

Mapping the policy landscape for women's economic empowerment in Tanzania

Women actively contribute to Tanzania's growing economy, with some eight out of ten currently in the labour force—one of the continent's highest female rates of participation. But as the country bases its future growth on a strategy of industrialization, women remain crowded into unpaid domestic work. If they are to benefit from the transformation of the economy, women need greater access to scientific and technical education, productive assets, and financial services.

There has been limited information on the incidence of COVID-19 in Tanzania. But women are likely among those hardest hit, economically and health-wise, due to the nature of their employment and the unequal burden of care.

What are the policy levers advancing women's economic empowerment (WEE) in Tanzania, and what role can research play?

This brief captures the main findings of a scoping paper that highlights policies, plans, and initiatives related to WEE. With expert knowledge of the policy landscape, the authors conducted a rapid assessment of available literature, covering eight themes relevant to WEE and gender equality. They identified gaps and entry points for further research to support evidence-based policies and programming, and stakeholders who may champion some of the work going forward.

Women's economic status

In 2019, Tanzania ranked 85th out of 153 countries on the Women, Peace and Security Index. Its poor showing stems in part from girls and women averaging only six years of education, their financial exclusion, and low levels of cell-phone use. Prevailing cultural and social norms disadvantage women in many ways—undermining their bargaining power within households and limiting their control over resources and assets.



Entry points for a WEE agenda

Action research can help to support the implementation and monitoring of upcoming and newly revised policies and plans, including:



An updated Women and Gender Development Policy



The National Social Protection Policy



The second phase of the Productive Social Safety Net



A new strategic plan by the National Economic Empowerment Council



Tanzania's Women Entrepreneurship Development National Action Plan



Research can also help the government put a value on unpaid care work.



Women and girls continue to perform most unpaid domestic work, spending four times as many hours as men on these duties.

Some 70% of Tanzanian women work in agriculture, but in rural areas, 73% of landholders are men. Most women who hold land do so jointly with their husbands. This lack of control over land limits a woman's chance of starting or expanding a farm or a business and reduces her access to credit. While poverty has diminished in recent years, 45.1% of rural female-headed households were poor as of 2014/2015.

Women in Tanzania have among the highest birth rates in the world and almost two in five girls marry before their 18th birthday, reducing their chances of higher education. While the gender gap in literacy shrank by five percentage points from 2002 and 2015, gender gaps have widened at higher levels of education. And those who study longer are less active in labour markets: only 67.1% of females with university degrees are market employed compared to 83.2% of their male peers.

As in many developing countries, women are overrepresented in vulnerable forms of employment: 51% are in the informal sector and 52% in subsistence agriculture. They also dominate in client-facing jobs, such as domestic work, retail, and hospitality – sectors that have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key policies, plans, and programs related to WEE

Several policies and interventions indirectly address WEE and gender equality, but none do so directly. The burden of unpaid care work in particular is overlooked.

The Women and Gender Development Policy is currently under review. Enshrined in the Tanzanian Constitution, the Policy endorses gender equality and equity and guarantees full participation of women and men in social, economic, and political life. Its implementation strategy—the 2008 National Strategy for Gender Development—is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals relevant to women's advancement.

While both the Policy and Strategy are critical of the long hours women spend on reproductive and productive roles compared to men, to date, Tanzania does not have a specific childcare policy or policies recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work across genders.

The National Employment Policy, updated in 2008, provides for female maternity benefits including coverage for breastfeeding for not less than six consecutive months. But given their high levels of employment in the informal sector and in agriculture, the vast majority of women do not benefit from these provisions. The Employment Policy, and the related Employment

Key national policies and plans concerning women:

- Women and Gender Development Policy and National Strategy for Gender Development
- National Employment Policy
- National Education Policy and Early Childhood Development Policy
- National Social Security Policy and Productive Social Safety Net Program
- Women Entrepreneurship Development National Action Plan



and Labour Relations Act, revised in 2017, both aim at promoting equal access to decent employment opportunities and resource endowments for vulnerable groups, including women. But implementation is inadequately enforced and monitored to achieve the intended outcomes.

Mothers' ability to participate in the workforce depends on the availability of schooling and day care for their children. Pre-primary programs are part of Tanzania's Education Policy. But the proposed (and long-delayed) Early Childhood Development Policy covers only children aged five to six years old and attendance is not compulsory. This leaves most mothers juggling employment and unpaid care.

The Education Policy aims for greater inclusion of the marginalized, including girls, by providing for no-fee schooling. In addition to establishing technical secondary schools, the government is promoting girl's school attendance and special training to inspire them to take science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects to prepare more women for scientific and technical professions.

Gender equality and WEE are being mainstreamed in poverty reduction and social protection policies. Tanzania's National Social Security Policy, updated in 2018, now recognizes that girls and women are more vulnerable than boys and men to social risks and deprivations. A second phase of the related Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) Program was launched in February 2020. It pays 83% of cash benefits to women.

To support female entrepreneurship, the Tanzania Public Procurement Act, amended in 2016, requires all government bodies to procure at least 30% of their services from businesses owned by women and youth. Tanzania's Women Entrepreneurship Development National Action Plan aims to help women access

resources and seize economic opportunities through an affirmative action plan that supports women starting, formalizing, and growing their enterprises.

Despite the number of policies and interventions that address WEE at least indirectly, the authors note their effectiveness is constrained by:

- the limited evidence base for policy development and review
- a lack of policy coherence and coordination
- governance issues—including a lack of stakeholder involvement, donor-driven agendas, and long delays between policy development and implementation
- the patchwork nature of interventions, and
- inadequate budgeting and financing for WEE.

Research entry points

Tanzania lacks research and data on women's economic growth and development, gender-disaggregated data, and sectoral and geographic data and evidence to support decision-making. With several newly developed or recently revised policies and interventions relevant to WEE, research can make an important contribution to the following areas.

- An updated Women and Gender Development Policy is currently awaiting parliamentary approvals. WEE is an overarching agenda and the updated Policy fills a large gap by proposing to value unpaid care work as provision of public services through national income accounting. There will be a critical need to build capacity within government on quantifying unpaid work. There will also be an immediate need for baseline data to underpin the proposed agenda.
- The yet-to-be-approved National Social Protection Policy highlights key barriers and spells out implementation steps needed for gender equality and WEE to be advanced. An implementation strategy, monitoring framework, and costing documents are in place. Research can help to support implementation.

- PSSN II is in its final stages before technical implementation begins. Its gender strategy and action plan ask interested partners to contribute financial and technical support to implementation. Launched in 2020, it will support programming on livelihoods and life skills training, mentoring, links to adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health, HIV, and other health and violence responses.
- The National Economic Empowerment Council has a new strategic plan that promotes the participation of women and girls in male-dominated trades. There is an opportunity to engage and provide evidence for a review of the plan, expected in 2021.
- Through the Women Entrepreneurship Development National Action Plan, business incubation centres are being established in Zanzibar as a means to help women start and grow their businesses. Research could be conducted on these incubators to shed light on how this model could be established on the mainland.

Recommendations for research uptake

If action research is to have an impact on WEE policies and programming, engaging with stakeholders will be crucial. These include key government ministries and agencies, women's organizations, those leading initiatives to support women entrepreneurs, and international organizations such as UN agencies and bilateral donors



focused on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The authors recommend establishing a community of practice, hosting an annual research gathering, and establishing an online research hub to share learning, strengthen the uptake of evidence, and enhance coordination.

The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) East Africa initiative seeks to spur transformative change to advance gender equality in the world of work. It is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Building on the success of the multi-funder GrOW program, GrOW East Africa aims to enhance gender equality and the economic empowerment of marginalized women in five countries of focus: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda. It will foster new in-country knowledge, innovations, and solutions to inform policies and programs addressing unpaid care work, sex segregation in labour markets, and women's employment. Activities will be spearheaded in partnership with in-country practitioners, governments, and researchers.

Scoping papers were commissioned for each of these countries to form a baseline that will allow for monitoring progress in implementing GrOW East Africa. The paper "Policy mapping: Women's economic empowerment in Tanzania," which this brief draws from, was prepared by Fortunata Songora Makene, Flora Myamba, and Margaret K. Kasembe.

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