



## Network

### The UN Women's Newsletter

### Volume No. 21, Issue 1 – January-February-March-April 2020

#### Letter from the Director, UN System Coordination Division, UN Women

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Since the last edition of the Network newsletter in 2019, the world has witnessed unforeseen times with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed we are all living with a new normal, which transcends borders, afflicting everyone everywhere! The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic is not only challenging global health systems, but testing our common humanity.

The year 2020, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, and other important milestones was intended to be ground-breaking for gender equality. However the pandemic limited the commemoration as planned and we switched to virtual and online forums to take our message forward.



In these difficult times, this first edition of the newsletter for 2020 is dedicated to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on gender equality and the rights of women and girls.

We kick off our coverage of the first quarter 2020 with our interview series for which we sat down with Dr Roopa Dhatt, co-founder of Women in Global Health in 2015 and a passionate advocate for gender equality in global health. She shares her views on the impact of pandemic on women and girls and on the movement to correct the gender imbalance in global health leadership amongst other insights.

The current issue contains pieces on why gender equality matters in the COVID-19 response and what UN Women and the global community is trying to do to address the crisis.

The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex.

Violence against women and girls is now seen as the shadow pandemic.

Responses to the crisis, thus far, have included several important initiatives, including for example work on “Using technology to assist vulnerable Syrian refugees during COVID-19 lockdown” and the launch of the HeForShe #HeForSheAtHome campaign.

Other news includes highlights from the 64<sup>th</sup> Commission on the status of women which, in the light of the COVID-19 crisis, decided to scale back the session to a one-day procedural meeting with delegations and civil society representatives based in New York.

We also bring news of partnership of Netflix and UN Women to launch a special collection curated by 55 groundbreaking women in entertainment called “Because She Watched”, a special Netflix collection of series, documentaries, and films to celebrate International Women’s Day and launch of ‘Women’s SDG Bond’ gender equality finance initiative.

Recommended readings include UN Women’s new report, “Women’s Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing”, a comprehensive stock-take on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and series of issue briefs on violence against women and girls.

These are extraordinary times, of crisis and also of landmark anniversaries – times to recall historic and visionary moments of birth and rebirth - this year the world marks the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the 25 years of the Beijing Platform for Action. Let us recommit to the visions and high ideals of both.

In solidarity,

Aparna Mehrotra  
Director, UN system Coordination Division  
UN Women

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## Interview

Dr. Roopa Dhatt, Executive Director and Co-founder Women in Global Health

Meet Dr. Roopa Dhatt - a passionate advocate for gender equality in global health and a leading voice in the movement to correct the gender imbalance in global health leadership. She is also a practicing Internal Medicine physician.


Dr. Dhatt is particularly committed to addressing issues of power, privilege, and intersectionality that keep many women from global health leadership roles and to opening up spaces for the voices of these women to be heard.



Determined to build a movement to transform women's leadership opportunities in health, Dr Dhatt co-founded Women in Global Health in 2015. Today, Women in Global Health has more than 25,000 supporters in more than 90 countries and continues to grow. Dr Dhatt leads a staff of 2, supported by 30 volunteers focused on supporting a diverse group of emerging women leaders, engaging global health executives to transform their own institutions, and growing the Women in Global Health movement. With more than 14 chapters on four continents, Women in Global Health is changing the conversation about women's leadership in health at global, national and local levels.

***Q.1 Could you tell us a bit about your work as a woman leader in global health? As Co-founder and Executive Director of Women in Global Health, what was your motivation for starting the organization in 2015?***

A.1 Women in Global Health was started by four millennial women who met on twitter when we found we were tweeting about the same issue – women's under representation in global health leadership and putting forward solutions. Women hold 70% of health and social care jobs globally but hold only 25% of senior decision-making roles. That was obvious just scanning the room in high level global meetings such as the annual World Health Assembly. Although women are more than half the world's population, critical decisions about the health of women and girls are largely in the hands of men. We were looking around us and seeing so many talented and experienced women in global health, but not in senior leadership positions. Women are often told that equality is just a matter of time, we should be patient and the gender imbalance at the top will equalize all by itself. But the health sector proves that is not the case and bears out the World Economic Forum finding that it will take another 257 years to close the gender gap at work. We decided that women deserved better than that and that global health served better – health systems will remain fragile until the gender gap is closed.




***Q.2 What has been your biggest challenge working on gender in global health? What progress have you seen so far in achieving gender equity in global health leadership?***

A 2. Our biggest challenge has been keeping up with demand. We started WGH as an advocacy initiative and didn't plan to start an NGO. But we pretty soon realized that the issues we were raising - gender equity in global health and women's underrepresentation in leadership - resonated with women all over the world. Women came forward from all career stages and continents to volunteer to work with Women in Global Health. We operated as a volunteer driven organization for the first four years, largely using our own resources. Our greatest strength has always been the commitment and diversity of our volunteers who have come from all branches of health and since we are a virtual organization, all parts of the world. All our volunteers, however, have time conflicts because we all have other roles - I work as an Internal Medicine physician. In 2017 therefore we registered as a not for profit in USA so we could form a stronger basis for the movement and support a growing global network of national chapters. We have seen change. There is now far greater recognition that women are the majority of the health workforce and that their underrepresentation in leadership deprives global health of critical talent and diverse perspectives. We authored a report launched by WHO last year 'Delivered by Women, Led by Men: A Gender and Equity Analysis of the Global Health Workforce' and with WHO, convene organizations working on gender equity in the health workforce in WHO's Gender Equity Hub. The World Health Assembly made 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife and is emphasizing the importance of leadership. We have seen important examples of change in the sector. Dr Tedros, the current Director General of the WHO, for example, appointed a gender balanced senior leadership team on his appointment in 2017. In general, however, despite increased awareness, there is a long way to go before we reach gender parity in health leadership.

***Q.3 Women represent 70% of the global health workforce, and yet they make just 25% of global health leadership. When women deliver global health-why are men still leading it?***

A 3. Women have always worked in health and in many countries are still traditional healers. But when medicine was formalized as a profession in Western countries, it was established as a profession by men for men with formal barriers excluding women. Some very courageous and determined women fought their way into medicine and made a path for women like me to follow them into the profession but this history has helped perpetuate stereotypes of men, for example, being surgeons and 'natural leaders' and left most women in lower status and lower paid roles. Even though in many countries now the majority of medical students and doctors under 40 are women, occupational segregation by gender remains pronounced in health and social care. Globally, 90% of nurses




are female. In low-and middle-income countries, fewer girls than boys finish secondary school, hindering their entry into higher status medical professions. In general, however, it is bias and discrimination that constrain women's entry to leadership. And this is compounded by the intersection with other identities such as race or caste, making it even harder for women from marginalized groups to attain leadership. In addition to a 'glass ceiling' and 'leaky pipeline for women, there is evidence that men in nursing have a 'glass elevator' and hold a disproportionate number of senior nursing roles, even though they are a minority in the profession. Levelling the playing field for women would require family friendly policies that enable them to balance work and home, equal access to training and career development, zero tolerance to sexual harassment which is common in the sector and in general, putting in place gender transformative policies that address gender inequity.

***Q.4 With the onset of the Covid -19 pandemic, response efforts are deeply undermined by fundamental gender inequities in COVID-19 decision making bodies, the health workforce and wider society. What will it take to transform this reality?***

A 4. Women are the majority of the global health workforce but are underrepresented in COVID-19 decision-making bodies and media commentaries. Responses to outbreaks are weakened where female talent, expertise and diverse perspectives are excluded. Whenever a high-profile health emergency breaks out or an influential commission needs experts, it seems that global health reverts to the default of 'delivered by women, led by men'. When we saw the same pattern being repeated in this emergency Women in Global Health joined with Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS) and launched Operation 50/50, a crowdsourced list of women health security experts, designed to be a resource for organizations looking for health security experts and media commentary on COVID-19. The list proves that the problem is not a shortage of qualified, expert women. The current pandemic makes it clear that we cannot fight a global health challenge as big as COVID-19 effectively by drawing from just half the talent pool.

***Q. 5 How is the corona virus 19 fallout worse for women than men? What is the impact of Covid -19 on productive and reproductive lives?***

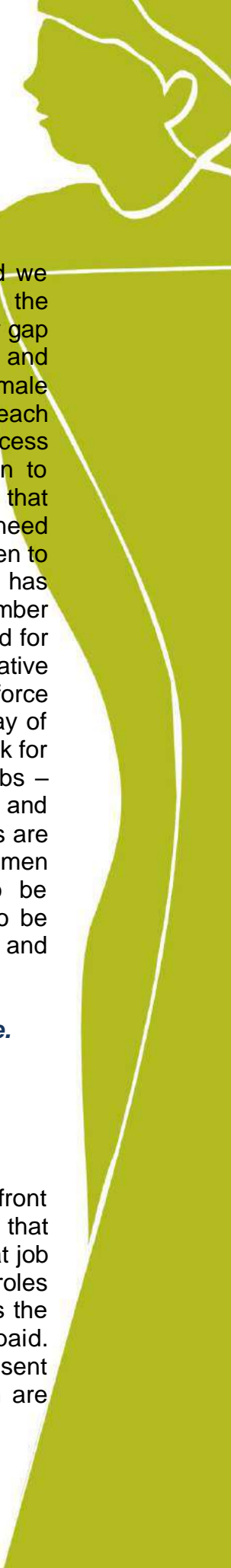
A 5. The fallout from corona virus is bad for everyone and worse when we approach it Gender Blind. Only 43 countries are reporting sex disaggregated data on COVID-19 infections and mortality. Without that evidence countries cannot design effective policy responses. Data is showing that men have a higher mortality risk in almost all countries, however, women are facing a triple burden: keeping up with their professional roles, taking on the additional care responsibilities of children and elderly, and often at a greater risk getting infected in frontline roles in health, social care and service sectors. Given that



more women than men work in the informal sector on insecure conditions and that women, on average, earn less than men, we know that women will suffer financially from lockdown and recession. We have already seen the secondary impacts for women of COVID-19 policy measures such as a marked increase in gender-based violence during lockdowns. Home is not a safe place for all women and children and women's organizations predicted this increase in violence. We learned from Ebola outbreaks that sexual and reproductive health services are essential and must be maintained during pandemics and emergencies. Maternal deaths and unwanted pregnancies increased during Ebola because services were disrupted and women could not reach clinics and hospitals. There have been reports from Uganda and Kenya of women dying in childbirth unable to reach safe delivery facilities during COVID lockdowns. If contraceptive services are not maintained women and adolescent girls will die from unsafe abortions. Nurses and midwives are the majority of health workers but significantly underrepresented in health leadership. As 2020 is the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, what better time to harness the expertise and leadership potential of nurses and midwives? If nurses and midwives were leading decision making for COVID-19 they would put greater priority on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. When we ignore women's experience, women and girls pay with their lives.

***Q. 6 Why do we need women's leadership in the CoVID-19 response? How can health care systems designed by and for women save lives? Why does the global health security depend on women?***

A 6. We are also told that this is 'not the time' to be arguing for gender equality as decision makers must be chosen 'on merit'. This is offensive as it implies women don't have merit and it is also misguided. Women, as the majority of health workers, know best the health systems they manage and they know what works. It is a stupidity that those who do not know health systems so well are making critical decisions. As I have suggested from the examples above, if women had been equally represented in COVID-19 leadership it is likely that decisions made would have been different and lives would have been saved. We do not assert that all female leaders are better than all male leaders but it has been noted that almost all the countries doing well in containing this pandemic are led by women and that those female leaders have a leadership style that is more likely to succeed - not asserting with war analogies that 'we can beat this enemy', placing human life first, listening to the evidence, being prepared to take unpopular decisions and communicating those decisions openly to the public, emphasizing a collective approach. We want gender parity in health leadership and we also want health leaders of all genders to be gendertransformative leaders. It is time in this pandemic that male leaders adopted the leadership style of their more successful female counterparts.




***Q. 7 Approximately 40 million new health and social care jobs will be needed by 2030 to keep up with changing demographics and increased demand for health. What policies need to be in place to meet this goal?***

A. 7. Women are the majority of the health and social care workforce and we could expect women to fill the majority of these 40 million jobs if given the opportunity. But women need equally paid work – there is a 28% gender pay gap in health – and they need decent, safe work if they are to be attracted to and retained in the sector. Women in health often report sexual harassment by male colleagues, patients and the community, more so when they are outreach workers or work in humanitarian or remote settings. Women need equal access to training and leadership and family friendly policies that enable women to balance home and professional responsibilities. Women also need policies that support the redistribution of domestic work between women and men. We need to break the gendered norms and stereotypes that encourage men and women to join different sectors in health. The percentage of men in nursing globally has remained relatively stable at 10%. In 13 countries, however, men outnumber women in nursing, so it is possible for those stereotypes to be overturned and for men to see nursing as an attractive profession. In general, gender transformative policies must be applied to health systems and health and social care workforce planning to address the bias and discrimination that put obstacles in the way of women in the workforce. All countries have an incentive to create decent work for women in the health and social care workforce to enable women to fill jobs – which will benefit everybody's health and in turn, strengthen the economic and social position of women and drive economic growth. Female health workers are central to the response to COVID-19, as they are to any epidemic. The women health workers on the front lines of health systems do not want to be sentimentalized or celebrated as martyrs. They want to lead, they want to be listened to and they want the means to do their jobs professionally, safely and with dignity.

***Q. 8 Times of crisis have historically also been opportunities for change. Are you optimistic that as we emerge from this pandemic, it could be a chance to tackle the defining issue undermining global health infrastructure inequality?***

***This pandemic like the Second World War will be a break in our history.***

A.8 Throughout Europe people are applauding the women who are on the front lines, risking their own lives to save our lives. That is positive but my worry is that this is based on the assumption that female health workers are doing a great job in exceptional times but once the emergency is over, workloads and gender roles will just go back to 'normal'. But beneath this picture of women's heroism is the fact that half the \$3 trillion that women contribute to health every year is unpaid. Women are the social shock absorbers of our societies. When children are sent home from school or elderly parents need to have food delivered, women are




expected to expand their hours, still do the majority of housework and earn an income. Right now, women's unpaid work is the foundation of our health and social care. This pandemic has demonstrated the unrealistic expectations we put on women's shoulders and that leaves our health systems vulnerable. It has also caused many to question why societies typically attach low social value to the female majority professions our lives depend on. We cannot return to business as usual because this pandemic has shown that our health and social systems are flawed. Medicine is not a broken system, it was established as a men only profession and so was flawed from its creation. We don't know when the next pandemic will arrive or whether COVID-20 has already crossed the species barrier. To be better prepared for the next global health emergency we need to fix gender equality, not in 50 years'time but now. And that means 50/50 women and men in decision making. Women have nothing more to prove. There has to be a new social contract between women and men. COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on the inequities we knew were there and that must end if societies and the world is to be strong to meet future health emergencies.

***Q. 9 What role do you see for civil society like Women in Global Health in supporting the work of the international agencies and governments to achieve gender equality?***

A.9 We work very closely with UN and other international agencies and governments. Many of the women in our network have worked or currently work in both. WGH has a growing global network of national chapters – around 20 currently in countries as diverse as Somalia, Pakistan, Chile and Norway. Our chapters enable us to ground our global work in the reality of national contexts and to work with governments at all levels. We see Women in Global Health as a critical friend, working in support of governments and international agencies both publicly and advising behind the scenes. As mentioned above, we work closely with WHO on gender equity in the health workforce, co-chairing with WHO the Gender Equity Hub of the Global Health Workforce Network. We are pleased to share the expertise of our network with international agencies and governments since we are all working for the same objective – better health for all. But at the same time, we publish data to call out gender inequity in global health. We have just published our annual count from the World Health Assembly of the percentage of Chief Delegates who are female and once again, it is below 30%. We are collecting similar data on global and national task forces responding to COVID-19 and the picture is depressing. Women are expected to step up and deliver health and social care services under extraordinary circumstances during this pandemic while men make the critical decisions that impact all our lives and health. It is our role to get that evidence and make decision makers accountable. We do not work alone. We also join forces with





other partners in the private and NGO sectors and research institutions to share resources and increase our impact. Last year, we formed an Alliance for Gender Equality and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) with Women Deliver and the International Women's Health Coalition to support member states in negotiations on the Political Declaration from the UN High Level Meeting on UHC in September 2019. The Alliance has over 100 NGOs working together effectively at national and global levels for gender responsive UHC. WGH is also playing a role to convene organizations working on gender and COVID-19 and are part of a Gender and COVID-19 research group. It has been inspiring to see women organizing across borders and sharing experiences, materials, data and resources in sisterly solidarity to respond to this pandemic. WGH and our network of chapters also intends to be strong voice to #BuildBackBetter gender responsive health systems and decent work for women in the sector to enable us all to live better, healthier lives with no-one left behind. We will work with UN Women and other partners in 2020-2021 to ensure that the learning from this pandemic feeds into the Beijing 25 Gender Equality Forums and momentum for fundamental change is maintained

## Congratulations to

***Ms. Agnes Kalibata of Rwanda*** on her appointment by the UN Secretary General António Guterres as Special Envoy for 2021 Food Systems Summit.

The Special Envoy, working with the United Nations system and key partners, will provide leadership, guidance and strategic direction towards Food Systems Summit In 2021, to be hosted by the United Nations, with the aim of maximizing the co-benefits of a food systems approach across the entire 2030 Agenda and meet the challenges of climate change.

Ms. Kalibata is the President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) since 2014. She leads the organization's efforts with public and private partners to ensure a food secure and prosperous Africa through rapid, inclusive, sustainable agricultural growth, improving the productivity and livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers in Africa.

Prior to joining AGRA, Ms. Kalibata was Rwanda's Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources from 2008 to 2014, where she drove programs that moved her country to food security, helping to lift more than a million Rwandans out of poverty.

***Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura of Sierra Leone*** on her appointment as the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)

Ms. Bangura, a relentless advocate for conflict resolution and reconciliation, and human rights champion, was most recently Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict from 2012 to 2017. She was Minister of Health and Sanitation (2010-2012) and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (2007-2010) for the Government of Sierra Leone. Ms. Bangura has also served as Executive

Director of the National Accountability Groups as well as Coordinator and Co-founder of the Campaign for Good Governance.

## The United Nations- gender in the times of Covid-19 Pandemic

*The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic is not only challenging global health systems, but testing our common humanity. As the world was alerted on the outbreak of this pandemic in early March 2020, UN Women is leading with full force in its response on Covid-19's impact on gender equality dimensions.*

*The year 2020, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, was intended to be ground-breaking for gender equality. Instead, with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, even the limited gains made in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex.*

*This edition of the Network newsletter is dedicated to put spotlight on gender in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic. How UN Women and the global community is taking a lead to combat this enemy.*

### **What UN leaders are saying**

**“Put women and girls at the centre of efforts to recover from COVID-19”** says the UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his statement issued in April 2020. Although the COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone, everywhere, the SG drew attention of the global community, that it affects different groups of people differently, deepening existing inequalities with the pandemic is having devastating social and economic consequences for women and girls. More women are at risk of falling prey to violence and into poverty, given that 60% work in the informal economy. As markets fall and businesses close, millions of women's jobs have disappeared. At the same time as they are losing paid employment, women's unpaid care work has increased exponentially as a result of school closures and the increased needs of older people. These currents are combining as never before to defeat women's rights and deny women's opportunities. He urged governments to put women and girls at the centre of their efforts to recover from COVID-19.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-sg-put-women-and-girls-at-the-centre-of-efforts-to-recover-from-covid19>



## ***Violence against women and girls is the shadow pandemic says Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women***

With 90 countries in lockdown, four billion people are now sheltering at home from the global contagion of COVID-19. This is a protective measure, but it brings the deadly danger which we see as the shadow pandemic growing, of violence against women, warned the Executive Director of UN Women in April 2020.

As more countries report infection and lockdown, more domestic violence helplines and shelters across the world are reporting rising calls for help, she said. Confinement is fostering the tension and strain created by security, health, and money worries and it is increasing isolation for women with violent partners, separating them from the people and resources that can best help them. It's a perfect storm for controlling, violent behaviour behind closed doors.

COVID-19 is already testing us in ways most of us have never previously experienced, providing emotional and economic shocks that we are struggling to rise above. The violence that is emerging now as a dark feature of this pandemic is a mirror and a challenge to our values, our resilience and shared humanity. We must not only survive the coronavirus, but emerge renewed, with women as a powerful force at the centre of recovery, Phumzile reiterated.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>

## **How Covid -19 impacts women and girls IN A NUTSHELL**

A profound shock to our societies and economies, the COVID-19 pandemic underscores society's reliance on women both on the front line and at home, while simultaneously exposing structural inequalities across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection. In times of crisis, when resources are strained and institutional capacity is limited, women and girls face disproportionate impacts with far reaching consequences that are only further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies. Hard-fought gains for women's rights are also under threat. Responding to the pandemic is not just about rectifying long-standing inequalities, but also about building a resilient world in the interest of everyone with women at the centre of recovery. Explore these varied impacts below and take a quiz to test your knowledge. For more information on this topic, visit UN Women's [dedicated web page](#) featuring news, resources and more, and [learn about our response](#).



See more at:

<https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html>

## UN Women Response to Covid-19

### Gender equality matters in COVID-19 response

UN Women is bringing up-to-date information and analysis on how and why gender matters in COVID-19 response. The COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health issue. It is a profound shock to our societies and economies, and women are at the heart of care and response efforts underway.



UN Women has developed rapid and targeted response to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women and girls and to ensure that the long-term recovery

benefits them.

UN Women's response to COVID-19 includes policy advice and programmatic interventions and is part of the broader UN-wide response.

Learn more: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/un-women-response-to-covid-19-crisis>

### Using technology to assist vulnerable Syrian refugees during COVID-19 lockdown

*Amid the coronavirus pandemic and the social distancing measures, UN Women is providing urgent support, information and essential services to more than 5,700 Syrian refugees in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps.*

In the Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps in Jordan, despite the strict lockdown measures, UN Women's innovative blockchain cash-disbursement system has proven to be a reliable and resilient system, because it can be managed remotely. As a result, UN

Women is one of the agencies in Jordan that has been able to seamlessly and remotely ensure cash continues to reach 213 Syrian refugee women involved in its cash-for-work programmes at the Oases women's empowerment centres in the camps.

UN Women is also using WhatsApp to disseminate reliable information on COVID-19 prevention and services made available by the Government and WHO.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/feature-technology-to-assist-refugees-during-covid-19-lockdown>

<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/information-un-system>

### **Women Leaders' Virtual Roundtable on COVID-19 and the Future issues call to put women and girls at the centre of response efforts**

On 20 April 2020, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, and Gabriela Ramos, OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa to the G20, convened and chaired the *Women Leaders' Virtual Roundtable on COVID-19 and the Future* to address the disproportionately negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on women and girls and to identify and prioritize policy measures that facilitates a more gender-inclusive recovery path.

The women leaders, ranging from Heads of State and Government, including President, Prime Minister and Vice-President, to civil society, heads of global women's movements and youth leaders, represented the voices of women from various sectors to share their advice based on their experience from before and during this crisis. The engaging and dynamic discussion confirmed that women's leadership is more needed than ever before to emerge from this crisis.

Considering the scarcity of women's voices in all decision-making spheres, including this crisis, the Roundtable served to put forward measures required to prevent the crisis from becoming a major setback for the safety and well-being of girls and women around the world.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/press-release-women-leaders-virtual-roundtable-on-covid-19>

### **HeForShe launches #HeForSheAtHome campaign**

The #HeForSheAtHome campaign aims to highlight the unfair burden on women during the Covid-19 pandemic and encourage men to do their equal share.

In responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, women make up 70 per cent of workers in the health and social sector and do three times as much unpaid care work at home as men. Women are in the lead across the world as front-line responders, health care professionals, scientists, doctors and more.

In providing useful tools and tips, the #HeForSheAtHome campaign seeks to inspire men to help balance the burden in their households. Whether its learning to use that new vacuum cleaner, or the game you play when washing the dishes, we want to hear your stories. In sharing these stories of positive male role models from all over the world, we hope to inspire many more to do their fair share.

Send your stories to [heforshe\[at\]unwomen.org](mailto:heforshe@unwomen.org) or share on social media and tag us @HeForShe with the hashtag #HeForSheAtHome

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/news-heforshe-launches-heforsheathome-campaign>

## Women hit harder by socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in Asia-Pacific, says UN Women report

***The coronavirus is exacerbating pervasive gender inequalities and discrimination facing women in the region.***

Gender and social inequalities that underpinned societies in Asia and the Pacific before the novel corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic are now exacerbated, making bad situations for women and girls even worse, warns a new report by UN Women.

The report entitled *The First 100 Days of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Asia and the Pacific: A Gender Lens*, presents a snapshot of the gender dimensions of the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic and captures promising practices for integrating gender in preparedness and response planning while proposing potential and entry points to mitigate the socio-economic impacts for women and girls in the region.

The publication highlights the immediate needs of women in the context of the pandemic, including those of female health-care workers and survivors of gender-based violence, as well as direct impacts related to women and girls' unpaid care work, sexual and reproductive health and rights, interrupted access to education and unequal access to information.

The '100 Days' gender report discusses the impacts and the potential way forward on issues including women, peace and security, gender and disaster risk reduction, ending violence against women and women's economic empowerment, while stressing the specific needs of marginalized and underserved groups, including refugees, women with disabilities, LGBTQI persons and women living with HIV.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/press-release-women-hit-harder-by-socio-economic-impacts-of-covid-19-in-asia-pacific>

## Step it up G7: An extraordinary time requires extraordinary solidarity

*As the COVID-19 pandemic intensifies and the implications on women become more clear, members of the 2018 and 2019 G7 Gender Equality Advisory Councils urgently called on G7 member states to take into account the gendered dimensions*

*of the crisis and to prevent the deterioration of gender equality and women's rights worldwide.*

Desperate times require bold and determined leadership. The COVID-19 virus represents a common challenge to the whole world and, like never before, reminds us of our interdependence.

The members of the 2018 and 2019 G7 Gender Equality Advisory Councils, urgently called on G7 member states for joint emergency action to respond to the particular challenges facing women and to prevent the deterioration of gender equality and women's rights worldwide.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/op-ed-joint-step-it-up-g7>

## 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

In the light of concerns regarding coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Commission on the Status of Women this year decided to scale back the session to a one-day procedural meeting with delegations and civil society representatives based in New York, convened, on 9 March,

The one day meeting was held on March 9<sup>th</sup> that included opening statements followed by the adoption of the draft Political Declaration (E/CN.6/2020/L.1). The session was then suspended till further notice.




This was always going to be a different CSW. Because this is a special year for gender equality. It is 25 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In addition to the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform Action, this year marks 20 years of implementing Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It is also UN Women's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday and the start of the UN Decade of Action. During this time,

Leaders at the one day session of CSW 64 pledged to ramp up efforts to fully implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, still considered the most visionary blueprint on women's rights. The Political Declaration is the main outcome of the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

This year's session focused entirely on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The review took stock of the status of women, including in-depth assessment of current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.



UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, said: “25 years after Beijing, we all recognize that progress on women’s rights has not gone far or fast enough. It’s 2020, yet no country has achieved gender equality and women continue to be squeezed into just one quarter of the space at the tables of power. Today, Member States have reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action, the progress and the gaps. Women and girls will hold them accountable as we work together for true and lasting equality and the full enjoyment of our human rights.”

In the Political Declaration, Member States welcomed the progress made towards the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, but expressed concern that overall, progress has not been fast or deep enough. In some areas progress has been uneven, and that structural barriers, discriminatory practices and the feminization of poverty persist.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/3/speech-ed-phumzile-csw64>

Related Links:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/3/press-release-csw64-adopts-political-declaration>

## **International Women’s Day 2020**

The United Nations Observance of International Women’s Day 2020 took place at the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations Secretariat in New York on Friday, 6 March 2020. It brought together the next generations of women and girl leaders and gender equality activists with the women’s rights advocates and visionaries who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action more than two decades ago.

The event celebrated changemakers of all ages and genders and discussed how they can collectively tackle the unfinished business of empowering all women and girls in the years to come. The Observance saw the participation of senior-most representatives of the United Nations system, including the Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and an inter-generational dialogue with gender equality activists from ages 11 to 75. The event also featured musical performances by UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and Grammy Awards winner Ms. Angelique Kidjo, also a speaker at the event,

### **Around the world**

Hundreds of events and initiatives mobilized people to demand progress on closing the gender gap in countries worldwide. 90 stock exchanges around the world raised awareness of the pivotal role that the private sector can play in advancing women’s empowerment by hosting a bell ringing ceremony. Film screenings in the UN Women



Oasis centres at the Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps in Jordan were organized engaging refugee women and girls but also host communities.

A global comic and cartoon competition on Beijing+25 and Generation Equality was launched in partnership with Belgium, France, Mexico and the European Commission, calling on the younger generation to picture how gender equality looks like to them. In Thailand a "Women in Focus" photo exhibition was launched in partnership with French Embassy and Alliance Francaise, and in Mexico a marathon for gender equality was organized.

See at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/3/press-release-ahead-of-international-womens-day-report-warns-that-progress-is-lagging>

## **Netflix and UN Women launch special collection curated by 55 groundbreaking women in entertainment**

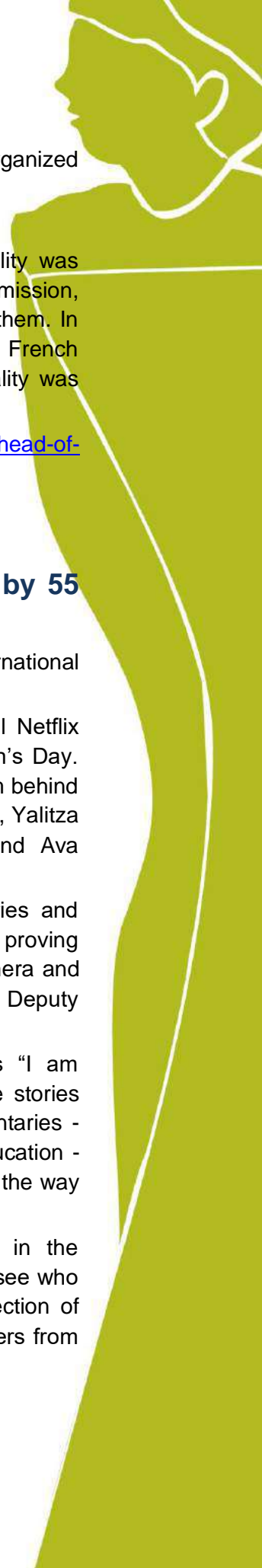
***Because She Watched***” collection celebrates the power of storytelling this International Women’s Day

Netflix and UN Women on IWD launched “Because She Watched”, a special Netflix collection of series, documentaries, and films to celebrate International Women’s Day. The collection, which will be available all year, is curated by female creators from behind and in front of the camera — including Sophia Loren, Janet Mock, Salma Hayek, Yalitza Aparicio, Millie Bobby Brown, Laurie Nunn, Lana Condor, Petra Costa and Ava DuVernay.

“This collaboration is about taking on the challenge of telling women’s stories and showing women in all their diversity. It’s about making visible the invisible, and proving that only by fully representing and including women on screen, behind-the-camera and in our narratives overall, society will truly flourish,” said Anita Bhatia, UN Women Deputy Executive Director.

Created for International Women’s Day, whose official theme this year is “I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights,” the collection celebrates the stories that have inspired the women who inspire us. These series, films and documentaries - Unbelievable and Followers to Orange Is the New Black, Lionheart and Sex Education - have started important, often hard, conversations that have helped to challenge the way we see the world.

The collection is available at [Netflix.com/BecauseSheWatched](https://Netflix.com/BecauseSheWatched). Every title in the collection will be labeled “XXXX’s Women’s Day Pick” so members can easily see who picked which story. In addition, members will be able to choose from a selection of “Because She Watched” profile icons to celebrate their favorite female characters from the collection.



UN Women and Netflix's partnership in support of the Generation Equality campaign comes on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, recognized as a visionary agenda for women's rights. We hope that it will spread the message that realizing women's rights means putting women front and center to achieve gender equality

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/3/press-release-netflix-and-un-women-launch-special-collection>

## **Launch of 'Women's SDG Bond' gender equality finance initiative**

On 6 February 2020, International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, the UN Women, the Global Media Campaign Charity to End FGM (GMC) and global law firm White & Case LLP came together to support the achievement of gender equality by using innovative financial tools.

Gender inequality, which continues to cost the world millions of lives and trillions of dollars in lost opportunities, can be ended with adequate resources and appropriate financing. Inspired by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, a finance initiative is being created to include innovative financing structures for sovereign bond issuances to finance the achievement of gender equality globally by 2030 with an initial focus on ending female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage in selected countries in Africa. The finance initiative is also exploring the creation of a global Women's SDG Fund to invest in countries and companies that have entered into measurable gender equality commitments.

UN Women welcomes this partnership as part of its efforts to increase innovative financing for gender equality.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/2/press-release-launch-of-womens-sdg-bond>

## **UN Women Executive Board convenes its first regular session 2020**

The UN Women Executive Board convened for this year's first regular session on Friday, 14 February at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The President of the Executive Board, H.E. Mr. Jukka Salovaara, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, opened the Session and the UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, delivered her remarks.

The Executive Board was presented with updates on the implementation of UN General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning of the UN development system; the midterm review of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021; and the working methods of the Executive Boards. In addition, the Executive Board heard briefings on the operational response at the regional level highlighting East, Southern and West Africa; mobilizing for the Generation Equality Forum; and options on improving the quality of the structured dialogue on financing.

The detailed agenda of this session and all official documents may be accessed on the Executive Board webpage or the PaperSmart-portal of the United Nations.

See at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/2/announcer-executive-board-convenes-first-regular-session-2020>

## Recommended Reading

UN Women released a series of issue briefs focused on violence against women the “EVAW COVID-19 briefs” series, as given below:

### Issue Brief: COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls

This brief highlights emerging evidence of the impact of the recent global pandemic of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls. It makes recommendations to be considered by all sectors of society, from governments to international organizations and to civil society organizations, in order to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, at the onset, during, and after the public health crisis, with examples of actions already taken. It also considers the economic impact of the pandemic and its implications for violence against women and girls in the long term.



It is a living document that draws upon the knowledge and experience of a wide range of experts who support solutions to end violence against women and girls, attentive to the country context in which the crisis is occurring.

See at:

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>

## COVID-19 and essential services provision for survivors of violence against women and girls

This brief explores the implications for the provision of essential services for women and girls who have experienced violence during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). It provides recommendations for governments, civil society, and international organizations that are seeking to improve the quality of and access to coordinated health, police and justice, and social services for all women and girls, especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination and are at increased risk of experiencing violence. It was informed by a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society and women's rights organizations, which, in many countries, provide most of the frontline services for survivors.

The paper complements the UN Women's brief "[COVID-19 and violence against women and girls](#)" and should be read in conjunction with sector-specific guidance from WHO on "[COVID-19 and violence against women](#)", from UNODC on "[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19 response\) – UNODC thematic brief on gender-based violence against women and girls](#)", and from UNFPA on "[COVID-19: A gender lens – Protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting gender equality](#)".

## UN Women report released on IWD 2020 warns that progress towards gender equality is lagging and hard-fought gains are under threat

*Aligned with 2020 theme, "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights", the Report issues call to action to achieve gender equality and justice for this generation, 25 years after the Beijing Platform for Action.*



Marking the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the first time that progress on the implementation of the Platform is reviewed in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Women launched its report, "Women's Rights in Review 25 years after Beijing", a comprehensive stock-take on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which remains the most comprehensive agenda for gender equality ever agreed.

The report finds that progress towards gender equality is faltering and hard-won advances are being reversed. Rampant inequality, the climate emergency, conflict and the alarming rise of exclusionary politics all threaten future progress towards gender equality. The report flags the lack of effective action to boost women's representation at the tables of power and warns that the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action will never be realized if the most excluded women and girls are not acknowledged and prioritized.

It highlights that what's needed now is a concerted drive to scale up, expand, and deepen policies and programmes that can accelerate the implementation of the entire Platform for Action for this generation and the next.

See at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/womens-rights-in-review>

## Report published on the importance of accountability for child rights violations

A report by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria on child rights violations, which highlights the need for investigations to improve accountability for child rights violations was released in March 2020.

The report, titled “They have erased the dreams of my children: Children’s rights in the Syrian Arab Republic”, documents the devastating consequences of the conflict on children, who have been killed and maimed, and subjected to myriad violations by warring parties since 2011. Rape and sexual violence have been used repeatedly against men, women, boys and girls as a tool to punish, humiliate and instill fear among communities.

The report identifies factors such as limited capacities for investigating conflict-related sexual violence, paired with deep-rooted gender biases, responsible for impeding the effectiveness of investigative and judicial authorities.

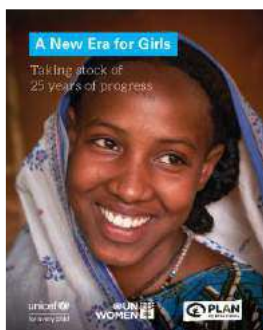
In the report, the Commission urges parties to respect the special protection that children are entitled to under international humanitarian and human rights law, ensure accountability for violations that have occurred, and makes a series of recommendations to increase support for child victims.

See more at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/2/news-report-on-accountability-for-child-rights-violations>

## 25 years of uneven progress: Despite gains in education, world still a violent, highly discriminatory place for girls

***Two and a half decades after the historic Beijing women’s conference, violence against women and girls still not only common, but accepted***

More girls are going to school and staying in school than ever before, but remarkable gains in education have made little headway in helping shape a more equal, less violent environment for girls, UNICEF, Plan International and UN Women warned today in report launched in March 2020.



The report, released ahead of the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, *A New Era for Girls: Taking stock on 25 years of progress*, is issued in the context of the Generation Equality campaign and to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing

Declaration and Platform for Action – the historic blueprint for advancing women’s and girls’ rights.

See at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-new-era-for-girls-taking-stock-of-25-years-of-progress/>

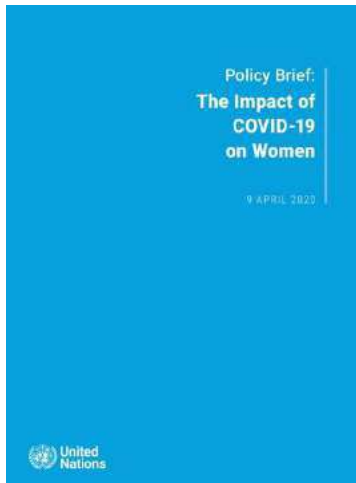
Nearly 64 million girls were born in 1995, the year the Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action was adopted, beginning their lives as the global community committed to improving their rights. In 2020, nearly 68 million girls are expected to be born. This report, finds that while girls’ lives are better today than they were 25 years ago, the gains are uneven across regions and countries. This is particularly true for adolescent girls.

Girls born today are expected to live eight years longer, yet we are still far from the vision of gender equality set out in 1995. This report demonstrates the need to focus on the realities girls face today and addresses the critical issues of making sure girls have access to 12 years of education and the skills they need for the workforce; ending gender-based violence, child marriage and female genital m utilation (FGM); and improving girls’ health and nutrition.



## UN Secretary-General’s policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women

This policy brief by the UN Secretary-General explores how women and girls’ lives are changing in the face of COVID-19, and outlines suggested priority measures to accompany both the immediate response and longer-term recovery efforts.



See at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>

### Websites

#### European Institute for Gender Equality-EIGE

EIGE launched a dedicated page for gender and Covid 19

This webpage aims to raise awareness about some of the gendered impacts that Covid-19 is having on our society. The information draws on EIGE’s existing research and gender statistics to highlight the different realities that women and men could be facing in light of this pandemic.

Access at: <https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality>

#### UN Women Info

##### *Employment opportunities*

You can find a monthly list of vacancy announcements at:

<http://www.unwomen.org/about-us/employment>

You can read Network online at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/fpnetworks.htm>

Network—The UN Women’s Newsletter

Editor-in-Chief: Ms. Aparna Mehrotra, Director, Division for UN system Coordination, UN Women

Production: Coordination Division, UN Women

Design and layout: UN System Coordination Division, UN Women, New York

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