



# Perspectives, Conclusions and Way Forward

## Introduction

Piloting of the AGDI in 12 African countries and presenting the results provide unique opportunities for stocktaking in the utilization of a tool which is still in its formative years. The experiences of the countries and experts involved in the design of the index bring to bear many lessons which occasion not only the need to appreciate this tool's added value but also ways to improve it for future use. The computation of the three blocks of the GSI and four in the AWPS form a formidable basis for making important comparisons with the outcomes and approaches of other development indices. It also helps place the overall outcomes of the trial exercise in perspective and also determine their predictive values. The sections which follow, therefore, outline the AGDI's contribution to appreciating the extent and impact of gender inequality in Africa. They also outline recommendations for improving the future use of the index, the main conclusions of the AGDI trials and the way forward.

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## Perspectives on the AGDI and other development indices

The Introduction noted that a review of other development indices formed an important component of AGDI's design. This section reviews the inter-relationship between the AGDI and relevant indices of the UNDP, namely the HDI, GDI and GDP, all of which are published annually to gauge the human development status of countries. The HDI measures average achievements in a country, but does not incorporate the degree of gender imbalance in these achievements. The gender-related development index (GDI), introduced in Human Development Report 1995, measures achievements in these same dimensions using the same indicators as the HDI, but captures inequalities in achievement between women and men. In essence, it is simply the HDI adjusted downward for gender inequality. Consequently, the greater

the gender disparity in basic human development, the lower a country's GDI relative to its HDI.<sup>1</sup>

The UNDP, however, notes that the concept of human development is much broader than what can be captured in the HDI and GDI, stating that they only offer a broad proxy on some key human development, gender disparity and human poverty issues.<sup>2</sup>

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It is also important to note the AGDI's shortcomings: 1) it does not assess gender relations in reference to absolute levels of well-being; and 2) it only measures the gender gap, regardless of the general socio-economic performance of a country.<sup>3</sup> The added advantage of the GSI, however, is that it measures a broad range of other relevant issues not included in the other indices, such as time use, access to economic resources and participation in civil society structures. The comparison between male and female status is fundamental to computing the GSI. As noted in previous chapters, this is done by comparing the female ratio to that of males, except with respect to the following indicators: Education (dropout); Health (stunting, underweight, mortality, HIV/AIDS prevalence); Time-use (domestic, care and volunteer activities). For these categories of analysis the calculations are based on a comparison of the situation of males and females.

This section examines the relationship between the GSI (that is the Gender Status Index as calculated under the AGDI framework) and the HDI and GDI as computed by the UNDP for the period 2008/2009. GEM-related data was unavailable for all countries with the exception of Egypt, Ethiopia and United Republic of Tanzania. As such, from these minor comparisons and observations are also made. All these indices are also correlated with the GDP rankings of countries, with the intent of making more holistic interpretations of the social, economic and political status of men and women in countries.

Table 8.1 presents a GSI, GDI, HDI and GDP ranking of countries based on the outcomes of this trial exercise using data from the latest UNDP Human Development Report (2007/2008). It demonstrates that a country's performance on the quantitative component of the AGDI (the GSI) can differ in different degrees from their HDI, GDI or GDP rankings.

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1 See the UNDP 2007/2008 Human Development Report.

2 See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/hdi/question,70,en.html>.

3 See [www.uneca.org/eca\\_programmes/acgd/Publications/AGDI\\_book\\_final.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/acgd/Publications/AGDI_book_final.pdf).

**Table 8.1****Comparison of GSI, GDI, HDI and GDP indices of countries (2007/2008)**

Countries	GSI		GDI 2007/2008		HDI 2007/2008		GDP 2007/2008	
	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank
Madagascar	0.784	1	0.530	5	0.533	5	0.533	5
Egypt	0.768	2		2	0.708	2	0.708	2
South Africa	0.753	3	0.667	3	0.674	3	0.674	3
Tunisia	0.670	4	0.750	1	0.766	1	0.766	1
Mozambique	0.638	5	0.373	11	0.384	11	0.384	11
Ghana	0.634	6	0.549	4	0.553	4	0.553	4
Tanzania	0.590	7	0.464	8	0.467	8	0.467	8
Uganda	0.557	8	0.501	7	0.505	7	0.505	7
Ethiopia	0.547	9	0.393	10	0.406	10	0.406	10
Burkina Faso	0.546	10	0.364	12	0.37	12	0.37	12
Cameroon	0.471	11	0.524	6	0.532	6	0.532	6
Benin	0.458	12	0.422	9	0.437	9	0.437	9

**Sources:** UNECA computation of country data and 2007/2008 Human Development Report (UNDP). Rankings of the GDI, HDI and GDP are also based on the same Human Development Report

**Note:** UNDP still ranks Egypt 2nd on the GDI regardless of the absence of data on this particular index

This comparative summary shows, for example, that South Africa, Ghana, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda have GSIs in close range with their GDI, HDI and GDP. Although not conclusive, this could be an indication of correlating linkages between national income and gender-related development processes. In the case of the GEM for which data exists for only Egypt, United Republic of Tanzania and Ethiopia, the findings also show that their respective GEM indices (0.263, 0.597 and 0.477; not reflected in Table 8.1) are comparable with the results of the GSI computations of their respective political and economic blocks combined (0.279, 0.440 and 0.466).<sup>4</sup>

Also of note is that countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia which have the highest GDPs, do not record high GSIs. Indeed, their economic and political gains for women were much lower than their social (education and health).

Equally so, South Africa, which scores high on the GSI and indeed has the same ranking (3<sup>rd</sup>) across its GSI, GDI, HDI and GDP experiences some deficiencies with respect to some of its AWPS indicators. Specific mention can be made of its

<sup>4</sup> Computed from Table 8.2.

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performance under the prevention of rape and protection of victims under which it scores 68 per cent (see Table 3.5). One would have expected more resources being invested to reverse rape trends in the country, considering, against the background of its high GSI, GDI, HDI and GDP performance. Mention is also made of South Africa's average HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 8.4 per cent (being the highest among the 12 countries, see Table 5.4) in addition to its relatively high MMR of 400 per 100,000 live births (Table 5.9).

These case examples underscore the fact that it takes more than economic growth to guarantee women's rights, and that political will, as well as the removal of social, religious and cultural barriers are also needed to achieve and sustain this. They also lead to a better appreciation of the complementarity between the GSI and AWPS. The latter could be well described as a whistle blower or alarm bells over both impressive and poor GSI performances, by signaling a need for more in-depth analysis of overall country interventions and impacts.

Hence, a high GSI ranking does not necessarily provide the best picture of the status of women in a country. For example, although Madagascar ranks 1st in this respect, it has poorer performances under the economic and political blocks and was severely lacking in many aspects of the AWPS. This apparent lack of symmetry in Madagascar's performance was borne out in its 2003 National Human Development Report entitled "Gender, Human Development and Poverty," which noted that the gap between men and women in Madagascar has diminished over the last few years. The GDI value for Madagascar was 0.477 in 2002, almost the same as the HDI for that year (0.479). The Government interpreted these results as indicating the near absence of discrimination between men and women from the point of view of the three HDI three components. Although this was explained by the reduction in variations in education, it is significant that the report also noted that the economic and political fields remain the preserve of men. This suggests that more interventions are needed in the country to sustain Madagascar's high GSI ranking.<sup>5</sup>

In effect, the GSI and AWPS compositely highlight the gender dimensions of the development process, underscoring the fact that it is insufficient to rely on absolute levels of well-being in assessing gender inequality in a country. This is due to the fact that the distribution of assets and or incomes may be inherently gender-biased. Women may not necessarily be better off in a country with a high HDI or GDP due to cultural or other social policy gaps or biases. Thus, a comprehensive evaluation of the status of women in Africa requires that the GDI, HDI and GDP are complemented by the AGDI and vice-versa.

5 See CEDAW/C/MDG/5/2008:39.

## Cross dimensional perspectives

The AGDI process revealed the relative points of emphasis needed to reduce and eventually eliminate gender discrimination in the social, economic and political fields. The computations have shown that all countries have achieved overall parity in the social fields of education and health, with Egypt, Madagascar and Tunisia, having higher access and benefit rates for females compared to males, with South Africa close to a situation of parity (Table 8.2 and Figure 8.1)

**Table 8.2**  
*Comparison of indices for the various blocks of the GSI*

Scores	Benin	Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Egypt	Ethiopia	Ghana	Madagascar	Mozambique	South Africa	Tanzania	Tunisia	Uganda	Average
Social Power Block	0.672	0.794	0.726	1.745	0.788	0.769	1.229	0.700	0.852	0.810	1.217	0.702	0.917
Economic Power Block	0.549	0.632	0.577	0.492	0.647	0.913	0.723	0.879	0.937	0.675	0.556	0.613	0.683
Political Power Block	0.154	0.213	0.109	0.066	0.205	0.221	0.401	0.335	0.469	0.284	0.239	0.357	0.254
GSI overall	0.458	0.546	0.471	0.768	0.547	0.634	0.784	0.638	0.753	0.590	0.670	0.557	0.618

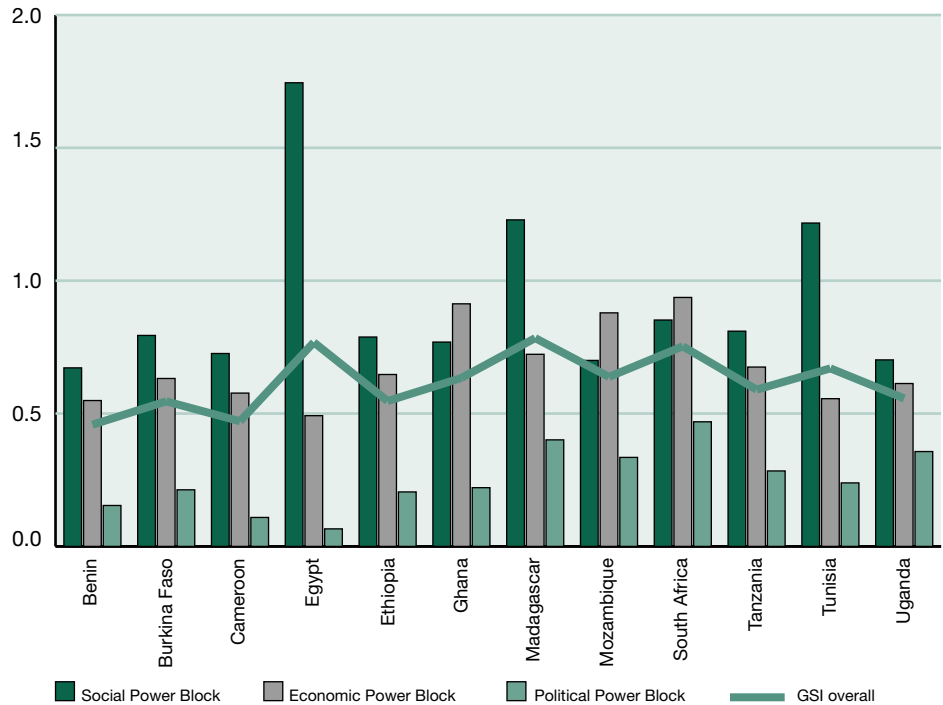
**Sources:** UNECA computations from country data

While not depicting more situations of parity, the economic block demonstrates that there was general over average performance, with South Africa presenting a near parity situation of 0.94, followed by Ghana with 0.91. It is instructive that the impressive performances of Egypt and Tunisia in the social block do not trickle down or across to the economic block, demonstrating the possible lack of connection between social empowerment through education and women's economic participation.

The political block demonstrates the poorest performance, showing that women are largely excluded in decision-making in their respective countries, with Egypt scoring the least (0.66) and South Africa the highest (0.47). The possible lack of connectivity between social and political participation also comes to play.

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**Figure 8.1**  
Comparison of indices for the various blocks of the GSI



Sources: Based on Table 8.2

The country assessments have, however, underscored the importance of also lifting the veil of indices to study the absolute numbers more definitively. This is particularly so with respect to education, where gender parity or over parity in favour of girls, needs to be examined more closely to prevent a strangulation of the vision for the totality of the future human workforce. In addition, although some countries may have achieved parity, these results may not tell the full story with regard to the regional and rural dimensions of inequality.

## Challenges and Improvements in the utilisation of the AGDI

The country trial experiences unearthed a number of challenges in the AGDI assessment process, as well as some shortcomings of the index itself. This, therefore, indicates a need to review and improve the overall tool if the index is to be sustained as an effective development framework. Proposed changes can be made on the basis of the following experiences of using the AGDI as a tool:

## Data definitions and standards

The wide use of raw data by country teams resulted in considerable variations in standards, definitions and usages, especially with respect to education and health data. Although harmonization became necessary for consistency and comparability, this was not possible in many instances. In particular, the use of net enrolment ratios as an AGDI variable was problematic in the light of the existing different age categories used for this indicator across the 12 countries. While UNECA recommended that age groups for the pilot exercise be 6-11 years for primary schooling, 12-18 years for secondary, and 19-25 years for tertiary, these age ranges were generally not in accord with the existing categories used by some countries.

At the secondary level, many countries run two 'cycles', commonly designated as Junior High School and Senior High School. It was therefore not always evident whether enrolment rates were based on both or only one of these cycles. It was also not clear from most reports whether those enrolled in vocational institutions were included in the estimates. Another source of discrepancy was the absence of specificities in relation to whether enrolment figures included private and religious institutions.

Another case in point is in respect of the child health indicators for which countries either used measures of either below minus two standard deviations (-2 SD) for *stunted or underweight* children or below minus three standard deviations (-3 SD) for those considered *severely stunted or underweight*. Such differences in the use of data rendered effective comparison across countries difficult.

## Data availability

The trial process suffered greatly from lack of current data on several indicators. The AGDI computation involved data collection with regard to a large number of indicators, with there being 41 for the GSI and 28 for the AWPS. The social block suffered major gaps in the areas of 'time spent out of work' and political participation in civil society; while for the economic block the data collection challenge lay in time use and access to resources. Peculiar to the AWPS was the absence of data on Gender-Based Violence. Chapter 3 noted that this is caused by the reluctance of victims and their families to report, the failure of law enforcement agencies to treat such acts as crimes and the absence of effective data collection systems.

This situation signals the need both to revise the number of indicators downwards to reflect data availability in Africa, while also serving as a wake up call to governments to improve data collection and the systems and institutions responsible for collecting this information.

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## **Lack of co-operation/capacity of government agencies**

The data collection process involved visits to government offices, interviews with key informants and reviews of volumes of government reports. Apart from the fact that relevant government officials were not always accessible and sometimes reluctant to provide information, many country teams also recounted challenges related to high staff turnover, inadequate equipment or training and insufficient resources; all of which restricted their access to information.

## **Data inconsistency**

The computation of the AGDI was also complicated by the fact that different data sources provided different estimates with regard to the same variable. In particular, official enrolment statistics from educational institutions were generally based on the count of students enrolled at the beginning of the school year. Due to children dropping out of school during the course of the year and a tendency for principals to inflate enrolment figures, this figure is often higher than the number enrolled or actually studying later in the year. This latter practice is generally motivated by a desire to attract additional resources for the school. It is also in contrast with household surveys which tend to record lower figures on the basis of actual school attendance.

## **Data disaggregation**

The area for which data disaggregation received the least attention was agricultural wages. This was due to the fact that Living Standard Surveys, from which such data is derived, aggregates incomes earned by all household members under the occupational classification of the household head who is assumed to be the primary income earner. Consequently, income sources of other members and of intra-household incomes tend to be overlooked.

## **Misinterpretation of indicators**

Some country teams understood ‘targets’ to mean target groups (e.g. Mozambique). Even where the term was understood, scoring on this issue was not uniform. While some teams consistently explored the existence of quantifiable goals, others were guided by general statements of intention. Scoring on the involvement of civil society was also based on different assumptions. Some country teams interpreted this as the government’s role in stimulating NGO participation, while others focused on listing the NGOs working on particular issues.

## Subjectivity and possible biases in scoring

Some AGDI country processes reflected expressions of patriotic sentiments, resulting in over-scoring in some cases. For example, the intentions or verbal commitments of a government (e.g. to undertake a project or promote gender equality) received a generous score of 1 or 2 regardless of whether the government had actually honoured or implemented these commitments. Some country teams also allocated a score of 2 when there was evidence of only partial government action on these issues. Other country teams were more critical towards their governments and awarded average scores when progress on a particular variable had actually been adequately addressed. With respect to budgets, some teams awarded high scores even though no funds had been clearly earmarked for the specific issue in question. In some cases, the rationale provided for the score was that the financial allocation was directed towards benefiting the general population, which included women. Scoring on research did not always take account of the relevance of the research undertaken in relation to the particular variable. While some countries simply reported on any kind of gender research being done, others focused on research which was specific to the variable in question. This problem is, however, linked to the fact that the index used a limited score range of 0-2 which did not readily allow for more nuanced assessments.

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## The AWPS score range

As indicated above, country teams noted that the score range of (0-2) was too narrow and required expansion to accommodate different shades of implementation levels. While there was hardly any disagreement as to when a 0 should be awarded, country teams were of the considered view that the score of 1 tended to be overly generous with regard to initial moves towards an action. In other contexts also, a score of 2 was often times regarded as an exaggerated expression of fulfillment of government commitment, especially where impact could not be ascertained readily. In essence, these concerns point to the limited opportunities to maneuver and give adequate and comprehensive expression to government performance within a 3-point scale range.

## Recommended actions to improve the AGDI

*UNECA, in collaboration with Member States, civil society and development partners must:*

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Develop a more transparent and valid process of scoring through the involvement of independent bodies and researchers.  
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### Renew the Gender Status Index indicators

- Review and revise the GSI indicators downwards to reflect general data availability in countries.
- Revise the indicators upwards periodically to match general improvements in data collection.
- Harmonise the data collection exercise with the publication of population census, DHS and Labour Force Survey results in order to ensure accessibility to current data on a wide range of social and economic indicators.
- Support Member States to invest in time use data in the short term and improvements in overall data collections systems and procedures in the medium to long term.

### Promotion of AGDI as a tool

- Sensitise relevant government departments on the use of AGDI as a monitoring tool to facilitate data collection among a wide range of users such as government agencies, CSOs and researchers.
- Provide such agencies with the skills, equipment and funds to generate AGDI-relevant and related data and to make them accessible to the public.

### Renew the scoring system of the AWPS

- Develop a more transparent and valid process of scoring through the involvement of independent bodies and researchers.
- Adopt a 6-point scale of 0-5 for the future calculation of the AWPS to provide for objectivity in the scoring of achievements.

### Streamline the AWPS

- Streamline components of the AWPS to simplify its computation by incorporating the BPfA and the Solemn Declaration of African Heads of States into the rights block, and drawing natural linkages with CEDAW, the OP-CEDAW and the African Women's Protocol as over arching treaties on women's rights.

- Harmonise the scoring of Articles 2 and 16 of CEDAW which are currently scored independently of CEDAW, and that of Article 5 of the African Women's Protocol which is scored as an integral part of the latter.
- Replace the rape indicator contained under the VAW component with the term *sexual exploitation* as an umbrella crime for the diverse forms of unlawful sexual actions against women and children in times of peace and conflict.

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## Final conclusions and way forward

The outcomes of the pilot exercises to determine the efficacy and usefulness of the AGDI as a tool to measure gender inequality in the social, economic and political fields of development and participation has been generally positive. The tool must, however, be sharpened further through periodic reviews of the current indicators to match the level of statistical development and data availability in Africa. This needs to be matched by a concerted effort on the part of governments and stakeholders to invest in sound and responsive statistical planning with gender perspectives in mind.

Gender-aware data collection is non-negotiable as it constitutes the prism through which defects and imbalances in the development process can be determined and addressed. The impact of the lack of attention to gender considerations in planning became evident in the 1980s and 1990s when structural adjustment was introduced into many African countries. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, the youth and elderly paid a high social cost of economic adjustment strategies. The UN Secretary-General has called for pro-poor development planning, through the integration of MDG concerns into national development frameworks. There is a wide body of research that demonstrates that gender equality is central to the achievement of all the MDGs and that lack of attention to such considerations will continue to hinder economic growth, as well as poverty reduction efforts in Africa. The AGDI serves as a useful tool in measuring gender inequality in the continent and is therefore a potential instrument in MDG-based planning.

The analysis of country efforts in eliminating gender discrimination and gender inequality within the broad framework of the AGDI has revealed general and specific gaps which governments, regional organizations, UN and donor agencies and civil society organizations need to address through a range of measures such as advocacy, policy, law reform, programming and international co-operation.

Tremendous progress has been made in the ratification of regional and global treaties affecting women. Most countries have also taken steps at law reform, policy development and planning, thereby providing frameworks for implementation at the local level. Nevertheless an immense lacuna still lies between these initiatives and implementation.

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This has largely been due to the fact that the institutional mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of CEDAW lack adequate financial and human resources; research is extremely limited and, where available, does not directly facilitate the implementation of treaty obligations. This suggests that there is need for governments to move beyond ratification and political commitments to financing and enforcement.<sup>6</sup>

The assessment of women's rights in Africa has shown the need for countries to invest resources in eliminating harmful traditional practices and inimical perceptions towards women. This is to be carried out through sustained public awareness campaigns, capacity enhancement of implementing agencies, empowering women through legal literacy, legal aid and accessible justice systems.

Although overall performance in education appeared to exceed that of other sectors, a detailed analysis of the individual and collective results demonstrate that major improvements are still required in this sector to push some African countries towards achieving the MDG targets in education. Access to and retention levels in most countries studied are demonstrating that the sector is in peril. In particular, the majority of countries demonstrate lack of capacity to ensure continuity of both boys and girls from primary to secondary level. While these patterns show clearly that girls tend to be excluded with progression up the educational ladder, it also demonstrates the need to halt the regression of boys where this is evident as this could also have a spiral effect on human capital formation.

Child survival remains an issue of great concern across countries, with varying indicators for both girls and boys in the areas of stunting, underweight and mortality. The outcomes demonstrate the need to intensify priority interventions in child health. On-going programmes in EPI, Vitamin A supplementation and the use of insecticide-treated bed nets must be scaled up, in especially deprived areas of African countries.

High maternal mortality rates call for urgent attention. In particular, the pilot study highlighted the need for improved equity in access and service delivery, especially with respect to emergency obstetric care and HIV/AIDS treatment. It also underscored the need to address the impact that the shortage of medical staff is having on

<sup>6</sup> This reflects the title of the UN Secretary-General's Study: "Ending Violence Against Women: From Words to Action."

African health delivery systems, especially at rural level by recourse to the training of Non Clinical Physicians.

Women continue to experience time poverty as evidenced by the disproportionate time allocated to productive activities and leisure compared with non-remunerative work. The former affects their capacity to generate sufficient income to spend on essential services and commodities and on their ability to make independent decisions. This is compounded by their limited access to productive resources such as land, credit and extension. National System of Accounts also need to recognise the proportion of time that women use in non-monetized sectors, such as domestic work and care of the sick, and compensate this massive contribution on their part through the provision of expanded public goods to women.

Despite considerable progress made in the field of women's participation in decision-making, data from all countries collectively indicate that African women lag farthest behind men at all levels in this area. The results outline the existence of structural, social, cultural, political and economic barriers that hinder effective female participation. They include low regard for women's potential contributions to politics, lack of commitment to affirmative action and women's limited financial capacities. It would take sustained political will and action to ensure that women are given the recognition and visibility needed to increase their participation in decision-making significantly. This should be embodied in the principle that sound democratic principles and good governance require that all sections of the society are effectively represented in the political process.

In addition to the imperative of advancing gender-sensitive data collection in Africa, is the adherence to constitutionalism and respect for the rule of law which tends to be low in many African countries (UNECA, 2009 d.).

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