



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



UN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY

Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Introduction

At the confluence of rising economic inequality, rapid demographic and technological changes affecting the world of work, pandemic recovery and climate, conflict and crisis-related tumult, the world needs a fresh approach to women's economic empowerment.

Women's economic participation and paid and unpaid work contribute enormously to sustainable development and are key for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Women make major contributions to the economy, directly and indirectly contributing to economic growth and development. The most direct route is via workforce participation, which boosts production – and thus income, savings, and tax contributions at the household, community, and national levels.

And while the world has advanced significantly in ensuring equality in women's and men's legal rights to work, rights at work and access to economic resources, structural barriers continue to constrain women and girls from enjoying their full rights. Discriminatory laws, policies and social norms persist in impeding women's full and equal participation in the economy. Additionally, shifts in the global economy and demographics, technological advancements, and

protracted crises are driving a changing world of work, which presents both challenges and opportunities for women's economic empowerment.

Addressing the barriers to economic empowerment and unlocking opportunities requires work at multiple scales: from the attitudes, beliefs and practices of individuals and communities to institutions including workplaces, community organizations and public services, to economic markets and laws, policies, norms and regulations at national and international levels. It also requires engagement with and action from diverse stakeholders, each of which has a role to play: from women's movements, civil society organizations and workers representatives; to private sector employers and organizations; to multilateral organizations including international financial institutions; to public sector policy-makers and decision-makers.

The Strategy

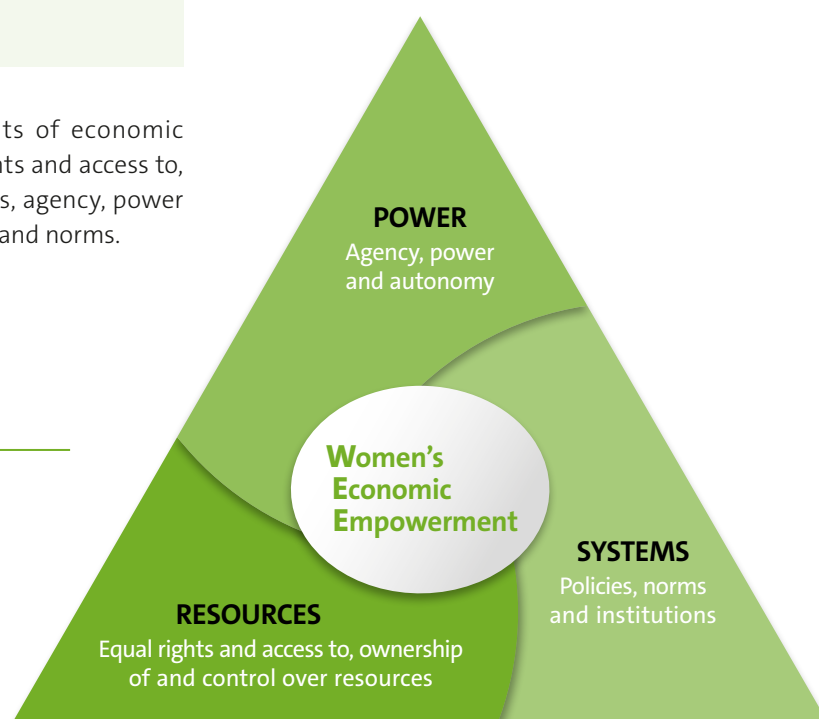
The Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy articulates UN Women's vision for enabling women's economic agency, autonomy and wellbeing. Anchored in UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its objective is to provide a framework that galvanizes internal and external stakeholders to work together at the local, national and global level through transformative solutions that improve the lives of women and girls with no one left behind. The strategy has been informed by data-driven analysis, extensive consultations, and UN Women's Independent Evaluation Service's 2022 corporate evaluation of UN Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships and its recommendation to undertake such a strategy.

BOX 1: Definition

UN Women defines economic empowerment as a transformative, collective process through which economic systems become just, equitable, and prosperous, and all women enjoy their economic and social rights, exercise agency and power in ways that challenge inequalities and level the playing field, and gain equal rights and access to, ownership of and control over resources, assets, income, time and their own lives.

Figure 1 summarizes the key elements of economic empowerment, which include equal rights and access to, ownership of and control over resources, agency, power and autonomy, and policies, institutions and norms.

FIGURE 1
Key elements of women's economic empowerment



Implementation of this strategy is expected to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, drive progress on international, regional, and national commitments to women's economic empowerment and contribute to UN Women's Strategic Plan outcomes. The strategy specifically contributes to several SDGs targets on reducing time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, women's land rights financing for gender equality and women's empowerment, women's employment and social protection. The work on economic empowerment contributes to several outcomes in the UN Women Strategic Plan 2025 including outcome 1 on global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws policies and institutions, outcome 2 on financing for gender equality and outcome 4 on women's equitable access to goods, services and resources.

Recognizing that women's economic empowerment cannot be achieved in isolation, the strategy is aligned to other areas of UN Women's work including on Governance and Participation, Ending Violence Against Women, and Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian and Research and Data. The work on women's economic empowerment is distinct due its multidisciplinary lens that draws on the other impact areas and analysis of poverty, labour markets, fiscal, monetary, and trade issues, industry, value chains, enterprise growth, sustainable livelihoods, to name a few.

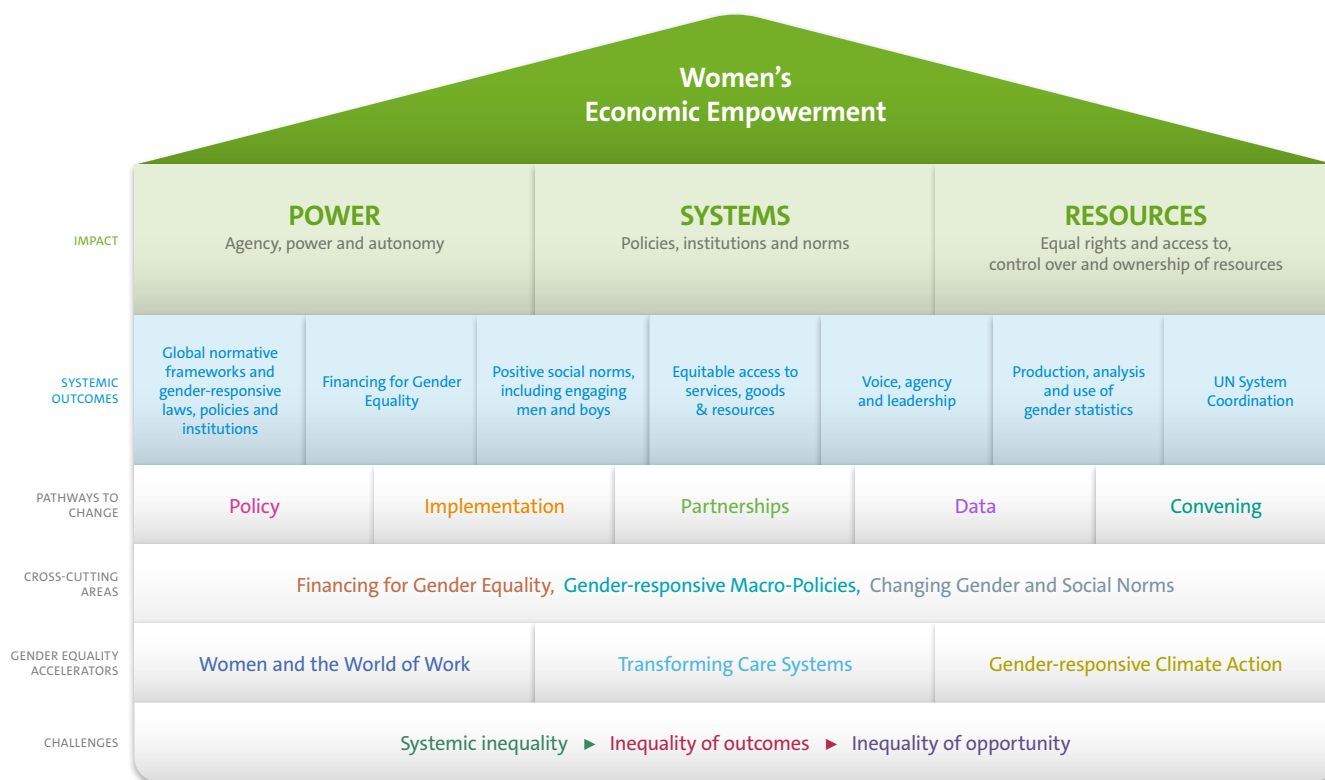
Components of the Strategy

The Strategy assesses the global landscape and UN Women’s role in realizing the economic rights of women and girls. It lays out the global context for work on women’s economic empowerment, provides a rights-based and transformative definition of economic empowerment, identifies gaps in current global efforts to achieve women’s economic empowerment, and then situates UN Women’s work on women’s economic empowerment within these broader efforts. Drawing on UN Women’s unique mandate and comparative advantage, it then lays out the opportunities for accelerating progress.

The strategy identifies three systemic inequalities that we need to address to achieve women’s economic empowerment including systemic inequality, inequality of opportunity and inequality of outcomes.

The Strategy follows a 3 by-3 by-5 framework. It identifies three key priority areas, or gender-equality accelerators where UN Women can make the most progress. These include women and the world of work, gender-responsive climate action, and transforming care systems. These three priority areas are underpinned by three cross-cutting areas on gender responsive macroeconomic policies, addressing discriminatory social norms and increasing financing for gender equality. The strategy then identifies five key pathways leveraging UN Women’s comparative advantage in advancing gender equality through global norms, public policy and government collaboration at the country level, partnerships with women’s organizations and other diverse stakeholders, generating gender data and convening key actors to engage collective action.

FIGURE 2
Women’s Economic Empowerment Strategy



Implementation

Putting UN Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy into action requires the adaptation and strengthening of key institutional processes and procedures. UN Women will develop and refine our institutional practices to increase efficiency and effectiveness across its priority areas and pathways for action through: (i) Communities of practice, (ii) Knowledge management, (iii) Cross-sectoral collaboration, (iv) UN system coordination, interagency work and joint programming, (v) Resource mobilization, and (vi) multi-stakeholder partnerships.

This Economic Empowerment Strategy will be monitored in line with the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Progress will be tracked against the indicators in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) and in UN Women's results management system (RMS). The pathways for action describe outputs that lead to the Systemic Outcomes and Impacts set forth in UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Results will be tracked in biennial workplan at the HQ, Regional and Country levels, in addition to at the programme level for the priority areas / Gender Equality Accelerators and cross-cutting areas according to the respective targets set. The results will be aggregated at the global level during the reporting process and published in the Transparency Portal.

If current trends continue, over 340 million women and girls will still live in extreme poverty by 2030. Progress will need to be 26 times faster to reach Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty.

UN Women (2023) The Gender Snapshot 2023

