

SUMMARY REPORT

THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION TURNS 20



Progress, challenges and lessons learnt for the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the human rights of women and girls in the post-2015 context are presented in this summary, prepared by UN Women, of the Report of the Secretary-General on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3).

© 2015 UN Women. All rights reserved.
Manufactured in the United States

Layout: Dammsavage studio
Printing: Colorcraft of Virginia



SUMMARY REPORT: THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION URNS 20



UN WOMEN

New York, March 2015

A summary of the Report of the Secretary-General on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3).



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	6
------------------------------------	---

ABOUT THIS REPORT	8
-------------------	---

I. TRENDS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION	9
--	---

A. Women and poverty	10
----------------------	----

B. Education and training of women	13
------------------------------------	----

C. Women and health	16
---------------------	----

D. Violence against women	20
---------------------------	----

E. Women and armed conflict	22
-----------------------------	----

F. Women and the economy	25
--------------------------	----

G. Women in power and decision-making	30
---------------------------------------	----

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women	33
--	----

I. Human rights of women	36
--------------------------	----

J. Women and the media	38
------------------------	----

K. Women and the environment	41
------------------------------	----

L. The girl child	45
-------------------	----

II. ACCELERATING IMPLEMENTATION IN THE POST-2015 CONTEXT	49
--	----

FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This report is a wake-up call.

With its up-to-date evidence and analysis of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, it is a salutary account of a world that has not, in the main, improved much for women and girls, and for some has got a lot worse. It is also an account of a world where new actors are starting to recognize their shared responsibility for achieving change.

Twenty years ago we were buoyed up by the unified determination and conviction of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Generations have been—and continue to be—inspired by the blueprint for gender equality and women’s empowerment. We are seeing better laws to promote gender equality and address violence against women and girls. Girls’ enrolment in primary and secondary education has increased, women are participating more actively in the labour force, especially in Latin America, and most regions have made progress in increasing women’s access to contraception with especially remarkable progress in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Twenty years on, it is a hard truth that many of the same barriers and constraints that were recognized by the Beijing signatories are still in force globally. There are bright highlights where progress has been made. But no country has achieved gender equality.

The overall picture is of slow and uneven implementation, with serious stagnation and even regression in several areas. Progress has been particularly slow for the most marginalized women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Governments and other stakeholders have in many cases taken strong and positive action. But policy prioritization has not been consistent across all critical areas of concern. Change has not been deep enough, nor comprehensive, and it is not irreversible.

The lack of resources, in national budgets and internationally, for implementing the Platform for Action emerges as a key challenge in the review. This is counterpointed by evidence of improvements where official development assistance has been concentrated—for example in education—yet significant underinvestment in other sectors and overall remains an acute concern.

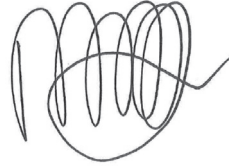
In recent years, progress on gender equality has been held back by forces in the global political and economic landscapes that have been particularly hard to mitigate or combat. Persistent conflicts, the global financial and economic crises, volatile food and energy prices, and climate change have intensified inequalities and vulnerability, and have had specific and almost universally negative impacts on women and girls. Fragile gains towards gender equality continue to be threatened by rising extremism and specifically directed backlash against women’s rights in many contexts. Deep-seated discriminatory norms, stereotypes and violence remain pervasive, evidencing gender-based discrimination that continues to be deeply entrenched in the minds of individuals, institutions and societies.

Creating a world with greater equality for generations to come is the defining and most urgent challenge of this century. Gender equality and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights are fundamental

for achieving human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development and must be central to the post-2015 development agenda.

We have set 2030 as the expiry date for gender inequality. Achieving this will require unprecedented political leadership, dedicated and vastly increased resources, and new partnerships across the whole of society. This review gives us clear direction on where our efforts must and will focus in order to deal, once and for all, with this greatest human rights violation. I urge all our partners to give close attention to this review's recommendations as we turn now to develop

and then implement the new post-2015 development agenda, at whose heart lies the renewed vision of a just, sustainable and prosperous world in balance.



Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

*United Nations Under-Secretary-General
and Executive Director of UN Women*

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The present report is a summary of the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.6/2015/3) on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The report provides a review of national level implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective, as mandated in the Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/18.¹

The first section of the report provides an overview of twenty years of implementation of the Platform for Action. The following sections of this report highlight the trends and priorities in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern, including an overview of remaining challenges and actions needed to accelerate implementation. The report concludes with lessons learnt and priorities for accelerating implementation of the Platform for Action and the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls in the post-2015 context. The full version of the Secretary-General's report can be found here: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/official-documents>.

¹ This Secretary-General's report utilizes the responses to a guidance note provided by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations regional commissions to all Member States and observer States in their respective regions at the end of 2013. By 12 December 2014, a record number of 164 Member States have responded to the guidance note. The national responses can be found alongside the guidance note here: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations>.

I.

TRENDS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Twenty years have now passed since the Fourth World Conference on Women set out an expansive vision and landmark set of commitments for achieving gender equality in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 1995, gender equality advocates brought to the fore the lack of empowerment and the multitude of human rights violations experienced by women and girls and the need for comprehensive laws and policies as well as the transformation of institutions, both formal (e.g. states, markets, national and global governance structures) and informal (e.g. family, community), to achieve gender equality and the full realization of the human rights of women and girls.

Over the last two decades there has been uneven progress towards gender equality. Countries have increasingly removed discrimination in laws and adopted laws to promote gender equality and address violence against women and girls. There have been significant gains in girls' enrolment in primary and secondary education. In some regions, women's participation in the labour force has increased. Some regions have made progress in increasing women's access to contraception. Harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, have started to decline in some contexts. There have been important gains in women's representation in national parliaments in some countries. Significant normative advances have been made in the global agenda on women, peace and security.

Overall progress, however, has been unacceptably slow with stagnation and even regress in some contexts. Change towards gender equality has not been deep enough; nor has it been irreversible. Discrimination in the law persists in many countries, particularly in the area of family law. Women's

increasing educational attainment and rising participation in the labour market have not been matched with better employment conditions, prospects for advancement and equal pay. At the current pace of progress it would take more than 75 years to reach equal remuneration for work of equal value.² Too many women remain without access to decent work, are denied equal rights to inheritance and property and are vulnerable to poverty. Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work continues to limit their enjoyment of human rights in several areas. Violence against women and girls persists at alarmingly high levels in many forms in public and private spaces. Unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality persist in some regions. Women's already limited presence in decision-making at all levels is frequently subject to setbacks and women remain significantly underrepresented at the highest levels of political leadership.

² International Labour Organization, *Report of the Director-General: A New Era of Social Justice, One-hundredth Session, International Labour Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, 1-17 June 2011* (Geneva, 2011).

Overall progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action has been particularly slow for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Stark gaps exist for poor women and girls living in rural areas and in poor urban settlements on several indicators including enrolment in education, maternal mortality and access to services such as water and sanitation. Young women are at much greater risk of new HIV infections, compared to their male peers. Marginalized groups of women such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender women are at particular risk of discrimination and violence.

Despite the persistent gaps, many countries have made important advances to realize women's rights by introducing and implementing laws, policies and programmes. Many of the transformative advances

have been driven by women's movements, and have often been more effective where they have worked in alliance with other gender equality advocates, in local and national governments, parliaments and political parties. These advances have served to ignite several important paradigm shifts in policy responses, such as the recognition and action on the continuum of violence against women in private and public settings as a public concern and the recognition of unpaid care work as a public good. Indeed, the role of autonomous feminist organizations in advancing women's rights is recognized in comparative research on 70 countries over four decades as the most critical factor in the implementation of gender equality policies.³

3 Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon, "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspectives 1975-2005," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 106, issue 3, (August 2012).

A. Women and poverty

KEY MESSAGES

- There is evidence that women are more likely than men to live in poverty. Women are less likely than men to have access to decent work, assets and formal credit.
- Tackling the root causes of women's poverty requires removing gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work; ensuring social protection across the lifecycle and equal access to assets and increasing investments in infrastructure and basic social services.
- The lack of data on women's poverty continues to be a major challenge. More and better data is needed to facilitate multidimensional and gender responsive assessments of poverty.

The Platform for Action noted that poverty had various manifestations, including, inter alia, lack of income and productive resources, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited access to education and other basic services, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, and social discrimination and exclusion. The Platform for Action emphasized that poverty eradication strategies should be comprehensive and that the application of gender analysis to a wide range of economic and social policies and programmes, including macroeconomic, employment and social policies, was critical to the elaboration and successful implementation of poverty reduction strategies. It also called upon governments to collect

sex- and age-disaggregated data on poverty and all aspects of economic activity as well as to devise suitable statistical means to recognize and make visible the full extent of women's work and all their contributions to the national economy.

Global trends

Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of people in developing regions living under the threshold of \$1.25 a day (in terms of purchasing power parity), the international benchmark for measuring extreme poverty, fell from 47 per cent to 22 per cent, thereby meeting Millennium Development Goal target 1a. Although

every developing region has seen reductions in poverty rates, changes have been led by Eastern Asia, where rates of extreme poverty have fallen from 60 per cent in 1990 to 12 per cent in 2010.⁴ Over the same period, Southern Asia has also seen rapid reductions in extreme poverty, from 51 per cent to 30 per cent, but progress has been slower in sub-Saharan Africa, where the reduction in extreme poverty (from 56 per cent to 48 per cent) was not enough to offset rapid population growth, resulting in an increase in the number of people in extreme poverty by 124 million people. Changes have also been significant in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caucasus and Central Asia and Northern Africa, but these regions started with both lower poverty rates and lower numbers of people in extreme poverty (see E/CN.6/2014/3). While the majority of the world's poor continue to live in rural areas, the share of the urban poor has increased significantly over the past decade, alongside rapid rates of urbanization and is expected to grow further in the years to come.⁵

There is evidence that women are more likely to live in poverty than men. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women are overrepresented in poor households, mainly because they are less likely to have paid work, and even when they do they are, on average, paid less than men.⁶ Data from demographic and health surveys shows that in 29 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, women aged 15 to 49 are much less likely to earn cash income than men in the same age category. While 83 per cent of men earned cash income over the 12 months preceding the survey, this was true for only 33 per cent of women.⁷ Across countries and regions, women are less likely than men to have access to decent work, assets and formal credit, although systematic global data on some of these dimensions have yet to be collected.

4 United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (New York, 2014). The categorization of all regions throughout the present report reflect the original source.

5 International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Rural Poverty Report 2011: New Realities, New Challenges—New Opportunities for Tomorrow's Generation* (Rome, 2010).

6 United Nations, "The Millennium Development Goals Report: Gender chart 2012" (2012).

7 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) calculations based on data from demographic and health surveys.

The lack of data on women's poverty continues to be a major challenge. The need for better multidimensional poverty statistics, disaggregated by sex, was highlighted in many responses, confirming that action on this front is long overdue. Most existing measures continue to be based on household survey data where aggregate household-based income or consumption data are used to calculate per capita income. Yet, the distribution of income within households is typically unequal, meaning that a large number of poor women may be living in households that are not categorized as poor.

In addition, income-based poverty indicators are limited from a gender perspective because they capture absolute deprivation rather than the fulfilment of the right to an adequate standard of living. Multidimensional measures of poverty can complement income-based indicators of poverty through the simultaneous consideration of overlapping deprivations. Many States recognized the multiple and interlocking determinants of women's poverty, including lack of, or limited access to, education, family planning, health care, housing, land and other assets. Some responses also emphasized the negative impact of violence against women and their lack of participation in economic decision-making. A few responses highlighted the importance of time poverty among women and girls. Recent research shows that the availability and distribution of time across and within households can be integrated into poverty assessments. Such assessments have been piloted in a few countries, showing that poverty rates increase significantly when time deficits are taken into account alongside income deficits.⁸

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Increasing women's access to paid employment through: policies that enable women to reconcile paid work and unpaid care responsibilities;

8 Ajit Zacharias, Rania Antonopoulous and Thomas Masterson, *Why Time Deficits Matter: Implications for the Measurement of Poverty* (Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College and United Nations Development Programme, 2012).

strengthening labour market regulations; and implementing public works programmes or employment guarantee schemes.

- Enhancing women's income security throughout the life cycle through social protection including: child benefits, conditional cash transfers, old-age pensions and subsidies for education, health care and housing.
- Improving women's livelihoods through access to land, property and productive resources through: legal reform; the issuance of individual or joint land and property titles for women; housing subsidies and access to agricultural technologies, information and resources.
- Increasing women's economic opportunities through access to financial services through microcredit schemes and mobile technologies.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Tackling the root causes of women's poverty requires concerted action to further remove gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work as well as broader efforts to extend essential social protections and access to assets through the adoption and implementation of labour market policies and carefully designed social

protection policies. Greater investments are needed in infrastructure and basic social services, including education, energy, health, water and sanitation, to reduce poverty and improve well-being, but also to free up women's time for productive activities. More and better jobs for women require an enabling macroeconomic environment with a focus on reducing inequality and realizing women's human rights through decent work generation and social investments (see Section F).⁹ Investing in gender equality through the implementation of special measures to contain its poverty-inducing effects on women, particularly through measures preventing households from falling into poverty by buffering against sudden drops in income should be prioritized. In addition, countries need to integrate gender-responsive investments in environmental protection and climate change mitigation processes into their national planning not only to accelerate implementation but also to avoid retrogression in the realization of women's right to an adequate standard of living. Finally, more and better data is needed to facilitate multidimensional and gender-responsive assessments of poverty as well as the impact of specific policies and programmes on women, including the distribution of income and time within households.

9 Jane Stotsky, "Gender and Its Relevance to Macroeconomic Policy: A Survey," International Monetary Fund Working Paper, No. 06/233, (IMF, Washington, D.C., 2007).

B.

Education and training of women

KEY MESSAGES

- There has been significant progress towards closing the gender gaps in primary enrolment; however there is great variation in progress in achieving gender parity in secondary education across regions.
- Improving the quality of education and fostering a gender-responsive learning environment is vital for enabling women and girls to equally enjoy their right to education.
- It is also essential to address the barriers to girls' education; ensuring high quality and gender-responsive education and a safe school environment for girls and providing support to young women in their transition from school to work.

One of the most significant advances towards gender equality in the last two decades has been the increase in women and girls' educational enrolment. The Platform for Action called on Governments to eliminate disparities between women and men in access to education and educational outcomes at all levels and in all forms of education, including primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training, adult literacy and lifelong learning, in line with the outcome of the 1990 World Conference on Education for All.

Global trends

Between 1990 and 2012, there was significant progress towards closing the gender gap in primary enrolments. In 2012, developing regions as a whole had achieved gender parity in primary education, with the gender parity index increasing from 0.86 to 0.97.¹⁰ In Southern Asia, where the corresponding index in primary education of 0.74 was the lowest among all regions in 1990, progress has been remarkable: by 2012, the index had reached 1.0, signifying that gender parity in primary education had been reached. Despite significant progress in sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, Western Asia and Northern Africa, girls are still disadvantaged relative to boys regarding enrolment in primary education in those regions.¹¹

At the global level, there has been progress towards gender parity in secondary education, but girls still face significant disadvantages in many regions. For developing regions as a whole, the gender parity index for secondary education increased from 0.77 in 1990 to 0.96 in 2012. However, there are large differences between regions, with girls enjoying an advantage in Latin America and the Caribbean, but lagging significantly behind boys in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, Western Asia and Oceania. Southern Asia stands out as the region where the greatest progress has been made, with the region's index increasing from 0.59 to 0.93 between 1990 and 2012.¹²

Young women's share of enrolment in tertiary education has also increased. In 1995, they made up 48 per cent of tertiary students globally and the share rose to 51 per cent in 2012.¹³ As of 2012, overall gender parity in tertiary education has been reached, with women outnumbering men in some regions. However, large disparities exist between regions, with women lagging behind men in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia, but enjoying an advantage in all other regions.¹⁴ However, despite women's increasing participation in tertiary enrolment, significant differences are observed in the fields in which men and women study. In 88 out of 102 countries reporting data in the period 2005-2012,

¹⁰ Gender parity in education is reached when the gender parity index, defined as girls' gross school enrolment ratio divided by the corresponding ratio for boys, is between 0.97 and 1.03. A rating below 0.97 indicates a bias against females, while a rating higher than 1.03 indicates that males are at a disadvantage.

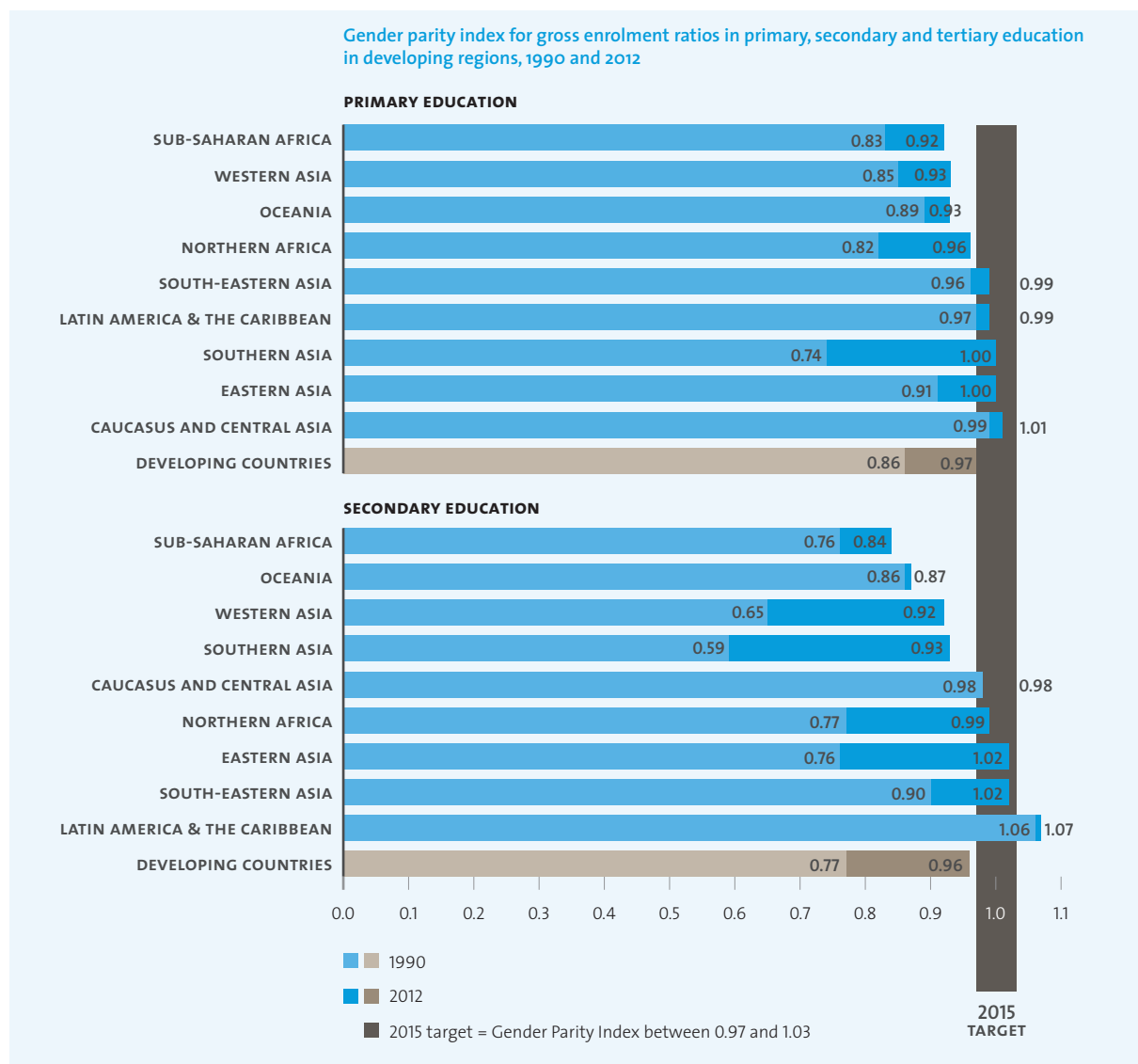
¹¹ *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (United Nations publication, 2014).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ UN Women calculations based on data from the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

¹⁴ *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (United Nations publication, 2014).

FIGURE 1:
Gender parity in primary education has been reached and parity in secondary education is close to being achieved, but with regional variations



Note: In secondary education, 1990 data for Caucasus and Central Asia refer to 1993.

Source: MDG 2014 report.

women accounted for the majority of graduates in the field of education. By contrast, in the area of engineering, manufacturing and construction, men constituted the majority of graduates in 99 out of 103 countries with data in the same period.¹⁵

Progress in enrolment has led to reduced levels of illiteracy, particularly for young women. Between 1990 and 2012, the global youth literacy rate increased from 83 per cent to 89 per cent. Still, in 2012, 781 million adults and 126 million youths worldwide lacked basic reading and writing skills, with women accounting for

¹⁵ The World's Women 2015 Trends and Statistics (forthcoming).

more than 60 per cent of all illiterate persons.¹⁶ While there has been considerable progress in increasing enrolments in recent years, the quality of education that girls and women receive has not necessarily improved. Of the world's 650 million children of primary school age, at least 250 million are not learning the basics in reading and mathematics. While global data are limited, several country studies show that gender, rural location and household poverty play a key role in determining learning outcomes.¹⁷

In addition to long-term benefits for children, public early childhood education and care services can also play a role in addressing gender inequalities more broadly by enabling the redistribution of unpaid care work, particularly for poor women who cannot afford to pay for care services. Since 1999, pre-primary education has expanded considerably. The global pre-primary education gross enrolment ratio increased from 33 per cent to 50 per cent. In many parts of the world, however, there is a wide gap in enrolment between the richest and poorest households. Part of the reason is that governments have yet to assume sufficient responsibility for pre-primary education: as of 2011, private providers were catering for 33 per cent of all enrolled children. The cost of private provision is one of the factors that contributes to the inequality in access at this level.¹⁸

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Addressing economic barriers to girls' education, through the elimination of fees, free provision of school supplies, meals and transportation as well as measures to provide financial support in the form of loans, grants and scholarships.
- Increasing efforts to foster gender-responsive school environment, for example, by addressing violence against girls, revising school curricula and textbooks to eliminate pervasive gender

stereotypes and implementing training programmes to increase the capacity of teachers to provide gender-responsive education.

- Increasing support for the transition from work to school, such as providing technical and vocational education and training to women and girls as well as initiatives to improve literacy skills of women and girls.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

With gender gaps in enrollment narrowing, much greater attention is now needed to ensure girls' and women's access to high quality and gender-responsive education. Efforts to address economic and financial barriers to girls' education must be strengthened, including the elimination of school fees, provision of stipend and scholarships and non-financial support, particularly in rural and remote areas. Greater focus is needed on the adequate financing of the education sector, investing in quality learning and teaching materials and promoting teacher training to better equip teachers with the skills to provide gender-responsive quality education. Addressing the causes of school drop-out, such as early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, is also vital. Greater efforts are needed to ensure that schools are safe and responsive to girls, including measures to address violence against girls in the school environment and when travelling to and from school, such as the provision of safe transportation and safe and hygienic sanitary facilities. Addressing gender bias and stereotypes in school curricula, and promoting awareness raising and mentoring programmes to support women's and girls' participation in non-traditional fields such as science and technology is crucial. Greater efforts are also needed to equip women with the skills necessary to succeed in labour markets and to reduce occupational segregation, through supporting women's participation in TVET activities and providing opportunities for lifelong learning, including a continued focus on women's literacy. Finally, given the important links between gender equality and early childhood education and care, States should prioritize and increase investments in this area.

¹⁶ *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (United Nations publication, 2014).

¹⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4: Teaching and Learning - Achieving Quality for All* (Paris, 2014).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

C. Women and health

KEY MESSAGES

- Women's life expectancy has increased globally over the last 20 years from 67 to 73 years between 1990 and 2012.
- Significant challenges remain with unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality in some regions, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services and the increasing rates of non-communicable diseases. The number of women living with HIV has been increasing globally since 2001.
- Continued efforts to enhance the availability, accessibility and affordability of quality services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, for women and girls are central to achieving progress.

The Platform for Action called for the realization of women's right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. It acknowledged that women's health is determined by the social, political and economic context of their lives as well as by their biological characteristics. It emphasized that gender as well as other inequalities based on ethnicity, class and geographic location were important barriers for the achievement of women's health and that gender-responsive health policy and programming required a thorough analysis of these factors. It called for greater efforts to increase women's access to appropriate, affordable and quality health care throughout the life cycle; the strengthening of preventive programmes that promote women's health; the implementation of gender-responsive approaches to sexual and reproductive health issues, including HIV and AIDS; the promotion of research and dissemination of information on women's health; increased resources for women's health and monitoring mechanisms to ensure gender mainstreaming and the implementation of women's health policies and programmes.

Global trends

Across the globe, women tend to have higher life expectancy at birth than men for both biological and behavioural reasons. However, in some settings, gender-based discrimination reduces women's life expectancy advantage so that female life expectancy at birth is more similar to that of males.¹⁹ Globally, between 1990

and 2012, female life expectancy increased from 67 years to 73 years globally, while men's life expectancy increased from 62 years to 68 years.²⁰ Regional differences in life expectancy remain significant. Generally, women's longevity advantage vis-à-vis men is smaller, but growing, in lower- and lower-middle-income countries, compared with higher income countries. In some African countries, progress in life expectancy has been slower as a result of HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality.²¹

Globally, in 2013, there were an estimated 289,000 maternal deaths, a decline of 45 per cent since 1990, but well below the Millennium Development Goal target to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015.²² High levels of maternal mortality persist in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, which together accounted for 86 per cent of all maternal deaths in 2013.²³ Maternal deaths, which are largely preventable, are linked to the low status of women and to inadequate health-care services, including the lack of emergency obstetric care services, low rates of skilled attendance at delivery and the persistent denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls in many countries. Recent research further shows that pre-existing medical conditions (such as diabetes, malaria, HIV and obesity), exacerbated by pregnancy, caused 28 per cent of maternal

19 *World Mortality Report 2013* (United Nations publication, 2013).

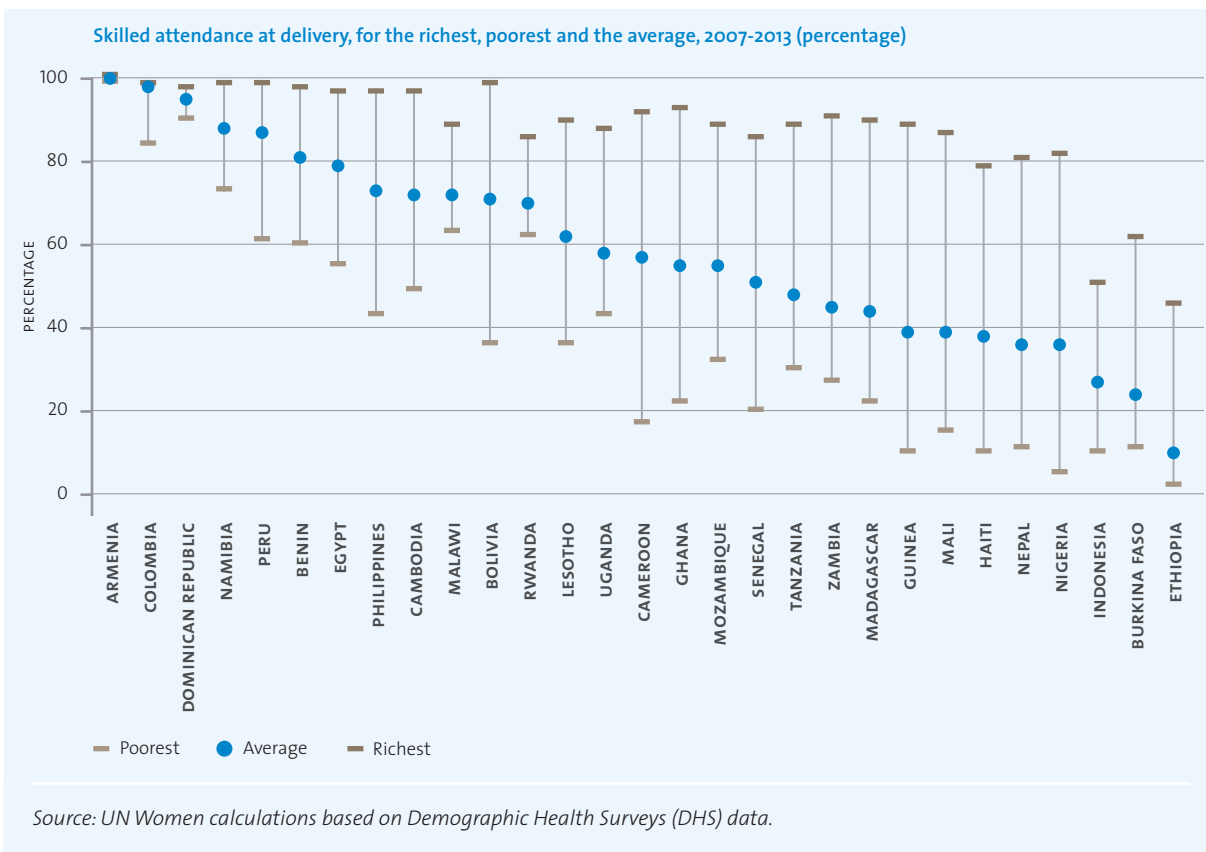
20 World Health Organization, WHO Global Health Observatory database (GHO) (<http://www.who.int/gho/en/>).

21 World Health Organization, *Women and Health: Today's Evidence, Tomorrow's Agenda* (Geneva, 2009).

22 *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (United Nations publication, 2014).

23 *Ibid.*

FIGURE 2:
The proportion of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel varies between women from different income groups



Source: UN Women calculations based on Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) data.

deaths.²⁴ Anaemia, caused by poor nutrition and deficiencies of iron and other micronutrients, affects 41.8 per cent of pregnant women worldwide.²⁵

Low rates of skilled birth attendance at delivery remain a significant challenge for women’s health in some regions. The proportion of deliveries in developing regions attended by skilled health personnel rose from 56 per cent to 68 per cent between 1990 and 2012. However, in 2012, 40 million births in developing regions were not attended by skilled health personnel,

and over 32 million of those births occurred in rural areas.²⁶ Nevertheless, there are important differences between regions and between women from different income groups. Compared with other regions, women in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia were much less likely to receive skilled birth attendance. Almost half of deliveries in those regions took place without appropriate medical care in 2012.²⁷ The situation is particularly acute for poor women and women living in rural areas. In developing regions, the rural/urban gap narrowed by only 2 percentage points (from 33 to 31) between 2000 and 2012.²⁸

24 Lale Say and others, “Global Causes of Maternal Death: A WHO Systematic Analysis,” *The Lancet Global Health*, vol. 2, issue 6 (Geneva, WHO, 2014).

25 World Health Organization, *Worldwide Prevalence of Anaemia 1993-2005: WHO Global Database on Anaemia* (Geneva, 2008).

26 *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (United Nations publication, 2014).

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

Unsafe abortions also constitute a leading cause of maternal deaths. Globally, an estimated 21.6 million unsafe abortions took place in 2008, mostly in developing countries, resulting in 47,000 deaths, about 13 per cent of all maternal deaths that year. The number of unsafe abortions will likely increase further without adequate access to safe abortion and contraception.²⁹

In 2012, in developing regions, 63 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 who are married or in a union used a method of contraception of any type, an increase of 11 percentage points since 1990.³⁰ Change has been remarkable in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa where contraceptive prevalence rates have increased by 13 percentage points and 18 percentage points, respectively. However, for those two regions, contraceptive prevalence rates remained relatively low in 2012, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where fewer than 1 in 3 women aged 15 to 49 use any method of contraception. Poverty and geographic location remain key determinants of unmet needs for family planning,³¹ with significant differences between poor rural women and rich urban women. Globally, adolescent childbearing declined between 1990 and 2011, from 34 out of every 1,000 girls to 21 out of every 1,000 girls in developed countries and from 64 to 54 out of every 1,000 girls in developing countries. The fastest progress was observed in Southern Asia, where rates declined from 88 out of every 1,000 girls in 1990 to 50 out of every 1,000 girls in 2011. Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America continued to have the highest rates in 2011, at 117 out of every 1,000 girls and 76 out of every 1,000 girls, respectively.³² Practices such as child, early and forced marriages are powerful drivers of maternal mortality and morbidity (see Section L). Childbearing at a young age constitutes a significant health risk for adolescents and their children. Young women and

adolescent girls who are sexually active, may have limited knowledge of and access to reproductive health information and services and are at increased risk of (unwanted) pregnancy, unsafe abortion and childbirth related complications, such as obstetric fistulas.³³

The number of women living with HIV has been increasing globally since 2001.³⁴ Roughly 80 per cent of women living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa, 9 per cent in South and South-East Asia, 3 per cent in Latin America, and 3 per cent in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. At the end of 2013, women accounted for 52 per cent of all people living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries, and up to 59 per cent of all people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa.³⁵ Globally, young women between 15 and 24 years of age have a 50 per cent higher risk of becoming infected with HIV, compared with their male peers. In sub-Saharan Africa, the rate of new HIV infections among young women remains double or greater than that among men in the same age group.³⁶ Women from specific population groups, including sex workers and transgender people, are also disproportionately affected by HIV.³⁷ Violence against women and girls is recognized as a driver of HIV, yet at the same time, being diagnosed with HIV has also been found to increase women's vulnerability to violence.

Non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, are now the leading cause of death in the world.³⁸ They account for a greater share of deaths in developed countries (88 per cent in 2012), but their impact is growing rapidly in developing regions as well. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, total deaths attributable to non-communicable diseases has increased from 21 per cent to 29 per cent between 2000 and 2012. Over the same period, the corresponding

29 World Health Organization, *Unsafe Abortion: Global and Regional Estimates of the Incidence of Unsafe Abortion and Associated Mortality in 2008* (Geneva, 2011).

30 *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (United Nations publication, 2014).

31 Defined as the percentage of married or in-union women aged 15 to 49 who want to stop or delay childbearing but are not using a method of contraception.

32 *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014* (United Nations publication, 2014).

33 United Nations Population Fund, *The State of the World Population 2013* (New York, 2013).

34 E/CN.6/2014/3

35 United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, *The Gap Report* (UNAIDS, Geneva, 2014).

36 E/CN.6/2014/3

37 Ibid.

38 World Health Organization, WHO Global Health Observatory database (GHO) (<http://www.who.int/gho/en/>).

proportion in Southern Asia increased from 47 per cent to 59 per cent, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, from 67 to 73 per cent.³⁹ Women and girls are disproportionately and differently affected by this increase. Non-communicable diseases are responsible for a higher share of female deaths than of male deaths, a pattern that is particularly pronounced in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the Caucasus and in Central and Western Asia. Such diseases also cause disability, which is often chronic, and the prevalence of disability is higher among women, particularly poor and older women, than among their male counterparts.⁴⁰ In developed countries, non-communicable diseases account for 90 per cent of all deaths among women and for 85 per cent of all deaths among men.⁴¹

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Increasing women's access to health services through: free access to health-care; improving access in rural areas; training and education of health-care staff; and improving accessibility to free or subsidized essential drugs and commodities.
- Realizing sexual and reproductive health and rights through legal reforms, the expansion of sexual and reproductive health services and HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care.
- Increasing attention to non-communicable diseases through: greater efforts to detect and treat breast and cervical cancers early; better management of chronic and degenerative diseases; more programmes to address mental health conditions; and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.
- Advancing the health rights of marginalized groups of women and girls through specific measures to improve access to health-care services.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Within the health system, continued efforts to enhance the availability, accessibility and affordability of adequate services for women and girls are central. Adequate funding for such services is indispensable for further progress in order to eliminate user fees and out of pocket expenses that are a heavy burden on low-income women. In this context, social protection mechanisms, including free services, vouchers and cash transfers could be even better harnessed to improve women's and girls' health outcomes. In order to make health services responsive and accountable to the needs of women and girls, especially those from disadvantaged groups, greater space must be provided for their voices to be heard in health policy planning, implementation and monitoring, for example, through the organization of women's health councils and service user groups. Cross-sectoral interventions, including legislative frameworks, gender mainstreaming across the health sector, education, economic empowerment as well as investments in basic infrastructure, such as roads, water and sanitation, will be central to further progress. The adoption and implementation of laws that protect women and girls from violence and harmful practices, and enable them to make informed choices about reproductive health and contraceptive methods of their choice also remains an important priority. Furthermore, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators is essential to monitoring and evaluating the effect of health policies and programmes on women and girls.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ World Health Organization and the World Bank, *World Report on Disability* (Geneva, 2011).

⁴¹ *The World's Women 2015 Trends and Statistics* (forthcoming).

D.

Violence against women

KEY MESSAGES

- All regions have unacceptably high rates of violence against women, with recent global estimates showing that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.
- A major obstacle for ending violence against women is the persistence of discriminatory attitudes and social norms that normalize and permit violence.
- Ensuring the implementation of strong and comprehensive legal and policy frameworks which address all forms of violence against women in all countries remains an urgent priority, along with adequate resourcing for implementation, long term strategies to prevent violence against women and ensuring accessibly and high quality services for survivors.

The Platform for Action recognized violence against women as a violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms and as an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. The Platform for Action called on States to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women; to study the causes and consequences of violence against women and to eliminate trafficking in women.

Global trends

Recent global estimates show that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.⁴² While there is some variation across regions, all regions have unacceptably high rates of violence against women. Among low- and middle- income regions, Africa has the highest proportion of women reporting either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, at 45.6 per cent, followed by South-East Asia (40.2 per cent), Eastern Mediterranean (36.4 per cent), the Americas (36.1 per cent), Western Pacific (27.9 per cent) and Europe (27.2 per cent).⁴³ In

high income countries, 32.7 per cent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Owing to the limited availability of data and comparability challenges, an analysis of global and regional trends over time is not possible.

The most common form of violence experienced by women is intimate partner violence, which often leads to injuries and at times, results in death. As confirmed in a global study on homicide, almost half of female homicide victims are killed by their intimate partner or family members, whereas the figure for men is just over 1 in 20 homicide victims.⁴⁴ Alarming, the majority of women who experience violence do not seek help or support. While global data are not available, a study of 42,000 women undertaken across 28 member States of the European Union found that only one third of victims of partner violence and one quarter of victims of non-partner violence contacted either the police or support services following the most serious incident of violence. Victims reported the most serious incident of partner violence to the police in only 14 per cent of cases.⁴⁵

A major obstacle for ending violence against women is the persistence of discriminatory attitudes and social

42 World Health Organization, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, 2013).

43 Ibid. These regional classifications are taken from the WHO study which covers only 81 countries in total, i.e. 23 high income countries and 58 low and middle income countries. The data is for 2010.

44 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide* (Vienna, 2013).

45 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey* (Luxembourg, 2014).

norms that normalize and permit violence. Victim-blaming attitudes are widespread across all countries. Data from 37 developing countries show that 21 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she argues with him.⁴⁶ Similarly 27 per cent of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects the children.⁴⁷ While those surveys collected data from women about their attitudes, surveys of men also reveal high levels of acceptance of violence against women. A 2010 survey conducted in 15 out of 27 member States of the European Union asked whether women's behaviour was a cause of domestic violence against women. The proportion of individuals who agreed with this statement averaged 52 per cent and ranged from 33 per cent to 86 per cent across countries.⁴⁸

The most recent Global Report on Trafficking in Persons provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels and is based on trafficking cases detected mainly between 2007 and 2010. Women account for between 55 per cent and 60 per cent of all trafficking victims detected globally, and women and girls together account for some 75 per cent. Moreover, the trafficking of children remains a serious problem, as 27 per cent of all victims are children and, of every three child victims, two are girls and one is a boy.⁴⁹

There is limited availability of global trend data on other forms of violence experienced by women. A study of 42,000 women in the European Union found that 55 per cent of women have experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15, and one in five women (21 per cent) had experienced such harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey.⁵⁰ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated in

2013 that more than 125 million girls and women had undergone some form of female genital mutilation/cutting in 29 countries across Africa and the Middle East. Another 30 million girls were estimated to be at risk of being cut in the next decade.⁵¹ Trend data show that the practice is becoming less common in a little over half of the 29 countries studied.⁵² However, owing to population growth, the number of women affected by female genital mutilation/cutting is actually increasing. With respect to child, early and forced marriage (see Section L.) UNICEF estimates that more than 700 million women alive in 2014 were married before their eighteenth birthday.⁵³ The harmful practice is declining, but still persists at unacceptably high levels in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Strengthening legal and policy frameworks to address all forms of violence against women through: the adoption and reforms of laws; increased efforts to implement and enforce laws and improve women's access to justice and continued efforts to adopt and improve national action plans.
- Accelerating efforts to prevent violence against women through public awareness campaigns, interventions in the education system and community mobilization activities.
- Increasing the provision and integration of multi-sectoral support services by strengthening referral mechanisms, improving specialized services and a greater focus on training and capacity building of service providers.
- Improving data and evidence on violence against women through dedicated surveys and crime surveys and research on the causes of violence against women, prevalence, attitudes and consequences.

46 UN Women analysis of Demographic Health Surveys. Data from most recent survey between 2009 and 2014.

47 Ibid.

48 Enrique Garcia, *World Health Organization Bulletin: Intimate partner violence against women and victim-blaming attitudes among Europeans* (WHO, Geneva, 2014).

49 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* (Vienna, 2012).

50 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey* (Luxembourg, 2014).

51 United Nations Children's Fund, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change* (New York, 2013).

52 Ibid.

53 United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects* (New York, 2014).

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Ensuring the implementation of strong and comprehensive legal and policy frameworks which address all forms of violence against women in all countries remains an urgent priority, along with adequate resourcing for implementation. Accelerating implementation will require comprehensive and long term strategies to prevent violence against women which address unequal power relations, change attitudes and realize women's human rights in all areas. There is a need to strengthen responses by integrating the prevention and response to such violence within broader policy frameworks such as national development plans, health, education, security and justice policies.

Laws, policies and programmes to address violence against women should specifically address the factors that place marginalized women and girls at particular risk of violence and create an enabling environment for these groups of women to find support in addressing violence. In addition, comprehensive strategies are needed to combat the multiple and newly emerging forms of violence against women and the various contexts in which violence occurs. There is also a need for much greater attention to the accessibility of, the quality of services, including through training of providers and better integration and coordination. Finally, States should increase their efforts to collect and report data in accordance with the nine violence against women indicators endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

E. Women and armed conflict

KEY MESSAGES

- Despite advances in implementing the global women, peace and security agenda, the broader context of insecurity, protracted crises, poverty and growing inequalities, as well as emerging threats such as the rise of violent extremism, has served to limit and even derail progress.
- Women's full and equal participation in all matters related to peace and security is vital to achieving and sustaining peace, however women remain under-represented in the structures of the security sector, particularly in decision-making and leadership positions.
- Accelerating progress requires ensuring the accelerated implementation of the global women, peace and security agenda through gender-responsive policies, ensuring women's equal participation and representation in peace processes, and improving the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis and policy making in conflict-affected areas.

The Platform for Action called for an increase in women's participation in decision-making in conflict resolution processes and the promotion of non-violent forms of conflict resolution, and recognized women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace. It also prioritized the protection of women in situations of armed conflict, as well as assistance to refugees, internally displaced people and women in colonies and non-self-governing territories. More broadly, it situated the issue of women and armed conflict within a global context of insecurity and called for a reduction in excessive military spending.

Global trends

Despite normative advances in the agenda concerning women, peace and security, the broader global context of insecurity, protracted crises, poverty and growing inequalities, as well as such emerging threats as the rise of violent extremism, have served to limit and even derail progress in practice. Commitments to gender equality and women's human rights are currently being tested in conflict settings characterized by mass violence, related humanitarian catastrophes and an unprecedented scale of forced displacement.

By the end of 2013, 51.2 million individuals were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict and violence,⁵⁴ the highest number in the post-Second World War era. Women and girls continue to face countless risks and challenges, both prior to and during the displacement process as well as in the context of repatriation, local integration or resettlement. Existing patterns of gender-based discrimination are often exacerbated, in all phases of displacement, and these risks and challenges may be further aggravated by the intersection of gender with other factors such as age, group affiliation (e.g. membership of minority groups), disability or civil and socioeconomic status.

The illicit flow of arms and money within and across borders facilitates the outbreak of conflict and perpetuates cycles of violence. The role of militarism in holding back progress on gender equality has received little attention from governments in their implementation of the Platform. Global military expenditure in 2013 reached \$1,709 billion dollars, although this represented a 1.9 per cent decline in expenditure compared with 2012.⁵⁵ Such excessive global military spending contributes to a cycle of instability, a context that creates challenges for the achievement of gender equality, especially when investment in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and development lags far behind.⁵⁶

The international community has recognized that the participation of women is vital to achieving and sustaining peace, yet progress in this regard has remained slow. As of July 2014, the share of parliamentary seats occupied by women in conflict-affected countries was four points below the global average of 22 per cent and they occupied only 13 per cent of ministerial positions.⁵⁷ Since 2010, a growing number of women form part of formal negotiating delegations in peace processes and occupy some prominent leadership positions in the United Nations. Additionally, as

of October 2014, 40 per cent of ambassadors to the Security Council were women, the highest percentage yet. Still, progress remains limited, with women's share of senior positions (from P-5 to D-2) in United Nations peacekeeping missions decreasing from 21 per cent to 19 per cent between 2011 and 2013.⁵⁸

Conflict related sexual and gender-based violence remains a serious concern, including the continuing occurrence of rape, harassment, sexual slavery and forced marriage. All forms of violence against women increase during and immediately after conflict as part of a continuum of violence. As of March 2014, there were 34 parties to conflict, including armed groups, militia and Government security forces, that were credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of violence.⁵⁹ Sexual violence remains underreported because of the fear and trauma faced by survivors and witnesses, including severe stigmatization, and the limited availability of services. Additionally, in 2013, 96 allegations of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse were made across all United Nations entities that reported information⁶⁰ and allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by soldiers deployed by the African Union surfaced in 2014.

The negative impact of conflict and crises on gender equality is also apparent when reviewing progress against common development indicators, including those relating to education and health. The latest available data show that about half of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas, with girls disproportionately affected. The maternal mortality ratio for the aggregate of conflict and post-conflict countries in 2013 (531 per 100,000 live births) was 2.5 times higher than the global ratio of 210 per 100,000 live births.⁶¹ As a result of discrimination in law and in practice, female-headed households face particular challenges in providing for and protecting themselves and their families. Yet alarmingly low levels of peacebuilding and recovery

54 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *War's Human Cost: Global Trends 2013* (Geneva, 2013).

55 Sam Perlo-Freeman and Carina Solmirano, "Trends in World Military Expenditure 2013," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Factsheet (Stockholm, SIPRI, 2014).

56 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, "You Get What You Pay For," (Geneva, 2014).

57 S/2014/693

58 Ibid.

59 S/2014/181

60 A/68/756

61 S/2014/693

spending targeted women's economic empowerment and livelihoods.⁶² Investment in infrastructure, including water and sanitation, but also in electricity, roads and transportation, structures which are often decimated in times of conflict, is also a priority in the post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery period.

The implementation of the women, peace and security agenda remains severely underresourced. Available data from entities using gender markers within the United Nations show that allocations to peacebuilding projects with the principal objective of addressing women's specific needs, advancing gender equality or empowering women remain far from the 15 per cent target set in the Secretary-General's seven-point action plan for gender-responsive peacebuilding.⁶³ Similar patterns are reflected by data from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) regarding sector-allocable official development assistance (ODA) allocations, which show that only 5 per cent of funds allocated to conflict and post-conflict countries in 2012 had gender equality as a principal objective.⁶⁴

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Expansion of national and regional policies and strategies on women, peace and security, including the implementation of global commitments.
- Growing support for women's participation in peacebuilding and security sector institutions through the increased efforts to implement gender equality action plans and guidelines to remove barriers to the entry of women in security-related career paths, such as the military and police; supporting women's participation in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and other forms of conflict resolution and greater visibility given to the contributions of women's organizations in fostering the conditions necessary for women to influence decision-making processes.

- Enhanced emphasis on linkages between peace and security and the broader development agenda, by improving women's access to legal institutions, promoting education for women and the economic empowerment of women through employment generation and specific programmes to support internally displaced persons and refugee women and girls.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Women's full and equal participation in all matters related to peace and security is imperative to women's protection, their empowerment and the promotion of their rights during and after war and to fostering a culture of peace. In this context, ensuring women's equal participation and representation in peace processes; promoting women's leadership roles in national security institutions; guaranteeing equal access to truth commissions, reparations and benefits from disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and recovery programmes and establishing temporary special measures to improve the gender-balance in decision-making bodies should be prioritized. Economic and social policies that are gender-responsive and that comprehensively address rising inequalities, militarization and the construction of violent masculinities are urgently needed to prevent violent conflict and the violation of human rights. In addition, establishing monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure the adequate implementation of gender-responsive policies and improving the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data for gender analysis to inform policy-making in conflict-affected settings is also needed. Greater efforts are needed to ensure access to essential services, including reproductive health care, for men and women in conflict areas and displacement settings. Furthermore, providing greater financial support and capacity building to women's organizations and dedicated funding for women, peace and security projects, within international development aid, in national budgets, and as part of United Nations programming, is imperative to ensure that progress is made in this regard.

62 Ibid.

63 A/65/354-S/2010/466

64 S/2014/693

F. Women and the economy

KEY MESSAGES

- In the last 20 years the gender gap in labour market participation has narrowed marginally, from 28 to 26 percentage points. There remains significant regional variation in women's labour force participation.
- Due to pervasive occupational segregation, women are overrepresented in low paid jobs, have less access to social protection, and are paid on average less than men for work of equal value. Women's employment outcomes are further limited by the disproportionate share of unpaid care work that they perform.
- Accelerating progress will require addressing the low quality of work available to women by strengthening measures to guarantee women's rights at work; shifting macroeconomic policies to enable the creation of decent work and redistributing and reducing women's unpaid care work through social protection measures, accessible and quality care services and improved infrastructure.

The Platform for Action called for the promotion of women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment under appropriate working conditions, control over resources, elimination of occupational discrimination and segregation, and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

Global trends

Globally, over the past two decades, there has been a slight decline in the labour force participation rates of both women and men. Between 1992 and 2012, the rate of female labour force participation fell from 52 per cent to 51 per cent while the rate for male labour force participation declined from 80 per cent to 77 per cent. The result has been a marginal narrowing of the gender gap, from about 28 to 26 percentage points.⁶⁵ One of the main reasons for the decline in labour force participation rates has been the increased opportunities for secondary and higher education for young people, which has led to lower labour force participation among those aged 15 to 24. If the analysis is restricted to adults of prime working age (aged 25 to 54), the labour force participation rate of women has declined from 65 per cent to 64 per cent and for men, from 96 per cent to 94

per cent.⁶⁶ This means a marginal narrowing of the gender gap from 31 to 30 percentage points over a 20 year period, which still leaves a substantial gender gap in place.

These global trends hide divergent patterns across regions. At the regional level, female labour force participation rates vary significantly, ranging from a high of 62 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific to a low of 22 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa. Between 1992 and 2012, the largest increase took place in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the female labour force participation rate increased by 10 percentage points (from 44 to 54 per cent). In contrast, in East Asia and the Pacific and in South Asia, it declined by 6 percentage points and 4 percentage points, from 68 per cent to 62 per cent, and from 35 per cent to 31 per cent, respectively.⁶⁷

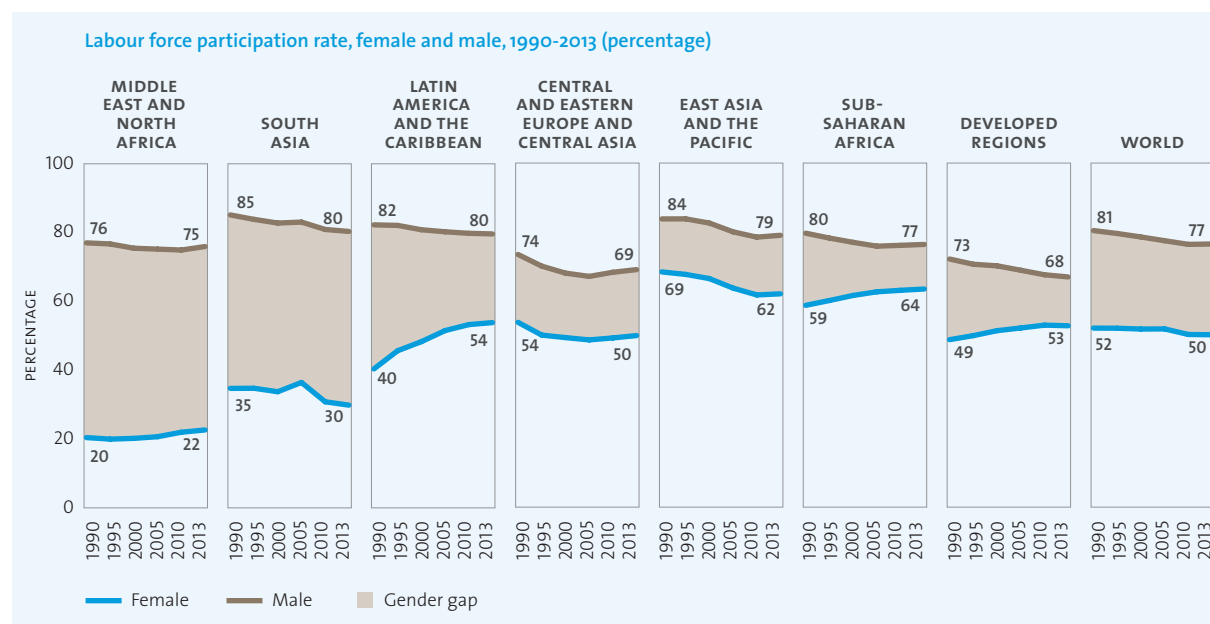
The widest gender gaps in labour force participation rates in 1992 were in the Middle East and North Africa region and in South Asia, at 56 and 50 percentage points respectively. In 2012, the two regions continued to display the biggest gaps (at 53 and 50 percentage points respectively) even though the gender gap in the former region had slightly narrowed. In sub-Saharan Africa, where agriculture employs nearly two-thirds of women and men, the female and male labour force participation rates were high across the board and the

65 Based on UN Women calculations using KILM (Key Indicators of the Labour Market) database, International Labour Organization (Accessed 2 October 2014).

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

FIGURE 3A:
Large gender gaps in labour force participation persist in most regions, despite a marginal improvement in the global gender gap in the last 20 years



Source: UN Women calculations using ILO data.

gender gap was the lowest of all regions (13 percentage points in 2012). In developed regions, meanwhile, the combination of an increase in the female labour force participation rate from 50 per cent to 53 per cent and a decline in the male participation rate from 72 per cent to 68 per cent between 1992 and 2012 has led to a narrowing of the gender gap from 22 per cent to 15 per cent.⁶⁸

Despite being more educated, on average, young people, at present, are in a much worse position than earlier generations in terms of their access to paid work, a situation which has been exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2007/2008. In 2013, the global youth unemployment rate, at 12.6 per cent, was close to its crisis peak.⁶⁹ The situation is particularly dire in developing regions, where 90 per cent of the global youth population lives; with weak social protection,

large numbers of young people are stuck in irregular and informal employment. While gender differentials in youth unemployment are small at the global level, youth unemployment rates are significantly higher for young women, compared with young men in the Middle East and North Africa, and to a lesser extent, in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁷⁰

Motherhood acts as a significant constraint on women's labour force participation rates, but not everywhere. Affordable care services, paid leave provisions and financial support to families with children make a big difference in how motherhood affects women's labour force participation. Comparative evidence across countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggests that the better the provision of support to working women, the higher the female labour force participation rate,

68 Ibid.

69 International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013: A Generation at Risk* (Geneva, 2013).

70 Ibid.

and the lower the incidence of family responsibilities being cited as a reason for being out of the labour market.⁷¹

In general, where women have increased their labour force participation rates this has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in men's participation in unpaid domestic and care work.⁷² In all regions women spend far more time than men doing unpaid domestic and care work.⁷³ Once paid and unpaid work are combined, women's average total work is greater than men's in 87 per cent of countries for which data are available, which means that women have less time for rest and leisure, compared with men.⁷⁴

The fact that more women are now in the labour force does not mean that they are on a level playing field with men. Nor does it mean that paid work provides a secure pathway out of poverty (see Section A.). For large numbers of women, much of the work they do is subsistence-based, insecure and lacking in basic social protections. Female-dominated occupations, on the whole, tend to offer lower earnings, in both formal labour markets and in the informal economy.

Gender-based occupational segregation is a key factor contributing to women's labour market disadvantages.⁷⁵ Occupational segregation is prevalent in all regions and its general patterns are broadly similar across countries, irrespective of the level of development, and the social and cultural context.⁷⁶ In Europe there has been little change in horizontal segregation

by gender since the mid-1990s.⁷⁷ At the global level, the latest available data show that women are over-represented in clerical support positions and only moderately represented in managerial occupations.⁷⁸

A variety of factors are known to influence gender-based occupational segregation, including social norms and gender stereotypes regarding what is considered appropriate work for women and men. Gender differences in fields of study are another contributing factor, with women generally more likely to be in humanistic fields and men are more likely to specialize in technical and scientific subjects (see Section B.). Women are also under pressure to "choose" occupations that offer more flexibility, in terms of working hours, in order to facilitate the reconciliation of work with family responsibilities, even if those occupations are generally less well paid.

Looking more specifically at the quality and conditions of employment, gender inequality continues to be an important source of stratification, along with other inequalities such as geography, ethnicity and race or caste with which it intersects. At the global level women are clustered into the more vulnerable and informal types of work, as own-account and contributing family workers (someone who works in a market-oriented enterprise owned by someone else in the household), while men are more likely to have jobs as wage and salaried employees and as employers.

Between 1991 and 2012, the rate of "paid employment", as defined by ILO (i.e. those who are wage and salaried employees or employers) increased significantly around the world for both women and men. However, at the same time a high proportion of women and men went into "vulnerable work" (i.e. in own-account work and as contributing family workers).⁷⁹ The latter group constitutes the overwhelming majority of the world's 375 million workers who live in extreme poverty. In 2012, the share of women among contributing

71 Olivier Thévenon, "Family Policies in OECD Countries: A comparative Analysis," *Population and Development Review*, vol. 37, No. 1 (March 2011); own classification using Eurostat data (2014) and Thevenon's classification.

72 *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*, (United Nations publication, 2010); see also Gosta Esping-Anderson "The Incomplete Revolution: Adapting to Women's New Roles," *Polity Press* (Cambridge, 2009).

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Richard Anker and Helina Melkas, "Gender Equality and Gender Segregation in Nordic Labour Markets," (ILO, Geneva, 1998).

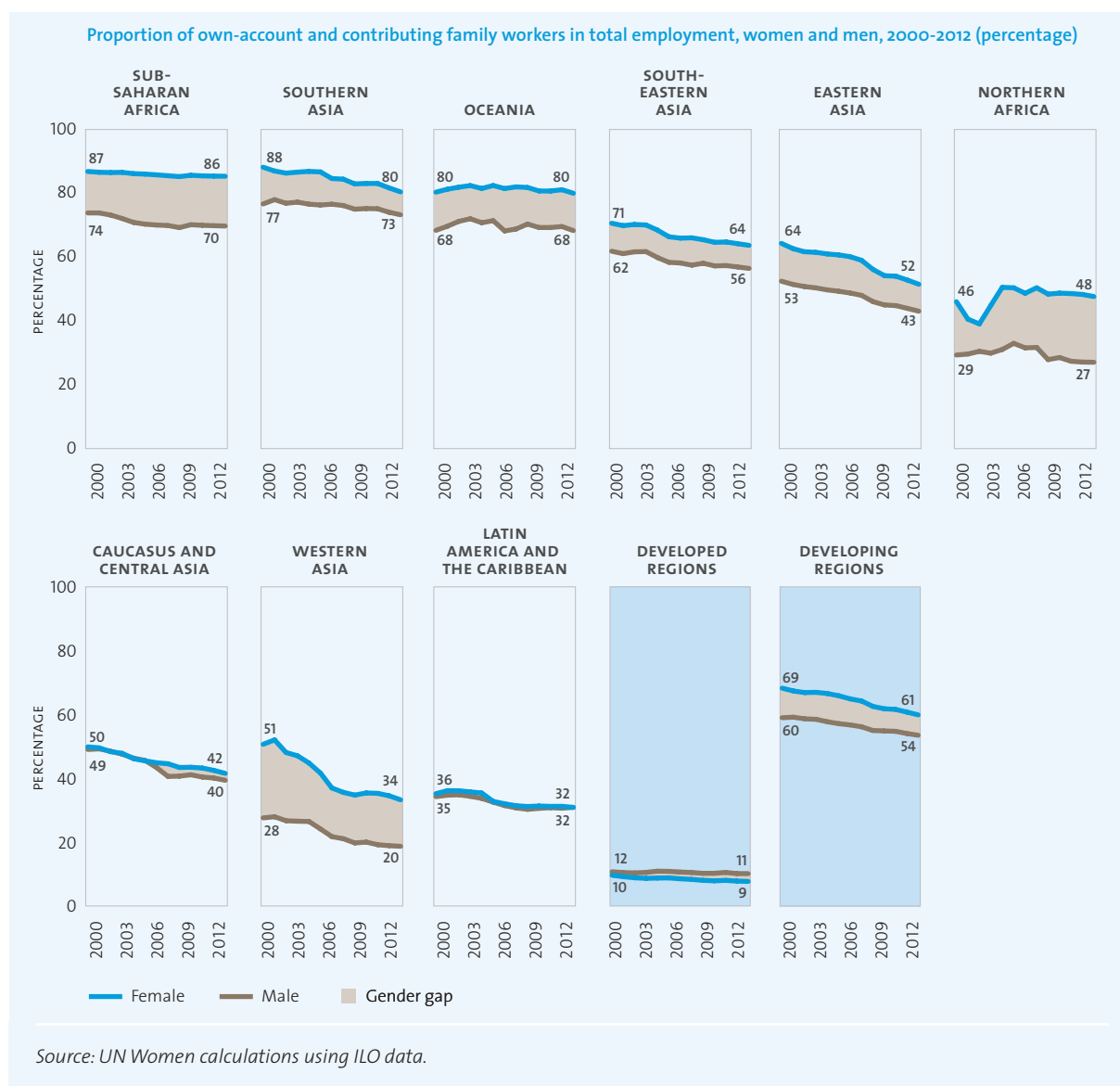
76 Richard Anker, "Theories of Occupational Segregation by Sex: An Overview," *International Labour Review*, vol. 136, No.3 (Fall 1997).

77 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now* (Paris, 2012).

78 Based on UN Women calculations using KILM (Key Indicators of the Labour Market) database, International Labour Organization. (Accessed 2 October 2014).

79 Ibid.

FIGURE 3B:
While the share of people in vulnerable employment is decreasing, gender gaps persist in most regions



family workers was 65 per cent, up from 60 per cent in 1995. However, in 1995, 33 per cent of women workers worldwide were contributing family workers, compared with 24 per cent in 2012. For men, the corresponding values are 14 per cent in 1995 and 8 per cent in 2012. Those jobs generally provide limited income and job security, poor working conditions and little or no social protection. Even the category of “paid employees”, which is considered to offer work that is

of relatively better quality, includes informal workers that is workers without a proper contract, working under unsafe conditions and with little or no social security benefits.⁸⁰ A significant and growing group of informal wage workers are domestic workers, 83 per

⁸⁰ International Labour Organization, *Measuring Informality: A Statistical Manual on the Informal Sector and Informal Employment* (Geneva, 2013).

cent of whom are women and are subject to multiple discriminations, on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, migration status, and geography.⁸¹

Gender gaps in wages and earnings are a feature of labour markets worldwide. Yet timely, reliable and comparable data are hard to come by, especially for developing countries, given the prevalence of self-employment, which complicates monitoring. At the global level, the most recently available data indicate that in a majority of countries women's wages are between 70 per cent and 90 per cent of men's wages.⁸² Trend data that are available for only a limited number of countries suggest that wage gaps have narrowed only slightly over the past two decades. At the current pace of progress, it would take more than 75 years to reach equal remuneration for work of equal value.⁸³

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Increasing gender equality in employment through law and practice by removing discriminatory provisions, laws and policies to improve terms and conditions of work for women and programmes to help women re-enter or gain better access to the workplace.
- Supporting women farmers and other women living in rural areas by mainstreaming a gender perspective within national agricultural or development plans providing support and assistance to rural women; legal reform to guarantee women's equal right to property and; improving access to agricultural extension services, technologies, training and credit.
- Addressing the needs of self-employed women and women entrepreneurs by improving the legislative environment, facilitating financial

support through access to credit, grants and loans and skills training.

- Enhancing women's voices in economic governance by supporting women's business and professional associations, research and advocacy groups working on gender equality in the economy and non-governmental organizations and community-based groups supporting gender equality in the economy at the grassroots level.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

A major task for States to move forward is to address the low quality of work that is available to both women and men, but especially women who remain confined to the least remunerative and least protected segments of the informal economy. Measures such as minimum wage legislation, paid maternity and parental leaves, and the extension of social protection to informal workers such as domestic workers, including the provision of early childhood education and care services as well as credit and infrastructure for self-employed women, are useful interventions that need to be further expanded. There also needs to be a more equal sharing of responsibilities for unpaid domestic and care work between households and other stakeholders through social protection measures, including accessible and quality care services and improved infrastructure. Macroeconomic policies need to make gender equality an explicit concern. To this end, it would mean a shift to macroeconomic policies that enable the creation of more and better jobs and encourage increased mobilization of resources to finance investments in infrastructure, social services and social protection measures. Furthermore, having comparable time use data is necessary to track how time spent on unpaid work, by women and men across income groups, location, and other axes of inequality changes in response to specific policies (e.g. improved infrastructure or accessible health services) and broader developments (e.g. an economic or ecological crises).

81 International Labour Organization, *Promoting Decent Work for Domestic Workers: ILO in Action*, (Geneva, 2014).

82 International Labour Organization, *Global Wage Report 2008/9: Minimum Wages and Collective Bargaining: Towards Policy Coherence* (Geneva, 2008).

83 International Labour Organization, *Report of the Director-General: A New Era of Social Justice, One-hundredth Session, International Labour Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, 1-17 June 2011* (Geneva, 2011).

G. Women in power and decision making

KEY MESSAGES

- Despite the steady increase in women's political representation and participation in parliaments, women remain significantly under-represented at the highest levels of political participation as well as across the public and private sectors.
- The persistence of discrimination, gender bias, and the threat of violence, harassment and intimidation in political institutions contribute to the low levels of women's political participation.
- Accelerating women's participation in decision-making requires a comprehensive approach; the implementation of temporary special measures to achieve a gender balance in decision-making bodies and capacity building and training initiatives to support women's political participation at the local and national levels.

The Platform for Action affirmed the importance of women's equal participation in decision-making as a means of achieving "transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life". The Platform for Action called on governments to take measures to ensure women's equal access to, and full participation in, power structures and decision-making and increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

Global trends

Women's representation in national parliaments has been steadily increasing over the past 20 years. Globally, in 2014, women occupied 23 per cent of the seats in single or lower houses of parliament, up from 12 per cent in 1995.⁸⁴ While acknowledging this important progress, it is nevertheless striking that 8 out of every 10 parliamentarians in the world are men. In 2014, Latin America and the Caribbean had the highest proportion of women in parliament at 26.4 per cent (compared with 12.5 per cent in 1995), while Oceania had the lowest, at only 3 per cent. The most substantial progress between 1995 and 2014 was made in sub-Saharan Africa, where women's representation increased from 9.7 per cent to 24 per cent. Over the same time period, women's representation in parliaments in the Middle East and North Africa

increased from 3.6 per cent to 16.8 per cent. South Asia saw the least progress, from 6.5 per cent in 1995 to 10.6 per cent in 2014.⁸⁵

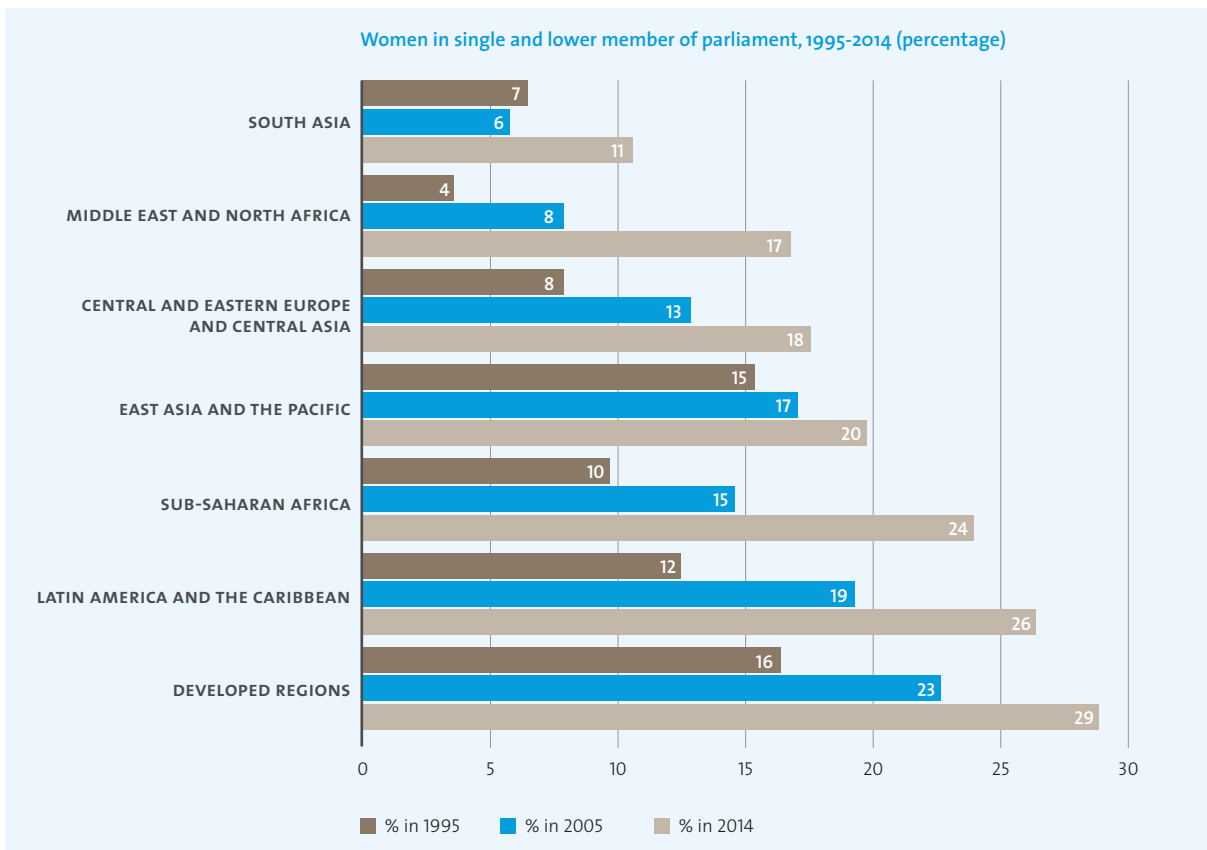
Women are significantly underrepresented at the highest levels of political participation, as speakers of parliament, heads of government and heads of State and as government ministers. Women holding the most senior parliamentary position continue to be quite rare: in 2014, 40 women (14.8 per cent) were speakers of parliament, an increase from 24 women (10.5 per cent) in 1995. Fewer still are in the most senior position of government: in 2014, 18 countries (9.3 per cent) had women heads of State or government, up from 12 countries (6.4 per cent) in 1995. In 2014, women held 17 per cent of ministerial positions, an increase from 15 per cent in 2000. In general, women ministers tend to be in charge of social sectors, and are less likely to hold portfolios on the economy or foreign affairs, which likely reflects such challenges as the lack of political will to promote women, women's lack of access to power and pervasive gender stereotypes. Of the 1,096 ministerial posts held by women in 2014, 187 of those portfolios were related to social affairs and services for the family, children, youth, elderly and disabled persons, compared to 45 in foreign affairs and 24 in budget/finance.⁸⁶

84 UN Women calculations based on data from Inter-Parliamentary Union.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

FIGURE 4:
Despite substantial progress since 1995, women remain significantly underrepresented in national parliaments



Source: IPU data provided by national parliaments.

The lack of women in senior decision making roles spans both the public and private sectors. The proportion of women working as legislators, senior officials or managers is significantly lower than for men.⁸⁷ Out of the 94 countries for which data is available, in only two countries does the proportion of women exceed that of men. The disparities are largest in the Middle East and North Africa, where the gender gap is over 80 percentage points in all countries. Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the developed countries and Latin America and the Caribbean have smaller gender gaps in this respect, with between a quarter and a half of such positions being held by women.

Data have not been systematically collected on a range of other indicators, including women's participation in local government, in public administration, in the judiciary, as leaders of political parties, trade unions and civil society organizations, as community leaders or in leadership positions in the private sector. However, some limited snapshots are available, all of which indicate that women are rarely well represented. A study on women's representation in local government in the Asia Pacific region in 2010 found very wide variations between countries: women made up between 1.6 per cent and 37 per cent of representatives on rural councils; and between 0 per cent and 48.2 per cent of

87 This includes three ILO occupational categories: legislators and senior officials, corporate managers and general managers.

representatives on urban councils.⁸⁸ A 2014 study on gender and public administration, based on 13 country case studies, found that women held less than 30 per cent of decision-making positions in public administration. In seven of those countries, women held less than 15 per cent of decision-making positions. In justice systems in 2011, women accounted for 27 per cent of judges, 26 per cent of prosecutors and 9 per cent of police officers.⁸⁹

Women over 18 years of age are less likely than men in the same age group to be members of political parties: on the basis of data from 51 countries, 11 per cent of women are members of political parties, compared to 15 per cent of men.⁹⁰ Even where women are active as members of political parties, they very rarely progress to leadership positions.

Women make up a growing proportion of trade union members in some contexts, but are underrepresented in leadership positions. A recent survey of trade unions in the European Union indicated that women made up 44.2 per cent of members but only 10 per cent of presidents and about 25 per cent of vice-presidents and general secretaries.⁹¹

Inequality in the public sphere often starts with unequal power relations within the private sphere. Household surveys show that, globally, 37 per cent of married or co-habiting women have no say in household decisions on large purchases. Only 15 per cent are able to make such decisions on their own, with 44 per cent making those decisions jointly with their partners.⁹² There are many factors that affect women's decision-making in the household, including age at

marriage and age gaps between partners, women's access to income and resources and engagement with community-based organizations.

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Implementing temporary special measures to increase women's participation, such as through the adoption of quotas and through constitutional and legal reforms which implement explicit provisions to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in political institutions and decision-making bodies.
- Addressing gender bias in political institutions and supporting women's political participation, through implementing capacity-building initiatives to support women's political participation at the local and national levels, promoting networking for women politicians and providing training for political parties; dedicated gender equality structures, such as cross-party women's caucuses; awareness-raising campaigns in the effort to eliminate the threat of violence and intimidation and annual national reports and monitoring to effectively measure progress made in women's participation.
- Supporting women's participation and leadership more broadly, including the private sector.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

A comprehensive approach is needed to increase women's participation in power and decision-making. Greater efforts are needed to support women's political participation through capacity building, training and dedicated gender equality structures. The implementation of temporary special measures provide a proven strategy for increasing women's representation in national and local politics, as well as on corporate boards. Political will on the part of leaders in public and private institutions, including political parties, is needed to ensure their effective implementation and bring about further and faster progress. Other measures such as public financing of political parties, including incentives to advance

88 United Nations Development Programme, *Women's Representation in Local Government in Asia-Pacific: Status Report 2010* (New York, 2010).

89 UN Women, *2011-2012 Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice* (New York, 2011).

90 UN Women calculations based on World Values Survey.

91 Arnaud Bouaffre and Cinzia Sechi, *European Trade Union Confederation 8th March Survey, seventh ed.*, European Trade Union Institute (Brussels, May 2014).

92 UN Women calculations based on Demographic Health Surveys data.

gender equality and increase women's representation can also make a difference. Violence against women in politics must also be addressed as an urgent priority through the implementation and enforcement of appropriate legislation. Efforts are needed to increase women's agency and voice starting from the household level, to community and local

levels, and to national, regional and global levels. Importantly, mechanisms should be promoted to facilitate relationships between women's organizations and women representatives to advance gender equality policies. In order to further galvanize progress on women's representation beyond national parliaments, more and better quality data is needed.

H.

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

KEY MESSAGES

- Despite the wide spread existence of institutional mechanisms to advance gender equality, the lack of adequate financial resources, low levels of technical capacity and lack of political will to prioritize gender mainstreaming in all government policies, are key challenges experienced across all regions.
- While the production of gender statistics has increased in recent years, the focus is predominantly on areas such as mortality, education and labour force participation and less on areas such as violence against women and girls or the measurement of unpaid care work through time use surveys.
- In order to strengthen institutional mechanisms to advance gender equality, continuous capacity strengthening and technical support; allocating sufficient human and financial resources; ensuring national women's ministries or other mechanisms are located at the highest possible level of government and improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated statistics should be prioritized.

The Platform for Action articulated three components to advance the critical area of concern related to institutional mechanisms: create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies; integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects; and generate and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

Global trends

Several sources, including the national responses submitted for present review and previous reviews on the implementation of the Platform for Action, and the results of the global survey carried out in 2012 on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, indicate that most countries report on the existence of institutional mechanisms for the pro-

motion of gender equality.⁹³ UN Women maintains a directory of national mechanisms for gender equality which indicates that 193 countries have a dedicated gender equality mechanism or focal point in place.

Beyond the widespread existence of institutions, several regional studies look at mandates and capacity. A 2014 study in the European Union found that, as of 2012, all 28 member States had established governmental gender equality bodies, but no substantial progress has been observed in relation to their mandate, the allocation of human resources and their capacity to promote gender equality.⁹⁴ The study found that since 2005, the human resources allocated to in government gender equality bodies had decreased in

93 A/69/62

94 European Institute for Gender Equality, "Gender Equality and Institutional Mechanisms: Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU," Briefing paper, (Luxembourg, 2014).

14 member States.⁹⁵ Another study on 13 countries with available data found that government spending on national machineries was less than 0.4 per cent of GDP. It also found that spending levels had either remained unchanged or had declined since the financial crisis, as a result of austerity measures implemented by governments worldwide.⁹⁶ Similarly, a study of 53 African countries found that financial constraints topped the list of challenges confronting these mechanisms.⁹⁷ Studies of national mechanisms in Latin America and the Caribbean; South-East and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and in Asia and the Pacific and Western Asia also revealed that the lack of adequate financial resources and, in some contexts, an increased dependency on donor funding to sustain activities; low levels of technical capacity, decision-making power and visibility within the government and the lack of political will to prioritize gender mainstreaming in all government policies and programmes, are key challenges experienced across all regions.⁹⁸

Continuing the trend over the last decade, gender-responsive budgeting has been used by governments to promote change in budget policies, allocation and outcomes to ensure that resources are provided for the implementation of commitments on gender equality. The majority of countries reported on initiatives to

track budgets from a gender perspective marking progress towards greater recognition of the gender-specific implications of fiscal policies.⁹⁹ The success of initiatives to finance policy measures for gender equality is reliant on the active involvement and collaboration of a broad range of actors, including ministries of finance and planning, national mechanisms for gender equality, parliamentarians, as well as other stakeholders such as research bodies and women's organizations.

On gender statistics, a review of 126 countries conducted in 2012 shed some light on global trends in building capacity for collecting and using gender statistics.¹⁰⁰ The review found that focal points or desks for gender statistics in national statistical offices existed in over two thirds of countries. However, a dedicated office for gender statistics within the national statistical office existed in only 31 per cent of countries, indicating that insufficient priority is given to this area. Furthermore, only 12.7 per cent of countries had a dedicated gender statistics budget, while 48 per cent depended on ad-hoc funds and budgets.¹⁰¹ While the production of gender statistics has increased in recent years, the focus is predominantly on areas such as mortality, education and labour force participation and less on such areas as violence against women and girls or the measurement of unpaid care work through time use surveys.

95 Ibid.

96 Development Finance International and Oxfam International, *The Government Spending Watch Report: Putting Progress at Risk: MDG Spending in Developing Countries* (Oxford, 2013).

97 Economic Commission for Africa, *Recent Trends in National Machineries for Gender Equality in Africa*, (Addis Ababa, 2011).

98 Economic Commission for Europe, *National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in South-East and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*, (Geneva, 2010); Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *National Mechanism for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Region*, (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.G.18, 2010); Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Regional Study-Asia and the Pacific*, (Bangkok, 2010); and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in the ESCWA Region*, (Beirut, 2010); Economic Commission for Africa, *Recent Trends in National Machineries for Gender Equality in Africa*, (Addis Ababa, 2011).

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Strengthening of national machineries for gender equality, through focal points, working groups and interdepartmental or multisectoral bodies; decentralization of institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality; and the establishment of gender equality mechanisms in the legislative branch.
- Improving policies for gender mainstreaming and advancing gender equality through strengthening the work relationship between

99 UN Women calculates that gender-responsive budgeting initiatives are in place in 65 countries worldwide. (see <http://www.gender-budgets.org>).

100 E/CN.3/2013/10

101 Ibid.

women's ministries and other parts of government; appointing gender focal points in senior management positions across various levels of government and tracking budgets from a gender perspective as well as activities to implement gender-responsive budgeting.

- Increasing efforts to collect, disseminate and use gender statistics, for example, through establishing national gender equality observatories and gender teams at the local and national levels to lead in the collection of statistics disaggregated by sex and develop national gender indicators and the establishment of regional statistical databases that measure gender equality.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

The need for institutional mechanisms to be vested with adequate authority; to have a clear mandate; to have sufficient human and financial resources; and to be accountable for delivering the mission, but also to be able to hold other government bodies to account

are key for achieving gender equality commitments and for effective gender mainstreaming. Ensuring that national women's ministries or other mechanisms are located at the highest possible level of government is crucial to mobilize political will and obtain support from the rest of government. Continuous capacity strengthening and technical support for national machineries for gender equality is required to support them to fulfill their mandates. Cross-sectoral collaboration, across government, and involving other stakeholders, especially women's organizations, is needed to strengthen coordinated action on gender equality. National action plans and policies for gender equality, as well as strategies for gender mainstreaming play an important role and should be prioritized. In order to properly assess the challenges facing national machineries and other institutional mechanisms in advancing gender equality, as well as to learn from successful strategies, there is a need for systematic, cross-country research on their performance and effectiveness over time. Finally, the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated statistics should be promoted, as well as a renewed effort made to fully analyze existing survey data, and to invest in other data sources, including administrative records.

I.

Human rights of women

KEY MESSAGES

- Despite progress in reforming laws, discrimination against women in the law remains pervasive in several areas, particularly in the area of family law.
- Even when laws guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination are in place, there remain significant obstacles for women to enjoy their human rights in practice.
- Accelerating progress will require the universal ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; removal of remaining discrimination in the law and strengthened efforts to ensure that women enjoy their rights in practice, including by ensuring women are empowered to claim their rights.

The Platform for Action makes clear that the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is essential for achieving gender equality. The Platform for Action called on Governments to: promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice; and achieve legal literacy.

Global trends

Since 2009, Nauru and the State of Palestine have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, bringing the total number of parties to 188 in 2014, but the goal of universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000, set in the Platform for Action, has not been achieved. Further, many countries have maintained their reservations on core provisions of the Convention. Sixteen States parties maintain reservations on article 2 (on policy measures) and 25 maintain reservations on article 16 (on marriage and family life). The Committee considers articles 2 and 16 to be core provisions of the Convention and has expressed concern at the number and extent of reservations registered to those articles. The large number of reservations on article 16 is particularly concerning, as it signals the reluctance of these States to regulate the private sphere where women and girls continue to experience deeply

entrenched discrimination. Eleven States parties have withdrawn reservations, in full or in part, between 2010 and 2014.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on its individual complaints and inquiry procedures offers international redress against violations of human rights for women who have been denied justice at the national level. The number of States parties to the Optional Protocol has steadily increased from 99 in 2009 to 105 in 2014. Under the individual complaints procedure, as at the end of September 2014, the Committee had found violations of the rights under the Convention in 16 cases which deal with a wide range of issues.

Legal reforms continue to promote gender equality. In 2014, at least 143 countries contain provisions on equality between women and men in their Constitutions.¹⁰² The World Bank database of women's property rights and legal capacity, which covers 100 countries over 50 years (1960-2010), shows that there has been significant progress in reducing gender gaps in the ability to access and own assets and to sign legal documents in one's own name as well as in having equality or non-discrimination enshrined as a guiding principle in national constitutions.¹⁰³ Between 2011 and 2013

¹⁰² UN Women, Constitutional Database (Accessed 13 October 2014).

¹⁰³ Mary Hallward-Driemeier, Tazeen Hasan and Anca Bogdana Rusu, "Women's Legal Rights Over 50 Years: Progress, Stagnation or Regression?" Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6616 (Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, 2013).

alone, the World Bank's Women, Business and Law database recorded 48 legal changes in 44 countries¹⁰⁴ to increase gender equality. The Social Institutions and Gender Index of OECD shows that 132 countries (out of 162 with available data) have passed legislation to prohibit domestic violence, and 134 (out of 162 with available data) have passed laws to make workplaces and public spaces safer for women by putting in place laws to prohibit sexual harassment.¹⁰⁵

Despite progress in reforming laws, discrimination against women in the law remains pervasive in several areas, particularly in the area of family law. In 26 of 143 countries, statutory inheritance laws differentiate between women and men.¹⁰⁶ There are 27 countries with legislation that discriminates against women insofar as they cannot confer their nationality to their children and/or foreign spouses on an equal basis with men.¹⁰⁷ Discrimination under the law in the area of family law remains a particular challenge in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa and in South Asia. The coexistence of multiple legal systems, with discriminatory customary and religious laws and practice prevailing, remains an obstacle in several countries.

A promising trend since 2010 is the increasing recognition amongst States of the need for a more refined approach to the protection of human rights, recognizing that women are not a homogenous group. However, particular groups of women, such as migrant, or indigenous women, and women with disabilities, remain especially marginalized from the formal legal system and access to services. In addition to laws and policies, efforts are needed to ensure that the needs, interests

and perspectives of marginalized groups of women and girls are integrated systematically across all policy areas and that these groups of women and girls participate in the shaping and monitoring of policies.

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Continued legal reforms to remove discrimination and policy measures to achieve gender equality, including a focus on reforms and measures to close the gap between de jure and de facto equality, to enable women's practical enjoyment of human rights.
- Strengthening accountability mechanisms, institutions and support for the human rights of women, including national human rights institutions, specific commissions on gender equality issues, legal support to ensuring women's access to justice and education and public awareness about women's and girls' human rights.
- Accelerating efforts to realize the human rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination through the adoption of laws and policies and targeted services.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Efforts need to be strengthened to ensure universal ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women worldwide, including removing reservations, as called for by the Committee, incorporating the Convention into laws and policies, ratifying the Optional Protocol, and implementing the Committee's concluding observations, general recommendations and views under the Optional Protocol into national planning and legal and policy reforms. The promising efforts to achieve substantive equality for women through specific laws, policies and programmes should be expanded and strengthened. Discriminatory constitutional and legislative provisions should be removed as an urgent priority, including in family, divorce and personal laws, penal codes, nationality laws, and laws relating to inheritance and ownership and control over

¹⁰⁴ Note total number of economies is 143. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2014: Removing Restrictions to Enhance Gender Equality: Key Findings*, (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Gender, Institutions & Development Database (GID-DB). (see <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=GIDDB2012>).

¹⁰⁶ UN Women calculations using data from the World Bank's Women, Business and Law database. (see <http://wbl.worldbank.org/data>). (Accessed 2 October 2014).

¹⁰⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2014," (Geneva, 2014).

land and other resources. Building on legal reforms, priority must be given to implementing laws with adequate resources and capacity building. All justice mechanisms, including informal, religious and customary mechanisms, must respect, protect and fulfill women's human rights and ensure non-discrimination and equality. Accountability systems and mechanisms need to be strengthened and better resourced to ensure that women are empowered to claim their rights and have access to redress and remedies. In addition,

the need to address multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination needs to be more effectively addressed through examining the differential impact of discrimination on different groups of women and girls across all policy areas, and the application of appropriate responses in laws and policies. Among other measures, such as strengthening legal protection and improving the responsiveness of public services and data must also be disaggregated by all relevant factors to enable effective monitoring of progress.

J. Women and the media

KEY MESSAGES

- Women's participation, access and representation in media and ICTs has improved, however data for monitoring global and regional trends in gender dimensions of media remains limited.
- The existing gaps in policies and regulations that govern media and ICTs as well as the persistence of negative and stereotypical portrayals of women and girls in the media, continues to pose a significant risk for women and girls to new and emerging forms of online threats and abuse.
- Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through media and ICT's requires the formulation of gender-responsive ICT and media strategies and related policies which seek to improve the relevance or representativeness of content and services; increased investments and financial incentives from government for investment in gender equality measures in media and ICT sectors and the establishment of monitoring mechanisms that integrate gender perspectives for increased accountability around implementation of commitments.

The Platform for Action recognized the potential that exists for the media to make a contribution to gender equality. The Platform for Action called on States to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication and to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

Global trends

Data for monitoring global and regional trends in gender dimensions of media remain limited. Only 35 per cent of countries produce gender statistics on media and a little over half produce gender statistics on information and communications

technologies.¹⁰⁸ Despite the limitations, the data that exist provide a snapshot of women's participation, access and representation in media and such technologies.¹⁰⁹

Women's participation in the media has improved considerably across the sector, though numbers are still far from equal, especially at senior levels. A global report that contains data on women in the news media, spanning 59 countries and 522 news media organizations, found that women make up 35 per cent of the total media workforce across the world, but only hold roughly a quarter of the jobs in top management

¹⁰⁸ E/CN.3/2013/10.

¹⁰⁹ ICTs include the internet, social media, radio and devices such as tablets, phones, and computers. ICTs also encompass applications and online content and services.

(27 per cent) and governance (26 per cent).¹¹⁰ In the past 16 years, the rate of employment of women in news media has more than doubled.¹¹¹ Reporting by women on all major topics, except science and health, has also increased over time.¹¹²

In the information and communications technologies sector, women's participation has increased, although gender gaps remain stark. For example, according to diversity figures published by major firms, women hold less than 20 per cent of the technology jobs at any level.¹¹³ In decision-making positions, women's representation drops to between 10 per cent and 15 per cent. Only 6 per cent of venture capital funding goes to information and communications technologies start-ups headed by women.¹¹⁴

Women's access to technology also lags behind that of men. Research on mobile phone ownership, for example, shows that despite sharp overall increases across low- and middle-income countries, a woman is still 21 per cent less likely than a man to own a mobile phone.¹¹⁵ With respect to Internet use, estimates by the International Telecommunication Union demonstrate that, globally, 36 per cent of women and 41 per cent of men go online however while rates have reached near parity across developed countries¹¹⁶, an

estimated 16 per cent fewer women than men use the Internet in developing countries.¹¹⁷ Women represent about half of social media users worldwide and constitute roughly three-fifths of the bloggers online.¹¹⁸ Such platforms enable women to create and disseminate their knowledge, share ideas, enter the public debate on various topics, and build solidarity around women's issues and gender equality. Despite some positive trends, however, recent research shows that technology is also being used for harmful purposes, for example, to perpetrate online harassment and abuse, especially towards young women.¹¹⁹

Representations of women and girls within the media as a whole (in television, film, advertising and music videos and online), on the other hand, have made limited progress. Though the proportion of female news subjects identified, represented or portrayed as workers or professionals has risen in some occupational categories,¹²⁰ women and girls, overall, continue to be portrayed in traditional and stereotypical manners that do not reflect their diversity, capacities and the roles that they actually maintain in life. Total representation of women in news coverage remains very low compared to that of men, with women constituting 24 per cent of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television; and only 23 per cent of those heard or read about on the Internet.¹²¹ In entertainment programming, a research study across 11 countries found that only 23 per cent of films had female protagonists and only 8 per cent of films had female directors.¹²²

110 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *2014 World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* (Paris, 2014).

111 Ibid.

112 Global Media Monitoring Project, *2010 Global Report: Who Makes the News?* (London, 2010).

113 For figures reported by Apple, Facebook, Google and Twitter compiled by Bloomberg, see Mark Milian, "The Silicon Valley Diversity Numbers Nobody is Proud of," *Bloomberg*, 12 August 2014.

114 International Telecommunication Union, *A Bright Future in ICTs: Opportunities for New Generation of Women*, (Geneva, 2012); see also Candida G. Brush and others, "Women Entrepreneurs 2014: Bridging the Gender Gap in Venture Capital," (Wellesley, Babson College, 2014).

115 Based on a market sizing model using mobile phone subscription data and UN Statistics for 149 low and middle-income countries (GSMA Development Fund and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, *2013 Women & Mobile: A Global Opportunity, A Study on the Mobile Phone Gender Gap in Low and Middle-income Countries* (London, 2013).

116 International Telecommunications Union, "The World in 2013: ICT Facts and Figures," (Geneva, 2013).

117 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *2014 World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* (Paris, 2014).

118 Ibid.

119 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against women: An EU-Wide Survey Main Results*, (Luxembourg, 2014); see also Pew Research Center, *Online Harassment* (Washington, D.C., 2014).

120 Global Media Monitoring Project, *2010 Global Report: Who Makes the News?* (London, 2010). (see www.whomakesthe-news.org).

121 Ibid.

122 Stacy L. Smith and others, *Gender Bias Without Borders: An Investigation of Female Characters in Popular Films Across 11 Countries* (Los Angeles, Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative, 2014).

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Increasing women's participation in media and ICT sectors such as through the direct collaboration with employers in the media to improve their internal policies and hiring practices; partnering with women's media networks and organizations and administering creative incentives, such as providing public recognition to more gender-responsive media houses.
- Addressing negative and stereotypical portrayals of women in the media and online threats and abuse, through reforming legal, regulatory and policy frameworks, standard-setting and codes of conduct; providing gender equality training and workshops; integrating media-related components in national gender equality plans and development plans and monitoring the compliance with laws through government bodies such as communications commissions.
- Increasing women's access to and use of ICTs, through the creation of free wifi hubs, Internet clubs and community technology centres to expand the reach of technology to poorer communities and more remote locations as well as through initiatives to build digital literacy and skills, including within schools.
- Using media as a tool to raise awareness of gender equality issues through the establishment or expansion of websites to disseminate information, increase transparency and raise awareness of gender equality as well as utilizing mass media channels to implement awareness-raising campaigns and educational programming on women's rights.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Increasing women's participation in media and ICTs at all levels of decision-making requires continued provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET), including in the areas of management and leadership. To strengthen the retention and advancement of women within the media and ICT fields, governments should ensure equal pay and decent work conditions and policies that enable the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, in addition to ensuring safe and harassment-free environments. Preventing and addressing stereotypes and discrimination in media requires further development of national and global legislative, regulatory and voluntary mechanisms, including professional guidelines and codes of conduct; continued capacity building of all media and communications personnel through media studies and training and enhanced awareness of the general public around gender equality in communications and information, including through social media. Greater efforts are also needed to ensure women's and girls' equal access to and use of media and ICTs, especially in rural areas and among marginalized groups, such as through the formulation of gender-responsive ICT and media strategies and related policies which seek to improve the relevance or representativeness of content and services. Other measures include increased investments and financial incentives from government for investment in gender equality measures in media and ICT sectors and the establishment of monitoring mechanisms that integrate gender perspectives for increased accountability around implementation of commitments.

K.

Women and the environment

KEY MESSAGES

- Women's dependence on and unequal access to land, water and other resources and productive assets, compounded by limited mobility and decision-making power in many contexts, also mean that they are disproportionately affected by climate change. Natural disasters, including those related to climate change, have greater impacts on poor women.
- Gender inequalities are worsened by the lack of universal access to improved water sources and modern energy services in terms of the time and labour burden of unpaid work.
- Accelerating progress will require greater efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change, natural disasters, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss on women and their families; ensuring women's access and control over land and productive resources and their voice and agency in environmental and sustainable development decision-making and action at all levels.

The Platform for Action called for building on the progress made at the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and for the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of sustainable development. It called on States to actively involve women in environmental decision-making at all levels; integrate gender concerns and perspectives in sustainable development policies and programmes; and improve the assessment of development and environmental policies on women, including compliance with international obligations.

Global trends

The meetings of the Conference of the Parties of each of the three Rio Conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which were adopted as the result of the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development, have addressed gender concerns in a more targeted fashion within the past five years. In 2012, in Doha, the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted a decision to promote the goal of gender balance in the bodies of and

delegations to the Conference of the Parties and to include gender and climate change as a standing item in the agenda of the Conference of the Parties.¹²³ Regarding the gender composition of delegations to recent sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, the representation of women in delegations was between 29 per cent and 37 per cent, and that of constituted bodies between 11 per cent and 52 per cent.¹²⁴ The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, at its tenth meeting, committed to gender mainstreaming and to integrating gender equality into the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.¹²⁵ The national action programmes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification provide for the effective participation of both women and men, particularly resource users, farmers, pastoralists, and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, implementation, and reviews at the local and national levels. The advocacy policy

¹²³ FCCC/CP/2012/8/Add.3; Decision 23/CP.18; see also UN Women and Mary Robinson Foundation-Climate Justice, *The Full View: Advancing the Goal of Gender Balance in Multilateral and Intergovernmental Processes* (New York, 2013).

¹²⁴ FCCC/CP/2013/4

¹²⁵ *Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Nagoya, Japan, 18-29 October 2010*, (UNEP/CBD/COP/10/27).

framework on gender, in the context of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, reaffirmed such commitments.¹²⁶

The Environment and Gender Index¹²⁷ of the International Union for Conservation of Nature compared the percentage of women delegates registered by governments for the most recent meetings of the Conference of the Parties of each of the Rio Conventions, for which data were available, with a corresponding meeting held between four and six years earlier. The representation of women among the various delegations were, for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 29 per cent in 2008 and 33 per cent in 2012; for the Convention on Biological Diversity, 33 per cent in 2006 and 36 per cent in 2012; and for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 25 per cent in 2005 and 21 per cent in 2011. Despite improvements in some cases, gender parity is far from being achieved in these government delegations.

The triple crisis (financial, food, and fuel), which began in 2007/2008 and its aftermath, made the precariousness of livelihoods globally, and especially those of women, given the additional time and labour demands of unpaid care work, more visible. Insecure livelihoods were exacerbated by the limitations on women's rights and on their access to land and natural resources. The consequences of climate change, biodiversity loss, and desertification, as well as the growth of extractive industries and large-scale land investments for production of biofuels and crops for export (rather than local consumption), added to these obstacles.¹²⁸ Yet women farmers, pastoralists and forest-users are central to the production, collection and preparation of food and in generating incomes for their households and communities, as well as in conserving local environments and productive landscapes and making them more resilient.

126 United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480; see also ICCD/CRIC(10)/20.

127 International Union for the Conservation of Nature, *The Environment and Gender Index (EGI) 2013 Pilot*, (Gland, 2013).

128 A/HRC/26/39 and A/HRC/13/33/Add.2

Women comprised an average of 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries in 2010, slightly more than the figures recorded for 1980 (40 per cent) and for 1995 (42 per cent).¹²⁹ While global data are limited, there is evidence that women farmers control less land than do men, and that they have limited access to inputs, seeds, credits, and extension services.¹³⁰ A comparison by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations of international agricultural census data showed that less than 20 per cent of landholders were women.¹³¹ The Social Institutions and Gender Index for 2012 of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development analyzed women's legal and de facto rights to own and/or access agricultural land in 121 countries. In 28 countries women had the same legal rights as men to own and access land; in 79 countries, women had equal legal rights as men to own and access land, but discriminatory practices restricted women's access to and ownership of land in practice; in 11 countries women had no or few legal rights to access or own land or access was severely restricted by discriminatory practices and there was no score available for 3 countries.¹³² While equal rights to own land are important, recent research on women and sustainability has indicated that security of tenure was critical.¹³³

In 2012, although 89 per cent of the world's population had access to improved drinking water sources compared with 76 per cent in 1990, 748 million people, most of who lived in rural areas, still lacked access to clean drinking water.¹³⁴ Similarly, while the global electrification rate increased from 76 per cent in 1990 to

129 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2011: Women and Agriculture, Closing the Gender Gap for Development* (Rome, 2011).

130 Ibid.

131 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Gender and land rights: understanding complexities; adjusting policies," Economic and Social Perspectives Policy Brief No. 8, (Rome, 2010).

132 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Social Institutions & Gender Index*. (see genderindex.org).

133 Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Chiara Kovarik, and Agnes R. Quisumbing, "Gender and Sustainability," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, vol. 39 (October 2014).

134 World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation: 2014 Update* (Geneva, 2014).

83 per cent in 2010, an estimated 1.2 billion people still did not have access to electricity.¹³⁵ More than 95 per cent of people without access to modern energy services lived either in sub-Saharan Africa or Asia, and 84 per cent of those people were in rural areas.¹³⁶ Nearly 3 billion people used solid biomass or animal waste to cook their meals and heat their homes, including the majority of the 850 million urban slum dwellers.¹³⁷ Critically, data disaggregated by sex do not exist for tracking and assessing women's access to and use of water and energy services. Indoor air pollution, primarily produced by inefficient and dirty cookstoves and fuels causes some 4.3 million premature deaths worldwide,¹³⁸ above all among women and children, which represents more deaths than those caused by HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and malnutrition combined.¹³⁹ Women and girls are also the most exposed to waterborne diseases.¹⁴⁰

Gender inequalities are also worsened by the lack of universal access to improved water sources and modern energy services in terms of the time and labour burden of unpaid work, which poses a significant obstacle to the ability of women and girls to access education, training, and decent employment opportunities. Women and children bear the main negative impacts of fuel and collecting and transporting water, with women in many developing countries spending between one and four hours a day collecting biomass for fuel.¹⁴¹ A study of time and water poverty in 25 sub-Saharan African countries estimated that women

spend at least 16 million hours a day collecting drinking water; men spend 6 million hours on the activity; and children, 4 million hours.¹⁴² Rural women spend more time than urban women and men on domestic and household work, including time spent obtaining water and fuel and processing food. Such work is intensified in contexts of economic crisis, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and inadequate infrastructure and services. Thus interventions that target women alone—on the assumption that they are the primary environmental managers rather than sharing the responsibility with men—could well increase women's and girls' unpaid work and its attendant risks.¹⁴³

Women's dependence on and unequal access to land, water, and other resources and productive assets, which are compounded by limited mobility and decision-making power in many contexts, also mean that they are disproportionately affected by climate change.¹⁴⁴ Natural disasters, including those related to climate change, have more impact on poor women. An analysis of 141 countries found that natural disasters lower the life expectancy of women more than that of men.¹⁴⁵ Given the prevailing circumstances, including severe climate variability, large-scale land and water grabs, and pervasive food and nutrition insecurity, the costs of gender inequality in terms of sustainability are high. But in a recent assessment of women's economic empowerment in relation to access to natural resources such as land and water, it was argued that "more equitable access to assets and services, land, water, technology, innovation and credit, banking and financial services, will strengthen women's rights, increase agricultural productivity, reduce hunger and

135 See www.se4all.org.

136 International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2011: Energy for All* (Paris, 2011).

137 United Nations Technical Support Team, "Issues Brief 14: Energy," 16 October 2013. (see <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>).

138 World Health Organization, *WHO Guidelines for Indoor Air Quality: Household Fuel Combustion* (Geneva, 2014). Figures are for 2012.

139 Stephen S. Lim and others, "A comparative risk assessment of burden of disease and injury attributable to 67 risk factors and risk factor clusters in 21 regions 1990-2010: a systematic analysis for the global burden of disease study 2010," *The Lancet*, vol. 380, iss. 9859 (15 December 2010). pp. 2224-2260

140 *World Water Development Report 4: Managing Water Under Uncertainty and Risk* (United Nations publication, 2012).

141 World Bank, *Household Cookstoves, Environment, Health and Climate Change* (Washington, D.C., 2011).

142 World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation: 2012 Update* (Geneva, 2012)

143 Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Chiara Kovarik, and Agnes R. Quisumbing, "Gender and Sustainability." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* vol. 39, issue 13.1-13.27 (International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C., 2014).

144 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*, (New York, 2011).

145 Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper, "The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy 1981-2002." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 97, issue 3 (2007).

promote economic growth.”¹⁴⁶ Moreover, women’s participation in local institutions for governing natural resources is critical for sustainable land, forest, and water management.¹⁴⁷

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Increasing women’s access to land and other resources through legal reforms, land redistribution programmes and institutional reforms.
- Supporting women to respond to environmental degradation by addressing the impact on women and girls in national plans and policies and increasing women’s participation in the conservation of national resources and biodiversity.
- Supporting women’s participation in environmental activities and environmental, policy, management and decision-making.
- Mainstreaming gender perspectives in sustainable development policies, including on climate change, natural disasters, desertification, water and sanitation and biogas policies.
- Increasing attention to changing patterns of consumption and production including addressing gender equality in programmes on new and renewable energy sources and technologies and water resource management.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Addressing the interlinkages between gender equality and environmental sustainability requires an approach that integrates the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability while advancing women’s human rights and empowerment. This includes transforming patterns of consumption and production in a fashion that promotes gender equality, and particularly women’s livelihoods that are based on the sustainable use and management of natural resources, including land, water, and energy. Greater efforts are needed to mitigate the impact of climate change, natural disasters, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss on women and their families. Ensuring women’s access and control over land and productive resources and their voice and agency in environmental and sustainable development decision-making and action at all levels is critical. Implementing gender-responsive planning and legal and policy reforms that protect rights to land and resources and for creating decent work for women and men should be prioritized. Financing sustainable development policies and investments that promote gender equality is also paramount. Finally, data gaps with respect to women and environmental sustainability should be addressed.

¹⁴⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Poverty Reduction and Pro-Poor Growth: The Role of Empowerment*, (Paris, 2012).

¹⁴⁷ Bina Agarwal, *Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women’s Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010); see also Isha Ray, “Women, Water, and Development,” *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, vol. 32, (2007).

L. The girl child

KEY MESSAGES

- Despite significant progress, girls around the world continue to experience multiple forms of discrimination, disadvantage and violence across all critical areas of concern in the Platform of Action.
- While there has been progress to realize girls' rights, efforts are often fragmented and inconsistent and fail to recognize girl's specific experiences across policy areas.
- Improving girls' wellbeing requires a comprehensive approach, including gender-responsive legislation and policies in all areas such as health, including sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, educational and economic outcomes across different stages through early childhood, adolescence and young adulthood, and by addressing issues of fundamental safety and integrity of person, including prevention and protection from violence, harmful practices and discrimination.

While issues of concern to girls cut across all 12 critical areas of concern, the Platform for Action gave specific attention to the persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child. The Platform for Action identified nine strategic objectives on: eliminating all forms of discrimination; eliminating negative cultural attitudes and practices; promoting and protecting girls' rights; increasing awareness of girls' needs and potential; health and nutrition; eliminating economic exploitation; education, skills development and training; eradicating violence; promoting awareness and participation in social, economic and political life; and, strengthening the role of the family.

Global trends

Despite significant advances in the normative framework, girls around the world continue to experience various forms of discrimination, disadvantage and violence. Where mortality rates for children under 5 years of age are higher among girls, in South and East Asia and the Pacific, this partly reflects discriminatory practices related to son preference.¹⁴⁸ Gender inequalities in health outcomes become more pronounced in adolescence as girls are prematurely married and forced into sex, increasing the risks associated with early childbearing and exposure to sexually transmitted

infections. Adolescent girls also have higher rates of anaemia.¹⁴⁹ Worldwide, in 2012, girls comprised two thirds of new HIV infections among youths aged between 15 and 19 years of age.¹⁵⁰ In sub-Saharan African countries, women aged between 15 and 24 are between 2 and 4 times more likely to be infected with HIV than men of the same age, reflecting gender differences in literacy levels, media exposure, access to condoms and greater vulnerability to sexual violence (see Section C.).¹⁵¹

Despite significant progress in girls' education in recent decades (see Section B.), an estimated 58 million children of primary school age and 63 million adolescents of lower secondary school age are not in school, the majority being girls.¹⁵² Many institutional and cultural factors affect girls' educational access and outcomes, including various forms of violence, such as sexual harassment and bullying, and safety issues in and around school, exploitation and conflict (see Section E.), poverty and the demands of work, as well as insufficient school infrastructure and resources. Girls who marry early and young mothers are discriminated against in schools and communities and they face particular health concerns, financial constraints,

148 United Nations Children's Fund, *Boys and Girls in the Life Cycle: Sex-Disaggregated Data on a Selection of Well-being Indicators, from Early Childhood to Young Adult*, (New York, 2011).

149 Ibid.

150 United Nations Children's Fund, *HIVAIDS and Children 2013: Thematic Report* (New York, 2014).

151 Ibid.

152 United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization, Institute for Statistics (UIS) database (Accessed 17 October 2014).

and pressures from within their communities and families, all of which contributes to high dropout rates (see Section A.).

Violence against girls continues to take many forms (see Section D.) and has significant consequences on their physical, sexual and mental health, and on their education, economic and employment outcomes. Approximately one quarter of girls aged between 15 and 19 are victims of physical violence from the age of 15,¹⁵³ and 120 million girls under 20, about 1 in 10 are subjected to sexual violence.¹⁵⁴ Vulnerabilities vary across and within countries, with girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination being at greater risk, namely indigenous, impoverished, internally displaced and refugee girls, girls with disabilities, girls in natural disasters and in humanitarian and conflict and/or post-conflict settings, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender girls. Violence is perpetrated by adults and peers, at home, in and around schools and workplaces, and through new forms of technology and media (see Section J.).

Approximately 125 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital-mutilation/cutting according to data for 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East, where the practice is concentrated.¹⁵⁵ Annually, at least a further 3 million girls, mostly under the age of 15, are at risk. Among women and girls aged between 15 and 49, 44 per cent in Eastern and Southern Africa and 40 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa have undergone female genital-mutilation/cutting.¹⁵⁶ The rates are over 75 per cent, and even higher among those in the poorest households in 10 of the 27 African

countries for which data is available.¹⁵⁷ The prevalence has declined from an estimated 53 per cent of women aged between 45 and 49 to an average of 36 per cent of adolescents and young women between aged 15 and 19 being cut.¹⁵⁸ Despite possible proportional decreases, the total number of cases may still be increasing as a result of population growth.¹⁵⁹ Female genital-mutilation/cutting and other harmful practices occur as a result of gender inequality and discriminatory social, cultural and religious norms relating to girls' and women's positions in their family, community and society, and are barriers to girls' enjoyment of their human rights.¹⁶⁰

Between 1995 and 2010, the rate of child, early and forced marriage consistently declined among girls under the age of 15, to 8 per cent and under the age of 18, to 26 per cent.¹⁶¹ However, in 2014, 700 million, more than 1 in 3, women worldwide were married before the age of 18,¹⁶² with 250 million married before the age of 15.¹⁶³ Rates are highest in South Asia, where nearly half of all girls were married before the age of 18, and one in five before the age of 15. This is followed by West and Central Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa.¹⁶⁴ If current trends continue, the number of girls marrying early each year

153 United Nations Children's Fund, *Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence Against Children*, (New York, 2011).

154 Based on a sub-set of countries with available data covering over 50 per cent of the global population of people within the respective age ranges. United Nations Children's Fund, *Monitoring the situation of Children and Women Global Database 2014* (see <http://data.unicef.org/>).

155 United Nations Children's Fund, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change* (New York, 2013).

156 United Nations Children's Fund, *Monitoring the situation of Children and Women Global Database 2014* (see <http://data.unicef.org/>).

157 Ibid.

158 United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Population Fund, UN Women, International Labour Organization, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, *Breaking the Silence on Violence against Indigenous Girls, Adolescents and Young Women*, (New York, 2013).

159 Ibid.

160 A/69/211

161 United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects* (New York, 2014).

162 Child and early marriage is defined as a formal or informal union where one or both parties are under 18 (United Nations Children's Fund, *Monitoring the situation of Children and Women Global Database 2014*. (see <http://data.unicef.org/>). Forced marriage—including child marriage—is a union that lacks the free and full consent of both parties (UN Women's Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls, 2012. (see www.endvawnow.org).

163 United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects* (New York, 2014).

164 United Nations Children's Fund, *Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women Global Database 2014*. (see <http://data.unicef.org/>).

will grow from 15 million in 2014 to 16.5 million in 2030 to over 18 million in 2050.¹⁶⁵ Child, early and forced marriage compounds poverty and gender inequality by depriving girls of educational and economic opportunities and negotiating powers regarding sex, family planning and resource allocation, contributing to early pregnancy, as well as exposure to violence.

Early childbearing is commonly linked to non-consensual sex in contexts of sexual violence, exploitation and child, early and forced marriage. More than 16 million girls aged between 15 and 19 and some one million girls under the age of 15 give birth annually, mostly in low and middle-income countries, the highest rate being in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶⁶ Global adolescent birth rates have decreased since 1990, albeit unevenly, but some 11 per cent of all births are still among 15 to 19 year olds. Adolescents are more likely to die from complications in pregnancy and childbirth than women in their 20's, and their infants are more likely to be stillborn or die in the first month of life.

Worldwide, approximately 14 per cent of girls aged between 5 and 14 are engaged in child labour, the majority of whom are unpaid.¹⁶⁷ Most child labourers are found in the informal economy in the agricultural sector (98 million, 59 per cent), in services including domestic work (54 million) and industry (12 million).¹⁶⁸ While the number of children recruited for child labour is decreasing in all sectors, the proportion of children in domestic work is increasing.¹⁶⁹ In West and Central Africa, more girls than boys work as child labourers.¹⁷⁰ Girls comprise over two thirds of the approximately 17.2 million

children aged between 5 and 17 in paid and unpaid domestic work in households other than their own, with 11.5 million working under coercion in unacceptable and hazardous conditions.¹⁷¹ A study of 65 developing countries found that gender is an important determinant of children's involvement in unpaid chores in their own households, and that there is a positive correlation between involvement in household chores and child, early and forced marriage.¹⁷² Many more girls than boys, often like their mothers, are disproportionately engaged in unpaid work, including care work, in their own and in other homes, which is overlooked in child labour counts. The limited data on forced labour indicate that many girls are in debt bondage, trafficking and servitude.¹⁷³ Child labour impedes girls' rights to education, training and decent work, health and safety, and to protection from exploitation.¹⁷⁴

What actions are States taking? Emerging trends in national-level implementation

- Eliminating harmful practices through the implementation of education programmes, mass mobilization and media campaigns; the adoption of health and well-being frameworks for girls; and the enactment of laws and comprehensive policies to eliminate female genital mutilation/cutting and address early childbearing and child, early and forced marriage.
- Implementing gender-responsive child protection legislation, policies and services.
- Improving access to a gender-responsive education environment, such as through abolishing school fees; addressing violence against girls; integrating comprehensive sexuality education in school curricula and providing separate sanitation facilities in the effort to better respond to girls' needs.

165 United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects* (New York, 2014).

166 World Health Organization, "Adolescent Pregnancy," WHO Fact sheet, No. 364, (September 2014). (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/>).

167 United Nations Children's Fund, *Monitoring the situation of Children and Women Global Database 2014*. (see <http://data.unicef.org/>).

168 The ILO defines child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. International Labour Organization, *Marking Progress against Child Labour: Global Estimates and Trends 2000-2012* (Geneva, 2013).

169 Ibid. Domestic work is a sub-sector of the services sector.

170 United Nations Children's Fund, *Monitoring the situation of Children and Women Global Database 2014*. (see <http://data.unicef.org/>).

171 International Labour Organization and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, *Tackling Child Labour and Protecting Young Workers in Domestic Work: A Resource Manual*, (Geneva, 2014).

172 Scott Lyon, Marco Ranzani and Furio C. Rosati, "Unpaid household services and child labour," Working Paper, (ILO, Geneva, 2013).

173 International Labour Organization, "Child Domestic Work: Global Estimates 2012," (Geneva, 2013).

174 A/68/293

- Promoting girls' activism and participation through the establishment of youth parliaments, councils, clubs and associations and the implementation of training and leadership programmes at the local, national and regional and global levels to encourage girls' activism.

Moving forward: Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

Creating a more enabling environment for girls requires addressing all strategic objectives relating to girls and linking these with the other critical areas. Concrete measures are needed to prevent and eliminate violence, harmful practices and child labour, to mitigate their impacts on girls' health, wellbeing, education and future opportunities and earnings.

Overarching measures including legislative and policy reform; building institutional capacity; enhancing education for all; social mobilization and social norm change and ratification and effective implementation of international conventions, must be comprised in comprehensive, integrated and multi-sectoral national frameworks. Strategies should be adopted, particularly at the family/household level, to address issues such as violence and abuse in the family. Greater efforts are needed to address the disproportionate allocation of domestic work and care responsibilities of girls, as well as address the specific needs of marginalized girls. The transformation of discriminatory social norms and strengthening the understanding of and support for girls' rights over the long term must be prioritized. To this end, girls must be seen as rights holders by policy makers, families and communities, and governments and other principal duty bearers must enhance institutional support for girls' rights.

II. LESSONS LEARNT AND PRIORITIES ACCELERATING IMPLEMENTATION IN THE POST-2015 CONTEXT

The world of today is very far from the vision set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The global review of national implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern shows unacceptably slow and uneven progress. The increasing recognition of gender equality as a global priority by a broad range of actors has not translated into real change in the lives of women and girls. The sweeping changes of the last 20 years in the social, economic, political, environmental and technological landscape have given rise to new challenges for achieving gender equality. Grave violations of women's and girls' human rights remain widespread. Women and girls who speak out and challenge such violations risk being subjected to routine violence, harassment and intimidation.

Creating a world where women and girls enjoy their human rights is one of the most defining and urgent challenges of this century. This daunting, yet achievable, task demands a change from business-as-usual to real transformation. The unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities that perpetuate gender inequalities, poverty and vulnerability must be changed, and peaceful and sustainable societies created. This requires renewed political will and greater commitment from Member States to take action to ensure women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights in practice. A concerted effort is needed to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action to fulfill the commitments made in 1995.

In 2014, the Commission on the Status of Women called on States to tackle critical remaining challenges in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls through a transformative and comprehensive approach; it called for gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls to be reflected

as a stand-alone goal, as well as being integrated through targets and indicators into all other goals of the new development framework.

The 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action takes place at an opportune moment at the end of the Millennium Development Goals and Member States' deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. This confluence provides a once in a generation opportunity to draw on the lessons learnt and ensure the future framework delivers transformative change in the lives of women and girls. The lessons should also inform other global processes such as the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the preparations of a new climate agreement and the strategic reviews taking place in 2015 in the area of peace and security, including the High-level Reviews of the United Nations Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Architecture and of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

The conclusions and recommendations below are informed by lessons from the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern as well as the findings of the expert group meeting on “Envisioning women’s rights in the post-2015 context”, organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and held from 3-5 November 2014 in New York.¹⁷⁵ The section also draws on research and analysis from United Nations entities and other sources as indicated.

Lessons learnt and challenges in the current context for the implementation of the Platform for Action

Persistent gaps between norms and implementation, and between commitment and action: Despite the expanded normative commitments to women’s and girls’ human rights in the last 20 years, there remains a stark gap between the global normative framework and its implementation on the ground, signaling a collective failure of leadership which has allowed the situation to prevail. Gender inequality remains a universal challenge. There is not one single country that has reached gender equality. Even where States have made important advances in introducing laws and policies to promote gender equality, many of these developments are yet to be translated into women’s and girls’ equal enjoyment and exercise of rights in practice. For example, while an increasing number of laws to address violence against women have been enacted across all regions, poor implementation and the persistence of stigma and shame around violence, often prevent women from claiming rights and being able to live a life that is free from violence. While laws have been introduced in most countries to promote equal pay for work of equal value, the persistence of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the education system and in labour markets more broadly mean that women continue to be concentrated in lower

paid jobs. Too often, equality under the law is undermined in practice by the lack of implementation, discriminatory social norms and attitudes, institutional barriers and women’s relative lack of power and resources.

Countries have given uneven attention across the critical areas of concern with greater emphasis on some areas than others. For example, there has been an increasing focus on realizing women’s and girls’ right to education, yet relatively less attention to policies needed to increase women’s access to decent work. The focus on a narrow set of issues in the implementation of some critical areas of concern is another challenge. For instance, while there has been a focus on women’s right to participate in decision-making in some arenas, such as national parliaments, the status of women and their decision-making power in other domains, such as households, market-based enterprises and local governments have received less attention. Efforts to address sexual and reproductive health and rights are often narrowly focused on maternal health rather than a comprehensive approach that is responsive to women’s health across the lifecycle. The uneven and narrow focus of implementation undermines the indivisibility and interdependence of the human rights of women and girls.

The global review shows that human rights standards and principles have not been applied in a cross-cutting manner across laws, policies and programmes in all critical areas of concern. For example, the implementation of the critical area of concern on health should be grounded in international human rights standards on women and health, by ensuring that health care is available, accessible, acceptable, appropriate and of good quality without discrimination against women and girls, and by ensuring that women participate in decision-making regarding health policies and services.¹⁷⁶ The implementation of the critical area of concern on the economy should reflect international human rights standards, requiring that economic policies ensure non-discrimination

¹⁷⁵ See <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015/preparations/expert-group-meeting>.

¹⁷⁶ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 14.

and equality, and non-retrogression in the realization of economic and social rights, including women's access to decent work.¹⁷⁷

Lack of attention to multiple forms of discrimination and inequality: The review of the national implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern shows that while States have recognized the need to address the specific needs of women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination, efforts to implement the Platform for Action have largely neglected disparities amongst women and girls. Despite significant gains in girls' educational attainment at the primary and secondary school levels, girls who are poor and/or live in rural or conflict affected settings, continue to experience significant disadvantage. While many States have made efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making, there is a glaring gap ensuring the participation and voice of particularly marginalized women in key decision-making forums. Where statistics are collected to monitor progress and gaps relating to gender equality, they are most often only disaggregated by sex, thus overlooking differences and inequalities among women based on other factors.

Persistence of discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes and unequal power relations between women and men: Discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes have long been recognized as major impediments to the achievement of gender equality and the realization of women's rights. As the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action has shown, even where equality before the law has been achieved, discriminatory social norms remain pervasive, which affects all aspects of gender equality, women's empowerment and women's and girls' human rights, for example their right to be free from violence, their rights to inheritance and property, the right to an adequate standard of living, their right to education, their right to work, sexual and reproductive health and rights, the right to water and sanitation and their right to participate in public and political life. Discriminatory norms and stereotypes have shifted in

some contexts, such as the questioning of the bread-winning role as exclusively male as a result of families increasingly relying on women's earnings. Yet, new discriminatory norms which perpetuate gender inequalities have emerged in other arenas, such as the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes that sexualize women and girls in the media, including the rapidly expanding social media platforms. Discriminatory social norms that perpetuate violence against women remain persistent, for example norms that excuse violence and stigmatize survivors.

However, social norms are not monolithic in any society, and they are also subject to change: they change as a result of broader processes of economic, cultural and social change, as well as through changing gender dynamics, including through deliberate social action by women's rights advocates in alliance with other stakeholders to foster norms of equality, human rights and justice. In order to promote the rights of girls and women it is particularly important that men and boys take responsibility to challenge discrimination and to nurture social norms that support social justice, fairness and gender equality, and which exist in all societies, as an important complement to the implementation of human rights standards.

Conservative and extremist resistance to gender equality: The realization of women's and girls' human rights is being threatened in some contexts, in both developing and developed countries, by the emergence and mobilization of conservative forces and extremist groups that increasingly resist gender equality and women's and girls' human rights. Such forces exist on a spectrum, with diverse manifestations across different contexts. However, a common feature is the misuse of religion, tradition and culture to curtail women's human rights and entrench stereotypical gender roles, particularly in relation to women's rights over their bodies and sexuality as well as women's and girls' rights to participate in public life, including in educational institutions, labour markets and politics. In some contexts these forces have

¹⁷⁷ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 18.

reshaped laws, state institutions and social norms related to gender equality, thereby reinforcing discrimination and violating women's human rights.¹⁷⁸

As the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights has elaborated, the reality of diversity within all communities makes it imperative to ensure that women's voices within a community are heard without discrimination, particularly those who represent the perspectives, interests and desires of marginalized groups.¹⁷⁹ While the resistance from extremist groups to women's human rights is not a new phenomenon, over the last 20 years these forces have become increasingly connected with greater capacity and resources to influence political agendas. Far from representing "authentic" religious traditions or cultures, such forces represent modern phenomena, sometimes offering new interpretations of religious precepts. In contexts where dominant economic policies have resulted in growing inequalities, persistent poverty and a dearth of decent jobs, especially for young people, and where governments have failed to deliver a sense of security, basic social services and sustainable livelihoods, some of these groups have gained legitimacy by stepping in to fill the gap. Religion or culture themselves cannot be reduced to a static, closed set of beliefs and practices, as those are never monolithic and often fluid. However, the politicization of religion and culture can lead to the violation of women's human rights through the codification of discriminatory norms and stereotypes into actual laws, policies and practices.¹⁸⁰ Culture or religion cannot be a justification for the violation of the human rights of women and girls.

Persistence of violent conflict: Continuing instability and new outbreaks of violent conflict in which civilians are increasingly under attack are key impediments to progress across the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. Conflict-affected countries perform worse on key human development indicators, with time series data showing slower progress or even regression. Sexual and gender-based violence is exacerbated during conflict and is a key risk factor

178 A/67/287

179 Ibid.

180 A/HRC/17/26

for HIV and AIDS. Women's access to services, economic opportunities and justice is undermined as a result of the destruction of civilian infrastructure and damaged state institutions. Gross breaches of human rights, which at times involve direct targeting of women and girls and the defenders of their rights, undermine global commitments, while the continued lack of security prevents women's political, social and economic participation. Militarism, based on violent masculinities and a culture of domination, perpetuates discrimination against women and undermines progress towards gender equality.

A disabling economic context: It is clear from the review of the implementation of the Platform for Action that progress towards gender equality has been stymied by the broader economic context marked by crisis and instability. Financial globalization has brought with it the threat of destabilizing financial flows and periodic economic crises that can result in increased inequalities and vulnerability, with particularly detrimental impacts on poorer women. The global financial crisis, since it began in 2007/2008, and the austerity measures adopted in many countries, since 2010, have put progress towards gender equality in further jeopardy.¹⁸¹ Economic crises, however, merely accentuate existing structural inequalities and disadvantages that women experience. Addressing the underlying causes and consequences of crises, therefore, provides an opportunity to tackle patterns of gender inequality and discrimination that are entrenched in economic structures and policy processes in order to shift towards new policy approaches that are gender-responsive.¹⁸²

Dominant macroeconomic policies of financial and trade liberalization, deflationary monetary policies and public sector reforms, have not, overall, been conducive to creating decent employment conditions for women or supporting public investments in areas

181 A/HRC/26/39; see also Isabel Ortiz and Matthew Cummins, "The Age Austerity: A Review of Public Expenditures and Adjustment Measures in 181 Countries," Working Paper, (New York, Initiative for Policy Dialogue; Geneva, The South Centre, 2013); and UN Women, *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality*, (New York, 2014).

182 A/HRC/26/39

needed to achieve gender equality. Further, such approaches have often focused narrowly on raising the level of GDP as their primary goal and have, for the most part, failed to support the achievement of substantive equality for women. In some instances, the GDP can even increase as a result of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, which are reliant on fossil fuels and natural resource extraction that contribute to environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, which also has negative social impacts, including for women and girls. Alternative approaches emphasize human development, well-being, the realization of human rights and environmental sustainability. Increases in GDP are important only to the extent that they support increased investments to achieve sustainable development and the realization of human rights, including greater gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Inadequate resources for gender equality: Insufficient resources for targeted spending on gender equality, such as the implementation of laws, policies, national gender equality mechanisms and national action plans, as well as low levels of resources allocated to sectors such as social protection, health, education and water and sanitation represent a major challenge to the full implementation of the Platform for Action. Gender-responsive budgeting can support the effective and efficient allocation and spending of available resources for women and girls. However, the impact of these allocations will be limited when overall budgets for the provision of services, social protection and infrastructure are grossly inadequate. There are a range of options for mobilizing resources, both domestically and internationally, by improving the efficiency of revenue collection, broadening the range of taxes used to generate revenues while ensuring that they are equitable both in terms of revenue mobilization and expenditure, and international borrowing to finance investments which have significant social returns.¹⁸³

While the share of ODA allocated on gender equality has remained relatively stable, there remains considerable underinvestment in gender equality, particularly when aid spending is broken down by sectors. Gender

equality focused aid is concentrated in the social sectors of education and health, with alarmingly low levels of aid targeted towards economic sectors. Donor funding for women's role in peace and security and sexual and reproductive health and rights remains inadequate. While North-South development cooperation continues to be a primary source of ODA, particularly for least developed and landlocked developing countries, South-South development cooperation is on the rise. However specific information is not available on spending allocated towards gender equality in the context of South-South development cooperation. Relatively new sources of financing such as private-public partnerships, the private sector and philanthropic foundations also have a growing influence on priorities and financing for gender equality, however they are often focused on a narrow set of issues.¹⁸⁴ A critical question is the extent to which all donors are accountable for the impact of their actions on gender equality.

Women's low levels of participation: The low levels of participation and leadership by women and girls in decision-making are a key barrier to progress across all critical areas of concern. Women remain significantly under represented in decision making at all levels—in the household, local governments, management of environmental resources, national planning and development structures, national parliaments and global governance. There is no consistent effort to ensure the participation and influence of women and women's organizations in shaping and monitoring policies across the critical areas of concern, which may mean that public services, programmes and infrastructure are not sufficiently responsive to women's specific needs or interests. Women's participation is of critical importance, both as an issue of justice and equality and because the active presence of women can put gender-specific concerns on the agenda and monitor the implementation of policies and programmes. However, participation is more than just numerical presence in decision-making fora. It is

¹⁸³ A/HRC/26/28

¹⁸⁴ Angelika Arutyunova, Cindy Clark and Julie Miller, *New Actors, New Money, New Conversations: A Mapping of Recent Initiatives for Women and Girls* (Toronto, The Association of Women's Rights in Development, 2013).

about the effective articulation of issues that matter to different groups of women and the ability to influence and monitor policies. Enabling women's participation, however, should not mean that women carry the sole responsibility for prioritizing gender equality concerns. All decision-makers, women and men, must take responsibility.

Absence of strong accountability mechanisms: The implementation of the Platform for Action has been hampered by the absence of strong accountability mechanisms to enable women to hold decision-makers answerable for their actions. Key institutions and mechanisms for gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of women and girls such as national gender equality mechanisms and national human rights institutions are often under-resourced and lack the political support or recognition they need to fulfil their mandate. Gender mainstreaming and efforts to ensure whole of government prioritization of and responsibilities for concrete progress towards gender equality remain limited, which is particularly concerning given that all policy and programme areas must contribute to achieving gender equality. While women's organizations play a crucial role in monitoring progress and advancing claims for women's rights, the constraints on the ability of civil society to influence decision-making, including resource constraints, present major obstacles for women's organizations to fulfill their role.

State restructuring and public sector reform in many contexts has increased the influence and impact of private sector actors on the enjoyment of women's human rights in many countries. While governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action and for ensuring that private actors do not violate the human rights of women and girls, there is a growing demand that private actors also be held answerable for their actions to other stakeholders.¹⁸⁵ The influence and impact of transnational corporations, international financial

institutions, and actions of States beyond their borders also pose challenges for accountability.¹⁸⁶ States, especially more powerful developed States, exert significant influence outside their borders, particularly through trade, investment and financial policies, which often constrain the capacity of less developed States to achieve development goals.¹⁸⁷ There is a need for stronger accountability mechanisms to respond to these challenges.

Limited data to track progress: A significant challenge for effectively monitoring progress towards gender equality is the lack of high quality and comparable data, collected over time. Many areas of statistics that are of critical importance such as time use, asset ownership, women's experiences of poverty, women's participation in decision-making at all levels, including local government, and violence against women are still not produced regularly by countries. As evidenced in the review of national implementation, even where "snapshot" data exists, there is often no trend data to enable monitoring of changes over time. Data and statistical requirements for the post-2015 development agenda will be substantial, particularly for monitoring gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls in the new framework.

Moving ahead: priorities for accelerated implementation in the post-2015 context

Twenty years ago the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established a visionary agenda and set of commitments for advancing the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity. This vision remains pertinent today as Member States deliberate on the post-2015 development agenda. Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls must be a central priority to the post-2015 development agenda. To be transformative, the future agenda must be universal and anchored in human rights. It

¹⁸⁵ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Center for Economic and Social Rights, *Who Will be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda* (Geneva and New York, 2013).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

must achieve sustainable development in all three dimensions—economic, social and environmental.¹⁸⁸ It must create peaceful societies by changing cultures of violence, masculinity and militarism. Gender equality and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights are fundamental for achieving human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development.

As recognized in the outcomes documents of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, and the Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals¹⁸⁹, the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to sustainable development and as such, implementation efforts must be accelerated to achieve the future goals. This means the future agenda must address gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of women and girls in a comprehensive manner and tackle the key structural constraints that are holding back progress for women and girls: persistent discrimination in law and practice; unacceptably high levels of violence against women and girls and harmful practices; women’s disproportionate share of unpaid care work; denial of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights across the lifecycle; and women’s significant under-representation in decision-making at all levels in the public and private sphere. It also means addressing gender equality in a transversal manner across all other areas of the new agenda. Given the urgency and scale of the task ahead, States must not wait until the post-2015 development agenda is in place, and rather take immediate action for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action, so as to achieve clear, measurable and major change by 2020.

The full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must be a priority for the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and the

¹⁸⁸ Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda entitled “*The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet*” (A/69/700).

¹⁸⁹ A/68/970 and Corr.1.

post-2015 development agenda. The stark gap between global norms and women’s and girls’ practical enjoyment of human rights calls for urgent attention to bridging the gap and achieving substantive equality for women. Accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action across all critical areas of concern and maximizing the synergies between them requires all human rights of women and girls to be realized with attention to the interdependence and indivisibility of rights. Religion or culture must not be misused to justify discrimination against women and girls. Importantly, States must look beyond the “averages” to monitor the impacts and results of laws and policies for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Based on the lessons learnt from the implementation of the Platform for Action, urgent action is required in five priority areas to accelerate progress: transforming discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes; transforming the economy to achieve gender equality and sustainable development; ensuring the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels; significantly increasing investments in gender equality; and strengthening accountability for gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls.

Transforming discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes

The transformation of discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes must be a priority for accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action and for effectively moving towards gender equality, women’s empowerment and the realization of women’s and girls’ human rights. Policies and programmes across the critical areas of concern must change underlying discriminatory social norms, power relations and gender stereotypes and instead promote positive norms of gender equality, human rights and social justice. Strategies should be context specific, but examples of actions include: programmes, including public and media campaigns, to mobilize communities to reject violence against women; outreach and education campaigns supporting women’s role in politics, public life and leadership; policies that support the

redistribution of unpaid care work between women and men in the household; policies to remedy discriminatory practices regarding inheritance and women's access to resources. Men and boys must take responsibility for challenging discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes and fostering positive norms of gender equality, non-violence and respect.

Transforming the economy to achieve gender equality and sustainable development

Achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment requires transformative economic and social policy agendas that are firmly anchored within a human rights framework. Macroeconomic policies should expand the overall fiscal space, while a broad range of gender-responsive social, economic and environmental policies should prioritize increasing State investments in infrastructure, public services and social protection measures. Such policies should work in tandem to: ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of economic and social rights for all; reduce and redistribute the burden of care work placed on women and girls; and promote sustainable livelihoods and ecological integrity. Governments should guard against economic policy positions that lead to retrogression in the enjoyment of rights. In the context of an increasingly integrated global economy, macroeconomic policy should reduce vulnerabilities by adopting measures that minimize systemic risks. Macroeconomic policies should also generate decent work for women and men and ensure women can enjoy their full range of rights at work. Processes of policy design, implementation and monitoring across all policy areas should be participatory by creating channels and mechanisms for participation and dialogue with women's rights advocacy groups, civil society organizations and associations.

Significantly increasing investments in gender equality

Increasing investments in gender equality to fulfill the vision of the Platform for Action requires greater efforts to mobilize and increase domestic and

international resources for gender equality, including official development assistance. For the accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and the post-2015 agenda, it will be vital to reorient fiscal and monetary policies to generate and increase public spending on gender equality and monitor and analyze the effects of such public spending on gender inequality through gender-responsive budgeting. In order to rectify persistent underinvestment, resources must be significantly increased for national gender equality mechanisms and local, national, regional and global women's organizations.

All developed countries should meet the 0.7 per cent target for ODA commitments, including the commitments to least developed countries of 0.15 per cent of gross national product by 2015, ensuring a stronger focus on gender equality, with attention to sectors where spending remains inadequate. Given the increasing role of South-South development cooperation, it is important to monitor and analyze spending allocated towards gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights in such cooperation. Global taxes, such as the proposed financial transaction tax, can also provide additional sources of revenue and ease financial constraints, particularly for lower income countries. All donors must be transparent in their decisions and actions and abide by international human rights standards.

Ensuring full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels

The full and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making to influence the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies is essential to accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action. Temporary special measures provide a proven strategy for increasing women's representation in decision-making and should be replicated and expanded. Greater efforts are needed to address the barriers to women's full and equal participation in decision-making, including the discriminatory culture of political institutions, financial constraints, the lack of family-friendly provisions and threats of violence and intimidation. Women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding must be

pursued as a priority. States also have a responsibility to protect women human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work.

Strengthening accountability for gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls

Achieving gender equality requires the involvement of women and men, girls and boys, and is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Governments must meet their obligations as duty bearers and women and girls must be empowered to claim and enjoy their human rights. Accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action will require strengthened accountability mechanisms for gender equality, including of national gender equality mechanisms, national human rights institutions and regulatory bodies. This means reforming the mandates, operations and norms within institutions as well as ensuring they are properly resourced and responsive to women and girls and that there are consequences for not meeting obligations. All parts of government must be responsible for achieving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized across government, with effective means of monitoring progress. National action plans for gender equality should be strengthened, by costing their implementation, setting clear goals, reporting and monitoring frameworks and ensuring the allocation of adequate resources.

Member States, international finance institutions and transnational corporations must be accountable for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of women's and girls' human rights, both within their borders and extra-territorially. While States must continue to

regulate the private sector to ensure compliance with human rights standards, multi-stakeholder accountability frameworks which include civil society can provide complementary avenues of accountability for the private sector. Such frameworks should include transparent reporting processes and procedures, public consultations and hearings and the ability to submit and handle complaints.

The United Nations system has a strong role to play in supporting the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including through pursuing systematic gender mainstreaming; substantially increasing resources to deliver results, especially under the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks; monitoring progress with better disaggregated data and statistics; and institutionalizing robust accountability systems, including through the full implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.¹⁹⁰

Increased efforts are needed from Member States to address data gaps and prioritize the collection, reporting, use and analysis of data to effectively monitor progress towards gender equality. Significantly increased investments in national statistical offices are needed, along with increased capacity building, as part of the "data revolution" and substantially increased resources devoted to the production of a broad range of gender statistics to make the monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda possible. However, the lack of data should not be an excuse for policy inaction. In addition to gender statistics, other sources of data, including qualitative data, should be validated and used to provide information on the full complexity of women's and girls' lives and experiences.

¹⁹⁰ General Assembly resolution 67/226.

**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A
GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND
GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED
TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON
MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA
Tel: 646-781-4400
Fax: 646-646-4444
www.unwomen.org
www.facebook.com/unwomen
www.twitter.com/un_women
www.youtube.com/unwomen
www.flickr.com/unwomen