



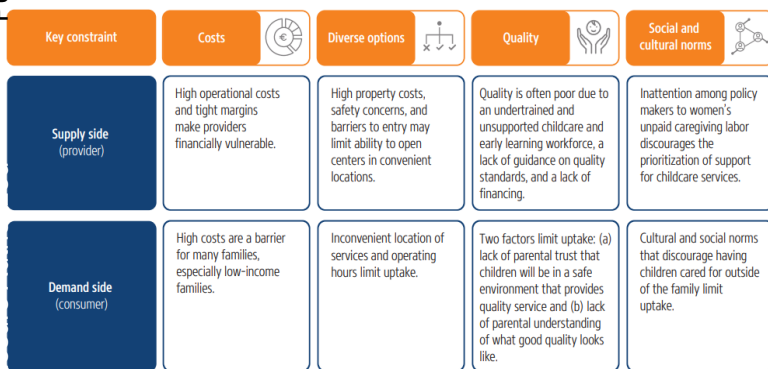
TOWARD AVAILABLE, AFFORDABLE, AND QUALITY CHILDCARE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Women, Business and the Law 2022 presents a novel and comprehensive pilot dataset on regulatory frameworks around the availability, affordability, and quality of childcare services for children below the formal preprimary school starting age – typically below 3 years of age – in 95 economies worldwide. Expanding childcare access can benefit female labor participation, child development, and economic growth through reduced unemployment and job generation, both within and outside the childcare sector.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, data were collected for 21 economies (Table 1). The new data are a stepping-stone toward facilitating and informing policy dialogue around key demand- and supply-side avenues that limit or facilitate formal provision of childcare services, their affordability, quality, and uptake by parents. Pilot data present a framework that shows a range of options that governments may support to meet the needs of working mothers and families. However, international best practice frameworks are yet to be established.

Supply- and demand-side constraints, including high costs, the inconvenience of services, low quality, and social and cultural norms, do not always guarantee the uptake of formal childcare by parents (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: KEY CONSTRAINTS IN THE CHILDCARE MARKET



Sources: Devercelli and Beaton-Day 2020; Muller and Jaen 2020.

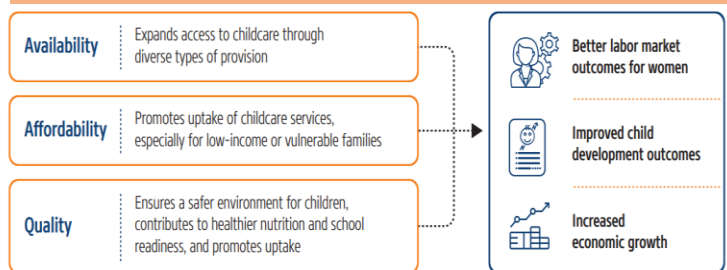
TABLE 1: COUNTRY COVERAGE AND KEY INDICATORS

Economy coverage	Income group	Main business city	Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)	Paid leave for mothers (calendar days)	Paid leave for fathers (calendar days)
Angola	LMI	Luanda	74.0	90	0
Botswana	UMI	Gaborone	56.2	84	0
Cabo Verde	LMI	Praia	46.9	60	2
Côte d'Ivoire	LMI	Abidjan	45.9	98	2
Ethiopia	LI	Addis Ababa	72.3	120	3
Gabon	UMI	Libreville	39.1	98	3
Ghana	LMI	Accra	64.5	84	0
Guinea	LI	Conakry	62.1	98	0
Kenya	LMI	Nairobi	71.0	90	14
Malawi	LI	Blantyre	71.6	56	0
Mauritania	LMI	Nouakchott	27.4	98	1
Mauritius	UMI	Port Louis	43.4	98	7
Namibia	UMI	Windhoek	54.5	84	0
Rwanda	LI	Kigali	82.5	84	4
Senegal	LMI	Dakar	33.5	98	1
Sierra Leone	LI	Freetown	56.1	84	0
South Africa	UMI	Johannesburg	22.0	120	14
Tanzania	LMI	Dar es Salaam	79.5	84	3
Togo	LI	Lomé	55.5	98	2
Uganda	LI	Kampala	64.2	84	4
Zambia	LMI	Lusaka	69.2	98	0

Sources: *Women, Business and the Law 2022* and World Development Indicators 2021.

The enactment of policies to make childcare available, affordable, and of decent quality is a priority due to their potential to achieve better market outcomes for women, children, and the economy overall (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: THE THREE PILLARS OF CHILDCARE



Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*.



International law has long recognized that working parents need access to outside childcare and called for making childcare facilities more readily available.

1976

The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** calls for establishing and developing a network of childcare facilities to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities

1981

The **International Labour Organization's Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities No. 156** calls for measures to develop or promote childcare services to enable equality of opportunity for working men and women.

1989

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** mandates that "State Parties" ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services and facilities for which they are eligible.

1999

The **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** states that States Parties must take appropriate measures to ensure that the children of working parents are provided with care services and facilities.



AVAILABILITY

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the provision of childcare services for children below the formal preprimary school starting age is not uniformly regulated, whether in private or public settings. Laws govern the provision of some form of outside childcare services in only 12 out of 21 economies measured (Table 2). Childcare services can be accessed at the child's birth in Angola, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia. In Côte d'Ivoire and Mauritius, parents can enroll their children when they reach 3 months of age. Conversely, legislative gaps remain in Botswana, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mauritania, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Uganda, where regulatory frameworks for children below the preprimary school age are absent. In Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo, government responsibility for provision of childcare services, typically within broader educational frameworks, starts once the child reaches the preprimary school starting age.

In 7 out of 21 economies in the region, parents can select between public and private childcare services. In five economies in the region – Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa – the provision of childcare services is regulated for the private sector only. There is no economy in the region where employers are mandated to assist by building daycare facilities or kindergartens or cover a part of childcare expenses incurred by their employees. More could be done to enable employer-provided childcare services in the region to avoid losses in productivity that come with a price tag when parents miss work to fill gaps in childcare.

The provision of childcare services must be tailored to meet parents' needs. Inconvenient operating hours that conflict with parents' working patterns may limit uptake and lead to more mothers taking up work in the informal sector or staying at home for unpaid care work. This may result in women's exclusion from the labor force, reflecting a wide gender employment gap across Sub-Saharan Africa. Only three economies (Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Mauritius) regulate minimum hours for childcare facilities that are compatible with at least an 8-hour working day for parents. Cabo Verde does not regulate minimum hours, but the law mandates that opening hours must accommodate the family's needs. A similar provision exists in Angola, where the pedagogical director is responsible for establishing the opening hours in accordance with the needs of the family, safeguarding the child welfare, and taking into account the standards of each institution (Table 3).

TABLE 2: LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE PROVISION OF CHILDCARE SERVICES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Economy	Earliest age at which childcare services are available	Preprimary school starting age	Public provision*	Private provision*	Employer provided or supported
Angola	at birth	3	✓	✓	
Botswana		3			
Cabo Verde	at birth	4	✓	✓	
Côte d'Ivoire	3 months	3	✓	✓	
Ethiopia		4			
Gabon	at birth	3	✓	✓	
Ghana	at birth	4		✓	
Guinea	at birth	3		✓	
Kenya		4		✓	
Malawi		3			
Mauritania		2			
Mauritius	3 months	3	✓	✓	
Namibia	at birth	5		✓	
Rwanda		3			
Senegal		3			
Sierra Leone		3			
South Africa	at birth	4		✓	
Tanzania	at birth	5	✓	✓	
Togo		4			
Uganda		2			
Zambia	at birth	3	✓	✓	

Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*. Note: *public and private provision includes care services provided in center-based settings.



TABLE 3: REGULATION OF OPERATING HOURS

Economy	Minimum required hours	Flexible options available
Angola	Unregulated	Flexible or on-demand hours of operation for public and private centers
Cabo Verde	Unregulated	Opening hours must be suitable to the needs of parents, and not longer than strictly necessary
Cote d'Ivoire	9.5 hours from Monday to Friday, from 8am to 5.30pm	Unregulated
Kenya	9 hours for private centers: Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm	Unregulated
Mauritius	10 hours for public and private centers: from 7.30am to 5.30pm on weekdays and from 7.30am to 1pm on Saturdays	Unregulated

Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*.



AFFORDABILITY

Even when formal childcare is available, affordability is a central concern in Sub-Saharan Africa that influences the demand for childcare services and the extent to which parents use it. Only one economy (Angola) in the region with a regulatory framework around public childcare mandates its free provision.

The specific conditions under which fees are typically determined are not explicitly laid out in any of the laws of the economies measured. Angola regulates fees that private childcare providers require. Angola is also the only economy where the public provision of childcare services covers meals. Côte d'Ivoire is the only country that regulates public and private childcare providers' fees. There, childcare facilities must have a fiche stipulating rates for childcare services.

Financial support to parents and providers of childcare services in Sub-Saharan Africa is limited (Table 4). No government in the region grants financial support to parents to use childcare services. Two economies (Mauritius and Zambia) support the use of childcare services by specifically targeting low-income families. To ease operating costs and encourage the supply of services, governments in four economies (Angola, Cabo Verde, Mauritius, and South Africa) provide financial support to private childcare centers. No economy provides similar financial support to employers for establishing or supporting childcare services for their employees. The absence of support may impact the demand and supply of services, affecting women's participation in the labor market. Governments in Sub-Saharan African economies could consider expanding policies to grant financial support to parents and providers to reduce costs and facilitate uptake in a similar fashion as in other regions (Figure 3).

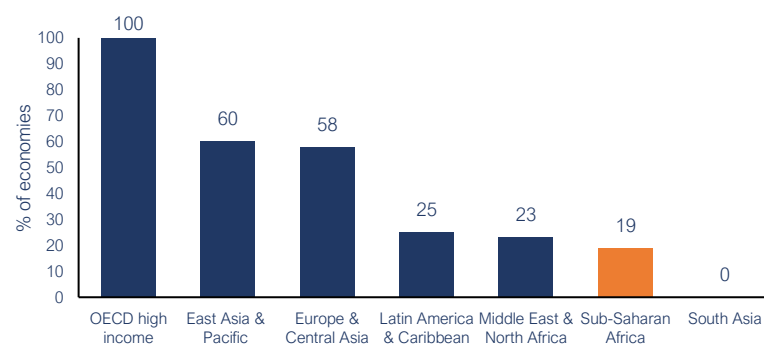
Similarly, preferential tax regimes for parents, private childcare centers, or employers are limited in the region (Figure 4). Many taxpayers are out of the tax net. No economy regulates the provision of tax benefits to parents or private childcare centers. Cabo Verde and Mauritius are the only economies in the region that grant tax benefits to employers for expenses incurred for providing childcare to their employees. Preferential taxation is another policy tool available to facilitate both childcare services and their uptake by parents.

TABLE 4: POLICY EXAMPLES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AND PRIVATE CHILDCARE CENTERS

Economy	Financial support to low-income families
Mauritius	Monthly cash assistance to poor families
Zambia	Equal access to quality education for poor and vulnerable children
Economy	Financial support to private childcare centers
Angola	Subsidy to private childcare centers
Cabo Verde	Operating and other subsidies to private childcare centers if they serve children below 3 years of age and guarantee that they will waive the monthly fee and publicize the free services provided, in line with obligatory quarterly reporting on the use of the subsidy awarded
Mauritius	One-time grant to newly registered crèches on the condition of operation for at least one year
South Africa	Funding for child and youth care centers when complying with the regulatory framework

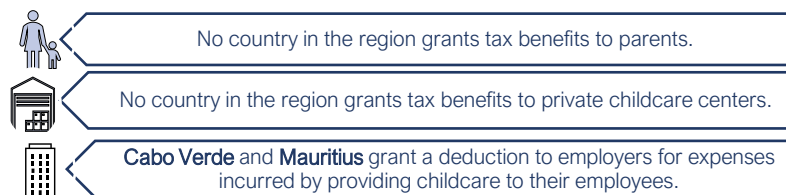
Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*.

FIGURE 3: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CONSUMERS OR PROVIDERS OF CHILDCARE SERVICES, BY REGION



Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*.

FIGURE 4: PREFERENTIAL TAX POLICIES FOR PARENTS AND PROVIDERS



Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*.





QUALITY

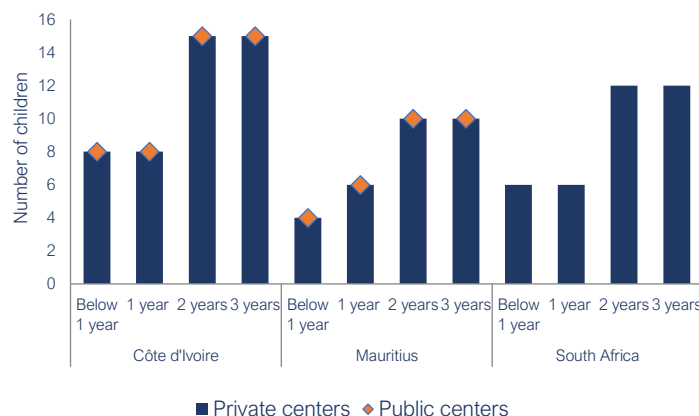
High-quality childcare services may influence parental decisions to use formal childcare services. Quality childcare improves children’s development outcomes, including school readiness, healthy nutrition, and educational achievements, leading to more promising long-term employment prospects and higher earnings. Definitions of high quality vary across contexts due to differences in economic development, resource availability, and cultural and social norms. However, there is some consensus on the elements that determine high quality childcare, regardless of circumstances.

Structural quality, for example, is a critical element of early childcare services. Children can receive individual attention, and teachers can more effectively cater to diverse learning needs, with specified teacher-to-child ratios – typically 1:10 or 1:15 as recommended by international institutions – and smaller group sizes – typically no more than 20 children. Structural quality gaps persist in most of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the teacher-to-child ratio and the maximum group sizes are yet to be established. Less than one third of the 21 economies measured in the region define the number of children per teacher. Côte d’Ivoire, Mauritius, and South Africa have relatively low teacher-to-child ratios, depending on the age of the child (Figure 5). Côte d’Ivoire regulates that there is one teacher for every eight children in creches (for children between 3 months and 2 years), and there is one teacher for every 15 children in daycare (for children above 2 years). In Tanzania and Ghana, a teacher is responsible for 25 children. The maximum group size in childcare centers is only regulated in Angola, Cabo Verde, and Côte d’Ivoire. In Cabo Verde, the maximum number of children per group is 18 until age 3.

Improving quality of care also means investing in the professional development of the workforce. The level of training of staff is poor across Sub-Saharan Africa. None of the economies measured prescribe that the teachers at nurseries must complete professional training on a regular basis. Professional development of the workforce is essential for improving the quality of care. Countries could prescribe regular professional training for educators in the region.

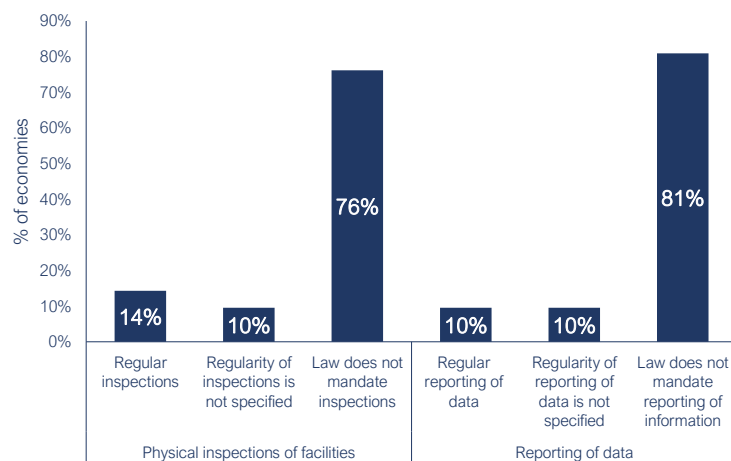
Physical inspections in childcare centers (public or private) are mandatory in 5 (Angola, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Namibia, Tanzania) out of 21 examined economies in the region. Information reporting is required in 4 economies (Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania, and Zambia). However, the regularity of inspections is only regulated in 3 economies (Ghana, Namibia, and Tanzania) and reporting in only 2 economies (Mauritius and Tanzania), increasing the risk of noncontinuous compliance among providers (Figure 6). By establishing quality assurance mechanisms through mandatory regular inspections of physical facilities or reporting of data by providers, governments can hold childcare providers accountable for any failure to comply with quality standards.

FIGURE 5: NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER EDUCATOR, BY AGE



Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*.

FIGURE 6: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CHILDCARE CENTERS



Source: *Women, Business and the Law 2022*. Note: Physical inspections are regulated for both public and private childcare centers in Angola, Cabo Verde, and Tanzania; for private centers only – in Ghana and Namibia. Reporting of data is regulated for both public and private centers in Mauritius, Tanzania, and Zambia; for private centers only – in Kenya.





REGIONAL TRENDS BY DATA POINT

AVAILABILITY

ANSWER (YES/NO)

Does the law regulate public provision of childcare services?	33%	67%
Does the law regulate private provision of childcare services?	57%	43%
Does the law mandate employers to provide or support childcare services?	100%	
Does the law establish adequate operating hours in public childcare centers?	19%	81%
Does the law establish adequate operating hours in private childcare centers?	24%	76%

AFFORDABILITY

ANSWER (YES/NO)

Does the law establish free provision of public childcare?	5%	95%
Does the law establish conditions based on which cost to parents is determined?	100%	
Are fees charged by public childcare centers regulated?	5%	95%
Are fees charged by private childcare centers regulated?	10%	90%
Does the government provide some form of financial or tax support to parents for childcare?	100%	
Does the government provide some form of financial or tax support to private providers?	19%	81%
Does the government provide some type of support to low-income families for childcare?	10%	90%

QUALITY

ANSWER (YES/NO)

Are public childcare centers required to obtain licenses or authorization of some form?	19%	81%
Are private childcare centers required to obtain licenses or authorization of some form?	52%	48%
Does the law mandate a teacher-to-child ratio for public childcare centers?	19%	81%
Does the law mandate a teacher-to-child ratio for private childcare centers?	29%	71%
Does the law mandate a maximum group size in public childcare centers?	10%	90%
Does the law mandate a maximum group size in private childcare centers?	14%	86%
Does the law require educators at public childcare centers to undergo periodic training?	100%	
Does the law require educators at private childcare centers to undergo periodic training?	100%	
Does the law require quality assurance at public childcare centers?	24%	76%
Does the law require quality assurance at private childcare centers?	38%	62%
Are penalties imposed for noncompliance with applicable laws by public childcare centers?	14%	86%
Are penalties imposed for noncompliance with applicable laws by private childcare centers?	38%	62%

DATA COLLECTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Data was collected in 21 countries: Angola, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia.



For more information, please visit wbl.worldbank.org/en/childcare or contact wbl@worldbank.org.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document aims to improve understanding of legal and regulatory systems around the availability, affordability, and quality of childcare services for children below preprimary school starting age in Sub-Saharan Africa. It also seeks to build awareness of laws and identify areas for reforms and other regulatory interventions. Support for the Women, Business and the Law childcare regional profiles series is provided by the World Bank's Knowledge for Change Program and the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Jobs.

