

## What it all means

Fiscal policies, especially investments in infrastructure, can support women's economic empowerment by improving income and reducing time burdens. But their full potential is often limited by structural challenges and weak implementation. For meaningful impact, these policies must be paired with complementary measures that directly address gender inequalities.

### What's Helping Women Make Progress

- ✓ Rural electrification improves household productivity in some cases.
- ✓ Road infrastructure increases women's access to markets and services.
- ✓ Progressive taxation helps when it protects low-income landholders.
- ✓ Free education reduces financial pressure and boosts enrolment for girls.
- ✓ Gender-inclusive planning improves participation in public works.

### What's Still Holding Women Back

- ✗ Policies are not implemented consistently enough to yield strong impacts for women.
- ✗ Policy programs are delayed, underfunded and often not gender-sensitive.
- ✗ Social norms limit women's roles in planning and decision-making.
- ✗ Infrastructure projects often leave out job opportunities for women.
- ✗ Electricity access does not help if jobs and credit are unavailable.
- ✗ Wage and tax reforms fall short when skill gaps persist.
- ✗ Many policies do not account for unequal access to land, jobs, or credit.

## What this means for policy

- Institutionalize gender budgeting and ensure fiscal transparency and accountability
- Increase support for WEE-focused advocacy to influence structural policy change
- Promote better data systems and disaggregated research to guide inclusive economic policy
- Ensure timely and consistent delivery of gender-sensitive fiscal policies
- Strengthen labor protections to secure opportunities for women in infrastructure projects
- Develop innovative wage and tax reforms that address the unique needs of women

### The need for more research

- To understand the long-term impacts of gender-responsive fiscal policies on women's economic empowerment.
- To explore how socio-cultural norms and intra-household dynamics intersect to shape the effectiveness of fiscal policy interventions.
- To map how interventions such as transport and energy policies affect women's mobility productivity.
- To examine the intersections between fiscal policies and labour market reforms and entrepreneurship programs, for insights into sustainable solutions.

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# How Fiscal Policies Shape Women's Economic Lives in Africa

Insights into infrastructure, taxes, and education policies



## Introduction

Fiscal policies, such as public spending and taxation, directly influence the everyday economic realities of women. This study presents a synthesis of evidence from eight (8) studies on gender-responsive macro-level policies in Africa. The focus is on how fiscal policies, especially public investments and taxation, impact women's income and economic participation.



## What we found in individual countries

### 💡 Electrification alone does not raise women's income

In Rwanda and South Africa, electricity access reduced time burdens and improved household life. But without access to credit, markets, or jobs, women's income remained unchanged.

### 🎓 Free SHS has improved girls access to education

The Free Senior High School policy reduced financial barriers and boosted enrolment, especially for girls. However, delays in funding and poor infrastructure limited broader impact.

### 🛣️ Road projects in Ethiopia increased mobility

Women benefited from easier travel to markets and services under national road programs. Yet many were excluded from planning and construction due to cultural norms.

### 🏠 Land taxes in Ethiopia hurt female-headed households

Women with smaller, less productive farms faced a heavier relative tax burden. This reduced their income and economic stability.

### 📁 Mauritius made small gains with its gender policy

The National Gender Policy Framework improved wages slightly. However, skill gaps, slow implementation, and job segregation blocked significant progress.

## What we noticed across the countries

### 🕒 Well-meaning and inclusive policies exist but implementation gaps derail benefits for women

- ✓ In Rwanda, South Africa, and Ethiopia, electricity and roads helped reduce time poverty. However, without extra support like training or finance, women's incomes did not improve.
- ✓ Ghana's Free SHS opened more doors for girls, but the lack of facilities, resources, and reliable funding weakened its full impact. **Thus, without implementation imperatives, policies fail in their reach and impact for women.**

### 🏠 Policies often miss structural gender barriers

When policies ignore social norms, women are excluded from planning and decision-making. This limits how much they benefit, especially in rural infrastructure projects.

### ⚙️ Support systems make good policies work better

Where fiscal policies are backed by training, credit access, and inclusive labor policies, the impact on women is much more substantial.

