MARCH DIGEST
WRAPPING UP WOMEN’S MONTH

A word from the Director

Women have heroically faced the COVID-19 pandemic as doctors, nurses, social workers, policy makers, business owners - and reminded all why their seats at the decision-making table must increase. This is not just a matter of rights and equality, it is one of survival for African economies, countries and societies. Every year, on the African continent, $60 billion is lost to gender inequality. Yet, when women have equal access to education and equal opportunities to contribute to the economy, it is the entire continent that gets lifted up.

As Africa charts its recovery path from the socioeconomic downfall of the COVID-19 pandemic, special attention must be given to women, because they have suffered significant setbacks over the past two years. Women and girls were the first to lose jobs or education opportunities, taking on more unpaid jobs such as caregivers, facing gender-based violence, teen pregnancies and child marriages. We must act now to stem the slide in recent gains on all these scores. Training to equip our staff to respond is key – and our Benin Country Office is showing the way.

In our volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world, where everything can change in a heartbeat – we must respond fast to the climate emergency – and our Benin Country Office is showing the way. In Rwanda, we are advocating to include climate risks into the country’s rural settlement program. In Benin, UNDP is working with various women leaders and policy makers to prevent losing hard-won gains for women in politics and pave the way towards even greater women participation in political life.

Ahunna Eziakonwa
Watch UNDP Africa Regional Director’s video message on the occasion of the International Women’s Day

Leaving no one behind in our energy transition

While renewable energy can create 30 million jobs worldwide by 2030, predictions show that women may be left out as they are not effectively represented in climate-related sectors. Countries should review their policies and actions to address the vulnerability women face with climate change. In Rwanda, we are advocating to include climate risks into the country’s rural settlement program.

Women in politics

A truly accelerated development and real progress in advancing gender equality in Africa will only be reached when women’s equal participation in politics is attained. Some African countries are leading the way internationally, with Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, and parliamentarians. However, it is still a winding road before parity and equal opportunity are attained. In Liberia, Ghana and in Nigeria, UNDP is working with various women leaders and policy makers to prevent losing hard-won gains for women in politics and pave the way towards even greater women participation in political life.

Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s full intervention at the Nigeria International Women’s Day Awards.

Women leaders of tomorrow

UNDP Africa launched, jointly with the African Union, Leaders Fellowship Programme. From 21 to 40 we have young women who will serve across UNDP and get today and tomorrow’s leaders and through them, we meet some of the AfYWL fellows.

In Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana, and other countries, UNDP has worked with the government to create a Climate Change Gender Action Plan. In Sierra Leone, UNDP has revived women-owned businesses which were forced to shut down at the peak of the pandemic, and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were revised to include stronger gender components – with 43 other such NDCs revised in 2021. And in Botswana, we are helping the government get closer to all citizens and rebuilding faster and better.

Awarding those who make a difference

This month, Rwanda’s Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), the country’s Private Sector Federation (PSF), UNDP and UN WOMEN jointly certified nine private companies for their outstanding efforts to promote gender equality. Africa’s first gender equality seal certification highlights advancements generated in terms of women’s rights and gender equality, such as new work policies, improved work environment, counselling and equal pay. This first-of-its-kind recognition comes at a very important time for women’s rights in Africa and stresses on the important role the private sector can play in promoting gender equality.

What does the AfCFTA mean for women in Uganda, watch here.

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