



# THE GENDER DIVIDEND

A BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER EQUALITY



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women



# Foreword

by Michelle Bachelet

## In July 2010, United Nations Member States adopted a resolution to consolidate four separate entities into a new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

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In creating UN Women, the international community sent the message that gender equality and women's rights are on par with other global imperatives, such as ending poverty and hunger and combatting climate change. As its first leader, I am determined that UN Women will be a catalyst for change, offering new energy, drawing on core ideas and values, and bringing together countries and communities in a shared endeavor.

The challenges we face today are considerable. The increasing gaps in wealth and income that have accompanied global growth have deepened with the economic crisis and pushed millions of workers, especially women, into permanent informal employment. Political conflict and natural disasters are driving up fuel and food prices, threatening livelihoods and straining household coping strategies in both developed and developing countries.

Yet we are seeing progress. Over 125 countries have outlawed domestic violence; at least 117 have equal pay laws; 187 have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and 115

guarantee equal property rights. The constitutions of 139 countries and territories now guarantee gender equality. As we see in countries throughout the Arab region, especially in Northern Africa, women who once stayed out of the public arena are now standing alongside men to demand freedom, dignity and the right to participate in revitalizing their societies.

Change can happen. But UN Women can't make it happen alone. Partnerships are essential. Working with key partners, including UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, and governments from the south and north, we are not only more comprehensive, bringing together knowledge and expertise from different sectors to tackle challenges holistically; but we are also more powerful—working to create the momentum for the results and progress we all want to see.

Now is the time for all of us to join together to create a tomorrow of peace, justice and equality for all the world's people—women and girls, men and boys alike.



A close-up portrait of a woman with dark skin, wearing a brown headwrap with white geometric patterns and a colorful patterned top. She is carrying a large, woven wooden basket on her head. The background is a bright, slightly blurred outdoor setting.

# INTRODUCTION

Countries cannot move forward when one in every two people lacks the opportunities and skills needed to live a productive, freely chosen life. Investment and action on an unprecedented scale are required to broaden the range of real opportunities open to the world's 3.5 billion women and girls.

**A**dvocates for equality between women and men have long made the case that women's empowerment benefits everyone—not just women. In recent years, other actors have added their voices to this chorus, bringing with them strong economic arguments and evidence. The World Economic Forum reports that across 134 countries, greater gender equality correlates positively with per capita Gross National Product. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific estimates that the Asia-Pacific region alone loses more than US \$40 billion per year because of women's limited access to employment, and \$16-\$30 billion because of gender gaps in education. And McKinsey & Company recently found that private sector firms with the largest share of women in top management perform best; they argued that moving from raising awareness about the gender gaps in management to implementing strategies to close those gaps is critical to private sector growth worldwide.

The Millennium Development Goals and the vision set forth in the Millennium Declaration represent the most ambitious blueprint for global development that the world's countries have ever agreed to. Meeting the Goals and realizing the Declaration's vision of "...a more peaceful, prosperous and just world" characterized by freedom

and equality requires a host of actions and resources. Of these, none is more critical, far-reaching or strategic than advancing women's empowerment and bringing about equality between women and men.

Of course, **empowerment and equality are valuable ends in themselves**. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen famously describes development as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Women are human beings; as such, they are, in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "born free and equal in dignity and rights" and thus entitled as surely as men to the full complement of rights—life, liberty, and the security of person; equal rights during marriage; freedom of opinion and expression; and the rights to work, to education, and to take part in the government of their country, to name but a few. Countries are obligated to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of every person, and all United Nations entities are charged with furthering the realization of these rights. To date, 186 countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Promoting gender equality is thus the **core business** of the international community and the United Nations family—not an add-on, not a special charity project.

But keeping our promises to women is not just a moral and institutional imperative; it is also the smart thing to do. **Equality and empowerment are critical means to a broad end**—development that is environmentally and socially sustainable—as well as vital linchpins for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Societies fall behind when half their citizens cannot live to their full potential. Economies lag when half a country's productive adults have inadequate capabilities, are excluded from the formal labor market, cannot gain access to credit, or are subjected to violence. Innovation stagnates when the thoughts and ideas of half the people are unheard or discounted. Corruption flourishes when those in power are not accountable to half the population. Families struggle when half the adults do not have access to good jobs with decent working conditions, and children are less likely to thrive when their mothers lack control over household resources.

The evidence is overwhelming and unambiguous: women's empowerment and gender equality drive development progress. The ways in which equality and empowerment advance development objectives can be seen by analyzing a few key drivers for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (see Box 1).

## Box 1

## Women's empowerment is key to the Millennium Development Goals

Evidence overwhelmingly supports the view that women's empowerment drives development and is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Yet investment in the gender dimensions of the goals continues to be inadequate. How would investing in women change the trajectory for countries currently off-track for meeting the 2015 targets?

#### Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

According to FAO, women produce half the world's food. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, they produce up to 80 percent of basic foodstuffs, and in Asia, they account for between 50 percent and 90 percent of the rice cultivation workforce. With the rights to own and inherit land and more equitable distribution of assets (credit, improved seeds and fertilizer, and information and technology), women would achieve higher agricultural productivity, boosting incomes and lessening hunger.

#### Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Though the gender gap is narrowing, and the world as a whole is currently on track to achieve universal primary education, more girls than boys are out of primary school. Two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. A one-year increase in the schooling of all adult females in a country is associated with an increase in GDP per capita of around \$700.<sup>3</sup> Girls' education has a greater return on investment than nearly any other development sector, thanks to multiplier effects that range from delayed marriage and lowered fertility to increased labor force participation and higher wages.

#### Goal 3: Promote gender equality and women's empowerment

Goal 3 calls for the elimination of gender disparities in education at all levels by 2015. Gender gaps in access to education have narrowed significantly, but access to university education, especially in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, remains highly unequal. Women account for only 19 percent of parliamentarians worldwide, according to the International Parliamentary Union, and are under-

represented in leadership roles the world over. Women's participation in governance has been shown to lead to greater investment in human capital, critical in our increasingly knowledge-based global economy. Firms with higher shares of women on their leadership teams show better financial results.<sup>4</sup>

#### Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Women's agency, autonomy and ability to negotiate within the family directly affect the well-being of children. Research shows that when decision-making within the household is more egalitarian, children's needs are more adequately met, and that women invest a greater share of their incomes on their children's health than men do. Even when a household's total income is taken into account, when women have greater control over income, child mortality rates decrease.<sup>5</sup>

#### Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, as well as other forms of violence against women, contribute to maternal mortality. A woman dies in childbirth every minute,<sup>6</sup> and girls in their teens are twice as likely to die in childbirth as women in their twenties.<sup>7</sup> Investing in the education and empowerment of adolescent girls and young women makes early marriage and its corollary, early motherhood, less likely, speeding progress toward the maternal health goal.

#### Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

Violence against women and unequal power relations with men place women at risk of HIV infection. High proportions of women—78 percent in Mali, 64 percent in Nigeria, 26 percent in Haiti, and 9 percent in Cambodia, for example—report being unable to ask their husband or partner to use a condom.<sup>8</sup> Three in four young Africans living with HIV are female,<sup>9</sup> young women aged 15-24 are at least three times more likely to be infected than men of the same age, and girls with little education are significantly more likely to contract HIV than girls with more education. Empowering women

and girls and tackling key gender-based risk factors for the transmission of HIV, such as rape, trafficking, the sexual exploitation of girls, power imbalances that make it difficult for women to negotiate safe sex, and the economic insecurity that drives transactional sex between impoverished adolescent girls and older men, are the foundations of successful HIV and AIDS programs and policies.

#### Goal 7: Improve environmental sustainability

A key target of the MDG 7 is to cut in half the proportion of people without access to a hygienic toilet or latrine; open defecation, the reality for those without access to sanitation, is a potent driver of infectious disease, child mortality, violence against women, and social exclusion. Research shows that when women have control over household resources, they are more likely to prioritize the construction of a sanitary latrine at home than men are. In addition, decades of evidence from community sanitation projects attests to the myriad ways that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that ignore women or relegate them to menial roles.<sup>10</sup>

#### Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

In an increasingly interdependent world, global governance, trade regimes, the international financial system, technology transfer and more all have a powerful influence on the opportunities open to women and men at the national level. Fairness in these international systems and deliberate efforts to ensure that they meet the needs of women as well as men is critical to development progress. Evidence shows that women in positions of political leadership tend to give greater priority than men to investing in people's capabilities by supporting, for instance, health care systems, social safety nets, and programs that benefit children.<sup>11</sup> Only by making the development dialogue more diverse can we hope for new, innovative solutions.

Delivering on the gender equality commitments countries made under the CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration, and a host of human rights conventions will bring tangible benefits to women—and to society as a whole, men included (see Box 2). We know why it needs to be done; we know how to do it: now is the time for the world to keep its promises to women and in so doing liberate the world's greatest untapped development resource.

## Box 2 What about men?

Gender is not just short-hand for women. Gender refers to the social roles of men and women, boys and girls, as well as the relationships among them, in a given society at a specific time and place. In societies the world over, gender is a key determinant of who does what, who has what, who decides and who has power. It patterns the range of choices and opportunities available to a person and defines what he or she is expected to do and be.

**UN Women believes that because gender is about women and men, engaging men is critical to transformative social change; it is a “positive-sum” game.** Engaging men is vital first and foremost because in most societies, men are more economically, socially and politically powerful than women; recruiting them as allies able to bring to bear their

disproportionate power on issues of social justice helps to remove impediments and hasten progress. Engaging men is also critical because gender is about the relationship between women and men; transforming the nature of that relationship requires change on the part of both parties—not just half of them. And engaging men is important to human progress because some definitions of what it means to be a man harm men as well as women.

Successfully engaging men requires appeals to enlightened self-interest, work with male role models and authority figures, and the creation of non-threatening environments in which change can occur. Working with boys and young men holds great promise for a more equitable future for everyone.







## WHY UN WOMEN?

UN Women was established in 2010 by bringing together previously separate United Nations entities; it is led by Under-Secretary-General and former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet. The organization is different from any other and uniquely well-suited to spearhead truly transformative change.



### A local presence, a global perspective.

With 75 offices around the world, UN Women has unprecedented global reach. Because it is positioned to bring together and make heard the voices and visions of the world's women, UN Women is a powerful advocacy voice—with governments, with UN sister agencies, with UN country teams, with nongovernmental organizations, with the private sector, and with the public at large. Thanks to its close ties with women's organizations on the ground, UN Women understands what women the world over think are the most critical issues of the day. As a UN organization, UN Women is in a position to amplify these voices and to make heard women's concerns, realities and priorities.

The organization is also ideally placed to promote south-south cooperation on evidence-based solutions that promote equality. The diverse countries of the world have different perspectives and priorities. Yet they also face shared challenges in implementing their commitments to gender equality, and much can be learned from the experiences of others. Seeing how others solved a common problem provides a starting point that can inform, inspire, offer hope, broaden the horizons of the possible, and demonstrate the positive impacts of change. The micro-lending approach pioneered by the Grameen Bank with Bangladeshi women, for instance, has now been replicated in every region. UN Women has the potential to take successful approaches like these to scale, speeding progress toward internationally agreed-upon goals.

### Knowledge of what works.

The landmark 1975 First World Conference on Women in Mexico City focused on equality, development and peace,

the very areas to which UN Women is committed today. In the 36 years that have elapsed since then, development practitioners, researchers and activists have generated a wealth of knowledge about how to advance gender equality and empower women. Many common pitfalls are now well understood, and strategies for overcoming some recurrent stumbling blocks are known. For example, for women to be able to influence political processes in a meaningful way, a critical mass of female politicians with the necessary skills and training to be effective are required; token women without adequate preparation can seldom bring about change. The success of electoral quotas in launching women into the political sphere in Nordic countries spurred change across the globe; nearly half the world's countries today have some form of electoral quota for women in parliamentary politics, and Rwanda recently overtook Finland and Sweden as the country with the highest proportion of women parliamentarians.<sup>12</sup>

Yet although countless lessons like these exist to inform good policy-making and enhance program effectiveness, too many of them are inaccessible; the potential for global knowledge-sharing to bring successful empowerment approaches to scale has not been realized. In addition, data collection on the status of women is inadequate in many countries, and more research is required in specific areas. UN Women is well positioned to serve as both a generator and repository of data, research and good practice in advancing women's empowerment, providing governments the upstream policy advice, support to legal reform, and programmatic tools they need to keep their promises to women. Realizing this potential will require both resources

and expertise. It is important to keep in mind, however, that good data and knowledge of what works do not automatically lead to change; political will is still the necessary and often missing ingredient.

### A focus on women's strategic interests.

The history of development is replete with examples of women's efforts and energies creating social change or bringing economic gains. Keeping women from being sidelined when initiatives succeed is critical to ensuring that these gains are far-reaching and sustainable and that they further women's empowerment. As the international community's voice for women, UN Women has a critical role to play in ensuring that women enjoy the fruits of development, not just its labors, and that leadership, agenda-setting and decision-making in all walks of life are the business of women as well as men.

### Cultural fluency.

Making gender equality a lived reality for the world's women requires grappling not just with legal and economic impediments to women's full participation in their societies, but also with the wide variety of social norms, beliefs and practices that restrict women's choices and opportunities. For instance, nearly two-thirds of the world's countries now have laws against domestic violence,<sup>13</sup> yet such violence nonetheless persists, supported by social norms around masculinity.

UN Women staff have the experience, expertise and legitimacy to address social and cultural barriers to the full realization of women's human rights and to tackle issues

like gender-based violence long considered outside the purview of development agencies. They know that societies can and do change—sometimes very fast—in response to new economic circumstances, political movements, conflict, and more. UN Women staff assess social norms and practices with regard to universal human rights; seek to understand the underlying motives—often positive—for harmful traditional practices to better support the development of alternatives; partner with traditional leaders; and support the ways in which women themselves work to shape and transform the societies in which they live.

### Convening power.

UN Women has unique convening power. As a United Nations entity, the organization has strong links with host country and donor governments, intergovernmental forums, its sister UN agencies and other multilateral organizations. In addition, UN Women has the support of the international women's movement and long-standing ties to nongovernmental organizations the world over. This broadly based legitimacy, "honest-broker" reputation and extensive network of relationships, coupled with its brand equity and brand recognition, give the organization unmatched ability to bring all relevant actors to the table when addressing obstacles to gender equality at the country level. Because creating a gender-equal world will require the efforts of everyone, this convening power is an invaluable and unique resource.

UN Women is also ideally placed within the United Nations system to provide an inter-governmental platform for gender equality policy development. The organization works to ensure that a comprehensive yet dynamic set of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment is in place. Key to that end is strengthening coherence between the normative guidance generated by intergovernmental bodies and the operational support provided to national partners at the country level. Equally vital is ensuring that the gender equality dimension is brought into global norms and standards, such as those related to climate change and sustainable development.

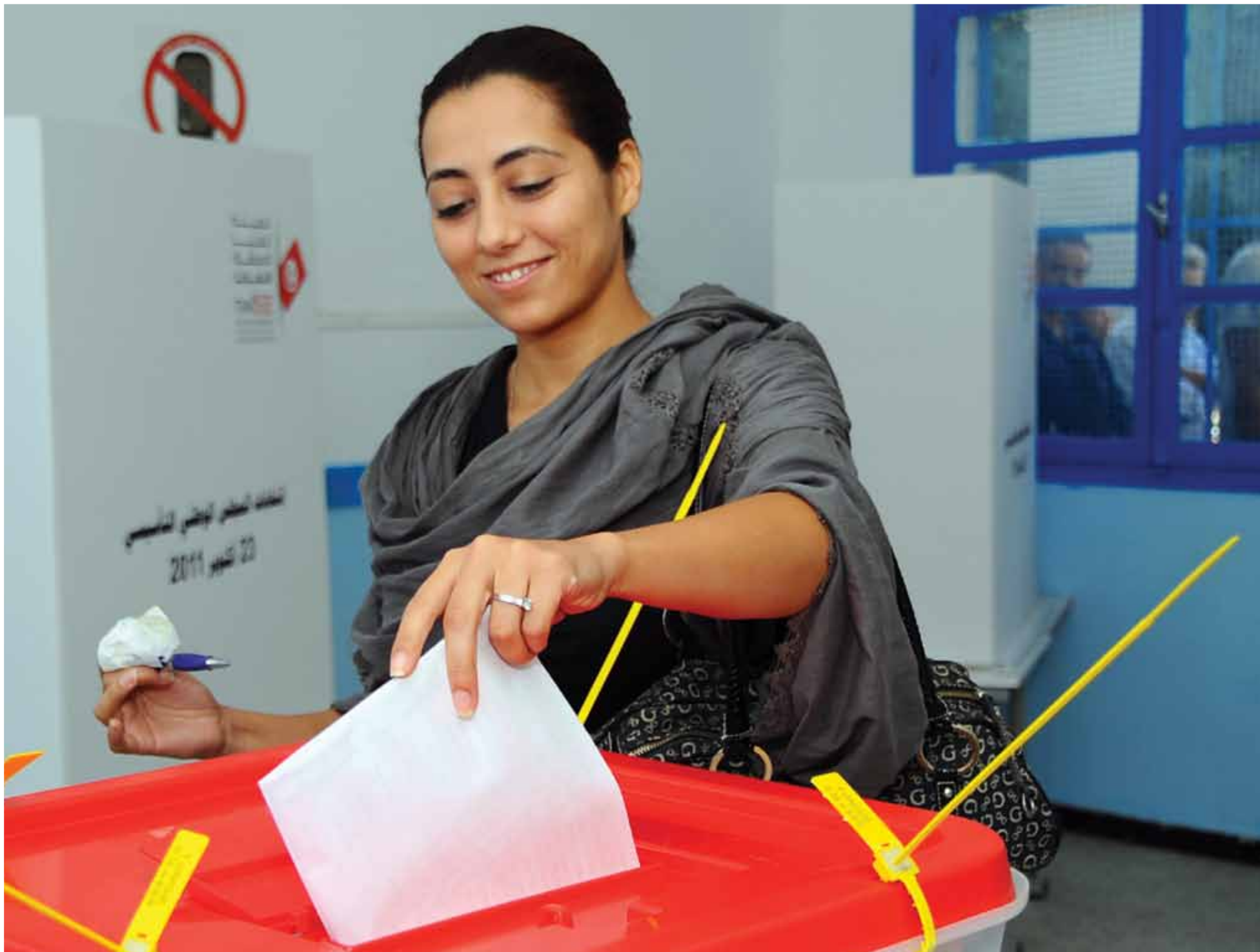
### Synergy.

The organizations that previously addressed gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations system were fragmented and chronically under-resourced; the successes they enjoyed are testament to the skills, creativity and personal commitment of individuals working in environments of persistent scarcity. UN Women was formed in response to the lack of coherence between intergovernmental agreements and actions on the ground, a lack of accountability within the UN system for gender equality, and a lack of resources. The UN Women funding target of \$500 million reflects a long-overdue recognition that, as is true of any ambitious goal, realizing equality between women and men and

bringing winning approaches to scale will require significant resources. Bringing together under one roof the normative, research and operational arms of the UN system that focus on women's empowerment creates synergies and the critical mass necessary to move the agenda forward.

In fact, the establishment of UN Women is arguably one of the strongest expressions of UN reform efforts to date. The overarching goal of UN reform is to ensure that the organization delivers with greater efficiency and effectiveness, and this powerful new voice for half the world's population is critical to that end. Among UN Women's charges is its coordination mandate, which calls on the organization to lead, coordinate and promote accountability system-wide for gender equality. With a rank of UN Under-Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN Women and her senior staff now have a "seat at the table" as equals when the international community discusses the critical issues of the day, ensuring that women's voices, perspectives and priorities are neither invisible and unheard nor sidelined as "special interests." This change is also crucial for holding governments, organizations and individuals accountable for gender equality results, not just gender equality promises. The United Nations Secretary-General has identified gender equality and women's empowerment as a key priority for his 2012-2017 term.







A photograph of a man and a woman working together on a construction site. The man, on the left, is wearing a red hard hat and a blue long-sleeved shirt. The woman, on the right, is wearing a black hard hat and a pink long-sleeved shirt. They are both looking down at a set of blueprints spread out on a table. The background shows the blurred structure of a building under construction.

## HOW DOES UN WOMEN SUPPORT CHANGE?

UN Women focuses on the most powerful levers for truly transformative change. A contribution to UN Women is a catalytic investment in those areas with the greatest potential for realizing a gender-equal world (see Box 3). The organization maximizes the impact of its funds by building capacity, providing technical assistance, supporting service delivery, promoting knowledge-sharing and advocating for change in areas most critical to equality and empowerment.

### Box 3 What does UN Women get for the money it spends?

Three points are critical to understanding how the resources UN Women spends impact women's lives.

- **First**, promoting change requires resources. Since the women-in-development movement of the 1970s, development agencies and national governments alike have ignored the old axiom, "you get what you pay for." Infrastructure, disease eradication, economic restructuring and other facets of development are always acknowledged as requiring money; eradicating a single disease, polio, for instance, has been given a price tag of about one billion dollars per year for the next two years (according to the Gates Foundation). Yet equality between women and men was somehow expected to occur magically, with minimal allocation of staff or financing. The unmet demand is thus great. In a recent call for proposals for the two main trust funds it manages, UN Women received "funding worthy" proposals (they met the trust fund criteria and "passed" the project appraisal process) whose combined value exceeded \$2 billion—a demand that far outstripped available resources.
- **Second**, catalytic, strategic investments pay for themselves many times over. For instance, thanks to a modest contribution from UN Women's precursor, UNIFEM, the 2006 Morocco budget contained a gender budget statement, which outlined how the

budget would address women's priorities. This led to the prioritization of maternal health clinics, which in turn contributed to a significant drop in the maternal mortality rate, from 130 per 100,000 live births in 2005 to 110 per 100,000 live births in 2008. Several such investments are highlighted in the sidebars in the pages that follow.

- **Third**, UN Women supports a range of activities that empower women. Some are easy to describe, and their impact can be readily measured. Others are equally important but more difficult to assess. For instance, one can track inputs to a public information campaign (number of billboards or radio spots; advertising dollars spent), but making methodologically defensible claims about outcomes and impacts is difficult, let alone assigning a dollar figure to such outcomes. Providing visibility to upstream activities, such as changes in domestic violence laws, more gender-sensitive justice systems and strengthened property rights and access, is vital, but not easily measured. While some quick wins can be demonstrated, transformative change involves long-term shifts in behaviors, attitudes and social norms related to sometimes entrenched cultural and traditional practices. UN Women is committed to developing innovative ways to tie its expenditures to real changes on the ground, while acknowledging that all organizations struggle with this task.



#### The areas UN Women has identified as critical for women's empowerment include the following:

**Expanding women's leadership.** Parliamentary debates, international peace deliberations, multinational corporate business negotiations, meetings of university presidents, gatherings of heads-of-state: what all these high-level, elite gatherings share is what they lack—the equal representa-

tion of women. Although the 30 percent critical mass mark for women's representation in parliament has been reached or exceeded in 28 countries, only one in five parliamentarians worldwide is a woman. In addition, only one in ten members of governing bodies of listed companies in Europe is a woman. The problem persists down to the level of village and town councils. Democracy demands that women have the same representation in government as in the community.

What happens when women are absent, for instance, from corporate governance? In short, the underrepresentation of women is bad for business. A McKinsey study of 101 companies in Asia, Europe and the United States found that companies in which at least 30 percent of the senior management team were women scored significantly higher than those lacking a critical mass of women on measures of organizational effectiveness. When women

## Helping women benefit from the democratic transitions of the “Arab Spring”

Thanks to years of work in the region, UN Women was poised in early 2011 to assist women in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere in North Africa as they joined mass demonstrations for more just and representative political systems. When the transition process began in Tunisia, UN Women made available an expert to help the newly formed electoral commission as it deliberated special measures to achieve political parity. Timing was critical; the volatile situation could easily have led to backtracking on Tunisia’s existing achievements in women’s rights. Advocacy and evidence on the best options for special measures led to consensus that women must comprise 50 percent of candidates for Constituent Assembly elections. This historic move for Tunisia set an ambitious new standard for the Arab region and the world at large. To further strengthen the foundations of this fledgling democracy, UN Women is now supporting Tunisian women’s groups in revamping their advocacy skills, which suffered under years of political oppression, and has brought in experts from Morocco to advise on making gender concerns central to Tunisia’s transitional justice and reconciliation processes. **This high-impact intervention was supported by a modest budget.**

make up the majority of consumers (women make 70 percent of household purchasing decisions in Europe, for instance), integrating them into a firm’s decision-making structures is vital to competitiveness. What happens when women are absent from leadership in media? Globally, about one in four top managers in news media institutions are women—a nearly perfect match for the fact that only 24 percent of those heard or read about in print, radio and television news are women. During the 2006 elections in Peru, though women accounted for 39 percent of all candidates for Congress, they obtained only 19 percent of print media coverage—meaning that Peruvian citizens did not receive all the information they needed to make a truly fair, well-informed and democratic choice when they cast their ballots.

Scores of declarations and resolutions over the last decades have decried the virtual absence of women in decision-making roles in all spheres of society. UN Women supports women and women’s organizations in their efforts to change the status quo through constitutional, legislative, policy and electoral process reform so that women have the power to influence political process,

participate in the decisions that affect their lives and lead in business, in politics, in international relations, and in society at large. It also supports efforts to ensure that women take part in corporate governance, discussed in greater detail below.

**Ending violence against women.** Violence is both a means and a manifestation of women’s subordination; it is found in all parts of the world. A World Health Organisation ten-country study found widespread physical and sexual intimate partner abuse, ranging from 15 percent of women in Japan to 71 percent in Ethiopia. According to World Bank estimates, violence against women kills and incapacitates as many women of reproductive age as cancer does. This clear violation of women’s human rights also has high economic costs. In the United States alone, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that costs resulting from intimate partner rape, physical assault and stalking exceed \$5.8 billion annually; these costs stem from medical and psychological treatment as well as from lost productivity in paid work. In developing countries, violence against women diverts scarce resources. The World Health Organization found that rape or assault is a stronger predictor of health

care use than any other variable, with medical care costs of victims more than twice that of non-victims. UN Women spearheads the international effort to end violence against women; this work grows out a history of involvement in this area by UN Women’s predecessors and a renewed call to action in response to successive UN General Assembly resolutions over the 2006–2009 period. The organization supports developing countries in ensuring that laws, policies and strategies are adopted and implemented to respond to and prevent violence against women. This support ranges from proving services to survivors of violence to ensuring that gender equality advocates and their organizations have the capacity to effectively influence policies, actions and budgets. UN Women also has a critical role in bringing the UN system together for a more coherent and effective response. UN Women hosts the secretariat for the Secretary-General’s global campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women 2008-2015, implements the 2010–2015 strategy of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and works hand-in-hand with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG) and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

### Strengthening the women, peace and security agenda.

Wartime sexual violence, at long last recognized as a deliberate warfare tactic, has been an unacknowledged corollary of combat for millennia. This is just one reason that, from the earliest days of the international women’s movement, peace has been a top priority. Yet women have long been shut out of peace-making, peace-building and reconciliation efforts. This is changing. UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, passed in October 2000, affirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take



## Mobilizing millions to end violence against women in Thailand

In Thailand, UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Princess Bajrakitiyabha and the Thai Ministry of Justice joined forces to mobilize more than 3 million people to call for an end to violence against women. In addition to signing on to a virtual campaign using the online Say NO platform, participants joined in events ranging from bicycle caravans to role model contests to raise awareness and challenge pervasive social norms. Well-known firms like Thai Airways and the Central Group of Companies took part. This social mobilization effort spurred many changes, including new judicial guidelines to fully implement Thailand's domestic violence law, the establishment of one-stop crisis centres in 750 hospitals, and anti-violence education programs that reached over 73,000 teachers, students, civil servants and community members.

special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. UN Women is leading a system-wide effort to create a roadmap for implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 as well as to support implementation of several related Security Council resolutions (SCr 1888, 1889, and 1960). In partnership with the Peace-building Support Office (PBSO), UN Women is supporting implementation of a seven-point action plan on gender-responsive peace building with pragmatic and specific changes across the UN in relation to mediation, post-conflict planning, financing for recovery, elections and governance, civilian deployment, justice and security sector reform, and economic recovery issues.

**Enhancing women's economic empowerment.** Women's educational levels have been steadily increasing thanks to the narrowing gap in girls' and boys' rates of school enrollment and completion. Yet this increased human capital has not seen commensurate increases in women's economic participation and incomes: only 60% of economic participation gaps have been closed. Women now make up 55 percent of university graduates in Europe, but their employment rate is 21 percent lower than that of men. In the United States, women earn 57 percent of bachelor's degrees and 60 percent of master's degrees, yet their median personal earnings are one-third less than men's.

Women's economic empowerment is still constrained due to fewer opportunities and rights as well as greater constraints and impediments, ranging from legal barriers to social norms to family responsibilities. UN Women works in partnership with multilateral organizations, such as UNDP, ILO, UNCTAD, the World Bank and regional development banks, to ensure that their policies and programmes help close the gap between women's capabilities and women's real-world economic opportunities. Priorities include legislation, policies and strate-

## Spearheading the global strategy on Security Council resolution 1325

The historic Security Council resolution 1325 addresses the differential impact of war on women and girls and calls for the full participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building. UN Women is playing a leading role in developing a comprehensive UN inter-agency framework for implementing and monitoring this landmark resolution. For the first time, starting in 2011, all United Nations organizations active on women, peace and security issues will work towards common, time-bound targets and goals. The strategy builds on indicators adopted in 2010 that will allow for scrutiny of progress made by both the United Nations and UN Member States, measuring essential issues such as funding allocated to women and the degree of women's participation. Since women must be part of all activities related to SCR 1325, UN Women held global "open days" in 25 post-conflict countries in 2010, during which women activists voiced their perspectives to a cross-section of high-level UN officials, including those from peacekeeping missions. A compilation of their recommendations was presented to the UN Secretary-General.

gies that support women's economic empowerment; water supply, energy and transportation infrastructure that meets women's productive needs; entrepreneurship and financial literacy training; engagement with the private sector; and implementation of the Women's Empowerment Principles. The Women's Empowerment Principles offer guidance on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community; they are a product of collaboration between UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact (see Box 4).

### Box 4 Women's Empowerment Principles

The Women's Empowerment Principles are a key component of UN Women's partnerships with the private sector.

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women.
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

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## Supporting women traders in sub-Saharan Africa

Informal cross-border trade provides nearly \$18 billion a year for the economies of Southern Africa alone, and 70 percent of cross-border traders are women. Across sub-Saharan Africa, these informal traders deal in crops, electronics, minerals, clothes and more. Yet economic policies and trade agreements have largely neglected women traders; they have few credit options and often face financial extortion and violence at borders.

UN Women's 15-country informal cross-border trade programme advocates for favourable tax regimes and supportive institutions and services. Program staff work directly with traders and communicate their concerns in global trade talks, including at the World Trade Organization.

In Liberia, UN Women supported the formation of the first Association of Women in Cross-Border Trade, which organizes traders and advocates for their issues. The association offers business and marketing training and facilitates Central Bank loans to thousands of women. Work with the Bureau of Customs has produced a simplified chart of customs rates for women traders, as well as a hotline for reporting problems at border crossings. Two new warehouses provide an income for the association and storage facilities for goods during the rainy season.

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**Making budgets work for women.** An authoritative study prepared for the World Bank by members of the UN Millennium Task Force on Gender Equality on the financial requirements for meeting the gender equality goal found that “over 90 percent of the investments [required] to achieve gender equality are, in fact, implemented through other MDG sectors.” In other words, focusing on investments aimed squarely at women's empowerment is not enough; far more consequential is ensuring that that budgets allocated to agriculture, water resources management, education, health, governance reform, and more benefit women. This notion is truer still in the post-Paris

Declaration environment, in which national planning and budgeting instruments are increasingly the chief mechanisms for managing development assistance. Gender-responsive planning, budgeting and aid management, an area in which the organization has deep expertise and current programs in more than 50 countries, is the chief mechanism for assessing how the government purse is being allocated and who benefits. UN Women works to build national capacity for gender budgeting across sectors. It is critical that donor and recipient countries alike prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment in aid allocation and delivery.



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## UN Women support leads to gender-responsive budgeting in Rwanda

UN Women is a leading global advocate for gender-responsive budgeting, which aims to ensure that the allocation of public resources benefits women and men equally. In Rwanda, UN Women assisted a successful piloting of gender-responsive budgeting in four national ministries, which produced gender budget statements that were submitted to Parliament with the general budget. Starting in fiscal year 2011-2012, gender-responsive budgeting is mandatory for all ministries, districts and the city of Kigali.

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# Conclusion

UN Women's vision is a world in which societies are free of gender-based discrimination, where women and men have equal opportunities, where women and girls are empowered to lead the change that they want to see, and where women's rights are upheld in all efforts to further development, human rights, peace and security. UN Women works to bring about changes in the relationships between women and men in families, communities, societies and countries—inclusive, transformative, sustainable changes that do not represent a “zero-sum” game with winners and losers, but rather a “positive-sum” game that benefits all of humankind (see Box 5).

Realizing that vision will require the efforts of everyone—governments, international organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, philanthropists, and, above all, individual women and men. UN Women stands ready to support this wide range of actors in keeping our collective promises to women. The reasons are clear. The time is now. The organization is UN Women.



## Box 5 How Does UN Women Work?

In furthering its aims of expanding women's leadership, eliminating violence against women, strengthening the women-and-peace agenda, promoting women's economic empowerment and making budgets work for women, UN Women engages in a broad range of activities.

- **ADVOCACY.** To forcefully promote gender equality and women's empowerment; and to amplify the voices of women and girls so that they can shape the decisions that affect their lives.
- **KNOWLEDGE GENERATION.** To engage in innovative research and analysis, act as a global broker of knowledge and experience-sharing and align practice and normative guidance.
- **RESPONSIVENESS.** To respond to the priorities of partners to enhance their capacity to implement national, regional and international agreements and standards.
- **INCLUSIVENESS.** To highlight the crucial role that men and boys play as actors and partners for women's rights and gender equality and to prioritize the needs of the poorest and most marginalized women.
- **UN SYSTEM COHERENCE.** To promote and contribute to national ownership in ways that are effective, efficient, accountable and results-based.
- **AFFIRMATION.** To affirm justice and equality.
- **TRANSFORMATION.** To transform relationships at the individual, family, community, national and global levels such that they further gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- **COMPLEMENTARITY.** The establishment of UN Women and its coordination role does not relieve any other part of the UN system from its responsibility to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **SUSTAINABILITY.** To support the vital role of women to development that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.





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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.

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