

United Nations in Turkey

IWD 2017 Theme: “Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030”



International Women’s Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.

To honour these courageous women, the idea of this year’s theme is to consider how to accelerate the 2030 Agenda, building momentum for the effective implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal number 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and number 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. The theme will also focus on new commitments under UN Women’s Step It Up initiative, and other existing commitments on gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s human rights.

Safeguarding Gender Equality: A Global Challenge

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. But, today gender inequality persists everywhere and stagnates social progress. As of 2014, 143 countries have guaranteed equality between men and women in their Constitutions but 52 have yet to take this step.

Only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians were female as of January 2015, a slow increase from 11.3% in 1995. Women continue to participate in labour markets on an unequal basis with men. Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age). More than one in three—or some 250 million—were married before 15.

Forced displacement exacerbates the risks that women and girls face. Gender-based discrimination, trafficking in women and girls, integration difficulties, under-representation in politics, unequal access to and control over resources, unequal employment strategies, and lack of access to basic services, are the key factors behind the unequal status of migrant women.

Approximately 63 million girls around the world are not in primary or lower-secondary school and twice as many girls compared to boys will never attend school.

Globally, 1 out of every 3 girls in developing countries marry before the age of 18; furthermore, 1 in 9 get married before 15 years old. UNICEF predicts that without a reduction in child marriage, 1.2 billion girls will be involved in child marriage by the year 2050.

To eliminate the obstacles women and girls face globally and in line with the changing world of work, the 2030 Agenda offers ambitious goals for empowerment of women and girls which includes quality education, elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres.

Gender Equality is a priority for the UN Agencies in Turkey

According to the Gender Gap Index (2016) of World Economic Forum, Turkey is the 130th out of 144 countries. Every 4 women out of 10 is exposed to physical and sexual violence at least once in their lifetime as stated in the Domestic Violence Research in Turkey in 2014.

A UNFPA survey indicates high prevalence (32%) of sexual and physical violence among white collar working women and the absence of response mechanisms within the private sector.

According to ILO figures, limited access to labour market and feminisation of informal employment is also reflected in the level of women representation in the trade unions. Only 7.04% of employed women is unionised and only 7 out of 176 trade union leaders (0.03%) are women.

Women are spending 435 minutes a day on household and family care, compared to only 53 minutes spent by men (Turkstat, 2015).

In Turkey, in 2016, 28.2% of women and 5.6% of men between the ages of 15 and above were married before the age of 18. In addition, over 31,300 girls between 16 and 17 got married in 2015. In the same year over 18,000 girls under the age of 18 and more than 240 girls below 15 gave birth.

The Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) statistics show that as of 2015-2016 school year, the nationwide net enrolment rates for primary education of girls was 95.22%. This percentage falls to 80.24% at the upper secondary level. When considering the net enrolment rates in the East and Southeast provinces, the rates for girls' upper secondary level falls below 70%.

Empowerment of women is an integral part of the UN projects and programs in Turkey. Below are some of the main activities of UN Agencies in Turkey in gender issues.

UN Women chairs the UN Country Team Gender Results Group (GRG) and tries to trigger a gender responsive and relevant UN system that promotes policies, programmes, accountability mechanism and operations for the protection of human rights and equitable development for women, men, girls and boys.

Funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and implemented by UN Women in partnership with Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men of Turkish Grand National Assembly, Gender Equality in Political Leadership and Participation in Turkey project aims at supporting women's political leadership and participation in decision-making processes.

Between 2012-2015, UN Women was implementing a gender responsive budgeting programme in 11 provinces with local administrations in Turkey. The planning for the second phase under the programme title, "Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting" have begun.

In addition, UN Women has designed programmes to ensure the empowerment of women and girls refugees and their access to opportunities, services and the protection of their rights as required by the international conventions and national legislations.

In 2017, UN Women will launch a regional programme in partnership with and with the financial support of the European Commission on ending violence against women. The joint programme will target most disadvantaged groups of women, in six Western Balkan countries and Turkey.

UN Women is inviting people in Turkey to stand together to create a bold, visible force for gender equality and advance our global solidarity movement, HeforShe to support gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of life. UN Women is calling individuals to become agents of change for full equality between women and men for the benefit of the whole society. UN Women is also actively running the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign that calls all to put an end to gender-based violence and discrimination against women.

Addressing gender equality is a fundamental part of **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**'s mandate. The problems of hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty cannot be solved until and unless women and men are treated equally and gender disparities are tackled. The main priorities for FAO's work in promoting gender equality in Turkey are identified as follows: 1. Empowerment of rural women; 2. Support to the generation of gender statistics for formulation and implementation of evidence based agricultural policies and strategies; 3. Gender-sensitive FAO technical assistance; by fostering an enabling environment for the empowerment of rural women for attaining food security and poverty reduction goals in agriculture and rural development in Turkey.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Turkey supports gender equality and mainstreaming through capacity building activities in Turkish institutions. Specifically, IOM Turkey has delivered gender mainstreaming workshops to the staff at Turkey's removal centres and gender awareness trainings to experts in six Provincial Directorates of Migration Management and to Turkish Red Crescent. In addition, IOM Turkey conducted a workshop for the gender focal points (GFPs) network to enhance gender equality throughout the humanitarian response. The aim of the workshop was to familiarise participants with basic gender concepts and to develop more coordinated approach to gender related matters in humanitarian response.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works for, gender equality and women's empowerment prioritising gender equality within all its interventions. Within this corporate commitment, UNDP works in various areas: some examples from our ongoing projects are as follows:

Engineer Girls of Turkey project aims at development of private sector led prototypes for inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the services and manufacturing sectors benefiting from gender equality mainstreaming and advocacy and dissemination of the success stories within the public and private sector.

UNDP projects such as Capacity Development for Sustainable Community Based Tourism, sustainable growth and natural resource management introduce a gender responsive approach for the empowerment of women.

Within the Syria Crisis Response and Resilience Programme which aims at increasing self-reliance of Syrian population and strengthening the resilience and capacities of host communities and public service providers to cope with and to recover from the impact of forced displacement, gender equality is one of the main concern and cross cutting issue. UNDP is also involved in a program that provides legal support for survivors of sex and gender based violence (SGBV).

World Food Programme (WFP) in Turkey incorporates gender and protection in programme design, implementation, and M&E activities, both for the e-Food Card Programme in refugee camps, and the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) nationwide. Men and women are included without any major differences in both WFP programmes in Turkey (e-food card and ESSN), and the usage of the assistance is closely monitored in terms of decision making, household dynamics, and food consumption. The increased flexibility introduced with the provision of multi-purpose cash provides increased autonomy and choice in terms of time, location and use of the assistance. In relation to the ESSN, application is made through the nearest Government Social Assistance office in the applicant's district, or the nearest dedicated ESSN TRC Service Centre, and appointments are provided to reduce waiting times. There are separate queues for men and women, and in some cases women are asked to come at a different time of day to men. The assistance is in the form of multi-purpose cash, and it can be withdrawn at any HalkBank ATM throughout Turkey, at any time of day or night. The cards can be collected at the beneficiaries' nearest HalkBank branch (there are 15,000 throughout Turkey), and there is some flexibility as to when they can collect their card.

International Labour Organizations (ILO), Office for Turkey, in addition to its other projects on child labour; Syrian refugees; occupational safety and health; social dialogue and sustainable enterprises; is implementing "More and Better Jobs for Women: Women's Empowerment through Decent Work in Turkey" project in cooperation with Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) to boost women's employment and gender equality based on the ILO's 'Decent Work for All' agenda.

Turkey's first Action Plan specifically focusing on women's employment was adopted to support the development of an inclusive and coherent policy to boost women's employment and create decent jobs for women as well as to increase women's employment and to close a gap of 39 percentage points between male and female labour force participation rates (Turkstat, 2015).

Gender-sensitive labour market reports were likewise prepared in project provinces to provide gender-sensitive information and policy suggestions, also revealing occupations that offer high potential for women's employment from the perspective of employers.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Turkey has been promoting gender equality, combating gender based violence and engaging men and boys to promote gender equality, mainly through awareness raising, data collection, and capacity development. The gender component under the 6th country programme between 2016-2020 was developed to be implemented in close collaboration with the national and local public institutions, NGOs, universities and private sector through advocacy, policy dialogue and technical assistance.

UNFPA Turkey Office is also working for strengthening the institutional capacity of public institutions. To this end, a series of pre- and in-service training programmes has been given to staff of Turkish Armed Forces, Judiciary and Law Enforcement Officials such as police and gendarmerie, Religious Affairs on prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence in order to improve the services. A new set of trainings were planned and will be conducted in the year of 2017 to support the capacity of police forces and gendarmerie for effective response to GBV victims/survivors.

UNFPA Turkey Office promotes gender equality and works for preventing gender based violence through its humanitarian programme. As per its mandate, UNFPA has been providing refugees with reproductive health and gender based violence services through 40 Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) which act as primary level health care centres with certain clinical and psychosocial services on RH and GBV and also empowerment activities for women and girls.

World Health Organization (WHO) in Turkey works to ensure that the impact of gender inequalities in women's health is addressed in national health policies and programmes. It works closely with the health sector to strengthen their capacity in preventing and dealing with gender based violence through clear guidelines and protocols for health care providers. The WHO Regional Office for Europe published a report titled "Women's health and well-being in Europe: beyond the mortality advantage" outlines the impact of socioeconomic determinants and gender, which covers 53 Member States.

WHO Country Office Turkey makes every endeavour to strengthen the capacity of essential health service delivery and referral care for general Syrian refugee population in Turkey, putting a considerable emphasis on increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services for particularly vulnerable groups, namely women and girls as part of their program objectives. Within the scope of their program they were able to and still continue to support classroom and hands-on practical training opportunities to the Syrian Health professionals making efforts to encourage more women to take part in the program and eventually join the workforce in the Migrant Health Centres to promote gender equality and combat gender based violence.

UNICEF in Turkey is committed to mainstreaming gender equality in all its work for children.

In line with the UNICEF Gender Action Plan (GAP), targeted gender priorities are to advance girls' secondary education, to end child marriage and to address gender-based violence in emergencies.

Advancing Girls' Secondary Education: UNICEF is working with Ministry of National Education (MEB) on the development and implementation of "Intervention" and "Orientation" models to prevent students from dropping out of school. Furthermore, MEB and UNICEF are planning to implement a new Gender and Child Rights Education Programme at the upper-secondary level in the coming months.

Child Marriage Prevention and Response Model: UNICEF in Turkey has developed a Child Marriage Prevention and Response Model, which was initiated in Gaziantep as a pilot programme in 2016. The programme is in the process of being expanded to other provinces across Turkey. First and foremost, the programme aims to strengthen the capacity of protection systems to effectively mitigate, identify and respond to cases of children at risk of marriage.

Gender-based violence: UNICEF programmes focus on both: 1) Violence Prevention, aiming at reducing the factors that place children at risk of violence and abuse; and 2) Violence Response, aiming at improving access to justice for child survivors of violence and reducing their secondary victimization by the criminal justice system.

Joint Action

In addition to the several projects individually run by UN Agencies, significant work has been based on joint projects with the participation of UN system in Turkey for the empowerment of women and girls in Turkey and create sustainability and awareness of women's social and economic needs.

What happens if gender equality is not ensured?

Inequalities faced by girls can begin right at birth and follow them all their lives. Disadvantages in education translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market. Women's and girls' empowerment is essential to expand economic growth and promote social development. The full participation of women in labour forces would add percentage points to most national growth rates— double digits in many cases.

The Way Forward

In fact, the path to integrate gender equality in the new global agenda is straightforward: Laws must be accompanied by resource allocations, institutional regulations and guidelines and systematic training for officials who will monitor and enforce them. To end violence against women public perceptions should be changed and barriers of culture and tradition should be eliminated to find non-violent ways to resolve conflicts in personal and public life.

On this International Women's Day and every day, we must, to create a planet 50-50 by 2030, take the efforts to end all kinds of discrimination against women seriously, and demonstrate our resolve to achieve an equal and just future for all as pledged in the Agenda 2030 which is defined by Sustainable Development Goals.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Turkey considers gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. In Turkey a gender perspective is reflected in UNIDO's projects and programmes.

UNIDO conducts Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) in 8 countries including Turkey. GCIP Turkey acts as a catalyst for increased innovations in clean energy technologies enabling Cleantech start-ups in particular the SMEs to meet with leading international investors. Since 2014, almost 75 Cleantech teams have participated in the GCIP accelerator programme. KAGIDER (Women Entrepreneurs Organisation) -a non-profit organisation- is one of the parties of GCIP as well. Furthermore, 35% of the team members were women in the course of three years. In 2014 %32, in 2015 %20 and in 2016 %29 of the team leaders were women.

UNIDO organised trainings on gender aspects in environmental management with the participation of Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation (MoEU) staff and relevant private sector partners covering 77 women and 59 men.

UNIDO vocational training programme for the Syrian refugees at the temporary refugee camps in Turkey was conducted in 2016 by the main objective of improving the livelihoods and social security of refugees, in particular the youth and women, by providing them with skills for self-employment. 1000 women in three camps were trained

United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Turkey: The total population of concern to UNHCR stood over 65 million people and the total number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate is over 21 million. Women and girls comprise about half of any refugee, internally displaced or stateless population. As of mid-February 2017, there are over 2.9 million Syrian refugees and some 295,000 persons of concern registered to UNHCR in Turkey, whom women and girls represent the half.

All UNHCR programmes and activities take into consideration and prioritise specific needs of vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, including women and female-headed households. UNHCR supports the Turkish authorities in addressing these needs through a set of targeted interventions including improvement and strengthening of the pathways and the response mechanisms available in Turkey; expansion of safe spaces for women; conducting awareness raising activities on issues like Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV); the support to the establishment of refugee and women committees in both camp and urban locations and of Refugee Outreach Volunteer (ROV) networks working to raise awareness on SGBV; provision of income-generating training to refugee women as well as Turkish language courses. UNHCR continues to act as the secretariat of the SGBV working group together with UNFPA, which is co-chaired by Ministry of Family and Social Policies and AFAD in Ankara. The trainings extended by UNHCR to national institutions and civil society also incorporate sections on the rights of refugee women under international law, the responsibilities that the host country has in protecting these rights, and specific actions that can be taken to increase protection for refugee women under the State's jurisdiction.

United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) works with the UN agencies, academia, international organisations and NGOs to promote gender equality.