Social Institutions and Gender Equality in Côte d'Ivoire
SIGI Country Report

The report *Institutions sociales et égalité femmes-hommes en Côte d'Ivoire* identifies discriminatory formal and informal laws, social norms and practices that are at the root of gender inequality. The analysis focuses in particular on identifying discriminatory social institutions that hamper girls' education and lead households to prioritise boys' education as well as those that create structural and fundamental obstacles to women's economic empowerment.

Main messages

1   **Discriminatory social norms lie at the heart of inequalities between girls and boys in terms of their education and school enrolment**

Girls' education is one of the most important determinants of their future economic empowerment, notably in terms of their future status in the labour market or participation in the formal sector. Côte d'Ivoire has made important progress since 2010 in the area of education and schooling of girls, but certain discriminatory social norms continue to be at the heart of persisting inequalities.

➡ **Households invest first and foremost in boys' rather than girls' education.** The perception of future returns from education in terms of employment favours boys. In case of limited resources, 30% of the population would favour boys' education, to the detriment of that of girls.

➡ **Boys are perceived as having higher innate abilities than girls in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)** and as better suited for certain careers: 32% of the population considers that boys have better capacities than girls in scientific subjects, against only 4% who think the opposite.

➡ **The share of unpaid care and domestic work that falls on girls' shoulders hampers their education**. Social norms confine girls and women to the private sphere and to their role within the household, including their role as mothers.

➡ **Schools are perceived as a space where girls are at risk of being exposed to violence or immoral behaviour, especially at the secondary level.** 20% of the population considers that schools corrupt girls' morals, while 43% of the population is reluctant to the idea of letting their daughters pursue their education in another town.

➡ **Discriminatory norms that encourage girl child marriage draw them away from school.** For 34% of the population, a well-educated woman has less chances of marrying. Girl child marriage increases the probability of school dropout at the secondary level and increases the risk of teenage pregnancies.

2   **Discriminatory social norms create structural and fundamental obstacles to Ivorian women's economic empowerment**

Discriminatory social norms lie at the heart of economic inequalities between women and men and hamper the full participation of Ivorian women in the labour market as well as their ability to own agricultural land.

➡ **In the public and private spheres alike, decision-making power is the prerogative of men, including in terms of women's right to work and to control household resources.** For example, 70% of the population thinks that a man should decide whether a woman has the right to work outside the home.

➡ **Social norms assign women to the domestic sphere, where they undertake most of the unpaid care and domestic work.** On average, Ivorian women dedicate four times more time than men to unpaid care and domestic activities.

➡ **Customs and traditions that legitimate discriminatory inheritance practices hamper women's ownership of property.** A large share of the population estimates that land belongs to men and considers normal that women and girls are fully or partially excluded from inheritance.

3   **Addressing and transforming discriminatory social norms and practices constitutes an extraordinary economic opportunity**

Removing discriminatory social norms is not only a necessary step to achieve gender equality, it also represents an opportunity to radically transform society and place women's economic participation at the service of a stronger, more sustainable and more inclusive economic growth. In addition, both the nature and levels of discrimination that Ivorian women and girls face vary across districts and/or places of residence. Therefore, policies, programmes and initiatives must reflect this observation and adopt a targeted approach that is adapted to local contexts.

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Policy recommendations

To address discriminatory social institutions that hamper gender equality holistically, the report proposes to structure the Ivorian public action around four main axes.

⬇	⬇	⬇	⬇
Amend discriminatory laws in order to eliminate any gender-based discrimination, and guarantee their enforcement	**Focus on discriminatory social norms and practices** identified as root barriers to **girls' education** and **women's economic empowerment**	Strengthen **the quality and reach of the educational system** as a means in itself to transform social norms	Invest in the **collection of sex-disaggregated data** to gain a better understanding of how they evolve and to monitor changes in girls' access to education and women's economic empowerment

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON GIRLS' EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR THE GOVERNMENT, THE DONOR COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The report highlights **specific recommendations** and **concrete actions** addressed to Ivorian policy makers but also to all relevant stakeholders, including community leaders, civil society, international partners and the donor community.

To address discriminatory social norms and practices that hamper girls' education, the report proposes to:

- **Sensitise parents**, notably through information sessions on the benefits of education, door-to-door enrolment drives and back-to-school and reenrolment campaigns in a post-COVID-19 context.
- **Propose targeted financial incentives**, for example through conditional or unconditional cash transfers, or the establishment of scholarships for girls.
- **Mobilise communities** by organising participatory workshops as well as media interventions and edutainment initiatives appealing to religious, community and cultural leaders.
- **Mobilise schools** by encouraging interactive discussions in classrooms about gender discrimination, by training teachers in gender engineering and by providing accessible and appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health.
- **Invest in education infrastructure** with a view to increase the number of primary and secondary schools in underserved areas, create boarding schools for girls and improve the housing conditions of teachers.

To address the structural obstacles that hamper women's economic empowerment, the report proposes to:

- **Place education at the service of women's participation to the labour market** through academic orientation sessions at school and mentoring programmes.
- **Support women's entrepreneurship**, for example through business training programmes that include skills' acquisition modules and training in financial and accounting management.
- **Address gender stereotypes and biases that confine women to specific professions and positions** by designing mass communication campaigns to deconstruct gender stereotypes and by increasing the visibility of women in leadership positions and working in male-dominated fields.
- **Strengthen the application of existing legal frameworks** that govern inheritance rights and women's access to land ownership.
- **Sensitise the public to questions related to women's land rights** through information and sensitisation campaigns in the media and free legal aid.
- **Strengthen women's capacities and position in the agricultural sector** by enhancing agricultural training, establishing collaboration schemes, training and mentorship programmes, and by prioritising public action on staple crops and small land owners.

Download the full report at oe.cd/SIGI-CIV