



Gender

Impact of the Gender Equality scenario

Kouassi Yeboua and Jakkie Cilliers

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In this section, we explore the effect of full gender parity on Africa's development trajectory by 2043, especially in education (capabilities), employment (livelihood), and in politics and decision-making processes (agency). Chart 29 shows the size of the African economy in 2043 in the scenario where we assume full gender parity by 2043 (i.e. the Gender Equality scenario).

Chart 29: GDP (MER), Current Path vs Gender and Gender Equality scenario: 2043



Achieving gender equality could represent a massive boost to Africa's economy. Africa's economy was US\$3.1 trillion in 2019 (pre-pandemic level). On the Current Path, Africa's GDP will likely be approximately US\$8.1 trillion in 2043. The Gender Equality scenario forecasts an economy that is US\$9.1 trillion, i.e. US\$1 trillion larger, than the Current Path forecast and about US\$740 billion larger than the Gender scenario.

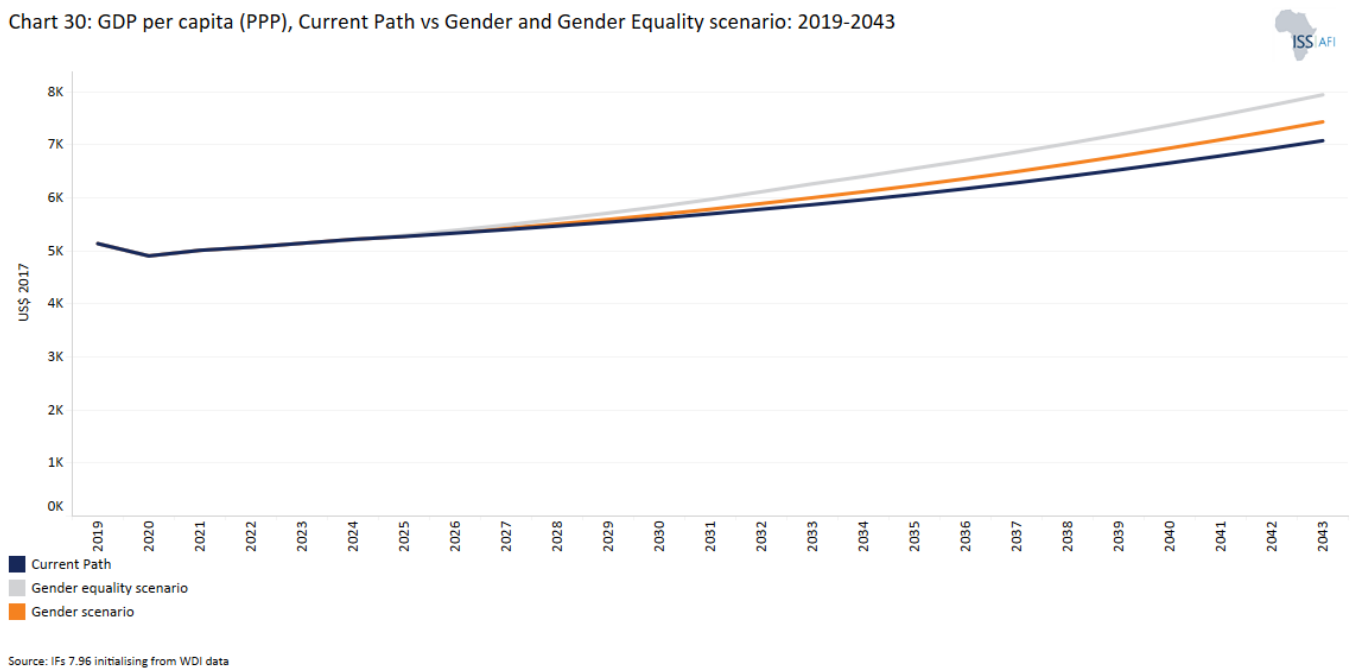
With much larger gender gaps in employment and political participation than in other African subregions, North Africa shows particularly positive momentum in the Gender Equality scenario, with the size of its economy US\$469 billion larger than the Current Path forecast in 2043. North Africa is followed by West Africa (US\$306 billion), East Africa (US\$104.5 billion), Southern Africa (US\$101 billion) and Central Africa (US\$72 billion).

In 2043, Africa's 23 low-income countries will have a combined GDP that is 10% larger in the Gender Equality scenario than the forecast on the Current Path. The increase for 23 Africa's low-middle-income countries is 15%, 6% for Africa's seven upper-middle-income countries and 12.5% for the single high-income island state, Seychelles.

At the country level, North African countries (Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria), including Somalia, experience the largest increase in their GDPs at around 20–30% compared to the Current Path in 2043. However, in absolute values, Egypt and Nigeria see the largest improvement.

In the Gender Equality scenario, Africa's GDP per capita (PPP) is US\$865 (or 12%) more than the Current Path forecast of US\$7 079 in 2043 (Chart 30), and US\$510 (or 7%) larger than the value forecast in the Gender scenario.

Chart 30: GDP per capita (PPP), Current Path vs Gender and Gender Equality scenario: 2019-2043

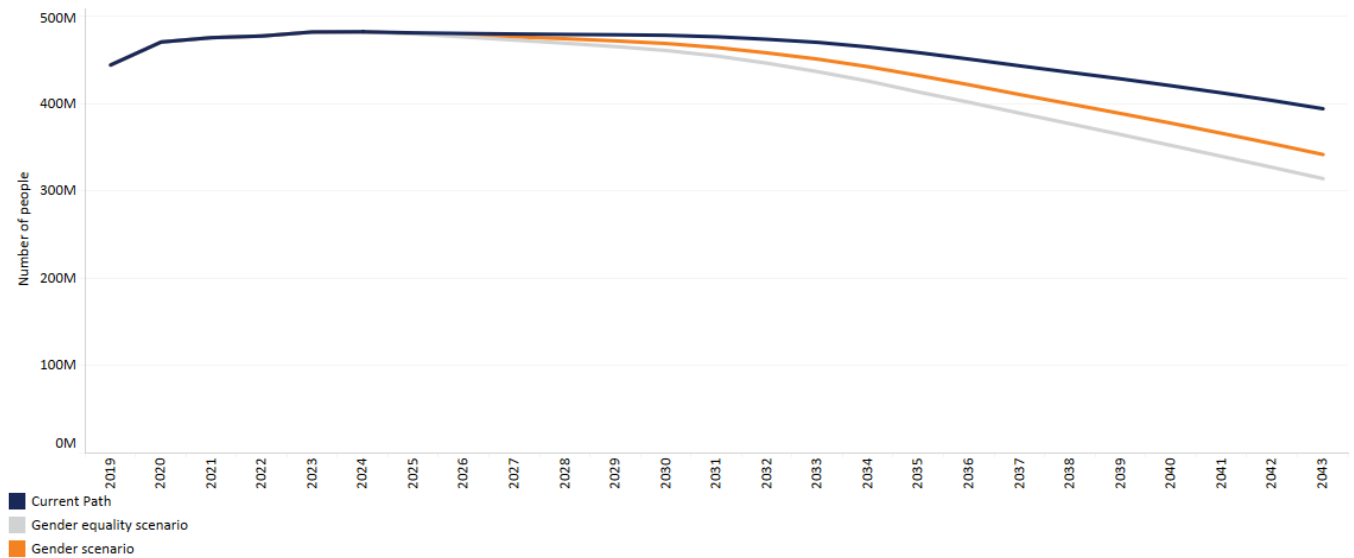


The variation in average GDP per capita in the Gender Equality scenario relative to the Current Path forecast in 2043 would be:

- US\$351 for low-income Africa compared to US\$178 in the Gender scenario (improvements of 10% and 5%, respectively).
- US\$1 227 for lower-middle-income Africa compared to US\$435 in the Gender scenario (improvement of 13% and 5%, respectively).
- US\$849 for upper-middle-income countries compared to US\$409 in the Gender scenario (improvement of 4.8% or 2.3%, respectively).

The top five countries that would gain the most in absolute increases in average income levels when comparing the Current Path forecast with the Gender Equality scenario by 2043 are Seychelles, Eswatini, Egypt, Libya and Algeria. The five countries that show the least improvement in absolute US\$ terms are Guinea Bissau, South Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic and Burundi. All have high population growth and undiversified and small economies that will probably not be able to fully absorb the influx of labour following the elimination of gender barriers in education and employment. The structure of a country's economy matters for the relationship between gender equality and growth.^[1]

Chart 31: Absolute number of people, Current Path vs Gender and Gender Equality scenario: 2019-2043



Source: IFs 7.96 initialising from UNPD population prospects estimate, WDI and PovcalNet data

Closing gender inequalities in Africa could lift millions of people out of extreme poverty. Using the US\$1.90 threshold, in 2019, more than 400 million Africans were poor. This number declines marginally to 394 million by 2043 (Chart 31) on the Current Path due to the projected rapid population growth, relatively slow economic growth and high levels of income inequality. In the Gender Equality scenario, the number of poor people is forecast to drop to 314 million by 2043, with 80 million fewer poor people than the projection on the Current Path, and about 28 million fewer poor people than in the Gender scenario. This is equivalent to a poverty rate of 15% in 2043, 3.5 percentage points lower than the Current Path forecast in the same year.

Overall, the findings show that implementing policies to reduce gender inequalities and create a level playing field for all could significantly improve growth and development in Africa. In other words, gender equality matters for Africa's development.

As we could not model all the dimensions of gender inequalities, our findings should not be taken as the maximum impact of gender equality on growth and development in Africa. Eliminating gender inequalities will contribute to Africa's development. Also, the relationship between gender inequality and development is a two-way street. As incomes increase, the incentives to continue certain types of behaviour, values and discriminatory practices will change. However, the analysis of the effect of development on gender inequality in Africa is beyond the scope of this theme.

Endnotes

1. S Seguino, *Gender inequality and economic growth: A cross-country analysis*, *World Development*, 28:7, 2000, 1211–30.

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About the authors

Dr Kouassi Yeboua previously worked as a Senior Researcher at AFI, where he led significant ISS studies on the long-term development prospects of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria, Malawi, and Mozambique. His research focuses on development economics, macroeconomics, gender, and economic modeling. He holds 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, head of the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme at the Pretoria office of the Institute, and is an extraordinary professor at the University of Pretoria. 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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