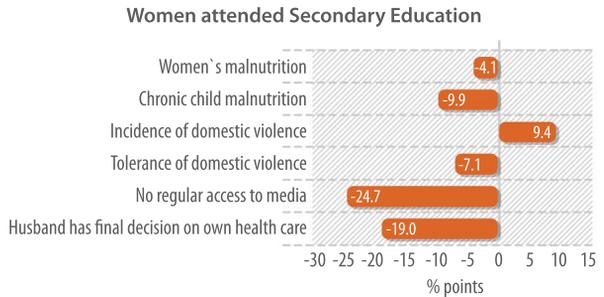


PROGRESS IN NON-MONETARY WELL-BEING IN AFRICA, BUT LARGE CHALLENGES REMAIN

Poverty reduction is not just a matter of improving incomes. Other dimensions that people value, and that cannot be measured by looking at income, include the ability to read and write, the ability to live long and healthy lives, two focus areas of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to be free from violence and to be free to decide. The recent flagship report “Poverty in a Rising Africa” also evaluates progress on these fronts.

Progress has been achieved in all four domains, but from low levels and with progress slowing (or even reversing in the case of violence), such that large challenges remain. **More rapidly improving female education and women’s socioeconomic opportunities will be especially game changing in increasing Africa’s capability achievement** (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Human development outcomes systematically higher among and in households with better educated women



Source: Beegle, Christiaensen, Dabalen, Gaddis, 2016

Note: Population weighted Africa wide regressions drawing on most recent DHS survey for each country. OLS estimates are conditional on country categories, residence and other household characteristics.

1 Over the past two decades, Africa’s adult literacy rates increased by 4 percentage points, but more than two in five adults are still illiterate (42 percent in 2012). This is partly because adult literacy rates only change with incoming cohorts, but partly also because schooling quality is low, such that literacy among the incoming cohorts is not as high as hoped for, despite a rapid increase in primary enrollment rates since 2000. Adult illiteracy rates remain particularly high in West Africa and the Sahel, where the gender literacy gap is also highest.

2 African newborns can expect to live longer (by 6.2 years compared to 2000), but progress is leveling off. Malaria remains an important cause of death among children, and HIV prevalence remains an important challenge in southern Africa. By the age of five, still almost two in five children are stunted, undermining their future cognitive and income earning capacity. Strikingly, in Africa, it is boys (not girls) that are more likely to be stunted (by 5 percentage points).

3 After a decade of relative peace, the number of violent events against civilians is rising again (to more than 4000 in 2014), especially in central Africa and increasingly also in the Greater Horn. The tolerance of domestic violence declined from 41 to 30 percent, but remains twice as high as in other developing countries. With tolerance substantially higher among younger women, a generational shift in mindset remains elusive.

4 Scores on voice and accountability, a measure of empowerment, rose slightly and there was also a trend toward greater participation of women in household decision making processes.

Two patterns stand out. First, conditional on income and other features, citizens in resource rich countries have lower levels of human development. Second, better-educated women (secondary schooling and above) and children in households with better-educated women score decisively better across dimensions.

More rapidly improving female education and women's socioeconomic opportunities will be especially game changing in increasing Africa's capability achievement.

This Radically Brief Policy Brief is based on the book *Poverty in a Rising Africa*, *Africa Poverty*. Report by Kathleen Beegle, Luc Christiaensen, Andrew Dabalen, and Isis Gaddis, doi: 10.1596/978-1-4648-0723-7.

References to individual studies are available in that paper.

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