

THE COST OF THE **GENDER GAP** IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda



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Contents

v	Foreword
vii	Acknowledgments
1	Introduction: the gender gap in agricultural productivity
5	Three takeaways on the gender gap in agricultural productivity
7	Measuring the cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity
13	Costing the factors that contribute to the gender gap in agricultural productivity
17	Finding the biggest bang for the buck: cost-effective policy interventions
21	Moving from recommendations to implementation
23	Appendix A: Methodology for quantifying the cost of the gender gap in agriculture
25	Appendix B: Methodology for costing the factors of production contributing to the gender gap in agriculture
27	References

Foreword

Women form a large proportion of the agricultural labor force in Sub-Saharan Africa and thus play a vital role in ensuring family nutrition and food security. In Eastern and Southern Africa, agriculture continues to be a key engine for local and regional economies, represents a critical source of income and ensures food security and nutrition. However, as has been widely documented, gender-based inequalities in access to and control of productive and financial resources inhibit agricultural productivity and reduce food security. A new study measuring the economic costs of the gender gap in agricultural productivity in three African countries—Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter Tanzania), and Uganda—provides further evidence that reducing the gender gap plays a significant role in poverty reduction and improved nutritional outcomes.

While there is mounting evidence on the link between promoting women's equality and economic empowerment and other development outcomes, such as sustainable agricultural and economic growth, gender issues are being inadequately reflected in agricultural policy strategies and programs. At the same time, a changing climate means that there is a shrinking window of opportunity for action, and it is imperative that climate-smart approaches to agriculture help close the gender gap and promote women's empowerment, economic development, and societal resilience to shocks.

Recognizing the need for more specific evidence of the economic gains from closing the gender gap, UN Women, the joint United Nations Development Programme–United Nations Environment Programme Poverty-Environment Initiative, and the World Bank collaborated on this study which measures the size of the gender gap in monetary terms.

The report provides a unique quantification of the costs in terms of lost growth opportunities and an estimate of what societies, economies, and communities would gain if the gender gap in agriculture is addressed. The findings of this report are striking, and send a strong signal to policy makers in Africa as well as development partners that **closing the gender gap is smart economics**. Consider this: closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity could potentially lift as many as 238,000 people out of poverty in Malawi, 80,000 people in Tanzania, and 119,000 people in Uganda.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a historic opportunity to shift from development in silos to a more integrated approach. This work provides evidence and policy recommendations that can support the achievement of the SDGs—which include a specific goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls—as well as the objectives of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). The report also provides guidance on the factors that must be targeted in order to close the gender gap and improve opportunities for women farmers. It concludes with

a set of general policy recommendations on how women's empowerment, agriculture productivity, and economic growth can be addressed in an integrated manner in order to achieve the SDGs at the national level.



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