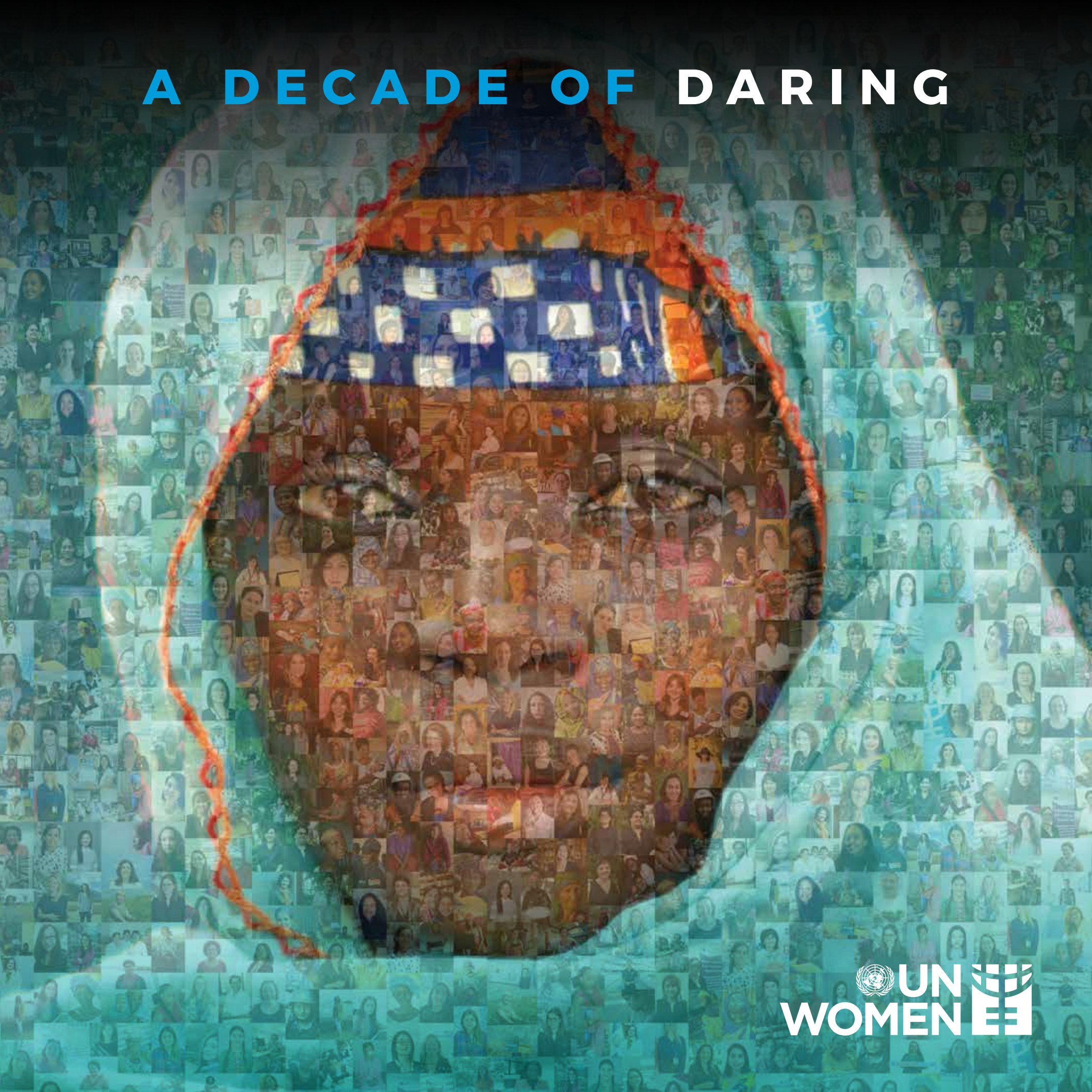


# A DECADE OF DARING





Durgi Devi is among the more than 2,800 rural women and girls who have joined peer groups as part of a UN Trust Fund-supported violence prevention programme for ethnic minority women in India. UN Women manages the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women on behalf of the UN system.



“Together, we can be game-changers. With the women and girls, men and boys of the world, we can make the 21<sup>st</sup> century one of irreversible progress—for women and all humanity.”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director

This landmark publication was made possible through the hard work of many dedicated people, too numerous to name. We wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all UN Women staff, donors, partners, beneficiaries, young women, and many others who contributed to this book and helped us share our journey and our vision. A special word of thanks to Professor Fiona MacKay of the University of Edinburgh for insights that laid the foundation of this publication.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

FOREWORD	6
PREFACE	8
INTRODUCTION	10
UN WOMEN AT A GLANCE	12
GENDER EQUALITY – A GLOBAL OVERVIEW	16
<b>PART 1. THE JOURNEY OF UN WOMEN</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> THE PATH TO UN WOMEN	24
<b>Chapter 2</b> THE EARLY YEARS	32
<b>PART 2. UN WOMEN IN ACTION</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> MEMORABLE MOMENTS	42
<b>Chapter 2</b> IN HER WORDS: STORIES	52
<b>Chapter 3</b> THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS	68
<b>Chapter 4</b> CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS	74
<b>Chapter 5</b> WE ARE UN WOMEN	78
<b>PART 3. THE FUTURE</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> I AM GENERATION EQUALITY	86
<b>Chapter 2</b> CONCLUSION	96



Ardo Djibo Fadimatou, 64, lost eight of her 15 children during the conflict in Central African Republic. She speaks for the over 12,000 women in the Gado refugee camp in Cameroon, as their elected President and leads meetings in UN Women's Social Cohesion Space.

# FOREWORD

“With the birth of UN Women, we welcome a powerful new agent for progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment ... true gender equality should be our shared legacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

When I stood in the UN General Assembly Hall on 24 February 2011 to celebrate the formal launch of UN Women, I felt an incredible sense of pride knowing that the hard work, dedication, and struggles of so many people were finally coming to fruition.

As UN Secretary-General, I witnessed trying environments for women and girls first-hand everywhere I went. I realized early on that despite the best efforts of the UN to improve the situation for women, it simply wasn’t enough.

So, standing at the famous podium on that memorable New York day, I felt like a proud new father; both overcome with emotion and deeply honored to have streamlined the UN’s critical work on women’s issues and launch UN Women to help deliver on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Ten years on, UN Women continues to represent the most ambitious effort the UN has ever undertaken to accelerate actions to achieve gender equality. And my pride continues to grow every day as I have witnessed its first steps, inspiring growth, and multitude of successes.

**UN Women is the true global champion for women and girls. And while it is just a decade old, it has already achieved so much: UN Women has helped integrate women in political participation and leadership roles at all levels in every continent. It has scaled-up economic empowerment and inclusion. It has fought to end violence against women and girls. And it is leading the response to the COVID-19 “shadow pandemic” that has created and magnified socio-economic gender inequalities.**

However, despite these successes, we must go further to shatter the barriers to gender equality at all levels, everywhere.

Today, as the international community faces historic challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating climate change, and increasing nationalism, we now need to scale-up our efforts in fulfilling UN Women’s guiding vision and mandate.

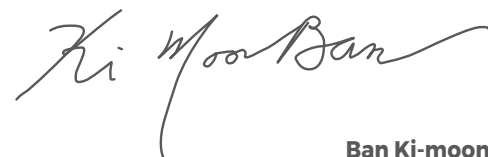
This is particularly important as the empowerment of women is essential to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by their 2030 target date.

**Indeed, we should remember that across the world, women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of conflict, inequality, poverty, and climate change. These major global challenges are inherently interconnected, and the empowerment of women and girls is a prerequisite to our global response to such challenges.**

To construct a sustainable future for all people and our planet, UN Women must continue to fiercely advocate for the rights, health, education, and wellbeing of all women and girls in every corner of the world.

I am confident that UN Women will lead the fight for our next generations and help illuminate the path towards our shared future.

This is a future that is equitable, peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable; one where true gender equality defines our common legacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.



**Ban Ki-moon**  
Former United Nations Secretary-General  
September 2020



# PREFACE

“UN Women is the spearhead of the global campaign to uproot and upend discrimination and violence against women, and to ensure this half of humanity has an equal say and seat at the table moving forward.”

I congratulate UN Women on the first decade of their work, and their leadership in mobilizing the United Nations system to deliver for women and girls.

The past 10 years have seen UN Women spearhead global, evidence-based campaigns and programmes to uproot and upend discrimination and violence against women, and to advocate for half of humanity to have an equal say at every decision-making table, be it in peace processes, parliament, or the boardroom.

As we mark this anniversary, it is a moment to take stock of where we are, and importantly, where we need to be.

Discrimination continues to permeate every sphere of the lives of women and girls, at tremendous personal and global costs. Inequality is not limited to poor economies, war zones or restrictive regimes. It lurks in the fine print of legislation and lingers in attitudes everywhere, deeply embedded in social, financial and political systems worldwide. It is writ large at the United Nations General Assembly, where just a handful of national leaders are women.

From conflict zones to long established democracies, women continue to fight for safety, education and opportunities for inclusion and

leadership. The global gender gap has narrowed, but it persists. Not a single country has yet achieved equality in rights, participation and pay.

We are at a watershed moment. The digital revolution is expanding access to information and opportunities – but there are troubling signs that it could reinforce discrimination and exclusion. This is the time to pick up the pace on our efforts, to bridge gaps, and to make a generational shift. Young people, and young women in particular, are mobilizing for greater inclusion, equality, climate justice and human rights for all. As we mark 25 years of the Beijing Platform for Action and ten years of UN Women, we should see this milestone as an opportunity to acknowledge the power and drive of the next generation and to journey beside them, supporting their transformative leadership.

COVID-19 is a stark reminder that the gains made on gender equality have shallow roots and are easily destabilized, and of the violence and insecurity that is a daily experience for too many and has only escalated in these past months.

Yet the crisis also highlights the promise of inclusive leadership, as women leaders guide nations to safety with policies based on evidence and inclusion. Women are rising for all. We must emerge from this crisis with women's leadership

front and centre. This will require us to take bold actions, including quotas and targeted measures, recognizing that equal representation is a fundamental human right. Until women's voices are fully heard in the hallways of power and politics, policies will continue to be based on the opinions and experiences of just half the population.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will require the strength, capacity, and expertise of the whole of humanity. Achieving gender equality is a prerequisite for all the SDGs, which is why I describe Goal 5 as the SDG 'docking station'.

The United Nations is totally committed to supporting gender equality and women's rights, from the highest levels and with the expertise and leadership of UN Women. I look forward to continuing our work together for the equal rights and dignity of women and girls everywhere.

**Amina J. Mohammed**  
Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations  
(on behalf of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system)  
September 2020



## INTRODUCTION

“As we celebrate the first decade of UN Women, we acknowledge the responsibility that accompanies a coming of age. We are grateful to reach this threshold; we cross it with the confidence of experience gained and the knowledge that there is still much more to achieve for the women and girls of the world.”

A decade has passed since the landmark establishment of UN Women- an unprecedented joining of United Nations forces into a single body committed to half of humanity. Marking the milestone through this book allows us to pause a moment to reflect on 10 years of achievements, the gaps and challenges we have faced, and the road ahead to gender equality.

Across the world there is a formidable movement of articulate women. Young and older are working with skill and passion to take forward and protect the advances made for women’s rights. They are adamantly resisting any erosion of those rights.

Marking this anniversary during the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the centrality of gender equality to sustainable progress. Women’s resilient and capable responses have demonstrated over and over again what we bring. We are frontline health care providers and experts, national leaders steering countries effectively through economic and social crisis, and parents finding ways to manage and overcome multiple and simultaneous challenges at home. We have flagged where there has been unacceptable cost to women and girls of shouldering these loads. And we have proposed the solutions needed, which have women and girls at their centre.

The drive for the next decade of action rests on massive building blocks that we have been able to put in place with the support of our many partners. These are the foundations for the progress that is critical to realize women’s rights, backed by good laws and policies. We have seen how we must together occupy more space as leaders in the key decision-making arenas, from parliaments and peace tables to corporate and editorial boards. We have seen and shown how vital it is for women to have viable alternatives that redistribute the burden of unpaid care at home. And we have set out women’s need for decent work and income, starting with education, and including the ability to plan their families. We have worked with allies across the world to raise the profile of violence against women and girls in its many public and private forms, from domestic abuse to child marriage, from cyberbullying to rape, in peace and in conflict, and to mobilize the resources to tackle change.

The same forces that take us towards an equal world hold the potential for positive impact on boys and men too. A society that moves away from narrow and harmful stereotypes of masculinity, away from violence and harassment of those who dare to step out from constricting gender norms, identities and roles, is a better society for all.

We know that together, we have the power to make permanent changes to our lives and our world. UN Women is proud to be the global leader that brings us together and galvanizes action to create a more equal reality for everyone.

In its second decade, UN Women will lengthen its stride to close gaps faster and drive change that is widespread across generations. We will mobilize simultaneously from the ground up and from the top down. We will value equally the voices and strength of our grassroots allies just as we heed our Member States, and work in every sector of society on our common goals, from sports fields to stock exchanges.

In my first address as Executive Director, I quoted an African proverb: **If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.** UN Women does not walk alone, and we thank all those sharing our journey-- Member States, civil society organizations, the business sector, faith leaders, men and boys. Above all, we thank the women and girls with whom we walk and whose bright future leads us forward.



**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Executive Director of UN Women  
September 2020



# UN WOMEN AT A GLANCE

UN Women connects people, issues and ideas behind one shared purpose: making gender equality a reality in our lifetime. It is the only entity in the United Nations system solely dedicated to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.

## WHO WE ARE

UN Women is the trusted global UN agency for gender equality, working to develop and uphold standards and create an environment in which every woman and girl can exercise her human rights and live up to her full potential.

With over 2,000 staff representing more than 150 nationalities and operations in all continents, UN Women works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide.

UN Women draws on its collective historic relationship with feminist movements to push the frontiers of public debate, create partnerships, enable new thinking, and propel global action.

## UN WOMEN LOCATIONS ACROSS GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS



“Gender equality and women empowerment are our most powerful solutions to achieve sustainable development. UN Women’s flagship programmes to foster peace and security, greater resilience to crises, governance and political empowerment, economic development and elimination of violence against women demonstrate the power of women’s rights to address the key challenges of our time.”

Yannick Glemarec, Former Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

UN Women works to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality and stands behind women’s equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on

## 4 strategic priorities to ensure that:

- 1 Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems
- 2 Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy
- 3 All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence
- 4 Women and girls have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action



# A FEW KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF UN WOMEN ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE DECADE

In recent years, we have:<sup>1</sup>



Secured inclusion of gender equality perspectives in **Rio+20, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement** and other key intergovernmental agreements.

Enhanced women’s economic participation, entrepreneurship and business skills with training for **100,000 women** per year.



Reached more than **270 million people in 180 countries** with Civil society partnerships focused on addressing multiple deprivation and marginalization.

Trained **25,000 people** on improving gender data collection and use.

Advanced gender-responsive disasters policies covering **181 million people**. Reached **83% of humanitarian teams** with our expertise.



Helped strengthen legislation to end violence against women in more than **60 countries**.

Strengthened essential services to respond to violence against women in nearly **60 countries**, and scaled-up support for women and girl survivors in **49**.

Engaged **660 million people** on social media with **106 accounts in 17 languages**.



Enabled **160,000 women** to access legal aid within two years alone.



Provided training on women’s human rights for **18,000 justice personnel** in 54 countries.

Successfully supported **175 legal reforms** and **25 constitutional reforms** to strengthen women’s rights.



Supported more than **30,000** aspiring women political candidates with the skills to run for office.

Deployed **130 experts** to investigate conflict-related sexual violence. Work with inquiry commissions and war crimes investigations has led to ground-breaking prosecution of gender-related crimes under international law.

Doubled grants to civil society organizations to a total of **US\$ 35 million**.



Reviewed progress on gender equality with **102 countries** and strengthened gender equality accountability and reporting throughout UN systems.

Engaged more than **3 million men and boys** with commitments to gender equality and women’s rights through HeForShe.



Helped **55 countries** eliminate discriminatory laws on land, inheritance and other economic issues and adopt policies for women’s economic participation.



# GENDER EQUALITY

## GLOBAL OVERVIEW

UN Women has supported laws and reforms that have affected the lives of more than 1 billion women in 2019 alone. Alongside some progress in key areas, deep disparities remain between and within countries, and all hurdles are markedly higher in rural areas, for minority groups, and for girls and women with disabilities.

### WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women lag behind in access to economic opportunities and rights. While 94% of men aged 25-54 were part of the global workforce in 2018, only 63% of women were, a rate which has changed very little over the past 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

Globally, women do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men, and this ratio increases to six times as much for women in Northern Africa and Western Asia.<sup>3</sup> Women's access to employment tends to decrease when they get married and have children. Only 52% of women married or in a union are in the labour force, and partly as a result, women aged 25-34 are 18% more likely to live in poverty than men of the same age.<sup>4</sup>

Women are over-represented in informal and vulnerable employment with low earnings and security. Globally, a quarter of economically active women are engaged in agriculture, and in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan

Africa, this rises to over 60% of all working women. Yet, women are far less likely to be agricultural land holders, holding only 13% of land rights globally.<sup>5</sup>

Women hold just 27% of managerial positions in most of the world. Only 7.4% of Fortune 500 companies have a woman CEO<sup>6</sup>, and the worldwide gender pay gap remains an average of 20%.

Many inequalities are anchored in laws. In 2018, 104 countries still had laws barring women from specific jobs, affecting 2.7 billion women. 59 countries do not criminalize sexual harassment in the workplace, and men can legally prevent their wives from working in 18 countries.<sup>7</sup>

Maternity benefits coverage remains 41% on global average, forcing mothers to choose between health and livelihood.<sup>8</sup>





## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS<sup>9</sup>

Girls and women are exposed to violence in all settings. 144 countries have laws against domestic violence but enforcement and legal recourse are lacking.

In most countries with available data, less than 40% of women who experience violence seek help and only 10% turn to the police. An estimated 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner, with some national studies showing much higher numbers.

Of the 87,000 women intentionally killed in 2017, it is estimated that 50,000 were killed by intimate partners or family members. This means 137 women across the world are killed by someone from their own family every day.

At least 200 million women and girls aged 15-49 have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) in the 30 countries with representative data. In most of these countries, the majority of girls were cut before age five.

Approximately 15 million adolescent girls have experienced forced intercourse or other sexual acts. In most countries, they are most at risk from a current or former partner.

**“Enhanced political and economic empowerment is needed to break the stereotypes of women as vulnerable victims, or mere ‘beneficiaries’, and to ensure that women as equal citizens can take their place alongside men in determining the directions and outcomes of sustainable development in the coming decade.”**

*Carolyn Hannan, Former Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women in the UN (DAW)*



## WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY, AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Women and girls face heightened risks in conflict and humanitarian crises due to the breakdown of normal protection structures and support and increased care-related tasks. Increasingly protracted crises urgently require a gender-based approach and funding. Only 29% of the funds needed to address gender-based violence in humanitarian crises was raised in 2019, leaving a funding gap of US\$ 132 million.

Gender-based violence increases in crisis settings, even doubling to 70%.

Child marriage is also more likely. More than one-third of Syrian refugee women between

the ages of 20 and 24 had been married before the age of 18, and child marriage in Syria has quadrupled since the crisis.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, only 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories in major peace processes. About seven out of every ten peace processes did not include women mediators or women signatories at all. Worldwide, the proportion of peace agreements with gender equality provisions has only increased from 14% to 22% in the last 20 years, and between 2015-2019, only 11% of ceasefire agreements included gender provisions.<sup>11</sup>

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION<sup>12</sup>

Representation of women in politics has doubled over the past decade yet remains low, with women currently holding one in four seats (24.3%) of national parliaments, and one-third in local governance bodies. The 80 countries with quotas for women show a higher representation of women than countries without, 30% and 18% respectively.

Rwanda has the highest number of women parliamentarians worldwide, with 61.3% of seats in the lower house. Yet in 27 countries women make up only 10% of parliament, and three chambers in 2019 had not a single woman. The higher up in hierarchy, the fewer women there are.

Women make up 50% or more of cabinets in only 14 countries; only 11 countries have a woman as a head of state and 12 as a head of government. The numbers reflect public attitudes that must change; globally, 53% of men and 43% of women believe men make better political leaders.<sup>13</sup>



## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

REGIONS  
IN FOCUS

UN Women's work over the past decade has had deep impact across the globe. By spurring action, focusing resources, raising awareness and increasing coordination between powerful entities like governments, international institutions, civil society movements and global businesses, UN Women has been able to profile, quantify and address some of the biggest obstacles women and girls face to realizing their rights with definitive research and policy leadership on critical issues, from violence against women to the burden of unpaid care.

**UN Women played a significant role in these examples of victories for women across the six regions in which we work.**

#### 4 Latin America and the Caribbean <sup>19</sup>

- › The Latin American "Model Protocol" guiding the justice system on investigating gender-related killings has been adopted in Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala, Colombia, and Uruguay.
- › The region boasts the world's highest percentage of women parliamentarians (30.9%), as well as gender parity in the cabinets of Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, El Salvador and Peru.
- › Colombia, Uruguay, Paraguay and Mexico have implemented gender-responsive care policies to reduce the unpaid care burden that falls almost exclusively on women. The national care system in Uruguay has become a model for the region.

#### 3 Europe and Central Asia <sup>18</sup>

- › Moldova took a big step forward in 2016 with Law No. 71 which established gender quotas for political party lists and cabinet nominees and led to amending another 15 laws.
- › In Tajikistan, persistent advocacy persuaded the country to raise the age of marriage to 18.
- › In Kyrgyzstan, women's pressure to stop bride-kidnapping led to outlawing the practice in 2013. Kyrgyz women continue to demand the law be implemented in full.
- › Fifteen years after the conflict in Kosovo, a decade of advocacy by UN Women and civil society finally achieved legal recognition of women survivors of violence in 2014.

#### 6 Arab States/North Africa <sup>20</sup>

- › Yemen ranks 151 out of 152 for women's national political participation. Now six of seven political parties have agreed to enhance membership and leadership of women and advocate for women's rights.
- › Arab states convened representatives of governments, employers and workers in Jordan to discuss equitable labour. Several countries committed to establishing minimum wage, equalizing pay and revising laws.
- › In Tunisia, years of efforts culminated in 2017<sup>21</sup> with the country's first dedicated national law to combat violence against women. The law covers physical economic, sexual, political and psychological violence, and provides mechanisms to support survivors.

#### 5 Asia Pacific <sup>17</sup>

- › Over 10,000 mostly female market vendors across Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are now represented through Market Vendors Associations to ensure marketplaces are safe for women.
- › In Afghanistan, 1,500 survivors of violence against women received culturally sensitive and age-appropriate lifesaving services.
- › In Nepal, over 14,000 women won various local seats in 2017, 46% of them from the excluded Dalit caste, with 6% winning the four highest positions in rural and other municipalities.

#### 2 Eastern and Southern Africa <sup>15</sup>

- › In Kenya, the new Women's Empowerment Index<sup>16</sup> is the country's first comprehensive and systematic measurement of female empowerment and provides data for informing equality measures.
- › UN Women has partnered with top global companies, the De Beers Group, Standard Bank and Coca-Cola to build capacity for women micro-entrepreneurs resulting in more than 25,000 women acquiring skills to grow and sustain their small enterprises.
- › Across Southern Africa, 144 male tavern owners joined the HeForShe campaign and declared their taverns and environs violence-free and safe for women. Over 5,000 male patrons attended fortnightly dialogues on reducing gender-based violence.
- › South Africa has adopted a National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide and adopted a policy framework for addressing gender-based violence in the post-school sector.

#### 1 West and Central Africa <sup>14</sup>

- › UN Women is building a stronger ecosystem for women agri-entrepreneurs, including through institutional strengthening of more than 200 women cooperatives in Senegal, Mali, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria. Through the Climate Smart Agriculture programme, UN Women helped increase the value of the products of over 20,000 women up to 10 times.
- › A strong movement of women to end conflict in the Sahel is being built through a women's regional advocacy platform. Over 6,000 women now have the skills to actively engage in preventing community conflicts and over 8,000 security personnel were trained on protecting women from GBV in conflict.
- › A growing movement of more than 350,000 HeForShe supporters including heads of State (Ghana, Senegal), influential traditional and religious leaders and youth are challenging gender discriminatory attitudes and practices to change societal norms around GBV and child marriage.

## PART 1

# THE JOURNEY OF UN WOMEN

**“It is time to stop trying to change women, and start changing the systems that prevent them from achieving their potential. Our power structures have evolved gradually over thousands of years. One further evolution is long overdue. The 21<sup>st</sup> century must be the century of women’s equality.”**

**António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General addressing The New School, New York, February 2020**

Janete Dantas records the eggs, chicken, fruit and vegetables produced on the small farm she runs near Itaóca, in São Paulo state, Brazil, and how much it adds to her family’s income. Projects like these have obliged the Government to acknowledge the role of women in Brazilian agriculture.

Aslam Biswas, left, is a transgender woman from Khulna, Bangladesh, which was devastated by Cyclone Amphan in 2020. After losing her source of income and being shunned by locals, she received cash support from UN Women, which she needed for essential commodities as well as medicine.

## CHAPTER 1

# THE PATH TO UN WOMEN



“UN Women has been an inspiration to change the direction of my life for the last 10 years, they are inclusive, forward looking and always looking to challenge the status quo! Generation Equality Campaign is only one example. The possibilities of UN Women are limitless; the challenge is making sure we globally come together in the spirit of abundance rather than scarcity, and engage at all levels with a collaborative shared leadership model. UN Women can't do it alone; we as civil society must stand with them to accomplish what is needed!”

Houry Geudelekian, Chair at NGO Committee on the Status of Women (NGO CSW/NY)

In 2010, UN Women became the newest UN entity, ushering in a new era for advancing gender equality and women's rights. Activists from across the globe celebrated when Member States unanimously voted for the creation of UN Women by adopting its founding Resolution 64/89 on 2 July 2010. It was a message to the world that gender equality had finally moved from the margins to the centre of policymaking.

## THE ORIGINS OF UN WOMEN

At face value, it appeared the UN possessed the structures and entities to address gender equality and women's rights issues. However, they consistently lacked resources, stature, commitment from senior management, operational capacity, and coherence. Women's organizations and UN staff were increasingly critical of a system which set up structures to advance women's empowerment and equality but consistently failed to provide the resources and status required for them to have voice and influence.

Prior to UN Women, there were four UN bodies working on women's rights and gender equality: **UNIFEM** (The United Nations Development Fund for Women), with its programmatic focus and country footprint, had the greatest reach and visibility, but it was marginalized within the UN system and had little political clout and a fraction of the operating budgets of other agencies. **INSTRAW** (The United Nations International Research

and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) oversaw research and training on women's rights. **DAW** (Division for the Advancement of Women) was responsible for supporting the formulation of international standards and policies and coordinated the World Conferences on Women. Finally, **OSAGI** (The Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) supported mainstreaming gender perspective within the UN and amongst Member States, but only had two full-time staff.

After the seminal 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, it became clear that this ambitious gender equality agenda would not be achieved within this fractured UN structure. When the UN moved to improve overall coherence in the mid-2000s, women's rights activists inside and outside of the UN seized the opportunity to ensure reforms would extend to the UN's investment in women's rights.



### A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE PROCESS

**Ambassador Tiina Intelmann** was the Permanent Representative of Estonia in New York and Co-Chair of the System Wide Coherence Panel, and previously Chair of the UNIFEM Advisory Committee. *Ambassador Tiina was convinced that while UNIFEM was doing a great job, its influence was hampered by not being part of decision-making tables of the UN system. The same applied to the other 3 predecessor entities, DAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW. "There was no powerful entity dealing with women in the UN – and the time had come for the UN and Member States to make things right. As a Co-Chair I was not going to leave a stone unturned to make this happen. I am proud I was part of the making of history within the UN System – creation of a new entity for the women of the world."*



### THE BIRTH OF UN WOMEN

*"Today UN Women is regarded as a poster child of the 2006 reform agenda, with a seat at the highest levels of UN decision-making and the ability to end the turf wars among gender entities. That could not have happened without the support and conviction of my staff at UNIFEM and powerful and diverse civil society partners. Without that support, the initiative to create UN Women would not have yielded the result we see today. It is the best example of inside-outside, top-down and bottom-up partnerships for*

*change. And our hope is for a future that delivers an even stronger, better resourced and more impactful UN Women that builds on the legacy from which it was born: a legacy that emerges from feminist organizing in every part of the globe and that re-imagines partnerships based on equitable sharing of power to ensure that our planet and its people survive and thrive."*

**Noeleen Heyzer, Former Under-Secretary-General, UNESCAP (2007-2015), Former Executive Director, UNIFEM (1994-2007)**

# UN WOMEN'S CREATION

1946

The UN Division for the Advancement of Women, DAW, (originally the Section on the Status of Women) was established.



1947

First meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.



1975

First World Conference on Women, Mexico City.

1976

UNIFEM and INSTRAW established.

1995

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the Beijing Platform for Action.



1997

**> March**  
OSAGI established, headed by an Assistant Secretary-General for Gender Equality.

**> July**  
UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced reforms that enable the gender equality entities to develop inter-agency mechanisms.



2004

UNIFEM calls for an independent assessment to determine if it can fulfill its mandate. Recommendations range from independence to merging.

2006

**> March**  
Women's organizations and UNIFEM gather over 1 million signatures demanding gender equality be part of the UN reform agenda. They succeed.

**> November**  
The Panel's "Delivering as One" report recommends consolidating the gender entities.



2007

**> March**  
Global women's activists launch campaign for Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) in the UN.



2009

**> March**  
UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presents details on "Options for Strengthening the Institutional Arrangements for supporting gender equality and women's empowerment."

**> September**  
UN General Assembly endorses the creation of a composite gender entity (Resolution A/RES/63/311)

**> November**  
UNIFEM, DAW, OSAGI and INSTRAW collaborate with other UN agencies on a merger outline.



2010

**> July**  
UN General Assembly adopts Resolution A/64/L.56, formally establishing UN Women.

**> September**  
Former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, is appointed Head of UN Women.



2011

**> February**  
UN Women is officially launched during the 55th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.



## ABOUT THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

In 1995, representatives from 189 countries convened in Beijing, China, for the Fourth World Conference on Women. For two weeks, government delegates laboured on a document of agreed written targets towards achieving gender equality. More than 17,000 participants and 30,000 non-governmental activists joined for the opening, with civil society advocates following the process closely with inputs in real time. The momentous conference produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), defining 12 critical areas of concern and concrete actions for each. It has been described as "the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights".

“Today's action will do more than simply consolidate United Nations strengths. The new entity will help the UN system to be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.”

Asha-Rose Migiro, Former United Nations Deputy Secretary-General



## THE LAUNCH OF UN WOMEN

**H.E. Joseph Deiss (Switzerland), in his capacity as the President of the General Assembly 65th Session, officially launched UN Women on 24 February 2011. “The creation of UN Women is an expression of the growing realization that we cannot address the world's most complex problems without the wisdom and full participation of women. Complex challenges like conflicts, global warming, migration, pandemics or financial crises will only be solved through true global partnership where men and women both have a voice.”**

Then began a period of transition during which UNIFEM, OSAGI, DAW and INSTRAW were pieced together and their mandates and functions were all transferred to the new entity. From then on, UN Women would be the one governing body to spearhead and drive progress on gender equality and women's rights. A new dawn of progress on women's rights had finally arrived.

### RESOLUTION 64/89 ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON 2 JULY 2010

*“The United-Nations General Assembly decides to establish, by the present resolution, as a composite entity, to be operational by 1 January 2011, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN-Women, by consolidating and transferring to the Entity the existing mandates and functions of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, as well as those of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, to function as a secretariat and also to carry out operational activities at the country level.”*





## THE EARLY YEARS OF UN WOMEN



“We are relentless! The GEAR Campaign demonstrated feminist collaboration to co-create UN Women. This is the hallmark of CSOs who bring diverse experience and inter-generational expertise to the table. We drive UN Women’s commitment to partnership with the women’s rights and feminist movement. That way, policy commitments become transformative reality - in our homes, communities, and countries.”

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Member of UN Women’s Global Civil Society Advisory Group, and Chair of the Board of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC); Member of the GEAR campaign for establishing UN Women

Artists from a widows’ association in Comalapa pause for a photo in front of a memorial they are painting for the 200,000 victims of Guatemala’s 36-year armed conflict. UN Women supports the National Widows Coordinator of Guatemala to advance women’s rights to truth, justice and reparation to break the cycle of violence.



## THE FIRST 100 DAYS

When Ban Ki-moon appointed Michelle Bachelet – a former head of state - as UN Women’s first Executive Director in October 2010, it was a step toward meeting the aspiration to have a high-level, influential voice at the head of the organization. It also increased the pressure on UN Women to be up and running quickly, as Madame Bachelet wanted to articulate concrete achievements in the first 100 days.

The enormous energy to reform the ways in which the UN dealt with women’s rights and gender equality had created high expectations of UN Women, and several big challenges. The new organization would have to be able to

both push new policies and processes at the UN level, stay in touch with women’s needs on the ground, and effectively connect the two.

It was also necessary to ensure that all UN bodies would indeed be guided by the one expert entity on gender equality issues. Among other things, this required guaranteeing that unlike its predecessors, UN Women would have a seat at the table in all decision-making spaces at the UN. And finally, the new organization would have to ensure it had adequate resources to deliver. UN Women estimated it would need an annual budget of at least US\$ 500 million to fulfill its mandate, more than double the combined resources of its four predecessors.



### TEACHING THE WORLD

*It was late 2011 when Clemencia Muñoz arrived in Santo Domingo to head the newly formed UN Women Training Centre, which was to build on the work of INSTRAW.*

*“When I arrived, there was a beautiful building and a lot of computers from the 1980s and cubicles for 40 people. There was no training centre. And not much clarity on what a training centre would look like, other than a global mandate and the need to work on UN Women strategic areas. I had a budget of US\$ 1.5 million and 28 people whose contracts were ending in the next months.*

*We started by exploring key questions: ‘What is training for gender equality?’ How will a UN training center for gender equality be different from other UN offerings?’ We wanted to re-politicize training, move from transactional to transformative training, address inequitable power relations.*

*We developed face-to-face, blended and self-paced online courses that have grown exponentially in popularity and diversity, with steady growth every year since 2014. Quite an achievement!”*

**Clemencia Muñoz, Head of Training Centre and Country Representative at UN Women**



## VOICES FROM THE PIONEERS



"We saw some advantages immediately. One of the key positives was that we got a full-fledged UN Women office in Nepal. Before that, we had to deal with the regional office in Delhi for everything. UN Women's voice became more vibrant in terms of leading national level advocacy on women's issues. It dealt with ministries directly. It lifted the women's rights profile higher. Those were exciting times."

Bandana Rana: CEDAW Committee member and long-time advocate for women's rights in Nepal and globally, who played a key role in securing high-level political support for creating UN Women.



"As soon as Madame Bachelet arrived and started attending the Secretary General's Senior Management Team meetings, we started getting internal briefing notes with confidential information about countries in conflict, different perspectives on how the UN should support peace-building, and other important insider political insights. That was an 'aha!' moment for me. We had been operating in the dark for years, working without this essential information because we were not represented on the Senior Management Team. It made all the difference to our work on the ground and our capacity to mobilize the UN system for women's rights."

Joanne Sandler: Former UNIFEM and UN Women Deputy Executive Director – feminist activist and researcher.



"Even in the early days of UN Women in Africa, it did quite well on issues such as ending violence against women or gender responsive budgeting. Where we needed to see more action was on contentious issues, such as LGBT rights and political space for civil society. There was also need for UN Women to simplify partnership strategies. Complex calls for proposals drove away the smaller organizations that are often at the forefront of change. All this changed with the coming of UN Women."

Florence Butegwa: Representative to the African Union and the UN-Economic Commission for Africa in the early years of UN Women, previously of UNIFEM.



"Delivering UN Women was a long, often frustrating process. But advocates – in and outside of the UN – saw the huge potential of a stronger UN body advancing women's rights and empowerment, and kept pushing. We learned to move the bureaucracy and avoid becoming a political football in nation states' disputes. Once created, UN Women faced enormous expectations without enough resources, but built on the strength and desires of a global constituency who wanted it to succeed."

Charlotte Bunch: Founding Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University and co-chair of the GEAR campaign for the creation of UN Women.



"At UNIFEM, we'd been working on the gender dimensions of HIV and AIDS for more than a decade but were refused entry into the UNAIDS partnership because we "were too small." Shortly after we became UN Women and Madame Bachelet arrived, doors opened and we were immediately encouraged to seek co-sponsorship status in the joint programme, even though our resources hadn't changed significantly. It was an immediate sea change."

Nazneen Damji: Senior Advisor, Gender Equality, HIV and Health, UN Women.



"I'm very proud of the work we did as UN Women strongly advocating for a stand-alone goal on gender equality within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Importantly, we were successful in getting a goal that addressed the root causes of gender inequality and systemic discrimination. This focus also helped us work better across the silos. Focusing on policy positions and policy change worked."

John Hendra: Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women 2011-2014.

## WHERE'S THE MONEY FOR GENDER EQUALITY?

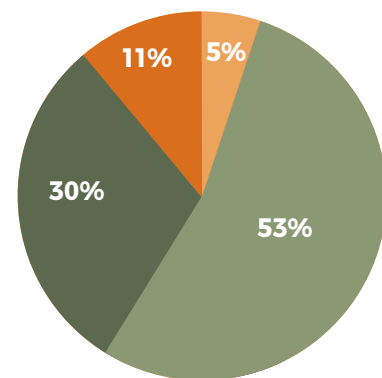
Forged within the context of UN reforms, UN Women was living proof of the value assigned to coordinated delivery for women's equality and empowerment. And yet, three years after its establishment, UN Women's resources only reached about half of the minimal US\$ 500 million initial goal needed<sup>22</sup>, which was not achieved until its 10<sup>th</sup> year — a resource gap faced the world over by women's organizations at all levels. Financing dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment is rare, stalled at around 4% of OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) bilateral aid, and as a secondary objective is not yet high enough, at 34%. In terms of total private equity and venture capital funding, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) estimates that only 7% goes to female-led businesses.

Yet this lack of support for contributing the funds needed to help achieving gender equality and women's empowerment makes no economic sense: investing in women brings measurable returns – socially, economically and financially. Gender inequality costs the world some US\$ 16.2 trillion in earnings, by the World Bank's estimate – but despite this compelling business case, progress lags far behind ambition.

Yet there is hope. The Climate agenda grew with momentum because it coalesced around targets and indicators, and launched new financial instruments, such as green bonds, to fund the required investment to achieve those targets.

To close our own funding gap, and the overall gender equality gap, UN Women aims to replicate the climate strategy to encourage new financial instruments that will fund the promise of a more equal world, and we are renewing our focus on Financing for Gender Equality. We have deepened our relationships with Development Banks and raised the visibility of gender lens investing at a time when the consequences for being left behind are extremely high.

This is mission critical as we Build Back Better from the global pandemic. Pre-COVID, women made up only 41% of the global workforce, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the majority of the jobs lost during COVID were women's jobs, given women's over-representation in hardest-hit industries. More than ever, our response must go beyond proving to traditional donors the value of investing in women as we ensure availability of resources for achieving gender equality.<sup>23</sup>



- Flows not screened against the DAC marker
- Integrated gender equality
- Gender not a focus
- Dedicated to gender equality

Note: Figure based on partial reporting against DAC gender equality policy marker by 11 multilateral organizations  
Source: (OECD, 2019) Creditor Reporting System  
<https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS>



### PARTNERS FOR PEACE

*In 2013, Belen Sanz Luque became UN Women Country Director in Colombia, and was immediately presented with a key opportunity: After nearly 50 years of civil war, Colombia was once again entering into a peace process between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia People's Army (FARC).*

*"UN Women had a strong interest and a lot of experience in using Security Council resolutions like 1325 to support local women peace advocates and to claim a place at negotiating tables. Our team seized the opportunity and Michelle Bachelet traveled to Colombia to meet with President Santos. Then doors started to open for women's voices. The Government of Colombia asked the UN to coordinate consultations with civil society and UN Women jumped on the opportunity. When the final agreement was reached, there were almost 100 provisions ensuring gender equality is central to every aspect of the peace agreement."*

**Belen Sanz Luque, UN Women Country Director in Mexico and former UN Women Country Director in Colombia**



### BUILDING OUT THE UN WOMEN OFFICE IN UKRAINE

*"The starting point for UN Women's work in Ukraine was not promising. It was the only country in the European context that had armed conflict. There were a lot of resources for humanitarian and immediate needs, but structural reform was badly needed to deliver.*

*A gender advisor to the UN system position was established. I arrived with confusing terms of reference. I didn't have an office, I worked on my own laptop, and I was my own driver. I was supposed to limit myself to advising the country team under humanitarian action. But as soon*

*as I arrived – although I saw the horrors of what was happening to women in conflict affected areas – I was skeptical of our capacity to be effective as a humanitarian actor. As the new UN agency in town, I was doubtful that we could leverage resources from traditional donors. So, I changed our focus: with women's rights activists and government, we designed a longer-term path to establish UN Women as a part of the renewed Ukraine and its new vision of development. That paid off."*

**Anastasia Divinskaya, first UN Women Country Director in Ukraine and currently UN Women Country Director in Brazil**

## PART 2

# UN WOMEN IN ACTION



**“UN Women opens UN spaces for young feminist activists to highlight concerning issues, share the work we achieved, and foster connections. I received a UNW scholarship for CSW59; this convening of women’s rights advocates played a critical role in my journey.”**

**Sophia Pierre-Antoine, PSEA Officer at IOM, YWCA member, and former Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of FRIDA Young Feminist Fund**

UN Women distributes urgently needed aid to 144 families during a 2016 emergency mission near eastern Mosul, Iraq, at a camp for those internally displaced by anti-terrorist military operations. UN Women’s ‘necessity kits’ contain basic provisions for families as well as feminine hygiene products.

# MEMORABLE MOMENTS

“In every girl there is a President, in every woman a Nobel Laureate and peace builder. Humanity cannot afford to continue squandering this treasure at an unspeakable direct cost to women, and a ruinous price for the global economy, sustainability and peace.

UN Women is effecting an unprecedented sea-change of global policy to ensure women have an equal, active role in shaping the decisions and policies impacting us and humanity at large.”

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Nobel Peace Laureate (2011), former President of Liberia and Africa's first elected female head of state

In this chapter, we pay tribute to a fraction of the memorable moments which mark the first decade of UN Women at the helm of the women's movement across the globe.



## FIGHTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITH HELP FROM BIG TECH

In June 2020, UN Women partnered with the “Big Five” tech giants to provide help for the spike in reported domestic violence, or “the shadow pandemic”, during COVID-19 lockdowns. Google linked to UN Women’s main site through its COVID-19 information hub, and dozens of UN Women country offices contributed to the help repository on Facebook, both providing essential support and information for women experiencing violence in isolation. Twitter too launched a #ThereIsHelp with relevant information and hotline numbers.

## GLOBAL LEADERS COMMIT TO GENDER EQUALITY ACTION

In September 2015, commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPpA), UN Women and the People’s Republic of China convened a summit of over 70 heads of State and Government at the United Nations headquarters: The Global Leaders’ Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: A commitment to action. The leaders delivered personal pledges to address the gaps identified in the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the BDPpA, and announced concrete and measurable actions to kick-start rapid change in their countries. Commitments addressed the most pressing barriers for women, such as increasing investment in gender equality, reaching parity for women at all levels of decision-making, eliminating discriminatory legislation, and addressing harmful social norms.



## UN WOMEN MOVES THE NEEDLE ON CHANGING NORMS AND STEREOTYPES

UN Women has made changing norms and stereotypes a key cross-cutting priority, making significant inroads in the last ten years at multiple levels.

In particular, religious and traditional leaders who perform, promote or defend child marriage and FGM are some of the most powerful custodians of these practices and can therefore be powerful allies to stamp out these violations. By supporting their engagement at community and regional levels, UN Women has been able to help move the needle, for example through supporting the 2018 meeting of traditional leaders from 17 African countries in Kenya, and the 2019 convening of the first African Summit to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Marriage, convened by the governments of Senegal and The Gambia in Dakar.

And at the international level, recognizing the power of the advertising industry, UN Women convened the Unstereotype Alliance, a thought and action platform of advertising industry members that seeks to eradicate harmful gender-based stereotypes in all media and advertising content.

## BLACK WOMEN MARCH AGAINST RACISM IN BRAZIL

On 18 November, 2015 UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka traveled to Brazil in support of some 20,000 women who took part in the Black Women’s March against Racism and Violence in Brasilia. A diverse range of women came from all over the country to draw attention to the double discrimination and violence faced by women of African descent in Brazil on account of their gender and the colour of their skin. She pledged, at the start of International Decade for People of African Descent, that the United Nations would stand with women of African descent, then and in the years to come.



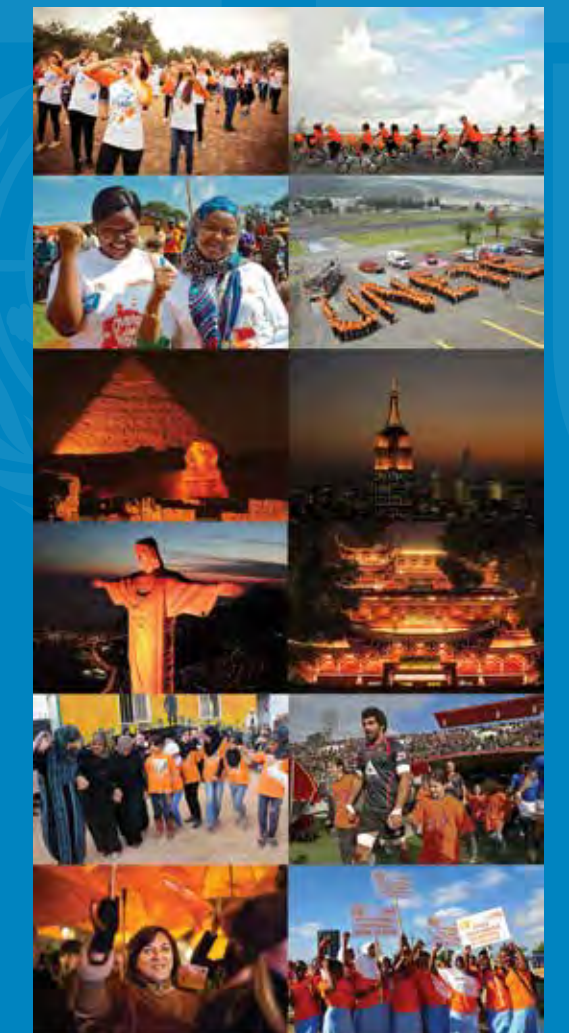
COVID-19 RESPONSE

## TRANSFORMATIVE POLICY INFLUENCE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS

UN Women successfully used its policy advocacy function to make sure that global debates include strong gender perspectives. In 2015, UN Women’s policy paper on the post-2015 development agenda called for a transformative goal on achieving gender equality – this became the basis for Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Five years later, UN Women led the development of a policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women, which became a reference point for advocates and policy-makers worldwide for the response to the pandemic to take gender considerations into account.

## UNITE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Orange the World! Every year during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (25 November to 15 December), UN Women activates the Secretary General’s UNiTE campaign. Through its campaign to “orange” global landmarks, UN Women dramatically brings global attention to violence against women and urges the world to take action.



“Over two years ago, sitting in a dark straw hut in the UN Mission in South Sudan with the Executive Director of UN Women, we heard the harrowing stories of Deborah and Nyamile. A month after the signature of the revitalized peace agreement, which included promising new gender provisions, we heard the challenges and hopes they saw for their country. What we learned from them continues to guide our paths today as we implement the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which reaffirmed the critical role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts.”

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Peace Operations



## UN WOMEN PUSHES FOCUS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

UN Women drew global attention to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, focusing on ensuring that the voices of women are heard at the peace table and in conflict prevention. Part of this strategy was the series of high-profile visits of the Executive Director to numerous conflict-affected countries: Somalia, South Sudan, Colombia, Ukraine, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, as well as peace talks in Havana between the Colombian government and the FARC, Syrian refugees in Za'atari, Jordan and Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

In addition, in 2017, the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) was launched, supported by UN Women and the African Union Commission through the Office of the Special Envoy on WPS. It is a unique continental movement, strengthening efforts towards Africa's transformation into a peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous continent. In four years, AWLN has established 25 national chapters, confirming itself as a key player at the national level. Its strong intergenerational focus fosters the transfer of knowledge and skills between young and senior women.

### TWENTY-SIX YEARS AFTER THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN BEIJING: THE GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM IN MEXICO AND FRANCE

The Generation Equality Forum – a major global gathering to advance gender equality - is convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, in partnership with youth and civil society. The forum kicked off in Mexico in March 2021 and (at time of publication) will culminate in Paris from 30 June to 2 July.

The Forum takes place at a critical moment to reverse rising gender inequality caused by COVID-19. It launches a series of concrete ambitions and transformative actions, fueled by investments, to drive a rapid acceleration in equality, leadership and opportunity for women and girls worldwide.

It will strengthen global movements, and ensure implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Forum will also fuel a significant and lasting coalition for gender equality, offering a vital moment for activists, feminists, young people and allies to achieve transformative change for generations to come.

The Forum's #ActforEqual campaign encourages everyone to take action and make their own commitments for gender equality.





UN WOMEN GOODWILL  
AMBASSADOR,  
EMMA WATSON

*As HeForShe Champions, we are growing a new world, advancing equality by every means at our disposal and using our influence to magnify our impact. Every step takes us forward and the momentum keeps building.*

*Men—I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue too.*

# HeForShe

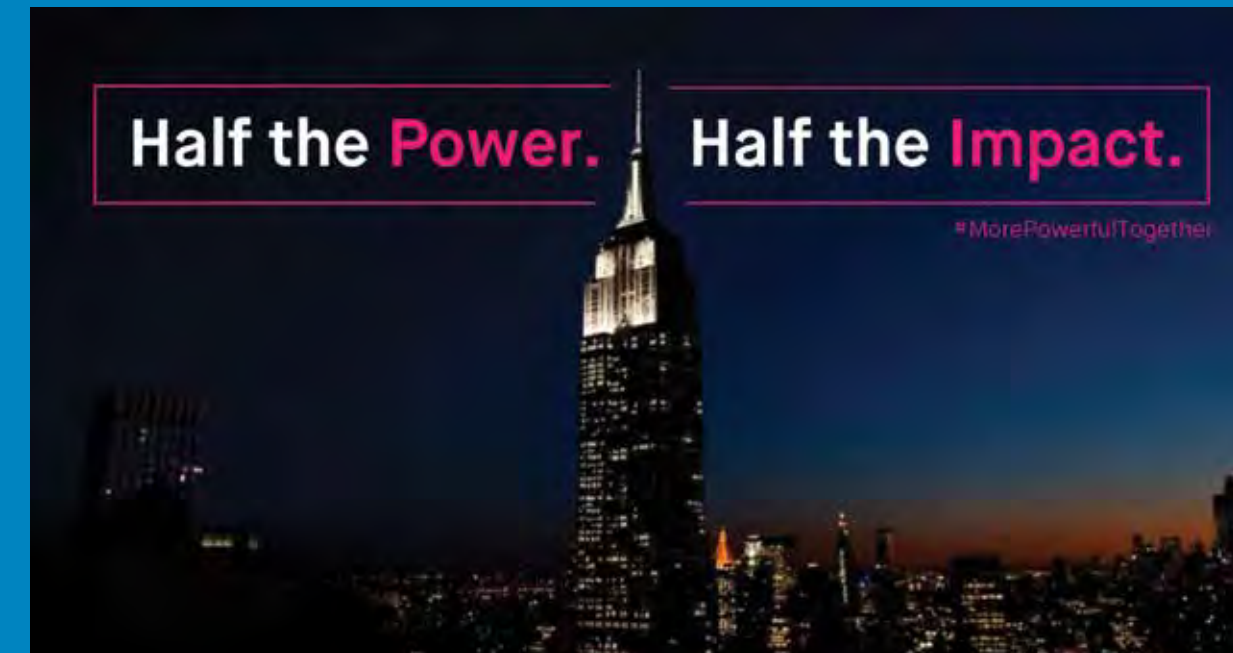
In September 2014, UN Women launched the HeForShe campaign to engage men as change agents and form a global solidarity movement for gender equality. HeForShe invites men and boys to complement the work of the women's movement as equal partners, crafting and implementing a shared vision of gender equality that will benefit all of humanity.



HeForShe has built a community of over 3 million activists through **male-focused positive messaging** and has been actively extending the invitation to men to not only be part of the gender equality conversation, but to be part of the solution.

Malawi committed to lead the charge to end child marriage and in 2016, Parliament amended the Constitution to outlaw child marriage at the highest level of the legal system, protecting girls and boys under age 18 from a violation of their human rights.

**Traditional chief Theresa Kachindamoto** is known for her fierce leadership in annulling over 2,500 child marriages (and counting) and sending girls and boys back to school in Dedza district, in the central region of Malawi.



In 2018, dozens of iconic landmarks in cities around the world, from the Empire State Building in New York City to the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, turned off half their lights to raise awareness for the importance of gender equality. The **#MorePowerfulTogether** campaign created a visual metaphor of the power lost when half the population is eliminated.

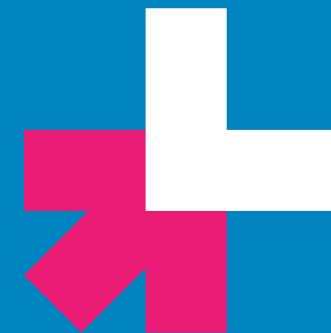
**HeForShe Taverns** is a project that uses taverns as a space for mobilization of men to end gender-based violence, and to promote gender equity, healthier relationships and an improved vision of what masculinity is. The project, which was introduced in South Africa, aims to initiate conversations between men and women about the violence in their communities. It also fights alcohol-related violence and encourages tavern owners to have zero-tolerance to acts of violence within their establishments.



PRIME MINISTER OF SWEDEN,  
STEFAN LÖFVEN

*I am a #HeForShe Impact Champion. Since 2014, I've been proud to lead the world's first feminist government, one that consists of as many female as male ministers. Still, gender equality is not just about equal representation but about equal power—rights, resources and being heard.*

*Sweden has been one of UN Women's strongest supporters, politically and financially. We will maintain this firm support. In its short life span, UN Women has changed the lives of many women and girls, men and boys, giving them tools and greater power to influence their lives.*





## THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is one of the oldest intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations and its second largest annual meeting, and it is the mechanism through which governments monitor implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA). Being the seminal UN intergovernmental forum on gender equality, CSW annually hosts the largest number of NGOs of all the Commissions of the United Nations – over 5200 registered Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) representatives from over 130 countries in 2019 alone, and nearly 35,000 representatives since 2010. Many more participate in parallel CSO events outside of the formal spaces of the Commission.

For two weeks every year, the streets of east mid-town Manhattan and the hallways of the United Nations Secretariat are transformed, as diverse groups of women and young people and activists - representatives of CSOs, gender advocates and UN entities - join Member States to discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the BDPfA. They also collectively push the gender equality agenda to the forefront; Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress.

CSW is instrumental in amplifying and elevating critical women's rights issues in the global arena. It documents the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shapes global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

## MEMORABLE GAINS FROM THE PAST 10 YEARS

### SURVIVOR VOICES

*The successful outcome at the 57th Session of CSW in 2013 pushed the boundaries of the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda on ending violence against women, underscoring the importance of including survivor views. It ended with a historic outcome document in the form of the "Agreed Conclusions" which called on Member States to prevent and end violence against women and girls. For the first time ever, the Conclusions incorporated the voices of survivors in its text, which reflected the strong recognition that violence against women and girls is a human rights violation that warrants significant redress.*



### INDIGENOUS WOMEN

*Managed by the Civil Society Division at UN Women, the Yvonne Hebert Fund is an innovative mechanism to ensure the inclusion of voices of individuals who would otherwise not be able to attend CSW. The programme has funded a kaleidoscope of voices and sectors from around the world: young documentary filmmakers; widows; human rights defenders; differently-abled individuals; survivors of violence. In response to a call by the UN Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues (IASG) and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, UN Women dedicates specific funds to support indigenous people, who often face some of the most pernicious forms of violence and discrimination.*

*"Just the act of wearing our traditional clothes is an expression of resistance."*

*Sonia Maribel Sontay Herrera, Majawil Q'ij Association, Guatemala*



### YOUTH

*UN Women continues to ramp up its efforts to include young people in the CSW process in a meaningful way. The number of youth-focused events and the participation of youth in formal dialogues have increased substantially. Moreover, UN Women continues to create safe spaces for young people to discuss their issues amongst their peers, as well as with other stakeholders and actors who are helping to move and shape the CSW agenda. Through the multiple*

*dialogues, youth have an opportunity to draft recommendations that are presented to the Member States in efforts to inform negotiations.*

*"We lack fora to express ourselves. But we have a lot to do and a lot to give."*

*Priscilla Magamba Busabono, Youth advocate for women's rights, YWCA member, Democratic Republic of Congo/ CSW60*



Severely traumatized after losing her four-year-old daughter during the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal, Kalpana Shrestha (left) is on the road to recovery today, thanks to psychosocial counselling she received at a UN Women-supported multi-purpose women's centre in Sindhupalchok District. Humanitarian assistance is one of UN Women's areas of work.

## CHAPTER 2

---

# IN HER WORDS: STORIES

---



“We go out into the streets for those who died, those who died fighting for the rights that we still don't have and those who died without the opportunity of defending themselves.”

Vanina Escales, co-founder of Ni Una Menos, a cultural, political and social movement that swept across Latin America and the world.



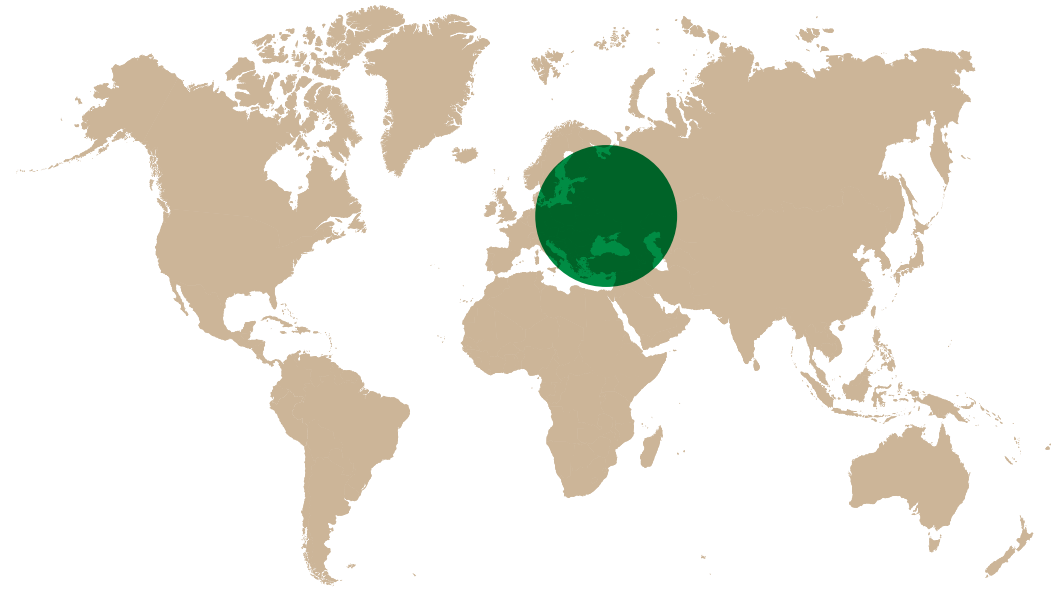
“As COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities, strong UN Women programming in every corner of the world will continue to be crucial to ensure that women and girls, in all their diversity, including those women and girls who are facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, are not left behind. UN Women’s unique triple mandate allows us, apart from our coordination and normative work, to join hands with our programme partners on the ground to deliver for all women and girls. We will continue to work directly with civil society to empower all women and girls from all walks of life through our programmes.

If we want to live in a green, equitable, gender-responsive and inclusive post-pandemic world, meaningful inclusion and participation of all women and girls in decision-making processes is key. Here are the stories of 12 women and men, whom we support with knowledge, training and other instruments that help them live free and empowered lives. I hope you will feel as inspired as I am when reading their first-hand experiences!”

Åsa Regnér, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women



# EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



GOVERNANCE, DISABILITIES



## The purpose of my life

Elana Georgievska's day starts at 5 a.m., getting her family ready for the day ahead. Her children, Jovan and Yana, attend school in the Aerodrom municipality in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia.

Jovan studies in the ninth grade. When he was diagnosed with autism as a little boy, doctors recommended Jovan be placed in a specialized school. Elana insisted on a regular school. "I told them to give him a chance," she says.

Standing up for her son's right to inclusive education took persistence. "The life of a child with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) largely depends on the will and efforts of the parents. You need to show your teeth, fight doctors' opinions," Elana says.

Elana has little time left for herself but is determined. "I set a goal- to set the right direction for the development of my child. It has become the purpose of my life," she says. Jovan struggled at first. "He was afraid to speak in class, afraid to say something wrong and that his classmates would make fun of him," Elana says.

Change came in 2019 when the Aerodrom municipality joined a UN Women-partnered project that funds personal assistants to support children with disabilities in school and promotes gender-responsive and inclusive policies and budgets.

The change has been tremendous. **"Jovan finishes his homework on time. He became more active and participates in projects with other children."**

Recently, Jovan opened his school concert with a performance of one of his favorite songs, 'We Will Rock You'. "It was unbelievable! Everyone rose to their feet in applause, they could not believe Jovan could do that," Elana smiles proudly. "I was the happiest mom!"

Now Elana's mission is ensuring Jovan completes secondary education so that he can earn a living in the future. "That means you need to continue to fight and never give up. I will knock on every door!"

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



## Our work is a source of joy

Kursanali kyzy Begimai, 24, lives on the disputed border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where conflicts are many and resources scarce.

Most men from her village are labour migrants in Russia, leaving the women and children behind. Begimai heads a self-help group of women in her village. The group of five young mothers is named "Yrisky", which means 'Bountifulness' in Kyrgyz. The bounty comes from Albion strawberries, a new fast-growing variety that bears fruit three to four times a year. Begimai and her group are among the first to plant it in the region.

When Begimai first presented the group's plan for their small berry business to the UN Women staff from the project for cross-border cooperation for sustainable peace and development and local partners, she was very nervous. "Like many women, I was not confident. I couldn't formulate complete sentences and didn't look the audience in the eye."

But she won over the selection committee, and received the plants, fertilizers and agricultural equipment through the project, which also provided training and ongoing consultation. The young mothers planted

more than 1,000 plants and installed drip irrigation – a game-changer in an area where water is scarce, and access hampered by border tensions.

In April, they enjoyed their first crop of three tons, which sold for 300,000 KGS (US\$ 4,300). Divided equally between the five women, each earned the equivalent of US\$ 860.

"Our work is an achievement and a source of joy, not only for us as members of the self-help group but also for our neighbors in the village," says Begimai, whose group has inspired others in the village to buy the strawberry seeds from them and start farms.

The training has provided more than agricultural support, says the young group-leader.

"Thanks to the UN Women project, I attended trainings and events at community and province level and I became more active. I have learned different ways of conflict resolution, women's role in peace-building, and the importance of sustainable practices."

Now Begimai wants to grow the message and empower other women. "Expanding economic opportunities for women is one of the key factors to ensure safety and prosperity," she says.



*"Expanding economic opportunities for women is one of the key factors to ensure safety and prosperity"*

# EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



ENGAGING MEN,  
ELIMINATING  
VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN (EVAW)



## Men and women are equal

Oupa Vani, a tavern owner in Klerksdorp, South Africa, has taken a pledge to ensure his tavern and its immediate vicinity is free from acts of violence against women. He is one of 550 men who have joined the HeForShe Taverns Campaign and taken an active stand for gender equality.

**“As a tavern owner, I was not aware that I had a role to play in addressing the problem of gender-based violence in my community, but during the campaign I was inspired to be part of the solution.”** In 2014, the proprietor joined the HeForShe Taverns Campaign run by the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference in partnership with UN Women, a local project within the larger global HeForShe campaign.

Campaign coordinator Robert Mafinyori explains that the idea is “using tavern owners as gatekeepers” to fight alcohol-related

violence against women and children, which Vani says is common in his community.

As part of the pledge, Vani is also committed to weekly community dialogue sessions and a series of educational activities throughout the year aimed at ending gender-based violence. “Education is key” in changing negative attitudes and perceptions among male patrons, he says. “Taking the pledge as a tavern owner means committing to zero tolerance of harassment of women or any form of violence in the tavern” Vani explains.

“Men and women are equal, and all patronize taverns for various reasons such as enjoyment, to share ideas or to release their stress. We can all co-exist even when drunk - no one is better than the other,” he says.

“Since I have taken the pledge, I can no longer be a bystander and allow acts of violence against women to take place within my tavern”.

INFORMATION AND  
COMMUNICATIONS  
TECHNOLOGIES FOR  
DEVELOPMENT (ICT4D)



## African girls can code

When Rebecca Azanaw got the news that she would get to meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations, nothing could keep her away from the opportunity, not even crunch-time at school as the 17-year-old was preparing for semester exams.

Azanaw was among more than 80 girls who participated in the first coding camp of the UN Women-supported African Girls Can Code Initiative in September 2018. “I am very proud that I got to be one of the first African girls to do the camp. That was a chance for me to start coding seriously,” she explained.

The coding camp is part of a four-year programme aiming to spark the interest of girls from across Africa in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) as a career path and avenue of innovation.

Since then, Azanaw has continued to hone her skills in Python programming. She is also spreading her new skills by founding a coding club at her school, Andinet International School in Addis Ababa, teaching other girls to code.

In 2019, she and 10 other girls from the programme met with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on the sidelines of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to share their experiences and ambitions.

“If more girls and women are not joining these professions, the power relations of the world will remain very male dominated,” said Secretary-General Guterres, addressing the girls and representatives of various UN agencies and dignitaries. It needs a movement of girls to bring more women into the field of science and technology, he added, commending the initiative for involving young girls across Africa. “What we are doing here is helping more girls come into ICT.”

Azanaw took the opportunity to deliver a message of her own.

“I want other girls to know that they can do it. If they want to, it is possible to achieve what they want to achieve.”



*“I am very proud that I got to be one of the first African girls to do the camp.”*

# WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA



HIV/AIDS



*I want to stay healthy and strong*



In most communities in Liberia, women and girls remain vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, lacking prevention and treatment knowledge, and support from their environment.

Mrs. Asatu Kromah is a mother of two from Margibi County in Liberia. Since testing positive for HIV two years ago, things have not been easy. "I did not understand the importance of drugs adherence. I would skip medication sometimes and this would affect my health," she says.

Stigma was a problem. Even after finishing the drugs she had, Asatu avoided getting more. "I didn't have the courage to go to the health center because I feared that people would see me and talk about me, I didn't like it." Asatu's health suffered, and so did her children, who do not carry the virus. "My children were always sad seeing their mother's health deteriorate. They couldn't concentrate in school."

Change came for Asatu in late 2019, when UN Women and partners implemented EWPR, a project dedicated to engaging women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, and for training communities for better prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices that put women and girls at increased vulnerability to the virus.

"Today, I never want to miss my medication because I want to stay strong and healthy to take care of my children until they are grown," says Asatu. **"Staying safe and taking care of my children is my priority."**

Asatu's health has improved greatly and so has her confidence, and she shares her story in community meetings. "I speak openly of my status and also encourage other women on the importance of drug adherence."

"In the past five or six months, my life has completely changed," Asatu says. "Now my children are happy to see their mother more active."

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



*Business is good!*

Mereng Alima Bessela, 50, is a successful entrepreneur from Ntui, in the Central Region of Cameroon. She is a cocoa farmer, owns her own restaurant business and a fish farm.

"I started the restaurant business three years ago when I heard that the government is building a road between Ntui and Yoko. I knew the road project will bring more people" says Bessela. "Business is good! I cook traditional food and everyone appreciates that."

The following year, Bessela attended a training supported by the Ministry of Fisheries and Animal Husbandry and got the idea for her next venture- a fishpond. "I fell in love with fish farming. In the morning, when I go to the pond to feed the fish, it's my favourite time of the day. Sometimes I feel so happy that I stand there for an hour, forgetting I must start cooking at the restaurant!"

Like thousands of women in the region, Madame Bessela lacks not acumen but access to skills, markets and finance- and UN Women's Gender Road Project is tackling exactly this.

Funded by The Development Bank of Central African States, the project teaches business

management and farming skills to women entrepreneurs living along the road being built between the townships of Batchenga, Ntui and Yoko. UN Women aims to empower 20,000 women in the region by preparing them for enhanced opportunities once the road is complete.

The training has helped Bessela improve her fish farm enterprise. "I have learned how to build the reservoir, how to breed and multiply the fish stock and how to feed the fish using local and natural food that's organic and less costly. I have learned business management skills, which helped me grow my business," she says.

Bessela has four girls and a boy and is sending them all to school. "I am a fighter and I do everything I need to do. The most important thing is that my children finish school and find good jobs."

She has a vision for her own future, too. "After my divorce, I bought forested land, got it cleared and started my own cocoa farm. My dream is to build my own house when my cocoa farm starts producing crops. I can then close this restaurant and live off the farm and spend the rest of my days in my own house".



*"I am a fighter and I do everything I need to do. The most important thing is that my children finish school and find good jobs."*

# LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN



CLIMATE CHANGE,  
WOMEN'S POLITICAL  
EMPOWERMENT



## The Women are Upbeat!

Hurricane Maria hit the island nation of Dominica in September 2017, causing devastation that was still visible everywhere many months later.

The agriculture sector, which employs nearly one-fifth of the small island's population, was badly battered. Especially hard-hit were women farmers: 76% reported catastrophic losses.



Many women could not immediately return to work and begin repair efforts because their homes had suffered extensive damage as well.

"Livelihoods were lost!" said Jennifer Pascal, vice president of the North-East Women Farmers Group. "The income we make from the farm, that is how the women feed their families and send their children to school," she said.

Of her own farm, only avocado trees survived. The greenhouses were flattened, water tanks toppled, and the irrigation pipes carried away by the river.

"A lot of people had to start again. I had to start all over," Pascal said.

UN Women conducted a special Post Disaster Needs Assessment after the disaster that provided important information for the World Bank and national government's efforts to rebuild Dominica.

The assessment made clear to UN Women that what Pascal and others needed was immediate assistance to get back on their feet and work, not handouts.

The women farmers asked for short crop seeds, fast-growing vegetables such as tomatoes, peas and carrots, so that they would have produce to sell in less than two months.

UN Women supported women farmers' groups to get labour and equipment to bring their farms back into production, focusing on contributing seeds, equipment and access to finance. Pascal said things were looking up. "The women are upbeat!"

Since Maria, the women's fight to recover their land and livelihoods had been an arduous journey, and the COVID-19 crisis dealt yet another blow to their progress, yet the women are undeterred.

UN Women reoriented its programming to connect the women farmers to new outlets and market opportunities. One way has been connecting them with Callister Sango, a young woman entrepreneur, whose online platform AgriVertise allows the women to set up virtual shops to advertise their goods and receive fresh produce orders. They refuse to be daunted. In the words of Pascal, "We are keeping the faith."

WOMEN'S POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION, SEXUAL  
AND GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE (SGBV)



## I want the world to know

Demecia Yat, an indigenous Q'eqchi' woman from Guatemala, was just 28 when she was forced into sexual and domestic slavery at the Sepur Zarco military outpost during the decades-long civil war.

She was not alone; many women of her community were systematically raped and enslaved by the army, as husbands and male relatives were brutalized and disappeared.

"I suffered violence. I suffered abuse. I suffered the conflict," she explains.

Supported by UN Women and partner organizations, Yat and 14 other survivors waged a five-year fight for justice at a national high court. In 2016, their battle resulted in the groundbreaking conviction of two former army officers of crimes against humanity, and a series of reparation measures.

Now Yat is a powerful voice for justice. In 2019, she brought her story and that of the other *Abuelas* - 'grandmothers', as the survivors are respectfully called, before the entire international community at the United Nations in New York. "For me, this is a great achievement," she says.

When the *Abuelas* began their fight, they were afraid but found strength in each other and support from international organizations. "Breaking the silence was not easy but we started discussing among us and found that we were not the only survivors of sexual violence," she recalls.

"My message to the world is eradicate sexual violence. I want everyone to know what happened in Sepur Zarco so that it doesn't happen again. We were made sexual and domestic slaves for years. Our families, husbands, our bodies and our liberty were stolen from us. I am not literate, but I have knowledge of my rights. I carry the pain of what was inflicted to us in my body, so I asked for justice," says Yat.

Now she co-leads a UN Women programme to monitor the implementation of the reparations ruled by the court, which include scholarships for girls and a mobile clinic.

Yat and the *Abuelas* continue to fight for their community, using their role as peacebuilders to advance gender justice for all women.



*"My message to today's generation and survivors is that they should speak out against any violation of their rights because justice can be reached."*



# ARAB STATES/ NORTH AFRICA



HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



## The strength to rebuild myself again

Falha Abrabo arrived at the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan with one hope: to find a safe place for her family. "The war destroyed almost everything that I had. I left Dara'a with my family in 2012. It was the only way that we would survive and have a future together," says the 48-year-old mother of four. "In that



moment of stepping into Jordan, we became known as refugees," she adds.

From refugee camps to urban settlements and rural communities, Jordan has provided refuge to more Syrians than any other country in the world. 86% of Syrian refugees live below the poverty line; half the refugee population are women and girls.

In 2012, UN Women opened its first Oasis Centre in the Za'atari camp as a safe space for refugee women and girls. Over the years, the Oasis model has evolved into what is now a centre for building women's resilience and empowerment, while also engaging men and boys in dialogue for social equality.

Shortly after Falha arrived in Jordan, her husband suffered a stroke that left him disabled and her the sole breadwinner, desperate for work to feed her family. Around

one-third of Za'atari's households are headed by women.

Through UN Women's programme at the Oasis, Falha now earns an income as an adult literacy teacher. "Oasis has given me the strength that I need to rebuild myself again," she explains. "The position I have is much more than earning money. Not only am I learning new skills, but I have the opportunity to teach other women life-long skills."

Falha is among 300 women gaining educational and livelihood opportunities through Za'atari's three Oasis centres. Falha is very grateful for the support system and friends she has found today. **"I want other refugees to know that being a refugee should not define who they are. You have survived conflict, lived through displacement, experienced heartache, and you are still here. You are strong, never give up."**

SPORTS, EVAW, EDUCATION



## The importance of education

A small group of women and men in Youssoufia, a region in central Morocco, is working hard to end violence against women.

Hanane Satour is a native of the area, and a co-founder of the Kholoud Association for Development, Education and Communication, which works with support from UN Women to end gender-based violence and increase women and girl's education.

"A lot of women from the villages around Youssoufia come into our centre because of violence from their husbands" says Hanane. She says the violence is tied to economic hardship, illiteracy, and the low social status of women. "Often the women suffering from violence at home are illiterate and don't know their legal rights. So, we provide free legal advice, and hold forums in villages to inform women of their legal rights".

The Kholoud Association is not only fighting intimate partner violence in the community but also empowering girls and changing harmful gender norms through football, which is widely popular in Morocco. In order to promote women and girls' participation in sports as part of a healthy lifestyle and to

boost their self-confidence, the Kholoud Association in partnership with UN Women provides training to Najmat Al Youssoufia Women's Football Club.

"I chose to help girls get involved in football because only boys played football in our area," Hanane said. "Girls wanting to play football were flocking to us, so we decided to help them in order to change this misperception that only boys can play."

Hanane strives to break down the gender barriers embodied in acts of violence against women and girls that hinder them from realizing their right to an education. The Kholoud Association also runs a kindergarten for children from families who otherwise would not be able to afford an education.

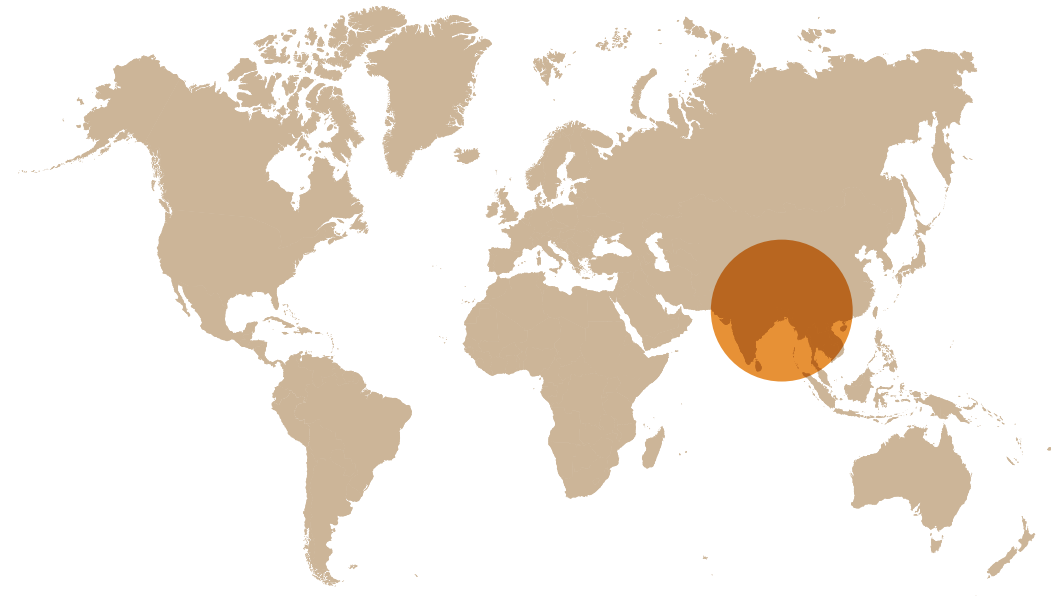
Most of the 50 students are girls. "Our school aims to provide the opportunity for a basic education to girls at risk of illiteracy. They are taught how to read and write and then they develop these skills further," Hanane added. Her organization also holds public gender sensitization trainings, in which men are encouraged to participate.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



*"Education is the key to addressing violence against women."*

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, COVID-19 RESPONSE



## Roses in the battlefield

In January 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic began spreading across China. Two-thirds of the 42,600 medical workers dispatched to the hardest-hit Hubei Province in early March were women, dubbed "roses in the battlefield".

In other provinces, women with no medical background volunteered for vital roles. In the village of Xiaruoyao, in China's northwestern Qinghai Province, 45-year-old pig farmer Yan Shenglian joined her village COVID-19 management team, standing at front-line checkpoints daily to take people's temperature and ensure precautions were observed.

This may not have happened a few years back. Like many in her village, Shenglian used to believe that public affairs was a man's job. But her ideas changed after participating in a UN Women programme on gender and climate change.

"Although some men do not want to admit it, they are silently imitating and learning my methods," she says.

The programme also gained Shenglian improved farming and business skills, such as using cost-cutting organic farming and online platforms for selling her produce. These have helped her maintain steady production and income throughout the pandemic: Shenglian has managed to sell 46 pigs through online platforms, earning 50,000 CNY, or US\$ 7,100.

**"Many rural women like Yan Shenglian gained knowledge, information and leadership skills during the programme.** Now, the impact of the programme is evident through the roles they are playing in supporting and contributing to their own communities, as well as to the most hard-hit Hubei Province," said Wang Qing, UN Women Project Manager for Qinghai.

"As farmers, these women are also playing a critical role in food security in the aftermath of COVID-19. Bringing their voices and leadership at the forefront of the recovery phase is very important."

CLIMATE CHANGE, WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT



## Learning to overcome the challenges

Rajena Boiragi wakes up at six in the morning to collect crab and shrimp in her family fishing pond, spending around five hours in muddy waters gathering what she can to sell at the local market. The 55-year-old lives with her son and daughter in south-western Bangladesh.

She had been a fish farmer before. But in 2009, cyclone Aila hit the country, killing at least 179 people and affecting more than 2.6 million others in the region. The disaster left an estimated 500,000 people homeless throughout the south-western coastal belt, including Ms. Boiragi, who took shelter in a primary school. "I lost everything: my house and the pond were washed away along with roads and people's belongings," she remembers.

The numbers of people displaced due to riverbank erosion, permanent inundation and rising sea levels are increasing rapidly every year. Bangladesh, already one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, will likely face more frequent and larger-scale floods, cyclones and droughts.

"Women in Bangladesh are actually the first to face the impact of climate change," says UN Women's Dilruba Haider, programme

coordinator for Gender and Climate Change. "We are working on providing them with skills training on alternative and sustainable livelihoods and providing them grants so they can try to change their lives, for themselves and their families, and thereby build and increase their resilience."

Thanks to this programme, Boiragi managed to rebuild her house and fishpond, and has doubled her previous income. Now she is group leader too, encouraging other women to invest in their capacities. "The women who lost their husbands in 2009 are now succeeding and moving forward. They learned to overcome the challenges presented in their lives thanks to the investment made in us."

In May, Boiragi travelled to the country's capital to speak of her experiences at a high-level meeting on South-South cooperation for sustainable development goals. Her message to the participants, including ministers and advisors, was simple: "I am happy now because I had the chance to rebuild my life by getting the right support at the right time and by learning how to be strong and resilient. More women need, and can benefit from, such initiatives and improve their lives."



*"I am happy now because I had the chance to rebuild my life."*



Palestinian girls participate in a wheelchair basketball championship as part of a sports for violence-reduction programme in Gaza in December 2015. UN Women works with a wide range of women's organizations – including grassroots, civil society, community-based and other groups, including those addressing multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS



“As co-founders of the Black Feminist Fund, we know that we can only leverage the resources Black feminist movements around the world need by building strong partnerships - with the philanthropic community, individual donors, and institutions like UN Women. That's the only way we can fund Black feminist movements like we want them to win!”

Amina Doherty, co-founder of Black Feminist Fund and Director of Women's Voice and Leadership-Caribbean.

UN Women's story reflects the transformative power of partnerships. UN Women was established following the concerted efforts of actors across governments and women's movements, and with a mandate that expressly reflected both the power and imperative of bringing people together to achieve equality, partnership was woven into the DNA of UN Women from the start.

UN Women partners both broadly and deeply. It works with governments, civil society and the private sector on policy, resources and initiatives. It engages philanthropy, academia, media, religious leaders, celebrities and others, all as part of building an unstoppable movement for change.

## GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS: INVESTMENTS, POLICY AND POLITICAL ACTION

UN Women's work with government partners – the bedrock of the organization's funding base – has led to more than a doubling its budget over the first decade, from US\$ 236 million in 2011 to over US\$ 500 million in 2019. The funding commitments reflect the mandate governments have given UN Women to head global efforts towards achieving gender equality.

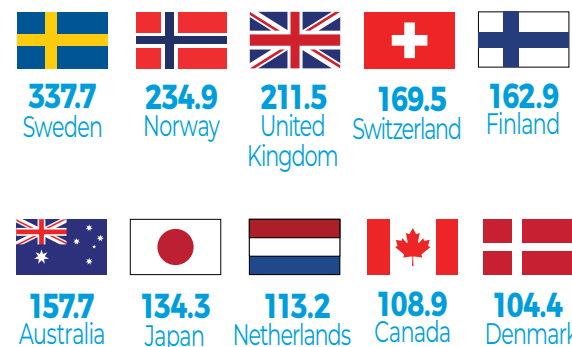


## PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS: EQUALITY IS GOOD BUSINESS

UN Women's initiatives with private sector partners have led to new standards and practices across a range of industries from media to tech and entertainment leaders.

One particularly powerful partnership is the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), a framework for corporate business to advance gender equality in their companies and encourage other corporations to promote gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community. To date, an impressive 3,000 companies have joined the WEPs, which also includes a Gap Analysis Tool, a confidential online platform that helps companies track their progress on issues such as human resources, procurement and corporate sustainability.

### TOP 10 UN WOMEN PARTNERS, 2011-2019 (IN USD MILLION)



## THE GRAND BARGAIN

Born of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the Grand Bargain is a framework bringing together multiple donors and providers of humanitarian assistance for coordinating and streamlining humanitarian work to serve those affected by crisis as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The Grand Bargain was important but did not include gender equality in any of its nine goals, despite women and girls being consistently under-served in humanitarian response. UN Women raised the issue among signatories and gained support from major donors like the EU and US, and key actors like the Red Cross.

UN Women was elected onto the first Facilitation Group (the Grand Bargain's coordination structure) and from that position advanced several crucial elements including gender-responsive cash assistance, support for local women's organizations and spaces for the voices of crisis-affected women.



## PRIVATE SECTOR AND PHILANTHROPY 2015 MEETING

In September 2015, UN Women's Business and Philanthropy Leaders' Forum brought attention to the need for private sector and philanthropic organizations to "step it up" to close the gender financing gap. With the Alibaba Group's Jack Ma and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Melinda Gates as co-hosts, the event was a watershed moment in UN Women's determination to engage more deeply with the private sector and philanthropy. Pledges included US\$ 5

million from Alibaba and US\$ 1 million from the Gates Foundation, and marked the beginning of longstanding business and philanthropy relationships and increased levels of funding. Other participating leaders included representatives from Coca-Cola, Cisco, Infosys, Itaipu, Mastercard, H&M, Citibank and State Bank of India, along with the Ford Foundation, General Electric Foundation and Nigeria-based Dangote Foundation.

The continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in media communications - electronic, print, visual and audio - must be changed.

Beijing Platform for Action, Section J

## MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS: A GAME CHANGER FOR GENDER EQUALITY

In 2014, UN Women was preparing for the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and launched a year-long campaign to invigorate old and new supporters. Realizing the importance of a dedicated partnership with media, UN Women formed the Media Compact, a pro-bono alliance in which top-tier national and international media joined UN Women to move the needle on gender equality. It draws its inspiration from the Beijing Platform.

Thirty outlets joined, producing thousands of stories featuring courageous women and giving voice to the marginalized. In 2016, the partnership expanded to form the 'Step It Up for Gender Equality Media Compact', with members committing to champion women's rights, ensure inclusion of women as sources in stories, aim for gender parity in newsrooms, adopt a gender-sensitive code of conduct on reporting, and mentor women journalists for career advancement. With over 80 current partners from France 24 to Jordan Times, the Compact has inspired new models of UN partnership.



## EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS TOWARDS 2030

UN Women is already planning the next decade's partnerships including new areas of focus, international financial institutions such as the World Bank, expanding the WEPs, and enhancing accountability so that commitments are followed by action.

Partnership is change, and the stronger the efforts in this area, the faster the advancement towards a gender equal world by the year 2030.

## UN SYSTEM-WIDE ACTION PLAN (UN-SWAP) ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

In 2012, UN Women developed the UN-SWAP into pioneering system-wide framework for accountability on gender equality, setting a new gold standard across the UN. Now nearly all UN entities use the system to report progress on gender equality requirements and indicators and have mandatory gender training for staff at all levels. In 2015, collaboration between UN Women and the National Health System (NHS) in the UK examining applying the UN-SWAP model to the British NHS led to a pioneering transformation process of increasing women at key positions within the health system.



## SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

UN Women and partners launched this high impact partnership with the EU in 2017 aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, based on the shared recognition that more and better resourced dedicated interventions were needed.

The EU invested an unprecedented €500 million to support interventions in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean, tackling challenges including harmful traditional practices, human trafficking, femicide and domestic and family violence.

The results have been impressive, with campaigns reaching 42 million people. Over one-third of Spotlight countries now have disaggregated national statistics to better reflect multiple forms of discrimination. Education programmes have reached nearly 350,000 adolescents and countries have passed dozens of laws and policy instruments on issues ranging from labour migration regulations to national action plans on eliminating violence against women and girls.

Spotlight remains one of the biggest programmes in UN Women's history and reflects a strong and growing partnership with the European Union.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

“During my term, I was inspired every day by the resilience, innovation and boldness of young women from Africa and the diaspora who advocated for Intergenerational Co-Leadership. The 10 practical demands from the Africa Young Women Beijing+25 Manifesto addressed the intention of the millennials to push for action, along with our elders, and impact in the global fora, and not wait another 108 years for gender equity. Young women said ‘Enough is Enough!’ I applaud UN Women and its leadership for the continued work in making the difference in the lives of women and girls.”

Aya Chebbi, Outgoing African Union Youth Envoy; Chair of Africa Young Women Manifesto Group.

Aya Chebbi, pictured at the Roskilde Festival in Denmark in 2019, is a Tunisian feminist blogger, first-ever African Union Youth Envoy, and founder of the Voice of Women initiative. As a youth speaker at UN Women's celebratory event for the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in March 2015, she rallied an audience of some 2,000 people.

UN Women would not exist without the powerful organizing of the women's rights movement, led by civil society organizations from across the globe. In March 2007, the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) convened 50 global women activists for a single purpose - to call for a fully resourced UN women's entity. That driving force that forged UN Women into existence still plays a major role today, keeping UN Women's feet to the fire and rallying global support around its leadership.

Here are the hopes and concerns of a few of our global partners.



"UN Women is the institutional achiever of the past decade. It has accomplished massively, though generally under-resourced and overstretched. Into the new decade, UN Women should bring its strong base, amazing brave heart and huge ear for feminist voices to continue pushing for breakthroughs."

## Sanja Nikolin

international development expert, entrepreneur and activist of the Women's Platform for the Development of Serbia & UN Women Europe and Central Asia Civil Society Advisory Group member



## Dorothy Senatus

Executive Director Femmes en Democratie, Haiti



"Rural women are the backbone of Haitian society and a pillar of the economy and of food security. And yet, they have limited and unequal access to productive resources such as land, financing, technology and information. I would like to see comprehensive policies and sustainable funding mechanisms that increase rural women's resilience and support their transformative integration across agribusiness value chains."



"The Beijing Platform for Action placed sexual and reproductive rights as fundamental human rights. It advanced specific public services for women who experience violence and access to legal abortion, for example, but many women still lack access to sexual and reproductive rights. We hope that we get government commitments."

## Elisa Silva

member of Curumim, feminist and anti-racist NGO in Brazil devoted to the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights of women



## Purity Soinato Oiyie

Maasai woman from Kenya and Say NO to FGM advocate



"I was only 10 or 11 years old, when my father decided to circumcise me. I talked to my class teacher and she informed the police chief. Just two hours before the cutting ceremony, the police came and took me away. Today, I work with World Vision and the Kenyan anti-FGM Board to help raise awareness among people in the villages."



"There's a monopoly of land ownership by big corporations in Indonesia. This makes women even poorer. They go on to become low-wage workers in palm oil, sugar or tobacco plantations. When women menstruate, they can ask for holiday, but plantation officials ask them to take off their pants to prove that they are menstruating."

## Helda Khasmy

from Indonesia, Chair of SERUNI- Indonesian Women's Organization



# WE ARE UN WOMEN



“Joining UN Women through its Inaugural Young Women Leaders Programme has assured me that my voice matters and that my story has value. My colleagues inspire me. We all share a common desire for transformative change within our families, communities and countries, and this can all be possible - together! Our differences should not keep us back, they can be an enabling catalyst that leads us to common ground.”

Kabelo Botlhe Dikobe (Botswana), Executive Analyst, UN Women HQ



UN Women dedicated team of staff, consultants, interns, volunteers and goodwill ambassadors in its country, multi-country and regional offices around the world are the key to the organization's success.





## TRIBUTE TO UN WOMEN OVER THE YEARS

"I am so impressed by the passion, the commitment and conviction of UN Women personnel. For the last 10 years, UN Women's people have worked relentlessly to push the gender equality agenda forward around the world. From remote islands to crowded cities, they have spared no effort to make sure that women enjoy their full human rights: that Mayan women in Guatemala have access to land, that Afghan women have a seat at the peace table, that girls in Uganda do not experience early marriages and other forms of violence, that women market vendors in Fiji have skills to negotiate with the market council management, and that sex-disaggregated data is available to develop informed and effective policies - among other achievements.

To this end, they have tirelessly engaged with a wide range of partners — grassroots organizations, Governments, the private sector, academia, young people, men and boys, and traditional leaders. I am so proud of the achievements and the hard work done by my deeply valued colleagues!"

Anita Bhatia, Deputy Executive Director UN Women





*“For 10 years, UN Women has pushed the frontiers of global norms and standards for gender equality and women’s rights. We forged a multi-stakeholder Global Gender Equality Compact in every area of the UN’s priority pillars of Peace and Security, Human Rights, Sustainable Development and Humanitarian response. We enabled millions of women and men, institutions and leaders everywhere to value, own and invest in gender equality within their families, communities and nations.*

*We must now be a revolutionary force for more rapid progress, and for deepening and updating these norms and their implementation everywhere. The time to create a gender equal world is now!”*

*Lakshmi Puri*

*Former Deputy Executive Director,  
UN Women*



*“I am proud to be among those who witnessed the birth of UN Women, the establishment of which the Government of Egypt strongly supported. Many women and feminist government institutions around the world look to UN Women and expect timely support, smart investments, and renewed commitments to achieve the empowerment of women by all possible means.*

*As a former member of the UN Women family and a contributor to the formulation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, it is a great honor to be part of its practical achievement through supporting the implementation of Egypt’s first-ever global strategy at national level on the empowerment of Egyptian women responding to the Sustainable Development Goals.*

*I sincerely hope that UN Women will continue to grow and make a tangible difference in the lives of many women worldwide, and for it to be able to do so, women’s economic empowerment is the winning horse and key to achieving planet 50-50.”*

*Maya Morsy*

*President, National Council for  
Women, Egypt; Former UNIFEM  
representative, Egypt*



*“UN Women represents power and justice in the historic struggle waged by diverse women, girls and all gender-marginalized people across the globe. Only by situating grassroots movements fighting for the empowerment of women and girls at the center of decision-making processes, can we hope to achieve meaningful gender equality. The move for a globalized society must unquestionably uphold institutions that reinforce the principles of justice inherently embodied by UN Women if we are to create a world based on fairness and equality for future generations.”*

*Dr. Nadine Gasman*

*President, National Women’s  
Institute, Mexico; Former UN  
Women representative, Brazil*



*“For me, UN Women has been a beacon to all governments globally, and is the driving force behind national actions, which has led to meaningful progress towards gender equality and the increased empowerment of women. As the global advocate for women in leadership and the overall champion for gender equality, UN Women plays a significant role in providing support and the necessary tools to create societies, where women and girls are treated as equal partners with our men and boys.”*

*Ambassador*

*Pennelope Beckles*

*Minister of Housing and Urban  
Development, Trinidad and Tobago;  
Former Permanent Representative of  
Trinidad and Tobago to the UN; advocate  
for women in STEM, politics and sport*



## PART 3

# THE FUTURE



**“Staying on the track through storms, pursuing the mission of waking up the world brings us closer to fulfilling Generation Equality. Reimagine what the youth can do, and let’s ally. Let’s unite and make the Decade of Action sure-fire.”**

**Dario Korolija (21) is a National Gender Youth Advocate globally selected for the UN Women’s Generational Equality Campaign, and a HeForShe Advocate from North Macedonia**

On 7 December 2019, as part of the 16 Days of Activism in Colombia, a variety of bold arts, dance and theatrical performances took over the Parkway, a traditional neighbourhood in Bogotá, to say NO to violence against women and girls.



UN Women marked International Women's Day 2020 in the city of Cjakova, in western Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244), with an activity for young women and girls in basketball. UN Women introduced the Generation Equality campaign and called on youth and girls in sports to join the movement and promote gender equality.

## CHAPTER 1

# I AM GENERATION EQUALITY

REALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS FOR AN EQUAL FUTURE



**I am Generation Equality because ...**

“We all deserve equal opportunity. I am passionate about trying to figure out how to reduce poverty and inequality. Poverty is one of the most urgent issues of our time. It cuts across everything, including climate change, gender equity and the digital divide.”

Bogolo Joy Kenewendo, 33, is an Economist, former Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry in Botswana, and a member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

# OUR VOICES, OUR COMMON FUTURE

Here we invite you to listen to some of the voices

# WE ARE GENERATION EQUALITY!

of the next generation of gender equality activists and leaders.



## I am Generation Equality because...

"As a digital product designer and front-end developer, I believe women can make a meaningful contribution to society through technology. We should have more diversity in tech. When COVID-19 started, unverified information kept spreading on social media. I asked myself, 'why is there no place that gathers all the information about COVID-19 cases so we can check easily?'. This sparked the idea of developing a website that curates news and data about the virus, and this was the beginning of "COVID Tracker by 5Lab". It started with the simple idea of visualizing the information from the Ministry of Health- we did it in a one-night hackathon! We gained four million users within five days, way beyond our expectations."

Ramida Juengpaisal, 24, is a digital product designer and front-end developer, Thailand



## I am Generation Equality because...

"Art is a good way to bring change, to challenge people's mindsets. If you want issues to be solved in society, you need popular discussions around it. Art is the best way for me to express my concerns about feminism. When I first raised the issue of women's rights in my songs, there was a huge backlash, because society is super patriarchal. I got a lot of threats, hate speech, harassment-- even death threats. But what I didn't expect was support. I received a lot of support from both men and women. My songs are about freedom, which is for everyone."

Zere Asylbek, feminist singer from Kyrgyzstan

## I am Generation Equality because...

"It has been my dream since childhood to be in a profession that touches people's lives. My role model was my uncle who was a firefighter. After graduating from university, I became a workplace nurse. One day I saw a vacancy announcement for firefighters at the Parliament and immediately applied. Successfully completing the examinations and outperforming many men, I became the first woman firefighter at the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Initially, I faced a lot of prejudice. My mother said, "You're a nurse, go do your own job". But my father supported me. My dream came true—now in my daily work, I can save lives."

Merve Erbay, 21, became the first woman firefighter in the Turkish Parliament



## I am Generation Equality because...

"It's thousands of years since the start of civilization and I cannot believe I am still teaching people that women's rights are human rights, still asking for freedom of choice, body and assets. Not only that, but I have to lower my standards. Instead of asking for equal inheritance, I am asking for the minimal share guaranteed by law or religion. Instead of asking for the same authority at home, I am begging to stop female genital mutilation (FGM). I am asked to surrender to patriarchal orders choosing my partner, career and even my dreams! But I am from Generation Equality with a vision for change to a world that is 50-50 and peaceful, where everyone can grow to their full potential safely."

Hanien Adel, 17-year-old activist, Egypt

## I am Generation Equality because...

"Gender equality is my issue, to make sure that the views and contributions of women and girls are valued and used to develop Zanzibar's social, cultural, economic and political growth. I also advocate for inclusion of women and girls in sport. Growing up, I noticed that despite their huge potential, women were often deprived of the opportunity to participate. We need to break these barriers, so women and girls know they have the right to participate and see sport as a career and tool than can transcend boundaries of sex, race, religion and nationality."

Fatma Ahmed, 25, is a Generation Equality Champion and Founder of the Girls' Inclusion in Sports Campaign in Zanzibar, Tanzania



## REALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS FOR AN EQUAL FUTURE

An entire generation has come of age since Beijing. We call it Generation Equality. Not because gender equality has been achieved- far from it- but because its members live in a generation more determined than ever to achieve it. Already now, women and girls, and men and boys, are speaking up for themselves and others, demanding economies, societies and political systems that leave no one behind. We will not wait for another generation. Generation Equality is now.



## I am Generation Equality because...

"Having witnessed violence first-hand, it made me obsessed with fighting for Equality. I witnessed my mum suffer violence and its always made me feel bad. Growing up didn't get any simpler - I wanted to become Vice-President of the Student Union in Maseno University. But as a woman you are told you need to do this and that, sleep around with men to get favors and such. It makes you think 'let's call it quits.' I don't want anyone to suffer the same things I have."

Kathy Gitau, 22, was elected Vice President of the Student Union at Maseno University, Kenya

# AN INTERGENERATIONAL CONVERSATION

I am Generation Equality: Join three feminists – young, older and older – for a talk about hope, love, expectation, stories, solidarity and sharing. A conversation about UN Women at 10 and beyond.



*Lopa Banerjee, 58, India*

Director of the Civil Society Division & Executive Coordinator of the Generation Equality Forum at UN Women, supporting and strengthening women's rights groups and civil society organizations and movements in their contribution, participation and influence in policy discussion and decision processes at global, regional and national levels.



*Hajer Sharief, 28, Libya*

Human rights advocate and co-founder of "Together we build it". Hajer promotes the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding efforts in Libya. She was selected by the UN Secretary-General to serve as a member of the Advisory Group of Experts for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security mandated by UNSCR 2250. She is also one of the twelve UN Women Champions on Women, Peace, Security and Human Rights.



*Getrude Mligo, 23, Tanzania*

Youth activist from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and author of the book 'Dear Girl Child, I am Generation Equality, #Be Brave', written during the COVID-19 crisis and school closures to encourage young girls, to remind them of their power to brave hardships. The book touches upon FGM, child marriage and resilience. In 2020, Mligo participated in a mentorship programme that paired her with UN Women Representative in Tanzania, Hodan Addou.

*Let's start at the very beginning*



**"It was the early 2000s.** I was working with UNICEF and I began hearing about the Gender Equality Architecture Reform and this big campaign. They were talking about setting up a UN agency on women. And I was like, wow! That would be such a great idea! And I want to work there!

Fast forward to 2010. It was a very, very difficult year for me. I was going through a deep, personal tragedy around the same time UN Women was being born. I was hearing about this amazing thing happening called UN Women at the same time as I was going through so much personal grief.

So, UN Women is forever linked in my life in this personal/political way. I joined it one week before its official launch in 2011. I was coming from deep sorrow, and it was like the hope in my life."

**"I remember vividly when I first heard of the UN.** I was maybe six or seven, sitting on the floor with my family, having lunch. My dad used to watch the news. It was a press conference of Kofi Annan, behind him was the UN logo. I didn't know who Kofi Annan was. My dad explained, imagine there's a world government and he's the head. Then my brother said, "oh Kofi like 'coffee'! that's an interesting name and he's like the president of the world!"

And we're like "yeah, yeah, yeah. He's the president of the world."

Life is funny, because then I got to meet Kofi Annan and work with him.

I had never really learned about the UN, apart from that conversation. Later on, I learned more about it and about this agency that is for us, the us Agency, which is UN Women."

**"How I heard about UN Women was from my father, in 2012.** I remember that day. I was coming home from school and it was raining. I was wet from head to toe. When I arrived, my father greeted me and said, "What happened? You could wait until the rain stopped. Where did you come from?"

I said, "I was tired of staying at school. I wish I could just leave."

He looked at me and said, "Do you know great women?"

"All great women in this country, you can see them in United Nations Women." It was the first time I heard of UN Women.

That was a moment. I said, "I want to find these women who are from United Nations Women. I need to see them. I need to know who they are, why are they great."



“Many years ago, when I was young and just coming into my feminism, I came across this poem: I saw a woman sleeping. In her sleep, she dreamt Life stood before her And she held it in each hand a gift- In the one hand – Love, In the other – Freedom. And she said to the woman : “Choose”. And the woman waited long. And she said : “Freedom”. And Life said “You have chosen well, If you had said ‘Love’ I would have left you, And never returned. Now the day will come when I shall return, On that day, I shall bear both gifts in one hand”. I heard the woman laugh in her sleep.

**And so, this concept of love and freedom together – that to me is UN Women.** Love for the work and the freedom to pursue it. And that's also in a sense what gender equality means to me. Love of what you want to be and do, and the freedom to do it. To live as you want to.”

# UN Women to me is about...

**“I'd say it's all about belongingness. It's about the people.** It's about those whom you've touched, those who are here because of you. It's about those who get another chance, who get to breathe, who get to believe in themselves because of you. I'll define UN Women in that way.”

**“If I would describe UN women in one word, or one sentence, I'd say: the primary ally of all women.** Knowing that you cannot do it all by yourself and you really need someone, especially if we think of how our world is constructed in terms of international, national, local levels. That you rely on UN Women to do the work on your behalf - I mean more in the context of partnership and soul solidarity.”

# Gender equality is



**“For me, it's much more than the fight of sexes and genders.**

Growing up, most of my experiences of injustices and inequalities were related to me being a woman, which made me realize that I don't actually understand every single struggle. If there is injustice towards women, then there is injustice towards races and religions and different groups of peoples in society. Being a feminist is just about being and doing the right thing.”

“I'll imagine that I'm seven years old, and I just wake up in the morning and it's a completely gender equal world. I say that I want to go horse riding. And I can, instead of it being an extremely complicated matter. And there're no questions like “should the girl ride horses or not?” and “are there even girls who do that? I want to go to the beach, and no one is like, “oh my god! scandal, scandal!” It's just about my right to do something I want.”

**“It is the freedom to just be.”**

“I'll say that it will be a world where all men and women can participate in making decisions, can be at all tables, are never pulled back or forced to do something they don't want to do. **A gender equal world is one where both men and women have equal rights** to decide what they want to be, who they want to be and where exactly they want to be. Gender equality is about humanity, plurality. Most importantly, it is about choice, about your rights.”

# Being a feminist

“That's what being a feminist is, right? **You create your own terms of how you are in this world.**”

**“Being a feminist means knowing when to speak up** and when to enable others to speak, because we are all different. One issue I reflect on is intersectionality, because there is no one way to speak of all gender injustices. For example, just because I'm a feminist doesn't mean I should speak about indigenous women. I should go and speak to them, because they can inform the debate.”

**“In our societies, patriarchal systems want to kill our views** through labelling us bad girls and good girls. I want to change that perspective.”

“In my country, some people call themselves feminists but they don't really know if they are. If we want a world where people are proud to say they're feminist, then feminists should know what they are fighting for. Being a feminist doesn't mean you know everything, but feminists should know exactly who they are. That's the first question: why are you feminists?”

“To be a feminist in this world right now, there are two things. One is resilience– pushing, focusing, acting with determination. The other is hope, which young people and activists everywhere represent.”



# UN Women @10 and beyond

## Storytelling

**“We came into this conversation with stories and that's who we are.** We all come into this with stories about each other. Solidarity and stories. How do we tell our stories so that we create new ones?”

“When you bring people together in a free space where women can share their pains, their success, their stories ...that is where you create a safe space for women to understand that UN Women is there for us. Not only to understand who we are, but to understand the pain and happiness of others.”

**“Sometimes it's not about me. It's about the community, about others.** It's about gaining comfort from others, knowing that you are not alone.”

**“UN Women should communicate with people in their own language.** When you speak in a language that only you understand, you're just talking, not communicating. The problem will still be there. To reach people, you must speak their language. understand why they are doing what they are doing. That is where we solve the problem.”



## I am Generation Equality

**“The next 10 years of UN Women cannot happen without inter-generational co-leadership, without shared stories and solidarity.** That's what goes forward.”

**“The time is now.** If we want to change the tables, then we should change them now. The space should be given now. There's no tomorrow.”

## Co-leadership

**“It's not about having more young women, it's about sharing the space.** Instead of trying to fill a 5-seat table, let's make it a 50-seat table, where we can all lead together and optimize our achievements.”

**“What matters is what you bring to the table, what you want to gain from it.** What matters is what you want to do, what your passion is. What do you want to learn from that table?”

**“Women feminists of my generation are so tired of trying to have a seat at the table.** There's a saying among feminists of my generation that if you don't have a seat at the table, bring a folding chair. There's only that much space at the table for folding chairs. But young people have no fear of breaking the table, building a new one, changing the shape of the table, or just saying we're all going to sit on the floor.”







To mark the International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October 2019, six young activists presented a collectively-drafted 'Global Girls' Bill of Rights' to UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

# CONCLUSION



“We are mobilized changemakers. We are empowered advocates. As adolescent girls, we play a crucial role in presenting UN Women with youth perspectives and insights on actions and legislation affecting our lives. An intergenerational approach to women's rights where adolescent girls have a seat at decision-making tables is essential to highlight diverse youth voices and propel us toward an equitable society.”

Hiya Shah, 17-year-old high school student living in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; Founder of Fundraising for the Girl Child non-profit; UN Delegate of NGO Girls Learn International; UN GEF Planning Group Leader.

# HOPES AND DREAMS FOR A GENDER EQUAL FUTURE

This year marks the convergence of two major milestones: the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, and the 10th anniversary of UN Women, its youngest entity. UN Women has revolutionized gender equality work within the United Nations family, accelerating efforts across the United Nations system through technical expertise, support to the normative agenda, and creation of greater accountability.

From its earliest days, the United Nations has been committed to gender equality. Our founding Charter pledged to protect fundamental human rights and dignity, and the equal rights of women and men. Three-quarters of a century later, UN Women is holding us to our word and ensuring we deliver on that promise—not merely to rectify the past, but to guarantee our future.

If the United Nations is to effect change, it must lead by example. As Secretary-General, I have made gender equality a top priority. And for the first time ever, women now make up half of the United Nations' senior management.

Gender parity is not a favour to women or an administrative whim; it is the key to achieving equality and justice, everywhere. Even the best-intended policies will fail if they are not informed, shaped, budgeted and decided with the equal representation of women.

Humanity as a whole pays dearly for the obstacles we place in the way of women and girls. Gender gaps are holding back the knowledge, science, technology and medicine we need for a sustainable future. Even the most innovative and advanced technology, including artificial intelligence, shows the bias born of our male-dominated world.

Gender equality is fundamentally a question of power. We must undo the centuries of injustice that have corrupted power to keep girls down and women out.

I look to the future with great hope as we pursue the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is the time to push ahead with full force. Securing full gender equality for the world's women by 2030 is ambitious. But not only is it possible, it is an absolute imperative.

In its first decade, UN Women has successfully strengthened the United Nations' work for women. I am honoured to celebrate this anniversary with you and look forward to your continued success.



**António Guterres,**  
United Nations Secretary-General  
September 2020



# A MESSAGE TO GENERATION EQUALITY



The 10 years of UN Women is the story of women, girls and people of all genders, ages and backgrounds who are determined to create a world in which every woman and girl can exercise their human rights and live up to their full potential.

UN Women was created in 2010 in the midst of a global financial crisis that was putting the realization of women's economic and social rights in jeopardy. Right from the start, we were shaped by women's resilience and grassroots activism. We grew up in partnership with the sisterhood of a multitude of other feminist and women-led organizations, joined year by year by people from all walks of life and experience as the key recognition has grown that gender equality is not just for women, it's for everyone.

As we complete our first decade, we confront the largest global crisis of our lifetimes caused by COVID-19. Never simply a health issue, this pandemic demonstrated both the extent to which economies and societies depend for their functioning on women's work inside and outside the home, and yet the fragility of so many women's livelihoods. In countries across the world, the strength and value of women's leadership has been clearly demonstrated, at the same time as the huge gaps in representation. It has shown us once again how deeply gender inequality remains embedded in the fabric of political, social and economic systems, and why

the progress that we have worked so hard to secure must be preserved and strengthened through proportionate, targeted investment and political support. As this new decade opens, we are seeing the dawning of radically increased attention to innovative financing for gender equality and a recognition of the previous shortcomings.

We have been motivated by our triumphs, humbled by our trials and inspired by the women and girls we met along the way. We continue our work, more determined than ever to ensure that all women and girls can live a life free from violence, with decision-making power over their bodies; that poverty does not continue to have a woman's face; that women and girls have equal access to leadership and decision-making roles, as well as the enabling technology and skills needed to excel in the future of work. Women must have the chance to contribute to sustainable peace and resilience in conflict-affected areas and benefit equally from crisis prevention and humanitarian action.

Our groundbreaking work on 'Generation Equality', which builds in the inclusivity and range of our partners for gender equality through action coalitions, will help us move into our next decade with the focused energy, commitment and resources to achieve irreversible progress. It is time to ensure that women's rights are fully realized and become their lived reality. In this

25th anniversary year of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, younger generations of women and girls cannot face a repeated cycle of the same conditions. That is why the leadership and participation of young people is so vital to the success of Generation Equality as a place for all who believe in change. We are determined to ensure that the UN System, representatives from all sectors and people from all spheres of life work together for gender equality and women's empowerment, guided by multilateralism; and the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind.

The challenges of gender inequality do have answers; we know this from the lessons we have learnt along the way. We also know that gender equality is everybody's business, and that it needs everyone's engagement, including the most marginalized groups and those who have not always been our traditional allies. As we enter the Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals, we aim to use the lessons of the COVID-19 crisis to build back a world that is green, equitable, gender-responsive and inclusive. And we look forward to the stories we will tell together over the next 10 years of UN Women, and beyond.



**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**  
Executive Director UN Women  
September 2020





UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

## Contact info

UN WOMEN 220 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York, NY 10017, USA · Tel: 646-781-4400 · Fax: 646-781-4496

[www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org) [www.facebook.com/unwomen](https://www.facebook.com/unwomen) [www.twitter.com/un\\_women](https://www.twitter.com/un_women) [YouTube www.youtube.com/unwomen](https://www.youtube.com/unwomen) [www.flickr.com/unwomen](https://www.flickr.com/unwomen)

## Credits

**Coordination and Lead Author:** Letty Chiwara

**Contributors:** Fiona MacKay, Joanne Sandler, Bandana Rana, Daniel Seymour, Lopa Banerjee

**Research Assistant:** Chong Liu

**Copy-editing, layout, design & printing:** Julie Pudlowski Consulting

**Photography:** ©UN Women/Ryan Brown; ©UN/ Julie Pudlowski; ©UN Women/Ritu Bhardwaj; ©UN Women Kosovo; ©UN Women/Juan Camilo Arias; Courtesy of Aya Chebbi; ©UN Women/Samar Abu Al-ouf; ©UN Women/N. Shrestha; ©UN Women/Lianne Milton; ©UN Women/Fahad Kaizer; ©UN Women/J. Carrier; ©UNAMI; ©Manuel Elias; ©UN Women/Neema Muunga; ©UN Photo/Kibae Park; ©UN Women/Daniel Donald; ©UN Women/Fabricio Barreto; ©UN Women/Norman Gorecho; ©UN Women/Sahand Minae; ©UN Women/Karim Selmaoui; ©Allison Joyce; ©UN Women/Joe Saad; ©UN Women/Urjasi Rudra; ©Erik Peinar; ©UN Women/Martin Jaramillo; ©UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz; ©UN Photo/Evan Schneider; ©UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras; ©UN Photo/Mark Garten; ©UN Photo/John McIlwaine; ©Stuart Ramson; ©UN Photo/Eskindir Debebe; ©UN Photo/Kim Haughton; ©Roman Shalamov; ©Volodymyr Shuvayev; ©UN Women/Bruno Spada; ©Karin Schermbrucker; ©Ruwa Georgina; ©Kristian Pohl/Regeringskansliet; ©Sol Avena; ©UN Women/Ezz Zannoun; ©UN Women/Susan Markisz; ©UN Women/Kennedy Okoth; ©Jennifer Pascal; ©UN Women/ Lauren Rooney; ©Catianna Tijerina; ©UN Women Indonesia; ©UN Women/Anahita Ahmed; ©Ibrahim Dirani / Dar al Mussawir; ©UN/MIUSCA - Herve Sereffio; ©UN Women/Fikerte Abebe; ©UN Women/Lauren Rooney; ©Adriana Borra; ©Christopher Herwig; ©Mia Vujadinovikj; ©Antoine Tardy; ©Emad Karim; ©Fernando Parra; ©UN Women/Faith Bwibo; ©UN Women/Ryan Brown; ©UN Women/Alicia Sully; ©UN Women/Shen Scott; ©UN Women/Tilebaldieva Kiyal; ©UN Women/Karina Ekizler-Kirillova; ©UN Women/Younes El Moumine; ©UN Women/Thaiza Castilho; ©IGSNRR; ©Dadli Dawta via Wikipedia CC BY-SA 4.0; ©UN Women; ©UN Women/Thao Hoang; ©UN Women/Pablo Rojas Madariaga; ©UN/ Women/Winston Daryoue; ©UN Women/Luke Horswell; ©UN Women/Tsitsi Matope; ©UN Women/Ebru Özdayı Demirel; Deachawat Sriolankul; ©UN Women/Benoit Almeras; ©UN Women/Paola Alfaro; ©UN Women/ Kennedy Okoth; Courtesy of Xiaoman Zhang; Courtesy of Lakshmi Puri; Courtesy of Dr. Nadine Gasman; Courtesy of Sanja Nikolin; Courtesy of Maya Morsy; Courtesy of Ambassador Pennelope Beckles; Courtesy of Hiya Shah; ©UN Women/Dzilam Méndez; ©UN Women/Allison Joyce; ©UN Women/Felix Eldridge; Courtesy of Houry Geudelekian; Courtesy of Sharon Bhagwan Rolls; Courtesy of Charlotte Bunch; Courtesy of Bogolo Kenewendo; Courtesy of Noeleen Heyzer; Courtesy of Clemencia Munoz

**Illustrations Generation Equality:** Bec Wonders

© UN Women 2020

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/annual-report-2019-2020>

<sup>2</sup> UN Women. 2019. Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World. New York: UN Women.

<sup>3</sup> UN Women. 2019. Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020: Families in a Changing World. New York: UN Women.

<sup>4</sup> UN Women. 2020b. From Insights to Action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19. New York: UN Women

<sup>5</sup> UN Women. 2018. Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: UN Women.

<sup>6</sup> Forbes. 2020 Women CEOs' Highest Representation On The Fortune 500 List Still Isn't Enough. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/08/03/women-ceos-highest-representation-on-the-fortune-500-list-still-isnt-enough/?sh=1067c4415aa8>

<sup>7</sup> World Bank Group. 2018. Women, Business and the Law 2018: Key Findings. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>8</sup> UN Women. 2020a. Women's Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing. New York: UN Women.

<sup>9</sup> All facts from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action/facts-and-figures>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

<sup>12</sup> All facts from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

<sup>13</sup> Gender Equality- Women's Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing, pdf.

<sup>14</sup> <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/west-and-central-africa>

<sup>15</sup> <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa>

<sup>16</sup> <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2020/08/womens-empowerment-index-for-kenyan-women-and-girls>

<sup>17</sup> <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/europe-and-central-asia>

<sup>19</sup> <https://lac.unwomen.org/en>

<sup>20</sup> <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/8/news-tunisia-law-on-ending-violence-against-women>

<sup>22</sup> 2015 assessment (ECOSOC, E/AC.51/2015/9)

<sup>23</sup> OECD development policy papers January 2020, no. 25: Putting finance to work for GEWE – the way forward.

[https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/putting-finance-to-work-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment\\_f0fa4d91-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/putting-finance-to-work-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment_f0fa4d91-en)





### **"Flying in Sorority"**

UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, accompanied by the artist Adry del Rocio, together symbolically add the final touches to Adry's mural, as part of the Generation Equality Forum closing ceremony in Mexico, March 2021.

The painting gives a historical view of Mexico's feminist movements in all their diversity and calls for action towards gender equality.