

# GENDER EQUALITY AS AN ACCELERATOR FOR ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



DISCUSSION PAPER



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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CEDAW</b>	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (also used to refer to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women)
<b>CFR</b>	Council on Foreign Relations
<b>EEOC</b>	United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
<b>ESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>GII</b>	Gender Inequality Index
<b>ICRW</b>	International Center for Research on Women
<b>IDS</b>	Institute of Development Studies
<b>IFC</b>	International Finance Corporation
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>INDEC</b>	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo de Argentina
<b>INEGI</b>	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Mexico)
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IPU</b>	Inter-Parliamentary Union
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OSAGI</b>	Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>STEM</b>	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme

<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNRISD</b>	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WEDO</b>	Women’s Environment and Development Organization
<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WIEGO</b>	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
<b>WOCAN</b>	Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management

## Summary

Gender equality lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes that achieving gender equality is a matter of human rights and is crucial to progress across all the goals and targets.

While being a goal in its own right, gender equality cuts across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and is reflected in 45 targets and 54 indicators for the SDGs. Furthermore, gender equality can be a catalytic policy intervention that triggers positive multiplier effects across the spectrum of development.

Evidence collected in this paper shows that gender equality is critical to achieving a wide range of objectives pertaining to sustainable development, from promoting economic growth and labour productivity, to reducing poverty and enhancing human capital through health and education, attaining food security, addressing climate change impacts and strengthening resilience to disasters, and ensuring more peaceful and inclusive communities. Based on this evidence, the paper argues that accelerating the pace of advancing gender equality in all spheres of society leads to a more rapid increase in progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The paper suggests that action in the following key areas is needed to accelerate progress:

- (i) ensuring equal rights, opportunities and outcomes for both women and men;
- (ii) enhancing women's agency, capabilities and participation in decision-making processes;
- (iii) eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination;
- (iv) transforming power relations at all levels of society.

Achieving equality between women and men also requires institutionalizing a gender-responsive approach to financing, and ensuring that adequate investments are made to implement national plans and policies for gender equality and women's empowerment. These include, among others, promoting decent work, ensuring access to resources, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work, and strengthening social protection for all. The systematic design and collection of and access to high-quality, reliable and timely gender-disaggregated data are essential to implementing effective and evidence-based policies.

To advance gender equality, it is also important to implement and reinforce legal and institutional arrangements on gender equality, while strengthening accountability mechanisms for fulfilling existing commitments. This requires political will and stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration involving not only national and local governments, but also civil society, the private sector, academia and the media.



## 1. Introduction

Gender equality lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set an ambitious universal plan of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within 15 years, with a central pledge to leave no one behind (UN 2015a). It recognizes that realizing gender equality is a matter of human rights and is crucial to progress across all the goals and targets. However, the SDGs will not be attained if women—who accounted for 3.7 billion persons in 2017, or 49.6 percent of the world’s population (UNDESA 2017)—are denied access to resources and opportunities for education, employment and decision-making.

Gender equality is a goal in its own right enshrined in SDG 5 and it cuts across all 17 SDGs within the Agenda, which contains 45 targets and 54 indicators related to gender equality. It is found to have positive effects on promoting economic growth and labour productivity (SDG 8) and enhancing human capital through health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4), which has important implications for poverty reduction (SDG 1). Gender equality is also critical for attaining food security (SDG 2) and addressing climate change (SDG 13), while also strengthening resilience to climate-related disasters and managing natural resources. Furthermore, providing equal opportunities for women’s participation in decision-making processes is beneficial for ensuring more peaceful and inclusive communities (SDG 16) (Barrientos and DeJong 2006; Kabeer 2003; Kabeer and Natali 2013; Quisumbing 2003).

Yet the potential for gender equality to advance the 2030 Agenda goes beyond what is reflected in the SDGs and their targets. There is growing recognition that gender equality can be an accelerator—or a catalytic policy intervention—that triggers positive multiplier effects across the spectrum of development. A body of evidence shows that investing in expanded opportunities for women and girls; promoting their economic, social and political participation; and improving their access to social protection, employment and natural resources result in a more productive economy, reduced poverty and inequalities, enhanced human capital and ecosystem, and more peaceful and resilient societies (ILO 2016; UNDP 2016a; UN Women 2014; World Bank 2011).

The main message of the paper is that accelerating the pace of advancing gender equality in all spheres of society—in the home and community, in the economy and workplace, in health and educational attainment, in political participation and leadership—leads to faster progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is therefore important to adopt a holistic approach to gender equality aimed at transforming the structures that create and perpetuate gender inequalities, rather than implementing separate piecemeal interventions.

In the following sections, the paper aims to bring together evidence on *how* gender equality enables the achievement of several development goals in an integrated way; *why* it is important to invest in gender equality and promote women’s agency in achieving the SDGs; and *what type* of policy interventions related to gender equality are needed to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The paper recognizes the importance of gender equality in achieving each of the SDGs and relevant targets and acknowledges that the evidence provided is specific to the context, time period and methodology used. While it is beyond the scope of the current study to examine all issues in-depth, it endeavours to focus on those areas where the most relevant and reliable evidence is available.

## Box 1. Gender equality: what it means in real terms



Gender equality refers to the equal rights, opportunities and outcomes for girls and boys and women and men. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but their rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born female or male (OSAGI 2001).

This paper maintains that achieving gender equality in real terms entails four major interrelated elements:

- (i) ensuring equal rights, capabilities and access to resources and opportunities by both women and men;
- (ii) strengthening women's agency, or ability, to make choices and decisions and act upon them;
- (iii) eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination;
- (iv) transforming power relations at all levels of society—from individuals and households to institutions and structures.

This approach to gender equality recognizes that women are not inherently vulnerable but are rather the agents of transformative change. Attaining gender equality is critical both as an important goal in itself and as an effective means to achieve sustainable development.

It is important to emphasize that gender equality is not a women's issue alone and should engage both men and women. Achieving gender equality requires that the needs, capabilities, experiences and contributions of both girls and boys and women and men are taken into consideration, while acknowledging their diversity. Gender equality is not about transferring opportunities from men to women, but about creating conditions where each person regardless of his or her gender has the right and ability to realize their human potential.

**Source:** Elaborated and adapted based on Kabeer and Natali (2013), OSAGI (2001)

## 2. Evidence on multiple benefits of advancing gender equality

In the context of international development, there has been a tendency to exclude women from active participation in development processes and treat them as passive recipients of development assistance, with little recognition of their rights and voice (Bradshaw et al. 2013; World Bank 2001). This was manifested, for example, in the fact that most conditional cash transfer programmes around the world targeted women who had been perceived as efficient distributors of goods and services within the household, with positive implications for children's health and education (Bradshaw et al. 2013; World Bank 2011). Such an approach had taken place within a particular development framework that had prioritized economic efficiency and focused on individual well-being and poverty reduction in its narrow sense, rather than paying attention to unequal social relations, power structures and gender norms that underpin exclusion and discrimination (Dugarova 2015; UNRISD 2005; UN Women 2015b). As a consequence, women's concerns have been viewed in isolation, as separate issues that are unrelated to major development concerns such as democratic governance, climate change and the environment, and peace and security.

Over the past decade, compelling new evidence has emerged that emphasizes the importance of gender equality and women's agency, which not only boost economic growth but also contribute to broader development outcomes. The following sections will look at how gender equality contributes to multiple dimensions of development and what is required to accelerate progress.

### 2.1 Economic development, poverty reduction, good health and education

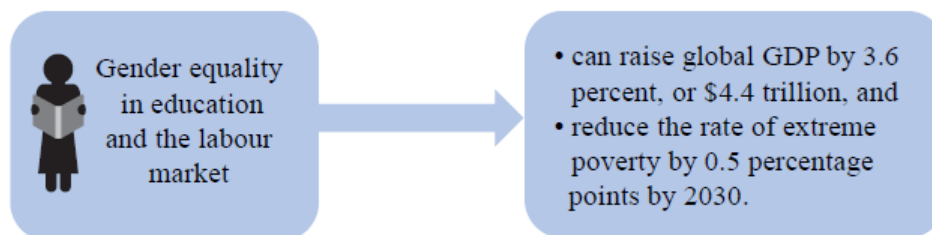
Increasing gender equality contributes to economic development in several ways. The direct pathway operates through female education and participation in the labour market. Gender inequality in education and employment affects economic growth by reducing the average amount of human capital in a society and thus harms economic performance (Klasen 1999, 2002). It does so by artificially restricting the pool of talent from which employers can draw, thereby reducing the average ability of the workforce (Dollar and Gatti 1999; Esteve-Volart 2004). This also impedes the development of new ideas, which is critical for entrepreneurship and economic diversification, the important drivers of sustainable growth (Herrington and Kew 2017; Kazandjian et al. 2016).

Using the International Futures economic model, UNDP has conducted global and regional analyses of the economic impacts of investing in gender equality in education and labour force participation and has found significant benefits.<sup>1</sup> Notably, the results indicate that interventions in

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<sup>1</sup> This analysis has been conducted for the current paper. The International Futures model is a model for global forecasting developed by the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver, United States. It is a free and open-source quantitative tool which aims to help users understand dynamics within and across global systems, and to think systematically about long-term trends. In this analysis, we have modeled two interventions into one gender equality scenario for four units of analysis: world, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa (that is, regions with the largest gender gaps). These interventions focus on reaching: (i) equal educational attainment (average number of years of education), and (ii) a 50 percent increase in the female share of the total labour force by 2030. For the education intervention, we did this by increasing the female intake and graduation rates from the primary up to tertiary level, and for the labour force

increasing female educational attainment and labour force participation by 2030 will have contributed 3.6 percent, or US\$4.4 trillion, to global gross domestic product (GDP) and will have reduced the share of the global population living in extreme poverty (measured at less than \$1.90 a day) by 0.5 percentage points. The highest impacts on GDP are found in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and South Asia with increases of 4.1 percent and 4.4 percent respectively, while the reduction of poverty is most pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa with a drop of 0.7 percentage points. This implies that policy interventions in female educational attainment and labour force participation increase human capital and labour supply, which leads to higher productivity and economic growth, while also contributing to poverty reduction.



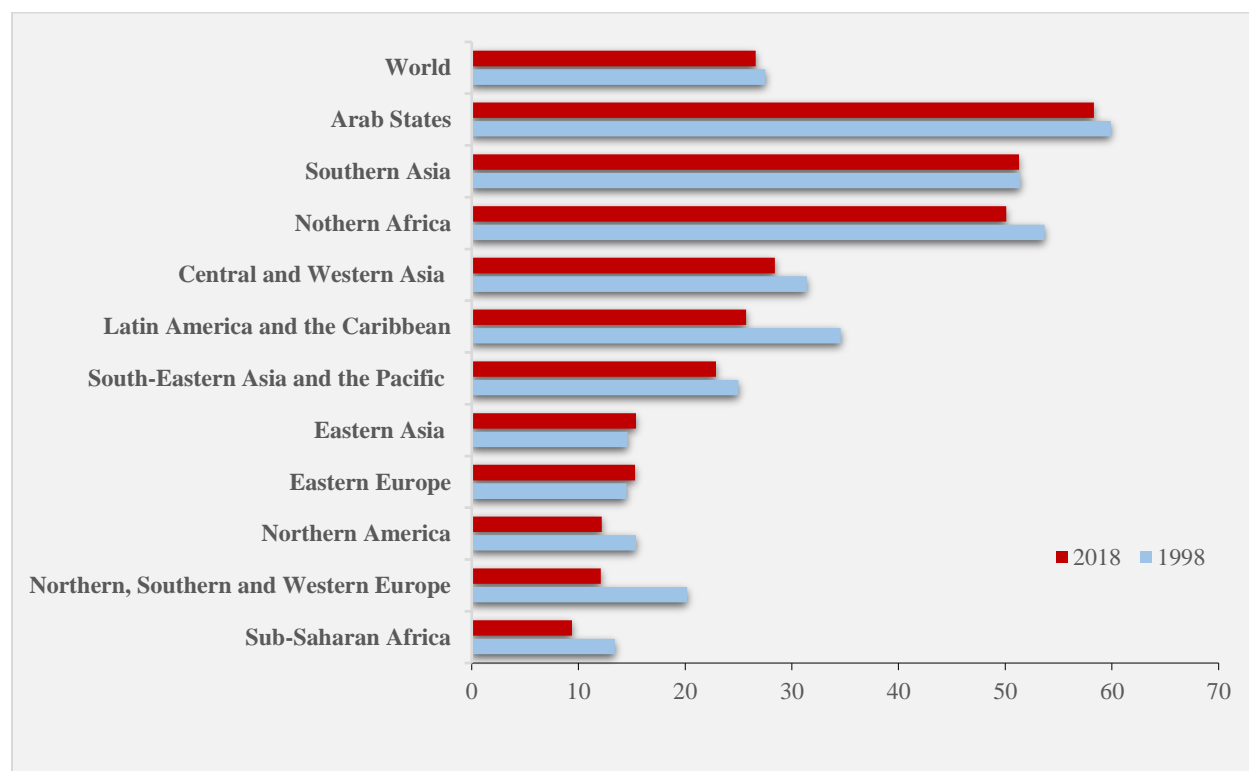
Previous studies have come to similar conclusions on the positive effects of closing gender gaps in education and employment. In their analysis of data on education, employment and growth in different world regions during the period between 1960 and 2000, Klasen and Lamanna (2009) have found that the combined costs of education and employment gaps in MENA and South Asia amount to 0.9-1.7 and 0.1-1.6 percentage point differences in growth, respectively, compared to East Asia. This suggests that inequality between women and men in education and labour force participation in MENA and South Asia constrains the growth of these regions, despite their improvement in female education over the past two decades. Women in these contexts face structural barriers in education and employment which can be related to economic reconstruction, recession, and limited domestic and foreign investment (Klasen and Lamanna 2009), and may also be constrained by social, cultural and ideological factors (World Bank 2004). These barriers are not only disadvantageous to women but also harm the entire society through reduced economic growth.

A recent study by the International Labour Organization estimates that reducing gender gaps in the labour market could increase global employment by 189 million, or 5.3 percent, by 2025 (ILO 2017a). This in turn would raise global GDP in 2025 by 3.9 percent, or \$5.8 trillion. The greatest benefits would be seen in the regions with the largest gender gaps, namely Northern Africa (which would see a GDP increase of 9.5 percent), the Arab States (7.1 percent) and Southern Asia (9.2 percent). Even in Northern America and Western Europe, which have made substantial progress in reducing gender gaps in the labour market, GDP could increase by 2 percent—an important contribution during times of weakened growth (ILO 2017a). In fact, data show that during the period 1998–2018, gender gaps in labour force participation rates in most regions decreased, with the largest declines found in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern, Southern and Western Europe, but in Eastern Asia and Eastern Europe the gap widened (Figure 1). Yet in every region, women are participating in the labour force to a lesser extent than men.

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intervention it was done by increasing the female labour force participation and growth rates. For more details about the model see [pardee.du.edu](http://pardee.du.edu).

**Figure 1. Gender gaps in labour force participation rates by region, 1998 and 2018**



**Note:** The gender gap is measured as the difference between the labour force participation rates of women and men. **Source:** Author’s calculations based on ILO World Employment and Social Outlook data (<http://www.ilo.org/wesodata>)

The 2016 Africa Human Development Report indicates that African economies will benefit immensely if women’s access to paid work was equal to that of men. It estimates that the economic costs of gender gaps in the labour market between 2010 and 2014 were nearly \$95 billion annually in sub-Saharan Africa alone—equivalent of about 6 percent of GDP, which is almost twice the amount of official development assistance that goes to the continent (UNDP 2016a). In addition to direct costs, the loss also involves indirect costs associated with limited life choices like sexual and reproductive rights, sending children to school, and ensuring that families have access to quality health services (ibid). In the same vein, the 2016 Asia-Pacific Human Development Report points to a high economic cost of women’s low labour force participation in the Asia-Pacific region where gender inequality in the labour market is estimated to subtract somewhere between \$42 billion and \$46 billion from GDP annually (UNDP 2016d).

It should be acknowledged that macroeconomic simulations on the contribution of female labour force participation to GDP growth often do not take into account various challenges that pertain to gender inequality. These, among others, include constraints on labour supply and demand (Kabeer 2018; UN Women 2018). In particular, the challenges concerning the supply side are related to the significant amount of time that women allocate to unpaid care work, lower education levels and a lack of bargaining power, while the demand side can be problematic due to employer

discrimination and scarcity of decent job opportunities, along with the prevalence of underemployment and women's overrepresentation in informal work.

Another argument for the positive effect of women's labour force participation on economic growth relates to international competitiveness (Klasen 2006). East Asian governments in newly industrializing economies such as Hong Kong, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan have been able to be competitive in world markets through the use of women-intensive export-oriented manufacturing industries such as textiles, apparel, consumer electronics, leather products and food processing—a strategy that has been adopted in South Asia (particularly Bangladesh) and several countries across the developing world (Seguino 2000a, b). The successful strategy of these East Asian countries during the export-led boom years was supported by a women's wide access to basic education and health, low gender gaps in employment, and policies to ensure high levels of household income equality (Birdsall et al. 1995). These findings suggest that for such competitive export industries to emerge and grow, women need to be educated and have access to employment (Klasen 2006). At the same time, the adequacy of such strategy in relation to gender equality and decent work is questionable, as it was accompanied by discrimination, large gender wage gaps, and a lack of security in the workplace (Seguino 2000a, b).

In some of these contexts, female migrant workers were critical to the countries' growth (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004; Seguino 2000b). In fact, migrant women make important contributions to the economy both in the countries of destination and origin, with estimates showing that in 2016 migrant women were responsible for approximately \$300 billion in global remittances (World Bank Group 2016). Although women's wages are generally lower than men's, female migrant workers tend to send home a higher proportion of their earnings more frequently (Petrozziello 2013). For example, women seasonal migrants in Nicaragua were found to send back 73 percent of their income earned abroad compared to men who sent back 65 percent (Macours and Vakis 2010). Women migrant workers also contribute to economic growth and human capital development through global value and care chains (Yeates 2018) and through the transfer of ideas, knowledge and technology (IOM 2017).

Furthermore, greater gender equality, including at top management levels, improves business performance (Catalyst 2011; Credit Suisse 2012, 2014; ILO 2015a; McKinsey and Company 2013). For example, a study of 366 public companies across a range of industries in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and several countries in Latin America has found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians (Hunt et al. 2015). Another study of 21,980 firms from 91 countries has shown that the presence of women in corporate leadership positions improves firm performance, which can be attributed to non-discrimination and skill diversity (Noland et al. 2016). Evidence further points to the benefits of women's participation in entrepreneurial activities. A recent study on female entrepreneurship in Kenya has shown that women's business ownership has resulted in women having a greater ability to support themselves, their families and communities, and is associated with positive changes to societal norms about women entrepreneurs (Lock and Smith 2016). Starting an enterprise has been made possible thanks to the availability of microfinance credits, yet limitations exist with regard to women expanding their businesses due to unintended consequences of loans, insufficient knowledge and education, as well as a lack of access to finance at scale.

Increased female labour market participation also has important implications for the reduction of poverty and inequality (Gasparini and Marchionni 2015). In Latin America, for example, improvement in women's income, together with public and private transfers such as remittances and cash transfer programmes, were crucial for poverty reduction, accounting for 30 percent of the reduction in extreme poverty between 2000 and 2010 (World Bank 2012). Labour market participation of both women and men was also the main force behind the region's decline in income inequality since 2000. Yet several challenges remain including labour market segmentation, wage gaps, and limited women's agency manifested in high levels of gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy, which affect gender equality and undermine poverty reduction efforts (ibid). Notably, in the Dominican Republic 22 percent of births occur among girls aged 15–19, with an adolescent birth rate standing at 101 births per 1,000 women, which is the highest rate among countries with a high level of human development (UNDP 2017e).

In addition to direct impacts on economic development, gender equality also makes significant indirect contributions through improved well-being of children. A large body of evidence indicates that women's increased access to income and resources, better nutritional status and higher education levels result in greater health and education outcomes for their children (Allendorf 2007; Doss 2013; Duflo 2003; FAO 2011; Thomas 1990, 1997; World Bank 2001, 2011). For example, earlier studies on microcredit in Bangladesh have shown that an increase in assets and income empower women within the household, increase consumption for them and their children, and contribute to other aspects of welfare such as schooling (Khandker 1998). Another study has documented positive effects of women's education on children's health. Using data from 175 countries between 1970 and 2009, Gakidou et al. (2010) have found that for every additional year of education for women of reproductive age, child mortality decreased by 9.5 percent. Conversely, when women experience poverty and unemployment, this negatively affects human capital, with studies showing the impact of mother's poverty and depression on early childhood development (Agénor et al. 2010). Greater investments in children's well-being in turn improve the productivity of the next generation of workers and have a positive effect on economic development.

While there is strong evidence of the catalytic effects of gender equality on economic growth, the reverse does not necessarily hold true (Kabeer and Natali 2013). The interrelationship between economic growth and gender equality is mediated by various context-specific factors, including the nature of growth strategies, the structure of the economy, the sectoral composition of women's employment, levels of economic development, and cultural factors (Kabeer 2016a; Seguino 2010). In fact, some patterns of growth are premised on maintaining gender inequalities, such as through maintaining gender wage gaps,<sup>2</sup> and entrenching gender-discriminatory values and institutions

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<sup>2</sup> Several studies have examined the impact of gender discrimination in wages on economic performance. Seguino (2000a, b) argues that in semi-industrialized economies, gender-based wage gaps contributed to growth. This is because in these economies with labour-intensive export-oriented manufacturing sectors, women were segregated into export sectors, and the surplus of workers lowered female wages. A productive but cheap female labour force enhanced competitiveness and profitability, which attracted investment and boosted economic growth. According to Blecker and Seguino (2002), the gender wage gap could not be explained by the low productivity of female labour relative to male, in view of women's relatively high levels of educational attainment in these countries. Rather it reflected the discriminatory practices embedded in highly patriarchal societies characterized by traditional gender norms and social institutions that reduced women's mobility in the public domain, promoted their secondary earner status and facilitated their crowding into a narrow range of poorly-paid jobs in export sectors or unpaid household work (Seguino 2000a). This altogether served to limit women's bargaining power (Kabeer and Natali 2013). On the other hand, there are

(Kabeer and Natali 2013; Seguino 2000a; UNRISD 2005). For example, despite the economic achievements of East Asian countries, the incorporation of women into the paid labour market maintained gendered hierarchies and did not challenge traditional gender norms (Braunstein 2012). Moreover, although the growth rate in Africa over the last decade has been considerable, primarily due to a large increase in the demand for natural resources, the status of women within families and in society overall has not changed in tandem with GDP growth (UNDP 2016a). This is because of persistent gender discrimination in education and social norms that govern care and domestic work, as well as unequal access to economic assets, participation in the workplace, entrepreneurship opportunities, and use of natural resources.

Discrimination also affects migrants. Despite the positive effects of migration, in many situations migrant women face exploitation and social exclusion in the countries of origin, transit and destination (IOM 2017; UNDESA 2006; UN Women 2017b). International care migration in particular tends to be regressively redistributive, and global care chains are rooted in social relations of inequalities, as the benefits, risks and costs of care resources that are extracted and exported from poorer to richer countries are often unequally distributed (Yeates 2018). Notably, while migrants' remittances provide a substantial form of revenue for the country of origin, these remittances are private transfers and thus do not necessarily flow directly into the public sector or translate into funding for improved social services (Chanda 2002).

In fact, evidence shows that while globally more women are in paid employment today, they continue to be underpaid and underemployed, while performing the majority of part-time, temporary and informal jobs (ILO 2018a). Women around the world tend to earn on average 23 percent less than men, while dedicating on average three times more time than men to unpaid care work (ILO 2016, 2018b). A recent analysis of 141 countries has shown that gender inequality in earnings could lead to losses in wealth of \$160.2 trillion, which is about twice the value of GDP globally (Wodon and de la Brière 2018). In developing countries, time-related underemployment among women (that is, working fewer hours than desired) can be as high as 40–50 percent (ILO 2016), while part-time employment among women in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries on average stood at around 26 percent in 2015, which is nearly three times higher than that among men.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, recent research demonstrates that even in countries which have been considered positive outliers in gender equality in the labour market, gaps in earnings between men and women persist. Notably in Denmark, the so-called “motherhood or child penalty” (that is, the share of losses accruing to women's earnings after childbirth) increased dramatically from 40 percent in 1980 to 80 percent in 2013 (Kleven et al. 2018). The penalties in earnings have been attributed to considerable impacts of children on women's occupation, sector and firm choices, and the persistence of such penalties has been explained by the intergenerational transmission of

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studies which point to the negative effects of large gender pay gaps on economic growth, mainly through reduced female employment and increased fertility (Cavalcanti and Tavares 2007; Galor and Weil 1996). While both perspectives regarding gender-based wage discrimination can be relevant, it depends on the time horizon considered (Klasen and Lamanna 2009). The former studies are concerned with more short-term, demand-induced growth effects, while the latter are longer-term growth models where growth is driven by supply constraints (ibid).

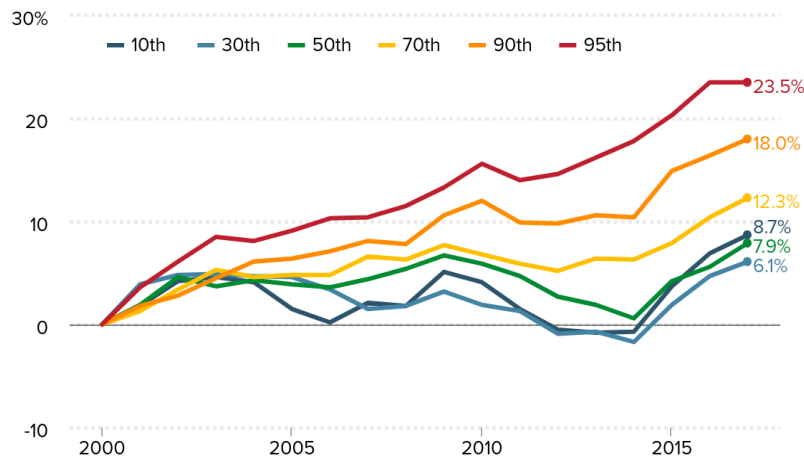
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/part-time-employment-by-sex.htm>, accessed 15 August 2018.



behaviour. Women who grow up in traditional families based on the male breadwinner model are found to incur larger penalties when they become mothers themselves.

Gender pay gaps have also been linked to intergenerational class mobility in the labour market (England 2010; Rubery and Grimshaw 2014). Women in the United States, for example, had strong economic incentives to move into male-dominated occupations over the past decades, and these incentives in fact varied by social class, with well-educated women having a stronger stimulus to be engaged in high-paying jobs (England 2010). A new report on American wage distribution has further revealed that since 2000 inequality among women has increased (Figure 2), with wage gaps being wider among women with less education (Gould 2018). Yet at every education level, women are paid consistently less than their male counterparts.

**Figure 2. Wage inequality among women in the United States, 2000-2017**



**Note:** Cumulative percent change in real hourly wages of women, by wage percentile. The xth-percentile wage is the wage at which x% of wage earners earn less and (100-x)% earn more. Sample is based on all workers aged 18-64. **Source:** Gould (2018)

It is important to recognize that it is not just labour force participation and access to employment per se that matter for sustainable economic development, but also the terms on which women enter the labour force and the quality of their jobs (ILO 2016; Kabeer 2016a; Seguino 2016a). Women’s employment and earnings are important for their bargaining power—a key factor in gender equality within the family, in the labour market and in society at large (Seguino 2016a; Sen 1990; Thomas 1997; World Bank 2001). Yet segregation of women in low-paid, insecure and unproductive jobs will do little to improve their situation (Kabeer and Natali 2013; Seguino 2016a), especially as women’s choices are often constrained (Chopra and Zambelli 2017). It is the extent to which women are able to control the proceeds of their own labour that determines the transformative potential of their work (Kabeer et al. 2013) and improves their ability to negotiate for resources, including at the household level. This not only benefits women themselves but also has a range of growth-enhancing effects including higher savings (Seguino and Floro 2003) and more productive investments (Stotsky 2006). For women’s increased education and labour force

participation to yield full benefits, a supportive macroeconomic environment is also needed, with sufficient aggregate demand to generate employment demand (Seguino 2016b).

It should be pointed out that while girls and women remain more disadvantaged, in many countries boys tend to underperform in education compared to girls. This is particularly evident in secondary education but also in higher education, with respect to enrolment, completion and learning achievement (Jha et al. 2012; OECD 2017c; UNESCO 2015). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) finds that across OECD countries, 15-year-old boys are more likely than girls of the same age to be low achievers. In 2012, 14 percent of boys and 9 percent of girls did not achieve the PISA baseline level of proficiency in reading, mathematics and science, the three core subjects measured by PISA (OECD 2015). Furthermore, in Indonesia, Jordan, Peru and Qatar, more than one in two male students failed to attain the required grade (ibid). The nature and underlying reasons for these gender disparities are highly contextual but often depend on factors such as socioeconomic background, ethnicity, location, attitudes and behaviours which can be affected by social norms and gender stereotypes. For example, a concept of masculinity and related concerns of being excluded by male peers can prompt boys to show disregard for school work and academic achievement (Salisbury et al. 1999; Van Houtte 2004) and lead to violence (Stromquist 2007; UNESCO 2015).

Moreover, while the patterns of sectoral and occupational segregation constrain opportunities for women to access decent jobs and are among the root causes of informality and working poverty among women, in some contexts the incidence of informal employment and working poverty can be higher among men than among women. Notably, in 2018 in several emerging countries in Asia and the Pacific, informality rates for men stand on average at 70 percent compared to 65 percent among women, and in the Arab States, on average, 22 percent of working men live in poverty compared to 13 percent of working women (ILO 2018a). In some of these countries, although women constitute a higher proportion of the low-wage labour force, they are more likely than men to supplement another income within the household and thus contribute to escaping poverty.

As evidence in this section has shown, equality between women and men is central to broad-based economic development. Improving gender equality can lead to faster and more effective achievement of several development goals related to economic growth and decent work (SDG 8), poverty reduction (SDG 1), and improved health and education (SDGs 3 and 4). Gender equality has a strong intergenerational impact on the human capital of future generations that can boost labour productivity and enhance growth. Furthermore, recognizing the contributions of women, including those of female migrant workers, and adopting a gender-responsive rights-based approach to migration can contribute to the reduction of inequality within and among countries (SDG 10). These positive results, however, can only be achieved if girls and boys and women and men are provided with equal opportunities, resources and access to quality education and employment; if discriminatory barriers to their participation, along with gender stereotypes, are removed; and if women are able to exercise their ability to make choices and decisions.

## 2.2 Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work

Achieving gender equality requires the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work that women disproportionately perform (Elson 2008; ILO 2018b; UNDP 2015; UN Women 2018). Lightening the burden of this labour will provide women with more time for engaging in paid work, developing new knowledge and skills, and participating in public life, which will in turn contribute to economic development and improved well-being, human capital and social cohesion (UNDP 2015, 2016b; UN Women 2015a, 2018). The 2030 Agenda has recognized the importance of unpaid care and domestic work by including it under target 5.4 of SDG 5.<sup>4</sup>

Estimates based on time-use survey data in 64 countries suggest that women do an average three-quarters, or 76.2 percent, of the total amount of unpaid care and household work, with countries in Western Europe and North America being closer to gender parity than those in South Asia and MENA (ILO 2018b). Time-wise, women spend on average 3.2 times more hours on unpaid care work than men (that is, 4.25 hours per day compared to 1.23 hour for men) (ibid). This amounts to a total of 201 working days, or 9.2 months, for women and 63 working days, or 2.9 months, for men with no remuneration (based on an average of 21.75 working days per month on an eight-hour basis). Moreover, with longer life expectancies, women comprise a larger proportion of world's older population (UNDESA 2015) and thus play a vital role in providing unpaid care for spouses, grandchildren and other relatives (UNFPA and HelpAge International 2012; UN Women 2015b). By 2030, 2.3 billion people are expected to require care (ILO 2018b), and unless these care needs are properly addressed, the care burden is likely to further constrain women's labour force participation and consequently limit their contribution to the economy.

Although the goods and services produced through unpaid care work are often excluded from GDP calculations and remain invisible, they are critical in sustaining the “economically active” labour force on a daily and generational basis (Kabeer 2016a; UNDP 2015). Among the countries that are attempting to measure the economic value of unpaid care work, estimates range from 20 percent to 60 percent of GDP (Antonopoulos 2009). For example, in the United States the total value of unpaid childcare services in 2012 was estimated to be \$3.2 trillion, or approximately 20 percent of the total value of GDP (Suh and Folbre 2014). When measuring the value of unpaid care work based on an hourly minimum wage, estimates show that unpaid care work amounts to 41.3 percent of GDP in Australia, 25.6 percent of GDP in Canada, and 23.8 percent of GDP in Germany (ILO 2018b). Furthermore, the value of unpaid care and domestic work is comparable to, or even greater, than that of key economic sectors (UN Women 2015b). In Mexico, for instance, the value of unpaid care and domestic work is estimated at 24.2 percent of GDP, higher than manufacturing and commerce (INEGI 2014; OECD 2017a).

The benefits of reducing unpaid care and domestic work for economic growth can be obtained through increasing investments in public infrastructure, notably social infrastructure, which includes childcare, elder care, health and education services and facilities, and physical

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<sup>4</sup> While many countries now administer time-use surveys, unpaid care work still is not counted as economic activity in labour force surveys nor integrated in calculations of GDP. Economic growth—defined as the increase in the market value of goods and services produced in a country within a given period—only includes goods and services that are produced in the market place and as such are considered “economic activity” (Kabeer 2016a).

infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and water and energy supply. A recent study by the Women's Budget Group has shown that investing 2 percent of GDP in social infrastructure (especially health and care services) in six emerging economies could generate increases in employment ranging from 1.2 percent to 3.2 percent (De Henau et al. 2017). This means nearly 24 million new jobs, many of which would go to women (as more women are engaged in these services), thereby reducing gender gaps in employment. Similar findings were obtained for seven OECD countries, in which 2 percent of GDP invested in the care industry could increase overall employment from 2.4 percent to 6.1 percent (De Henau et al. 2016). As a result, the employment rate of women would rise by 3.3 to 8.2 percentage points and that of men by 1.4 to 4 percentage points. Jobs can be created directly in the activities where the investment takes place (for example, in providing childcare services or building houses), but also in other sectors and industries that supply necessary materials and services for the investment. The expansion of employment leads to increased household income, which in turn creates demand for more goods and services and thus contributes to the economy (De Henau et al. 2016).

Reducing unpaid care work also has benefits for businesses. An in-depth study of 10 companies has shown that employer-supported childcare has positive effects on recruitment, retention, productivity, diversity and access to markets (IFC 2017). For example, in one company the provision of childcare facilities has reduced staff turnover by one third, and in another company retention of new mothers translates into notional financial returns of \$45 million thanks to childcare support (ibid).

Research identifies a strong link between physical infrastructure expenditures, women's unpaid care burden and potential output growth (Agénor et al. 2010). Better physical infrastructure like roads, electricity, sanitation and water lowers the time intensity of unpaid care work, with benefits for intra-household bargaining power (Chiappori and Meghir 2014; Johnston et al. 2015). An analysis of 38 sub-Saharan African countries during the period 1991–2010 has found a positive effect of physical infrastructure investments on gender equality in employment rates (Seguino and Were 2014). A study in rural Senegal has shown that time savings associated with investments in small water piping systems enabled women to enhance their income-earning activities and to establish new livestock-raising enterprises (van Houweling et al. 2012). Moreover, access to electricity in many households in Uganda has increased the time men spend on unpaid care and domestic work, which they are able to carry out after dark (Parvez Butt et al. 2018). Safe and gender-responsive infrastructure also has positive externalities for health and education for women and children, leading to a virtuous cycle of human capital accumulation, labour productivity and economic growth (Agénor et al. 2010; Braunstein 2012; De Henau et al. 2016). In many developing countries, improved water and sanitation facilities decreases illness and time spent fetching water (UN Women 2015b), while public infrastructure such as transportation and electricity has beneficial effects on school attendance (Koolwal and van der Walle 2010; Nauges and Strand 2017).

Public care services, including early childhood education and care services, as well as care services for the elderly and persons with disabilities, are also critical to redistributing some of the workload for women. For example, the Costa Rican National Childcare and Development Network (Red Nacional de Cuido y Desarrollo Infantil) launched in 2014 exemplifies an initiative which aims to ensure the provision of childcare services to all children up to 6 years of age, thus allowing both

fathers and mothers to engage in the labour market. Between 2014 and 2016, the coverage of children by these services increased by 41 percent, reaching nearly 51,300 children in 2016 (Government of Costa Rica 2017). As of 2010, Kenya's Constitution set forth the shared responsibility of both parents to care for their children, which paved the way for national advocacy to call for more public services that support care provision (Heilman et al. 2017). Faced with a rapidly ageing population and low fertility, Japan embarked on substantive reforms to boost childcare coverage (De Henau et al. 2016). In the two years since it was enacted, a long-term care insurance policy in the Republic of Korea that finances domiciliary and institutional care services for older persons, reduced the share of unpaid care provided by family members, predominantly women, by 15 percent (UN Women 2015a).

Another important pathway to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, thereby achieving more gender equal outcomes, is through the provision of paid parental leave. Parental leave entitlements foster a more equitable division of childrearing responsibilities in the family, which in turn gives women greater opportunities for professional advancement (World Bank 2015). A study of 18 OECD countries in the period 1981 to 2008, for example, has shown that countries with paid leave and public childcare, which facilitate work and family reconciliation, are associated with less economic inequality among households due to women's higher earnings (Nieuwenhuis et al. 2018). In fact, most countries provide paid maternity leave or offer maternity benefits through paid parental leave.<sup>5</sup> Paternity leave entitlements are also becoming more common: by 2015, they were provided in 94 of 170 countries, mostly in developed countries (ILO 2016). In some countries like the Nordics and Germany, paternity leave is mandatory. Fathers may be induced to use more paternal leave through granting a bonus to parents who share parental leave more equally. For example, as of 2017 paid paternity leave provisions in Spain increased from 13 days to four weeks, covered at 100 percent pay and provided by social security (Heilman et al. 2017). In 2016, a new Legal Framework for Early Childhood was adopted in Brazil, including an expansion of paternity leave from 5 to 20 days in many Brazilian companies (ibid).

Evidence suggests that involved fatherhood, child development and mothers' labour market outcomes are all interrelated. Leave entitlements for fathers are found to lead to better job and home-life satisfaction for men, and benefit the health of a child (Huerta et al. 2013; Levtoev et al. 2015; Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel 2007). This in turn is likely to have positive effects on gender equality in the home, which is conducive to gender equality at work and in the community. Fathers' leave also supports women's participation in the labour market and can increase their income and career outcomes. A study from Sweden showed that every month that fathers took paternity leave increased the mother's income by 6.7 percent, as measured four years later, which was more than she lost by taking parental leave herself (Johansson 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> Of 189 countries, seven countries—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Suriname, Tonga and the United States—have no paid parental leave (World Bank 2018). Tonga and Suriname do not provide any kind of leave, Papua New Guinea grants unpaid maternity leave, and the United States provides unpaid parental leave.

## **Box 2. Men, masculinity and gender equality**

Men's and boys' actions, behaviours and attitudes are subject to norms of masculinity, which are often characterized as being aggressive, risk-taking, unemotional and dominant over women (Klugman et al. 2014). Yet there are multiple masculinities which are shaped by class, ethnicity, race and other sources of identity (Connell 1995), as well as diverse social roles (Nurse 2004).

Although men often have more decision-making power and resulting agency than women, they also may feel pressured to conform to societal expectations. Trends in falling employment rates among men, along with their lower educational attainment in recent years compared to women in some countries, heighten gender conflict (Seguino 2016a), with negative effects on intra-household relations and society at large. In particular, men are expected to be providers and protectors of their families, but when they are unable to fulfil those roles, they may compensate by finding alternative ways to prove their masculinity such as substance abuse, more aggression or violence (Tertilt and van den Berg 2012). This can also result in an unspoken depression, suicidal thoughts (Barker et al. 2011), and high mortality and morbidity rates (IDS et al. 2016). Evidence also shows that when men feel unable to live up to societal expectations of masculinity, they may be more susceptible to recruitment into armed groups as a means to “recover lost masculinity” (Dolan 2011). These all have negative effects on men's own well-being, on their families and communities, on public spending (such as on health), and on law and order (IDS et al. 2016).

The harmful practices of men are rooted in gender norms and in economic and work-related stress, childhood experiences and rigid class differences, among other factors (Barker et al. 2011). For example, men who witness and experience violence as children are significantly more likely to use violence in their adult relationships (Jeyaseelan et al. 2007; Kishor and Johnson 2004). Furthermore, conflict, political instability and economic uncertainty all filter into household relations and into men's identities, attitudes and practices (UNDP 2017d). A study on the homicide epidemic in Mexico, for example, has shown how a neoliberal economic model in the country and associated impoverishment, inequality and deprivation have undermined men's capacities to have a dignified life and exercise their masculine identity, thus resulting in interpersonal violence as a resource for respect and manhood (Gamlin and Hawkes 2018). In fact, men tend to be less adaptable or frequently unwilling to accept change that might ease their heavy burden of societally imposed patriarchal duty (El Feki et al. 2017; World Bank 2011).

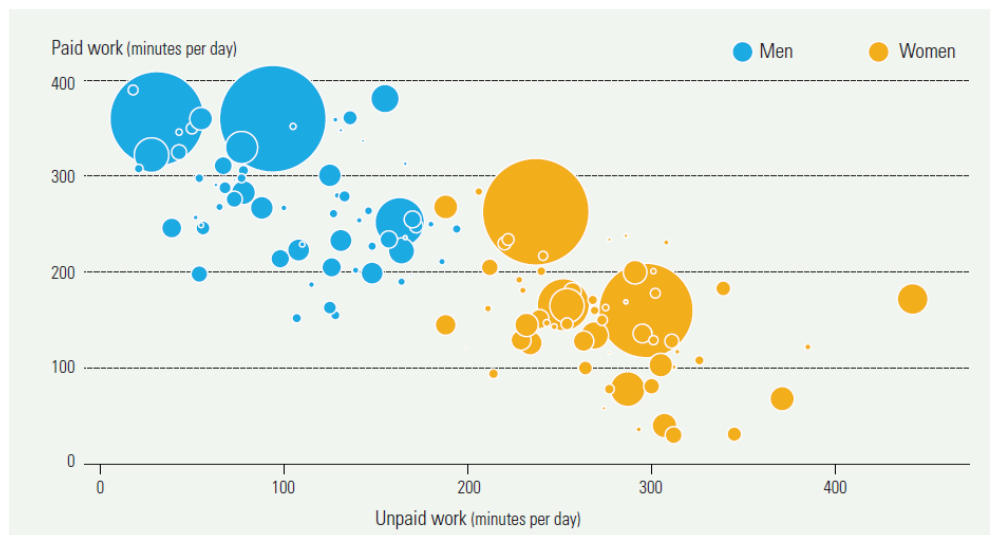
Yet evidence shows that men's attitudes and practices can and do shift, and the constructions of masculinities can be changed in a positive way. A growing body of data confirms that men and boys change as a result of well-designed efforts, including group education, community outreach, mass media campaigns, and health and social services that seek to engage them (Levtov et al. 2014). Positive family role models also matter. Studies show that boys who witnessed their fathers engaging in childcare and domestic work are more likely to undertake this work as adults (Levtov et al. 2015). Several interventions such as those by the South African Sonke Gender Justice, the Brazilian Promundo, MenCare and MenEngage have shown that boys and men can be engaged in work towards gender equality and equitable decision-making (Heilman et al. 2017; Peacock 2012; Ringheim and Feldman-Jacobs 2009; WHO 2007).

Men have much to gain from gender equality. Data from multi-country studies show that men who participate actively as fathers are more likely to be happy and have better physical and mental health (Levtov et al. 2015); and men who take on greater caregiving roles report benefits to their friendships and relationships with their children, as well as with their spouses (Brown et al. 2003; Fleming et al. 2013; Holt-Lunstad et al. 2009). Fathers' involvement has also been linked to children's higher cognitive development and school achievement (Levtov et al. 2015). Studies have further found that fathers can be more willing to support lower gender gaps for the next generation to ensure well-being for their daughters (Doepke and Tertilt 2009; Fernandez 2014).

All this evidence affirms the need to move beyond seeing gender equality as a women's only issue and involve men in addressing the structural factors that underpin it, both through policies and programmes and in a local context within families, which brings benefits for both men and women, as well as for broad-based development outcomes.

Despite some developments in policy and practice, several challenges impede progress towards reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work. These include social norms that stereotype caregiving as women's work; economic and labour market policies such as unequal wages and workplace discriminatory practices; and laws and policies related to pay, public provision of childcare, parental leave and social protection that can reinforce the unequal distribution of care (Heilman et al. 2017). As shown in Figure 3, unpaid care work continues to be unevenly shared between women and men. For example, in Argentina in 2013, an estimated 87 percent of women did unpaid domestic work, averaging 3.9 hours a day, compared with 50 percent of men and 2.4 hours a day, respectively (INDEC 2014). Limited redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work can put working mothers at risk of time poverty, which has negative implications for the well-being of children and other family members (UN Women 2018). While expansion of paternity leave around the world is reflecting greater involvement of men in childrearing, in situations where parental leave is offered as a shared entitlement, it is taken mainly by women. In fact, in most developing countries even maternity leave is often not available, with the exception of a small proportion of formal sector employees (ibid). This is mainly because women in these contexts are predominantly engaged in the informal sector. The latest data show that globally, only 10 percent of female workers are protected by law in case of loss of income during maternity, and 41.1 percent of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit, with only 15.8 percent of childbearing women in Africa receiving it (ILO 2017b). In many cases maternity benefits, which are critical for ensuring income security for women and their families, are financially inadequate or short-lasting.

**Figure 3. The burden of unpaid care work is disproportionately taken by women, most recent year available**



**Note:** Each bubble represents a country. The size of the bubble reflects the country’s population. **Source:** UNDP (2015) calculations based on Charmes (2015)

Furthermore, while investment in public infrastructure is important for reducing unpaid care and domestic work, it may not be sufficient by itself. Chakraborty (2010) finds that in India, infrastructure investment reduced the time required for unpaid care work but did not translate into increased employment for women. Along with infrastructure investment, complementary employment and care policies are needed to ensure the substitution of market work for unpaid work. These include job quotas to enhance women’s employment opportunities, investments in skills training, and onsite care facilities (Seguino 2016a). In addition, sufficient employment demand in the broader economy is necessary to absorb women as paid workers in response to reductions in the time that they spend on unpaid care work (ibid).

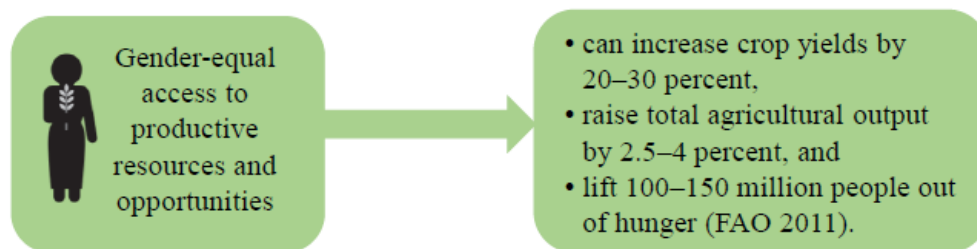
Ultimately, what women are able to do with their freed time—paid work, entrepreneurship or education—depends on the socioeconomic context and on whether or not other policies are in place to enhance their opportunities and choice (Fontana and Elson 2014). It is important to bear in mind that a country’s range of possible actions depends on a variety of factors, including its level of development and overall capacity, as well as the availability of financial, human and technological resources (UNDP 2009).

The evidence provided in this section has thus shown that recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work is critical for gender equality, and that it has multiplier spillover effects. In addition to job creation and economic growth (SDG 8), it has a positive impact on poverty reduction through increased incomes (SDG 1); the provision of affordable and quality health care and education (SDGs 3 and 4); management of water and sanitation (SDG 6); reduction of inequalities (SDG 10); and provision of childcare and long-term care for the elderly, which is especially pertinent in the context of rapidly ageing populations, migration and urbanization (SDG 11).



## 2.3 Food security and agricultural production

Equality between women and men is critical to the implementation of SDG 2 on ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and agricultural production. Estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations point out that if women worldwide had the same access to productive resources and opportunities as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent, which could raise total agricultural output by 2.5–4 percent and lift 100 million to 150 million people out of hunger (FAO 2011). The available data show that women produce over 50 percent of the world’s food (ibid), and 48 percent of the economically active women globally and 79 percent in developing countries are engaged in agriculture (Doss 2014). Women play an important role in the entire food system: they are involved in all areas of food production, including staple foods, cash crops or livestock; they are engaged in food processing across all categories of food, as well as in tasks varying from cleaning to fermenting; they are at the centre of local food distribution systems, including in street-food vending; and are generally responsible for preparing meals for family members as part of their unpaid care and domestic work (Clarke 2016).



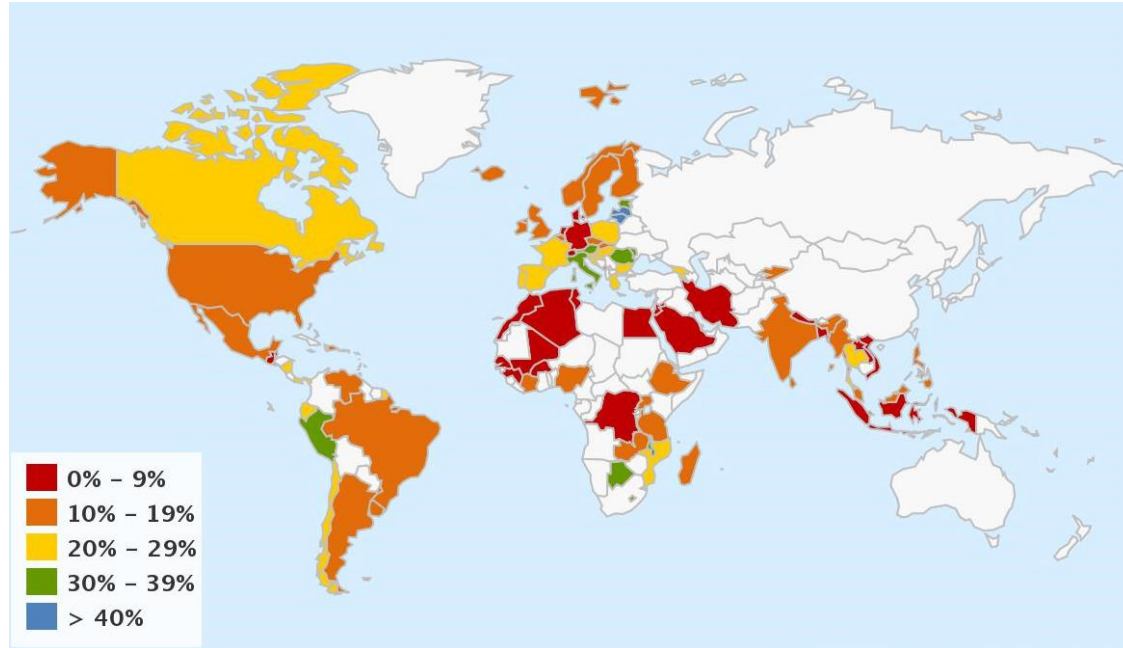
Research evidence points to a link between more equal gender relations at the household and community levels and better agricultural and development outcomes (FAO 2011; Farnworth et al. 2013; Harper et al. 2013; Sraboni et al. 2014; UNDP 2012). For example, a study on food security in Bangladesh has found that reducing intra-household gender inequality increases calorie availability and dietary diversity at the household level, whereas women’s active participation in the community and their greater control of assets are positively associated with food security outcomes (Sraboni et al. 2014). Another recent study suggests that closing gender productivity gaps in Nigeria, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda yields production gains of 2.8 percent, 8.1 percent and 10.3 percent respectively, which contributes to poverty reduction (Mukasa and Salami 2016). These improvements in productivity could also have positive effects on a country’s balance of payments because of the reduced demand for food imports (Seguino 2010).

Furthermore, engaging women in the use, development and distribution of renewable energy-based agricultural technology can generate a positive chain reaction (Gill et al. 2012). For example, technology that irrigates arable land such as solar-powered irrigation systems can improve crop yield and reduce the amount of time that women spend collecting water. This process is beneficial to economic progress by enhancing women’s productivity in economic activities and by creating new income-generating opportunities. It can also contribute to enterprise-based technology initiatives by expanding their markets and enabling them to generate higher financial returns.

Gender equality in the food system is also conducive to improving the human capital of current and future generations. For example, a study by Malapit and Quisumbing (2015) has pointed to a positive correlation between women's empowerment in agriculture and children's dietary quality in Ghana, while decision-making concerning credit is associated with better outcomes for women. In comparison to men, women tend to spend a larger share of their income on food (Adeyemi 2010; Duflo and Udry 2004), partly due to their role as primary caregivers (O'Brien et al. 2016), and are found to invest as much as 10 times more in their family's well-being, including in children's health, education and nutrition (Duflo 2012; Maertens and Verhofstadt 2013; Quisumbing and Maluccio 2003). Consequently, in households where women hold control of the budget, family members tend to have better nutrition levels, and childhood survival rates increase (De Schutter 2012). In Afghanistan, for instance, integrating women in dairy value chains not only resulted in increased income for smallholder farm families, but also led to improved nutritional status and school enrolment of both boys and girls, while strengthening women's status within the household and community (FAO 2016a).

Despite women's contributions to the food system, they face many constraints. Women often have weaker or no access to, and control over, productive resources such as land and livestock, financial services, and agricultural inputs and technology including improved crop varieties, training, information and marketing (Devereux and Sharp 2007; Fletschner and Kenney 2014). Globally, women account for only 12.8 percent of agricultural land holders (FAO Gender and Land Rights Database), and in some parts of Africa, MENA and South Asia, the share of female agricultural holders is below 9 percent (Figure 4). Women often lack decision-making power within the household and experience less effective participation in community-level bodies, value chain networks and innovation platforms aimed at creating space for collaborative work among multiple stakeholders (Aker et al. 2017; Farnworth and Colverson 2015). The major share of female labour in agriculture is often non-wage-based, performed at home and within small-scale agricultural systems where marriage laws and customs assign ownership of land and decision-making about crops to men (UNDP 2012). Together with such restrictive sociocultural inhibitions (Dankelman 2010), these all render women vulnerable to food insecurity (UNDP 2017a). In addition, in many regions female-headed (and particularly widow-headed) households are disproportionately represented among the poorest households and have a relatively lower purchasing power due to fewer economic opportunities related to their lower educational levels, wage gaps and overall income insecurities. This makes women more susceptible to the negative impacts of food price volatility (De Schutter 2013).

**Figure 4. Global distribution of female agricultural holders (% of total agricultural holders)**



**Note:** An agricultural holder is a civil or juridical person who makes major decisions regarding resource use and exercises management control over an agricultural holding, which typically comprises land or livestock, but may also refer to other resources. The years for which data depicted in the map vary depending on how often agricultural censuses are conducted or whether countries include this item in their census report. Most of the data belong to the 2000 and 2010 agricultural census rounds, but some data derive from the 1990 census round. **Source:** FAO Gender and Land Rights Database based on Eurostat and national agricultural censuses (<http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database>)

Gender inequalities in access to relevant resources and services in turn create barriers for women farmers, thereby decreasing their productivity and increasing their post-harvest losses (Demessie and Yitbarek 2008; Mason and King 2001; Mogues et al. 2009). A lack of control over assets, along with malnutrition in women, also have grave repercussions for children's health. Research shows that countries where women lack any right to own land have on average 60 percent more malnourished children compared to countries where women have some or equal access to credit and land (OECD 2010). Evidence also indicates that maternal undernutrition is associated with intrauterine growth restriction, which has lifelong consequences for the child's physical and mental development (Black et al. 2008). Another serious malnutrition issue is obesity, which in many cases is associated with poor dietary practices. At least 650 million adults worldwide are obese today, with the majority being women (WHO 2018). In OECD countries alone, more than one in two adults and nearly one in six children are overweight or obese, with the highest adult obesity rates found in the United States, Mexico and New Zealand (OECD 2017b).

Inherent in women's lack of access to resources are gender norms which lie at the base of gender inequality in agriculture (O'Brien et al. 2016). Development and technology interventions often tend to be focused on men, with the assumption that men are important farmers (Mogues et al. 2009), and technology-related information and benefits will trickle down from men to other family

members, including women (Aregu et al. 2010). A study on gender gaps in agricultural productivity has found that productivity of women's farms in six African countries was significantly lower per hectare compared to men, ranging from 13 percent in Uganda to 25 percent in Malawi (O'Sullivan et al. 2014). This is because women tend to be locked out of land ownership, access to credit, markets and productive farm inputs, support from extension services and other factors that are key to improving productivity. The results, however, also reveal that equal access to resources does not automatically translate into equal returns for women farmers, nor into their empowerment. Another study has shown that although women's ownership of land in Nepal increased from 11.7 percent in 2001 to 19.7 percent in 2011 due to the provision of tax exemption to women in land registration, which in turn enhanced their bargaining capacity, women have not necessarily gained control over land (IOM 2016). Such practices contrast with those in developed countries as well as in Latin America, where joint ownership is often the norm (De Schutter 2013). In these national contexts, any property acquired after marriage is generally the joint property of the married couple. A study in Ecuador, for example, has found that the gender gap in asset ownership has almost disappeared due to its community property regime and equal inheritance practices (Deere and Diaz 2011). Women's property and land ownership is shown to produce several cross-sectoral gains including improved children's welfare (Doss 2005), strengthened household economic security (ICRW 2006), and reduced levels of domestic violence inflicted upon them (Agarwal and Panda 2007).

This suggests that improving productivity through providing access to assets and resources is not sufficient for achieving gender equal outcomes. It should be accompanied by measures to strengthen women's voices along with substantive changes in gender relations. This can happen if men consider themselves partners and beneficiaries of gender equality and asset sharing (Farnworth and Colverson 2015). Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) is a global network of professionals and farmers across 109 countries dedicated to achieving food security and sustainable development. During the period 2011–2015, WOCAN developed and delivered training courses on reframing leadership for gender equality and gender-integrated planning to over 1,500 women and men professionals. This resulted not only in women's enhanced access to resources and information, along with their improved skills and capacities, but also in men's changed attitudes and behaviours towards female leadership (WOCAN 2015).

Achieving gender equality in the food system will also bring gains in the context of climate change. The agriculture sector is likely to experience substantial stress due to climate change-induced hazards that could cause crop failures, disease outbreaks, and the environmental degradation (FAO 2011). According to the estimates of a recent study, global labour capacity in rural populations exposed to temperature change decreased by 5.3 percent between 2000 and 2016, which has serious implications for the livelihoods of those relying on subsistence farming (Watts et al. 2017). As will be discussed in the next section, women play a critical role in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and in view of their importance in agricultural production, it is vital that gender equality be addressed in ensuring food security (Carvajal-Escobar et al. 2008; UNDP 2012), including through climate-smart agriculture practices.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture>, accessed 15 August 2018.

Achieving SDG 2 requires providing women with the resources, assets and opportunities they need to increase agricultural production; reshaping gender roles and social norms to give women more bargaining power within households and community; and enhancing women's agency and decision-making in society (FAO 2016a; ILO 2017c; UNDP 2016a, e; UN Women 2014). To address gender inequality in the food system, it is also necessary to reconsider existing discriminatory laws and regulations, particularly those related to property and inheritance. Further, the policy scope should be broadened by implementing gender-sensitive multi-sectoral policies, including on agriculture, trade, health and social protection, that influence gender relations at household, societal and political levels. For instance, school feeding programmes have multiple advantages, as they improve girls' school enrolment, support access to markets by small-scale farmers, and increase female employment. Public work programmes can provide jobs for low-income women and at the same time improve infrastructure and services that relieve women of some care and domestic burdens. Finally, gender-sensitive food security strategies should be formulated through participatory means and encourage participation at all levels—from individual projects at local level to national and global strategies (De Schutter 2013).

#### 2.4 Climate change, disaster risk management and natural resource management

Promoting gender equality is crucial to addressing the effects of climate change and protecting planetary ecosystems. While women's vulnerability and victimhood are almost always assumed in the context of climate change and natural hazards, evidence demonstrates that women around the world have been critical in mitigating and adapting to climate change, in reducing disaster risks, and in helping communities to survive in harsh conditions (Aguilar et al. 2015; Carvajal-Escobar et al. 2008; McKinney and Fulkerson 2015).

Addressing the impacts of climate change includes measures in climate change adaptation and mitigation designed to strengthen resilience and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The former can range from putting in place early warning systems for natural hazards and switching to drought-resistant crops to improving conservation techniques and climate-sensitive disease surveillance and redesigning government policies. Actions to mitigate climate change can involve the use of renewable energy, the application of new technologies and improvements in existing devices such as cookstoves, and sustainable management of forests, land and waste.<sup>7</sup> The contribution of women to implementing many of these measures has been attributed to their participation and leadership at the community and political levels, and also to their local knowledge, skills and experiences regarding the environment and management of food, water and other natural resources, which are often the result of women's responsibilities within their families.

Evidence shows that equality between women and men in governance structures, along with women's political agency, have the potential to improve environmental stewardship (Buckingham 2010; UNDP 2014a, 2017c). For instance, a greater proportion of women in positions of political authority is associated with fewer carbon dioxide emissions (Ergas and York 2012), more land protection (Nugent and Shandra 2009), and higher possibility of the ratification of environmental treaties (Norgaard and York 2005). A cross-country study of waste management in the European Union has found that the presence of women in senior positions in municipal waste management

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<sup>7</sup> <https://unfccc.int/topics>, [https://www.ipcc.ch/publications\\_and\\_data/ar4/syr/en/spms4.html](https://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/syr/en/spms4.html), accessed 15 August 2018.

programmes is linked to higher recycling rates, which was implemented by fostering the creation of gender-sensitive approaches and initiatives in environmental management (Buckingham et al. 2005). Based on their analysis of data from 160 countries that assesses the effects of women's political status on carbon dioxide emissions, Ergas and York (2012) conclude that improving gender equality is important in curtailing global climate change and preventing environmental degradation.

Furthermore, having gender equality is important across the disaster management cycle—mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery (WEDO 2007). While the negative effects caused by escalating vulnerabilities and gender stereotyping are reinforcing the complexity of disaster risk reduction, it is often women who make it possible for the community to cope with disasters (Charan et al. 2016). For example, following Severe Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016, the most intense tropical cyclone in the Southern Hemisphere on record, the majority of Fiji's population were lacking food and clean drinking water, and many were deprived of shelter.<sup>8</sup> Water storage and food preservation techniques practiced by women proved vital to the well-being of the local community. In particular, in the cyclone season women had preserved tavioka (a variety of staple crop) using a drying technique, which ensured its availability during the disaster. Fijian women were also among the first to attend to the needs of their families after the cyclone (Charan et al. 2016).

Research shows that women play a pivotal role in natural resource management, and their increased participation leads to improvements in local natural resource governance, conservation efforts and more sustainable livelihoods (FAO 2010, 2016b; Leisher et al. 2016; UNDP 2017b; World Bank 2009, 2011; WWAP/UN-Water 2015). For example, an examination of 61 countries has shown that a greater per capita number of women's and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) correlates with decreased levels of deforestation (UNDP 2011). In the same vein, women's active participation in community institutions is associated with greater probability of forest regeneration (Agrawal et al. 2006), and more equitable sharing of benefits and improved forest sustainability (Agarwal 2010). Research in India and Nepal has found that gender-sensitive, inclusive participatory governance decreases women's time and labour in collecting non-timber forest products, and increases household income (Das 2011; McDougall et al. 2013). An analysis of water inventory data from the Republic of Vanuatu has further shown that women's involvement in Water User Committees is associated with more effective water management and improved functioning of water systems (Mommen et al. 2017).

Strengthening women's leadership while ensuring equal participation of women and men in the use of natural resources also has positive effects on sustainable wildlife management. For example, a project to diminish illicit trade in wild meat in the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve in Ecuador, led by an indigenous women's group, generated broad community support for reducing illegal over-harvesting, conserving some highly threatened species, and adopting alternative income-generating activities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://newzealand.adra.org/project/cyclone-winston>, accessed 15 August 2018.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/2/22/women-hold-key-to-solving-wildlife-trade-issues-in-amazon.html>, accessed 15 August 2018.

In addition, women's involvement in agrobiodiversity is of great significance (Howard 2006). In many parts of Latin America, migration flows reduce male involvement in farming, and women are becoming increasingly vital to maintaining knowledge about plant and crop diversity and improving farm resilience (Aguilar-Støen et al. 2009; Zimmerer 2011). In several countries of South Asia, women are found to be critical in managing key species and crop variety—often through saving and exchanging seeds and maintaining home gardens—which has positive effects on the well-being of the rural community and food security (Gautam et al. 2009; Oakley and Momsen 2005).

Equally important to protecting the planet from degradation is sustainable consumption. In developed countries, women are found to make over 80 percent of consumer decisions and are more likely to be sustainable consumers, having a higher inclination to recycle and placing a higher value on efficient energy (OECD 2008). These decisions are particularly important regarding food choices as they can help to reduce the contribution of agriculture to greenhouse gas emissions, while also bringing significant health benefits. To take action on climate change in Australia, for example, the “1 Million Women” campaign is empowering women to combat climate change in their workplaces, communities and households by reducing carbon pollution through everyday lifestyle changes such as saving energy and reducing waste.<sup>10</sup>

All this evidence clearly points to the importance of gender equality in addressing the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as managing disaster risks. Although women tend to be disproportionately affected in these situations due to their unequal socioeconomic status and lack of rights and resources (Neumayer and Plümper 2007; UNDESA 2016; UNDP 2017b),<sup>11</sup> treating them merely as victims only exacerbates their vulnerability and denies their roles as vital agents in reshaping climate change policies and disaster risk reduction and responding effectively to its impacts (Aguilar et al. 2010; Dankelman 2010; Resurrección 2013; Sweetman and Ezpeleta 2017). For example, in Bangladesh, of 140,000 people who were negatively affected by Cyclone Gorky in 1991, women outnumbered men by 14:1. However, when Cyclone Sidr hit in 2007, the casualties were reduced to 3,000 and the gender gap in mortality rates decreased to 5:1. This was achieved thanks to several integrated efforts including improved hazard monitoring and community preparedness, but also by addressing socially constructed gender norms through engaging women as community mobilizers and creating women-only spaces within cyclone shelters (Aguilar et al. 2015).

It is also essential to be “gender smart” in promoting technologies that are developed to tackle climate change (Gonda 2016). For example, the adoption of so-called gender-sensitive technologies such as wood-saving stoves and water reservoirs in Nicaragua mainly eased the work burden of men rather than women, while reinforcing patriarchal relations. This happened because of a limited understanding of changing gender roles due to climate change effects. Notably, recent

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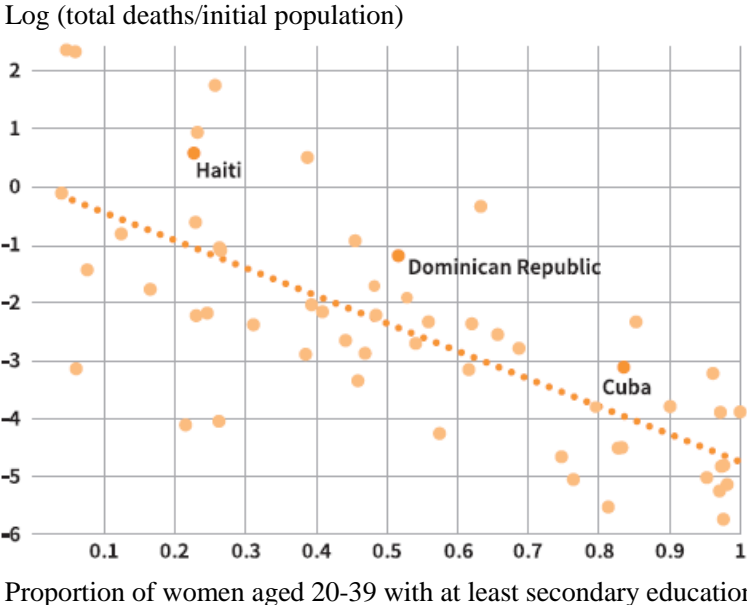
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.1millionwomen.com.au>, accessed 15 August 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Evidence shows higher disaster fatality rates for women than for men. For example, women accounted for 61 percent of fatalities caused by Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, 70–80 percent in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and 91 percent in the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh (Castañeda and Gammage 2011). This largely results from gendered differences in geographic, economic, social and political power imbalances in families and communities, which translate into women's lower levels of access to economic resources, education and information, as well as decision-making processes, which would enable them to be better prepared for and cope with the adverse impacts of the changing climate and environmental degradation (Aguilar et al. 2015).

deforestation and water scarcity in the area obliged rural populations to walk further to find these resources, which resulted in women staying at home and increasingly more men fetching wood and water after a day of farm work. Thus, the introduction of wood-saving stoves and water reservoirs in this context turned out to serve primarily the interests of men instead of transforming unequal gender roles (ibid). Another study on solar home systems in Bangladesh has found that new technologies such as solar lighting increased workloads for women by extending their working hours in income-generating activities in addition to their domestic duties (Wong 2009). This poor integration reflects the persistence of problematic images of women as a homogenous vulnerable group in climate change debates (Leach et al. 2016).

To address the global challenges of climate change, environmental degradation and disaster risk management, it is important to go beyond these images and recognize women’s critical roles in these processes. With appropriate measures—such as attainment and realization of rights to land, water and property, provision of education, training, skills development and finance, and participation at all levels, along with shifting social norms—women have valuable capacities to strengthen the resilience of communities in the changing climate and at times of disaster. For example, countries with higher education levels among women and girls are found to experience lower mortality from weather-related disasters (Striessnig et al. 2013) (Figure 5). Failure to include women will not only undermine the effectiveness of disaster risk management, climate change response and environmental protection, but also have detrimental impacts on development outcomes.

**Figure 5. Weather-related disaster mortality and female education in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti**



**Note:** The graph shows deaths per 1,000 based on 1980 population levels (y-axis) proportional to secondary and higher education among women aged 20-39 (x-axis) for 56 countries with one or more disasters on average per annum. **Source:** Pichler and Striessnig (2014)



The evidence provided in this section has demonstrated that gender equality has significant positive effects on achieving multiple goals and targets related to climate change and the environment, as well as to other development issues. In particular, it contributes to SDG 6 on sustainable water management, including target 6.4 on efficient water use; SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production, particularly targets 12.2 on efficient use of natural resources and 12.5 on waste reduction; SDG 13 on addressing climate change impacts; and SDG 15 on protecting terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management and preservation of biodiversity. In addition, it can help achieve target 1.5 under SDG 1 on building resilience in the face of climate-related extreme events and disasters, and target 2.4 under SDG 2 on strengthening capacity for adaptation to climate change through resilient agricultural practices.

## 2.5 Political participation

Ensuring the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes is vital to achieving goals across a spectrum of development including those related to ending poverty (SDG 1), improving nutrition (SDG 2), ensuring healthy lives (SDG 3) and quality education (SDG 4), providing access to adequate water and sanitation (SDG 6), promoting economic growth and employment generation (SDG 8), addressing climate change (SDG 13), and fostering good governance and effective institutions (SDG 16).

When considering women's political participation, it is important to take into account their representation, both descriptive (the proportion of women in elected bodies) and substantive (their impact on decision-making), and their mobilization both within formal and informal political spaces. Participation in formal political institutions such as political parties, parliaments, civil service and courts, and in formal processes including elections and constitutional reform, is often the most direct way to influence decision-making. Yet women can shape decisions and behaviour of power holders outside public office through collective action and participation in social movements and civic associations including grassroots groups, community-based organizations and trade unions (Domingo et al. 2015).

Evidence shows that countries with women's active participation and leadership in politics and civil society tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian and democratic (Markham 2013; OECD 2014; Rosenthal 2001; Tamaru and O'Reilly 2018; UNDP 2014b, 2016a; UNRISD 2005). For example, an analysis of 39 countries has found that a higher female presence in legislatures is connected to more positive perceptions of government legitimacy among men and women (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). Another cross-country study indicates that when at least one quarter of members of parliament are women, laws that discriminate against women, such as those that restrict women from being head of household, are more likely to be repealed (Hallward-Driemeier et al. 2013).

The participation of women in political processes is also integral to building strong communities and shaping policymaking in ways that better reflect the needs of their families and communities (Jones 2005; Schwindt-Bayer 2006). Female parliamentarians are more likely to prioritize issues such as education, health, childcare, parental leave, access to employment and pensions (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Mitra et al. 2015; UN Women 2014), which are key to strengthening human capital and improving living standards. They are also more likely to be

concerned about gender-based violence and safety; and broader development matters such as poverty reduction and service delivery (IPU 2008; Markham 2013). For example, an analysis of public expenditures in 27 OECD countries between 1980 and 2011 shows that women's political representation correlates with higher expenditures on family benefits (Ennsner-Jedenastik 2017). In Kuwait, just five years after the women's suffrage movement achieved the rights of women to vote and run for office, newly elected female legislators introduced new labour laws that would give working mothers mandatory nursing breaks and provide onsite childcare for companies with more than 200 employees (Markham 2013). In India, the significant numbers of women in local government were related to expanded investments in drinking water facilities as well as in public infrastructure projects hiring women workers, and also saw a reduced gender gap in school attendance (Beaman et al. 2012; Clots-Figueras 2012) and increased female labour force participation (Ghani et al. 2013). In Rwanda and South Africa, a higher number of female lawmakers led to progressive legislation on land inheritance and reproductive rights (Ballington and Karam 2005). In Afghanistan, the 50 percent quota for women in local government not only increased their participation in social and political activities but also improved women's income generation (Beath et al. 2013).

### **Box 3. Women's political participation in Rwanda**

Ever since the 2003 Constitution of Rwanda set aside 30 percent of legislative seats for women, each election has increased the number of seats held by women, both those reserved for women and some non-reserved seats as well. Rwanda's parliamentary elections in 2003 saw nearly 50 percent of new female representatives. In 2008, women assumed 56.3 percent of the seats in the parliament, and in 2013 women's representation in the House of Deputies rose to nearly 61.3 percent, which remains the highest number of women parliamentarians in the world.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the transition years in Rwanda, women in parliament played a significant role in post-conflict governance, and their participation in shaping decisions is increasingly recognized as critical to the long-term security and stability of the country (Markham 2013; UNDP 2016a). In particular, their contributions include influencing policies on decentralization so that previously marginalized groups such as women and youth are now included, and gender sensitivity is integrated at all levels of government; and initiating and implementing national and community-based reconciliation efforts that reach the grassroots. Furthermore, Rwandan female politicians were responsible for creating the only tripartite partnership among civil society and executive and legislative bodies to ensure that women's needs are met and basic services are provided to communities countrywide. Together with grassroots activists, they successfully advocated for adopting in 2008 a law on prevention and punishment of gender-based violence. They have also formed the first cross-party caucus in parliament to work on controversial issues such as land rights and food security (Powley 2003).

Studies show that the strength of women's organization and the nature of their engagement with political authorities is critical to achieving progress towards gender equality (Htun and Weldon 2012; Kanthak and Krause 2012). Notably, the influence of women's movements has been an important factor in transforming national constitutions in several countries, which has led to better

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<sup>12</sup> <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm>, accessed 15 August 2018.

protection of women's rights, realization of their citizenship and more gender-equitable access to civil law (UNDP 2016a). Many women's organizations in Africa, such as Action for Development in Uganda, the National Women's Lobby Group in Zambia and the National Committee on the Status of Women in Kenya, have been key in promoting collective voice in local, national and international networks. In particular, for over a decade African female activists have been advocating for workers' rights and have supported initiatives for the mobilization of workers and the organization of trade unions in the workplace (UNDP 2016a). Activities have involved, for example, community education programmes on domestic violence and workplace harassment against women, and awareness-raising campaigns that explicitly link sexual violence and exploitation within the home and at the workplace. Positive trends in women's participation in unions, particularly in leadership positions, have increased attention towards issues related to women in the informal economy, particularly the situation of domestic workers (Hobden 2015).

There are several mechanisms that have proved useful in improving the political participation of women. They include temporary special measures such as quotas which are considered to be one of the most effective tools to achieve a greater gender balance in political participation. Many Latin American countries have implemented affirmative action schemes aimed at strengthening women's participation on electoral lists, and Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Mexico approved parity. In 2017, in Latin America women held on average 28.6 percent seats in parliament, an increase from 15.4 percent in 1998, which currently ranks the region second in the world after the Nordic countries (Figure 6).<sup>13</sup> In fact, an experience of Latin American democracies during the so-called "pink tide" era—a period over the past two decades where many countries in the region saw a surge of left-wing governments and a greater mobilization around gender equality issues—shows that a combination of factors such as party politics and strong social movements is critical in advancing gender equality on policy agendas (Blofield et al. 2017; Funk et al. 2017).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, in Central and Eastern Europe, women from parliament, progressive political parties and civil society organizations formed the CEE Network for Gender Issues that successfully advocated for the adoption and implementation of gender quota policies in Albania, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and several other countries (Di Meco 2017). Yet, while quotas increase the numbers of women in decision-making, they do not necessarily ensure that gender equality interests are represented in political debates.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world011117.htm>, accessed 15 August 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Overall, evidence on the correlation between political systems and gender equality is inconclusive, with cross-national research showing varying findings depending on the context, time period, measures and methodologies used (Beer 2009; Htun and Weldon 2010; Inglehart et al. 2002; Paxton et al. 2012; Tripp 2013). In general, the factors that have made democratic regimes more likely to achieve greater gender equality in contrast to authoritarian and hybrid regimes include higher levels of economic growth, which have given rise to class forces that have pushed for more equality and in some cases have led to cultural change that transformed gender roles; broader political and civic freedoms, which have allowed women's movements to demand change; the presence of 'femocrats' (feminist bureaucrats) and male allies in the government that have promoted gender equality on the policy agenda including more allocation of resources; and pressures from international and regional organizations which have urged governments to comply with international norms and standards.

**Figure 6. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%), 2017**



**Source:** Inter-Parliamentary Union

The creation of groups in parliament to address gender equality issues has also been critical to promoting gender equality in legislative agendas. These groups include gender equality committees, parliamentary women’s caucuses and councils, and internal party networks that help to build the capacities of female parliamentarians. Cross-party women’s caucuses in particular have played an important role in influencing parliament through advocacy, awareness-raising and collaboration with external gender advocates. In many countries, they have been successful in raising women’s concerns, tackling discriminatory laws and promoting gender-sensitive legislative reforms (UNDP 2016g).

It should be acknowledged that the struggle for legislative changes to advance gender equality is long and difficult, but when there is an opportunity to renegotiate a constitution, women have been able to seize this moment to promote equality in some contexts. Lessons from case studies on constitutional reform processes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts suggest that in addition to quotas, strategic alliances and broad coalitions, effective framing of the debate is an important tactic for women to influence constitutional negotiations and advocate for issues related to gender equality and the rights of marginalized groups. Notably, when women successfully frame these issues in relation to peace, reconciliation or democracy, they are more likely to achieve their objectives. This was the case in Tunisia where during the drafting process of the new constitution adopted in 2014, women linked together the issues of equality, democracy and human rights in their advocacy, instead of focusing exclusively on women’s rights. This located their priorities in the broader narrative of establishing a government that is responsive to the needs of all Tunisians (Tamaru and O’Reilly 2018).

Despite the contribution of women's political and civic participation to development goals, women face significant challenges in influencing public decision-making (Beauregard 2013; Inglehart and Norris 2003), and these obstacles can differ from those experienced by men (Ballington 2008). For male politicians, the main barriers include a lack of support from the electorate and political parties, limited financial resources and insufficient relevant experience. Women in politics and civil society have to deal with discriminatory laws, conservative attitudes and domestic responsibilities, and these constraints often add to those of their male colleagues, making their path to political power more arduous. Women also tend to have a lower level of political awareness, which is primarily attributed to gender disparities in education and income (Abdo-Katsipis 2017). The experience of women leaders in South Asia shows that while historically this region has had some significant female political leaders who have made immense contributions to building democratic institutions, the social position and political participation of women in general have been low, due to gendered social, cultural and domestic constraints (Lal et al. 2015).

Furthermore, women's presence in political office does not automatically result in systemic changes or progressive policy; nor does it necessarily erode the entrenched patriarchal attitudes and structural barriers that impede gender equality and women's empowerment (Goetz 2009; Krook and Norris 2014; UNDP 2016a; UN Women 2015b). In some countries, the increased participation of women in parliament has provoked resistance or backlash, which may involve a range of tactics to subvert feminist policy initiatives and keep women outside of positions of power (Childs and Krook 2009). In addition, women politicians, like their male counterparts, may address the issues of concern to their parties and constituents; their links with women's rights organizations may be weak or non-existent; and women in leadership positions may owe their political success not to constituency support but to their influential political families, which makes them dependent on kinship support (Nussbaum et al. 2003).

Influence also depends upon the types of ministerial positions or positions in the executive held by women, but in the case of senior political appointments, women's participation tends to be limited to what are considered "soft" social issues, and women are often not considered for "hard core" issues such as defence, justice, interior or economic leadership positions, which require collective bargaining agreements with employers and governments (UNDP 2016a). In fact, in framing the importance of women's political inclusion, there has been a tendency to essentialize women's qualities in that women are perceived to be more aware of their community needs, are less corrupt by nature, and are good at negotiating compromises (Dollar et al. 2001; Girard 2015). This type of role assignment reflects social expectations and women's perceptions of their proper roles, and this tends to shape women's public policy in ways that are an extension of their familial and domestic responsibilities (Girard 2015). Yet women may receive less support for promoting equality policies in areas that are deemed male domains (Nazneen 2018). In India, for example, while women local politicians' activities in the areas of health and education benefited the community, they did not infringe on traditionally male projects such as irrigation or technology (Girard 2015). Female representatives gained social legitimacy for addressing women's needs but their perceived legitimacy did not improve public views of their ability to represent broader community interests. When participating in political life, in many cases women have to overcome a perceived lack of legitimacy through subject-matter expertise or by asserting political authority (Tamaru and O'Reilly 2018).

Fostering women's political participation and leadership requires improving their access to resources, education and employment, and strengthening human, economic and social capital (Iversen and Rosenbluth 2008; Stockemer 2015). Women employed in the formal sector are more likely to engage politically, as found, for example, in some countries of Latin America (Desposato and Norrande 2009). A study of women's rising political participation and leadership in Zambia has shown that gender stereotypes are gradually weakening and women are increasingly recognized as equally capable political actors due to growing female labour force participation (Evans 2016).

It is important to establish legal frameworks for promoting gender equality, which includes the adoption of dedicated gender equality laws, policies and gender-sensitive national development strategies, and monitor their implementation. To ensure equal opportunities for women's effective participation and leadership in decision-making, as stated in target 5.5 under SDG 5, it is necessary not only to increase the quantitative representation of women in parliaments but also to improve the quality of women's participation and enhance their capacity through, for example, political apprenticeship and mentorship, so that they can shape institutional norms and influence decisions while holding relevant actors accountable. Moreover, enhancing strategic collaboration between political parties, parliamentary caucuses and civil society, together with increased support and financing for women's organizations and movements, are vital in achieving greater gender equality and better development outcomes.

## 2.6 Preventing conflict and achieving peaceful societies

Closely linked to gender equal political participation is the question of women's participation in peace processes. Peace processes consist of a complex range of arrangements, which include formal peace negotiations that are generally conducted by official state representatives, and informal processes that involve peace marches and mass action campaigns that are carried out by non-governmental actors. The landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security has reaffirmed the important role of women in conflict and post-conflict countries across four key dimensions: conflict prevention, equal participation, protection, and relief and recovery. This all is crucial to achieving the 2030 Agenda, including SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

Women have generally been excluded from peace processes despite their vital role in building and sustaining peace, preventing and reducing conflict, and "building back" their societies and restoring communities after crises (Cardona et al. 2012; Coomaraswamy et al. 2015; O'Reilly et al. 2015; UN 2002). A growing body of research has linked more sustainable peace with women's meaningful participation in peace processes—through several inclusion modalities such as representation at the negotiation table, in official or unofficial consultations and relevant commissions, and in different peace process phases including pre-negotiation and post-agreement implementation (Paffenholz et al. 2017; Page et al. 2009; UN 2017). It has been found that countries with high levels of gender inequality are more likely to be involved in intra- and interstate conflict and to resort to violence to resolve internal disputes and disputes with neighboring states, compared to countries with more equitable gender relations (Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Hudson et al. 2008/2009, 2012). Another study has further maintained that the most reliable indicator of the

peacefulness of nations is not the level of democracy, wealth or ethno-religious identity, but rather the security of women (Hudson et al. 2008/2009).

An in-depth analysis of 40 peace and political transition processes between 1989 and 2014 shows that in cases where women were able to influence negotiations (whether inside or outside formal negotiations), there was greater likelihood of agreements being reached and implemented than in cases of women's weak or no influence (Paffenholz et al. 2017). For example, in the Papua New Guinea-Bougainville peace process (1997-2005), the inclusion of the women's coalition known as the "Women of Bougainville" in high-level negotiations and decision-making processes was critical to the conclusion of negotiations and the signing of the peace agreement in 2001. The main conflict parties recognized the legitimacy of women's participation due to their important roles in dispute-settlement practices and local peace efforts prior to the start of the formal peace process. Another study of 182 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2011 has further indicated that women's participation has a positive impact on the duration of peace agreements (Stone 2015). Notably, when women acted as witnesses, negotiators, mediators or signatories, a resulting peace agreement was 20 percent more likely to last at least two years, and this percentage increased over time, with a 35 percent rise in the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years.

Studies suggest that women's inclusion in peace processes was mostly initiated and realized via concerted pressure and lobbying by women's organizations and sometimes supported by external actors. In fact, women tend to have higher chances of exercising influence on the negotiation process when they have their own women-only delegation (as opposed to individual women within other delegations) and/or when women are able to strategically coordinate among women across delegations and form coalitions (Paffenholz et al. 2017). For example, in the Northern Ireland peace process, women united across sectarian divides to form the Women's Coalition and gained a seat at the negotiating table. In Somalia's 2002 Peace and Reconciliation Conference, female delegates transcended five traditionally dominant Somali clans and organized themselves in a group known as the "Sixth Clan" which introduced a gender-sensitive dimension to the negotiations. Women's groups from Darfur played a critical role in the Doha rounds of peace negotiations in Darfur in 2006, while also raising issues on women's participation in decision-making (Government of Sudan 2018; UN Women 2012). As a result of these efforts, out of 41 members of Darfur Regional Authority, 10 positions were designated for women. In addition, many women have joined the security forces, notably as police officers.

Coalition-building among women's groups was also found to be critical beyond the peace table, which maximized women's influence in a variety of cases, from Liberia to Yemen (O'Reilly et al. 2015; UNDP 2016a). In Nepal, despite barriers to formal political participation, many women have been active in peacebuilding at local levels, which is essential to community cohesion and protecting people's rights (Moosa et al. 2013). After the end of the civil war in 2003, grassroots women in Liberia adapted traditional Palava huts (local dispute management) to run programmes known as Peace Huts to mediate local disputes and abuses, monitor police and justice services, empower women through entrepreneurial opportunities, and educate them about their rights. The Peace Huts have been key to improving women's participation in decision-making and reducing and preventing violence in the community (Douglas 2014; UN and World Bank 2018).

Overall, the results of different studies demonstrate that while women's participation is not the only factor that has influenced the likelihood of reaching an agreement, women's inclusion is associated with an increased likelihood of positive outcomes (Cardona et al. 2012; Coomaraswamy et al. 2015; O'Reilly et al. 2015; Paffenholz et al. 2017; Page et al. 2009). Better outcomes of peace processes with women's meaningful participation can be attributed to women's skills as negotiators, mediators and educators, and their experiences building dialogue and trustworthy relationships with communities (Cardona et al. 2012; d'Estaing 2017).

When included in peace processes, women have advocated for a variety of critical issues including land ownership, inheritance, health care, gender-based violence and human rights violations. For example, in the 2016 Colombia peace process, one third of participants in the negotiations were women, who in addition to peace successfully lobbied for supporting women in rural areas for new development activities (Bouvier 2016). In Burundi, women succeeded in inserting into the peace agreement provisions on freedom of marriage and the right to choose one's partner; and in Guatemala, women's groups in the Civil Society Assembly worked closely with the women's representative at the table to introduce commitments to new legislation that would establish an office for indigenous women's rights (O'Reilly et al. 2015).

#### **Box 4. Inclusion of women in the peace process in the Philippines**

The Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front signed a comprehensive peace agreement in 2014, ending 17 years of protracted negotiations. The agreement paves the way for the creation of a new autonomous political entity called Bangsamoro in the southern Philippines. The peace agreement had strong provisions on women's rights, including provisions to ensure their engagement in local governance mechanisms and development planning, and protection against violence. This was the direct result of women's participation in the negotiations, built on a long history of women's leadership, expertise on negotiation and technical issues, and representation of significant constituencies through their work in the women's movement. At the same time, women's civil society groups supported the process through lobbying and mass mobilization. Women's influence in the negotiations led to a range of clauses and provisions that directly impact their empowerment and rights in the new political entity (Santiago 2015).

In July 2018, the Government approved the Bangsamoro Organic Law which represents a significant step towards achieving peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region while retaining all provisions regarding women's rights and welfare. The new law requires the Bangsamoro parliament to enact a law that recognizes the important role of women in state-building and development, and take steps to ensure their representation in decision-making bodies, including in parliament. Specifically, consultation mechanisms for women and a women's commission are to be established, and women are to be included in the Bangsamoro council of leaders and among provincial governors, mayors and indigenous representatives. Furthermore, at least 5 percent of the total budget of each Bangsamoro government unit and up to 30 percent of its official development funds must be allocated to gender-responsive programmes.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.house.gov.ph/assets/PDF/92/FINAL%20BBL%20SUBSTITUTE%20BILL%20-5.30.2018.pdf>, accessed 15 August 2018.



There is a growing awareness of the important role that women play not only in negotiating peace agreements to put an end to wars but also in preventing conflicts and countering violent extremism and terrorism (Fink et al. 2016). For example, after many years of failed negotiations, the Islamic Republic of Iran and a group of countries formed by the United States, the Russian Federation, China, France, the United Kingdom and Germany reached a historic deal to curb the Iranian nuclear programme. An important feature of this diplomatic breakthrough was the prominent leadership of several women who were credited with leading the negotiations and ensuring that a deal was reached (Coomaraswamy et al. 2015). Elsewhere, based on interviews with women in 30 countries in MENA and South Asia, research has found that women are often more willing to prevent violent extremism as they may be more affected by it and be among the first targets of fundamentalism, which constrains their rights and in many cases increases domestic violence before it becomes open armed conflict (O'Reilly 2015). A focus group study conducted in Yemen, for instance, suggested that with appropriate legal, psychological and emotional support, women could be critical in creating dialogue about violent extremism and terrorism prior to their children joining a terrorist organization (Fink et al. 2016). Mothers in particular can be vital partners in preventing conflicts, from identifying early warning signs of radicalization to mobilizing support, whether within the family or in other social and kinship circles (Schlaffer and Kropiunigg 2016). Yet women's participation is not limited to "private" roles, and their inclusion in political and community activities is crucial in preventing violent extremism and radicalization (OSCE 2013; UN and World Bank 2018). Notably, female law enforcement officers tend to be better at building trust with community-oriented policing, which is an essential element of preventing and countering violent extremism (Lonsway et al. 2003). Evidence also shows that female United Nations peacekeepers help to improve situational awareness of the mission by, for instance, strengthening the understanding of female victims or young girls and boys (Dharmapuri 2013).

Relief and recovery is another critical area in conflict and post-conflict situations, which encompasses issues related to safety and security, access to justice and basic services, gender-based violence, and economic revitalization through, for example, job creation and infrastructural improvements. Women have been found to take on increased responsibilities in their communities during and after conflict (Baird 2010). For example, women's groups in Afghanistan helped to set up underground schools, health clinics and other vital services (Hassan 2010), while in Sierra Leone women contributed to the reintegration of ex-combatants into the communities (Mazurana and Carlson 2004). A cross-country analysis has found that women's empowerment in conflict-affected settings, including through their increased participation in the labour force, is associated with more rapid economic recovery, poverty reduction and improvement in overall household and community welfare (Coomaraswamy et al. 2015; UN Women 2012). Furthermore, the participation of women can create a more trusted and legitimate security apparatus and a gender-responsive justice system (Coomaraswamy et al. 2015). For example, data from 39 countries have shown a positive correlation between the proportion of female police officers and reporting rates of sexual assault (UN Women 2011).

Despite the growing evidence of the important peace dividends of women's inclusion in peace processes, existing operations, conflict resolution mechanisms, post-conflict recovery policies continue to focus on men in the achievement of peace, while women's rights are still largely overlooked and their contributions often remain invisible (UN 2002; UNDP 2016a; UN Women 2012). Women continue to be seen primarily as victims of conflict rather than as critical agents of

peace (Coomaraswamy et al. 2015; O'Reilly et al. 2015). As a general rule, women remain to have a marginal or negligible presence in most formal peace processes, whether related to mediation, negotiation or signing of peace agreements (UNDP 2016a). A review of major peace processes between 1990 and 2017 shows that women represented only 2 percent of mediators, 5 percent of witnesses and signatories and 8 percent of negotiators, and most peace agreements have failed to reference women or address their concerns including gender-based violence (CFR 2017). Sometimes female representatives are invited to negotiations to fulfil a formal requirement for equal participation, but in real terms their participation remains tokenistic (UN 2015b). In situations where women do participate, their influence is often restrained through low numbers and process design (Coomaraswamy et al. 2015). This has serious implications for the inclusion of gender-specific priorities and needs in peace agreements and post-conflict development agendas, as well as for long-term sustainable peace.

Women face multifaceted challenges that block their full and equal participation in peace processes and undermine their rights. These include poverty, low literacy and education levels, unpaid care workloads, customary norms and discriminatory attitudes, gender-based violence, and a lack of access to justice systems. A study of a gendered approach to countering violent extremism in Morocco and Bangladesh has found that improvement in gender equality reflects positively in peacebuilding and conflict prevention (Couture 2014). In particular, the Government of Bangladesh identified poverty as one of the root causes of radicalization and violent extremism in the country and accordingly focused on developing education, employment and microcredit programmes for its female population, while also providing training and equipment to security agencies to improve safety, governance and accountability. The study shows that improvement in women's literacy levels, maternal and infant mortality rates, education levels and empowerment in the public space correlates with increased security and stability. This implies that gender equality and women's empowerment are not only about building skills or providing training but also about promoting women's socioeconomic rights and opportunities, which ensures the effectiveness of their contributions to preventing and countering violent extremism and engaging with communities to build peace (d'Estaing 2017).

Effective conflict prevention should start from addressing both the broad and deep insecurities that permeate women's and men's lives prior to conflict, and the ways that pre-conflict structural inequality can facilitate violence and insecurity (UNDP 2016a). A recent study demonstrates that in situations where individuals are more positive towards gender equality and equal rights between women and men, they are less likely to view other countries as enemies (Bjarnegård and Melander 2017). Examining a link between a marriage market and violent conflict in Nigeria, South Sudan and Saudi Arabia, another study points out that the way in which gender relations are structured has critical implications for conflicts (Hudson and Matfess 2017). Notably, it shows that in these patrilineal societies, marriage is considered a prerequisite for transitioning to manhood, and men are required by customary law to pay a bride price (that is, assets in the form of cash or goods given by the groom to the bride's family). However, rising bride prices make it financially difficult for many young men to marry, and this prompts them to join terrorist groups to earn income needed for marriage. Marriage market obstruction, fueled by bride prices and polygyny, is thus identified as an important factor that, in addition to poverty, social marginalization and a lack of opportunities, incentivizes violence and can destabilize nations (ibid).

The findings of various studies reviewed in this section suggest that to ensure sustainable peace, national and international peace processes need to integrate a gender-responsive approach across the whole conflict cycle. Such an approach supports women's meaningful participation and leadership, strengthens their agency as decision-makers, and promotes equal rights, opportunities and access to resources. It also recognizes the critical roles that women and women's organizations play in their communities, while bringing their skills, knowledge and experiences to the international, regional and national levels. Adopting a gender-responsive approach requires changing attitudes and stereotypes, addressing gender discrimination and gender-based violence, including through law enforcement and improved access to justice. As with the case of women's representation in parliaments, a mere increase in the number of women in peace processes does not necessarily mean that women are able to effectively influence decisions and shape their effective implementation. The benefits of women's participation are only fully realized when there is quality participation and the opportunity for influence (Paffenholz et al. 2015). Reducing gender inequality, along with transforming power relations both in the home and in society at large, can accelerate efforts to prevent conflict, establish durable peace and achieve inclusive societies, as embodied by SDG 16.

## 2.7 Eliminating all forms of gender-based violence

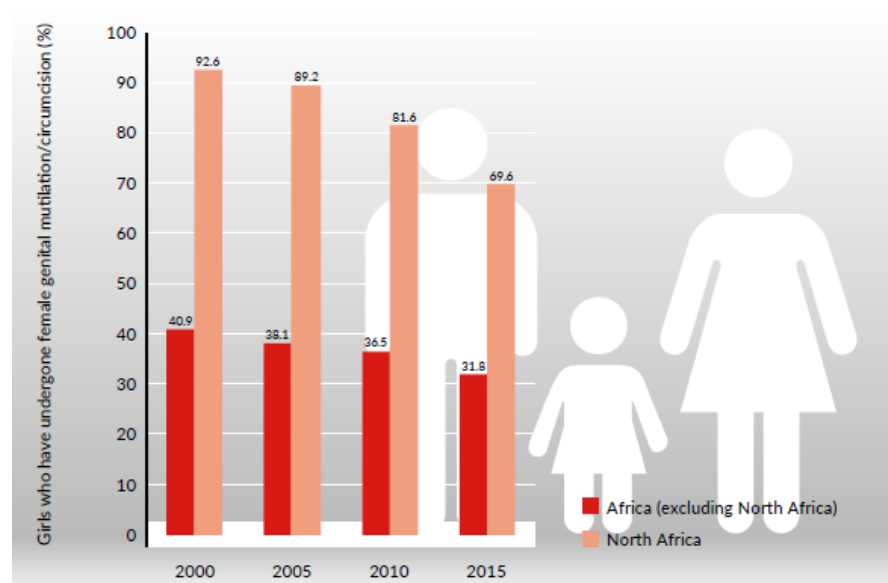
Eliminating all forms of gender-based violence in both public and private spheres is crucial to achieving gender equality and other goals and targets in the 2030 Agenda. While it directly contributes to reaching targets 5.2 and 5.3 under SDG 5 and targets 16.1 and 16.2 under SDG 16, it is an important prerequisite for ending poverty (SDG 1); attaining food security (SDG 2), better health and well-being (SDG 3), effective learning outcomes (SDG 4), productive employment and economic growth (SDG 8); and reducing inequalities (SDG 10).

Gender-based violence is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. It is manifested in different forms including physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners or non-partners; femicide; child, early and forced marriage; female genital mutilation (FGM); trafficking; 'honour' crimes; sexual harassment; gender-biased sex selection; and cyber violence. Women and girls disproportionately experience violence, as in most contexts they tend to have less power, fewer resources, lower income and education levels than their male counterparts. Yet men and boys can also be subject to harmful gender-based practices, abuse and exploitation (Jewkes et al. 2013).

As existing evidence shows, gender-based violence is pervasive around the world, affecting all societies and cutting across age, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity and other forms of identity. For example, according to the estimates of the World Health Organization based on 81 countries and territories where relevant data are available, globally 35.6 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual non-partner violence in their lifetime, with prevalence rates ranging from 27.2 percent in Europe to 45.6 percent in Africa (WHO 2013). A more recent analysis of comparable data from 87 countries shows that 19 percent of women and girls aged 15-49 have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in the last 12 months (UN Women 2018).

Moreover, an estimated 200 million girls and women have undergone some form of FGM in 30 countries (UNICEF 2016). Despite substantial progress over the past 15 years, this harmful practice remains prevalent in Africa, particularly in North Africa, where 70 percent of girls between 15 and 19 years old are estimated to have undergone the procedure in 2015 (Figure 7) (AU et al. 2017).

**Figure 7. Proportion of girls aged 15-19 years in Africa who have undergone female genital mutilation, 2000-2015**



Source: AU et al. (2017)

Violence against women and sexual harassment are prevalent in public spaces, including in parliaments. A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the experiences of women parliamentarians in 39 countries has revealed that psychological violence is particularly widespread, which includes threats of death, rape or abduction (IPU 2016). Research shows that sexual harassment is found across industries, and it occurs more often in workplaces where men dominate in management and women have little power (Dobbin and Kalev 2017; Parker 2018).

Gender-based violence is also perpetrated in the new arenas created by social media. Although modern information and communication technologies have opened space for new forms of civic engagement and political participation for marginalized voices (Stolle and Marc 2009), they have also given rise to new channels for harassment and abuse, with the majority of cyber violence being experienced by women (UN Broadband Commission 2015). Violence, sexist attitudes and misogynistic remarks undermine women's sense of legitimacy, competence and safety, and can carry a cumulative emotional and physical cost over time.

There is no single cause of violence. In fact, gender-based violence and violence against women in particular is grounded in a complex interplay of multiple factors at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels (Heise 1998; WHO and London School of Hygiene and Tropical

Medicine 2010). Notably, individual factors for violence perpetration include childhood adversity, substance abuse and mental illness; relationship factors can be concerned with a marital conflict; and community factors entail poverty and unemployment which can generate stress and a sense of inadequacy among some men. At the societal level, factors relate to the hegemonic norms of masculinity and gender hierarchies, as well as accompanying policy frameworks, that legitimize men's control and authority, structure women's unequal access to resources, and shape behaviours and attitudes that condone such violence (García-Moreno et al. 2015; Heise and Kotsadam 2015; Jewkes et al. 2015; Renzetti et al. 2011).

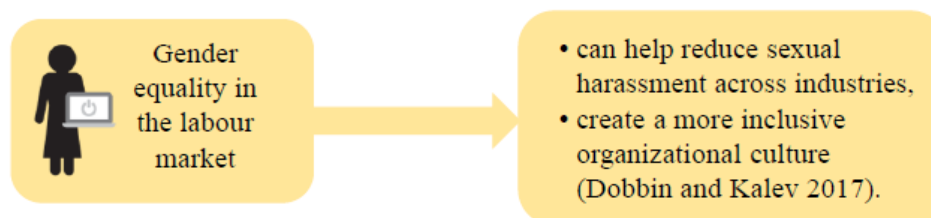
There is no doubt that gender-based violence has far-reaching implications for those who have experienced it, for their communities and society as a whole. It constrains individuals' ability to participate in public life and has severe consequences for their health, including mental and reproductive health and HIV (Campbell 2002; Mitchell et al. 2016). Furthermore, it decreases economic production and diminishes human capital formation, while incurring significant costs related to the provision of services (such as health care, police and judiciary services), out-of-pocket expenditures, and lost income and productivity (Klugman et al. 2014; UNDP 2015). For example, the estimated costs of intimate partner violence in a variety of countries range from 1.2 percent to 3.7 percent of GDP, equivalent to spending on primary education in many countries (Duvvury et al. 2013; Horna 2013). Notably, in Viet Nam intimate partner violence amounted to 1.4 percent of GDP in lost earnings and out-of-pocket expenses to treat health-related violence outcomes, leading to an overall output loss of nearly 1.8 percent of GDP in 2010 (Duvvury et al. 2012). In the United States, health-care costs among women experiencing physical abuse were 42 percent higher than among non-abused women (Bonomi et al. 2009). These estimates often do not include costs associated with long-term emotional effects, increased health-care needs and second-generation consequences (Klugman et al. 2014).

A critical relationship exists between gender inequality, gender-based violence, and conflicts and disasters. Conflicts exacerbate existing gender inequalities placing women and girls, especially from marginalized backgrounds, at a high risk of violence by both state and non-state actors (UN 2018). Sexual violence in particular is sometimes employed as a tactic of war and torture, which results in forcible displacement, leads to the dispossession of resources and identity, and has detrimental effects on social cohesion (ibid). Yet evidence shows that societies with low levels of violence against women tend to be more peaceful towards their neighbours and are more likely to refrain from using force to resolve internal and external tensions (Hudson et al. 2012).

The challenges to address gender-based violence are aggravated by the lack of legal systems and legislative provisions to criminalize violence against women and by the existence of discriminatory laws that exacerbate women's vulnerability to violence. Notably, 45 countries still do not have laws that specifically protect women from domestic violence (World Bank 2018). Even when legislation is in place, implementation lags behind and impunity prevails in many situations (García-Moreno et al. 2015), and justice systems and legal services are not necessarily accessible and responsive, which discourages women to seek support (UN Women 2018). Moreover, gaps in data and statistics obscure the gravity of the problem. Notably, data collection on violence against women is often limited to those under the age of 49—which stems from a traditional focus on women in reproductive age—and thus overlooks violence in older women's lives (Dugarova et al. 2017; UN Women 2018).

Existing interventions that address gender-based violence directly or indirectly have produced varying results and are highly context specific (Buller et al. 2018; Fulu 2014; Klugman et al. 2014). For example, in some settings women's increased income through access to employment and finance can reduce poverty-related stress, strengthen women's bargaining power and shift gender norms (Fernandez 2013; Haushofer and Shapiro 2016). However, in other contexts it can provoke violence, notably by intimate partners (Lenze and Klasen 2017), which can be attributed to the failure to fulfil cultural expectations of successful manhood or good womanhood (Jewkes 2002). In fact, cash transfer programmes that are less challenging to traditional gender norms and make smaller shifts in power relations (such as those intended for children's health) tend to be more easily accepted by men compared to those that trigger larger disruptions (such as programmes aimed at women's economic empowerment) (Buller et al. 2018).

Furthermore, studies on sexual violence show that in some situations, training programmes, policies and reporting systems have been insufficient and even aggravated the problem, while reinforcing gender stereotypes (EEOC 2016; Tinkler 2013). Notably, men with a high inclination to harass women can be more resistant to training on sexual harassment prevention and have worse attitudes towards harassment after the training (Robb and Doverspike 2001). Promoting more women in the labour force can reduce power differentials and help address harassment, not only because women are less likely than men to harass but also because their presence in management can improve workplace culture (Dobbin and Kalev 2017). An inclusive organizational culture in which women and men are treated equally and respectfully, with comprehensive anti-harassment policies and accountability mechanisms at all levels, is likely to be more effective in preventing harassment.



Evidence on tackling gender-based violence suggests that it is useful to link prevention with response measures across a continuum, from primary prevention and protection to early intervention and survivor response (Fulu 2014; UN Women 2015c). Examples of primary prevention include building women's economic independence; working with both men and women to strengthen equal and respectful relationships; shifting social norms through, for instance, mutually reinforcing group education, training and community mobilization; and parenting programmes. Protection involves ensuring safe spaces and introduction of sanctions through laws, regulations and other legal mechanisms to enforce compliance and punitive measures for perpetrators. Early intervention focuses on individuals and groups with a high risk of perpetration or victimization through, for example, psycho-educational programmes for children who have been exposed to violence. Response measures are aimed at building systemic, organizational and community capacity to respond to violence and strengthen multisectoral support to those who have been affected by violence. These include legislative and procedural reforms to strengthen access to justice for survivors, and workplace policies such as paid leave provisions and co-worker sensitivity trainings.

The effective elimination of gender-based violence requires a holistic approach that includes long-term prevention measures; effective protection and high-quality services to support women who experience violence; prosecution and punishment of perpetrators; regular data collection on prevalence of violence; and monitoring and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of relevant laws, policies and programmes (CEDAW 2017; Fulu 2014; Jewkes 2002; UN Women 2015c, 2018). In view of the complexity of gender-based violence and its wide-ranging effects, action to eliminate all its forms needs to be accompanied by laws, policies and programmes that promote gender equality, strengthen women's rights and address gender-based discrimination in all areas, including in the labour market, education, political participation and peace processes. Furthermore, as the unequal relations that perpetuate gender-based violence tend to stem from power relations that are embedded and broadly accepted in society (Michau et al. 2014), it is critical to transform power dynamics not only within individual relationships, but also within systemic structures in political, social and economic domains that sustain these inequalities.

### **3. Underlying causes of gender inequality and unsustainability**

The underlying causes of gender inequality and of unsustainability are deeply interlocked (Fukuda-Parr et al. 2013). They tend to be rooted in prevailing market-led development models which involve economic liberalization and focus on short-term profits, excessive material consumption and overexploitation of natural resources, and the privatization of public goods and services, often at the expense of state regulation and redistribution (Leach et al. 2016; UNRISD 2005; UN Women 2014; Wichterich 2012). In many situations, this has exacerbated poverty, widened inequalities, deteriorated the quality of work, aggravated environmental degradation, and caused conflicts (Dugarova and Gülasan 2017). Such unsustainable patterns are underpinned by unequal power relations between women and men and persistent gender-based discrimination which essentialize women as caregivers and instrumentalize them as a means for development.

The findings of a new study on gender relations in Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia show that persistent gender inequality and essentialization of women in these countries are underpinned by the neoliberal approach to welfare provision, conservative social norms, and limited agency of civil society to influence the policy agenda. Nonetheless, the respective states have distributed to the population with an emphasis on working mothers, and this policy choice has been driven by the need to enhance economic gains, solve demographic issues, and secure electoral support (Dugarova 2018).

Furthermore, the effects of these unsustainable development trajectories intensify gender inequality, as women and girls are often disproportionately affected by economic, social and environmental shocks (Neumayer and Plümpner 2007; UNDESA 2016; UNDP 2017b). For example, austerity policies and fiscal constraints that limit the state's capacity to provide public goods in both developed and developing countries often have negative effects on women in low-income households, due to their status in the household and care work (Ortiz and Cummins 2013). This is confirmed by evidence from post-2010 fiscal austerity measures implemented in various countries affected by the 2008 global financial crisis, which saw cuts in family and child allowances, old age benefits, housing benefits and care services that have been largely borne by

women (UN Women 2014; World Bank 2011). All these negative aspects undermine the realization of women's rights, their participation in decision-making and access to resources and opportunities, while impeding progress towards attaining the SDGs.

Yet, as evidence in this paper demonstrates, the reverse is possible: promoting gender equality and women's agency is central to achieving more sustainable outcomes across the spectrum of development. This requires overcoming barriers to gender equality and implementing policies and strategies that could remove these obstacles and equally benefit both women and men (UNDP 2016a, b). The key interrelated barriers include: structural barriers such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and a lack of resources and assets; institutional barriers such as discriminatory laws and a lack or shortage of women's representation and leadership in decision-making processes; and regressive social and cultural norms including gender stereotypes and biases on acceptable roles and responsibilities for women and men. It is also critical to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence which poses a major obstacle in achieving gender equality and the 2030 Agenda.

Existing evidence suggests that women make up a high proportion of people living in poverty (UNDP 2016b; UN Women 2018; World Bank 2011). The latest estimates of extreme poverty in 89 developing countries for which sex-disaggregated data are available show that out of 654.9 million people living on less than \$1.90 a day, more than half are women and girls (330 million) (Munoz Boudet et al. 2018). This corresponds to the poverty rate of 12.8 percent for women and girls, compared to 12.3 percent for men and boys. In the European Union, an estimated share of women who were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2016 constituted 24.4 percent, compared to 22.5 percent for men, with gender differences increasing in older age.<sup>16</sup> Gender disparities in poverty are attributed to inequalities in access to resources and assets, education and health services, lower rates of labour market participation and lower average earnings, as well as unequal division of domestic and care work. In fact, age-disaggregated data reveal that global gender gaps in poverty are widest during the age of 25-34, with on average 120 women living in extreme poverty for every 100 men (Munoz Boudet et al. 2018). This phase of life coincides with the period of biological reproduction and childcare responsibilities when women tend to experience decreased labour force participation, increased expenses and higher demands on their time, thus making them more vulnerable to poverty. Furthermore, the vast majority of women today continue to work in informal employment, which often leaves them without social protection (Chen et al. 2005; ILO 2018a). These disadvantages and vulnerabilities accumulate across the life course and affect well-being in old age, while undermining the rights of both older women and men (Dugarova et al. 2017).

Gender inequality cuts across intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination related to class, caste, ethnicity, age, disability or religion. As such, women and girls from poor and socially marginalized groups can find themselves in the most disadvantaged position in society (CEDAW 2010; Kabeer 2016b) and face clustered deprivations (UN Women 2018), that is, deprivations in various dimensions of well-being including income, education, health and voice that tend to correlate and reinforce each other. Evidence from women's participation in local government in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan uncovers challenges posed by the intersections of gender, caste and class, which affect minority women's ability to contest elections, raise issues related to gender equality, and represent the interests of their communities (Nazneen 2018). These intersections also

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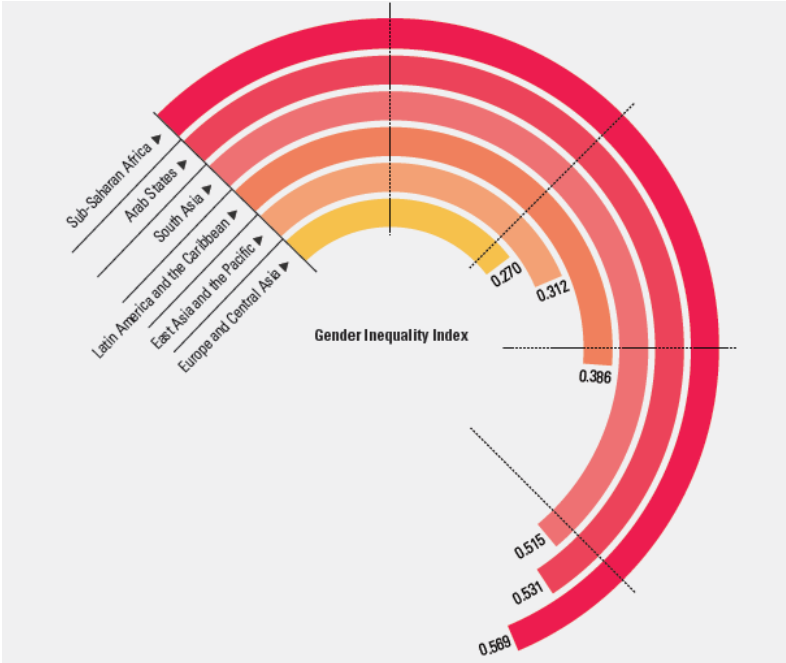
<sup>16</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>, accessed 15 August 2018.



make women more vulnerable to discriminatory practices within government and to organized forms of violence at the hands of class/caste-dominant groups. Factors related to literacy and awareness training, less restrictive patriarchal norms, women’s engagement in local institutions, and the mobilization of women’s organizations can enable women from minority communities to exercise their political agency and tackle discrimination (ibid).

According to the Gender Inequality Index (GII)—a composite index that captures the inequality that women face in reproductive health, education, political representation and labour market participation—among developing regions, the GII value ranges from 0.270 for Europe and Central Asia to 0.569 in Sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 8). The global GII value is 0.441 and the GII value for OECD countries is 0.186 (UNDP 2018). The higher the GII value, the more disparities between women and men, and the greater loss to human development (UNDP 2016f).

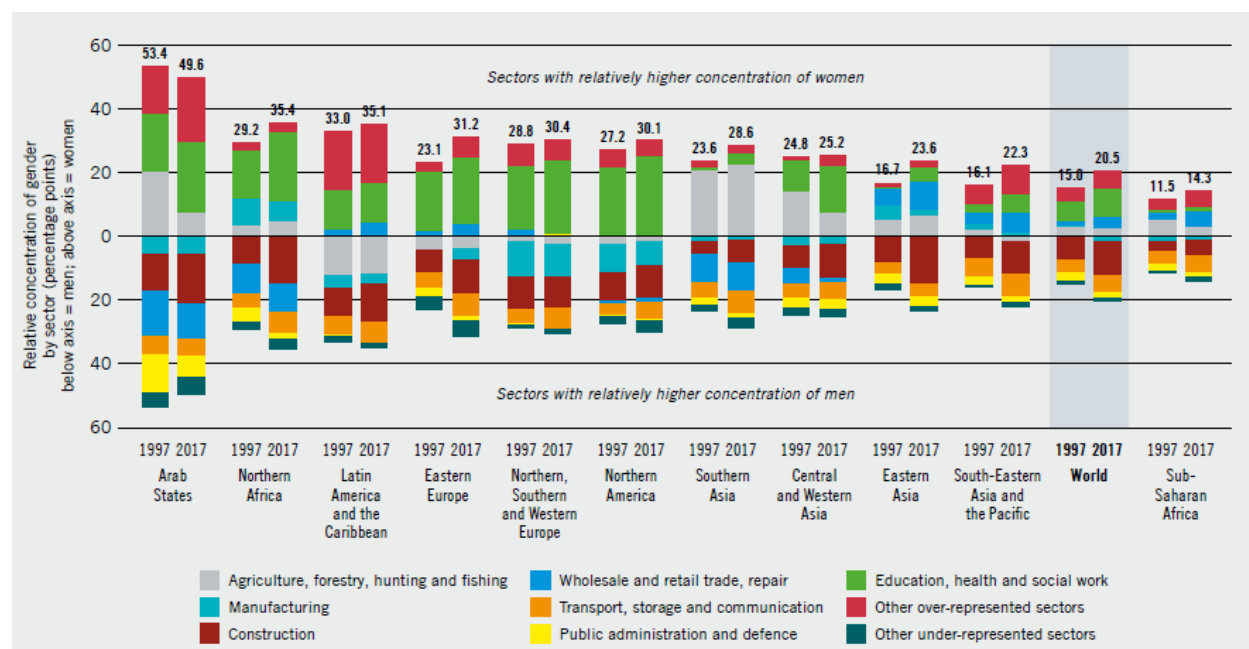
**Figure 8. Gender Inequality Index, by developing region, 2017**



**Note:** 1 indicates absolute inequality and 0 indicates perfect equality. **Source:** UNDP (2018)

Furthermore, segregation by gender in sectoral and occupational dimensions is widespread and reflects important underlying differences in opportunities for women and men, particularly with respect to accessing different types of jobs. As shown in Figure 9, global sectoral segregation increased from 15.0 percentage points to 20.5 percentage points between 1997 and 2017. At the global level, the education, health and social work sectors have the highest relative concentration of women, followed by wholesale and retail trade. In contrast, the construction and transport sectors tend to have the highest relative concentration of male workers. The Arab States region has the largest sectoral segregation, while sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest one.

**Figure 9. Composition of total sectoral segregation by region, 1997 and 2017**



**Note:** The figure shows the difference between women and men with regard to the share of employment in a sector relative to total employment for the respective gender. Thus, it reflects the sectors in which women are relatively overrepresented compared with men. The total height of a bar indicates the overall sectoral gender segregation. The world aggregate is lower than most regional aggregates since opposing overrepresentations across regions offset one another. **Source:** ILO (2017a)

Linked to occupational segregation that often confines women to lower-paid industries and contributes to gender wage gaps is subject segregation in education. While many countries have closed gender gaps in education, subject segregation persists across regions, reflecting traditional expectations of gender roles. In particular, women are persistently underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which can have long-term effects not only on gender equality but also on economic development (WEF 2017). Evidence shows that increasing gender diversity in STEM may lead to more effective problem-solving and improved innovations (Kahn and Ginther 2017).

At the core of gender unequal relations are deeply entrenched social norms and cultural attitudes that lock girls into traditional gender roles and stereotypes. For example, parents may discourage girls from pursuing formal education due to their belief that it is harder for an educated woman to marry and concerns that she will remain a financial burden to her family (Fredman et al. 2016). Families with limited resources may also choose to send boys to school instead of girls (World Bank 2015). Some countries have discriminatory social norms that underlie bias in favour of sons and reverse the negative impact on women and girls. “Son bias” has manifested itself in large gender gaps in birth rates and the number of “missing women” due to sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, and excess female mortality as a result of poor health and nutrition (UNFPA 2015). Despite evidence of women’s contribution to economic growth and human capital development, various cultures continue to prefer boys over girls as the former are believed to be more productive and carry on the family line.

In some contexts, social norms tend to construct particular gender roles that form the basis of the national identity and can serve to keep the existing gendered social and cultural order, thus preserving the status quo of unequal gender relations (Holtmaat 2013). Transforming these norms and enforcing change require legal and cultural legitimization (Packer 2002). Yet while legal legitimization can be achieved through the ratification of international conventions, cultural legitimization can be particularly challenging as it entails overcoming deeply rooted gender stereotypes and modifying fixed gender roles (Holtmaat 2013). Furthermore, under certain circumstances there could be a backlash to increasing gains made by women (Kabeer 2016a; Klasen 2016), whether when they enter the labour market (Sender et al. 2006), gain access to credit (Rahman 1999) or participate in politics (Mueller 2015). For example, the fight against female education by the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan can be seen as an extreme manifestation of resistance to the promotion of women's rights and their participation in the economy, which is perceived as an assault on traditional values and norms (Klasen 2016).

Providing access to financial and natural resources, quality education, health care and decent jobs, and participation in economic, social and political life are all important for achieving gender equality, yet they are not sufficient to attain meaningful gender equal outcomes. For example, the presence of women in governance structures carries the potential to change discriminatory practices, but if the women in question are drawn from a narrow elite with no grassroots constituency to represent, their presence will be merely a token one (Kabeer 2005). Women's access to education may improve their literacy, but unless it also provides them with the analytical capacity to question unjust practices, its potential for change will be limited (ibid). Access to paid work may give women greater purchasing power, but if it is undertaken in conditions that damage their health, undermine security and exploit their labour (UNDP 2016c), the costs may outweigh the benefits. Cash transfer programmes can increase women's income but can also reinforce gender stereotypes (Molyneux 2007), as it is mainly women who perform the unpaid tasks of fulfilling conditions required to access programme payments. For instance, while the PROGRESA programme in Mexico increased resources in the household, women also experienced increased time burdens as they were compensating for more demands on their time by working longer (Adato and Roopnaraine 2010). The Child Support Grant in South Africa is different in this respect, as it is provided to a child's primary caregiver regardless of sex.

Policies and programmes that treat women as so-called "sustainability saviours" reinforce stereotypes about women's traditional roles and tend to view women as a homogeneous category, thereby ignoring important intersections with age, ethnicity, identity and other factors that shape women's knowledge, interests and capabilities (Leach et al. 2016). Such approaches assume that women's time is an unlimited resource that can be used to sustain livelihoods, without proper consideration of women's own well-being (UN Women 2014). In fact, while in some contexts there has been more rapid progress in the public sphere of politics, education and employment, limited success has occurred in the private sphere of the home (Kaufman et al. 2017), for example, in relation to time use in household production, the reallocation of primary care for children and the elderly, and addressing intimate partner violence. It is particularly challenging to address these issues, as they lie at the heart of gender norms and roles within the household (Klasen 2016). Little policy impact has also been seen in the case of occupational and sectoral segregation. Occupational choice can be affected only marginally (through, for instance, role models and mentoring). As with

gender roles in the home, occupational and sectoral segregation is closely linked with social norms about gender division of labour that tend to be reproduced across generations (ibid).

Ultimately, tackling gender barriers and realizing gender equality in real terms requires a structural change that entails a redistribution of power and resources, and a shift in the institutional structures that perpetuate women's subordination (Fredman 2003). It goes beyond ensuring formal gender equality before the law and involves addressing gender-based discriminatory norms, strengthening women's agency, and exercising their rights in practice (Stuart and Woodroffe 2016; UN Women 2015b). In addition to public policies, partnerships with civil society, the private sector, academic institutions and the media that are based on the principle of solidarity can facilitate this process through finding innovative ways to contest gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices, reshaping social attitudes and shifting biased mindsets, while emphasizing the positive benefits of gender equality for all members of society across multiple dimensions of development.

**Figure 10. Evidence on global gender gaps**



**Source:** CFR (2017); FAO Gender and Land Rights, and IPU databases; ILO (2018b); Munoz Boudet et al. (2018); Neumayer and Plümper (2007); UNDP (2013); UNICEF (2016); UN Women (2018); WHO (2013); WHO and UNICEF (2017).

#### 4. Integrating gender equality in policymaking: good practices

To accelerate progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving broad-based development outcomes, public policies need to be rethought and redesigned using a gender-responsive approach. This implies taking into account different socially determined roles, responsibilities and capabilities of women and men, along with power relations and cultural settings in which women's and men's activities take place, while responding to their diverse needs and interests (UNDP 2016a; UN Women 2015b).

In particular, to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment (SDG 8), current models of economic growth need to integrate policies and programmes which: (i) provide good quality employment to all; (ii) improve women's access to productive assets and resources, particularly in developing countries; (iii) remove discriminatory barriers that prevent women from participating in the labour market; and (iv) eliminate gender gaps in education (Klasen 2006; UNDP 2016a; UN Women 2014). Creation of jobs in the formal sector is a critical avenue to reduce informal employment. At the same time, it is important to promote and protect the rights of both women and men engaged in the informal sector, while improving earnings and working conditions and extending social security (ILO 2015b).

To tackle gender inequalities in the labour market and boost female participation, gender equality provisions should be supported by legislative and institutional frameworks that guarantee equal opportunities and rights; ensure equal pay, safety and security; and prohibit discriminatory practices such as lower pension ages for women and workplace harassment. For example, following the passage of the Workplace Gender Equality Act of 2012, the Government of Australia developed a comprehensive approach to a gender wage gap. In particular, all non-public sector employers with over 100 workers are obliged to provide the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency with data related to the remuneration profile of managers and non-managers, the number and proportion of employees who were awarded promotions by gender and employment status, the existence and implementation of a remuneration strategy or policy, and any actions taken to address the pay gap (OECD 2017a). In 2018, Iceland became the first country to legalize equal pay for women and men. According to its new law, all companies with more than 25 staff are required to have a certificate showing that they pay workers in the same job equally regardless of their gender, sexuality or ethnicity.

##### **Box 5. Promotion of employment among ethnic minority women in Thailand**

The Mae Fah Luang Foundation exemplifies Thailand's efforts to promote employment and improve income for local ethnic minority women in Chiang Rai Province. The Foundation established the Cottage Industries Centre, which provides jobs to local ethnic minority women to prevent unnecessary migration to urban areas and engagement in illegal activities. The Foundation also supports traditional knowledge and craftsmanship to generate income and create more sustainable and balanced livelihoods. In addition, the Foundation established Women and Family Development Learning Centres across the country that provide vocational training, job search assistance and funding to local women, along with support to victims of human trafficking and prostitution to enable them to reintegrate into society and create economic and social security and independence (Government of Thailand 2017).

To reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, as stated in target 5.4 under SDG 5, policy interventions need to focus on the provision and improvement of care services including affordable childcare; enhancing family-friendly workplace policies such as paid parental leaves and flexible workplace arrangements that allow women and men to better balance family and work responsibilities without penalizing professional advancement; and investments in public infrastructure including water, sanitation and modern energy services. For example, in 2013 the Republic of Korea removed a requirement on family income level while offering free childcare for all children up to age 6 years. As a result, since 2005 the share of children aged 0-2 years in centre-based childcare facilities has increased from 9 percent to 34 percent, and the proportion of children aged 3-5 years in pre-primary schools has nearly tripled from 31 percent to 92 percent (OECD 2017a). In 2017, Japan revised the Act on Securing of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment, as well as the Child Care and Family Care Leave Law. Under these revised laws, employers are obliged to implement necessary measures to prevent harassment related to pregnancy, childbirth and childcare leave (Government of Japan 2017). To ensure that care is provided to all, the Government of Canada and indigenous organizations are developing the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework to reflect the cultural needs of children from indigenous groups across the country (Government of Canada 2018).

In developing countries with prevailing informal labour markets where parental leave and fathers' quotas are not easily available, the role of father can be encouraged through child and family benefits and child nutrition programmes by directing them to the child's primary caregiver, rather than automatically to the mother (UN Women 2015a), as in the case with the South African Child Support Grant. As part of the National Child Care and Development Network, Costa Rica has developed 41 Centres of Care and Development and implemented pilot schemes to expand night care to enable women to complete their primary or secondary education (Government of Costa Rica 2017). The country has also built centres called Casas de Alegría aimed at providing care to indigenous girls and boys during the periods when their parents are engaged in coffee harvests. In addition, the National Care System, currently being developed, intends to encompass a comprehensive public policy that addresses the care of children, the elderly and persons with disabilities (ibid).

Social protection policies such as cash transfer programmes, universal health-care systems and pensions are important for reducing women's care burdens, while providing income support and improving health and education. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that conversion to a paid care economy does not simply shift women from unpaid care work to vulnerable, poorly paid care work. Decent working conditions are vital in the provision of care services, including among domestic workers and migrant care workers, who are usually women (UNRISD 2016).

To achieve food security and agricultural sustainability (SDG 2) and address climate change impacts (SDG 13), policies should improve women's access to land, water, finance, technology and other means that will enable women to implement agricultural practices, gain income and improve health and livelihoods for themselves, their families and communities. For example, to recognize opportunities for women's empowerment and leadership in rural areas, Cambodia's National Adaptation Programme of Action has provided improved access to water resources, climate-resilient farming practices and seed varieties, and extension services for women. One of its projects covered 5,500 households in 60 villages where women were key stakeholders and

beneficiaries of the project. Since the project's implementation, women have become contributors to household income through activities such as cultivating vegetables in their gardens or on their land, and key actors of climate change adaptation, while also making decisions regarding domestic water use (Aguilar et al. 2015). Furthermore, to ensure gender-responsive climate change adaptation, the Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs developed the Gender and Climate Change Strategic Plan (2013-2022), while also providing training and support to local groups and women in particular to manage new water facilities (UNDP 2016e). Another relevant example of a gender-responsive programme is the water project in Gujarat, India, run by the Self-Employed Women's Association, which involves women in the participatory irrigation management of water supply and enables them to access drinking water for themselves, their families and communities (De Henau et al. 2017). This in turn contributes to achieving SDG 6 on securing availability of safe water.

Key to combatting climate change is access to clean energy (SDG 7). An NGO called Energy 4 Impact, formerly GVEP International, facilitates women's integration into energy markets through the provision of gender-focused entrepreneurial support; leadership training; sensitization of manufacturers, suppliers, retailers and consumers; developing partnerships; and working with financial institutions to help women businesses in sustainable energy. Yet challenges persist in accessing resources, education and skills that prevent women from participating in the energy market, and women continue to face gender-based prejudices.<sup>17</sup> Another initiative that contributes to SDG 7 comes from GERES, a development NGO specializing in sustainable energy and environmental protection.<sup>18</sup> During 2003–2013, it disseminated 3 million improved cookstoves in Cambodia benefiting 800,000 end-users. This helped to save 1.6 billion tons of wood from being used as fuel and in turn reduced carbon emissions by 2.4 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. It also improved women's incomes and thus contributed to children's education.

To ensure equal participation in decision-making, as stated in target 5.5, Austria's civil service implemented a cross-mentoring programme aimed at developing women's careers and professional potential. Female mentees are matched with male or female managers from another ministry who act as mentors and share their knowledge, experience and advice. The programme provides a mechanism for support and an advocacy platform to assert women's interests. Involving male and female mentors fosters cross-gender engagement throughout public administration. For participating men, it develops their openness towards female careers, increases their understanding of the types of issues faced by aspiring female leaders, and allows them to overcome prejudices. Between 2005 (when the programme was launched) and 2017, around 910 mentors and mentees from all ministries have taken part.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.energy4impact.org>, accessed 15 August 2018.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.geres.eu/en>, accessed 15 August 2018.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.jobboerse.gv.at/aufstieg/crossmentoring/index.html>, accessed 15 August 2018.



## **Box 6. Promoting gender balance on corporate boards in the European Union**

Women are outnumbered by men in corporate leadership positions in the European Union. In 2010, the European Commission put the issue of women in leadership positions high on the political agenda through its Strategy for Equality between Women and Men. In 2012, the Commission put forward a law aiming to accelerate the progress towards a more balanced representation of women and men on boards. As a result, between 2010 and 2016 the share of women on the board of the largest publicly listed companies in the European Union increased from 11.9 percent to 23.3 percent. The most significant improvements were seen in countries that have taken legislative action and/or had an intensive public debate on the issue. However, there is still a long way to go before achieving gender balance. In particular, the proportion of women board chairs is very low, accounting for only 7 percent in 2016, while just 5 percent of the largest listed companies in Europe had a female chief executive officer in 2016 (EC 2016).

Eliminating all forms of gender-based violence is critical to achieving SDG 5 (notably, targets 5.2 and 5.3), along with other goals in the 2030 Agenda. Several countries have adopted a multifaceted approach to the prevention and elimination of violence against women. For example, Jamaica developed the National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence (2016–2026), which focuses on five strategic priority areas: prevention, protection, intervention, legal procedures, and data collection (Government of Jamaica 2018). As part of the Integrated Programme to Prevent, Address, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence Against Women (Programa Integral para Prevenir, Atender, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra las Mujeres), Mexico established publicly funded justice centres to help local women, offering psychological, legal and medical care, temporary shelter, child development consultations and workshops on social and economic empowerment (OECD 2017a). In 2017, Brazil adopted legislative measures such as the Maria da Penha Act and the Femicide Act and introduced specialized public assistance for women and victims of domestic violence in the Unified Health System (Government of Brazil 2017). To better understand the scale of violence against women, Indonesia conducted the National Women’s Life Experience Survey in 2016, which was the first national survey to collect information on violence experienced by women aged 15-64 years and covered 9,000 households (Government of Indonesia 2017).

Several countries have undertaken steps towards ending the harmful and prevalent practice of early marriage, especially girls (target 5.3 under SDG 5). For example, Azerbaijan amended the country’s Family Code and increased the minimum age for marriage for girls to 18 years, equaling the minimum age for boys. As a result of these changes, the number of early marriages in the country dropped from 5,138 in 2011 to 388 in 2015 (Government of Azerbaijan 2017). In 2017, Bangladesh enacted the Child Marriage Restraint Act, which emphasizes the responsibility of local officials and the community to actively prevent child marriages (Government of Bangladesh 2017). It also prepared an action plan for all districts to eradicate child marriage. In 2016, Zimbabwe passed a law prohibiting marriage of persons below 18 years of age and also developed the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment to improve accountability and implementation of gender equality and women empowerment commitments in the country (Government of Zimbabwe 2017).

Women's participation in all phases of peace processes is critical to building and sustaining peaceful societies (SDG 16). For example, the recently created Mediterranean Women Mediators Network led by Italy promotes women's participation and leadership in peacemaking and conflict resolution in the region.<sup>20</sup> In 2017, the African Union established the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation known as "FemWise-Africa", which provides a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity building and networking aimed at strengthening the role of women in peacemaking in Africa.<sup>21</sup> The Global Women's Alliance for Security Leadership brings together peace practitioners and women's rights activists to enhance collaboration and supports innovative civil society efforts to prevent violent extremism and promote peace.<sup>22</sup>

Providing gender-equal rights in laws and policies is a necessary measure to attain gender equality in practice, yet it is not sufficient to ensure women's meaningful enjoyment of their rights. Even in countries where gender equality laws have been implemented, inequalities persist in power relations between women and men, along with gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms (UN Women 2015b). Gender equality and women's rights have not been adequately supported by institutional mechanisms such as financing or political commitment, and some of the structural issues facing many women remain unresolved (ibid). For example, most African countries have set up institutions for the advancement of women, which include thematic ministries or ministerial departments for women. The record of such gender-focused institutions is mixed, with varying degrees of success. In some cases, there is concern that these institutions have not received full government backing, resulting in the marginalization of the institution by delegating gender issues to a single ministry or agency outside of mainstream government (UNDP 2016a). Thus, while having gender-specific ministries and departments is important, it is critical to tackle gender inequality as a wide-ranging effort across multiple sectors that engage all segments of society.

In 2017, Afghanistan launched the 10-year Women Economic Empowerment National Priority Programme, led by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs Martyrs and Disabled, with a cumulative budget of over \$100 million and contributions from nine ministries (Government of Afghanistan 2017). In Belgium, in the context of the latest federal plan, several initiatives have been undertaken to incorporate a gender equality perspective across policies. These include awareness-raising campaigns concerning the prevention of psychosocial risks at work and preparations for the modernization of labour conditions; support for local communities in combating radicalization and in countering violent extremism; the fight against poverty; and accommodation in refugee centres and support for migrants (Government of Belgium 2017). To facilitate the integration of migrant women, several governments have provided relevant services and information, including programmes to develop new skills that can help women increase their participation in the labour market (OECD 2017a). In Sweden, some municipalities also provide language training to immigrant mothers at preschools.

To promote gender equality, it is also important that fiscal policy include gender-responsive budgeting and auditing that assess the effect of government revenue and expenditure policies on both women and men (Budlender and Hewitt 2003). Guatemala, for example, introduced a special

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<sup>20</sup> <https://womenmediators.net>, accessed 15 August 2018.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-concept-note-femwise-sept-15-short-version-clean-4-flyer.pdf>, accessed 15 August 2018.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.icanpeacework.org/our-work/womens-alliance-for-security-leadership>, accessed 15 August 2018.

expenditure mechanism called “budget classifier with a gender approach” (clasificador presupuestario con enfoque de género), which aims to contribute to the visibility of budgetary resources to promote gender equity and in particular to identify allocations that benefit women and girls (Government of Guatemala 2017). The new Constitution of Thailand enacted in 2017 stipulates that the government should consider the different necessities and needs with respect to gender when allocating the budget. The concept of gender-responsive budgeting has since been introduced to all local administrations (Government of Thailand 2017).

### **Box 7. The pathway towards gender-responsive public spending in Mexico**

In Mexico, the active work of civil society organizations led in 2008 to an alliance between the National Institute for Women, the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit, and the Gender Equality Committee of the Chamber of Deputies. Through joint efforts, they created an annex to the federal expenditure budget that earmarked public resources for gender equality. In 2011, a reform of the Planning Act enhanced the incorporation of a gender perspective into the design, execution and evaluation of the budget cycle, making equality of rights between women and men a guiding principle of planning. Through a reform of the Budget and Fiscal Responsibility Act, an annex for equality between women and men was formally established in 2012 as a cross-cutting element of the federal budget. Furthermore, the Act stated that the amount of resources allocated to attaining gender equality and advancing women could not be reduced (UN Women 2017a).

The level of commitment to gender equality at institutional levels varies greatly. Institutions at the national level may present gender as a strategic priority without necessarily having the political will, internal resources or analytical capacity to implement gender equality in their policies or programmes. Although many countries have developed initiatives that promote gender equality, a systematic and comprehensive approach is generally lacking and actual implementation is often underdeveloped. Moreover, the attention paid to gender mainstreaming may be sensitive to political changes, resulting in a lack of consistency. In addition to the design of political institutions and policies, many factors affect the prospects for the adoption and effective implementation of gender equality policies (Goetz and Jenkins 2016). These include the economic situation, the presence of progressive political parties in power, cultural norms about gender and state capacity to challenge them, extra-national influences such as international human rights norms, the nature of the policy domain in question (for instance, reproductive and sexual rights are more controversial than equal pay or quotas), and the degree to which civil and political freedoms are respected (Mazur 2016).

Furthermore, the multiplicity of possible interventions can make the choice for policymakers appear overwhelming. A key question is how to make these kinds of investments a priority for policymakers who often regard gender equality as a “soft” investment that represents a trade-off from other more important investments. Various studies, as shown in this paper, have identified such expenditures as “investments” because they stimulate growth, generate employment and enhance human capital. In fact, giving higher priority to gender equality does not mean giving lower priority to other development issues (UNDP 2016a). Gender equality is not a separate issue but rather is an integral part of any agreed priority, whether related to economic growth, poverty

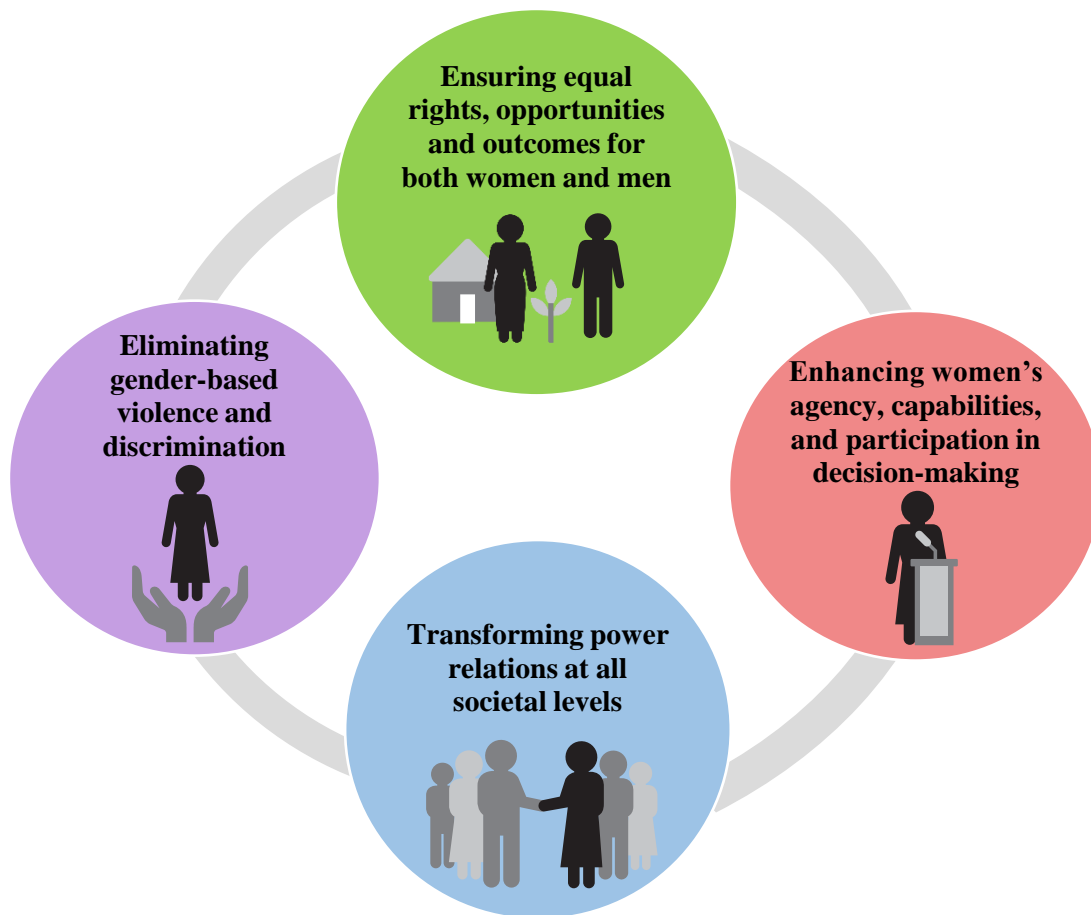
reduction, improved provision of social services or tackling climate change and environmental degradation. Development will not be inclusive and sustainable if women and men do not benefit equally from policies and programmes. It is therefore important to use gender equality as a policy lens for the formulation, planning and implementation of development agenda, while ensuring that all policies and programmes are aimed at achieving equal outcomes for both women and men.

## 5. Conclusion

Improving gender equality, both in terms of balanced participation in decision-making and substantive influence on decisions, has a profound intrinsic value. At the same time, as evidence collected in this paper has shown, gender equality is integral to achieving a wide range of objectives pertaining to sustainable development, from faster economic growth and poverty reduction to food security and environmental sustainability, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction, and peaceful and inclusive societies.

The paper suggests that accelerating progress towards achieving the SDGs requires action in the following interrelated areas concerned with gender equality (Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Key areas to accelerate progress towards gender equality and the SDGs**



These issues are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For instance, improving access to productive assets, resources and opportunities, including in education, training and employment, enables women to have an adequate standard of living and increases their bargaining power within the family and in the community. This in turn strengthens women's voice and participation in decisions that affect their lives, which makes governance systems more gender-responsive. Such systems can foster women's empowerment in economic, social, environmental and political domains and can help address negative gender stereotypes that cause and perpetuate violence against women and girls.

Achieving equality between women and men requires support for and institutionalization of a gender-responsive approach to financing, and ensuring that adequate investments are made to implement national plans and policies for women's empowerment. These include among others promoting decent work, ensuring access to nutritious food, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work, and strengthening social protection for all, particularly those in the informal economy. It is essential that gender-responsive policies and programmes be designed and implemented taking into consideration the multiple intersecting forms of discrimination against women and their specific needs and experiences throughout the life cycle. Systematic design, collection and access to high-quality, reliable and timely gender-disaggregated data are critical to implementing effective and evidence-based policies.

To advance gender equality and ensure that women exercise their rights and fully contribute to and benefit from development, it is necessary to implement and reinforce legal and institutional arrangements on gender equality, while strengthening accountability mechanisms for fulfilling existing commitments. This requires political will along with stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration involving not only national and local governments, but also civil society, the private sector, academic institutions and the media.

## Annex. Summary of gender equality contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>23</sup>



- Increasing women's income and reducing gender wage gaps, providing better training and skills development, and improving access to and control over assets and resources have positive effects on women's productivity and their participation in the labour market, strengthening their bargaining power within the family and in society, reducing poverty and improving living standards among their families and communities.
- Increasing female educational attainment and labour force participation by 2030 can contribute 3.6 percent, or \$4.4 trillion, to GDP, with the highest increases of 4.1 percent and 4.4 percent in MENA and South Asia, respectively.
- Investments in better health and education of women positively affect children's well-being and development, which contributes to creating a healthier, more educated and more productive workforce, thus decreasing the risk of poverty.
- Reduced burden of care and domestic work provides women with more time for engaging in paid work, developing new skills and knowledge, and participating in public life.



- Women play an important role in the entire food system: food production (such as staple foods, cash crops or livestock); processing across all categories of food; distribution (including in street-food vending); and food preparation.
- Greater control of assets, resources and services such as land, livestock, financial and extension services, and technology has positive effects on productivity.
- Female farmers possess valuable knowledge in seed varieties, plant and crop diversity, vegetative propagation and the reproduction of plants and animals, which contributes to agricultural production, crop management and farm resilience.
- Women's equal access to productive resources and opportunities could increase crop yields by 20–30 percent, raise total agricultural output by 2.5–4 percent, and lift 100–150 million people out of hunger.
- Better nutritional status among women results in greater health and education outcomes for children.

<sup>23</sup> For details and references see relevant sections.

### 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



- Better access to quality health services contributes to decreasing preventable morbidity and mortality among women and men throughout the life course.
- More engagement in productive activities and increased income for women, who tend to invest more in family well-being, lead to improved physical and mental health of family members.
- Eliminating gender-based violence improves the health and development of women and their children, while reducing costs related to service provision, lost income and productivity, and out-of-pocket expenses to treat health-related outcomes of violence.

### 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



- Ensuring equitable and quality education, training and skills across the life cycle strengthens women's capabilities, improves their living standards and contributes to better well-being of their families and community.
- More equality in education is conducive to entrepreneurship and economic diversification, which are essential drivers of sustainable economic growth.
- Higher education levels among women contribute to enhanced quality of human capital, including through better health and education of children.
- Gender diversity in the choice of subjects in education can lead to more innovations.
- Better education among women and girls contributes to lower mortality from weather-related disasters.

### 5 GENDER EQUALITY



- Removing gender-based discriminatory norms, laws and practices has positive effects on labour productivity, economic development, human capital formation, and political participation.
- Ending gender-based violence not only has direct positive impacts on health and well-being but is also an important prerequisite for ending poverty; attaining food security, effective learning outcomes, productive employment and economic growth; reducing inequalities; and achieving peaceful societies.
- Reducing unpaid care and domestic work through investments in child and elder care services, as well as in public infrastructure, brings significant interlinked benefits for employment generation, economic growth, and the health and education of women and children.
- Among the countries that are attempting to measure the economic value of unpaid care work, estimates range from 20 percent to 60 percent of GDP (Antonopoulos 2009).
- Shared domestic and care responsibilities as well as involved fatherhood through paid parental leave and positive role models contribute to better physical and mental well-being of fathers; improved health and labour market outcomes for mothers; and better health, cognitive development and school achievement for children.

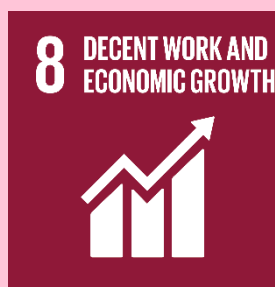
- Greater representation and participation of women in decision-making processes lead to progressive legislation on various issues such as land inheritance and reproductive rights; result in expanded investments in education, health, childcare, nutrition and pensions; and contribute to improved education and labour force participation for women.



- Improved water and sanitation infrastructure lowers the time and labour intensity of unpaid care and domestic work, which contributes to increasing female labour force participation and household income.
- Availability of safe and affordable drinking water, as well as good quality sanitation, has positive impacts on the health and education of women, their children and families, leading to a virtuous cycle of human capital accumulation, labour productivity and economic growth.



- Engaging women in the use, development and distribution of renewable energy-based agricultural technology can improve crop yields, increase women's incomes and productivity, and contribute to children's education and health.
- Improving gender-equal access to clean energy and women's participation in the energy market improves the environment and addresses the impacts of climate change by decreasing women's and men's reliance on traditional sources of fuel for wood stoves and reducing the negative health effects of smoky cookfires.
- Better infrastructure such as electricity contributes to decreasing women's unpaid care burden and positively affects intra-household bargaining power.



- Reduction of gender gaps in the labour market and gender-equal access to resources, assets and technologies have positive effects on employment generation, labour productivity and economic diversification. It can also help reduce sexual harassment and improve organizational culture.
- Notably, reducing gender gaps in the labour market could increase global employment by 189 million, or 5.3 percent, by 2025.
- These measures empower women within the household, increase consumption, and lead to greater health and education outcomes for their children, which improves the productivity of the next generation of workers.
- Women's participation in entrepreneurial activities, facilitated by the availability of microfinance credits, leads to women's improved ability to support themselves, their families and communities.
- Greater gender diversity, including at top management levels, results in higher financial returns and improves business performance, which can be attributed to non-discrimination and skill diversity.



## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



- Increasing investments in public infrastructure, including social infrastructure such as childcare, elder care, health and education facilities, and physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and water and energy supply, has positive effects on creating jobs, expanding income-earning activities, reducing unpaid care and domestic work, and promoting economic growth.
- Investing 2 percent of GDP in social infrastructure (especially the care industry) could increase employment to 3.2 percent in emerging countries, which means nearly 24 million new jobs, or up to 6.1 percent in developed countries.
- Better infrastructure such as transportation and electricity has positive effects on the health and education of women and children, and improved sanitation and water facilities decrease illnesses and time spent fetching water.
- Women's access to education and employment contributes to industrialization.
- Reducing gender gaps and subject segregation in education (for example by increasing gender diversity in STEM) can give rise to improved innovations.

## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



- Eliminating gender discrimination—which can intersect with age, ethnicity, disability and other factors—in accessing resources; improving opportunities and outcomes in education, employment and political participation; and addressing unequal division of domestic and care work, has catalytic effects on reducing inequalities in multiple dimensions.
- Adopting a gender-responsive, rights-based approach to migration, while facilitating safe and responsible mobility of people, is vital to reducing inequalities and contributing to social and economic development in view of the significant value of remittances and care work provided by female migrant workers.
- Notably, in 2016 migrant women were responsible for approximately \$300 billion in global remittances.

## 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



- Providing gender-equal access to public spaces and basic services in cities is vital to making human settlements and livelihoods inclusive and sustainable.
- Provision of quality and affordable childcare and long-term care for the elderly is critical, particularly in the context of rapidly ageing populations, migration and urbanization.
- Improved public infrastructure such as transportation has positive effects on improving the well-being, health and education of women and men, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

## 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



- Women tend to make the majority of consumer decisions and are more likely to be sustainable consumers, having a higher inclination to recycle, save energy and reduce waste.
- Improving gender equality and women's presence in senior positions foster the creation of gender-sensitive approaches and initiatives in environmental management and efficient use of natural resources.
- Gender-equal access to natural resources, property and technologies, along with women's increased participation in natural resource governance, are important to improving conservation efforts and achieving more sustainable consumption and production.

## 13 CLIMATE ACTION



- Due to their local knowledge, skills and experiences regarding management of food, water and natural resources, women are critical actors in climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction.
- Gender equality in governance structures is associated with reduced carbon dioxide emissions, more land protection, and greater possibility of ratification of environmental treaties.
- Recognition of women's rights to land, property and finance; equal provision of education, training and skills development; participation at all levels, along with shifting social norms, are key to enabling women to strengthen the resilience of communities in the face of a changing climate and at times of disaster.

## 14 LIFE BELOW WATER



- Gender equality in accessing assets, resources and opportunities in the use of marine resources, including fisheries, aquaculture and tourism, has a significant role in conservation of oceans and seas, reduction of marine pollution, and sustainable management of coastal ecosystems.

## 15 LIFE ON LAND



- Women play an important role as land stewards and collectors of wood, wild foods and herbs, and their knowledge of indigenous practices is key to preserving ecosystems.
- Women's active participation in community institutions is associated with greater probability of forest regeneration, more equitable sharing of benefits, and improved forest sustainability.
- Gender-sensitive, inclusive and participatory governance decreases women's time and labour in collecting forest products and increases household income.
- A greater number of women's NGOs correlates with decreased levels of deforestation.
- Equal participation of women and men in the use of natural resources has positive effects on sustainable wildlife management.

**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



- Countries with increased women’s participation and leadership in politics and civil society tend to be more inclusive, responsive, egalitarian and democratic. In particular, a higher number of women in parliaments is more likely to lead to the repeal of laws that discriminate against women, and women’s movements have resulted in better protection of women’s rights, realization of their citizenship and more gender-equitable access to civil law.
- In cases where women can influence negotiations, there is greater likelihood of agreements being reached and implemented than in cases of women’s weak or no influence. Notably, women’s participation as witnesses, negotiators, mediators or signatories increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years.
- Women play a vital role in building and sustaining peace, preventing and reducing conflict, and “building back” their societies and restoring communities after crises.
- A growing body of research has linked more sustainable peace with women’s meaningful participation in peace processes—through representation at the negotiation table, in official or unofficial consultations, and in different peace process phases including pre-negotiation and post-agreement implementation.
- The participation of women in political processes is shaping policymaking in ways that better reflect the needs of their families and communities. When included in peace processes, women advocate for land ownership, inheritance, health care, gender-based violence and human rights violations.
- Women play an important role in preventing conflicts and countering violent extremism and terrorism. Female law enforcement officers tend to be better at building trust with community-oriented policing, and United Nations women peacekeepers help to improve situational awareness of missions by strengthening the understanding of female victims or young girls and boys.
- In conflict-affected settings, increases in women’s participation in the labour force are associated with more rapid economic recovery, poverty reduction and improvement in overall household and community welfare.
- Societies which value women’s participation and have fewer economic, social or political disparities between men and women tend to have lower levels of violence. Moreover, societies with low levels of violence against women tend to be more peaceful towards their neighbours and eschew the use of force to resolve internal and external tensions.
- The participation of women can create a more trusted and legitimate security apparatus and a gender-responsive justice system. Notably, there is a positive correlation between the proportion of female police officers and reporting rates of sexual assault.

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



- Partnerships between government, civil society, the private sector, academia and the media can facilitate the achievement of gender equality and sustainable development by implementing gender-sensitive policies, contesting gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices, reshaping social attitudes and shifting biased mindsets.
- Gender equality is more likely to be achieved when public policies are designed with a gender-responsive approach, supported by legislative and institutional frameworks that guarantee equal opportunities and rights.
- Fiscal policy that includes gender-responsive budgeting and auditing is essential to promoting equality between women and men.
- Systematic design, collection and access to high-quality, reliable and timely gender-disaggregated data is critical to implementing effective policies.

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