

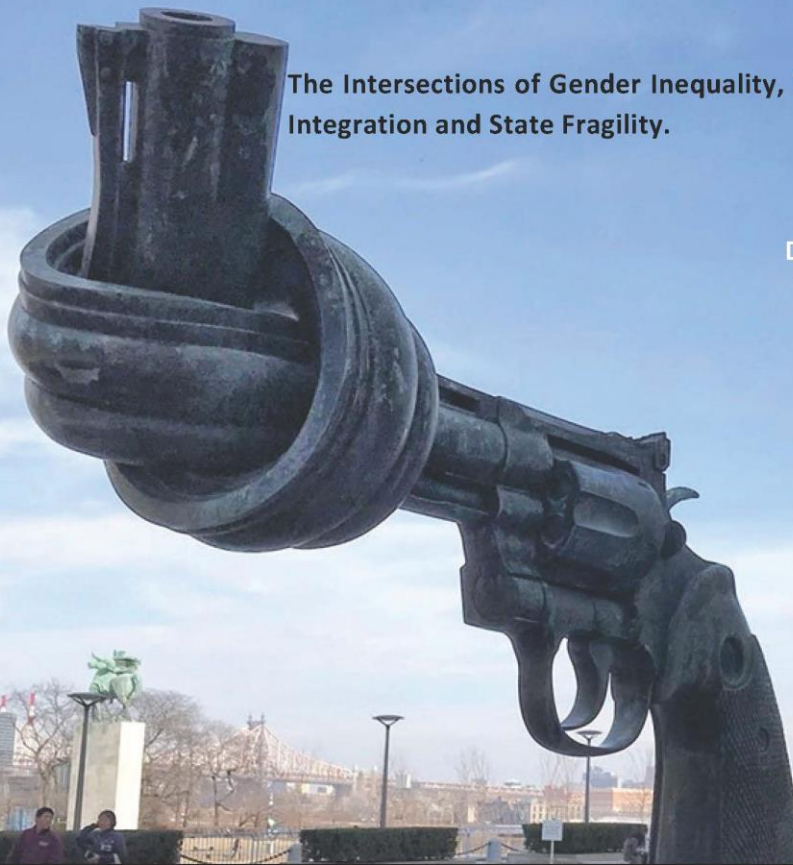
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The Intersections of Gender Inequality, Regional Economic  
Integration and State Fragility.

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# The Intersections of Gender Inequality, Regional Economic Integration and State Fragility

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## **Key Words:**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Gender equality is an important indicator of human security both in terms of political stability and economic development. When states are unable to address the interests and economic priorities of their constituents, the excluded populations can experience a level of marginalization that can lead to intrastate conflict. Regional economic communities (RECs) and regional integration organizations (RIOs) have adopted a series of policy interventions to address inequality and political stability. More specifically the RECs, RIOs, and domestic governments of member organizations have drafted and implemented gender mainstreaming strategies to address gender inequality. Women cannot be treated as a monolith; disparities in access to resources intersect with other demographic categories and factors. This paper is part of a larger study which uses *gender inequality to predict state fragility (GISF)*, through the lens of systematically sampled African countries by combining econometric and case study datasets. The larger *GISF* model features from all subregions of the continent however this paper focuses on a subset of cases.

The goal of this paper is thus to develop and test a theoretical framework capable of predicting when the constraints imposed by social structures create tensions which can lead to a dysfunctional state, conflict, and potentially violence. In order to capture the variations in women's experiences in RECs and RIOs, I have developed an *Index of Agency (IOA)*. The *IOA* reveals how combinations of inequalities produced by political, economic, and social institutions combine to impact women's economic security. Agency is operationalized as having the autonomy to determine one's own economic activities and to successfully address institutional obstacles. The model captures rich data and aims to a) identify weaknesses in state structures that are producing inequalities, b) develop sustainable approaches to addressing inequalities before they lead to conflict, and c) provide targeted approaches to mainstreaming gender equality into regional economic integration policies. The proposed paper is part of a larger project where the model is tested in two countries in each sub-region of the African continent (West, East, North, Southern Africa) because of variability in the presence of multiple RECs and RIOs, levels of inequality and gender equality, and the presence or absence of inter and intrastate conflicts. This UN OSAA paper focuses primarily on a set of West African country case studies, Nigeria and Ghana.

The current pandemic continues to highlight the consequences of maintaining high levels of inequalities in multiple areas on human security. This paper proposes centering the varied experiences of women can help identify structural weakness in the state and RECs. Once identified policies can be developed to generate institutional changes that can mitigate fiscal stressors that often lead to conflict. The study provides a careful examination of the intersecting relationships among inequalities in the context of economic, political, social, educational, Information Communication Technology, and public health institutions. The gender disparities in access to health care include the following indicators: treatment, insurance coverage, medication, personnel and the proximity of facilities. The investments in human capital required to reduce gender inequalities simultaneously serve to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The capacities of state structures to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable members of societies is an important metric of both economic and political stability. Local women's organizations need to have decision making authority in tailoring gender equality policies and monitoring and evaluating them. Placing women's groups at the center of policy implementation and assessments generates institutional changes that are dynamic and capable of responding to new inequalities that may emerge. State fragility can be significantly reduced when tensions surrounding the intersections between economic disparities and other demographic pressures are alleviated.

## **OVERVIEW**

Gender equality is an important indicator of human security both in terms of political stability and economic development. The goal of this paper is to develop a theoretical framework that predicts when domestic tensions can weaken the state making it more fragile and potentially leading to conflict, violence and instability. This work uses gender inequality to predict state fragility by combining econometric indicators, case study datasets, conflict forecasting models and systematically applying them through the lens of African countries from across the region. Gender equality policies have been included in regional economic communities (RECs) and regional integration organizations (RIOs) to address inequality and political stability. Women cannot be treated as a monolith; disparities in access to resources and lack of recourse intersect with other demographic categories and factors. To capture the variations in women's experiences in RECs and RIOs, I have developed an *Index of Agency (IOA)*. The *IOA* reveals how combinations of inequalities produced by political, economic, and social institutions combine to impact women's economic security. Agency is operationalized as having the autonomy to determine one's own economic activities and to successfully address institutional obstacles and social constraints.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Gender equality is an ideal lens through which to observe different types of instability because gender intersects with a full range of demographic factors. Gender mainstreaming in regional economic cooperative treaties and domestic political systems is an ideal bridging mechanism to understand the impact of gender inequality on political instability because it allows using individual responses to examine aggregate national- and cross-national results. Through illustrating the barriers and obstacles being faced by different groups of women on the ground detailed policy frameworks can be drafted and adopted to remedy those disparities. The framework developed in this paper will capture individual, aggregate and state-level effects. Much of the

current scholarship analyzes these sets of using statistical analysis to illustrate the broader trends yet does use what is happening at the local and household levels to interpret the results produced by large in cross-national studies. The qualitative data collected through interviews and participant observation gives detailed pictures of women's lived experiences that will be mainstreamed into the analysis.

This paper is part of a larger project where the author is testing a *Gender Inequality as a Predictor of State Fragility (GSIF)* model using two countries in each sub-region of the African continent (West, East, North, Southern Africa). The variability in the presence of multiple RECs and RIOs, levels of inequality and gender equality domestically, and the presence or absence of inter and intrastate conflicts are factors that are incorporated into the analysis. The policy paper prepared for the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa utilizes qualitative data from the *IOA* in the West African country case studies, Nigeria and Ghana. These two cases were selected for this paper because, 1) there is a greater significant difference in their scores on the Fragile State Index Scores, 2) they experienced similar political, economic, and social restructuring by the British during colonialism, 3) they have Muslim majority and minority populations, 4) there are similar differences in infrastructure, 5) they have the presence or absence of insurgent activity, and 6) there is a formal office for NGOs in the government in Nigeria while the same kind of office is not present in Ghana. Using these two country case studies this policy paper aims to 1) examine the differences in addressing gender equality between RECs and local women's civil society organizations and 2) to identify institutional barriers constraining the full economic participation of women. The entire model captures rich data and aims to a) identify weaknesses in state structures that are producing inequalities, b) develop sustainable approaches to addressing inequalities before they lead to conflict, and c) provide targeted approaches to mainstreaming gender equality into regional economic integration policies. The impact of the pandemic has further highlighted the intersecting issues of economic instability, political instability and inequalities. More specifically the variations in public health infrastructure and access are included in an effort to identify practical remedies to close those gaps.

The findings of this study will include explicit policy recommendations for the RECs, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Sahel Saharan States (CEN-SAD), domestic governments (national, subnational and local levels), and relevant stakeholders and agencies. The study begins by defining state fragility and state dysfunction and the role of gender inequalities in generating both. Next the qualitative data from the country case studies will be analyzed. Finally, the specific policy recommendations for each implementing organization and agency will be outlined.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Much of the existing scholarship examines these factors using econometric data and statistical analysis but does not drill down to contextualize what is happening at the local and household levels. This study uses a mixed methods approach which combines, statistical analysis of econometric data, conflict forecast modeling trends, content analysis of the gender equality policies of two RECs (e.g. ECOWAS and CEN-SAD), 10 local women's organizations, 150 semi-structured interviews (in each field site), and country case studies. The study utilizes regression and multi-factor analysis of cross-national trade deficits and women's external labor force

participation and contextualize those results using two country case studies from the West Africa sub-region (Nigeria-Ghana). The cases of Nigeria and Ghana in this study were featured because there is a greater than 30-point difference in their Fragile State Index Scores (Nigeria-98.0; Ghana-63.9), they are both formerly colonized by the British, they have Muslim minority and Christian majority populations, and Nigeria has more recent incidents of insurgent activity compared to Ghana. The variations in physical infrastructure and development in the northern regions of both countries are very similar. The external labor force participation of women is higher in Ghana than in Nigeria and Nigeria ranked higher than Ghana on the UNECA and African Development Bank African Gender Index 2019 Report.<sup>1</sup> Including one case that is grappling with stability issues in the northern region of the country, Nigeria, and one case that is not dealing with an insurgency, Ghana, provides more insight into the inequality thresholds that are reached before culminating in conflict.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data can strengthen our understanding of the interactions between gender inequities and the structural limitations of the state. The econometric data sets provide a large aggregate picture of women's economic participation however they do not provide an in-depth look at the multiple factors that impact their decisions around labor and participation in the economy. The ability of women to make choices about the work they engage in and obstacles they face are captured through semi-structured interviews. The interviews further illustrate the types of strategies women undertake to overcome or challenge the societal constraints they encounter. The ways in which social expectations around gender norms can be reflected in limited institutional access is described in detail in the interviews. The interviews will be used for the purposes of this policy paper to outline the institutional barriers and constellations of inequality to create tangible policy prescriptions at the sub-regional, national, sub-national and local levels. The organizations selected include a cross section of non-governmental organizations NGOs and community-based organizations CBOs and the participants selected for the interviews were identified using snowball sampling (Leech 2002). The qualitative data is heavily featured in this paper because it reveals the factors on the ground that can be translated into tangible policies and institutional interventions. Conflict forecasting models identify overall trends in the fragility of the state through combining the resulting patterns in the cohesion, economic, political, and social indicators. The interviews and content analysis of local women's organizations programming contextualize these larger statistical patterns identified in the forecasting models. By placing these trends in context based on the endogenous factors in country case studies the different impacts of inequalities on state fragility across national contexts can be discerned. The comparison of how gender equality is operationalized by local women's organizations and the RECs and domestic Ministry of Women's Affairs (Nigeria) and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (Ghana), illustrate the gaps in the definitions and priorities between civil society and state entities.

The intersectional analysis used in this study produces dynamic pictures of how underlying political, economic and social factors impact women's economic experiences and how women react to these institutions. Through the incorporation of datasets from 2012 the study is able to identify contemporary issues with trends over a decade. The qualitative data collected through 150 interviews and content analysis of local women's organizations will provide detailed pictures of women's lived experiences that will be integrated into the *GISF* model. The women participating

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-report-2019-analytical-report>

in this study are a representative sample of women across levels of privilege and engaged in a range of economic activities. The *IOA* uses individual-level gender indicators (e.g., labor force participation, decision making authority) to identify relationships to components of state fragility, providing a method for coding gender indicators to test short term and long-term effects on conflict forecasting models. Typologies of the combinations of weakened state and social institutions that can culminate in conflict are captured by this study and contextualized at the household and national levels. The *IOA* supports a series of insights into motivational factors used in conflict forecasting through capturing the perspectives of multiple groups on the ground.

### *Description of Participants*

The women participating in this study will be a representative sample of women across levels of privilege and engaged in a range of economic activities. Participants will come from multiple economic sectors, firms of all sizes, private and not-for profit organizations, and government agencies. The age ranges of women will extend into their 80s because labor does not end at 64 years of age but continues throughout the lifecycle (Wallace, 2018). Women will be interviewed in urban and rural communities within each country field site in order to obtain internal domestic geographic differences. The women represent the intersections of multiple ethnolinguistic groups (majority and minority status), income (individual and household), family lineages, formal education, Islamic education, marital status (married-polygamous/monogamous, unmarried, widowed, divorced).

The specific types of work included are a) private sector small and medium sized enterprises (industries/sectors-agriculture, food stuffs, technology, banking, telecommunications, fashion/clothing, beauty, health, education, child/elder care), b) women in civil society organizations, NGOs, CBOs, c) national women political officials (ministers, legislators, executive), d) sub-regional women political officials (RECs, RIOs), e) work without monetary remuneration (care work). I selected labor sectors where women are over or underrepresented. Social Network maps will be developed based on the interview data. The social network maps determine how many degrees of separation that exist between an individual and a key decision maker within political, economic, and social institutions. The political officials participating in this study represent a cross section of ministries, offices and levels of governance that include local, sub-national and national state structures, and officials from the RECs, RIOs and at the African Union Commission. Collectively, these individuals are responsible for translating gender equality into policies that can be implemented, monitored and evaluated.

### *Index of Agency*

The *IOA* will highlight the micro-level economic experiences of women including 1) their ability to make decisions about the types of work they undertake, 2) the specific institutional barriers they encounter, 3) the strategies they employ to address any obstacles, 4) their success in removing structural impediments. The *IOA* includes a survey that has already been developed and semi structured interviews that will be conducted. A total of 150 women in each country case study will be interviewed in Nigeria and Ghana respectively. A survey is being developed based on the results of the semi-structured interviews. The survey will be distributed to an independent sample of 200 women in each country field site during the summer of 2022.



A qualitative content analysis of the semi-structured interviews will be conducted in order to identify themes and sub-themes to compile a detailed description of the level of agency based on the four measures of gender equality described above. The results of the interviews will be used to distill the specific kinds of structural barriers that result in equalities experienced by women. The results of the qualitative content analysis will be compared with the results of the *IOA* survey to determine points of congruence and divergence, and to determine any additional probing questions that need to be added to the survey which will be distributed. The *IOA* is broken down into three tiers with a range of 1-3 within each. The experiences of women in the lowest sphere, with the least amount of agency, will be featured in this policy paper because they represent the most vulnerable groups. Successfully addressing the issues faced by women that are the most institutionally marginalized across multiple sectors can help improve the conditions for other cross sections of society and strengthen formal economic political and social structures and mechanisms of the state and regional and sub-regional governing organizations. Comparing the two sets of narratives produced by the survey and the semi-structured interviews will help ensure that the reported economic experiences of women can be further contextualized through their own stories.

#### *Regional Economic Communities & Domestic Ministries*

The macro-level analysis includes a content analysis of the gender equality policies adopted by the regional economic communities, regional integration organizations and continent-wide trade treaties in Africa as a region. A content analysis of the policy prescriptions of the Ministries of Women's Affairs and Gender in Nigeria and Ghana respectively will be included in the analysis. The content analysis of the treaties and of the local women's organizations will be compared in order to identify any gaps between how the policies were defined and then operationalized by civil society groups compared to sub-regional and domestic governing bodies.

#### *Constellations of Inequality*

There are six kinds of institutions that will be incorporated into my larger cross regional *GSIF* model: a) economic institutions, b) political institutions, c) social institutions (cultural & religious), d) educational institutions, e) information communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, f) public health institutions.

The analysis will yield the constellation of inequalities by carefully identifying and describing the sets of interactions across structural barriers that individual women report experiencing. For example, if a woman is trying to obtain some of the contract set asides for women owned small businesses, she may be unable to do so if her business is not registered and recognized by the state. Barriers to registration could include not having: 1) a bank account, 2) a physical office location, 3) registration forms translated into local languages, 4) registration and certification fees, 4) internet access to submit forms to compete for contracts. The ways in which these institutions inadvertently produce disparities among particular groups will be identified. Once these interactions are identified, policy interventions can be implemented that will address the root causes of inequalities. Centering these types of individual economic experiences of women make visible the bottlenecks that gender equality policies in RECs and RIOs face in domestication.

#### *Motivation for Case Selection in the larger GISF project*

In the larger project, the *GISF* is being tested in different sub-regions because the variability in the country cases will allow me to assess the robustness of the model most effectively.

In order to study the different types of instability produced by constellations of inequalities, two country pairs in each sub-region of the continent have been selected: West Africa (Nigeria-Senegal), East (Rwanda-Ethiopia), North (Morocco-Tunisia), Southern (Namibia-Angola). Three independent variables were used to select country pairs: 1) Gini coefficient (an inequality measure), 2) trade deficits, and 3) history of conflict. All of the countries are members of at least one RECs or RIOs. The pairs represent the highest and lowest levels of inequality, Human Development Index scores, and Gender Inequality measures (regional-African Union Commission and global-UN). Each country pair has a recent/on-going conflict or no-conflict designation. Each pair represents a range of demographic factors including a) majority or 50/50 Muslim populations-Muslim minority populations, b) colonial institutional legacies (British, French, German, Portuguese), c) ethnolinguistic groups. The physical and policy environments of the pairs differ in terms of ICT readiness and the adoption of gender quotas.

### **MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN RECs**

States attain security for their populations through a combination of political stability and addressing economic needs and inequalities. Ideally, states represent the interests of their populations and are held accountable if those populations' interests are excluded. States become fragile when groups experience marginalization and exploitation, and national identities become fragmented—all of which can be precursors to inter- and intrastate conflict (Caprioli, 2005). The relationship between inequality and political instability has been well-established (Robinson, 2003, Cramer, 2005; Ostby, Nordas, & Rod, 2009; Buvinic et al., 2013; Baker, 2014; Forsberg & Olsson 2016; Hudson, Bowen, Nielsen, Perpetuya, 2016), with gender inequality yielding similar predictive results. The state is considered dysfunctional when public goods, services, and the descriptive components of democracy are systematically not available for particular segments of the population consistently. The state becomes fragile when the dysfunction remains sustained in place without effective mechanisms for recourse. Domestic governments have taken a myriad of policy approaches to address gender inequality. Regional and sub-regional responses have attempted to standardize these measures to increase women's economic participation. States and regional economic cooperative groups have adopted quotas and policies to promote gender equality; however, there have been few empirical tests of their direct material impacts.

When the state is not responsive and produces inequality, it is predicted to increase state fragility and instability because inequalities are interconnected. This policy paper identifies sets of risk factors and places them in comparative context to learn more about how specific countries may be more susceptible to conflict resulting from state fragility while the same weaknesses may not generate intrastate conflict within other countries. These relationships are captured and denoted with the term *constellations of inequalities*. These typologies of state fragility will be used to predict the relationships between the particular kinds of fragility and the duration of inequalities which can provide a range of thresholds that can be reached before intrastate conflict develops. The *IOA* aims to predict variations in the types of inequalities women encounter; analyzing these differences will illustrate how multiple forms of inequality combine to undermine state responsiveness in particular ways. This work makes it possible to capture and translate differing priorities of women and other underrepresented groups into substantive macro and micro economic policy. The *IOA* creates new knowledge about the institutional factors that impact external labor force participation, which can be utilized in domestic and international contexts to provide inclusive sustainable growth. The work quantifies how privilege can increase or decrease the



ability of women and other populations to use political, economic, social, cultural and religious institutions to successfully remove barriers to participation.

The conceptualization of gender equality utilized in this study allows specific effects and dimensions of inequalities to be isolated by building on the works of African feminists that recognizes that gender norms stem from and can transcend the societal roles ascribed to people based on the sex assigned at birth (Mama, 2001, 2004, 2011; Oyewumi, 2006; Mama & Okazawa-Rey, 2012). It is imperative that gender is not conflated with biological sex. Gender is not a substitute for other demographic categories rather an intersectional analysis can help explain how multiple demographic factors impact ability to participate fully in terms of labor, agency and then how discrimination is addressed. The dimensions of gender featured in security studies often include 1) economic, 2) political, 3) social, and 4) physical security (Forsberg & Olsson, 2016). The *IOA* adds agency as a fifth dimension in theorizing gender equality. Perceptions of individual agency in terms of the ability to both attain stated goals around economic activity and address institutional barriers (successfully or not) is a critical component of understanding how inequality functions.

Women's economic security has become a feature of regional economic treaties and less formal agreements because it 1) promotes sustainable growth and regional economic integration and 2) is positively correlated with reductions in interstate violence (True, 2008; Buvinic et al., 2013; Forsberg & Olsson, 2016). The model will analyze the gender equality protocols and treaties that have been adopted by the African Union Commission (AUC, a regional organization), and sub-regional economic communities (RECs) and regional integration organizations (RIOs). The recent passage of the AUC 2063 Agenda (2015) and the Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) both emphasize the critical role of regional economic integration and blending of the informal and formally economy (Juma & Mangeni, 2018; Quisumbing, Meinzen-Dick, Njuki, 2019). The majority of workers in the informal economies in Africa as a region is over 80% women, as is the majority of workers in the agricultural sector (Meagher, 2010; UNECA, 2011; AUC, 2012, 2015; AUC, AfDB, UNECA, 2017). Gender inequality is not experienced the same way by every woman. Personal economic experiences on the level of the individual women are expected to reveal how combinations of inequalities create state fragility. Multiple dimensions of gender inequality at the household-level, including how women respond to institutional constraints are assessed in this study. The *IOA* will capture the relationships between the different definitions of gender equality and variations in the economic experiences of women at the individual, regional, sub-regional, and national levels. Gender mainstreaming in regional economic cooperative treaties is an ideal bridging mechanism to understand the impact of gender inequality on political instability because it allows using individual responses to examine aggregate national- and cross-national results. The intersectional analysis produces dynamic pictures of how underlying political, economic and social factors impact women's economic experiences and how women react to these institutions.

The *GISF* model aims to identify the ways that women experience constraints on their economic activities and predict the specific types of weakness in the state these barriers generate and depict. Inequality has multiple dimensions and includes a range of institutions at each level of governance (local, sub-national, national, sub-regional, regional, global). The key institutions incorporated into this model include: 1) economic institutions (access to capital, human capital

investments, remuneration, formal financial institutions, labor markets, registration requirements for firms), 2) educational institutions (literacy, primary, secondary, tertiary post graduate education), 3) political institutions (policy frameworks, legal frameworks), 4) social institutions (cultural, religious), 5) infrastructure (ICTs, Internet, roads, clean water, sanitation), and 6) public health institutions (healthcare access: mental & physical, insurance, treatment, medication, facilities, personnel). (See Figure 1 below)

The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the urgency of addressing economic inequality and human security on a global scale. The *GISF* model will be extended, which was conceptualized prior to the pandemic, to test the pandemic's impact on state fragility and agency. The impact of the pandemic on state fragility and agency can be analyzed using both the model's *IOA* and its constellations of inequality. My measures of gender inequality include specific indicators for access to health care, treatment, insurance coverage, medication, personnel and the proximity of facilities. Public health infrastructure is examined among the state institutions that are tested for critical weaknesses. The intersecting relationships among economic, political, social, ICT, and public health infrastructure, access to education and literacy result in the impacts of the pandemic on state fragility being assessed beyond health explicitly.

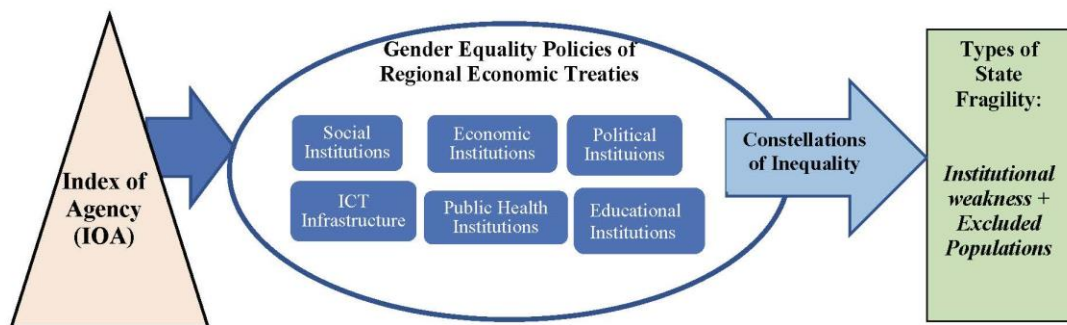


Figure 1. Gender Inequality as predictor of State Fragility (GISF Model)

## GENDER INEQUALITIES & CONFLICT FORECASTING

There are multiple factors attributed to state failures, including quality of life, functioning democratic structures, and participation in global trade. Security studies scholars have established an empirical link between high levels of inequality (Robinson, 2003; Cramer, 2005), specifically gender inequality and high levels of inter and intrastate conflict (Caprioli, 2005, Forsberg & Olsson, 2016). The majority of these studies theorize gender along three dimensions: a) norms, b) social capacity, and c) socioeconomic status (SES). Socioeconomic status, the most recently added component (Forsberg & Olsson, 2016), is defined as a combination of income, occupation, and formal education. While critical, this conceptualization of SES does not reveal how *privilege* functions, allowing some women more autonomy to define work on their own terms and cope with institutional barriers. There is need to develop models that can unpack such complexities of

inequality. If we can understand how inequalities intersect, we can forge more effective state responses.

Understanding the complexities surrounding how identities impact the ways in which individuals perceive their autonomy and power within the state includes understanding individuals' willingness to negotiate and cooperate to avoid conflict (Suedfeld, 2010, 2011; Conway et al., 2018). Early warning systems have outlined a range of key indicators (e.g., regime change, perceived relative deprivation) (Gurr & Lichbach, 1986; Goldstone et al., 2010; Blair & Sambanis, 2020). The majority of forecasting models tend to include economic variables that are not contextualized domestically making it difficult to explain how inequalities and the individual motivations of actors vary by country. Gender inequalities are often treated as dependent variables or outputs (Natali, 2020) whereas in this study they are treated as input variables. The incorporation of the perspectives of individual actors as they relate to systematic discrimination and opportunity constraints extends the work of Suedfeld exploring the relationships among the complexities of identity and political stability. The *GISF* model utilizes economic variables endemic to domestic and sub-regional systems and uses agency to determine how individuals and groups experience and attempt to resolve structural disparities in access to resources. The proposed study attempts to answer the *why* questions around what motivates actors and suggests ways that stability can be improved without using military force. The full integration of the multiple components of gender into forecast modeling is challenging. The questions about how to accurately code complex gender-related constructs make it difficult. The *IOA* provides an opportunity to empirically test agency as an attribute of gender equality through measuring the gap between idealized economic activities and lived economic experiences.

The Fund for Peace developed a Fragile State Index (FSI) (2017) that utilizes quantitative economic indicators, content analysis from media and other reports, and qualitative assessments of critical junctures in individual countries to assess the level of state fragility<sup>2</sup>. The FSI identifies “group grievances, economic decline and poverty, uneven development, human rights and the rule of law, state legitimacy and demographic pressures” as key indicators that can cause states to be more susceptible to becoming dysfunctional (7-12, 2017). Although FSI does not explicitly utilize gender inequalities as a measure they examine the interactions among economic inequalities, social exclusion and legitimacy of the state. Forecast models that often include gender-based violence as one dimension of gender equality; do not address all of the multifaceted components of gender. The State Department and Department of Defense have generated forecasting models and early warning systems for conflict integration for countries in multiple regions, with the Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Early Warning of Violence and Conflict: A Global Framework, which is a critical development (IFES, State Department, 2021). This forecasting model defines gender more broadly and includes the following categories: 1) security and justice, 2) social norms and gender equality, 3) politics and governance, 4) economic factors, and 5) other. The role of perception indicators (perspectives of individual actors) is essential because it bridges the connection between the structural indicators, which tend to be long-term indicators with data collected once a year, and dynamic indicators, which examine specific behaviors and events that may foreshadow conflict or violence (IFES, State Department, 2021). Economic indicators are conceptualized by women's attempts to quickly acquire cash and their rates of unemployment. The IFES and State Department model's gender categories examine primarily effects of gender

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<sup>2</sup> <https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/FSI-Methodology.pdf>

inequality (e.g., things done to women) but do not incorporate the goals women have for themselves and their strategies for addressing discrimination and disparities. An emphasis on women's own definitions of gender equality and individual efforts to engage with or react to institutional constraints/opportunities are captured in my *GISF* model. *GISF* and *IOA* highlight the key sets of mechanisms that perpetuate marginalization for different intersectional groups of women. The *IOA* measure is an alternative approach to measuring impacts of institutional inequalities including a) the ability to select economic activities (participation and non-participation), b) identifying obstacles to economic engagement across institutions, c) concrete policy recommendations to address the obstacles.

By examining how or whether national and sub-regional institutions are addressing gender inequality, we can determine whether they are increasing or reducing inequality and political instability. Regional economic cooperative treaties are ideal institutional responses to analyze because they provide comparative insights into gender gaps at the national and household levels. The relationships between economic security and political stability have been established (Nye, 1974; Keefer & Knack, 1998; Gyimah-Brempong & Traynor, 1999; Waever, 2008; Rickards, 2009; Ronis, 2012). Moreover, scholarship on human security in Africa emphasizes the importance of accountability, transparency, human rights, the rule of law and the “role of women in social and economic development” (Cilliers, 2004, p. 6). Development requires social inclusion and strengthens state institutions (Deacon, 2016). Therefore, attaining gender equality and incorporating other marginalized groups into inclusive and sustainable growth and economic development frameworks is paramount. There have been several theoretical developments around the most effective ways to measure women's economic participation and engagement. The work done to establish gender statistics into econometric data by the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Economic Commission for Africa, the AUC, African Center for Statistics ACS), African Development Bank (AfDB), and the work of feminist economists have been pivotal.

The current advances in gender statistics reflect a commitment to reconceptualizing work and developing datasets that reflect the diverse economic experiences and priorities of women. Work is conceptualized as labor activities performed, where individuals may or may not receive remuneration. The ILO and NSOs have made methodological innovations, including revising their surveys, creating questions that are more probing, and offering trainings to advance gender mainstreaming in labor statistics. They have established gender data networks to provide capacity building of local national statistical offices (NSOs). The ILO has developed the Descent Work Labor Framework, Gender Statistics Divisions, and the Data 2X platform in a concerted effort to address gender equality globally. UNECA, the AfDB, and the ACS created the Africa Program on Gender Statistics, African Gender and Development Index (AGDI), African Gender Equality Index to regionally contextualize gender disaggregated economic data. The *IOA* provides this kind of contextual data at the individual and household levels, coupled with capturing women's agency in addressing barriers and women's relative levels of privilege. The variations in women's experiences become visible with the index. The impact of other intersecting factors (e.g., religion, socioeconomic status), are assessed.

The underlying assumption, that full integration into the global economy has a net positive benefit for women and is the best method to address gender inequality and state fragility, must be interrogated. Subjecting women to external market forces and the governance structures of global

financial institutions without understanding the empirical impacts on their daily lived economic experiences could have negative consequences (Pyle, 2003; Keating, Rasmussen, Rishi, 2010). This approach makes the goal *access*, rather than transforming the existing institutions that were responsible for the marginalization in the first place (Rankin, 2002; Roberts, 2012; Wilson, 2015). Additionally, many feminist economists have highlighted the potential exploitation that different groups of women may experience when integrated into global markets without careful attention and this could exacerbate gender inequality and therefore increase state fragility. The majority of the feminist scholarship on gender inequality, geographically based economic groups, and trade treaties tends to focus almost exclusively on the provisions in policies and/or the ability of civil society and women's groups to successfully push institutions to adopt gender inclusive measures (Rai, 2008). While making a critical contribution, these studies do not systematically link the policy frameworks to economic security to evaluate the impacts. In order to address inequality, the barriers that place restrictions on the economic activities that women undertake need to be removed (Aterido, Beck, Iacovone, 2013). A different approach is needed to identify and change the pervasive institutional obstacles to women's fiscal stability. Increasing state capacity to address the needs of their constituents creates stability and formal systems that can accommodate new groups and accompanying social structures.

Women in the Africa region are overrepresented in both the informal economic sectors and agricultural production. Although the delineation between formal and informal economic activities is often blurred it is important to note the barriers that women participating primarily outside of the economic purview of the state to address the policy priorities of the most vulnerable populations. The study will capture the diverse experiences of women within and across national and sub-regional contexts using both quantitative and qualitative data. Although policy decisions should be driven by quantitative data, qualitative data—women's stories—are powerful levers to communicate with policy makers and stakeholders about the institutional barriers to attaining inclusive sustainable growth through regional integration. In addition, developing theories capable of reflecting the different experiences that women have with economic activity is critical to avoid treating women in Africa as a monolith. This project will also analyze the key areas of focus of each of the economic treaties: a) the operationalization of the gender equality mainstreaming in the economic treaties and agreements and b) the mechanisms of institutional accountability for the RECs among different populations of women residing in their member states. The RECs and RIOs provide the larger context in which the other institutions are examined—political, economic, social (cultural and religious), public health, ICT, infrastructure, and education.

## **DATA & ANALYSIS SUMMARY**

### *Key Economic Indicators & Fragile State Index*

The key econometric indicators, external labor force participation for Nigeria is 45.5% (2019) and 63.85% in Ghana.<sup>3</sup>

### *Fragile States Index (FSI)*

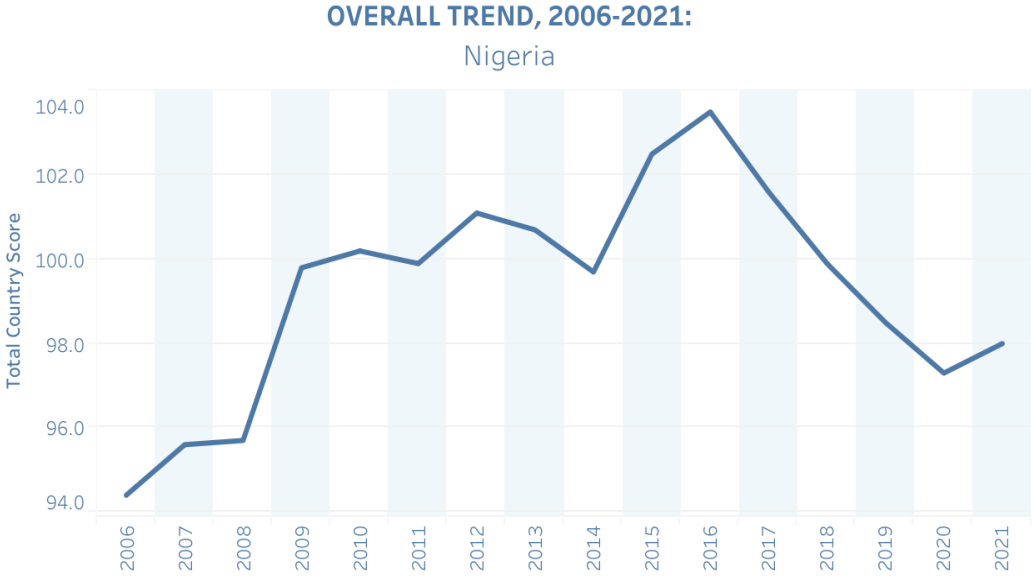
The FSI designations result in a lower score indicating less fragility. The results of this work could be utilized to identify regionally based metrics for stability. This paper could contribute to the development of new or modified indicators and issue areas utilized to develop

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/women/>

measures and conceptualizations of state fragility. Nigeria has a higher FSI score, 98.0, than Ghana, 63.9, indicating that Nigeria is more fragile than Ghana. Below are the trends for Nigeria and Ghana from 2006-2021.

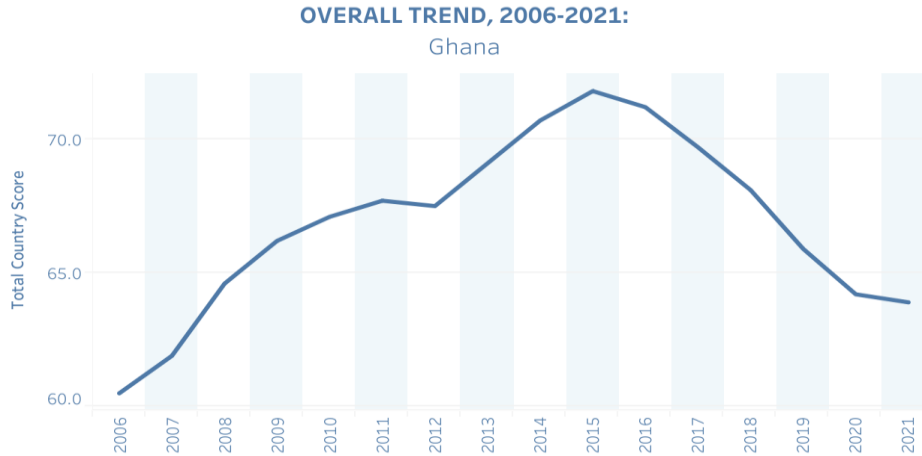
The FSI score for Nigeria in 2021 is 98.0<sup>4</sup>. While the overall score dropped significantly after 2016 the pandemic has reversed that trend which is now illustrating a steady increase. The specific dimensions that are increasing the vulnerabilities of the Nigerian state include demographic pressures, the economy overall and economic inequality specifically.



The FSI score for Ghana in 2021 is 63.9<sup>5</sup>. In Ghana a significant decrease in the score occurs in 2015. The impacts of the pandemic have resulted in the decline stopping and instead reaching a plateau. The factors that are increasing particularly vulnerabilities are inequality and demographic pressures that are rising.

<sup>4</sup> <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>



### *RECs & Local Women’s Organizations*

The impact of RECs on intra-regional trade for both ECOWAS and CEN-SAD vary. Based on data from the 2016 UNCTAD<sup>6</sup> stats the share of intra-regional trade for ECOWAS among other RECs was 10.7% and 5.6% for the remainder of the continent. Additionally, it has some of the highest levels of trade within the region among all of the RECs. The share of intra-regional REC trade for CEN-SAD is 7.5% and 4.1% for the rest of the continent outside of the RECs. There are some key differences among the rankings of exports of goods based between ECOWAS and CEN-SAD. Intra-regional exports for ECOWAS include natural resources (54.5%), manufacturing (29.7%) and food and agriculture (15.8%) and for CEN-SAD manufacturing (42.9%) is also first however, natural resources (35.4%), and food and agriculture comprising 21.7% rank second and third. The sectors in the economy where women tend to be overrepresented include agriculture and informal economic activities that would need to be disaggregated from these formal sectors in order to gain accurate assessments of their participation. These totals do not include service sector work across borders, to include care work (child and elder care) and home healthcare work. The E-commerce figures in 2017 for ECOWAS are 34.9 and 33.4 for CEN-SAD. Labour productivity decreased in 2017 for CEN-SAD from 39.5 to 31.8 and ECOWAS experiences a minor decline from 20.9 to 20.0.

Understanding these broader trends and limitations allows us to contextualize some of the larger disconnects between the goals of addressing gender equality among regional integration organizations and the priorities and requirements of different groups of women based on their levels of agency and privilege. The first table below summarizes the results of the content analysis of two key features of the RECs gender equality mainstreaming agreements, 1) the operationalization of gender equalities and 2) the presence of any mechanisms to promote institutional accountability of the RECs to different groups of women within their member states. The two RECs featured are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the

<sup>6</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditctab2019d3\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditctab2019d3_en.pdf)



Community of Sahel Saharan States (CEN-SAD). These two groups were selected because Nigeria and Ghana are members of both RECs.

Table 1: Summary of Gender Mainstreaming in ECOWAS & CEN-SAD

<b>REC</b>	<b>Conceptualizations of GE &amp; Economic Priorities</b>	<b>Mechanisms of Institutional Accountability</b>
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Increasing women's SMEs</li> <li>*Capacity building institutions &amp; orgs.</li> <li>*Equal access to basic goods &amp; services</li> <li>*Economic empowerment</li> <li>*Human Rights</li> <li>*Conflict</li> <li>*Governance</li> <li>*Peace &amp; Stability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Special Agency on Gender &amp; Development</li> <li>*Gender &amp; Development Center</li> </ul>
Community of Sahel Saharan States (CEN-SAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Regional Security</li> <li>*Sustainable Development</li> <li>*Education (cultural, technical, scientific)</li> <li>*Economic participation increase</li> <li>Women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*None specified</li> </ul>
Ministry of Women's Affairs- Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Gender equality mainstreaming national &amp; international contexts</li> <li>*Gender equality mainstreaming in public &amp; private sectors</li> <li>*Health</li> <li>*Women's Rights &amp; Gender Development</li> <li>*Sustainable development</li> <li>*Women's Education, Empowerment Training &amp; Organizations</li> <li>*Women centered NGOs</li> <li>*Women &amp; Gender Policy Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*National Centre for Women Development (NCWD)</li> <li>*Gender Desk Office (Ministries, Line Agencies)</li> </ul>
Ministry of Gender, Children, & Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Include women in every sector of national development</li> <li>*Increase access to social welfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*National Council for Women and Development</li> </ul>

Protection-Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Providing income security at the household levels</li> <li>*Advance the social, economic, and emotional stability of families</li> </ul>	
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The second table summarizes the ways in which different local women’s groups in Nigeria and Ghana define their gender equality priorities to promote economic engagement and the presence of structures to help ensure that women that are represented by the organizations are able to provide feedback and hold the groups accountability for representing their different interests. The greater specificity of the local women’s organizations moves beyond them themes and outlines ways to concretize them and generate structural changes that perpetuate the disparities.

Table 2: Summary of Gender Equality Priorities of Local Women’s Groups

<b>Type of CSO</b>	<b>Conceptualizations of GE (Local Women’s CSO)</b>	<b>Mechanisms of Organizational Accountability (Local Women’s CSOs)</b>
<p><b>NIGERIA</b>  <u>Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)</u>            *umbrella organizations            *individual NGOs            *issues: health, education, democracy, vulnerable populations, faith-based groups</p> <p><u>Community Based Groups (CBOs)</u>            *issues: development committees, trading cooperatives, traditional birth attendants, small scale food stuffs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*increase access to fiscal capital</li> <li>*removing collateral requirement</li> <li>*business development</li> <li>*basic fiscal literacy</li> <li>*trainings for health care work</li> <li>*increase access to contract set asides</li> <li>*better telecommunications network stability &amp; access</li> <li>*inclusion in designing gender equality policies</li> <li>*increase access to healthcare facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*direct connectivity NGO umbrella and CBOs</li> <li>*decision making via consensus vs majoritarian votes</li> <li>*autonomy to form coalitions</li> </ul>
<p><b>GHANA</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*increased access to capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*direct NGO-CBO missing link among some demographically minority groups</li> </ul>

<p><u>Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)</u> *issues: political engagement, LGBTQ+ groups, faith-based groups, health, education</p> <p><u>Community Based Groups (CBOs)</u> *issues: development committees, trading cooperatives, textile/clothing production, sub-regional groups, small scale food stuffs</p>	<p>*increased access to equipment and facilities *increases in local government institutional support *inclusion in designing gender equality policies *increase access to health care services and medications</p>	
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*Index of Agency & Constellations of Inequalities*

The table below combines the results of the interviews with women that scored in the lowest category on the IOA, tier C. The factors that resulted in their scores being in tier C include lack of formal education, income, social capital, limited autonomy to determine if they would participate in the external labor force market and if they decided to participate, they were not able to select their preferred types of economic activities. Women that scored in this last tier had little flexibility to determine the conditions under which their labor occurred. The social network maps of these women were often characterized by differing degrees of separation among decision makers in formal economic and political institutions and social, cultural and religious ones. The other factors that were important include their domestic sub-regional location and the majority and minority statuses of particular demographic categories such as religion. Finally, the majority of the women interviewed in both country case studies while engaging in informal economic activity that includes remuneration, they are also providing labor in both the formal and informal sectors that is not compensated monetarily.

Their similarities of the key obstacles that participants in Nigeria and Ghana reported facing are depicted with their corresponding institutions in table 3. The points of congruence across the two country case studies are highlighted in order to outline specific policy prescriptions that can be instituted to address these gender inequalities and fortify the connected state institutions.

Table 3. Summary of the institutional barriers reported by women in Nigeria & Ghana with the lowest IOA scores

	<b>Economic Institutions</b>	<b>Political Institutions</b>	<b>Social (Religious &amp; Cultural) Institutions</b>	<b>Educational Institutions</b>	<b>ICT Infrastructure</b>	<b>Public Health Institutions</b>
1	*ability to access capital (firm registration)	*Existence of gender equality policies & quotas	*Authority to change cultural gender norms *descriptive representation *symbolic representation	*Adult literacy rates -official language -local languages	*ICT policy adoption *ICT policy implementation	*Access to Healthcare facilities *
2	*Human capital investments *University education *Vocational Education *Updated trainings by industry	*Knowledge of quota policies *Knowledge of institutions implementing quotas	*Authority to change religious gender norms *descriptive representation *symbolic representation	*increasing literacy rates among girls & boys *childcare in schools	*Internet Access (Broadband subscription) *reduction in outages	Mental Healthcare access
3	*Wages	*Presence of enforcement mechanisms for quotas & discrimination *Utilization of enforcement mechanisms for quotas & discrimination	*Leadership positions in cultural institutions	*Primary School Completion *fees *books	*Technology innovation & access *influence on the adoption of technology based on labor requirements	*Insurance coverage *Public options without copays *Disparities in facilities that accept public insurance
4	*Access to formal financial institutions *Mobile banking functions	*Women in legislatures & executive office *Women in office at local	*Leadership positions in religious institutions	*Secondary School Completion *fees *books	*Access to good Roads *repairs occurring after issues are reported	*Treatment access to specialists *challenges with referral systems

	compared to formal ones *Financial transitions via apps	government levels				*logistical issues *need formation of medical teams *continuity of care
5	*Labor force participation *lack of infrastructure by industry	*Legal protections (criminal-workplace) *filing grievance	Public changes in women's roles within last decade cultural institutions	*Tertiary education *tuition *textbooks *hardware *retention	*Access to clean water in the home or on the compound *Consistent access to water	*Medication availability at local dispensary *fees
6	Investment in economic sectors	*Invoking gender based legal discrimination precedents	Public changes in women's roles within the last decade religious institutions	*Post-graduate education *retention	*Sanitation systems that are consistent	*Personnel recruitment of women *retention of staff

### Key Findings

Ideally women would have the ability to make decisions around their participation in the economy based on their own priorities and needs. The reality on the ground is that the women face two sets of obstacles in attaining their goals around economic engagement. The list of specific obstacles women face based on each dimension are outlined in detail in Table 3. The gender disparities in human capital investments make it more difficult for women to execute their own choices around labor and work. The introduction of gender mainstreaming in the policies of the RECs and at the ministerial levels are not necessarily felt as directly on the ground in the daily lived economic experiences of women. The gap between the policy frameworks and material realities of different groups of women must be addressed if gender inequality is going to be reduced.

The goal of this paper is to center the experiences of women with the least amount of agency in order to develop and implement policy prescriptions that can begin to address the different types of intersecting inequalities they face. An emphasis on the economic, political, social (religious & cultural), educational, ICT and public health institutions outlined in Table 3 will help facilitate the ability of small-scale trading to benefit from regional integration and generate more sustainable and inclusive models of economic development. More specifically, regional production networks that are often extremely weak hamstringing the ability of RECs in general to capture domestic markets. These issues are further compounded for women owned firms

regardless of the economic sector. Listed below are critical conceptual approaches to regional integration that need to be adopted based on the results from two of the country-case studies:

- ❖ Mainstreaming Gender Equality in RECs recommendations:
  - ❖ Quantitative metrics cannot be used exclusively. We need to understand the microprocesses that inform and shape women's ability to make choices around labor and remuneration.
  - ❖ The integration of informal economic activities into the formal economy cannot occur without ensuring that women receive institutional benefits and additional eligibility for access to state resources to support their work. The taxation system of the informal work needs to be commiserated with the revenue that is being derived from those activities. The informal activities being under the purview of the state should not result in punitive surveillance of women's work.
  - ❖ Regional economic agreements are heavily dependent on the state parties which can exacerbate gender inequalities because of structural issues. Therefore, similar types of accountability mechanisms for state governments at the national, sub-national and local levels should be mirrored by those of the RECs.
  - ❖ The human rights frameworks referenced in different RECs should institutionally reference and be based upon the AU-Charter on Human and People's Rights in Africa, Protocol on the Rights of Women.
  - ❖ There is a requirement to integration and mainstream gender equality into all sectors of the regional economic integration plan in addition to having an organizational body responsible for monitoring and evaluating its implementation and effectiveness.
  - ❖ There needs to be a greater buffer and protectionists trading policies for small and medium sized firms for women and other vulnerable groups for participation in the global, regional, and sub-regional markets.
  - ❖ There is a need for specific gender equality targets and metrics across sectors.
  - ❖ There should be greater input from local women's organizations and activists which shapes the priorities and goals of RECs and domestic members states. This will allow for streamlining and tailoring of the needs of different groups of women into the policy frameworks. Local women's groups even if they are not formally registered as NGOs or part of umbrella NGOs should be a key part of the monitoring and evaluation processes.
  - ❖ Inclusion within policy prescriptions is necessary but an insufficient condition. Institutions need to be transformed in order to address inequalities.
- ❖ Mainstreaming Gender Equality in the Ministry of Women's Affairs and/or Gender in Nigeria & Ghana recommendations:

- ❖ Local women's organizations should have a key role in oversight. More specifically these groups need to help devise the policy priorities and the metrics utilized for monitoring and evaluations.
- ❖ The local women's groups that have policy oversight need to rotate in order to ensure that no single group's perspective is dominant.
- ❖ The formal relationships among the state and civil society needs to largely be limited to accountability. Women's civil society organizations acting in this capacity give them recourse to hold the state accountable while also retaining a level of autonomy.
- ❖ The formal structural relationships between women's NGOs and women's CBOs cannot be assumed. The form of the civil society organization often indicates a level of privilege. Often women heading NGOs having more access to fiscal and social capital than women in community-based groups. Therefore, there need to be a combination of both types of organizations provided policy oversight. The feedback mechanisms result in real-time changes that can be made to policy interventions.
- ❖ The *IOA* results and *constellations of inequalities* can be used to outline the specific weaknesses in state institutions. Then policy changes can be drafted and implemented to remove the obstacles that women are facing.
- ❖ The monitoring of the *IOA* needs to be continuous in order to identify new areas where the state is fragile and new populations that are impacted.
- ❖ The public policy literacy and legal literacy programs should be held for women. These campaigns can provide women with knowledge about the formal recourse mechanisms that individual women can access when they encounter obstacles. The trainings could be tailored to each respective set of institutions.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPACTS**

Although the literature on the positive impacts of RECs on *interstate* conflict is firmly established, the model empirically tests the impact of RECs on *intrastate* conflict. My work can represent the relationships between perceived agency and institutional barriers that individuals, and groups, are facing so that these can be addressed, and so that any inflection points may be deescalated. My study provides mechanisms to mainstream the economic priorities and labor concerns of the most marginal members of society creating a greater commitment to fostering stability domestically and regionally.

The datasets generated by the *IOA* can be shared with national, sub-regional, regional policy makers and governing institutions, local and national statistical offices, and universities in Africa. Policy and programmatic solutions derived from model predictions can be less expensive to implement and more sustainable than military interventions because they promote autonomy, generating local support. Global governing bodies such as the UN Interdepartmental Taskforce on African Affairs (UN-IDTFAA) can use the findings of this study to generate tangible policy prescriptions, and monitoring and evaluation plans in post-COVID- 19 recovery efforts. The findings of the paper can help shape inclusive and sustainable development and gender equality policies. It is important to recognize that there are always questions around representation and which groups get included and which groups are excluded. Therefore, it is recommended that the



leadership of umbrella NGOs and CSOs rotate across multiple groups. In particular groups that are not explicitly considering themselves part of civil society groups should be sought out and encouraged to participate because many of these women lack the political and ties in the community development networks domestically. Below are my preliminary policy recommendations based on the data generated in the previous sections. Ideally the *IOA* can be replicated in additional countries and the institutional barriers outlined in Table 3 can be generated for women that scored in tiers A and B on the index of agency. By including the perspectives of women at each level additional policy interventions can be adopted and any tensions among women in all three spheres, from the most to the least privileged can be resolved. Each of these recommendations become even more critical as the region undergoes rebuilding post the pandemic.

### **Gender Mainstreaming Policy Recommendations (Regional & National levels):**

#### **❖ Economic-Social Justice Approach**

- ❖ Protectionist Policies for women owned firms, regional, and global.
- ❖ Protect labor so profit models that reinvest in human capital and infrastructure for individuals and firms.
- ❖ Utilize qualitative data such as the *IOA* and Constellations of inequality as a contentious measure so that the monitoring of the impacts of the gender equality policies and the fortifying of state institutions can be empirically assessed.
- ❖ Women's groups and activists' must be an integral part of monitoring and evaluation of these policies.

#### **❖ Diverse Priorities of Women**

- ❖ Need local women's organizations and activists to shape goals, and priorities not international orgs or the larger NGOs, need CBOs.
- ❖ Need to collect more accurate data on the variations in needs across sectors of the economy and size of firms.
- ❖ Implement mechanisms to identify different economic sectors women are active in as this will continued to change.

#### **❖ Transformative-Institutional Changes**

- ❖ Establish mechanisms to identify economic participation by choice or institutional constraints that prevent full engagement.
- ❖ Substantively make more women as policy decision makers and increase the involvement of women in the budget allocation and approval processes.
- ❖ Increases in state and REC investments in women's firms can make them more competitive in global, regional, sub-regional, national and local markets.

#### **❖ Gaining the Benefits of Economic Integration**

- ❖ Disaggregate by economic sector and the type of formal and informal activity because women are often involved in both simultaneously.
- ❖ Include measures for work that receives remuneration and labor that does not and remains unpaid. This can potentially help identify areas where the domestic government and regional organizations can subsidize and invest in for longer term economic benefits.

- ❖ Consider allocating resources to domestic efforts of states to promote gender inclusive measurements as this type of data collective can be cost prohibitive.
- ❖ **Sustainable Approaches to Increasing access to Capital**
  - ❖ Remove barriers in registration and licensing for CSOs and small-scale firms.
  - ❖ Provide more grants instead of loans then measure employment, tax, revenue that goes back into the community, local government area, sub-national and national governments.
  - ❖ Create contract set asides with women as primary contractors not secondary or sub-contractors.

## CONCLUSION

This paper developed a theoretical framework to examine the roles of gender inequalities in predicting state fragility. Although this study is part of a larger cross sub-regional study, this policy paper featured the qualitative data from Nigerian and Ghanaian case studies. The intersecting relationships among economic, political, social, ICT, and public health infrastructure, access to education and literacy impact state fragility being assessed beyond health explicitly. Through addressing these institutionalized gender inequalities, inclusive and sustainable approaches to growth can be adopted. The changes that formal political structures undergo at the national and regional levels can strengthened the institutions and provide a model for other regions of the world. The *IOA* outlines the ability of different groups of women to make their own choices around economic participation. The *constellation of inequalities* helps outline the specific policy changes required to reshape state institutions within the national and sub-regional systems.

As we rethink what participation in the global and regional economies should produce for the most vulnerable members of society post the pandemic investments in human capital and infrastructure should be paramount to reduce inequities. Making local women's organizations key decision makers can help domestic movements addressing gender inequality implement policy interventions that result in institutional changes. Resolving these tensions around economic inequality can further reduce demographic pressures which contribute greatly to state fragility. The resolutions offered through preventing gender inequities has the potential to keep domestic strains at level below the thresholds that give rise to conflicts resulting from the incapacities of state structures.

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