Women, Business and the Law 2014 Fact Sheet: Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region that has reformed the most over the past 50 years in the areas covered by Women, Business and the Law’s historical time series—restrictions on women’s property rights and their ability to make legal decisions were reduced by more than half from 1960 to 2010. Over the past two years numerous Sub-Saharan African economies passed reforms promoting gender parity and encouraging women’s economic participation for the report’s six indicators:

In Angola and Mauritius public credit registries now include information from microfinance institutions.

Botswana enacted a new Constitution that prohibits discrimination based on sex.

Côte d’Ivoire amended its Family Code to allow both spouses to choose the family domicile and to pursue their career of choice, taking into account the interests of their family. The code was reformed to eliminate provisions providing childcare benefits only to men for being the head of household. In addition, married women no longer need to provide their marriage certificates to obtain passports.

In Ethiopia the credit reporting system now records loans of any amount.

Ethiopia and Malawi introduced retirement and pensionable ages for women and men.

In Ghana and Kenya private credit registries now include information from microfinance institutions.

Mali enacted a law removing the restriction on married women’s ability to register businesses. Under the law each spouse with a separate profession can act and contract in pursuit of that profession. Mali also enacted a succession law that provides equality between husbands and wives in inheritance.

Togo enacted a new Family Code that allows both spouses to choose the family domicile and to object to each other’s careers if deemed not to be in the family’s interests.

Uganda enacted new procedures for small claims courts in 2012.

Zimbabwe enacted a new Constitution under which customary law is no longer exempt from the constitutional protection against nondiscrimination.

About the Women, Business and the Law Report series:
Women, Business and the Law measures how laws, regulations and institutions differentiate between women and men in ways that may affect women’s incentives or capacity to work or to set up and run a business. It analyzes legal differences on the basis of gender in 143 economies, covering six areas: gaining access to institutions, using property, getting a job, providing incentives to work, building credit, and going to court. The project provides a clear picture of gender gaps based on legal differences in each economy, but it does not capture the full extent of the gender gap, nor does it indicate the relative importance of each aspect covered. This year’s report was published by Bloomsbury Publishing. For more information, please visit: wbl.worldbank.org. Join us on Facebook: wbl.worldbank.org/Facebook

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