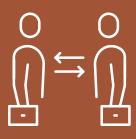


# **ECOWAS 2024**

# Human Capital Development Report















#### **Note on this Report**

This document is the biennial report on HCD performance in the ECOWAS region. It presents the region's progress in HCD since the publication of the ECOWAS 2022 HCD Report and the initial baseline conducted in 2019. This document is based on the analysis of performance on the same 18 +1 indicators for all 15 Member States. It also incorporates qualitative data and information on HCD initiatives launched during the reporting period based on consultations with Member States.

This is a biennial report to ensure that we continuously monitor HCD evolution in the region in light of our 2030 ambition to become the top performing economic community in HCD on the continent. This document serves to highlight the HCD achievements as well as key challenges in the region during the reporting period. It provides useful information and data to support and steer national HCD strategies and activities in Member States and to define how the Commission can best support this work.



### **ACRONYMS**

**ACE Submarine** - Africa Coast to Europe Submarine

**ANPEJ** - National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment Agency (Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi des Jeunes)

**ASC** - Community Health Worker (Agent de Santé Communautaire)

**AU** - African Union

BCEAO - Central Bank of West African States (Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest)

**CERFAM** - World Food Programme's Regional Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition (Centre d'excellence regionale contre la faim et la malnutrition)

CNE - The National Education Council (Conseil National de l'Education)

**DFI** - Development Finance Institution

**EAC** - East African Community

**ECCAS** - Economic Community of Central African States

**ECOWAS** - Economic Community of West African States

**EPI** - Expanded Program on Immunization

**FNS** - Food and Nutrition Security

**HCD** - Human Capital Development

**HCI** - Human Capital Index (a World Bank metric)

**HDI** - Human Development Index (a United Nations metric)

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

IXP - Internet Exchange Point

MDAs - Ministries, Departments, and Agencies

**MTMSGs** - Mother-to-Mother Support Groups

**MMS** – Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation

**NCD** - Non-communicable Diseases

**NEET** - Not in Employment, Education or Training

**PAQUET** - Plan d'Amélioration de la Qualité et de l'Equité de l'Éducation et de la Formation

**PNEF** - Programme National d'Éducation Financière

**PNDS** - Plan National de Développement Sanitaire

PSE - Plan Sectoriel de l'Education

RMNCAH+N - Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health + Nutrition

**SADC** - Southern African Development Community

**SDGs** - The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

**SLeSHI** - Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance

**SMEs** - Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

**SNIF** - Stratégie Nationale d'Inclusion Financière

**SOPs** - Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

**SRMNIA** - Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health

(Santé Reproductive, Maternelle, Néonatale, Infantile et des Adolescents)

 $\textbf{STEM} \text{ -} Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics}$ 

**SWEDD** - Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend

**TVET** - Technical and Vocational Education and Training

**UHC** - Universal Health Coverage

**UN** - United Nations

**UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme

**UNFPA** - United Nations Population Funds

**UNICEF** - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

**USSD** - Unstructured Supplementary Service Data

**VSLAs** - Village Savings and Loans Associations

**WAEMU** - West African Economic and Monetary Union

**WASH** - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

**WHO** - World Health Organization

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01

### **Foreword from the President**

### **Strength in Togetherness**

In 2019, the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) made a strategic decision to prioritize Human Capital Development (HCD). It was a decision that acknowledges the importance of investing in our people's wellbeing, knowledge and skills to achieve economic development and ECOWAS' founding goal of collective self-sufficiency.

This commitment was further solidified in 2021 with the adoption of the ECOWAS Integrated HCD Regional Strategy. Our ambition at that point of strategic evolution was clear: to become the leading regional economic community in HCD on the continent by 2030. As part of this endeavor, we developed a HCD Index, which assesses the region's performance in the HCD Strategy's three thematic areas: Health and Nutrition; Education, Skills and Labor Participation; and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and the Digital Economy. We also pledged to publish a report that presents the findings of this assessment on a periodic basis. The first ECOWAS HCD report was published in 2022, and it enumerated the region's performance on the HCD Index between 2018 and 2020.

The 2024 HCD Report presents a comprehensive assessment of the progress made from 2020 to 2022. It reveals that ECOWAS continues to make notable strides in HCD, with significant advancements in Health and Nutrition, as well as in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and the Digital Economy. This progress is testament to our collective efforts and commitment to drive economic development across the region.

At the same time, the report highlights several areas of concern, notably a decline of over 7% in the Education, Skills and Labor Participation thematic area since the last report. This decline, which comes after a period of notable stability, is attributed to a reduction in government spending on education, an increase in the number of children that are out of school, and a decrease in the mean years of schooling and harmonized test scores. Such revelations underscore the need for renewed focus and intensified efforts within this critical sector. It is also evident that although we have made a lot of progress, it is not sufficient to meet our 2030 aspirations. We must therefore accelerate the pace of our work and investments in human capital development.

This is a challenge to which all of us must now rise; redoubling our efforts today to achieve tomorrow's objectives. As we do this, it should not escape our minds, even for one moment, that while HCD focuses on the development of individuals, it has implications for our collective future as a regional community.

Finally, let me be the first to say that despite the challenges we face as a region, our collective resolve will lead us to our goals. The progress we have made, so far, with the unwavering support of our Member States, provides a glimpse of what we can accomplish when we unite around a common vision and cause. Indeed, the path to 2030 will be demanding, but with a clear focus and unwavering commitment of resources, both human and financial, we can realize our vision of an "ECOWAS of the peoples, peace and prosperity for all".



DR. OUMAR ALIEU TOURAY

PRESIDENT, ECOWAS COMMISSION

02

## **Foreword from the Vice President**

### **A Lasting Legacy for the Region**

HCD is a continuous process for enabling, enhancing and optimizing the skills, knowledge, abilities, and experiences of our citizens to realize their potential and make valuable contributions to society. It is a true mark of the commitment of governments, states and regions to deliver inclusive and sustainable development.

Since 2021, the ECOWAS Commission has been fully focused on implementing its Integrated HCD Strategy and driving progress across its core thematic areas of Health and Nutrition; Education, Skills and Labor Participation; and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy. Through the Strategy, we aim to advance HCD and improve both regional and Member State performance on HCD indicators. To this end, we are supporting Member States in developing their own national HCD strategies and action plans, establishing dedicated 'delivery units', and implementing HCD-focused initiatives.

We built the HCD Index and dashboard to enable us to measure and report on progress in HCD across the region and to enable countries to monitor and track their performance in HCD on an individual country-level basis. In 2022, ECOWAS published its inaugural 2021 HCD Report, which detailed regional and Member State HCD performance between 2018 and 2020.

The Report had initially been envisioned as an annual assessment of regional progress across the three thematic areas. However, after careful consideration of the rate of potential change within HCD indicators, which exceeds one year, and the fact that data for each indicator from each Member State is often not available annually, ECOWAS decided to change the reporting cycle to biennial, making this report the 2024 HCD Biennial report. The 2024 HCD Report presents progress made from 2020-2022. It serves as a tool to inform policy decisions and promote coherent investments by Member States in HCD interventions.

In the words of the late Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General and posthumous recipient of the ECOWAS Prize of Excellence, "Without good data, we're flying blind." The data at the heart of this report paints a clear picture of progress in most areas of HCD, with the region's HCD score increasing by 12%. This positive change is driven by significant advancements in Health and Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and the Digital Economy. I congratulate each Member State for its contribution to this improvement.

In terms of gender, despite persisting inequalities, our region has made progress in closing the parity gap, with the 2024 report showing a 3% improvement in the HCD Gender Index. The results are promising, demonstrating the unwavering political commitment of Member States to accelerate HCD. Had the region not recently faced numerous significant challenges, such as political instability, climate change-related natural disasters, growing insecurity, terrorist attacks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a rise in economic migration and brain drain, progress might have been even more substantial.

It is important to recognize the significant work that still lies ahead to achieve our ambitious yet attainable goal of being the top performing region in HCD on the continent by 2030. In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, the gains made in the previous reporting period have now been lost. Our governments therefore need to prioritize human and financial resources in these areas, and to sustain efforts in the other areas to ensure continued progress. Investing in education, healthcare, skills development, economic opportunities and entrepreneurship will enable us to harness the full potential of our people, and to overcome many of the obstacles to economic growth and development that we currently face.

I therefore call on all our Member States to continue to invest in and prioritize HCD so that we can create a sustainable future built on the skills and capabilities of our people.



**DAMTIEN L. TCHINTCHIBIDJA** 

VICE PRESIDENT, ECOWAS COMMISSION

# 03

## **Executive Summary**

Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills and health that people accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society<sup>1</sup>. Investing in human capital development enhances economic productivity, stimulates innovation, and fosters inclusive growth. Critical factors such as proper nutrition and health in early childhood are essential for cognitive development and school performance, laying the foundation for a more capable workforce. Inadequate schooling directly impacts the ability of an individual to acquire knowledge and skills, and hence their ability to compete and be productive in the labor market later in life<sup>2</sup>. Technological innovation and digital transformation play a pivotal role in accelerating sustainable economic growth. In the absence of technological innovation, the range of opportunities available to the skilled workforce are limited, particularly in the age of quickly advancing technology, potentially leading to underutilization of human capital<sup>3</sup>. HCD is therefore vital for positive and inclusive growth in the ECOWAS region. Gender parity is a cross-cutting enabler of HCD as gender disparities exacerbate poverty and inhibit economic development.

ECOWAS Member States continue to lag behind much of the world on the three HCD dimensions of: Health and Nutrition; Education, Skills, and Labor Participation; and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, and the Digital Economy. Various factors including political instability, insecurity, climate change and economic challenges significantly hinder HCD in the region. Insecurity disrupts communities, displaces populations, impedes education and healthcare access, exacerbates poverty and reduces opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Economic and political instability lead not only to increased poverty and reduced access to opportunities but also to migration and brain drain, resulting in the loss of valuable human capital.

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed an even greater challenge on the region by straining healthcare systems, disrupting vital health services such as antenatal and postpartum care, childhood immunization, chronic and acute care, and decreasing access to education. In the face of these challenges, our governments have often reduced expenditures and investments in health, education, and skills development, which has impacted outcomes and slowed progress toward the regional ambition. However, it is long-term investments in human capital that can drive sustainable growth and create more resilient societies that can still progress in the face of often unpredictable challenges.

With the adoption of its Integrated Regional Strategy, the ECOWAS Commission declared HCD a priority and set an ambitious target of the ECOWAS region becoming one of the top performing economic communities on the continent by 2030.

As part of the Strategy, ECOWAS committed to help Member States work toward achieving this target through the deployment of four strategic levers of support. ECOWAS has embarked on several activities under each lever to ensure the advancement of HCD across the region and to support Member States in achieving their HCD objectives and goals including:

#### 1. Advocacy, Policies and Communication

- Formulating and implementing an advocacy and communication strategy to support Member States in increasing awareness and support for HCD among political leaders as well as the development and implementation of national HCD strategies. This work is underway and will continue until the HCD targets are achieved.
- Encouraging and supporting HCD policies at both regional and national levels, which is an ongoing activity to facilitate progress across the three HCD dimensions and that boosts domestic funding for HCD priorities.

#### 2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Updating the HCD Index Dashboard with data from the recent assessment to ensure Member State access to a tool for monitoring and reporting on regional and country-level progress in HCD.

#### 3. Capability Building and Knowledge Sharing

- Organizing a new network of national HCD focal points in May 2024 to aid in executing national HCD strategies and related HCD initiatives.
- Convening training and workshops for focal points to facilitate peer-to-peer learning, build capacities in strategy development and implementation, communication and advocacy strategies for HCD, and monitoring and evaluation.

#### 4. Resource Mobilization

- Launching the Catalytic Investment Fund in the coming months to identify and fund innovative projects in the region that accelerate improved performance on HCD priority indicators.
- Continuing to provide financial and advocacy support to Member States for their national HCD strategies. The Commission awarded grants to Senegal, The Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Benin, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau for the development of their national HCD strategies. Additionally, efforts are underway to support the implementation of the Nigerian HCD national strategy in six Nigerian States.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>World Bank Human capital project

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Human Capital Project in Africa: Stories of Progress. World Bank October 2018. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/466661539712226332/pdf/130910-WP-PUBLIC-HCP-in-Africa-booklet.pdf

<sup>3</sup>Awode, Segun Subair and Oduola, Musa Olanrelwaju. Enhancing Industrial Productivity and Competitiveness in Africa: A focus on Technological Innovation and Human Capital Development 2023. https://aec.afdb.org/sites/default/files/papers/enhancing\_industrial\_productivity\_and\_competitiveness\_in\_africa\_a\_focus\_on\_technological\_innovation\_and\_human\_capital\_development.pdf

Under the Monitoring and Evaluation lever, ECOWAS also developed a measure of human capital development—the HCD Index— based on Member State priorities and a wider set of population factors. The ECOWAS HCD Index evaluates country performance in the three dimensions of the HCD Strategy. Since its review in 2022, the strategy's 19+1 indicators have been streamlined into 18+1 indicators to ensure better data availability. These indicators track progress at both the country and regional levels and are used to set aspirational targets. The HCD Index is accompanied by another measure—the HCD Gender Index—that was created to incorporate gender inclusion/parity into the assessment as it is a cross-cutting enabler of HCD. The HCD Gender Index measures gender parity across the various HCD indicators in each thematic area.

The performance of the region and individual Member States on the HCD Index was initially assessed in the baseline undertaken as part of the HCD Strategy, and it was later assessed as part of the 2021<sup>4</sup> HCD Report. Although there were significant strides demonstrated in 2021, particularly in Health and Nutrition and Education, the findings indicated that there was still work to be done in order to attain the 2030 target in these dimensions. However, Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy achieved the 2021 target, which signaled the need for Member States to increase investments and focus on the first two dimensions and to maintain their efforts to bolster performance in the last dimension.

This 2024 HCD Report shows overall progress since the last report, with the HCD Index improving by 12% (from 0.24 to 0.2688 out of 1). The Region was only -0.01 away from meeting its 2020-2022 target and is on track to meet its 2030 target. The Health and Nutrition dimension saw a 10% improvement driven by 12% reduction in maternal mortality rates, a 30% increase in government health expenditures, and a 30% reduction in child marriage. Targeted health programs in the region, such as Senegal's SRMNIA, positively impacted under-five and maternal mortality rates. Improved healthcare access and efforts to reduce child marriage have also enhanced health outcomes. Additionally, COVID-19 mitigation plans bolstered health infrastructure and innovations across the region during this period. Nonetheless, this improvement was not sufficient for ECOWAS to achieve its 2020-2022 target.

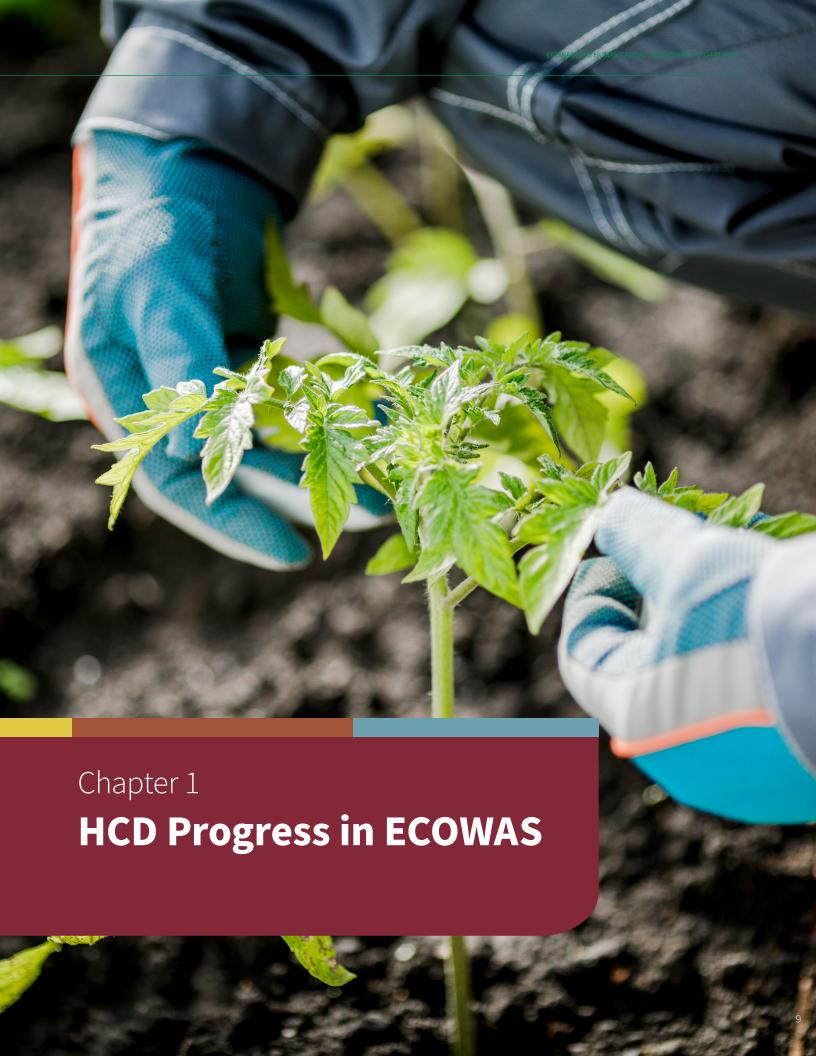
Performance in the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, and Digital Economy dimension increased by 50% (from 0.14 to 0.21 out of 1), which was 0.07 points over its 2020-2022 target. The region is steadily moving toward its 2030 target in this dimension, with internet penetration, the accessibility of financial services and the availability of business incubators driving the Index up. Financial service access almost doubled, driven by mobile banking, microfinance, and national financial inclusion strategies.

Performance in the Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimension, however, declined by 7% (from 0.24 to 0.22 out of 1) and is 0.07 points away from the 2020-2022 target. The decline in this dimension in the region is due to a 12.24% reduction in government spending in education, a -0.11-point drop in the teacher-to-student ratio, and a 4.27% reduction in mean years of schooling. These dips overshadowed the 4.16% improvement in the Youth NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) rate and the 37.62% increase in youth literacy, bringing down the score in this dimension as well as the overall regional Index score. These findings further demonstrate the need for increased investment in the education sector and policies that ensure governments' investments remain consistent, sustainable, and focused on the main drivers of performance — access to education, literacy, school retention, and teacher-student ratios.

This Report highlights slight improvements in gender parity across the region, although disparities persist. Women performed better in Health and Nutrition but faced challenges in Education and Entrepreneurship. Addressing these disparities is crucial for maximizing the region's human capital potential and fostering inclusive growth. ECOWAS must prioritize gender mainstreaming across all sectors and work collaboratively with stakeholders to promote gender equality and empower women.

The 2024 ECOWAS HCD Report underscores the importance of sustained investment in human capital to drive economic growth and improve regional well-being. While progress has been made, particularly in health and entrepreneurship, education and gender parity remain critical areas needing attention. The ECOWAS Commission and Member States must continue to prioritize human capital development to achieve the 2030 objectives and ensure sustainable growth and prosperity for all citizens in the region.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>The 2021 ECOWAS HCD Report was published in 2022.



### I. The Importance of HCD

Human capital is one of the essential elements of building sustainable social and economic growth. As such, nurturing a healthy, well-educated population that can fully participate in the economy, transition away from poverty, enter the labor market, and make more meaningful contributions to their communities, ensures economic growth in the present and plants the seeds for future economic growth. An investment in human capital, therefore, is an investment in people, productivity and prosperity.

Given its immense positive impact on the lives of citizens, the ECOWAS Head of States and Governments have now made HCD a number-one priority. HCD is the cornerstone of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 – "a fully integrated Community of peoples, living in a peaceful and prosperous region, with strong institutions and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, striving for inclusive and sustainable development."

By adopting its 2030 Integrated Human Capital Development Strategy, ECOWAS has set a clear agenda for improving human capital outcomes in the region. These efforts will drive economic growth, reduce poverty rates and support ECOWAS' plans to meet the African Union 2030 Vision and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Strategy also aims to make ECOWAS one of Africa's top-performing economic communities in HCD – a beacon of progress in the continent's human capital landscape.

# II. ECOWAS HCD Strategy: Aspirations and Objectives

The ECOWAS 2030 Integrated Regional HCD Strategy sets a clear agenda for improving human capital outcomes in the region. The Strategy also sets out the crucial role ECOWAS must play in supporting Member States and orienting resources to the region. More importantly, the Regional HCD Strategy complements and facilitates country-led national HCD strategies by focusing on: (i) presenting a regional baseline assessment of the state of HCD to define an aspiration or ambition for the region; (ii) defining levers to support Member States; and (iii) developing an action plan to achieve this ambition.

Given the importance of HCD and its various dimensions, ECOWAS has developed a measure of human capital that builds on existing global human development metrics. It is based on Member State priorities and captures a wider set of population factors – including measures of financial and digital inclusion – that enable productivity. ECOWAS' HCD Index evaluates performance in the three thematic areas: Health and Nutrition; Education, Skills and Labor Participation; and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy – all areas in which the region has performed poorly in the past. Gender inclusion, a cross-cutting enabler of HCD, is assessed in ECOWAS' HCD Gender Index.

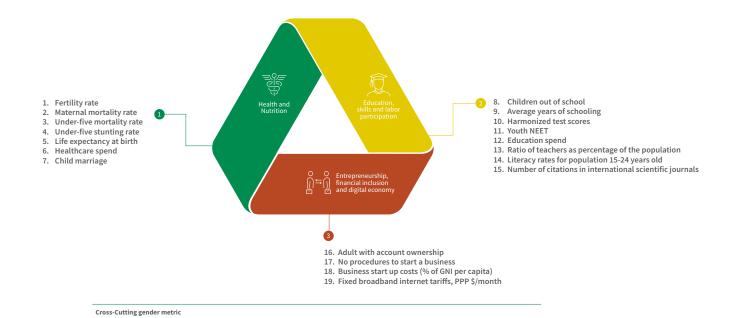


Fig 1. Three dimensions of HCD and 19+1 priority indicators

+1 Data disaggregated by gender for relevant indicators above

The ECOWAS HCD Index was used to develop a baseline for understanding the current state of HCD in ECOWAS. It was also used to assess variations in performance across countries on the three dimensions of HCD and 19+1 priority indicators. These results served as the basis for developing the 'regional aspiration'<sup>5</sup> and helped to reveal different approaches required to deliver change and provided quantitative context for understanding countries and their challenges. The regional baseline also enables ongoing performance tracking across countries using standardized metrics. Due to factors such as quality and the availability of data, these indicators were revised for the 2021 HCD Report.

ECOWAS devised index targets to enable the achievement of its ambition of becoming the top performing economic community on the continent. The average World Bank Human Capital Index score for ECOWAS countries in 2020 was 0.38 (the lowest in Africa), versus 0.40 for the top-performing Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Therefore, ECOWAS would need to improve HCD performance across all indicators by 5% annually, on average to meet its ambition. This 5% formed the basis for the regional and country-level targets set between 2021 and 2030. Meeting these targets would require, in the short term, Member States overcoming existing challenges such as insecurity, political and financial instability and climate change, while accelerating annual improvement beyond the historical average rate of improvement.

Annual improvement required across 19+1 indicators to achieve different levels of HCD aspiration for the ECOWAS region by 2030

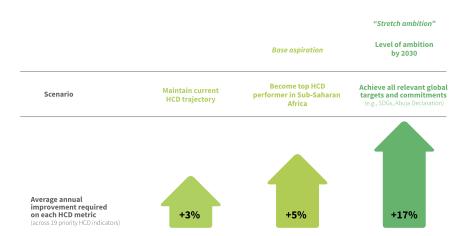


Fig 2. ECOWAS HCD aspiration

In the last HCD Report, the region was not able to achieve its targets for the Health and Nutrition and Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimensions. In the Health and Nutrition dimension, it only made progress of 0.02 points and missed the target by 0.03. In the Education, Skills and Labor participation dimension, there was limited progress. The region's score remained unchanged since the baseline and is still 0.04 points from the target. In the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimension, the region achieved the most progress with a score of 0.05, exceeding the target by 0.03.

#### **ECOWAS HCD performance evolution**

			Q	
	Integrated HCD Index	Health and Nutrition	Education, Skills and Labor Participation	Entrpreneurship, Financial Inclusion, and Digital Economy
Baseline	0.22	0.33	0.24	0.09
Progress made	+0.02	+0.02	0.00	+0.05
Latest value <sup>1</sup>	0.24	0.35	0.24	0.14
Difference to target	-0.01	-0.03	-0.04	+0.03
2019-20 target <sup>2</sup>	0.26	0.38	0.28	0.11
Progress made	0.45	0.61	0.44	0.29

Fig 3. ECOWAS 2021 HCD performance evolution

### III. Purpose of this Report

From the time of the launch of the ECOWAS 2030 Integrated Human Capital Development Strategy in 2021, the ECOWAS Commission has committed to produce a periodic report on the state of HCD in the region. The first ECOWAS HCD Report was published in 2022 and assessed the period between 2018 and 2020. This 2024 ECOWAS HCD Report aims to assess HCD progress in the region, covering the period 2020 – 2022. It will do this by:

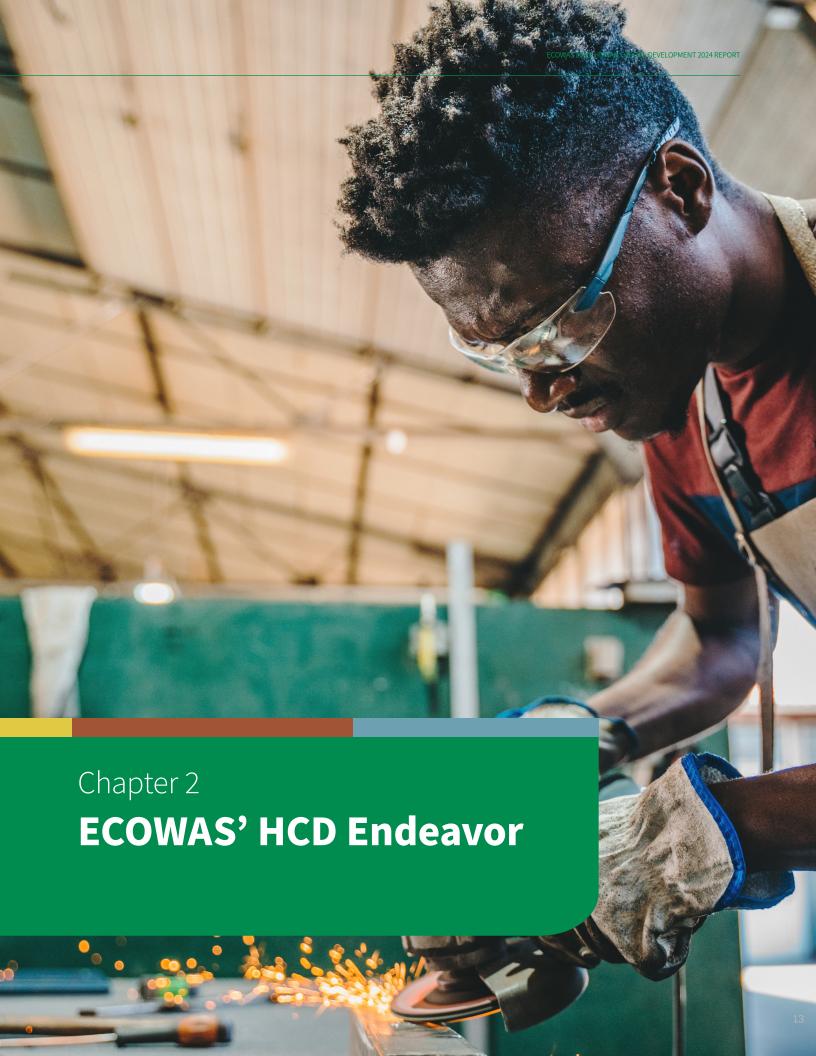
- Presenting the performance of the region and individual Member States on the HCD Index, in each of the dimensions, and on the HCD Gender Index.
- Providing an overview of ECOWAS efforts to support HCD in the region.
- Assessing regional and country-specific HCD progress to highlight ongoing challenges that the ECOWAS Commission and Member States need to address to improve their HCD Index and HCD Gender Index performance.
- Providing an overview of achievements and successes on which Member States and the ECOWAS Commission can build as they move forward.

Overall, the 2024 ECOWAS HCD Report presents the performance of the ECOWAS region and individual Member States on the HCD and HCD Gender Indexes as well as insights as to the drivers of the regional and country-specific outcomes. It aims to outline ways in which ECOWAS and its Member States can achieve the HCD ambition set in the regional HCD strategy, based on global and local best practices. Above all, the Report provides data, insights and analysis to help inform HCD policies and pathways, helping Member States build country-level resilience while contributing to regional prosperity.

The 2024 ECOWAS HCD Report will follow the same structure as the 2021 Report to allow for immediate comparison. It has been developed based on the following five inputs:

- A desk review on ECOWAS HCD Strategy aspirations and objectives, focusing on the importance of HCD in the region and the relevance of gender.
- 2. The evolution of the ECOWAS Integrated HCD Index and its common set of indicators for all 15 Member States; data has been collected from trusted multilateral organizations for the period 2020 2022. Although there may be national data for some of the indicators of the Index, by using the selected secondary sources, we ensure the availability of data for all of the indicators. We also ensure that all country level data is collected using the same methodology and that data from this report can be compared to the data from the last report and the baseline, both of which relied on the same secondary sources and this same methodology.
- The performance of Member States on the Gender Index as an indicator of gender parity in the three HCD dimensions.
- A qualitative assessment of strategies and initiatives undertaken by both the ECOWAS Commission and the Member States, based on inputs from stakeholder consultations.
- External reports on Member State activities and initiatives across the thematic areas deemed essential to HCD.





# I. Highlights from the ECOWAS HCD Journey

The ECOWAS Commission began its HCD efforts in July 2019, with a drive to build a regional vision and corresponding strategy. In 2020 and 2021, it solicited hundreds of experts and stakeholders in the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, looking to define the overall HCD ambition and strategy and push for regional action.

After the publication of the 2021 HCD Report, ECOWAS launched several initiatives across the four levers presented in the HCD Strategy to accelerate progress in the region. In the area of advocacy, policy and communication, the Commission began the process of implementing the ECOWAS HCD Advocacy Strategy by driving regional-level salience on HCD on individual country and sub-national levels. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, ECOWAS created a digital dashboard to track the progress of HCD strategy implementation and both regional and Member State HCD performance.

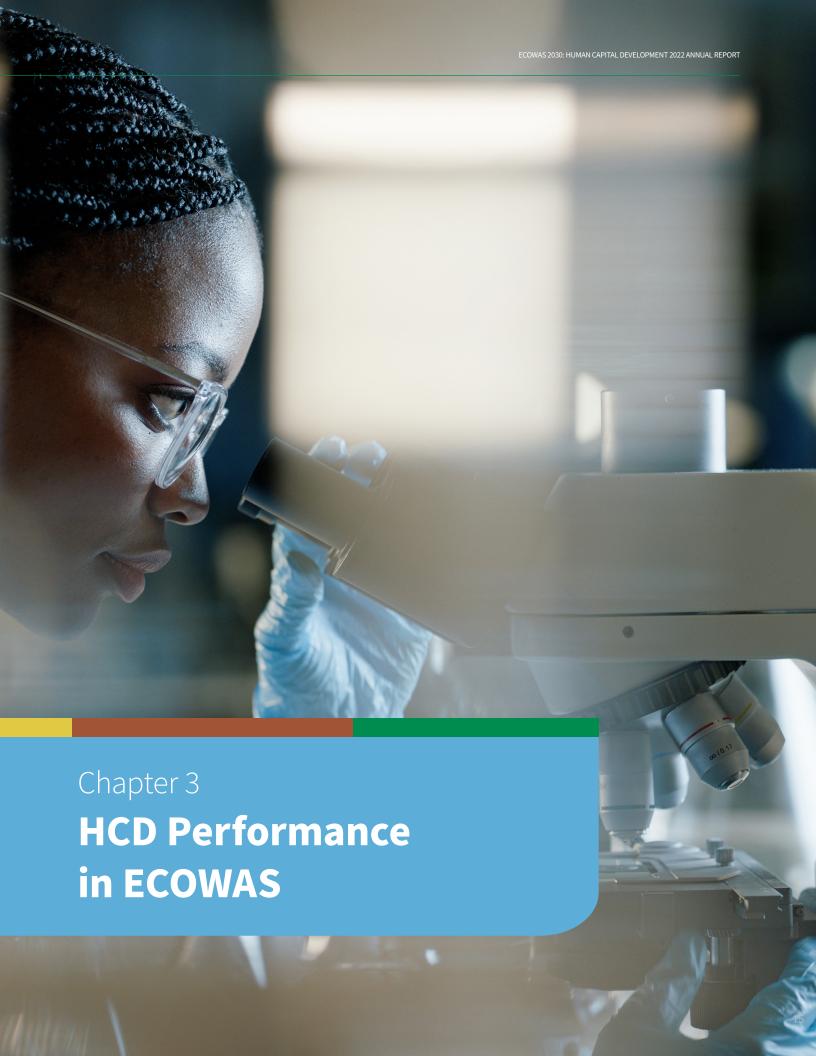
With respect to capacity building and knowledge sharing, several training sessions and webinars were held to develop the capabilities of the Commission and Member State focal points in HCD. In the area of resource mobilization and partnership, ECOWAS worked with partners to design and secured financing for a catalytic investment fund. The aim of the fund is to support innovative programs or initiatives across the region that will accelerate HCD and drive tangible progress against priority indicators.

In parallel to ECOWAS' efforts at the regional level, Member States launched several HCD initiatives based on their existing or developing strategies. These included the appointment of HCD focal points and the creation of dedicated national HCD teams called HCD delivery units, to drive human capital development. ECOWAS countries, however, are still facing challenges such as political and security instability that have delayed development and implementation of their HCD strategies and initiatives. ECOWAS continues to support Member States in finalizing and implementing their HCD strategies and in developing resilient HCD policies and initiatives that can withstand the shocks of ongoing and future challenges.

## II. Key Priority Initiatives Launched after the 2021 HCD Report

In 2022, ECOWAS experienced a change in leadership, which temporarily slowed down work on HCD. However, once the new leadership was in place, the HCD team was able to adapt and rebuild quickly. ECOWAS is focused on getting Member States back on track for achieving the Strategy's objectives and is currently engaged in the following activities:

- Development of a monitoring and evaluation framework that aims to strengthen Member State capacity to capture and track process-level HCD indicators in a harmonized way and evaluate HCD initiatives.
- Development and implementation of an advocacy and communication strategy with the following goals: i) Raising awareness and support for HCD, and the development and implementation of national HCD strategies; ii) Promoting and supporting regional and national policies that advance HCD; and iii) Increasing domestic budget allocations for HCD priorities.
- Delivery of training and workshops for focal points to build their capacity in HCD strategy implementation. The first workshop was held in May 2024 in Accra. The workshop was also a forum for knowledge sharing between focal points and partners to generate synergistic solutions to meet the 2030 HCD objectives.
- Preparation for the launch of the Catalytic Investment Fund, which seeks to support innovative projects that accelerate progress on HCD priority indicators in the region.
- Conducting field visits to Member States to assess country technical and financial needs and to provide advocacy support for national strategy development and implementation. The Commission has provided grants to Senegal, The Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Benin, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. It has also started exploring ways to support the implementation of the Nigerian HCD national strategy in six Nigerian States.



### I. ECOWAS Integrative HCD Index

#### 1. Methodology Update

The ECOWAS Integrative HCD Index was created to serve as the guiding benchmark for HCD initiatives in the region. It aligns with ECOWAS's ambitions across the three primary dimensions and establishes clear targets. Monitoring the progress of the HCD Index is crucial for sustaining focus and momentum in HCD efforts. This Index enables Member States to evaluate their HCD performance, celebrate achievements, and identify areas needing improvement.

This section describes the methodology used to compute the 2024 HCD Index, as well as the findings from the 2024 review.

Updating the Index with 2024 data required five steps:

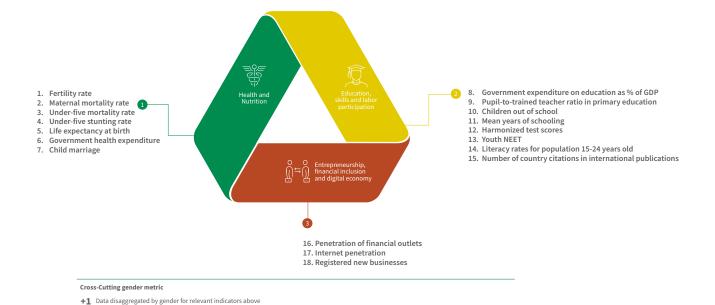
- On each of the three dimensions of HCD, a list of indicators is defined to capture the evolution of inputs (e.g., government expenditure) as well as outputs (e.g., teacher-student ratio) and outcomes (e.g., youth literacy).
- Each value for each country is normalized on a 0-1 scale to allow for comparison. The minimum and maximum values are set to ensure that the values are comparable over time.
- 3. The indicators are then aggregated by theme, with adjustments made to account for any correlation between indicators with linked outcomes evolution, such as child mortality and maternal mortality; the Index is then integrated at a national level. The method used to compute the average by theme, is the sum of squares of indicators an arithmetic mean to reflect the distance to ideal target performance. The square of the variation (or distance to target) is computed for each indicator, with the variation defined as the spread between each discrete value and the mean, to reduce the potential statistical effect of any outliers.

- The comparisons are made using ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 represents the lowest possible performance or outcome, and 1 represents the highest.
- A fully integrated HCD Index is then compiled for the region across each of the three dimensions and is finally integrated as an average of all Member States.

The 2024 HCD Index is based on data from 2020 to 2022. This allows for a comprehensive review of recent trends and developments. Member State progress was studied across two periods:

- Period 1: which assesses the evolution of HCD at regional and country level from the baseline to the 2021 assessment.
- Period 2: which corresponds to the interval between the 2021 assessment and the actual period from 2020-2022 considered for the 2024 HCD Index.

This HCD report uses the same list of 18+1 indicators as the 2021 HCD Report. These indicators are distinct from the 19+1 indicators identified in the ECOWAS HCD Strategy, as four of the initial 19 indicators were discontinued due to data reliability issues. These indicators were replaced in the 2021 HCD Report by three new indicators: penetration of financial outlets, internet penetration, and registered new businesses. Please find a complete list of these indicators in the figures below.



#### 2. Overall HCD Index Results

#### A. Overall

The overall HCD Index improved from the last report, up from 0.24 to 0.27, indicating general progress in human capital development. As in the previous report, the region performed best in Health and Nutrition, with a score of 0.37, representing a 10% improvement.

This progress was further reinforced by significant advancements in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy, which increased from 0.14 to 0.21, marking a 50% improvement. However, the Education sector saw a decline of more than 7% since the last report, despite previous stability.

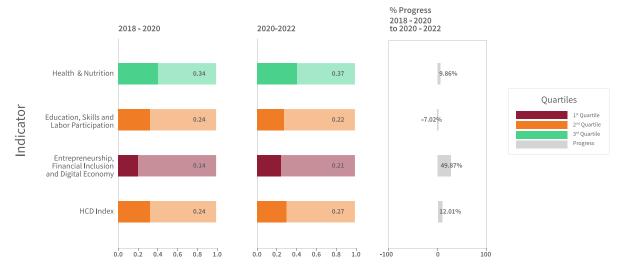


Fig 5. Overall HCD Index scores

#### **B.** Health and Nutrition

The improvement in Health and Nutrition within the ECOWAS region has been driven by a multifaceted approach focused on improving infant and maternal health, increasing government health expenditures and reducing child marriage. There was a 12% reduction in maternal mortality rates, a 30% increase in government health expenditures, and a 30% reduction in child marriage.

There were substantial increases in government funding for health services and infrastructure. Targeted health programs such as Senegal's SRMNIA program on strengthening pre and post natal care, have contributed to reductions in under five mortality and maternal mortality rates. Additional efforts, such as better surveillance of maternal deaths, provision of post-abortion care, management of obstetric fistula, and increased availability of essential medicines, have been crucial. The implementation of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in countries has also improved healthcare access and quality, leading to better health outcomes. Efforts to reduce child marriage through regulatory reforms and community sensitization have significantly impacted the health and education trajectory of girls, with Guinea-Bissau making notable progress. Member States implemented a COVID-19 mitigation plan to address the impacts of the pandemic, with measures including enhanced health sector funding, improved healthcare infrastructure, and community health initiatives.

These combined efforts have led to better health indicator performance, increased access to healthcare and overall human capital development in the region. They have also driven significant progress in several key health indicators:

- Health and Nutrition score: improved from 0.34 to 0.37, a 9.86% progression. This indicates substantial advancements in healthcare services and outcomes across the region.
- Fertility rate: improved from 0.44 to 0.468 (6.41% progression), with a gap of 0.0315 to the target; this gap can be bridged by scaling up family planning services and enhancing reproductive health education.
- Maternal mortality rate: improved from 0.53 to 0.595 (12.35% progression), with a gap of 0.0359 to the target, which can be closed by investing in maternal healthcare facilities and providing specialized training for healthcare providers.
- **Under-five mortality rate:** improved from 0.4 to 0.411 (2.79% progression), with a gap of 0.1235 to the target; this gap can be addressed by expanding immunization programs and providing nutritional support to mothers and children.
- **Under-five stunting rate:** improved from 0.55 to 0.578 (5.11% progression), with a gap of 0.0167 to the target, which can be closed by implementing community-based nutrition education programs and increasing supplemental feeding programs.
- **Life expectancy at birth:** slightly declined from 0.26 to 0.252 (2.89% regression), with a gap of 0.0761 to the target. This can be addressed by strengthening chronic disease management programs and improving healthcare access in rural areas.
- **Government health expenditure:** increased from 0.17 to 0.220 (29.21% progression), with a gap of 0.0217 to the target, which can be closed by advocating for increased health sector expenditure and ensuring efficient use of funds.
- Child marriage: improved from 0.48 to 0.621 (29.33% progression), exceeding the target by 0.0986; this achievement can be maintained by sustaining efforts through community sensitization and legal enforcement of child marriage bans.

# C. Education, Skills and Labor Participation

The decrease within the Education dimension across the ECOWAS region can be attributed to several critical factors. There has been a significant reduction in government spending on education, evidenced by a 12.24% decrease in this indicator, which has directly impacted the quality and accessibility of educational services. This funding shortfall has led to fewer resources for schools, including teaching materials, infrastructure maintenance, and support programs for both students and teachers. In countries like Senegal, the budget for education investment decreased from 16.3% to 11.5% of the total education expenditures between 2019 and 2022. Across the region, there has also been a slight decline in the ratio of teachers to students (-0.11%), resulting in larger class sizes, overburdened teachers and less individual attention for students. The mean years of schooling also reduced by 4.27%, suggesting that fewer students are completing their education. High dropout rates, particularly in secondary education, can be attributed to economic pressures, lack of infrastructure and sociocultural factors such as early marriages.

Improvements are noted in the Youth NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate (4.16%) and Youth literacy, which increased significantly (37.62%), indicating successful literacy programs and efforts to improve basic education. Also, in higher education an improvement is noted of close to 59% showing improved participation in academic research projects and international publications. These gains are overshadowed by declines in other critical areas. So, although more youths are becoming literate, the overall quality and length of education is not improving. Inadequate and poorly distributed teaching resources, the lack of sufficient teaching materials and infrastructure, and the inability of teachers to effectively transform available resources into improved learning outcomes, have further exacerbated the situation.

Elsewhere, sociopolitical crises, violence impacting the educational environment, significant disparities in school attendance and admission rates between regions, and gender disparities in schools, remain significant factors contributing to the decline in education. These issues impede access to education, especially for girls, and contribute to high dropout rates. COVID-19 also had a major impact, leading to prolonged school closures, disruption and significant learning losses, particularly for vulnerable students. The pandemic also exacerbated existing challenges in digital infrastructure, worsening a digital divide that negatively impacts learning outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

- Ratio of teachers to students: decreased slightly from 0.32 to 0.319 (0.3% regression), with a gap of 0.0693 to the target. This indicator can be improved by recruiting more teachers and reducing class sizes.
- Children out of school: score decreased from 0.57 to 0.447 (21.55% regression), with a gap of 0.1198 to the target, which can be addressed by implementing programs to increase school enrolment and retention, especially in rural areas.
- Mean years of schooling: decreased from 0.2 to 0.191 (4.27% regression), with a gap of 0.0826 to the target; this gap can be closed by reducing dropout rates through addressing socioeconomic barriers, academic counseling, and improving school infrastructure in remote and underserved areas.

- **Harmonized test scores:** decreased from 0.26 to 0.247 (5.09% regression), with a gap of 0.1002 to the target, which can be addressed by improving the quality of education through curriculum development and teacher training.
- Youth NEET: improved from 0.33 to 0.344 (4.16% progression), with a gap of 0.1271 to the target, which can be bridged by expanding vocational training programs and employment opportunities.
- Youth literacy rate: improved significantly from 0.28 to 0.385 (37.62% progression), with a gap of 0.0984, indicating that current efforts should be sustained and strengthened to achieve literacy targets.
- Number of citations: increased from 0.01 to 0.016 (59.02% progression), with a gap of 0.0695 to the target, which can be addressed by promoting academic research and providing support for scholarly activities.

# D. Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy

The ECOWAS region has seen significant enhancements in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy, driven by various strategic initiatives and programs. The entrepreneurship score has improved from 0.14 to 0.2098 (indicating progress of 49.87%), thanks to the establishment of business incubators and accelerators, such as Innovalab in Guinea-Bissau. Business plan competitions that provide crucial support to digital startups and local entrepreneurs have also played a part. The penetration rate of financial services has increased from 0.31 to 0.6107 (96.99% progression) supported by initiatives like mobile banking and microfinance, along with the creation of agencies such as Côte d'Ivoire's Agency for the Promotion of Financial Inclusion. These efforts have been reinforced in several countries by the establishment of a national strategy for financial inclusion.

The percentage of individuals using the internet has risen from 0.13 to 0.1898 (46.00% progression) due to investments in telecommunications infrastructure. Key projects include the ACE submarine cable and national fiber-optic networks, which have boosted internet accessibility and usage across the region. Additionally, new business density has increased from 0.04 to 0.05 (18.18% progression). This increase has been facilitated by the establishment of one-stop shops for business registration in several countries, streamlining the process of starting and formalizing new enterprises. Job creation has been further supported by vocational training programs and programs such as those conducted by ANPEJ in Senegal that provide training, funding and mentorship to young entrepreneurs.

Financial inclusion efforts have been bolstered by programs like Ghana's Mobile Money Interoperability initiative, which facilitates seamless transactions across different mobile money platforms. Internet accessibility has also been improved by initiatives such as Nigeria's National Broadband Plan, which aims to increase broadband penetration and enhance digital infrastructure. These efforts have collectively fostered a conducive environment for entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, job creation, and the digital economy in the ECOWAS region, leading to substantial improvements in these areas.

Additional efforts are needed to meet the targets for other indicators, including:

- Penetration Rate of Financial Services: showed remarkable progress, increasing from 0.31 to 0.6107, representing an impressive growth of 96.99%. This significant improvement not only surpassed the latest target of 0.23 but also reached and exceeded the ambitious 2030 target of 0.54 well ahead of schedule. This achievement underscores the effectiveness of current initiatives and highlights the potential for continued advancements in financial inclusion.
- 2. Individuals Using the Internet: rose from 0.13 to 0.1898 (progress of 46.00%), surpassing its 0.14 target; this emphasizes the need to sustain and enhance investments in telecommunications infrastructure to further improve internet accessibility and digital inclusion.
- **3. New Business Density:** increased from 0.04 to 0.0473 (18.18% progression), with a gap of 0.0021, highlighting the importance of maintaining and expanding initiatives to simplify business registration, thereby fostering entrepreneurship growth.

#### **ECOWAS Region: Countries Grouped by Quartiles based on HCD Integrated Index**

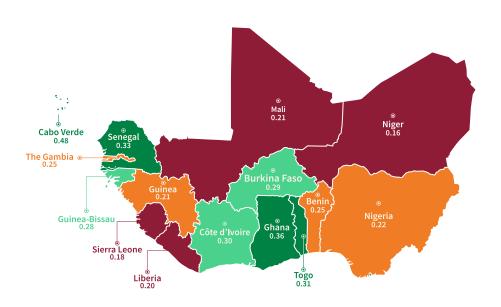




Fig 6. Member states baseline values

Golden AR, Srisarajivakul EN, Hasselle AJ, Pfund RA, Knox J. What was a gap is now a chasm: Remote schooling, the digital divide, and educational inequities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Curr Opin Psychol. 2023 Aug;52:101632. doi: 10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101632.

#### 3. Country Comparisons

#### **Overview**

Data from the HCD Index provides a comprehensive view of the progress and performance of Member States from their baseline values to the 2021 Report and the latest values, including the biennial and 2030 targets.



Cabo Verde, which had the highest baseline and 2021 Report value of 0.46, achieved 0.48 in the latest reporting period. It is therefore ranked first among Member States, with an increase of 3.6% from the 2021 Report. Cabo Verde still needs to close a gap of 0.06 to reach its current target of 0.54 but is on a strong trajectory towards its ambitious 2030 target of 0.73.

Ghana, with a baseline of 0.31 and a value of 0.34 in the 2021 Report, increased to 0.36 in the latest reporting period, ranking second in the region. This performance represents a 5.4% improvement since the 2021 Report. Ghana is now just 0.03 points away from its target of 0.39, and well positioned to achieve its 2030 goal of 0.54.

Similarly, Senegal, starting at 0.25, achieved 0.30 in the 2021 Report and continued to 0.33 during the latest reporting period, ranking third. Recording an 11.1% improvement against the 2021 Report, Senegal surpasses its current target of 0.32 and is steadily moving toward its 2030 target of 0.49.

Togo with a baseline value of 0.26 achieved 0.28 in the previous report and continued to 0.31 during the latest reporting period ,ranking fourth. It represents a 10 % improvement since the last report. Togo surpasses its current goal and is moving steadily toward its 0.43 2030 target.

Benin, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire also made notable improvements. Benin moved from a baseline of 0.21, and 0.22 in the 2021 Report to 0.25 in this period. It now ranks eighth in the region, with progress of 14.9% from the 2021 Report. Burkina Faso, starting from 0.25 at the baseline, and 0.27 in the 2021 Report, attained 0.29 in the latest report. It ranks sixth, with progress of 6.0% from the 2021 Report. Côte d'Ivoire improved from 0.23 to 0.26 in 2021 and 0.30 in the latest report, ranking fifth and making progress of 14.4%.

The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau present interesting cases with divergent trends. The Gambia, with a baseline of 0.22, achieved 0.28 in 2021 but dropped slightly to 0.25 in the latest data, ranking ninth, indicating a decline of -11.6% from the 2021 Report. Consequently, The Gambia has lost its rank. Conversely, Guinea-Bissau, despite a low baseline of 0.13, showed significant improvement, jumping from 0.17 in 2021 to 0.28, ranking seventh and recording progress of 67.0% since the 2021 Report.

1<sup>st</sup> Ouartile

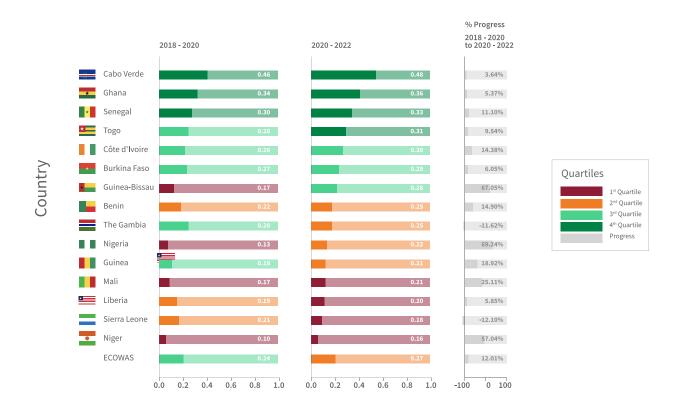
2<sup>nd</sup> Quartile 3<sup>rd</sup> Quartile

4<sup>th</sup> Quartile Progress

Nigeria and Sierra Leone made varying degrees of progress. Nigeria, starting from 0.19, reached 0.13 in the 2021 Report and improved to 0.22, ranking tenth and showing progress of 69.2% from the 2021 Report. Sierra Leone showed modest improvement from a baseline of 0.18 to 0.21 in 2021, but has now slipped back to 0.18, ranking fourteenth and indicating a decline of -12.1% from the 2021 Report.

In the lower quartiles, Niger, Mali and Liberia made encouraging progress. Niger advanced from a baseline of 0.08 and 0.10 in 2021 to 0.16, ranking fifteenth with progress of 57.0%. Mali, improved from a baseline of 0.14 and 0.17 in 2021, to 0.21, ranking twelfth, with progress of 25.1% from the 2021 report. Liberia, which remained at 0.19 for the baseline and the 2021 Report, has moved to 0.20, ranking thirteenth, with progress of 5.8%.

Overall, the progress between 2021 Report to the latest values highlight the diverse pace and achievements among Member States. Continuous monitoring and targeted initiatives will be crucial for each country to meet their respective targets and further enhance their HCD performance, especially considering the impacts of COVID-19 and the ambitious goals set for 2030.



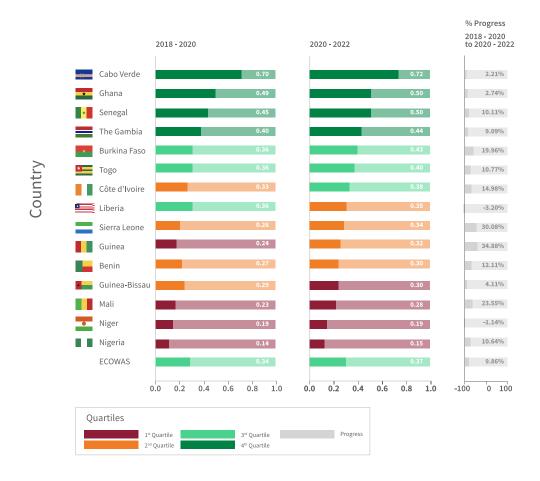
### Country comparisons by dimension

#### **Health and Nutrition**

The Health and Nutrition dimension data reveals the varying progress among ECOWAS countries based on their baseline values, the values from the HCD Report covering 2018-2020 and the latest values.



Cabo Verde stands out with the highest score of 0.7155, improving from 0.6969 in the 2021 HCD Report and maintaining strong performance towards its targets. Ghana and Senegal also show notable progress, with Ghana increasing from a baseline value of 0.4689 in 2021 to 0.5034, and Senegal improving from 0.4388 to 0.4955. Significant improvements were observed in Guinea, which rose from a baseline of 0.2299 and a 2021 score of 0.24 to 0.3237, and Côte d'Ivoire, which increased from a baseline of 0.3154 and a 2021 score of 0.33 to 0.3794. Conversely, Nigeria and Niger have lower latest scores of 0.1549 and 0.1878, respectively, despite making progress from their baselines and 2021 values. Cabo Verde, Ghana and Senegal are close to their immediate targets, indicating they are on track to meet their 2030 goals. These comparisons underscore the diverse performance levels across the region, emphasizing the need for continuous monitoring and targeted interventions to ensure progress towards the 2030 targets.



#### **Education, Skills and Labor Participation**

The Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimension reveals varying progress among ECOWAS countries starting from their baseline values to the previous HCD Report covering 2018-2020 and now, the latest values.





Togo leads with the highest latest score of 0.37, followed closely by Cabo Verde and Nigeria with scores of 0.36 each, indicating strong performance towards their targets. Guinea-Bissau has shown significant improvement, rising from a baseline of 0.12 to 0.17, while Niger also improved from 0.07 to 0.13. In contrast, Sierra Leone recorded one of the lowest latest scores of 0.17, declining from a baseline of 0.32. Similarly, The Gambia and Mali have relatively low latest scores of 0.16 and 0.12, respectively. Benin and Ghana have moderate scores of 0.21 and 0.20, showing some progress but still below the regional average. Burkina Faso, with a latest score of 0.19, and Côte d'Ivoire, with 0.24, demonstrate modest improvements. Guinea and Senegal have scores of 0.24 each, indicating steady progress. Liberia, with a score of 0.18, shows marginal improvement. And while Togo, Cabo Verde and Nigeria are on track to meet their immediate and 2030 targets, countries like Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Mali need significant support to improve their education scores.

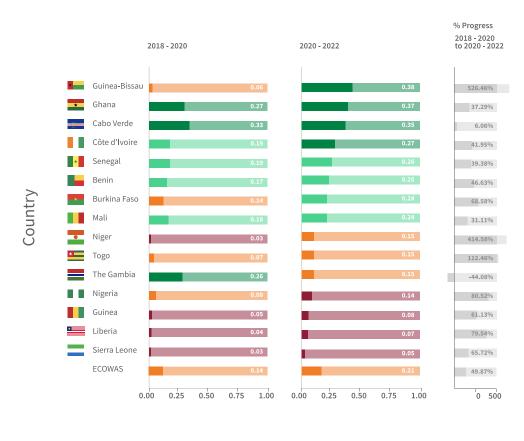


### **Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy**

Entrepreneurship scores also reveal diverse performances among ECOWAS countries.



Guinea-Bissau leads with a score of 0.38, significantly exceeding its target of 0.05 and the 2030 target of 0.13. Ghana follows closely with 0.37, surpassing its current target of 0.27 and approaching the 2030 goal of 0.38. Cabo Verde has a strong score of 0.35 but still has work to do to meet its ambitious 2030 target of 0.73. Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal show solid entrepreneurship environments, with scores of 0.27 and 0.26, respectively, progressing well towards their 2030 targets. Other countries like Benin (0.25), Burkina Faso (0.24) and Mali (0.24) demonstrate positive trends, surpassing their immediate targets and aiming for steady growth. On the lower end, Sierra Leone (0.05), Liberia (0.07) and Guinea (0.08) achieve modest scores but are working towards their targets. And despite its economic prominence, Nigeria has a relatively low score of 0.14, indicating room for improvement in fostering entrepreneurship.





# II. ECOWAS HCD Gender Index

# 1. Relevance of Gender-related Analysis to Support ECOWAS HCD Strategy

ECOWAS, comprising 15 member states, is a diverse region marked by considerable gender disparities in access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. Historically, women and girls have faced systemic barriers hindering their full participation in education and workforce development initiatives. This has led to a significant gender gap in HCD indicators such as mortality rates, literacy rates, employment rates and skill acquisition.

Gender inequality not only perpetuates social injustice, but it also impedes overall economic progress. The World Bank estimates that gender disparities in labor force participation alone cost sub-Saharan Africa \$95 billion annually. By underutilizing the talents and potential of women, ECOWAS countries are missing out on substantial opportunities for economic growth and prosperity.

Addressing gender disparities for enhanced HCD is essential for maximizing human capital potential and fostering inclusive growth. It is imperative for ECOWAS Member States to prioritize gender mainstreaming across all sectors, and work collaboratively with governments, civil society organizations, private sector entities and international partners to address gender disparities and promote HCD across the region. By investing in women's empowerment, ECOWAS can foster inclusive growth, reduce poverty and build resilient economies for the future.

ECOWAS' HCD Index and Strategy cover the region's entire population. The Index and initiatives shared in this report are gender agnostic and focus on assessing the overall HCD performance of Member States. While some indicators, such as 'fertility rate', are specific to the experience of women in the region, there is a need to consider more comprehensively how HCD efforts impact outcomes differently based on gender. In this regard, it is essential to assess the region's baseline and address all gender-related shortcomings within specific initiatives. These issues are incorporated into the HCD Gender Index: a tool to measure and compare female and male performance along HCD outcomes in the three thematic areas.

#### 2. Methodology and Approach

The ECOWAS HCD Gender Index monitors HCD gender parity performance among Member States. It employs several indicators that capture the inclusion and outcomes for women and girls in HCD. The following methodology was used to calculate the Index:

- Select specific ECOWAS HCD indicators that capture outcomes where gender differences are significant.
- For each indicator, determine if a higher rate for females compared to males indicates a favorable situation for women.
   Conversely, assess if a higher rate for females represents an unfavorable condition.
- Compute the female-to-male ratio for indicators where a higher female rate is positive, and the male-to-female ratio when a higher rate is negative. When interpreting the HCD Gender Index results, a value below 1 indicates that outcomes are less favorable for women, while a value above 1 signifies that women have better outcomes compared to men on that specific indicator or dimension.

- Calculate the arithmetic average of the ratios across the three thematic areas for each Member State.
- Calculate the weighted average for the ECOWAS region by considering each Member State's population share. This ensures equitable representation of every woman or girl in the region.

For this specific gender parity assessment, eleven indicators have been selected. In contrast to the HCD gender parity assessment in the 2021 HCD Report, the maternal mortality rate has been excluded due to the lack of an equivalent male indicator. Instead, a standalone analysis of maternal mortality rates in the region has been included. Below is a list of the eleven gender parity indicators:

- Health and Nutrition: under-five mortality rate, under-five stunting rate, life expectancy at birth.
- Education, Skills, and Labor Participation: children out of school, mean years of schooling, harmonized test scores, youth NEET, youth literacy rate.
- Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy: internet penetration.

Two additional indicators, not included in the ECOWAS HCD Index, were added to better assess gender gaps at the later stages of life: women in managerial positions and saving at a financial institution. Because maternal mortality rate was removed from the ECOWAS HCD Gender Index, the previous HCD Gender Index was computed again to allow for effective comparison with the latest one

#### 3. Overall Results in ECOWAS

Compared with the gender parity assessment in the last report, outcomes for women in the region have improved slightly. However, there is still much work to be done, as men continue to enjoy better outcomes than their female counterparts.

In Health and Nutrition, women performed better than men although their performance in this area declined (albeit slightly) compared to the last report. The under-five mortality rate for girls relative to their male counterparts also declined. For under-five stunting rates and life expectancy at birth, outcomes for women deteriorated slightly.

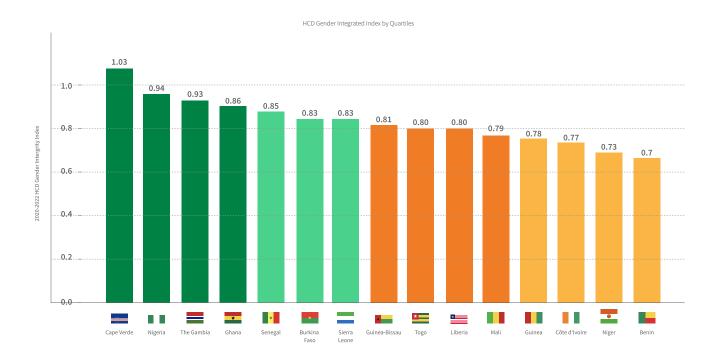
In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, the performance of women dropped. More girls are out of school, and the share of girls in the youth NEET also increased across the region.

The gender gap is diminishing in the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimension, with a score of 0.68 for the region. The performance of women in this area improved by 28%. This is mainly due to the fact that there are now more women in managerial positions. However, the female-to-male ratio for making savings with a financial institution decreased.

### 4. Country Comparison

In terms of HCD gender parity performance, Member States can be classified into four categories:

- Top 25% or upper quartile: compared to the previous report, Cabo Verde, The Gambia and Ghana are still ranked among the best performers, while Nigeria moved into this category during this period.
- Second quartile: Senegal, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone.
- Third quartile: Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Togo.
- Fourth quartile: Guinea, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger are the lowest performers in HCD gender parity within the region.







In this Report, the progress in HCD made by Member States is assessed across two key periods:

- Period 1: which assesses the evolution of HCD at the regional and country level from the baseline to the 2021 HCD report.
- Period 2: which corresponds to the interval between the 2021 HCD report and the actual period (2020-2022) considered for the 2024 HCD Index.

#### Benin

Benin experienced progress in the areas of Health and Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy in contrast to its performance in Period 1 during which there were decreases in Health and Nutrition, and in Education, Skills and Labor Participation.

Benin's Health and Nutrition score surpassed the baseline value. This 12%+ progress can be explained by an increase in public spending on health, a fall in the infant mortality rate and the rate of stunting in children under five, despite an increase in maternal mortality and fertility rate.

This progress is attributed to enhanced governance and regulatory frameworks in health, increased training and recruitment, and key reform programs such as the Assurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital project. Substantial investments in healthcare infrastructure and equipment, alongside public health and nutrition initiatives, have collectively improved the quality and accessibility of healthcare services, benefiting children's health outcomes. Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was increased health funding and public health expenditure, which enhanced the availability of medical equipment and facilities.

In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, the score remained constant, despite a decrease of close to 18% in Period 1 and the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education access. Efforts to enhance performance in this dimension in Benin include the establishment of the National Education Council (CNE) and the Delegation for Control and Ethics in Higher Education, improved administrative, pedagogical and financial governance. Increased teacher recruitment and training lowered the student-teacher ratio. A new school feeding program, providing hot meals to students in 75% of public primary schools, contributed to improvements in student retention and attendance rates.

In the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimension, Benin has seen very significant improvements. Entrepreneurship increased by more than 175% against the baseline, and 47% since the last report, thanks to significant progress in the penetration of financial services and internet access.

Gender parity in HCD still remains a challenge in Benin. Since the last report, overall gender parity declined from 0.74 to 0.70 (5%) due to a drop of 29% in the Entrepreneurship dimension, specifically in terms of the ratio of women to men making savings in financial institutions which dropped from 0.58 to 0.21. However, there was a slight improvement in gender parity within the Health and Nutrition (0.88%) and Education, Skills and Labor Participation (1.5%) dimensions.





#### Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's performance on the HCD index has steadily improved since the baseline assessment.

In Health and Nutrition, the country's performance has improved since the baseline assessment and the last report. This positive trend is mainly driven by an improvement in all health indicators except life expectancy.

The country's performance in Education, Skills, and Labor Participation has substantially declined over time, driven by a decline in all indicators except for mean years of schooling, which increased slightly. this may be due to the decrease in education access due to the impact of COVID-19 and ongoing violence and insecurity, which has led to the closure of 6,149 schools and displaced over 52,000 people, leaving more than 1 million children out of school.<sup>9</sup>

In Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy, Burkina Faso performed well, driven by a better financial service penetration rate and increased internet usage.

Regarding gender parity, the country's overall score of 0.83 remained consistent with that of the last report and demonstrates that women's HCD outcomes are still worse than their male counterparts. There was some improvement across the Health and Nutrition and Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimensions, driven respectively by improvements in the under-five stunting rate, life expectancy at birth ratios and children out of school, youth literacy rate, mean years of schooling and Youth NEET. There was a decline in parity for the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimension , which was caused by a decline in women saving at financial institutions and women in managerial positions.

s"UNICEF. 'Burkina Faso: 1 million d'enfants non scolarisés en raison de la violence et l'insécurité.' Accessed July 31, 2024. https://www.unicef.fr/article/burkina-faso-1-million-denfants-non-scolarises-en-raison-de-la-violence-et-linsecurite."

#### Cal

#### Cabo Verde

Cabo Verde has consistently been the top HCD performer in the region. The country benefits from a high baseline score, especially in Health and Nutrition, which set it apart from many other countries. However, progress has slowed across all three HCD dimensions this reporting period.

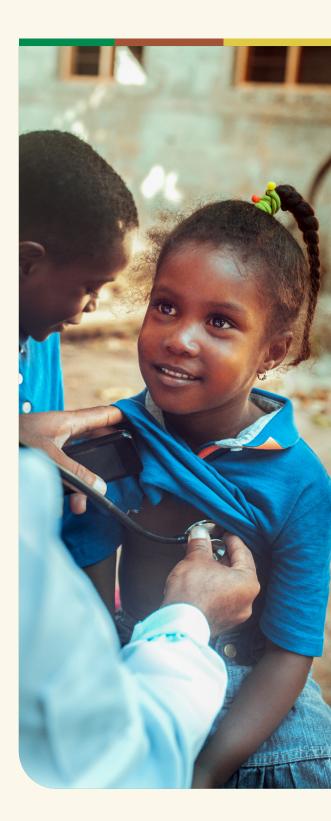
Cabo Verde maintained its leading position in Health and Nutrition, driven by an increased life expectancy and decreased fertility rate. Government health expenditure has remained relatively stable, while strong governance, international partnerships and robust immunization programs also contribute to positive health outcomes. The country's policymakers have taken a wider view of health and focused on ensuring universal access to healthcare and providing primary healthcare services. Today, more than 80% of the population lives within 30 minutes of a health facility. All Cabo Verdeans are entitled to a basic package of health services, which covers antenatal care, emergency treatment, plus treatment and prevention for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. Also, around 40% have social insurance through their employers, entitling them to a range of health services as well as sick pay.

In the area of Education, Skills and Labor Participation, Cabo Verde's score has improved since both the baseline and the last report. Nonetheless, it has dropped to second place in the region in this dimension. This could be attributed to the percentage of children out of school, which has consistently risen over time. The primary causes of children being out of school in Cabo Verde include regional disparities in preschool access and quality, with low enrolment rates and a lack of qualified teachers in many areas. Economic barriers also play a significant role, as the high cost of internet access limits educational opportunities, particularly for lower-income families.

During COVID-19, Cabo Verde implemented several key improvements across its education sector, which helped to maintain educational continuity and minimize disruptions and negative educational outcomes. Most importantly, while government education expenditures increased during this period. The country achieved universal access to basic education and made considerable progress in preprimary education. Key initiatives include improving school infrastructure, raising awareness of preschool opportunities, and strengthening the preschool feeding program. The impact of the increased education spending and these initiatives may be seen in the next reporting period.

Cabo Verde also performed well in the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimension during this period, which can be attributed to increased internet access, which now extends to 71.2% of the population. Nevertheless, further progress is required to overcome the constraints of low connectivity.

Cabo Verde is the highest performer in gender parity across the region. In Health and Nutrition, the country implements targeted programs to improve maternal and child health. Cabo Verde's achievement of universal access to basic education and enhanced pre-primary education positively impacted gender parity in education. In Financial Inclusion, Entrepreneurship and Digital Economy, the country also performed well in gender parity. In addition, the government has invested in programs that promote female entrepreneurship, access to digital resources and social insurance.





#### Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire demonstrated commendable progress in HCD between 2019 and 2022. Ranked fifth in the region for HCD during this period, Côte d'Ivoire is one of the few countries to meet its 2022 target during this second period. Notable advancements have been observed in the Health and Nutrition and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimensions.

Progress in Health and Nutrition has been a standout for Côte d'Ivoire. Key achievements include increased government health expenditure and a reduction in the maternal mortality rate. However, a troubling increase in the under-five stunting rate was observed during this second period, pointing to ongoing challenges in child nutrition and early childhood health.

The country's notable advancements in Health and Nutrition have resulted from increased financial commitments, strategic initiatives and targeted interventions in these areas. Since 2020, a 15% annual increase in health funding, coupled with substantial state budget allocations, has bolstered resources. Universal Health Coverage (CHU) and a 1,200 billion FCFA hospital program have improved healthcare access and quality. Innovative financing through excise duties on tobacco has funded crucial health programs. Maternal mortality reduction efforts have also yielded significant progress. And despite COVID-19 challenges, commitment to health funding and strategic planning has driven continued progress.

Côte d'Ivoire has also excelled in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy. Key drivers include the improvement in financial service penetration rate and increased internet access. The establishment of the Agency for the Promotion of Financial Inclusion in 2018 has been instrumental. This agency focuses on increasing access to financial services for low-income populations and SMEs, fostering a more inclusive financial ecosystem. The promotion of mobile money and electronic payments has also boosted financial inclusion, while investments in telecommunications infrastructure have enhanced internet access.

Despite success in other areas, Côte d'Ivoire faced setbacks in Education, Skills and Labor Participation. This is mainly due to decreases in government education expenditure, the average years of schooling and the teacher-to-student ratio. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted the educational environment. Moreover, limited access to educational technologies and inadequate digitalization policies have also hindered progress. Optimized resource management and governance are needed to improve the overall quality of education.

In gender parity, women's outcomes have improved slightly but remain worse than those of men. In Health and Nutrition, circumstances for women have deteriorated since the previous assessment. In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, there has been a notable improvement in the school dropout rate for girls compared with boys, driven by improvements in learning conditions, increased awareness and advocacy for girls' education, and the provision of targeted investments. Additionally, efforts to enhance the social and psychological support for students and teachers, coupled with specific measures to ensure female student retention, have been effective.

#### The Gambia

The Gambia's overall progress in HCD slowed during Period 2, with a gap of 25% to the target value. The drop in the overall Index is due to a decline in the Education, Skills and Labor Participation and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimensions.

In Health and Nutrition, Gambia is fourth in the region. While its performance has improved over the two periods of study, the target has still not been met. Progress in this dimension is linked to a 60% rise in government spending on health and improvements in the maternal mortality rate (25%), under-five stunting rate (26%), under-five mortality rate (6%) and fertility rate (23%). However, a 5% gap still needs to be closed to reach the Health and Nutrition target value.

Comprehensive programs have been implemented to enhance the health sector, particularly in the area of maternal and infant health. Key interventions include:

- Screening and managing children with acute malnutrition.
- Promoting local production and consumption of nutrient-dense foods and diversified diets.
- Efforts against malaria, vaccine-preventable diseases and diet-related no communicable diseases (NCDs).
- · Vitamin and mineral supplementation.
- Introduction of a comprehensive health insurance scheme for all Gambians.
- Intensive care programs for pregnant women and newborns.

Despite these efforts, barriers to progress remain, including limited resources, reliance on donors, low incomes, poor health infrastructure and the impact of climate change on the availability and affordability of quality food.

In keeping with the regional HCD trend, The Gambia is underperforming in the Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimension. A downward trend has been noted in basic education, with drop-out rates increasing since the last Report. There has also been a drop in two key indicators: government education expenditure (30%) and children out of school (almost 50%). Other challenges include: insufficient resources; limited human capacity, especially in relevant skills areas; limited access to training programs and institutions; and a lack of modern teaching and learning equipment. This dimension was also negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, despite the difficulties noted, the level of literacy among young people improved considerably along with a 25% increase in the ratio of teacher and improvements in the mean years of schooling indicator. Several initiatives, such as the Second Chance Education Program, the compulsory basic education policy, and the Free Secondary Education Program, may have contributed to these outcomes.

Gambia's performance in the area of Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy declined despite progress in the first period, driven by a decrease in people accessing the internet. This drop in internet access can be explained by the high cost of internet access costs and inconsistent electricity supply.

In terms of gender parity, outcomes for women have declined since the last report, likely due to the dips noted in all three dimensions. Sociocultural, economic and regulatory factors are largely to blame. Women's limited participation in leadership and decision-making roles has also contributed improvements in this area. The limited participation of women in leadership and decision-making roles has also contributed to the decline in this area. The government has implemented several initiatives to advance the status of women and girls. The Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs leads these efforts, coordinating programs such as the Women Enterprise Fund and the SWEDD program, which aims to economically empower adolescent girls through education. The Ministry has also passed laws, including the Gender-Based Violence Law and the Sexual Offences Act of 2013, to support gender issues. It has also conducted a gender scorecard and is studying women's representation in tertiary education.





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#### Ghana

Ghana is consistently one of the top HCD performers in the region during this period, ranking second after Cabo Verde.

In Health and Nutrition, Ghana's performance improved over the last two periods, but it was not able to achieve its target value for this period. Its progress here is likely driven by an improvement across all the health-related HCD indicators, spurred by key government initiatives in family planning and maternal and child health. The government has also overseen the community management of acute malnutrition and conducted outreach visits, significantly enhancing service delivery.

During the reporting period, Ghana integrated responsive care and early learning with infant and young child feeding counselling, which has led to improvements in dietary diversity and caregiver-child interactions. Strengthening community structures, such as village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) and mother-to-mother support groups (MTMSGs), has promoted positive nutrition behaviors. Improvements have also been driven by advocacy for increased food and nutrition security (FNS) in district development plans, while budget analyses have influenced government health expenditure. Nonetheless, further action is needed by the government in order for Ghana to achieve the target for this dimension.

As with other Member States, Ghana's performance in the Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimension declined. Compared to the baseline assessment and the last Report, it regressed in almost all educational HCD indicators, except for youth NEET and the youth literacy rate. As seen elsewhere, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing educational challenges, putting additional strain on the pupil-teacher ratio and increasing the number of children not in school. Prolonged school closures also led to decreases in the mean years of schooling and declines in harmonized test scores, with many students missing critical learning periods.

Ghana made significant strides in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy. Progress in this dimension was driven by a substantial increase in the number of individuals using internet in the country, following government investment in ICT infrastructure and connectivity.

In terms of gender parity, the situation in Ghana has worsened since the last Report. Although Ghanaian women are healthier compared to men, their outcomes in the other two dimensions declined significantly. This decline is due to limited access to quality education exacerbated by COVID-19, and persistent barriers faced by women in financial services and entrepreneurship opportunities. Nonetheless, government efforts to ensure gender parity in Ghana have increased and include the launch of initiatives in each sector (such as expanding access to reproductive health services, scholarship schemes for girls to ensure their retention in school and progression to higher education, and small-scale credit and loans to SMEs, predominantly benefiting women and enhancing their economic empowerment and participation in the digital economy). It is hoped that these initiatives will improve gender parity across the indicators in the near future.

#### Guinea

Guinea's overall performance in HCD improved since the baseline and the last Report. There has been an increase of 35% in the Health and Nutrition score, driven by an improvement of the fertility rate (10%), maternal mortality rate (3.26%), under five-stunting rate (9%), and government health expenditures (155%). Also, the country experienced declines in infant mortality (1%) and increases in life expectancy at birth (35%).

There was a decline in Education, Skills and Labor Participation of 8.5% driven by a decrease in the number of children out of school (20.62%) and mean years of schooling (34.3%). Guinea improved in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy by up to 61% thanks to a large increase in the number of people with internet access (more than 95%) and new business density (5%).

In gender parity, the outcomes of women worsened compared to their male counterparts for 1.45% driven by a decline of 10% in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy despite slights improvements in Health and Nutrition (1.59%) and the Education, Skills, and Labor Participation dimensions (2.12%). With a ratio of 1.16, in Health and Nutrition women are healthier than their male counterparts which may be due to the country's gender inclusive strategic objectives, which seek targets to improve overall public health and infrastructure. The Guinean government has also launched the Guinean National Gender Policy, which aims to ensure quality health services, including reproductive health, for both men and women, improve gender mainstreaming in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and enhance sanitation and drinking water supply systems for all urban and rural populations.

There was a decline in parity for the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimensions driven by a decrease in the number of women saving at a financial institution. To address challenges in this area, the government has launched several initiatives aimed to support women entrepreneurship like the Women's Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Centers (CAEF), and the Agricultural Development Fund (FODA) which provides loans for women at 0%, an assistance program for women in agriculture.





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#### **Guinea-Bissau**

Since the baseline, Guinea-Bissau has made remarkable overall progress in HCD. In this second period, slight progress was noted in Health and Education, and there was a major leap forward in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy.

Since the last Report, there has been improvement in the Health and Nutrition dimension due to reductions in the rates of fertility, under-five mortality and the under-five stunting. However, these gains were undermined by an increase in maternal mortality, making it difficult to achieve the set target for this dimension. Key challenges and aggravating factors include:

- Limited access to quality healthcare services, particularly in rural areas.
- Inadequate prenatal care, lack of skilled birth attendants and insufficient postnatal care.
- Disparities in healthcare access across regions.
- Low levels of education among some mothers, leading to underutilized healthcare services and unhealthy practices during pregnancy and childbirth.

In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, Guinea-Bissau experienced an improvement. The improvements seen in the first period have continued in the average years of schooling and youth NEET. Although Guinea-Bissau achieved its target in the Education, Skills, Labor Participation dimension, a slight drop in government education expenditure made reaching this target challenging. The challenges of the education sector can be explained by the fact that only 25% of schools in Guinea-Bissau offer the first two cycles of education for free. Consequently, approximately 27.7% of primary school children between the ages of six and eleven, and 23.3% of lower secondary school children aged 12 to 14, are considered 'out-of-school'. High dropout rates in secondary education also impact students' ability to gain the qualifications necessary for employment, a problem compounded by the lack of standardized curriculum.

The most positive advances were seen in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy. There was a considerable increase in the number of households with access to financial services. Significant growth in mobile money usage was recorded, with activity rates growing by 77% and transaction values by 235% in 2020. This growth can be linked to temporary measures undertaken by the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) to loosen regulations during COVID-19. The government also implemented initiatives aimed at improving digital skills and training, including the establishment of centers like GetKnowledge. In addition, internet access has increased thanks to the ACE cable system and the Internet Exchange Point (IXP), while the development of automated tax filing and payments and business registration platforms have helped to expand digital service.

In terms of gender parity, women in Guinea-Bissau are just as healthy as men but lag behind in Entrepreneurship and Education, Skills and Labor Participation. Addressing these disparities is crucial for achieving comprehensive and sustainable HCD. Key challenges and aggravating factors include:

- A sharp decline in the number of years of schooling for females compared to their male counterparts.
- The prevalence of early and forced marriages, which significantly impact girls' education.

#### Liberia

Liberia's overall performance in HCD has improved slightly since the baseline and last Report. However, the country has not yet met its HCD target for 2022.

Performance in Health and Nutrition declined despite improvements in the first period. This shift was likely driven by economic challenges, limited access to health services and the impact of the COVID-19, which led to decreases in government expenditures in health.

Despite this decline, there was some progress in indicators for maternal mortality, under-five mortality and under-five stunting, possibly linked to the recent integration of nutrition into the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) and the use of nutrition commodities such as Micro Nutrient Powder, Plumpy Nut, Vitamin A, and Albendazole. There have also been efforts to increase awareness around exclusive breast feeding with mothers and caregivers.

In the Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimension, Liberia's performance, despite a decline in the first period, has remained consistent. Performance in most education-related indicators dropped, except for mean years of schooling and the youth literacy. Liberia's education system faces numerous challenges, including the prolonged impact of civil war, inadequate infrastructure, low teacher capacity and decrease in access during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools often lack essential facilities, and many teachers are underqualified, contributing to poor learning outcomes. Government spending on education remains insufficient, relying heavily on external funding that does not fully address systemic issues.

The government has launched comprehensive policy reforms and investments in infrastructure, teacher training and curriculum development to address these challenges, which may have contributed to increased mean years of schooling and improved literacy rates. Nonetheless, more reforms are needed to get Liberia to its target for this dimension.

Slight progress was made in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy since the baseline and the previous report. Recent initiatives in digital financial inclusion, entrepreneurship and innovation demonstrate significant potential. The synergy of economic recovery, infrastructure development, government efforts and digital literacy programs has driven advancement in the digital economy and boosted internet usage.

The overall gender parity has improved in Liberia, driven by progress in Health and Nutrition. Also, significant strides in education were noted, which may be attributable to recent community awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives around girls' education.

Gender-sensitive policies, such as tuition-free education, scholarships and financial aid, a strong legislative and institutional framework, and support for pregnant girls and young mothers, also have significantly improved girls' education.

Key challenges in this area include sexual harassment, lack of tenure security and limited access to networks and information. Overcoming cultural and gender norms, improving infrastructure and enhancing capacity-building will be essential to addressing these challenges to gender parity in this dimension.

Women's outcomes worsened on the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy side.







#### Mali

Mali exhibited a positive performance on the HCD Index, driven by the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimension, despite initial declines in health and education during the first phase of analysis.

In Health and Nutrition, the performance in the dimension improved by more than 23% driven by improvements linked to a fall in the mortality rate, the under-five stunting rate and an increase in government health expenditure. However, there was a decline in the other indicators within this dimension including life expectancy at birth, under five mortality rate, and fertility rate.

In Education, Skills, and Labor Participation, there were slight improvements across several indicators, such as mean years of schooling, test scores, youth NEET, youth literacy rate and the number of citations. This dimension benefitted from a 28% increase in government spending in education since the last assessment.

There was also an improvement in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy, mainly due to greater penetration of financial institutions (over 40% more than in the last evaluation) and greater access to the internet.

From a gender perspective, women's outcomes improved by almost 13% compared to their male counterparts, thanks to investments targeting women and girls in the areas of entrepreneurship and nutrition.

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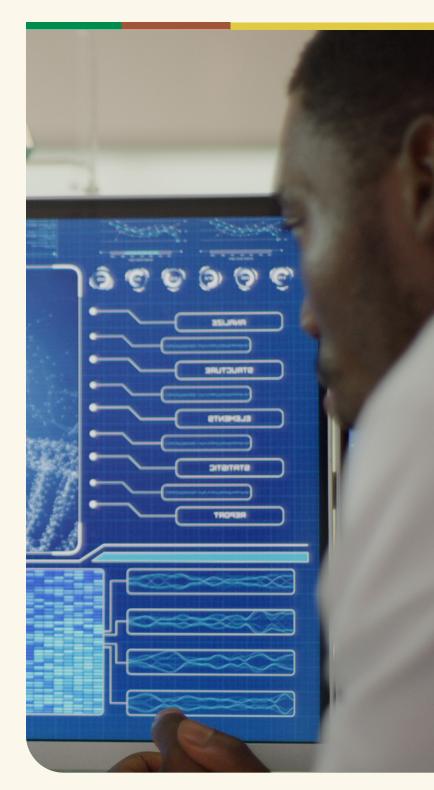
#### **Niger**

Niger has consistently been the lowest ranked HCD performer in the ECOWAS region. However, the country's performance has improved substantially since the baseline assessment and the last report. This improvement was driven by progress in Education, Skills, Labor participation (30%) and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, and Digital Economy (400%) dimensions despite a slight drop in Health and Nutrition (-1%).

In Health and Nutrition, progress has stalled despite improvements during the first period due to the improvements in government health expenditures, and in the fertility and maternal mortality rate being countered by declines in under-five mortality, under-five stunting and life expectancy at birth. In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, Niger is one of the few countries in the region whose performance has improved in this dimension since baseline and the previous report. This improvement is driven by an increase in government education expenditure, Youth NEET, number of citations and student-to-teachers ratio.

Niger performed well in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy, with a marked increase in the number of people using the internet and better financial services penetration.

Niger continues to perform poorly in gender parity, moving from twelfth place in the region in 2018-20 to fourteenth in 2020-22. This drop is driven by a decline in the Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy indicators.





#### ■ Nigeria

Nigeria has made good progress in its HCD performance since the last Report, exceeding the baseline value by 15%, despite a drop noted in the first period. However, its Index value is 22% of its target value.

In Health and Nutrition, Nigeria has seen an improvement of 10% since the last Report from a Health and Nutrition score of 0.14 to 0.15 (out of 1), due to gains in the fertility rate, the under-five mortality rate and under-five stunting rate. However, there were dips in maternal mortality rate, life expectancy at birth, government health expenditure and child marriage.

In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, there has been clear improvement driven by gains in mean years of schooling, harmonized test scores, youth NEET, and number of citations, despite regressing in this dimension during the first period. Nigeria is ranked third within this dimension regionally.

In Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy, Nigeria's performance was in line with the trend observed across the sub-region. It made considerable progress over the two periods, doubling its baseline value in this area. This progress can be attributed to high levels of internet access, which enabled Nigeria to achieve its target value.

In gender inclusion, there has been improvement since the last report, making Nigeria close to parity with a score of 0.94 due to considerable progress in Health and Nutrition and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, and Digital Economy. Nonetheless, there was a decline in Education, Skills and Labor participation.

#### Senegal

Senegal has consistently made good progress in HCD since the baseline and has met its HCD target for this period. It ranks third overall in the region. During the second period HCD performance improved for 11% driven by progress in Health and Nutrition (10%) and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, Digital Economy (39%), despite a drop in Education, Skills and Labor Participation (-4%).

In Health and Nutrition, Senegal's performance improved driven by an increase in government health expenditure, a reduction in maternal and under-five mortality rates, a drop in the under-five stunting rate, and the fertility rate. Increased government investment has improved healthcare infrastructure, human resources and service delivery, with progress achieved despite unequal access, insufficient funding and inadequate resources within the healthcare system. Key contributing factors include:

- Implementation of SRMNIA programs that strengthen prenatal, childbirth and postnatal care.
- Improved surveillance of maternal deaths, provision of post-abortion care, management of obstetric fistula, and increased availability of essential medicines.
- Improvements in healthcare coverage through universal health coverage initiatives.

In Entrepreneurship, Financial linclusion and Digital Economy, the country has made significant progress in this dimension since the baseline and last Report, driven by improvements in financial service penetration rate and internet accessibility – the latter enabled by increased fiber optic coverage and high-speed services. This improvement can be linked to the government investments undertaken during the first period to in various educational institutions, programs and services by increasing public fund allocation. Senegal also implemented Stratégie Nationale d'Inclusion Financière (SNIF) 2022-2026 and the Programme National d'Éducation Financière (PNEF) to mobilize resources for business creation projects and support high-value income-generating activities.

Senegal's performance in Education, Skills and Labor Participation has declined in all indicators except for the ratio of teachers to students since the last report, although it still remains above the baseline value. Despite pockets of improvement and investment, including the allocation in 2022 of 959.42 billion FCFA to education and training, representing 23.72% of the national budget and 6.41% of GDP, the education sector continues to struggle. Key challenges include:

- A decreasing budget, which dropped from 16.3% to 11.5% of the total education expenditures between 2019 and 2022.
- Delays in the construction of many schools and universities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic, political tensions and social unrest, which disrupted educational schedules and access.
- Insufficient funding for the full implementation of the national education plan (PAQUET).

From a gender perspective, gender parity was achieved in Education, Skills and Labor Participation. However, progress was not inclusive of women in the Health and Nutrition or Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy dimensions. In these areas, women still face challenges in terms of access to decision-making positions and representation due to sociocultural beliefs and economic barriers. To address these challenges, Senegal has adopted a range of projects, such as the Stratégie Nationale Ecole des Maris and the Regional Project for the Elimination of Obstetric Fistula, to improve the wellbeing and empowerment of women. These and other projects engage with key issues related to health, nutrition, education and social barriers to tackling gender disparities.





#### Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's HCD performance decreased during this reporting period from a value of 0.21 to 0.18, a 12% fall, despite an increase in the first period. Despite significant progress noted in Health and Nutrition and Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, Digital Economy dimensions respectively 30% and 66%, the loss is driven by a decrease in Education, Skills, Labor Participation from 0.33 to 0.16, a decrease of almost 50%.

In Health and Nutrition, Sierra Leone improved its performance and met its 2022 target value for this dimension. This improvement is attributed to advancements in nearly all health-related indicators, except for government health expenditure, which decreased.

The health sector improved overall in Sierra Leone through initiatives such as Vitamin A supplementation, deworming, malnutrition detection and those targeting under five mortality and stunting. The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative and breastfeeding campaigns boosted maternal and infant health, while expanding Special Care Baby Units and MMS supplementation enhanced neonatal care. Innovative solutions such as: hospital-on-wheels and solar-powered vaccine storage have expanded access to services. The government's higher healthcare budget, efforts to improve health care infrastructure, workforce expansion, and the creation of the National Public Health Agency have strengthened disease surveillance and service delivery, improving overall health outcomes.

In Education, Skills and Labor Participations there has been a substantial decline. This decline was driven mainly by a significant drop in mean years of schooling and government education expenditure. Despite the overall decline, there were improvements in the education indicators of pupil-teacher ratio, youth literacy rate, harmonized test scores, the number of children out of school, youth NEET and citations.

The challenges that continue to hamper progress in education include:

- Economic barriers to schooling (i.e. school being unaffordable to many families).
- High dropout rates, especially at the senior secondary level.
- Socioeconomic challenges linked to back-to-back pandemics of Ebola and COVID-19, and fluctuations in government education expenditure.
- A mismatch between education and labor market needs, meaning many youths are unable to find suitable employment opportunities despite having educational qualifications.

Government efforts during the reporting period to address these challenges include: paying school and exam fees for students in government and assisted schools, providing core textbooks and learning materials to 12,000 schools nationwide, and implementing a school meal program that benefits over 600,000 pupils to reduce absenteeism caused by hunger. Additionally, school buses have been provided in cities and district headquarters to improve student transportation and access to education. These initiatives are likely to drive further performance improvements in this dimension in the future.

The substantial 65% progress in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy was mainly driven by improvement progress in the number of people accessing the internet. The Government of Sierra Leone has also made significant efforts to improve entrepreneurship, focusing on financial inclusion and access to credit. This includes the launch of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (2022-2026) by the Bank of Sierra Leone, specifically targeting women, youth, and MSMEs. Additionally, the government introduced the MUNAFA Fund, providing microcredit to support SMEs, with over 4,000 women benefiting from the program, and passed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, ensuring equal access for women to financial services and credit.

The overall gender parity measure remains unchanged since the last report. The  $0.83\,\mathrm{HCD}$  Gender Index score shows that outcomes for women across the indicators are still worse than their male counterparts. However, women's Health and Nutrition outcomes have improved in Sierra Leone by over 5% (from  $1.08\,\mathrm{to}$  1.14) and parity has been achieved in that dimension despite declines in the other dimensions of Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion, and Digital Economy (-7.40%) and Education, Skills and Labor Participation (-2.27%).

The government has taken various steps to address the country's challenges with gender parity, including the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022, which ensures equal access to credit, financial services, and employment opportunities for women. Additionally, the recently passed Child Marriage Act. 2024, prohibits marriage under the age of 18, safeguarding girls' rights and educational opportunities. The impact of these policies on gender parity and HCD overall will likely be seen in the next reporting periods.

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#### **Togo**

Togo's HCD Index has increased consistently since the baseline and rose almost 10% during this second period. This has resulted in an overall HCD Index improvement and a fourth place ranking within the ECOWAS region driven by an 11% improvement in Health and Nutrition and big strides in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy (112%). It is worth noting that the overall pace of improvement for Togo has slowed this reporting period due to a decline of 9% in the Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimension.

In Health and Nutrition, Togo has made steady progress since the last report, missing its target score by just 0.03 points. This can be explained by the impacts of COVID-19, which strained the healthcare system and led government to redirect resources and refocus priorities. Its progress in Health and Nutrition can be linked to the range of government initiatives aimed at enhancing healthcare infrastructure, training and deploying healthcare workers, and implementing the National Health Insurance Scheme to reduce out-of-pocket expenses. Disease control programs have also enhanced the management of neglected tropical diseases and improved maternal and child health services.

In Education, Skills and Labor Participation, Togo is the best performer in the region, despite a 9% regression caused by a reduction in government education expenditures and increase in student-teacher ratios. The success of Togo's education sector can be attributed to the country's comprehensive reforms and initiatives. These include the revision of the PSE to align with national educational needs, free tuition fees in public schools, and the removal of registration fees for national exams. Significant investments in teacher training and the recruitment of new teachers have reduced the reliance on volunteer teachers. Additional measures, such as the establishment of school feeding programs, the implementation of inclusive education policies and health insurance for students, have all contributed to increased school retention and accessibility.

In Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy the country made significant progress during this period, driven by improved penetration of financial services and increased internet access.

In gender inclusion, Togo's score (0.80) indicates that overall HCD outcomes for women are still worse than those of their male counterparts, although there was a slight improvement of 1% since the previous report. Women only fare better than their male counterparts in Health and Nutrition. Togo's improved health system provides inclusive quality services for women and there are a range of initiatives set out in the Togo National Health Development Plan (PNDS) 2023-2027 to reduce disparities and promote gender equality in healthcare.

Gender disparities persist and have actually increased in Education, Skills, and Labor Participation (0.68 ratio) by more than 5 % since the last report. This decline is driven by an increase in the number of female children out of school. Nonetheless, there were improvements in mean years of schooling and in the youth literacy rate. Several initiatives, highlighted in the Sectorial Plan of Education of Togo, were launched during this reporting period to improve the retention of girls in higher educational, address socio-cultural barriers, improve school infrastructure, female teacher representation, etc., which will hopefully lead to progress in this dimension in the coming period.

Despite an improvement in the Gender Index score for Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy, gender parity has not been achieved.



# 04

## **Reflections and Recommendations**

The ECOWAS HCD Index paints a clear and detailed picture of how the region and individual Member States have progressed in this HCD journey since the 2018 baseline and the last Report. Notably, Senegal, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, and Niger have all met their targets for this reporting period, showcasing substantial improvements in their respective metrics. Those countries that did not reach their targets experienced challenges and/or decreases in HCD-related investments during this period that led to this outcome. Many of these countries have since increased HCD investment and launched initiatives with the aim of improving outcomes in the three thematic areas.

The region performed best in the Health and Nutrition dimension. Many countries were able to reach their targets by investing in enhanced health insurance coverage, expanding nutrition services, improving access to care in rural areas and for vulnerable populations, and developing comprehensive maternal and child health programs. Those countries that did not perform as well or were not able to reach their targets in this dimension, should intensify their investments in these areas in order to boost their performance and improve health outcomes generally.

There was also marked improvement across the region in Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy driven by significant efforts in countries to enhance internet coverage, fund business accelerators and incubators, expand and advance the telecommunications sector, and boost business by streamlining the registration process for new enterprises. These efforts should be enhanced and expanded across the region to ensure that the current rate of progress is maintained.

Conversely, the region struggled in the Education, Skills and Labor Participation dimension. This outcome reflected the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, as well as the decrease in government spending on education over the past two years, which has negatively impacted school access, school infrastructure and materials, and the quality of teachers recruited. Positively, some countries have since decided to focus on strengthening the education sector by launching vocational programs and initiatives to increase school attendance, retention and completion. These types of initiatives are absolutely essential for activating rapid progress in this dimension across the region.

The Index findings also underscore the importance of prioritizing gender parity. Progress in HCD performance does not necessarily translate to improvements in gender parity. Countries that performed well should, therefore, make efforts to not only facilitate progress in HCD, but to also address the cultural, social and political barriers that women and girls face in accessing services and opportunities across the three dimensions.

The findings and lessons from this Report, as well as the strategic priorities outlined in the ECOWAS HCD Strategy, provide a clear roadmap for achieving the HCD Strategy's 2030 goals. ECOWAS and Member States can drive significant improvements in human capital outcomes and socioeconomic development by focusing on four key areas:

#### 1. Advocacy, Policies and Communication

- Developing policies that advance HCD and working with community and political leaders to advocate for change in cultural and social practices that hinder Education, Skills and Labor Participation outcomes and gender inclusion.
- Advocating for policies that facilitate investments in education and skills development to reverse the current downward trend in this dimension
- Communicating the importance of maintaining investments in comprehensive health services and health education to ensure continued progress in the the Health and Nutrition dimension.

#### 2. Building Resilience

- Building robust health and education systems (including technical and vocational education) that can withstand the shocks of insecurity, health emergencies, natural disasters/climate change. Digital and technological innovations can play a significant role in this resilience by ensuring the continuity of and enhancements in healthcare services and in creating economic opportunities for youth and women.
- Developing regional contigency plans, strong disease surveillance and early warning systems to detect and prompt responses to health threats is also important in preventing disruptions in essential services.

#### 3. Monitoring and evaluation

- Developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for HCD data collection for the harmonization of data collection methodology across Member States.
- Strengthening data collection, analysis and reporting to ensure interventions are data-informed and evidence-based and resources are allocated efficiently.

#### 4. Enhancing digital infrastructure

- Establishing a regulatory framework for digital innovation that will ensure equitable digital access, support SMEs with digital tools, and fostering innovative ecosystems to facilitate improved services, job creation and enhanced productivity.
- Implementing digital literacy programs, developing e-learning platforms, and training teachers in technology use to increase access to education, improve education outcomes and guarantee greater digital dividends for the population.
- Expanding telemedicine and health information systems to enable greater access to health care services, enhance disease prevention and management programs, and ensure continuity of care.

By implementing these strategic priorities, ECOWAS can achieve its HCD Strategy 2030 goals and drive significant improvements in human capital outcomes and socioeconomic development across the region, aligning with the vision of "ECOWAS of the Peoples: Peace and Prosperity for All" by 2050

# 05

# **Appendix**

## **ECOWAS Country Indicator Values for each Dimension**

#### **Health and Nutrition**

Indicator	Cabo Verde	Ghana	Senegal	The Gambia	Burkina Faso	Togo	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Guinea	Benin	Guinea-Bissau	Mali	Niger	Nigeria	ECOWAS
Child marriage	No data	No data	0.53	0.71	No data	No data	No data	0.67		No data	No data	0.65	No data	No data	No data	0.62
Fertility rate	0.95	0.64	0.49	0.43	0.42	0.51	0.48		0.56	0.49		0.56		0.03	0.33	0.47
Government Health Exp.	0.45	0.25		0.17	0.52	0.16			0.15				0.18	0.44		0.22
Life Expectancy at birth	0.68	0.34	0.45	0.28	0.18	0.26	0.16	0.23	0.21		0.2	0.2		0.26	0	0.25
Maternal mortality rate	0.98	0.78	0.78	0.6	0.78	0.66	0.58		0.62	0.52	0.54	0.36		0.62	0.07	0.06
Under-5 mortality rate	0.94	0.68	0.72	0.64	0.35	0.52	0.41	0.4	0.16	0.21	0.34	0.42	0.22	0.07	0.1	0.41
Under-5 stunning rate	0.95	0.86	0.75	0.84	0.63	0.62	0.67	0.51	0.53	0.48		0.49	0.58	0	0.32	0.58
Health & nutrition score	0.72	0.5	0.5	0.44	0.43	0.4	0.38	0.35	0.34	0.32	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.19	0.15	0.37

### **Education, Skills and Labor Participation**

Indicator	Togo	Cabo Verde	Nigeria	Côte d'Ivoire	Guinea	Senegal	Benin	Ghana	Burkina Faso	Liberia	Guinea-Bissau	Sierra Leone	The Gambia	Niger	Mali	ECOWAS
Harmonized test scores		No data	0.02	0.35	0.53	0.55	0.4	0.01	0.5	0.14	No data	0.06	0.24	0	0.01	0.25
Individuals using internet	0.16	0.38	0.29	0.23	0.16	0.31	0.15	0.37		0.15	0.16			0.08	0.16	0.19
Mean years of schooling	0.31	0.35	0.47	0.21	0.06	0.1	0.12	0.38		0.29	0.16	0.15	0.23	0	0	0.19
Number of citations			0.15		0	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.01	0	0	0		0	0	0.02
Youth literacy rate	0.52	0.65	No data	0.47	No data	No data	No data	0.59		0.4		No data	No data	No data	0.03	0.39
Education score	0.37	0.36	0.36	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.21	0.2	0.19	0.18		0.17		0.13	0.12	0.22

## **Entrepreneurship, Financial Inclusion and Digital Economy**

Indicator	Gunea-Bissau	Ghana	Cabo Verde	Côte d'Ivoire	Senegal	Benin	Burkina Faso	Mali	The Gambia	Niger	Togo	Nigeria	Guinea	Liberia	Sierra Leone	ECOWAS
Individuals using internet	0.16	0.37	0.38		0.31			0.16			0.16	0.29	0.16			0.19
New business density	No data	No data	0.32	0.02			No data		No data	No data			0.01		No data	0.05
Penetration rate fin services	0.73	No data	No data	0.81	0.6	1	0.45		No data	0.24		No data	No data	No data	No data	0.61
Entrepreneurship score	0.38	0.37	0.35	0.27	0.26	0.25	0.24	0.24	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.21

#### **ECOWAS HCD Gender Index Indicator Values**

Indicator	Baseline Value	Latest Value	Percentag	e Progress
Under-5 mortality rate-male to female ratio	1.143217215	1.143983089	0.000765874	▲ 0.07%
Under-5 stunting rate-male to female ratio	1.17014557	1.149134787	-0.021010783	▼ 1.80%
Life expectancy at birth-female to male ratio	1.035852264	1.033359471	-0.002492793	▼ 0.24%
Children out of school-male to female ratio	1.038181764	0.883179286	-0.155002478	▼ 14.93%
Mean years of schooling-female to male ratio	0.65966051	0.663220393	0.003559883	▲ 0.54%
Harmonized test scores-female to male ratio	0.991895798	0.985588857	-0.00630694	▼ 0.64%
Youth NEET- male to female ratio	0.713162218	0.555363461	-0.157798758	▼ 22.13%
Youth literacy rate-female to male ratio	0.81997668	0.843145101	0.023168421	<b>▲</b> 2.83%
Women in managerial position-female to male ratio	0.38774488	0.847644692	0.459899812	<b>▲</b> 118.61%
Individuals using internet-female to male ratio	0.635107353	0.651318043	0.01621069	▲ 2.55%
Saved at financial institution-female to male ratio	0.57790224	0.537820166	-0.040082074	▼ 6.94%

## **HCD Index Scores and SWOT Analyses by Country**



### **Benin** HCD Index Scores

Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.21	0.22	0.25	8	0.28	0.42
Health & nutrition score	0.28	0.27	0.30	11	0.37	0.55
Education score	0.26	0.21	0.21	7	0.32	0.46
Entrepreneurship score	0.09	0.17	0.25	6	0.15	0.27

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.66	0.67	0.01	<b>▲</b> 1.52%
Health & nutrition score	1.13	0.14	0.01	▲ 0.88%
Entrepreneurship score	0.41	0.29	-0.12	▼ 29.27%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.74	0.70	-0.04	▼ 5.41%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Improvement in entrepreneurship, health and nutrition.</li> <li>Increased public spending on health and reduction in infant mortality and stunted growth in children.</li> <li>Effective management of the COVID-19 crisis, including the creation of rapid intervention teams.</li> <li>Introduction of National Education Council (CNE) and Delegation for Control and Ethics in Higher Education.</li> <li>School feeding program for improving student retention and attendance.</li> <li>Significant improvement in financial services penetration and internet access, boosting entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Improved governance and satisfaction in public health facilities.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Increased maternal mortality and fertility rates.</li> <li>Decreased score in education, skills and work participation.</li> <li>Gender disparities, with women's outcomes being poorer than men's, especially in entrepreneurship and savings.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Enhancing governance and regulatory frameworks.</li> <li>Making significant investments in healthcare infrastructure and equipment.</li> <li>Implementing the Assurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital project and school feeding programs.</li> <li>Shifting towards technical education and professional training.</li> <li>Delivering the Sème-City project for innovation and higher education.</li> <li>Providing comprehensive insurance and micro-credit services.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Strain on healthcare resources due to increased maternal mortality and fertility rates.</li> <li>Potential long-term impact of inadequate nutrition in early childhood.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Increasing investments in public health and infrastructure</li> <li>Focus on reducing maternal mortality by reallocating resources and improving maternal health services.</li> <li>Enhance public health campaigns to address key health issues and improve healthcare access.</li> <li>Implement targeted interventions to improve education and build skills among youth.</li> <li>Expand and sustain the school feeding program to ensure complete coverage.</li> <li>Increase recruitment and training of teachers to further lower the student-teacher ratio.</li> <li>Continue reforms to expand technical education and vocational training.</li> <li>Promote financial inclusion and internet access to sustain growth in entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Develop specific programs to support female entrepreneurship and improve their savings in financial institutions.</li> <li>Expand and enhance digital infrastructure to further boost the digital economy.</li> <li>Promote the use of digital financial services among the population, especially women.</li> </ul>



### Burkina Faso HCD Index Scores

Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.25	0.27	0.29	6	0.32	0.46
Health & nutrition score	0.38	0.36	0.43	5	0.49	0.71
Education score	0.31	0.31	0.19	9	0.36	0.45
Entrepreneurship score	0.06	0.14	0.24	7	0.10	0.22

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.78	0.83	0.05	<b>▲</b> 6.41%
Health & nutrition score	1.13	0.15	0.02	<b>▲</b> 1.77%
Entrepreneurship score	0.59	0.5	-0.09	▼ 15.25%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.83	0.83	0.00	0.00%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Significant improvements in maternal and child health indicators.</li> <li>High financial service penetration and internet usage.</li> <li>Better healthcare services and nutritional outcomes.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Decline in educational performance and labor participation.</li> <li>Deterioration in women's outcomes in the entrepreneurship sector.</li> <li>Challenges in educational infrastructure and quality.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Leveraging the digital economy for further growth.</li> <li>Expanding access to financial services for economic growth.</li> <li>Exploring potential for international aid and partnerships.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Sociopolitical instability can hinder development efforts.</li> <li>Disparities in access to education and healthcare.</li> <li>Potential health crises affecting progress in health and nutrition.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Continue investing in maternal and child healthcare programs; enhance nutrition initiatives for children under five.</li> <li>Improve educational infrastructure and teacher training; implement programs to increase labor market integration for graduates.</li> <li>Promote digital literacy and skills training; increase support for women entrepreneurs through targeted programs.</li> <li>Address barriers to women's participation in entrepreneurship; implement gender-sensitive policies in health and education sectors.</li> </ul>



### **Cabo Verde** HCD Index Scores

Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.46	0.46	0.48	1	0.54	0.73
Health & nutrition score	0.70	0.7	0.72	1	0.77	0.95
Education score	0.34	0.35	0.36	2	0.39	0.51
Entrepreneurship score	0.35	0.33	0.35	3	0.45	0.73

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.95	0.95	0.00	0.00%
Health & nutrition score	1.15	0.14	-0.01	▼ 0.87%
Entrepreneurship score	0.83	0.97	0.14	<b>▲</b> 16.87%
HCD Gender Integrated score	1.00	1.03	0.03	▲ 3.00%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Positive health outcomes.</li> <li>Consistent government spending supports stability.</li> <li>Widespread access to health services.</li> <li>Comprehensive health programs, including preventative and emergency care, as well as treatment for major diseases.</li> <li>Significant progress in basic and pre-primary education.</li> <li>Improved educational facilities, with enhanced infrastructure and preschool programs.</li> <li>Effective COVID-19 Response, maintaining educational continuity during the pandemic.</li> <li>Majority of the population has access to the internet.</li> <li>Increased internet use supports digital entrepreneurship and financial inclusion.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Despite strong foundations, recent improvements have been slow.</li> <li>Increasing number of children out of school, especially among vulnerable groups.</li> <li>Unequal access and quality of education across different regions.</li> <li>Some areas face low connectivity due to limited infrastructure.</li> <li>Need for more comprehensive digital government strategies.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Leveraging technology to improve healthcare delivery and outcomes.</li> <li>Strengthening partnerships with global health organizations.</li> <li>Increasing focus on digital education.</li> <li>Enhancing early childhood education and feeding initiatives.</li> <li>Expanding E-Government services to improve digital infrastructure and support public services.</li> <li>Supporting startups and small businesses through digital platforms.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Economic instability could affect funding for health programs.</li> <li>Potential health crises could strain the system.</li> <li>Impact of COVID-19 on key economic sectors may impact overall stability.</li> <li>Increasing number of children out of school, especially among vulnerable groups.</li> <li>Unequal access and quality of education across different regions.</li> <li>High internet costs limit access to education for low-income families.</li> <li>Lack of qualified educators in some areas impacts education quality.</li> <li>Inequities in internet access exacerbate social disparities.</li> <li>Financial limitations may hinder further digital infrastructure development.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Invest in expanding internet infrastructure and capacity.</li> <li>Create comprehensive strategies for digital government services.</li> <li>Enhance education and training in digital skills.</li> <li>Ensure broad access to financial services through digital platforms.</li> <li>Improve healthcare infrastructure and services in rural areas.</li> <li>Allocate more resources to ensure the sustainability of health programs.</li> <li>Implement digital tools to enhance healthcare service delivery and management.</li> <li>Increase public awareness and education on health and nutrition.</li> <li>Focus on improving education access and quality in underserved regions.</li> <li>Ensure stable and adequate funding for education.</li> <li>Improve access to digital learning resources.</li> <li>Enhance training and retention of qualified educators.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.23	0.26	0.30	5	0.30	0.46
Health & nutrition score	0.32	0.33	0.38	7	0.40	0.57
Education score	0.25	0.27	0.24	4	0.31	0.46
Entrepreneurship score	0.12	0.19	0.27	4	0.18	0.36

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.66	0.72	0.06	▲ 9.09%
Health & nutrition score	1.14	1.12	-0.02	▼ 1.75%
Entrepreneurship score	0.45	0.46	0.01	▲ 2.22%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.75	0.77	0.02	▲ 2.67%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Increased internal resources for health funding with a minimum annual increase of 15% starting from 2020.</li> <li>State budget commitments for health interventions amounting to 2,624 billion FCFA (66%), with contributions from Technical and Financial Partners (34%).</li> <li>Specific financial commitments, including for contraceptives and programs to tackle HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.</li> <li>Universal Health Coverage (CMU) effective since October 2019.</li> <li>Hospital program improving healthcare services and infrastructure.</li> <li>Enhanced coordination and financial accessibility for maternal mortality reduction.</li> <li>Increased training capacity and community participation in healthcare.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Limited qualified professionals and inadequate material and logistical resources.</li> <li>Reliance on donors for program implementation and financial sustainability.</li> <li>Need for improved coordination and visibility of health interventions.</li> <li>Weak regulatory frameworks for sexual and reproductive health.</li> <li>Communication challenges in disseminating health messages.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Expanding healthcare coverage and improving health infrastructure.</li> <li>Enhancing inclusive education mechanisms and improving school infrastructure.</li> <li>Aligning curricula and teacher training to enhance education quality.</li> <li>Promoting digital payment systems and financial services for increased financial inclusion.</li> <li>Establishing regulatory sandboxes to promote innovative fintech solutions.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Economic hardships and political instability impacting healthcare and education.</li> <li>COVID-19 pandemic disrupting health services and financial contributions.</li> <li>Regulatory barriers and stringent requirements for financial licenses.</li> <li>Gender disparities in the financial sector and limited access to educational technologies.</li> <li>Climate change affecting food production and availability.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Increase investment in health and education infrastructure and resources.</li> <li>Enhance crisis preparedness and resilience of health and education systems.</li> <li>Promote financial literacy and inclusion through targeted programs.</li> <li>Strengthen partnerships and advocacy for better resource allocation.</li> <li>Address sociocultural and regulatory barriers to women's participation in leadership and decision-making.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.22	0.28	0.25	9	0.30	0.46
Health & nutrition score	0.37	0.4	0.44	4	0.46	0.66
Education score	0.16	0.19	0.16	13	0.21	0.34
Entrepreneurship score	0.14	0.26	0.15	11	0.22	0.36

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	1.04	1.01	-0.03	▼ 2.88%
Health & nutrition score	1.14	1.13	-0.01	▼ 0.88%
Entrepreneurship score	0.85	0.65	-0.20	▼ 23.53%
HCD Gender Integrated score	1.1	0.93	-0.17	▼ 15.45%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Comprehensive health programs for managing malnutrition, preventing disease and improving maternal and infant health.</li> <li>Introduction of a comprehensive health insurance scheme for all Gambians.</li> <li>Efforts to improve education, including increased literacy rates among young people.</li> <li>Improved internet access due to the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable and fiber-optic cables.</li> <li>Gender-focused initiatives to support women entrepreneurs and address gender-based violence.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Limited resources (financial, human, and equipment) for health and education sectors.</li> <li>Reliance on donors for program implementation.</li> <li>High drop-out rates in education and limited access to training programs.</li> <li>Frequent internet cuts, high costs and reliability issues.</li> <li>Sociocultural and regulatory barriers limiting women's participation in education and leadership roles.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Expanding and upgrading health infrastructure and training of health professionals.</li> <li>Improving teacher-student ratios and mean years of schooling through various education programs.</li> <li>Leveraging digital platforms and technologies to enhance education and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Promoting gender equality and women's participation in STEM education and leadership roles.</li> <li>Strengthening partnerships and advocacy for better resource allocation and investment in education and health.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Economic hardships and political instability limiting access to healthcare and education.</li> <li>COVID-19 pandemic impacting the health sector and disrupting industries and training institutions.</li> <li>Climate change affecting food production and availability, leading to malnutrition.</li> <li>High internet and electricity costs and reliability issues affecting digital initiatives.</li> <li>Sociocultural and regulatory barriers limiting women's participation in various sectors.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Increase investment in health and education infrastructure and resources.</li> <li>Enhance education and health system resilience by improving crisis preparedness.</li> <li>Promote digital literacy and financial inclusion through targeted programs and initiatives.</li> <li>Address sociocultural barriers to women's empowerment and ensure equal opportunities in education and leadership.</li> <li>Strengthen partnerships and advocacy efforts to secure better resource allocation and support from stakeholders.</li> </ul>



## **Ghana**HCD Index Scores

Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.31	0.34	0.36	2	0.39	0.54
Health & nutrition score	0.47	0.49	0.50	2	0.54	0.72
Education score	0.27	0.27	0.20	8	0.35	0.52
Entrepreneurship score	0.18	0.27	0.37	2	0.27	0.38

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	1.32	0.93	-0.39	▼ 29.55%
Health & nutrition score	1.13	1.15	0.02	<b>▲</b> 1.77%
Entrepreneurship score	0.56	0.5	-0.06	▼ 10.71%
HCD Gender Integrated score	1.01	0.86	-0.15	▼ 14.85%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Consistent improvement in health-related HCD indicators.</li> <li>Effective training of health workers in family planning, maternal and child health, and management of acute malnutrition.</li> <li>Enhanced service delivery through outreach, home visits and the integration of early learning with child feeding.</li> <li>Strengthened community structures like VSLAs and MTMSGs promoting positive nutrition behaviors.</li> <li>Increased advocacy for food and nutrition security in district plans and government health expenditures.</li> <li>Significant increase in internet usage due to government investment in ICT infrastructure.</li> <li>Programs like MASLOC providing small-scale credit and loans, particularly benefiting women.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Deterioration in educational HCD indicators, excluding youth NEET and youth literacy rate.</li> <li>Increased pupil-teacher ratio and gaps in teacher training and digital skills due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>Increased percentage of children out of school, leading to declines in mean years of schooling and harmonized test scores.</li> <li>Decline in women's education, skills, labor participation and financial inclusion outcomes.</li> <li>Persistent barriers to accessing quality education, financial services and entrepreneurship opportunities for women.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Expanding health worker training programs to include more comprehensive family planning and maternal health services.</li> <li>Leveraging community structures like VSLAs and MTMSGs for broader health and nutrition education and support.</li> <li>Investing in ICT infrastructure to enhance internet accessibility, especially in rural areas.</li> <li>Expanding financial inclusion programs targeting women and marginalized communities.</li> <li>Implementing robust remote learning solutions and training for teachers in digital skills.</li> <li>Addressing gaps in school attendance and improving mean years of schooling through targeted interventions.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system.</li> <li>Ongoing barriers to quality education and financial services for women, hindering overall gender parity.</li> <li>Sociocultural factors like child marriage and early motherhood negatively affecting girls' education and economic opportunities.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Continue scaling up training programs for health workers with a focus on family planning and maternal health.</li> <li>Strengthen community-based health and nutrition initiatives, leveraging VSLAs and MTMSGs for wider impact.</li> <li>Advocate for increased government funding in health and nutrition, ensuring these areas remain a priority in district development plans.</li> <li>Invest in remote learning infrastructure and teacher training programs to address gaps revealed by the pandemic.</li> <li>Implement targeted initiatives to reduce the number of children out of school and improve overall educational outcomes.</li> <li>Provide additional support and resources for girls' education to combat child marriage and early motherhood.</li> <li>Expand access to financial services and credit, especially for women and small-scale entrepreneurs.</li> <li>Promote digital literacy and skills training to enhance participation in the digital economy.</li> <li>Continue investment in ICT infrastructure to improve internet accessibility, particularly in rural areas.</li> <li>Strengthen initiatives aimed at improving women's access to quality education and entrepreneurship opportunities.</li> <li>Address sociocultural barriers affecting women's participation in education and the workforce through community education and advocacy.</li> <li>Enhance partnerships with international organizations to support gender-focused programs and initiatives.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.16	0.18	0.21	11	0.21	0.38
Health & nutrition score	0.23	0.24	0.32	10	0.34	0.55
Education score	0.23	0.26	0.24	6	0.26	0.38
Entrepreneurship score	0.01	0.05	0.08	13	0.02	0.21

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.625	0.638	0.013	<b>▲</b> 2.12%
Health & nutrition score	1.138	1.156	0.018	▲ 1.59%
Entrepreneurship score	0.597	0.532	-0.06	▼ 10.89%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.787	0.775	-0.011	▼ 1.43%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Positive progress in health and nutrition indicators.</li> <li>Slight progress in education indicators, such as years of schooling and harmonized test scores.</li> <li>Significant increase in internet access contributing to improvements in entrepreneurship and financial inclusion.</li> <li>Achievement of objectives in the digital economy, supported by increased Internet access.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Slight drop in life expectancy at birth and an increase in infant mortality during Period 2.</li> <li>Increase in the number of children out of school and a rise in mean years of schooling during Period 2.</li> <li>Increase in youth NEET despite initial progress.</li> <li>Continued struggle to achieve objectives in health and education sectors.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Leveraging increased internet access to further improve entrepreneurship, financial inclusion and digital economy.</li> <li>Implementing targeted education reforms to address the decline in education indicators.</li> <li>Introducing health interventions to reverse the decline in life expectancy and reduce infant mortality.</li> <li>Collaborating with neighboring countries in the sub-region to share best practices and resources.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Risk of not sustaining initial progress in health and education.</li> <li>Potential economic instability affecting funding and resources for health and education initiatives.</li> <li>Risk of a digital divide, whereby certain populations may not benefit equally from increased internet access.</li> <li>Political and social instability potentially disrupting ongoing and future initiatives.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	Launch public awareness campaigns to educate citizens on the importance of health, education and digital participation. Encourage community involvement in these sectors.



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.13	0.17	0.28	7	0.18	0.32
Health & nutrition score	0.26	0.29	0.30	12	0.34	0.49
Education score	0.12	0.16	0.17	11	0.15	0.35
Entrepreneurship score	0.02	0.06	0.38	1	0.05	0.13

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.885	0.769	-0.115	▼ 13.15%
Health & nutrition score	1.123	1.139	0.016	<b>▲</b> 1.48%
Entrepreneurship score		0.532	0.532	
HCD Gender Integrated score	1.004	0.813	-0.190	▼ 18.98%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Guinean Health System Enhancement Plan (2023-2030) to improve the national health system.</li> <li>Health Innovation Strategy aimed at service expansion and enhancement.</li> <li>Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) investment in infrastructure and public-private partnerships.</li> <li>Innovalab providing crucial support to digital startups.</li> <li>Significant growth in mobile money usage and digital economy.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Shortage of qualified healthcare personnel and insufficient supplies and financial resources.</li> <li>Challenges in sustaining health and education activities post-partner funding.</li> <li>Significant regional disparities in access to education and resources.</li> <li>High maternal and child mortality rates.</li> <li>Limited access to healthcare services in remote and rural areas.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Expanding healthcare coverage and increasing availability of essential health products.</li> <li>Improving health infrastructure through new construction, equipment and rehabilitation.</li> <li>Addressing the need for more health workers and capacity building to improve patient care.</li> <li>Supporting public-private partnerships to establish training and expand apprenticeships.</li> <li>Promoting dietary diversity and good nutritional practices.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Economic hardships, exacerbated by political instability, limit access to healthcare services.</li> <li>Cultural and socioeconomic barriers hindering access to health services and proper nutrition.</li> <li>Health emergencies causing healthcare service disruption and financial constraints.</li> <li>Disruption of global supply chains affecting access to essential staple foods and supplies.</li> <li>High rates of delayed enrollment in school and high drop out rates.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Improve access to Early Childhood Education (ECE) and increase overall investments in education.</li> <li>Enhance teacher qualifications through training programs and professional development.</li> <li>Implement targeted policies for gender equity and support for girls' education.</li> <li>Prioritize internet affordability and digital literacy efforts.</li> <li>Make strategic investments in health and wellbeing to address fiscal constraints and health system limitations.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.19	0.19	0.20	13	0.24	0.40
Health & nutrition score	0.31	0.36	0.35	8	0.40	0.57
Education score	0.24	0.18	0.18	10	0.29	0.40
Entrepreneurship score	0.02	0.04	0.07	14	0.04	0.23

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.72	0.81	0.9	<b>▲</b> 12.50%
Health & nutrition score	1.11	1.12	0.01	▲ 0.90%
Entrepreneurship score	0.52	0.47	-0.05	▼ 9.62%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.78	0.8	0.02	▲ 2.56%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Youth Opportunities Project empowering over 10,000 youth with life skills and business training.</li> <li>Excellence in Higher Education for Liberian Development program with USAID partnership.</li> <li>Liberian Education Advancement Program (LEAP) improving access and quality in education.</li> <li>Resilience and slight progress in digital economy and internet usage.</li> <li>Improvement in women's outcomes in health and education.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Historical impact of civil wars disrupting education systems and infrastructure.</li> <li>Inadequate school infrastructure and facilities.</li> <li>Insufficient teacher capacity and professional development.</li> <li>High rates of average enrollment countered by high dropout rates.</li> <li>Poor learning outcomes and limited distribution of national curriculum.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Devising targeted policies for education and labor force reintegration.</li> <li>Enabling collaboration among education stakeholders including policymakers, educators, employers and communities.</li> <li>Investing in digital skills.</li> <li>Enhancing teacher qualifications and professional development.</li> <li>Increasing internet affordability and digital skills for entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Health emergencies causing school disruptions and impacting access to education and learning.</li> <li>Economic constraints and low government spending on education.</li> <li>Gender disparities affecting girls' access to education.</li> <li>Skill gaps and mismatch in the labor market.</li> <li>Decrease in government health expenditure and life expectancy.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Improve Early Childhood Education (ECE) access and increase investment in education.</li> <li>Enhance teacher qualifications through training and professional development.</li> <li>Implement targeted policies for gender equity and support for girls' education.</li> <li>Prioritize internet affordability and digital literacy efforts.</li> <li>Make strategic investments in health and wellbeing to address fiscal constraints and health system limitations.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.14	0.17	0.21	12	0.21	0.37
Health & nutrition score	0.25	0.23	0.28	13	0.35	0.57
Education score	0.10	0.09	0.12	15	0.15	0.29
Entrepreneurship score	0.07	0.18	0.24	8	0.12	0.26

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.0%
Health & nutrition score	1.08	1.16	0.08	<b>▲</b> 7.41%
Entrepreneurship score	0.32	0.51	0.19	▲ 59.38%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.71	0.79	0.08	<b>▲</b> 11.27%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Significant improvement in entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Reduced mortality rate and under-five stunting rate; increased government health expenditure.</li> <li>28% increase in government education expenditure; improvements in mean years of schooling, test scores, youth NEET, youth literacy rate and citations.</li> <li>Notable improvement in women's HCD outcomes.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Initial declines in health and education indicate potential vulnerabilities.</li> <li>Some health indicators have shown a decline.</li> <li>Youth NEET remains an issue, despite slight improvements.</li> <li>Recent improvements may not yet be deeply rooted or sustainable without continued support and investment.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Building on momentum in the Entrepreneurship dimension to further drive economic growth and job creation.</li> <li>Continued investment in and policy focus on health and education.</li> <li>Promoting gender equality.</li> <li>Increasing access to the internet and technological resources.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Political instability could disrupt progress and investments.</li> <li>Economic challenges could impact government expenditure in critical sectors.</li> <li>Persistent social and economic inequalities could undermine broader development goals.</li> <li>External factors like global economic downturns, pandemics or climate change impacts could slow or reverse current progress on HCD indicators.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Strengthen health programs targeting life expectancy and infant mortality. Focus on maternal and child health services, nutrition and preventative care.</li> <li>Implement comprehensive education reforms to reduce the number of out-of-school children and improve the quality of education. Introduce policies to reduce the mean years of schooling and address the NEET challenge.</li> <li>Continue to invest in digital infrastructure to expand internet access and support digital literacy programs to ensure equitable benefits across the population.</li> <li>Provide targeted support for entrepreneurship through training programs, mentorship and access to financing.</li> <li>Establish robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress in the health, education and digital sectors. Use data-driven approaches to identify and address challenges promptly.</li> <li>Foster partnerships with other countries in the sub-region to share knowledge, best practices and resources.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.08	0.1	0.16	15	0.15	0.30
Health & nutrition score	0.16	0.19	0.19	14	0.28	0.53
Education score	0.07	0.1	0.13	14	0.11	0.23
Entrepreneurship score	0.03	0.03	0.15	9	0.05	0.14

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.69	0.71	0.02	▲ 2.90%
Health & nutrition score	1.08	1.08	0.00	0.0%
Entrepreneurship score	0.5	0.4	-0.10	▼ 20.00%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.75	0.73	-0.02	▼ 2.67%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Significant improvements in education, skills and labor participation.</li> <li>Initial improvements in health and nutrition.</li> <li>Notable progress in the digital economy with a rise in internet usage.</li> <li>Improved financial services penetration rate.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Still the lowest-ranked performer in the ECOWAS region overall.</li> <li>Initial improvements in health and nutrition have not been sustained.</li> <li>Decline in HCD outcomes for women, especially in entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Moved from twelfth to fourteenth place in gender performance within the region.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Leveraging the increase in internet usage to boost the digital economy further.</li> <li>Focus on primary healthcare and nutrition programs for children under 5 to reduce mortality and stunting</li> <li>Building on improvements in education and skills to foster a more skilled workforce.</li> <li>Revitalizing and expanding health and nutrition programs.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Potential for sociopolitical issues to disrupt progress in various dimensions.</li> <li>Economic challenges could undermine improvements in human capital development.</li> <li>Continued decline in outcomes for women may exacerbate overall social inequality and economic inefficiency.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Focus on primary healthcare and nutrition programs for children under 5 to reduce mortality and stunting.</li> <li>Provide specialized training for healthcare professionals, particularly in maternal and child health to ensure high-quality care for this population.</li> <li>Develop targeted programs that address the specific needs of education system.</li> <li>Expanding access to financial resources for women by offering digital literacy programs, and promoting female entrepreneurship by providing vocational training align with labor market demands.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.19	0.13	0.22	10	0.27	0.48
Health & nutrition score	0.15	0.14	0.15	15	0.26	0.49
Education score	0.37	0.17	0.36	3	0.45	0.65
Entrepreneurship score	0.07	0.08	0.14	12	0.10	0.31

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.85	0.80	-0.06	▼ 6.75%
Health & nutrition score	1.10	1.16	0.06	<b>▲</b> 5.11%
Entrepreneurship score	0.56	0.87	0.31	▲ 54.64%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.84	0.94	0.10	<b>▲</b> 12.17%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Significant progress in the digital economy, doubling the baseline value.</li> <li>Notable improvements in health and nutrition indicators.</li> <li>Marginal improvement in education, score now approaching baseline value.</li> <li>Overall HCD Index progress exceeding the baseline by 15%.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Decline in life expectancy and government health expenditure.</li> <li>HCD Index currently at 22% of its target value.</li> <li>Regional disparities due to instability and insecurity.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Leveraging the digital economy for economic growth.</li> <li>Conducting health sector reforms to address declining indicators.</li> <li>Implementing educational initiatives to improve access to education and enhance performance.</li> <li>Developing targeted regional development programs.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Continued insecurity and instability in certain regions.</li> <li>Economic volatility affecting development funding.</li> <li>Potential health crises exacerbating existing challenges.</li> <li>Political instability impacting development continuity.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Expand internet access and promote digital literacy nationwide.</li> <li>Increase government health expenditures and strengthen health systems.</li> <li>Enhance educational quality, develop and maintain a robust national curriculum and support education continuity in conflict areas.</li> <li>Strengthen security measures and create economic opportunities in insecure regions and ensure inclusive development.</li> <li>Conduct regular assessments and utilize data-driven policies for targeted interventions.</li> </ul>



## **Senegal** HCD Index Scores

Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.25	0.3	0.33	3	0.32	0.49
Health & nutrition score	0.44	0.45	0.50	3	0.51	0.65
Education score	0.22	0.25	0.24	5	0.28	0.48
Entrepreneurship score	0.10	0.19	0.26	5	0.16	0.34

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.840	0.922	0.081	▲ 9.73%
Health & nutrition score	1.216	1.141	0.075	▼ 6.20%
Entrepreneurship score	0.479	0.484	0.004	▲ 0.98%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.845	0.849	0.003	▲ 0.44%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Significant investment in building educational institutions and improving educational programs through increased public funding.</li> <li>Strong initiatives like PAQUET to improve educational quality, equity and transparency.</li> <li>Successful health programs leading to improved maternal and child health indicators.</li> <li>National strategies for financial inclusion and digital economy growth.</li> <li>Efforts to promote gender equality through various national and international programs.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Funding shortfalls and construction delays impacting education infrastructure development.</li> <li>Social and political factors disrupting educational schedules and reducing overall efficiency.</li> <li>Insufficient high-quality human resources in healthcare, especially in rural areas.</li> <li>Limited budget allocation to address nutrition issues.</li> <li>Challenges in achieving gender equality due to sociocultural barriers and economic constraints.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Expanding partnerships with media and technology companies to support remote learning and digital education.</li> <li>Investing in teacher training and capacity building for health workers.</li> <li>Promoting universal health coverage and improving health infrastructure.</li> <li>Developing a range of financial products tailored to the needs of various population segments.</li> <li>Implementing programs to enhance women's economic empowerment and participation in key sectors.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Economic hardships and political instability limiting access to healthcare and education.</li> <li>Health emergencies causing healthcare service disruption and financial challenges.</li> <li>Disruption of global supply chains affecting access to essential foods and health supplies.</li> <li>High maternal and child mortality rates due to inadequate healthcare services.</li> <li>Persistent gender disparities in access to education, employment and decision-making positions.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Enhance resilience of the education system by improving crisis preparedness and leveraging lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>Improve the allocation and optimization of resources to address financial gaps and ensure better implementation of educational programs.</li> <li>Invest in health infrastructure and human resources to improve service coverage and quality.</li> <li>Promote digital literacy and financial inclusion through targeted programs and initiatives.</li> <li>Address sociocultural barriers to women's empowerment and ensure equal opportunities in education, employment and decision-making.</li> </ul>



### Sierra Leone

#### HCD Index Scores

Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	Rank 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.18	0.21	0.18	14	0.24	0.42
Health & nutrition score	0.22	0.26	0.34	9	0.34	0.57
Education score	0.32	0.33	0.17	12	0.35	0.48
Entrepreneurship score	0.02	0.03	0.05	15	0.03	0.22

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.88	0.86	-0.02	▼ 2.27%
Health & nutrition score	1.08	1.14	0.06	▲ 5.56%
Entrepreneurship score	0.54	0.5	-0.04	▼ 7.41%
HCD Gender Integrated score	0.83	0.83	0	0.0%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Consistent improvement in health and nutrition indicators.</li> <li>Progressive policy reforms and legal frameworks promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.</li> <li>Significant reduction in maternal mortality rate.</li> <li>Increased support for entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, particularly for women and youth through initiatives like the MUNAFA Fund.</li> <li>Progress in internet access and digital economy.</li> <li>Recruitment and training of qualified teachers.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Decrease in government health expenditure.</li> <li>High out-of-pocket household expenditures.</li> <li>Substantial decline in education, skills and labor participation indicators.</li> <li>High education dropout rates, especially at the senior secondary level.</li> <li>Socioeconomic challenges and cultural factors affecting education.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Developing strategic policies and technical instruments for improving the education system.</li> <li>Enhancing financial inclusion by increasing access to credit and financial services for rural populations and small businesses.</li> <li>Improving education outcomes by expanding technical and vocational training for youth to meet labor market demands.</li> <li>Enhanced digital economy through increased internet access.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Economic barriers impacting school attendance.</li> <li>Cultural factors limiting educational participation.</li> <li>High NEET rates among youth.</li> <li>Persistent socioeconomic challenges.</li> <li>Fluctuations in government education expenditure.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Increase government health expenditures to sustain improvements in health and nutrition.</li> <li>Enhance financial support for the SLeSHI to reduce out-of-pocket household expenditure.</li> <li>Implement targeted interventions to address high dropout rates and improve secondary education completion.</li> <li>Address socioeconomic and cultural barriers to education access and advancement.</li> <li>Expand internet access initiatives to further enhance the digital economy.</li> <li>Promote gender equality in education and labor participation through targeted programs.</li> <li>Ensure consistent and adequate funding for education.</li> </ul>



Indicator	2016-2018	2018-2020	2020-2022	RANK 2020-2022	Target 2020-2022	Target 2030
HCD Index	0.26	0.28	0.31	4	0.31	0.43
Health & nutrition score	0.35	0.36	0.40	6	0.43	0.59
Education score	0.37	0.41	0.37	1	0.41	0.51
Entrepreneurship score	0.05	0.07	0.15	10	0.09	0.21

Indicator	2018-2020	2020-2022	Progress made between 2018-2020 and 2020-2022	Percentage Progress
Education score	0.72638253	0.687098944	-0.039283586	▼ 5.41%
Health & nutrition score	1.1000	1.100649804	0.000666271	▲ 0.06%
Entrepreneurship score	0.553905412	0.614387004	0.060481592	▲ 10.92%
HCD Gender Intergrated score	0.7934238825	0.800711917	0.007288092	▲ 0.92%

STRENGTHS	<ul> <li>Steady progress with a 10% improvement since the last report.</li> <li>Strategic health objectives for 2023-2027 focused on increasing life expectancy and improving access to quality healthcare.</li> <li>Comprehensive reforms under PSE 2020-2030, including free tuition and removal of registration fees for national exams.</li> <li>Improved penetration of financial services and increased internet access.</li> <li>Improved health system providing better quality services for women.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	<ul> <li>Slight regression in education impacting overall progress.</li> <li>Strain on the healthcare system caused by the pandemic revealing limited capacity to handle health emergencies.</li> <li>Decline in government education expenditures and pupil-teacher ratio.</li> <li>Need for improvements in education infrastructure, an increase in financing for educational programs, and teacher training and retention.</li> <li>Sociocultural barriers such as early marriages and female genital mutilation impacting educational outcomes.</li> <li>Lower enrolment and completion rates for girls, especially in secondary education.</li> <li>Women still lag behind men in managerial positions and internet usage.</li> <li>Persistent sociocultural and economic challenges hindering girls' education.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul> <li>Improving healthcare infrastructure and services through continued strategic investments.</li> <li>Enhancing community health systems and increasing utilization of essential health services.</li> <li>Digitalizing and operationalizing educational projects to improve quality and access.</li> <li>Strengthening governance and sectoral coordination to enhance the effectiveness of educational initiatives.</li> <li>Expanding internet access and financial services to drive further economic growth and inclusion.</li> <li>Implementing government initiatives to reduce school fees and promote gender-sensitive policies, with a view to improving educational outcomes for girls.</li> <li>Focusing on gender equality and health equity policies to reduce disparities and promote inclusiveness.</li> </ul>
THREATS	<ul> <li>Pandemic and potential future health emergencies could strain the healthcare system further.</li> <li>Reallocation of resources due to health impacting other health services.</li> <li>Financial constraints and reduced state revenues could impact the sustainability of educational reforms and investments.</li> <li>Failing to address socio-economic barriers to education for girls will continue to hinder development.</li> <li>Gender disparities in digital economy and entrepreneurship could persist without targeted interventions.</li> </ul>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul> <li>Continue to invest in healthcare infrastructure and capacity building to ensure efficient management of health emergencies.</li> <li>Expand disease control programs and maternal and child health services.</li> <li>Implement strategic health objectives for 2023-2027 to increase life expectancy and improve access to care.</li> <li>Enhance community health systems and increasing the availability of essential health services.</li> <li>Ensure sustained government expenditure on education with an aim of improving access, education infrastructure and pupil-teacher ratios.</li> <li>Implement and expand gender-sensitive policies and initiatives to reduce sociocultural barriers to girls' education and address the issues of disparities in employment and internet access and gender-based violence.</li> <li>Promote digitalization of the education system to improve quality and access.</li> <li>Enhance policies and initiatives that support financial inclusion, internet access and digital economy.</li> </ul>

# 06

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