

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



Gender Equality and UNDP

Gender equality and women's empowerment are human rights that lie at the heart of development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Despite progress in recent years, women and girls account for six out of 10 of world's poorest and two thirds of the world's illiterate people, only 18 percent of the world's parliamentarians are women and one third of all women are subjected to violence, whether in times of armed conflict or behind closed doors at home.

In promoting human development across 166 developing countries, UNDP integrates gender equality and women's empowerment into its four focus areas: poverty reduction, environment and sustainable, development democratic governance and crisis prevention and recovery.



Cambodia, UN Photo/Vanessa Wruble

Poverty reduction

When men and women have equal opportunities and freedoms, economic growth accelerates and poverty rates drop more rapidly for everyone. This is why reducing inequalities between women and men is critical to cutting by half the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015. UNDP works with national partners to:

- Plan and budget for both women and men;
- Promote women's and girls' economic rights and opportunities;
- Address the gender dimensions of HIV and AIDS;

- Strengthen the collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data.

In Northern **Ghana**, UNDP and the Japanese government helped more than 200 rural women to set up six training centers where they learned to produce high-quality shea butter, soap and other goods that are now being exported around the world. Following technical support from UNDP, the government of **Mauritius** applies the results of a national time-use survey to make more informed social policies, aiming to reduce the daily work burdens on poor women and increase their opportunities in the labor market. In **Ecuador**, UNDP and the *Ecuadorian Coalition of Persons Living With HIV/AIDS* trained 400 leaders -- who in turn engage over 50,000 people -- in prevention and activism aimed at reducing discrimination, especially against HIV-positive women.

Environment and sustainable development

The world's poorest and most vulnerable people are dependent on their natural environment to earn a living and feed their families. Daily tasks such as tending fields, collecting firewood and water, and grinding grain can take up nearly all of a woman's available time in some countries. But women are not just victims of a degrading environment -- they are a powerful source of indigenous knowledge. For centuries, women have passed on their skills on how to manage water, forests, and biodiversity; how to preserve medicinal plants and adapt and cope when faced with a changing climate. This knowledge is critical for a nation to sustain its environment. With this in mind, UNDP helps governments to:

- Meaningfully include women in planning, budgeting, and policy-making processes;
- Deliver energy and environment services like fuel, clean water and mechanized power, to poor women;
- Engage women's networks;
- Leverage financing for women entrepreneurs and women's organizations working to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change;
- Harness women's local knowledge to protect, sustain

and manage the environment and its resources. In partnership with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNDP is working with governments in **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Senegal** to roll out 600 sustainable, rural agro-enterprises centered around mechanizing laborious tasks like grinding grain -- enabling women to increase their productivity and sell higher-value products, thereby increasing their income. In **Tanzania**, a UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme project is enabling villagers to tap solar energy to pump water for drinking and irrigation, offering improved health and food security and generating income and employment opportunities. UNDP has supported a Togolese NGO to learn about the gender impacts of climate change and to participate at the global UNFCCC negotiations. As a result, the NGO contributed to **Togo's** national adaptation program.

Democratic governance

The participation of women in politics is a human right and a development goal. UNDP strives to ensure that women have a real voice in all governance institutions, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society, so they can participate equally with men in public dialogue and decision-making and influence the decisions that will determine their families' and countries' future. From the national to the most local levels, UNDP works with partners to:

- Increase the number of women in public office;
- Enhance women's leadership by helping to reform electoral processes, making political parties more accessible and accountable to women, and strengthening parliaments, judiciaries and the civil service;
- Strengthen the capacities of women's autonomous organizations to advocate and implement projects to promote women's rights;
- Promote judicial reform to ensure equal legal protection to poor women and men;
- Ensure that essential public services like health and education, especially at the local level, benefit poor women and men girls and boys equitably;
- Promote the ratification, implementation and reporting on women's international and regional instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Reduce gender-based violence.

In 10 states in **India**, UNDP joined forces with the ministry for local governance and civil society organizations to support women elected to public office in more than 2,600 village councils, with proven results in improving service delivery to the some of most marginalized sections of society. UNDP is

supporting the national justice system in **Timor Leste** to appoint qualified women as judges, public defenders and prosecutors. In **Serbia**, UNDP is supporting six non-governmental organizations in advocating for the implementation and promotion of CEDAW with a focus on gender-based violence and improving the position of Roma women, women in rural areas, and women entrepreneurs.

Crisis prevention and recovery

If a society is stable and secure it is more likely to achieve the MDGs. Conflict and natural disasters often have a particular impact on women and children. Communities that equitably plan for and address the different needs of men and women are better prepared to recover from crisis. Despite the devastation that crises can wield, the period of rebuilding afterwards offers a great opportunity to create more inclusive governance institutions and transform societies. For these reasons, UNDP has defined the following Eight Point Agenda to empower women and enhance gender equality in crisis prevention and recovery efforts:

1. Stop violence against women;
2. Provide justice and security for women;
3. Advance women as decision-makers;
4. Involve women in all peace processes;
5. Support women and men to build back better;
6. Promote women as leaders of recovery;
7. Include women's issues in the national agenda;
8. Work together to transform society.

UNDP has a wide range of initiatives under the Eight Point Agenda such as: assistance to the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** to train and sensitize the armed forces on gender issues and a post-conflict support center in western **Côte d'Ivoire** run by a local women's non-governmental organization, which provides psychological, health and economic services to women and girls affected by the conflict. In **Somalia**, UNDP supported a rule of law programme ensuring that an estimated 10 percent of police academy graduates were women, and the first Women Lawyer's Association providing legal assistance to victims of rape and domestic violence was established.

For more information, visit:

www.undp.org/women

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