

Women, Business and the Law

Sub-Saharan Africa has the most economies that carried out multiple reforms, and more than a third of all reforms in the past two years occurred in the region. *Women, Business and the Law* monitors 47 economies in the region. Of all reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa nearly a third (32%) occurred in the building credit indicator. Thirteen reforms were recorded in protecting women from violence, with almost half of these occurring in in Sub-Saharan Africa. But of the 36 economies with no domestic violence laws or aggravated penalties for domestic violence, 19 are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Over the past two years, the following reforms have occurred:

Angola increased the number of legal restrictions on women's work. However, Angola now prohibits discrimination based on gender by creditors in financial transactions.

Botswana improved access to credit information by beginning to distribute positive and negative data from utility companies.

Burundi introduced civil remedies for sexual harassment in employment.

Cameroon adopted a new criminal code that covers sexual harassment in employment and education as well as established criminal penalties for sexual harassment.

Chad adopted a new criminal code that aggravates penalties for domestic violence and criminalizes sexual harassment in employment.

The Democratic Republic of Congo reformed its family code to allow married women to sign contracts, get jobs, open bank accounts and register businesses in the same way as married men. The economy also removed the obligation for a married woman to obey her husband and allows spouses to choose the marital home mutually. The Democratic Republic of Congo also lifted restrictions on women's ability to work at night in public or private industrial establishments. The economy also now prohibits discrimination based on gender in various aspects of employment including hiring and promotions. The Democratic Republic of Congo now prohibits discrimination based on gender in access to credit.

Côte d'Ivoire made primary school compulsory for all children ages 6-16 years. Côte d'Ivoire also established a small claims procedure in 2015 and raised the maximum amount for small claims in 2017.

Ethiopia now requires the Attorney General to provide free legal aid services to women and others who lack the financial capacity to institute civil actions in federal court.

Guinea prohibited discrimination based on gender and marital status when accessing goods and services including financial services. The economy also criminalized sexual harassment including in the workplace.

Kenya's new Legal Aid Act provides legal aid services in civil matters. Kenya also improved access to credit information by distributing data from two utility companies that report positive and negative payment information. Additionally, Kenya enacted its first domestic violence law, which protects family members, spouses, former spouses and partners (including non-cohabiting partners) from physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse.

Lesotho expanded the credit bureau's coverage to include more than 5% of the population. The bureau reports data from both utility companies and retailers.

Liberia increased the length of paid maternity leave from 90 to 98 days. Further the new labor code mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value as well as prohibits discrimination based on gender in various aspects of employment including hiring, promotion and dismissal. Its new labor code also guarantees employees returning from maternity leave an equivalent position.

Malawi improved access to credit information by establishing a new credit bureau that reports data collected from utility companies.

Mauritius increased the length of maternity leave from 84 to 98 days.

Namibia enhanced access to credit information by starting to report data from utility companies.

Nigeria improved access to credit information by beginning to distribute positive and negative data from utility companies.

Rwanda granted both spouses equal rights to choose the marital home. Rwanda also removed the provision designating the husband as "head of household." The economy also increased the percentage of wages received during maternity leave from 60% to 100%. Additionally, the employer and government now share the cost of maternity benefits whereas previously the employer was solely responsible.

Senegal enacted a new national identity card law in 2016 introducing biometric cards. The application process is now equal for men and women.

The Seychelles introduced 5 days of paid paternity leave.

South Africa increased the percentage of wages received during maternity leave from 60% to 66%.

Tanzania made primary education free and compulsory. The Legal Aid Act of 2017 mandates legal aid for indigent persons in civil proceedings in Tanzania. Tanzania improved access to credit information by distributing data from retailers.

Zambia's Gender Equity and Equality Act now prohibits gender discrimination in various aspects of employment. The Act also mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value and established the Gender Equality Commission in Zambia. The economy now prohibits discrimination based on gender and marital status in access to credit. Finally, Zambia established civil remedies for sexual harassment in employment.

Women, Business and the Law measures how laws, regulations and institutions differentiate between women and men in ways that may affect women's incentives or capacity to work or to set up and operate a business. It analyzes legal differences on the basis of gender in 189 economies, covering seven areas: accessing institutions, using property, getting a job, providing incentives to work, building credit, going to court and protecting women from violence. The report is published every two years.

The full report and accompanying datasets are available at wbl.worldbank.org.

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