



**IANWGE**

United Nations Inter-Agency Network on  
Women and Gender Equality



# IANWGE Compendium

30 Years After Beijing: Promising Practices  
on Gender Mainstreaming in Support of  
the Beijing Platform for Action's 12 Critical  
Areas of Concern



FOR ALL  
WOMEN  
AND GIRLS



The content of this publication is based on submissions received from members of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) through the online call for case studies in 2024, edited and adjusted by the IANWGE Secretariat, UN System Coordination Division, UN Women. The views presented by the individual practices do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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# UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY NETWORK ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) is a vibrant network comprised of over 70 UN entities dedicated to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide.

Established to enhance cooperation and collaboration among these entities, the Network serves as a vital platform for sharing knowledge, promising practices and effective strategies to integrate gender perspectives into all facets of development and humanitarian efforts. By fostering partnerships and collaboration across the system, it plays a pivotal role in working towards system-wide coherence on gender mainstreaming. Also, the Network strives to ensure that gender mainstreaming is at the forefront of policymaking, programme design and implementation, thus contributing significantly to the advancement of gender equality globally.

This compendium stands as a testament to the hard work and commitment of the IANWGE members, who represent a diverse array of entities united by a common goal: to eradicate gender disparities and promote women's rights. The case studies shared in this compendium celebrate the collective achievements of the Network, showcasing successful practices and innovative initiatives that have emerged on advancing the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action.

We extend our gratitude to all IANWGE members, particularly the IANWGE Working Group on Beijing+30/ CSW69,<sup>1</sup> co-led by UNRISD, WHO and UN Women, for their dedication and perseverance in championing women and girls' rights and gender equality. Their inspiring work not only drives progress but also serves as a beacon of hope as we continue to strive toward a future where women's rights and gender equality are fully realized for all. Together, let us build on these achievements and remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering a more equitable and inclusive world.

<sup>1</sup> | FAO, ILO, IOM, UN DESA, UN Women, UNDP, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRISD, UNV, WHO.

# ACRONYMS

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>BPfA</b>    | Beijing Platform for Action  |
| <b>CHANGE</b>  | Cultivating Healthy Attitudes and Norms for Gender Equality            |
| <b>CHC</b>     | Community Health Centres   |
| <b>CSE</b>     | Comprehensive Sexuality Education                                      |
| <b>CSOs</b>    | Civil Society Organizations  |
| <b>CSW</b>     | Commission on the Status of Women                                      |
| <b>DPPA</b>    | United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs       |
| <b>EbA</b>     | Ecosystem-based Adaptation   |
| <b>ECLAC</b>   | United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| <b>EVAWG</b>   | Ending Violence Against Women and Girls                                |
| <b>FAO</b>     | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations                |
| <b>GBV</b>     | Gender Based Violence  |
| <b>GBViC</b>   | GBV in Crises  |
| <b>GDP</b>     | Gross Domestic Product   |
| <b>GEF</b>     | Global Environment Fund  |
| <b>GEWE</b>    | Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment                                |
| <b>GMG</b>     | Gender Mainstreaming Group   |
| <b>GPEI</b>    | Global Polio Eradication Initiative                                    |
| <b>GRB</b>     | Gender Responsive Budgeting  |
| <b>IAEA</b>    | International Atomic Energy Agency                                     |
| <b>IANWGE</b>  | Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality                      |
| <b>IDP</b>     | Internally Displaced Person  |
| <b>ILO</b>     | International Labour Organization                                      |
| <b>IOM</b>     | International Organization for Migration                               |
| <b>ITU</b>     | International Telecommunication Union                                  |
| <b>JP RWEE</b> | Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment                  |
| <b>KPI</b>     | Key Performance Indicators   |
| <b>LAP</b>     | Legal Aid Provider   |
| <b>LGAP</b>    | Local Gender Action Plan   |
| <b>LGBTIQ+</b> | lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer                 |
| <b>LKDF</b>    | Learning and Knowledge Development Facility                            |
| <b>MSCFP</b>   | Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme                            |
| <b>NDC</b>     | Nationally Determined Contribution                                     |
| <b>NGM</b>     | National Gender Machinery  |
| <b>NoW</b>     | Network of Women   |
| <b>NTTA</b>    | National Time Transfer Accounts  |
| <b>PGA</b>     | Participatory Gender Audit   |
| <b>PSSC</b>    | Public Safety Command Center   |
| <b>RCW</b>     | Regional Conference on Women   |
| <b>SAM</b>     | Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization                                 |
| <b>SDG</b>     | Sustainable Development Goal   |
| <b>SRHR</b>    | Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights                              |
| <b>STEM</b>    | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics                       |
| <b>UN</b>      | United Nations   |
| <b>UNCDF</b>   | United Nations Capital Development Fund                                |
| <b>UNCT</b>    | UN Country Team  |
| <b>UN DESA</b> | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs               |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>UNDP</b>       | United Nations Development Programme                                       |
| <b>UNEP</b>       | United Nations Environment Programme                                       |
| <b>UNESCO</b>     | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization           |
| <b>UNFPA</b>      | United Nations Population Fund   |
| <b>UN-Habitat</b> | United Nations Human Settlements Programme                                 |
| <b>UNHCR</b>      | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                              |
| <b>UNICEF</b>     | United Nations Children's Fund   |
| <b>UNIDO</b>      | United Nations Industrial Development Organization                         |
| <b>UNITAMS</b>    | United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan           |
| <b>UNODC</b>      | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime                                   |
| <b>UNOPS</b>      | United Nations Office for Project Services                                 |
| <b>UNRISD</b>     | United Nations Research Institute for Social Development                   |
| <b>UNSCR 1325</b> | UN Security Council Resolution 1325  |
| <b>UN-SWAP</b>    | UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| <b>VAW</b>        | Violence Against Women   |
| <b>VAWP</b>       | Violence Against Women in Politics   |
| <b>VSLA</b>       | Village Savings and Loan Association                                       |
| <b>WE-FBS</b>     | Women's Empowerment - Farmer Business School                               |
| <b>WFP</b>        | World Food Programme   |
| <b>WHO</b>        | World Health Organization  |
| <b>WOB</b>        | Women Owned Business   |
| <b>WPP</b>        | Women's Participation Project  |
| <b>WRG</b>        | Women's Rights Group   |



# CONTENTS

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <u>United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality</u>        | <u>03</u>         |
| <u>Acronyms</u>  | <u>04</u>         |
| <u>Foreword</u>  | <u>09</u>         |
| <u>Introduction</u>  | <u>10</u>         |
| <b><u>Chapter 1: WOMEN AND POVERTY</u></b>                                     | <b><u>24</u></b>  |
| <b><u>Chapter 2: EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN</u></b>                       | <b><u>34</u></b>  |
| <b><u>Chapter 3: WOMEN AND HEALTH</u></b>                                      | <b><u>48</u></b>  |
| <b><u>Chapter 4: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN</u></b>                                | <b><u>58</u></b>  |
| <b><u>Chapter 5: WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT</u></b>                              | <b><u>66</u></b>  |
| <b><u>Chapter 6: WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY</u></b>                                 | <b><u>76</u></b>  |
| <b><u>Chapter 7: WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING</u></b>                    | <b><u>92</u></b>  |
| <b><u>Chapter 8: INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN</u></b> | <b><u>106</u></b> |
| <b><u>Chapter 9: HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN</u></b>                                 | <b><u>120</u></b> |
| <b><u>Chapter 10: WOMEN AND THE MEDIA</u></b>                                  | <b><u>128</u></b> |
| <b><u>Chapter 11: WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT</u></b>                            | <b><u>134</u></b> |
| <b><u>Chapter 12: THE GIRL CHILD</u></b>                                       | <b><u>150</u></b> |





# FOREWORD

As we mark 30 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we recognize this pivotal moment as one of both reflection and renewed commitment. This publication, the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) Compendium – *30 Years After Beijing: Promising Practices on Gender Mainstreaming in Support of the Beijing Platform for Action's 12 Critical Areas of Concern*, stands as both a testament to the progress made and a call to action for the road ahead.

Over the past three decades, we have witnessed undeniable advances in gender equality. Today, the world is more equitable for women and girls than ever before—proof that progress is possible. Yet, as we reflect on these gains, it is clear that they remain fragile and uneven. As we commemorate Beijing+30, we confront both persistent and emerging challenges: deepening inequalities, a sharp decline in financing for gender equality, overlapping crises that disproportionately affect women and girls, and an alarming backlash against hard-won rights. At the current pace, a girl born today will be 68 years old before we eradicate child marriage globally. She will never live to see the end of extreme poverty—137 years away. These are unacceptable realities. We cannot afford to wait another 30 years to deliver bold, urgent, and transformative action.

This Compendium captures the collective efforts of UN entities advancing women's rights by strategically embedding gender perspectives across policies and programmes. It reflects a commitment to ensuring that gender equality is not an afterthought, but a foundational pillar of all we do. IANWGE exemplifies this system-wide approach—bringing together expertise, innovation, and best practices to dismantle barriers and drive progress. More than a collection of initiatives, this Compendium is a source of inspiration and a guide for action. It reinforces our shared responsibility to push forward against the pushback, build on lessons learned, and forge solutions that meet the needs of all women and girls.

The newly adopted Beijing+30 Action Agenda provides a clear and urgent roadmap to accelerate gender equality. Anchored in the priorities identified



by Member States and civil society, it calls for action in six key areas: closing the digital divide, addressing poverty, eliminating gender-based violence, ensuring women's full and equal decision-making power, advancing peace and security, and achieving climate justice. Central to these efforts is the recognition that adolescent girls and youth must be at the heart of our work across these six actions. The UN system plays a critical role in turning this agenda into reality—driving implementation, fostering accountability, and supporting Member States in translating commitments into tangible change.

Thirty years after the Beijing Declaration and with just five years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, this is the moment to accelerate and amplify our efforts. The UN system, working in close collaboration with governments, civil society, and the private sector, must act as a catalyst for irreversible change. This means not only advancing progress but also safeguarding the hard-won gains of the past three decades. The path to gender equality is not linear, but our resolve must be unwavering. Together, we can tackle challenges, turn momentum into impact, and fulfill the promises made in Beijing. Because gender equality is the way forward—not just for women, not just for girls, but for the future of humanity.

**Sima Sami Bahous**

Chair of IANWGE

Executive Director of UN Women

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

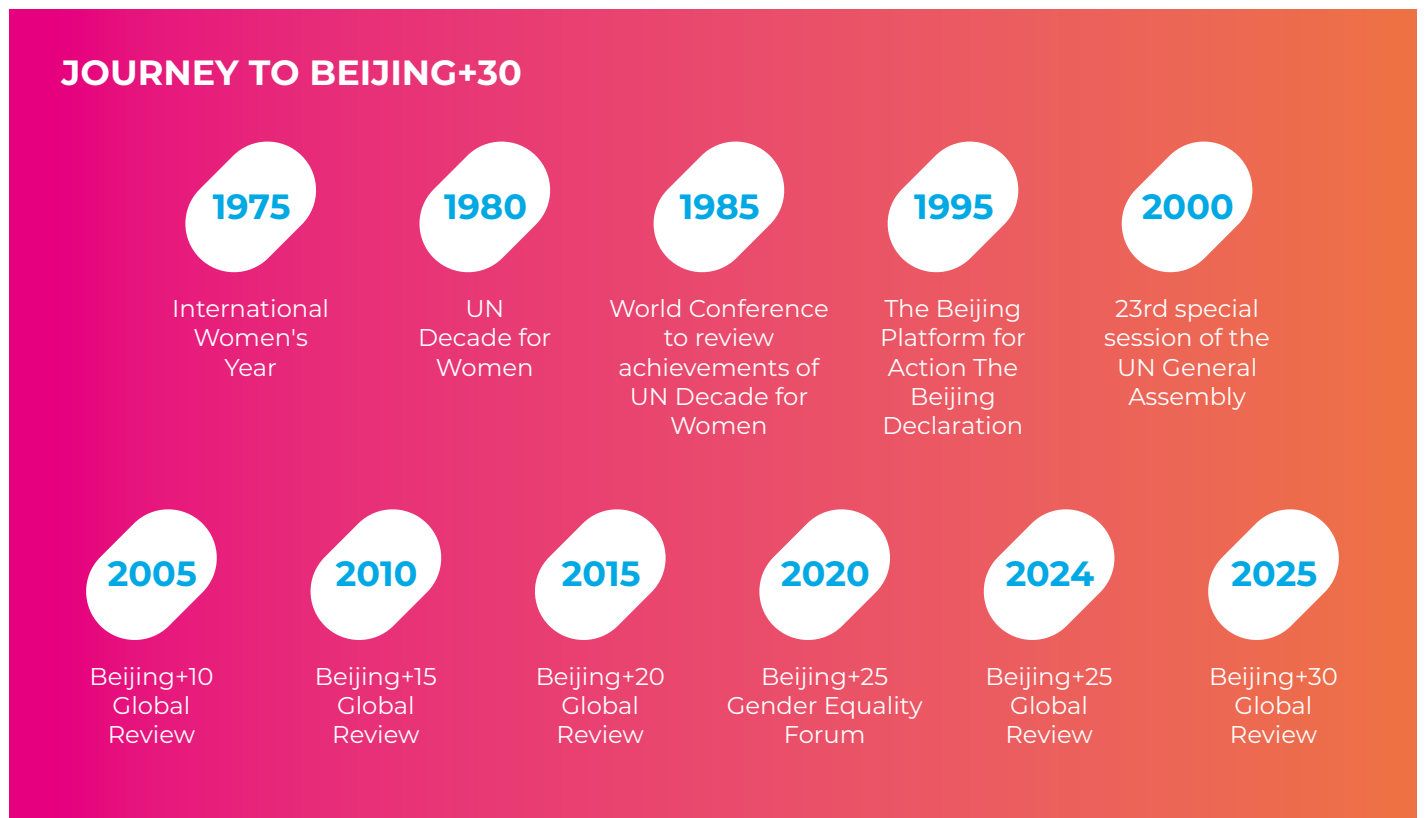
# INTRODUCTION

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, marked a significant milestone in the global agenda for rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The conference brought together thousands of delegates, including representatives from governments, non-governmental organizations and other civil society activists, to address pressing issues faced by women worldwide. The Platform recognized that achieving gender equality is essential for the advancement of society as a whole and called for comprehensive action across various sectors, including health, education and economic participation.<sup>2</sup>

At its core, the Platform for Action aimed to create a blueprint for change, setting forth specific actions and commitments to improve the lives of women

and girls. It identified 12 critical areas of concern, such as violence against women, poverty and the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes. The document emphasized the necessity of transforming societal norms and institutions that perpetuate gender inequalities, advocating for a multi-faceted approach that includes legal reforms, education and the active involvement of women in all aspects of life.

The Platform for Action has since served as a guiding framework for governments and organizations working towards gender equality. Its principles have influenced international policies and initiatives, fostering collaboration and accountability among various stakeholders. The enduring significance of the Platform is evident in the ongoing efforts to address gender disparities, highlighting the importance of sustained commitment to the empowerment of women and girls as a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for achieving broader social and economic development goals.



2 [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(1995\)](#).



The Platform for Action has been a cornerstone in the global movement for gender equality, inspiring numerous world conferences, reviews and events that continue to hold governments and organizations accountable for their commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Since its adoption in 1995, the Platform has catalysed critical discussions and initiatives, including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) sessions, the recent Generation Equality Forum and various regional reviews that assess progress toward gender equality. These gatherings not only celebrate achievements but also identify gaps and challenges, ensuring that the principles established at Beijing in 1995 remain at the forefront of international agendas.

As countries reflect on their commitments and share promising practices, the Platform serves as a powerful reminder of our collective responsibility to create a world where women and girls can thrive, thus reinforcing the ongoing necessity for action and accountability in the pursuit of gender equality.

## **THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS**

The Beijing Platform for Action identifies 12 critical areas of concern that are essential for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. These areas address specific barriers that women face, while highlighting the unique challenges encountered by marginalized groups of women, including persons living with disabilities, single parents, refugees and those affected by violence and environmental crises.

By promoting interlinked and mutually reinforcing objectives, the Platform underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach to gender equality. It calls for tailored interventions that consider the diverse experiences of women and individuals from marginalized communities, ensuring that initiatives are inclusive and responsive to the needs of the most disadvantaged populations. The 12 critical areas of the Platform--outlined below--not only serve as a guide for action but also reinforces collective responsibility to dismantle barriers and create an equitable environment where all women--and all individuals including those from marginalized communities--can thrive.

# OVERVIEW OF THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

1



## WOMEN AND POVERTY

Strategies must be implemented to eradicate poverty among women, recognizing that economic empowerment and access to resources are crucial for enhancing their quality of life.

2



## EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

Equal access to education and training is essential for women and girls, as it equips them with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in the job market and contribute to society.

3



## WOMEN AND HEALTH

Improving women's health is vital, focusing on access to comprehensive healthcare services, reproductive health education and addressing gender-specific health issues to reduce disparities.

4



## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Comprehensive measures must be taken to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, creating safe environments where they can live free from fear and abuse.

5



## WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Integrating gender perspectives into conflict resolution and peace processes is essential, as women play crucial roles in rebuilding communities and fostering peace.

6



## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Promoting women's participation in economic activities and addressing barriers such as unequal pay and lack of access to resources will empower women economically and socially.

# 7



## **WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING**

Increasing women's representation in leadership roles and decision-making processes across all sectors is critical for ensuring that their perspectives and needs are considered.

# 8



## **INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

Establishing and strengthening institutions dedicated to promoting gender equality will facilitate coordinated efforts to address women's rights and empowerment.

# 9



## **HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

Protecting women's human rights and holding violators accountable is essential for ensuring justice and equality, enabling women to live with dignity and freedom.

# 10



## **WOMEN AND THE MEDIA**

Eliminating gender stereotypes in media representation and promoting diverse portrayals of women can challenge societal norms and empower women and girls.

# 11



## **WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Integrating gender perspectives into environmental policies and sustainable development initiatives ensures that women's contributions and needs are recognized in addressing climate change and resource management.

# 12



## **THE GIRL CHILD**

Addressing the specific challenges faced by girls, such as access to education, protection from violence and the prevention of child marriage, is crucial for fostering their development and empowerment.

## PROMISING PRACTICES

This publication presents over 54 promising practices<sup>3</sup> from 24 UN entities<sup>4</sup> of progress in gender mainstreaming towards the 12 critical areas identified at the Beijing Conference as imperative to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Promising practices are presented against the respective critical areas of progress. A short summary of each critical area is provided below.



### CHAPTER 1: WOMEN AND POVERTY

The Beijing Platform for Action identified poverty as one of the most significant obstacles to achieving gender equality. Women, especially in developing countries, bear the brunt of poverty due to systemic gender inequalities in education, healthcare and economic opportunities. Women are more likely to be in vulnerable employment, have less access to assets such as land, credit and property, and face discrimination in labour markets. Over the past 25 years, there has been a concerted effort to address these disparities, but poverty remains a key challenge for women globally, particularly in conflict-affected and rural areas.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated gender inequalities, pushing many women further into poverty due to job losses in sectors like tourism, retail and domestic work, which disproportionately employ women. According to a UN Women report in 2020, the pandemic caused 25% of self-employed women to lose their jobs, compared to 21% of self-employed men, highlighting the gendered nature of economic vulnerability.<sup>5</sup> However, there have been positive strides in addressing gender-specific poverty through social protection schemes, microfinance

programmes and increased focus on women's access to economic resources.

The Sustainable Development Goals further emphasize the importance of gender-responsive poverty reduction strategies. Goal 1 (No Poverty) explicitly includes a gender perspective, calling for targeted efforts to address women's poverty. While progress has been slow, the adoption of gender-sensitive budgeting and investments in women's education, reproductive health and rights and opportunities for entrepreneurship have laid the foundation for future growth. As we approach Beijing+30, these approaches must be scaled up to close the gender poverty gap and achieve sustainable economic empowerment for women globally.

### WOMEN AND POVERTY: PROMISING PRACTICES

#### *FAO: Women's Empowerment Farmer Business Schools*

*Integrating gender and agribusiness perspectives to promote gender equality and rural women's economic empowerment (Cambodia, Kenya and Uganda)*

#### *WFP: Village Savings and Loan Associations*

*Empowering women through capacity building, digitalization, and linkage to financial services (Uganda)*

#### *FAO: Sustainable Mechanization for Women Processors*

*Empowering women agricultural processors through small-scale technologies (Benin)*

#### *UNCDF: Empowering Women through Digital Remittances*

*How IME Pay's remittance and wallet services enhanced women's financial inclusion (Nepal)*

- 3 A promising practice is an initiative or approach that has demonstrated potential in contributing significantly to gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes through gender mainstreaming specific to one of the Beijing Platform for Action's 12 critical areas.
- 4 ECLAC, FAO, GEF, IAEA, ILO, IOM, ITU, UN DESA, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNCDF, UNDP, DPPA, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRISD, WFP, WHO.
- 5 UN Women (2020). *COVID-19 and its economic toll on women: The story behind the numbers.*





## CHAPTER 2: EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

Education is one of the most powerful tools for achieving gender equality. Educating women and girls not only enables them to realize their full potential but also drives economic growth, poverty reduction and social progress. In 1995, global efforts focused on overcoming barriers to girls' education, such as early marriage, violence and limited access to schools, particularly in conflict-affected regions. While significant strides have been made since then, challenges remain.

In 2024, UNESCO reported that 122 million girls globally were out of school, and millions more faced significant barriers to education due to economic inequality, child labour and gender-based violence.<sup>6</sup> Despite these challenges, significant progress has been made in promoting girls' education. In many countries, girls now outperform boys in secondary and tertiary education, with female enrolment at the tertiary level surpassing that of males in several regions, including in Latin America and East Asia.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic eroded these gains. UNESCO highlighted that school closures due to the pandemic disproportionately affected girls, especially those in rural areas, thereby worsening existing educational inequalities.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, digital learning exposed the gender gap in access to technology, with girls in some regions facing limited access to electronic devices and internet connectivity. As we approach the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform, it is crucial to address these barriers, ensure universal access to quality education and close the gender digital divide.

Empowering women and girls through education not only enhances their individual opportunities but also contributes significantly to societal development, economic growth, and poverty

reduction. When women are educated, they are more likely to participate in the labour force (notably in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as STEM), make informed health choices and invest in their families' education, creating a positive ripple effect within communities.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN: PROMISING PRACTICES

#### *IAEA: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme*

Inspiring young women to pursue careers in nuclear science (Global)

#### *UNIDO: Learning and Knowledge Development Facility*

Strengthening women's participation in male-dominated industrial sectors (Global)

#### *UNHCR: Nosotras Conectadas*

Digital empowerment to enhance the employability for refugee and migrant women (Argentina)

#### *ITU: HerCyberTracks*

Promoting the equal, full and meaningful representation of women in cybersecurity (Africa, Europe/CIS)

#### *UNESCO: Closing the Digital Divide*

Ensuring gender-transformative digital skills education for women and girls (Global)

#### *ITU: The EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age*

Leveraging knowledge sharing and collaboration to close the digital gender divide (Global)

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO (2024). [Global Education Monitoring Report, 2024/5 Leadership in education: lead for learning](#).

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO (2021). [When schools shut: gendered impacts of COVID-19 school closures](#).



### CHAPTER 3: WOMEN AND HEALTH

Women's health is a critical aspect of gender equality. Ensuring that women have access to quality health services, including reproductive healthcare, is fundamental to their well-being and empowerment. In 1995, many women around the world, particularly in low-income countries, faced significant health inequities, including limited access to maternal care, high rates of gender-based violence and lack of reproductive rights. Despite substantial progress over the last 25 years, women's health challenges remain deeply rooted in gender inequalities.

In 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that maternal mortality had decreased by more than 50% since 1995, but maternal death rates in developing regions are still disproportionately high.<sup>8</sup> Globally, women still face barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services, particularly in rural areas, where cultural norms, lack of infrastructure and insufficient healthcare professionals limit access to care.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, with disruptions to essential maternal and reproductive health services affecting millions of women worldwide. UNFPA data indicates that 41% of reporting countries experienced family planning service disruptions due to the pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

The Sustainable Development Goals include specific targets on improving maternal health and achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. While progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality and expanding family planning services, much remains to be done to achieve gender equality in health outcomes.

8 WHO (2023). [Maternal mortality ratio estimates, 1990-2023](#).

9 UNFPA (2021). [Impact of COVID-19 on Family Planning: What we know one year into the pandemic](#).

### WOMEN AND HEALTH: PROMISING PRACTICES

#### WHO: Global Polio Eradication Initiative

Gender integration into polio operations in all endemic and outbreak countries (Global)

#### UNRISD: Living, Working, Caring and Dying in Times of COVID-19

How the pandemic exposed and amplified pre-existing social and structural vulnerabilities, particularly in the care system (Global)

#### UNICEF: Engaging Female Vaccinators to Increase Uptake of COVID-19 Vaccination

Ensuring equitable access to healthcare services during the pandemic (Pakistan)

#### UNOPS: Rural Renewable Energy to Empower Health Centres

Using sustainable energy to electrify rural community health centres and provide 24-hour care (Sierra Leone)



### CHAPTER 4: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women (VAW) remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations worldwide, and the Beijing Platform for Action called for comprehensive strategies to eliminate such violence. Over the last 30 years, considerable progress has been made in terms of international legal frameworks and national legislation to combat VAW. The 2015 adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals explicitly addressed the need to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Despite this progress, violence against women remains widespread, deeply rooted in cultural norms, and exacerbated by situations of armed conflict, economic crises and natural disasters.



The COVID-19 pandemic brought a surge in domestic violence. UN Women reported that prior to the pandemic, 243 million women aged 15-49 had experienced intimate partner violence, and that this had intensified during the COVID-19 period.<sup>10</sup> Exacerbating factors included cramped living spaces, isolation with abusers and deserted public spaces, amongst others, as key causes.

WHO reports that VAW is a major health concern and a violation of women's human rights. Their data reveal that one in three women globally have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, with rates even higher in conflict-affected areas.<sup>11</sup> The #MeToo movement has helped raise global awareness of sexual harassment and assault, leading to more significant policy changes and improved support services for survivors. However, the implementation of these measures remains uneven, with many women still lacking access to essential services like shelters and legal aid.

The global community has continued to strengthen frameworks and laws to prevent and address VAW. In many countries, domestic violence laws have been enacted or strengthened, and there has been a rise in awareness campaigns. However, the effectiveness of these measures is often hindered by inadequate funding, lack of political will and cultural norms that continue to normalize violence against women. As we approach the deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, there is an urgent need to focus on implementation and ensuring that services are available to all women, especially those living in vulnerable situations.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: PROMISING PRACTICES**

### **UNHCR: Strengthening Community Mechanisms for the Prevention of and Response to GBV**

Community engagement for GBV prevention and responding to survivors needs (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

### **IOM: Institutionalizing IOM's Approach to Addressing GBV in Crisis**

Ensuring crisis-affected women and girls live free from gender-based violence (Global)

### **UN Women: Spotlight Initiative**

Gender responsive budgeting to sustain the results and take further action on gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (Grenada)



## **CHAPTER 5: WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

The Beijing Platform for Action highlighted the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and called for their inclusion in peacebuilding and conflict-resolution processes. In the last 30 years, significant advances have been made in recognizing the role of women in peace and security. The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in 2000, which calls for women's participation in peace processes, marked a turning point. However, women's participation in peace processes remains limited, and they continue to be disproportionately affected by conflict, particularly in terms of sexual violence and displacement.

In recent years, women have increasingly been recognized as key agents of peace and stability. UN Women reports that women comprise only 9.6% of negotiators, and 26.6% of signatories to international peace and ceasefire agreements.<sup>12</sup> Yet the impact of conflict on women has been highlighted through ongoing humanitarian crises such as the situation in Syria, Yemen and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war. Efforts to increase the participation of women in peace negotiations are ongoing, yet in many contexts,

<sup>10</sup> UN Women (2024). The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19.

<sup>11</sup> WHO (2024). Violence against women.

<sup>12</sup> UN Women (2024). Facts and figures: Women, peace and security.

women's voices are still often sidelined in peace and security dialogues.

Despite these challenges, the women, peace and security agenda has brought about a greater focus on the need for gender-sensitive peacebuilding efforts. National action plans on UNSCR 1325 are now being developed by many countries, and more women are being included in peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

## **WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT: PROMISING PRACTICES**

### *IOM: Gender Transformation with At-Risk Youth in Peacebuilding Initiatives*

Addressing the complex challenges faced by women and girls in conflict zones (South Sudan)

### *DPPA: Sudan Women's Rights Group & Multi-stakeholder Women's Consultations*

Engaging women in the Sudanese political processes (Sudan)

### *DPPA: Women, Peace and Security*

Ensuring women's voices and gender provisions are addressed – and monitored – in peacebuilding efforts (Colombia)

### *UN Women: From National Ambitions to Local Realities*

Ensuring women's voices and gender provisions are monitored – and addressed – in peacebuilding efforts (Somalia)



## **CHAPTER 6: WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY**

Economic empowerment is a cornerstone of the Beijing Platform for Action, which advocated for the elimination of barriers hindering women's participation in economic life. Despite progress

since 1995, gender disparities in economic participation persist. Women continue to face lower wages, underrepresentation in leadership positions and limited access to economic resources.

Women are more likely to be employed in informal sectors, where labour protections are weaker, and they experience higher job insecurity and wage inequality. However, in recent years, there has been a growing global emphasis on gender equality in the workplace, with efforts to address the gender pay gap and promote women's entrepreneurship. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) the global female labour force participation rate is 47%, compared to 72% for men.<sup>13</sup> Closing the gender gap in labour force participation could significantly boost global GDP, especially in regions with large gender disparities, and even accelerate growth in developed economies.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated gender disparities, as women were disproportionately affected by job losses in sectors such as hospitality, retail and care work, which are heavily female-dominated.

Access to affordable and quality childcare has also been noted as essential for women's full participation in the workforce. Additionally, addressing women's unpaid care burdens, often stemming from caring for children and elderly family members, is crucial for their economic empowerment.

However, there have been positive developments in women's entrepreneurship. Many countries have implemented policies to support women-owned businesses, including financial access, mentorship and networking opportunities. The number of women-owned businesses has increased globally, demonstrating the resilience and growth of women entrepreneurs despite challenges.

## **WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY: PROMISING PRACTICES**

### *UNOPS: Integrated Urban Services Emergency Project*

Providing employment and economic opportunities to Yemeni women (Yemen)

<sup>13</sup> ILO (2024). [The gender gap in employment: What's holding women back?](#)

### **UNCDF: WE! Fund**

Fostering women's economic empowerment in the 'missing middle' - medium-sized projects often underserved by traditional financing (Senegal)

### **UNIDO: CAPFISH-Capture: Post-harvest Fisheries Development Project**

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia's fisheries sector (Cambodia)

### **WFP: Reducing Women's Unpaid Domestic and Care Work Burden**

Partnering with government, private sector and local communities to support women's economic empowerment (Tanzania)

### **ILO: Moldova's Approach to Alternative Childcare Services**

Piloting sustainable care solutions for working parents (Moldova)

### **UNODC: Women and Public Procurement**

Inclusion as a means to combat corruption (Latin America)

### **UN DESA: National Time Transfer Accounts Manual**

Measuring the gendered and generational economy (Global)



## **CHAPTER 7: WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING**

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized the need for women's equal participation in decision-making at all levels of governance, from local to national levels. In 1995, women were significantly underrepresented in political leadership and decision-making roles globally. While some progress has been made in terms of gender quotas and women's political participation, the pace of change has been slow, and women remain vastly underrepresented in positions of power.

In the last five years there has been slow, yet steady progress in increasing women's participation in politics. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the percentage of women in national parliaments has risen from approximately 25% in 2020 to 27% in 2024.<sup>14</sup> While this represents a small increase, it is still far from parity. Women still face barriers such as gender bias, limited access to political networks and violence, which hinder their ability to fully participate in decision-making processes.

Women's participation in leadership roles is essential not only for achieving gender equality but also for ensuring more inclusive governance. Women's leadership has been shown to have positive impacts on policy outcomes, particularly in areas such as health, education and social welfare. Moving forward, ensuring that gender quotas are implemented effectively and that women have access to leadership training and support will be key to breaking down remaining barriers and achieving full gender parity in decision-making by implementing the SDGs.

## **WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING: PROMISING PRACTICES**

### **FAO: Dimitra Clubs**

Community action for change (Global)

### **UN Women: Generation Equality**

Global Adolescent Girl Leadership Town Halls (Global)

### **IOM: Women's Participation Project**

Engaging displaced women and girls in camp governance and decision-making processes (Global)

### **ITU: Network of Women**

Increasing women's participation and decision-making in ITU's radiocommunication, development and standardization sectors (Global)

### **UN Women: UN Gender Quota Portal**

Expanding global knowledge and advocacy on gender quotas (Global)

### **UN Women: Women's Political Participation**

Ensuring inclusive, and violence-free political participation for women (Mexico)

14 IPU (2024). [Global data on national parliaments](#).



## **CHAPTER 8: INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

The Beijing Platform for Action called for the creation and strengthening of institutional mechanisms to advance the status of women and ensure that gender equality is integrated into national policy frameworks. Many countries are continuing to make progress by establishing gender equality ministries and national commissions on women's status. However, the effective functioning and resourcing of these bodies are inconsistent.

Over the past five years, there has been a continued push to strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender equality at both the national and international levels. Countries are increasingly integrating gender equality into national policies and budgets. However, the sustainability and political commitment to these mechanisms vary widely, particularly in regions where gender equality is still seen as a secondary issue.

As the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform approaches, there is a continued need for robust institutions dedicated to advancing gender equality. This includes not only ensuring adequate funding and political will but also empowering women's civil society organizations to hold governments accountable for implementing gender-responsive policies.

### **INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN: PROMISING PRACTICES**

*UNDP: Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions*  
How the gender equality seal supports institutional change (Global)

*WFP: Digital Social Safety Nets: A Key to Resilience and Gender Equality*  
Digital infrastructure as the foundation for an inclusive social protection system (Haiti)

*ILO: Supporting a Gender-Equitable Economy*  
Supporting the development of gender-responsive policies and programmes (Uzbekistan)

*ECLAC: Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean*  
47 years of advancing gender rights and sustainable development (Latin America and the Caribbean)

*UNDP: EQUANOMICS*  
Transforming economies to advance gender equality (Global)

*UN Women: Transformative Financing for Gender Equality*  
Working towards more transparent, inclusive and accountable governance (Kosovo)



## **CHAPTER 9: HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

Human rights have been firmly placed at the center of the gender equality agenda, recognizing the need to eliminate discrimination, violence and exploitation of women in all its forms. Since 1995, there has been a growing recognition of women's human rights, with international legal frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) providing a foundation for global efforts.

Over the last five years, important strides have been made in upholding and protecting women's human rights. The adoption of national laws on domestic violence, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation in several countries represents a significant shift in the recognition of women's rights as human rights. The #MeToo movement has also brought widespread attention to sexual harassment, leading to legal reforms in many countries.

Despite this progress, violations of women's human rights remain widespread. Women continue to face discrimination in both public and private spheres, and violations such as trafficking, forced labour and gender-based violence continue to be prevalent.

As we approach Beijing +30, the international community must strengthen the enforcement of

international human rights treaties and frameworks, ensure that women's voices are heard in legal and policy-making processes, and enhance accountability mechanisms for the protection of women's human rights.

## HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN: PROMISING PRACTICES

### UNHCR: Comité Femmes Ressources

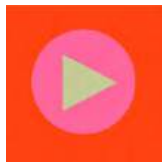
Empowering women community leaders to expand participation and access to emergency assistance and basic services for refugees at heightened need for protection (Mauritania)

### UNODC: Improving Access to Legal Aid for Women in Western Africa

Strengthening gender-responsive and equitable legal aid systems (Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone)

### UNRISD: The International Anti-Gender Movement

Understanding the Rise of Anti-Gender Discourses in the Context of Development, Human Rights and Social Protection



## CHAPTER 10: WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

The media plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of women and gender, and the Beijing Platform for Action called for the elimination of gender stereotypes in the media and for the promotion of women's full participation in media and information sectors. In 1995, women were largely underrepresented in media production and decision-making and often portrayed in stereotypical roles that reinforced traditional gender norms.

Recent years have seen increasing recognition of the importance of gender equality in the media. The Global Media Monitoring Project's 2020 report stated that women made up only 25% of news subjects and

sources globally, albeit an increase from 19% in 1995.<sup>15</sup> Women are still underrepresented in leadership roles in the media, and their representation in news coverage is often limited to specific, stereotypical topics. However, the rise of social media platforms has given women new spaces to engage in media production and activism, allowing for a more diverse range of voices and narratives to be heard.

Even so, the media industry remains one of the most gender-imbalanced sectors, with women's participation in decision-making roles and media ownership still limited. It is crucial to continue advocating for gender-sensitive media policies, the safety of women journalists and increasing the representation of women in media leadership roles to foster a more inclusive and equitable media sector.

## WOMEN AND THE MEDIA: PROMISING PRACTICES

### UNESCO: The Chilling

Global trends in online violence against women journalists (Global)

### UNESCO: MedFilm for All

Create a gender-responsive film sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq region (Middle East Region)



## CHAPTER 11: WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that women have a unique relationship with the environment, as they are both disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and climate change and are key agents in environmental sustainability. In 1995, discussions around gender and the environment were still in the early stages, with little focus on how gender dynamics shaped environmental outcomes. However, in the last 30 years, the growing recognition of climate change has

<sup>15</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project (2020). Highlight of Findings.



underscored the need for gender-responsive environmental policies.

The intersection between gender and the environment has gained increasing attention, particularly in the context of climate change and natural disasters. Studies reported by UN Women continue to highlight the disproportionate impact of climate-related disasters on women and girls.<sup>16</sup> The consequences of such disasters impact their life expectancy, unemployment rates, labour force re-entry and relative asset losses.

However, women's involvement in climate resilience efforts has also been recognized as essential. Women have been at the forefront of many grassroots environmental movements, advocating for sustainable practices and the protection of natural resources.

Integrating gender considerations into environmental and climate change policies is critical. The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, includes gender equality as a key element in its climate action framework. Ensuring that women are empowered to participate in decision-making processes and have access to resources is crucial to creating more resilient and sustainable communities.

## **WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT: PROMISING PRACTICES**

### *UNIDO: Empowering Women in E-Waste Management*

Reducing toxic exposure for women and children in e-waste recycling

### *GEF: Building Climate Resilience of Urban Systems through Ecosystem-Based Adaptation*

Empowering women and enhancing community resilience to climate change (Latin America and the Caribbean)

### *UNDP: Climate Promise*

Ensuring gender equality and social inclusion in climate strategies (Global)

### *UNEP: EmPower: Women for Climate Resilient Societies*

Accelerating gender-responsive and human rights-based climate actions (Asia and the Pacific)

### *UNCDF: Tackling the Consequences of Climate Change with Solar-Powered Solutions*

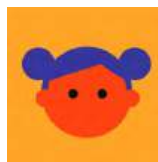
Ensuring safe and reliable solar-powered water sources through local government initiatives (Bangladesh)

### *GEF: Coastal Fisheries Initiative*

Ensuring safe and reliable solar-powered water sources through local government initiatives (Latin America)

### *UN-Habitat: Strengthening Women's Rights through Access to Secure Housing*

The impact of gendered property systems on equality (Mozambique)



## **CHAPTER 12: THE GIRL CHILD**

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that girls and young women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and violence, and emphasized the need for specific interventions to ensure girls' rights are protected. In 1995, gender disparities in child health, education and protection were significant, with millions of girls being denied access to education, subjected to early marriage and facing violence and exploitation.

According to UNICEF, only 49% of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education.<sup>17</sup> The challenges remain, particularly in regions with conflict and poverty, where millions of girls are still out of school. Additionally, while child marriage rates have declined globally, they persist in many regions, particularly in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>16</sup> UN Women (2023). UN Women Humanitarian Strategy (2022-2025) in brief

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF (2024). Girls' education.

Ensuring that all girls have access to quality education, protection from violence and the opportunity to participate fully in society must remain a top priority. Addressing issues such as child marriage, female genital mutilation and gender-based violence are essential to enable girls to grow up in an environment that promotes their full potential.

## THE GIRL CHILD: PROMISING PRACTICES

### UNICEF: Skills4Girls

Girl-centered solutions to unlock the potential of adolescent girls (Global)

### UNFPA: Improved Access to Emergency Services for the Victims/Survivors of GBV in Early Marriage

Empowering marginalized groups with crucial knowledge about their rights and available support services (Georgia)

## FOCUS ON INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is crucial to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, and it is increasingly recognized that the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action cannot be fully achieved without addressing intersecting social identities--such as race, class, disability, age, ethnicity and sexuality--that shape individuals' experiences and identities. An intersectional approach ensures that the unique challenges faced by women at these intersections are recognized and addressed, leading to more inclusive policies and interventions.

The principle of "Leave No One Behind" emphasizes that the benefits of the 2030 Agenda must reach every individual, especially those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. This highlights the importance of addressing intersectionality, given that differing and compounding social identities intersect to create unique challenges. This comprehensive approach is key to operationalizing the SDGs and supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform.

Without considering intersectionality, gender equality efforts risk overlooking marginalized

women, exacerbating inequalities and failing to meet the needs of those hardest hit by systemic discrimination. For example, women from marginalized racial or socioeconomic backgrounds face multiple layers of disadvantage that cannot be addressed by gender-focused policies alone. Therefore, integrating intersectionality across all areas of the Beijing Platform for Action is essential to ensuring that all women, especially those living in vulnerable situations, can access their rights and opportunities.

The UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women includes enhanced multiple indicators in its latest version, UN-SWAP 3.0, with an aim to strengthen the institutionalization of intersectionality within the UN system. This important step will provide increased opportunities to assess how well UN entities are incorporating intersectional perspectives into their work, ensuring that their plans not only address gender equality but also account for the various intersecting factors that affect individuals' access to rights and opportunities. By embedding intersectionality into both evaluation and implementation, the UN system is taking a significant step toward making gender equality more inclusive and effective across all areas of its work

The UN Women Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit, the Beijing +30 Interagency Working Group on Gender and Disability Compendium, the IANWGE Intersectionality Informed Gender Analysis Toolkit and Compendium and the UNRISD Intersectionality Course effective across all areas of advancing gender equality and social development provide valuable frameworks and guidance for integrating an intersectional approach into policies, research and programmes. These learning resources and tools emphasize the need to understand how different identities interact to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege, ensuring that no one is left behind.

# 1

## WOMEN AND POVERTY



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Whilst the picture around the globe has been mixed, there has been progress in reducing poverty for women in certain regions, particularly in East Asia and the Pacific. According to the [World Bank](#), the poverty rate for women in this region fell from 12.4% in 2015 to 5.2% in 2021.

Globally, labour force participation rates for people aged 25 to 54 are 1.8 times lower for women than for men, with just 51.6% of women engaged in the labour force compared to 94.6% of men, a gap worsened by the pandemic. [SDG Action](#) reports that this disparity is most pronounced among married individuals with children, due to prevailing norms around unpaid care work, and leads to long-term financial disadvantages for women, including lower income, savings, and pensions in old age.

Climate change is worsening poverty gaps, with 236 million more women and girls projected to face hunger by 2030, double the number faced by men (131 million). [UN Women](#) report that as competition for resources grows with the impact of climate change, women will bear a disproportionate burden, with intensified threats to livelihoods and increased societal polarization.



# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT—FARMER BUSINESS SCHOOLS

INTEGRATING GENDER AND AGRIBUSINESS PERSPECTIVES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND RURAL WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Geographic region: CAMBODIA, KENYA AND UGANDA



**Entity:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 -

**Global partners:** Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and Care International (CARE)

**Partners in Cambodia:** Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries and provincial departments in the Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey provinces; Ministry of Women's Affairs and provincial departments in the Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey provinces

**Kenya:** Farm Forestry Smallholder Producers Association of Kenya; World Vision Kenya

**Uganda:** Environmental Alert

**To learn more:** [https://www.fao.org/gender/resources/videos/videos-detail/A-gender-perspective-to-business-development-through-the-Women-s-Empowerment-Farmer-Business-Schools-\(WE-FBS\)/en](https://www.fao.org/gender/resources/videos/videos-detail/A-gender-perspective-to-business-development-through-the-Women-s-Empowerment-Farmer-Business-Schools-(WE-FBS)/en)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXY6PIZh8YM>

## OVERVIEW

The Women's Empowerment-Farmer Business School (WE-FBS) is a grassroots methodology that aims to create profitable agricultural enterprises while transforming gender relations at the household, community, and market levels.

The methodology engages stakeholders across sectors, providing a space for analysis, dialogue, and action among family members, service providers, rural institutions, and value chain actors. Central to the WE-FBS approach is its focus on women and men, encouraging participants to critically reflect on roles, daily tasks, decision-making and resource allocation within their households, groups and communities.

Through participatory and experiential learning, men and women assess how gender dynamics impact their business opportunities. Building on these insights, the approach supports participants in developing strategies to enhance their business potential, increase income generation, and improve household food security and nutrition.

## CREATING A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE MODEL FOR FARMER BUSINESS SCHOOLS

The WE-FBS builds on the success of Farmer Field Schools and Farmer Business Schools, among other models, introducing a gender-transformative methodology that integrates women's economic empowerment into agribusiness development.

The process begins with forming a task force to manage operations, mentor facilitators, and ensure adherence to principles. A context analysis follows to understand local social norms, stakeholders, market challenges and opportunities, guiding the adaptation of the training to the community's needs.

Participants, typically small-scale producers with a small surplus, are organized into groups of 15–30, often leveraging existing producer organizations. While mixed groups are ideal, separate women's groups may be formed in some cases to facilitate engagement.

Facilitators may come from extension services, NGOs, or the community or staff experienced in other farmer school methodologies (FFS, FBS, GALS etc.). WE-FBS graduates can also serve as facilitators, promoting sustainability and continuity. A balanced representation of men and women among facilitators ensures diverse role models within the groups.

Training takes place locally, enabling participants to learn at their own pace in accessible, community-based settings. Spanning at least one year, the methodology fosters critical thinking and ownership, giving participants time to internalize changes and adapt. This approach ensures that any transformation is driven by the participants themselves. Thus, discussions among participants shape the curriculum, reflecting their ideas and interests. Household members are invited to join some sessions, and participants may take exercises home to discuss with their partners shifts in gender roles, decision-making, and responsibilities.



Image source [FAO](#)

The WE-FBS equips small-scale producers with skills and knowledge to improve businesses, increase income, tackle gender inequalities and foster inclusive, resilient growth.

## ADDRESSING CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN WITH A GENDER LENS

The WE-FBS strengthens the capacity of individuals and institutions by integrating gender equality into key business training modules, including marketing, enterprise selection and financial management. It focuses on empowering women by promoting their leadership, decision-making skills, and involvement in business planning, which enhances their ability to succeed in agrifood markets and improve household income.

Participatory methods--such as group discussions, role-plays, and market visits--encourage learning and reflection on gender roles.

## KEY RESULTS

- The WE-FBS has been implemented in Cambodia, Kenya, and Uganda, reaching approximately 10,000 producers, with 60% women, organized in 586 producer groups.
- Participants reported early signs of positive change in gender norms, power dynamics and social structures, leading to greater opportunities for women and men.
- Women participants experienced significant empowerment, gaining confidence and taking on greater decision-making roles in business, asset management, and household expenditures, leading to increased self-esteem and leadership.
- Women and men enhanced their skills in negotiation, market access, and business strategies, leading to diversified production, better market orientation, and increased collective action.
- In Cambodia the WE-FBS demonstrated its potential to foster cross-ministerial collaboration and support the institutionalization of the methodology as a tool for policy implementation on gender mainstreaming in agriculture and rural development at the grassroots level.

# VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING, DIGITALIZATION AND LINKAGE TO FINANCIAL SERVICES

Geographic region: UGANDA



**Entity:** World Food Programme (WFP)

**Project Timeline:** 2022 - 2022

**Project Partners:** AVSI Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

**To learn more:** <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000157431/download/?ga=2.15597362.545059898.1730865496-597015370.1730865496>

## OVERVIEW

In May 2022, the World Food Programme (WFP) and AVSI Foundation launched a project in the Nakivale refugee settlement, Uganda, to digitalize Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) with a strong focus on empowering women. Through capacity building, digital training and linking VSLA groups to formal financial services, the initiative aimed to enhance women's financial inclusion and economic empowerment.

As a result of the project, 57.3% of women participants gained bank accounts, a 21.9% increase, and 73.9% accessed formal financial services, marking a 37.2% increase. The digitalization of savings platforms also significantly improved women's access to financial services, with 60.5% using digital platforms for transactions.

Access to Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and digital phone devices can significantly empower women and help lift them out of poverty by providing a secure and accessible means to save,

borrow and manage finances. VSLAs allow women to pool resources, gain access to credit, and invest in income-generating activities that might otherwise be unavailable due to lack of formal banking services.

## BENEFITS OF ACCESS TO DIGITAL FINANCIAL TOOLS

When VSLAs are combined with mobile phone technology, women can engage in digital transactions, manage their savings remotely and access mobile money services, all of which increase financial independence, improve household security and open new economic opportunities. This combination of financial inclusion and digital access helps bridge the gap to better income, health and educational outcomes, ultimately contributing to long-term poverty alleviation for women.

The project also fostered improved group functionality, including enhanced conflict resolution skills within VSLA groups. This initiative demonstrates the transformative potential of digital financial services in empowering women living in poverty, contributing

to greater gender equality in financial access and decision-making.

## **ENSURING WOMEN ARE NOT LEFT BEHIND**

At the outset of the digitalization initiative, it became clear that many of the savings groups identified for the project had a majority of male members who owned mobile phones. This would give the men greater access to the benefits of digital transactions. To ensure that women--who are often excluded from digital financial services--were not left behind, the project team implemented a requirement that a certain percentage of women in each group needed to own mobile phones in order for the group to qualify for digitalization.

This approach not only addressed the gender gap in mobile phone ownership but also incentivized increased participation by women, empowering them to take advantage of financial tools that can help lift them out of poverty. Additionally, the team partnered with local private sector providers to offer affordable mobile phones, making it easier for women (who may have limited financial resources) to meet this criterion and engage in digital transactions that could improve their economic opportunities.

## **STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO FINANCE**

The digitalization of the VSLA groups further empowered women by expanding their access to financial services, with 60.5% of women using the digital platform and 95.8% of groups conducting transactions digitally. These advancements have

provided women with greater control over their finances, helping them build financial resilience and break the cycle of poverty.

## **KEY LESSONS LEARNED**

- Ensuring women's inclusion in digitalization efforts requires targeted strategies, such as making mobile phone ownership a key criterion. Creating partnerships with the private sector helps to make phones more accessible to women and prevent them from being left behind in financial inclusion initiatives.
- Tailoring the digitalization process to the maturity level of VSLA groups helps avoid delays, ensuring that more stable, mature groups can transition to digital platforms more effectively, thereby accelerating the process and expanding access for women.
- Successful digitalization requires simultaneous linkage to formal financial services. Early engagement with financial institutions builds trust and ensures women can use digital tools to access credit and savings opportunities, key to empowering them economically.



Image source [WFP Uganda/Brenda Luyiga](#)

# SUSTAINABLE MECHANIZATION FOR WOMEN AGRO-PROCESSORS

EMPOWERING WOMEN AGRO-PROCESSORS THROUGH SMALL-SCALE MACHINERY AND SKILLS

Geographic region: BENIN



**Entity:** Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

**Project Timeline:** 2021 - 2023

**Project Partners:** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), Republic of Benin's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, National Agricultural Development Agency, Department of Finance and Planning, Territorial Agricultural Development Agency (ATDA) - of the Agricultural Development Pole 4 and Green Innovation Centers in Benin (ProCIVA)

**To learn more:** <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/25385b1e-3c4b-4148-9fa8-5552e4b3c69e>  
<https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/2cf68a43-a907-4675-9a42-b53c61c5e3f0>

## OVERVIEW

The FAO-led project in Benin represents a significant step toward promoting women's active participation and economic empowerment in agricultural value chains as both producers and entrepreneurs. Sustainable agricultural mechanization was identified as a critical barrier to agro-processing cooperatives focusing on rice, cassava and soybean. Specific machinery was, therefore, designed to alleviate labour-intensive tasks and improve product quality so that women small-scale entrepreneurs could improve the efficiency of their operations, boost their productivity and incomes while also reducing post-harvest losses.

With the support from the Government of Benin and international and national partners, the initiative aligns with the Benin National Strategy for Agricultural Mechanization to create a more sustainable and inclusive agricultural sector.

## SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOME-EARNING POTENTIAL

Sustainable agricultural mechanization (SAM) is vital for reducing poverty in communities where small-scale subsistence farming prevails, including in countries like Benin. For many smallholder farmers, especially women, reliance on manual labour and tools limits productivity and income potential. SAM can alleviate these challenges by improving the efficiency of farming operations, reducing post-harvest losses, and opening up new income-generating opportunities.

Besides limited access to small-scale machinery, women also face barriers in accessing training and financial resources. Addressing these constraints through targeted interventions can significantly enhance women's roles as active market actors and entrepreneurs, leading to increased economic participation and ultimately contributing to poverty reduction.



By empowering women with the knowledge and skills to operate and maintain small-scale machinery, the project fostered sustainable agricultural practices to improve both household livelihoods and broader community well-being. In addition to the training on safe and correct use of small-scale machinery, FAO, together with local authorities, also organized training on business skills as well as hygiene and post-harvest handling training to ensure quality agro-processing of rice into parboiled rice, garri from cassava and cheese from soybeans.

*“Before, we had to suffer to grind soybeans because we didn't have a machine. Sometimes you can't even find a mill machine in the village, and the soybeans spoil. To help us, the FAO gave us a mill machine and another machine to press the soybeans. That day, we were all happy.... the FAO support helped us find three times more profit than before.”*

– Valérie Kpaossou, Secretary of the soybean agro-processing cooperative



Image source: [FAO/Belty Lokossa](#)

## GENDER RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION

From the planning stage, the project focused on achieving women's economic empowerment by targeting the needs of women-led agro-processing cooperatives and improving their businesses.

Key to successful implementation was the recruitment of a national gender expert who worked in close collaboration with an agricultural engineer and agribusiness expert. This mixed expertise at country level led to the successful implementation of a gender-responsive mechanization needs assessment; the selection of locally made and scale appropriate machinery; and to improving the business models of women-led agro-processing cooperatives.

The project also introduced a gender transformative dimension by organizing awareness-raising sessions to challenge social norms that restrict women's access to and confidence in using small-scale machinery. These initiatives were undertaken to engage women more actively as entrepreneurs, operators, and service providers in the mechanization sector.

## KEY RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Improved business models of 15 women-led cooperatives:** (about 225 women in total) agro-processing rice into parboiled rice, cassava into garri and soybeans into cheese, leading to increased incomes, reduced drudgery and post-harvest losses.
- **Building skills of different stakeholders to ensure sustainability:** Women agro-processors, local service providers, policymakers and mechanics were exposed to targeted training session.
- **A multi-disciplinary team approach, partnerships with local institutions and community engagement:** this collaborative effort ensures that training responded to real needs, selection of scale-appropriate machinery was correct and capacity of local institutions was enhanced.
- **Awareness on gender norms:** Gender norm awareness sessions fostered broader acceptance and equipment adoption.

# EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH DIGITAL REMITTANCES

## HOW IME PAY'S REMITTANCE AND WALLET SERVICES ENHANCED WOMEN'S FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Geographic region: NEPAL



**Entity:** United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 - 2022

**Project Partners:** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

**To learn more:** <https://migrantmoney.uncdf.org/resources/insights/expanding-and-digitizing-ime-pays-women-and-migrant-customer-base-in-nepal-consumer-archetypes-research-findings-and-pilot-projects/>

### OVERVIEW

Domestic and international remittances are a crucial source of income--particularly for women--and often represent their primary financial support. However, traditional financial systems can be inaccessible or expensive, especially for women in rural or underserved areas.

By facilitating access to digital remittance services, the IME Pay initiative empowers women to manage their finances independently. It does so by avoiding intermediaries and ensuring women receive a larger share of the resources sent to them. This not only increases their control over household finances but also enhances their economic security, providing a direct pathway out of poverty.

Greater economic equality for women is essential for achieving the poverty reduction and empowerment goals outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action.

According to the World Bank, personal remittances represented 26.2% of Nepal's GDP in 2023,<sup>18</sup> underscoring the importance of these financial flows in supporting women's economic advancement.

IME Pay, one of Nepal's leading remittance companies, exemplifies the power of digital financial inclusion. Launched in 2017 with technical assistance from UNCDF, IME Pay's digital mobile wallet allows users to send and receive money. By 2023, the platform had grown to become Nepal's second-largest mobile wallet provider, with over 30,000 agents and more than 1.4 million customers nationwide.

Initially, IME Pay's remittance services and mobile wallet were separate, with remittance customers only able to receive funds in cash or through a bank account, while wallet users could only transact domestically. In 2020, IME Pay integrated these two services, enabling both men and women to receive international remittances

<sup>18</sup> World Bank (2024). [Data Bank](#).

directly into their mobile wallets. This innovation has expanded access to digital financial services, particularly benefiting women and underserved rural populations, where access to banking infrastructure is limited. By increasing financial inclusion for women, IME Pay contributes to enhancing women's economic participation in Nepal.

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN DIGITAL PAY PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES**

Gender mainstreaming in the development of IME Pay's remittance service in Nepal has significantly contributed to gender equality by addressing the unique financial barriers faced by women, youth and rural populations. Specifically, women comprised only 22% of wallet-terminated remittance customers, indicating that digital adoption was slower among women than among men. Instead of using digital channels, the majority of women customers used more expensive agent-led channels to cash out their remittances. By integrating a gender-sensitive approach from the development phase through to monitoring and implementation, the project has specifically targeted women as key beneficiaries, ensuring that they have access to digital financial services.

The pilot led to tangible increase in financial resilience, with women accessing USD3.3 million in remittances through the service. The data collected through gender-disaggregated tracking allows for real-time adjustments to ensure that women's specific financial needs are met, helping to narrow the financial inclusion gap and promote gender equality in the digital financial space.

The success of IME Pay's gender-focused approach demonstrates how tailored financial products can break down gendered barriers to financial inclusion that cause poverty, especially for women. For example, by integrating international remittance services with mobile wallets, IME Pay has expanded its reach to remote areas, allowing more women to participate in the digital economy.

Despite initial slower adoption by women, the product's adoption rate among women is rising, suggesting that overcoming access barriers through digital solutions accelerates financial inclusion and resilience. This gender-inclusive approach is essential

for empowering women economically, enabling them to take control of their finances and access resources that were previously out of reach. Such models serve as effective tools in advancing gender equality and financial empowerment.

## **OVERCOMING THE GENDER DIVIDE IN DIGITAL PAY SERVICES**

In Nepal, women struggled with limited access to digital services due to lower financial literacy, restricted mobile phone access, and gender norms that hindered their financial autonomy. To address this, IME Pay and UNCDF have focused on improving digital literacy, raising awareness, and designing services tailored to women's needs.

On the supply side, agents were incentivized to continue cash payouts, so the project introduced incentives to encourage promotion of digital services. Trust issues also posed a challenge, with many women preferring familiar cash transactions, which was addressed through targeted outreach and education campaigns to build confidence in the security of digital tools.

By tackling both demand- and supply-side barriers, the project enabled more women to access digital financial services. This approach not only empowered women economically, but also contributed to poverty eradication by providing them with the tools and resources to improve their financial resilience and autonomy.





# 2

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The global enrollment rate for girls in primary education rose to 91% in 2023, up from 83% in 2000, indicating significant progress in access to education ([UNESCO, 2023](#)).

Despite improvements, [UNESCO](#) reports that women represent only 28% of engineering graduates globally, highlighting ongoing gender disparities in STEM education.

The gender digital divide persists, with approximately 250 million girls worldwide remaining without the necessary digital skills to be online; skills which are increasingly vital for future employment opportunities in a technology-driven economy ([Plan International](#)).

According to [UNICEF](#), violence continues to affect girls' ability to access education, with threats to their personal security whilst travelling to and from school continuing to be a threat to their well-being, as well as their social and academic performance once at school.

# MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

INSPIRING YOUNG WOMEN TO PURSUE CAREERS IN NUCLEAR SCIENCE

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

**Project Timeline:** 2012 - 2025

**Project Partners:** European Union, 25 Member States, 2 Member State Institutions, Industry (2 private sector partners) and 2 Academic Institution

**To learn more:** <https://www.iaea.org/services/key-programmes/together-for-more-women-in-nuclear/iaea-marie-skłodowska-curie-fellowship-programme>

*"The IAEA MSCFP facilitated my immersion in research, while the internship component allowed me to build a strong network in the scientific and professional field at the IAEA Dosimetry Laboratory. Through these experiences, I gained the clarity needed to define my research interests and make an informed decision about pursuing a PhD programme that aligns with my aspirations."*

– Roua Abdulrahim from the Syrian Arab Republic, studying nuclear science and applications at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Germany.

## OVERVIEW

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme (MSCFP) aims to boost the participation of women in the nuclear sector, fostering a diverse workforce that enhances global scientific and technological innovation. Its primary goal is to inspire young women to pursue careers in nuclear science, addressing the persistent gender gap in the field. In March 2020, the IAEA launched a scholarship initiative specifically



Image and quote source: [IAEA](#)

for female students interested in nuclear careers, emphasizing the importance of education in cultivating future professionals. The programme focuses on long-term educational and training initiatives that promote women's professional development and retention in areas such as nuclear energy, applications, safety, security and non-proliferation. Recognizing that a diverse workforce is crucial for its mission, the IAEA is committed to including women in its technical professional pool, despite their current underrepresentation and the barriers they face in STEM fields. The MSCFP seeks to empower women globally to enter and excel in the nuclear field, thereby building gender-balanced expertise in this critical area.

Selected female students in the MSCFP are awarded scholarships for master's programmes in various nuclear-related disciplines, such as nuclear science, safety, security, non-proliferation and nuclear law. Alongside their studies, they have the opportunity to undertake internships arranged by the IAEA that align with their specializations. Scholarships are granted annually, with the number of recipients increasing based on available funding, and attention is given to both the specific fields of study and geographic representation.

## CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

- **Funding shortfalls:** The initiative faces challenges due to inadequate funding from donor organizations, affecting both the number of students supported each year and overall project management costs. The project team continues to actively collaborate with stakeholders to raise funds and promote the initiative, ensuring adequate support for selected students.
- **Low application rates:** There is a general shortage of applicants, particularly in specific fields of study, which hinders programme effectiveness. To promote applications, the initiative attends various events to reach out to potential students, including International Women's Day celebrations, which also provide an opportunity to connect with potential partners and donors to enhance visibility and support.
- **Limited internship opportunities:** A lack of internships that align with students' areas of study restricts practical learning experiences. The project continues to work closely with Member States, industry and academia to identify and secure internship placements for students.
- **Scholarship dropouts:** Some recipients do not complete their master's programmes, posing a risk

to the project's success. Close financial monitoring of scholarship disbursements on a semester basis helps minimize financial risks associated with dropouts.

## KEY RESULTS

Despite the challenges to boost women's participation in the nuclear energy education field and professional workforce, the project has experienced several impressive results:

- Since its inception in 2020, it has received 2,271 applications and selected 560 students from 121 Member States, currently studying across 72 countries.
- The fifth application cycle closed in September 2024, aiming to support even more female students in nuclear-related master's programmes.
- Regional distribution of selected students includes 143 from Africa, 179 from Asia, 126 from Europe, 80 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 26 from North America, and 6 from Oceania.
- In terms of fields of study, 194 students are focusing on Nuclear Energy, 50 on Nuclear Safety, 8 on Nuclear Law, 36 on Nuclear Security, and 36 on Safeguards/Non-proliferation, with 236 in Nuclear Science and Applications.
- As of July 2024, 220 graduates have completed their master's degrees, with 120 securing internships facilitated by the IAEA, while others have either pursued PhD studies or successfully found employment in their respective fields.

# LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT FACILITY

## STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRIAL SECTORS

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

**Project Timeline:** 2012 - 2025

**Project Partners:** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

**To learn more:** [https://downloads.unido.org/ot/46/71/4671426/STUCKI\\_AGR\\_AIT\\_GLO\\_2016\\_120212\\_002.pdf](https://downloads.unido.org/ot/46/71/4671426/STUCKI_AGR_AIT_GLO_2016_120212_002.pdf)

<https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/698591498812317468/female-enrollment-in-male-dominated-vocational-training-courses-preferences-and-prospects>

<https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/unido-publications/2023-11/UNIDO%27s%20Contribution%20to%20Gender%20Equality%20Progress%20across%20Critical%20Areas%20of%20Concern%20-%20Beijing%2B25.pdf>

## OVERVIEW

The Learning and Knowledge Development Facility (LKDF) is UNIDO's flagship initiative focusing on developing industrial skills among women and youth in industrializing countries through public-private development partnerships, addressing the demand for skilled labour in such sectors as construction, mining, transport and mechanics, water management and forestry. The projects under the LKDF umbrella are supported by multiple donors, including Sweden, Japan, Finland, USAID and the European Union. To encourage women's participation in these traditionally male-dominated fields, the LKDF employs targeted strategic communication and community outreach initiatives, including mentorship by female role models and gender-sensitive training programmes.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **75% female graduates** of the H2O Maghreb project in Morocco's water sector
- **55% female graduates** in forestry management in the SADC region
- **10% increase in female enrolment** in automotive and heavy-duty equipment in the AGEVEC project in Morocco
- **13% rise in female participation** in heavy-duty machinery training at Zambia's Industrial Training Academy (Zamita)
- **50% income increase** for female trainees at Ethiopia's Misale Driver Training Academy with a **17.3% female enrolment rate**, surpassing the national average of under 5% and the funding partner Sweden's own rate of 14%

## IMPORTANCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation have been a key component to track gender-specific indicators to measure the project's progress and long-term outcomes. Expanding the collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated data across projects provides a stronger evidence base to assess their impact. Including more detailed metrics on the long-term career progression of female graduates adds depth to the evaluation of the projects' successes. For LKDF projects, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data encompasses female trainee enrolment and graduation rates, employment outcomes and income changes--all tracked and reviewed regularly. This data-driven approach ensures that the impact on women is continually assessed and improved.

In Morocco, the AGEVEC project's gender survey in the road transport sector highlighted logistical barriers like the lack of female-friendly accommodations and focused on involving families in the decision-making process to encourage women's participation. These insights shaped targeted interventions that significantly improved female enrolment and retention.

Project research uncovered some surprising insights that have influenced the initiative's approach and shed light on how to tailor education and learning prospects for women in traditionally male-dominated sectors. The findings revealed that personal interests and job prospects are the main factors driving course selection for women, while gender beliefs and sociocultural norms and stereotypes may have minimal impact.



Graduate of the MISALE, Heavy Duty and Industrial Vehicles, Ethiopia training. Image source: [LKD Facility](#).

This realization shifted the team's focus towards discovering and highlighting female role models and career opportunities rather than solely addressing gender biases. Furthermore, the research highlighted the importance of existing relationships, networks and industry connections in increasing female enrolment in male-dominated sectors. Based on these insights, adjustments are planned to enhance mentorship and networking programmes to better support women's learning and career advancement.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Develop gender-specific strategic communication:** Create materials featuring female role models and success stories to inspire potential applicants.
- **Introduce targeted incentive structures:** Design and implement innovative incentive mechanisms, including scholarships exclusively for women, alongside mentorship programmes and guaranteed job placements after training, to significantly boost female participation in training programmes.
- **Leverage visual media for engagement:** Utilize visual storytelling through videos, interviews and interactive content with female graduates and trainers to demystify technical fields, showcases diverse career possibilities and resonates with younger audiences.
- **Continually refine inclusive strategies:** Regularly assess and refine educational strategies to ensure they remain responsive to participants' needs and effectively support women balancing educational and household responsibilities, promoting an inclusive and empowering learning environment.
- **Enhance community and stakeholder engagement:** Engage families, community leaders and industry stakeholders through awareness campaigns that address societal biases and emphasize the value of gender diversity in technical fields.

*"I've always been interested in these programmes, even when people said they were for men. I wanted to show that women can learn, work and succeed in this field too. Now, being the class representative in our all-female class has been a great experience. It's challenging, but we support and uplift each other. The practical work is especially rewarding—it's amazing to learn something new and then actually do it. Our trainer has been a huge inspiration.... I definitely feel more confident now and it makes me excited for the future—maybe even starting my own business someday!"*

– Agatha Sakala, ZAMITA participant

# NOSOTRAS CONECTADAS

## DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT OF REFUGEE WOMEN

Geographic region: ARGENTINA



**Entity:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

**Project Timeline:** 2012 - 2023

**Project Partners:** General Directorate of Collectivities of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires; L'Oreal Foundation, Accenture, MindHub and Digital House Coding School, Numen Academy; Organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless women

**To learn more:** <https://www.unhcr.org/media/gender-equality-promising-and-emerging-practices-inspiration-implementation>

### OVERVIEW

The Nosotras Conectadas project is an innovative initiative aimed at enhancing the employability of refugee and migrant women, facilitating their access to decent work opportunities and promoting their economic independence. Targeting forcibly displaced women aged 18 to 60 residing in Argentina - particularly those from Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, Peru, Cuba and Syria - the project addresses critical barriers to employment, namely digital skills.

Through a collaborative consultation process, refugee women helped design the training programme to ensure it aligns with their specific priorities and needs. Two training cohorts have completed the project, with many graduates securing positions in ICT companies or embarking on freelance careers within the digital sector. The development of specialized ICT skills has empowered participants to pursue competitive job opportunities. Notably, the focus on flexible workforce opportunities--especially self-employment and remote work prospects--has proven particularly beneficial for single women heads of households managing caregiving responsibilities. The project has also provided digital training scholarships, capacity building and

essential ICT resources, significantly improving the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless women in the digital landscape.

### MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

The project's foundation is rooted in extensive consultations with organizations representing forcibly displaced and stateless women, which identified critical gaps in supporting their access to digital livelihoods. In partnership with local authorities, private sector stakeholders and UNHCR, refugee women co-designed the initiative, ensuring it directly addresses the gender digital divide and alleviates poverty among refugee women in Argentina and South America. This multi-stakeholder approach, led by refugee women themselves, has yielded tangible and sustainable outcomes, fostering economic inclusion for this population exposed to high risks. The refugee women-led organizations involved continue to collaborate with partners, including UNHCR, and are developing further programmes inspired by this initiative, contributing to global efforts such as the Global Refugee Forum pledges.



## BRIDGING THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

Bridging the digital gender divide is crucial for enhancing women's participation in the digital sector, and in the future workforce in general, as evidenced by the project's comprehensive approach that includes digital training scholarships, capacity building, and provision of essential ICT resources such as notebook computers. A total of 260 women have graduated from two training cohorts, with the first cohort offering scholarships to 200 women in foundational courses such as web development and software programming. A total of 130 new participants joined the second cohort, with 60 graduates advancing to specialized training in project management and advanced digital marketing. This showcases the potential to not only equip women--and marginalized women such as women refugees--with vital skills but also to open doors to employment opportunities in ICT, significantly advancing their economic independence.

## CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

- **Changes in local authorities:** Institutionalize projects and programming to ensure they are not reliant on specific government representatives' agendas. Focus on building strong, collaborative partnerships with key government entities to maintain project stability and support.
- **Limited resources:** Engage diverse private sector stakeholders from the outset in order to secure comprehensive support, expertise, resources and funding. Pursue collaborative partnerships with the private sector to enhance technical capabilities and networking opportunities. Explore various funding

options and alternative financing mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

- **Leaving No One Behind:** Adopt an inclusive approach by actively involving diverse refugee women in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project to ensure their needs and perspectives are addressed.



Image source: [UNHCR](#)



# HERCYBERTRACKS

## PROMOTING THE EQUAL, FULL AND MEANINGFUL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN CYBERSECURITY

Geographic region: AFRICA, EUROPE/CIS



**Entity:** International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

**Project Timeline:** 2023 - ongoing

**Project Partners:** German Federal Foreign Office Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), UNODC and Microsoft

**To learn more:** <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/Skills-Development/Her-CyberTracks.aspx>

### OVERVIEW

HerCyberTracks promotes the equal, full and meaningful participation of women in cybersecurity by equipping them with the skills and mindset needed to succeed in this critical field.

The project offers a comprehensive one-stop curriculum tailored for women in the public sector, structured around three core pillars:

- **Train:** Providing access to expert-led courses on both technical and soft skills
- **Mentor:** Facilitating mentorship between senior cyber professionals and junior participants to foster professional growth
- **Inspire:** Hosting inspirational talks and networking events to highlight role models in cybersecurity and encourage peer support.

The initiative currently offers three thematic CyberTracks: Policy & Diplomacy, Incident Response and Criminal Justice. Over five months, Her CyberTracks participants get access to live online and self-paced trainings, mentorship and an on-site week featuring hands-on exercises, simulations and study visits to cybersecurity organizations.

The comprehensive Her CyberTracks curriculum has demonstrated its effectiveness. Over 2024 and 2025, 300 participants took part in the programme, with 93% expressing high satisfaction. By fostering expertise, confidence and a strong network of public sector cybersecurity professionals, HerCyberTracks encourages collaboration, strengthens information-sharing and builds leadership capacity across regions.

### THE URGENT NEED FOR GENDER-SPECIFIC PERSPECTIVES IN CYBERSECURITY

Securing a global, open, free, safe and secure cyberspace is essential to protect human rights and digital systems. However, gender-specific perspectives are often overlooked in cybersecurity, even though women and girls face unique online threats, such as cyberstalking, harassment and gender-based violence. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted in 1995, could not have foreseen the growing prominence of digital security issues or the gendered nature of online threats. Today, 30 years after the BPfA took effect, women are disproportionately affected by online abuse, with studies showing that one in three women has experienced online harassment. Women make up only 26% of the cybersecurity

workforce, and their underrepresentation in the sector limits the effectiveness of global cybersecurity strategies. Women are also often absent from international negotiations on cybersecurity, which hinders inclusive, comprehensive approaches to digital security. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, including women in cybersecurity is critical not only for gender equality but also for ensuring the safety and resilience of cyberspace for everyone. Initiatives such as HerCyberTracks are essential to equipping women with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to this vital field.

## **ADDRESSING KEY BARRIERS TO ENTRY IN THE CYBERSECURITY WORKFORCE**

HerCyberTracks specifically targets women in Africa and the Europe/CIS regions, notably the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, focusing on overcoming key barriers to their entry in the cybersecurity sector. These barriers include unequal access to training, a lack of strong female role models and limited awareness of career opportunities in cybersecurity.

The project aims to address these challenges by providing women with expert guidance, mentorship, tailored skill development and support within their local cybersecurity communities. It ensures that women are equipped with the skills and mindset to thrive in their chosen cybersecurity sector. With a strong focus on role modelling and soft skills, Her CyberTracks empowers women to take on leadership roles, helping to build a more inclusive, diverse and secure digital future for all.



Image source: ITU

By equipping women with critical cybersecurity skills, Her CyberTracks helps ensure their voices and expertise are integral in shaping the future of this vital sector.

*“This training has provided impactful development in my life, in particular thanks to the hands-on exercises on real cybersecurity issues, providing me with critical technical skills to solve real world problems, enhancing my confidence in this space.”*

– Suun Faye, Digital Technology Specialist, Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, The Gambia

Her CyberTracks is a natural progression of ITU's dedication to promoting gender diversity in cybersecurity. The project builds on the success of the ITU's Women in Cyber Mentorship Programme, taking the next step by offering highly specialized, targeted training designed to address the unique challenges women face in cybersecurity.

Partnerships are integral to the success of Her CyberTracks. This one is co-implemented by ITU, Germany and UNODC and integrates existing cyber capacity-building offers from more partners in the public and private sectors, think tanks, academia, and civil society organizations.

Designed with scalability in mind, the initiative is set to expand regionally, with plans for Latin America and Asia-Pacific in 2025, creating a global model that can be adapted to different contexts and needs.

# CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

## ENSURING GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE DIGITAL SKILLS EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Geographic region: AFRICA



**Entity:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

**Project Timeline:** 2012 - 2025

**Project Partners:** Governments of Kenya, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda; Intel Foundation; Prada S.p.A; UNESCO; African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Governments of Kenya, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda; Intel Foundation; Prada S.p.A; UNESCO; African Union International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)

**To learn more:** <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384678>

### OVERVIEW

Ensuring that all learners acquire the necessary digital skills for success in today's technology-driven world is essential. As technology continues to advance, it is crucial for girls to develop competencies that allow them to thrive in a rapidly changing environment. UNESCO's 2017 report highlights the various factors affecting girls' participation in STEM fields, emphasizing the need to address social and cultural norms that can hinder their confidence and interest in these areas.

This project aims to close the gender digital divide by adopting a comprehensive approach that enhances girls' participation in STEM and ICT education. It focuses on building teacher capacities in gender-responsive teaching, developing girls' technical and soft skills and increasing their motivation through exposure to female role models and mentors. Implemented in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, the project has empowered secondary school girls by

providing them with valuable training and resources, enabling them to overcome traditional barriers and pursue careers in STEM fields.

Results between August 2021 and July 2023 revealed a total of 430 girls had participated in boot camps across Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, demonstrating the project's reach and impact. In Rwanda, 108 girls and 15 teachers from 27 schools took part, while Kenya saw 96 girls with 19 teachers from 18 schools. In Tanzania, 126 girls and 4 teachers joined, and 100 girls and 15 teachers represented 20 schools in Uganda. This was complemented by social media and TV campaigns, as well as other advocacy activities reaching thousands of girls and their families.

### INSPIRING GIRLS TO EMBRACE STEM

Through targeted interventions, the initiative inspires girls to embrace science and technology, fostering a supportive learning environment that encourages

their engagement in STEM subjects. Specifically, the project aims to:

- Provide training for teachers and decision-makers on gender-responsive pedagogies in STEM classrooms.
- Encourage and nurture secondary school girls to view science as integral to their lives and embrace STEM/ICT fields for their future careers.
- Offer opportunities for girls to interact with women scientists and engineers for role modelling and mentorship.
- Educate secondary school girls on the admissions requirements for engineering, science and ICT courses, clarifying steps towards potential STEM/ICT career paths.
- Expose secondary school girls and their science teachers to the excitement and importance of STEM/ICT through coding, robotics and technological applications.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building has been a key component of the Closing the Digital Divide project, namely for teacher professional development, as well as role modelling and peer and parental support for beneficiaries:

- **Teacher professional development:** The project includes a week-long training module for teachers focused on gender-transformative STEM education, addressing gender dynamics and promoting inclusive teaching practices. This training incorporates various activities, such as lectures and hands-on exercises, to enhance teachers' skills and foster a supportive learning environment.



Image source: [UNESCO](#)

- **Access to role models and support:** The initiative expands opportunities for girls to engage in extracurricular activities, mentorship programmes and coding clubs, boosting their confidence and interest in STEM. Special emphasis is placed on connecting girls with successful female role models in technology, reinforcing the importance of female participation in STEM fields.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The initiative has made significant strides in enhancing digital skills among girls, and in doing so, numerous lessons were learned that can inform future efforts. The varying characteristics of trainee groups highlight the inadequacy of a "one size fits all" approach to women's and girls' education. A thorough gender analysis of sociocultural norms and economic contexts prior to training is essential for effective project design. Additionally, the diverse curricula and methodologies used by partner countries have the potential to complicate the measurement and comparison of skills acquisition, emphasizing the need for harmonized guidelines for digital skills training. Furthermore, establishing standardized mentorship practices through the development of STEM/ICT mentorship guidelines and pre-service training for mentors could enhance consistency and effectiveness. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for the success of similar initiatives moving forward.

# THE EQUALS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

LEVERAGING KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND COLLABORATION TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

**Project Timeline:** 2016 -

**Project Partners:** GSMA, International Trade Centre (ITC), UN Women and the United Nations University

**To learn more:** <https://www.equalsintech.org/>

## OVERVIEW

The EQUALS Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age (EQUALS) was established in 2016 as a multi-stakeholder initiative to address the gender digital divide. Founded by five organizations--ITU, GSMA, the International Trade Centre, the United Nations University and UN Women--the partnership now includes over 100 organizations dedicated to closing the digital gender gap. EQUALS works to ensure equal access to digital technologies, foster digital skills development and increase the representation of women in leadership roles across STEM and technology sectors. Its flagship initiative, the EQUALS in Tech Awards, highlights grassroots efforts and each year celebrates organizations and individuals working to empower women and girls in the tech industry.

The mission of EQUALS is to reverse the growing gender digital divide by facilitating collaboration, scaling successful projects and creating a platform for networking and knowledge-sharing among practitioners. The partnership aims to drive progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5, particularly Target 5B, with the vision of

achieving equal access to digital technologies for women and girls by 2030. EQUALS also seeks to empower women and girls to acquire the skills needed to become ICT users, creators and leaders in the digital world and beyond.

## BUILDING A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

EQUALS emphasizes gender equality and inclusion by creating platforms that empower women and girls to actively participate in the digital world. Through a variety of initiatives such as workshops, mentorship programmes, and leadership forums, EQUALS provides women and girls with opportunities to build digital skills, share experiences and develop leadership abilities in tech. These spaces foster a supportive and collaborative community, where women can exchange challenges and successes, thus strengthening their participation in shaping the digital economy. The initiative ensures that women's voices are not only heard but are integral in designing and driving the strategies and actions that address the gender digital divide.

## **INTEGRATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN DIGITAL POLICYMAKING**

In addition to promoting gender equality through direct engagement, EQUALS supports the integration of gender perspectives into policies, projects and programmes. ITU's 2023 [Handbook on Mainstreaming Gender in Digital Policies](#) provides policymakers with a structured approach to creating gender-equitable digital policies. This resource offers actionable strategies, best practices and a checklist to help decision-makers incorporate gender considerations into policy frameworks.

EQUALS also developed the [Her Digital Skills: Towards a Gender Transformative Approach](#) framework in 2024, providing a comprehensive guide for digital skills education. This framework encourages gender-transformative approaches to curriculum design, learning strategies and content, emphasizing the importance of changing gender norms and ensuring that digital education is inclusive.

These resources contribute to creating an environment where gender equality is embedded in the policies, practices and educational opportunities that shape the digital future.

## **EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS FOR THE DIGITAL FUTURE**

EQUALS is making significant strides towards closing the gender digital divide, particularly by equipping



Image source: [Equals](#)

women and girls with the digital skills they need to thrive in the 21st-century workforce. Through the [EQUALS Her Digital Skills](#) flagship initiative, EQUALS has already impacted nearly 300,000 women and girls across over 90 countries, with the goal of training 1 million by 2026.

This effort is critical as the digital economy becomes an increasingly central part of global employment opportunities. According to international data, women make up only 28% of the global tech workforce.<sup>19</sup> By providing foundational IT training and e-mentoring, EQUALS Her Digital Skills is helping women gain the skills necessary to enter and succeed in this rapidly growing sector, thereby improving their employability and readiness for future job markets.

EQUALS' commitment to increasing visibility and opportunities for women leaders in tech is equally important. With over 4,000 women leaders and entrepreneurs already benefiting from the initiative, EQUALS is working to create a sustainable and scalable model of support that can be replicated globally. By fostering multi-stakeholder collaborations between governments, tech companies and NGOs, EQUALS is not only helping women build technical skills but also empowering them to take leadership roles and drive innovation in the tech sector. These efforts provide a blueprint for other initiatives seeking to bridge the gender gap in digital technology.

<sup>19</sup> World Economic Forum (2023). [Global Gender Gap Report](#).







# 3

## WOMEN AND HEALTH



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

WHO data reveals that in 2023, 86% of births globally were assisted by skilled health professionals, including doctors, nurses, and midwives. However, there are significant disparities between regions, with lower-income countries often having lower rates of skilled birth attendance.

While the global contraceptive prevalence rate has increased over the years, many women still lack access to modern contraception (UNFPA). This can lead to unintended pregnancies, maternal mortality, and other health issues.

Factors such as poor working conditions, poor remuneration, and absence of female health and care providers hinder women from joining the healthcare sector, and from accessing essential health services such as immunizations. Sociocultural and religious norms continue to prevent some women from seeking care unless a female provider is available (WHO).

# GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE

## GENDER INTEGRATION INTO POLIO OPERATIONS IN ALL ENDEMIC AND OUTBREAK COUNTRIES

**Geographic region:** GLOBAL - ENDEMIC COUNTRIES (PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN) AND OUTBREAK COUNTRIES (AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST)



**Entity:** World Health Organization (WHO)

**Programme Timeline:** 2019 - 2029

**Programme Partners:** United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Rotary International and GAVI (The Vaccine Alliance)

**To learn more:** <https://polioeradication.org/what-we-do-2/gender-mainstreaming/>

### OVERVIEW

Polio remains a highly endemic virus that can cause disability or death, particularly in children under five. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) has developed a gender equality strategy to guide the integration of gender considerations into polio operations across endemic and outbreak regions. The Global Polio Eradication Strategy 2022-2026 (extended up to 2029) emphasizes gender mainstreaming as a crucial factor for achieving eradication, promoting gender-responsive programming that includes conducting gender assessments, addressing barriers to vaccination and increasing women's participation in decision-making to ensure diversity and social inclusion.

### LINKS BETWEEN GENDER AND HEALTH

Gender roles and inequalities are critical factors that directly impact health outcomes, including vaccination rates. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a 2021 GPEI analysis highlighted how

societal norms contribute to high levels of un- and under-immunized children. Factors such as low education among women, men's decision-making power and women's daily responsibilities--like farming and fetching water--often prevent them from participating in vaccination campaigns. These gender-related barriers are shaped by local religious and social customs and can vary significantly across regions.

Recognizing the link between gender and health, the GPEI is expanding efforts to support local authorities in high-risk areas, such as northern Nigeria, to study gender dynamics in vaccination decisions. To enhance this work, the GPEI is committed to closing the gender data gap, which is essential for identifying disparities in immunization based on a child's sex. In the DRC, the programme is holding workshops with government and stakeholder representatives to improve the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, ultimately informing more effective vaccination strategies.

## **POLIO ERADICATION GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY**

The GPEI Gender Equality Strategy 2019-2026 (extended up to 2026) outlines four main objectives: addressing gender barriers to polio vaccination; integrating gender into programming for effective coverage; enhancing women's meaningful participation at all levels; and fostering a gender-equitable institutional culture. It also sets key performance indicators related to gender-disaggregated vaccination coverage, zero-dose identification, disease surveillance timelines and the involvement of women in immunization activities, as well as staff training on prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PRSEAH).

To promote inclusion, the strategy aims to increase women's representation in decision-making bodies, particularly in emergency operations led by the Ministry of Health and various advisory groups. It also encourages a higher ratio of women frontline health workers to engage with women in their communities for health education. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative has formed a Gender Mainstreaming Group (GMG) to support gender integration efforts, holding monthly meetings to share promising practices and provide technical assistance. This group facilitates gender training for both its members and senior leadership, while country-level focal points develop tailored plans for gender-specific interventions, underscoring the critical importance of gender mainstreaming in health programmes.

## **PROMOTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN OTHER GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVES**

The results from this initiative demonstrate that merely increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies is insufficient; meaningful engagement and support for women's ideas are crucial for success. Additionally, showcasing the link between gender integration and program outcomes with documentary evidence can highlight its importance. This approach can inspire other health initiatives, such as childhood immunization programmes, which often face challenges in achieving their goals. Since polio vaccination is part of childhood immunization efforts and both programmes fall under the Ministry of Health, the lessons learned here can be effectively replicated to enhance health and vaccination uptake across various health initiatives around the globe.



Image source: [WHO/Pakistan](#)

# LIVING, WORKING, CARING AND DYING IN TIMES OF COVID-19

HOW THE PANDEMIC EXPOSED AND AMPLIFIED PRE-EXISTING SOCIAL AND STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITIES, PARTICULARLY IN THE CARE SYSTEM

Geographic region: GLOBAL



Entity: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

Project Timeline: 2022

Project Partners: N/A

To learn more: <https://www.unrisd.org/en/library/blog-series/to-live-work-care-and-die-in-times-of-covid-19>

## OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and deepened pre-existing inequalities, shedding light on the often invisible and undervalued role of women in the care economy. While emotions, care work, and interdependence have always been fundamental, the pandemic underscored their critical importance in navigating an overwhelming global crisis, especially as market-driven solutions and individualistic approaches failed. This crisis revealed the need for an intersectional lens to understand the disproportionate impact on those who lived, worked and provided care-particularly women.

UNRISD's series To Live, Work, Care and Die in Times of Covid-19 brings together perspectives from prominent feminist scholars who critically examine the heightened challenges and inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic within health and care systems across Latin America.

Originally presented at an UNRISD session during the 2021 International Congress of the Latin American

Studies Association, these contributions offer unique insights into how the pandemic revealed vulnerabilities in health and care systems, while also inspiring calls for transformative change.

## FINDINGS

Each think piece in the series brings forward diverse reflections from Latin American researchers on the pandemic's transformative effects on gender and care, social inequalities and neoliberal systems.

- In [Body, Territory, Care](#). Reflections from the South, Alejandra Ciriza discusses Argentina's experience, where the pandemic laid bare the fragility of healthcare networks and underscored the importance of community-based solidarity in the face of profound disparities.
- Diamela Eltit's [Unequal Among the Unequal](#) reflects on an ongoing political crisis in Chile, where marginalized groups, especially Indigenous and low-income communities, faced severe limitations in

accessing healthcare and other resources, sparking a social movement to address entrenched inequities.

- Marta Lamas' A Crisis of Affect or a Crisis of the System? highlights the mental health impacts of the pandemic on women in Latin America, emphasizing the urgent need for a stronger support system to address the emotional strain that accompanies caregiving responsibilities.
- Francisco Cos-Montiel's Virtual Worlds: Crisis of Work and Other Discontents examines the shift to virtual spaces, which intensified challenges for those in direct care work, who faced heightened demands without sufficient structural support.

# ENGAGING FEMALE VACCINATORS TO INCREASE UPTAKE OF COVID-19 VACCINATION

ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Geographic region: PAKISTAN



**Entity:** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

**Project Timeline:** 2021 - 2025

**Project Partners:** GAVI (The Vaccine Alliance), PAKISTAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH and CANADA

To learn more: <https://www.unicef.org/female-vaccinators-pakistan>

## OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination uptake among women in Pakistan was significantly lower than that of men, largely due to socio-cultural norms that restricted women's access to vaccination, particularly in conservative areas. By August 2021, women accounted for only 36% of the total vaccinated population, a stark contrast to 64% of men, as reported by the National Immunization Management System. This gender gap was partly attributed to reluctance among women to receive vaccinations from male health workers, highlighting the critical need for a gender-responsive approach to vaccination delivery. In response, efforts were made to recruit and train female vaccinators, addressing this barrier and improving vaccine uptake among women. This initiative underscores the importance of gender mainstreaming in health programmes to ensure equitable access to healthcare services, particularly in environments shaped by sociocultural complexities.

## THE VITAL ROLE OF FEMALE VACCINATORS

Upon reviewing the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding increasing the uptake of vaccinations amongst women and girls, UNICEF reflected on the role of female vaccinators in past health programming. Female vaccinators have played a vital role in Pakistan's past and ongoing efforts to eradicate polio and improve immunization rates. This has been especially the case in challenging regions with strong resistance to vaccines.

In tribal and rural areas, where vaccines have often been misperceived as part of a Western agenda, female frontline workers have faced significant risks, including attacks and harassment. Despite these challenges, over 285,000 polio vaccinators work in Pakistan, with 68% being women. These women have been instrumental in gaining trust from communities and encouraging parents to vaccinate their children, helping to overcome local misconceptions and fears.

To address the gender gap in vaccination coverage, UNICEF implemented an intervention to recruit 300

female vaccinators across three provinces--Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Baluchistan. This initiative targeted the most conservative districts, where societal norms often hindered women's access to vaccination services.

Female vaccinators were selected from a pool of trained health workers, nurses and community midwives, with a particular focus on retired or currently enrolled local health workers. In areas where experienced staff were scarce, new recruits were brought in through local recruitment efforts. This targeted approach has been crucial in improving vaccination uptake among women and children in some of the country's most challenging regions.

## KEY RESULTS

- **Increase in vaccination rates:** Between August and November 2021, the percentage of women vaccinated rose from 36% to 39%, narrowing the gender gap in vaccination rates (compared to 64% for men in August and 61% in November).
- **Impact of female vaccinators:** Female vaccinators are crucial in creating a more accepting environment for women to receive vaccinations, as their presence increases trust and allows for home visits, improving awareness and mobilization.
- **Role in routine immunization:** The engagement of female vaccinators has not only boosted COVID-19 vaccination rates but also contributed



Image source: [UNICEF/Pakistan](#)

to strengthening routine immunization efforts in communities.

- **Challenges to sustainability:** While the initiative has shown positive results, there are challenges in retaining female vaccinators, as they were not hired permanently. The recognition of permanent roles, government involvement and robust safety measures is critical for long-term success.
- **A need for permanent roles:** UNICEF Pakistan is advocating for the government to support permanent hiring of female vaccinators, requiring political will, funding and a strong system for the safety and protection of female workers in the field.

## THE NEED FOR GENDER SENSITIVITY AND TEAM COLLABORATION

To promote a more gender-diverse vaccination workforce, it is crucial to confront entrenched male dominance in vaccination programmes, which reflects the broader patriarchal structure of society, and work towards fostering collaboration between male and female vaccinators. Training programmes should focus on building teamwork and cooperation, helping male vaccinators understand and support the integration of female colleagues, ensuring a smooth transition without resistance. The success of this initiative highlights the potential to scale up female participation in routine immunization efforts, especially given that only 4% of the 17,000 vaccinators in Pakistan are women. With high demand for female vaccinators, particularly in community settings where women and mothers feel more comfortable, there is significant opportunity to expand their role in immunization programmes.



# RURAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TO EMPOWER HEALTH CENTRES

USING SUSTAINABLE ENERGY TO ELECTRIFY RURAL COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES AND PROVIDE 24-HOUR CARE

Geographic region: SIERRA LEONE



**Entity:** United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

**Project Timeline:** 2016-2024

**Project Partners:** United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Government of Sierra Leone Ministry of Energy

**To learn more:** <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/stories/access-to-energy-giving-sierra-leone-the-power-to-change>

## OVERVIEW

Sierra Leone has one of the lowest rural electrification rates in sub-Saharan Africa, with just 6% of rural areas having access to electricity. To address this critical gap, the Rural Renewable Energy Project was launched to support the Sierra Leone government goals for sustainable, low-emission energy access and climate resilience. The initiative provided clean energy to 97 rural communities through the installation of 93 mini-grids and 97 distribution grids across the country. By the end of 2023, the project had connected 22,649 households, businesses, schools and community health centres (CHC) had benefited 557,666 people, including women and people with disabilities and had generated 4.6 MW of energy generation capacity.

One of the project's key successes is its impact on rural healthcare. UNOPS electrified 94 community health centres (CHCs), providing reliable power for critical health services such as prenatal and postnatal care. The availability of electricity has improved the quality of

services, resulting in increased utilization of these health facilities, particularly among women delivering in clinics. Furthermore, the electricity supplied to these health centres is free of charge. This initiative has significantly enhanced healthcare access and service delivery in rural areas, contributing to better maternal and child health outcomes such as essential diagnostics in a short time, and storage of drugs and vaccines in Rural Renewable Energy Project connected clinics.

## ANALYSING GENDER-RELATED CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The project conducted a comprehensive gender analysis to identify both the challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality and improving access to health services for women. This analysis informed the development of a Gender Action Plan, which was implemented through consultations with women at every stage of design and execution. A key aspect of the plan was working with private sector

operators in the energy supply chain to ensure women were trained and equally compensated for their involvement in construction and operational tasks, fostering a more inclusive technical workforce.

*“Mini-grid electricity is helping the CHC to provide better services compared to other areas where there is no light. The light is secured and available for 24 hours in the CHC. When a child is born, the light helps us to see and observe the child very well which was difficult earlier using torchlight.... So the light has saved the life of so many people.”*

– CHC staff member

### **IDENTIFICATION OF KEY PARTNERS TO ADVANCE THE WOMEN AND HEALTH AGENDA**

One notable example of gender-focused implementation was the identification of the potential to partner with Power Leone and the Barefoot Women Solar Engineers Association. This collaboration led to the training of local women to assemble and install solar panels and electricity meters and become maintenance engineers, providing them with valuable skills and employment opportunities. Beyond that, this partnership led to opportunities to electrify the CHCs, which has supported increases in healthcare accessibility for women and children in rural Sierra Leone.



Image source: UNOPS

Members of The Barefoot Women, a local association inspired by women's own experiences, have worked to electrify rural CHCs, improving healthcare conditions, particularly for pregnant women. Their efforts as an implementing partner have resulted in over 60 community clinics being powered with solar energy, highlighting the impact of gender-focused initiatives on both women's empowerment and access to healthcare.

### **WHY RELIABLE ENERGY SUPPLY IS ESSENTIAL FOR ACCESS TO RURAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Reliable electricity is essential for ensuring that rural clinics in Sierra Leone can provide consistent and quality healthcare services, particularly for women. Many rural health centres, especially those not connected to the national grid, face significant challenges due to the high cost of electricity and a lack of funding for essential maintenance. This issue became even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic when resources were redirected to combat the pandemic, leaving many clinics without the means to function properly. As a result, many women are forced to give birth in poorly equipped facilities or at home, where the risks associated with childbirth are much higher. The provision of electricity to these health centres is therefore critical, as it enables them to offer reliable services, particularly for female patients who are most in need of safe, accessible healthcare.

The installation of reliable electricity at community health centres has significantly improved service delivery in Sierra Leone, directly benefiting women and their families. With electric light available, healthcare practitioners can perform deliveries at night in safe, well-lit conditions, ensuring better outcomes for both mothers and babies.



# 4

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

In 2022, around 48,800 women and girls worldwide were killed by their intimate partners or other family members ([UN Women](#)). This means that, on average, more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family.

Violence against women, once a private issue, is now recognized as a global public health crisis. However, [WHO](#) reports reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue, with reported rates of violence against women and children increasing significantly.

Child marriage remains a significant global issue. [UN Women](#) report that while the global proportion of girls married before 18 has decreased from 25% in 2010 to 19% in 2022, significant progress is still needed to eliminate this harmful practice by 2030.

A lack of a universal definition for technology-facilitated violence against women and girls hinders global data collection. However, [UN Women](#) studies present regional data that reveal alarming rates. In the Arab States, it was reported that 60% of women internet users experienced online violence within a year.

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY MECHANISMS FOR THE PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSE TO GBV

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR GBV PREVENTION AND RESPONDING TO SURVIVORS NEEDS

Geographic region: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



**Entity:** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

**Programme Timeline:** 2022 - 2024

**Programme Partners:** Actions et Initiatives de Développement pour la Protection de la Femme et de l'Enfant (AIDPROFEN) and SAFDEF, in collaboration with local community-based women's organizations

**To learn more:** <https://www.unhcr.org/media/gender-equality-promising-and-emerging-practices-inspiration-implementation>

### OVERVIEW

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) hosts over 200,000 refugees, with women and girls making up 54% of the population. Ongoing violence in North Kivu has displaced around 600,000 people since the start of 2023, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to over 2.3 million.

In this context, women IDPs have limited access to income-generating activities, education and decision-making roles.

Women and girls are at increased risks of different forms of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual and physical violence. These risks are exacerbated by forced displacement and extreme poverty. Deeply ingrained social norms and fear of retaliation prevent GBV survivors from seeking support and accessing essential care and support services.

Forced displacement increases the risks of GBV for women and negatively impacts their rights to education, healthcare and livelihoods. This project, led by women's organizations-including those representing forcibly displaced and conflict-affected populations-addresses the comprehensive needs of GBV survivors while integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of programming, empowering women to influence decision-making and drive policy change.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR GBV PREVENTION

In response to the challenges and risks of GBV in North Kivu, UNHCR established partnerships with local women's organizations, AIDPROFEN and SAFDEF, to address GBV root causes through GBV prevention and provide support to survivors. The project focuses on five key components:

1. **Women's Leadership:** Strengthening women's agency and leadership in community structures.
2. **Positive Masculinity:** Engaging men to address gender inequality and promote gender equality through trained male ambassadors.
3. **Psychosocial Support:** Creating safe spaces and training community-based assistants to provide support and raise awareness about GBV services.
4. **Cash Assistance (CA):** Linking cash support to GBV response and mainstreaming GBV risk mitigation in CA, with secure payment methods.
5. **Legal Assistance:** Providing legal services, counselling and advocacy for survivors, including support for documentation and access to legal services.



Image source: [UNHCR](#)

## AWARENESS RAISING

Awareness raising is essential to facilitate access to services and can help reduce women's and girls' risks of GBV.

Through awareness-raising activities, 12,973 people were reached, learning about the types and consequences of GBV and how to access support. Additionally, 180 women were trained to provide psychosocial first aid and safe disclosure of GBV. Community members developed strategies to prevent and respond to GBV, promoting women's empowerment and challenging harmful social norms. Male community members were engaged, with 302 male ambassadors trained to promote gender equality, and sessions reaching 10,818 men and boys and contributing to a positive shift in attitudes and behaviours against GBV.

## POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

- **Tackle the root causes of gender inequality:** Empower women and girls, enhancing their agency, participation, and leadership to advance gender equality and fight discrimination.
- **Foster partnerships among national women's organizations:** Engage organizations and groups led by displaced women to provide mentorship and support to smaller groups.
- **Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework:** Use to track, assess, and report on the gender equality and empowerment outcomes of the project.
- **Promote accountability to women and girls in male engagement:** Ensure the initiatives address the needs of women and girls and adhere to the "do no harm" principle.

# INSTITUTIONALIZING IOM'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING GBV IN CRISS

ENSURING CRISIS-AFFECTED WOMEN AND GIRLS LIVE FREE FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**Project Timeline:** 2018 -

**Project Partners:** United States Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) as part of Safe from the Start initiative

**To learn more:** <https://publications.iom.int/books/institutional-framework-addressing-gender-based-violence-crises>

## OVERVIEW

In 2018, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched its first Institutional Framework for Addressing GBV in Crises (GBViC) Framework. The framework is designed to prioritize the safety, dignity and well-being of crisis-affected populations, especially women and girls. It builds on lessons and promising practices from IOM's global crisis operations over the years and sets out three institutional approaches: mitigating GBV risks, supporting GBV survivors and addressing the root causes of GBV.

Over the past six years, IOM has significantly increased the prioritization of GBV risk mitigation, with 45% more country programmes adopting such measures by 2023. To operationalize the GBViC framework, IOM deployed GBV specialists and developed action plans tailored to each country's context. These plans include, as a minimum, essential interventions for mainstreaming GBV, including:

- **Ensuring that programming does not cause or increase the likelihood of GBV**

- **Work to actively identify and mitigate GBV risks within the environment and programme design and implementation**
- **Facilitate and monitor safe access to services for women and girls.**

To further build on this, IOM has developed an [intersectional gender analysis toolkit](#). The toolkit is being piloted in various IOM country offices and aims to enhance contextualized GBV risk mitigation and gender mainstreaming efforts.

## ROLLING OUT THE GBV IN CRISES FRAMEWORK

The roll-out process actively engages IOM country office units in the effective mitigation of GBV risks. IOM staff of all genders are integral to the implementation of the Action Plan, ensuring inclusive participation. Additionally, the core elements of the GBV action plans emphasize the importance of robust consultations with women and girls at every stage of the programme cycle.



The framework roll-out involves building a shared understanding of core GBV concepts and IOM's institutional approach, including risk mitigation. The initial phase includes training for staff to implement the Action Plan safely, with ongoing consultations with GBV specialists to ensure alignment with institutional and international standards.

## **GBV COMMITMENTS AND OTHER CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

IOM has made significant progress in strengthening accountability and ownership within its collective responsibility to protect women and girls from gender-based violence (GBV). They have invested in toolkits and guidance to translate GBV commitments into practical, mandatory actions across all projects.

However, challenges persist, particularly in balancing the prioritization of GBV alongside other cross-cutting issues. In some cases, new action plans on additional cross cutting issues have shifted focus away from GBV risk mitigation, and an overwhelming number of plans have made it difficult for staff to fully engage in GBV risk mitigation.



Image source [IOM](#)

To address this, there are calls for integrated, cross-cutting actions, though the risk remains that specific GBV actions may lose granularity. Furthermore, inadequate funding for GBV risk mitigation continues to be a barrier to the full implementation of action plans, hindering the realization of goals to reduce GBV risks for women and girls.

## **KEY RESULTS**

Since 2018, the GBViC framework has been successfully rolled out in 10 countries and five regions, with two more roll-outs coming in 2025.

While the roll-out process varies depending on available resources and capacities in each country's mission, the ultimate goal remains to enhance the quality of IOM's programming.

Overall results, and ongoing operationalization initiatives of the Framework, include:

- A 45% increase in the number of country programmes implementing GBV risk mitigation measures, reaching 58 countries globally in 2023.
- Senior management engagement to successfully mainstream GBV throughout IOM missions.
- Structural adaptations, consultations with women and girls, safety audits and training on handling GBV disclosures.
- Ongoing operationalization of the GBViC framework has strengthened IOM's programming to better protect women and girls from GBV.
- A new funding model, piloted in five IOM operations, now allocates a small percentage of each grant to support GBV risk mitigation activities. This funding goes to financing GBV personnel and ensuring staff are trained in handling GBV disclosures.

# SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

## GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING TO SUSTAIN THE RESULTS AND TAKE FURTHER ACTION ON GENDER EQUALITY AND ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Geographic region: GRENADA



Entity: UN Women

Project Timeline: 2020 - 2023

Project Partners: European Union and the Government of Grenada

To learn more: [https://www.finance.gd/docs/2023/Gender\\_Budget\\_Statement\\_2023.pdf](https://www.finance.gd/docs/2023/Gender_Budget_Statement_2023.pdf)

### OVERVIEW

As a result of UN Women's interventions, Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) was successfully mainstreamed by the Grenada Government in 2023 for implementation in the 2024 budget. This process exceeded expectations, expanding from four to all 28 ministries and departments, with "all line ministries providing expenditure estimates that adequately reflect gender priorities and considerations." The mainstreaming of GRB offers a systematic approach to sustaining progress on gender equality and women's empowerment and ending violence against women and girls. Additionally, in the first quarter of 2023, the government issued a Gender Budget Statement to highlight gender priorities across various ministries.

In August, the Ministry of Finance released the Budget Framework Paper 2024, emphasizing the need to consider gender issues in budget preparation: "The Government is keenly aware that the implementation of projects, programmes and policies that are financed by public expenditure has differential impacts on women and men." The Ministry instructed all ministries and departments to "include gender-related statements in their strategic objectives and performance measures," ensuring gender considerations are integrated into all sectors and budget estimates.

### PROMOTING THE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND GIRL SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE IN GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

The active and meaningful participation of women and girls who are survivors of violence in Gender Responsive Budgeting ensures that their perspectives and lived experiences were integrated into the process. This was achieved through close collaboration with the Division of Gender and Family Affairs, the lead government entity responsible for mainstreaming gender across policies, programmes and initiatives.

The Division coordinated efforts to include the voices of women and girls, ensuring that their experiences informed sustained commitment and financing for addressing violence against women and girls. In terms of capacity building, initial sensitization workshops were held with the Division and finance focal points in 2022, followed by the development of a GRB manual and data collection tool.

Training sessions were conducted for key government focal points on these resources, and further support was provided in the form of a budget assessment and report. Additionally, focal points participated in regional GRB workshops, where they exchanged experiences and lessons with counterparts and

engaged with experts in the field. The UN Women team provided additional support in terms of training, working meetings and technical support, which allowed the government to complete the exercise and to develop concrete recommendations for a Gender Budget and GRB process.

### **MOVING GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING FORWARD**

Gender Responsive Budgeting is often seen as solely a responsibility of the ministry responsible for gender. Rather, as the Spotlight project emphasizes, it requires the active involvement of all government financing teams. In this model, finance and other technical focal points were engaged early in the process, ensuring that the project had broad support across all relevant sectors. Crucially, the UN Women team secured high-level buy-in at the Grenada ministerial level, which was key to the project's success.

By adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, providing early sensitization, and having a champion at the highest levels of government, the Spotlight project demonstrates how gender mainstreaming and budgeting can be effectively integrated across all areas of government finance.

### **TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE FROM GRENADA ACROSS THE REGION**

The Spotlight manual and assessment tool have now been introduced in Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. This has been supported by capacity-

building workshops for gender and finance focal points. Feedback from these initiatives has been overwhelmingly positive, with governments requesting further training and technical support to transition from theory to practice. As a result, there is a rising interest across the region in adjusting budgetary processes to enable the phased implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting in an effort to address persisting issues on gender equality and women's empowerment--in particular, the need to address ending violence against women and girls.



Image source: [UN Women](#)



# 5

## WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

In 2023, over 170 armed conflicts were recorded globally. Over 612 million women and girls resided within 50 kilometres of these conflicts, representing a 50% increase from a decade ago ([UN Women](#)).

Between 2018 and 2024, the share of military women in UN peacekeeping operations doubled from 4.2% to 8.5%. Yet globally, only 9.6% of negotiators, 13.7% of mediators, and 26.6% of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements were women ([UN Women](#)).

Despite their exclusion from formal peace processes, women often play crucial roles in local peacebuilding efforts. For instance, [UN Women](#) reports showcase the fact that Yemeni women successfully negotiated for civilian access to water, while over 49 women-led organizations in Sudan formed the Peace for Sudan Platform to advocate for an inclusive peace process in 2023.

In 2023, the [UN](#) verified a staggering 3,688 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, a 50% increase from the previous year. Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo reported the highest numbers, with 835 and 733 cases, respectively. However, these figures likely underestimate the true extent of the problem, as many cases continue to go unreported or unverified, and perpetrators often act with impunity.

# GENDER TRANSFORMATION WITH AT-RISK YOUTH IN PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES

ADDRESSING THE COMPLEX CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CONFLICT ZONES

Geographic region: SOUTH SUDAN



**Entity:** International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**Programme Timeline:** 2019 - 2025

**Donors:** UN Peacebuilding Fund, South Sudan Reconciliation Stabilization and Resilience Trust Fund, European Union

**Programme Partners:** Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, Community Empowerment for Progress Organization

**To learn more:** <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/success-story-south-sudan>

<https://southsudan.iom.int/news/over-300-youth-graduate-skills-prevention-gbv-and-gender-transformation-wau>

## OVERVIEW

In South Sudan, conflict has exacerbated gender-based violence (GBV) and entrenched harmful social norms, particularly affecting youth. In response to these challenges, IOM South Sudan, in partnership with the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, developed a gender transformative curriculum, for integration in youth peacebuilding initiatives. The curriculum, Cultivating Healthy Attitudes and Norms for Gender Equality (CHANGE), draws content from proven gender-transformative methodologies, such as the SASA! approach, Manhood 2.0 and Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP).

Launched as a pilot in 2021, CHANGE evolved into a comprehensive 13-session programme aimed at promoting gender equality, reducing violence and enhancing conflict resolution skills among at-risk youth. The project, based

in the town of Wau, targeted youth involved in or at risk of joining gang groups, while integrating mental health and psychosocial support to help participants cope with trauma.

*“Young men used to beat young women, especially when they rejected their proposals, but this has changed now.”*

– Young woman CHANGE participant, Wau

## ADDRESSING TRAUMA AND COMPLEX CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH

The IOM programme sought to address the trauma and complex challenges faced by young people in conflict-affected areas and reduce GBV and other forms of violence using the following strategies:



- At the planning stage, focus groups with male and female youth and community members were held to identify relevant gender dynamics, which informed curriculum content. The active involvement of women facilitators-- 50% of the total--created a supportive environment for discussing sensitive topics like GBV.
- A phased approach to training ensured that both IOM staff and facilitators were equipped to manage community engagement and sensitive issues. Topics included gender roles, GBV and conflict resolution, fostering a comprehensive understanding among participants. The facilitators were trained to handle disclosures of GBV in a safe and ethical manner, ensuring timely referral to appropriate services. This contributed to a more supportive environment, especially for women and girls.
- An intersectional approach addressed the many challenges faced by at-risk youth, including trauma from conflict, substance abuse and poverty. By integrating mental health and psychosocial support tailored to both women and men, the overlapping factors influencing behaviour and social norms were recognized.
- The project was implemented alongside cash-for-work and other livelihood and peacebuilding initiatives, which bolstered social cohesion and increased women's economic empowerment and household decision-making power.

*"I used to think that house chores are women responsibility alone, but I learnt from the gender sessions that these are shared responsibilities, and I do speak up about it. Now my husband and I share roles."*

– Young woman CHANGE participant, Wau



Image source: IOM South Sudan

## RESISTANCE AND RESULTS IN GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE MESSAGING

Gender-transformative messaging initially met some opposition, particularly in communities where deeply ingrained attitudes toward gender equality prevailed. Despite this, participants and community members reported that the initiative produced positive outcomes, including transformed social norms, increased social cohesion and reduced violence, including GBV.

Through qualitative assessments, including focus group discussions, interviews and testimonials, it was evident that the programme led to improved conflict resolution skills, a reported decline in GBV, and a shift away from gang violence among youth participants. Women and girls in target communities reported feeling safer, while men who participated advocated for gender equality, supporting women's education and contributing to a more equitable division of household labour. Overall, IOM in South Sudan has fostered lasting change, with youth becoming advocates for peace, non-violence and gender equality within their communities.

CHANGE can be adapted for use in other post-conflict contexts but requires participatory action research to ensure it is culturally relevant. Successful implementation depends on a structured adaptation process, adequate funding and ongoing peacebuilding efforts in the region. While IOM advocates that the curriculum should remain true to its original content and approach, it must be adjusted to address local needs effectively to ensure the safety of participants and the potential to impact gender-transformative change.



# SUDAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS GROUPS & MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

## ENGAGING WOMEN IN THE SUDANESE POLITICAL PROCESSES

Geographic region: SUDAN



**Entity:** United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)

**Project Timeline:** 2022

**Project Partners:** UNITAMS, UN Women and UNDP

**To learn more:** <https://peacemaker.un.org/thematic-areas/gender-women-peace-security>

### OVERVIEW

In 2022, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) (which later closed in 2024) actively engaged Sudanese women from various sectors, including civil society, political parties, armed movements and academia, to support a Sudanese-led and owned dialogue process aimed at restoring a civilian-led democratic transition in Sudan.

The dialogue process was facilitated by the UN-African Union-Inter-Governmental Authority on Development Trilateral Mechanism. A cornerstone of this engagement was the establishment of the Women's Rights Group (WRG), which brought together independent gender experts representing Sudan's diverse landscape.

### IDENTIFYING GENDER-RELATED PRIORITIES

The WRG played a pivotal role by regularly engaging with key stakeholders in the political process and producing a foundational document that articulated

crucial gender-related priorities for both the political process and any future agreement. Supported by this sustained engagement, Sudanese women succeeded in advocating for a provision to ensure at least 40% representation of women in transitional institutions envisaged by the 5 December 2022 Framework Political Agreement.

The primary objectives of the WRG were to:

- Establish a dedicated platform for women to engage in the Sudanese political process.
- Integrate the priorities of Sudanese women, including gender equality and women's rights, into the broader political dialogue.

### IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE CONSULTATIONS

Throughout January and February 2022, UNITAMS conducted comprehensive consultations involving a wide range of stakeholders, including political parties, military representatives, civil society organizations and women's groups across Sudan. This included organizing 15 specific consultations with women's

groups, supported by UN Women and UNDP. A selection panel of women academics was convened to establish criteria for participation in the WRG. At the request of UNITAMS, DPPA contributed capacity-building support through the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers mechanism, deploying gender and inclusion experts to facilitate workshops that supported members of the Women's Rights Group and conflict parties to effectively contribute to peace negotiations. Despite the challenges posed by internal divisions within the women's movement following the military coup, these efforts aimed to strengthen coalitions and ensure meaningful representation of women in the transition process.

### CHALLENGES TO THE PROCESS

The military coup further divided an active women's movement, complicating efforts to build coalitions among diverse groups with differing perspectives and allegiances.

Engaging diverse constituencies within the women's movement, including those aligned with the protest movement and those supporting the military, presented significant challenges in fostering collaboration and consensus.

Coordinating comprehensive consultations across fractured groups proved logistically complex, requiring substantial resources and planning to ensure effective participation.

Limited financial capacity also restricted the scope to support meaningful engagement and final selections for WRG participation.

### KEY RESULTS

- Women engaged in gender and constitutional reform, political parties and the Women's Rights Group effectively advocated for strong gender provisions in the draft constitution created by the Sudanese Bar Association.
- The revised constitution became the primary negotiating document in discussions between civilians and the military.
- Their lobbying efforts led to the inclusion of gender and women's rights provisions in the 5 December 2022 Framework Political Agreement.

The results showcase how multi-track efforts that advocate for and support targeted measures on women's direct participation can shape inclusive agreements. A key component of this is ensuring not only that diverse women stakeholders are engaged but also that gender expertise is integrated and informs the process. In Sudan, support for the WRG enabled a balance between these priorities. The responsibility for the selection of WRG members resting with local women's groups and academia, representing different regions of Sudan, was a critical factor underpinning the groups' legitimacy.

Mediators should tailor inclusion modalities to fit the specific objectives and needs of the context. While consultations can be an entry point, it is crucial to design them in a way that maximizes inclusivity, capturing perspectives from women across diverse backgrounds in a way that informs the process.



Image source: [UN Sudan](#)

# WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

## ENSURING WOMEN'S VOICES AND GENDER PROVISIONS ARE ADDRESSED – AND MONITORED – IN PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS

Geographic region: COLOMBIA



**Entity:** United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 -

**Project Partners:** UN Verification Mission in Colombia, UN Women

**To learn more:** <https://peacemaker.un.org/documents/words-action-experience-un-political-missions-colombia-women-peace-and-security>

### OVERVIEW

Following the Final Peace Agreement signed in 2016, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC) and UN Country Team (UNCT) actively supported implementation of gender-specific provisions in the agreement, as well as related peace initiatives, including the national "total peace" policy and Colombia's first-ever national action plan on women, peace and security. The 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) guerrillas set a global benchmark with over 100 gender-related provisions. Efforts to accelerate implementation of the agreement's gender measures continue, led by the Unit for Implementation of the Final Agreement in collaboration with the Vice-Ministry for Women and other entities.

However, challenges remain in delivering on this potential, especially in conflict-affected territories. Following the signing of the agreement, the UN has worked to actively engage civil society and increase the participation of women in decision-making in the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion, and Verification of the Final Peace Agreement as well as in related peace initiatives.

The UN maintains regular consultations with women's and LGBTIQ+ organizations, ensuring that their experiences and recommendations inform the Mission's advocacy efforts. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) meets every three months with these organizations to foster ongoing dialogue and address specific issues, as well as security concerns for women leaders and human rights defenders. Since 2023, dedicated thematic meetings have been established to ensure the integration of women's priorities into the Mission's verification work, particularly in areas like rural reform and security guarantees.

UNVMC has also provided support to address women's security, working closely with women's and LGBTIQ+ organizations and coordinating with various entities to develop action plans, such as the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders. This programme addresses the risk of sexual and gender-based violence that has become increasingly prevalent for women and LGBTIQ+ people and ending which is critical for protecting women's political participation.

These efforts of working closely with women's and LGBTIQ+ groups to inform peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts significantly contributes to advancing the political participation of diverse women

and promoting the foundation for a more equitable and safe society for all.

### **GENDER-RELATED CHALLENGES TO FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementation of the peace agreement's ambitious goals, particularly regarding gender provisions, has been inconsistent since its signing in 2016, with 46.3% of the 54 gender indicators in the Framework Plan for Implementation less than halfway completed. The newly launched National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 is expected to further boost the implementation of the gender provisions. Continuing to foster effective inter-institutional coordination at the local level in order to translate political will into tangible results on the ground remains a challenge. Important mechanisms, such as the government's High-Level Forum on Gender, are not being used to their full potential, limiting progress in the coherent implementation of gender provisions outlined in the agreement.

### **ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP**

Women's organizations' priorities have been regularly integrated into UNVMC reporting to the Security Council, ensuring their priorities are raised in international discussions. Likewise, advocacy efforts have successfully facilitated the participation of women from civil society in the National Commission for Security Guarantees, enhancing security protections for women leaders and human rights defenders through the Comprehensive Programme for the Safeguards of Women Leaders. Local-level dialogue has been advanced with women's organizations, including women former combatants, to support their agendas and promote communication between them and Cuba and Norway, the main guarantor countries involved in peace talks with the National Liberation Army [ELN].

### **ENGAGING SELF-ORGANIZED FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AS KEY PARTNERS FOR PEACE**

The UN's ability to effectively partner with self-organized women's, LGBTIQ+ and feminist movements and to build trust with government officials has been critical to advancing inclusive and gender responsive peace in Colombia. Key lessons learned include that

special political missions may be able to use their good offices in support of inclusive peace efforts. Building on technical support and good offices provided, missions may be able to raise key issues with the government, including related to gender or ethnic provisions in peace agreements. Such engagement may also lead to more meaningful involvement of women's civil society organizations in peace agreement implementation and related peace initiatives.

Mediators should identify and support local, women civil society leaders and feminist movements. Inclusion modalities should be transparent and accountable. In these ways the UN can better support local efforts to advance peace based on women's participation, protection and rights.

# FROM NATIONAL AMBITIONS TO LOCAL REALITIES

## SOMALIA'S JOURNEY IN LOCALIZING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

Geographic region: SOMALIA



Entity: UN Women

Project Timeline: 2022 - ongoing

Project Partners: UN Peace Building Fund, Somalia Joint Fund and the Federal Republic of Somalia

To learn more: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2023/01/somalia-launches-national-action-plan-on-unscr-13-for-women-and-security>

### OVERVIEW

In late 2022, Somalia launched its first National Action Plan (NAP) to implement the Somali Women's Charter and UN Security Council Resolution 1325, marking a crucial advancement in promoting women's participation in peacebuilding and decision-making, especially in post-conflict contexts. The Federal Ministry of Family and Human Rights Development, in collaboration with the Federal Member States (FMS), have worked to adapt the NAP to the local context by integrating it with the Somali Women's Charter and creating six Local Action Plans in five FMS and the Benadir Administrative Region. This collaborative effort has led to the establishment of formal structures that coordinate between federal, state and civil society organizations to prevent and respond to conflicts.

Somalia is currently transitioning from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) which coincides with the transition from United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOM) to United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), joining the Security Council in 2025. This makes the

country's growing role in peace and security matters particularly significant, offering valuable insights for the international community on how to address insecurity and fragility through a Women, Peace and Security (WPS) lens, thereby reinforcing the importance of women's inclusion in peace and security processes.

### SOMALI WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Somali women have tirelessly fought for their rights, playing key roles as agents of change, from negotiating as the "6th Clan" political network to fighting terrorism and strengthening community resilience against challenges like climate change. Their contributions have shaped the localization agenda, with the National Action Plan and localized plans providing frameworks to ensure women's participation in peace processes, promote accountability and strengthen protection mechanisms. This agenda reflects the government's commitment to including Somali women at all levels of peacebuilding and decision-making, integrating gender into national and local laws, policies and programmes for broader nation-building.

## **LOCALIZING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA**

The localization of the NAP 1325 in Somalia has been a comprehensive process, involving extensive consultations with women's organizations and groups nationwide to ensure broad participation. A Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) platform supports the implementation of the NAP and the localization of the WPS agenda, ensuring that women have a meaningful role in advancing peace and security. Through this platform, there is ongoing dialogue among women, gender equality advocates, government officials and international partners, thereby promoting strategic guidance and solutions to foster women's leadership in a highly patriarchal society.

At the local level, 17 women's peace networks have been established to engage with state actors and other stakeholders. They work together to address protection and peace-related concerns and plan collective actions to promote peace and security in their communities.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING AS KEY TO RAISING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING**

A key objective of the localization process has been to raise awareness and understanding of UNSCR 1325 and related international instruments among government officials, Federal Member States, traditional leaders, local women leaders, community elders, religious leaders and their constituencies. To support this effort, a certificate course on Women, Peace and Security was introduced, training 100 young people, 70% of them women, to build a future generation of leaders in this field. Additionally, the development of the NAP and localized plans provided an opportunity to consult with and raise awareness of the WPS agenda among security actors, enhancing their understanding of the challenges women face in conflict and the necessary actions to address these issues.

## **KEY RESULTS AND SUCCESS STORIES**

- Increased national capacity to lead peace and security efforts through training women in mediation.
- Launch of African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) to support and connect Somali women leaders to the regional platform to promote peer learning on the WPS agenda.

- Development of an Early Warning System Standard Operating Procedures with stakeholder training.
- The NAP has fostered collaboration across sectors, engaging non-security actors in peace and security, exemplified by 17 women's peace networks that regularly engage with justice, security and district administrations to address protection and peace concerns.
- Fatima Ali Iman, Chairperson of the Peace Working Group, exemplifies the impact of localization, using her mediation skills to independently resolve community conflicts.
- In some communities, women use WhatsApp to share information and coordinate responses to local challenges, addressing conflicts at the grassroots before involving authorities.

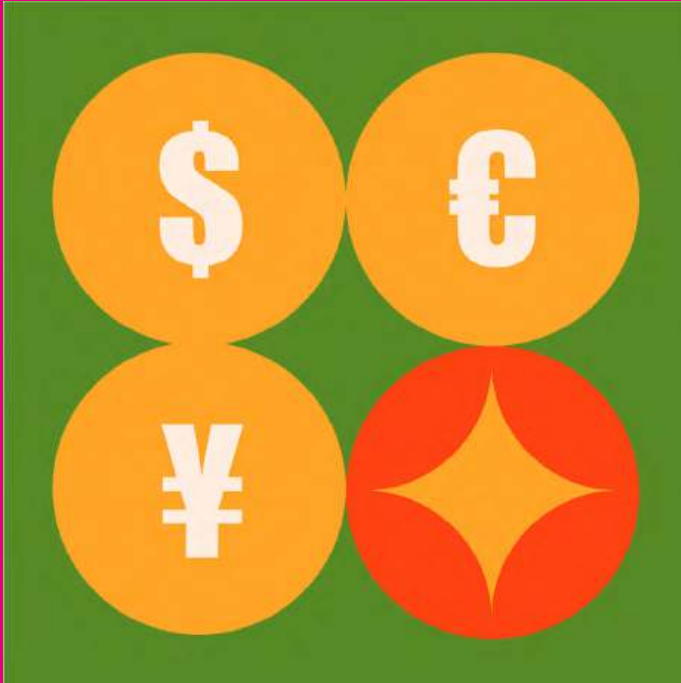
Empowering women to actively participate in peace processes ensures that their perspectives and needs are incorporated, leading to more inclusive and sustainable agreements. True progress in peacebuilding is only possible when women are fully engaged and recognized as essential contributors.





# 6

## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

ILO reports that the global labor force participation rate for women is just under 47%, while for men it's 72%.

Female participation in the labor force has steadily recovered after the worst of the COVID-pandemic, with employment rates rising in some countries faster than for men. However, the economic impact of COVID-19 caused a 4.2% global decline in female employment, widening gender disparities and threatening the progress made toward gender equality over the past two decades (ILO).

Despite progress over generations, women still earn less than men. As of 2022, the gender wage gap across the OECD was 11.6%, meaning a woman working full-time earns, on average, about 88 cents for every dollar or euro a man earns at median earnings, reflecting only a modest improvement since 2010, when the gap was 14%.

Worldwide in 2024, 748 million people – comprising 95% women, and 5% men - above 15 years of age are outside of the labour force due to care responsibilities (ILO). Care responsibilities are the primary barrier preventing women from joining the labor force, whereas men typically cite other personal reasons, such as education or illness.

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor in 2023, women around the world are continuing to show a strong interest in entrepreneurship. Globally, one in six women expressed the intention to start a business in the near future, with the highest entrepreneurial intention rates found in low-income countries, where around 28% of women aimed to launch a business.

# INTEGRATED URBAN SERVICES EMERGENCY PROJECT

PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES TO YEMENI WOMEN

Geographic region: YEMEN



Entity: United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

Programme Timeline: 2021 - 2026

Programme Partners: World Bank

To learn more: <https://ye.unopsmr.org/project/yemen-integrated-urban-services-emergency-project-yiusep-phase-ii/>

## OVERVIEW

The ongoing conflict and socioeconomic challenges in Yemen, exacerbated by climate-related shocks, have significantly hindered women's participation in the workforce and their access to economic opportunities. In a context where social and gender norms traditionally limit women's roles in the economy, the Yemen Integrated Urban Services Emergency Project II, funded by the World Bank, aims to address these barriers by integrating gender-responsive strategies into its development framework.

A key component of the project was the Women Owned Business (WOB) initiative, which provides critical support to women entrepreneurs in the country. Through tailored training, technical assistance and mentoring, the initiative has enabled women to access economic opportunities, has awarded contracts worth USD1.4 million in goods and services and promoted women's participation in the formal economy.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Yemen, the project included gender-specific objectives aimed at empowering women

owned businesses and creating an inclusive economic environment. Gender-responsive procurement practices prioritized contracts for these businesses, thus promoting their market participation and addressing economic inequalities.

Additionally, gender-disaggregated data has been regularly collected and analysed to monitor progress, ensuring accountability and highlighting the impact of the initiative on women's economic empowerment. This approach aligns with the Beijing Platform for Action by fostering women's economic independence and participation in decision-making processes, contributing to long-term social and economic resilience in Yemen.

## PROCESS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PROCUREMENT

The project was designed to ensure active participation and inclusion of women owned businesses in the procurement process. A structured approach was followed to identify, vet and build the capacity of these businesses, providing them with the necessary tools to

participate in UNOPS procurement opportunities. The process was organized in the following steps:

#### **Identification and Vetting:**

- Collaboration with local business associations and Chambers of Commerce in various cities (Sana'a, Aden, Mukalla) helped to first identify 34 eligible women owned businesses. To date UNOPS has identified 60.
- These businesses were invited to attend consultation workshops to better understand the procurement process and requirements.

#### **Criteria for Selection:**

- Key eligibility criteria included: 100% women ownership, valid commercial registration and a valid tax ID.
- These criteria ensured that only legitimate businesses were included.

#### **Capacity-building Programme:**

- A tailored capacity-building programme was created to enhance the skills and knowledge of women owned businesses. It comprised conceptual training and practical tools for completing vendor registration on the UN Global Marketplace ([UNGM](#)) platform; navigating the UNOPS e-Sourcing system for tender submissions; and UNOPS technical training for businesses entering infrastructure sectors.

#### **Tendering Process:**

- Initial pilot tenders were issued with limited competition to facilitate WOB participation, starting with small-value contracts to build confidence.
- As the women owned businesses' capacity grew, the tenders increased in scale and value, with a strategic

move towards national-level tenders, including both locally made and imported goods and later works tenders.

- Gradual scaling allowed women-owned businesses to gain essential experience and become better positioned to compete for future contracts, both with UNOPS and other international organizations.

### **INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH**

This project showcases an innovative approach to engaging women entrepreneurs in the economy by addressing the unique challenges faced by women in Yemen, a fragile and conflict-affected country. This initiative improved the business capabilities of the women owned businesses and created new opportunities for market entry and competition, helping them build relationships, negotiate effectively and explore solutions to challenges such as financial capacity and infrastructure experience.

The project has already demonstrated significant results, with 42 women owned businesses participating in 12 training sessions and successfully submitting bids for reserved tenders. Ten of these were awarded contracts for the first time in UNOPS Yemen history. The project's success also led to recognition with the [UN Procurement Awards 2023 for Sustainable Procurement and Supply](#). By using a phased approach to procurement and integrating targeted training, the project has fostered inclusive economic growth, improved market diversity, and is continuing to contribute to long-term social inclusion for women in Yemen.



Image source: [UNOPS](#)

# WE! FUND

## FOSTERING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE 'MISSING MIDDLE' - MEDIUM-SIZED PROJECTS OFTEN UNDERSERVED BY TRADITIONAL FINANCING

Geographic region: SENEGAL



**Entity:** United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 - 2021

**Project Partners:** UN Women, UNDP, SDC, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, FONSIS (Sovereign Wealth Fund of Senegal)

To learn more: <https://wefund.sn/>

### OVERVIEW

The WE! Fund is an innovative financial mechanism designed to promote gender-sensitive investments, particularly targeting women-owned SMEs in the underserved "missing middle". Focused on fostering women's economic empowerment, especially in secondary cities, the fund offers affordable equity and quasi-equity to businesses meeting gender impact criteria, using the Women's Economic Empowerment Index (WE Index). After making its first investment in 2021, the fund successfully expanded into a second phase in November 2023 with an increased capital of 10 billion CFA (USD15,885,624 million), aiming to support gender-impactful SMEs and inclusive infrastructure projects.

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGH THE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INDEX

The WE! Fund integrates gender considerations through the use of the Women's Economic Empowerment Index (WE Index), a tool co-developed by UNCDF, UNDP and UN Women to assess the gender impact of the SMEs it supports. The index evaluates factors such as women's representation in the workforce, ownership roles and involvement

in supply chains, ensuring that funded projects are gender-responsive and contribute to reducing gender inequality. Aligned with Senegal's gender policies and SDG 5, the fund focuses on empowering women, particularly in secondary cities, by unlocking gender-responsive investments that support women-led enterprises and drive local economic development.

### PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

The WE! Fund fosters women's active participation by targeting women-owned or women-led businesses, as well as enterprises with significant female involvement in the workforce and supply chain. Focused on sectors with high potential for women's engagement, such as agriculture, manufacturing and retail, the fund drives inclusive economic growth that empowers women across different levels of the economy.

A key example of the fund's impact is its investment in Mburu, a women-led bakery in Thiès that promotes local cereals and employs a large number of women in key roles. This investment exemplifies the fund's commitment to supporting women in secondary cities, where access to financing is often limited, and aligns

with its gender impact criteria, which include hiring women and sourcing from women-owned suppliers.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING AS KEY TO ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

The WE! Fund is instrumental in building the capacity of both individuals and institutions to advance women's economic empowerment in Senegal. Through comprehensive technical assistance and training, the fund supports women-led businesses in areas such as financial management, business development and gender-responsive practices, enabling them to meet the WE Index standards and scale effectively.

### **IDENTIFYING BUSINESSES THAT MEET BOTH GENDER IMPACT AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY CRITERIA**

A key challenge faced by the WE! Fund was identifying businesses that met both the gender impact and financial viability criteria, as many women-led SMEs in Senegal operate informally and lack the resources or expertise to develop formal business proposals. The strict requirements of the WE Index further limited the number of qualifying businesses, making it difficult to find suitable investments. To overcome this, UNCDF, in collaboration with the WE! Fund manager FONSI, provided targeted technical assistance to help businesses improve their gender responsiveness and financial stability, guiding them through the process of formalizing operations and enhancing their business models. This support gradually expanded the pipeline

of qualifying businesses, though securing long-term, large-scale financing for the fund's sustainability remains an ongoing challenge.

### **POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION**

The WE! Fund's innovative approach has strong potential for replication in other regions and countries aiming to boost financial support for medium-sized women-owned enterprises. By using the WE Index to assess gender impact, the fund provides a transparent, adaptable framework that integrates gender considerations into investment decisions.

The success of the fund highlights its ability to expand its reach and impact, not only by supporting gender-focused SMEs but also by developing municipal infrastructure through public-private partnerships. The collaboration between UNCDF and FONSI exemplifies how international and local institutions can work together to advance shared development goals, creating a sustainable model that can inspire similar initiatives worldwide and foster inclusive economic growth.



Image source: [WE!FUND first investment \(MBURU Senegal\)](#)

# CAPFISH CAPTURE: POST-HARVEST FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN CAMBODIA'S FISHERIES SECTOR

Geographic region: CAMBODIA



**Entity:** United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

**Project Timeline:** September 2019 – December 2025

**Project Partners:** European Union (EU), Cambodian Fisheries Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and supporting institutions, universities and private sector representatives

**To learn more:** [https://downloads.unido.org/ot/26/60/26608852/Report-%20CAPFish\\_Gender%20Analysis%20of%20Post%20Harvest%20Fisheries%20in%20Cambodia.pdf](https://downloads.unido.org/ot/26/60/26608852/Report-%20CAPFish_Gender%20Analysis%20of%20Post%20Harvest%20Fisheries%20in%20Cambodia.pdf)

## OVERVIEW

The UNIDO CAPFISH-Capture: Post-harvest Fisheries Development project, co-funded by the European Union, is a key initiative aimed at contributing to Cambodia's vision for social and economic development, food security and poverty reduction. Focused on enhancing gender equality, the project acknowledges the vital role women play in the fisheries sector, particularly in post-harvest operations.

Guided by this, the project was designed to empower women by addressing gender-specific barriers and promoting their access to resources, markets, and decision-making spaces. By targeting a minimum of 40% of women beneficiaries across all project levels, the initiative aligns with Cambodia's Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1 and the UN's broader goals for sustainable development, with a particular emphasis on SDG 5--achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Despite the crucial contributions of women to the fisheries value chain, their roles are often undervalued and invisible, particularly in post-harvest activities such as organizing supply chains, transforming fish and fishery products, and ensuring their preservation. Gender inequalities continue to limit women's economic opportunities and business development potential in the sector. The CAPFISH-Capture project works to counter these disparities by promoting gender-responsive policies, providing tailored training and facilitating co-investment mechanisms to support women-led enterprises. The project has successfully fostered an inclusive and sustainable fisheries value chain, with over 50% of certified fisheries now being women-led, offering a replicable model for integrating gender equality into similar contexts.

## USING GENDER ANALYSIS TO INFORM GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

A comprehensive baseline gender analysis of the post-harvest fisheries sector identified significant disparities



in women's participation and access to resources, which were then used to guide the development of the project's targeted interventions. The findings from this analysis were instrumental in the formulation of the Fisheries Administration Gender Policy and Strategic Framework, which focuses on enhancing women's access to economic resources, technology and information, and protecting children from labour in the fisheries value chain. The gender mainstreaming guidelines were seamlessly integrated into the project's design phase, ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment were embedded into key project activities, such as capacity-building initiatives and the creation of a gender-responsive policy framework for the fisheries sector.

The integration of gender into policy development documents, such as the voluntary Cambodia Quality Seal (CQS) certification and the Environmental and Social Management Plan, ensured that gender-sensitive practices were upheld across all value-chain interventions. In addition, targeted support was provided to women-led enterprises, with 20 businesses receiving equipment and training assistance. Gender-sensitive research and development was also promoted by funding women-led research teams in 10 out of 23 research projects, making up 53% of core research teams and 70% of interns, thereby fostering innovation and increasing women's access to technological advancements. Monitoring and evaluation processes incorporated gender-specific indicators, ensuring that at least 40% of key performance indicators (KPIs) were linked to women's participation and leadership, reinforcing the project's commitment to achieving gender equality in the fisheries sector.

## **ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY**

The project has made significant strides in promoting gender equality within Cambodia's fisheries sector, surpassing its target of directing 40% of benefits to women-led enterprises. Currently, 50% of businesses receiving the CQS certification and 69% of enterprises supported by the Value Chain Investment Support programme are women-led. These businesses have enhanced their operations through improved equipment, food safety and business development practices, and have expanded market access, thereby driving growth and competitiveness. Notably, two women-led enterprises have expanded into international markets, exporting products to New Zealand and Australia. In addition to supporting individual businesses, the project empowered five women producer groups, comprising 141 members (88% women), increasing their market access and operational productivity.

These initiatives contributed to a 20% increase in sales and the creation of new jobs, with women holding 68% of the positions. These achievements earned the project the UNIDO Gender Equality and Mobilization Award in 2023.



*A woman processor inspects the quality of shrimp dried using a solar dryer dome in Koh Kong Province. Image source: [UNIDO/Samruol IM](#)*



# REDUCING WOMEN'S UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK BURDEN

PARTNERING WITH GOVERNMENT, PRIVATE SECTOR AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Geographic region: TANZANIA



**Entity:** World Food Programme (WFP)

**Project Timeline:** 2022 - 2027

**Project Partners:** Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, Natural Resources and Livestock (Zanzibar), Ministry of Blue Economy (Zanzibar), FAO, IFAD, UN Women

**To learn more:** <https://jprwee.org/news/partnering-tanzanias-government-private-sector-and-local-communities-reduce-womens-unpaid>

## OVERVIEW

World Food Programme (WFP), as a member of the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) is addressing the significant burden of unpaid care work that women in Tanzania bear, which limits their economic participation and hinders gender equality. In rural areas, women spend a disproportionate amount of time on household and caregiving responsibilities, which restricts their ability to engage in income-generating activities and perpetuates gender inequality. For example, women in Zanzibar devote 87% of their time to unpaid domestic and care work, while men spend only 13%. Similar disparities exist in mainland Tanzania, where women spend nearly four times more time on domestic tasks than do men. This gendered division of labour significantly hinders women's economic opportunities.

The five-year JP RWEE initiative aims to tackle these structural barriers by promoting the rights, livelihoods and resilience of rural women. By focusing on four key outcome areas, the initiative seeks to empower

women to participate equally in the economy and in decision-making processes. Additionally, it incorporates a gender-transformative approach to challenge historical power imbalances and discriminatory norms, while fostering resilience to climate change and other shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through these measures, the initiative supports the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to gender equality and economic empowerment. By addressing both the social and structural challenges women face, the initiative lays the foundation for long-term, sustainable development and gender equality in Tanzania's rural areas.

## ADDRESSING LACK OF ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE SERVICES

The lack of accessible and affordable childcare services is a major barrier to women's economic participation, especially in rural communities. Without reliable childcare, women often must juggle caregiving duties

with income-generating activities, limiting their ability to fully engage in the workforce. This imbalance not only restricts women's financial independence but also perpetuates gender inequalities, as women are disproportionately burdened with unpaid care work. In places like Zanzibar and Singida in Tanzania, this issue has prevented many women from participating in crucial economic activities, such as farming or small businesses.

To address this, the Joint Programme has partnered with local governments to create community-based childcare centres. In Zanzibar, a former pre-primary school was repurposed into a childcare centre, allowing mothers to pursue activities like seaweed farming. Similarly in Singida, former shop stalls were transformed into a childcare centre serving 50 children. These childcare centres have been vital in enabling women to engage more fully in economic activities, and ongoing efforts are focused on ensuring their sustainability through modest user fees and community involvement.

*"The childcare centre is a blessing for us. We can now work knowing our kids are safe. It's like a weight off our shoulders, giving us hope knowing our children are in a safe environment."*

– Hadah Ameir, mother of eight children in Zanzibar



Image source: [WFP Tanzania-Joint Programme](#)

## **REDUCING COOKING TIME AND SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH**

The Joint Programme is helping to reduce the time women in Zanzibar spend on cooking-- a key part of unpaid care work--by providing them with subsidized gas stoves and cooking cylinders. In partnership with local energy companies and the regulatory authority, the programme has supplied 335 women with gas stoves at a reduced price. The result is a significant reduction in cooking time, allowing women to reallocate time to income-generating activities, rather than spending hours cooking and gathering firewood.

By freeing up time, the initiative empowers women and promotes healthier, more sustainable cooking practices.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING A KEY PROGRAMME STRATEGY**

Enhancing the skills and knowledge of rural women, their organizations and institutions is crucial for sustainable empowerment and women's economic empowerment. At the individual level, women gain skills in climate-resilient agriculture, literacy, information and communication technology (ICT), and leadership. At the collective level, it strengthens women's groups and cooperatives, promoting gender-equitable governance and greater accountability. Additionally, the programme builds institutional capacity to ensure gender-responsive policies and services that support rural women's access to resources, decision-making and economic opportunities. This comprehensive approach drives long-term empowerment, resilience and gender equity in the economy aligned with the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action.

# MOLDOVA'S APPROACH TO ALTERNATIVE CHILDCARE SERVICES

## PILOTING SUSTAINABLE CARE SOLUTIONS FOR WORKING PARENTS

**Geographic region:** REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



**Entity:** International Labour Organization (ILO)

**Project Timeline:** 2023 - 2024

**Project Partners:** SIDA, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova (CNPM), National Confederation of Trade Unions (CNSM) Centre Partnership for Development (CPD) and the Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Moldova (AFAM)

**To learn more:** <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/innovative-childcare-workplace-enables-women-participate-labour-market>

### OVERVIEW

Mothers often stay out of the labour market for lack of available, reliable and/or affordable childcare services. To address this, ILO and the Republic of Moldova have been testing new models of childcare facilities that can help women to join or re-join the labour force.

As part of the initiative, Moldova has reformed its legal framework, introducing paid paternity and shared parental leave, as well as laws and regulations that support alternative childcare options, such as home-based nurseries, individual nannies and on-site kindergartens in workplaces.

These reforms aim to reduce the barriers that keep mothers from returning to work, particularly those aged 25-34, and help increase women's participation in the labour force. By providing these alternative childcare solutions, Moldova is creating more opportunities for women to balance work and family responsibilities, fostering greater gender equality and economic empowerment.

### ON-SITE CHILDCARE FACILITIES TO FACILITATE WOMEN'S RETURN TO THE LABOUR MARKET

On-site childcare facilities are proving to be a game-changer in facilitating the return of women to the workforce, especially in countries like Moldova, where family responsibilities often limit women's economic participation.

By offering accessible, affordable childcare within workplaces, parents, particularly mothers, can stay close to their children while maintaining their professional commitments. This not only reduces the stress of finding external childcare but also removes a significant barrier for women returning to work after parental leave. Such facilities have become an essential support structure, allowing women employees to balance both their career and family life without compromising on either.

These investments in childcare infrastructure are helping to shift societal norms and contribute to

broader global economic empowerment goals. As the Moldovan government incentivizes businesses to establish such facilities, more women are empowered to re-enter the labour market, helping to address gender imbalances in employment and contributing to national development.

This initiative is part of a larger effort to boost female workforce participation, with the government, supported by international organizations, investing in both public and private childcare services. By improving access to reliable childcare, Moldova is setting a regional example of how targeted, family-friendly policies can drive women's economic empowerment and foster a more inclusive and sustainable labour market.

*“We aimed at creating a conducive environment where parents can focus on their work without neglecting family life. Many women give up their careers to care for their children, and we aim to give them more opportunities and develop a parent-friendly job market. I encourage public institutions and private companies to offer similar services for their employees.”*

– Alexei Buzu, Minister of Labour and Social Protection

### **TACKLING THE CHALLENGES TO EXPANDING ALTERNATIVE CHILDCARE SERVICES**

The pilot project encountered several key challenges, which were addressed through targeted solutions:



Image source: [ILO](#)

- **Formalization Costs:** High costs for formalizing home-based nurseries and individual nannies were a barrier. Solution: The programme provided financial support, subsidies and training on cost-effective business practices for providers.
- **Lack of Popularity:** Parents were hesitant to use alternative childcare services. Solution: Awareness campaigns and community outreach were implemented to build trust and highlight successful case studies.
- **Legal Compliance Concerns:** Private companies struggled with complex legal requirements. Solution: The programme offered clear guidelines and workshops to help businesses navigate regulations and comply with legal standards.

### **A PATHWAY TO GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE**

The pilot project can serve as a potential blueprint for other governments aiming to enhance women's participation in the economy. By introducing flexible childcare options, ILO and the Republic of Moldova are addressing a critical barrier to women's workforce participation: the lack of affordable, accessible childcare.

Their approach combines private contributions, innovative financial support mechanisms, and legal guidance to facilitate the establishment of childcare services, creating employment opportunities in the caregiving sector and encouraging women's return to work. With more governments recognizing the importance of childcare services as a key enabler of women's economic empowerment, Moldova's model could serve as an example for broader implementation in other regions.

# WOMEN AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

## INCLUSION AS A MEANS TO COMBAT CORRUPTION

**Geographic region:** LATIN AMERICA (ARGENTINA, CHILE, COLOMBIA PARAGUAY)



**Entity:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

**Project Timeline:** 2022 - 2023

**Project Partners:** Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the United States Department of State

**To learn more:** [https://track.unodc.org/uploads/documents/corruption/Publications/2024/UNODC\\_2024\\_Women\\_and\\_Public\\_Procurement\\_-\\_Inclusion\\_as\\_a\\_Means\\_to\\_Combat\\_Corruption\\_ENG.pdf](https://track.unodc.org/uploads/documents/corruption/Publications/2024/UNODC_2024_Women_and_Public_Procurement_-_Inclusion_as_a_Means_to_Combat_Corruption_ENG.pdf)

[https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2024/UNODC\\_Mujer\\_y\\_compras\\_publicas\\_-\\_La\\_inclusion\\_como\\_medio\\_para\\_luchar\\_contra\\_la\\_corupcion\\_2023.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2024/UNODC_Mujer_y_compras_publicas_-_La_inclusion_como_medio_para_luchar_contra_la_corupcion_2023.pdf)

### OVERVIEW

As part of the global Anti-Corruption Response and Recovery Project (2020-2023), UNODC developed the publication “Women and Public Procurement: Inclusion as a Means to Combat Corruption in Latin America.”

This initiative, in partnership with relevant authorities from Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay, aims to explore the gender disparities in public procurement processes and highlight how greater inclusivity can serve as an effective tool for combating corruption. The report synthesizes key findings from the region, presents case studies and offers actionable recommendations designed to promote gender-sensitive public procurement policies and practices.

In 2022, public procurement represents a significant portion of government spending in Latin America and the Caribbean, accounting for 30% of central government expenditures and approximately 8.6% of GDP in the region. Despite this, only 1% of public contracts are awarded to female entrepreneurs, while women predominantly own the micro, small and

medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) that make up 99% of businesses in the region. These women face significant barriers to accessing public procurement opportunities, which limits their ability to compete and grow within the market.

By examining the intersection of gender, corruption and public procurement, this report aims to identify key factors that hinder gender equality and highlight how government purchasing power can be leveraged to create more inclusive, equitable and integrity-driven markets.

The findings emphasize the need for gender-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive public procurement policies, inclusive tendering processes for women, transparency focused on women and improved inter-institutional coordination with the anti-corruption policies. By addressing these gaps, the initiative contributes to women's economic empowerment, ensuring that women entrepreneurs can access vital opportunities for growth, secure better market access and ultimately improve their economic independence.



## **FACILITATING THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES**

To consolidate regional insights on the intersection of gender and corruption in public procurement, UNODC facilitated dialogues among public authorities to exchange promising practices. A preliminary diagnosis was developed through a virtual consultation and analysis of documents provided by authorities in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay. This diagnosis was further explored in a focus group session, allowing for an in-depth discussion of the challenges and opportunities faced by authorities in incorporating a gender perspective into public procurement transparency and anti-corruption strategies. The project culminated in a virtual regional event that enabled the exchange of experiences among participating countries and experts, as well as insights from other regions, including Africa. This collaborative process highlighted key regional good practices, marking an important step toward integrating gender considerations into anti-corruption policies and practices.

## **RAISING AWARENESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

The development of the publication has raised awareness among key public officials in the four project countries on the importance of integrating gender considerations into the public procurement

process. A total of 91 participants attended the regional workshop, and 17 individuals joined the focus group, where they deepened their understanding of the critical barriers women face in procurement bids. Participants also had the opportunity to exchange promising regional practices and explore the benefits of gender-responsive public procurement policies in the fight against corruption.

The publication includes 16 regional case studies aimed at inspiring other countries in the region and globally to adopt more inclusive public procurement practices.

By promoting gender-responsive procurement, the publication highlights the substantial contribution women's enterprises can make to the business environment, offering valuable benefits to businesses and strengthening economic inclusion. The report highlights that tackling corruption in procurement is crucial to ensuring gender equality and fairness, enabling equitable economic empowerment for all.



Image source: [UNODC](#)

# NATIONAL TIME TRANSFER ACCOUNTS MANUAL

MEASURING THE GENDERED AND GENERATIONAL ECONOMY

Geographic region: GLOBAL



Entity: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Project Timeline: 2023 -

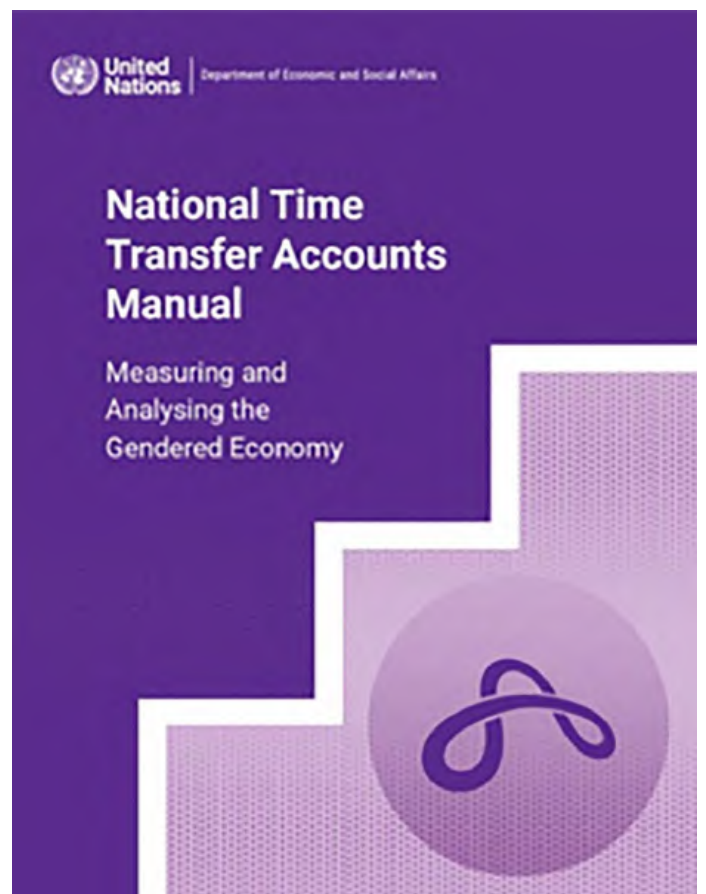
Project Partners: UNFPA, ECLAC, ESCAP

To learn more: [population.un.org](https://population.un.org)

## OVERVIEW

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) plays a key role in generating and analysing a wide range of economic, social and environmental data to assist Member States in addressing global challenges. As part of this work, the Population Division of UN DESA is developing a trilogy of manuals--National Transfer Accounts (2013), National Time Transfer Accounts (2024) and National Inclusion Accounts (forthcoming)--designed to offer a comprehensive framework for demographic-economic accounting. This framework integrates population and economic data, providing valuable insights into the economic contributions of different population groups by age and sex, including the transfer of resources between them.

The methodology of National Time Transfer Accounts (NTTAs) is a critical innovation within this system, as it treats time as a valuable resource, recognizing the economic significance of non-monetized work, often performed by women. By capturing the gendered and generational dimensions of time use, the NTTA methodology provides a robust evidence base that can assist governments in promoting gender equality,





planning for population ageing and evaluating policies aimed at ensuring economic security for older persons. Furthermore, it can support the growth of the "silver economy", with high and rising proportions of older workers and consumers, and it can help foster inclusive and sustainable economic development by highlighting the importance of investing in human capital across all age groups.

### **IMPORTANCE OF DATA DISAGGREGATION**

Ensuring that no one is left behind is a central and transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Fulfilling this promise requires data disaggregation along multiple dimensions. By ensuring that different social groups are accurately represented within national statistical systems, disaggregated data enables policymakers to better understand and address the unique needs and challenges faced by vulnerable segments of society. In this context, the NTTA methodology plays a crucial role by generating informative data disaggregated by age and gender, enhancing the visibility of women's work and providing a more nuanced understanding of the care economy and its gendered aspects. By treating time as a valuable resource, the NTTA approach helps to highlight the often-overlooked contributions of unpaid care work, thus supporting progress towards achieving SDG 5 on gender equality and enabling more inclusive, evidence-based policymaking.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF INCOMPLETE ACCOUNTING OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

Domestic care is essential to the functioning of societies, yet standard economic measures typically only account for care when it is purchased in the marketplace. In reality, the majority of care work, including direct care for children, older persons and others, as well as indirect care such as housework and household management, is largely provided by women and is unpaid.

Unpaid labour contributes significantly to overall social welfare and economic output, with the proportion of total work hours spent on such tasks ranging from about 30% in Thailand to 60% in Spain.<sup>20</sup> However, because these activities are not captured by traditional economic measures, women's contributions are

undervalued, often resulting in their exclusion from benefits such as pensions and healthcare. Integrating unpaid domestic and care work into social science and policy analysis can greatly enhance our understanding of labour dynamics, economic growth, social welfare, gender equity and human capital. By acknowledging the full scope of women's contributions, this approach offers a unique opportunity to improve policymaking, leading to more inclusive, equitable and effective solutions that better address the needs of all members of society.

### **ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH BETTER ECONOMIC MEASUREMENT**

The NTTA manual will offer Member States a means of obtaining more complete estimates of the economic contributions of women in the gendered economy. It is the second in a series of manuals developed by UN DESA aimed at providing a more comprehensive understanding of national economies that goes beyond traditional GDP measures.

The previous manual on National Transfer Accounts presents a methodology for describing age patterns of production and consumption, and has been applied to over 70 countries. In a similar manner, UN DESA anticipates that the methodology outlined in the NTTA manual will be widely adopted by countries to better capture the economic value of unpaid domestic and care work.

### **LESSONS LEARNED AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEYOND GDP METRICS**

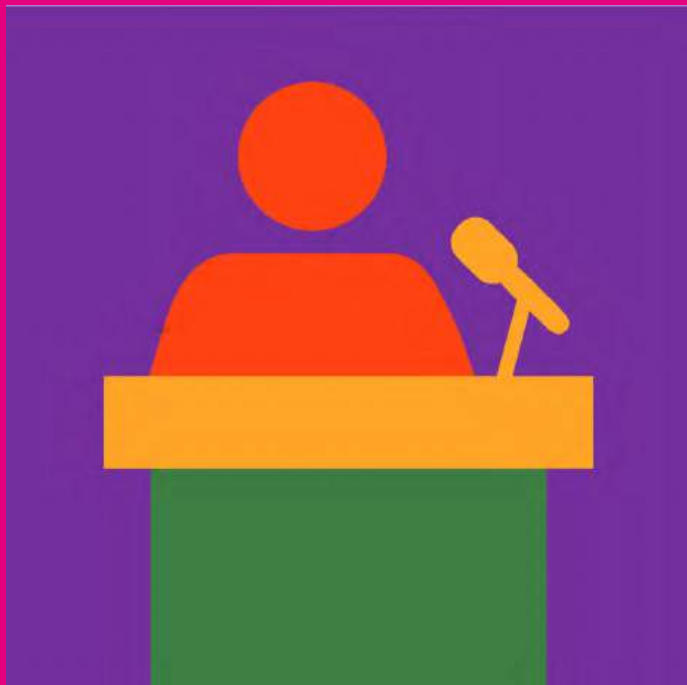
Traditional GDP per capita is an inadequate measure of well-being as it fails to reflect variation in the lived experiences of women and men and across the age range. By measuring economic activity through the lens of both age and gender, the NTTA methodology shines a light on the economic contributions of women, including unpaid domestic and care work. By providing a standardized methodology to measure the gendered economy, the NTTA manual will assist countries in their efforts to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls.

<sup>20</sup> Total work hours refer to paid and unpaid work hours spent by men and women.



# 7

## WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION- MAKING



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

[UN Women](#) data reveals that as of October 2024, 29 countries have 30 women serving as Heads of State and/or Government. At the current pace, gender parity in the highest positions of power will not be achieved for another 130 years. While there has been progress, it's clear that women are still underrepresented in political leadership roles.

Gender quotas have significantly advanced progress. In countries with legislated candidate quotas, women's representation in parliaments and local governments is five and seven percentage points higher, respectively, than in countries without such laws.

Key barriers that persist in achieving gender equality in political leadership include the perpetuation of traditional gender roles and stereotyping of women as less capable leaders, hindering their ability to win elections and hold positions of leadership. Discrimination in accessing political finance and fundraising can add to the difficulties for women to compete against male candidates.

The evidence shows that women's leadership enhances political decision-making. In India, areas with women-led local councils had 62% more drinking water projects than those with men-led councils, while in Norway, women in municipal councils were linked to increased childcare coverage. Women also demonstrate leadership by working across party lines on issues like gender-based violence, parental leave, and gender-equality laws.

# DIMITRA CLUBS

## COMMUNITY ACTION FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

**Project Timeline:** 2007 - 2025

**Project Partners:** Commenced in partnership with the Kingdom of Belgium, with subsequent funding by FAO internal funding mechanisms such as the Flexible Voluntary Contribution with a variety of FAO and other UN projects/programmes, and bilateral resource partners Implemented in collaboration with local partners

**To learn more:** <https://www.fao.org/in-action/dimitra-clubs/en/>

### OVERVIEW

A Dimitra Club is a community-led group of men and women who come together to collaboratively address common challenges in their community using local resources. Members begin by identifying a list of issues and decisions they want to tackle, with agriculture often being a primary focus, given its importance to rural livelihoods. Other significant topics include nutrition, climate change, women's rights and everyday concerns such as health, education, infrastructure and peace.

Dimitra Clubs provide safe, action-oriented spaces for dialogue among women and men ages to confront local challenges through collective efforts. Utilizing their own resources and knowledge, these clubs empower women community members to participate and influence decisions and foster gender equality, ultimately leading to sustainable improvements in their lives.

With over 10,000 clubs and around 300,000 members in 18 countries, they indirectly benefit at least 11 million people by enhancing community engagement, promoting leadership among women and youth, and improving women's participation in local governance.

*"I am truly grateful to the Dimitra Clubs. Before I did not use to attend the village meetings. Women were not informed on the issues and activities discussed and carried out by the community. We, the women, did not have the right to speak. Now, thanks to the clubs, we dare to speak in public and give our opinion."*

– Fatou Ngom, woman member of a Dimitra Club, village of Kouthia Farindella in Tambacounda, Senegal

### AGENTS OF CHANGE

Women and girls in rural areas play a vital role in agriculture, the rural economy and in ensuring household food security. However, they have less access to and control over resources, services, information, education, training and technology compared to men. Persistent gender inequalities and discrimination restrict their socioeconomic opportunities. Additionally, rural women face a heavier workload and have limited involvement, decision-making authority, representation and leadership roles in rural organizations and little influence at the community level.

The clubs provide women and girls with a vital platform to become agents of change and have a say in their personal lives and communities. By fostering women's leadership and active participation in decision-making processes, the Dimitra Clubs promote voluntary and inclusive membership, enabling members to collectively address issues that matter to them. Importantly, the clubs also engage men as key actors of change and allies in advancing gender equality, while fostering collaboration and mutual understanding within communities.

Supported initially by local facilitators and tied to various initiatives, Dimitra Clubs encourage continuous learning and networking among members. This structured approach not only enhances women's agency but also aids in transforming harmful social norms, ultimately contributing to broader goals like food security, nutrition and climate resilience. The Dimitra Clubs serve as an effective model for advancing gender equality in both development and humanitarian contexts.

### **RECOGNIZING MEMBERS IN DECISION-MAKING AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

The Dimitra Club model emphasizes long-term transformation rather than relying on short-term activities like trainings. It encourages a "learning-by-doing" approach that empowers members to make informed decisions and take control of their lives. By equipping community members with new competencies and practical tools, the Dimitra Clubs enhance their ability to identify common challenges and develop solutions using their own resources and talents. This community-driven validation fosters greater recognition of Dimitra Clubs' women members in decision-making and local governance, creating an environment where dignity, justice and equal opportunities are prioritized for all.

FAO supports the Dimitra Clubs process by offering continuous gender-responsive training and coaching to local facilitators of partner organizations over a 12- to 18-month period. This hands-on learning approach enables women members of the clubs to enhance their organizational skills, self-confidence and problem-solving abilities in a safe space, paving the way for the emergence of new women leaders and decision-makers. The successful implementation of the model is further reinforced by training and guidance provided

by local facilitators to the Dimitra Clubs' focal points-- women, men and youth--to strengthen club operations. Local authorities, including customary leaders, are actively involved, encouraging club members to participate in local governance as citizens. This engagement also provides women with a platform to ensure their voices are heard and valued. Additionally, collaboration with community radio stations inspires wider participation in development efforts.

### **ENSURING THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF ALL**

Simone, a Dimitra Club member from Bossangoa, 300 km from Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic reported that despite never attending school, she can serve as the moderator, facilitating discussions on issues raised by members and promoting their full participation. "Thanks to the Dimitra Club, I became aware of my ability to speak up in public and even to local authorities, to express myself without any problem", she recalled. Her experience is one of thousands of women who, through the Dimitra Clubs, have become key agents of change in the development of their communities.

# GENERATION EQUALITY

## GLOBAL ADOLESCENT GIRL LEADERSHIP TOWN HALLS

Geographic region: GLOBAL



Entity: UN Women

Project Timeline: 2023 - 2025

Project Partners: Adolescent girls, civil society organizations, and UN agencies including UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health

To learn more: <https://forum.generationequality.org/news/global-adolescent-girl-leadership-town-hall>

### OVERVIEW

The Global Adolescent Girl Leadership Town Hall series is an initiative led by adolescent girl leaders worldwide, supported by UN Women in collaboration with civil society partners and other UN agencies. Its core mission is to promote adolescent girl leadership and ensure girl-led accountability, providing a platform for girls and gender-diverse adolescents aged 19 and under to share their ideas and perspectives on intergovernmental matters directly impacting them. The Town Hall addresses the challenges these young leaders face in multilateral forums and presents recommendations on increasing financial, political and programmatic commitments.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE TOWN HALLS

The Global Adolescent Girl Leadership Town Hall series provides a platform for meaningful engagement with adolescent leaders at both regional and global levels, fostering ongoing dialogue through a feedback loop with key decision-makers, such as government officials, parliamentarians and civil society leaders, to directly engage with girls and gender-diverse adolescents. The

Town Halls offer a safe space for adolescents to present concrete recommendations and share their lived experiences, priorities and issues that can influence intergovernmental policy decisions.

### PROCESS FOR CONVENING THE TOWN HALLS

UN Women convenes girls and gender-diverse adolescents prior to each Town Hall to co-create the structure of the Town Hall, identify the decision-makers they wish to engage with and the issues they want to discuss, ensuring relevant participation. As a result of this process:

- Five Town Halls were convened
- Over 500 girls and gender-diverse adolescents were reached
- Five recommendations reports were produced.

### GLOBAL ADOLESCENT GIRL LEADERSHIP TOWN HALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town Hall series spanned across several intergovernmental sessions, including CSW67, the Global Forum for Adolescents, CSW68, the Summit of

the Future and the ongoing Beijing +30 process. The different Town Hall recommendations emphasized the importance of promoting gender equality, rights, empowerment and inclusion specifically for girls and gender-diverse adolescents.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO DECISION-MAKERS TO AFFIRM GIRL LEADERSHIP, VOICE AND AGENCY**

Based on the five Town Halls, the following recommendations were made to decision-makers:

- Invest in inclusive digital literacy and teacher training to ensure the security of women and girls online and to combat discrimination, violence, and marginalization, alongside allocating funds to girl-led councils and boards.
- Create safe developmental spaces in schools, community centres and homes that celebrate adolescent agency, resilience and leadership while addressing gender-based discrimination and ensuring inclusivity for adolescents with disabilities.
- Prioritize bridging the digital divide by ensuring universal access to digital literacy and technology for girls, as a critical enabler for their education, empowerment and inclusion in the digital economy.
- Support meaningful engagement of adolescent girls in intergovernmental processes like the Summit of the Future and Beijing +30 by addressing barriers to their participation, including targeted outreach to underserved areas and capacity-building initiatives.
- Commit to fully implementing international human rights instruments such as CEDAW and adopt comprehensive legislation to eliminate violence against girls, ensuring survivor-centred remedies and inclusive policymaking shaped by adolescent participation.

### **GLOBAL ADOLESCENT GIRL LEADERSHIP TOWN HALLS IMPACT**

The Global Adolescent Girl Leadership Town Halls have had a significant impact by providing a vital platform for girl and gender-diverse adolescent leaders to present concrete recommendations on key global issues. These events, held in connection with major international conferences such as CSW, Women Deliver, and the SDG Summit, have enabled adolescent voices to directly influence policy discussions, highlight their priorities, and call for increased commitment to gender equality. Through these Town Halls, adolescent leaders have strengthened capacity to engage with policymakers, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and philanthropic foundations, fostering stronger accountability and ensuring that adolescent girls' needs and rights are addressed at the highest levels.

The insights gained from the Town Halls led to several key recommendations, including the establishment of community education initiatives, the creation of inclusive mentorship programmes and the formation of youth councils. These strategies aim to address cultural norms, improve safety and protection and foster global connections while ensuring that local needs are met.



Image source: [UN Women](#)



# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION PROJECT

## ENGAGING DISPLACED WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CAMP GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**Project Timeline:** 2016 -

**Project Partners:** Women's Refugee Commission, Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, United States Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration

**To learn more:** <https://www.womenindisplacement.org/>

### OVERVIEW

Since its launch, the Women's Participation Project (WPP) has been implemented in 14 countries, empowering over 15,000 displaced women and girls to engage in site governance and decision-making. The project promotes their inclusion through Camp Coordination and Management Mechanisms, ensuring that the diverse perspectives of women and girls are integrated into service design and policy implementation. It addresses specific risks and needs they may face; encourages community engagement with an emphasis on intersectionality; and supports the safety and participation of women and girls, including those with disabilities, contributing to gender-based violence (GBV) risk mitigation.

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT LIFECYCLE

The WPP focusses on gender mainstreaming by ensuring the inclusion of women and girls at every stage of implementation, addressing their needs and risks while enhancing their capabilities. It starts with an Inception Phase, which involves community consultations and qualitative data collection to assess

the current participation levels of women and girls in displacement sites, particularly for those at higher risk, such as women with disabilities, young women and adolescents girls.

The insights gained inform the Design Phase, where women and girls actively participate in developing and prioritizing activities to boost their involvement in site life.

In the Implementation Phase, the various activities prioritized by women and girls to support participation are implemented, with regular consultations to ensure their voices are heard. The project also engages men as allies, encouraging them to challenge harmful cultural norms and promote the safety and inclusion of women and girls. Gender mainstreaming is integral to all activities, including leadership training and enhancing access to information and services.

Finally, in the Evidence and Learning Phase, project teams evaluate changes in participation, empowerment and safety, assessing the impact of interventions on women's roles in both private and public domains, from household decision-making to site governance.

## **INCLUSION AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

The Women's Participation Project is centred on fostering the inclusion and active participation of women and girls in site governance and decision-making. Rooted in initial community consultations that identify barriers to participation, the project tailors its activities to local contexts, ensuring a responsive and community-driven approach. Across implementing countries, the WPP has successfully facilitated women's involvement in site management through various methods, including mobilizing support for women's committees and establishing formal quotas for decision-making forums.

Involving men as allies and community leaders from the start is crucial, as their participation--particularly through targeted programmes for fathers and husbands--helped challenge restrictive norms and promote women's involvement in both public and private life. Regular monitoring and feedback from women participants are vital for refining activities and ensuring responsive, locally driven solutions. The inclusion of women with disabilities from the project's inception has led to positive outcomes, with participants sharing empowering experiences, contributing to challenging harmful stereotypes about persons with disabilities which limit their engagement.

Workshops and training sessions build women's confidence and leadership skills, often accompanied by literacy classes to enhance their empowerment and sense of self-esteem. Safe spaces for women to gather and access services have further promoted their participation in camp life. Additionally, the project emphasizes economic empowerment through income-generating activities such as tailoring and food



Image source: [IOM](#)

processing, which not only provide financial support but also strengthen community bonds, ultimately enhancing women's ability to participate meaningfully in governance and decision-making processes.

## **RESPONDING TO THE COMPLEXITIES OF MIGRATION AND CAMP GOVERNANCE**

The project serves as a vital reminder of the necessity to address the needs of women and girls in various displacement settings and adapting to the complexities of crises and migration. Its community-centred approach allows for contextualization in diverse environments, from informal sites in Yemen to Protection of Civilian sites in South Sudan. Ongoing technical support from the Global Women's Participation Project Support Team enhances knowledge sharing, but the project's success relies on Camp Coordination and Camp Management operational teams' efforts, regularly tailoring activities to meet the evolving needs of each context.

Recommendations from the IOM's 2023 Project Review emphasize the importance of providing guidance for implementation and fostering knowledge exchange to ensure the project effectively responds to the challenges faced in these dynamic situations.

# NETWORK OF WOMEN

## INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND DECISION-MAKING IN ITU'S RADIOCOMMUNICATION, STANDARDIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT SECTORS

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

**Project Timeline:** 2016 - ongoing

**Project Partners:** Governments of Australia, China, Saudi Arabia

**To learn more:** <https://www.itu.int/en/action/gender-equality/Pages/default.aspx>

### OVERVIEW

ITU's Network of Women (NoW) activities focus on increasing the participation of women in ITU events and decision-making processes across its three sectors: Radiocommunication, Development, and Standardization. Through targeted efforts such as the [NoW for WRC](#), [NoW in ITU-D](#) and the [NoW in ITU-T](#), the organization strives to bridge the gender digital divide and promote more inclusive digital policies. A notable milestone in this initiative was the [NoW Digital Ministers event](#) held in Geneva in May 2024 at WSIS+20, which featured a high-level panel discussion led by ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin, addressing the need for greater female participation in the digital domain and the development of inclusive digital strategies.

NoW provides a platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among women delegates across all ITU sectors. By creating a supportive and collaborative environment, NoW activities aim to empower women within the organization and foster greater gender equity in the development of global digital policies

### CREATING A PATHWAY FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DIGITAL DECISION-MAKING AND LEADERSHIP

NoW activities, spanning across Radiocommunication, ICT Standardization and Development, play a critical role in promoting the meaningful participation of women in high-level conferences, technical meetings and decision-making processes. As the digital landscape continues to shape global economies and societies, the need for greater female representation in digital policymaking becomes increasingly urgent for achieving gender equality. Digital policymaking can directly impact access to communication technologies, and without gender-diverse input, these decisions may inadvertently overlook the needs of underserved communities, particularly women in developing regions.

Inclusive policymaking ensures that the design and deployment of telecommunication infrastructure meets the needs of all users, helping bridge the telecommunication gender divide. Similarly, in standardization, a lack of women's participation in setting global technical standards can perpetuate biases in technology design, affecting everything from the usability of devices to privacy policies. Through NoW activities, ITU supports sector-specific gender resolutions and fosters networking, capacity-building and knowledge sharing among women delegates.

These efforts not only address barriers to entry but also ensure that women's voices are heard and central in shaping the future of the digital world, aligning with ITU's broader commitment to empowering women in the digital realm and advancing gender equality across its sectors.

## **FOCUS ON CAPACITY BUILDING**

The NoW activities focus on capacity building with the aim to equip women with the skills and knowledge necessary to take on leadership roles at ITU meetings. This includes sector-specific technical training, an understanding of ITU's structure, procedures and processes, as well as practical skills such as chairing meetings, enhancing negotiation abilities, boosting confidence and building competence in consensus-building scenarios.

Additionally, mentorship programmes offer women delegates a platform for professional growth and leadership development, aimed at increasing their active and meaningful participation in decision-making processes within the digital sector.

## **KEY RESULTS**

The NoW activities facilitated an increase in women's participation in ITU events, meetings and leadership roles, showcasing a unified approach to gender inclusivity within the organization. For instance, the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-24) in 2024 reached 26% of women representation, the highest for a WTSA held outside Geneva, surpassing the 22% at WTSA-16 in Tunisia. Notably, the number of women in leadership positions at WTSA in 2024 doubled compared to the previous Assembly. Also, in 2023, women represented 22% of World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23) delegates, up from 18% at WRC-19 in 2019. Women also held more leadership positions at WRC-23 than at previous conferences. In 2022, at the World Telecommunication Development Conference, women's representation reached 34%, showing a progressive increase from the 28% recorded at the previous event in 2017.

The NoW Digital Ministers event, held in Geneva during the World Summit on the Information Society +20 (WSIS+20) in May 2024, highlighted the objectives of the initiative, spotlighting women leaders' engagement, awareness and efforts in closing the

gender digital divide, increasing the participation of women in decision-making processes and advocating for more inclusive digital policies.

## **SHAPING WOMEN'S ROLE IN DECISION-MAKING**

Advancing women's participation in leadership and decision-making is essential for achieving gender equality, particularly in male-dominated sectors like the digital and telecommunications spheres. The NoW activities showcase how this is fostered through targeted capacity building initiatives, such as mentorship programmes, equipping women with skills and confidence to take on key roles.

Strengthening advocacy within the organization, both internally and externally, is crucial for advancing gender equality, while networks play a vital role in promoting women's participation and career advancement. The NoW activities at ITU have shown the positive impact of integrating gender mainstreaming into technical operations, policies and programmes. The NoW activities approach, supported by ITU sector-specific resolutions, may serve as a model for other entities and organizations.

# UN GENDER QUOTA PORTAL

EXPANDING GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE AND ADVOCACY ON GENDER QUOTAS

Geographic region: GLOBAL



Entity: UN Women

Project Timeline: 2020 - 2024

Project Partners: United Nations Executive Office of the Secretary-General, DPPA, OHCHR, UNDP and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)

To learn more: <https://genderquota.org/>

## OVERVIEW

The UN Gender Quota Portal is the first UN global hub dedicated to providing comparative country knowledge on legislated gender quotas. It aims to support the United Nations' advocacy efforts and to strengthen the implementation of gender quota legislation, aligning with the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights and the Task Team on Temporary Special Measures. The Portal serves as a tool to advance gender equality by offering insights into how gender quotas are designed and implemented worldwide.

## GENDER QUOTA DATA AND TYPE

The Portal includes detailed information on gender quotas in lower and single houses of parliaments, covering aspects such as the type of quotas, electoral systems, quota targets, ranking rules, sanctions and methods of filling seats. It also offers analysis of constitutional and legislative provisions on gender quotas.

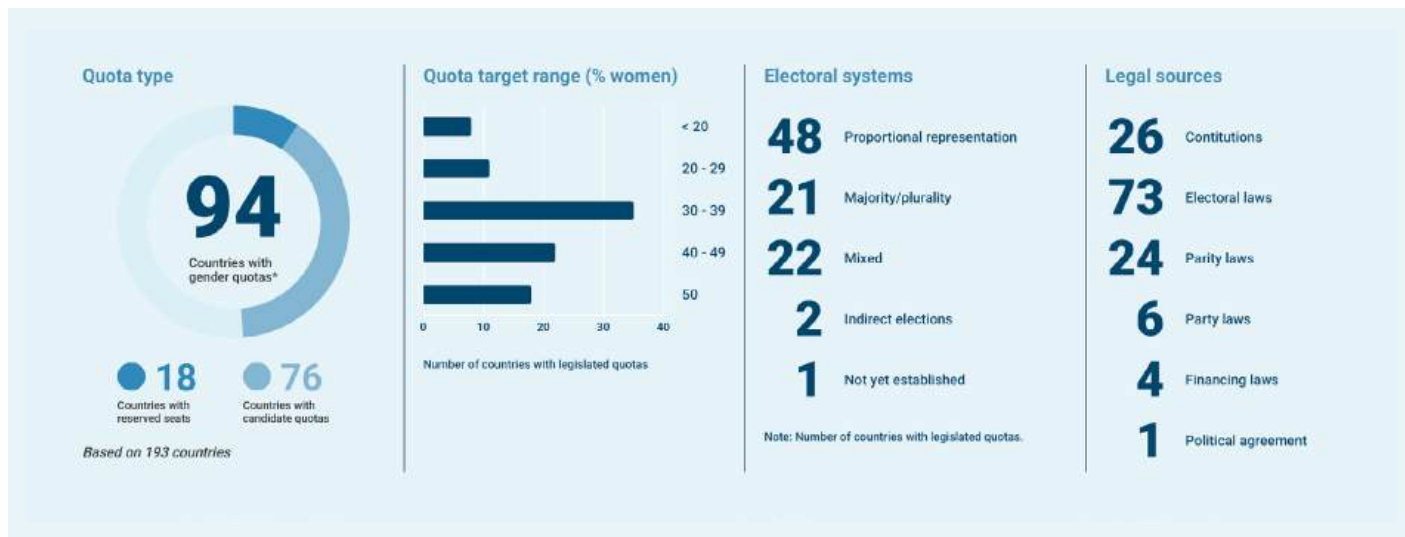
UN Women's ongoing monitoring of legal frameworks ensures that the Portal presents up-to-date information, although occasional delays in reporting

legal changes may occur. Only countries with legislated gender quotas, effective from January 2022, are included in the Portal's data.

## PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE ONLINE KNOWLEDGE HUB

What originally started as an internal UN tool, the UN Gender Quota Portal has since been adapted into a publicly accessible online knowledge hub. This shift was intended to provide governments, stakeholders and practitioners with valuable data to inform advocacy efforts, programming and legal reforms aimed at increasing the representation of women in government.

By offering detailed insights into gender quota legislation across various countries, the Portal supports the global push for gender parity in decision-making in line with normative frameworks, including the newly adopted CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40 on parity in decision-making. The availability of this comparable data enables countries to better assess their levels of women's representation in comparative perspective and provides the opportunity to capitalize on the benefits that gender-inclusive policies can bring to national legislatures.



Data current as of 19 December 2024. Image source: [UN Gender Quota Portal](#)

## DRIVING PROGRESS FOR WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING IN SIERRA LEONE

The UN Gender Quota Portal plays a pivotal role in driving progress for women in power and decision-making by providing accessible, comparative data on gender quotas worldwide. By showcasing the numbers and tracking progress, it inspires governments and stakeholders to adopt quotas and advocate for gender equality in leadership roles.

For example, in Sierra Leone, the information and technical assistance offered through the technical assistance and data published in the portal helped inform the revision of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, which established a 30% gender quota across all levels. This led to significant gains in women's representation in the 2023 elections, including a 30.4% increase in women members of Parliament and a 34% increase in local councils.

The Portal not only makes the numbers visible but also empowers institutions and individuals to push for change. It enhances capacity building efforts, equipping stakeholders with the knowledge needed to implement policy and legal reforms that promote women's equal representation in decision-making. The

Sierra Leone example is just one of many as to how data can drive progress and change. By offering both data and technical support, the Gender Quota Portal fosters a deeper understanding of the impact of gender quotas and encourages the adoption of policies that can increase opportunities for women politicians globally.

# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

## ENSURING INCLUSIVE, AND VIOLENCE-FREE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN

Geographic region: MEXICO



Entity: UN Women

Project Timeline: 2020 - 2024

Project Partners: Government of Mexico, National Institute for Women, National Electoral Institute, Electoral Institute of the State of Oaxaca, UNDP, IDEA International, National Institute for Women, DPPA

To learn more: <https://mexico.unwomen.org/es/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2020/09/lanzan-para-fortalecer-la-participacion-politica>

<https://centralectoral.ine.mx/2021/02/12/ine-capacita-a-mas-de-16-mil-mujeres-politicas-que-aspiran-a-contender-en-las-proximas-elecciones/>

### OVERVIEW

Over the past two decades, Mexico has made significant progress towards gender parity in politics. The country has achieved gender balance in both federal and local legislatures, the Presidential Cabinet, and a notable increase in the number of women holding positions such as governors, mayors and judges. These advancements have been driven by a combination of administrative, legislative, and judicial measures.

The UN Women Country Office in Mexico has played a key role in supporting these efforts through its 2020-2025 Strategic Note and various initiatives. The office has provided technical assistance to the Mexican government, focusing on promoting women's political leadership and designing policies aimed at ensuring equal participation in public life while addressing violence against women in politics (VAWP).

### TARGETED APPROACH TO IDENTIFY ADVANCEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

To address challenges and advancements in women's political participation, the UN Women Country Office conducted surveys and studies through initiatives like ATENEA, in collaboration with UNDP and national authorities. These efforts identified barriers and progress for women decision-makers, focusing on violence against women in politics (VAWP) at the local level, especially in Indigenous communities. Findings were shared with decision-makers from electoral bodies and the National Institute for Women to inform policies and measures aimed at increasing women's participation and addressing violence. All interventions were aligned with national gender equality policies to integrate gender concerns at every policy-making level.

From 2020 to 2023, UN Women focused on building the capacity of women leaders, especially indigenous and Afro-descendant women, including decision-makers, political party members and grassroots organizers. In Oaxaca, where Indigenous and Afro-



Mexican populations are significant, nearly 300 women leaders received specialized training, and materials were translated into local languages, including Zapotec and Mixtec. Additionally, a national meeting for Afro-Mexican women mayors, supported by UN Women and other agencies, helped create a unified agenda to promote the political rights of Afro-Mexican women.

### **OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INDIGENOUS AND AFRO-MEXICAN WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Despite the federal government's strong political, technical, and financial capacities, state governments vary in their ability to support women's political participation in violence-free environments, and territorial differences affect coordination with women's organizations. Additionally, public funding for promoting women's political leadership remains limited, and while international cooperation could support marginalized groups, Mexico's status as a

middle-high income country with a large economy restricts available development funding, leaving grassroots organizations without sufficient resources.

### **KEY RESULTS**

- Over 16,000 women candidates and leaders enhanced their knowledge and capacities to engage in electoral processes and develop gender-sensitive political agendas.
- Nearly 1,500 women in public office participated in three meetings co-convened by UN Women and the National Institute for Women to address challenges in achieving full equal participation and to build common agendas for advancing women's political representation.
- National and local institutions gained access to tools, knowledge and training to improve their capacity to prevent and respond to VAWP, monitor VAWP cases, and promote women's political leadership.
- Eight women's organizations received catalytic funding to support the political leadership of Indigenous, Afro-Mexican, and disabled women, and to address online violence against women in politics.
- UN Women, in coordination with national authorities, helped raise awareness and fostered the political representation of Afro-Mexican women, contributing to the development of an agenda to increase their political participation.



*UN Women initiative exploring the possible relationships between gender parity and violence against women in the political sphere in Mexico. Image source: [UN Women](#)*



# 8

## INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

UN Women reports that many countries have established dedicated government bodies to promote gender equality and women's rights. These institutions develop policies, allocate resources and monitor progress.

While there is still a significant gap, many countries have quotas and affirmative action to increase women's representation in government, parliaments and corporate boards.

An increasing number of countries have adopted gender-responsive budgeting, with over 80 countries reported to have implemented some form of gender equality based financial planning and allocation processes (OECD).

While many countries have enacted laws to protect women's rights, enforcement continues to remain a challenge. Specific data on enforcement rates can vary be difficult to obtain and can vary by country and issue.

# GENDER EQUALITY SEAL FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

ACCELERATING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY REFORMS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

**Project Timeline:** 2018

**Project Partners:** Multiple, including Republic of Korea and Luxemburg, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and European Union

**To learn more:** <https://www.gendersealpublicinstitutions.org/>

## OVERVIEW

The Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions is a global initiative developed by UNDP to support public sector reforms aimed at advancing gender equality. It helps institutions integrate gender considerations into all aspects of their operations, from policies to services, fostering a culture of equality and strengthening leadership. It also provides a roadmap for overcoming institutional barriers, building trust with civil society and improving organizational culture to ensure that public institutions effectively promote gender equality both through their policies and services and throughout their organizations.

As of December 2024, the Seal has reached all regions, 30 countries and 101 institutions across a wide diversity of sectors, impacting over 260,000 public servants. Institutions voluntarily participate by signing an agreement with UNDP and establishing a Gender Equality Committee that leads the process. UNDP supports the institutions through tailored technical advisory tools and peer-to-peer exchange throughout. Institutions can earn the Gold, Silver or Bronze Seal depending on their level of compliance with the Seal

Standard and the demonstration of transformative results in gender equality.

## KEY AREAS OF THE SEAL

- 1. Planning and Management for Gender Equality:** Institutions assess and adjust their planning, implementation and monitoring to address gender inequalities more effectively. This includes integrating gender goals into strategic planning; establishing gender mainstreaming processes; institutionalizing sex-disaggregated data systems; and ensuring budget allocations for gender equality. It also involves integrating gender considerations into public procurement practices.
- 2. Gender Architecture and Capacities:** Institutions build gender expertise and capacity within their workforce, enhancing leadership and communication strategies to challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender mainstreaming in all areas of work.
- 3. Enabling Work Environment:** Institutions improve workplace policies to foster inclusivity and fairness,

focusing on work-life balance, zero tolerance for sexual harassment and discrimination, gender-responsive recruitment, closing gender pay gaps and promoting gender parity in leadership roles.

#### **4. Participation, Partnerships and Accountability:**

Institutions are encouraged to expand partnerships with other public institutions, civil society and the private sector, thereby enhancing citizen participation and ensuring accountability to women's and feminist movements.

**5. Results and Impact of Public Policies:** Institutions must demonstrate the impact of their policies and services in addressing gender inequalities and advancing women's empowerment, showing measurable progress linked to their institutional mandate.

### **BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES ON GENDER EQUALITY**

Institutions awarded with the Gender Equality Seal must demonstrate deliberate efforts to build internal capacities for gender equality, including in-house gender expertise and mainstreaming gender skills



Image source: [Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions](#)

across departments. Senior management must lead these efforts, championing gender equality within the institution and through stakeholder engagement. Currently, 79% of Seal-awarded institutions have institutionalized gender departments with clear work plans, while 93% incorporate mandatory gender equality training into their institutional training plans.

Real-life examples of progress include Mongolia's General Tax Authority, leading a tax reform policy to support women's access to the labour market and implementing mandatory gender training for all staff. In Bosnia, the Judiciary and Prosecutorial Council incorporated gender equality and anti-harassment training into the Judiciary School's curriculum. In Panama, the National Secretary of Science and Technology led the approval of the National Policy and action plan for Equality in Science, Technology and Innovation to increase women's participation in scientific knowledge and technological development. Nigeria's Federal Inland Revenue Service has launched a mandatory gender training plan for its tax officers, while Colombia's Ministry of Transport integrated gender equality into its environmental strategies for urban mobility. Additionally, the Central Electoral Board of the Dominican Republic institutionalized a gender training programme for public officers and political actors.

### **CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER EQUALITY RESULTS AROUND THE GLOBE**

The Gender Equality Seal has achieved significant results globally, with all participating institutions establishing zero-tolerance policies on sexual harassment and 72% reaching gender parity in decision-making. Additionally, 79% have institutionalized gender mainstreaming mechanisms; 79% have adopted data systems that provide for sex disaggregation; and 64% report notable gender equality outcomes in key programmes.

# DIGITAL SOCIAL SAFETY NETS: A KEY TO RESILIENCE AND GENDER EQUALITY

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR AN INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

Geographic region: HAITI



**Entity:** World Food Programme (WFP)

**Project Timeline:** 2021 - 2024

**Project Partners:** Haitian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, World Bank, Digicel, Edge Consulting, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other local partners

**To learn more:** <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000153133/download/?ga=2.176590125.902615596.1709547469-1260603909.1636438555>

## OVERVIEW

Haiti faces one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world, with nearly 5 million people--almost half the population--lacking sufficient food, and 1.8 million facing emergency levels of hunger. The country's vulnerability to natural hazards, insecurity, violence and deepening economic crises compounds this emergency.

Ranked third on the 2021 Climate Risk Index for extreme weather events, Haiti's need for adaptive solutions is urgent. The World Food Programme (WFP) has been working closely with the Haitian government and partners like the World Bank to strengthen social protection policies, focusing on gender-responsive Government-to-Person (G2P) systems to efficiently deliver aid. Through the Klere Chimen programme, over 22,400 vulnerable households in the Grand'Anse region receive monthly unconditional cash transfers, predominantly via e-wallets, enabling families to meet essential needs and build resilience in times of crisis.

Digital payment systems offer a critical opportunity to enhance financial resilience and empower women economically in times of crisis. As of March 2023, 66% of the Klere Chimen programme participants were women, and about 60% of the participants were receiving their cash transfers digitally (instead of via cash-in-envelopes), eliminating the need to wait in long lines or travel through unsafe areas to access assistance. This programme also helps women acquire national IDs and open accounts in their own names, which grants them access to vital services like healthcare, voting and formal financial services such as remittances, savings and credit. These efforts not only meet immediate needs but also pave the way for long-term economic independence and gender equality.

## ENHANCING WOMEN'S FINANCIAL INCLUSION

In designing cash transfers, it was essential to involve women and their communities in the process to ensure transformative outcomes for women and



strengthen family resilience. Initial consultations with both women and men highlighted key barriers such as mistrust of formal banks, low self-confidence and challenges with male-dominated e-money agents. These insights led to the development of targeted solutions, including communication campaigns, improved network coverage and the bundling of financial services with cash transfers to better meet the needs of women and marginalized groups.

## **PRIORITIZING WOMEN**

Under the Klere Chimen programme, a targeted effort was made to prioritize women as the main recipients of cash transfers, resulting in 66% of recipients being women. Initially, sensitization campaigns encouraged families to register women as recipients, but this approach alone proved insufficient. Through analysis of social registry data, women in eligible households were automatically registered as recipients, significantly increasing their representation--from an initial 37% in the first communes to 95% in the last communes where the programme was implemented.

Additionally, women were provided with essential training on e-money and financial inclusion, enabling them to use their e-wallets for various services beyond cashing out assistance, such as remittances and savings, thereby fostering long-term economic empowerment.

## **ADVANCING DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE SAFETY NETS**

WFP's work in Haiti showcases the potential to build a more inclusive and adaptive social protection system.



Image source: [WFP / Gabrielle Menezes](#)

focusing on strengthening digital public infrastructure. This will enable both women and men to access secure and timely social protection payments, verify their identities and exchange data seamlessly. Such systems are essential in helping individuals and households prepare for and respond to shocks such as climate crises, economic disruptions or conflict.

A key goal of this work has been to ensure that the systems are designed in ways that leave no one behind, particularly women, and that they are resilient in the face of future challenges. With the Haitian government now taking over the Klere Chimen programme, this transition aims to create a sustainable, gender-responsive framework for social protection.

WFP's approach goes beyond Haiti, recognizing that digital financial inclusion and women's economic empowerment are critical global priorities. In line with its 2022–2025 Corporate Strategic Plan and Gender Policy, WFP works to strengthen government social protection systems worldwide, reaching millions through humanitarian cash transfers. In 2023 alone, WFP provided USD2.9 billion in cash to 57 million people across 76 countries. However, long-term solutions require well-designed, government-led systems that are both financially inclusive and gender-sensitive. WFP's support to 65 governments in improving their cash transfer programmes--with a focus on women's economic empowerment and leveraging shared digital infrastructures--is a step towards building robust, inclusive systems that foster resilience and reduce inequalities.



# SUPPORTING A GENDER-EQUITABLE ECONOMY

## SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Geographic region: UZBEKISTAN



**Entity:** International Labour Organization (ILO)

**Project Timeline:** 2023 - 2024

**Project Partners:** Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction, Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU), Confederation of Employers of Uzbekistan (CEU)

**To learn more:** <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/trade-unions-representatives-complete-ilo-participatory-gender-audit>

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo%E2%80%99s-participatory-gender-audit-programme-be-launched-uzbekistan>

### OVERVIEW

Since 2017, Uzbekistan has made significant strides in promoting gender equality through policy and legislative reforms, but challenges remain in their effective implementation. Gender disparities persist across various sectors, from the labour market to societal norms. To address these issues and enhance institutional accountability in advancing gender equality, the Government of Uzbekistan introduced a national gender audit programme in 2022, the first of its kind in Central Asia, as part of the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men.

In this context, the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU) has been tasked with conducting gender audits of government bodies as part of a three-year plan. To support this effort, the ILO launched its Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) programme in

Uzbekistan, building the capacity of FTUU members. The ILO provided training on its PGA methodology and supported FTUU in conducting its first audit, which focused on the Ministry of Finance and Economy, with the aim of promoting gender mainstreaming in public administration.

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGH PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDITS

The ILO's Participatory Gender Audit programme, a well-established methodology after two decades of use, offers a comprehensive assessment of an organization's progress in gender mainstreaming. It has gained increasing attention from ILO constituents, donor agencies, training organizations and academic institutions due to its effectiveness in promoting gender equality. The PGA serves as both a tool and process to encourage group learning at individual,

team and institutional levels, enabling the practical integration of gender across programmes and projects.

By using a participatory approach, the PGA fosters awareness and continuous improvement in gender responsiveness. It involves engaging staff, especially women, in the social auditing process to ensure their voices and perspectives are included. This method enhances the organization's ability to evaluate its activities from a gender perspective, identify gaps in implementation and track progress in mainstreaming gender. The PGA also plays a key role in strengthening institutional ownership of gender equality initiatives and improving overall organizational learning. Uzbekistan has recently become a notable example of national commitment to gender mainstreaming through the successful application of the PGA methodology.

### **BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ON THE PARTICIPATORY GENDER AUDIT TOOL**

In Uzbekistan, the ILO's Participatory Gender Audit tool has played a key role in building institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming within the country's government bodies. To support this effort, the ILO's International Training Centre (ITC/ILO) adapted the PGA Certification Programme to the national context, ensuring it was accessible to local experts by translating the full training package into Russian.

Through a five-week blended learning course, 10 trade union representatives were certified as the ILO PGA facilitators, gaining the skills to conduct gender audits in government institutions. This capacity-building initiative has empowered local experts to guide national bodies in assessing and improving their gender equality practices, ultimately promoting a more transformative gender equality agenda within Uzbekistan's public sector.

### **CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER AUDIT**

One of the main issues in implementing the gender audit was the lack of understanding and acceptance of the gender audit programme's role in mainstreaming gender equality within policy development and organizational change. To overcome this, it was essential to ensure the active participation of the audited institutions, particularly to capture the

voices of staff, especially women, and secure senior management commitment.

Another challenge was the limited capacity, both financial and technical, of organizations conducting the audits, which was addressed by developing a detailed gender audit methodology guide and offering intensive training for gender auditors. Additionally, ensuring effective monitoring and follow-up of audit recommendations posed a challenge, requiring dedicated resources and budget allocation to track progress and achieve lasting gender mainstreaming outcomes.

### **KEY RESULTS**

- **Gender Audits:** Three gender audits completed in key ministries, with roadmaps for improving gender equality in policies and structures.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Audit results shared with a committee of stakeholders, fostering cross-sector collaboration on gender equality.
- **Actionable Roadmaps:** Gender equality roadmaps developed for ministries, outlining steps for better working conditions and policies.
- **Mainstreaming into National Policy:** The gender audit programme integrated into national policy, supporting long-term gender equality reforms.
- **Building Capacity for Change:** Created "change agents" with skills to drive gender equality, benefiting both national institutions and the ILO.

# REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

47 YEARS OF ADVANCING GENDER RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Geographic region: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



**Entity:** United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

**Project Timeline:** 1977 -

**Project Partners:** Intergovernmental Forum with the participation of ECLAC Member States, and observers from United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, and other international organizations, intergovernmental agencies, academia and non-governmental organizations

**To learn more:** <https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/gender-affairs#> ; [What is the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean?](#)

<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/47951-45-years-regional-gender-agenda>

## OVERVIEW

The Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (RCW), established 47 years ago as a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), is the foremost intergovernmental forum in the region dedicated to advancing women's rights and gender equality. Meeting every three years, the conference has brought together diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, academia and international organizations, to analyse the status of women's autonomy and rights, present recommendations and undertake periodic assessments of the policies, programmes and initiatives implemented in fulfilment of regional and international agreements on women's rights and gender equality. For over four decades, ECLAC member countries have used this platform

to adopt a comprehensive Regional Gender Agenda, positioning Latin America and the Caribbean as a global leader in efforts to achieve gender equality, promote women's rights and ensure sustainable development.

At the 15th session of the RCW in 2022, the Buenos Aires Commitment was adopted, marking a significant step towards building a "care society" that prioritizes gender equality and sustainability. This agreement emphasizes care as a fundamental right for all, recognizing the importance of both providing and receiving care, as well as the need for self-care. The RCW continues to play a crucial role in implementing and monitoring key international and regional agreements, making it an essential forum for advancing transformative gender policies in the region.

## **LINKING COMMITMENTS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM TO THE REGIONAL GENDER AGENDA**

The RCW serves as a key platform for countries to report on progress in aligning commitments made under the Beijing Platform for Action with the Regional Gender Agenda and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It also ensures that the Regional Gender Agenda is integrated with other important intergovernmental ECLAC agreements, such as the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development. Emphasizing the need for data to highlight the situation of women and girls, the RCW has worked with the Statistical Conference of the Americas to prioritize gender statistics. It has also played a pivotal role in advancing gender mainstreaming and advocating for affirmative action across various ECLAC forums, including those on social development, South-South cooperation and environmental justice, reinforcing a comprehensive approach to gender equality in the region.

### **KEY CHALLENGES**

Advancing the Regional Gender Agenda requires stronger coordination among ECLAC's subsidiary bodies to effectively produce data and policy recommendations that support the commitments of the Regional Gender Agenda, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. There are significant gaps in the implementation of gender equality policies, particularly at the national level, where challenges persist in such areas as institutional architecture, capacity building, and information systems. The sustainability of gender equality policies also remains a critical issue, requiring political, economic and institutional commitment to avoid setbacks. Financing gender equality policies and integrating them into broader national strategies across sectors such as care, education, innovation and the environment is essential for ensuring comprehensive progress toward gender equality.

### **REFLECTIONS AFTER 47 YEARS**

After 47 years, the integration of the Beijing Platform into the region's gender equality agenda has seen significant progress. The RCW has effectively provided a space for governments, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to exchange ideas and

adopt new agreements, such as the Buenos Aires Commitment, which calls for a fair social organization of care and gender equality in all spheres of development. The RCW has facilitated the promotion of regional cooperation on issues including gender-responsive fiscal policies, improved tax collection for gender equality and better financing for care systems. These lessons reflect the importance of creating synergies between national, regional and global efforts, including alignment with the SDGs and the CSW deliberations.

However, while the commitments to gender equality are clear, the challenge remains of translating these policies into actionable change. ECLAC emphasizes the importance of institutional capacities--technical, operational, political and prospective--to manage the transformations needed to build a care society.

Since 2000, a strategic alliance with UN Women has been essential in advancing the region's progressive stance on gender equality at the global level. Continued collaboration and capacity building are crucial for overcoming existing barriers to implementation and achieving the ambitious goals of the Regional Gender Agenda.

### **NEXT MEETING: MEXICO 2025**

The XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, set for 2025 in Mexico, will centre on the theme "*Transformations in the Political, Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Spheres to Promote the Care Society and Gender Equality.*" This event will mark a pivotal moment, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform, and the 50th anniversary of the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975, reaffirming the region's dedication to advancing gender equality and women's autonomy.

# EQUANOMICS

## TRANSFORMING ECONOMIES TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

**Project Timeline:** 2023 -

**Project Partners:** Multiple, including Republic of Korea, Norway, the Gates Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation

To learn more: <https://stories.undp.org/equanomics>

### OVERVIEW

In 2023, UNDP launched its flagship gender initiative, EQUANOMICS, aimed at aligning fiscal policies with gender equality and driving fiscal policy reforms. The project supports 23 countries in implementing national-level fiscal policy reforms, including local planning and budgeting. Services provided to governments include diagnostics of gender biases in tax and expenditure systems, capacity building for civil servants, policy dialogues, data generation and legislative revisions. Notable examples include the Ministry of Finance of Mongolia, which is analysing the gender equality implications of its tax regime as part of income tax reforms, and Costa Rica, which is strengthening institutional conditions for gender-responsive budgeting.

EQUANOMICS also supports ministries of finance and tax administrations in implementing gender-responsive institutional reforms, ensuring that they are equipped and ready to develop and maintain policies and services that work for all. This includes initiatives such as improving the quality of taxpayer services, developing accountability mechanisms with women's organizations; and promoting institutional policies to challenge negative gender social norms and change organizational cultures. Countries such as Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda and Mongolia

are now undertaking these reforms to advance gender equality in their fiscal systems.

### ADVOCATING FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY IN PUBLIC FINANCE

EQUANOMICS promotes a comprehensive approach to gender equality in public finance, addressing the entire public finance cycle—from resource mobilization through taxation to budgeting. It acknowledges that, to make economies work for gender equality, profound structural reforms need to happen.



Image source: [UNDP](#)

EQUANOMICS targets three main objectives through fiscal policy, tax and budget reforms, namely, helping reduce the gender poverty gap by conducting changes in the fiscal incidence; helping eliminate gender discrimination and biases in the economy; and leveraging investments for expanding care systems and for gender equality.

EQUANOMICS also emphasizes the importance of inclusive fiscal governance, and so helps open spaces for civil society, while helping public institutions to lead gender-responsive reforms. UNDP's approach moves beyond conventional gender mainstreaming to focus on aligning national gender equality objectives with fiscal policy objectives and planning.

### **FISCAL CHALLENGES IN THE CURRENT DEBT DISTRESS CONTEXT**

Increasingly, these efforts are shadowed by tightening fiscal constraints primarily due to ballooning debt burdens. In 2023, global public debt reached USD97 trillion, a 62% increase compared to a decade ago. In fact, it is estimated that 85% of the global population lived under austerity measures in 2023.<sup>21</sup> EQUANOMICS is analysing the impact of debt on gender equality, with recommendations for soft-landing measures that help protect gains.

Moreover, the global backlash against gender equality and women's rights raises concerns about political commitment to these reforms. This makes it crucial to leverage strategic entry points, such as opening national dialogues to find common ground, or introducing gender responsive budgeting (GRB) in countries already transitioning to results-based budgeting. Building strong advocacy efforts and partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs) is also essential.

### **PROMISING RESULTS**

Implementation of gender-responsive fiscal policies is still in the early stages, but some countries are already seeing positive outcomes. In Mongolia, the Ministry of Finance has proposed amendments to the personal income tax code based on a gender-equality

impact assessment, and the General Tax Authority is targeting women entrepreneurs in its taxpayer education programme. In Nigeria, national and local tax administrations are working with women's CSOs to raise awareness and train women entrepreneurs on managing their taxes. Despite these advances, the lack of sex-disaggregated public finance data remains a significant challenge, which UNDP is actively helping to address.

Key lessons from the initiative include the need for stronger alignment between fiscal objectives and gender equality goals, as many countries are still far from meeting SDG targets. There is also a lack of knowledge around the gendered impact of fiscal policies, especially in low-income countries. While political will is critical, technical support is essential for success. Collaboration between departments within ministries of finance and other ministries is often limited.

To ensure lasting reforms, building political will through broad partnerships is crucial. These collaborations--and the lessons learned--will inform future efforts to scale up gender-responsive fiscal policies.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations (2024) Economic and social council. Report of the Secretary-General. Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.

# TRANSFORMATIVE FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

WORKING TOWARDS MORE TRANSPARENT, INCLUSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

Geographic region: KOSOVO



Entity: UN Women

Project Timeline: 2020 - 2025

Project Partners: Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Gender Equality Facility (European Union)

To learn more: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/kosovo-under-unscr-1244>

## OVERVIEW

In 2021, UN Women partnered with 16 municipalities in Kosovo to enhance the gender responsiveness of their policies, budgets and monitoring practices. By conducting gender analyses in sectors critical for gender equality, such as domestic violence prevention, the project provided essential data for creating targeted interventions in local gender action plans and budgets.

As a result, 15 Local Gender Action Plans (LGAPs) were costed for the first time, with 13 municipalities designing a sustainable model for funding shelters and support services. This model includes support strategies such as rent subsidies, social housing and employment support. At the central level, the Government of Kosovo allocated 3 million Euro for 2024 and 2025 to support shelters and social services, further contributing to sustainable gender equality mechanisms within local governance.

## USING GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOLS TO HARMONIZE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY COMMITMENTS

The project demonstrates the effective use of gender analysis and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) to align national and international gender equality commitments with local gender action plans and budgets in Kosovo.

Gender analysis was conducted in sectors most relevant to women, such as employment, social protection, housing and domestic violence prevention, resulting in concrete recommendations and targeted measures. These were integrated into the LGAPs of the 15 municipalities, with funding needs identified for each priority measure. It was through this process that the 13 municipalities gained access to sustainable funding necessary to address the long-standing need for support strategies for victims of domestic violence.

At the national level, UN Women facilitated the integration of GRB into Kosovo's public finance management system, partnering with the Gender Equality Agency, the Ministry of Finance and other



ministries to increase gender-focused budget allocations. This collaboration, alongside advocacy from civil society organizations and international donors, aims to support the reintegration into their community of survivors of violence, providing them with essential services and opportunities to rebuild their lives with dignity and independence.

## **INTEGRATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING TO REFLECT THE NEEDS OF THE POPULATION**

UN Women's approach to integrating gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) emphasizes the importance of using data that accurately reflects the needs of the population, especially at the local level.

Gender sectoral analyses are designed using relevant data from various sectors, including input from women's associations and feedback from women and girls who benefit from local services. This data-driven approach ensures that local policies and budgets are better aligned with the specific needs of the community.

Additionally, UN Women has worked to increase awareness and understanding of GRB by engaging with media to promote coverage of gender budgeting, particularly in relation to preventing and combating violence against women.

Capacity building is essential for the successful implementation of GRB, and in Kosovo, over 300 central and local government officials have received training in gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and budget monitoring.

Despite progress, challenges remain, such as stereotypical gender attitudes and limited analytical skills among civil servants, which affect the quality of gender analyses and policy design. UN Women will continue to provide targeted support to enhance the analytical skills of government officials and collaborate with other initiatives to ensure that GRB practices are applied to local and national mechanisms to support gender equality. This is essential to ensure that local policies meet international standards and advance gender equality, particularly in critical areas such as Violence Against Women.



*Strehimorja – Gjakova Shelter for Survivors of Domestic Violence. Image source: UN Women Kosovo*



# 9

## HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

According to [UNHCR](#), 108.4 million people were forcibly displaced in 2022, the largest annual increase on record, with women and girls making up 51% of this population. Additionally, slightly more women and girls (51%) are stateless compared to men and boys.

Gender-based violence was a top protection concern in over 30 humanitarian emergencies, alongside other issues like attacks on civilians, forced displacement, abduction, detention and psychosocial risks, particularly affecting women and children.

Harmful gender norms and the shrinking of civil spaces for women and girls significantly restrict their ability to exercise their human rights, including access to legal aid, leadership, economic, and educational opportunities, particularly for forcibly displaced women. The challenges they face have been found to be further compounded by the effects of climate change, the upheaval caused by COVID-19, and ongoing or protracted conflicts, all of which heighten the protection risks for displaced and stateless women and girls.

Gender equality continues to be central to human rights. However, [OHCHR](#) reports that millions of women and LGBTIQ+ individuals still face discrimination in their civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. Many, especially transgender, gender-diverse, and intersex women, experience compounded discrimination due to factors such as age, race, disability, or socioeconomic status. Achieving full enjoyment of human rights for all requires a deep understanding of the social structures, norms, and power relations that shape laws, politics, and daily life.

# COMITÉ FEMMES RESSOURCES

EMPOWERING WOMEN COMMUNITY LEADERS TO EXPAND PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND BASIC SERVICES FOR REFUGEES AT HEIGHTENED NEED FOR PROTECTION

Geographic region: MAURITANIA



**Entity:** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

**Project Timeline:** 2022 - 2023

**Project Partners:** Comité Femmes Ressources

**To learn more:** <https://www.unhcr.org/media/empowering-women-community-leaders-expand-participation-and-access-emergency-assistance-and>

## OVERVIEW

The Comité des Femmes Ressources is a women-led, community-based organization in Mbera Camp, Mauritania, composed of 98 Malian refugee women from diverse ethnic, linguistic and age backgrounds. This initiative focuses on supporting refugees facing heightened need for protection due to various factors such as gender, age, disability and difficult living conditions that increase vulnerability to violence. Backed by flexible funding and resources from UNHCR's Regional Bureau Accountability to Affected People Grant, the organization has strengthened its capacity as a key protection actor within the camp. Through outreach efforts like door-to-door visits and awareness campaigns, they have identified 250 individuals at risk and facilitated their access to assistance and protection services, as well as health and education, particularly for those with reduced mobility. This project not only enhances access to vital resources but also significantly contributes to advancing gender equality and safeguarding the human rights of women and marginalized individuals within the refugee community.

## IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN COMMUNITY LEADERS IN REFUGEE REPRESENTATION MECHANISMS

Women leaders from the refugee-led organization have been instrumental in the representation mechanisms within Mbera Camp since 2012. With members representing four zones and 44 blocks within the camp, these leaders act as vital liaisons between the community, humanitarian actors and the government. The leaders provide essential support and information to women, children and those at heightened risk, such as persons living with a disability. By advocating for women's and children's rights and addressing issues such as child labour, early marriage and gender-based violence, they have significantly increased school retention rates and women's participation in decision-making. The diversity of Femmes Ressources members--representing different ethnic, age and linguistic groups--enables them to engage effectively with the entire camp population.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Femmes Ressources initiative faced several significant challenges impacting its ability to support marginalized individuals, particularly women, in refugee

camps. As a volunteer-based organization, many members struggled to meet their own basic needs, which limited their consistent participation in activities. This situation was exacerbated by limited livelihood opportunities within the camp and the distance to urban centres. Additionally, traditional gender roles often left women and girls responsible for household duties and childcare, further hindering their engagement in community-led initiatives. There was also a notable underrepresentation of persons at heightened need of protection in community structures, which limited their ability to voice specific concerns. Lower levels of education and French proficiency among women due to gender norms presented barriers to equal opportunities, while harsh environmental conditions made outreach efforts more challenging.

Several mitigation strategies were implemented to address these barriers. Ongoing capacity development and resource identification were prioritized to ensure sustainability post-project. By promoting existing community structures, the initiative increased the effectiveness of small-scale grants and fostered resilience. Thorough analyses of power dynamics and intersectional factors helped identify strengths and weaknesses within the community, enabling a targeted approach to support marginalized groups. Importantly, the high number of women representatives facilitated a rotation mechanism to reach all corners of the camp, ensuring broader engagement. The organization's credibility and community ties, along with consistent support from UNHCR in promoting women's participation in decision-making, were vital enabling factors. These strategies not only addressed immediate needs but also established a foundation for sustainable programming that empowers marginalized individuals in future humanitarian efforts.



Image source: [UNHCR](#)

# IMPROVING ACCESS TO LEGAL AID FOR WOMEN IN WESTERN AFRICA

## STRENGTHENING GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND EQUITABLE LEGAL AID SYSTEMS

Geographic region: LIBERIA, SENEGAL, SIERRA LEONE



Entity: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Project Timeline: 2018 - 2021

Project Partners: Local CSO legal aid service providers, UN Women, OHCHR, UN DESA

To learn more: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Independent\\_Project\\_Evaluations/2021/Final\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_1819U.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Independent_Project_Evaluations/2021/Final_Evaluation_Report_1819U.pdf)

### OVERVIEW

UNODC and UN Women have enhanced women's access to legal aid services in Western Africa, focused on Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone, through a project that strengthened national legal aid frameworks, built capacity for service provision and empowered women to utilize legal aid. This initiative targeted women in contact with the law--who are often marginalized and unable to access legal services. Grants provided to civil society organizations allowed them to expand essential legal services, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, hundreds of women received various forms of support, including legal, social, psychological and occasionally medical assistance, helping them navigate the justice system, secure fair trials and address issues such as unlawful detention. Additionally, justice professionals and policymakers were trained to enable their recognition of the importance of legal aid for women, enhancing judicial processes and better implementing existing legal frameworks.

### UNDERSTANDING THE REASONS--AND CONSEQUENCES--FOR WOMEN IN CONTACT WITH THE LAW

The project focused on women and girls in contact with the law, recognizing the distinct causes and experiences that set them apart from men. A thorough analysis of these factors was conducted prior to project design, utilizing insights from a joint UN Practitioners' Toolkit and the expertise of UN Women, UNODC and OHCHR. This analysis continued through baseline assessments and training during implementation, ensuring a gender-responsive approach throughout. By targeting the unique challenges faced by women, the project aimed not only to empower individuals but also to foster broader systemic changes that promote gender equality. By building legal aid providers' capacity and improving the normative framework, it sought to transform women's access to justice, ensuring they are treated equitably within the legal system. This approach underscores the necessity of analysing gendered contexts to develop effective, gender-responsive programmes that address the specific needs of women in contact with the law.

## **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE LEGAL SERVICES**

Through community-based interventions, legal aid providers (LAPs) engaged women and girls by enhancing their understanding of vital laws, such as those addressing domestic violence, sexual assault and divorce. In Sierra Leone, a partner LAP established a public relations team funded by the project to conduct information sessions in local communities. Meanwhile, in Liberia and Senegal, LAPs provided training on basic rights and legal procedures within prisons. By fostering relationships with both formal and informal community leaders, including women neighbourhood leaders in Sierra Leone and Imams in Senegal trained as paralegals, the project ensured ongoing access to legal knowledge for women.

These outreach efforts not only built trust and collaboration among community members and institutional stakeholders but also dismantled barriers of exclusion, empowering local residents to approach public officials for assistance confidently. The project demonstrated the importance of addressing gender-specific needs in legal aid delivery, paving the way for more inclusive and effective justice systems.

## **KEY RESULTS**

- The project significantly increased access to legal aid for women, particularly vulnerable groups like victims of violence and incarcerated women, with a 40% rise in women users at supported legal aid providers.

- It facilitated essential legal services for women victims of violence, including covering transportation costs to courts, where only defendants typically received state-funded transport.
- Over 500 legal aid providers conducted visits to women's prisons, resulting in the release of 718 women in Liberia, enhancing the realization of their rights.
- Adaptation of legal aid services to COVID-19 challenges, enabling the reopening of courts for urgent cases in Sierra Leone and maintaining access through online and phone support.
- Demonstration of the worth of legal aid to practitioners and created conditions for the implementation of compliant legal aid frameworks.



Image source: [UNODC](#)



# THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENT

## UNDERSTANDING THE RISE OF ANTI-GENDER DISCOURSES IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Geographic region: GLOBAL



Entity: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

Project Timeline: 2023

To learn more: <https://www.unrisd.org/en/library/publications/the-international-anti-gender-movement-understanding-the-rise-of-anti-gender-discourses-in-the-conte>

### OVERVIEW

The increasing influence of anti-gender movements poses a significant threat to gender equality, women's empowerment and the broader human rights agenda. The UNRISD publication *The International Anti-Gender Movement: Understanding the Rise of Anti-Gender Discourses in the Context of Development, Human Rights and Social Protection*, authored by Haley McEwen and Lata Narayanaswamy, provides critical insights into this global trend. The publication highlights the ways in which anti-gender actors, often backed by transnational networks and significant funding, can influence established development frameworks to push back against policies that support sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), LGBTIQ+ inclusion, and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

### THE RISE OF ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENTS

Anti-gender movements, also referred to as "pro-family" organizations, have been strategically reshaping public discourse around gender, sexuality

and family structures. These groups invoke the language of human rights frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to legitimize their restrictive positions. By positioning their opposition to LGBTIQ+ rights and gender equality as a defence of "cultural values" or "moral preservation", they present themselves as protectors of the family, often framing their agenda as aligned with the broader human rights movement.

### ANTI-GENDER ACTORS

The publication outlines the sophisticated strategies employed by anti-gender actors to amplify their reach and influence. These include the professionalization of their advocacy through think tanks, research publications and partnerships within development and human rights arenas. By presenting themselves as credible experts in international development, these actors use well-established tools, such as peer-reviewed research, to promote their views. Their engagement in UN forums and partnerships with state and non-state actors allows them to shape policies

that undermine gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

The rise of anti-gender movements presents a formidable challenge to the global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. These movements pose direct threats to progress in several key areas:

- **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:** Anti-gender actors push for restrictions on access to sexual and reproductive health services, often framing SRHR as a "Western imposition" that undermines traditional family values. This limits women's access to essential health services, further entrenching gender inequalities.
- **LGBTIQ+ Rights:** The promotion of heteronormative family structures also seeks to exclude LGBTIQ+ individuals from the broader rights discourse, denying them access to equal protection under the law and social benefits.
- **Comprehensive Sexuality Education:** Anti-gender movements oppose CSE, which is crucial for empowering young people to make informed decisions about their bodies and relationships. Their opposition further perpetuates misinformation and reinforces harmful gender norms.

The impact of these movements is particularly dangerous in regions where gender equality and human rights frameworks are already fragile or contested. By aligning their views with international frameworks such as the SDGs, these actors undermine efforts to achieve gender justice by framing their anti-rights stances as compatible with global development goals.

## **RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE**

The UNRISD publication emphasizes the importance of countering anti-gender discourses with research-based, inclusive gender frameworks. During the [November 2023 webinar featuring McEwen and Narayanaswamy](#), it was highlighted that feminist and queer-inclusive perspectives are crucial for developing effective counter-narratives. The webinar underscored the urgent need for policy makers, civil society organizations and advocates to build alliances and use evidence-based arguments to promote inclusive

policies that protect and advance gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights and LGBTIQ+ rights.

## **STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS**

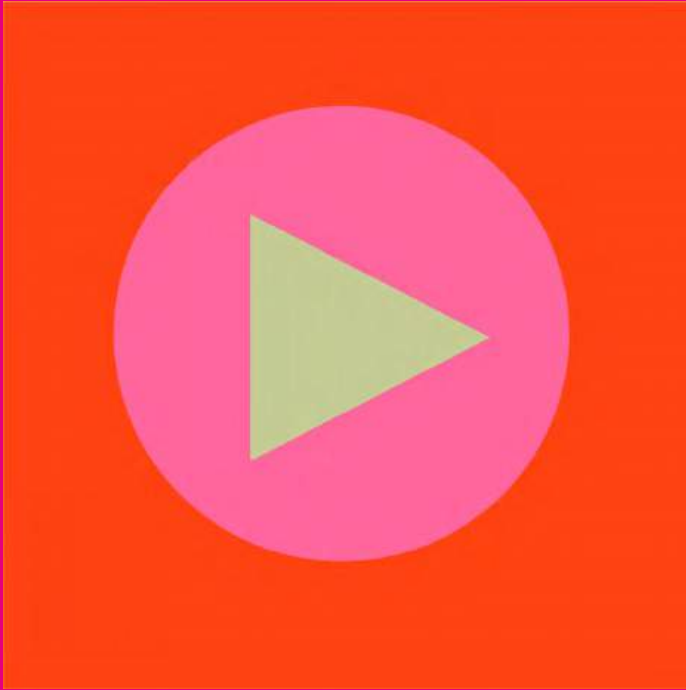
The rise of anti-gender movements presents a significant challenge to achieving the goals of gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights. It is essential for stakeholders within the development, human rights and social protection sectors to recognize the threat posed by these movements and to respond with a unified, evidence-based approach.

The insights provided by UNRISD offer a critical framework for understanding the tactics of anti-gender actors and the need to bolster inclusive gender rights and policies. As the struggle for gender equality continues, reaffirming feminist and queer-inclusive visions of human rights is key to safeguarding progress in this area.



# 10

## WOMEN AND THE MEDIA



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The media continues to play a powerful role in shaping societal structures and influencing our understanding of gender, including norms, roles and stereotypes. Gender norms, which dictate how individuals should behave based on perceived gender, are reflected in media organizations and contribute to the distribution of power within society.

In 2024, women held 25% of top editorial positions, up from 23% in 2020. However, there is no correlation between the percentage of women in these roles and overall gender equality in society ([Reuters](#)).

Social media platforms are major enablers of online violence against women journalists yet are often criticized for their inadequate response to the issue. [UNESCO](#) reports that increasing evidence shows that online violence against women journalists often escalates into offline physical attacks, harassment and legal threats, highlighting the significant real-world impact of such abuse.

Despite some progress, the underrepresentation of women in key roles within the film industry, both behind and in front of the camera persists. In 2022, women accounted for only 22% of all directors, writers, producers, executive producers, editors and cinematographers working on the 250 top-grossing films globally ([SDSU](#)).

# THE CHILLING

## A GLOBAL STUDY OF ONLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

**Project Timeline:** 2019 - 2022

**Project Partners:** International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), CSO Coalition under the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, with funding from UNESCO's Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists, and the Swedish Postcode Foundation

**To learn more:** <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383921>

### OVERVIEW

Online violence has emerged as a significant threat to journalism, with women journalists disproportionately bearing the brunt of this violence due to a toxic mix of misogyny, racism and other forms of discrimination. This escalating crisis not only endangers their physical and psychological safety but also affects their families, reflecting a broader trend where digital harassment translates into real-world consequences.

*“There should be no room for misogyny and violence in journalism. Social media platforms and governments must protect women journalists from online violence.”*

– António Guterres, UN Secretary-General <sup>22</sup>

The UNESCO-supported publication, "The Chilling: A global study of online violence against women journalists", conducted by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), analysed data from 15 countries, included surveys from 901 participants and examined

2.5 million social media posts targeting journalists. The research study was the most comprehensive assessment of online violence against women journalists to date.

The findings highlighted the links between online violence, disinformation, and political influences, prompting widespread media coverage and leading to the incorporation of its insights into key UN resolutions, discussions on journalist safety and recommendations for legal and policy changes to better protect women journalists. The research results had a cascading impact on the safety and well-being of women journalists, including:

- Increasing visibility of online violence against women journalists which led to its inclusion in key UN resolutions from the UNGA, the Human Rights Commission and UNESCO.
- Informing the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression regarding "Gendered Disinformation".
- Facilitating discussions among multiple stakeholders under the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and Impunity.

<sup>22</sup> UNESCO (2021), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377223>.

- Recommendations for legal and policy interventions which were in turn developed as a result.
- Inspiring the launch of pilot initiatives, such as enhancing training for psychologists and providing direct support to women journalists in their workplaces.

The importance of ongoing data collection and analysis on women’s safety in the media and as journalists was highlighted as a necessity to track progress and adapt strategies in response to emerging challenges, particularly the rising threat of AI-generated content. A data-driven approach is essential so that interventions remain relevant and effective as online violence evolves.

### POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

This case study offers significant potential for replication in other areas, especially where women journalists face increased risks. For example, since the report was released, UNESCO has commenced a similar research project in Ukraine to tackle online violence against journalists in conflict zones. Such research could be expanded to explore the effects of

online violence on other groups of women in public life, such as women parliamentarians and athletes.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

A key takeaway from The Chilling study is the necessity of adopting an intersectional approach when addressing online violence against women journalists, as it reveals how various forms of discrimination--such as misogyny, racism and homophobia--compound the vulnerabilities of specific groups, including LGBTQ+ individuals and people of colour. Future initiatives should concentrate on these intersections to effectively address the unique challenges faced by diverse women.

Additionally, tailoring recommendations for different stakeholders, such as tech platform operators, governments, media organizations and NGOs, is essential, as each has a distinct role in improving response systems, enacting protective legislation, implementing gender-sensitive policies, and providing advocacy and psychological support for victims, thereby fostering a more comprehensive framework for combating this issue.



Image source: UNESCO/Franziska Barczyk

# MEDFILM FOR ALL

## CREATE A GENDER-RESPONSIVE FILM SECTOR IN THE MAGHREB-MASHREQ REGION

Geographic region: MIDDLE EAST REGION



**Entity:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 - 2020

**Project Partners:** UN Women, Mena Media Monitoring and the International Women Film Festival of Salé, with the financial support of the European Union

**To learn more:** <https://south.euneighbours.eu/project/medfilm-all/>

### OVERVIEW

The objective of the MedFilm For All initiative was to foster a gender-responsive film sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq region (across Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia) by effectively implementing sustainable practices among key stakeholders and decision-makers in the audio-visual industry. Stakeholders included media managers, government officials involved in decision-making regarding public funding to the film industry, as well as filmmakers. The project focused on empowering individuals and promoting gender equality and addressing gender stereotypes in the film industry. It did so by supporting female filmmakers through building their capacities to advocating with audio-visual industry decision makers to integrate a gender responsive approach; from establishing an online directory for women in film to foster networking and visibility, to organizing festivals and workshops to raise awareness of gender issues. It ultimately fostered the power of fictional films and series to challenge traditional gender roles and enhance the representation of women in society.

By conducting early gender analyses, the project identified barriers faced by women and funded seven civil society organizations to monitor gender

representation and raise awareness about gender stereotypes. Workshops were designed to be gender-balanced, empowering female participants while educating all attendees about gender-related issues, and a "HeForShe" approach engaged male professionals to promote gender equality in film production.

### CAPACITY BUILDING AS A KEY OUTCOME FOR LONG-LASTING CHANGE

A key action of this project was the Sisters in Film initiative, which offered mentorship and professional development to eight female directors from the Maghreb-Mashreq region, helping them build supportive networks and align their career strategies with their goals. Furthermore, over 134 female film professionals benefited from capacity-building programmes, empowering them to voice their concerns within the industry.

The project also focused on the institutional level by training more than 140 film producers, both male and female, in gender-sensitive practices. National entities, including ministries of culture and cinematographic centres, were engaged to highlight the importance of gender equality in creative industries. Additionally,



collaboration with seven relevant civil society organizations across the Arab region facilitated advocacy for gender equality, providing essential tools and resources to promote sustainable change and support ongoing integration of these principles in the film sector.

Project results showed that 87% of the participants in the project reported that their involvement in MedFilm for All helped them advance gender equality in their respective countries. Many participating professionals committed to increasing the representation of women in their films, demonstrating the long-term impact of the initiative on shifting gender norms in the regional film industry.

## CHALLENGES

Despite the success and achievements of the initiative, a number of key challenges were faced by the project including:

- Political instability in some target countries, which in some cases restricted project activities related to gender equality awareness.
- Resistance from some of the key stakeholders in the film industry against integrating gender-responsive policies.
- Logistical disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting in-person activities like film screenings and workshops.
- Complexities in engaging with institutions in some countries, necessitating early and continuous dialogue for effective collaboration.

## INSPIRING THE FUTURE FOR WOMEN AND THE MEDIA IN THE ARAB REGION

The project has made a significant and lasting impact on the film industry by establishing the Sisters in Film programme, which fosters knowledge exchange, professional development and solidarity among women filmmakers and serves as model for creating regional networks. MedFilm has also contributed to the development of gender-sensitive curricula in film and audiovisual schools; created an online directory to enhance visibility for women professionals; and bolstered women's participation in regional film festivals. Additionally, the initiative has advocated for the institutionalization of gender equality through the Equality Forums (Assises) in the Audiovisual and Film Industry, inspiring future change and reinforcing the commitment to gender equity within the sector across the Maghreb-Mashreq region.



Image source: [EU Neighbours](#)



# 11

## WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and are often at the forefront of creating solutions. The COP29 climate conference was reported by UN Women to be the most gender-balanced COP to date however, registrations showed only 40% of delegates were women. It was further reported that out of the 78 world leaders attending COP29 were women ([UN Women](#)).

The impacts of climate change vary for men and women due to existing gender dynamics and inequalities. As with many other challenges in humanitarian and developmental contexts, women continue to be disproportionately affected by climate change. Their lower societal status restricts their access to resources and hinders their ability to adapt their livelihoods in response to climate change ([UNEP](#)).

[UNEP](#) reports that women are more likely than men to invest in environmentally friendly transportation and prioritize eco-friendly products. Additionally, women leaders in various industries are already championing sustainable business practices that have positive social impacts. This shift can take place at all levels, from households and communities to businesses and politics.

# EMPOWERING WOMEN IN E-WASTE MANAGEMENT

## REDUCING TOXIC EXPOSURE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN E-WASTE RECYCLING

Geographic region: PHILIPPINES



**Entity:** United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 - 2024

**Project Partners:** Global Environment Fund (GEF), Philippines Department of Environment and Natural Resources

**To learn more:** <https://www.unido.org/stories/transforming-e-waste-wealth-joannas-story>

<https://www.unido.org/stories/informal-women-workers-organize-and-learn-safely-recycle-e-waste-manila>

### OVERVIEW

Electronic waste is rapidly becoming one of the largest and most pressing waste streams globally, raising significant environmental and public health concerns, especially in developing nations.

In cities like Manila, many women and children rely on the informal e-waste recycling sector for their livelihoods. These workers, often organized into cooperatives, collect discarded electronics and dismantle them, often in their own homes and backyards, to extract valuable materials for resale.

While this offers a livelihood for those with limited education, the lack of protective equipment and safe disposal methods exposes workers, particularly women, to hazardous chemicals. In many cases, the recycling is done at home, putting families, including children who play near discarded e-waste, at even greater risk.



*A typical scene in Brgy. Caloocan City, where women would assist their husbands while caring for the family, increasing their exposure to toxic substances from e-waste.*

*Image source: UNIDO*

## CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building played a crucial role in the success of the project by transforming how e-waste was handled and ensuring its long-term sustainability. Before the project, dismantling was done in unsafe, crude ways with little regard for environmental impact. To address this, the project partnered with local organizations to provide specialized training on proper e-waste dismantling techniques using pneumatic tools, as well as educating workers on the health risks of hazardous chemicals.

The project also produced user-friendly manuals to help workers implement best practices. In addition to technical training, women learned business management skills, enabling them to take an active role in managing e-waste facilities and ensuring the project's operations would continue successfully beyond its initial phase.

This capacity-building approach not only enhanced the workers' technical skills but also empowered them economically. This was particularly true for women, who gained more regular income and greater financial independence through their participation in the project, while actively contributing to laying the foundation for future sustainable e-waste management.



Joanna De Amican, works as a dismantler in one of the e-waste facilities established through the initiative  
Image source: UNIDO

## CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS

Traditionally, women's roles were limited to collecting e-waste or dismantling small items, such as mobile phones, while men dominated more technical tasks. However, through targeted training, women gained the skills to dismantle larger items, like televisions, using pneumatic tools and XRF spectrometers. These skills empowered them to take on roles previously reserved for men. This not only boosted their confidence but also allowed them to participate more fully in the sector, with women actively leading operations at e-waste facilities and taking on formal leadership roles in community organizations.

By 2021, the number of female dismantlers had risen to almost that of male dismantlers, signaling a real shift in gender dynamics. This shift was further supported by community-based organizations, where women held key positions such as secretary, treasurer, and auditor. The project's success in empowering women has helped challenge traditional gender roles and improve both their economic and social status within the e-waste sector, the community and the family.

*"We have a voice, dignity, and purpose now. We have a place in our community and a role in protecting our environment."*

– Joanna De Amican, e-waste dismantler

## REPLICATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE E-WASTE SOLUTIONS

To replicate this e-waste project globally, key factors include selecting the right partners with access to all stakeholders, such as local communities, women, youth and government units. Engaging women in decision-making and empowering them through consultations and training is also crucial for success.

Additionally, providing economic interventions that offer alternatives to harmful e-waste practices can help shift behaviours. Feasibility studies, considering factors like location, political support, and local e-waste trade, are essential for determining the viability of new facilities, and a comprehensive framework for local governments can help scale these efforts.

# BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE OF URBAN SYSTEMS THROUGH ECOSYSTEM-BASED ADAPTATION

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND ENHANCING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Geographic region: LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN



**Entity:** Global Environment Facility (GEF)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 - 2024

**Project Implementing Agencies:** UNEP and UNDP

To learn more: <https://cityadapt.com/>

[https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN\\_GEF.68\\_Inf.07\\_Progress%20Report%20Gender\\_Dec\\_%202024\\_Final%20%282%29.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN_GEF.68_Inf.07_Progress%20Report%20Gender_Dec_%202024_Final%20%282%29.pdf)

## OVERVIEW

The Building Climate Resilience of Urban Systems through Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in Latin America and the Caribbean project focuses on enhancing climate resilience in urban areas by integrating ecosystem-based adaptation strategies. The project is implemented in three medium-sized cities: San Salvador (El Salvador), Kingston (Jamaica) and Xalapa (Mexico).

The project aims to address vulnerabilities caused by climate change, particularly in urban ecosystems, through nature-based solutions such as watershed restoration, reforestation, soil conservation and rainwater harvesting. At the same time, EbA incorporates gender mainstreaming to ensure inclusive climate resilience outcomes for vulnerable communities.

## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the need for women's participation in environmental decision-making and the integration of gender-responsive strategies in sustainable development urban climate resilience, women's involvement in ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) approaches, such as in San Salvador, where women often experience disproportionate vulnerability to climate impacts due to their roles in household and community management. Ensuring their participation in climate resilience planning not only strengthens adaptive capacity but also fosters social inclusion and economic empowerment. As cities such as San Salvador and Xalapa implement reforestation, conservation agriculture and watershed restoration, women are actively engaged in the planning, decision-making and implementation phases, increasing their visibility in climate action.



## GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The project has integrated gender mainstreaming through a structured approach developed with technical support from UN Women, addressing specific vulnerabilities and creating gender action plans in San Salvador and Xalapa.

The gender action plans were developed based on detailed gender analysis and consultations with key local actors, ensuring that the needs of women and other marginalized groups were fully integrated into urban climate adaptation strategies. The intention is for women in these cities to benefit from improved access to sustainable urban infrastructure, including rainwater harvesting systems and ecological sanitation, which will directly enhance their health, livelihoods and resilience.

This approach exemplifies how gender-responsive strategies in ecosystem-based adaptation can promote gender equality in the environmental sector at the same time as building more resilient urban communities.



Image source: [Acción Climática](#)

## CAPACITY BUILDING AS KEY TO OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

In line with the project's focus on Ecosystem-based Adaptation, targeted training initiatives aimed to foster both environmental stewardship and sustainable livelihoods. These efforts are designed to build local resilience and ensure that women play an active role in shaping the future of their communities. Through hands-on training and leadership development, the project not only enhanced skills but also inspired a sense of agency and responsibility toward environmental conservation. Key capacity-building activities included:

- Training for women in Cerro del Estropajo, near Veracruz, to strengthen resilient livelihoods, where women gained essential skills for adapting to environmental changes.
- Specialized training for women in gender equity and market access related to edible mushroom cultivation, fostering women's economic empowerment while promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- The creation of the "River Guardians" initiative in which female heads of households led community-based reforestation projects, contributing to environmental restoration and building local ownership of climate adaptation efforts.
- The adoption of beekeeping initiatives in Jamaica with 60% female participation, providing women with new skills in urban EbA and offering new opportunities for livelihood diversification.

The project made strides in improving data collection through gender-sensitive indicators, helping to ensure that future climate resilience efforts will be better tailored to the needs of both women and men. Moving forward, the work done through these trainings--and the monitoring of results-- is a powerful reminder of the potential for transformative change when women are empowered with the tools, resources and support to lead in the face of climate change.



# CLIMATE PROMISE

## ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN CLIMATE STRATEGIES

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

**Project Timeline:** 2022 -

**Project Partners:** Governments of Germany, Japan, Sweden, United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Portugal

**To learn more:** <https://climatepromise.undp.org/>

<https://climatepromise.undp.org/what-we-do/areas-of-work/inclusion>

### OVERVIEW

UNDP's Climate Promise prioritizes gender equality by ensuring that countries' climate action plans under the Paris Agreement are gender-responsive and inclusive. Recognizing that climate change disproportionately affects women and underrepresented groups, the initiative helps countries integrate gender considerations into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Through technical support and capacity-building, Climate Promise empowers governments to create climate policies that not only address environmental challenges but also promote gender equity, ensuring women are both active participants in and beneficiaries of climate solutions.

Climate Promise--supporting 140 countries around the globe--also works to increase women's leadership in climate decision-making by promoting their participation in climate governance. Climate Promise provides training, resources and platforms for women, particularly in vulnerable communities, to engage in climate policy development. By incorporating gender analysis into climate strategies, the initiative ensures that climate actions contribute to social equity and empower women, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable approach.

### APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Climate Promise adopts a three-pronged approach to integrate gender equality, women's empowerment and climate change into NDCs through governance, planning and policy processes. These elements are seen as mutually reinforcing for achieving more inclusive climate action.

- **Effective Governance:** The initiative strengthens governance structures by establishing clear institutional frameworks, enhancing coordination and building institutional capacity. It fosters the active participation of gender and social inclusion-focused institutions, while ensuring the involvement of underrepresented groups like women, youth, Indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making processes.
- **Inclusive Policy:** Climate Promise integrates gender and social inclusion into the early stages of NDC planning, identifying the needs and priorities of diverse groups. It also helps countries build the capacity to incorporate gender and social inclusion into climate finance and investments, ensuring more targeted and impactful interventions.
- **Integrated Policy:** The initiative supports the development of policy frameworks that align climate,

gender equality and social inclusion goals, ensuring that NDCs address the differentiated impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups. This approach fosters equal access to resources such as finance, technology and markets, helping build resilience and facilitating a just transition to a low-carbon economy.

## IMPLEMENTING GENDER EQUALITY COMMITMENTS

Under the second generation of NDCs, countries supported by Climate Promise are making progress on gender equality commitments through key entry points, such as stakeholder engagement and inclusive policy development. For example, 27 countries are consulting with women's groups to enhance their leadership in climate action.

Sri Lanka has advanced gender equality through its Gender-sensitive Climate Change policy, involving women-led organizations in the policy development process. Liberia, with Climate Promise support, has established a platform for non-state actors, including women's groups, to engage in NDC revisions. In Peru, a decentralized consultation process ensures broad participation, including women and marginalized communities. North Macedonia has created a women's entrepreneurship platform to highlight green solutions and provide women entrepreneurs with access to climate-related funding, such as the Green Financing Facility. These efforts demonstrate how gender-

inclusive approaches can strengthen climate action and empower women across diverse sectors.

## NEED FOR ADEQUATE AND SYSTEMIC ATTENTION TO GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN CLIMATE FINANCING FRAMEWORKS

While increasing access to climate finance, training and skills is essential for women's economic empowerment and enabling underrepresented groups, such as Indigenous peoples and youth, to participate in climate solutions, significant bottlenecks remain in budgeting and implementing gender-responsive activities.

Although some countries are making strides in integrating gender and social inclusion into their finance strategies, more work is needed to align financial resources with gender-responsive and inclusive actions, particularly through frameworks like NDCs. Also, tight implementation timelines, often imposed by donors, can hinder meaningful engagement with local communities and limit the ability to incorporate gender and social inclusion measures effectively, impacting the success of these efforts.

Despite these challenges, government capacity for gender-responsive climate finance is improving with the Climate Promise initiative, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing to enhance inclusive climate action.



*Kenya's NDC aims to improve access to enterprise funds, climate finance, and credit lines for women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.*

*Image source [UNDP Kenya 2019](#)*

# EMPOWER: WOMEN FOR CLIMATE RESILIENT SOCIETIES

## ACCELERATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED CLIMATE ACTIONS

Geographic region: ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



**Entity:** United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

**Project Timeline:** 2018 - 2022 (Phase I)

**Project Partners:** UN Women and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

**To learn more:** <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/06/empower-women-for-climate-resilient-societies-programme-brief>

### OVERVIEW

The impacts of climate change disproportionately affect women and marginalized groups across Asia and the Pacific. These groups often face greater barriers in accessing resources, such as information and finance, as a result of discriminatory gender norms. In response, UNEP, together with UN Women, launched the EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies programme, aiming to accelerate gender-responsive and human rights-based climate actions. EmPower focuses on mobilizing investment for renewable energy entrepreneurship and skills development for women and marginalized groups, while promoting their leadership in the energy transition and advocating for gender-responsive climate policies.

### RESULTS OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

During Phase I (2018-2022) EmPower worked in three target countries--Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam. EmPower established a methodology supporting the setting up of women economic livelihood

projects that harness the potential of renewable energy and other clean technologies. By facilitating women's access to affordable loans, 38 climate-resilient interventions were implemented across the three countries, of which 473 women entrepreneurs benefited economically while over 2,000 women in their communities reaped indirect benefits. Through its work, EmPower contributed to increased investments aimed at addressing gender-based vulnerabilities and improving the long-term resilience of women and marginalized communities across the Asia-Pacific region.

The project also helped fill a critical regional knowledge gap by establishing clear links between gender and climate change, highlighting promising gender-responsive actions. This was achieved through the preparation and dissemination of [policy research, tools, and guidance](#) and by engaging a wide range of public, private and community stakeholders in the process.

Other outcomes include the adoption of 11 gender-responsive climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies at both the national and regional levels.

Additionally, the project expanded its impact to 15 other countries, building the capacity of governments and institutions to integrate gender into climate, renewable energy and DRR policies, including through a [free e-learning course](#). Through successful partnerships with intergovernmental organizations, EmPower increased outreach and commitment across Member States.

## EXPANDING GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

Building on the successes of Phase I, EmPower Phase II has expanded efforts to further scale up gender-responsive, human rights-based climate action across the Asia-Pacific region. The programme is leveraging a range of tools, methodologies and data to implement existing plans and policies, with a focus on empowering women and marginalized groups to shape decisions and build resilience.

Between 2023-2027 EmPower is working in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Viet Nam and across Asia and the Pacific on three outcomes:

- Asia-Pacific actors increase action on gender-responsive climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Women in all their diversity and other marginalized groups are represented as key environmental actors in climate and DRR decision-making.
- Women and other marginalized groups in Asia-Pacific engage in climate-resilient livelihoods.



*COP 28: EmPower side event coordinated together with the Philippines Department of Environment and Natural Resources.*

*Image source: [UN Women Asia Pacific](#)*

## RAISING INVESTMENTS FOR WOMEN

The EmPower initiative has committed to raise investments for renewable energy technologies and interventions that are gender-responsive and uphold human rights and the principle of leave no one behind.

In order to achieve this, EmPower works with the financial sector to enable access to finance for renewable energy-based systems for underserved communities. At the same time, it [supports women](#) in acquiring the necessary skills to build climate-resilient businesses.

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT IS CRITICAL FOR EFFECTIVE GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Technical support from initiatives such as EmPower is crucial for effectively integrating gender into climate change policy review and implementation. As the project highlighted, there is an urgent need for practical tools and guidance to ensure that gender equality and the principle of “leave no one behind” are not only considered but actively applied in policy processes and in the financial sector. Without this support, the risk remains that those most at risk to the impacts of climate change will be overlooked, undermining the effectiveness of climate policies and their ability to address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalized groups.

# TACKLING THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE WITH SOLAR-POWERED SOLUTIONS

ENSURING SAFE AND RELIABLE SOLAR-POWERED WATER SOURCES THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Geographic region: BANGLADESH



**Entity:** United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 - 2025

**Project Partners:** UNDP, European Union and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

**To learn more:** <https://www.uncdf.org/article/8786/villagers-tackle-climate-related-water-shortages-with-solar-powered-technology-and-locally-led-commitment>

## OVERVIEW

Following the devastation of Cyclone Sidr, water shortages in Sonatola village, located in Bangladesh's southern delta, worsened due to salinity intrusion and the disruption of both surface and groundwater supplies. The community, especially women, was forced to rely on contaminated pond water and salt-laden groundwater for daily consumption, with existing hand pumps unable to meet growing needs. In response, local authorities in Naltona Union Parishad (UP) partnered with United Nations Capital Development Fund to build a solar-powered water purification system, which included a network of pipelines and 16 distribution points with taps, providing the community with access to clean water.

The project brought a significant improvement in water accessibility, delivering 6,000 litres of safe, clean water daily to approximately 2,400 residents, including 975 women and 1,075 men. A solar-powered desalination unit



*Mrs. Begum and young women from the local community returning home after collecting water from the solar-powered pumps. Image source: [UNCDF LoGIC Bangladesh](#)*



was installed to treat the water, ensuring its quality. In addition to infrastructure development, the community was actively involved in the initiative, receiving training in facility management and repair. This collaborative approach not only improved water availability but also empowered the community to take ownership of their water resources for long-term sustainability.

*"Now, we can easily collect drinking water and save time fetching water from faraway places."*

– Mrs. Begum, Bangladesh

### **INVOLVING WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING, PLANNING AND OPERATIONS**

By involving women in both the decision-making process and the operation of the water infrastructure, the project has ensured that gender considerations are central to its execution. Women, who traditionally bear the burden of water collection, now save valuable time that was once spent fetching water, allowing them to engage in other productive activities. The training sessions provided to women on water conservation, hygiene practices and the maintenance of the solar-powered desalination unit have further empowered them, enhancing their confidence and leadership in managing the water system.

In addition to improving women's access to clean water, the project has strengthened local-level planning and financing mechanisms to address



Image source: [UNCDF LoGIC Bangladesh 2024](#)

climate change adaptation, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable communities. The active participation of women in the operation and maintenance of the water system, as well as in broader capacity-building initiatives, has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility. Through these efforts, the Local Government Initiative on Climate Change (LoGIC) has not only improved the health and livelihoods of women but also contributed to the overall resilience of the community, positioning women as key agents of change in building climate resilience.

### **KEY RESULTS**

The project has led to significant gender-related successes, particularly in empowering women and improving their access to resources. By providing a reliable, safe water supply through solar-powered infrastructure, the project has drastically reduced the time and effort women previously spent collecting water. This has allowed them to dedicate more time to other activities, including income-generating opportunities.

Additionally, 99% of beneficiaries from the project's Climate Resilience Funds were women, with many leading their own group businesses, thereby strengthening their financial independence and social empowerment. The project also supported the financial inclusion of women, with 35,000 women opening individual and group bank accounts, further enhancing their economic resilience.

Moreover, the initiative has had a direct impact on improving the health and well-being of women and children, as the integrated water treatment measures reduced waterborne diseases. By addressing both water scarcity and quality, the project has not only enhanced women's health but also contributed to their overall empowerment. With 63% of the 1 million direct beneficiaries being women, the project has played a key role in promoting gender equality and building climate resilience within vulnerable communities.

# COASTAL FISHERIES INITIATIVE

## ENHANCING WOMEN'S ROLES THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKET ACCESS IN LATIN AMERICA'S COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Geographic region: LATIN AMERICA



**Entity:** The Global Environment Facility (GEF)

**Project Timeline:** 2021 - 2022

**Project Partners:** UNDP

**To learn more:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DW28GfGq8o7HIQL0hLc-Qr-TaEP4iv-/view>

[https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN\\_GEF.68\\_Inf.07\\_Progress%20Report%20Gender\\_Dec\\_%202024\\_Final%20%282%29.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-11/EN_GEF.68_Inf.07_Progress%20Report%20Gender_Dec_%202024_Final%20%282%29.pdf)

### OVERVIEW

The Coastal Fisheries Initiative in Latin America (CFI-LA) has played a pivotal role in promoting the sustainable use and management of coastal fisheries, an area where women's contributions have historically been overlooked. Through the application of the UN supported credit union programme, Peru's UNICAS (Uniones de Crédito y Ahorro)<sup>23</sup> and UNDP's Growing Your Business methodologies, women have gained crucial skills in administration, finance, accountability and market access, enabling them to diversify their income streams. Additionally, the initiative has fostered stronger social networks, promoting economic independence and empowering women within the community.

The initiative implemented the following key interventions:

- **Gender and Sustainability Training:** Training was conducted on basic gender concepts to empower women and foster an inclusive community. Both women and men also received training on sustainable fisheries

management. As a result, 11 gender focal points were appointed to oversee the successful implementation of the gender action plan.

- **Economic Empowerment of Women:** Supported women's access to finance and enhanced their entrepreneurial skills. The project facilitated the establishment of 4 women-led enterprises. Over the course of 18 months, 33 Credit and Savings Unions were formed, benefiting a total of 551 individuals, 66% of whom were women.

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The Beijing Platform for Action calls for the active participation of women in environmental decision-making and the integration of gender perspectives in all aspects of sustainable development. The project's gender mainstreaming strategy was designed to promote women's active participation in the fisheries sector, a traditionally male-dominated field, while also fostering economic empowerment through

<sup>23</sup> Local groups that pool money in interest-bearing funds



training and access to resources. By focusing on the visibility of women's roles in the fisheries production chain and providing training in sustainable fisheries management for both women and men, the strategy helped promote women's economic independence and leadership in environmental sectors.

Environmental degradation is recognized as having disproportionate impacts on women, especially in sectors like agriculture, water and fisheries, where women often bear the brunt of climate change. As part of its gender mainstreaming strategy, the project conducted gender capability assessments in Ecuador and Peru, revealing a significant gap in gender awareness and the integration of gender considerations into local fisheries management.

Based on these findings, gender training was rolled out to local stakeholders, including 234 fisheries officials in Ecuador and 43 in Peru, as well as civil society organizations. This capacity-building effort helped to equip local institutions with the tools to better address gender impacts of environmental degradation in their environmental policies and practices.

The designation of 11 gender focal points in participating organizations has ensured that gender-sensitive approaches will continue to be integrated into future environmental and fisheries management policies, furthering the Beijing Platform's call for long-term institutional commitment to gender equality and environmental sustainability.



Image source: [GEF](#)

## **STRIVING FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR**

The CFI-LA project exemplifies the progress needed to advance gender equality in the fisheries sector, in line with the Beijing Platform, which mandates the inclusion of women in decision-making processes and sustainable development. In countries like Peru and Ecuador, women make up nearly 40% of the workforce in small-scale fisheries but face significant barriers in terms of access to financial resources, technical training and participation in policy discussions.<sup>24</sup> CFI-LA addresses these challenges by implementing methodologies like UNICAS (collective savings) and UNDP's Growing Your Business, which promote women's economic empowerment by improving their access to finance and strengthening their entrepreneurial skills.

Through capacity-building initiatives that focus on financial, administrative, and technical training, the project increases women's participation in both the fisheries sector and broader community leadership.

By engaging both women and men in gender-sensitive training and promoting women's leadership, the project helps shift cultural perceptions and fosters gender equality in this traditionally male-dominated sector. These efforts directly contribute to the Beijing Platform for Action's call for gender-responsive policies and sustainable development in the environment and natural resources sector.

<sup>24</sup> FAO (2022). [The State of the World's Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022: Towards Blue Transformation](#).

# STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S RIGHTS THROUGH ACCESS TO SECURE HOUSING

## THE IMPACT OF GENDERED PROPERTY SYSTEMS ON EQUALITY

Geographic region: MOZAMBIQUE



**Entity:** United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

**Project Timeline:** 2017 -

**Project Partners:** UN Women and Government of Mozambique counterparts

**To learn more:** <https://unhabitat.org/news/07-mar-2024/beyond-four-walls-empowering-women-through-secure-housing-in-mozambique>

### OVERVIEW

In Mozambique, women face compounded challenges due to climate change, armed conflict and systemic gender inequalities. UN-Habitat initiatives have been pivotal in addressing these challenges, empowering women through the construction of resilient housing and community development projects. Their focus on gender-sensitive, sustainable housing solutions not only provides women with secure homes but also enhances their safety, participation in the economy and leadership roles within their communities. This serves as a model for advancing gender equality, particularly in the context of climate resilience, sustainable development and women's empowerment.

### GENDER, CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT

Mozambique is a country severely impacted by climate change, with frequent cyclones, flooding and droughts exacerbating the vulnerability of its citizens, especially women. Women, particularly those in rural and conflict-

affected areas, often bear the brunt of these crises. In the northern region of Cabo Delgado, ongoing armed conflict has displaced thousands, leaving many women without adequate shelter or resources. Women-headed households, which make up 63% of those facing poverty, struggle to meet basic needs, including access to housing, employment and security.

In addition, the exclusion of women, particularly young urban women, from formal labour markets continues to hinder their ability to achieve economic independence. Only 4% of women aged 19-24 are represented in the formal labour force, leaving them dependent on informal and precarious work. This economic marginalization, compounded by environmental disasters, results in women being disproportionately affected by poverty, insecurity and lack of opportunity.

### EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH HOUSING

UN-Habitat directly addresses these systemic challenges by empowering women through secure

housing and inclusive community development. In Marrokani, Cabo Delgado, UN-Habitat has built 50 resilient homes for internally displaced women, many of whom have also received training in resilient housing construction. The initiative has been made possible with support from the Embassy of Norway, Embassy of Iceland and UN Women. These women, previously excluded from construction roles, are now involved in hands-on building activities, gaining valuable skills that contribute to both their economic independence and community resilience.

### **PROMOTING GENDER-SENSITIVE URBAN PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

In Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado, UN-Habitat collaborates with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to implement gender-sensitive urban planning, focusing on integrating internally displaced persons (IDPs) and addressing gender-based violence (GBV). Supported by the High Commission of Canada, this initiative has engaged over 6,500 women in community activities that promote gender-inclusive infrastructure planning, migration rights and GBV prevention. A key component of this initiative is the use of the Her City tool, which empowers women to observe and contribute to the development of public spaces that are safe and accessible for all.

### **BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

In central Mozambique, UN-Habitat has focused on post-disaster reconstruction following Cyclone Idai,



Image source: [UN-Habitat](#)

which devastated the region in 2019. With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank and the High Commission of Canada, over 220 resilient housing units have been constructed, benefiting women-headed households and other vulnerable families. These homes are part of a larger effort to rebuild some 15,000 homes, alongside vital infrastructure such as schools, health facilities and economic centres.

In addition, the initiative places a strong emphasis on women's participation in the workforce: at least 40% of the workforce in the reconstruction of schools in the buffer zone of Gorongosa National Park are women. This focus on skills development and job creation ensures that women are not just beneficiaries of housing projects but active contributors to their communities' recovery and growth.

### **IMPACT AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY**

By involving women in every stage of the housing construction process, from planning to execution, these projects not only address immediate needs for secure housing but also create long-term opportunities for women to participate in the economy and decision-making processes. The training and leadership roles that women assume in these projects challenge traditional gender norms, increase their confidence and foster resilience in the face of climate change and conflict.

UN-Habitat's work in Mozambique exemplifies the intersection of gender equality, climate resilience and sustainable development. Through its innovative approach to housing and community engagement, it is helping to empower women, mitigate the impacts of climate change and promote social inclusion. By ensuring that women are at the forefront of rebuilding their communities, UN-Habitat is not only providing shelter but also creating the foundations for a more just and sustainable future for all Mozambicans.



# 12

## THE GIRL CHILD



### 30 YEARS AFTER BEIJING: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

[UNESCO](#) reports that in the last 10 years, 50 million more girls have been enrolled in schools worldwide, with 5 million additional girls completing each level of education, from primary to upper secondary. While this progress is significant, it underscores the need for continued efforts in the years leading up to 2030, as 122 million girls remain out of school globally.

Food poverty continues to affect 181 million children under 5 years of age, contributing to malnutrition and increased risks of mortality, poor growth and development. Around 200 million children under 5 face stunting or wasting, while 136 million children aged 5–10 are overweight or obese. Despite a 51% decline in under-5 mortality since 2000, 4.9 million children died in 2022, with over 80% of these deaths in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia ([UNICEF](#)).

Progress on child protection-related SDGs has been modest and uneven. At the current pace, [UNICEF](#) estimates that it will take 300 years to end child marriage.

Improved and more accessible data is making it easier to track progress for girls. Data on childbirths among girls aged 10–14 is becoming more widely available. In 2023, the global adolescent birth rate for girls aged 10–14 was estimated at 1.5 per 1,000 women, with higher rates in sub-Saharan Africa (4.4 births) and Latin America and the Caribbean (2.3 births) ([WHO](#)).

# SKILLS4GIRLS

## GIRL-CENTRED SOLUTIONS TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Geographic region: GLOBAL



**Entity:** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

**Project Timeline:** 2019 - 2025

**Project Partners:** Clé de Peau Beauté, Chloé, Max Factor, Sylvamo, Lind Foundation and Government of Iceland

**To learn more:** <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality/skills4girls>

### OVERVIEW

Skills4Girls takes a girl-centred approach to skills building. This means

- **Girl-centred engagement:** Putting girls at the centre of design, implementation, monitoring and learning.
- **Girl-specific skills:** Focusing on competencies that position girls to participate equally and transition to employment.
- **Girl-focused approaches:** Tailoring strategies to girls' needs, including safe spaces, mentorship, internships, access to technology and leadership development.

### DESIGNED FOR GIRLS, WITH GIRLS

Girl-centred programmes are designed and implemented with and for girls, from the Robotics training in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, teaching girls to design and build robot prototypes, to the girls-only Chicas+ web programming training in Peru, and the innovative UniSat programme, which teaches girls to build and launch nanosatellites and has been rolled out as a cross-country collaboration in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The Skills4Girls programme aims to empower girls by enhancing the capabilities of frontline workers, service

providers and policymakers. In Cambodia, Skills4Girls promotes adolescent girls' leadership and well-being; advances girls' education, learning and skills; and addresses discriminatory social norms. UNICEF worked to embed a life skills programme into the formal education system to ensure young people, especially adolescent girls, have the confidence and information to overcome challenges in their lives. In addition, the entrepreneurship programme, Generation Future, is supporting talented adolescent Cambodian girls to address key challenges in their communities by developing their ideas for positive social change and



*Image source: [UNICEF](#)*

matching them with mentors, training, networking and seed funding opportunities to realize their projects.

## CHALLENGES

- Low foundational skills in beneficiaries, as well as weak educational systems and limited access to technology affect UNICEF's efforts in rural areas, particularly in the initial programme stages.
- Fragile and conflict-affected countries pose significant obstacles for both adolescent girls and the delivery of programmes aimed at supporting them.
- Harmful gender norms impact all stakeholders involved, including the girls, their peers, parents, teachers and policymakers, hindering effective programme implementation.

## KEY RESULTS

- Since 2020, the Skills4Girls project has reached 9.5 million adolescent girls and young women in over 20 countries--including nearly 4 million girls in 2023 alone--promoting essential STEM, digital and life skills for their transition to adulthood.
- In Bangladesh, UNICEF has integrated gender-responsive and skills-based curricula into the secondary education system, benefiting youth--particularly girls--in STEM, with the new curriculum rolled out in 62 pilot schools and over 419,000 teachers trained.
- The UniSat programme in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan teaches girls to build and launch nanosatellites using digital content co-created with them, enhancing their skills in STEM and data analytics through an interactive educational platform.
- In Niger, where child marriage rates are high, Skills4Girls focuses on equipping girls with economic skills and tools for productivity, offering literacy, numeracy and entrepreneurship training to help them secure meaningful employment, especially in STEM fields.

## POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION

- UNICEF and partners collaborate with governments to integrate skills-building activities into national education curricula, enhancing the quality and reach of interventions through partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations.

- The aim is to foster national ownership of these initiatives, ensuring sustainability by engaging diverse stakeholders to secure the necessary financing and action to unlock the potential of adolescent girls.

The efforts of such programmes benefit not only the girls themselves but also their communities and economies as a whole, and this is a key factor to discuss with national governments to encourage them to invest in the sustainability of such initiatives.



# IMPROVED ACCESS TO EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR THE VICTIMS/ SURVIVORS OF GBV IN EARLY MARRIAGE

EMPOWERING MARGINALIZED GROUPS WITH CRUCIAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS AND AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES

Geographic region: GEORGIA



**Entity:** United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

**Project Timeline:** 2022 - 2026

**Project Partners:** UN Joint Programme for Gender Equality, funded by the Government of Sweden

**To learn more:** <https://georgia.unfpa.org/en/news/visiting-schools-together-mia-representatives-aimed-ending-child-marriage>

## OVERVIEW

UNFPA has highlighted the fact that while the legal age for marriage is 18, some girls are still married at younger ages, especially in specific communities. In the broader South Caucasus region, rates can vary significantly, with countries like Azerbaijan and Armenia also facing challenges related to child marriage, particularly among marginalized communities.

In 2022, the UNFPA Georgia office partnered with the local Public Safety Command Centre (PSSC) "112" to improve access to emergency services for victims of early marriage, particularly among ethnic minority groups. The PSSC "112" is pivotal in providing nationwide emergency response via a unified number and mobile app. The app has been enhanced to

include vital information on child marriage--definitions, legal implications and public services available to victims--and has been translated into Azerbaijani and Armenian to better serve these communities.

## NEW SOS FEATURE FOR DISCREET ALERTS

A significant new feature is the "SOS button", which allows users to discreetly alert authorities without making a call, ensuring safety for those at risk of further harm. This new feature has had a significant impact by allowing victims of child marriage and GBV to alert authorities, provide a GPS pinpoint of their location and do so without fear of the potential repercussions that unfortunately can arise when overheard calling for help.

## VULNERABILITIES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN AFFECTED

## BY CHILD MARRIAGE

This project specifically addresses the vulnerabilities of girls and women affected by early marriage. It focuses on empowering these marginalized groups with crucial knowledge about their rights and available support services, while the app's cultural sensitivity ensures equal access for ethnic minorities.

By providing tailored tools and resources, coupled with in-school learning and familiarization with the app and how its functions can be utilized, the project actively engages women and girls in the fight against violence. In turn, these awareness-raising meetings in schools revealed that many students had a very limited understanding of early marriage, particularly regarding its legal implications, health risks and long-term effects on young girls. This knowledge gap hinders their ability to identify early marriage signs and advocate for their rights. In response, UNFPA Georgia and its partners created additional tailored educational workshops for adolescents, including ethnic minority youth, featuring interactive sessions and discussions that encourage critical thinking about the implications of early marriage.

## INSPIRING FUTURE ACTION TO COMBAT CHILD MARRIAGE AND GBV

This project provides several lessons learned that are essential to inspire similar initiatives to combat child marriage and the exposure of girls, and boys, to gender-based violence. These include:

- **Tailored Educational Programmes:** Customized

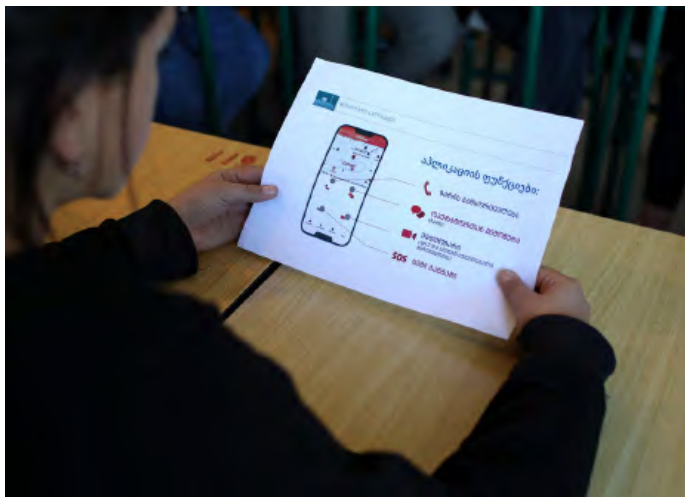


Image source: [Dina Oganova/UNFPA Georgia](#)

educational initiatives are vital for raising awareness among adolescents about the implications of early marriage, fostering deeper understanding through interactive and participatory methods.

- **Empowerment through Information:** Providing access to information and resources enables women and girls to make informed decisions and take control of their lives, highlighting the importance of user-friendly resources.
- **Leveraging Technology:** Integrating educational content into mobile applications, like the "112" app, exemplifies how technology can support women and girl's rights and improve access to critical information.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Forming effective partnerships with public institutions, such as the PSCC "112," demonstrates the importance of cross-sector collaboration in achieving common goals in gender equality initiatives.
- **Cultural Adaptation for Replication:** Educational programmes can be adapted to various cultural contexts, ensuring that local customs are considered while maintaining a focus on issues related to early marriage and gender rights.



## **IANWGE Compendium**

30 Years After Beijing: Promising Practices on Gender  
Mainstreaming in Support of the Beijing Platform for  
Action's 12 Critical Areas of Concern