

**COUNTRY ECONOMIC MEMORANDUM**  
**for São Tomé and Príncipe**  
**Background Notes**

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**Note #13 – What do we know about gender in São Tomé and Príncipe**

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**I. Introduction**

1. **The objective of this note is to provide a summary of gender-related statistics and research in São Tomé and Príncipe in the areas of human capital, economic empowerment, and gender-based violence (GBV).** The data comes from surveys conducted by the national statistics office and from international databases, such as the Women, Business, and the Law database and the various databases that feed into the World Development Indicators. Whenever possible the note compares the gender situation in STP with peer countries. It also summarizes data and knowledge gaps on gender.

2. **STP has made strong progress on gender equality in human capital yet has been unable to translate this into the economic empowerment of women.** While its performance on gender-related indicators of human capital are similar to other middle-income countries, STP's performance on indicators related to women's economic empowerment more closely resembles its low-income neighbors. This is partly explained by traditional gender norms, which restrict women's income generating versus their domestic role and impede their personal safety.

3. **STP performs relatively well in terms of maternal and child health outcomes and total fertility, yet adolescent fertility is high and there are regional inequalities.** Between 1990 and 2012, STP saw a decline in fertility from 5.8 to 3.6 births per woman and a similarly impressive drop in infant mortality, which now stands at 25 deaths per 1,000 live births. However, the total fertility rate is considerably higher among rural women (5.2) and the country's adolescent fertility rate is high, more closely resembling rates seen in low-income comparators.

4. **High adolescent fertility and high total fertility among rural women, as well as norms that leave women with most responsibility for domestic tasks, have prevented the country from translating increasing gender equality in education into women's economic empowerment.** There is close to gender parity in both primary and secondary enrollment. However, the female to male labor force participation rate is just 69 percent and is even lower in rural areas and among the poorest households. Moreover, while in most Sub-Saharan African countries labor force participation disparities tend to be much smaller for younger cohorts, this is not true in STP. The situation appears to be at least partly related to continuing high rates of adolescent childbearing, which causes girls to drop out of secondary school, and high total

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fertility among women in rural areas, with social norms assigning to women the responsibility for most domestic tasks.

5. **Women’s low empowerment in the labor market is reflected in their low empowerment within households, with high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and low participation in decision making.** GBV appears to be fueled not only by social norms around its acceptability, but also by alcohol abuse by women’s partners.

## II. **STP has made strong progress in gender equality in human capital, but gaps in secondary schooling, high early childbearing rates and societal norms are still a hindrance.**

6. **There is no significant gender disparity in school enrollment.** There is only a small gender gap in primary school attendance, with a gender parity index<sup>1</sup> of 97 percent, ranging from 94 percent in the Central region to 112 percent in the South. At the secondary level, there is a small reverse gender gap in attendance, with a gender parity index of 106 percent. The favorable position of girls relative to boys in secondary school attendance is consistent across all regions, except for the South, where the gender parity index is 88 percent.

7. **However, there is a significant gender gap in the completion of secondary schooling.** Overall secondary completion rates are very low, regardless of gender, with less than 1 percent of all respondents reporting completion (table 1). However, the 2012 population census shows that girls are increasingly likely to drop out as they move from lower to upper secondary school, with females making up only 35 percent of students at the upper secondary level. Historical gender gaps in secondary schooling are also reflected in the ratio of the proportion of women and men that have some (i.e. incomplete) secondary schooling (table 2). The gender gap in the proportion of people who have some secondary education is higher in the North, with a ratio of just 70percent, compared to 80-90percent in the other regions (INE, 2010).

8. **While the overall rate of enrollment in tertiary education is low, there is relative gender equality.** Overall, data from the World Development Indicators show that gross enrollment in tertiary education is at 13 percent, slightly higher than the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 8 percent. Between 2009 and 2015, the gender parity index (GPI) for enrollment in tertiary education increased from 92 percent to 100 percent. The National Education Sector Strategy 2007-2017 does not provide any details on sex segregation in terms of subjects studied. This could offer an interesting avenue of analysis, though given the average socioeconomic profile of tertiary students, it is unlikely that gender gaps at this level have a direct impact on the welfare of the poorest.

9. **Although gender gaps in education have been closing, the legacy of historical gender gaps can still be seen, with older women having lower literacy levels than their male counterparts.** Unsurprisingly, given girls’ higher dropout rates and larger historical gender gaps, there are some remaining gender gaps in literacy among the adult population, with women slightly less likely to be able to read a whole sentence, especially older women from the South and North regions. This gap has been

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<sup>1</sup> For each level of schooling, the gender parity index for gross enrollment is the ratio of girls’ to boys’ enrollment rates in public and private schools.

almost entirely closed for those in the 15-19 age group and is lower in urban areas. Similarly, the 2012 population census finds that 15 percent of women are illiterate (down from 22 percent in 2001), compared to just 5 percent of men, with no gap among the 15-19 age group, but increasingly large gaps among those aged 40 and older. The rate of illiteracy among women is above 20 percent in three districts: Cantagalo, Lemba, and Caue (figure 1). Overall, these figures suggest that specific efforts should support the literacy of adult women in lagging regions.

**Table 1 - Percentage of women and men completing secondary school, by region**

Region	Women (percent)	Men (percent)	Gender Parity Index (percent)
Centro	0.4	1	40
Sul	0.8	0.9	90
Norte	0.4	0.3	130
Principe	0	0	n/a
<b>Total 15-49</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: DHS 2008-09

**Table 2 - Percentage of women and men (age 6 and over) with some secondary schooling, by region**

Region	Gender Parity Index (percent)
Centro	90
Sul	90
Norte	70
Principe	80
<b>Total 15-49</b>	<b>90</b>

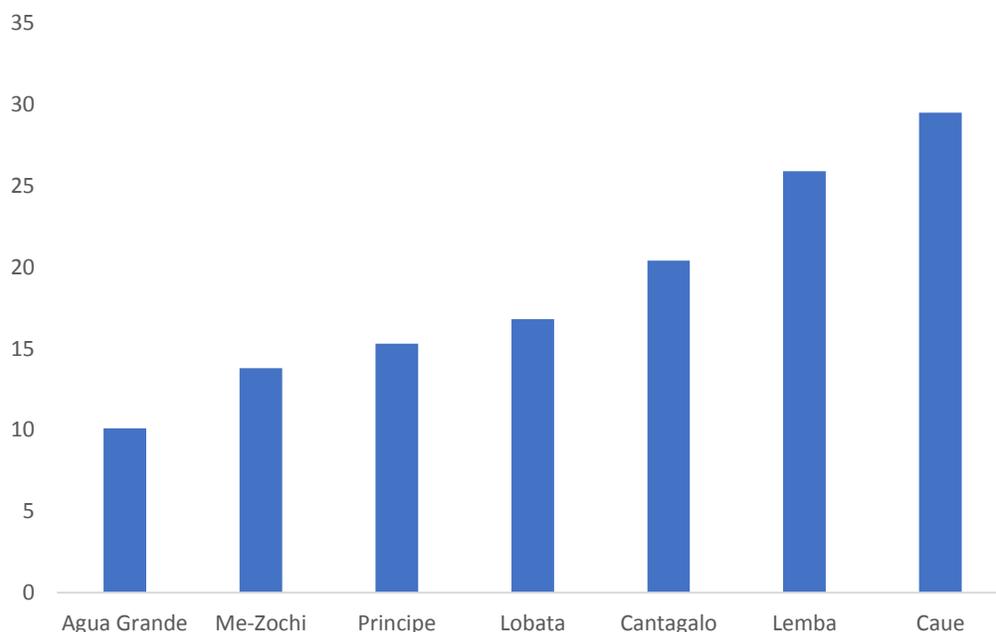
Source: DHS 2008-09

**Table 3 - Percentage of women and men who can read a whole sentence, by region**

Region	Women (percent)	Men (percent)	Gender Parity Index (percent)
Centro	34	35.4	100
Sul	24.8	43.2	60
Norte	27.9	38.9	70
Principe	28.1	36.3	80
<b>Total 15-49</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>80</b>

Source: DHS 2008-09

**Figure 1 - Percentage of women who are illiterate, by district**



Source: 2012 Population Census

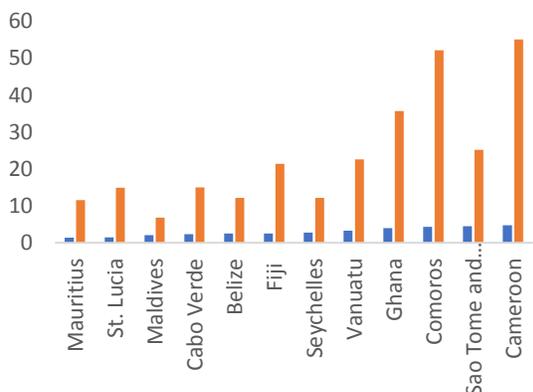
**10. A couple of key constraint hinders girls' secondary schooling, including the high rate of early childbearing. These constraints are likely exacerbated by social norms that place less value on girls' education and on women's income generating role versus their domestic role.** STP has an adolescent fertility rate of 96 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years. This puts the country closer in its performance to low income countries, such as Cameroon (108), than to middle income comparators, such as Cabo Verde (74). The 2012 population census reveals that the problem is particularly acute in Lobata, Lembá, and Cantagalo, where between 13 percent and 15 percent of adolescent girls have already given birth. Early marriage likely contributes to high rates of adolescent fertility and is facilitated partly by statutory law which sets a minimum age of 18 to marry, but with special exceptions that allow girls as young as 14 years and boys as young as 16 years to marry (GoSTP, 2015).

**11. While pregnant girls are able to continue attending school during their pregnancy via special night classes** (USDS, 2017), it is thought that a general lack of availability of night courses may hinder young mothers' ability to fit their education around their parental responsibilities (UNICEF, 2016).

**12. The long distances that students must travel to reach secondary school facilities, combined with concerns about gender-based violence, are also thought to constrain adolescent girls' educational access.** There is an insufficient number of 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school facilities in the country (Gender Strategy for Education System), which may also have a disproportionate impact on girls, with parents reluctant to let girls travel long distances to school because of concerns about their physical safety and

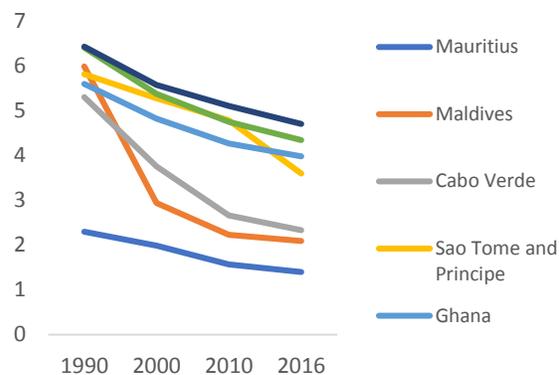
the risks of gender-based violence (GoSTP, 2015). There are even concerns about GBV taking place within the school environment, including through inappropriate sexual relationships between teachers and students, yet there is no specific legislation on sexual harassment in education. Concerns about GBV in schools may be exacerbated by the low proportion of female teachers at higher levels of education: while 93 percent of pre-school teachers and 58 percent of primary school teachers are female, only 16 percent of secondary school teachers are female (UNICEF, 2016).

**Figure 2 - Adolescent fertility (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)**



Source: WDIs, latest data

**Figure 3 - Births per woman (RHS) and infant mortality (LHS)**



Source: WDIs, latest data, and 2012 household survey

13. **High rates of early childbearing may also contribute to high numbers of single parent households with adverse impacts on childhood development.** In STP, 60 percent of female household heads lead single parent households. This may have significant implications for future generations, with research from Cabo Verde suggesting that the absence of fathers from children’s upbringing can have negative impacts on their behavior and learning outcomes (Alves, 2014; UNICEF, 2013).

14. **Conditional cash transfers and vocational and life skills training can help keep more girls in school and reduce the incidence of early childbearing.** Evidence from across the region suggests that conditional cash transfers can help keep girls in school and reduce levels of adolescent childbearing, while combined vocational and life skills training can be effective at influencing the reproductive behavior and economic empowerment of girls who have already dropped out. In Malawi, a cash transfers program increased girls’ school attendance by 3 to 4 times (Baird et al, 2010). Moreover, girls who had already dropped out of school and were provided with unconditional transfers saw significant reductions in rates of early marriage and adolescent fertility. In Burkina Faso, conditional transfers were significantly more effective than unconditional transfers at improving the enrollment of “marginal children”, such as girls who are less favored by parents for investments in their human capital (Akresh et al, 2013). For high-risk girls who may have already dropped out of school, combined vocational and life skills training programs have been successfully used to reduce risky sexual behavior and improve economic empowerment. In Uganda, the Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) program used girl-only clubs to deliver vocational and life skills training. Girls on the program were 72 percent more likely to be engaged in income generating activities, 26 percent less likely to have a child, 58 percent less likely to be married or

cohabiting, and 44 percent less likely to have had sex against their will over the past 12 months (Bandiera et al, 2014).

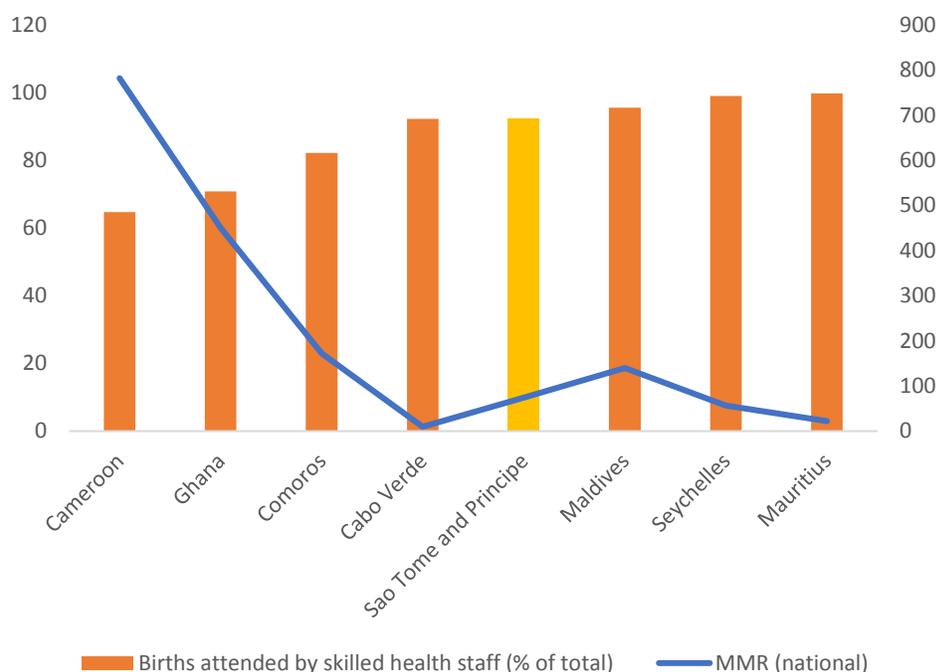
15. **The country has reduced total fertility in line with the progress seen in comparator countries (figure 3), but with large within country disparities.** Between 1990 and the latest household survey data of 2012, STP saw a decline in total fertility from 5.8 to 3.6 births per woman. While the Maldives and Cabo Verde saw even larger drops in fertility, STP's progress is in line with that seen in other comparators. Despite overall progress, there are large disparities within the country. While urban women have a fertility rate of 3 births per woman, rural women have a rate of 5.2.

16. **Further progress reducing fertility, especially in rural areas, may be impeded by inadequate use of family planning.** Data from the 2008/9 DHS indicate a large gap between the actual fertility rate (4.9) and the wanted fertility rate (3.3). This suggests that continuing high fertility is not related to women's demand for large family sizes, so could rather reflect inadequate use of family planning. Contraceptive prevalence is relatively low, at 37 percent, compared to 57 percent in Cabo Verde. In the last DHS, health concerns (19 percent of women) and opposition to use by the respondent (17 percent) were the most common reasons given for not intending to use contraceptives. Inadequate outreach by family planning programs could also be part of the issue. Around 70 percent of women not using contraceptives reported that they did not discuss family planning with a field worker or during a visit to a health facility over the 12 months prior to the DHS. This figure is slightly higher in the North and South regions, at around 75percent. Use of modern contraceptives is strongly associated with education – only 15percent of those with no education report use, compared to over 30percent for those with primary or secondary education.

17. **STP has made strong progress on maternal health and now has a relatively low rate of maternal mortality with only small gaps in service access between the poorest and richest.** STP met the Millennium Development Goal on maternal health, reducing the rate of maternal mortality from 100 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2002 to 74 in 2014. The country currently has a high rate of skilled birth attendance, with 93 percent of all births attended by a skilled professional. Data from the 2009 DHS indicate lower birth attendance rates among the poorest and those in the South region. However, the gap between the rate for the poorest and richest (around 8 percentage points) is smaller than the gap seen in many other countries (e.g. almost 50 percentage points in Ghana).

18. **With the distribution of free insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs)/long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs), the country has also been successful in reducing the prevalence of malaria, a disease that mainly affects pregnant women.** Between 2003 and 2010, the number of cases dropped from over 63,000 to less than 4,000 (GoSTP, 2015) and, since 2014 the country has reported zero deaths from malaria (WHO, 2017).

**Figure 4: - Percentage of births attended by a skilled professional and maternal mortality rate, by country**



Source: WDIs, latest data

### III. Women still face barriers in the labor market, accessing land and finance, and in political participation.

19. **Economic empowerment concerns a person’s ability to make meaningful choices regarding their economic activity.** Using Kabeer’s (1999) seminal framework, we see that this ability has several prerequisites, such as access to material inputs and human capital, the ability to participate in and influence decision making, and ultimately the ability to attain certain results, such as meaningful improvements in relevant life outcomes.

20. **In STP, evidence suggests that women are less able than men to make meaningful choices regarding their economic activity and this impedes their contributions to their households and to national economic growth.** These negative impacts can be seen in terms of fewer women working in the labor market, women’s concentration in lower paying jobs and sectors, and women’s lower access to key productive inputs, such as finance and land (though we still need more evidence, especially on the latter). Social norms appear to play a significant role, with women’s unequal burden for child care limiting the time they have available for income-generating activities, and with social norms around women’s and men’s roles perpetuated through school curricula. These norms may also be reflected in national laws, with women prevented from working in certain positions and from working during nighttime hours.

21. **The following paragraphs present the latest evidence and data on women’s economic empowerment in STP.** This section looks at gender gaps in labor force participation rates and what drives

these gaps. It then turns to women versus men's unemployment and their participation in vulnerable employment. It then examines sex segregation in terms of the sectors and jobs where women and men are active. Finally, this section presents evidence on gender gaps in access to key productive inputs, namely finance and land.

22. **Despite relatively small gaps in human capital, women in STP are less likely to be employed.** This may partly reflect its income level, with less pressure on all household members to work compared to households in low income countries, yet it may also hint at the role that social norms play in STP.

23. **The gender gap in labor force participation is relatively high compared to the region and, unlike in many countries, does not appear to be narrowing among the younger generations.** The ratio of male to female labor force participation rates<sup>2</sup> is 69 percent, which is comparable or better than neighboring lower and upper middle-income countries, but significantly lower than in low income neighbors, such as Ghana and Cameroon. Not only is there a large gender gap, but overall participation in the labor force is also low, with just 41 percent of women participating in the labor force, compared to 49 percent in Cabo Verde and participation rates of over 70 percent in Ghana and Cameroon. This is to be expected as gender gaps in labor force participation are generally smaller in poorer countries, where households are under more financial pressure for each adult member to work. However, the gender gap appears to be considerably larger in rural areas, with data from the latest census showing that only 34 percent of rural women are employed compared to 66 percent of rural men. The gender gap in economic participation is much wider if we look at the DHS, with 43 percent of women compared to just 15 percent of men responding that they did not work over the previous 12 months. The gap between women and men is highest in the North, where 45 percent of women compared to just 9 percent of men that they did not work over the previous 12 months. The gender gap is also higher for the poorest wealth quintiles, indicating that even pressing financial pressures on households are not enough to overpower social norms and other factors that may hinder women's economic participation. Finally, while most countries in the region see a substantially lower gender gap in labor force participation among younger compared to older cohorts, this is not the case in STP (World Bank, 2010).

24. **The gender gap in labor force participation likely has a sizeable negative impact on GDP.** By reducing the size of the active labor force, women's lower participation reduces aggregate economic output. The gender gap in labor force participation may also contribute to an inefficient allocation of labor, along with sex segregation in the labor force, with men filling certain posts because they are men and not necessarily because they have the most appropriate skills for a given post. An analysis for Cabo Verde, where the female to male labor force participation rate is 48 percent, estimates that closing the gender gap would increase GDP by as much as 12 percent (World Bank, 2018).

25. **Analysis from across the region indicates that discriminatory social norms and a lack of affordable child care services are key factors behind women's lower labor force participation.** Analysis from Cabo Verde indicates that social norms which place an unequal share of childcare responsibilities on women's shoulders, combined with a lack of affordable child care services, lie behind women's lower

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<sup>2</sup> Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate is calculated by dividing female labor force participation rate by male labor force participation rate and multiplying by 100

labor force participation. The availability of child care could also be a factor in STP: while the government does cover 100 percent of the costs of maternity leave, it does not support child care services that could alleviate women's childcare burden and allow them to increase their participation in the labor force<sup>3</sup>. There is compelling evidence from across the region that providing families with access to affordable childcare can significantly increase women's labor force participation. In South Africa, for example, the introduction of a Child Support Grant is estimated to have increased women's labor market participation by 7 to 14 percent, with larger impacts for the least educated women (ILO, 2016). Similarly, a childcare lottery in Brazil was found to have increased employment from 36 percent to 46 percent for beneficiary mothers (Barros et al, 2011). Child care provision may not only boost women's participation but also their productivity - in India, an intervention providing self-employed women with childcare increased their incomes by 50 percent (Alfers, 2015). Additionally, STP has discriminatory labor laws that restrict the hours and types of jobs that women can perform. Statutory law prohibits women from working night hours and from working in jobs that expose them to physical danger, such as heavy-duty work and jobs that involve working underground<sup>4</sup>.

**26. Despite progress over recent years, available data suggest that women still spend significantly more time than men on domestic tasks, including child care and water and fuel collection.** The Beijing 2014 report on STP notes that progress has been made easing women's work burden, through recent investments in public infrastructure that have improved access to water, sanitation, and energy. However, data show that women still spend significantly more time than men on unpaid work: one study finds women spend an average of 8 hours per day on unpaid work, compared to just 2 hours on paid work (INPG, 2017); while a survey conducted by INPG finds that 34 percent of women report spending 5 hours or more per day on domestic tasks, compared to just 3.2 percent of men (INPG, 2017). Unpaid work includes child care, and water and fuel collection. Approximately 65percent of households report that it is a woman who fetches water, compared to just 7percent reporting that a man performs this task (INPG, 2017). Fuel collection also likely puts a burden on women, with 72percent of households estimated to use wood for fuel (GoSTP, 2015). Overall, women's domestic role is seen as their primary responsibility, to the extent that, for rural women, their participation in productive agricultural activities is viewed more as "help" than as real work, even though they are often working on the same tasks as men.

**27. Women, especially female youth, experience higher unemployment than their male counterparts.** The latest data suggest that the unemployment rate for women (22percent) is more than double the rate for men (9percent). The figures are even higher for female youth (33percent) who, again, have more than double the rate of unemployment of their male counterparts (15percent). Across the SSA region, high youth unemployment has been linked to feelings of social exclusion and to higher levels of antisocial behavior, including crime and drug abuse.

**28. Unlike in many other countries in the region, women in STP are not more likely than men to work in vulnerable employment.** The latest ILO modelled estimate, which defines vulnerable employment as 'contributing family workers and own-account workers', finds that 30 percent of women

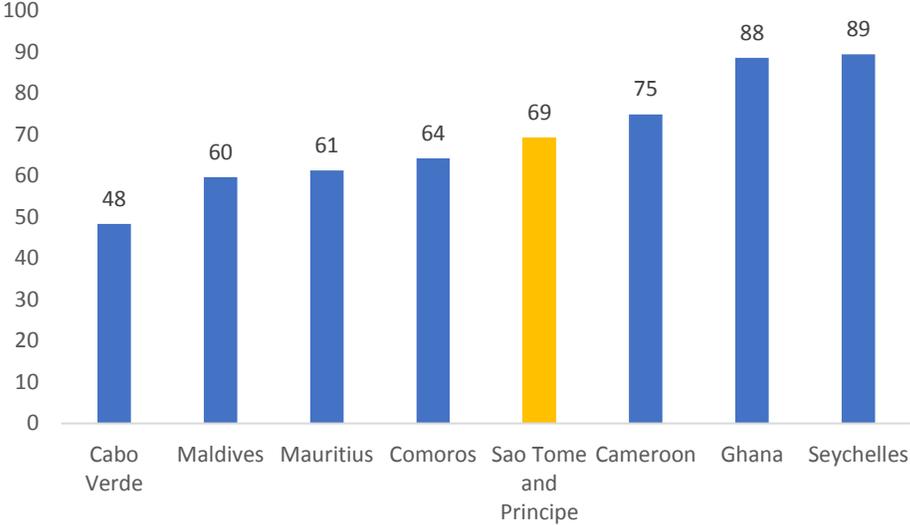
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<sup>3</sup> Women, Business, and the Law database

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/lo\\_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms\\_174785.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/lo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_174785.pdf)

compared to 36 percent of men are employed in vulnerable work. This differs from the estimates for other countries, such as Maldives (36 percent of women versus 15 percent of men), Comoros (78 percent of women versus 54 percent of men), Ghana (76 percent versus 56 percent), and Cabo Verde (40 versus 36). While not included in the ILO definition of ‘vulnerable employment’, informal sector jobs also put workers in a vulnerable position, impeding their access to social protection systems and credit, for example. There are currently no reliable figures on the number of workers, male or female, in the informal sector in STP (Rodrigues and Bialoborska, 2017). However, given that Valverde (2011) estimates there to be less than 10,000 formal sector jobs in the country, it is likely that the vast majority of both women and men work in the informal sector.

**Figure 5 - Female to male labor force participation rate (percent - national estimate)**



Source: WDIs, latest data

29. **There is evidence of occupational sex segregation in STP, with women tending to occupy less skilled and lower remunerated jobs and working in sectors that are more closely aligned with traditional ideas of women’s role in society.** Women are almost entirely absent from jobs in the fishing, extractives, energy, water, construction, and transport sectors (2014). For example, women are estimated to occupy just 4 percent of fishing jobs, though they are involved in the processing and marketing of fish (2014). Women are also underrepresented in key security-related jobs, occupying just 20 percent of military jobs and 34 percent of community police officer jobs (INPG, 2017). Even when women are well represented in a sector, they tend to be concentrated in the less prestigious jobs within the sector. While women make up around half of jobs in public administration, defense, and social security, they represent only 25 percent of legislators or directors and 27 percent of town councilors (INPG, 2017). In the education sector, while women make up almost 80 percent of school teachers, they make up just 44 percent of professors (INPG, 2017). Overall, the occupations that are dominated by men tend to be better paid than those dominated by women. In this context, it is not surprising that 85percent of households report that the male respondent in the households is better paid than the female respondent.

30. **Women make up around 80 percent of domestic workers, a particularly vulnerable role.** Domestic workers work in private residences and so are more exposed to GBV and other forms of mistreatment. Encouragingly, since 2004, domestic workers in STP have been eligible under social security programs to receive sickness, maternity, old age, disability, and survivor benefits.

31. **One sector that may be particularly conducive to expanding women’s economic opportunities is the tourism sector, yet there is a need to help women move beyond their current concentration in the lowest paying jobs.** The tourism sector already accounts for around 11-14 percent of both GDP and employment and there is a strategy in place to further develop the sector (IMF, 2016; WTTC, 2018). Globally, the tourism sector offers more opportunities for women than many other sectors. The UN’s (2010) Global Report on Women in Tourism shows that women dominate the workforce in the tourism sector, yet mostly occupy lower skilled positions and earn 10 to 15 percent less than their male counterparts. Similarly, a recent UNCTAD (2017) report on tourism in Africa finds that women make up 90 percent of people employed in lower paid jobs, such as servers, cleaners, and travel agency sales persons. However, this is not inevitable and research from across the globe indicates that the tourism sector often provides more opportunities for women to move up the career ladder than other sectors. For example, in Bulgaria, it is estimated that women make up over 70 percent of managers and administrators in the tourism sector, despite representing less than 30 percent of these positions across all sectors (World Bank, 2017).

**Table 4 - Employment by industry and sex (2014)**

Industry	Men (#)	Women (#)	Women as percent of total
Agriculture, Livestock, Hunting and Forestry	8,187	3,858	32
Fishing	2,356	108	4
Extractive industry	206	22	10
Manufacturing industry	3,946	927	19
Production and distribution of electricity, gas and water	324	0	0
Construction	3,622	65	2
Wholesale and retail trade, Repair of vehicles and other	4,447	9,569	68
Accommodation and Restaurant	177	884	83
Transport, Storage and Communications	1,767	86	5
Financial Activities	29	86	75
Real estate activities, Rentals and services provided	147	22	13
Public Administration, Defense and Social Security	1,266	1,272	50
Education	530	797	60
Health and Social Action	883	668	43
Other collective, social and personal service activities	707	711	50
Households with domestic servants	648	2,414	79
International organizations and Other extra-territorial institutions	206	65	24

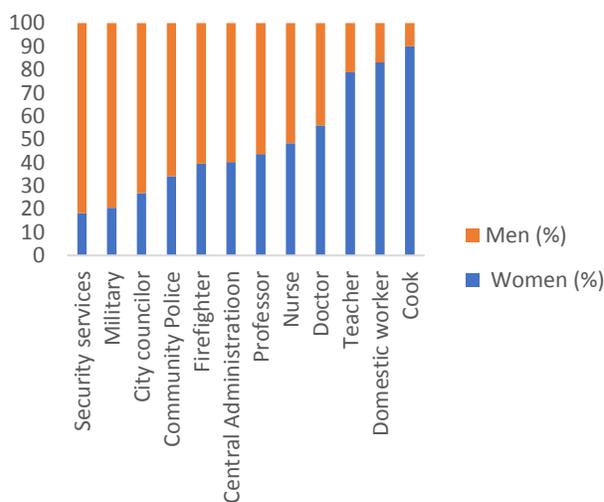
Source: INE/STP

32. **If the tourism sector is to be leveraged as a source of economic opportunity for women, it will first be necessary to fill some knowledge gaps and to increase attention to gender issues in tourism in**

**national strategy documents.** Despite its important position in the economy and its potential to contribute to women’s economic opportunities, the tourism sector is not discussed in the national gender strategy (the 2007-2012 ENIEG). There is also very minimal discussion of gender issues in the national tourism sector strategy (Plano Estratégico e de Marketing Para O Turismo de São Tomé and Príncipe, 2018), though the strategy does find that women represent 53 percent of the workforce in the tourism sector and highlights differences in women’s and men’s representation in a few tourism sub-sectors. For example, while women dominate employment in restaurants, men dominate bars and nightclubs, handicraft shops, and amusement arcades. There is relatively equal participation of women and men in jobs related to accommodation. Beyond these very aggregated data, there is a need for more detailed information on the different roles and constraints of women and men in the tourism sector (see knowledge and data gaps section for more).

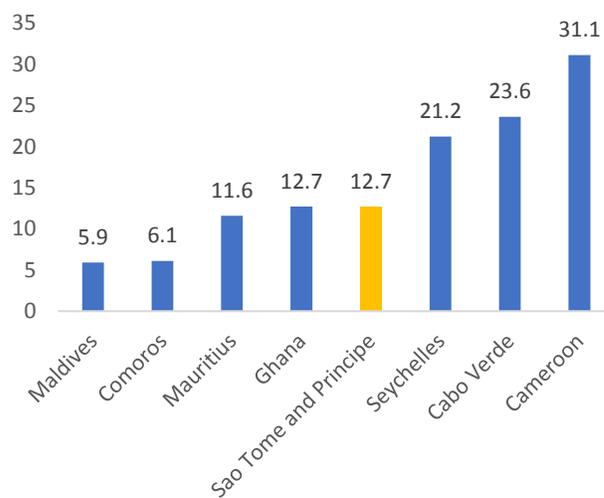
33. **Occupational sex segregation is partly underpinned by social norms that are perpetuated by the education system.** Research carried out for STP’s gender strategy for the education sector found evidence of gender bias in school teaching materials and in the opinions that school leaders had on suitable careers for women and men - with women being favored for cleaning, caring, and secretarial work, and men being favored for fishing, carpentry, firefighting, and electronics. School leaders were also found to exhibit bias in the personality characteristics they associate with women and men, with women being more likely to be described as dependent, quiet, weak, and patient, while men were more likely to be described as independent, strong, aggressive, and loud.

**Figure 6 - Representation of women and men in selected formal sector jobs**



Source: INPG, 2017

**Figure 7 - Percentage of parliamentary seats held by women, by country**

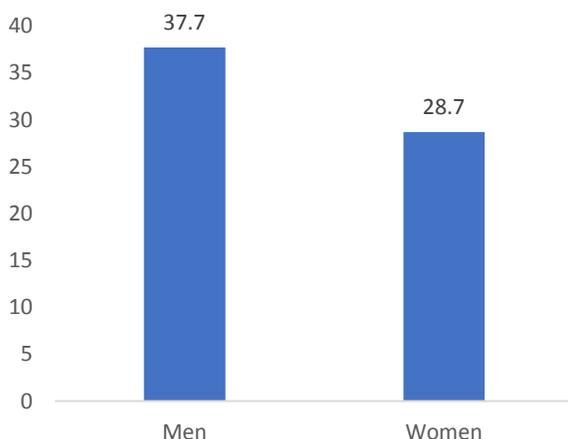


Source: WDIs, latest data

34. **Despite having held many high-profile government positions in São Tomé, women are still underrepresented in public decision-making roles.** Over the years, women have held many high-profile government positions in STP, including Prime Minister, President of the National Assembly, and President of the Supreme Court. However, in general, women are still underrepresented in public decision-making roles. In 2009, following the creation of the National Institute for the Promotion of Gender Equity and

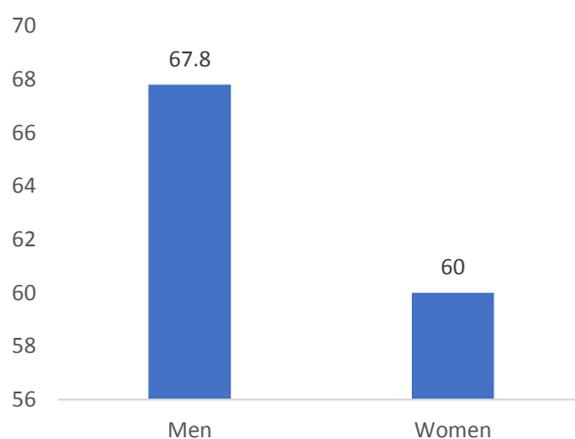
Equality (INPG) in 2007, the National Assembly adopted a resolution that set a quota for 30 percent of parliamentary seats to be held by women. These efforts were followed by an immediate increase in the percentage of seats held by women, from 7 percent to 18 percent. However, after the parliamentary elections of October 2018, women’s representation has shrunk to 13 percent, with women occupying only 7 out of 55 seats. While lack of enforcement of the quota and a lack of female candidates and political party members means that the country has been unable to reach the 30 percent required by the quota, the current proportion of women in parliament is not exceptionally low when compared to some neighboring countries (see figure 7). However, women’s lack of decision-making representation is also seen in government positions, with only 3 out of 12 government ministers being a woman, and women’s representation is thought to be much lower at local levels of government, especially in rural areas where women are estimated to make up only 9 percent of local councilors.

**Figure 8 - Percentage of men and women reporting access to agricultural microcredit**



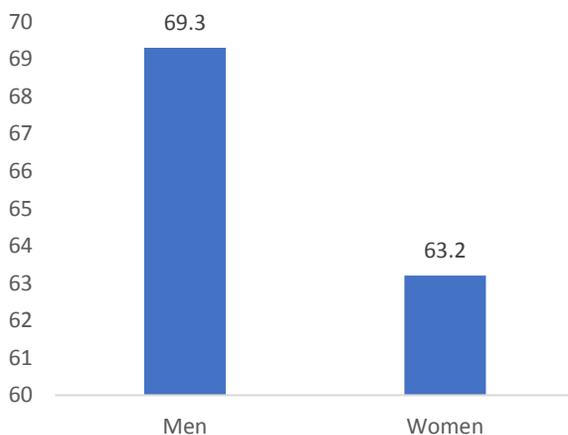
Source: INPG, 2017

**Figure 9 - Percentage of men and women reporting participation in agricultural extension services**



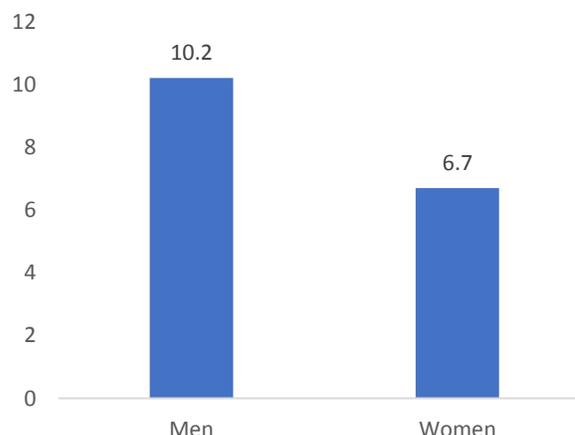
Source: INPG, 2017

**Figure 10 - Ownership of agricultural assets, inputs, and tools**



Source: INPG, 2017

**Figure 11 - Percentage of men and women farmers reporting use of new technologies**



Source: INPG, 2017

35. **Access to finance is a general constraint to higher agricultural productivity but is even more binding for women.** Access to finance is the constraint to agricultural productivity that is mentioned by the highest proportion of respondents (44percent) to the INPG household survey and appears to be slightly more problematic for women than for men. The survey (INPG, 2017) also finds that 29 percent of women compared to 38 percent of men report having accessed agricultural microcredit. Access to agricultural extension services and to agricultural assets, inputs, and tools is higher, with smaller gender gaps (figures 9 and 10), though male farmers are more likely to report using new technologies (figure 11).

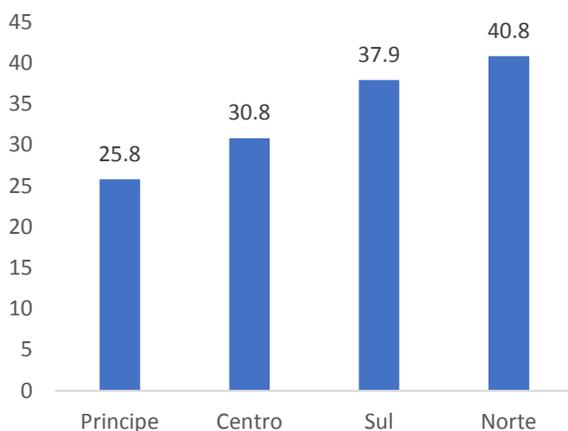
36. **Land governance is an ongoing issue in STP, with lack of registration and clear mapping of plots, and evidence from across the region suggests that improving land tenure security could bring even greater benefits for women and their agricultural and business investments.** While there are no statutory laws that discriminate between women and men in terms of land rights or access to land, there is little information about women's and men's ownership and access to land in practice. The land privatization reforms on the early 1990's (governed by the Land Law 3/91) facilitated the distribution of land to more than 10,000 families, of which a third were female-headed rural households (GoSTP, 2015). While the majority of women and men (87percent) report having access to land, it is estimated that 75percent of titles are sole titles (i.e. only in the name of one spouse). Research from other countries across the region indicates that when land is only registered in one spouse's name, it tends to be that of the man. This may negatively impact women farmers' incentives for making productive investments in their land and may hamper women entrepreneurs from using their land as collateral for obtaining access to business loans (see Goldstein and Udry, 2008). It also means that any efforts to promote joint land titling are likely to bring disproportionate benefits for women. For example, in Rwanda, the pilot of the Land Tenure Regularization program brought a 19-percentage point increase in female-headed households' likelihood of making soil conservation investments – double the impact observed for men (Ali et al, 2014). There are also recent examples of interventions that use financial incentives to encourage households to do joint titling. In Uganda, emerging evidence from the Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) indicates that making a subsidy for land titles conditional on husbands including their wives as co-owners increased rates of co-titling, without dampening overall demand for titling (Cherchi et al, forthcoming).

#### **IV. Despite the existence of laws against domestic violence, high rates of Gender-Based Violence still prevail.**

37. **Women's lack of economic and political empowerment is reflected in their low empowerment within the home, with women experiencing high rates of domestic violence and often having limited say in a range of household decisions.** Gender-based violence (GBV) is relatively common, despite legal protections, such as the law on domestic violence. The latest DHS data show that 20 percent of women think wife beating is acceptable for at least one of five possible reasons, while over a quarter of women experienced sexual and/or physical violence over the 12 months preceding the survey. The proportion of women who have ever experienced physical violence at the hands of their husband or partner (27 percent) is higher than the level recorded for South Africa (20 percent), for which one study estimates of the costs of GBV at 1.3 percent of GDP (KPMG, 2017). These costs include those related to health care, justice, lost

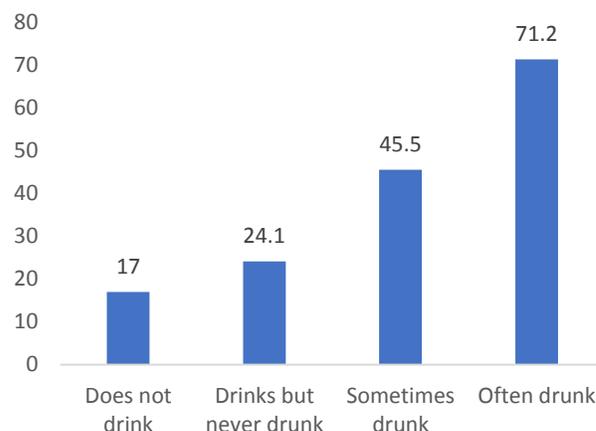
earnings, productivity, and taxes. In STP, the proportion of women who have experienced physical violence since age 15 appears to be higher in the North (41 percent) and South (38 percent) than in other regions. It is also higher among women from the poorest wealth quintile (46 percent).

**Figure 12 - Percentage of women who have experienced physical violence since age 15, by region**



Source: DHS, 2008-09

**Figure 6 - Percentage of women who reported experiencing physical or sexual violence over the past 12 months, by drinking habits of their husbands/partners**



Source: DHS, 2008-09

38. **While there are laws against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, several constraints impede the effective enforcement of the legal framework against GBV.** There is no data on the number of prosecutions or convictions for domestic violence, but high legal costs, women’s lack of awareness of their rights, and a general lack of confidence in the legal system are thought to weaken the effectiveness of the current legal framework for addressing GBV (USDS, 2017). The INPG has been trying to address these issues through awareness campaigns and training for women and the police force.

39. **A high proportion of women do not have voice in basic household decisions.** The DHS finds that 15 percent of women play no role in decisions regarding their own health care, major household purchases, or visits to relatives. This figure is much higher (30percent) for women in the South and for unemployed women (24percent). Decision making in STP also appears to be more limited for younger women, signaling the importance of promoting delayed marriage and childbirth. For example, while only 9percent of all women report that their husband/partner mostly decides how to spend the woman’s own earnings, this figure rises to 28percent for women ages 15-19 (DHS).

40. **Multiple studies across the SSA region highlight the link between social norms, women’s empowerment, and their vulnerability to domestic violence.** A study in South Africa (UCT, 2016) finds that women’s economic dependency on a male partner, the extent of the control of the relationship by the man, and the man’s personal norms related to inequitable gender relationships are all associated with women’s likelihood of experiencing domestic violence. Women’s lack of empowerment may also increase the likelihood of transactional sex and exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or GBV outside of the household. Research in Tanzania finds that non-sex-worker women who experienced a negative

shock to their households' food security were 36 percent more likely to test positive for an STI, and that women who experienced negative food shocks were 12 percent more likely to self-report having had unprotected sex (De Walque et al, 2014).

41. **In STP, alcohol abuse appears to play a significant role in the occurrence of GBV.** Approximately 71 percent of women who report that their partners/husbands are often drunk also report experiencing physical or sexual violence over the 12 months prior to the last DHS. This compares to just 17 percent of women who have partners/husbands who do not drink at all.

#### **V. There are knowledge and data gaps that could be fulfilled to improve public policy.**

42. **There are several knowledge and data gaps on key gender issues in STP, including those related to women's economic participation, especially in tourism, agriculture, and the informal sector.** Filling these gaps would enable the development of policies and interventions that are better targeted at closing gender gaps. Given the increasing importance of the tourism sector in STP, it will be important to uncover more detailed information about the different roles of women and men in the sector and the different constraints they face as workers and as entrepreneurs. Such information would be invaluable in better informing national strategic documents, such as the *Plano Estratégico e de Marketing Para O Turismo de São Tomé and Príncipe*, and may include: data on women's versus men's representation in management positions in the tourism sector; more detailed data on women's versus men's representation in different jobs and different parts of the tourism value chain; the prevalence of GBV in the tourism sector and its relative impact on women and men in different service positions; the different constraints and business performance outcomes of women and men business owners in the sector. Agriculture is clearly another key sector in STP, yet there is currently little information on a range of potential constraints to women's productivity: while we know there is statutory legal protection for gender equality in land rights, we don't know much about the degree to which women are able to enjoy those rights in practice; we also don't have sex disaggregated data on farm managers' access to farm labor (both household and non-household), which was identified by the Bank's (2014) leveling the field report as the most significant factor underlying gender productivity gaps across 6 countries in SSA. Beyond evidence on any specific sector, it would also be useful to have more knowledge on gaps in business outcomes and the constraints faced by women and men entrepreneurs. For example, on access to finance, while the World Bank's 2004 STP Gender Assessment states that women have lower access to finance, no specific data is referenced. Finally, there is a lack of evidence on gender gaps in the informal sector. Considering there are estimated to be just 10,000 formal sector jobs in STP, it is clear that any gender analysis that does not include a specific focus on the informal sector will be necessarily limited in its relevance to the country.

#### **VI. Conclusion**

43. **STP has made strong progress on gender equality in human capital yet has been unable to translate this into the economic empowerment of women.** STP performs relatively well in terms of maternal and child health outcomes and total fertility, yet adolescent fertility is high and there are regional inequalities. High adolescent fertility and high total fertility among rural women, as well as norms that leave women with most responsibility for domestic tasks, have prevented the country from translating increasing gender equality in education into women's economic empowerment. Women's low

empowerment in the labor market is reflected in their low empowerment within households, with high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and low participation in decision making.

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