



Addressing gender-based discrimination in social institutions

A Roadmap for Action in West Africa

July 2021

As part of the series of policy dialogues organised in West Africa, a range of diverse stakeholders gathered virtually¹ on 27 and 29 April 2021 to discuss and identify priority policy options that address gender-based discrimination in social institutions and 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 the discussions at the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Gender Equality in West Africa on 12 July 2021. The upcoming event aims to build a consensus on this roadmap and outline the next steps that various stakeholders can take to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The roadmap will serve as a plan of action for West Africa with the objective of realising Sustainable Development Goal 5. It is aligned with the commitments made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the region in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment, notably the Supplementary Act on Equal Rights between Men and Women for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Area, which aims to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men through the implementation of priority programmes in ECOWAS Member States.² 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 the Africa Gender Index 2022 Regional Report to be published by the African Development Bank and UNECA.

The tables below give an indication of which actor—governments, grassroots organisations or to all actors—may be in best position 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:



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 27 April; and national and regional policy makers as well as development practitioners for the workshop of 29 April.

² More information: https://www.ccdg.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/Roadmap-Supplementary-Act-on-Gender-Equality_Final.pdf



General recommendations

This section presents overall priority recommendations to achieve gender equality in West 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>Mainstreaming gender as a cross-cutting theme, including gender-responsive budgeting</p>	<p> All Ministries should integrate gender as a cross-cutting theme in national development policies and implement broad-reaching educational policies when targeting youth and the elderly, including formal and social education, in view of moving away from harmful norms</p> <p> Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should focus post COVID-19 economic recovery policies on the sectors most hit by the pandemic, where women are predominantly employed, including by further integrating women workers in the informal sector into the formal economy</p> <p> All Ministries should recognise and take into account women's effective role in managing the COVID-19 crisis, by taking into account their voices and including their concerns into recovery plans</p> <p> Ministries of Gender should establish inter-agency working groups including all relevant stakeholders involved with national gender equality machineries in view of institutionalising gender-responsive budgeting</p> <p> Ministries of Gender should provide adequate capacity building on implementing gender-responsive budgeting for parliamentary budget commissions</p> <p> Civil society and feminist organisations should make governments accountable for gender-responsive budgeting implementation through accountability mechanisms</p>
<p>Strengthen legal frameworks</p>	<p> Ministries of Gender and Education should implement laws that tackle gender-based discriminations holistically and foster equal opportunities, for example by criminalising harmful practices (e.g. child marriage, female genital mutilation) and ensuring compulsory education, including for pregnant girls wishing to pursue their education</p>



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<p>Strengthen peace and security efforts with a gender lens</p>	<p> Ministries of Defence, Peace and Justice should take into account the specific needs of women and girls in contexts of conflict specifically at the level of local governance</p> <p> Civil society organisations, in collaboration with regional and international organisations, as well as local development actors should involve conflict-affected communities in dialogue processes on solving key issues affecting women’s human development including their education, health, economic and political empowerment</p>
<p>Support gender-transformative interventions</p>	<p> All key regional and national-level development actors, in collaboration with the private sector and community-based organisations, should develop training programmes specifically targeting men and boys, as well as traditional leaders and older women, to challenge discriminatory practices and behaviours</p> <p> All Ministries, together with the media and active civil society networks, should run large-scale as well as locally-led awareness raising campaigns on valuing women and girls and their roles in society</p>
<p>Invest in gender data gaps</p>	<p> All Ministries, and especially those in charge of food and nutritional programmes, should support efforts to improve sex-disaggregated data collection processes to inform food and nutrition security policies</p> <p> Statistical units in line Ministries, National Statistical Offices as well as other development actors should strengthen sex-disaggregated data collection tools to monitor progress for women and girls, and develop comparable indicators to improve understanding and monitoring of how social norms evolve</p> <p> Statistical units in line Ministries, National Statistical Offices as well as other development actors should ensure data collection processes that consider intersectionality and include all women</p>



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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 three goals listed below to improve women’s health and reproductive autonomy, and eliminate gender-based violence.

Reduce maternal mortality rates



Ministries in charge of social protection should design social behaviour change communication tools for men and women on healthy nutrition practices and maternal health



Ministries of Health, in partnership with health donors and foundations, should strengthen primary healthcare systems, such as local clinics and community health centres, by allocating increased resources and providing training to staff on women’s health, including maternal health



Ministries of Health, public health agencies and grassroots organisations, together with educational institutions, should provide comprehensive maternal health information to girls and young women on the available and safe options for child delivery, such as going to a hospital, and on the nutritional needs of children and pregnant women



Ministries of Health, together with grassroots organisations, should develop communication strategies that are respectful of cultural codes at local levels and generate a demand for services linked to maternal and neonatal health, as well as child nutritional health

Provide secure access to family planning



Ministries of Health and Education should implement laws that tackle gender-based discriminations holistically, for example by criminalising harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation



Ministries of Health and Education should implement laws and programmes that foster equal opportunities, for example by ensuring compulsory education, including for pregnant girls and child mothers wishing to pursue their education



Ministries of Health should improve access to a broad range of basic and essential medical services, including for girls and young women to promote their reproductive health

Eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage



Ministries of Education should include age appropriate comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education in school curricula



Ministries of Education and Gender (especially local and regional authorities), together with civil society organisations and foundations, should carry out awareness-raising campaigns and activities in schools, universities, and youth centres on family planning and contraceptive methods



National Statistical Units in Line Ministries and National Statistical Offices should strengthen data collection to measure the health status of women, especially with regards to decision-making agency in terms of family planning, sexual and reproductive health information and services



Ministries of Health should establish one stop-service centres for survivors of gender-based violence, with counselling services and psychological support



Civil society and feminist organisations, as well as other non-state actors such as international/regional organisations, the donor community and grassroots organisations should expand community-based efforts and engage with the general public to change the social norms driving child marriage, female genital mutilation and intimate partner violence



All development actors, including the government, as well as foundations and the private sector should foster educational initiatives to shift perceptions and practices and advance sexual and reproductive health for women, targeting specifically men, older women, as well as traditional and religious leaders that support and perform female genital mutilation



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 five 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</p>	<p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should facilitate access to affordable childcare and implement flexible working arrangements and supportive equitable and paid parental leave policies</p> <p> Ministries of Planning, Infrastructure and Technology should invest in infrastructure and technologies, including at the household level, that reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, for example through electrification and improved access to water</p> <p> Ministries of Planning and Finance, and Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should establish tax incentives for companies to hire qualified women – including women that are re-entering the labour market, for example after giving birth – to help counter discrimination in hiring practices</p> <p> Ministries of Education, Labour and Finance, together with regional organisations, the private sector, donor community and civil society actors should run awareness-raising campaigns and encourage men to be agents of change to help drive broad-based changes in attitudes towards working women</p>
<p>Ensure women have access to formal jobs and enhanced status of employment</p>	<p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should establish social security for workers in the informal economy, where women are overly represented</p> <p> Ministries of Finance should develop funding instruments and mechanisms to ensure women’s access to financial services for their income-generating activities</p> <p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should adopt national legislation to guarantee the right to equal pay for work of equal value, and encourage public disclosure of employee pay data to increase pay transparency and close the gender pay gap</p>

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	 <p>Ministries of Labour and Finance, through partnerships with the private sector and the donor community should establish training programmes for upskilling women’s competencies</p>
<p>Reduce gender segregation across sectors of the labour market</p>	 <p>Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should remove discriminatory legislation that forbid women to enter certain professions, especially in male-dominated sectors such as construction and mining</p>
	 <p>Ministries of Education should establish programmes beginning in primary schools to bolster the technical skills of young girls and boys</p>
	 <p>Ministries of Education, in partnership with the industry and the private sector, as well as philanthropic organisations should initiate training programmes to address gender stereotypes, such as training in gender engineering³</p>
	 <p>Ministries of Gender, in collaboration with regional organisations, the private sector and grassroots organisations, should work closely with religious leaders and male partners to relax restrictive gender roles, in view of destigmatising women’s work in male-dominated sectors such as in factories, construction, and mining</p>
<p>Increase women’s ownership of agricultural land and assets</p>	 <p>Ministries of Agriculture should establish a minimum quota for women’s representation on land and natural resource management committees</p>
	 <p>Ministries of Finance should remove mandatory authorisations from husbands or legal guardians in accessing credit or loans by women</p>
	 <p>Ministries of Agriculture, in co-operation with Ministries of Gender, should provide gender-sensitive agricultural extension and advisory services⁴ that address the specific needs of women farmers</p>

³ Training engineering brings together the different processes implemented to build a training action, from the analysis of the relevance of the training response and training needs to the design of the evaluation. This training was conceived by the UNESCO Chair in Water, Women and Decision-making in 2017 and aims to facilitate understanding of the gender approach in view of integrating it in the various government-led projects and programmes in Côte d’Ivoire.

⁴ [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



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	<p> Ministries of Agriculture, in collaboration with international/regional organisations, grassroots organisations and the media, should change mind-sets and attitudes towards land ownership by raising awareness among local communities on the importance of land rights for women and educating women about their rights to land, and access to natural and productive resources</p> <p> Ministries of Innovation and Ministries of Information and Communication Technologies, in partnership with Ministries of Agriculture and the private sector, foundations and civil society organisations, should develop technologies, semi-autonomous equipment and interventions that alleviate women’s workloads in agriculture, such as mills, subsoil ploughs and soil and water sensors.</p>
<p>Foster women’s entrepreneurship</p>	<p> Ministries of Labour and Education should foster women's quality education and training opportunities through the provision of incentives such as nurseries and scholarships, to increase their entrepreneurship opportunities and improve their employability</p> <p> Ministries of Education, in collaboration with financial institutions and the private sector, should establish formal mentorship, sponsorship and skills development programmes for women and women entrepreneurs to enhance their financial, digital and legal literacy, and managerial confidence</p>

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.



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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 leadership in political and public life.

<p>Achieve gender parity in representation at all levels of leadership in public and political offices</p>		<p>Parliaments and electoral bodies should ensure that legal frameworks protect women’s rights to hold public and political office and enforce their implementation</p>
		<p>Parliaments and legislatures should consider the adoption of legislated gender quotas at the national and sub-national levels</p>
		<p>Parliaments and electoral bodies should implement financial incentives for political parties to reach gender targets when it comes to women’s representation on candidate lists</p>
		<p>Grassroots and feminist organisations should establish training and mentorship programmes, as well as networking groups to encourage women, especially young women, to become candidates and provide information on electoral laws and candidacy procedures</p>
		<p>All political parties should support travel and childcare needs to help women candidates build their constituent base while government ministries should provide the same to women employees to help them undertake their official duties effectively</p>
		<p>National Statistical Units in Line Ministries should develop indicators to track the gender commitments made by the different ministries, and apply budgetary consequences where objectives are not reached</p>
		<p>Parliamentary networks, together with local electoral bodies and political parties, as well as grassroots organisations should develop a database to facilitate the identification of women to be appointed to high-level positions from both urban and rural areas</p>
<p>Achieve equal participation of men and women in all aspects of public and political life</p>		<p>Parliaments and electoral bodies should review voting procedures and ensure that they guarantee equal voting rights for women and men</p>
		<p>Parliamentary networks, local electoral bodies and political parties should conduct voter outreach campaigns targeting women to inform them on the process to register, vote, and find local polling stations</p>



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	 <p>Governments, schools, international and regional organisations, civil society organisations, foundations and the media should work together to promote positive messages about women’s political participation and change perceptions on gender roles in public and political life, including by spotlighting successful women role models</p>
<p>Eliminate gender-based violence in politics</p>	 <p>Ministries of Health should adapt existing laws and policies on violence against women to include specific measures to ensure the protection of women candidates during and after elections</p>  <p>Parliaments should work with political parties to enforce their party’s policies and practices on addressing violence against women during election periods</p>  <p>Governments, parliamentary networks, as well as civil society organisations and the media should work together to raise awareness on gender-based violence in politics, with a view to changing norms and behaviours</p>
<p>Systematically incorporate a gender perspective in all peace and security efforts, and value women’s participation in these processes on an equal footing with men</p>	 <p>Ministries of Defence and Ministries of Peace should strengthen women’s leadership by providing civil society and women’s rights organisations meaningful voice and equal representation in national and international negotiations so that they can influence policy-making and contribute to peace-building processes</p>  <p>All Ministries should ensure the support of state institutions for scaling up initiatives led by local communities, to ensure young girls and vulnerable populations’ needs are addressed</p>  <p>Ministries of Defence and Ministries of Peace, together with parliaments and legislatures, as well as regional and international organisations should strengthen women’s important role as peace negotiators through the ratification and effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, to address the structural causes of rising insecurity in the region</p>