



Gender Balance in Tanzania: Success and Challenges

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Key messages

The Gender Development Index shows that women are more disadvantaged than men in the three basic dimensions of human development: education, health, and income.

Overall unemployment rate of women remains high averaging 12.7% for both 2014 and 2020/21 surveys and vulnerability is higher among female youth.

Tanzania has registered improvement in the participation of women in decision-making processes at both the national and household levels.

The percentage of women who experience physical violence has slightly increased while that of sexual violence has declined between 2010 and 2015/16.

Introduction and Background

Gender equality is one of the cross-cutting issues prioritized by many countries across the world. This matter has been a topic of concern and has been prioritized by many actors including governments, private sectors, researchers, and academia. Marking the urgency of the matter, gender equality has been streamlined into international, regional, and national strategies and policies, including Goal 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the National Development Vision 2025. Among successful advocacy initiatives is the recognition of International Women Day (IWD) which is usually celebrated on 8th of March every year.

Tanzania's population is projected to be 61.7 million of which the largest share of the population is dominated by women (NBS, 2022). Despite the high dominance of the women population, they are marginalized compared to their male counterparts, because of their control over assets is constrained, limited involvement in decision making, and limited access to economic and political opportunities¹. This is more likely to be contributed by discriminatory social norms, attitudes towards them and the role they are expected to play such as being family caretakers (Osorio, et al., 2014; Feinstein, et al., 2010). However, women are key contributors of economic growth thus their role must not be undermined. This brief highlights successes and challenges in the promotion of gender equality in political, social, and economic aspects in Tanzania. It argues that it is not possible to attain gender balance without knowledge of the existing status quo on the promotion of gender equality.

¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/tanzania/our-work/gender-equality-and-women%E2%80%99s-empowerment>

This brief uses data from the Demographic & Health Survey, the Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS), and secondary data available in other government reports and related literature.



Main Findings

The Gender Development Index (GDI)² is a significant measure used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to assess gender parity in human development achievement in three basic dimensions: education, health, and income. Statistics show that In Tanzania there was a notable increase in the GDI from 0.936 in 2014 to 0.948 in 2019, which later declined to 0.943 in both 2020 and 2021. These results imply women are more disadvantaged in enjoying dividends of human development achievements since the GDI is less than 1.



Women and girls in the labor market

Unemployment remains a huge policy concern that many countries including Tanzania are struggling to address. According to the Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS), Tanzania has recorded a decline in the overall unemployment rate from 10.5% in 2014 to 9.3% in 2020/21. Apparently, unemployment rate among men declined significantly by 2.4 percentage points, but remained the same among women between 2014 and 2020/21 (see figure 1). Unemployment among women in Dar es Salaam declined from 32.2% in 2014 to 28.6% in 2020/21. On the other hand, unemployment among women increased from 13.6% to 16% for those residing in other urban areas and from 9% to 9.6% for those residing in rural areas between 2014 and 2020/21 (see figure 2).

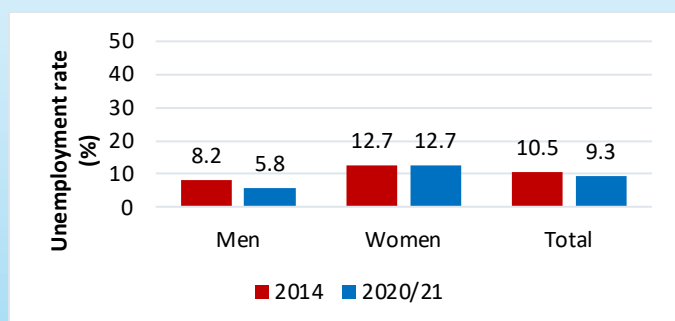
² Gender Development Index is the ratio of female to male human Development Index values. The index ranges from 0 to 1 where a value of 1 implies development equality between men and women, less than 1 implies women are disadvantaged while above 1 implies women are advantaged.

Further, youth³ unemployment has dropped significantly among men but remained a serious challenge among young women (see figure 3).

Total women employed in agriculture, fishing and forestry have declined from 69% in 2014 to 60% in 2020/21 while the percentage of women employed in the manufacturing and service industry significantly increased between 2014 and 2020/21. These results demonstrate that there is a shift from agricultural activities to services and manufacturing activities which also points to some structural change taking places. Among other initiatives, the Government through the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) is implementing the Conditional Cash Transfer initiative which aims at reducing poverty and social exclusion in poor households. This social protection programme has exposed women and other household beneficiaries to productive non-agricultural activities (REPOA, 2019).

Unpaid work including domestic services for their own and household final use remains a critical labour issue particularly among women. Such work tends to consume much of their time leaving limited choice to women in the engagement of paid productive work (NBS, 2017). Thus, women tend to be more disadvantaged in the labour market than men which explains gender gap in productive employment and better earnings. With this gap which has some impact on women in society, there is a need for better targeted affirmative policies and laws to promote increased participation of women in productive activities and fair earnings.

Figure 1: Unemployment rate by gender

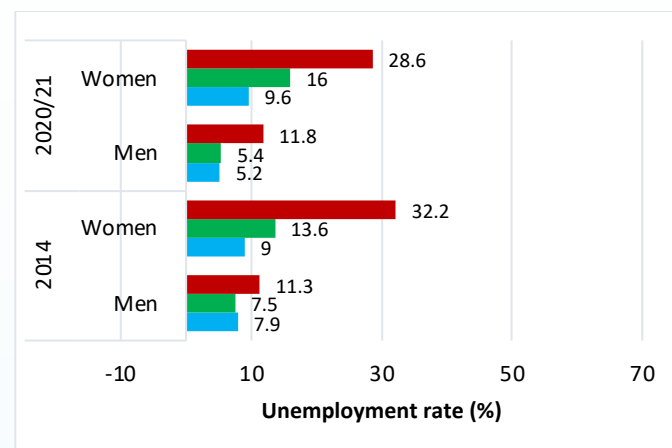


Source: ILFS (2020/21)

3 According to Tanzania, youth is any person between the age of 15-35 years.

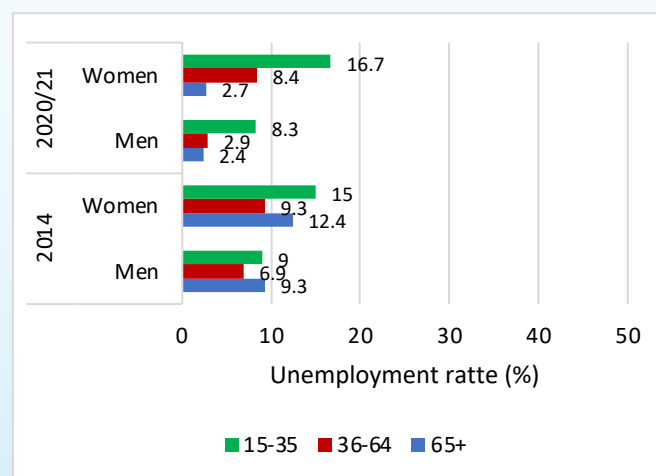
4 Gender parity index for gross school enrollment ratio is the ratio of girls to boys enrolled in public and private schools. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) indicates parity between girls and boys. A GPI of less than 1 suggests girls are more disadvantaged than boys in learning opportunities and a GPI of greater than 1 suggests the other way around.

Figure 2: Unemployment rate; Gender Vs Location



Source: ILFS (2020/21)

Figure 3: Unemployment rate; Gender vs Age group



Source: ILFS (2020/21)

Developments in education

With the pithy aphorism that “if you educate a woman, you educate the whole society”, Tanzania has made significant progress in Gender Parity Index⁴ for gross secondary school enrolment from 0.96 in 2014 to 1.10 in 2020 (UNESCO, 2021).

This implies the number of girls enrolled in secondary education has significantly increased compared to men. Between 2014 and 2020, the Gender Parity Index for gross primary school enrolment; and the gross primary and secondary school enrolment has slightly remained the same but with the index above the value of 1. This implies that gender parity in primary schools have been reached, with girls having a slightly more advantage than boys in enrolling for primary education as well as for both primary and secondary education. However, a notable increase in school enrolment is more likely to have been triggered by factors such as the adoption of the Universal Primary Education policy, introduction of free education, and establishment of at least one public secondary school at every ward across the country to enhance access of education to everyone. Thus, enhancing access to education opportunities, especially for girls is more likely to awaken their status, confidence, and capability.

Maternal health

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), the total life expectancy at birth stood at 66 years whereby for women and men it stood at 69 years and 64 years, respectively. As of 2019, statistics from the Human Development Report show the life expectancy of women and men in Uganda was 67.6 years and 61 years, respectively, while that of Rwanda was 71.1 years and 66.8 years for women and men, respectively; and for Kenya was 69 years and 64.3 years for women and men, respectively. These statistics provide evidence that women have a longer life expectancy than men in Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya. According to the TDHS-MIS of 2015/16, the maternal mortality rate (MMR) was noted at 556 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is an increase compared to the MMR reported in the 2012 Population and Housing Census (432 deaths per 100,000 live birth) and in the 2004-05 TDHS (454 deaths per 100,000 live birth). This increase in MMR may be attributed to the low quality of health facilities, among other factors as suggested by (Shija, et al., 2011). However, the government of Tanzania is still making tireless efforts through the implementation of different initiatives targeted to enhancing access to quality health services among women such as free health services to pregnant women and children under the age of five (URT, 2017). It is thus important for the relevant authorities to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of such initiatives to lower the rate of maternal mortality in Tanzania.

Decision making at the national level

Women representatives at the central decision-making position of the Government are expected to be a catalyst in bridging the gender gap including underrepresentation of women in various decision-making platforms, equal access to political, social, and economic opportunities, and so on. For the first time in the history, since independence, Tanzania got its female President and Head of State H.E Samia Suluhu Hassan who ascended into power in March 2021 after the death of the late President John Pombe Magufuli. Even before proceeding as the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, she was also the first female Vice President from 2015. Apparently, Tanzania's Parliament is also advantaged to be led by a female Speaker, Hon. Tulia Ackson who was elected in February 2022. This implies that, of the three arms of the United Republic of Tanzania (Executive, Parliament, and Judiciary), two of them are being led by women, hence paving way for a huge potential of women in the decision-making influence of the state.

Further, the share of women ministers in the Tanzanian cabinet⁵ is 34.6% while that of Rwanda (50%), Uganda (38.7%), Kenya⁶ (33.3%). On the other hand, the share of seats held by women in the Tanzania Parliament⁷ is 36.9% while that of Rwanda⁸ (61%), Uganda⁹ (34%), and Kenya¹⁰ (22%). Unlike Rwanda, gender equality in leadership

positions in the cabinet and Parliament still lags behind in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda with the share of women being less than 50 percent. However, this calls for more efforts to encourage women's participation in politics as their increased proportion in these top decision-making bodies is more likely to be a steppingstone towards equal access to political, economic, and social opportunities.

Decision making at the household level

Women as members of the household are also part of the decision-making process regarding different matters of the household. The Tanzania Demographic Health Survey (TDHS) asked married women aged 15-49 years of their participation in decision making about their own health care, major household purchase decision, visits to family or friends as well as their participation in all those three decisions. The results show the decision-making influence of women in the three decisions separately and engagement in all three decisions improved significantly between 2010 and 2015/16. This is indeed a headway towards closing a gender gap at the household level since women voice over household matters is increasing.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is one of the challenges facing Tanzania and thus demands attention. Gender-based violence is indeed an unfair act, and it occurs in different forms including physical, sexual, and emotional violence. Results from the demographic health surveys show the percentage of women who experienced physical violence alone increased from 25% in 2010 to 27% in 2015/16 while that of sexual violence alone slightly declined by 3 percentage points between 2010 and 2015/16. Further, the difference in the percentage of women who experienced both physical and sexual violence and those who experienced either physical or sexual violence between 2010 and 2015/16 is not statistically significant.

The decline in Gender-based violence has been triggered by efforts enacted by both the Government and other stakeholders. Among efforts taken include Government abiding to the regional and international protocols including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Female Genital Mutilation

Regarding the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practice, which is also known as female circumcision, the percentage of women between 15-49 years who experienced Female Genital Mutilation has declined from 18% in 1996 to 10% in 2015/16. These results complement the efforts such as strict laws against the practice, as well as awareness programmes put in place by the Government in collaboration with other stakeholders towards eliminating FGM.

7 Up to 2021, the Tanzanian Parliament comprised 393 Members of Parliament of which women seats were 144.

8 From the national Elections of Rwanda held in 2018, its parliament comprised a total of 80 seats with a share of 49 women seats.

9 From the recent elections of 2021, the Uganda Parliament comprised 556 seats of which women seats are 188.

10 From the National Elections of Kenya held in 2017, it had a total of 347 seats in its Parliament with a share of 75 women only.

Conclusions & Policy Recommendations

It is crucial to understand that women play an important role in the socio-economic development of the nation, hence their empowerment cannot be neglected. Thus, equal access to economic, political, and social opportunities such as employment, education, leadership opportunities amongst both men and women is highly needed for the reduction of extreme poverty, as well as attainment of a vibrant economy.

To fully reach a greater milestone of gender equality, much effort is still needed to enhance equal opportunities and labour force participation for both men and women.

This policy brief recommends as follows: first, the enhancement of the existing labour market programmes to encourage women and girls participation in the labour market; second, enforcement of existing laws and policies to end discriminatory practices that undermine women in the society such as domestic violence, FGM and early marriages; and third, mainstreaming of gender equality in all national plans, strategies and other interventions.

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