Gender

Scenario

Kouassi Yeboua and Jakkie Cilliers

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Scenarios

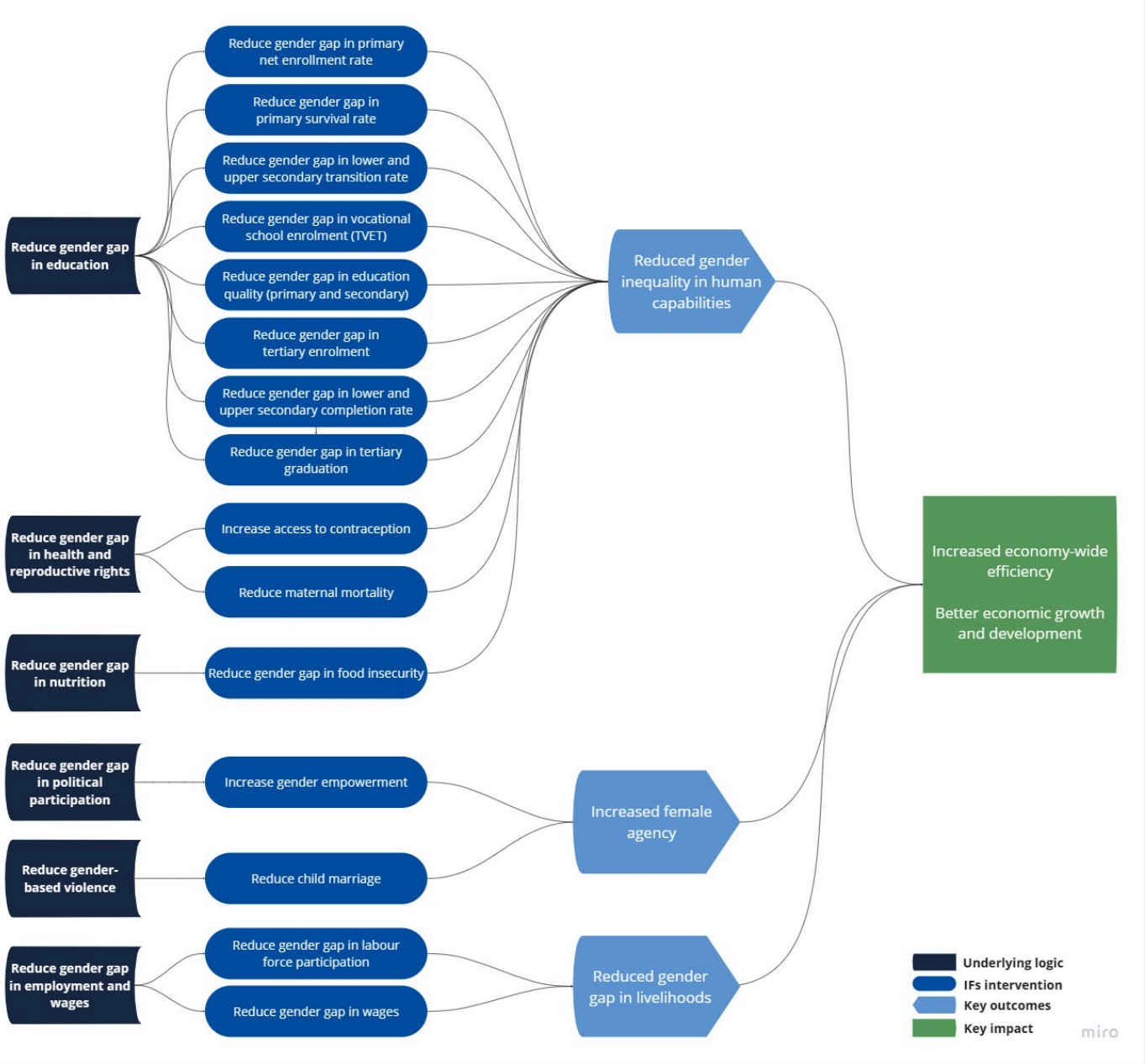
The preceding analysis documents the extent to which Africa has made progress in reducing gender inequalities, especially in education. The ratio of females' mean years of education to males' in Africa has improved from 0.5 in 1960 to 0.8 in 2019 (where 1 is full parity). Gross primary school is universal in most African countries, and gender gaps in secondary school enrolment have already disappeared in several countries. Also, the gender gap in the labour force participation rate has declined from a gap of 23 percentage points in 1990 to a gap of 17 percentage points in 2019, while the prevalence of child marriage declined by seven percentage points from 2009 to 2018.

Nevertheless, Africa is far from achieving gender equality. African girls and women still receive less inheritance and ownership of assets, are under-represented in the labour market and are concentrated in low-paying jobs. Women and girls in Africa also face a higher risk of violence at home and in public spaces and are under-represented in politics, governance and decision-making throughout the continent. These ultimately add up to diminished welfare and capacity to fulfil life aspirations.

This section presents a Gender scenario (Chart 20) that allows a forecast on the impact of a more rapid reduction in gender inequalities on Africa’s development prospects.

We compare the impact of the Gender scenario to the Current Path forecast (i.e. a business-as-usual scenario). The interventions commence in 2024 and present a subsequent ten-year push to 2033, which is the end of the second ten-year implementation plan of the African Union's Agenda 2063. The improvements/progress achieved by 2033 is maintained thereafter to 2043.

Chart 20: Gender scenario



All variables in our modelling are interrelated so that any intervention on one variable affects all the others. For instance, a decline in the gender gap in secondary education has budgetary implications, which can cause a change in other variables. In other words, our scenarios deal with any potential endogeneity or reverse causality issues.

One of the key limitations of most other studies on the gender-growth nexus is that they fail to account for such potential two-way relationships between gender gaps and growth or development (reverse causality).[1] While empowering women benefits development, economic development also significantly reduces gender inequalities.[2] For instance, the development process may push policymakers to adopt interventions favouring gender equality. Also, economic growth can increase fiscal space for the government to invest in education and healthcare, which reduces gender inequality in these sectors and investment in socioeconomic infrastructure that lowers women's unpaid work burden.[3]

Gender inequalities in Africa are deeply rooted in long-standing social and cultural norms and traditions that will not disappear overnight. No country or region in the world has achieved full gender parity. Studies have shown that, given the

current rate of progress, it could take more than 100 years for Africa to achieve full gender equality,[4] meaning that things are moving but slowly. Thus, it would be unrealistic to assume that Africa will achieve full gender equality within our forecast horizon. Rather, we apply an ambitious but realistic reduction in gender inequalities in the scenario using the progress made by other countries or regions at similar levels of development as a benchmark (see Annex).

The first cluster of interventions reduces gender gaps in labour force participation rates and wages. Despite progress made in recent years, gender gaps in labour force participation rates remain large in many African countries. Also, as mentioned previously, the gender pay gap stands at 30% in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 24% globally. In addition to the benefit of a larger labour force, evidence has shown that women and men bring different skills and perspectives to the workplace, including different attitudes to risk and collaboration.[5] Thus, large gender gaps in employment and wages may come at a significant economic cost by hindering productivity and growth.

The second cluster of interventions reduces gender inequality in political participation, and decision-making processes. Despite the overall increase in women in politics, leadership and decision-making in Africa, the gap between men and women in political representation is still high. Aggressive but reasonable improvement in the UNDP gender-empowerment measure (GEM) is used as a proxy for more female representation in politics and the decision-making process in African countries. The GEM is determined using three indicators: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, percentage of women in decision-making positions (including administrative, managerial, professional and technical occupations) and female share of income (earned incomes of males vs females).[6]

The third cluster of interventions represents reasonable reductions in gender inequality in access to education along the entire educational funnel, from primary enrolment to tertiary graduation. Specifically, it reduces the gap between girls and boys in net primary school enrolment, graduation rates at lower secondary and upper secondary levels and tertiary intake and graduation. Also, the gender gaps in the proportion of TVET students are reduced to address the skills shortage in African countries. A reasonable reduction in gender gaps in education quality is also modelled at the primary and secondary levels.

The fourth cluster of interventions reduce gender inequalities in health and reproductive rights. Gender inequality affects women's ability to control their sexual and reproductive options and limits their right to choose when and if they wish to have a child. As previously discussed, equality in reproductive health includes access, without discrimination, to affordable and quality contraception. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, about 25% of women of reproductive age have an unmet need for contraception, which is the highest proportion globally. Also, the high maternal mortality on the continent has been associated with gender bias in the distribution of healthcare. Against this background, the scenario increases access to contraception and reduces maternal mortality rate as a proxy for reducing gender inequalities in health and reproductive rights in Africa.

Child marriage, which is considered a form of gender-based violence, is prevalent in many African communities. It affects girls' chances to pursue their education and reduces their agency. In this scenario, we conclude that African policymakers take tougher measures to combat child marriage. For this reason, the scenario includes an intervention to significantly reduce the share of females between the ages of 15 and 19 years in marriage or union as a proxy for reducing child marriages. Finally, the scenario reduces the gender gap in nutrition (food insecurity). Good nutrition for both men and women can keep them healthy and help boys and girls stay in school, thereby increasing their economic opportunities.

All these interventions (summarised in Chart 20) are benchmarked and done at the country level for each African country (see annexure). The choice of interventions is bounded by what is possible within the model. For instance, there are many forms of gender-based violence, but we reduce child marriage as a proxy for a reduction in gender-based violence. Also, we cannot directly capture the effects of reducing gender gaps in unpaid domestic work and access to finance (credit). The

model also does not account for the quality of jobs. Female labour force participation can be high, but, if women work in low-quality and vulnerable jobs, welfare implications of reducing gender gaps in labour force participation may be reduced.

The two subsequent sections present the impact of an ambitious but reasonable **Gender scenario**,and then of an illustrative **Gender Equality scenario**. The latter models full equity by 2043, with the understanding and acknowledgement that it is not practically achievable.

Endnotes

1. O Bandiera and A Natraj, Does gender inequality hinder development and economic growth? Evidence and policy implications, *The World Bank Research Observer*, 28: 2–21, 2013.
2. E Duflo, Women empowerment and economic development, *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50:4, 2012, 1051–79.
3. S Seguino and M Were, Gender, development and economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa, *Journal of African Economies*, 23:suppl_1, 2014, i18–i61.
4. L Moodley et al, The power of parity: Advancing women's equality in Africa, McKinsey Global Institute, 24 November 2019.
5. JD Ostry et al, Economic gains from gender inclusion: New mechanism, new evidence, IMF Staff Discussion Note, No. SDN/18/06, 8 October 2018.
6. The GEM score can be presented on a scale between 0 (representing extremely high gender inequality in politics and decision making process, and income) to 1 (representing full parity).

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About the authors

Dr Kouassi Yeboua is a senior researcher in African Futures and Innovation programme in Pretoria. He recently served as lead author on ISS studies on the long-term development prospects of the DR Congo, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and Malawi. Kouassi has published on various issues relating to foreign direct investment in Africa and is interested in development economics, macroeconomics, international economics, and economic modelling. He has a PhD in Economics.

Dr Jakkie Cilliers is the ISS's founder and former executive director. He currently serves as chair of the ISS Board of Trustees and head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria oce of the Institute. His 2017 best-seller Fate of the Nation addresses South Africa's futures from political, economic and social perspectives. His three most recent books, Africa First! Igniting a Growth Revolution (March 2020), The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities (April 2021), and Africa Tomorrow: Pathways to Prosperity (June 2022) take a rigorous look at the continent as a whole.

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