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Insight

Women's Equality in Africa:
2024 IIAG overview



Women's Equality

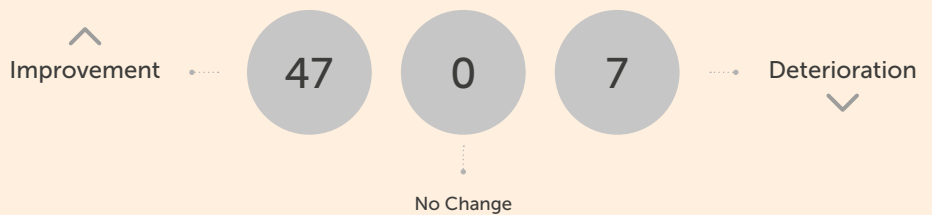
African average

Source: MIF

2023 score (out of 100.0)	59.2
10-year change (2014-2023)	+6.9
Trend: 5-year change (2019-2023) compared to 10-year change	Slowing Improvement ●

African countries

10-year change (2014-2023) by number of countries



Trend: 5-year change (2019-2023) compared to 10-year change by number of countries

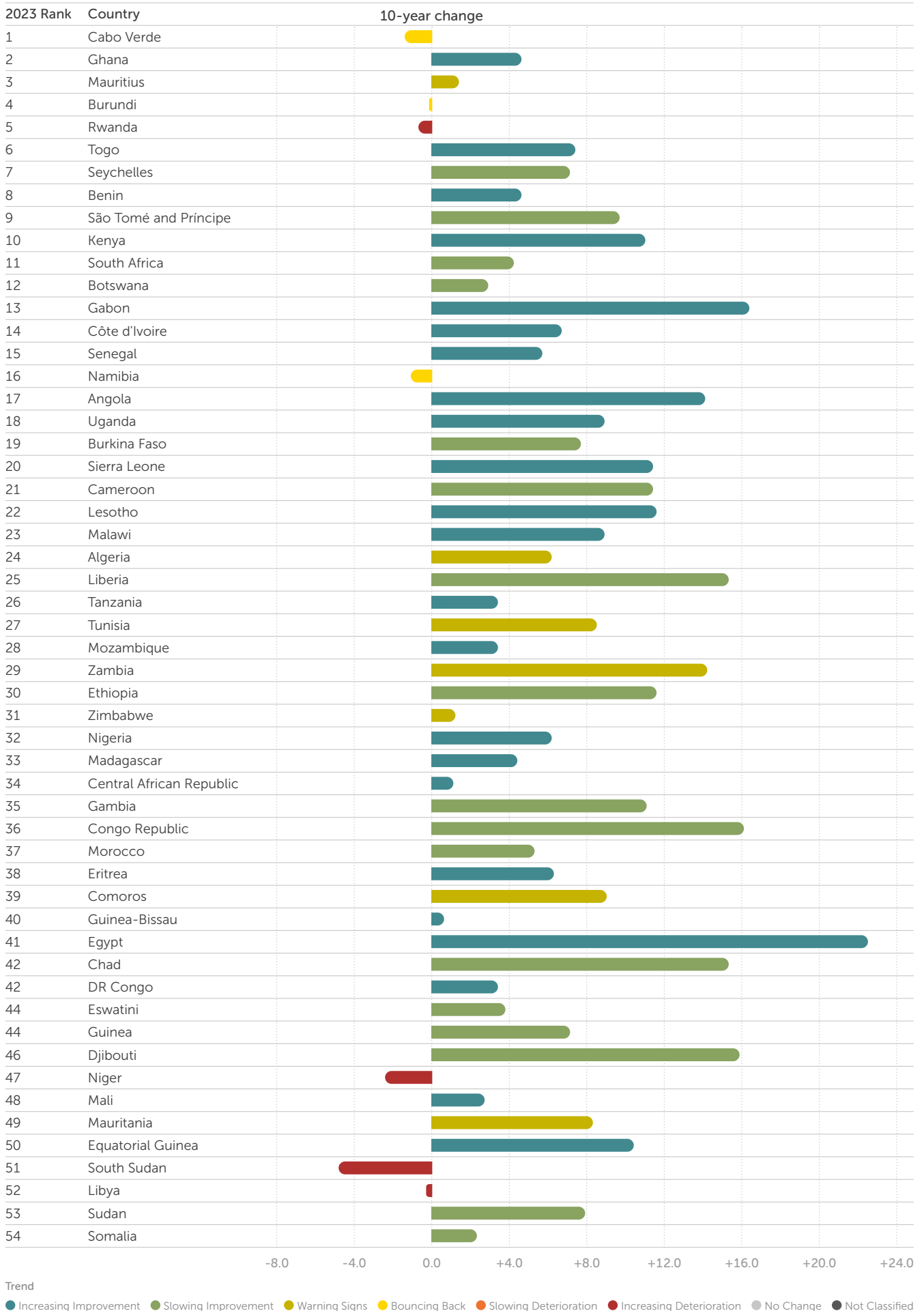


Largest Improvement	Egypt
Change 2014-2023	+22.5
Score/Rank (2023)	49.6/41st
Largest Deterioration	South Sudan
Change 2014-2023	-4.8
Score/Rank (2023)	31.9/51st

Underlying measures	Score (2023)	10-year change (2014-2023)	
<i>Political Power & Representation of Women</i>	51.5	+6.5	●
<i>Equal Rights & Civil Liberties for Women</i>	70.3	+1.9	●
<i>Socioeconomic Opportunity for Women</i>	48.6	+3.1	●
<i>Equal Access to Public Services for Women</i>	44.3	+0.9	●
<i>Laws on Violence against Women</i>	79.3	+16.7	●
<i>Public Perception of Female Leadership</i>	66.7	+14.5	●

Women's Equality sub-category: 2023 rank, 10-year change & trend (2014-2023)

Source: MIF



International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March is a global day recognising the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It is also a key moment to call for and raise awareness of the need for women's equality and gender parity.¹

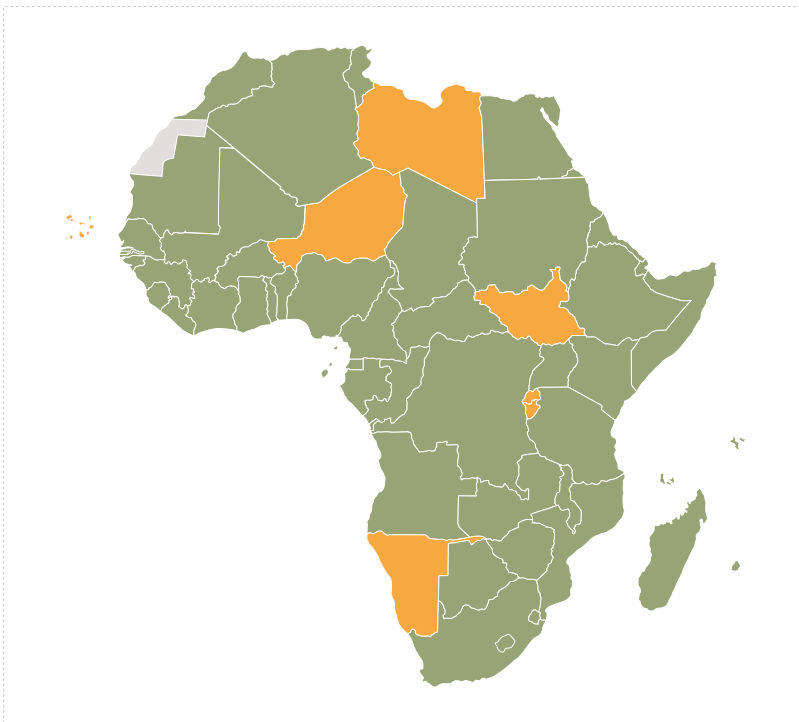
The 2025 United Nations theme is 'For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.'² Calling for action that can unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all women. 2025 also marks 30 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The 2025 Beijing +30 Africa Regional Review shows that progress towards gender equality remains generally uneven across countries on the continent.

In line with this, it is key to have a data assessment of Africa's progress towards achieving women's equality over the last decade. This research insight unpacks results from the *Women's Equality* sub-category in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), delving into the underling indicator trends and country analysis.

Women's Equality: the second most improved sub-category in the IIAG

For 94.8% of Africa's population, living in 47 countries, *Women's Equality* has improved since 2014 – with 60% living in 23 countries where it has even increasingly improved since 2019.

African countries: *Women's Equality*, 10-year change (2014-2023)



Since 2014, *Women's Equality* has improved for 94.8% of Africa's population living in 47 countries

Source: MIF

Africa makes significant strides in legal rights and protection for women

Laws on Violence against Women improved all across the continent. It was the most improved indicator in the sub-category and the second most improved within the entire IIAG, improving by +16.7. This shows countries' renewed commitment to protecting the rights of girls and women.

On the other hand, *Rights & Civil Liberties for Women* indicator only improved marginally by +1.9 at an increasing improvement trend over the decade.

In February 2025, the African Union adopted the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU CEVAWG), the continent’s first dedicated legal instrument aimed at ending all forms of violence against women and girls. Its ratification will enable the implementation of more protections that safeguard the rights and well-being of women and girls in AU member states.³

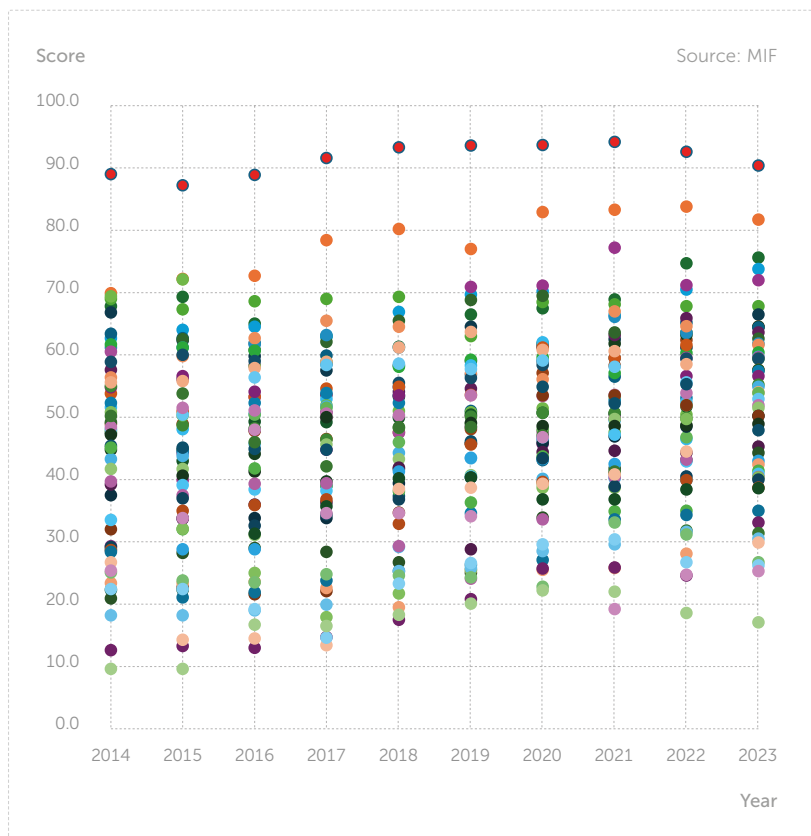
UNICEF 2024 estimates revealed that globally, about 370 million girls and women have faced sexual violence, with 79 million (21.4%) in the sub-Saharan Africa region. These alarming statistics show the evident gaps between the legal frameworks and contextual reality on the continent.⁴

The Beijing +30 Africa Regional Review emphasises that while policy and law adoption is key, it must go along with the required effective implementation and enforcement by stakeholders in order to achieve gender equality.⁵

A convergence in the *Political Power & Representation of Women* over the decade

This indicator followed an ambiguous trend at country level over the past decade, with some of the best performing countries having a decline in scores and an increase in scores for the lowest performing countries.

African countries: *Political Power & Representation of Women* scores (2014-2023)



Laws on Violence against Women was the most improved indicator in the *Women’s Equality* sub-category and the second most improved in the entire IAG



Effective legislation on violence against women and girls must be accompanied by the necessary implementation measures

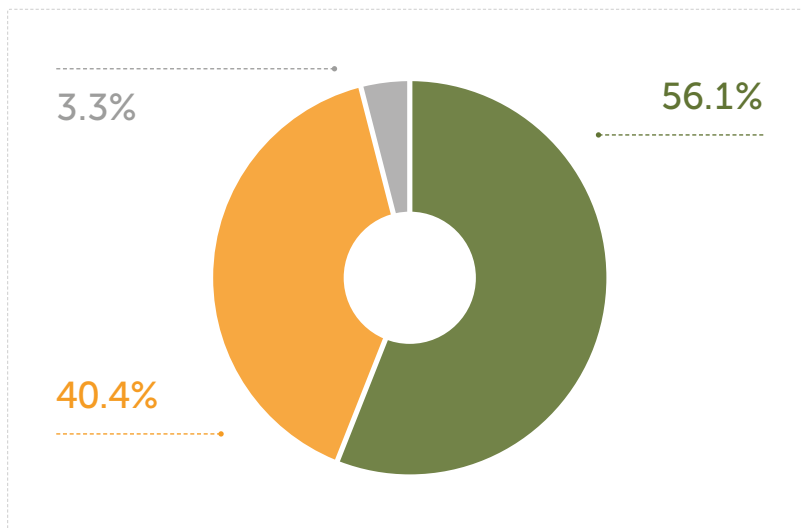
Rwanda, which remains a top scorer at the continental and global level, registered a slight decline (-0.7) since 2014 while Somalia, though the lowest performer in 2023, improved by +7.5 points over the past decade.

As of 2024, women constituted just a quarter of all parliamentarians in Africa - 26% in the lower houses, and 21% in the upper houses of parliament increasing by only 1% since 2021. At this rate, the continent is still far behind achieving the 50% target set in SDG 5.5.⁶ This calls for more policies in addition to the quota systems in some countries that are aimed at empowering more women to participate in political spheres.

Mixed progress on Access to Socioeconomic Opportunities for Women

The indicator improved for 56.1% of Africa's population but also declined for almost half, 40.4% showing divided progress across the continent over the last decade.

Africa population (%): Access to Socioeconomic Opportunities for Women (2014-2023)



This shows that countries are at varying levels in terms of implementing structures and reforms aimed at eliminating restrictions on women's employment and promoting financial inclusion in the private and public sector.

Gambia which experienced the most improvement (+20.2), has promoted the economic empowerment of women through its Women Enterprise Fund (WEF). The fund was established in 2020 by the parliament supports women's groups locally known as kafos through financial literacy training and cash loans at a minimal 5% interest rate, which is relatively lower than that of the national commercial Banks. The fund has supported approximately 63,000 women in scaling up their entrepreneurial activities.⁷

The improvement in this indicator is driven by growth in the *Workplace Equality for Women* sub-indicator which improved in 20 countries representing 46.5% of Africa's population and by +6.1 at the continental level. This is notable progress towards achieving equal opportunities and benefits for women across different work sectors on the continent.

Despite significant progress, Africa is only halfway towards achieving the SDG target 5.5 of 50% of seats held by women in national parliament

Access to Socioeconomic Opportunities for Women in Africa improved for 56.1% of Africa's population but also declined for 40.4% of the population

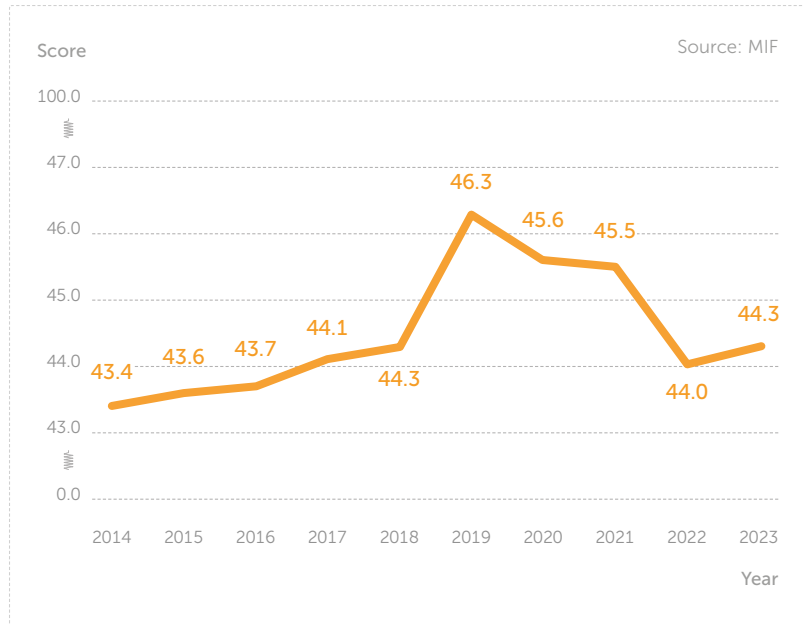
- Improved access
- Declined access
- No change

Source: MIF

Access to Public Services for Women hampered by the COVID-19 lockdown

This was the lowest scoring and least performed indicator in the sub-category, after reaching a peak in 2019, scores gradually declined between 2020 to 2022, with an overall decline of -2.0 in the last five years.

Africa: Access to Public Services for Women, scores (2014-2023)



The COVID-19 lockdown worsened the pre-existing inequalities in women's access to essential public services in Africa

The mandated lockdown regulations implemented all across the continent deepened the pre-existing gender inequalities in access to essential public services.

In the education sector, school closures left millions of children out of school. This brought additional risks of gender-based violence for girls such as early marriage that affected gender parity in education. For example, in Kenya, 2021 Ministry of Health records showed that over 328,000 school going girls got pregnant in the first year of the pandemic which affected their chances of re-enrolling back into school.⁸

The lockdown also exacerbated constraints faced by women and girls in accessing essential health services. 2022 analysis by the WHO found that about 40% of African countries reported disruptions to sexual, reproductive, maternal, child and adolescent health services.⁹

Public Perception of Female Leadership was the only perception indicator in the IIAG that improved over the past decade. It has gradually improved alongside *Political Power & Representation of Women in Africa*.

For more information on how to read the IIAG results, please see the documents available to download on the [IIAG online data portal](#).

Mo Ibrahim Foundation (MIF) (2024) Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) Data Portal | Mo Ibrahim Foundation. Accessed 20 February 2025

¹ International Women's Day (2025) About International Women's Day IWD: About International Women's Day. Accessed 20 February 2025

² UN Women (2024) International Women's Day 2025 – For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment. International Women's Day 2025 – For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment | UN Women – Headquarters. Accessed 20 February 2025

³ African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights(ACHR) (2024) Statement on the Adoption of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. <https://achpr.au.int/en/news/statements/2025-02-17/convention-ending-violence-girls-and-women>. Accessed 20 February 2025

⁴ UNICEF (2024) Over 79 million girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa subjected to rape or sexual assault as children.<https://www.unicef.org/esa/press-releases/over-79-million-girls-and-women-sub-saharan-africa-subjected-rape-or-sexual-assault>. Accessed 20 February 2025

⁵ UN Women (2024) Beijing Africa Regional review.https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/202502/beijing_africa_regional_review_summary_report_0.pdf. Accessed 20 February 2025

⁶ Africa Barometer (2024) Women's Political Participation.<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-07/womens-political-participation-africa-barometer-2024.pdf>. Accessed 20 February 2025

⁷ UN Women. (2024)The Gambia country report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/b30_report_gambia_en.pdf. Accessed 20 February 2025

⁸ The East African (2021) Covid-19 nightmare of out-of-school adolescent parents in Kenya <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/covid-19-nightmare-of-out-of-school-adolescent-parents-in-kenya-3481034>. Accessed 20 February 2025

⁹ WHO (2022) COVID-19 takes a heavy toll on women's health. <https://www.afro.who.int/countries/congo/news/covid-19-takes-heavy-toll-womens-health> . Accessed 20 February 2025



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