



AGDI Gender Outlook Series

7

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The African Centre for Gender (ACG) *Gender Outlook #7* aims to benchmark the Democratic Republic of the Congo's performance on the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI), highlight challenges and offer prioritized policy recommendations to accelerate progress towards gender equality. The AGDI is based on two components. The first is the Gender Status Index (GSI), a quantitative snapshot of 44 indicators that capture gender disparities¹ in the social, economic and political arenas. The second component is the African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS), a qualitative self-evaluation of government performance in the implementation of more than 30 treaties, declarations, and resolutions affecting women's rights and women's empowerment in the social, economic and political arenas. All data² are provided by stakeholders in DRC, including various ministries and civil society organizations. This profile draws on the results from the AGDI Country Report for DRC, one of the 14 countries in Phase 2 of the AGDI³.

Key Messages

- DR Congo lags significantly behind other AGDI Round II countries in the *Education* component of Social Power.

This performance emanates from weaknesses in quality (e.g. completion and literacy rates) and quantity (such as enrolment rates at primary level), along with large disparities in tertiary enrolment rates.

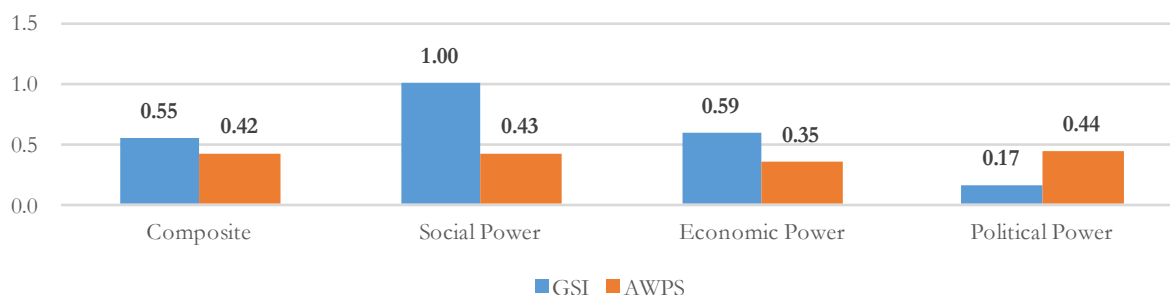
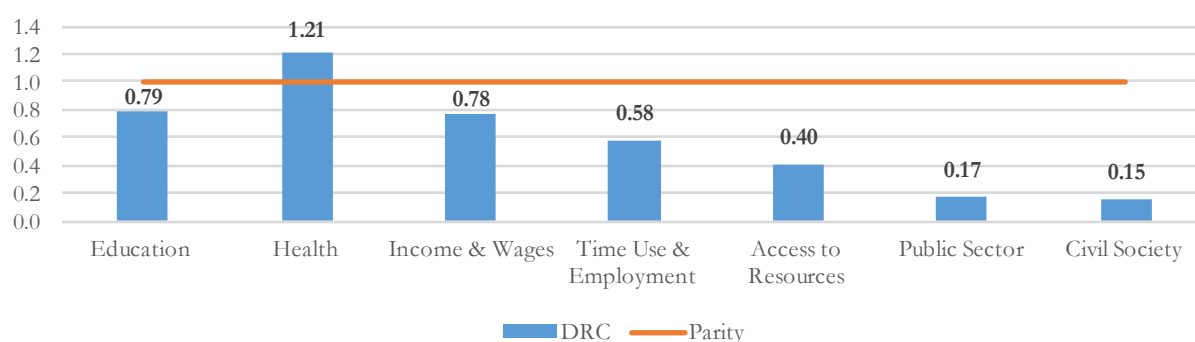
- Rural women and households headed by women are economically at a grave disadvantage, with high poverty rates. Large gender wage gaps exist in rural areas along with virtually no asset ownership. Access to land and extension services along with human capital formation are crucial in supporting women to break out of the poverty trap.
- For DR Congo to improve its GSI and AWPS scores, there needs to be greater political empowerment of women, particularly in local politics as well as in civil society. Accelerating gender mainstreaming at all levels along with gender-responsive budgeting could be a first step. However, affirmative action through quotas will eventually be needed, given structural inequalities facing women in politics and society.
- Uncertainty and violence that follow from ongoing conflict in the country have negative implications for women's human capital development, sexual and reproductive rights and security.

¹ The GSI for most of the indicators are calculated by dividing the indicator for female achievement by that for male achievement for the particular indicator. A tolerance level of 3 per cent is set around the full gender parity score, leading to a parity bandwidth of 0.97-1.03 whereby scores below (above) this bandwidth indicate gender disparity against women (men). However, there are eight reverse indicators, i.e. stunting, underweight, mortality, prevalence of HIV/AIDS, share of women under poverty line, time spent on non-market activities and domestic care and volunteer activities and youth unemployment rate, that follow a slightly different formula such that overshooting in these normatively negative indicators are neutralized for the consistency of the index.

² The Country Report from DR Congo was finalized by May 2012 and received by the ACG in July 2012. While the ACG has strived to update various indicators using international databases, e.g. Demographic and Health Survey and Inter-Parliamentary Union, the majority of the indicators are from 2012 and were provided by the government of DR Congo.

³ Other countries that were part of AGDI 2 are Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, the Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Senegal, Togo and Zambia.

Figure 1 provides a comparative perspective on DRC's AGDI. DRC is among the few countries with complete data, which makes its assessment consistent and accurate. Both the composite GSI and AWPS are significantly far away from their respective optimal benchmarks, with one of the lowest AWPS scores among the 13 countries under review. In the GSI, as with other AGDI Round II countries, there is parity in the Social Power block, while the Political Power block indicates the absence of women in decision-making positions. In the Economic Power block, gender disparity is again substantial and progress will require strong commitment. In the AWPS, the

Figure 1. African Gender and Development Index Snapshot - DRC**Figure 2. Disaggregating DRC's Gender Status Index**

DRC records very low performance – under 20 per cent – in women's access to agricultural extension services, land and technology. In the Social Power block of the AWPS, no policy action is apparent regarding safe abortion and education campaigns on human and specifically women's rights.

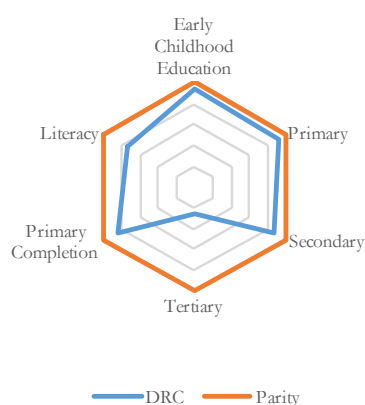
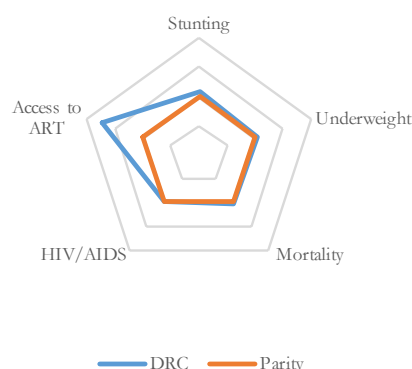
In Figure 2, the significantly high score above parity in the *Health* sub-component, as in other AGDI countries, reflects the disproportionate share of women accessing antiretroviral treatment (ART) services. School enrolment rates are quite high for DRC's overall level of development yet challenges abound, particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions across the country. Dismal access to land and livestock and large disparities across different management categories are behind the low score in *Access to Resources*. The largest challenge is yet again women's low participation in decision-making processes. DRC can significantly improve its GSI score by boosting women's political power, and affirmative action is the most promising policy tool in the short term, along with strong political commitment at the highest levels.

- The **Social Power** block is made up of the *Education* and *Health* sub-components.

In *Education*, gender parity is not achieved at any level of education. While the ratio is close to parity at pre-school lev-

el, the gross enrolment rate is around 3 per cent, reflecting exclusively urban and better-off families. On a positive note, gender parity is within reach for primary and secondary enrolment. The relatively large disparities in literacy and completion rates justify prioritization of interventions to improve quantity and quality issues at primary level. Enrolment rates beyond secondary education are currently at the bottom of the distribution, and there was a major decrease in gender parity score between 2005 and 2009. This makes it highly unlikely that enrolment rates will improve given the low achievement scores at primary level.

In *Health*, there is gender parity to large extent, with slightly more girls than boys underweight and stunted. While HIV/AIDS prevalence rates are lower than elsewhere in Africa, the prevalence rate for women is 2.5 times more than that of men. Conflict, violence and poverty are among the leading factors cited by the AGDI Country Report driving women's higher rates of infection. Among young girls, knowledge of HIV/AIDS transmission as well as use of condoms is lower than among boys. As with most other study countries, there are many more women accessing ART than men.

Figure 3a. GSI for Education indicators**Figure 3b. GSI for Health indicators**

Notes: ART = antiretroviral treatment; mortality refers to children under 5 years of age; HIV/AIDS refers to the prevalence rate in the 15-24 age group

- The **Economic Power** block is made up of the *Income*, *Time Use and Employment* and *Access to Resources* sub-components. Despite the presence of a variety of measures such as laws guaranteeing equal access to employment and social protection as well as capital and business activities, no satisfactory and tangible outcomes have been achieved. Insufficient financing and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms reinforce one another in preventing women from breaking out of this vicious cycle.

In the *Wages and Income* component, gender parity is far from being achieved in the short-run across all sectors of the economy. Similar to other countries in AGDI Round II, there are large wage gaps, particularly in the agriculture sector, while women earn relatively more in the informal sector. In terms of income, gender parity is within range only for income in small agricultural household enterprises. As in other Round II countries, female-headed households are more vulnerable to income poverty than their male counterparts, as a consequence of wage and income gaps along with time poverty.

DRC is one of the few study countries with data on *Time Use*. The picture that emerges is that women spend almost as much time as men on market activities but in addition, women spend much more time on non-market activities and domestic chores relative to men. In fact, women spend up to 2.7 times more hours on domestic chores than men do. In terms of *Employment*, while there is gender parity in youth unemployment rates, women are virtually absent in the non-agricultural economy. As observed in the AWPS, the lack of policy action on women in agriculture must be addressed immediately in order to boost women's economic empowerment.

In *Access to Resources*, there are severe disparities in rural areas where the influence of customary law is still strong and where women do not own land and livestock despite forming 70 per cent of the agricultural workforce. Time poverty combined with lack of resources in farming leads to large productivity losses in the sector. Without cash and livestock, it is highly unlikely that women will soon start acquiring land, especially nowadays with the commercialization of agriculture across the country in full swing. On the bright side, there is gender parity when it comes to house ownership

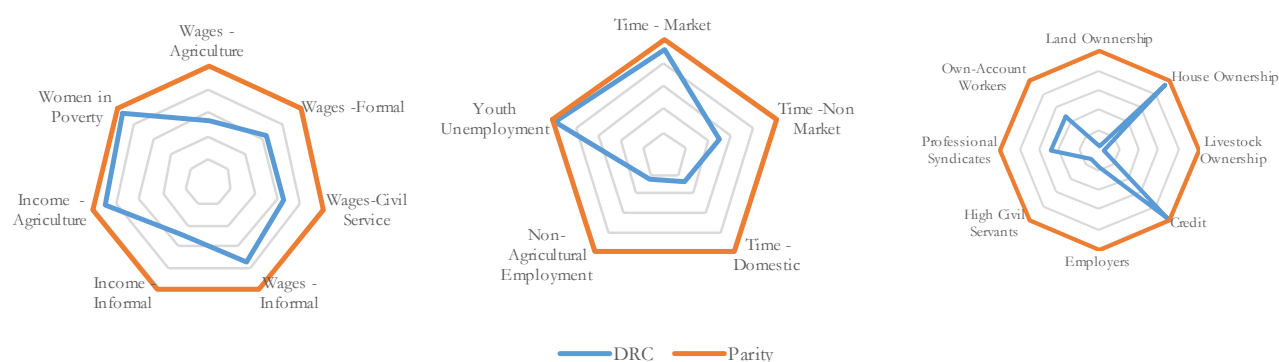
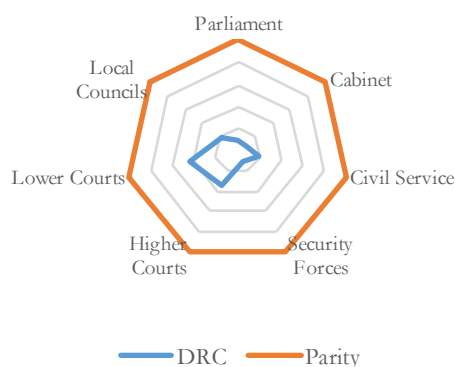
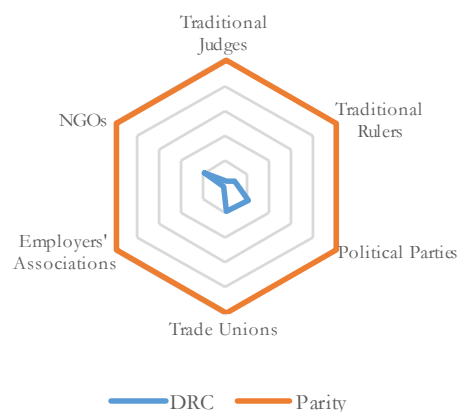
Figure 4. Economic Power

Figure 5a. Political Power block**Figure 5b. Political Power block (contd.)**

and access to credit, a phenomenon that largely occurs in urban areas. It is highly surprising that while women have parity access to credit, their presence among Own-Account Workers and Employers is much below that of other AGDI Round II countries.

- The **Political Power** component is a function of the quantity and quality of female participation in the public sector and civil society. DRC is one of the AGDI Round II countries with extremely weak scores in Political Power. Evidence from the AWPS shows that gender mainstreaming is far from ideal and women's involvement and peace and security negotiations is terribly weak.

In the *Public Sector*, women's presence is remarkably low in elected positions. The AGDI Country Report suggests that women face financial barriers in competing with their male counterparts and getting media coverage. As such, fewer than 10 per cent of the seats in parliament and the Cabinet are occupied by women. It is notable that since 2012, the

share of women in Cabinet has shrunk from 14 per cent to 8 per cent. In local government, women's low presence is equally troubling, with fewer than one-sixth of positions in local councils across the country held by women. At the time of writing, there were no women governors or vice-governors. As with some other countries under review, women are also largely underrepresented at all levels of the judiciary.

In *Civil Society*, the statistics paint an even more disappointing picture, with at best one-sixth representation among top cadres of civil society organizations. In political parties and employers' associations, women's representation does not exceed 2 per cent. There is a much better level of representation among trade unions and NGOs at 16 per cent. The challenges in the Economic Power block are unlikely to change without a strong push from political parties and trade unions. ILO conventions are only halfway implemented and rural women are in need of support to advance their land rights.