

RESEARCH PAPER BY
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WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

A WOMAN'S WORK

Encouraging and developing female leaders of the future

Africa's untapped potential: its women and girls. This has been a statement that has been true for some years but what concrete initiatives can we learn from so we can instil strong core values in girls, to teach them about health issues, and to support their family?

Gender equality is not only important from a basic human rights perspective; it is also a driver of development. The World Bank notes that gender equality has many benefits ranging from enhanced economic development, and improved civic society. More social and politically active leaders will lead to better policies and more inclusive institutions. Excluding women from the labour force in all sectors has lasting consequences including low agricultural productivity and less profitability in all sectors (World Bank, 2012). Creating societies that are more gender inclusive starts with empowering girls by instilling confidence and shaping their skills setting them up to be female leaders.

Regional challenges

In its Millennium Development Goals report 2014, UNDP outlines that over the past decade, disparities between boys and girls in all levels of education in all developing regions have decreased, and political participation of women has increased (*UNDP, 2014*). Sub-Saharan Africa leads many developing countries with the third highest percentage of women holding offices in national parliament between 2000-2014 at 23% (*UNDP, 2014*). However, societal attitudes, institutional structures and market barriers must change before progress can be made. In order to achieve gender equality the international community should prioritize MDG goals including achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education, eradicating poverty, improving maternal health and ensuring environmental sustainability (*OECD, 2007*).

Education

Primary school enrollment and completion rates for children in sub-Saharan Africa show the biggest gender disparities; gender parity in is at 80% compared to 95% in South East Asia and 96% in Latin America, while only 23% of poor, rural girls complete their primary education (*World Bank, 2012 and UNDP, 2014*). Sub-Saharan Africa also has the lowest gender parity index for education of all developing nations, and particularly in secondary and tertiary education.

Factors that impede girls' education completion include access to proper sanitation and hygiene, and also societal attitudes about gender roles, such as early child marriage and household power dynamics. For example, girls and women spend significantly more time than men on household chores, which affects school attendance. According to UN Water, in rural areas, the task of gathering water is delegated to women 9 times out of ten. A study in Tanzania illustrated that reducing the distance to a water source from 30 minutes to 15 increased girls' school attendance by 12% (*UN Water, 2013*). Access to proper sanitation also impacts women and girls directly and indirectly. Many women and girls in rural in sub-Saharan Africa are without access to proper toilets, leaving them at risk for attacks or harassment as they venture outside to find a place to go to the bathroom. According to the World Toilet Day Advocacy Report, when a girl reaches puberty, she may not have access to sanitary supplies or cleaning facilities, leading to irregular attendance in secondary school. Moreover, few adolescent girls receive proper education about their menstrual cycle, which may cause a young woman to experience shame and low self esteem as she goes through puberty, affecting her decisions about completing her education (*Water Aid, Unilever, World Toilet Day Advocacy Report, 2013*).

Inadequate and incomplete schooling impede a woman's changes of economic and social equality later in life. The World Bank reports that girls who complete primary and secondary school education have fewer unwanted pregnancies, earn higher incomes and provide better education to their children (*World Bank, 2012*). As of 2014, 85% of women in sub-Saharan Africa were vulnerable workers, which the UNDP defines as the percentage of unpaid family workers in total employment. Women in sub-Saharan Africa are far more likely to be underemployed than man at a rate of 15.8% compared to 12.6% (*UNDP, 2014*). Although significant earning gaps exist in most sectors of society across the continent, agriculture and entrepreneurship in particular show the greatest disparities because female entrepreneurs and farmers have limited access to credit and capital. Female farmers, on average, operate on smaller plots of land and produce lower yields than men (*World Bank, 2012*).

Women in sub-Saharan Africa are also left behind in terms of Internet usage. Intel reports that 45% fewer women than men have access to the Internet, and many women cite high costs as the reason they were not online (*Dalberg/Intel, 2012*). However, Intel's report found that lack of digital literacy, exposure and societal attitudes also hindered a woman's choice of connecting to

the Internet. Studies have found that increased access to Internet has many benefits including supplementing a woman's education, increased job networks and improved confidence levels.

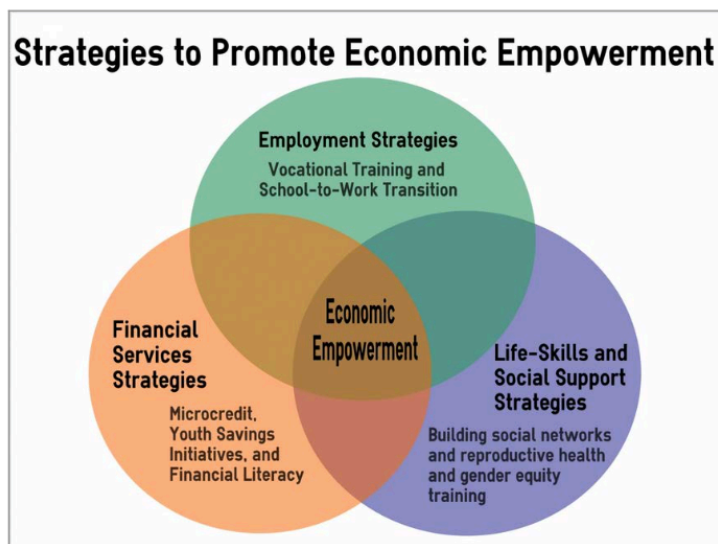
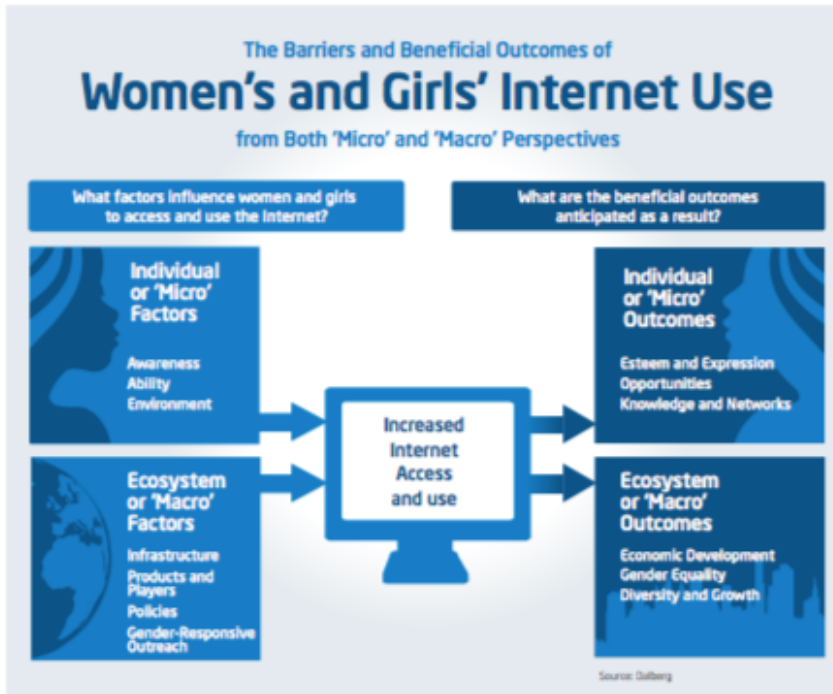
Market failures, societal attitudes and institutional constraints hinder gender equality for all generations of women and girls. Adolescence is a time when a young woman's attitudes and aspirations are developed, and it is important that policymakers focus on ways to offer the best support during this vulnerable period. More importantly, attitudes about women are transmitted across generations so that women who do not work outside the home may not encourage their daughters to pursue employment outside the home. Discriminatory credit and labor markets may also impede women's access to capital or inputs in agriculture perpetuating inequality (*World Bank, 2012*). Vocational training, health education programs and mentorships or exposure to female role models can have transformational effects on young women (*World Bank, 2012*).

Recommendations from Dalberg/Intel, USAID, World Bank and Water Aid

- Public-private partnerships can improve access to sanitation and also help young women understand public health. The private sector can act as a direct provider of services, including toilets and the development of sanitation infrastructure, but can also deliver knowledge about proper hygiene (*Water Aid, Unilever, 2013*)
- The international community and governments can make sanitation goals a larger priority and help de-stigmatize issues like menstruation (*Water Aid, Unilever, 2013*)
- Policymakers should build partnerships across a wide range of stakeholders in the private sector and civil society to measure performance in closing gender gaps (*USAID, 2012*)
- Public and private partnerships should emphasize science, technology and innovation to empower women and girls in STEM fields (*USAID, 2012*)
- Policymakers should focus on closing earnings and productivity gaps and reducing gender gaps in human capital (*World Bank, 2012*)
- Policy makers should focus on strengthening women's land and ownership rights, correcting biases and improving the functioning of credit markets, which will help entrepreneurs and female farmers (*World Bank, 2012*)
- Active labor market policies that combine training, placement and networks will support women entering sectors that are disproportionately populated by men (*World Bank, 2012*)
- The private sector can help expand access to affordable Internet, to free content, and support the piloting of programs to address women specific needs such as women-only Internet cafes (*Dalberg/Intel, 2012*)

- Policymakers can support the growth of Internet advocacy organizations that focus on increasing female access to Internet and invest in integrating digital and information literacy into existing programs targeting women and girls (*Dalberg/Intel, 2012*)

Figure 4: Framework for evaluating Internet access barriers and outcomes



These strategies often overlap in program design and implementation. Together they create a comprehensive and integrated approach for adolescent girls' economic empowerment.

Figure 1 (above) Dalberg/Intel, 2012; Figure 2 (below) AGLI, 2012

Issues for debate

- How can we encourage women to venture into new frontiers like science and technology?
- How can we support women through mentoring and encouragement, so they can give back through the private and public sectors?
- What can governments do to put structures in place that support girls and women so they can achieve more? How much is the responsibility of the government and how much is the private sector's responsibility?
- And, do you think governments pay enough attention (and resources) on life skills and support mechanisms for women and goals to enable them to stay in school longer, or to work?
- In many African countries, unemployment is higher among women than men, yet women are leading the way in entrepreneurship and start-ups. If the motivation is there, then why can't governments and companies do more to find jobs for women?
- Do we give enough credit to other "non-traditional" types of learning, e.g. on-the-job learning in the informal economy bears no value on paper, but can provide substantial value to a woman's growth?
- What programmes are in place to enable girls to stay in education for longer? There are great examples in Africa – Seychelles has fully achieved education for all, with a literacy rate of 94%
- The importance of mentorship – how can we create more effective mentorship programmes outside of a business environment?
- Empowering women isn't just about making them CEOs, it's about giving them the tools to improve their circumstances. What examples can we see of cases where we have empowered women in the community?

Forum Flashback:

NYFA 14: Auma Obama, Kenyan author and activist, argued for the importance of engaging girls and young women in technology and education. Jon Gosier, founder of Appfrica felt that African women were being left behind in technology, and advocated for the creation of more female centered training centers.

Further reading:

Africa's female leaders "are expected to act like mothers":

<https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/africa%E2%80%99s-female-leaders-are-%E2%80%98expected-act-mothers%E2%80%99>

Women entrepreneurs blazing the trails of business in Africa:

<http://www.essence.com/2015/07/13/model-moguls>

Lack of sanitation is a serious health crisis:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/business/no-joke-lack-toilets-signals-deadly-crisis-2D11603662>

Are toilets a feminist issue?

<http://ideas.time.com/2012/06/19/are-toilets-a-feminist-issue/>

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