



ENABLING WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM ECONOMIES





Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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ENABLING WOMEN'S

CONTRIBUTIONS TO

THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM

ECONOMIES



**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT SECTION
OF UN WOMEN**

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Foreword

Enabling women's contributions to the Indian Ocean Rim Economies

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) represents one of the world's most dynamic regional communities. While the people of the Indian Ocean Rim come from diverse backgrounds, they rely on interconnected environments, institutions and markets for their livelihoods. They are united by a shared commitment to the prosperity of the region through inclusive, sustainable economic growth that includes women's economic empowerment. The 2014 IORA Economic Declaration formalizes this commitment by IORA nations and is explicit that *"the prosperity of the region will only be realized fully by investing in the empowerment of women."*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the IORA Secretariat welcome the report, *"Enabling Women's contributions to the Indian Ocean Rim Economies"*. This report provides baseline data on gender equality and explores enabling factors for women's economic empowerment in Indian Ocean Rim countries.

Women in Indian Ocean Rim countries are not a homogeneous group – they are workers, entrepreneurs, mothers, daughters, teachers and students. They are both caregivers and those in need of care. Despite their diversity, women share common experiences when it comes to economic engagement. For example, women are disproportionately concentrated in undervalued sectors and occupations, and all too often their contributions to the economy are insufficiently remunerated.

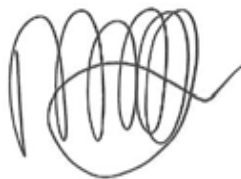
2015 marks the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals and 20 years on from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, – a particularly opportune time to convene dialogue on action to promote women's economic empowerment as a key enabler of growth. We welcome consensus on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the financing for development commitments that recognize the critical importance of gender equality.

IORA's full partnership approach and dedication to accelerating progress towards women's economic empowerment can have a positive impact both regionally and globally.

This report is the first of its kind covering IORA countries and we hope its analysis will contribute to gender equality efforts, and encourage increased collection and monitoring of quality data to promote accountability and evidence-based decision-making in support of women's economic empowerment.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a growing commitment to promoting women's economic empowerment among the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Member States.¹

This report identifies some of the key trends and critical issues for the region's members to address in support of women's substantive gender equality and economic advancement. It provides an overview of existing data on key aspects of women's economic empowerment in Indian Ocean Rim countries using publicly available and comparable data. The datasets used have been produced and collated by international organizations such as the World Bank, International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women.

The report develops a simple baseline, primarily using data from 2010 onwards in some of the areas that describe women's participation in the economy and their opportunities for advancement in business and economic leadership. (See annex). It also explores some of the key enabling factors that support women's increased labour force participation and are associated with improvements in the terms and conditions of their employment, leadership and entrepreneurship.

The findings emphasize that although the Indian Ocean Rim Member States are highly diverse, and indicators vary from country to country, women throughout the region make up an important part of the labour force and are actively engaged in markets. An average of 36 per cent of women (compared to 73 per cent of men) aged 20–49 are employed and receiving some kind of remuneration. Average labour force participation rates are 51 per cent for women and 79 per cent for men. Although a large number of women work, they tend to be disproportionately concentrated in a small number of sectors and occupations and are more likely to be in informal and self-employment. Gender wage gaps are prevalent across the Indian Ocean Rim countries, with women earning less than 80 per cent of male wages in more than half of those for which data are available. The unequal burdens of unpaid care work appear to underpin these gender gaps in labour market and sectoral participation and contribute to gender gaps in earnings.

Despite this, women are in the formal economy and entering management and leadership positions in

business, unions and cooperatives. However, efforts need to be made to increase their representation in economic leadership positions beyond existing levels. Only in Australia, Madagascar and Seychelles are more than 30 per cent of all management positions held by women.

Investments in women's education have clearly been made across the Indian Ocean Rim countries, with women over the age of 25 having achieved an average of 6.8 years of education as compared to an average of 7.9 years for men. Moreover, more women are entering and completing tertiary education in most countries. At the same time, however, they remain concentrated in the arts and humanities at this level and appear to be far less likely to enter science, engineering, manufacturing or construction degrees. Such disciplinary specialization contributes to women's concentration in a narrow range of occupations and sectors.

This preliminary baseline on women's economic empowerment is hampered by the lack of comparable data across the IORA countries. Data are particularly lacking for gender pay gaps, gendered poverty rates, women's informality and self-employment rates, time spent in paid and unpaid work, women's position in supply and value chains, and education and training in non-traditional careers. This is true mostly but not exclusively for the poorer countries such as Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles and Yemen. The scarcity of data highlights the need to redouble efforts to collect gender-disaggregated data through household and labour force surveys and report on these data consistently

as a means of measuring the IORA countries' success in achieving commitments to women's economic empowerment.

An ideal baseline would capture this information consistently over time and differentiate between rural and urban locations as well as ethnic and income groupings. Both Member States and international agencies will need to expand efforts to collect data as well as monitor and evaluate women's advancement in the key areas explored in this report. This is particularly important in light of the upcoming implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development goals to measure human-centred development and well-being.

This report also considers a number of enabling factors that enhance women's economic participation, advance their position in markets and improve the terms and conditions of their employment. Education, rights at work, gender equality laws and initiatives, maternity and paternity leave entitlements, access to social security and social transfers, financial inclusion and land tenure are all considered. It is clear that Indian Ocean Rim countries have set change in motion and have invested in laws and institutions that benefit women and their economic empowerment. That said, the Indian Ocean Rim region for the most part has yet to provide the legal foundations and institutions that ensure gender equality in the workplace, prevent gender discrimination and ensure equal remuneration for equal work. While all the States provide mandatory maternity leave, with benefits ranging in the amount of time off and the pay provided, paternity leave is minimal, with an average of less than five days for all Indian Ocean Rim countries. Moreover, where such provisions exist,

to develop and expand a business or receive wages from formal employment. On average just over half of women in Indian Ocean Rim Member States hold accounts either by themselves or jointly with someone else. Only in a limited number of countries in the region do most women have bank accounts, not far behind the averages for men. This includes Australia with 99 per cent, Singapore with 96 per cent and Iran with 87 per cent of all women over 15 banked. Malaysia is one of the few countries where women and men appear to have an equally high percentage of bank accounts at roughly 80 per cent.

Expanding women's access to such enabling factors can improve their position in markets, employment and access to leadership positions. Without a doubt, greater investment in women's education, more equitable legal frameworks, expanded social protection instruments and initiatives to protect women's rights at work are critical enabling factors for women's economic participation and advancement. These are key instruments for improving the terms and conditions of women's employment and moving them up and along value chains in the region. The diversity documented across the Indian Ocean Rim Member States documented means that no one approach to enhancing women's economic progress and empowerment is likely to prevail. Progress is taking place in the region and still there is need for significant and continued change. Where advances have been made, lessons can be learned from good practice in the region to be shared and adapted to country-specific contexts.

It is clear that there are opportunities for more equitable and inclusive growth in the region, which can be enhanced by ensuring that women can contribute to their full potential. Strategic use of women's skills

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