



Gendered Perspectives on Covid-19 Recovery in Africa

Towards Sustainable Development

Edited by Ogechi Adeola



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PREFACE

Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic has retrogressed efforts made by countries across the globe to attain the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The pandemic threw people into poverty or put them at risk of losing their livelihood, disrupted the global workforce and informal economy, and generally undermined educational, social, and economic lives. The 17 SDGs (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>) include Goal 5, a quest for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, an admirable effort that has suffered setbacks in the wake of the pandemic. Policies and plans are urgently needed to recover the gains made towards gender equality since the SDGs were articulated in 2015. Women and girls are the most vulnerable during any widespread crisis, given their traditional domestic responsibilities for the care of children and the elderly. Women are often victims of gender-based violence, a symptom of social and economic stresses. The Covid-19 disruption is evidence that most countries were not prepared to protect and guide women and girls in a time of crisis. The effect of a pandemic will never be gender-neutral; policies and plans needed to survive such a crisis should acknowledge their particular risks and appropriate remediations, including access to healthcare.

The pandemic has exacerbated the social and economic inequalities experienced by women in Africa, and a policy response towards sustainable development for women is imperative. The book explicates the negative effect of the pandemic on women's social and economic contributions

towards sustainable development, and outlines recovery plans to build a more prosperous, healthy, equitable, and sustainable future for African women and girls. The chapters in this book document the adverse effects Covid-19 has had on efforts to achieve sustainable development, particularly as it relates to African women. Some chapters focus on the adverse effect of the Covid-19 on six SDGs: poverty (goal 1), hunger (goal 2), good health and well-being (goal 3), education (goal 4), gender equality (goal 5), and decent work and economic growth (goal 8), while others address gender-based violence, women empowerment, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and information and communication technologies. Tourism is an aspect covered in this book, given its importance as an economic gateway for women in Africa and the existential threat the pandemic poses for the industry. The chapter with contributors from The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is devoted to identifying and recommending plans for pandemic recovery in Africa.

The book is offered to policymakers, activists, students, academicians, and specialists in gender research as a means to understand and make informed decisions on gender-related crisis management and sustainable development as detailed in the UN SDGs. The findings and discussions in the book provide tangible, targeted, and actionable recommendations to better prepare Africa's policymakers and key stakeholders to extricate the continent from the current pandemic and prepare for inevitable future crises.

Lagos, Nigeria

Ogechi Adeola

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Gendered Perspectives on Covid-19 Recovery in Africa—Towards Sustainable Development

Ogechi Adeola

INTRODUCTION

Women and girls are being disproportionately affected by the social & economic consequences of Covid-19 pandemic... (UN Women, [2020](#))

A novel coronavirus, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), which caused a pandemic of a highly infectious disease named ‘corona virus disease 2019’ (Covid-19), was first reported in Wuhan city, China in December 2019 and rapidly spread to countries across the globe (Lone & Ahmad, [2020](#)). Considering the growing number of cases, on January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a global health emergency (Evans, [2020](#); Velavan &

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Meyer, 2020) and a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Lone & Ahmad, 2020). Covid-19 produces multiple effects on its human hosts, with respiratory tract infections such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) being prominent. Most symptoms are mild, though some patients experience severe symptoms such as pulmonary edema, pneumonia, and organ failure, which may lead to death (Leal Filho et al., 2020). Since the official WHO warning, the number of global cases has risen rapidly. As of June 20, 2021, all world regions have been affected by Covid-19, with over 179 million confirmed cases worldwide and over 3.8 million deaths (Worldometer, 2021).

A pandemic has different implications for men and women, and it would be inappropriate to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to managing the effect and recovery process of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) crisis. At the peak of the pandemic, the World Health Organization released the May 14, 2020 Advocacy Brief that encouraged governments of member nations to include gender-sensitive policies when dealing with the pandemic's varied outcomes for women and men (WHO, 2020). Historically, the effects of crises are never gender-neutral, and the Covid-19 pandemic is not an exception. African countries are too often unprepared to shelter and care for their people during crises (Kavanagh et al., 2020). For example, Covid-19 lockdown forced the single mother in Northern Nigeria to stop her little business that brought food to her family's table. The office cleaner in Northeastern Kenya was suddenly out of a job and with no unemployment benefits or other protection. For countless women in African economies of every size, the loss of income, domestic work burden, and unpaid childcare have increased as a result of the pandemic. While everyone faces unique challenges, women bear the greater burden of the social and economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic (Staab et al., 2020). Poor and marginalised women face even greater risks of Covid-19 transmission and fatalities, increased violence, and loss of livelihood.

According to UN Women (2021, para. 6), "Globally, 70 per cent of health workers and first responders are women, and yet, they are not at par with their male counterparts. At 28 per cent, the gender pay gap in the health sector is higher than the overall gender pay gap (16 per cent)". In support of this finding, the UN Women (2021) report argued that Covid-19 could roll back women's economic gains made in recent decades unless we act immediately and with intent. Therefore, governments and stakeholders must act fast through intervention policies. With a general focus

on the effect of Covid-19 on women's social and economic contributions towards sustainable development, the book assesses the need for responses and recovery plans in order to build a more prosperous, healthy, equitable, and sustainable future for African women and girls. The authors of this book acknowledge the impact of the pandemic on women in Africa and offer recommendations for government, policymakers, and stakeholders at all levels to initiate the kind of change that empowers women to be full contributors to their nation's sustainable development.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development generally implies development that meets the needs of the present generation in ways that would not compromise the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (UNESCO, n.d.). As the concept of sustainable development advances, it has shifted focus towards social development, economic development, and environmental protection. The idea reconciles modern economies' ambitious economic development and their obligations of preserving natural resources and the environment.

In 2012, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development meeting at Rio de Janeiro created a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to serve as measures to tackle current and future global challenges. In September 2015, the United Nations met in New York to endorse the SDG 2030 agenda. SDG 2030 is comprised of 17 goals (see Table 1.1) with 162 associated targets set to be achieved by 2030. In response to the failure of past development programmes such as the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) (United Nations, n.d.a), the 17 SDGs aim to address global challenges including poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, peace, and justice.

The 17 SDGs acknowledge that action in one area will influence outcomes in others and that development must balance-economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The UN SDG 5 recognised that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a significant contribution to progress across all the 17 SDGs (United Nations, n.d.b). SDG 5's nine targets included equal access to education, decent work, health care, and political representation for women and girls, all of which engender sustainable economies and benefits for humanity at large (see Table 1.2). The commitment to advance gender equality has

Table 1.1 United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

<i>Goal 1: No poverty</i> End poverty in all its forms everywhere	<i>Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure</i> Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
<i>Goal 2: Zero hunger</i> End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	<i>Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries</i> Reduce inequality within and among countries
<i>Goal 3: Good health and well-being</i> Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	<i>Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities</i> Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
<i>Goal 4: Quality education</i> Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	<i>Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production</i> Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
<i>Goal 5: Gender equality</i> Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	<i>Goal 13: Climate action</i> Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
<i>Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation</i> Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	<i>Goal 14: Life below water</i> Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
<i>Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy</i> Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	<i>Goal 15: Life on land</i> Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse
<i>Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth</i> Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	<i>Goal 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions</i> Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive
	<i>Goal 17: Partnership for the goals</i> Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) (2021)

Table 1.2 SDG 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*The SDG 5 targets*

-
- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
 - Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
 - Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
 - Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
 - Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
 - Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
 - Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
 - Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
 - Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels
-

Source The Global Goals for Sustainable Development (n.d.)

brought progress in some areas, but the promise of full gender equality and removal of economic barriers to women empowerment is still wanting (UN Women, n.d.).

Even though SDG 5 is a distinct and separate goal, other SDGs are also achievable if the needs and desires of women receive commensurate attention (Adeola, 2020). Gender equity experts have reiterated that without progress on SDG 5, the other goals cannot be achieved. This rationale linking SDG 5 to the other SDGs is extensively elaborated upon in the 2018 UN Women's report on gender equality and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (UN Women, 2018). For instance, access to decent work for women contributes not only to poverty reduction (SDG 1) but also supports achievement of zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and well-being (SDG 3), and quality education (SDG 4). Abolition of all forms of violence against women (Goal 5, target 2) is not only a basic element of SDG 5 but also essential to healthy lives and well-being (SDG 3).

In contemporary times, women make substantial contributions to African economies and their number increases at a faster pace than men (Kelly et al., 2015; Niethammer, 2013). African women contribute to poverty alleviation and socio-economic development (Boateng, 2018). For example, over 70% of women in sub-Saharan Africa are engaged in the informal economic sector, and their capacity for economic contribution is identified as a factor for growth (Adom, 2015; Fapounda, 2012). Women's significant participation and contribution to the African informal economy cuts across agriculture and food processing sectors as well as domestic work and childcare. In recognition, many African countries have invested in women's entrepreneurship as an avenue to women's economic empowerment. For example, the African Development Bank has initiated several interventions to support the growth of women's enterprises. Likewise, various donor agencies and development actors (e.g., the International Finance Corporation, the UK Department for International Development) have promoted entrepreneurship for women in Africa (see Chapter 9).

There are high levels of female enterprises in Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, but the majority are driven by a need for survival (Katongole et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2015). Though women launch new businesses at a rapid rate, sustaining those businesses is often a challenge. The majority of women run microenterprises without employees in the informal sector, and hence, make less revenue than men (Kelly et al., 2015). There is a gender gap in entrepreneurship in terms of motivation, industry choice, and business performance (Campos et al., 2015). Women are under-represented in corporate ownership and management, finance, high-tech, construction, and manufacturing sectors, but are predominant in a consumer sector that deals in cheap goods and services or farming, endeavours which require little to zero start-up capital (Said-Allsopp & Tallontire, 2014). Despite the recognition of women's contributions to Africa's economic development, they remain in the informal sector and run survivalist enterprises (Kelly et al., 2015; UNIDO, 2014).

THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the wake of the unprecedented social and economic crisis triggered by the global Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that women and men are being

affected unequally – by spiraling rates of domestic abuse, double or triple shifts of unpaid care and domestic work, as well as job losses, declining income, increasing poverty, and vulnerability for the 740 million women who work in informal jobs lack basic social protection. (Staab et al., 2020)

A few months after the World Health Organization's January 30, 2020 declaration of the Covid-19 global emergency, the world began dealing with a systemic crisis in human development, unprecedented in its evolution from health shock to a social and economic crisis.

The pandemic continues to present a huge challenge to all countries' attempts at sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs (Lucero-Prisno et al., 2020). While it is true that the SDGs themselves lack a dedicated pandemic response strategy, there is a clear need to integrate the SDGs with crisis management at the local and national levels (Heggen et al., 2020). Selected examples support this important relationship:

SDG 2: Zero Hunger: Import restrictions on staple foods such as rice and wheat worsened food insecurity in Africa with a sharp increase in food prices and mounting hunger and malnutrition (Odey et al., 2021).

SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing: Because routine vaccination and surveillance of preventable diseases in Africa lost momentum as healthcare resources were redirected to address the pandemic priorities, Chad, Ethiopia, and South Sudan experienced an outbreak of previously controlled diseases such as measles and malaria (Odey et al., 2021).

SDG 5: Gender Equality: According to the 2020 UNFPA report, there has been a sudden upsurge of sexual and gender violence, protests and crimes during the pandemic, stigmatisation, and xenophobia against positive Covid-19 patients, foreigners, and migrants (UNFPA, 2021).

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Lockdowns and travel restrictions devastated the tourism sector (about 20% of the GDP of some countries). International trade and domestic consumption revenues, a staple of most African countries, declined significantly. Odey et al. (2021) reported that 85.8% of the informal sector workforce lost their jobs due to lockdown and a drop in the standard of living. Domestic resources in form of tax and non-tax revenues were exhausted.

Notwithstanding the recovery measures, the consequences of the pandemic are seen in the negative growth of most sectors, particularly in the progress of the SDGs, with an increase in the number of people being pushed into penury and malnourishment (Odey et al., 2021). Due

to the sheer complexity of the pandemic within all sectors, Africa's authorities are overwhelmed. In many circles, the consensus is that, with the advent of Covid-19, Africa's current and long-term strategic developmental agendas, including effective implementation of the SDGs, are at risk of being unachievable by 2030.

THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN

The Covid-19 pandemic has spurred sundry economic and social challenges. The Sachs et al. (2020) report on the SDGs and Covid-19 shows that gender equality—SDG 5—is negatively impacted by the pandemic, with women experiencing job losses, poverty, and domestic violence (Sachs et al., 2020). These consequences could reverse the little progress that has been made towards gender equality and women's rights over the decades. The rationale is not far-fetched: The pandemic outbreak worsened existing inequalities for women and girls across every sphere, from health and education to security and social protection. African women have faced many barriers to accessing support from finance lenders, largely due to low literacy and numeracy, family responsibilities, social attitudes, or lack of documentation (Sioson & Kim, 2019). While some of those barriers may also exist for men, they are more significant for women, especially during the Covid-19 crisis (Sahay et al., 2020).

Women play an important role in the Covid-19 response, including frontline health workers and home care providers. At the onset of the pandemic, the demand for unpaid care work increased appreciably due to school closures and the intensified needs of older people. The crisis positioned women at a higher risk of falling into poverty as they participate in the informal economy which is characterised by insecure labour markets. The absence of preventive resources and vaccines also placed them at greater personal risk of falling prey to the virus.

The pandemic has also fuelled a precipitous increase in violence against women. The mandated lockdown measures trapped many women in homes with their abusers and restricted access to legal or social remedies (UN Women, June 2020). Also, women-owned businesses are disproportionately informal and in less profitable sectors, they lack the resources to cope with shocks such as Covid-19 (Staab, Tabbush & Turquet, 2020). Already, women-led businesses in Africa battle with various obstacles in the form of limited access to finance, social and legal constraints, and

skills gaps (Kimbu et al., 2019). Across the world, women are far more socioeconomically disadvantaged than men. For women entrepreneurs in Africa, the aftereffects of Covid-19 are felt more deeply and more likely to extend far longer than for their male counterparts (The African Report, 2020).

African women's obstacles to entrepreneurial choices have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Unlike men, women often lack access to large social networks needed to establish valuable business relationships. Likewise, women generally control fewer assets than men (Ebo & Kerubo, 2020). A further detriment to women entrepreneurs' efforts to sustain their businesses is the expectation of compliance with social norms that require African women to manage the household responsibilities, all of which have been compounded by Covid-19.

Since women represent half of the continents' entrepreneurs and dominate the informal sector, the consolidation of their capacity is a substantial economic contribution that can lead to growth. To spur women's contribution to sustainable development, the constraints that feed the gaps in performance must be addressed. Public policy will be best positioned when it addresses these constraints faced by women survivalists (i.e., the poorest, most excluded, and most marginalised women). The three major interventions for women entrepreneurs are financial services (including microcredit), business development, and technical assistance, which could be targeted at survival entrepreneurs (Gravesteyn, 2012; Patel, 2014). Added interventions should target barriers confronted by women in their communities and in their homes. Since the effects of the pandemic and the consequent lockdowns are not gender-neutral, and considering that women are more vulnerable to economic shocks from the crisis, governments, financiers, and other stakeholders may need to apply a gendered approach to the design of Covid-19 responses as a strategy to foster women empowerment.

Protecting women-led businesses from the effects of the pandemic would require provisions of much-needed liquidity to women who already have reduced access to loans compared to men. Since agriculture is a vocation in Africa and women are about 40% of the farmers in the continent who typically experience lower farm yields than men, the provision of productive inputs to women farmers could improve their economic outcomes and alleviate the effects of the pandemic. Likewise, technical assistance facilities providing women-led businesses with advisory services

would foster informed decisions, enabling them to survive the pandemic as well as foster post-crisis business growth.

THE FOCUS AND STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

This introductory chapter, has set the tone for understanding the pandemic's immediate and long-term challenges for African women and girls. In Chapter 2, Ogechi Adeola offers an analysis of how the pandemic altered pursuit of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The chapter argues that though Africa's deteriorating economic conditions have had a negative effect on development, some positive developments are obtainable in the long term if appropriate policies and plans are put in place.

In Chapter 3 Yvonne Uchechukwu Carver considers how women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa can be protected against extreme poverty and hunger during a pandemic in response to reports that have shown that African countries are too often unprepared to shelter and care for their people during crises. In Chapter 4, Oyafunke-Omoniyi Comfort, Isaiah Adisa, and Abolaji Adewale Obileye discuss the gender-based violence fuelled by the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. They recommend policies and interventions that can protect women from violence, sexual abuse, and rape during this pandemic and future emergencies.

Utibe Effiong, Uju Okeke, and Fejiro Nwoko, in Chapter 5, discuss healthcare for African women. The pandemic has overwhelmed health-care systems across the world, particularly those in developing countries. The authors document the health challenges to which women were exposed during the pandemic and recommend strategies for ways to protect women during such crises. In Chapter 6, Ebes Aziegbe-Esho, Adebukola E. Oyewunmi, and Grietjie Verhoef consider the pandemic's effect on the education of girls by analysing the situation in Nigeria and South Africa. Education has been one of the hardest-hit sectors during the pandemic, with unquantifiable effects on children in the future. The chapter offers strategies on how the educational sector can not only recover, but continue to pursue the goals of SDG 4, which is focused on quality education for all.

In Chapter 7, Lydia Aziato, Merri Iddrisu, Mary Ani-Amponsah, and Lilian Akorfa Ohene consider the physical, psychological, and socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 on the African workforce as experienced by nurses and midwives. The authors emphasise that these

frontline workers need adequate attention to their mental, physical, and emotional needs, targets of SDG 3. Covid-19 recovery and sustainable development were analysed in Chapter 8 by Oyedele Ogundana, Kehinde Akin-Akinyosoye, Deborah Ikhile, and Damilola Omodara, who assess women's entrepreneurship by developing a gender-sensitive crisis management model aimed at achieving multiple SDGs, but especially SDG 1 and SDG 8.

In Chapter 9, Ruth N. Kiraka provides an exhaustive discussion on the role of African entrepreneurship in promoting gender equality and increasing resilience and agility in uncertain times. The authors evaluate the role of entrepreneurship as African women navigate the inherent gender disparity made more egregious by the pandemic. Achievement of numerous SDGs that target gender inequalities is found in their recommendations.

Abel Kinoti Meru and Mary Wanjiru Kinoti, in Chapter 10, examine gender and Covid-19 economic recovery, targets of SDG 8, focusing on policy recommendations and directions in Kenya. They call for a rigorous approach to gathering statistics that will gauge gender imbalances and support development of elaborate socio-economic approaches to address inequalities.

Chapters 11–15 provide insights into the status of sustainable development in Africa as the continent recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic. David Olusegun Sotola, Pregala Pillay, and Priscalia, in Chapter 11, examine issues related to the impact of the pandemic on the empowerment of women. Nguyen Phong Nguyen and Emmanuel Mogaji, in Chapter 12, explore evidence of financial inclusion and contributions of women in the informal economy, and offer policy recommendations for achieving financial inclusion targeted by the post-pandemic SDG agenda.

In Chapter 13, Olaniyi Evans and Olusegun Vincent explore the phenomenal power of digital financial technology and its potential for the empowerment of women in the post-pandemic era. Authors, Belinda Nwosu, Elcia Grandcourt, and Lydia Bebe Kum, in Chapter 14, assess the nexus between the pandemic and sustainable development, offering recommendations and insights for decision-making by African women and stakeholders involved in the tourism sector. In Chapter 15, Benjamin Mulili and Jane Wanjira Njuguna discuss how leveraging ICT resources can contribute to post-pandemic recovery of sustainable development gains and the empowerment of African women.