

Impact of Women's Movements in Africa

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Questions

- ❖ What impacts have social movements and women's movements had on shaping policy?
- ❖ What are the opportunities for feminist movements in supporting policy implementation? What are the gaps?
- ❖ What are the research and data needs related to understanding the impacts that feminist movements have on policies?



Why women's movements matter

- ❖ One of most important predictors of policy change
- ❖ Develop new awareness of problems
- ❖ Influence public opinion
- ❖ Challenge conventional understandings of issues.
- ❖ Carry out advocacy and influence political institutions
- ❖ Help bring about legislative and constitutional reforms
- ❖ Influence international, norms, treaties and agencies

Women's movement impact in Africa

- ❖ Constitutional and legal reforms
- ❖ Political representation of women
- ❖ Gender based violence laws
- ❖ Land and property rights
- ❖ Women's health
- ❖ Economic empowerment
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Peacebuilding





Tunisia



Kenya



Somalia



Uganda

Constitutional Reforms: Africa

Area of law	T1: 1960-1989	T2: 1990-2019	% Increase
State			
Electoral quotas for females	0.06	0.54	47
Equality between men and women	0.55	0.94	40
Anti-discrimination clause referring to sex	0.29	0.81	52
Women can pass citizenship to children	0.10	0.50	40
Formal markets			
Labor rights for women	0.13	0.61	48
Family law			
Statutory law overrides customary law	0.00	0.31	31
Property rights for women	0.06	0.22	16
Other			
Gender-based violence	0.00	0.30	30
AVERAGE	0.14	0.52	38

Entrepreneurship



Income parity



Women's Political Representation

- ❖ Three times more women in parliament today than in 1995 (IPU)
- ❖ One fifth of African parliaments have female speakers of the house (IPU)
- ❖ One fifth of ministers are women (World Bank)



Post-conflict legislative representation of women

	Seats held by women
Rwanda	61%
Namibia	46
South Africa	43
Mozambique	40
Ethiopia	39
Angola	38
Burundi	36
Uganda	35
South Sudan	32



Where women's movements have had the least impact



- ❖ Changing customary practices, e.g., inheritance rights, polygamy, child marriage
- ❖ Ending harmful traditional practices, e.g., female genital mutilation
- ❖ Reforming family law
- ❖ Implementing legal reform

Conundrum for activists: Autocratic instrumentalization of women's rights

“Museveni intended to offer women an opportunity to get into political structures, and it [his policy] was supposed to motivate them and bring them on board so that their views could be heard, that they would be able to influence the governance agenda.

As I talk now, the affirmative action, as you know, it is a double-edged sword. It can be used by those in power . . . to sustain them in power.”

*Miri Matembe
Activist and former minister, MP in Uganda*



Goals of instrumentalizing women leaders

	Economic	Political
International	• Expand trade • Encourage foreign direct investment • Obtain foreign aid	• Soften country's image after civil war, jihadist activity, or military rule • Seek legitimacy against a dismal human rights record • Comply with international and regional targets for women's representation • Virtue signal to assert global or regional leadership
National	• Expand industrial production • Diversify the economy, especially oil-based economies • Expand export-oriented agriculture	• Preserve/expand vote share of ruling party • Expand patronage linkages, especially with key ethnic and religious groups • Isolate extremist jihadists and Salafists • Gain greater legitimacy among women activists and voters

Opportunities: Africa



Post-conflict contexts

Where coalitions can be built

Where funding is available

In democratizing countries

Where less resistance from societal actors

What we know about movements globally

- ❖ Focus on certain issue areas: suffrage, political representation and quotas, gender-based violence
- ❖ Public opinion on women's rights
- ❖ How movements spread influence globally
- ❖ International norm diffusion (world polity approach)
- ❖ The role of the United Nations in promoting women's rights
- ❖ NGOization (professionalization of movement)
- ❖ State feminism
- ❖ Transnational feminism

Research Gaps

- ❖ The extent to which legal reforms are translated into practice
- ❖ The impact of the right-wing populism in Europe and the United States on support for women's organizations in the global South
- ❖ How ideological gender frames influence women's rights
 - Liberal
 - Communitarian
 - Universal republicanism
 - Socialist
 - Complementarity



Research Gaps

- Regional comparative studies (we have many country studies and crossnational studies)
- Asia and Middle East
- Varieties of authoritarianism
- LGBTQ+ concerns
- How gender identity affects perceptions of women's right
- Generational changes around attitudes and strategies around women's rights