

Women in the Economy

Policy Brief No 1

A summary of issues and findings of the SADC Gender and Development Monitor 2018

Women's (economic) empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development, and peace.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) has made significant progress towards gender equality and equity as noted by an improvement in representation and participation of men and women in a number of sectors.

In the economic sector, commitments have been reaffirmed as prioritised through several legal frameworks which include: the Revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development; the Protocol on Employment and Labour; the Protocol on Trade; and the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), among others.

However, many challenges remain, particularly for women and girls, who remain the most disadvantaged. One of the major challenges is that women have multiple roles that include domestic work, child caring and rearing, adult care, caring for the sick, searching for and collecting water and fuel. These multiple roles are a major inhibiting factor for women to take part in the economic sector and improve their lives.

This policy brief focuses on the involvement of women in mining, agriculture, trade and industry. The focus on these sectors is premised on the significance that the sectors command in regional production economics.

Agriculture

The agriculture sector remains central to poverty reduction, growth, food and nutritional security in the SADC region, as noted in the Regional Agricultural Policy, accounting for the livelihoods, employment, income and

wealth creation for two-thirds of the 350 million people in the region (SADC Statistics).

Despite the important role that women play in the agricultural sector, women tend to be disadvantaged in terms of access to and ownership of productive resources as well as participation in decision-making processes in this sector. In Seychelles, for example, of the total number of people who make use of state land, 15 percent are women and 85 percent are men, and with regard to private land an estimated 23 percent is owned by women farmers and 77 percent by men. This significant variation between women and men in access to land in Seychelles may result from the policies of the country which are said to be gender neutral without making special provisions for women who are in most cases disadvantaged.

Where specific gender provisions for women have been put in place, eg Namibia, positive results have emerged. The land reform programmes organised by the Namibian Government state that women should have the right to own

the land they cultivate, inherit it and bequeath land and other fixed properties. Further, women should be fairly represented in all districts councils, land boards or other bodies which deal with the allocation and use of land in the communal areas.

As a result of these initiatives, of the 70 percent of the country's population who depend on agricultural land for livelihood, women account for 59 percent and are significantly contributing towards food security in Namibia.

Access to technology is another challenge in the agricultural sector. Limited access to agricultural technology exacerbates productivity, for example, in Malawi, where a 2018 FAO report notes that only 1.5 percent of a small family farmland is irrigated on average, resulting in a strong dependence on rain-fed agriculture and a high vulnerability to weather extremes. Even fewer smallholder farmers have motorized equipment (0.4 percent).

The limited access to loans is one of the major reasons why smallholder farmers cannot afford to acquire the necessary technology to improve their products.

Mining

Most SADC Member States are endowed with vast mineral resources and the extractive sector presents a good opportunity for the economic empowerment of women and men. However, as with other sectors, women experience challenges in participating in the sector as it is mainly dominated by men. The participation by women is mainly artisanal due to the high capital outlays which present a barrier to entry into formal mining. Artisanal mining is unregulated and characterised by poor health and safety standards and adverse environmental impacts. This is a cause for concern for women in the sector and a restraining factor to those who want to get involved.

A factsheet on *Women in Mining* produced by the South African Chamber of Mines in 2017, noted that some of the machinery used in the mining sector is not suitable for women and the physically demanding nature of the work causes women to be sidelined. If a woman is pregnant the chances of

doing hard manual labour will be a strain as the equipment is not designed to cater for women in different conditions.

The mining sector is demanding in terms of location as, in most cases, mines are located far away from living settlements and thus mine owners and workers have to live temporarily at the mine site. This is a challenge for women who have families as they will be forced to leave their families behind, with no one to take care of their families and children.

Nonetheless, in countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, measures have been put in place to attract more women to be part of the mining sector. In Zimbabwe,

the Women Development Fund encourages women to take part in the extractives sector and 16 percent of the funds which have been disbursed since 2010 go to the mining sector.

In South Africa, the Chamber of Mines reports that through addressing some of the challenges faced by women, representation of women increased from around 11,400 in 2002 to about 53,000 in 2015, representing a 365 percent increase. However, although increasing, the representation at management level is considerably low. Women participation in the mining sector in SADC is relatively low when compared to other sectors such as education and health, as shown in the table below.

Employment Rate by Industry

Country	Mining & Quarrying %		Manufacturing %		Construction %		Education %		Health %	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Botswana	4.4	0.7	5.7	7.8	8.2	1.7	5.4	10.9	1.9	3.3
Seychelles	15.8	9.2			9.2	1.2	2.6	9.2	2.3	14.9
Namibia	3.6	0.6	8.3	4.6	16.6	1.1	3.6	8.9	1.5	4.3
Zambia	3.6	0.5	7.2	2.6	8.6	0.3	3.7	2.8	1.2	1.4
Malawi	0.2	0.3	4.5	3.6	4.2	1.0	2.8	1.6	1.6	1.1
Zimbabwe	2.7	0.3	6.3	1.8	3.1	0.1	2.5	3.2	0.6	1.0

Source: National Progress Reports on Implementation of the SADC Gender Protocol

Trade

Africa has been pursuing trade integration through the African Union as a collective development agenda leading to the eventual creation of an African Economic Community and Common Market.

This agenda is premised on the notion that creating a bigger market offers opportunities for enhanced value addition, creating possibilities of higher trade volumes and living standards. Since as far back as 2008, efforts were being made to improve regional trade and its benefits, and it was noted that women were largely confined to informal trade and largely marginalized from “mainstream trade” where returns are much higher (SARDC 2008).

To date, the situation remains similar with women still being largely confined to informal cross border trade. According to a report produced by Southern Africa Trust (SAT) in 2018 highlighting the experiences and challenges of women in the SADC region in trade and agriculture, it was noted over a 10-day survey, more than 205,000 people crossed the borders, of which 85,000 (41.5 percent) are

Cross Border Traders. Women are prone to harassment by customs officials on both sides of border posts in the form of sexual abuse as well as confiscation of their procured goods (SAT 2018). The commonly reported forms of abuse and harassment include indecent body searches by male security officers, requesting for transaction sex, and calling of names and verbal insults.

In some cases, officials solicit bribes to allow smuggling of goods due to taxes and other fees which tend to be very high, leaving the trade businesses with very little or no profit. The main challenge noted is that women traders are not well equipped with knowledge about trade policies that serve to protect and promote their endeavours within the sector, hence the abuse and injustices faced on a daily basis.

Industry

Industrialization is the period of social and economic change that transforms a society from being solely agrarian-based into highly mechanized production (SARDC 2015). Evidence and statistics of

women taking part in the industrial sector is minimal yet the revised RISDP states that the overall goal of the Gender Equality and Development intervention area is to facilitate the empowerment of women and gender equality, and the promotion of gender-responsive, human-centred development towards inclusion and social justice.

The RISDP notes that mainstreaming gender into the industrialization policy should be informed by an analysis of the opportunities and constraints faced by women and men in the context of strategies for industrialization, in particular the way in which strategies may not meet gender needs. It is important to observe from the onset, that “...the impact of industrialization can also be different for women and men, and affect their wellbeing differently” (Beall and Davila 1994). A benchmark analytical framework for a gender-sensitive industrialization strategy for the SADC region could be guided by the above.

The planning and execution of industrial policies nationally and regionally within the SADC context should fuse the elements noted

above to maximize developmental aspirations and outcomes and entrench a sustainable human development path that ensures a broad-based developmental framework to reduce poverty in the region.

Policy

Multiple roles. Women have multiple roles in the family and society that can be a barrier to participation in the economic sector.

Therefore, Member States should ensure access to cheap and affordable energy and water services to reduce the burden of women who often have to travel long distances in search of firewood and water

Agriculture. In the agriculture sector, ensuring access to modern technologies can significantly reduce the labour burdens that women face on a daily basis and result in an increase of women participation and production. In addition, the equitable distribution of the means of production such as land, resources and capital and support to smallholder agricultural produc-

tion and gender-sensitive, agriculture-related infrastructure can boost women's participation. Enhancing agriculture-related infrastructure investments such as dams, irrigation and feeder-road networks can enhance productivity and market access. SADC Member States are encouraged to conduct awareness-raising initiatives on land tenure and equitable use.

Mining. Learning from South Africa's Mineral Council, member states should work towards engineering mining policies to deal with safety concerns for women to feel safe when working underground.

These include improving lighting in working and travelling areas; providing safe toilets, shower and changing facilities; and ensuring that women have work colleagues to move around with in quiet areas. Adapting equipment to suit the bodies of women such as the cut and sizing of overalls, the size and fit of helmets, goggles and earplugs, and the sizing and proportions of boots and gloves. Ensuring that Personal Protection Equipment and work clothing fits properly, is key to allow-

ing women to be fully and safely active in their jobs. Member States are encouraged to address challenges facing artisanal miners through policy and relaxing requirement to enter into formal mining.

Trade. Women involved in informal cross-border trade are not well equipped with knowledge about trade policies that serve to protect and promote their endeavours within the sector. Therefore member states are encouraged to work with immigration officials to raise awareness on the rules, regulations and the rights of cross border traders. Free trade in the region, if located within a framework of strengthening national production and industrialization, will create a larger market, releasing the potential for trade, economic growth and employment creation. The creation of online platforms where women and men can register challenges in the trade sector can assist in informed decision-making and policy formulation. These strategies can be adapted for all sectors, not only trade.

Conclusion

Persistent discrimination and exclusion of women in the formulation of policies, access to productive resources and property, employment and the lack of recognition of the multiple roles of women can substantially hinder development and slow the pace of economic growth. Economic development, if done ef-

fectively, works to retain and grow jobs and investment within a community for all citizens, women and men alike. Agriculture, mining, trade and industry are among the main drivers of economic development in the SADC region and it is imperative that women, who constitute more than half of the SADC population, be an integral part of these development sectors.

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This policy brief is produced by the Beyond Inequalities Gender Institute (BI) of the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre through a project on tracking implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development funded by the Austrian Development Agency. The information is drawn from the *SADC Gender and Development Monitor 2018* publication. The policy brief and related information are available on www.sardc.net. Responsibility for the content of this publication lies entirely with the authors. The information and analysis do not reflect the official opinion of the Austrian Development Agency. February 2019



Julius K. Nyerere House
15 Downie Avenue, Belgravia, Harare, Zimbabwe
Tel +263 242 791141 Email sardc@sardc.net
Website www.sardc.net Knowledge for Development



