



**USAID**  
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## EAST AFRICA

# GENDER EQUALITY & FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Despite great strides in economic growth and increased women in leadership in the region, gender inequality remains a significant impediment to growth and well-being across East Africa. Women face differential barriers in access to assets, markets, capital, training, and technologies; and they are underrepresented in—if not restricted from—decision-making spheres at all levels. This limits them from reaching their full potential and fully contributing to their countries' economies. USAID increases economic empowerment opportunities and closes gender gaps in participation between women and men. Through its programs, USAID links women to access credit, engage in international trade, and access global markets.

The regional economies are shifting away from primarily farming economies towards services and industries. However, 96% of women in Burundi, 76% in Kenya, 84% in Rwanda, 71% in Tanzania and 77% in Uganda still work in agriculture. Women's contribution to home and childcare, which is time-consuming, and which largely is unpaid, limits their ability to get paid work. Women's land tenure remains low in many countries due to ambiguities in national laws or when discriminative customary law informs decisions that disadvantage women. Few women have bank or mobile money accounts and even less can borrow money. The gender digital gap worsened by affordability, illiteracy, and a lack of digital skills still locks women out and are the key barriers to mobile phone use and ownership. When women face sexual harassment and violence or they are denied their property rights, inadequate measures exist to protect them.

## TRADE AND INVESTMENTS

While women make up the largest percent of small-scale cross border traders in the region, however, access to finance for female-owned and female-led enterprises remains a major constraint on businesses' growth in East Africa. It is estimated that informal cross-border trade

accounts for up to 60% of all intra-regional trade in East Africa and women are estimated to compose 80% of all informal traders.

Through the Trade Infrastructure Program (TIP) activity, in collaboration with the East African Community EAC, the revised EAC Simplified Trade Regime (STR) formalizes and improves the performance of Small-Scale Cross Border Traders (SSCBTs) in their importing or exporting businesses. The revised STR simplifies the process of clearing goods across the borders and will enable the SSCBTs, especially women, to benefit from preferential tariffs. USAID support ensures that One-Stop-Border-Posts guarantee safer, more productive cross-border trading environments for women traders. USAID further leverages women associations, cooperatives, and the regional women's platforms to gather evidence for advocacy on gender-responsive trading environments (policy, regulation, practice) for women and small businesses.

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## LEADERSHIP

To bridge the leadership gender gap, the YALI Regional Leadership Center in partnership with Power Africa provides leadership training to young women in the energy sector from ten countries in the Eastern Africa region. The Women in African Power (WiAP) training identified 45 young women ages 18-35 years who are active in the energy sector, bringing them together in a five-week virtual training program. The program included interactive facilitated sessions and networking events, followed by ongoing post-training engagement that include small grants to fund select initiatives by the alumni. The aim of WiAP is in the region.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

With climate change impacts accelerating around the world, communities face depleting resources. Recognizing women as agents of change, and the value of the diverse knowledge, experiences, and capacities of women and men alike, USAID's partnership with SERVIR uses satellite data to help identify and manage climate risks. Conserving Natural Capital and Enhancing Collaborative Management of Transboundary Resources (CONNECT) and the Partnership to End Wildlife Trafficking activities similarly support videos, trainings and workshops which aimed to increase awareness of decision-makers and the public on preventing wildlife crime as well as the current and potential value of natural capital in the context of a changing climate in East Africa.

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