

Addressing gender-based discrimination in social institutions

A Roadmap for Action in Southern Africa

September 2021

As part of the series of policy dialogues organised in Southern Africa, a range of stakeholders gathered virtually¹ on 26 May and 2 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 options identified, it will feed discussions at the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Gender Equality in Southern Africa on 15 September 2021. The latter discussion will aim to build a consensus on this roadmap and identify 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 Southern Africa to realise Sustainable Development Goal 5. It is aligned with the objectives and commitments made by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development.² The roadmap will also feed into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 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 (ECA).

The tables below indicate which actors—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:



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 26 May; and national and regional policy makers as well as development practitioners for the workshop of 2 June.

² More information:

https://www.sadc.int/files/8713/5292/8364/Protocol_on_Gender_and_Development_2008.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 general and cross-cutting priority recommendations to achieve gender equality in Southern Africa and should be implemented across various sectors and at all levels of government, as well as through engagement with regional local stakeholders, including civil society and the media.

Mainstream gender as a cross-cutting theme		All Ministries should institutionalise gender throughout the political system by appointing gender focal points within each line Ministry
		Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should embed gender-responsive budgeting and planning within the entire gender machinery and across all sectors, thereby identifying the necessary interlinkages between various issues to better address them (e.g. gender-based violence and women's economic empowerment)
Strengthen legal and policy frameworks as well as their implementation		Line Ministries should ratify and implement international (e.g. CEDAW) and regional conventions and legal instruments (e.g. the Maputo Protocol) aimed at enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment
		Ministries of Gender should invest the necessary resources for the full implementation of policy and legal frameworks that aim to promote gender equality and women's empowerment
Invest in gender data		Statistical units in line Ministries should collect high-quality and comparable sex-disaggregated data to document progress towards gender equality and SDG 5 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 promote the expansion of health insurance to reduce the burden of possible health complications linked to pregnancy
		Governments should guarantee universal access to health services, specifically for girls and young women, and especially in conflict-affected areas

	 <p>Ministries of Health, in collaboration with Public Health Institutions and philanthropic organisations should invest in the capacity-building of midwives and nurses to ensure quality prenatal care and child delivery for all women, especially in rural areas</p>
<p>Eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including child marriage</p>	<p> Parliaments and legislatures should close legal loopholes, such as laws that fail to specifically address marital rape</p> <p> Ministries of Gender, in collaboration with Ministries of Defence, should implement national action plans to actively address gender-based violence and human trafficking, in a comprehensive manner</p> <p> Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministries of Finance, together with international and regional organisations as well as civil society organisations should promote economic justice for all citizens, in particular for women to ensure they have economic agency which also decreases their likelihood of experiencing gender-based violence</p> <p> Ministries of Education, together with Ministries of Gender and grassroots organisations, should design educational interventions with men and boys to support shifts in behaviours and attitudes to promote women’s reproductive rights, physical integrity and agency</p> <p> Grassroots organisations, as well as other non-state actors such as international/regional organisations and local community members, should work with traditional leaders, as gatekeepers of traditional and cultural norms, in view of shifting mind-sets and behaviours related to practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage</p>
<p>Prevent HIV infection in women and adolescent girls</p>	<p> Ministries of Health and Gender should prioritise the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in national development plans and include a gender perspective in the elaboration of health-related policy interventions</p> <p> Ministries of Health, together with Ministries of Gender and international/regional organisations should incorporate a gender perspective and address the gender-differentiated effects of HIV/AIDS in policy frameworks</p> <p> Ministries of Education, as well as grassroots organisations and public communication agencies should establish education and awareness-raising campaigns designed to help prevent the spread of HIV infection and reduce the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS</p>



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Provide secure access to family planning



Central governments, particularly Ministries of Health should prioritise the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health and rights in national development plans and policy interventions



Ministries of Health and Education should invest in collaborations between academia, civil society and the donor community, to understand the impact of comprehensive sexuality education on women’s economic empowerment and political representation

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.

Close the gender gap in labour force participation and ensure women have access to formal jobs



Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs should conduct mandatory gender audits, including policy reviews, for both private and public companies



Parliaments and legislatures should undertake legal reforms of the business code to put more emphasis on corporate social responsibility and social licence to operate, and integrate specific components on local communities’ needs, especially in the context of extractive industries

Reduce gender-based segregation across sectors of the labour market and increase women and girls’ access to and representation in Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) fields



Ministries of Planning and Development should support gender-responsive industrialisation policies and promote women’s application of their skills in science and technology



Ministries of Education should include gender equality and STEM topics in the school curriculum from early childhood education



Ministries of Education should support the revision of school textbooks, learning materials and curriculum with a gender-responsive lens and give particular attention to the treatment of traditionally male-dominated fields, including especially STEM



Ministries of Education, in partnership with the private sector and philanthropic organisations, should establish technical boarding schools and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes for girls with a focus on digital skills











Ministries of Transport, Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministries of Education, together with the private sector and the donor community, should create programmes that allow girls from





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	<p>rural areas the opportunity to safely travel to and study in larger cities</p>
<p>Reduce the share of young women not in education, employment and training</p>	<p> Ministries of Finance should put in place quotas or incentive measures to ensure that more women are represented in the banking sector and in institutions that provide credit</p> <p> Civil society and feminist organisations, together with family planning and health centres, should raise awareness on the importance of family planning to better enable the uninterrupted education of girls and young women</p> <p> Ministries of Planning and Development, Ministries of Finance and Ministries of Education should collaborate, through partnerships with actors from the private sector as well as the donor community, to build safe and affordable boarding schools and girls' residences and offer scholarships and financial aid for girls from poorer households, to offset the high cost of education and training fees and ensure equal opportunities for girls of all backgrounds</p> <p> Grassroots and philanthropic organisations should design community-based actions to retain girls in school such as networking circles or peer groups for young mothers</p> <p> Ministries of Labour and Education, Ministries of Information and Communication Technologies, as well as grassroots organisations and the private sector, should promote traineeship, mentorship and/or internship programmes that give opportunities for young women as well as women entrepreneurs to build their technical and digital skills</p>
<p>Foster women's entrepreneurship</p>	<p> Ministries of Finance and Development should elaborate national plans on financial inclusion that focus on women and promote their financial literacy, including by supporting the development of digital solutions such as digital wallets</p> <p> Ministries of Finance and Development should foster women's economic inclusion and ownership of productive assets through gender-responsive industrial master plans as well as measures such as affirmative procurement quotas for women-owned businesses, public employment stimuli, and affirmative procurement</p> <p> Women's business associations, the private sector and grassroots organisations should provide training and legal services to help women entrepreneurs gain a better understanding of compliance systems and requirements</p>



Ministries of Finance, Economy and Development and Ministries of Information and Communication Technologies, together with the private sector, women’s entrepreneurship associations and the donor community, should increase the availability and accessibility of digital training programmes tailored specifically to the needs of women entrepreneurs



Ministries of Finance, Economy and Development, in partnership with the private sector, should promote inclusive value chain approaches to small and medium-sized enterprise growth, with a particular focus on linking women to value chains

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 political voice and leadership.

Achieve gender parity in representation at all levels of leadership in public and political office



Parliaments should enact and enforce legislated 50% quotas that aim for gender-balanced representation at the national and local levels



Parliaments and electoral bodies should consider the use of the “zebra principle”⁶ in proportional representation and mixed electoral systems



Grassroots and feminist organisations should continue data-driven advocacy efforts to promote accountability for voluntary political party quotas and support increases in women’s representation at all levels of public office



Parliamentary women’s networks, international organisations, as well as political parties, should offer trainings for women candidates on how to effectively use the media in political campaigns and convey their messages in interviews











Ministries of Information and Communication Technologies, together with international and regional organisations, as well as grassroots organisations and the public media should sensitise political parties on the importance of gender-balanced participation in politics to change mind-sets



Parliamentary networks, as well as political parties and civil society organisations should ensure women have equal access to training opportunities on candidacy for public office and collect data monitoring the scope and impact of these trainings

⁶ The zebra principle refers to the alternation between men and women.

<p>Eliminate gender-based violence in politics</p>	<p> Parliaments and legislatures should define online harassment and abuse in penal codes</p> <p> Ministries of Justice should enforce legal codes that include political violence as a form of violence against women</p>
<p>Achieve equal participation between men and women in all aspects of public and political life</p>	<p> Ministries of Gender and Finance, as well as the donor community, should establish financial resources to ensure women participate in politics</p> <p> Parliaments, electoral bodies and grassroots organisations should develop women’s support networks such as voting circles and mentorship programmes that provide access to information and resources on how to participate in political processes</p> <p> Civil society and feminist organisations, together with the media and the private sector should implement awareness and sensitisation programmes to change mind-sets and perceptions on women’s leadership roles, including involving men as allies</p> <p> Parliamentary women’s networks, electoral bodies, together with Ministries of Gender and Education, should implement measures and initiatives that foster the interest of younger generations of girls in politics, for example through mentorship programmes or collaborations with schools and universities</p> <p> Statistical units in line Ministries, as well as electoral bodies and local non-state organisations, should collect gender- and age-disaggregated data on political participation and representation at all levels to identify persistent gaps</p>
<p>Systematically incorporate a gender perspective in all peace and security efforts</p>	<p> 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</p>

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