources.

What is the SIGI?

The SIGI measures gender-based discrimination in social norms, practices, formal and informal laws across 160 countries. The SIGI comprises country profiles, a classification of countries and the Gender, Institutions and Development database (GID-DB). It serves as a research, policy and advocacy tool for the development community and policy makers.

The SIGI covers five dimensions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect the life course of a girl and woman:

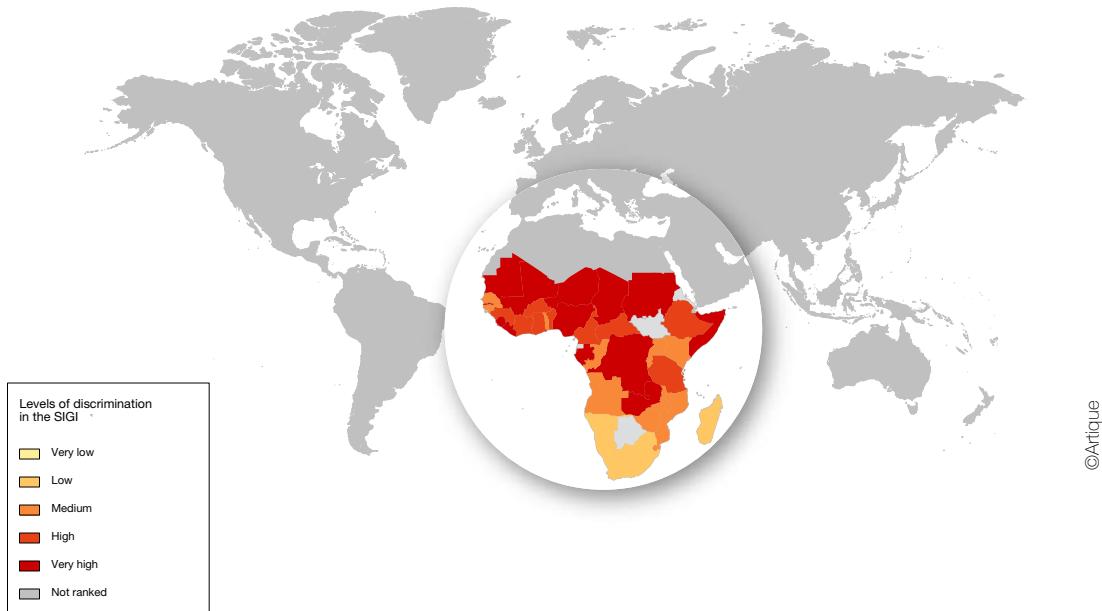
- **Discriminatory family code** captures restrictions on women’s decision-making power and status in the family
- **Restricted physical integrity** captures restrictions on women’s control over their bodies
- **Son preference** captures intra-household bias towards sons and devaluation of daughters
- **Restricted resources and assets** captures restrictions on women’s access to, control of and entitlement over resources
- **Restricted civil liberties** captures restrictions on women’s access to, participation and voice in the public and social spheres.

These dimensions look at the gaps that legislation, prevalence and attitudes create between women and men in terms of rights and opportunities through 14 indicators and 21 variables (Figure 1).

Figure 1. **The composition of the SIGI**

Social Institutions and Gender Index				
Discriminatory family code	Restricted physical integrity	Son bias	Restricted resources and assets	Restricted civil liberties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal age of marriage • Early marriage • Parental authority • Inheritance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence against women • Female genital mutilation • Reproductive autonomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing women • Fertility preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure access to land • Secure access to non-land assets • Access to financial services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to public space • Political voice

Levels of discrimination in the SIGI



Key findings

Despite political commitments, improvements in the law, and progress on certain areas in recent years, the region remains one of the poorer performers globally in the 2014 edition of the SIGI. Over half of the countries show high to very high levels of discrimination across the SIGI and most SIGI sub-indices (see map). The mixed picture highlights the need for continued and long-term investments in gender equality, moving beyond the introduction of law to its effective implementation and working at the community level, notably through engaging men and boys, to inspire social norm change.

Discriminatory family code: Early marriage is declining in sub-Saharan Africa. In Ethiopia, for example, 73% of women aged 45-49 were married before 18 compared to 41% of women aged 20-24 in 2011. However, regional prevalence remains almost double the world average of 13%, with 24% of girls aged 15-19 married, divorced or widowed in the region. This is perpetuated by weaknesses in the legal framework: 60% of countries in the region legally allow girls to marry under the age of 18.

Restricted physical integrity: Strong regional commitments, and legislative reform, aiming to end female genital mutilation (FGM) have seen growing consensus around the need to eliminate the practice. Nevertheless, it remains an issue in 26 countries in the region. While there is evidence that the number of women and girls who are subjected to FGM is decreasing, prevalence rates remain alarmingly high in some countries affecting over 90% of women in Guinea and Somalia.

Son bias: Sub-Saharan Africa stands out from other regions with evidence of missing women (e.g. China and India) as skewed sex ratios are not present at birth but occur among older age groups. Skewed sex-ratios during women's reproductive years (15-49) are found in 19 countries connected to the HIV/AIDS infection in Southern Africa and high rates of maternal mortality in Western Africa.

Restricted resources and assets: The majority of countries (88%) in the region have taken the first steps towards improving women's economic outcomes by granting women and men equal rights to access, own and control land and non-land assets. However, plural legal systems and the recognition of customary law undermine women's legal rights in this area. Even when legally guaranteed, discriminatory customs and practices restrict women's ability to realise these rights: regional estimates suggest that women represent only 19% of agricultural land holders, both as individuals or jointly.

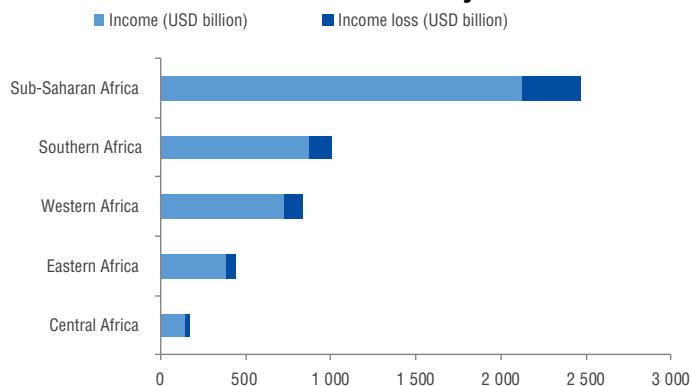
Restricted civil liberties: Women in sub-Saharan Africa have strengthened their political voice over the past two decades, and in 2014 they held 20% of parliamentary seats, on par with the global average of 21%. Progress has been uneven though, with some countries seeing women's participation advance faster than others: Rwanda has the highest percentage of women MPs in the world (64%), while in Swaziland, women's representation is 6%. Progress has been supported by the introduction of quotas in 65% of countries at either the national or sub-national level.

The cost of discriminatory social institutions in sub-Saharan Africa

Discrimination against women and girls represents an important cost for sub-Saharan Africa's economic development. Beyond the multiple adverse effects for women's empowerment opportunities, discriminatory social institutions also have widespread consequences for economies. The Report showcases new evidence based on the SIGI on the economic costs of discriminatory social institutions: overall, the current level of gender-based discrimination in social institutions in sub-Saharan Africa is associated with an income loss of USD 340 billion (Figure 2). This effect is explained by the negative influence of discriminatory social institutions on women's levels of education and labour force participation, as well as on technological progress and productivity.

The SSA economy would benefit from greater parity between women and men. While eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination in social institutions requires long-term commitments, by introducing gender-responsive policies and removing discrimination in legal framework the SSA countries could gradually reduce their levels of discrimination. Huge macroeconomic gains would be made if social institutions would treat women and men equally, allowing women to fully develop their potential. Sudan, the poorest performer of the region in the SIGI 2014 classification, would see its annual GDP per capita growth rate increased by 0.05 percentage points over the next 15 years by reducing its level of discrimination in social institutions from very high to high levels (as measured in the SIGI 2014 classification). This income gain would increase to up to 0.2 percentage points if Sudan were to reach the same level of discrimination as South Africa, and 0.7 percentage points by completely eliminating discriminatory social institutions.

Figure 2. **Income losses associated with discriminatory social institutions by sub-region**



Note: Income losses are measured in terms of 2011 real income at current PPP.

Source: Ferrant, G. and A. Kolev (2016), "Does gender discrimination in social institutions matter for long-term growth?: Cross-country evidence", *OECD Development Centre Working Paper No. 330*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Best practices

The SIGI Regional Report for sub-Saharan Africa provides inspiring initiatives that have proven successful in advancing girls' and women's rights, with a focus on Agenda 2063's Aspiration 6 and the SDG 5.

Challenging discriminatory gender roles within the household in South Africa

The Sonke Gender Justice Network developed the “Fatherhood project” in 2006 to challenge traditional norms on masculinities in South Africa. The project works with local government and civil society groups to engage with men through digital storytelling and media. The programme aims to increase men's involvement as fathers and caregivers and change negative attitudes about expected roles in the family. The evaluation showed positive results: men who participated in the programme adopted new roles that were traditionally viewed as “unmanly”, such as spending more time parenting, caring for the ill or supporting women in balancing workloads.

Mobilising communities to combat female genital mutilation in Ethiopia

Since 1999, the local NGO “Kembatti Mentti Gezzimma” has worked in the Kembatta zone to challenge the acceptance of FGM and increase awareness of its harmful effects at the community level. “Community conversations” led by trained facilitators brought together entire communities to reflect on the current situation of women and girls and violence, and disseminated prevention information and developed sanctions.

Partnering with the private sector to economically empower women in Burkina Faso

Since 2006, “L'Occitane Foundation” has worked to develop women's entrepreneurship in Burkina Faso. While the company has been working with women in the country producing shea butter since the 1980s, it recently strengthens this partnership by focusing on activities that support women's economic empowerment. The Foundation developed a three pillar approach: literacy programmes targeting women; financial and technical support through microcredit programmes and trainings; and support of entrepreneurial activities for small businesses. As a result, more than 15 000 rural women have been supported in developing and strengthening their business in Burkina Faso.

The OECD Development Centre was established in 1962 as an independent platform for knowledge sharing and policy dialogue between OECD member countries and developing economies, allowing these countries to interact on an equal footing. Today, 27 OECD countries and 24 non-OECD countries are members of the Centre. The Centre draws attention to emerging systemic issues likely to have an impact on global development and more specific development challenges faced by today's developing and emerging economies. It uses evidence-based analysis and strategic partnerships to help countries formulate innovative policy solutions to the global challenges of development.

For more information on the Centre and its members, please see www.oecd.org/dev.

For more information about the OECD Development Centre's gender programme:

dev.gender@oecd.org

www.genderindex.org

<http://stats.oecd.org>