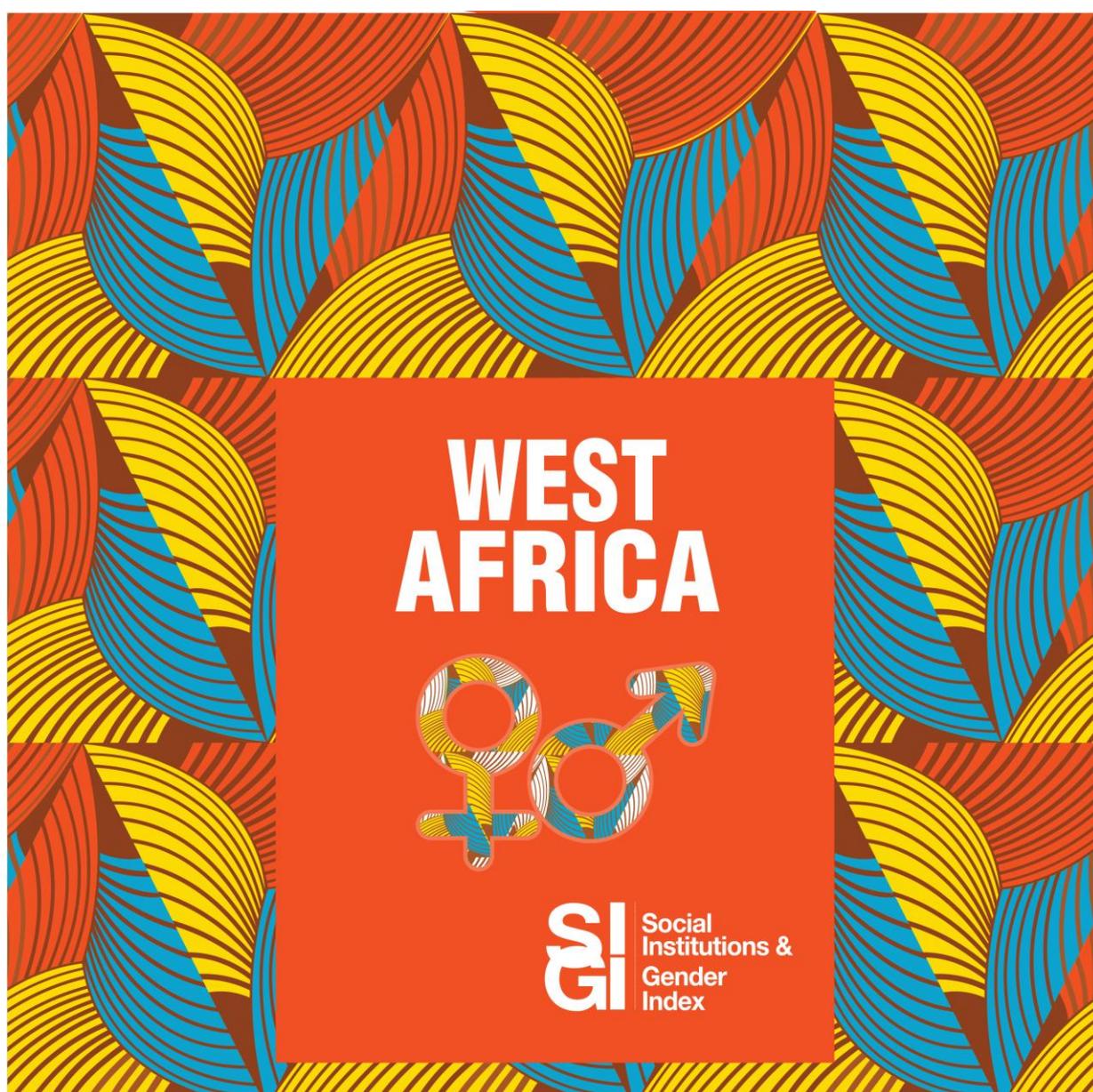


Policy dialogues in West Africa

From data to policy action: Tackling gender-based discrimination in social institutions

27 April, 29 April and 12 July 2021



Policy dialogues in West Africa

Objectives

The West Africa policy dialogues on tackling gender-based discrimination in social institutions is co-organised by the OECD Development Centre, in partnership with the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC), the African Development Bank Group (the Bank) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), with the support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). The main objectives of the policy dialogues are to:

- Present insights into the current status of gender equality and women's empowerment in the region and share policy recommendations to effectively integrate gender in policy, project and programme planning, implementation and monitoring for policy makers and practitioners across the region;
- identify key challenges, opportunities and good practices on addressing gender-based discrimination and promoting women's and girls' rights; and
- prioritise a set of context-specific policy options to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in West Africa.

Format

The policy dialogues are taking place in three stages: i) a grassroots workshop on 27 April 2021; ii) a policy makers workshop on 29 April 2021; and iii) a high-level policy dialogue with all stakeholders on 12 July 2021.

The dialogues include a brief presentation of the Bank and ECA's Africa Gender Index (AGI) as well as the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019 to showcase the state of gender equality in West Africa. While the AGI focuses on presenting the gender status in the respective areas, the SIGI provides insights into the 'root causes' of gender inequality—discriminatory laws, social norms and practices. The events will feature three thematic sessions on three main themes:

- Women's health, gender-based violence and reproductive autonomy;
- Women's economic empowerment; and
- Women's political voice, leadership and agency.

The SIGI and AGI's analysis identifies some critical goals to improve women's status in West Africa. For each theme, participants will seek to i) identify the key challenges constraining the achievement of these goals and ii) identify the policy options that could address these challenges. The key outcomes and tables of policy options from the different thematic sessions will be shared at the upcoming plenary high-level policy dialogue on 12 July 2021.

Key findings from the Africa Gender Index 2020 in West Africa

Drawing together data from 51 of Africa's 54 countries, the Bank and ECA's AGI offers a comprehensive picture of gender equality in Africa today and the progress that is being made in closing gender gaps, through its three thematic areas: economic, social and representation and voice. The AGI scores for 2019 range from 24.0% to 80%, with an average score of 49%. There are some marked differences in gender gaps at the regional level (African Development Bank and UNECA, 2020^[1]). The West Africa region index recorded an average of 43%, which shows that the gender gap is 57% across the AGI's three dimensions (Table 1.) The index for West Africa is below the continental average.

Table 1. AGI Results in West Africa

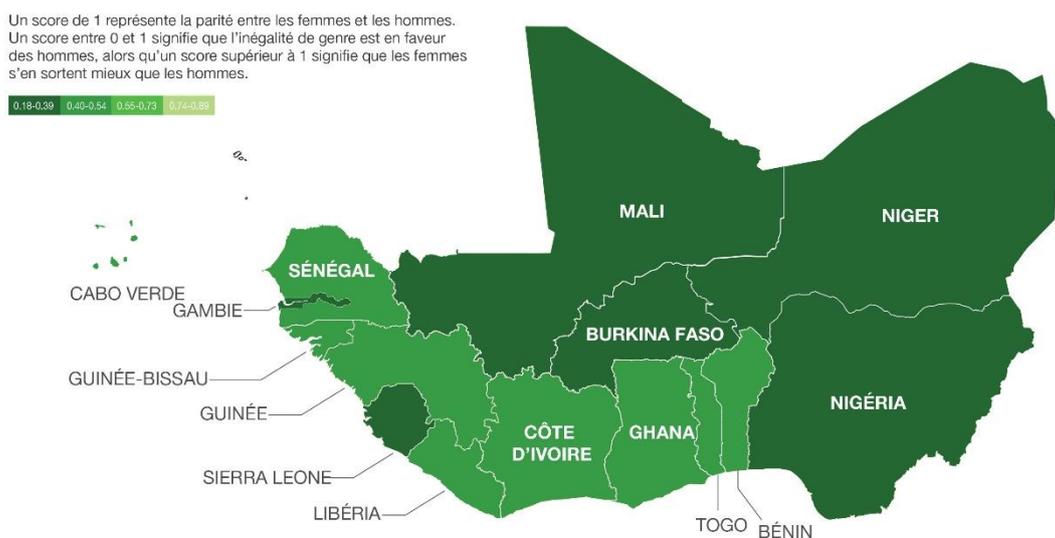
Countries	Africa Gender Index	Economic Dimension	Social Dimension	Representation and Empowerment
Benin	43%	73%	78%	14%
Burkina Faso	38%	62%	87%	10%
Cabo Verde	66%	71%	88%	45%
Côte d'Ivoire	41%	75%	83%	11%
Gambia	35%	32%	104%	13%
Ghana	52%	67%	98%	21%
Guinea	51%	69%	72%	27%
Guinea Bissau	45%	63%	85%	16%
Liberia	51%	67%	88%	22%
Mali	33%	47%	79%	10%
Niger	32%	51%	55%	12%
Nigeria	37%	63%	95%	9%
Senegal	50%	67%	86%	22%
Sierra Leone	33%	44%	69%	12%
Togo	40%	64%	108%	9%
Regional average	43%	61%	85%	17%
Continental average	49%	61%	95%	23%

Box.1. What's the AGI?

The Africa Gender Index (AGI) is a composite index jointly developed by the African Development Bank Group (the Bank) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in 2019 for the first time. It is intended to gauge how women are faring alongside their male counterparts in three dimensions of human wellbeing-economic, social and empowerment (political and institutional representation). The economic dimension assesses whether women and men have equal economic opportunities. It measures gender inequalities in labour market participation, wages and incomes, business ownership and access to productive resources. The social dimension measures gaps in access to education and health services. It assesses whether girls and boys have equal access to education and health services, and whether they attain the levels of education and health needed to be full participants in economic and social life. The representation and empowerment dimension measures the extent to which women and men participate in their country's decision-making processes and organs, and whether women and men are represented equally in political institutions.

Figure 1. AGI 2019 findings for West Africa

AGI scores in Africa's sub-regions and West Africa's countries



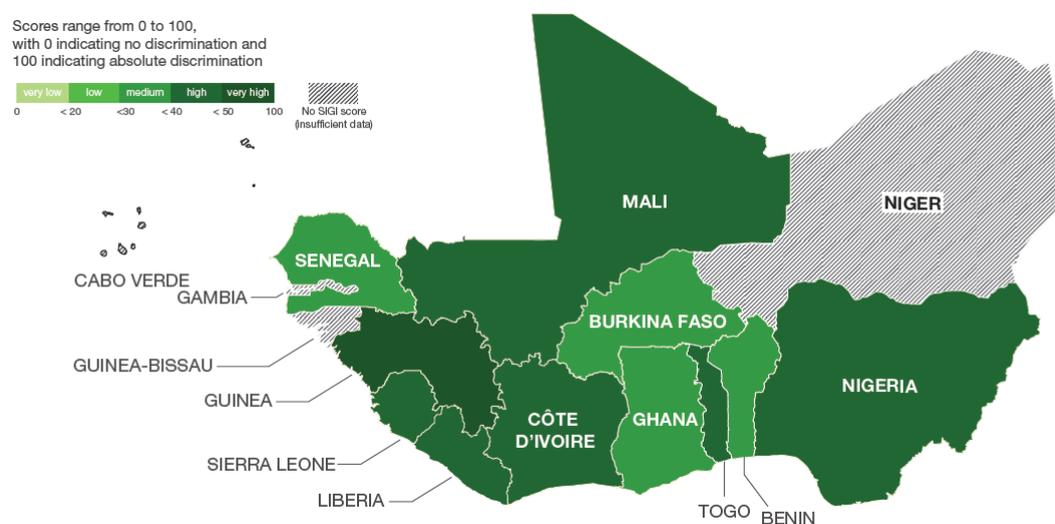
Key findings from the SIGI 2019 analysis in West Africa

The SIGI measures the level of discrimination faced by women and girls in formal and informal laws, social norms and practices. In West Africa, the SIGI score of 44¹ denotes a high level of discrimination compared to other regions of the world and sub-regions of the continent. West Africa trails behind East Africa and Southern Africa with scores of 32 and 39 respectively (Figure 2 **Error! Reference source not found.**). The Africa Gender Index (AGI) of the African Development Bank indicates similar findings. In 2019, West Africa's AGI score revealed high levels of inequalities, in line with North and Central Africa, trailing behind East and Southern Africa, and slightly lower than the continental average (African Development Bank, 2020⁽¹⁾). Across West African countries, levels of discrimination as measured by the SIGI range from medium to very high. While Burkina Faso performs the best, it nevertheless has a medium level of discrimination with an overall SIGI score of 32. At the global level, the country ranks 78th, underscoring the need for the sub-region as a whole to intensify its efforts to eliminate the discriminatory social norms faced by women and girls.

¹ SIGI scores denote the level of discrimination in social institutions and range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating no discrimination and 100 indicating absolute discrimination.

Figure 2. High levels of discrimination in social institutions in West Africa

SIGI scores in Africa's sub-regions and West Africa's countries



Note: Because of data limitations and the fact that the overall SIGI score can only be computed for countries with data points in every single indicator and variable composing the index, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Niger did not obtain a score in 2019.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[2]), Social Institutions and Gender Index, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f0c48e52-en>.

The highest levels of discrimination in social institutions in West Africa are found in the family sphere. This is primarily driven by the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work within households, hampering women's political and economic empowerment, as well as a high prevalence of girl child marriage and a failure of legal frameworks to adequately protect young girls from this harmful practice.

Although less severe, discrimination faced by women and girls in the other dimensions of the SIGI are still high and reflect the presence of some specific issues in West Africa, among others:

- violence against women and female genital mutilation;
- discriminatory laws, social norms and practices constraining women's equal rights in the workplace as well as their participation in the labour market;
- discrimination preventing women's voices from being heard and perpetuating their underrepresentation in politics.

Box 2. What is the SIGI?

Since its first edition in 2009, the OECD's [Social Institutions and Gender Index](#) (SIGI) has been measuring, assessing and analysing the deeply entrenched barriers and discrimination faced by women and girls across the world. Laws, social norms and practices delineate the legally and socially acceptable ways to think, do, express or act in relation to gender. When these social institutions discriminate against women and girls, they establish multiple structural barriers, which span the entire life course of women and girls.

Women's health, gender-based violence and reproductive autonomy

Where does West Africa stand?

Table 2. Key indicators for women's health and access to reproductive autonomy

Indicator	Women	Men
Maternal health		
Maternal mortality ratio (maternal death per 100,000 live births)	715	
Births attended by skilled health staff (% of deliveries attended by personnel trained to give the necessary supervision, care, and advice to women during pregnancy, labour, and the postpartum period; to conduct deliveries on their own; and to care for new-borns.	53%	
Nurses and midwives (per 1000 people)	1.1	
Access to family planning		
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	110	
Prevalence of unmet need for family planning – percentage of currently married or in-union women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who want to cease or delay childbearing but are not using any method of contraception	27%	
Percentage of women age 15-49 years making their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care	38%	
Gender-based violence		
Percentage of ever-partnered women who ever suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence	27%	
Proportion of ever-partnered women experiencing intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months	14%	
Percentage of women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM	28%	
Percentage of girls/boys aged 15-19 years ever married, divorced, widowed/widower or in an informal union	29%	3%
Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the specified reasons, i.e. if his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations.	42%	
Percentage of women aged 15-49 years who have heard about FGM and think the practice should continue	22%	
Food and nutrition security		
Stunting prevalence among children under 5 years of age (%)*	27%	
Prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years)	40%	

Note: *13 countries across the region have a prevalence of over 40% (severe) among women of reproductive age.

Source: (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019^[3]), Gender Institutions and Development Database; (Unicef, n.d.^[4]), Unicef Database; (WHO, n.d.^[5]), The Global Health Observatory; (World Bank, n.d.^[6]), World Development Indicators.

Goals to improve women's health, and reproductive autonomy

To help structure the conversation in the area of women's health and reproductive autonomy, we focus our attention on four critical goals:

- reduce maternal mortality rates;
- provide secure access to family planning;
- eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage; and
- implement gender-transformative food and nutrition security (FNS) policies and programmes.

Discussion questions

Challenges

- What are the main obstacles preventing women's reproductive autonomy and access to family planning?
- What factors promote gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage?
- What are the specific challenges in implementing gender-transformative food and nutrition security policies and programmes?
- What are the main discriminatory social norms, traditions and practices that explain these challenges?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected these existing challenges?
- What are the main obstacles encountered by actors working on these issues?

Policy options

- What good practices or policies have proven effective in addressing the challenges identified?
- What are the key success factors and lessons learned from these good practices and policies?
- How can they be scaled up and adapted to local contexts? Which of these policy options should be prioritised?

Women's economic empowerment

Where does West Africa stand?

Table 3. Key indicators for women's economic empowerment

Indicator	Women	Men
Labour force participation		
Labour force participation rate (adult 15+)	52%	67%
Share of the population considering that when jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women	42%	
Share of the population considering that it is better for a family if a woman has the main responsibility for taking care of the home and children rather than a man	54%	
Share of the population that agrees that when a mother works for pay, children suffer	40%	
Share of the population who disagrees that it is perfectly acceptable for any woman in the family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one	15%	
Access to formal and standard employment		
Share of men and women among informal workers	47%	53%
Status of employment		
Employees	13%	25%
Employers	1%	2%
Own-account workers	70%	64%
Contributing family workers	16%	9%
Gender segregation across sectors		
Share of men and women by economic sectors (ISIC Level 2)		
Construction	4%	96%
Transport, storage and communication	14%	86%
Public administration and defense; compulsory social security	17%	83%
Utilities	20%	80%
Mining and quarrying	22%	78%
Real estate, business and administrative activities	31%	69%
Education	32%	68%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	36%	64%
Human health and social work activities	41%	59%
Financial and insurance activities	51%	49%
Other services	53%	47%
Manufacturing	59%	41%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	68%	32%
Accommodation and food service activities	81%	19%
Ownership of agricultural land and assets		
Ownership rate of agricultural land	9%	86%
Ownership rate of houses	23%	42%
Share of the population who disagrees that women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land	26%	
Entrepreneurship		
Ownership rate of bank accounts at a formal institution	23%	40%

Source: (ILO, n.d.^[7]), ILOSTAT; (World Bank, n.d.^[6]), World Development Indicators; (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2019^[3]), Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB); (Afrobarometer, 2019^[8]), Afrobarometer (Round 7); (Inglehart et al., 2014^[9]), World Values Survey.

Goals to improve women's economic empowerment

To help structure the conversation in the area of women's economic empowerment, we focus our attention on five critical goals:

- close the gender gap in labour force participation;
- ensure women have access to formal jobs and enhanced status of employment (wage employee vs own-account worker);
- reduce gender-based segregation across sectors of the labour market;
- increase women's ownership of agricultural land and assets; and
- foster women's entrepreneurship.

Discussion questions

Challenges

- What are the main challenges constraining women's access to the labour market?
- What are the main challenges constraining women's access to assets and hindering women's entrepreneurship?
- What are the main discriminatory social norms, traditions and practices that explain these challenges?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected these existing challenges?
- What are the main obstacles encountered by actors working on these issues?

Policy options

- What good practices and policies have proven effective in addressing the challenges identified?
- What are the key success factors and lessons learned around implementing these good practices and policies?
- How can they be scaled up and adapted to local contexts? Which of these policy options should be prioritised?

Women's political voice, leadership and agency

Where does West Africa stand?

Table 4. Key indicators for women's political voice, leadership and agency

Indicator	Women	Men
Representation in public and political offices		
Representation in parliaments (lower/single house)	16%	84%
Representation in parliaments (upper house)	16%	84%
Representation in local government	<i>Insufficient data</i>	<i>Insufficient data</i>
Representation in political party leadership	11%	89%
Representation as mayors in capital cities	20%	80%
Representation in ministerial positions	Min. 10%; Max. 50%	Min. 50%; Max. 90%
Representation in top executive positions	7%	93%
Representation in electoral monitoring bodies	24%	76%
Representation as commissioners in national human rights institutions	Min. 11%; Max. 36%	Min. 64%; Max. 89%
Representation as judges	<i>Insufficient data</i>	<i>Insufficient data</i>
Representation as prosecution personnel	<i>Insufficient data</i>	<i>Insufficient data</i>
Share of the population that agrees that men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women	28%	
Political violence		
Share of the population that is a victim/survivor of gender-based political violence	<i>Insufficient data</i>	
Share of the population that reports being a victim of political intimidation or violence during election campaigns	47%	45%
Share of the population that reported personally fearing violence at a political event in the past two years	33%	33%
Participation in public and political life		
Share of the population that reported having voted in the most recent national election	69%	74%
Share of the population that reported having attended a campaign rally in the last national election	35%	45%
Share of the population that reported having attended a community meeting in the past year	50%	66%
Share of the population that reported having worked for a candidate or party in the last national election	20%	31%
Share of the population that reported having contacted a Member of Parliament about some important problem or to give its own views during the past year	9%	16%
Share of the population declaring that they discuss political matters when they get together with friends or family	54%	72%
Peace and security		
Peace agreements that include issues related to women, girls and gender concluded since 1990	17 out of 90	
Countries that have ratified at least one national action plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325	13 out of 15	

Note: Representation in political party leadership analyses the top three positions in ruling and opposition parties. Top executive positions include president, vice president, prime minister and deputy prime minister. Figure on peace agreements includes agreements concluded where the country or jurisdiction in which the conflict originated was a West African country.

Source: (IPU Parline, 2021^[10]), Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments; (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2021^[11]), Africa Barometer; (UN Women, n.d.^[12]), Thematic Area Dashboard; (Afrobarometer, 2019^[8]), Afrobarometer (Round 7); (UNODC, 2018^[13]), Court personnel; (UNODC, 2018^[14]), Prosecution personnel; (Bell et al., 2021^[15]), PA-X Peace Agreements Database; (WILPF, n.d.^[16]), National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security Database; and various Beijing+25 National Reports.

Goals to improve women's political voice, leadership and agency

To help structure the conversation in the area of women's political voice, leadership and agency, we focus our attention on four critical goals:

- achieve gender parity in representation at all levels of leadership in public and political offices;
- achieve equal participation between men and women in all aspects of public and political life;
- eliminate gender-based political violence; and
- incorporate a gendered perspective in all peace and security efforts in a systematic manner and include women in a meaningful way in these processes on an equal footing with men.

Discussion questions

Challenges

- What are the most important obstacles preventing equal participation between men and women in public and political life?
- What factors promote gender-based political violence?
- What are the specific challenges in facilitating a gendered perspective in peace and security efforts?
- What are the main discriminatory social norms, traditions and practices that explain these challenges?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected these existing challenges?
- What are the main obstacles encountered by actors working on these issues?

Policy options

- What good practices or policies have proven effective to address the challenges identified?
- What are the key success factors and lessons learned around implementing these good practices and policies?
- How can they be scaled up and adapted to local contexts? Which of these policy options should be prioritised?

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