



BEIJING+20 REVIEW AND APPRAISAL

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The Platform for Action

Twenty years after its adoption, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains the most comprehensive international blueprint for advancing women's human rights. These documents firmly anchored the struggle for gender equality within a human rights framework and made a clear statement about State responsibility in delivering on the commitments that were made.

Looking back, 20 years on

As part of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, UN Women undertook a global review and appraisal of implementation. A record number of 166 countries have submitted national reports assessing implementation of the Platform for Action. This is the largest ever number of reports received on achievements and gaps for women and girls at the national level. There has also been rich inputs from civil society and from regional institutions. This shows unprecedented commitment to advancing the gender equality agenda.

Twenty years on from the commitments made in Beijing, no country has achieved gender equality. The analysis of these reports shows that progress has been unacceptably slow, with stagnation and even regression in some cases. Progress has been particularly slow for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Areas of progress

- Countries have increasingly removed discrimination in laws and adopted laws to promote gender equality and address violence against women and girls.
- There have been significant gains in girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education.
- In some regions, such as Latin America, women's participation in the labour force has increased.
- There has been a doubling in women's representation in national parliaments from 11% in 1995 to 22% today.

- Maternal mortality has decreased by 45% since 1990. All regions have increased women's access to contraception.
- Significant normative advances have been made in the global agenda on women, peace and security.

Major gaps remain

- Discrimination in the law persists in many countries, particularly in the area of family law.
- Women's increasing educational attainment and rising participation in the labour market have not been matched with better conditions, prospects for advancement and equal pay.
- In the last 20 years the global gender gap in labour market participation has only narrowed marginally, from 28 to 26 percentage points.
- Women continue to be clustered in vulnerable and informal types of work. The gender pay gap is a universal phenomenon.
- Heavy and intense unpaid care workloads limit women's enjoyment of human rights in several areas.
- Violence against women and girls persists in all countries and in many forms.
- Unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality continue in some regions. Violations of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights remain widespread.
- Women continue to be excluded from decision-making at all levels.
- The chronic underinvestment in gender equality is a major barrier to progress in all areas.

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Progress has been unacceptably slow

At current pace, it is estimated that it would take 81 years to achieve gender parity in economic participation, more than 75 years to reach equal remuneration for work of equal value and about 50 years for gender parity in representation in parliaments.

Over the last 20 years several forces in the global political and economic landscape have held back progress on gender equality. Persistent conflicts, the global financial and economic crises, volatile food and energy prices, food insecurity and climate change have intensified inequalities and vulnerability, with specific impacts on women and girls.

Fragile gains towards gender equality continue to be threatened by rising extremism and backlash against women's rights in many contexts. Deep-seated discriminatory norms, stereotypes, prejudice and violence remain pervasive.

A key finding is that there has been uneven attention across the critical areas of concern, with some areas receiving greater focus than others. For example, there have been important advances in girls' education, but less commitment to increasing women's access to decent work. Gaps between norms and implementation signal a collective failure of leadership.

Five areas for action

Urgent action is required in five key areas to accelerate progress:

1. Transforming discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes. There is a need to change discriminatory social norms, stereotypes and practices that are holding back progress. This requires an investment in long term interventions and campaigns to change attitudes and behaviours, including on male responsibility for unpaid care work and for challenging discrimination and violence.
2. Transforming the economy to achieve gender equality and sustainable development. Macroeconomic policy should be reoriented to increase State investments in infrastructure, social services and social protection measures to ensure that women and girls can live a life with dignity. Macroeconomic policies should also support the generation of decent work for women and men and ensure women can enjoy their full range of rights at work.
3. Ensuring the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels means participation in political institutions, in the economy, in conflict prevention and resolution, in climate change negotiations, in community

planning, in family decisions, in collective action to advance women's human rights. Temporary special measures provide a proven strategy for increasing women's representation in decision-making and should be replicated and expanded.

4. Significantly increasing investments in gender equality. This includes domestic resources and ODA. This can be done by reorienting macroeconomic policies (tax policy, government expenditures, and debt management) and global economic governance to expand fiscal space by mobilizing resources both domestically and internationally.
5. Strengthening accountability for gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls. We need increased investments in gender statistics, stronger national gender machineries and gender-responsive institutions, and greater efforts to make gender mainstreaming the norm in government policy. Governments must ensure that private actors are held accountable for the impact of their actions on women's enjoyment of human rights. Feminist and women's movements must be strengthened and supported to advance claims for women's human rights.

Accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action across all critical areas of concern and maximizing the synergies between them requires all human rights of women and girls to be realized with attention to the interdependence and indivisibility of rights.

Tackling inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination must be a priority. We must look beyond the "averages" to monitor the impacts and results of laws and policies for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

A historic opportunity in 2015

In 2015 we are at a historic moment with world leaders set to decide the post-2015 development agenda. Creating a world with greater equality for generations to come is the defining and most urgent challenge of this century.

Gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights are fundamental for achieving human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development.

The findings of the Beijing+20 global review provide important lessons for the post-2015 development agenda. Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls must be a central priority to the post-2015 development agenda. Gender equality is a shared vision of social justice and human rights. Everyone has a responsibility to act, particularly Governments as the primary duty bearers.