



CHAPTER 3

Gender and Leadership in Africa: Exploring the Nexus, Trends, and Opportunities

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The topic of leadership, as a process and a complex set of interactions to motivate and inspire others, has been, in the context of Africa, a matter of interest and research over the past six decades. A study by Fourie, van der Merwe, and van der Merwe (2017) documented some 114 peer-reviewed research articles on leadership in Africa. The articles outline and discuss issues of individual and institutional leadership in the context of politics, gender, traditions and values, religion, education, ideology, and socioeconomic and development dynamics. While the nexus between gender and leadership features as a topical issue in the region, we have known and seen very little evidence about how those topics could be analyzed and addressed beyond the mere application of theories and leadership approaches pertaining to gender (Alimo-Metcalf 2010; Ayman and Korabik 2010), and particularly to gender equality in Africa.

According to the International Labour Organization (2000, 48), “Gender equality, or equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.” Furthermore, gender equality—including in relation to leadership—is not just a fundamental value but, more importantly, constitutes a driving force for a more inclusive approach to transformative change. Effective leadership is not possible without full consideration of how gender dynamics can (1) shape perceptions, personal expectations, and those expectations expressed by others, and (2) induce—desired, permitted, or prohibited—behavioral rules and norms that are reflected in diverse spheres of influence and spans of power and control (for example, character, competence and skills, context, and communication) and at different—community, organizational, and national—levels of interaction (Eklund, Barry, and Grunberg 2017). Gender equality and effective leadership,

as concepts, are inextricably intertwined (Eklund, Barry, and Grunberg 2017; Kark and Eagly 2010). Understanding this interrelation and the associated ripple effects in various domains is critical if Africa is to follow a path to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and particularly gender equality across the continent’s different regions.

Various actors (such as governments, the private sector, society, and individuals) at different levels have made and continue to make concerted efforts to ensure that African people—including women, girls, and youth—can effectively contribute to shaping and implementing the aspirations of the 2030 development agenda for the benefit of all. While we see some encouraging signs toward creating mutually reinforcing mechanisms for improved gender equality and inclusive leadership in line with the SDGs implementation process, the overall picture remains rather complex and varies considerably from one country to the other. Advancing the cause for gender equality so that we may fully achieve the goals and targets of sustainable development is not only the right thing to do but an imperative for Africa. In this context, we can identify at least two ways various actors have approached the relationship between gender equality and leadership effectiveness.

On the one hand, the most popular approach has been to optimize leadership effectiveness by increasing the participation of women in management and leadership positions as a response to their very noticeable absence in several sectors. Studies have shown that leaving some stakeholders—in this case, women with their various realities, and other groups (such as the youth, disabled, and elderly) at the margins—out of the leadership equation may lead to mixed results in terms of advancing gender equality and building strong commitment toward achieving sustainable development (Waldman et al. 2018; Hunt, Layton, and Prince 2015; UN Women et al. 2015; Nkomo and Ngambi 2013; Hoyt 2010; African Union 2009). Various reports² have documented economic losses directly or indirectly caused by the lack of a systematic and participatory approach of all actors to catalyze process and development efforts. This is also evidenced through the persistent disparities in accessing and receiving benefits from productive

2 A recent World Bank report projected a global loss of about US\$160 trillion in wealth due to differences in lifetime earnings between women and men (Wodon and de la Brière 2018). Similarly, a report by UN Women et al. (2015) had estimated the costs of gender inequality in Africa south of the Sahara (SSA) to be an average of US\$95 billion per year. The same report also mentioned that for countries such as Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda, the gender gap regarding notably agricultural productivity could amount to as much as US\$100 million, US\$105 million, and US\$67 million per year, respectively.

At the same time, it was also projected that a significant reduction of gender gaps in different sectors would increase social and economic gains (WEF 2018; FAO 2011) and generate trillions of dollars in global growth. Thus, most regions could achieve a gain of approximately 8 percent annually in incremental gross domestic product and SSA in particular could register an increase of 12 percent annually in GDP by 2025 over a business-as-usual scenario (McKinsey Global Institute 2015).

resources illustrated by, among other factors, the low female and youth participation in existing and new markets. Differences in access to employment have equally played to the disadvantage of women owing to multiple socially defined roles and responsibilities that often constrain their mobility, time, and full engagement. Furthermore, significant differences according to gender in access to formal and informal education, and in the impacts of development interventions and threats such as climate change, high prevalence of disease, and poor health conditions, have contributed to a high level of inequality across Africa's regions and between different groups of African men and women.

On the other hand, it is now generally recognized that addressing such problems involves more than just fixing the issue of women's representation. In line with the literature on social (gender) role theory that suggests different patterns of socialization for men and women and gender stereotypes resulting from the division of labor in different social spheres; some research has also found that men are likely to be more effective than women in management and leadership positions (Koenig et al. 2011; Wood and Eagly 2009; Eagly and Karau 1991). A growing body of literature is currently revisiting the perceptions and stereotypes about leadership effectiveness and finding new evidence that both men and women can be equally effective leaders using different styles and operating in different contexts (Badura et al. 2018; Saint-Michel 2018; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr 2014; Cooper and Nirenberg 2012; Appelbaum, Audet, and Miller 2003). Therefore, in addition to increasing women's numbers in positions of leadership, another strategy is to support and nurture a pipeline of African leaders—male and female—who can change the many stereotypical views about gender and leadership, who can act and effectively influence the realization of gender equality in all spheres of society. For that to happen, current and emerging leaders, regardless of their gender, have a significant role to play in fostering opportunities for people to come together and maximize the potential for positive outcomes. To catalyze the transformative process, it is also imperative to tackle, at different leadership levels, capacity limitations on how to embrace a gender-responsive and inclusive approach to sustainable development; it is imperative to substantially shift attitudes, gender norms, and practices while also encouraging relevant actors to take concrete actions and promote viable solutions to influence social and policy change.

In Africa, and particularly in Africa south of the Sahara (SSA), where it has been projected that significant progress toward gender equality could add up to US\$0.3 trillion to the region's annual output by 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute

2015), how has the process of leadership development unfolded? What has hindered the process? What are the possible pathways to progress? How can we scale up those pathways? This chapter explores these questions in the context of the SDGs and, particularly, with regard to how the nexus between leadership effectiveness and gender equality relates to achieving sustainable development in the region.

Sustainable Development in SSA: Assessing Progress in Catalyzing the Relationship between Gender Equality and Leadership

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, it became clear that moving forward decisively on the 17 SDGs and related targets will demand commitment and action, but above all, we will need a holistic approach to gender equality and effective leadership if we are to integrate the SDGs into strategic plans, policies, and processes.

What has been done? In addition to the several ongoing efforts at national and regional levels, a number of initiatives have taken place at the continental level:

- Adopted in 2004, the **African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa** (SDGEA) saw African heads of state and government reinforce their commitment to parity and gender mainstreaming in the political and development agenda while committing themselves to actual implementation in their countries at all levels of decision making. Following the 2010 evaluation of the SDGEA, the African Union in 2016 commissioned another evaluative study to document progress and lessons learned in regard to the SDGEA's implementation (African Union 2016). Overall, 28 out of the 54 countries in Africa (about 52 percent) had officially reported on the 13 SDGEA commitments on women, HIV/AIDS, and related health issues; peace and security; gender-based violence; gender parity; women's human rights; rights to land, property, and inheritance; education for women and girls; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (better known as the Maputo Protocol); the strategic framework for the AIDS Watch Africa initiative; the African Trust Fund for women; and annual reporting on achievements. For the majority of these commitments, it was apparent that the little progress made toward gender equality since 2004 was very much concentrated in a handful of countries and for some specific sectors.

- **Agenda 2063**, established in 2013, was designed to strategically guide inclusive growth and sustainable development for Africa over the next 50 years. The plan's framework promotes the attainment of full gender parity and thus emphasizes a set of priority actions and review processes for gender equality and youth and women's empowerment at all economic levels, including access to health, education, science, and technology and access to and control of productive resources (for example, land, credit, inputs, and financial services). Although, in theory, the framework was carefully and inclusively articulated around different priority intervention areas, the strategy for implementing the Agenda 2063 commitments has been unclear about the innovative leadership and management required to achieve gender equality, and thus the overall process to date has yielded uneven results. For that reason, the **African Union Gender Strategy (2018–2028)** was formulated to ensure that gender-related concerns will be clearly reflected and systematically integrated as part of the implementation process (including the development of measures and benchmarks such as gender scorecards, targets, and indicators) of the Agenda 2063 framework.
- Introduced in 2003, the **Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)** framework has been at the center of efforts by African heads of state and government to accelerate economic growth through agriculture-led development and thus contribute directly and indirectly to the achievement of all of the SDGs. In June 2014, taking stock of lessons learned in the first 10 years of CAADP implementation, the heads of state and government of the AU endorsed the *Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods* as a renewed commitment to design and align national and regional policy documents with the implementation of the SDGs, including the transversal theme of gender equality in Africa. Beyond the adoption of several gender-specific commitments, AU member states have also renewed their call for action by all African countries to show tangible results in different socioeconomic and related sectors. Despite the political will expressed in the recent past, the implementation framework still is beset by several flaws regarding adequate mechanisms within CAADP to champion effective leadership to achieve gender equality goals in Africa.

Evidently, the gender gaps in the framework have been mirrored at the country level and especially in the National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans formulated within countries' CAADP compacts to direct agricultural investments to actual beneficiaries (Botreau and Cohen 2019; FAO and African Union 2018).

What are the current trends? Over the past decade, many African policy frameworks have been identified as possible entry points for Africa's development. As described above, some laid a foundation for promoting and strengthening effective leadership toward achieving the SDGs and, particularly, gender equality in Africa. However, the results are far from impressive. A recent report introducing the SDG Gender Index found that the SSA region, with an average regional index score of 51.1, is lagging behind many world regions in meeting most of the SDGs, gender equality included (Equal Measures 2030 2019). For many SSA countries featured in the report, this can partly be explained by the influence of cultural and historical factors as well as different situations of conflict escalation and economic and political instability that, in turn, have affected the establishment of a consistent enabling environment for gender equality. Beyond this report, critical challenges exist in terms of insufficient data coverage and quasi-nonexistent gender-sensitive data collection systems that would support sound performance evaluation and adjustment of country interventions to meet the 2030 development agenda.

Current Status of Gender and Political Leadership in SSA

Women continue to be underrepresented at the top levels of organizational and political processes in different African regions (Barnes and Burchard 2013). According to McKinsey & Company's *Women Matter Africa*, in 2016 women still made up less than 6 percent of the chief executive officers in different sectors and represented only 22 percent of cabinet members in Africa (Moodley et al. 2016). A further analysis of the current trends uses the Gender Parity Index (GPI),³ a socioeconomic measure that, in this case, was adapted to compute the female-to-male ratio of representation in political structures with available data from different African countries. If a given country or region were to make strides in achieving gender parity in parliamentary and ministerial positions, the GPI value would get closer to 1.

³ See the UNESCO Institute of Statistics' definition of the GPI at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/gender-parity-index-gpi> (accessed June 11, 2019).

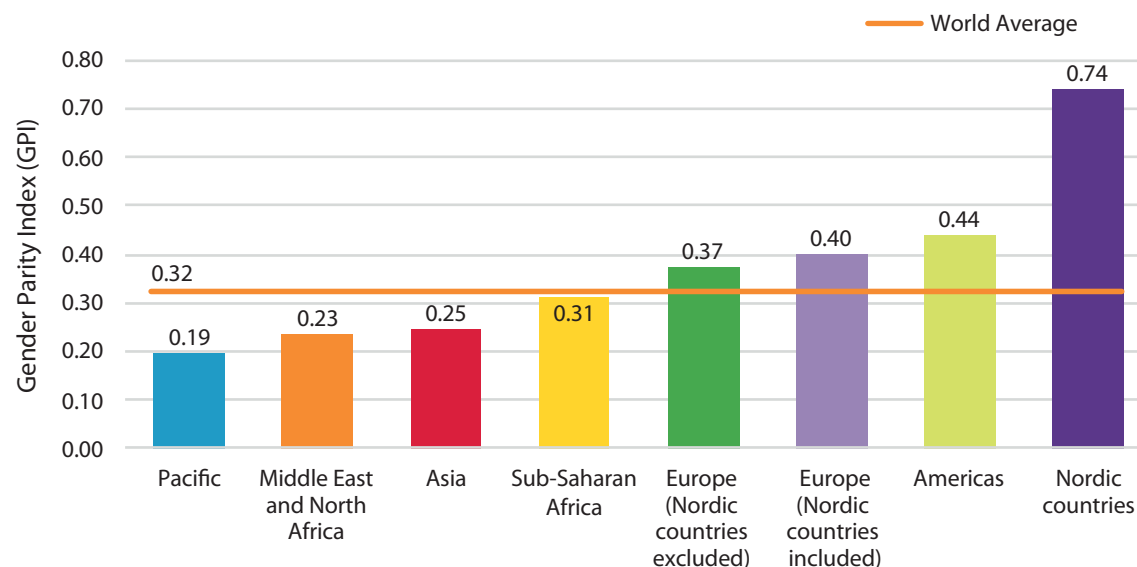
The gender parity in the national governance structures (and particularly in parliament, single or lower house) in SSA has seen relative improvement in recent years. The region's GPI stood almost at the same level as the global average (a GPI of 0.32) in January 2019 (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 also shows that the SSA region has recorded a higher GPI value than the Pacific, MENA, and Asian regions and that its GPI does not lag far behind Europe when Nordic countries are excluded. As Figure 3.2 shows, the region has demonstrated an upward trend with respect to GPI, although the pace has slowed in the last five years, 2013 through 2018.

Similarly, several SSA countries have increased the proportion of women in government considerably (Figure 3.3). With women occupying 24 percent of seats in national parliaments in 2013, SSA mirrors the global average, and it also had the only country (Rwanda) with the highest percentage of women in parliament worldwide (about 61.3 percent of seats in the lower house; data from Inter-Parliamentary Union). Rwanda continues to lead globally with a GPI value of 1.58 in 2018.

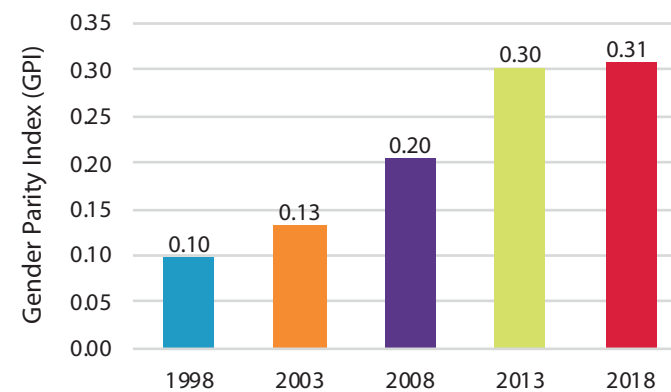
In addition to Rwanda, other countries such as Ethiopia, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa also registered a net improvement in gender parity in political participation over the last two decades, and all ranked in the top 10 in the 2019 SDG Gender Index. This has translated into an increased female-to-male ratio of representation in national parliamentary positions. We can partly attribute this evolution to the adoption and implementation of legislation on gender quotas for political participation in several African countries since the 1990s. South Africa, Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda are among the leading countries in the region to implement gender quotas in their legal systems (Hills 2015; Bauer 2008). For most of these African countries, a similar set of factors—including the political transition processes (such as adoption of new constitutional laws) and pressure from gender activists and other advocacy groups—has, by and large, contributed to the relatively successful implementation of gender quotas in the political realm.

FIGURE 3.1—GENDER PARITY INDEX (DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE WORLD) IN PARLIAMENT IN 2019



Source: Authors' computation using Inter-Parliamentary Union data.

FIGURE 3.2—GENDER PARITY INDEX (GPI) IN PARLIAMENT, SSA REGION, FOR THE PERIOD 1998–2018



Source: Authors' computation using Inter-Parliamentary Union data.

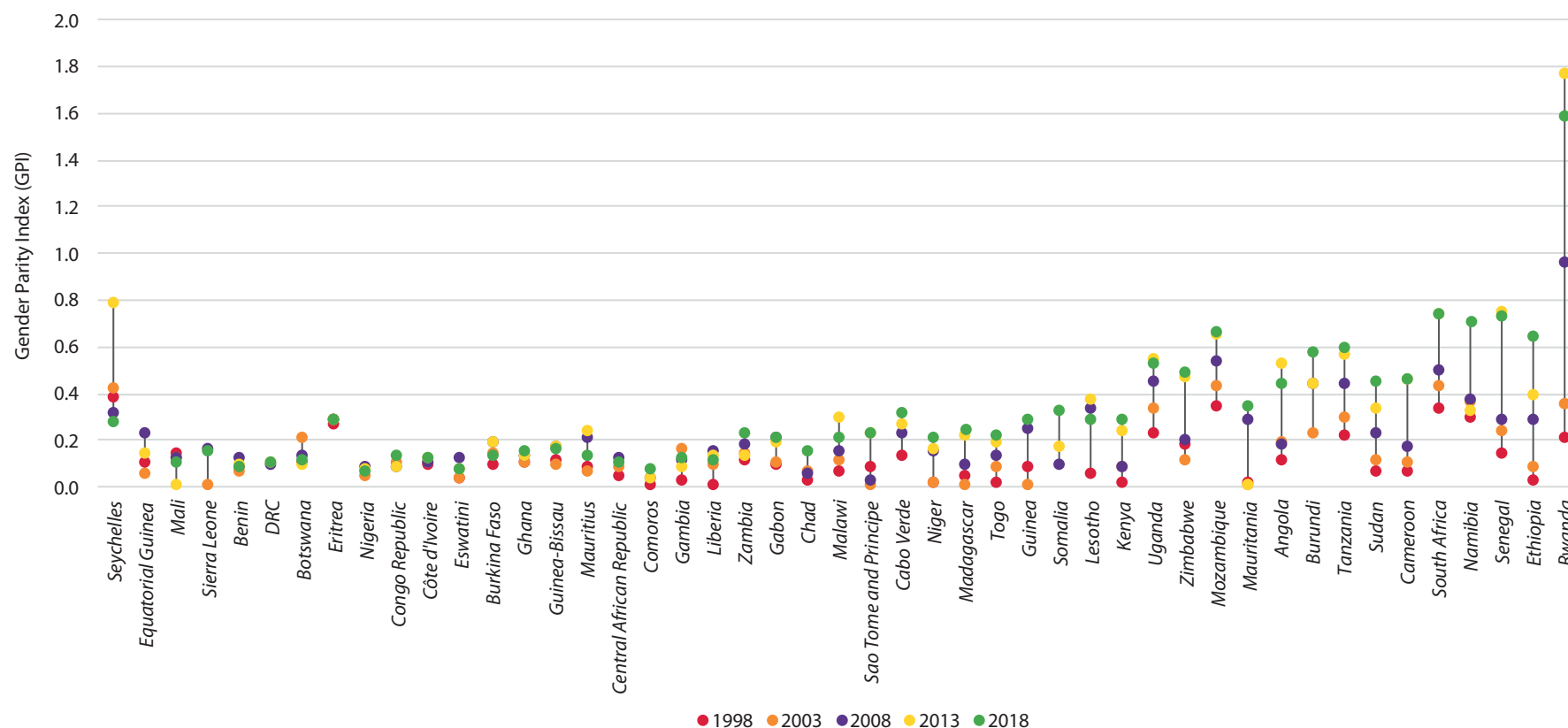
Whereas some SSA countries stand out with higher GPI values, Figure 3.3 also shows wide variation across the continent as more than half of the countries have less than 10 percent of women parliamentarians and even less when other parameters are considered.

With regard to gender parity in ministerial positions, South Africa led the way in 2017 followed by Rwanda, Swaziland (Eswatini), and Seychelles, where the female-to-male ratio of representation in political leadership positions has seen a steady increase (UNECA 2018). However, as of early 2017, only 18.3 percent of government ministers in SSA were led by women in different ministerial portfolios (data from Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). Over time, the distribution

of portfolios has become more diversified with women increasingly taking on cabinet positions (including for economy and finance, environment and management of natural resources, and energy, among others) in addition to the ministerial positions (for example, social and family affairs, education, gender and youth, and so forth) traditionally led by women (UNECA 2018).

In other domains of government and particularly with regard to female participation at the community or local government level and in other nongovernmental implementing agencies supporting sectors such as agriculture and rural development, data on recent trends are not always available or consistent and do not provide a complete picture of the situation and allow for reliable

FIGURE 3.3—GENDER PARITY INDEX IN PARLIAMENT IN SSA, COUNTRY DISTRIBUTION, 1998–2018



Source: Authors' computation using Inter-Parliamentary Union data.

comparisons between and within SSA countries (African Union 2018; UN Statistics Division 2015).

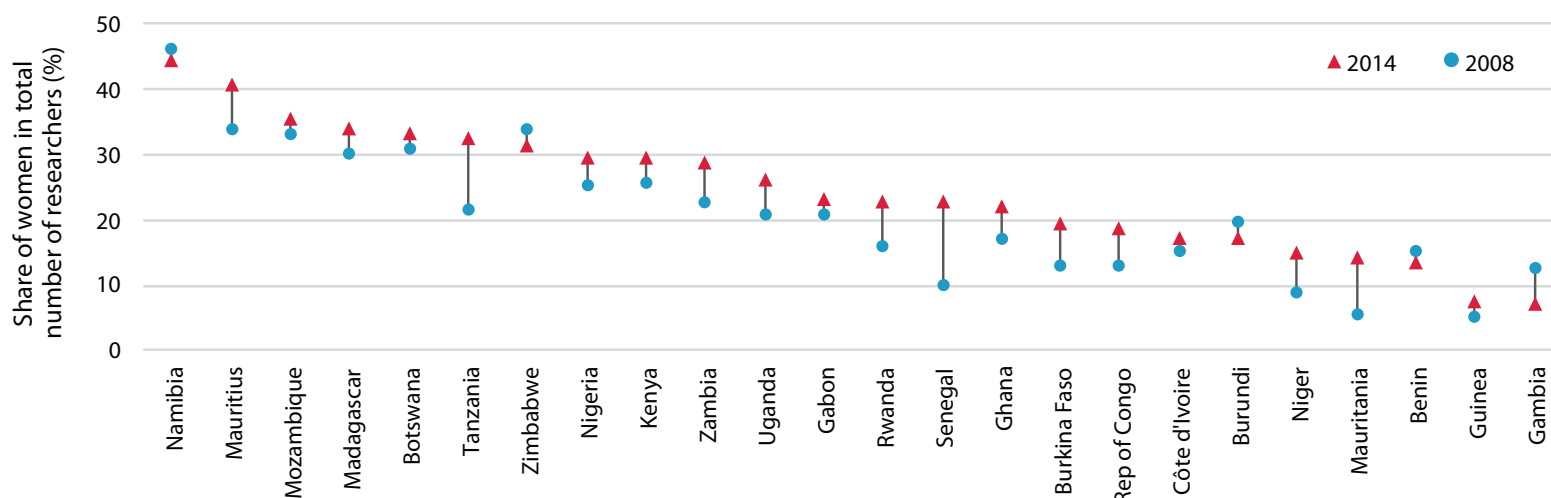
Status of Gender and Leadership in Agricultural Research and Related Activities

A critical issue in the context of gender and leadership in African agriculture has been the leaky pipeline of female African agricultural scientists, particularly women researchers capable of leading and influencing the sector, and their representation in leadership positions in agricultural institutions so that they might substantially contribute to increased economic returns and policy and social change across the continent. Using data from Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI), a recent report on research capacity in the African agricultural sector highlighted current trends with regard to existing technical and human capacity for agricultural research in SSA (Beintema 2017). Looking at scientific disciplines in general, the data show a significant increase in the participation of female scientists in many African countries over the 2008–2014 period, but it has been unevenly distributed across the subregions (Figure 3.4).

The assessment report also articulated the need to combine an increased share of female researchers in agriculture with strong female participation in mid- and senior-level management. The evidence, however, shows a decreasing trend in the female-to-male ratio of representation in agricultural and related research, with women being significantly underrepresented in senior and leadership positions in several agricultural research institutions (Beintema 2017). In 2014, only about 24 percent of all senior level agricultural scientists were women (ASTI data, based on a sample of 19 SSA countries, Beintema 2017).

Generally, the female share of agricultural researchers has remained low in many African countries except for Lesotho, Namibia, Mauritius, and South Africa, where that share has steadily increased, reaching 48 percent, 44 percent, 42 percent, and 40 percent, respectively, in 2014 (Figure 3.5). However, when considering the seniority level, only a handful of countries (Lesotho, Swaziland, and Mauritius) have made strides toward increasing the number of women holding mid- and senior-level positions in agricultural research institutions. For Ethiopia, the Republic of Gambia, and many other SSA countries, there is still a long way to go in increasing the participation of women in senior management and leadership of various institutions and bodies.

FIGURE 3.4—GROWTH IN THE SHARE OF WOMEN RESEARCHERS, 2008–2014



Source: Beintema (2017).

Note: Based on a sample of 24 African countries with available data.

As for the institutions themselves, the data show a similar trend in selected African agricultural research institutions and academia (Figure 3.6). For most such institutions, as of 2014, only a few had taken steps to attract and maintain qualified and competent women in strategic positions in the agricultural sector. Hence, there is a need for more capacity-building initiatives targeting women in agricultural science (Bomett and Wangalachi 2017).

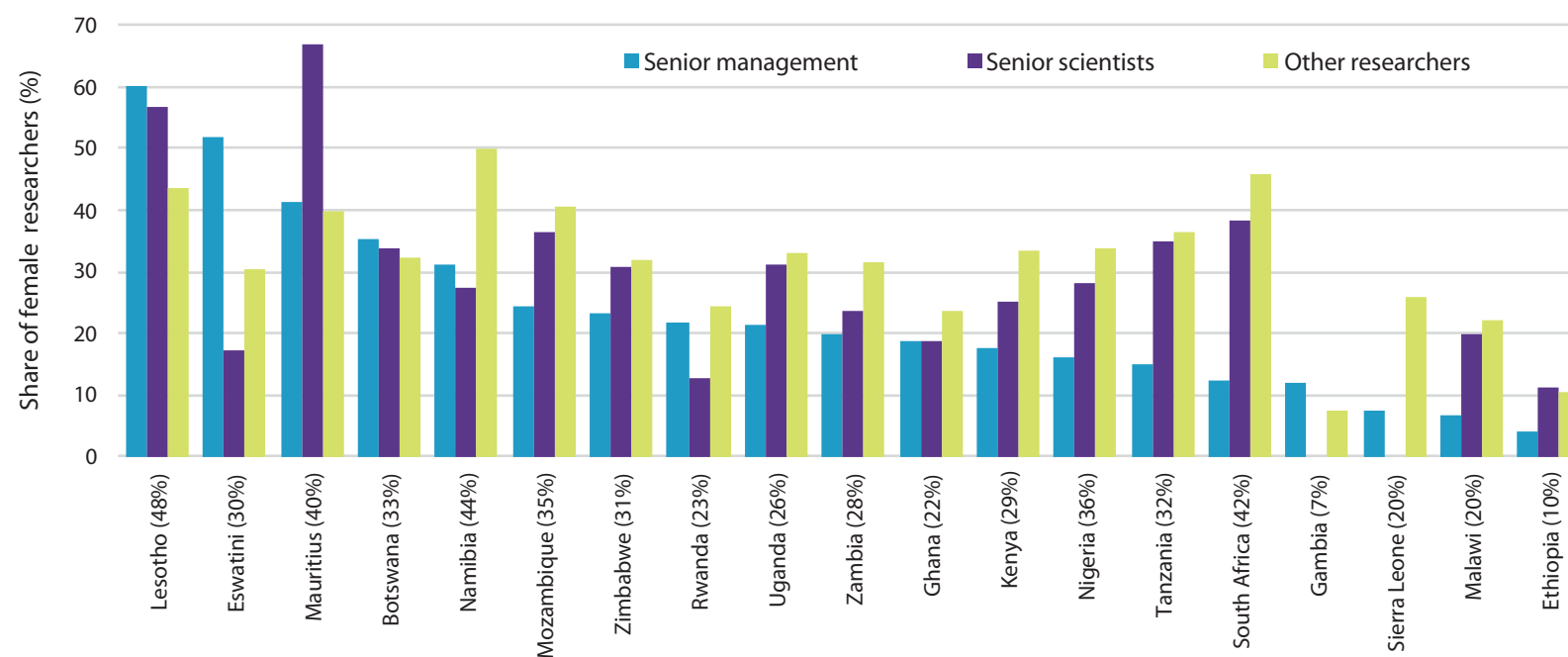
In the case of Ethiopia, the data show some slight improvement for female participation in general at the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) from 2007/08 to 2014, but overall, there is still a scarcity of senior management and leadership positions open to women. It is in this context that EIAR recently commissioned a participatory gender audit (Drucza et al. 2017) to estimate the extent of the extant gender gaps in the institution's various research centers and to take concrete action to increase the number of female researchers and, more

importantly, invest in women's capacity development in science and leadership. Many other African institutions are currently taking similar steps to address the gender gap and open up opportunities for increased and equitable representation of men and women at the highest levels.

Gender and Leadership in Action: What Are the Critical Impediments for Africa?

From the preceding trend analysis, it appears that a lot more still needs to happen at different levels and this will require commitment of all driving forces including capable African women ready to take leadership in and influence various segments of society (Ogunsanya 2007). Considering gender equality in the quest toward attaining sustainable development outcomes in Africa remains critically important. However, it is also paramount to consider who the effective

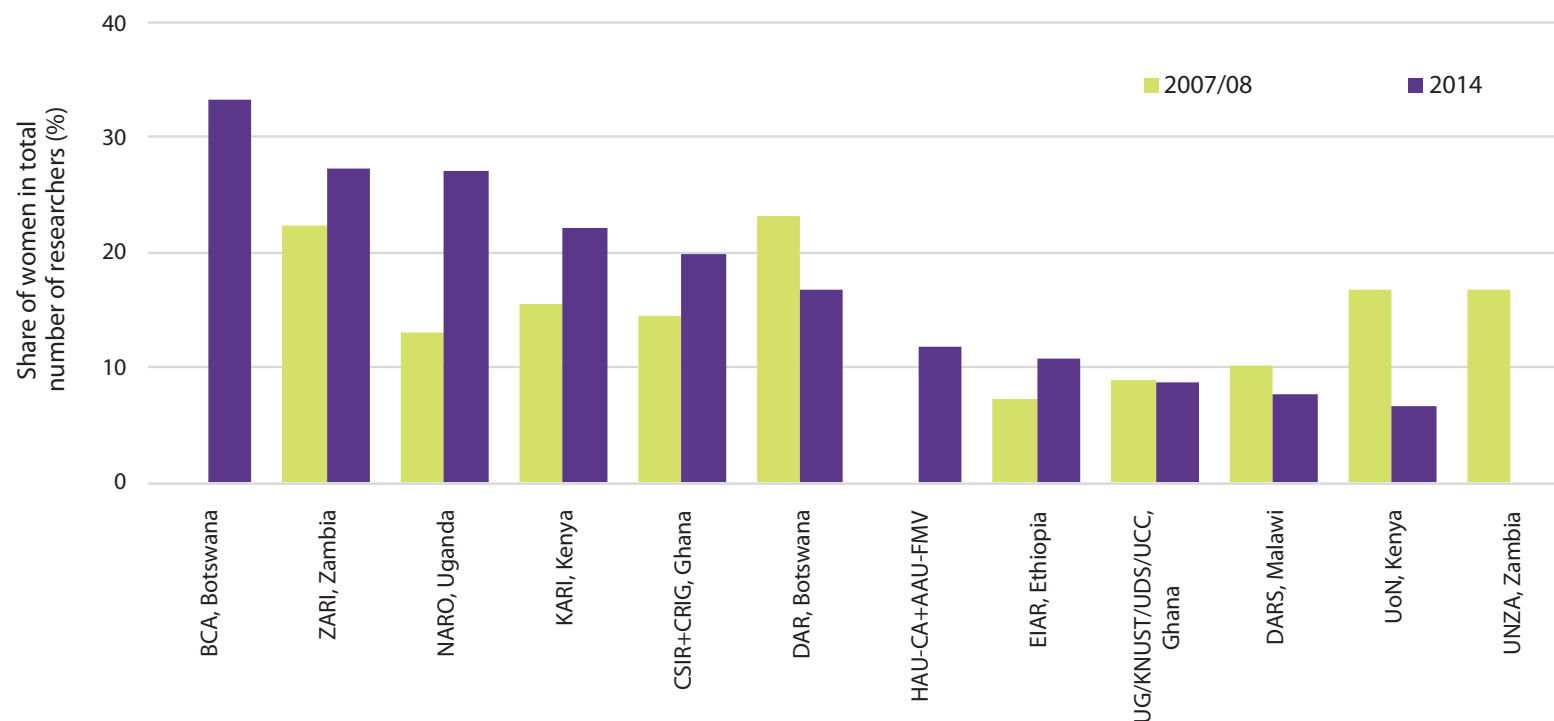
FIGURE 3.5—SHARE OF WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL AND LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AT SELECTED INSTITUTES AND UNIVERSITIES, 2014



Source: Beintema (2017).

Note: Percentages within brackets are the average share of women in the country's total agricultural researchers.

FIGURE 3.6—SHARE OF WOMEN IN TOTAL NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCHERS BY SENIORITY LEVEL FOR SELECTED INSTITUTES AND UNIVERSITIES, 2007/08 AND 2014



Source: Beintema (2017), ASTI datasets and ASTI-AWARD 2007/08.

leaders are and under what circumstances they become leaders and can make a significant impact on the continent. In this light, it is essential to rearticulate what Sen (1999)'s framework termed individual and group "entitlements and capabilities" in the context of social and economic empowerment so as to shed light on what building a strong leadership culture would mean for the African continent to achieve the SDGs and gender equality in particular.

- *Economic empowerment* refers to "the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth" (OECD 2011, 6). This definition is summarized in Eyben, Kabeer, and Cornwall as

the situation when people can be "thinking beyond immediate survival needs and thus able to recognize and exercise agency and choice" (2008, 10). This dimension of empowerment as it relates to effective leadership is also directly linked to the concept of *entitlements*. These can be defined as the resources that proponents of the next-generation leadership and people themselves need as individual assets (such as land, livestock, savings, housing, technology, labor, and so on) or should have access to and control over for the purpose of more informed decision-making processes and appropriate plans of action.

- *Social empowerment* may be understood as a "process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively

to change social relations and the institutions and discourses” that, in many instances, may exclude people at the margins (Combaz and McLoughlin 2014). This other dimension of empowerment has a lot to do with how to approach effective leadership for sustainable development. In this context, the notion of individual and collective *capabilities* becomes very relevant as one thinks of human conditions (for example, education, health, and other basic needs), social dimensions (for example, interaction/socialization, representation, identity, and so on), and psychological aspects (for example, agency, self-esteem and confidence, voice, and so on). All of these dimensions refer to people’s abilities to deploy and use available resources, control their own lives, make their own choices, and exercise bargaining power while also organizing and influencing the direction of social change and creating more equitable societies.

Both social and economic empowerment are therefore prerequisites for sustainable development. However, the process of achieving this socioeconomic empowerment for all is not straightforward; it is, however, directly related to the specific obstacles that different people and especially women in Africa face to become leaders. Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) and Hoyt (2007, 2010) summarize some of the barriers in three broad categories as follows:

- *Differences in human capital.* Differences exist in the combination of hard (teachable and quantifiable) and soft (interpersonal) skills people need to unlock and nurture their potential to aspire to positions of leadership. In SSA, several factors (access to information, education, research and other technical knowledge, career development and growth, mentoring, and informal and formal networking opportunities, among others) are still at work in limiting the self-realization of many Africans, and in particular women and youth—as their participation in and contribution to different spheres is often conditional upon the socially constructed (productive versus unproductive) roles and responsibilities defined for men and women in different contextual settings in African regions.
- *Institutional factors.* Ideally institutions provide a conducive environment wherein people can develop a practice of effective leadership and together figure out steps forward on the road to gender equality beyond the status quo male-female representation (Rao and Kelleher 2003). In this process, a host of structural factors (for example, existing structures, policies, and support

systems including staff appointment, advancement plans and promotion processes, work–life balance, and flexibility mechanisms) and individual factors (such as amount of experience, position held, individual circumstances, and the various intersecting identities that are comprised by gender, age, race, class, and ethnicity) can drastically affect the overall organizational culture, which, if not well articulated in the context of a fully inclusive and equitable system, can prevent key players, including women, from having opportunities to move into higher ranks. In addition, in many African institutions, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes (beliefs and perceptions) take precedence over the real issues at stake, and this is often at the expense of women’s chances of emerging as competent and charismatic leaders.

- *Sociocultural factors.* In most of Africa, public systems (institutions) and private structures (families) have evolved in a dynamic, multicultural environment (Aycan 2008; Jackson 2004). That environment has, in turn, shaped people’s thinking (through unconscious bias) about leadership and their approach to it. In many African countries, that thinking and approach often takes place through a gender lens. In such a context, traditional values and practices, including religion, more often than not have been in competition with the inclusive and transformative leadership process that is hoped for on the African continent. Cultural barriers and their manifestation on the ground still make it hard for African women—more so than men—to fit into and to advance in leadership positions (Kiamba 2008). Cultural shifts—inclusive, collaborative, and reflective processes—in local and national systems and structures have the potential to affect the practice of leadership. But this would necessitate an inner process whereby leaders understand themselves and the world so that they can effectively work with a variety of stakeholder groups to make effective change. Ultimately, this would open doors for those engaged in the long and difficult journey toward attaining gender equality goals through transformative leadership.

A Renewed Approach to Leadership to Achieve Gender Equality in Africa

Despite the current trends and challenges, younger and older generations should pursue an agenda for Africa’s socioeconomic transformation through effective leadership to realize gender equality at all levels. What are the possible pathways to success and how can we scale them up? One way to answer those questions is

to explore a renewed approach to leadership that builds on *transformational* and *transformative* theories (Hewitt, Davis, and Lashley 2014; Shields 2010) in the context of a culturally diverse Africa.

In recent years, African institutions and bodies have embraced a more transformational approach to leadership that focuses on preparing individuals and organizations for socioeconomic change. *Transformational leadership theory* presents leaders' personal traits and characters as the key components for their own transformation into better leaders who will, in turn, inspire their followers to effect positive change as they themselves also develop into leaders (Burns 2004). To that end, it is important that we facilitate more capacity-building initiatives and leadership development for individuals, organizations, and structures on issues such as allocation of duties, distribution of resources, and existing cultural (gender) roles, traditions, and norms.

Promoting formal education has been a key lever for this process given the growing population of youth across the continent. Over time, the need to combine cognitive and noncognitive capacities for leadership development has become increasingly relevant, and thus that method has been encouraged at different levels. Consequently, the past two decades have seen the launch of a number of leadership preparation programs and initiatives, with many still being rolled out, with a common objective of unleashing and nurturing the potential of the next generation of African leaders (see Appendix Table A.1⁴ for a description of some of the notable leadership initiatives in Africa).

Whereas some differences exist in the capacity-building models (for example, residential and nonresidential programs) and the target audience (programs for women only versus those for men and women, age criterion, and so on), most programs center on the individual and focus on such things as sharpening technical skills, fostering peer learning, mentorship and role modeling, and developing interpersonal skills as well as promoting a networking culture. To date, most of these programs have made tremendous achievements in terms of bringing together an increasing number of Africans from across different regions, working on similar or different topics, equipping them with the skills necessary for their personal development, and encouraging the establishment of strong alumni networks across the continent. Beyond the positive achievements, we must ask how and to what extent in this process of cultivating aspiring leaders for

effectiveness the necessary goals of gender equality, social justice, and ethics are safeguarded so as to maximize outcomes and policy change in African societies. Moreover, how do we leverage the success stories generated by the programs and initiatives; how do we critically assess program outcomes and impacts beyond the individuals; and, finally, how do we envision the sustainability of most of the donor-funded programs?

The many challenges to making gender equality a reality in African societies are too complex to be dealt with in isolation, by putting them exclusively in the hands of existing and prospective African leaders. A profound understanding of leadership as an inclusive and shared process is very much needed. Africa as a continent should be envisaging the traditional *transformational leadership* approach alongside a transformative leadership process that “offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others. Transformative leadership, therefore, inextricably links education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded” (Shields 2010, 559). As such, positive individual change should reflect on other people and groups, processes, and systems and, ultimately, lead to transforming the entire society. A good mix of transformational and transformative approaches to leadership would be necessary to achieve gender equality, but this will happen only if specific conditions are met to create an improved enabling environment and develop a sound framework for collecting and documenting evidence while also strengthening accountability mechanisms for sustainable and equitable outcomes.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Africa faces complex challenges in promoting and implementing development approaches that champion equity and diversity in the various sectors of its economy. As a result, the progress made in developing excellent policy frameworks at the regional and continental levels has still not satisfied the continent's growing needs and priorities. Our analysis of current trends in two key components of the continent's economy (political governance and agriculture) reveals that in many African countries gender gaps persist not only in political representation, agricultural research, and innovation systems but also in other positions of influence. We locate the reasons for this situation in the failures (1)

⁴ See Chapter 3 Appendix Table A.1 (<https://www.resakss.org/node/6748?region=aw>).

to systematically integrate a gender perspective in national systems and sector policies; (2) to promote strong and accountable leadership at all levels to address disparities in human capital and sociocultural constraints; and (3) to tackle institutional deficiencies.

If African leaders, organizations, and other stakeholders are going to leverage the potential for leadership to have the most impact, then it is imperative to define specific conditions for success and sustainability including setting a new paradigm for collective and concerted action. Our review of gender and leadership in the African context leads to the following recommendations:

- *Create an improved enabling environment that will provide a solid foundation for a level playing field for all stakeholders while also striking the right balance among the interventions and approaches for building successful pathways to gender equality.* This requires, in particular, putting greater emphasis on multistakeholder processes that will help develop platforms for social and policy dialogue and define adequate intergovernmental frameworks for capacity building and strengthening at the individual, institutional, and system levels. In the policy sphere, decision makers should provide national leadership in the formulation and effective implementation of sound evidence-based gender policies supplemented by targeted participatory programming at local, national, and regional levels. At the institutional and organizational level, interventions should ensure that the perspectives of various target and nontarget groups are fully considered and the relationships between and among them taken into account. In addition, different community actors need to take the lead in promoting an environment for social cohesion and economic and political empowerment of the local populations.
- *Develop a sound framework for collecting and documenting evidence on the manifestation of collective action toward transformational and transformative leadership for societal change.* This calls for effective and reliable data systems, mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, and targets and benchmarks against which progress and change can be monitored and evaluated. Additionally, it is essential to define (1) what would constitute sound evidence, bearing in mind that not all concepts can be easily measurable and adequately analyzed from a gendered perspective (for example, contribution to gross domestic product by men versus women; male versus female

empowerment; social status influenced by power dynamics; level of resilience; capacity to face risks; and others); (2) how much evidence and analysis are necessary to reflect new learnings and challenges, including evidence from interventions, knowledge shared among partners, and analysis of coherence between different stakeholders; and (3) how to ensure that the compiled evidence will influence the policy debate around gender equality and, ultimately, advance the cause of those who live at the margins of Africa's economy, especially women and youth.

- *Create an adequate framework for accountability for all relevant actors.* Transformative leadership comes with the responsibility to make the case for the less advantaged actors; voice and let others voice their views, ideas, and recommendations for gender equality results; and facilitate consensus-building exercises to bring about change and, ultimately, to take visible steps to move from commitments to effective execution and delivery to accountability processes. While accountability defines the nature and scope of people's, organizations', and institutions' responsibilities and achievements, mechanisms to ensure its full implementation are often flawed when they do exist (Waldman, Theobald, and Morgan 2018). As Goetz (2003, 53) aptly argues, accountability institutions "are designed to support the rights of less powerful actors . . . to demand answers of and enforce punishments on more powerful actors (for instance the executive). However, they do so unevenly. They may selectively amplify the 'voice' of particular groups, making authorities answer only to powerful social actors, or making a developing country government more accountable to foreign corporations and international financial institutions than to its own citizens. In this sense, the real-life workings of accountability institutions (who answers to whom, who is able to punish authorities?) provide us with a key to uncovering power relations in any polity." This is particularly relevant in the African context, where the imperative is to rethink the accountability mechanisms by establishing common evaluation criteria that can also be adapted to different country-specific circumstances and by systematically integrating gender equality concerns into Africa's peer-review processes and other monitoring mechanisms.