

## Women's challenges and opportunities

### Renewed efforts for gender equality and unpaid work recognition

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The recently published Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the United Nations Developing Programme Gender Equality Strategy in 2018 summarizes various achievements towards implementing the gender equality strategy, 2018-2021.

Gender equality is a valuable support to countries to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that gender equality is critical to achieving progress across all Sustainable Development Goals while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Since, UNDP's Executive Board adoption of the gender equality strategy, 2018-2021, it committed to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the development work.

Gender equality is one of the six-signature solutions identified in the Strategic Plan to provide an integrated response to complex challenges across three outcomes:

- (a) Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions;
- (b) Accelerating structural transformations for sustainable development; and
- (c) Building resilience to crises and shocks.

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals has the achievement of gender equality and empower all women and girls as one of its goals.

More specifically, target 5.4 mentions the recognition and value of "unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family."

Many efforts have been made towards the achievement of this goal and its targets up until now, but more commitment, data, innovative approach and political support are needed.

This Report shows the UN System's efforts, along with Governments and Partnerships, to support the implementation of gender equality at all levels.

*Extracts from the Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2018 (DP/2019/11).*

Improvements were made across all outcome areas and signature solutions to support women as agents of change, especially with strong results in supporting women's political participation. The year also saw an increase in results to empower women as decision makers in natural resource management, energy and climate risk reduction and adaptation. However, more progress is required to engage women in leadership positions within recovery mechanisms, social dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms.

There has been a significant work done in improving access to jobs, basic services, financial services and non-financial assets, and in addressing unpaid care work, particularly through better access to clean energy. Yet more needs to be done to remove structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and to close gender gaps.

Various efforts have been undertaken to prevent and address gender-based violence by strengthening legal frameworks and policies and ensuring access to justice and multi-sectorial services, as of the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.

Also, more innovative initiatives such as the partnerships to address discriminatory gender and social norms; expansion of partnerships with international financial institutions and the private sector to transform business practices and help direct capital investments to advance gender equality; pioneering solutions to advance gender equality such as crowd-funding platforms to finance shelters for survivors of domestic violence; incubator programmes to identify marketable interventions to address security; employment and political participation of women; and application of behavioral science to inform decision-making.

### **Gender equality today**

The equality setting in 2018 was shaped by ongoing and emerging trends such as persistent multi-dimensional poverty and inequalities, [1] increasing global warming, [2] protracted conflicts and high levels of violence [3] and the changing nature of work. All these trends have distinct impacts on women and men due to their different roles, rights and opportunities in society, which are enhanced or constrained by intersecting forms of discrimination. [4]

More women participate in paid employment today, particularly in developed countries, where women and men have nearly equal educational achievements. [5] However, women remain economically disadvantaged, with fewer asset holdings, gender gaps in labor force participation and a concentration in the informal sector, which leaves them without social protection.

While women's representation in governance structures has been growing, women, on average, account for just 24 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide. Of countries that track gender parity in public administration, only 20 per cent reached gender parity in decision-making positions. [6] In the private sector, women accounted for only 4.8 per cent of chief executive officers of Fortune 500 companies in 2018. [7]

Sexual and gender-based violence is a concern in all regions and contexts as it has significant impacts on women's health, basic rights and opportunities and undermines progress towards gender equality and national development.

While there has been more attention to women's active agency in addressing impacts of climate change, women continue to be disproportionately affected by disasters and are insufficiently represented in climate change decision-making processes.

### **Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions**

Gender equality is an imperative for eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions. Increasing women's income, 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 and improving living standards.

A lot of work on gender equality in 2018 focused on the areas of women's economic empowerment through interventions as of:

- (a) Mainstreaming gender in national planning;
- (b) Improving access to basic services, financial and non-financial assets and jobs;
- (c) Strengthening energy access;
- (d) Reducing unpaid care work; and
- (e) Eliminating gender-based violence.

#### *Gender mainstreaming in national planning*

Throughout 2018, it was ensured a support for Sustainable Development Goal planning and implementation was gender-responsive, including through the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) framework. For example, eight countries were supported in Latin America and the Caribbean to assess and strengthen their development plans and review statistical and financial systems, while contributing to designing road maps and identifying gender-sensitive accelerators. In line with the MAPS approach, gender

equality and women's empowerment were identified as a stand-alone accelerator in six countries in Europe and Central Asia.

#### *Improving access to basic services, financial and non-financial assets and jobs*

The report shows an active support to women's access to jobs, livelihoods and basic services. In India, provisions benefited more than 450,000 women who participated in training and micro-enterprise development activities. In the Republic of Moldova, more than 165,000 women gained access to better infrastructure with improved social services due to targeted interventions in over 100 communities.

Globally, 4.1 million more women benefited in 2018 to access basic services (including health services), financial services and non-financial assets. In Fiji, an integrated government service-delivery platform for remote communities was promoted and provided nearly 38,000 services, including legal aid, disability benefits and banking services, to 21,587 women. In Cambodia, UNDP together with the Government and civil society helped nearly 3,000 women with disabilities to receive a disability allowance. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the revised Family Code widened opportunities for women's economic empowerment by eliminating requirements for marital authorization for women to sign labour or commercial banking contracts.

#### *Strengthening women's access to clean energy*

Achieving gender equality in access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy, including renewable energy, is vital for eradicating poverty. The results various projects show that gender equality is beneficial for the environment, women's health and the reduction of unpaid work. In 2018, nearly 612,000 women-headed households benefited from access to clean energy. In Niger, for example, women represented 51 per cent of the population who gained access to modern energy services thanks to the installation of multifunctional platforms. This reduced the time the women spent on domestic work, increased their income and improved nutrition and food security.

In Brazil, the construction of ecological stoves enabled women to save four hours walking to transport 20 kilograms of firewood three times a week. The time saved also allowed the women to make better use of subsistence agriculture and improve their nutrition.

#### *Unpaid care work*

The recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work that women

disproportionately perform is critical to achieving gender equality, with significant benefits for economic development and labour market outcomes, improved well-being and poverty reduction.

In El Salvador, the Government developed its national care policy and includes gender analysis in the universal social protection system. In Sierra Leone, the creation of new clean water facilities located closer to residential dwellings, resulting in increased children's study time and women's engagement in trading and small businesses. In Timor-Leste, an extension of new water supply taps was implemented, reducing the time spent by women on water collection.

#### *Reinforcing efforts to eliminate gender-based violence*

Eliminating gender-based violence is crucial for achieving gender equality and eradicating poverty in its multiple forms among women and girls and men and boys. The elimination of gender-based violence contributes to better health and well-being, improves educational outcomes and supports women's rights to decent work and income security.

In 2018, strengthening efforts have been made to prevent and respond to gender-based violence at work through reinforcing legal frameworks and policies; providing comprehensive multi-sectorial services; improving access to justice for and safety of survivors; and raising awareness and social mobilization. Three notable global initiatives in this regard are:

- (a) European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative;
- (b) UNDP project on ending gender-based violence and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (2018-2020) which examines how prevention and response can be integrated within sectorial programming; and
- (c) Global programme on strengthening the rule of law and human rights for sustaining peace and fostering development (2016-2020), which has addressed sexual and gender-based violence in nearly 40 priority countries affected by crisis, fragility or conflict.

In all regions, UNDP works with Governments to adopt critical legal and policy reforms to combat violence against women and eliminate all forms of discrimination. In Albania, improvements and alignments have been promoted to align national legislation with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, including the

criminal procedural code and by-law on domestic violence. In Peru, the implementation of the National Plan on Violence Against Women has been promoted, along with the law that established the National System for the Prevention, Sanction and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Family Members at the local level.

Governments have been supported to generate evidence and data to better understand the root causes of gender-based violence as in Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guyana and Honduras.

In 11 countries, women and girls have gained access to justice for crimes of sexual and gender-based violence; 47 per cent of gender-based violence cases, which were reported to authorities, received judgment in the formal justice system.

In conclusion, the report features significant achievements in promoting women's political participation and economic empowerment, especially while recognizing, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work that women disproportionately perform as critical to achieving gender equality. The report also shows the progress achieved in empowering women as decision-makers in natural resource management and addressing impacts of climate change with significant benefits for economic development and labour market outcomes, improved well-being and poverty reduction.

However, despite the progress made, limited impact was found in transforming power relations and achieving structural change. Women are still treated as programme beneficiaries rather than as active agents of change. Moreover, within UNDP women remain underrepresented at middle management level, and there is a persisting gap in the experiences of men and women in the workplace. More concerted and systematic efforts are therefore needed to advance gender equality, remove structural barriers, and promote women's agency and leadership.

### Highlights of 2018 \*

- **UNDP continued to strengthen women's economic empowerment.** Over 4.1 million more women gained access to basic services, financial services and non-financial assets in 2018 with UNDP support.
- **UNDP continues to be a vital actor in supporting women's political participation.** Forty-eight per cent of all voters registered with UNDP support in 39 countries were women, and across all regions special measures were implemented to ensure a conducive environment for women's political participation.
- **UNDP continues to support women in crisis and post-crisis contexts.** Fifty-nine per cent of all beneficiaries of recovery programmes were women.
- **UNDP demonstrated strong performance against the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0,** meeting or exceeding 87.5 per cent of the performance indicators. Notable achievements include: policy and strategic planning; knowledge and communications; inter-agency coordination; and evaluation, for which UNDP exceeded requirements for the first time.
- **UNDP achieved gender parity at senior management level.** The Assistant Secretary-General team is composed of 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men and resident representative appointments comprise 51 per cent women and 49 per cent men.

\* Based on the Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2018 (DP/2019/11).

[1] Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2018). *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2018: The Most Detailed Picture To Date of the World's Poorest People*, University of Oxford, UK.

[2] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018. *Global Warming of 1.5 °C*.

[3] United Nations; World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Washington, DC: World Bank. 2018.

[4] Dugarova, E., *Gender Equality as an Accelerator for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals*, New York, UNDP and UN- Women, 2018.

[5] *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 – Global snapshot*, Geneva, International Labour Office, 2018.

[6] UNDP Gender Equality in Public Administration Initiative data, 2019.

[7] Catalyst, *Pyramid: Women in S&P 500 Companies* (January 16, 2019).