



IN BRIEF



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Photo © UNDP/AFP Photo/Luis Acosta.

What's the Issue?

Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

But they also remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Gender discrimination means that women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions. It curtails access to economic assets such as land and loans. It limits participation in shaping economic and social policies. And, because women perform the bulk of household work, they often have little time left to pursue economic opportunities.

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Our Solutions

Many international commitments support women's economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on gender equality. UN Women supports women's economic empowerment in line with these, and with the growing body of evidence that shows that gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economies and sustainable development.

Working with a variety of partners, our programmes promote women's ability to secure decent jobs, accumulate assets, and influence institutions and public policies determining growth and development. One critical area of focus involves advocacy to measure women's unpaid care work, and to take actions so women and men can more readily combine it with paid employment.

In all our economic empowerment programmes, UN Women reaches out to women most in need, often by engaging with grass-roots and civil society organizations. Particularly marginalized groups include rural women, domestic workers, some migrants and low-skilled women. Our aims are higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence.



How We Make a Difference

Recent successes from around the world:

MOROCCO: In the oases of the south-eastern province of Errachidia UN Women helps women adapt to the changing climate. We support associations of women farmers, many of whom grow medicinal and aromatic plants that require little water and yield higher profits than traditional crops.

KENYA: Since 2013, as a result of the UN Women-supported review of Kenyan public procurement, a minimum 30% of annual government spending is reserved for women, youth and people with disabilities. We assist women entrepreneurs and women's associations in Kenya to take advantage of the opportunities unleashed by this regulation and increase women's participation in the supply chain. In collaboration with partners, we supported training of 1,500 women entrepreneurs and we are now taking the training to the county level.

NEPAL: UN Women's long-standing work with migrant women workers in Nepal has yielded concrete results, such as the creation of a network of returning migrant women workers, legislation that has cemented rights, and regulations that provide protection for the country's 2.7 million migrant workers. We supported preparation of the Foreign Employment Policy, which includes a separate section focusing on the rights of women domestic workers.

GLOBALLY: Over 1,000 CEOs from around the world have signed the Women's Empowerment Principles on corporate social responsibility for gender equality, developed by UN Women and the UN Global Compact. For more information, see www.wepinciples.org.

EMPOWERWOMEN: UN WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE GATEWAY

UN Women engages an open global community for women's economic empowerment on the web portal www.empowerwomen.org. This Knowledge Gateway provides opportunities for its members to find and share resources and learning tools; connect with peers and experts; and to discuss, generate new ideas and advocate for women's economic empowerment. It brings together a diverse range of partners, networks and members from international organizations, private sector, governments, academia and civil society.

FACTS AND FIGURES - ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Benefits of economic empowerment:

- If men and women played an identical role in labour markets, as much as USD 28 trillion, or 26%, could be added to the global GDP by 2015.
- An analysis of Fortune 500 companies found that those with the greatest representation of women in management positions delivered a total return to shareholders that was 34% higher than for companies with the lowest representation.

Women in the world of work:

- In the majority of countries, women's wages represent between 70 and 90% of men's, with even lower ratios in some Asian and Latin American countries.
- As of 2011, 50.5% of the world's working women were in vulnerable employment, often unprotected by labour legislation, compared to 48.2% for men. Women were far more likely than men to be in vulnerable employment in North Africa (55 versus 32%), the Middle East (42 versus 27%) and sub-Saharan Africa (nearly 85 versus 70 per cent).
- Women bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work. Women devote 1 to 3 hours more a day to housework than men; 2 to 10 times the amount of time a day to care (for children, elderly, and the sick), and 1 to 4 hours less a day to market activities.

GENDER PAY GAP

At least 50% of the world's women are in paid wage and salary employment, an increase from 40% in the 1990s.



But women earn 24% less than men for the same work.

