

A BETTER WORLD



Actions and commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals

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Cover photo: Rinku Dagiwal, 18, belongs to the Nat caste. She is one of the beneficiaries of the bridge course being run at the NFE centre. Rinku was in class five when she dropped out of school due to problems at home. But thanks to the bridge course, she has now cleared class eight and made her teachers proud. Today, she dreams of becoming a teacher.

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Foreword

**SEAN NICKLIN, GENERAL COORDINATOR OF THE
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOR TUDOR ROSE**

With the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, Tudor Rose and its Human Development Forum has accepted the challenge to expand its human development publishing with the creation of a series of volumes, each dedicated to one or more of the 17 SDGs.

Entitled *A Better World*, this volume first published in November 2016 covers Goal 5: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

This volume reflects the progress and challenges in this essential topic, highlighting good practices in a wide variety of societies and disciplines. By focusing on the experiences and livelihoods of people, especially those in vulnerable human habitats, the book will show the benefits of best policy and practices, and how these may develop further as we come to terms with a changing and more turbulent world. This innovative endeavour is a striking example of sharing respective resources to engage the many official governmental, international organisations, institutional and professional interests in displaying the extent and variety of their efforts to make the world a better place.

Since 1999 Tudor Rose has published 27 books in partnership with the United Nations and its agencies, covering a diverse range of subjects from disaster reduction, water management and climate science to intercultural dialogue and humanitarian assistance. The books are read extensively by the human development sector and especially by community leaders in vulnerable regions around the globe.

The books are close collaborations between individual UN agencies, UN member states and civil sector organisations, committed to a better future for the world. They have widened the knowledge of people in vulnerable communities and given them inspiration and knowledge to better their lives in a sustainable way.

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Reaching a 'Planet 50-50' by 2030

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women

It is often said that nothing can stop an idea whose time has come. But what about an idea whose time is overdue? This is the situation for women and girls around the world. The time for equality is long overdue and we must now accelerate our efforts to create the gender-equal world we all deserve.

With its universal nature and resounding call for gender equality, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has provided us with an ideal roadmap. Common to the whole Agenda, and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is the emphasis on 'leaving no one behind', directing our attention to those who have least and whose voices are unheard. Unfortunately, it is women and girls who most often fall into this category.

Goal 5, which focuses on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, is designed to specifically redress this problem. By dedicating a goal to women and girls, gender equality evolves from being merely a 'women's issue'

to a human rights challenge that impacts us all. Because all of the goals and the challenges they address are interlinked, almost all of them have an impact on gender equality — and vice versa. We cannot expect to make progress on issues such as decent employment (Goal 8) or peace and justice (Goal 16) without addressing their underlying gender disparities. Fundamentally, gender inequality and its various manifestations are a whole-of-society problem and will require our integrated and holistic response.

While we know that gender equality would lead to better outcomes for all, we also know that change is unfortunately not happening fast enough. Forecasts predict that, at the current pace of change, it will take 50 years to achieve parity in political participation, and 118 years to achieve true pay equality between women and men.

Meanwhile, our daily headlines announce a litany of challenges with consequences that often affect women and girls disproportionately: poverty, extensive migration and population



Image: UN Women/Gustavo Stephan

'One Win Leads to Another' uses sport to reduce gender inequalities and develop self-esteem and life skills among adolescent girls in Brazil



Image: UN Women/Maika Gogaladze

People mobilized by a women's movement marched in Tbilisi and other cities in 2015 to support the introduction of mandatory political quotas for women in Georgia

movement, including the refugee crisis in the Middle East and in Europe, the dire consequences of climate change, conflict-related violence and widespread instability in many regions.

Women make up the majority of those living on less than two dollars a day and, in some regions, account for 81 per cent of the unemployed. Where they do earn a wage, women are paid an average of 24 per cent less than their male counterparts for the same work. A study of more than 60 countries reveals some sobering results: despite an increase in women's and girls' education, and further access to employment opportunities, neither of these improvements have translated into higher or equal compensation.

Women and girls remain underrepresented in science and engineering, and the unequal burden of care work in the home often takes a long-term toll on their educational opportunities. Deficiencies such as lack of sanitation in schools defy local taboos and pose a clear challenge for menstruating adolescent girls, preventing them from completing their studies.

One third of the world's burden of disease for women between the ages of 15 and 44 years is related to poor sexual and reproductive health. Maternal deaths have fallen by half since 1990, but every year, some 300,000 women still die during pregnancy and childbirth — the second leading cause of death among women of reproductive age.

Violence, in its various pernicious manifestations, also disproportionately impacts women and girls, with one in three women experiencing violence in her lifetime globally. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) have injured at least 200 million girls and women in 30 countries, and the

continuation of child, early and forced marriages is expected to affect more than 140 million girls between 2011 and 2020.

Priorities for action

These realities do not define women and girls; they define our agenda for action. Agenda 2030 has set a clear expiry date for gender inequality, and it is within our generation. At UN Women we call the drive for equality between men and women, boys and girls, 'Planet 50-50 by 2030'.

Using the SDGs as our roadmap, we now turn to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This means going beyond our traditional allies and reaching out to engage new stakeholders, including the private sector, and new groups of people such as youth, faith-based groups, and bringing men and boys strongly into the framework for action.

Policies and legislation are another crucial part of the equation. In 155 countries around the world, there is at least one law impeding women's economic opportunities. These include laws that restrict women from doing certain jobs, from owning or inheriting property, or opening bank accounts in their own name — all significant impediments to women's livelihoods. At the same time, in countries with more gender-equal laws, more girls attend secondary school relative to boys, more women work or run businesses, and the gender wage gap is smaller.

Today, globally there are more women in public office than at any previous point in history. Over 10,300 women serve as national parliamentarians, making up over 22 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide and more than doubling the



In Guinea, Partenariat Recherches Environnement Medias has helped rural women to form cooperatives and plant, harvest and sell the leaves of the vitamin-rich Moringa tree

proportion in 1995. This is nowhere near parity and the rate of change is still too slow, but it is progress.

Governments often are, and will continue to be, key drivers of gender equality. They can take a range of important actions, such as passing new laws or strengthening existing ones to improve women's economic empowerment; form new programmes or build upon existing ones to eradicate violence against women and girls; or encourage women's participation in decision-making. Governments can also invest in national action plans or policies for gender equality, or create public education campaigns to the same end.

In September 2015, UN Women co-hosted a 'Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action'. At that meeting, and in the year since, some 93 heads of state have made clear and concrete commitments to gender equality. For example, Japan committed to "boost women's leadership and development assistance for gender equality," while Kenya committed to "reproductive health, [and] progressive action towards economic empowerment." Estonia committed to "reduce the gender pay gap and protect against discrimination under the first national gender equality action plan," and the United States committed to "work towards a world where every woman and girl can enjoy their rights and freedoms."¹

Partnering with these governments, we can make important strides on a range of priority issues, such as providing support and protection to women who work in domestic care,

and other parts of the informal economy. With government support, we can continue to tackle the persistent wage gap, and work on changing outdated laws as well as implementing the good laws that are designed to protect women.

Other stakeholders, such as United Nations agencies; regional bodies and international organizations; civil society, which can comprise both international and local non-governmental organizations; foundations; the private sector; academia and the media will also play a big role in ensuring a gender responsive implementation of the SDGs.

Civil society has the unique ability to hold governments to account for their commitments made in bilateral or multilateral agreements, such as Agenda 2030. Indeed, the fact that the new agenda is so emphatic in its gender equality outcomes and grounded in international human rights standards owes much to the strong and effective participation of well-organized women's rights and civil society organizations. The role of a strong civil society will continue to be critical in the implementation of the SDGs and the leadership and strength of the transnational women's movement will be necessary to hold governments to account for their commitments to peace, plurality, justice and equality and a sustainable planet.

In many countries of the world, there are new and fierce attacks on democratic actors and democratic space. Civil society and in particular women's rights activists and other social justice actors are facing serious threats to their work and lives, and the very legitimacy of their political work is

being challenged. They are being starved of resources and political space and access. Addressing and expanding this diminishing space for civil society must be a top priority.

Engaging new allies

The media represents a powerful force in shaping how we see the world, what we think, and often how we act. It should be an example of gender equality, depicting women in diverse jobs and situations and representing women in all areas of coverage. And yet the media is still, in large part, doing the opposite. In an era where we consider digital media to be conveying news in the most immediate manner, it is a problem that the content transmitted has not evolved as fast as the medium. Gender discrimination deprives media coverage of the richness that women's diverse perspectives can bring, and limits the media's appeal to increasingly aware audiences around the world. We now know that the ways in which women are depicted in news has a profound effect on societal attitudes and reinforces traditional gender roles. That recognition brings responsibility. Women and girls are half of humanity. Giving equal time and weight to their stories is an important part of creating a better, freer world for all of us.

It is also critical to engage the other half of humanity in the fight for gender equality — men and boys. In September 2014 Ban Ki-moon officially launched UN Women's HeForShe campaign, together with UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson. In the next few days 100,000 men around the world signed up for HeForShe, and more than 1 billion conversations about the campaign were generated on Twitter. By now, over 1.3 million men and boys all over the world have committed to gender equality. HeForShe recognizes that a more equal world benefits all of us, and for the world to make real progress on gender equality, we need women and men to work together to redefine stereotypical gender roles and reshape ideas about masculinity.

The private sector also plays a critical role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment by institutionalizing game-changing practices in workplaces and throughout the supply chain. The private sector has an important stake in women's economic empowerment because sustainable development also means sustainable growth. McKinsey estimates that if women in every country played an identical role in markets to men, as much as \$28 trillion would be added to the global economy by 2025, and the World Bank has estimated that if all forms of discrimination against female workers and managers were eliminated, productivity per worker could increase by up to 40% (2012). Companies must step up and guarantee equal pay for equal work, help women to access credit, support women entrepreneurs, and provide the flexibility in working hours that real life demands. Without this support, the burden of caring for children and ageing parents too often falls on women, leaving them stuck in low-paid, undervalued jobs with no opportunity to grow. This is a negative cycle that we are determined to break, with the support of both governments and the private sector, where corporate policies can have an immediate and far-reaching impact. Many of the barriers to women's economic empowerment, from equal pay to digital inclusion, and from the care economy to women's entrepreneurship, are being addressed by the United Nations Secretary-General's

new High-Level Panel for Women's Economic Empowerment, which aims to provide thought leadership and galvanize political will to tackle these challenges.

UN Women also values the contribution of youth, and consistently seeks new and innovative ways to bring them into the conversation. Right now more than half the world's population is under 30, and that figure is projected to rise to 75 per cent over the next decade. There are 1.8 billion young people aged 10-24 years old in the world. Young women and girls are one of the largest groups affected by poverty, malnutrition, violence, exclusion from education and poor health outcomes. They also represent a powerful force to enact change through the redress of long-standing power imbalances, and the opportunities to break negative repeating cycles. We must work hard now to guarantee that they have the opportunity to come of age in a gender-equal world.

Working together for peace and equality

We are living in a world plagued by conflict, economic insecurity, rising extremism and a growing migrant and refugee crisis. Violent extremists are specifically targeting the rights and freedoms of women and girls. Women are attacked for trying to exercise their right to education and basic services. Girls are raped and turned into sex slaves, given as prizes to fighters or sold to traffickers. Displaced from their home setting — which by definition is not safe either — women and girl refugees in transit and in camps, and those internally displaced, are at risk of sexual violence, unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections without sufficient access to vital services. Women and girls make up nearly half of all international migrants, and are also more likely than men and boys to migrate internally, often to urban centres. They, too, risk being subjected to violence, exploitation and abuse, and to false promises of employment or assistance from human traffickers. Discrimination and gender inequality compound these vulnerabilities.



Image: UN Women/Christopher Herwig

Yusra, a beneficiary of the UN Women cash-for-work programme for Syrian refugees, prepares her family for breakfast in Za'atari camp, Jordan



Image: UN Women/Samir Jung Thapa

Panchkhal, Nepal: psychosocial counsellor Sujata Sharma Poudel speaks with a local woman at the Women's Rehabilitation Centre, set up following the earthquake in 2015

Further, we are seeing a wave of intolerance, fear and exclusion which has put women's rights squarely in its crosshairs. In the last few years, we have seen societies turning insular and intolerant and governments becoming increasingly authoritarian, squeezing civic spaces and cracking down on the dissent and critique that is vital to women's rights and social justice movements everywhere.

The need to work together for a fair world within countries, between countries and between peoples has never been so urgent and so obvious. This situation demands that we hold the line with a unified assertion of the counternarrative of peace, gender equality, sustainability and shared prosperity, including for the most marginalized and excluded. This is the universal narrative of Agenda 2030 and a Planet 50-50.

Women suffer the most at the hands of conflict, and are also the best placed to help end it and achieve peace that lasts. This has involved changing practices as well as attitudes to reflect the positive roles women play in peace and security efforts. For too long women have been portrayed solely as casualties of conflict rather than a crucial part of its resolution, and traditionally male-dominated security forces have not always understood or valued women's positive impact on peacebuilding and peacekeeping. At the same time, particular attention is needed to the most vulnerable, such as indigenous women facing a compound disadvantage of gender and ethnicity, especially in areas of conflict, and women and girls in areas of violent extremism.

A recent statistical analysis that looked at 181 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2011 showed that when

women were included in the negotiations, there was a 35 per cent increase in the probability of peace lasting 15 years. As the first to notice attacks on their rights and freedoms and the militarization and radicalization of individuals in their families and communities, women also have an important role to prevent the radicalization of youth, militarism and violent extremism.

Women are not simply victims, waiting to be rescued, they are active agents of change who make a significant contribution to sustainable development, peace and security, humanitarian response, and economic and political leadership. An ever-increasing body of evidence demonstrates that eliminating discrimination and closing gender gaps in several sectors would result in increased productivity and better economic, political, social and environmental outcomes for everyone. In addition, evidence is growing of the critical importance of investing in young women and men to enable them to reach their full potential so that they can become change-makers, peacebuilders, able to address problems in their communities and beyond.

Concluding with peace is a powerful reminder for us all that the SDGs have essentially the same end: the well-being of all people. Because half of these people are women and girls, gender equality is something that the world cannot afford to ignore. Only when women and girls are empowered to be actors in the fate of our planet, and leaders of their own destinies for a better future, will we all come closer to fully realizing the 2030 Agenda. The time has come for an equal world, indeed it is already overdue.

Tomorrow's strong leaders: a school for indigenous women

*Valeria Poggi, Emma Jessie McGhie, and Yon Fernandez de Larrinoa,
Indigenous Peoples Team, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*

Full and effective participation at different levels of decision-making remains an issue to many women around the world. This is even more problematic for indigenous women, who often suffer from discrimination, lack of recognition of basic human rights, and exclusion from decision-making. However, indigenous women, with their wealth of traditional knowledge, can play a critical role within their communities and in the overall achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To overcome these constraints and support tomorrow's indigenous women leaders, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (IIWF) partnered to train more than 150 indigenous women from seven countries in Asia and Latin America to provide them with the necessary tools to develop leadership and advocacy skills, thus enabling them to influence decision-making processes and contribute to improving their communities' livelihoods.

It is estimated that there are more than 370 million indigenous peoples around the globe belonging to more than 5,000 different groups and living in 90 countries. Over the centuries, their cosmogony and holistic understanding of natural processes played a key role in establishing a unique balance between nature and human beings. This helped preserve forests, lakes, rivers and other natural resources that today constitute the remaining pockets of biodiversity. In this process, indigenous peoples became the custodians of their ancestral lands and territories and transmitted from one generation to another fundamental knowledge on ecosystem management and preservation, as well as traditional food systems and healthy and sustainable diets.

While indigenous peoples account for less than 5 per cent of the global population, they comprise about 15 per cent of all the world's poor. What makes them highly vulnerable and marginalized is the denial of their ancestral rights, especially in the access to their land, territories and resources.

In addition, indigenous women face a 'triple discrimination' because of their ethnicity, socioeconomic conditions and gender. This threefold discrimination affects all aspects of their lives, making them victims of inequalities and violence both inside and outside their communities. Indigenous women are frequently prevented from taking an active role in political activities and participating in decision-making processes. This limits the contributions that they could provide to their communities and

to the societies they live in, particularly regarding food production, biodiversity conservation and seed preservation.

Moreover, technical assistance and development activities are usually not conceived to target indigenous peoples, being culturally inappropriate and failing to reach remote communities. When they do, they tend to benefit indigenous men, leaving women outside. This further exacerbates indigenous women's vulnerabilities, perpetrating marginalization.

Taking into account that indigenous women are bearers of traditions and carers of families, and with the objective of enhancing their contribution towards the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty for all, FAO and IIWF have developed a learning approach that focuses on indigenous women and is tailored to their needs, featuring human rights, advocacy, leadership and decision-making, and food security and nutrition. "Women are the main providers of food in the household not only in terms of preparing it but also in sowing, planting and harvesting it. But it is still the men who decide what food or crop should be planted and harvested, what should be bought and sold in the market," said Darhmingliani Hloncheu, a Mizo woman from Meghalaya, who participated in the programme in India.

In 2013, IIWF started implementing three International Programs on Human Rights and Advocacy Skills through the Global Indigenous Women Leadership School. Based on the success generated by these programmes, in 2014 IIWF and FAO partnered to adapt the global school methodology to the national level, jointly developing four National Leadership Programmes on Human Rights, Food Security and Nutrition for indigenous women in Bolivia, India, Peru and the Philippines. A year later, three additional programmes started in El Salvador, Panama and Paraguay.

The direct support of FAO has allowed the school to focus on food security and nutrition, which is particularly important because, as declared by Judith Paucar from the Puno province in Peru: "When we talk about women we need to realize that women are vital on the production of food. It is us who produce, who prepare the food and feed our families. We are convinced that in our houses we need to eat our own foods. We indigenous peoples are not poor, on the contrary, we are very rich because we have nature, and nature is alive."

Through the engagement of its global team of technical specialists, FAO has developed training material specifically tailored to address the most common challenges that indigenous women face. The training material and the leadership curriculum is constantly evolving, being enriched with best

practices and lessons learnt from the participants. It is of significance the relevance and stress they give to indigenous women's ancestral knowledge. FAO's contribution also allows the specific needs of indigenous women in the different countries to be addressed, by exposing them to relevant national authorities, institutions, academia, civil society and other United Nations organizations at country level.

Through these participatory capacity-building initiatives, participants are provided with tools to reinforce their leadership skills and are empowered to become community leaders. They come to realize that they have rights as human beings, as women, and as indigenous peoples, and are acquainted with related instruments and processes to claim the respect of these rights. As stated by Darhmingliani Hloncheu, "indigenous women need this kind of school because most of us do not know about our rights; we know there are rights but we do not know how to implement them and we do not know how to advocate for them. Coming here, participating in this school, I feel that I have learnt so many things that I can take back to the community, to the women I work with."

A key component of the training is the basic computer and Internet module. For the majority of the participants, it is the first opportunity to engage outside their community, familiarize with a computer and learn how to use the Internet, create e-mail along with social networks accounts and plan their future engagement within their countries. "This is the first time that I am able to join a gathering of indigenous women from different parts of the country and even from outside our country," said Elsie Mokudelf from the Teduray Peoples in Maguindanao Province, the Philippines. "We can see a democratic dialogue and we are learning through sharing our experiences and listening to the experiences of others."

In fact, while discussing food security and food sovereignty, protection of local seeds, ecosystem management, land, free prior and informed consent, nutrition, and many more topics, women learn about advocacy and effective communication and they are supported in the preparation of their own advocacy plans, through which they can promote changes in their communities. These plans analyse specific issues faced by women in their communities and identify possible ways of overcoming them through the know-how acquired during the school, resulting in mini-projects that could be practically implemented.

For this reason, participants are selected among indigenous women playing a key role in their communities who demonstrate leadership aptitude, strong motivation, organization skills and entrepreneurship or are already leading social movements and are committed to activities in support of the school.

Each school is unique as it is adapted to the country needs. A National Academic Advisory Council formed by representatives of IIWF, FAO experts, as well as indigenous women leaders, reviews the priorities, expectations and educational backgrounds of the participants in order to tailor the curriculum as much as possible to their needs, resulting in a constantly evolving methodology. The promotion of gender equality is a crucial aspect of the school and it encompasses all the different modules.

The school is organized to balance learning and interaction, valuing the opportunity for women to exchange experiences and plan for their future. Because the knowledge they possess as indigenous women is of high value, improvements in their



Participants are provided with tools to reinforce their leadership skills and are empowered to become community leaders

communities strongly depend on it, and women's empowerment has to be based on this unique knowledge. Not only does this learning itinerary give women access to information and equip them with leadership and decision-making tools, but it also provides them with an opportunity to share their perspective with other indigenous women across the region. This represents an invaluable chance to foster inter and intra-generational dialogue, to learn from other women who live in similar conditions and to discuss experiences and strategies.

Each school develops into three consecutive phases. The first phase is one week including a series of workshops, discussions and case studies on food security, nutrition, communications, leadership, network building, advocacy strategies etc, based on the context of the country. Representatives from the national government, academia and other relevant sectors are invited to different sessions of the school in order to promote dialogue. During this phase, a set of key issues affecting indigenous peoples and women in their communities are discussed. In this context, the contributions of women to food production and households' food systems are analysed, as well as the discriminations that indigenous women have to endure.

An e-learning stage is then managed through the web and telephone calls: during this five-month phase the participants have to read relevant documentation, discuss through a forum and submit reflections and analysis. Participants are guided to elaborate their own advocacy plans to promote changes regarding a specific issue that they identify as a priority. This may include increased access to education and health services, specific work on food systems and food security, as well as improved recognition and active participation in community decision-making. The process is followed by facilitators from IIWF accompanied by FAO technical experts, and special guests are invited to address specific subjects.



Image: FAO

FAO and IIWF have partnered to train indigenous women in Asia and Latin America, enabling them to influence decision-making processes

A final third phase includes the organization of sessions on the most relevant topics and the presentation of the participants' advocacy plans based on the priorities identified within their communities. For example, Clementina Garnica from the Ckochas municipality department of Potosí in Bolivia anticipated that "my advocacy plan is based in food sovereignty, we want the wheat from my region to be produced and processed to make cookies for school breakfast as a way to promote healthy and nutritious consumption of our local products."

The advocacy plans elaborated so far have shown extraordinary efforts from the participants and resulted in innovative small-project proposals. FAO and IIWF are currently exploring funding possibilities with the idea of supporting the implementation of the best proposals at national or local level.

At the end of the programme, the participants are also encouraged to raise awareness in their communities, replicate training activities and support other indigenous women to improve their socioeconomic conditions, establishing an innovative model for empowering indigenous women.

Positive examples shared by the participants include the creation of women's groups, collaboration with local non-governmental organizations in relation to land-related

claims, the organization of community seminars, discussions on laws and policies among indigenous women leaders to enable them to participate in meetings and planning processes, demonstrations of agricultural techniques that revive traditional ways of farming, and awareness-raising activities on traditional seed preservation.

In order to strengthen the link between indigenous women's local organizations and international processes, a selected number of participants also has the chance to attend and intervene during a session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which is the United Nations' central coordinating body for matters relating to the concerns and rights of the world's indigenous peoples.

So far, the feedback from participants has been extremely positive and FAO and IIWF will continue to provide support to the women that have taken part in this initiative in their efforts to become leaders, while seeking opportunities to run the programme in more countries.

Pursuant to the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of 'leaving no one behind' further emphasis should be put on ensuring that equal rights and access opportunities are granted to indigenous peoples, and in particular to indigenous women who are to be the leaders of tomorrow.

What does it mean, to be empowered?

*Hanford Lin, Chien-Cheng Yang, Debra Boudreaux and contributing author
Dharma Master Cheng Yen, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation*

On a sunny spring day in 1966 in the small island country of Taiwan, an indigenous woman was carried into a small medical clinic, bleeding profusely from labour complications. Her family had been carrying her from the mountains where they lived, walking eight hours in the scorching heat. When they arrived at the hospital, however, they were turned away; they could not afford the NT\$8,000 deposit fee required for her treatment.

A young Buddhist nun, or Dharma Master, who was visiting a patient at the time, saw the trail of blood left by this woman and learned of her plight. Overcome by sorrow, she fashioned simple coin containers out of bamboo. The Dharma Master, five female disciples and 30 housewives, put just a penny of their grocery money into their bamboo banks each day, starting a movement that grew and spread across the neighbouring villages, with patrons travelling far and wide each day to make their small contributions. “The spirit of giving,” she teaches, “must be renewed each day, and it is the constant thought of giving that matters, not the amount that was contributed.” This is a kind of actionable meditation, or as the organization terms it, ‘Buddhism in Action’. With the money collected from the daily contributions, they paid for life-saving surgeries for

those who were unable to afford them. Six years later, using the same model, the band of monastics proceeded to build a medical clinic with the money they saved, providing free quality health care from volunteer doctors.

The Venerable Dharma Master’s name was Shih Cheng Yen, and the medical clinic she built became the first health facility of the Tzu Chi Foundation, the beginning of a grass-roots movement that has since grown into a large international humanitarian organization, with a membership of over 10 million spread across 94 countries. These women established a commitment to doing good deeds under the guidance of Buddhist teachings and demonstrated the strength to overcome overwhelming obstacles, inspiring millions to come together to commit to a common cause. This model was not merely a programmatic one, but also one for the concept of empowerment in the aid and development programmes implemented around the world, one that not only educates those who are at severe disadvantage, but inspires them to contribute positively through the realization of their own riches and capabilities.

With the spirit of compassion and experience working with socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi began to engage in aid and relief work based around the sentiment of universal love and the concept of empowerment of the vulnerable. However, it can be argued that empowerment is based upon a flawed mindset and framework; moreover, the language and culture of understanding within the humanitarian space surrounding empowerment is one that is actually disempowering, implying that power is bestowed by more powerful entities. This leaves the underlying conflict of whether one can truly have power, or in the context of humanitarianism, ownership and agency, if it is given: a conflict caused by an arguably flawed framework that is coined as ‘paternal’.

Taking this conflict to heart, Tzu Chi began engaging in empowerment projects with the mindset that power is inherent; and though Tzu Chi does indeed give, it gives aid with two hands and a bow, showing that both giver and receiver are one and the same, lifting the veil and illusion of powerlessness. Establishing compassion, education and inspiration as the basic pillars, Cheng Yen and her now internationally recognized organization, with special consultative United Nations Economic and Social Council status, began to implement projects that went further than merely providing and giving aid. These projects revolved around innovation and partnerships, which are the key to inclusiveness. They were projects that, like the movement she began in 1966 with her 30 female followers, reveal the strength that is inherent in all.



Dharma Master Cheng Yen plays with formerly conjoined twins Rachel and Lea days after Tzu Chi's doctors performed surgery to separate them

Image: Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation



Image: Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

Christ the King Secretarial School was built by Tzu Chi to empower the women of Port-au-Prince, Haiti

In Haiti, for example, the country continues to recover from the devastating 7.0 moment magnitude earthquake of 2010 and, to a degree, from foreign aid that excluded local residents, especially women and girls. Exacerbating the nation's struggles are the needs reflected by Haiti's education system, where only 50 per cent of the children attended school, and where only 29 per cent of Haitians aged 25 or above completed secondary school. Seeing this need and the conflict between short-term need and long-term development, as well as the exclusion of women and girls, Cheng Yen and her followers, believing that education is the key component to empowerment, began to implement education programmes as well as school and student investment projects. They built an all-girls school in Port-au-Prince called the Christ the King Secretarial School, implementing the organization's very successful Happy Campus programme, which provides scholarships and after-school tutoring services to struggling and underprivileged students, and invested in the reconstruction of three other schools.

This conceptual understanding of true empowerment comes directly from Cheng Yen and her followers' faith and the merit placed on education. They believed that education, as Confucius articulates, "breeds confidence, and confidence breeds hope, and hope breeds peace," thus establishing a vision of peace that is anchored in harmony, or in the context of gender, the harmonious balance between men and women.

Five years after the initial implementation of the Happy Campus programme in Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien, and three years after the completion of the College Marie-Anne,

17,985 students enrolled, 14,682 graduated and 16,038 finished school. This retention rate achieved by these schools is ever more significant as girls in Haiti, similar to those of many of countries, whether considered to be developing or developed, are more vulnerable to school drop-out than boys, especially at the later stage of schooling. While boys tend to re-enrol, girls are less likely to come back to school. The success that is manifested through these young women, however, is also attributed to another key component to empowerment: partnerships, the synergistic complementation between collaborating entities. Partnering with local schools, the community, local faith-based organizations and churches such as the Sisters of St Anne Congregation, the reconstruction of the schools was completed.

In the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa live the Zulu people. With a population of approximately 11 million, the Zulu make up the largest ethnic group in South Africa. Known for its mighty warriors and legendary battles of the nineteenth century, the Zulu culture perpetuates a patriarchal mentality. As a result, the women were generally mistreated and abused, their treatment exacerbated by superstition and the lack of economic and educational opportunities. In the early twentieth century, a sharp increase in the number of HIV cases was observed among the Zulu people, growing from 116 cases in 1988 to as many as 3 million in 2010, taking an average of 1,000 lives each day. According to Zulu superstition, sexual intercourse with a virgin would cure those afflicted with this disease, leading to widespread rape of young girls in the Zulu population,



Zulu women are taught employable sewing skills, challenging the traditional gender roles of Zulu culture

further spreading the virus. The violence against women in the Zulu culture is the result of a lack of education, fuelled by the spread of misinformation in the population perpetuating the notion of submissive women and dominant men.

Tzu Chi's long-term humanitarian project first began in 1995 in South Africa, with the mission of providing health care for those suffering from HIV and AIDS and stopping the spread of the deadly disease through education. Upon witnessing the intimate care provided for the AIDS patients, several of the Zulu locals in the Durban region no longer feared the spread of the disease through touch, and ceased to alienate their ailing brethren. Many of the Zulu women became volunteer caretakers under the Tzu Chi name, and the AIDS patients cared for by the volunteers retained their humanity until the bitter end. The organization's volunteers that emigrated to South Africa were committed to empowering the Zulu women, spearheading sustainable humanitarian programmes such as sewing groups that would later develop into sewing and other vocational skills training centres, as well as vegetarian farms, all of which are by women for women. These endeavours are an encapsulation of what is now Goal 5 of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The vocational training programmes have been crucial for the betterment of the livelihood of the participating women, challenging the Zulus' traditional gender roles of the male provider and the female caretaker.

Since 1995 more than 800 local community members, most of them being Zulu women and girls, have become Tzu Chi volunteers carrying out missions of compassion and humanistic aid projects to those less fortunate; missions and projects all led and operated by local women in the community, many of whom were indigent and previously in need of aid themselves. These Zulu women, who now don the blue and white uniform worn by Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide, have established more than 500 vocational training

centres in various communities, teaching more than 12,000 women how to sew and make other handicrafts and, further, to sell their created products, generating a liveable income for themselves and their families.

The growth in capacity, quantity and quality of this programme is a testament to Cheng Yen's vision of women's empowerment, and a testament to how effective humanitarian projects actually are if they place the agency of the community first. As stated, although the provision of aid is important, it can only be the first initial, if not the last, step to humanitarian projects; and Tzu Chi's Zulu volunteers are learning this as well. In addition to empowering themselves and other women in South Africa, these volunteers have, since 2012, begun to implement humanitarian projects to help communities and individuals in neighbouring countries. The volunteers that plan, coordinate and carry out missions of charity and compassion know full well the situation of those they are giving aid to, understanding their plights and often sharing the same pain and struggles, giving them the knowledge and will to enact humanitarian missions. This encapsulates and distinguishes Tzu Chi's relief programmes and mission of charity: the empowerment of those that already do not have much to lead, take control of their lives, and then give back to those even less fortunate, thereby encouraging those who have been given aid to give back and, perhaps one day, become Tzu Chi volunteers themselves.

Another reflection of the success of the programmes in South Africa is the display of courage among its own contingent of Zulu volunteers. In response to the surge of rape and violence against women in Zulu culture, the native volunteers found the courage to form an anti-rape group, providing psychosocial support to victims of sexual violence and encouraging legal action against their oppressors. Through the realization of their own inherent power, they were able to find the courage to face some of the darkest and cruellest aspects of humanity, which had affected many of them on a deep personal level.

It is in this situation that the meaning of empowerment, at least to that of Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi, can be revealed. It is not a single thing to be given, just as courage cannot be given or provided; rather, it is a mindset, or even a state of being, that is realized internally. Through the operational perspective of empowering women by way of programme projects, it is important for humanitarian actors to remember that dignity, agency and power are not things or material possessions that can be given, but rather inherent and universal human rights to be realized.

In line with the Paris agreement and climate action (SDG 13), the Venerable Dharma Master Cheng Yen initiated a global movement to combat the nature of large agribusiness and the effects of factory farming on the changing climate, all of which contribute to roughly 17 per cent of anthropomorphic greenhouse gases. Termed Ethical Eating Day, participants of this global movement, such as the female Zulu volunteers in South Africa, commit to a day of meatless meals on 11 January, empowering them to take action through conscious eating habits in the household and helping to create a better world.

Born to inequality, building equality: family-centric approaches to gender mutuality

Catherine Bernard, Founder-Director, Service and Research Institute on Family and Children

Most programmes around the world on issues related to women and girls focus on atrocities, deprivations and discrimination they are subjected to, the evils and negativism that surround the girl child and how these crimes can be prevented. In short, they take an 'intervention and disaster management' approach. While such an approach certainly needs to be continued, there is urgent need to engage in long-term, systemic and integrated approaches which embody and foster an empowerment paradigm that is pre-emptive, proactive, culture-based and family-centric.

In many societies and from ancient times, females were considered a liability, their rights were denied, and expectations and wishes curtailed or suppressed. This was often manifested in unequal power relationships between men and women. Various other forms of disparity, discrimination and deprivation often take place within the family, community, workplace and religion, with the male being preferred over the female.

It needs to be appreciated that the absence of historical data on discrimination against women — where it happened, how and why — increases the complexity of the issue. Further, unprecedented changes in the sociology of the family, with consequent weakening of marital relationships, parent-child relationships, family size, economy, beliefs, increased social/familial/workplace violence and changing values and lifestyles, create a web of complexities and barriers. Alongside, the number of households headed by single women, unwed pregnancies, abortions, trafficking of women, prostitution and other social problems have rapidly increased. All forms of gender inequality, irrespective of degree and nature, have serious consequences.

The Service and Research Institute on Family and Children (SERFAC) recognizes gender inequality as follows.

It is a family issue, because families are essential to humanity's future and are indispensable social units in addressing domestic/community violence. Family breakdown is reflected in the fragmentation of society. Hence, strengthening family relationships is a highly proactive approach to reducing or eliminating gender disparity.

Gender inequality is a hydra-headed human experience which wreaks havoc on its victim(s). Like culture, traditions and values which are passed on to successive generations, so too is gender discrimination. Families repeat themselves, according to McGoldrick, Gerson and Petry.

It is gender-based discrimination which occurs in more forms in families than in larger communities. It is prevalent in

varying degrees across the socioeconomic spectrum in different parts of the world.

Gender inequality is male dominance, widely prevalent in many societies but hardly admitted or attended to. This has furthered family breakdown. The impact on protection of women and children has been underplayed and/or vaguely understood by policymakers.

It is a phenomenon with manifold tentacles which affect physical and social well-being, inhibit cognitive and emotional development and create systems of dependency, compelling women to remain focused on short-term goals and mere survival — a condition of dysfunction.

Finally, gender inequality is socially stigmatizing discrimination, leading to isolation and dehumanizing conditions. In the family, community and larger social and religious settings, these problems are often kept alive by increasing socioeconomic injustices, social unrest, violence, corruption, religious fundamentalism, social isolation and states of continual war in many parts of the globe.

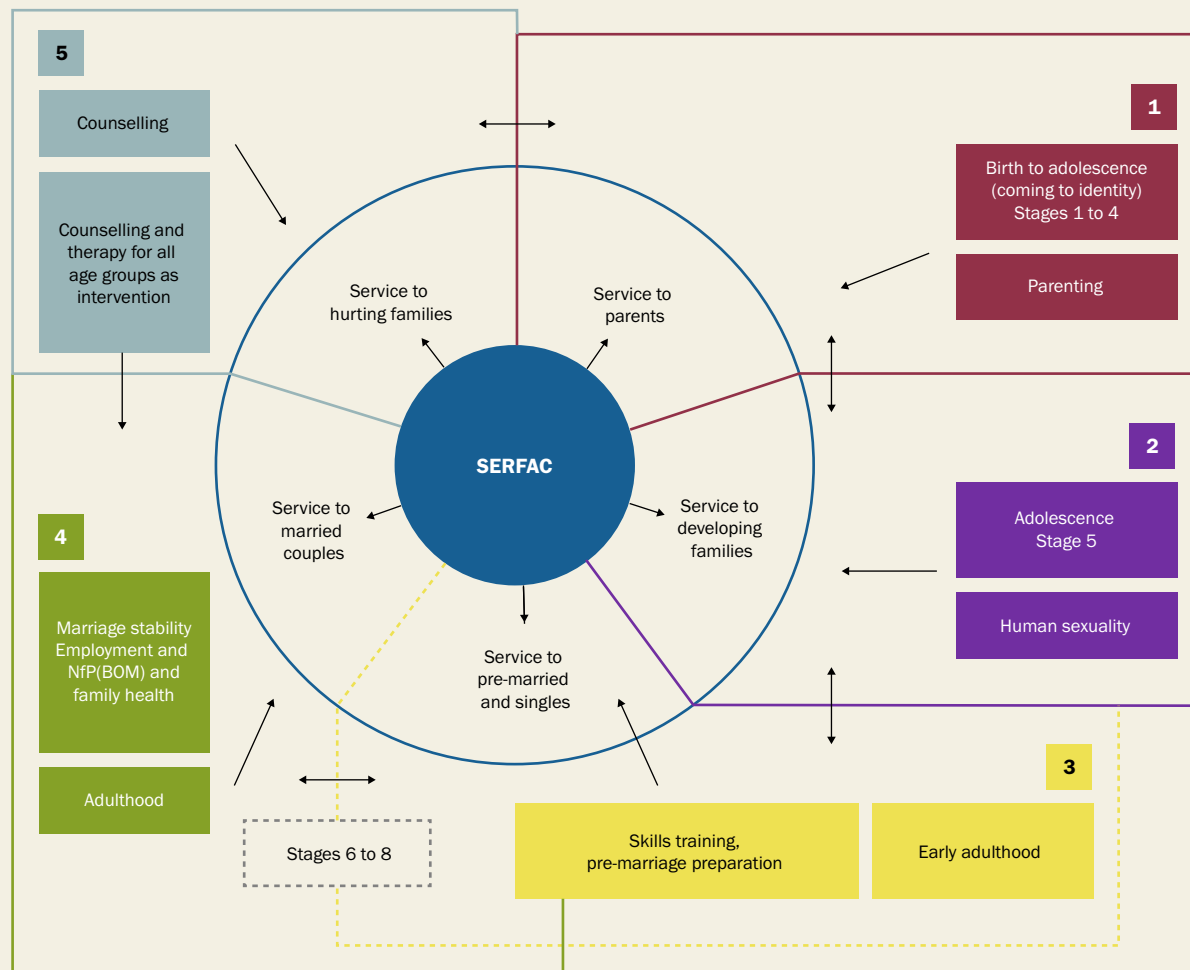
Society has yet to come to terms with the fact that gender equality contributes greatly to marriage stability. A healthy family life is the basic social security for humankind. Most countries lack effective policies to combat and eradicate gender inequality. There seems to be little political will and courage to really confront gender inequality in the various social, economic and religious institutions.

My work in the Asian and African continents included visits to plantations, mines and slums. These visits broadened my understanding of problems affecting families, women in particular. I talked to the Chief Executive Officers of companies, intervened for the rights of women and made strong pleas for revisiting policies in firms where women are employed.

I recognized that most programmes which aim at 'women's empowerment' do not contain basic elements required to enable women to meet the challenges they face in society today. This led me to believe that working with women in contemporary society requires a multi-lens approach, focusing on social, sociological, psychological, spiritual, religious and cultural issues simultaneously. This will facilitate a new paradigm for a world order that is humane, just, and accepts women as partners and equal architects in family stability and social reconstruction/transformation.

Family-centred practice is based on a radical set of principles, values and beliefs which recognizes the critical role of the family as a constant focus in preventing inequality, and offers intervention/therapeutic counselling services for building equality. It is a

The family-centric approach developed by SERFAC is based on the family lifecycle and Erik Erikson's epigenetic model: stages of development



Source: SERFAC

strengths-based, overarching practice which builds on resources within the family itself. It employs an empowerment paradigm, develops collaborative partnership and dialogue within families, and provides understanding of the stages of development needs of individual members of the family and, most importantly, the role of women. It engages in a strategically unified and multidimensional approach covering the whole gamut of relationships, taking into account that when adequate support — physical, emotional and financial — is available for the goal of changing their lives, women are capable of doing it. Such an understanding reduces the asymmetry between rights and responsibilities of women and men in the family. This is now better understood, leading women not to deny the family, but to challenge its structure.

Some experimental projects were conducted over several years to understand the nature of issues such as gender inequality, poverty, marriage instability, broken families and single parenting, in order to identify possible entry points for reducing violence in families. Several major findings were

noted, chiefly, the lack of stability in marriage and family leading to breakdown of family and other social safety nets and relationships. It was gradually understood that causes and consequences are intertwined and any solution has to address the developmental process, matrix of relationships within the family and social pressures on the family simultaneously while giving priority to the source of the problem.

Drawing from these experiences, two major multi-pronged approaches were developed:

- fertility regulation, clarifying the role of parenthood, gender balance, and fostering dialogue among members as equals
- prioritizing socioeconomic needs of the family, its security and socializing of its members.

The following questions then arose: Where does gender equality start, and how does it manifest itself? How do policymakers and women themselves understand gender equality? Is struc-

tural and economic development of women synonymous with gender equality and is this form of empowerment superior to human need?

We realized that each strand that goes into the various forms of women's empowerment needs to be identified in terms of its goal. All forms of social progress need to be at the service of the person and family and must be sustainable.

We concluded that as long as inadequate understanding exists, political will cannot be maximized to bring about social/gender equality, and gender imbalance and social isolation will continue to exist. Millions of dollars will be spent on numerous fringe programmes in the name of women's empowerment, but they will be addressed by the wrong voices and from the wrong platforms.

Project: natural family planning programme

Based on the premise that gender inequality is not a benign issue, SERFAC undertook to promote the Billings Ovulation method of natural family planning. This was found to be an appropriate method for all people as it recognizes that the stability of marriage must receive prime importance while helping couples to plan and space pregnancies. It enabled couples to function as partners, make decisions on the basis of mutual respect, and share family responsibilities. Over a period of 10 years the impact could be seen in about 75 per cent of the marriages — couples were truly exercising their parenthood as partners.

The Billings method, which hinges on observing signs of fertility/infertility during a woman's menstrual cycle, was effective in enabling wife-husband dialogue on 'their fertility', and choosing whether to go in for or avoid a pregnancy. This was a confidence-building measure that promoted talk on other matters related to the family too. After several months, the tone of the marriage showed considerable improvement. A sense of openness gradually prevailed. Couples became partners and joint architects of their relationship; they were autonomous.

In due course, 100 full-time workers were employed and trained to teach the method and follow up on a monthly basis for a year.

The outcome of the project was that husband and wife could plan their family as a couple; spacing was by choice. A newborn was given time to grow before the next pregnancy was planned. Husband-wife dialogue was reflected in almost all areas of life. Further, the method had no side effects or complications and was easily reversible.

Project: skills development programme

The pivot of the gender mainstreaming project is the premise that every woman has the right to be seen and accepted as an individual with the capacity to decide and act for herself, and have equal access to resources and social, economic and political support to develop her full potential as a human being.

SERFAC responds to this need in a comprehensive and integrated manner by providing education, training and employment for uneducated women and single mothers.

The six-month programme covers employability skills and education in marriage and family issues — pre-marriage guidance, natural family planning, pregnancy, parenting, childcare, health, education, budgeting, environment care and gender equality. With these basic tools women are



Image: SERFAC

SERFAC aims to help empower women in the family and the community

able to understand what family life is about, and work at improving their relationships with their husbands and families. Therapeutic counselling is part of the programme and husbands are included in several sessions.

While entry points differ from one programme to another, the transformation process eventually becomes cyclic and intergenerational.

The outcome of this project is that women become literate, numerate, confident and capable of earning a livelihood, improving their living conditions and having some money for emergencies as well. They become responsible, have more stable marriages and healthy family lives; the husband-wife relationship improves, domestic violence is eradicated or limited, parent-child relationships and sibling relationships improve, boys and girls are treated equally, fewer children drop out of school, and risks of addictions and debt are lower. The intergenerational long-term impact is that children who experience less gender violence when treated equally will be equipped to develop the resources to remain in partnerships.

The family is the foundation from which gender equality can be effectively promoted and practiced, and it is the first context where equality can be experienced. Investment in women in the family as 'family' offers the first experience of their humanity. These elements are essential to women's liberation and empowerment and need to be incorporated in any programme that focuses on gender. Men must be educated on similar lines, simultaneously. Families are key actors in the empowerment process, for family encapsulates an orientation which places women, children and future generations at the centre of human development and empowerment.

SERFAC works towards women becoming architects of their own empowerment and being able to build a positive framework in the family and, along with their husbands, in the community.

Catherine Bernard, Founder-Director of SERFAC, is a medical doctor who switched professions. The Natural Family Planning Programme is about 38 years old and the skills development programme was formulated on the basis of several years of experience.

Women, peace and security: a roadmap towards gender equality in the Arab region

*Raidan Al-Saqqaf, Social Affairs Officer — Women, Peace, and Security,
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Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) brought new thinking about international development, moving beyond the reductionist approach of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to an integrated approach where progress towards any one goal requires progress towards several other goals as well. The new development agenda also brought in a new emphasis on peace as a prerequisite for development as well as a development goal through SDG 16.

Peace as a development goal is particularly important for the Arab region as fragility, conflict and instability do not only hinder development progress, but also reverse gains made particularly towards gender equality and the empowerment of women in the region. This therefore requires a new generation of improved policies, institutions and methods to make it work, particularly in fragile environments, within the context of a dedicated agenda for women, peace and security.

The Arab region is shaken by unprecedented levels of conflict, occupation, instability and fragility. It is home to around 40 per cent of the United Nations' political and peace-keeping missions, and requires around half of the funding in global humanitarian appeals to deliver life-saving support to tens of millions of vulnerable persons. This is an acutely challenging context in which to deliver development and achieve meaningful progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, especially since many Arab states already trail global lists of gender gap and inequality.

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, as the roadmap for international development over the next 15 years, adopted the motto 'leaving no one behind'. It is the result of extensive negotiations among governments and other development partners to agree on a common floor and a roadmap for development by 2030. This insinuates that this agenda aims at delivering development support to those who need it the most, and it proposes a 5-P formula to do just that, focusing on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. Although Agenda 2030 did not include a goal on leaving no one behind, it reiterated the focus on inclusion and on particular population groups, and consequently interweaved this focus in various goals and targets. This was particularly evident in the focus on women, where women-related targets were included in nine goals in addition to being the focus of Goal 5 on gender equality.

Therefore, Agenda 2030 makes a lot of promises for women. It is the latest international framework to make such prom-

ises, building on the progress achieved through the MDGs, Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the Beijing Programme of Action, the International Conference for Population and Development Programme of Action and the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others. However, delivering on such promises is left to those states and actors who negotiated it, as they decide what national and local priorities to focus on, and how to go about responding to these priorities.

A document entitled Arab Development Outlook: Vision 2030¹ proposes an agenda for the region loosely derived from the global agenda. This document states that there is a case for optimism despite the bleak current circumstance: the region continues to experience a steady rise in human capabilities, it is well endowed in extractive resources and geography, and the middle class remains a dominant economic group in most Arab countries. However, according to the same document, the region is unable to capitalize on these assets due to poor governance and dysfunctional governing institutions, adding that "this democracy deficit is accompanied by a profound gender deficit, particularly in terms of power-sharing and employment."²

Changing governance mechanisms and renegotiating the social contract was one of the promises of the Arab Spring which took the region by storm in 2011, and it remains central to the grievances of people across the region. In her Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Yemeni political activist Tawakul Karman said that the youth-led revolt was for "the pursuit of free and dignified life in a democratic and civil state governed by the rule of law."³ This leads us to consider that the top priorities for the Arab region are peace and justice and gender equality, drawing parallels with SDGs 16 and 5 respectively, and Goal 10 on inequality to a lesser extent.

The question is, then, how to advance gender equality for women in the Arab region in such a challenging environment? One answer is to integrate the advancement of women with peace and security work as a dual goal. This idea originates in Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on WPS, and gradually evolved with other relevant resolutions and international frameworks. A maximalist approach to interpreting this integration and subsequent evolution formulates the WPS agenda to include all frameworks relating to the advancement of women, such as Beijing Programme of Action and CEDAW, with those relating to global peace and security, such as peace-keeping and counter-terrorism resolutions and frameworks.



Image: ©Anis Mahyoub, 2016

Women have joined pro-government militias to fight against coup forces trying to overtake the Yemeni city of Taiz

This maximalist interpretation of the WPS agenda establishes three broad categories for action, namely protection and human rights issues; peace and security issues; and gender equality and the empowerment of women issues. These categories overlap, are context-specific, and are mutually supportive. For instance, investing in post-conflict governance generally contributes to all three categories; however, when designed under the context of a WPS agenda, its contributions are better guaranteed to respond to women, peace and security priorities.

To achieve the commendable dual goal of the WPS agenda, a new generation of development policies, institutions and working methods is needed. They need to be viable, effective and conducive particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings such as those of the Arab region today. This requires us to think of the factors that underscore the fragility of development gains in the face of instability and conflict, and how to invest in policies, institutions and systems that are resilient and able to advance the WPS agenda including in times of volatility.

This question underscores much of the thinking on WPS across the Arab region. Several states have initiated the design and implementation of national action plans dedicated to the WPS agenda, listing activities that fall under the three pillars of WPS, albeit focusing mainly on the third pillar on the advancement of women. However, these national actions plans are unique and represent a leap forward in the sense that their cross-sectoral approach includes actions falling within the mandates of civilian as well as security sector actors. These actions range from combating violence against women and provision of social services, to terrorism prevention and peace-

keeping. These national action plans therefore represent a new generation of development policies that include peace and security elements at their core, thereby representing the new mindset of peace for development and development for peace.

A case in point is the Iraq national action plan on WPS. This action plan included a range of activities that go beyond the advancement of women per se. For example the action plan includes particular activities to promote women's participation in security sector activities such as war theatre planning and activities during live combat operations. In fact, the emergency national action plan, devised as a spin-off of the national action to mitigate the impacts of military operations against the Islamic State on civilian populations, went a step further to include gender sensitization, capacity development, and mitigation measures focusing on military commanders and officers participating in this offensive prior to their deployment.

Another example is from Palestine, where the national action plan on WPS was developed through two tracks. The first is a government-led track with civil society participation, while the second is a purely civil society track. The Palestine national action plan has included a particular emphasis on highlighting and documenting the human rights violations committed by Israeli occupation against Palestinian women and girls, towards the international prosecution to end the de facto impunity and deliver justice.

While these two examples showcase how national action plans were designed to advance both developmental as well as peace and security goals, the new paradigm also includes a shift in the design, structures and working methods of institutions



Image: ©Bluewind/Wikipedia commons, 2012

A graffiti detail on the separation barrier in the West Bank depicting Leila Khaled, a former Palestinian resistance fighter

involved. A study undertaken by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the role of institutions in advancing the WPS agenda in the Arab region has shown that institutions are reinventing themselves in order to respond to the WPS issues. This includes creating new functions, units and specialities among civilian organizations with mandates including WPS issues. Security sector institutions are also increasingly reaching out and coordinating their responses to WPS with other government and non-government institutions. This coordination is expanding in scope, recurrence and methods, ranging from joint research on early warning systems to capacity development on post-conflict governance.

In Lebanon, for instance, the Internal Security Forces has updated and expanded the training materials for gendarmes, who are military officers entrusted with internal security issues, to tackle social and civic issues relating to the influx of refugees from Syria. This training included several components relating to human rights, social and economic vulnerabilities, gender-based violence, and the roles of various institutions which contribute to peace and security in the country.

Civilian institutions are also making important contributions to peace and security. For example the Bahraini Supreme Council for Women played a leading role in the National Consensus Dialogue following the unrest of 2011, while Sudan's Ministry of Social Welfare and Insurance created a unit mandated to focus on WPS issues. The national women's machineries in Jordan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and other states are also engaging in discussions to revisit their priority areas and working methods towards focusing more on established and emerging WPS issues.

However, progress is not always smooth and accumulative. It often lurches forwards and then pauses while new capacities are built and then assimilated into the institutions' systems and partner organizations' work. This is critical to establish a foundation for WPS work and for creating collaborations and working interdependencies among these institutions, and focusing along the three pillars of WPS in tandem. Without this work, little can be accomplished towards achieving SDG 5 and gender equality in the Arab region noting the challenges to peace and security the region faces.

Moving forward, the challenges that lie ahead require that this foundation is firmly established and able to advance the WPS agenda. The League of Arab States has devised a regional strategy and action plan on WPS to guide the efforts of member states and provide an umbrella for policy development and institutional development. ESCWA has also developed a range of technical materials for capacity development designed in response to this new paradigm on WPS and towards reinforcing its policy and institutional foundation. The training materials include a thematic guide on responding to Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on WPS, a report on response options to the WPS agenda, as well as technical notes on a range of issues of relevance. ESCWA also delivers direct technical assistance to member countries based on their demand. This technical assistance ranges from awareness-raising to capacity development on the design and implementation of national action plans.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

Comprehensive and tailored approaches for women's economic empowerment

Leena Akatama, Senior Adviser — Gender, Department of Development Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Women's share of the global workforce has increased more or less at the same speed as international trade, and is estimated at around 40 per cent. For many women, jobs are their gateways to the formal economy, their own income and, subsequently, independence, also affecting their power relationships in the household.

However, these are only the first steps towards a more profound equality. The majority of women in developing countries still work in the informal economy with limited access to occupational safety, services or social protection. Furthermore, women are still primarily responsible for unpaid care work, are left with little or no time for recreation and rest, and are predominantly considered as secondary earners.

The gender gap in education limits women's ability to grasp new work opportunities, although the gap in basic education is gradually closing. Vocational training more often benefits men than women, because of social norms and the perceived limitations of women's command of their own time or their safety. Women in many developing countries have weaker rights to own land or other property, hindering their capabilities to invest or acquire productive resources such as finance.

Also, limited access to sexual and reproductive health services and unrecognized rights to make decisions concern-

ing one's own life weaken women's potential to participate in the economy. Many are juggling with poor health outcomes, increased care work, financial consequences of increased family size, and often the risk of violence.

According to a recent report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), women's economic empowerment is a process where the capacities of individuals, participation in decision-making, access to and control over resources, and participation in collective action merge. Therefore, be it freedom from violence or harmful practices, access to sexual and reproductive health services or access to information and communication technologies, all the targets of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 contribute to women's economic participation.

The study points out six direct factors that either enable or hinder women's economic empowerment: education and skills development; access to quality, decent work; unpaid care work; access to economic resources; collective action and leadership; and social protection. These are accompanied by underlying factors, namely labour market characteristics, fiscal policy, legal and policy framework, and gender discrimination. Discrimination is prevalent in all 10 factors and manifests in various ways.

Female workers with relatively low educational levels are particularly vulnerable in situations where competitive advantage is sought through low salaries and flexible working conditions, while women's status is strongly defined by traditional gender roles. They are more affected by the gender role gap than those men and women who have been able to take advantage of trade openness, technological change and the widespread availability of information. Furthermore, inadequate or unavailable social protection makes women particularly vulnerable to shocks such as occupational hazards, loss of employment, economic crisis or drought. To date, many economic advances for women have been made within the existing structures and power relations, without challenging them. Addressing the discriminatory perceptions that form and inform institutions, policies and legal frameworks remains a big task and requires consistent gender mainstreaming.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) is the new platform for development policy and a great opportunity to promote gender equality. It is both a stand-alone goal and a cross-cutting objective in the SDGs, reflected in many targets and indicators across the agenda. This comprehensive approach is useful to see the interlinkages between the goals but it also poses a challenge of complexity for effective implementation and monitoring.



An SCT beneficiary receiving a payment at the Mukuni paypoint in Zambia's Kazungula district

Image: Unicef Zambia



Image: Indra Gurung

The women's economic empowerment programme in Nepal focuses on providing vocational training and skills development

The momentum for addressing women's economic empowerment is high. In 2016, the Secretary-General of the United Nations launched the High Level Panel (HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment, which gathers together various high-level stakeholders from the United Nations, development banks, member states, the private sector, academics and civil society. The panel will make recommendations on six areas, namely eliminating legal barriers to women's economic empowerment, addressing the care economy, reducing gender pay gaps, expanding opportunities for women in informal work, financial and digital inclusion, and fostering women's entrepreneurship and enhancing the productivity of women-owned enterprises. The HLP report will provide useful best practice guidance for the implementation of SDG 5.

The Finnish Government launched its new development policy early in 2016, putting increased emphasis on strengthening the rights of women and girls, including their participation in the economy. Gender mainstreaming has traditionally been our stronghold, advancing the rights of women and girls in various sectors and at all levels. Our objectives for gender equality are to ensure education and skills development, participation in politics and the economy, access to services, self-autonomy and living free of violence. We advance them through specific programming and as a cross-cutting objective in all development policy.

We channel core financing to our strategic partners UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund and Unicef, and implement programmes at the country level in partnership with them. For example, our support for the women's economic empowerment programme through UN Women in Nepal focuses on providing vocational training and skills development to the most vulnerable groups such as women living with HIV, returnee women migrant workers and home-based workers. Some of the women live in areas that were also affected by the 2015 earthquake and several of them were conflict survivors or ex-soldiers. The vocational training empowers women

to be active participants in the peacebuilding efforts and links their livelihoods to the national efforts on women, peace and security.¹ The programme also builds local capacities to do gender-responsive budgeting and develop a favourable policy environment for women's economic empowerment.

Finland's Aid for Trade (AFT) programme is an umbrella that harnesses various interventions on private sector development and engagement. AFT offers possibilities to promote trade and economic development in developing countries, and for ordinary people to benefit from it.

One crucial aspect of this programme from a gender perspective has been sex-disaggregated results monitoring and reporting. This has enabled the monitoring of outcomes such as supported jobs and companies by gender. For example, the recent results monitoring showed that 44 per cent of supported jobs were for women in Finland's AFT programme.

Availability of sex-disaggregated data is particularly important when the main approach is gender mainstreaming. It is a useful way to address discriminatory structures and practices across sectors and gradually make them more inclusive. It can be a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment and provides a broader financial base for gender interventions. But it also poses challenges in tracking expenditure and results. Strengthening reporting systems to disaggregate outcomes by gender is crucial in order to understand the impact of our interventions and feedback to policymaking and programme design.

AFT contributes to decent employment and, in the long run, to improved domestic resource mobilization in developing countries. The final beneficiaries of AFT — the poor people in developing countries — need public services, a clean environment, nutrition and many other things in order to be productive, innovative and entrepreneurial.

Gender equality and women's economic opportunities and entrepreneurship are key goals of Finland's AFT Action Plan. Macroeconomic policies profoundly impact the status and position of women and men in society, and gender equal-



Image: Timo Olkkonen

Supported by SCT, this woman, whose husband has a disability, has started a baking business to earn income

ity is a way forward to implementing desired macroeconomic policies. Poverty reduction is not possible without addressing gender equality questions.

One example of our support to women's economic empowerment is Women's World Banking (WWB). According to recent studies by WWB, financial institutions often do not know their potential customers, and financial services meant for women often fail because they are not designed for women's needs. WWB works with financial institutions to increase low-income women's access to financial tools and resources and to invest in women as customers and leaders. WWB assists financial institutions with in-depth market research, financial product development and consumer education. For the institutions, this is a great way to increase their customer base by serving those that were previously left unserved by their regular financial products.

For instance in Jordan, WWB's network member has developed the country's first private health microinsurance, which provides benefits after hospitalization that clients can use for transportation to hospital or to cover lost business revenue. The product is widely used by women to cover maternity-related hospitalization costs. It has 105,000 active policies and has been expanded to Peru, Uganda, Morocco and Egypt.

Another example is savings schemes. Women whose earnings are low and unpredictable are able to save on average 10-15 per cent of their income, but they often lack reliable savings schemes. For financial institutions, savings schemes are easier to manage than credit as they do not rely on in-depth understanding of the market dynamics. They also provide opportunities to market other financial products to savings clients. WWB network members in Pakistan, Colombia, Kenya, the Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Malawi and Tanzania are offering savings schemes that operate in the markets where traders, most of them women, work, giving them convenience and security.

The savings schemes currently have 1 million active accounts. Notably, financial products designed for women often end up enhancing the financial inclusion of men, and

thus reducing inequality overall. Approximately 1.6 million clients currently benefit from the financial products of WWB network members, including credit, small to medium enterprise services and mobile financial services.

Another encouraging example of women's economic empowerment and 'leaving no one behind' is the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme in Zambia. Despite Zambia being considered as a low-middle income country, 60 per cent of its population lives in poverty and 42 per cent in extreme poverty.

SCT started as a one-district pilot and has grown into a nationwide programme with significant government financing. In 2016, it was scaled to 78 districts, covering approximately 8 per cent of the population. SCT's success is due to years spent designing a targeting system that best reaches the poorest Zambians, consistent impact assessment during the implementation, and evidence-based advocacy for government financing.

The basic idea of SCT is to provide reliable cash transfers to poor families who are either destitute or incapacitated. Although the benefit is designed to assist the entire family, women are often the recipients. Widow or elderly headed households with orphans, households with an elderly member or a member with a severe disability are targeted. All beneficiary households are assessed based on their welfare and incapacity status, and the targeting is done in cooperation with the community and the district welfare officer. The payments are handled by government teachers or health workers, reducing the transaction costs.

The transfer amount is relatively small, ZMK 70 or just over US\$7 per month. SCT is an effective and inexpensive poverty reduction programme which the Zambian Government will gradually upscale and cover the costs of the transfers. Impact evaluation has shown that SCT is more successful than traditional poverty reduction programmes such as material welfare support and farmer input support programmes.

For every Kwacha transferred an additional 0.68 Kwacha has been generated through productive impacts. This means that SCT beneficiary households have invested in agriculture production, livestock rearing or non-farm enterprises and thus, the depth of poverty has reduced. Families have increased food consumption with 95 per cent of households eating more than one meal a day. Harmful consumption such as tobacco or alcohol has not increased. There were significant improvements in living conditions as more families acquired mosquito nets, their own latrines, lighting and cement floors. The overall welfare of children has improved, incidences of diarrhoea have reduced, more children have their material needs met (two sets of clothing, shoes and a blanket) and more children aged 15-17 are in school. Beneficiary testimonies have also consistently voiced that SCT has helped ensure families' dignity as they are no longer dependent on other people and therefore have the confidence to participate in the community and prepare for future shocks.

Women's economic empowerment requires both comprehensive and tailored approaches and interventions to succeed. The big challenge that affects women's participation in the economy at large is gender discrimination and it is important that we address the discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices as we provide other kinds of support. Considering the potential women possess for the economy and the well-being of society, we cannot afford to miss this opportunity to tap it.

A woman, a mobile phone and an education: empowerment at her fingertips

Saniye Gülser Corat, Director, Division for Gender Equality, Office of the Director-General; and Elodie Khavarani, Division for Gender Equality, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

“Your son got an ‘A’ today in class. Rokhaya.” This simple news was the equivalent of Alexander Graham Bell’s “Mary had a little lamb” moment for Rokhaya, a mother and grandmother hailing from a remote village in Northern Senegal. These eight words that she composed on the black and white screen of her second-hand Nokia phone and sent to her husband in Dakar were the first thing she ever wrote after completing an adult literacy programme organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

As is too common in the developing world, Rokhaya married very young and was not able to attend school as she needed to look after her growing family. When her husband found a decent job in Dakar she was left behind with no way of communicating with him. She thought she could call him from time to time if she had a phone. She saved some money and got herself a Nokia from the village’s telco centre, a shack in the marketplace. But the first time she called him, she realized that the cost was

prohibitively expensive for her. Whereas texting was free. At the age of 40, Rokhaya decided that it was time to learn how to read and write.

Fortunately, her village was included in UNESCO’s adult literacy project called *Projet d’Alphabétisation pour les Jeunes Filles et les Femmes au Sénégal* (PAJEF). She eagerly enrolled in the programme.

Rokhaya’s class had 30 adult students. She quickly learned how to write and to do basic arithmetic operations on her phone as the programme had a phone-centric emphasis. The courses also included interactive learning through mobile applications and the use of laptops, beamers, touch pens and television. Women were provided with information technology and vocational skills and attended sessions on developing income-generating activities.

Women’s lives, like Rokhaya’s, can improve drastically when they are given access to previously denied education opportunities and knowledge to make use of modern technological tools like smartphones and computers. The key to access is to place all these initiatives within a framework



Knowledge is the key for life



Teaching literacy in Wolof, Senegal



Image: cdn/Shutterstock.com

A mother speaking on her mobile phone in the Sahara Desert

of gender equality. Without it, women are always given a secondary place in education and technology.

This is, indeed, the reason why UNESCO has made gender equality a global priority since 2008, as it realized that gender equality should be an integral part of all its programmes and initiatives.

First articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the concept of gender equality has been reinforced time and time again through international agreements including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1979 and the Beijing Declaration in 1995. Most recently, it was recognized as a central component of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 is to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”

In addition to distinguishing gender equality as a development imperative, the international community has also acknowledged its critical role in pushing the education agenda forward. UNESCO helped shape SDG 4 on education, through the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The framework recognizes that achieving gender equality is a requirement to ensure that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete education cycles, but are also empowered through education.

About PAJEF



Image: UNESCO Dakar

The PAJEF slogan: Re-write the future

UNESCO formed the Projet d'Alphabétisation pour les Jeunes Filles et les Femmes au Sénégal (PAJEF) under its Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education. With a slogan reading 'Re-write the future', the project ran from 2012 to 2014 to improve access to education for 40,000 neo-literate and illiterate women between the ages of 15 and 55 years old, across seven regions of Senegal: Diourbel, Fatick, Kédougou, Matam, Saint-Louis, Dakar and Tambacounda. The project also explored the role information and communication technologies (ICTs) can have in improving literacy skills. Mobile phones were not supplied to learners. In the span of the two years, 253 classes followed in French and national languages benefitted the 6,500 girls and women who enrolled in the programme. The project inspired Senegal's national literacy programme to use ICTs in boosting literacy rates in the country.



Image: UNESCO/Nokia

A woman using her mobile phone at the street market

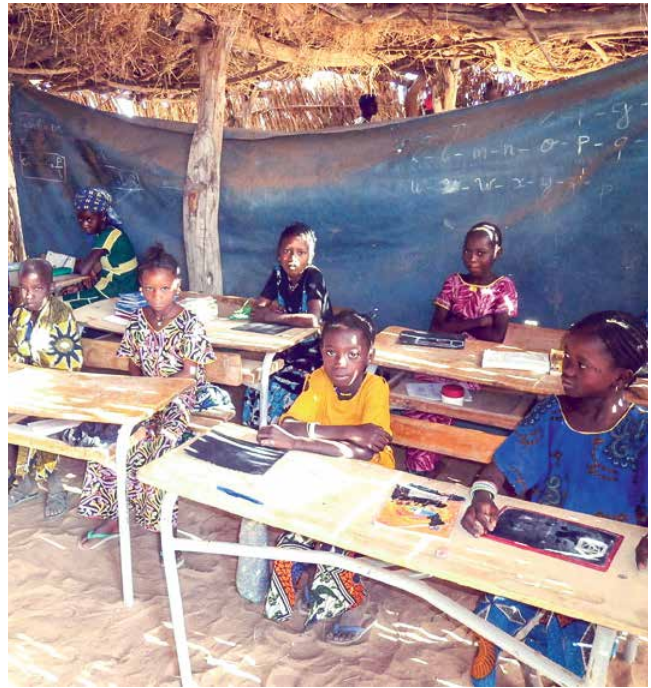


Image: Birama Touré

Girls attending school in Northern Senegal; education is key to development here, where about half of the population are illiterate

Women's education is an extraordinary asset that remains largely unused. If low income countries achieve the target of universal secondary education by 2030, per capita incomes will increase by 75 per cent. It is reported that in developing countries, women invest 90 per cent of their income in the well-being, education and nutrition of their families (compared to about 35 per cent for men).

Literate societies where women and men, girls and boys benefit from decent education systems and lifelong learning and development opportunities are more likely to be able to reduce poverty, live healthier lives and acquire better employment prospects. According to the 2016 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report,¹ educated mothers will save the lives of their children — 3.5 million child deaths could be prevented from 2040-2050 in sub-Saharan Africa alone by achieving the 2030 education commitments.

The GEM Report notes that there are 758 million illiterate adults in the world and two thirds of these are women like Rokhaya. The sad part is that this proportion has remained unchanged in the last 20 years. In Senegal, women accounted for close to 2.5 million of the illiterate population in 2015, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics — double the proportion of men.

The GEM report finds that 15 million girls of primary-school age will never get the chance to read or write in a primary school setting. These girls are not expected to ever set foot in a classroom. If this continues, the most disadvantaged girls in sub-Saharan Africa for instance, will only make it to school in the year 2086. Education can provide girls and women with the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their aspirations. Or in some cases, simply to free themselves from a vicious cycle of continued dependence or poverty.

In that context, mobile phones represent a unique opportunity.

Mobile phones can reach the unreachable and they can motivate them to learn new skills in their own time and beyond the institutionalized school system. For instance, in Senegal, mobile phone subscriptions skyrocketed in recent years: according to the World Bank, they went from 1.1 million in 2004 to 14.4 million subscribers in 2014.

Since mobile phones include services that rely on literacy skills such as text messages, e-mail and for some Internet access, the device is considered a very useful pedagogical tool. It provides learners with critical and cognitive skills they can apply to real-life situations in their context.

Mobile phones open up new ways of communication and networking within small communities. They could also lead to new income-generating activities: after she graduated from UNESCO's PAJEF programme, Rokhaya realized that she could use her new skills to make some money for herself and her family. She began renting her phone and her newly-acquired writing skills to women who were in the same situation with their husbands or kids in a different part of Senegal. Through her phone she met new people, made new friends and earned additional income.

But more needs to be done in that respect, as there is a clear digital divide which negatively reinforces the gender divide. Globally, 37 per cent of women are online (as opposed to 41 per cent of men). In the developing world the gender gap is much larger. A report by Intel found that "on average across the developing world, nearly 25 per cent fewer women than men have access to the Internet, and the gender gap soars to nearly 45 per cent in regions like sub-Saharan Africa."²

This digital divide is not inconsequential: a study in 12 Latin American and 13 African countries³ found that the gender

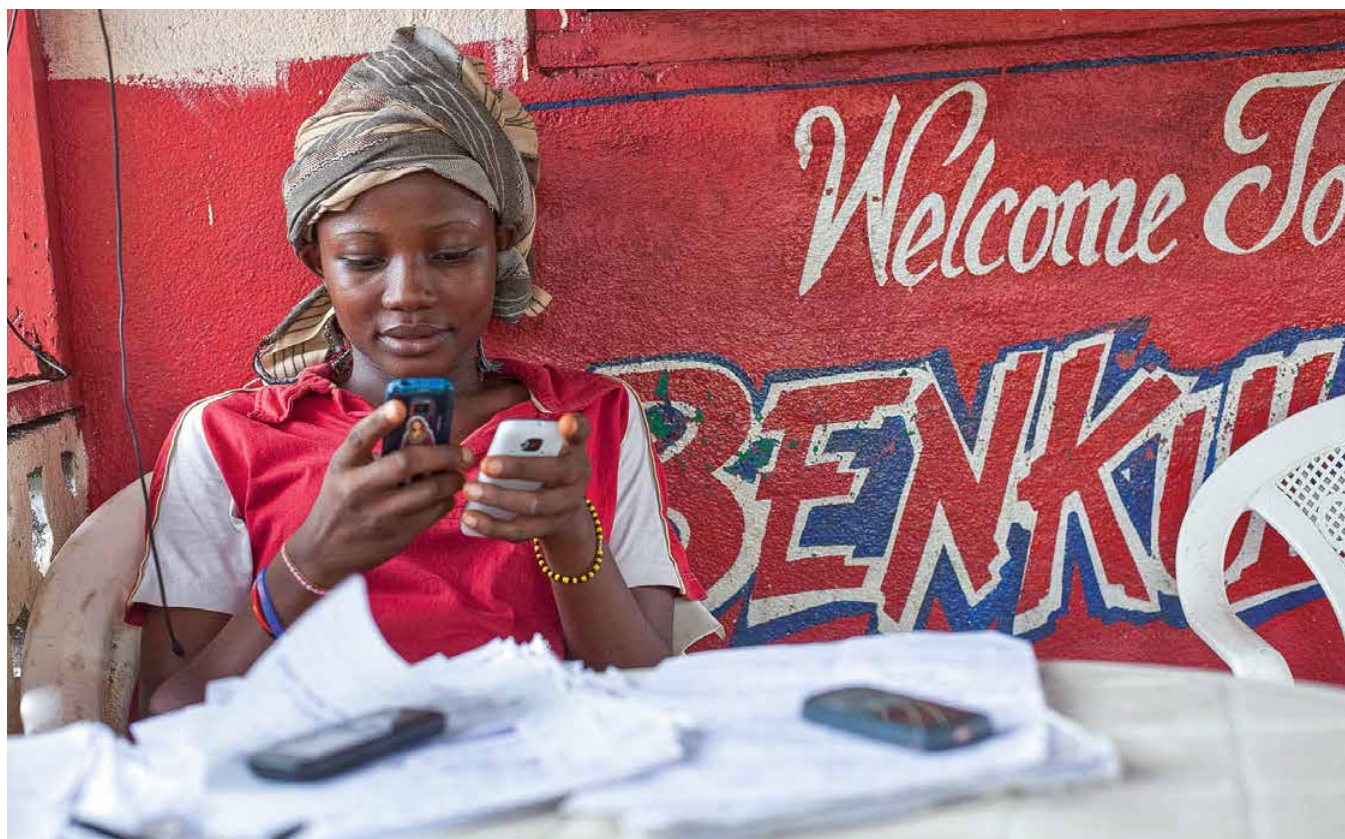


Image: UNESCO/Nokia

A woman practises reading and writing on her mobile phone

divide is primarily responsible for women's economic situation: "the reason why fewer women access and use ICT is a direct result of their unfavorable conditions with respect to employment, education and income. When controlling for these variables, women turn out to be more active users of digital tools than men."

But change is taking place. UNESCO's PAJEF initiative was a part of a larger project called the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education⁴ and its aim was to increase learning opportunities for adolescent girls, addressing in particular two challenging areas: secondary-level schooling and literacy. A United Nations-International Labour Organization project in Tanzania enables women to start and expand their businesses by using smartphones.⁵ In Zambia, young women began using Twitter and Facebook to stop gender-based violence.⁶

The phone's role in fighting illiteracy and lifting women out of poverty is one side of the equation. The other side is to ensure that women can take part in the design and production of the hardware and software of these new technological marvels. It is a well-known fact that girls lag in science, technology, mathematics and engineering (STEM) education across the globe. In the US in 1985, 37 per cent of computer science graduates were women whereas in 2009, that figure went down to just 18 per cent. The highly influential Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers has 407,000 members and only 10 per cent of these are women. Globally, the percentage of women engineers hovers between 10 and 20 per cent. Moreover the women who are employed in these fields earn 33 per cent less than their male colleagues.

In 2015, UNESCO partnered with two other United Nations agencies, namely the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations Population Fund, to introduce the Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education.⁷ UNESCO expects to reach over 500,000 girls in 20 countries in the next five years. The project includes, among others, substantial STEM and health components: "Activities will be strategically built into the interface between education, health, skills development, technology and women's economic empowerment."

Finally, in 2016, UNESCO and the US Mission to UNESCO created a public-private partnership to launch a new initiative called TeachHer.⁸ Their starting point was the realization that if girls are not introduced to science, technology, engineering, arts/design and mathematics (STEAM) fields between the ages of 13 and 16, they are highly unlikely to pursue a university degree in them. To rectify that situation UNESCO and its partners will train Master Teachers in STEAM in the developing world. These Master Teachers will train others in an effort to give adolescent girls access to STEAM careers.

Rokhaya was the human face of the empowering and life-changing effect of education and technological tools like the phone. The goal should be to close the circle by giving Rokhaya's daughters access to STEAM fields and having them participate in the creation, design and development of the next computer program, smartphone application or the hardware that runs them all.

Rokhaya would be proud.

Investing in women and girls in Asia and the Pacific: a pathway to equality and sustainable prosperity

Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Gender equality plays a fundamental role in transforming our economies and societies. Investing in women and girls is not only a vital part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is also a prerequisite for addressing some of the key challenges faced by our region, including the economic slowdown, rising inequalities and rapid demographic transition.

Increasing women's participation in the economy could add US\$28.4 trillion to annual global output by 2025. Closing gender gaps in hours worked, participation and productivity

could result in gross domestic product (GDP) gains of up to 60 per cent in India and 48 per cent in the South Asia subregion, and 30 per cent for East and Southeast Asia (excluding China) by 2025.¹ The strong correlation that exists between gender equality and economic growth means that a 0.1 reduction in gender inequality as measured by the United Nations Gender Inequality Index² is associated with almost one percentage point of higher economic growth.³

In spite of the economic opportunity, progress in female economic participation has been slow and uneven. The gender gap in labour force participation in Asia and the Pacific has



Image: Daphna Beerdtsen/ESCAP

Women sell eggs in Sittwe market, Myanmar. Increasing women's participation in the economy will add significantly to annual global output

actually worsened, with the female-to-male ratio declining to 0.61 in 2016 from 0.67 in 1990. This decline stands in stark contrast to the gender gap decreases witnessed in other regions over the past 10 years and it has in large part been driven by a low participation ratio of 0.36 in 2016 in South and South-West Asia.

The current economic and social situation in Asia and the Pacific has made closing the gender gap even more pressing. Economic slowdown combined with weakening prospects for decent employment in our region has raised concerns about the extent of poverty reduction and rising inequality. In a region where female labour force participation is below 30 per cent in some countries,⁴ catalysing women's economic participation would not only empower individual women, but could also positively boost economic growth and uplift large segments of the population out of poverty.

Economic empowerment of women is one of the key dimensions recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Empowering women economically involves improving their economic status, power and agency through increasing their participation in the labour force and ensuring they have equal opportunities for economic leadership as well as political representation, and equal access to economic resources, inheritances, financial services, technology and natural resources. It also involves increasing women's ownership, use and control rights over land and other forms of property.

Achieving the economic empowerment of women in Asia and the Pacific will require considerable progress in all of these areas. In addition to closing the above-mentioned labour force participation gaps, sex-based inequalities in the ownership of productive assets must also be overcome. For example, substantially fewer women than men are agricultural landholders, with less than 10 per cent of women holding land in Bangladesh, Fiji, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nepal.⁵ The gender divide in access to and usage of financial services is also pronounced in the region.⁶ Lack of access to financial services makes it more difficult for women to save and invest in lifting themselves, as well as their families, out of poverty. This in turn serves to further entrench the cycle of inequality in the region.

Women in Asia and the Pacific also face hurdles in accessing productive technology. For example, the estimated global gender gap in low-income and middle-income countries shows that women are 14 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone than men. Regionally, this gap is particularly marked in South Asia, where women are 38 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone.⁷ There is also a gender divide in Internet usage, with Internet penetration in Asia and the Pacific at 39.5 per cent for females versus 47.5 per cent for males.⁸ As information and communication technologies (ICT) are the cornerstone of our increasingly digital economies, these gender gaps will only translate into women falling further behind.

These gender-based inequalities in access to land, financial instruments and ICT tools demonstrate the multidimensional nature of women's economic empowerment and the integrated response that is needed to tackle them. Recognizing this need, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the regional development arm of the United Nations for Asia-Pacific, is capitalizing on its multidisciplinary programmes in social development, ICT, trade and



Image: Cai Cai/ESCAP

A woman entrepreneur in China. ESCAP works with governments and other stakeholders to help remove barriers to women's entrepreneurship

investment, and macroeconomic policy, to actively promote enablers for women's economic empowerment. Two initiatives in particular are being implemented towards achieving these aims: capacity-building to promote gender-responsive budgeting, and support for women's entrepreneurship.

Promoting gender-responsive budgeting

Effective and responsive domestic resource mobilization is imperative for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. Recognizing this, ESCAP, as a part of our work to enhance member states' financing for development capacity, has championed the integration of gender concerns into national planning and budgetary processes, otherwise known as gender-responsive budgeting. Gender-responsive budgeting aims to achieve equitable distribution and allocation of resources between men and women across sectors in accordance with their different needs and priorities. Thus, it is a powerful tool for ensuring an all-of-government approach to empowering women and girls.

ESCAP provides gender-responsive budgeting technical assistance to a number of countries, including Cambodia, China and Lao People's Democratic Republic, and helps deepen the understanding and enhance the capacity of senior officials in ministries of finance, planning and various line ministries to apply gender-responsive budgeting in their respective countries.

In addition to seeking technical assistance, a number of Asia-Pacific countries are also taking concrete steps to expand the uptake of gender-responsive budgeting in both the public and private sectors. Some noteworthy best practice examples include the efforts underway in Indonesia, the Philippines and China.

Following the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting in Indonesia, the Ministries of Tourism and Creative Economy,



Image: Mari Sawai/ESCAP

Electricity and light from a local biomass plant have improved this family's quality of life in Badhai, Punjab

Industry and Trade, Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises found that lack of access to markets, networking and skills training opportunities significantly impeded the ability of women to start and run their own businesses. To address these challenges, these ministries have joined hands to sponsor domestic and international trade fairs to promote the products of women-led businesses, provide sector-specific training programmes, and develop incubators for innovative business models. These measures will go far in helping to build a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem for women in Indonesia.

In the Philippines, a national law has been implemented that requires each ministry to allocate a minimum of 5 per cent of its annual budget to projects addressing gender concerns. Implementation of gender-responsive budgeting over the past two decades has resulted in a number of progressive policy and legal measures promoting equal opportunities for women and girls. The implementation of these policies contributed to the Philippines ranking seventh out of 145 in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2015. As the highest ranked Asia-Pacific country, the Philippines has made considerable progress in closing gender gaps in health and survival, educational attainment, economic participation and political empowerment.

In China, to enhance rural women's access to credit and financial services, a state-subsidized interest-free loan programme was jointly launched in 2009 by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security, People's Bank of China and the All-China Women's Federation. Benefiting from loans totalling US\$42 billion issued over the

past seven years, more than 5 million women have been able to start or expand their businesses and thereby create employment opportunities for millions of women in China.

Promoting women's entrepreneurship

Asia and the Pacific is the engine of global economic growth and home to the world's fastest growing economies. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of this growth, accounting for on average 96 per cent of all enterprises and over 60 per cent of the national labour force in the region.⁹ Women-owned SMEs are a critical component in this landscape and they have enormous potential to contribute to economic growth, particularly in emerging markets.

To support the creation of SMEs through female entrepreneurship, ESCAP has been working with governments and other stakeholders in the region to foster the adoption of legal and regulatory measures that remove barriers to women's entrepreneurship. Our policy work aims to:

- address discriminatory social norms and ensure gender-responsive policy in SME development and promotion
- engage financial institutions to increase women's access to credit and financial services, and develop standards for fair and equal treatment of women applicants
- enhance women's access to market information, social networks and services through harnessing access to ICT.

Of these policy areas, we as a region must urgently work together to enhance women's access to ICT in particular.



Young students learn computer skills to prepare themselves for the future

Technological advancements are rapidly transforming economies and charting the path towards an increasingly digital economy. In South-East Asia, for instance, by 2030, a new wave of disruptive innovations created by, among other things, the development of the Internet of Things, mobile Internet, big data and cloud technology could lead to an increase of up to 12 per cent in GDP.¹⁰ These disruptive technologies will shape the future of many sectors, including those with a high concentration of women-owned enterprises such as the agriculture, food and retail sectors. If effectively leveraged, they could unleash new market opportunities and provide productivity and efficiency gains for large companies and SMEs, including women-owned enterprises.

Harnessing the transformative capabilities of ICT will require Asia and the Pacific to significantly enhance ICT connectivity. ESCAP research has revealed that there is an alarming digital divide in broadband connectivity among the Asia-Pacific region. As many as 20 countries in the region have below 2 per cent of fixed broadband subscription per 100 inhabitants,¹¹ while ICT champions such as the Republic of Korea enjoy over 40 per cent. These disparities exist not only between and within countries, but as mentioned earlier, they also exist between men and women. Thus, when taking into account both the digital and the gender divide, the need to place particular focus on women's access to productive ICT tools becomes even more pressing.

To enable more women to participate and benefit from the rapidly changing digital economy, ESCAP is rolling out a new regional programme in 2016 – the Women and ICT Frontier

Initiative. This comprehensive and integrated ICT and entrepreneurship training programme is being implemented in partnership with government agencies and national training institutions to support women's access to technology and build their skills to start and expand their businesses.

Leaving no one behind

The 2030 Agenda provides us with a blueprint for global progress to achieve sustainable development, and gender equality and women's empowerment are drivers of this progress. To transform its vision of gender equality into a reality, we need catalytic policy initiatives backed by adequate financing. Comprehensive gender-responsive budgeting is one of the tools at the disposal of governments to ensure that enough financing is committed throughout the system to convert intentions into actions, contributing to equitable outcomes for women and men, girls and boys. Promoting women's entrepreneurship is another important mechanism that can both increase the economic empowerment of women and enhance economic output, employment creation and women's participation in the labour force.

ESCAP plays a pivotal role in the Asia-Pacific region, working with governments to enhance investments in gender equality and women's empowerment. Leaving no one behind in Asia and the Pacific requires that the commitments we have made for gender equality translate into resources and opportunities for the advancement of women and girls in all aspects of society and life, and harnessing their productive potential for sustainable prosperity.

Empowering women with information and communications technology

Dr. Angela Langenkamp, Gender Officer of GIZ and Senior Programme Officer in the Governance and Conflict Division; Christine Brendel, Manager, Regional Programme 'Fighting violence against women in Latin America' – ComVoMujer; Sandra Doempke, Manager, Private Sector Development Project (PSDP), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on all of us not to be bystanders in her speech at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in September 2015. "We are making a new commitment with Sustainable Development Goal 5," she concluded. "Commitments are good. Action is better. Let us take action!"

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH acts and works on the principle that gender equality is a human right, a goal in itself, a key to sustainable development and a quality feature of its work. As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ is determined and committed to uphold gender equality as a guiding principle in its own company and in its work with partners in more than 130 countries around the world, while supporting the German Government as well as other public and private actors in achieving their objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Every two years the internal GIZ Gender Competition and Award honours projects for their convincing and innovative initiatives in the area of promoting gender equality and empowering women. These initiatives provide proof of and stand for innovation, excellence and competence development. The 87

project applications for the 2016 Gender Competition cover a wide range of sectors and thematic issues such as governance, financial inclusion, economic participation, climate change, energy, biodiversity, agriculture and rural development, health and education. They assist greatly in responding appropriately to challenges and changes in the development landscape. Looking for new and innovative ways to do this, one approach is the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology (ICT) which represents one of the sub-goals of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

ICT has changed the world: the way we communicate with each other, the way we organize ourselves, the way we do business and the way we access and spread information. Experience has shown that ICT can be an enabling but also a dividing factor. Already existing disparities can be enhanced if women and girls lack or are denied access to ICT. But ICT can also serve as a promoter of women's economic, social and legal empowerment, as a possibility for networking, participation and advocacy within society and as a means to disseminate and provide access to good practices. The Pacific Gender and Climate Change Toolkit, available online for practitioners and developed in collaboration between GIZ and other international and bilateral partners, is such a web-based source of information that can be accessed from anywhere in the world.¹

ICT is critical to social and economic development and as such also for the promotion of gender equality and the achievement of Agenda 2030. The two following case studies, both commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), show successful examples of how the opportunities afforded by ICT have been exploited to fight violence against women in Latin America and empower women as entrepreneurs in war-torn Yemen.

Tackling violence against women in Ecuador

Gender-based violence against women (VAW) is still very widespread in Latin America. The World Health Organization estimated in 2010 that 30-50 per cent of women in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru are subjected to physical violence by their partners. The Andean countries and Paraguay have committed themselves to preventing, combating and punishing VAW. They have also ratified major international agreements and put in place laws on protection from violence and action





The Junt@s — Together app can notify an emergency centre or a person of trust at the touch of a button³



CNT trained its employees using the online certification course 'Safe Company — leader in zero tolerance towards violence against women'

plans to tackle gender-specific violence. However, the effective implementation of these laws and commitments is rather weak. Through the years VAW has become culturally accepted in many societies of Latin America.

ComVoMujer, the regional programme 'Fighting Violence against Women in Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru' of GIZ, aims at changing this reality so that women stop suffering gender-based violence. The programme focuses on improving the exchange of information and cooperation between regional and national stakeholders and collaboration with the private sector in the region, in order to implement measures to prevent and combat this epidemic. The idea is that enhanced exchange of information and experience between countries and effective dialogue between public, non-governmental and private-sector stakeholders improves the implementation of existing laws and action plans.

Groundbreaking studies in private companies, conducted by ComVoMujer in conjunction with the Peruvian University of San Martín de Porres, highlighted the financial consequences of VAW for businesses in the region.² Hence, VAW is not only a human rights violation and a serious public health problem, but also a major financial burden and an obstacle to socio-economic development. The studies have shown that VAW costs medium and large businesses in Peru US\$6.7 billion, or 3.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). In Bolivia the cost is US\$2 billion (6.5 per cent of GDP) and in Paraguay it is around US\$735 million (2.4 per cent of GDP). These alarming figures caught the attention of businesses and not only led to campaigns and measurements within the companies but also to the cooperation of the private sector with state institutions.

A company that has been especially active in the fight against VAW is the National Telecommunications Corporation of Ecuador (CNT) with more than 7,000 employees across the country. The company trained almost all its employees on VAW with the online certification course 'Safe Company —

leader in zero tolerance towards violence against women' and implemented several campaigns on the prevention of VAW. Together with ComVoMujer, CNT also developed the cost-free app Junt@s, which can be downloaded but is also a standard feature of all new smart phones sold by CNT.³ With this app an emergency centre or a person of trust can be notified with just the touch of a button. For security reasons, the use of its help or emergency function is not recorded and therefore cannot be traced by the perpetrator. Additionally, the app offers help in the form of contacts for specialized institutions, motivating phrases for affected women, and tests to find out whether the user is in danger of suffering violence or becoming an aggressor.

Within only one year and with the technical assistance of GIZ, CNT converted into a leading business in preventing VAW. As a company taking its corporate social responsibility seriously, CNT was also able to better its position on the free market over other providers that do not offer this app. The goal is to reach out to as many mobile phone users as possible and therefore a second, enhanced version of the app is in the making. After all, prevention is everybody's responsibility.

Strengthening businesswomen in times of conflict

Yemen has descended into a full-fledged military conflict since March 2015. Even before the war, the economic conditions in the country were challenging. Women in particular had limited access to economic opportunities and education due to cultural and political norms. According to World Bank data, only one in four women was economically active in 2014. In current times of war businesswomen, even more than their male counterparts, struggle hard to keep their businesses going or to start up their own business. Freedom of movement is very limited due to fighting, destroyed infrastructure and high petrol costs. The GIZ Private Sector Development Project aims to strengthen companies and households in times of war by safeguarding and creating jobs. Important partners such as



Image: GIZ

GIZ partnered with the Yemeni Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Service (SMEPS) to reach out to businesswomen in the country through the WhatsApp Consultancy for Businesswomen

the Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Service (SMEPS) are additionally strengthened in their capacities.

Yemeni businesswomen need more support than ever — though it is challenging to reach out to them. In 2015, the GIZ project therefore started to support its Yemeni partner SMEPS to reach out to businesswomen in the country through social media. The aim of the new approach — WhatsApp Consultancy for Businesswomen — is to help female business owners with limited freedom of movement to stay in business and to safeguard jobs during the war.

In an initial pilot, 300 Yemeni women who had participated in International Labour Organization (ILO) start-up training received business development services from six female advisors through WhatsApp over the course of one month. WhatsApp groups of a maximum of 20 women were established, an advisory manual drafted and clear rules set. Women profited from the direct consultancy offered by the six female consultants, but also from advice and motivation from their respective peer groups. While some groups were categorized by professions, others were open to all types of businesses. One of these professional groups was specifically for midwives. Not only did the 80 members of this group manage to stay in business, but some of them even managed to expand their business with the help of the consultants and their peer groups. They hired an additional 120 women and the average income of these 200 women has increased by 220 per cent.

The example of one midwife illustrates that there are additional positive impacts of the measure. One midwife from the northern part of the country had to flee to another region as her house was bombed. She considered selling her medical tools as she did not see a chance for her, as an internally displaced person (IDP), to

find work and be accepted as a professional midwife in her new village. The other businesswomen and the consultant convinced her through WhatsApp to try again. They advised her to offer her services for two weeks for free in order to actively promote her skills. She also received advice on how to develop a new financial concept. She tried, and managed to start taking money for her services. Today she is making a decent income. She even hired an additional person and organizes and sells medicine to the villagers because, due to the ongoing war, there is neither a pharmacy nor a health station available nearby.

The WhatsApp measure provided by SMEPS has successfully created trust among businesswomen from different groups and backgrounds of society. Even women who come from opposing geographical areas started to interact and to support each other as peer-to-peer advisors.

Reportedly, the trained businesswomen contribute significantly (if not most) to the household income and one can observe increasing support by husbands and other male family members. Even though the WhatsApp consultancy was officially finished after one month, the groups still exist, with businesswomen supporting and advising each other.

These two case studies were submitted for the GIZ Gender Competition of 2016 and represent two of many successful examples of GIZ's engagement in gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's empowerment was also a central feature of Germany's presidency of G7⁴ in 2015 and features as one of the key issues of Germany's G20⁵ Presidency in 2017. The German Government's commitments, which are binding for GIZ, find their reflection also in the German Sustainability Strategy, the BMZ Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 and the European Union Gender Action Plan 2016-2020.

Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence

Mendy Marsh, Child Protection Specialist, GBV in Emergencies, UNICEF New York; Athieng Riak, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF South Sudan; and Patty Alleman, Senior Advisor, Gender and Development, UNICEF New York

Violence against women and girls, also called gender-based violence (GBV), is a pervasive problem in societies all over the world — in all countries, on all continents, among the rich and poor, in cities and in the countryside. Violence comes in many forms. Women and girls are often extremely vulnerable to sexual violence during armed conflict, natural disasters and during displacement, with harsh tolls on their physical and mental health and socio-economic wellbeing. It can also have grave social consequences, such as isolating families and undermining community cohesion.

Despite wide recognition of the devastating effects of GBV on survivors, as well as their children, societies often do not do enough to put a stop to the problem. On the contrary, many communities have shared beliefs and unspoken rules that send the message that sexual violence against girls and women is acceptable. These beliefs have to do with expectations of how women, men, boys and girls should behave, who should have power and control in different situations, and how communities value the lives and well-

being of women and girls and support their rights, needs and opportunities.

These expectations usually put girls and women at a disadvantage, leading to discrimination, violence and lack of justice. Changing these norms and perspectives is a necessary step to putting a stop to GBV and to ensuring quality services for survivors that promote healing and prevent re-victimization.

The programme *Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence (CC)*¹, developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), aims to do just that. Grounded in the idea that even though armed conflict causes horrific suffering, the resulting disruption may also create opportunities for positive changes in social norms.

The process of transforming harmful community norms is not easy, and requires the dedication and participation of everyone, from community leaders and teachers, health workers and students, to law enforcement and parents. All must work together to build healthier, safer and more peaceful and prosperous communities in which all enjoy their rights to live free from violence.



Images: UNICEF/Adriane Olanesian 2015

CC programme participant William Madut Mel with his children: "My commitment is to send both my daughters and sons to school, to treat them equally"

How it works

The Communities Care programme aims to create healthier, safer and more peaceful communities for women and girls by working to improve access to care and support for survivors of sexual violence, and to transform harmful social norms that uphold violence against women and girls into norms that promote dignity, equality and non-violence². This is done through a two-pronged approach: 1) guiding local service providers from the health, education, and justice sectors through reflection and training to improve their knowledge, attitudes and skills related to working with survivors of GBV, and 2) facilitating dialogue among key community members to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

More specifically, in collaboration with programme staff, including local Community Discussion Leaders and service providers, communities are guided through a 16-week process by a toolkit that supports them to implement a six-step pathway to change:

- **Step 1:** Strengthen community-based care and support for GBV survivors — including health, psychosocial, law enforcement and education services — by addressing gaps in services, identifying barriers to access, and providing training and mentoring for providers on sexual violence, social norms, self-awareness and survivor-centred care.
- **Step 2:** Reflect and raise awareness in the community about harmful beliefs and norms that foster sexual violence, as well as positive community values that contribute to healthy, safe and peaceful communities. This step requires identifying community members who can act as agents of change.
- **Step 3:** Through facilitated discussions, explore and choose alternative practices that promote non-violent and respectful relationships between men and women, identifying both immediate and long-term changes that can be made.
- **Step 4:** Commit to taking action to prevent sexual violence. The programme supports community members in understanding the collective benefits of promoting change and organizing public actions that demonstrate their commitment to non-violence.
- **Step 5:** Communicate positive norms with others in and beyond the community. Making these changes visible reinforces that change is possible, is happening — and can be contagious!
- **Step 6:** Build an environment that supports the community in sustaining change, including by advocating for laws, policies and other mechanisms that support new practices and behaviours, address violations, and strengthen the capacity of institutions to provide care for survivors.

At the time of writing, UNICEF's Communities Care programme is being piloted and tested in conflict-affected communities in Somalia and South Sudan, in partnership with local and international organizations as well as researchers at Johns Hopkins University. In each country, there are communities that receive the programme, and communities that serve as 'comparison' communities that do not receive the programme right away. This approach allows us see clearly whether the programme is truly successful in transforming norms and preventing and delivering compassionate responses to GBV. Through this research, UNICEF and Johns Hopkins University are pioneering tools to better understand and measure social norms and their effects on communities. These tools are intended to be useful to any organization that wants to test the impact of programmes aiming to transform negative social norms and behaviours related to preventing and responding to sexual and related forms of violence.

While evaluation results are not yet in, the below case study from South Sudan highlights early insights into programme



Images: UNICEF/Adriane Olanesian 2015

Community members perform a skit challenging ideas of education and household norms during the launch of the CC programme in Gogrial West, South Sudan



Members of the community show off their commitments at the launch of the CC programme in Gogrial West, South Sudan



Images: UNICEF/Adriane Ohanesian 2015

successes. These include raising community members' awareness and mobilizing action, and strengthening health, education and justice systems to prevent and respond to GBV.

Communities Care in South Sudan

The setting

Since 2013, armed conflict between the Government and opposition forces has ravaged large parts of South Sudan, leaving tens of thousands dead. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that more than 2.3 million people, or one in every five, have been forced to flee their homes. Sexual violence has been found to be a key feature of the ongoing conflict.³

The programme

To start the programme in South Sudan, UNICEF and partners conducted a mapping exercise in the programme communities to assess the presence and quality of services related to GBV. This exercise identified gaps in facility-based physical and basic psychological health care, highlighting the need for community-based health care to complement existing services to ensure quality care reaches those who need it.

The mapping also found that most people in the communities turn to church, religious groups and women's groups when they seek some form of social service support, including in cases of GBV. Therefore, participants recruited for the programme's service provider trainings included representatives from these groups, alongside social workers from the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. Also, because the traditional justice system plays a critical role in law enforcement, community chiefs and influential members of customary courts were also invited to participate in trainings alongside police officers, lawyers and judges.

Communities in action

Facilitated by a trained Community Discussion Leader, the community dialogue component of the programme stimulates reflection on shared community values, individual rights — including the right to live free of violence — and fosters debate about existing beliefs and norms that are harmful for women and girls, which leads to discussion about change and alternatives.

Community members then identify relevant and achievable actions and strategies to change harmful social norms and practices to create shifts in attitudes about violence against women and girls. Such actions could include working with fathers and husbands to better support daughters and wives who have experienced sexual violence, encouraging religious leaders to take public stances against sexual violence with their congregants, and urging local officials to strengthen laws and policies to reduce impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence.

After a round of dialogue sessions in one community in South Sudan, for example, participants made individual commitments to make sure their daughters completed primary school and did not marry before age 18. Some men committed to helping their wives with household work such as collecting water, washing dishes and cooking. Collectively, community members are working together through storytelling, drama and songs to stop child marriage, change survivor-blaming attitudes and include women in traditional courts.

UNICEF and partner staff have reported significant changes in attitudes and behaviours in intervention communities. In one community, male CC programme participants now recognize that their wives have equal rights; there was also greater recognition that husbands are not entitled to abuse their spouses. In another community, a man who had participated in group dialogues was observed pumping water in an effort to better share the burden of household chores with his wife. This behaviour



Arop Kuol pumps water from a borehole: "My commitment is to work together with my wife"



Images: UNICEF/Adriane Ohanesian 2015

was previously unheard of in a community where household work is considered the sole responsibility of women and girls. While this early and anecdotal information does not amount to evidence of sustained change in gender- and violence-related social norms or behaviours, these are promising signs, pointed in the right direction.

Strengthening health and social service systems

One of the most innovative elements of the CC programme is its work with community health workers (CHWs) on building their capacity to fill the gaps in health facilities' work with GBV survivors. Based on the initial mapping and consultation with the Ministry of Health, the CC programme's CHW training focused on providing referrals and awareness-raising on sexual violence and related HIV risks.

Facility-based health workers such as doctors, midwives and nurses were also trained on health and psychosocial support for survivors of sexual violence, including the clinical management of rape.

In line with the CC programme's approach to sustained change, UNICEF and partners will continue to follow up with both facility and non-facility-based trainees to assess the quality of services and identify opportunities for further capacity development and mentorship to improve survivor care.

Communities Care also worked with psychosocial service providers. In one community, prior to training, most of the local service providers believed that survivors should be blamed for rape. By the end of the training, 100 per cent of participants no longer believed this. The participants credited the use of the CC toolkit with helping them shift their beliefs. In another community, participants discussed challenges to providing services to survivors, including lack of capacity and poor coordination among service providers. As a solution, the participants established a community-based network to strengthen coordination and peer support. The

group now meets monthly and has helped develop reference guides based on the training, such as "do's and don'ts" of working with survivors. These reference guides are an early sign of sustainability — they will help transmit the lessons learned beyond the duration of the programme, which can contribute to lasting change.

Educating the educators

The CC programme recognizes the critical role of education in preventing GBV and responding to the needs of survivors, especially children. In South Sudan, incidents of rape of girls by teachers and/or on the way to or from school have been reported, and parents are hesitant to send girls to school. In consultation with the Ministry of Education in each state, several schools were selected for training from the CC toolkit. Participants included teachers, principals, school administration, parents and representatives from the state Ministry of Education.

Before the training, 90 per cent of participants were unaware of the code of conduct to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by teachers. They were also unaware of how to report incidents of sexual violence and refer survivors to services. After the training, the participants drafted a plan to prevent and respond to sexual violence in their schools.

Recommendations made by the participants included:

- Raise awareness about GBV during lessons, school assemblies, parent-teacher association meetings and extracurricular activities.
- Establish mechanisms to report incidents of sexual violence (for example, suggestion boxes in strategic areas in the school where students can report confidentially).
- Identify and train senior women teachers to support students and serve as counsellors and focal points for referrals; dedicate safe spaces in the schools where students can meet with them.



Children gather for the launch of the CC programme in Gogrial West, South Sudan on 16 November 2015

- Conduct trainings for teachers and non-teaching staff to understand and sign the code of conduct.
- Implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Incorporate life skills into school curricula to promote self-esteem and confidence among students, especially girls, and to challenge negative social norms.

While monitoring is ongoing, at the time of writing, three schools were visited and all of them had implemented at least one of the recommendations.

Improving the justice system

Prior to the CC programme trainings, some members of customary courts were unaware that sexual violence is a criminal offence under the Penal Code and did not know that only formal justice systems can handle such cases. Police officers were under the incorrect impression that certain paperwork and reporting was a precondition to survivors being able to access medical care.

The training helped participants understand these basic laws and policies as well as their roles in preventing and responding to sexual violence. In one community, as in the one mentioned above, a clear legal response protocol was developed by participants, highlighting do's and don'ts for both customary and formal legal structures to support survivors seeking legal redress.

In another location, a mentoring and supervision plan was developed after the training, and follow-up meetings are ongoing among participants and the county police inspector to discuss the role of law enforcement and the courts in providing justice to women and girls who have experienced sexual violence. The CC programme training module for law enforcement actors was also shared with the South Sudan National Police Services as potential input to the national police training curriculum.



Mayen Awak, Senior Community Engagement Officer for the Organization for Children's Harmony in Gogrial, worked closely with community members to bring the CC programme to completion

Positive change

While it is too early to determine the sustainable impact of the CC programme, early indicators are positive. Thus far, the pilot programmes in both South Sudan and Somalia have trained over 600 service providers, worked with over 1,000 community discussion participants, engaged 50,000 people in collective community actions and community events, and reached over 17,000 through radio-based awareness-raising efforts.

Emerging evidence also shows that community discussion dialogues promote community action and contribute to safer, more peaceful communities. Trained Community Discussion Leaders demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of the negative impacts GBV can have on community cohesion. Service providers across many sectors also demonstrate greater understanding of the specific needs of survivors, as well as the positive impact they can make, including as role models in their communities.

Preliminary findings point to significant differences in outcomes between control and intervention groups, with the latter reporting a reduction in acceptability of the social norm of 'protecting family honour', as well as the norm of blaming a woman/girl for the sexual violence she has experienced. Intervention communities also report a reduction in intimate partner violence and the acceptability of husbands using violence against their wives.

In the CC programme, communities are the engine of transforming lives and preventing violence against girls and women. They are also the voice to advocate for systems change and accountability to better prevent and respond to violence.

We hope this example inspires and translates across the globe as we collectively aim to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 5 target of eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres.

Engagement for action: how the Government of Canada is responding to gender-based violence

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P. Minister of Status of Women, Government of Canada

There is no doubt that gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be a serious problem in Canada and around the world.

A study published in medical journal *The Lancet* in 2013 collected data on intimate partner homicide from multiple sources in a total of 162 countries. Among 16 comparable countries, Canada ranks tenth according to the percentage of women killed in an intimate relation context. In Canada, 47 per cent of all women who are murdered are in this category. In Australia it's 22 per cent, in Japan it is 29 per cent. However, Austria and Denmark are at the higher end of the spectrum with 77 per cent and 70 per cent respectively.

In 2014, for the first time since Canada started collecting crime statistics, women had higher rates of self-reported violent victimization than men. There were 85 such incidents for every 1,000 women, compared to 67 for every 1,000 men.

In addition to the personal trauma and pain caused by such events, they also have a financial cost for our society. A study conducted by the Canadian Department of Justice estimated that the cost of spousal violence against women reaches more than C\$4.8 billion per year. This includes the costs to victims of C\$3.7 billion, the cost to third parties of C\$691 million and

the cost to the justice system of C\$454 million. In addition, Canadian employers lose C\$52.1 million due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence such as absenteeism, reduced productivity and, in some cases, job loss.

When I was sworn in as the new Minister of Status of Women Canada in late 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau gave me a mandate to work with experts and advocates to develop and implement a comprehensive gender based violence strategy.

Unfortunately, being female is one of the strongest predictors of violent victimization in Canada. Women are more likely than men to be victims of intimate partner violence, including homicide, sexual violence and harassment. Overall, 80 per cent of intimate partner homicides in Canada are committed by men against women. The homicide rate of women in Canada is four times that of men. In the population 15 and over, the rate of homicides against women is 0.44 per 100,000 while for men it is 0.11 per 100,000.

Some 94 per cent of sexual assaults were committed by men, especially younger men. The majority of child sexual abuse victims, including online abuse, are girls.

A 2014 Angus Reid survey found that 28 per cent of Canadians reported experiencing sexual harassment at work. The survey showed that women were over 3.5 times more likely



Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women



Minister Patty Hajdu and Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau with young women from Plan Canada



Minister Patty Hajdu with members from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police



Government of Canada Ministers: Jody Wilson-Raybould, Patty Hajdu and Carolyn Bennett

to report any kind of sexual harassment than men – 43 per cent for women versus 12 per cent for men. Women were also more than twice as likely to report unwanted touching than men.

Overall police-reported crime, including violent crime, is decreasing. But rates of certain types of violence that disproportionately affect women and girls have increased, including sexual assault, online child exploitation, luring and online harassment. From 2013 to 2014, police-reported sexual assault among female victims increased 19 per cent. There were also 83 intimate partner homicides in 2014, up from 72 in 2013.

The rates of violent crime against women in our three northern territories are up to eight times higher than the rates of these crimes in our provinces. Equally disturbing is the fact that Indigenous women and girls in all parts of Canada face violent crime rates up to three times greater than those for non-Indigenous women and girls.

The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada has received national and international attention. Rights organizations, Indigenous groups, academics and many others have long argued that this was an issue that urgently needed to be addressed. Amnesty International raised the issue in 2004, and it was also flagged by The United Nations and Inter-American Commissions on Human Rights in 2015.

Here in Canada, a 2014 report by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), examined all police jurisdictions across the country. The review accounted for the murder of 1,017 Indigenous women and girls and the disappearance of 164 Indigenous females. A 2015 update to the RCMP report added 32 Indigenous female homicide cases and 11 additional missing Indigenous women and girls.

The RCMP also confirmed that Indigenous women are ‘over-represented’ among Canada’s missing and murdered women, something affected families and advocates had been highlighting for many years. Indigenous women made up 16 per cent of all women murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012, but comprised only 4 per cent of Canada’s female population. Meanwhile, the homicide rate for Indigenous women has remained unchanged over the past three decades while it has been declining for non-Indigenous women in Canada.

Clearly, this tragic situation needs to be addressed.

The Government of Canada recognizes the severity of this tragedy and is committed to reducing the levels of violence that disproportionately affect Indigenous women and girls. Among other initiatives, we have launched a national inquiry to help us better understand the systemic nature of the violence and what actions must be taken to end it.

As Minister of the Status of Women, I joined with the Ministers of Justice and Indigenous and Northern Affairs to design this inquiry.

Our challenge was to ensure that the mandate and composition of the commission reflected the needs and expectations of those most directly affected. We knew that meeting directly with families and survivors was the collaborative and inclusive approach needed to ensure its success.

In winter 2016, my colleagues and other senior departmental officials met with survivors, families and representatives of support organizations who work with women at risk. In total, we met more than 2,000 people affected by the tragedies.

We took special steps to ensure that all the participants were safe, supported and respected. A wide range of cultural, spiritual and religious ceremonies were included at each meeting. Elders were on hand to provide ceremony and counsel and Health Canada workers were available at all times to provide additional cultural and emotional support and to ensure the well-being of participants. We also gave survivors, families and loved ones as much advance notice as possible to enable their participation in meetings in their regions. The Government covered the costs of travel and accommodation for family members and individuals from support groups.

In addition to meeting with survivors and their families, we met with Indigenous leaders, provincial and territorial leaders, local front-line support organizations, community representatives, scholars and legal experts.

It is clear that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people want to see justice for victims and their families. They also want to see systemic change that will address the underlying causes of violence.



Image: SWCFC

Minister Patty Hajdu with members of her Advisory Council on Gender-based Violence

The many participants also spoke about a deep desire for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. We believe that the basis of reconciliation is creating a better understanding of the effects of racism and discrimination against Indigenous peoples. We also believe that we must foster a climate of respect for Indigenous culture and its enormous contributions to Canada.

An independent *National Commission of Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* was officially created on 8 August 2016. The commission has a mandate to examine and report on the systemic causes behind the violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls. By looking for patterns and underlying factors that explain why higher levels of violence occur, we hope to understand why Indigenous women and girls are more vulnerable to violence than others.

The commission will examine and report on contributing historical, social, economic, cultural and institutional factors. It will examine the effects of policies and practices of government bodies such as police forces, child welfare agencies, coroners, and others. The mandate is expected to be complete by the end of 2018 and we are looking forward to seeing the recommendations for action.

At the same time, we know we cannot wait for the results of the commission before we take action. That is why we are also engaged in consultations and discussions on the development of an overall federal strategy on GBV.

To do so, we are focused on six main objectives:

- the federal scope
- emphasising prevention
- embracing diversity
- respecting survivors
- finding evidence
- forming partnerships.

In June 2016, I created an 18-member Advisory Council to provide guidance on the engagement process and to

help develop the strategy. The council acts as a forum for exchanging views on best practices and research related to GBV.

The members of the Advisory Council represent a broad range of expertise and include experts in violence prevention and alternative gender identity such as lesbian, transsexual and transgender issues, and engages men and boys.

I also convened a series of roundtable discussions on the issue bringing together over 300 individuals from all key sectors. One of these was a scientific panel of recognized Canadian researchers who took stock of the current knowledge on risk and protective factors and on evidence-based preventative interventions. We also conducted a targeted survey of key experts who could not attend the roundtables and a more general survey of over 7,500 Canadians to gather opinions and perceptions regarding the federal role and priorities for action on GBV.

In addition, I have met with survivors of GBV from across the country to hear first-hand experiences of victimization and its consequences. I've also listened to survivors' views on the priorities we should pursue.

Hearing first-hand experiences and the ideas and perspectives of experts in the field will inform a collaborative, comprehensive, evidence-based and accountable strategy that will move us closer to the elimination of GBV in this country.

Through a much firmer commitment on GBV and a resulting national conversation, Canadians are gaining a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the federal government and why this issue is so integral for gender equality here and around the world.

Violence against women in our society, and in societies around the world, has been ignored for far too long. We know the path to reducing and eliminating it altogether will not be easy or smooth. But we are committed to finding solutions and working toward the day when all women and girls will have an equal opportunity to thrive in safe homes and communities.

FAO Dimitra Clubs — boosting rural women's empowerment using information and communication technologies

*Christiane Monsieur, Eliane Najros, and Andrea Sánchez Enciso,
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*

Through the Dimitra Clubs implemented in sub-Saharan Africa, by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), rural communities discuss and solve their common problems and take their own development in hand in a sustainable way. This participatory communication approach leads to changes that improve people's livelihoods and gender equality. In this process, information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as solar radios, mobile phones and apps are used as enablers for socioeconomic empowerment and women's leadership.

All over the world, rural women make important contributions to agriculture and rural economies.¹ Nevertheless, compared with men, women face gender-specific inequalities that are barriers for the socioeconomic growth of their communities and countries. This is particularly the case in sub-Saharan Africa, where over half (52 per cent) of the rural population lives in extreme poverty, earning less than \$1.25 a day.²

In this region, women have less access than men to productive resources, including land and inputs, training, extension

and financial services, information, technologies, ICTs, markets etc., and their access to basic services such as education and health is limited.

Women's disadvantaged position is further exacerbated by the fact that they are generally not involved in decision-making or policy processes in the agricultural and rural sectors. Their voice is not heard and/or does not count, at different levels (households, organizations and communities). Being less informed about opportunities, they are less able to make informed choices.

ICTs have rapidly spread, including in the developing world where mobile phones' penetration at the household level has surpassed access to electricity and improved sanitation.³ In only 10 years, worldwide the number of Internet users has gone from 1 billion in 2005 to 3.2 billion at the end of 2015.⁴ Their proliferation has led to important social and economic transformations, boosting socioeconomic growth, expanding job opportunities and improving services.

Yet in 2016 over half of the world's population is still offline, particularly in Africa, where most of the Internet non-users (75 per cent) are present.⁵ Although mobile subscription has



Image: Senegal, Yarnick De Moi

ICTs can be drivers for rural women to raise their voices and actively participate in decision-making processes



Image: The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Christiane Monsieur

Community radio stations are used to relay information requested by the clubs, broadcast the debates, and facilitate exchange and networking



Image: Niger, Elaine Najros

The dynamic nature of the Dimitra Clubs has stimulated changes in gender roles and behaviours at individual, household and community levels

grown fast in sub-Saharan Africa in the last decade, the region remains with the lowest mobile penetration worldwide.⁶ Not everyone benefits from the dividends of the digital technology sector. The digital divide exists between (developed/developing) and within countries (rural/urban) and women often lag behind men in terms of ownership and use of digital technologies in all regions of the world.

In sub-Saharan Africa, 64 per cent of women, representing over 300 million people, do not own a mobile phone. In Niger, the gender gap in mobile ownership represents 45 per cent.⁷ Besides structural impediments that inhibit both women and men in rural areas from reaping the benefits of using ICTs (costs, coverage and literacy), gender-specific factors influence women's possibilities to access, use and own digital technologies.

In this context, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is convinced that increased attention is needed to reducing the gender gap across all areas of its work. As declared by FAO Director-General, Mr José Graziano da Silva, "Women must be seen as equal partners in sustainable development, because they have as much to give as they need to receive. In the end, achieving gender equality and empowering women is not only the right thing to do; it is also a crucial ingredient in the fight against poverty and hunger."

FAO also considers that for facilitating women's empowerment it is necessary to have the strong engagement of both men and women. Gender inequalities are structural and deeply rooted in society. Cultural and behavioural changes are imperative for the transformation of rural societies.

The main question remains: how can this be achieved?

One of the answers provided by FAO is to facilitate women's and men's empowerment through innovative gender-sensitive approaches in the field of participatory communication. This is achieved through the Dimitra Clubs' approach, which has proved to be extremely effective

in stimulating changes in gender roles and behaviours in several countries of sub-Saharan Africa in the last 10 years. The approach has been developed by FAO with the support of the Belgian Cooperation.

The Dimitra Clubs help their members to strengthen community dialogue and social cohesion. They are groups of women, men and youth — mixed or not — who voluntarily decide to get organized to identify and discuss their problems, make informed choices and find solutions they can put into practice themselves, with their own resources. This process of empowerment translates into collective action and concrete achievements by the clubs to bring about changes in their communities.

The Dimitra Clubs are more than a simple participatory approach: by combining capacity development processes with the use of ICTs, such as solar-powered radio sets and mobile phones, phone apps and rural radio stations, this approach greatly contributes to people's empowerment, collective action, gender equality and better livelihoods for all.

The clubs are equipped with wind-up and solar-powered radios, often paired with mobile phones connected in a fleet. In this empowering process, community radio stations are used to relay information requested by the clubs, broadcast the debates on air and facilitate exchange and networking. It should be emphasized that rural radio is still today the most used media tool in Africa,⁸ particularly in rural isolated areas and among rural women.⁹

ICTs can pave the way to socioeconomic opportunities for rural women, such as mobile banking, cash transfers, e-learning and relevant information on market prices, sustainable agricultural techniques, weather conditions etc. They can be drivers for rural women to become more informed and active citizens, engage in income-generating opportunities, raise their voices and actively participate in decision-making processes. This results in significant social gains for the whole community.



The Dimitra Clubs combine capacity development processes with the use of ICTs such as solar-powered radio sets and mobile phones



Isolated rural communities can communicate with the world to share the clubs' achievements through photos, videos, texts and voice messages

ICTs are enablers for social inclusion and improved dialogue but they are not a development objective in themselves. By making use of ICTs in support of transformative processes, the Dimitra Clubs ensure better inclusive participation and ownership, and thus sustainability.

Today, there are 45,000 members (two thirds being women) in the 1,500 existing Dimitra Clubs in five countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Niger and Senegal). It is estimated that about 270,000 people benefit directly from the activities carried out by the clubs and that over 1 million people's lives have improved through them. Impact has been achieved in a variety of areas such as nutrition, agricultural production, resilience, climate change adaptation, marketing, women's leadership, gender equality, education, social cohesion and community governance.

The dynamic nature of this approach has stimulated changes in gender roles and behaviours at individual, household and community levels. In most villages women now speak up in public, something that was unacceptable before the clubs were created. Violence against women at the household and community levels has notably decreased. In the village of Gasseda (Niger), there is less tension among the villagers and the increasing number of girls going to school has led to a decrease in early and forced marriages. The clubs have also been instrumental for breaking down food taboos that prevented women from taking an adequate food intake. Thanks to a series of awareness-raising activities conducted by the Dimitra Clubs, in the village of Yalosuna (Democratic Republic of Congo) the women are now allowed to eat catfish and other previously forbidden foods, which adds a new and valuable source of protein to their diets.

As active members of the clubs, women increasingly gain self-confidence and often become leaders and entrepreneurs of their communities. In the village of Yanongé (Democratic Republic of Congo), women members of the clubs have become leaders of producers' organizations and participate in the decision-making processes at the community level. In Busunu (Ghana), one year after one club had been created, discussions around bread produc-

tion resulted in the kick-off of a business activity led by the women of the club. "We now have our own money, and this has given us more power with our husbands and within our families! We have developed leadership skills!" said Saasi Fati, treasurer of the club.

Many stories from the field¹⁰ show the success of this approach in using participatory communication and ICT applications as enablers for collective action. In the village of Mallam Koïra (Niger), a woman leader of a Dimitra Club noticed that some insects were damaging the millet fields. After discussions, her club decided to take action by taking a picture with the club facilitator's mobile phone and send it to the agricultural inspector of the region who was able to promptly advise on actions to stop the infestation. Three days after, the agricultural inspector sent the pest control agents who had already seen the picture and were able to provide the adequate treatment on time. In the village of Falwel (Niger), the youth's Dimitra Clubs have created a network through the WhatsApp application. For the first time, isolated rural communities communicate with the world to share the clubs' achievements through photos, videos, texts and voice messages. This has been a source of motivation for young rural people who feel they count and that they can contribute to improve their environment.

These stories show how participatory approaches making inclusive use of ICTs not only help build people's resilience capacities to mitigate risks, but also stimulate social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups in rural areas, such as women and youth, and contribute to gender equality.

In line with the principle of 'leaving no one behind' from Agenda 2030, the approach of the Dimitra Clubs is a new social model of individual and collective empowerment and engagement that is emerging with the use of improved communication. Efforts are currently being made to maximize the number of rural women and men targeted, notably by introducing better up-to-date digital technologies, such as smart phones and tablets, and in establishing partnerships with the private sector to improve connectivity and implement simple solutions for rural areas such as whitespaces for rural Wi-Fi.

Opening opportunities for all: advancing women's leadership and economic empowerment in Kenya

*Ambassador Gil Haskel, Head of MASHAV — Israel's Agency for
International Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Gender inequalities are still deep-rooted in many societies. Structural barriers in the economic, social, political and environmental spheres produce and reinforce these inequalities, resulting in a lack of access to the workforce, occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. In many situations, women are denied access to basic education and health care, are victims of violence and discrimination, and are underrepresented in political and economic decision-making processes.

Women have a critical role to play in all of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the need to recognize gender

equality is especially represented in Goal 5. Known also as 'the stand-alone gender goal', it is dedicated to achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, detailing in a single goal a full range of issues and actions. The 2011 United Nations General Assembly resolution on women's political participation noted that "women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women." Thus it establishes the link to one of the main targets of Goal 5: to provide women

Impact: empowering the women of Bungoma, Kenya

The impact of ACTIL's training was already evident in its early stages of establishment. In rural Bungoma County in western Kenya, about 400 kilometres from Nairobi, hundreds of women are becoming economically empowered and their lives are being transformed through a savings and credit cooperative society. This inspiring achievement is the work of a graduate of ACTIL's inaugural pilot training.

The Honourable Dr Reginalda Wanyonyi, Member of Parliament for Bungoma County, was among the first participants in ACTIL's course on Transformational Leadership and Agribusiness for Women Leaders. The empowering training inspired her to implement the knowledge acquired during the course to design and develop a County Action Plan to benefit and empower the women of her county.

Her plan led to the creation of a successful and much-needed enterprise: the Bungoma County Women's Savings and Credit Society (SACCO). The goal of the project was to create alternative opportunities at the grass-roots level for women entrepreneurs who otherwise did not have the possibility of taking loans for a low interest rate and with little or no collateral. The society encourages women to develop a culture of saving and to create wealth through a table-banking concept to raise a collateral and asset base. In its first eight months, SACCO grew to include over 10,000 members and more than 400 women's groups.

Loans disbursement goes hand-in-hand with entrepreneurship and business training. Realizing the need for capacity-building in entrepreneurship, and in accordance with ACTIL's goal of promoting the emergence of a regional network of leadership institutes, the society founded its own Transformational Leadership Institute. The institute develops necessary skills through professional capacity-building and mentorship while promoting innovation and social transformation as well as the expansion of businesses and agricultural activities.

Following her course in ACTIL, Dr Wanyonyi continued her professional training at MCTC in Israel, where she participated in the prestigious



Creating alternative opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Bungoma, Kenya

course on Economic Empowerment of Women, held by MASHAV-MCTC in cooperation with UN Women.

Dr Wanyonyi's drive and inspiring work has touched and transformed the lives of thousands of women and men in her community. One transformational leader, together with ACTIL's empowering training, has succeeded in impacting an entire community. Dr Wanyonyi is currently serving as Member of Parliament Representation, Legislation and Oversight, at the National Assembly of Kenya.



Image: MASHAV

Placing people at the heart of development: Head of MASHAV, Ambassador Gil Haskel, visits a MASHAV project in Kenya

with the tools, skills and capacity to be effective in their leadership roles.

We at MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, have promoted, since our inception in early 1958, the centrality of the human resource, focusing our activities on capacity-building. By placing people at the heart of development, we view it as our mission to lead the State of Israel's efforts to empower those living in poverty to improve their own lives, strengthening our commitment to share our knowledge and experience to inspire and support fellow nations and communities in their struggle to achieve sustainable development and social equality.

Moreover, we consider the empowerment of women as a critical and central component of our development policy. Sustainable development is only possible when women and men enjoy equal opportunities to reach their potential. Therefore the economic and political empowerment of women should be considered as a powerful instrument for changing women's position in society and a most effective way to reduce poverty.

As in many parts of the world, women in Africa face many challenges in their pathway to leadership. These include social and cultural barriers and traditional gender roles, as well as the lack of access to high-level skills to support their leadership development.

It is within this framework that the Africa Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership (ACTIL), a joint venture between MASHAV and the United Nations Entity

for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), in partnership with Kenyatta University, was established in 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya. ACTIL seeks to raise transformative leaders and build the leadership competencies of upcoming and existing leaders, especially women and youth, in politics, business, government and society to drive accelerated, equitable and sustainable development in Africa, taking into consideration increasing challenges and complexities, influenced by both local and global developments.

By definition, transformative leadership is built on a foundation of integrity and driven by self-awareness and a sense of purpose. It is about addressing inequity, improving the lives of others and making or influencing positive change. A transformational leader has the ability to inspire people to achieve unexpected or remarkable results.

ACTIL considers these transformative leaders 'agents of change'. The goal is to provide necessary skills through professional capacity-building and mentorship, while promoting innovation and social transformation to facilitate the emergence of a regional network of Leadership Institutes, creating high standards and, eventually, accreditation in leadership development. These leaders are committed to applying approaches that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres, thus creating a formidable alliance of leaders in Africa who can transform politics, business and society for the benefit of all.

MASHAV's involvement with ACTIL commenced at the vision stage. The founders of the newly born centre were



Image: MASHAV

Raising transformative leaders at ACTIL, Kenya

seeking a suitable educational model adaptable to their own realities and needs. They chose the Golda Meir MASHAV Carmel International Training Center (MCTC). As one of the first training centres in the world dedicated to the advancement of women, MCTC has been addressing the connection between gender, poverty reduction and sustainable development for over 55 years, placing women's education at the core of women's ability to contribute to all activities, and working to advance and enhance knowledge, competence and skills, both in the development process and in their contribution to civil society.

Following ACTIL's request, MCTC designed a tailor-made study tour in Israel to present programmes and best practices, including professional visits to Israeli women's organizations involved in the advancement of women at all levels. The next step was to share MCTC's experience for the planning and execution of a pilot training programme for African women leaders, which took place in Nairobi.

Cooperation between the parties continues to be strong. Within this framework, joint workshops organized in Israel by MASHAV and the UN Women Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa offer women and men training on leadership and on the economic and political empowerment of women.

Most of the participants in the courses in Israel are graduates from ACTIL, thus creating a continuous and dynamic learning framework. In addition, MASHAV conducts periodic consultancy missions in Kenya to provide technical advice and support in setting up efficient systems of operation, structure and design of training programmes, to maximize ACTIL's impact and ensure sustainability.

ACTIL's inspirational vision is noticeably shared by all the parties involved in this great venture. As a vibrant and innovative training centre, it brings much-needed transformation and change, creating a positive impact for aspiring leaders and a multilevel ripple effect which starts with the holistic transformation of the leaders, and then transcends to their families, communities and countries.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls the opportunity to build leadership skills and empowering them as economic, political and social actors with equal access to education, health care, decent work and representation in political and economic decision-making processes, will empower sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

Gender justice for women

E. Sare Aydın Yılmaz, Founding President of the Women and Democracy Association and Faculty Member at Istanbul Commerce University Department of International Relations and Political Science

Women represent half of the world's population, and their participation in the workforce and in social, political and economic life remains a hot topic. Changes to sociocultural life are directly or indirectly associated with women's activity and employment. Therefore, women's participation in the workforce grows in parallel with efforts both to drive the importance attached to the female workforce and to uphold international policies and practices, education and representation.

The transformative effect of the female workforce on the global economic market has made women's participation in the economy a prioritized area. At this point, it is important to distribute roles assigned to women and men as the two basic elements constituting society, and more specifically the family, and to establish the basic dynamics affecting such roles.

As required by democratic rights and social justice, access to economic freedom, capitalist industrialization and economic movements affecting the global economy have guided women

to leave their homes and engage in different fields of activity. Private and public areas have emerged, and women still seek status and power for themselves between these areas. Women often face the dilemma of choosing between domestic and professional roles, or shouldering both burdens. Therefore, women's dilemma must not be underestimated and practices to balance and support family life must be developed in parallel with their participation in the workforce. During the historical process, women have been regarded as cheap labour and exploited by taking advantage of their changing social, political and economic position, their secondary role as substitute labour and their participation in the workforce only to 'contribute' to the family budget rather than investing in it. Thus, capitalist economies alter and diversify the quality of the female workforce.

Modernism demands the highest benefit from individuals and as it is intertwined with the capitalist system today, it has become inevitable that women's domestic work is disregarded, resulting in women being subject to gender discrimination



W20 was formed in Ankara for the first time under the G20 as a result of efforts by Turkey



KADEM hosted a Refugee Women Panel at the G20 Summit to raise awareness of the ongoing refugee crisis

as they participate in the workforce. In order for women to realize their own potential and to end their economic dependence while maintaining their family life as a social value in a smooth manner, the dilemmas they experience, both in the private and public areas, must be resolved. After all, women's participation in the paid workforce is a sophisticated phenomenon. The opportunities, possibilities or difficulties brought to women by this phenomenon vary depending on the region and living conditions.

The 'second shift' of women at home, due to the unfair distribution of responsibilities between women and men in professional and family life, is an issue that is still discussed with efforts to find a solution. A preliminary condition in achieving a fair work/life balance is to consider the domestic responsibilities of women and men and meet the current conditions of working life for women by respecting the biological differences, while providing equal opportunities and access. The given social gender roles that make women work at home and at work, ignoring the domestic work and even referring to it as a requirement, must be reorganized. At this point, intellectual studies to form the foundation of social policies are expected to support the idea of justice.

We prioritize the concept of gender justice,¹ which refers to how women must be valued in every aspect of social life while anticipating a fair distribution of roles between women and men. In fact, most statements produced about how women and men should be positioned in the family and social life, ignoring their qualitative and characteristic attributes, are not based on reality. Instead of positioning women and men as opposites, they must be regarded as the arms of a scale to establish balance; as 'humans' with

different qualities and characters but with the same weight on the scale. It is important to avoid turning the qualities and characters of women and men into a disadvantage, and instead to create the right environment and opportunities for both to realize their full potential. Under Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment," it is emphasized that women must choose their place of work freely, and just and favourable conditions of work must be provided at the workplace of their choice. However, it would not be fair to force women to choose between work and home, and it must be borne in mind that despite regularly updated social regulations, there are still failures in this regard.

Issues resulting from such dilemmas between domestic and professional life are still included in the agendas of many international organizations, countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with alternatives offered to make women's lives easier. Thus, steps to be taken, policies to be produced and strategies to raise consciousness about social responsibility are highly important in terms of establishing a work/life balance. Such remedial arrangements made as part of social policies will facilitate the integration of women into working life, improving their rate of participation in public life and their visibility. In this respect, services including paid parental leave and flexible work hours are key steps not only in ensuring the continuity of women in working life, but also in protecting the 'togetherness and sustainability of the family'. The Sustainable Development Goals clearly express that no one must be left behind. It is an essential



The International Women and Justice Summit was hosted by KADEM in Istanbul on 24-25 November 2014

condition for a developed society that women are integrated into economic life by establishing a balance between family life and work life. For a more fair and livable world, regulations must be more inclusive by protecting women. Supporting women's participation in work life, especially in developing countries like Turkey, is vital for women's access to economic freedom and their contribution to the national economy. In order to encourage women's participation in work life and to ensure they are retained, the "affirmative action" for women which was approved in the referendum in 2010 in Turkey must be implemented.

In the global competitive environment, one condition of development for a country is to make efficient use of, and mobilize, all its resources. Therefore, ensuring women's sufficient participation in the workforce is a priority area of policy for countries. In the Beijing Declaration and Action Plan approved at the Beijing Conference in 1995, the targets defined for the article "inequality in any type of activities for production and access to resources in economic structures and policies" include "elimination of occupational discrimination and any kind of discrimination in employment and extending aligned work and family responsibilities for women and men." Strategic targets include not only the elimination of educational, employment and occupational discrimination, but also the alignment of family and work life for women and men. In fact, the family as the founding element of society, and access to economic needs ensuring a sustainable life, are highlighted as the greatest variables of protecting the fundamental qualities of being a society. To that end, we must protect the family and the balance between work life and

family life in a just and fair manner for social welfare and sustainable development. It is very important for a sustainable order of society to defend fundamental dynamics like the family which keeps alive society and its conscientious and moral values. It is also imperative for the continuity of the family as the backbone of society to establish and safeguard the balance between the domestic and public roles of women who are included in economic life.

The importance of this issue in terms of global development was proved once again as this year's G20 officially approved the subject of increasing women's presence in the economy and the economic empowerment of women. During the period of Turkey's G20 leadership from December 2014, this was brought to the agenda again since employment plans and growth strategies were among the areas considered important in supporting sustainability and development. As part of the efforts to improve social protection and working conditions, flexible working models, regulations related to maternity and breastfeeding leave, and provision of preschool and childcare services to allow women to balance their family and work life, are included in the policy areas of the Women 20 (W20) initiative group in line with the commitments adopted by G20 member countries. In addition to areas such as education, employment, leadership and entrepreneurship highlighted at the W20 National Solidarity Meeting, the article "work and life balance by developing and/or improving infrastructural mechanisms for social care (child, elderly, sick and disabled care)", proposed by the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM) as a member of the W20 committee, became a



Image: KADEM

Successful participants in the Women in Innovation programme attended a project implementation training camp and received certificates at KADEM's head office

priority area of W20 policy. The G20 remains committed to its ideal of inclusive and sustainable economic development by emphasizing inclusiveness concerning women in its final declaration, and to that end the global agenda has once again focused on improving social protection, working conditions and ensuring work/life balance from a gender justice perspective, thanks to the contributions of the W20. This initiative, launched by Turkey, will ensure continuity for women in business life and pave the way for the development of regulations and policies to protect the unity of the family if the global arena also demonstrates due attention.

Additionally, applicable and sustainable solutions for common problems of women around the world are developed to empower women and enable them to be actively involved in all areas in the elimination of gender-based injustice and inequalities at the International Women and Justice Summit held by KADEM every two years, honouring the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November and hosting many ministers of state, NGOs, academics and students from around the world. The aim is to build a relevant shared wisdom in order to analyse developments regarding women's rights and progress with respect to the human rights of women in the national and international arena. This year the main topics of the summit are Syrian refugee women and women in the peace processes. Women and children who had to flee their countries as a result of the ongoing civil war in Syria represent the most vulnerable group. Women are subject to further threats and complexities due to their gender. In this context, we must discuss policies to improve the problems and lives of refugee women from a

gender justice perspective and develop specific actions and strategies for refugee women. Women play the most active role in the processes of establishing peace in situations of conflict in many countries, and they contribute to the peace process by attaching importance to the protection of justice. An in-depth analysis of women's role and power in establishing global justice, democracy and peace is important to ensure more effective use of this power. Once again we will invite the world to follow the traces of justice for women by standing up against any kind of violence with our slogan 'Speak Up For Justice' on 25 November in Istanbul.

Today it is exciting that there is a serious platform for responsible action in efforts by civil societies that set the agenda. Uniting around justice, and accepting that justice represents an inclusive higher framework covering equality for women, means that many disputes centred around women are addressed using a scale of conscientious and social responsibility. Justice for women can be understood as a conscientious responsibility only if civil society and governments come to terms by taking solid steps.

Consequently, civil societies must take action to guide and raise awareness of society by leveraging the facilities of democracy, and act to fulfil their own conscientious responsibility without getting stuck in certain models. Civil society functions by discussing many problematic questions concerning the government, economy and family and delivering a shared consciousness as a result of such discussions. Accordingly, the International Women and Justice Summit is an attempt by civil society to come together, fulfil its conscientious responsibility and reach out to the world.

Strengthening the role of women in the marine fisheries sector of South Asia

*Yugraj Singh Yadava, Director and Rajdeep Mukherjee, Policy Analyst,
Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation*

The marine fisheries sector in South Asia (in the present context comprising Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka) is traditionally a sector of family-oriented artisanal activity. In a typical fisher family, men would usually engage in production-oriented activities such as fish harvesting or navigating the vessel, while women would by and large engage in post-harvest activities such as distribution and marketing. These traditional roles of women in fisheries have changed over time but their contributions to the overall development of the fisheries sector in the region remain significant.

The 1970s brought the first change when capital-intensive powered vessels were introduced in marine fisheries in the region. This change saw the emergence of commercial fishing enterprises from hitherto family-based, small, non-powered fishing units. At the same time, improved communication

and transportation infrastructure also led to the growth of markets, extending from village boundaries to national limits and beyond.

These developments created both challenges and opportunities for fisherwomen. The challenges came from disturbances in traditional supply and distribution channels as production units moved away from a particular village to fish landing centres and fishing harbours catering to several villages, towns and cities. On the other hand, a larger market also increased opportunities for better price realization and upscaling business activity. It also created the scope of employment in post-harvest activities such as processing, fish drying and so on.

The Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), a precursor of the present Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), was in the forefront



Image: S. Jayara

Drying small fish in Negombo, Sri Lanka



Image: S Jayaraj

Chennai Fishing Harbour, India: fisherwomen now negotiate prices through their cell phones

in the region working with governments and communities in ushering technological and infrastructural development in the fisheries sector. The programme also identified the changing needs of women in the sector. A range of innovative interventions geared at enhancing women's capacity to engage in the market were planned and implemented, including introduction of new activities like seaweed farming, fish marketing, adult education and the formation of self-help groups (SHGs).

However, in the absence of good gender statistics, it has been difficult to measure the trend and extent of women's participation in the fisheries sector in the region. Approximately 4 million people in the region derive their livelihoods from fishing and fishing-allied activities, of which about 10-15 per cent are women. In India, marine fishers are a well-identified sociocultural group. The total fisher population in the country including adults and children is about 4 million (2010), of which 1.92 million are women. In Sri Lanka, about 275,046 peoples are employed in marine fisheries sector, of which, 14,643 (7 per cent) are women (2015). Whereas in the inland capture and culture fisheries, women constitute 5 per cent of the workforce. In Bangladesh, of the total workforce in fisheries (inland, marine and aquaculture), about 10 per cent are women. In Maldives, women constitute about 11 per cent of

Securing women's role in fisheries

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries (VG-SSF) is an international effort in securing women's role in fisheries.

Rights and duties are the cornerstone of any successful governance mechanism. The 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), which documented best practices in fisheries governance, arguably focused on this. To further support implementation of the CCRF, in June 2014, 143 FAO member countries adopted the VG-SSF. As the title suggests, these guidelines focus on small-scale fisheries, which constitute about 90 per cent of the global fishery.

The VG-SSF aims at ensuring human rights and dignity, gender equality and equity, transparency and rule of law, participation, accountability and social responsibility by empowering small-scale fishing communities, including both men and women, to participate in decision-making processes, and to assume responsibilities for sustainable use of fishery resources. At the same time, the differences between women and men have been acknowledged and the guidelines suggest that specific measures should be taken to accelerate de facto equality. The guidelines call for the state to secure equitable and appropriate tenure rights to fishery resources (marine and inland) with special attention paid to women. The guidelines also call for ending all types of discrimination against women and ensuring secure workplaces and fair wages while providing them with the necessary support to avail different resources — such as finance and training.



Image: S. Jayara

Building awareness among fisherwomen in Chittagong, Bangladesh

the total workforce in fisheries. They are mostly engaged in post-harvest operations, mainly in the production of Maldives Fish — a smoked and dried fish preparation. It may be also noted that apart from technology and market constraints, sociocultural norms also determine women's participation in economic activities in the region.

In the case of India, national marine fisheries censuses were carried out in 2005 and 2010. The census data shows that women constitute the majority of the workforce in fishing-allied activities. Between the two censuses, women in the workforce in fishing-allied activities increased from 48 per cent in 2005 to about 60 per cent in 2010 — an increase of about 2 per cent per year during 2005-2010. The largest concentration of women in the workforce is in peeling, followed by processing and marketing. The data also shows that women are increasingly participating in other allied activities such as net mending.

Several factors have possibly contributed to the successful migration of women from a traditional family-oriented artisanal sector to more market-oriented fisheries activities. At the top level, various women-centric policies of the national governments, ranging from training programmes in skill and capacity-building to rural banking and micro-finance, have been the positive contributing factors. These

efforts were supplemented by regional and international organizations such as BOBP, FAO and other international developmental agencies, bringing both technology and funds. Finally, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations have contributed to the last mile of connectivity.

At the national level, the 1998 National Fisheries Policy of Bangladesh identified “Poverty alleviation through creation of self-employment opportunities and improvement in socioeconomic conditions of the fishers” as a major objective. The policy further calls for encouragement of women in fish culture through training and capacity-building. The more recent 2014 National Shrimp Policy of Bangladesh has called for improving women's participation in shrimp production, processing and marketing as well as proper implementation of national and international labour standards in the shrimp industry. The women's workforce in the sector is likely to benefit from such intervention. In addition Vision 2021, declared by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has also called for improving women's participation in fisheries to an average of 20 per cent from the current level. On the other hand, Grameen Bank, which pioneered microfinance and micro-credit in 1970 and won the Nobel Peace Prize for its effort in 2006, has helped in unlocking productive resources in rural

Unlocking entrepreneurship in fisherwomen in Bangladesh

During the mid-1980s BOBP worked with the fisher community in the Juldia-Shampur village of Chittagong District, Bangladesh on several issues aiming to uplift the community. A socioeconomic survey in 1985 revealed that indebtedness was a major issue, with 62 per cent of the fishing families in debt and 35 per cent having no savings. About 94 per cent of children were suffering from malnutrition, with 23 per cent facing severe (third degree) malnutrition.

For women, economic empowerment meant 'more scope for fish marketing'. The women also believed that although they worked as hard as men, they were denied equal status, both in the family and in the community.

The project tried the participatory approach to improve their living standard. First, the women were helped to organize themselves into small groups, and second, in consultation with them a menu of possible livelihood activities was identified. Since fishing activities were seasonal and not remunerative enough to meet their basic needs, it was envisaged that diversifying the economic activities could at least reduce seasonal risks and hopefully more income would be generated. Different activities, such as fish marketing (traditional), animal husbandry and poultry were introduced. In addition, education-cum-action programmes on health, sanitation and nutrition were also launched. Apart from the Government and BOBP, agencies such as the Grameen Bank and local and national NGOs participated. Dedicated community workers were engaged for hand-holding and interest-free loans were provided with no fixed payment schedule for new activities. Within 8-12 months most of the women's groups paid back over 50 per cent of the loans. Most of the groups also reported saving 10 per cent or more.

Post-project, local NGOs carried the model forward in other areas. Twenty years later, BOBP-IGO engaged with another fisher community in Chakoria village — about 100 kilometres south of Chittagong under the Global Project on Safety at Sea. The community was still suffering from many structural problems — such as low catch, high risks of accident while fishing and increasing population. However, the village was more vibrant in terms of economics as most families were engaged in additional livelihood activities such as sewing, animal husbandry and/or poultry. The most significant change was in the attitude of women as they were playing



Image: S Jayaraj

Tailoring is an alternative source of livelihood for fisherwomen in Chittagong, Bangladesh

a leading role in many areas, including helping their menfolk with cyclone warnings and so on. Something seems to have changed within 20 years — apart from better economic engagement, women have started playing an important role in decision-making and leadership.

Developing a market for fisherwomen in Besant Nagar

The Fish Marketing Society of Besant Nagar Fisherwomen in Chennai has just completed its twenty-fifth year of establishment. Twenty five years back these women came from two small fishing villages located in close proximity within the city limits of Chennai. Competing with each other and facing problems in marketing their fish, life for these women was full of hardships. They neither had a designated place nor adequate supply to earn enough.

BOBP met this group in the late 1980s and the first challenge was to unite them. This was done through dedicated training programmes mixed problem solving exercises, simulation and games designed to value cooperation and leadership. The training brought confidence and the fisherwomen negotiated with the City Corporation for a designated marketplace to conduct business. While BOBP developed the market design, the City Corporation in consultation with the fisherwomen constructed the market. Meanwhile, the women set up a formal society and started collecting funds.

By July 1990 the market was completed and the fisherwomen entered into a lease agreement with the corporation and began operating from the market. How did it make an impact? In their own words, earlier they used to procure small amounts of fish from the landing sites, mostly from their family boats. Now they buy fish from open auction. Their price realization has also increased many fold. Selling fish from their own market also raised their self-esteem and decision-making power. The lessons learned were never forgotten. Subsequently, the market complex underwent many ups and downs but the women have struggled hard to maintain it. BOBP (and later BOBP-IGO) have continued to assist these fisherwomen in developing their enterprise and providing need-based assistance from time to time.



Image: S Jayaraj

A fisherwoman vending fish through her retail shop in Chennai, India



Image: Y S Yadava

A stakeholder consultation with fisherwomen from Mudasalodai Fish Landing Centre, Tamil Nadu, India

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Bangladesh as well as encouraging savings and creating rural capital through the formation of SHGs.

In Maldives, women are largely engaged in the production of Maldives Fish or smoked and dried tuna. Therefore, the extent of their participation is determined by the availability of fresh tuna. In recent years, the Government of Maldives has encouraged the domestic fishing fleet to target both skipjack and yellowfin tuna. The Government has also recently announced the Fisheries and Agriculture Diversification Programme, under which soft loans (at 6 per cent interest) will be provided to cooperative societies for value addition and enhancing productivity.

In Sri Lanka, as in the other countries of the region, women are mostly involved in fish processing and to a small extent in marketing. The role of women is more visible in inland fisheries and fish farming. The policy objective of the Government of Sri Lanka is to ensure sustainable production through community participation. The legal framework of the country emphasizes stakeholder consultation — which potentially engages women in the decision-making processes.

In India, women have played multiple roles in fisheries, apart from their key role in raising the family. Policy supports have facilitated improvements in their skills, the formation of women's cooperatives and SHGs and access to credit. Besides their traditional role in post-harvest activities, involvement is diversifying to areas such as seaweed farming and other mariculture activities. The new draft Marine Fisheries Policy of 2016 aims to strengthen the role of women in fisheries. It proposes that the “Government will ... further enhance support by way of forming women cooperatives; women-friendly financial support schemes; good working conditions that would include safety, security and hygiene and transport facilities for retail marketing; encouragement to take up small-scale fishing, value addition activities; and also play an active

role in fisheries management.” In addition, it also suggests that the coastal provinces should consider increasing the area presently reserved for artisanal fishing. Such an action could see the revival of the role of women in active fishing as artisanal fishing mainly comprises the marginal section of society catering to local markets. The policy objective of reduction in post-harvest losses could help ensure better financial remuneration for women engaged in fisheries.

In spite of the multidimensional roles of women in fisheries, their contributions often go unnoticed. There are several reports of discrimination in wages and working conditions, especially in the processing sector. Various social indicators such as sex ratio and literacy rate also suggest that there is a need to empower women. While these features may be a reflection of society at large, in the context of fisheries, it implies that women in practice are far from the decision-making processes at the macro level.

Experiences so far on the involvement of women in the marine fisheries sector show that the removal of constraints can lead to their productive engagement. The first constraint is that despite women playing a significant role in distribution and post-harvesting, they do not have much power to influence the process. The second constraint is that their role in economic activities is not reflected in their social status as captured in sex ratio and literacy rate differentials. The third constraint is that unlike men, examples of successful women's enterprises show the necessity of group effort. In other words, solo ventures by women possibly have little chance of success. These factors could inhibit unlocking the full potential of women in enterprise and decision-making. While these constraints are mostly part of the position of women in the larger society, the fisheries sector can bring in changes by moving to principles as described in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Small-scale Fisheries Governance.

PROSPERA: empowering women through social inclusion

National Coordination of PROSPERA Social Inclusion Program, Mexico

Mexico's fight against poverty and inequality has involved many efforts from a wide variety of actors in the country. Specifically, within the public sphere, the Federal Government's main strategy for poverty alleviation is a conditional cash transfer programme called PROSPERA, whose aim is to contribute to better nutrition, health and education for the population in poverty. The complex design of PROSPERA is based on the premise that addressing multiple dimensions of human capital can simultaneously lead to better development of the vulnerable population.

The programme started operations in 1997, under the name of *Progres*a. During these first years, its scope was limited to serving the rural population by focusing on three major components: health, nutrition and education. Some years later, in 2002, PROSPERA's (previously known as *Oportunidades*) coverage expanded to all 32 states of Mexico, reaching 4.2 million people. In 2014 the programme went through a trans-

formation process that led to its current design as PROSPERA, which now serves 6.8 million families, representing 5.6 per cent of the total Mexican population.

A key element in terms of the evolution of PROSPERA's design was the creation of a new component (linkage) that focuses on the promotion of labour, productive, financial and social inclusion. This is achieved through a cooperation strategy (network) with other institutions within and outside the governmental sphere, whose actions are related to poverty relief and human development, along with capacity-building and new models of income generation.

One of the most relevant features of the programme since its creation is the incorporation of a gender perspective approach. This can be observed in different elements within the design of the programme. For example, while the unit of attention of the programme is households, its main relationship is established with women, who are predominantly the holders of the monetary transfers. As holders of PROSPERA's benefits, women are also given the opportunity to become PROSPERA



Handcrafts: PROSPERA families receive financial support, advice and counseling for their projects and promote social economy in their communities

Image: PROSPERA



Images: PROSPERA

Due to links and coordination with the Ministry of Education, PROSPERA women can now finish their primary and secondary education

leaders within their communities. This involves carrying out important administrative and organizational tasks for the delivery of the transfers and compliance with the commitments and co-responsibilities related to the programme.

This can be observed in the operational rules of the programme where a 'Gender Perspective' section is incorporated: "PROSPERA within its operation field will incorporate a gender perspective which will take into consideration the circumstances that worsen the inequality gaps, which emphasize the disadvantages and lead to the discrimination of women and girls. The objective is to determine mechanisms that can make an impact in reducing or eliminating inequalities in the distribution of resources, access to opportunities, and active citizenship, among others; to ensure equality conditions which guarantee the validity of the exercise of their rights."¹

In this same section, it is established that the programme's benefits are given preferably to mothers. It also points out that there are higher educational grants for girls as a mechanism to counteract the disadvantages they face to access education. In particular, this aims to contribute to the building of a society where women and men have the same value, equal rights and opportunities to access resources and to decision-making. In line with this, PROSPERA's components (education, health, nutrition and linkage) foster actions to promote and build a culture of gender equity and women's empowerment in Mexico.

In order to understand how PROSPERA empowers women, it is important to go over some of its most significant interventions and projects. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep in mind that from the total number of beneficiaries (6.8 million families), in 96.5 per cent of cases the mother is the person entitled to receive the monetary transfers and to make decisions about how to use the money. This is also why PROSPERA has chosen women in the communities to become 'PROSPERA representatives' (vocales), which is a position that entails important responsibilities, communication skills and strong leadership.

PROSPERA representatives are democratically elected by their communities and they are responsible for establishing

a link between beneficiary families and health and education services staff, as well as with other institutions involved in the programme's productive, financial, labour or social inclusion projects. They are also in charge of maintaining the relationship with central offices by promoting all the components of the programme within their localities, and by encouraging beneficiaries to participate and collaborate in activities related to transparency and accountability. Their role as representatives is completely voluntary and honorary; they must make decisions led by the idea of benefiting their communities and their fellow beneficiaries.

PROSPERA representative women show special pride in their work as leaders of their communities; they ensure that beneficiaries meet their co-responsibilities and compromises in order to comply with the structure of the programme. For example, the education component of PROSPERA works by giving families monetary educational grants for every child in school as long as they keep attending classes. The monetary amount of the scholarship depends on their school level and their gender, as explained in more detail below.

Girls in Mexico present an earlier dropout from school due to the perception that their role is staying at home and doing domestic work; while there is the belief that boys must finish their studies in order to find jobs and support their families. For this reason, the idea of giving a higher grant to females was considered as a strategy to reduce the gap in school attendance among genders. This mechanism has shown substantial results by reducing significantly the number of dropouts in basic and high school education. From 2010 to 2015, 49 per cent of PROSPERA's beneficiaries in primary education were girls, while in high school this was 51 per cent. These results show a more equitable gender distribution that can be perceived through the education component of the programme.

Along with education, health and nutrition are the other two components established since the inception of the programme. Both of these components have worked under a gender perspective approach by permanently focusing



Image: PROSPERA

A carpentry productive project: today, PROSPERA women have different supports that help them boost their own business



Image: PROSPERA

PROSPERA has bridged the gender gap in education through scholarships for school attendance for girls

their attention on women of reproductive age and infants. According to a 2012 evaluation, the percentage of coverage of prenatal care reached 104.33 per cent of the planned target. Another important action is the relevance given to birth control mechanisms to reduce teenage pregnancy and promote better family planning. In line with this, a recent evaluation focused on social protection for the indigenous people showed that 51 per cent of women were offered a contraceptive method after their last pregnancy.

The main change in the design of the programme occurred in the transition of 2014, when it adopted the name of PROSPERA. These changes responded to a profound process of re-evaluation that showed that the programme was a successful instrument for improving the education, nutrition and health conditions of its beneficiaries. However, even though cash transfers were mitigating poverty, the results were not considered significant enough. For this reason, the new linkage component was incorporated, with the main aim to promote labour, productive, financial and social inclusion for the beneficiaries through cooperation and linkage with other institutions and governmental agencies working for social development.

These interventions are highly important in terms of women's empowerment and gender equality. As explained above, the structure of the programme situates women at the core of PROSPERA. This means that they are also the ones who benefit more from these inclusion projects. In the financial inclusion field, for example, the 'Integral Program for Financial Inclusion' (PROIIF, its acronym in Spanish) provides access to diverse financial systems such as savings accounts, loans with the lowest interest rates, life insurance and saving workshops, among other services. This programme is currently initiating, and so far 1 million people have benefited from it.

The relevance of PROIIF for women's empowerment can be understood in terms of giving them the necessary knowledge and tools to become independent in their economic decisions regarding their monetary transfers from PROSPERA. They are given the chance to decide if they want to save the money for the future education of their children, if they want to keep it in a debit account (instead of keeping cash at home), if they want to ask for a loan when facing an emergency, and so on. This is a big step for them. It gives them a better chance to become empowered and independent and, more importantly, to access better conditions for deciding about their families' future.

For the productive inclusion intervention, evidence shows that even if the vast majority of the rural population in poverty has underdeveloped economic and productive capacities, PROSPERA families have greater productive potential than those who are not beneficiaries. This is why, along with more than six governmental agencies, substantial efforts have been made to promote productive projects for beneficiary families, from which more than 95 per cent have women as part of the work teams. In 2015, 1,525 productive projects were supported; this means the participation of 12,591 families (50,364 beneficiaries). Productive activities allow beneficiary women and their families to generate their independent income, in order to overcome poverty in a sustainable way.

The work of PROSPERA has delivered significant results in the fight against inequality. Through transversal interventions to empower women, PROSPERA beneficiaries have been given the opportunity to become independent decision makers. Moreover, the design of the programme, which is women-centred, is crucial to the operation of PROSPERA as well as for building a culture of gender equity that can be transmitted to those who are not beneficiaries, and to future generations.

The future we want: towards a better world through Sustainable Development Goals

Gia Gaspard Taylor, President, Network of Rural Women Producers Trinidad and Tobago

Empowering women in Trinidad and Tobago has been the main goal of the Network of Rural Women Producers Trinidad and Tobago (NRWPTT) since it was launched in 1995. Though there were many trials and challenges along the way, successes also came as a result of persistence, hard work and commitment. NRWPTT's 100-plus members are led by a president and executive. The many members continue to operate and manage viable enterprises, thus contributing to the economic improvement of themselves, their communities and the nation within the last 21 years.

In 1998 the then young network, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and under the patronage of Oma Panday, the wife of the Prime Minister, hosted the first and only Regional Meeting of the Wives of Heads of Government/State. At that meeting the wives signed the Port of Spain Accord which saw the establishment of the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP) and which

also took place during the initiation of another regional initiative, the first Caribbean Week of Agriculture. NRWPTT can therefore justifiably claim to have played a critical role in the inauguration of two very important initiatives in the development of the 'new' agriculture in the region.

The United Nations listened to the many civil society organizations that advocated for and on behalf of a space for rural women. The 1995 Beijing Conference on Women decided to give recognition by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/136 of December 2007. On 15 October 2008, the first United Nations International Rural Women's Day was observed, to recognize the critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women in advancing agriculture and rural development, improving food security and eradicating poverty.

In the years 2007-2008, a decrease in events and activities of NRWPTT was evident. However, in 2009 the challenge of hosting an event called the Mango Festival brought new life to the network. In 2010 the University of the West Indies, the Tourism Development Company, the Ministry of Agriculture and IICA all came together to support NRWPTT in hosting the second Mango Festival. News reaching the international and regional organizations about the success and innovativeness of this unique event prompted an invitation to NRWPTT to participate in the Organization of American States Sustainable Development Conference in Washington. Another door opened with an invitation to join the delegation at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) annual conference, hosted by UN Women at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Being the 'new kid' on the block, NRWPTT attempted to attend as many workshops as humanly possible including accepting an invitation from another local civil society organization, the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, where the President is serving as International Affairs Officer. Invitations were also extended to a Commonwealth Foundation meeting.

At the CSW event, an invitation was extended to the NRWPTT President and the Trinidad and Tobago Minister of Gender Affairs at the time, Marlene Coudray. At that meeting, discussions were held on sustainable development projects among the various organizations present. NRWPTT's contribution was based on our Mango Festival and, to our surprise, the participants chose this among all the other presentations from the plenary session as the best presentation. The following year NRWPTT was invited to attend the Commonwealth



NRWPTT members receive training in food safety and product development



Soaps, creams and lotions made from the mango, on display at the Mango Festival



Images: NRWPTT

Foundation Women Government Ministers meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Many of the handmade mango products were taken to that meeting and proved to be quite a hit. These many events afforded NRWPTT the opportunity to continue its attendance at CSW and therefore provided an avenue for many of the network's rural women farmers to attend CSW58 in 2014, which focused on family farming.

Through the years a relationship was also developed with the Commonwealth Foundation. NRWPTT can boast a milestone achievement when its member, Nolana Lynch, emerged as the Commonwealth Youth Officer 2015/16 for the Caribbean. Nolana was able to meet the Queen and the Mayor of London. Three members of NRWPTT also participated in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) hosted by the Government of Malta in 2015.

At the meeting at Malta Baroness Scotland, a candidate for the Commonwealth Secretary General, made a lasting impression on NRWPTT. The first time we saw her as she visited the NRWPTT display in Malta, we felt the warmth of the Caribbean as she smiled with colleagues, friends and strangers alike. Later that night at the CHOGM Women's Forum Banquet hosted by Her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, formal introductions were made. In November 2015 NRWPTT had the opportunity to be a part of the dialogue between the Commonwealth Secretary-General candidates and representatives of civil society in the parliament of Malta. All candidates — Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwamba, Sir Ronald Sanders and Baroness Patricia Scotland — were impressive, but Baroness Scotland left a lasting impression as the candidates discussed issues such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights, environmental sustainability, opportunities and protection of women, and the future of indigenous people. Baroness Scotland was quite knowledgeable about each issue and addressed concerns with facts and personal proposals for moving forward. Some issues hit home for her as she used herself and her circum-

stances to highlight issues. She highlighted her Carib origins and drew reference to the socialization of indigenous people in society. She also highlighted the effects of hurricanes, one of which recently hit her island, Dominica, and their impact on environmental sustainability. When asked about moving forward with LGBT rights she acknowledged that the Commonwealth cannot force its member countries to change their laws but that she would work to bring about awareness and education to the issue. She spoke intelligently and eloquently but in a way that was simple enough for the common person to understand. On behalf of NRWPTT we extend our congratulations and vote of confidence in her executing her duties effectively and efficiently.

Back at home, NRWPTT foundation member Rose Rajbansee also championed the cause of the network's international image, having served as the President of CANROP and the Regional Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean for Associated Country Women of the World from 2010 to 2014.

In 1999 the Domestic Violence Act in Trinidad and Tobago provided legal protection to our women and girls. Many strong and courageous women across the twin-island state worked tirelessly to reduce the incidence of domestic violence. The voices of women gained strength through many organizations such as the National Muslim Women Organizations, the Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Hindu Women Organization, the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, Families in Action and our own NRWPTT. Violence continues to hit at our venerable women in society in this small twin-island republic and we are yet to have a gender policy — however, we press on having joined forces with the UN Women HeForShe Campaign in raising awareness among schools, the general public and our national security and municipalities. In our most recent effort history was created when, through a live link-up, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force signed



Preserves, condiments, cakes and breads are among the products on offer at the Mango Festival



Country Farmhouse Bread is a project linked to rural and urban communities through Habitat 3

up to the HeForShe campaign by inviting senior ranks in every section (Coast Guard, Air Guard, the Army and the Voluntary Guards) to sign up, thereby demonstrating their commitment to gender equality.¹

The Mango Festival is NRWPTT's flagship project. The Paramin Women's Group, a foundation member, began as a small herb farmers' group in a semi-rural/semi-urban community of family members with capacity training, a revolving loan, product development and food safety. The group now supplies two supermarkets with its bottled green seasoning and pepper sauce, and participates in many green markets throughout the twin-island state.

The group's members accepted the challenge to produce items made from mangoes, to take the Mango Festival from 2009 to the present with food and non-food items. The range of products includes mango paper jewellery; handcrafted paper cards; handcrafted soaps, body creams, oils and soaks; wine from mangoes and other local fruits; preserves and sweet and savoury condiments from the mango such as amchar, pepper sauces and mango cheese; cakes and breads, among many others such as punch-à-crème (local fruits), a favourite at Christmas time. The women also provide spa and beauty treatments such as mango manicures; catering using all locally grown fruits and vegetables; seasonings from their herb gardens; and even plant rentals and landscaping. The women continue to empower themselves through training in product development and food safety, labelling, packaging, record keeping and financial management.

In an effort to take advantage of the New Urban Agenda in the United Nations Habitat 3 preparation, NRWPTT linked rural and urban communities in the Country Farmhouse Bread project. In doing so, it took the opportunity to remind everyone that the country, like most of the developing world, is faced with enormous challenges

including resource scarcity, climate change, food security and unemployment among others. As a contribution to the solution, NRWPTT and the Women's Action for Development project hosted an event themed 'Planting Food and Forest' in Trinidad and Tobago, in the scenic area of Cumana, Toco on 5 June 2016. This event also coincided with the United Nations World Environment Day.

The feature activity of the event highlighted IICA's assistance to NRWPTT through the 10th European Development Fund Intra-ACP Agriculture Policy Programme (APP) Caribbean Action. The APP project supports access to small-scale equipment for NRWPTT, for the production of breads and other value-added products from roots crops.

Other activities included members of the Port of Spain Sister City United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Youth Club and the Toco Foundation UNESCO Youth Club in the Youth Tree Planting Ceremony; displays of roots and tubers; breadfruit and mango breads made by network members in the conventional oven and the 'Yesteryear Old time Traditional Oven', as well as demonstrations and displays of members' items for the tourism component of the project.

Empowerment of women is a powerful driver of progress in the Sustainable Development Goals. We have therefore used our mission of enhancing the social and economic development of rural women by taking the bold step of challenging members to develop innovative products using the resources in their environment, to run their own community based micro-enterprise or supply their wider national, regional and international clientele boasting an impressive variety of products and services. Education and training plays a critical role in our development. We continue to strive and look for avenues where members' lives and, by extension, their families and communities can be empowered.

Women's empowerment through effective participation and equal opportunity

Helen Potiki, Principal Policy Analyst and Hannah Gray, Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry for Women, New Zealand

The New Zealand Government is committed to ensuring all women have equal opportunity to realize their strengths and participate fully in society and the economy. Maximizing women's contributions to society and the economy is essential — for women, their families and communities, and as an investment in New Zealand's future prosperity and well-being. To achieve this, the Government has a sharp emphasis on supporting more women and girls in education and training; utilizing women's skills and growing the economy; and encouraging and developing women leaders, through a Social Investment approach which applies evidence-based investment.

New Zealand's population is increasingly diverse and some groups of women have poorer outcomes relative to other groups. The Government is focused on working alongside key stakeholders and communities to develop innovative and sustainable solutions that are relevant and effective for different groups of women.

In the last decade, New Zealand women have made steady gains in representation at central and local government level and on statutory boards. Representation at top levels in the private sector has improved, but is still relatively low.

The Ministry for Women works to address the underlying factors that create barriers for women in leadership by:

- maintaining an aspirational goal of 45 per cent participation of women on state sector boards and assisting appointing government agencies with the recruitment of suitable women for vacancies on state sector boards¹
- creating an environment where key decision makers accept the importance of appointing women and actively seek out suitably qualified women candidates
- 'connecting' emerging women leaders and providing support and information, to develop their skills and talents and realize their leadership potential
- supporting the expanded Future Directors programme, which matches talented people seeking high-level governance experience with state sector boards to observe and participate in board meetings over a year.

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples has invested in governance training workshops to increase Pacific women's representation on state sector boards and committees. The Ministry for Pacific Peoples also assists appointing government agencies with the recruitment of suitable Pacific women for vacancies on state sector boards.

The Office of Ethnic Communities has run women's leadership programmes to increase participation and inclusion of ethnic women leaders in civic life. The Office of Ethnic Communities also manages a nominations service to ensure that skilled individuals from ethnic communities are put forward for state sector board appointments.

Women made up 17 per cent of directors and 19 per cent of officers (chief executives and senior managers) of all listed companies in 2015.² There is a range of private sector initiatives to encourage women onto private sector boards and into senior roles.

The Ministry for Women actively supported the New Zealand Stock Exchange in the institution of a rule requiring New Zealand companies to report on the gender balance of their boards and in senior management from 2013. Work with umbrella organizations such as the Institute of Directors and Business New Zealand has highlighted the business case for gender diversity and provided solutions for those wishing to improve the promotion of women in their organizations.

Through the Inspiring Women series, the Ministry for Women profiled more than 60 New Zealand women who are making a positive difference in their workplaces, their industries and their communities. The Ministry for Women



The Ministry for Women has published profiles of women in a range of sectors, showing the diversity and scope of women's leadership

Image: Ministry for Women



Image: Ministry for Women and the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team

Government is working on initiatives to attract and retain women in occupations such as ICT industries, and construction and trades

has published profiles of women in a range of sectors, from aviation to winemaking. These stories show the diversity and scope of women's leadership; they prove that women have the skills, the drive and the tenacity to succeed.

The Ministry for Women also contributed to the work of DiverseNZ Inc., a private sector cooperative venture that developed a platform of knowledge and practical tools for businesses to leverage diversity. Building on this momentum, in November 2015, Global Women launched Champions for Change, a collaboration of New Zealand chief executives and chairs from the public and private sectors who are committed to raising the value of diversity and inclusion within their organizations and actively promoting the concept among their peers.

Despite gaining qualifications at a greater rate than men, women's skills are not being translated into greater career and development opportunities. Women are over-represented in minimum wage jobs and a substantial proportion of both women (47 per cent) and men (53 per cent) work in occupations that are at least 70 per cent dominated by their own gender.³ Better utilization of women's talents in the labour force will help meet New Zealand's current and projected skill shortages.

The Ministry for Women has undertaken two seminal research projects on gender role stereotyping and prejudice in the context of women's career progression. *Realising the opportunity: Addressing New Zealand's leadership pipeline by attracting and retaining talented women*⁴ identifies why women 'drop out' of the leadership pipeline and how employers can support their retention. *Inspiring action: Action plans and research to help you attract and retain talented women*⁵ is a quick reference to resources that assist organizations

to address unconscious bias and identify practical steps to improve women's career pathways.

Government is working on initiatives to attract and retain priority groups of women in occupations where high growth is projected and where women are currently underrepresented, in particular science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communications technology (ICT) industries, and construction and trades.

Government is working with education providers and employers to increase opportunities for women in the STEM and ICT industries. Launched in 2014, *A Nation of Curious Minds/He Whenua Hihiri I te Mahara: A National Strategic Plan for Science in Society*⁶ encourages and enables better engagement with science and technology across New Zealand society. This plan includes an action to increase girls' participation in science and ICT.

In 2014 the Government allocated \$28.6 million over four years for an ICT Graduate School programme. Three schools are being established in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The initiative is committed to increasing the diversity of ICT students and all schools will focus on increasing the participation of women.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Ministry for Women, the Tertiary Education Commission and industry training organizations are also working together to increase trades training opportunities for women including work to encourage Māori and Pacific women into the Māori and Pacific Trades Training programme. Another initiative, Ultimit, aims to encourage more women to consider career options within the electricity supply industry by offering taster courses and raising awareness of opportunities. 'Got A Trade Got It Made' promotes careers in trades and services. The programme's website highlights the achievements of young New Zealand apprentices and various career opportunities available to women are profiled. Worldskills New Zealand also promotes the opportunities for and achievements of women in trades. Regional and national competitions are held every two years with winners selected to participate in the Worldskills international competitions.

Following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, women's employment in Canterbury was negatively affected. At the same time, demand for trades people increased as the rebuilding process commenced. The Ministry for Women partnered with a number of industry and community leaders and local training providers to improve women's employment and help meet skill shortages in Canterbury, and to promote the idea of women in trades. This work included the publication of *Building back better: Utilising women's labour in the Canterbury recovery*,⁷ a business case for increasing the number of women in trades in Canterbury; *Growing your trades workforce: How to attract women to your jobs*,⁸ a handbook for trades employers on how to recruit and retain women; and *Getting it done: Utilising women's skills in the workforce*,⁹ which shares the lessons learned and strategies developed in Canterbury. The Ministry for Women also worked with the Stronger Canterbury Infrastructure Rebuild Team to raise women's visibility in the rebuild.

The Women in Trades Scholarship initiative at Ara Institute of Technology (formerly Christchurch Polytechnic



Image: Ministry for Women and the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team

The experiences gained in Canterbury are being used to promote the recruitment and retention of women in occupations where they are underrepresented

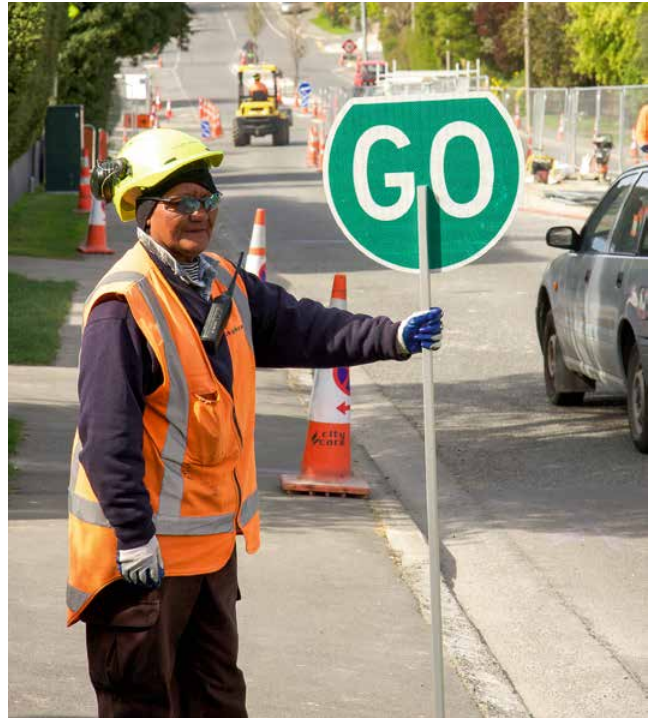


Image: Ministry for Women and the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team

New Zealand is proud to continue its leadership role on gender equality in the international community

Institute of Technology) was introduced in 2014. The initiative covers tuition fees for women studying towards a Level 1-4 Trades programme at CPIT. Female enrolments in trades training at CPIT increased from 50 in 2011 to 414 in 2014.¹⁰

The number of women working in construction in Canterbury is increasing. Women made up 17.3 per cent of construction workers in Canterbury in March 2016 (up from 14.5 per cent two years before), and nationally there were 2,400 more women employed in construction in March 2016 than at the same time the previous year.¹¹ Women made up 13.5 per cent of construction workers nationally in March 2016, up from 11.7 per cent two years before.¹²

The experiences gained through these actions in Canterbury are being used to inform national efforts to promote the recruitment and retention of women in occupations where they are underrepresented.

Building on the work in Canterbury, the Ministry for Women has embarked on a project to raise awareness among small to medium-sized enterprises of the benefits of flexible and diverse work environments. With a focus on skill gaps in the STEM and trades industries, the Ministry for Women facilitated three regional workshops in 2016 on the theme 'Getting and Keeping Good Workers'. A toolkit has been developed that provides practical resources for business owners, including information on the support available from government agencies.

New Zealand is proud to continue its leadership role on gender equality in the international community. It is committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action, the International Conference on Population and

Development, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions relating to the women, peace and security agenda. New Zealand's term on the United Nations Security Council offers an opportunity to contribute to the Council's efforts to address the gendered impacts of conflict and the role of women in conflict prevention, protection and sustainable peace.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will rely on action at the global level. New Zealand will contribute through a combination of domestic action, international leadership on global policy issues, and supporting countries through the New Zealand Aid Programme. This will require a cross-government effort. New Zealand government agencies are reviewing the goals and their alignment with existing government priorities. This analysis will inform a discussion on how New Zealand focuses its efforts.

The private sector and civil society can also help reach the goals. Already a number of non-governmental organizations and businesses are considering how their work helps, and are engaging productively with government agencies.

The New Zealand Aid Programme is well-positioned to support New Zealand's partner countries' achievement of the SDGs, its main focus being the Pacific region where it seeks to develop shared prosperity and stability. New Zealand integrates women's empowerment and gender equality across all investment priorities and a number of investments specifically target gender outcomes. As well as women's parliamentary representation and building the understanding that gender equality is essential to economic growth and sustainable development, these priorities include reducing violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and working with partner agencies.

Women's economic empowerment: sharing women's experiences in artisanal and small-scale mining

Thokozi Ruzvidzo and Maharouf Oyolola, African Centre for Gender, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) recognizes women's economic empowerment as critical to the achievement of broader economic and social development goals. This is in line with agreed regional and global frameworks, including Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, and the Africa Agenda 2063.

ECA's strategic framework, the Continent-Wide Initiative on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, recognizes the positive interplay between gender equality and Africa's structural transformation. It has identified three interlinked thematic focus areas: women's economic empowerment, women's political rights and the social sector. Within the women's economic empowerment pillar, 'Promoting women's entrepreneurship' is an area that ECA addresses, specifically looking at the agricultural sector and the extractive industries.

In September 2014, ECA launched its Gender and Mining Project with a comprehensive study that has shed important light on how artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) impacts the livelihoods of women in Africa. Drawing on dialogue with six countries (Ghana, Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe), a study was conducted with the objectives to:

- broaden understanding of the policy treatment of gender issues in ASM through a review of existing legislative frameworks, laws, mining codes and standards
- interrogate current and potential financing mechanisms for women in the sector
- identify opportunities for private sector partnerships, specifically with large-scale mining (LSM), with the aim of empowering women.

These six national studies aim to broaden understanding of the gender dimension of ASM in Africa. More importantly, they have been a much-needed foray into the lives of the region's rural inhabitants, providing knowledge which could help to strengthen development interventions in the sector.

The studies have captured valuable data on women's participation in ASM, illustrating how women mostly have a marginalized role in the sector in each country and underscoring how intensified support could help alleviate their hardships and empower their families. Broadly,

the project has unearthed valuable information about the contribution ASM is making in the region. As the Zambia and Ghana studies illustrate, ASM has inseparable ties with agriculture and is contributing enormously to national mineral outputs. The studies show — mostly implicitly — that the performance of ASM is linked to the sector's activities being mostly confined to informal 'spaces', further underscoring calls from scholars about the importance of formalization in this context. Finally, the studies offer a timely reminder of the breadth of activities in the region's ASM economy. Because of the unique orientation and production dynamics of, and different markets targeted by, these different 'branches' of ASM, each has its own unique gender dimension which will ultimately require the design and implementation of context-specific policies and solutions. The studies have brought to light a number of issues.

Gaps in government policies and legislation constrain the potential economic empowerment of women through their involvement in ASM. These span issues of legality, clarity and consistency across the ASM subsector (such as application to both gold and quarrying ASM). Further, existing legislation is typically not gender-responsive. Women in ASM face challenges in adhering to the laws, in many cases stemming from lack of knowledge about laws and processes, the bureaucratic process of applying for mining licences (which requires a level of literacy and/or technical knowledge), and the high cost of mining licences.

The ASM subsector is constrained by the structure of traditional and formal financing options. Mining has long lead times and specifically for ASM miners, lack of credit-worthiness, unbankable documents, lack of collateral and high mobility tend to discredit their applications for loans. In Ghana, one of the women interviewed was denied access to a loan facility because of her gender but was later given the facility when her husband became the primary applicant. In DR Congo and Tanzania, formal financial institutions are hesitant to lend to women miners because they lack proper geological assessment reports on mining concessions, hence limiting their chances of repaying the loan should it be guaranteed. In Tanzania, the Tanzania Development Bank under the National Economic Empowerment Policy provides small loans to women in general; however, for women miners the size of the loan is inadequate to fund the sustainability of

Profile: Amina

Amina is a small-scale miner who owns several alluvial gold concessions in the eastern and central regions of Ghana.

Amina's 30 permanent staff are all men, for whom she pays salaries, Social Security and National Insurance Trust, and medical bills. About 60 per cent of her 100-plus temporary workers or contractors are women, who are paid based on the amount of gold they make.

"I started as a gold buyer because I saw it as very lucrative," Amina says. "A concession owner cheated me and I seized his land and mined it to get my money back. Following that, I applied for and obtained a concession from the Minerals Commission and started my own small-scale mine. I applied for a licence, which took a long time, but it finally came. I also did an environmental impact assessment of the site."

Amina has not engaged the services of surveyors because she believes that she intuitively knows where the gold is located. According to an exploration team from the village, 40 per cent of Amina's 50-acre concession at Kwabeng is minable, and the mine has a projected life of two years.

"I do not know the total resource," Amina says. "I mine it step by step depending on which farmer gives me the access."



Amina has been in the mining business for 10 years

Image: ECA

their ventures. Regionally, the overarching Agenda 2063 recognizes lack of access to productive resource as a key limitation to women's engagement in the economic sector, and has set an ambitious target of levelling the playing field of gender equality by 2020 (and providing about 90 per cent access to productive resource for women in its 10-year implementation plan.¹

In terms of the poverty-wealth nexus, the data gathered for the research suggested that most women get into ASM because of poverty, with only a small proportion of respondents entering because of the subsector's wealth creation potential. Scholars have alluded to the stronghold of poverty as the major driver in ASM.² In this regard, when women enter ASM with limited understanding of the sector and the mentality of getting rich quickly (especially in the gold and gemstone industry), the drive changes to wealth creation without them having adequately prepared themselves. The fine line between preparation and lack of preparation by those who enter for wealth creation makes a difference in how women are able to engage in the subsector. Women in Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and others told how they learned within a short time to adequately prepare and understand how the subsector works and, with some (although little) government intervention, have been able to reap compounded benefits from mining. The fine nexus between poverty and wealth, and lack of preparation in terms of understanding the fundamental requirements, limit women's effective participation in mining. Broadly, however, the nexus is tied to the added advantage of education, socioeconomic status, and support structures to boost women's capacity for mining.

Women's often limited level of education, awareness and access to knowledge constrains their roles in the

ASM subsector and their potential economic empowerment. Many women are not aware of the laws governing mining activities, including the processes related to mining licences, environmental management requirements, health and safety regulations and practices, mining value and supply chains, and business development and implementation strategies. Across Africa, women's low levels of literacy and education affect their ability to gain the technical knowledge that would help them manage their mining operations and access the higher levels of the ASM value chain. It also translates into a limited number of women who can act as role models. In essence, ASM enterprises are small businesses with the associated challenges of accessing finance, developing business plans, developing and managing business, marketing and sales.

Being able to tally the numbers aids in effective planning. However, most of the numbers of ASM are 'guesstimates', and in all six countries, the agencies show different numbers/statistics on the actual operators within ASM. Effective development planning starts with a strategy which accounts for who, where, what and how to address the needs of a sector. Without knowing the actual numbers of the diverse groups of women involved in different aspects of the mining value chain, most attempts at formalization would be unsuccessful. Tanzania, a classic example of a country with some known and verifiable data, conducted a baseline survey of the subsector in 2011. When it developed its Five Year Development Plan 2011/12-2015/16, it committed to leasing mining equipment to small-scale miners, developing medium-scale miners and providing quasi banking institutions to address the needs of women in the sector through innovative forms of financing such as rotating savings and credit, community cooperatives and

Profile: Rebecca

Image: ECA

Rebecca works in galamsey mining to make a living

Rebecca is a 21-year-old galamsey miner at Kwabeng. Galamsey — an adulteration of the phrase ‘gather them and sell’ — is a form of mining in the informal sector and is outside the legal and regulatory framework of the country. The operations may be mechanized or artisanal, but the miners do not have legal access to the mineral concession.

Rebecca is educated to secondary school level, but has not undergone any technical training. She has a six-month-old baby, and

came to the mining site on her own to make a living. “Life became difficult for me after delivering my baby, as the baby’s father abandoned us, leaving us with no financial support, so I started doing galamsey work to make ends meet,” she says. “My family members think the galamsey work is difficult but they cannot take care of me either so they do not say anything when I am out here working. I use the money I make to take care of my baby and myself. I am better now than before.”

village community banks. Regionally, there is a need to provide disaggregated data for effective decision-making, service delivery and citizen engagement; and information for Africa to own its narrative.³ There is also a need for continued research and initiatives targeted at the ASM subsector, to define clear policy guidelines in relation to data collection, development planning and transforming the sector into decent employment for women.

Not surprisingly, the multifaceted nature of livelihoods strategies for women who work in ASM also emerged as a key theme. For many women, involvement in ASM is part of their livelihoods strategy and is balanced with other income-generation activities such as agriculture, as ASM is often seasonal.

Regarding collaboration between LSM and ASM, common themes were conflict over allocated mining concessions; women in ASM feeling disempowered in their relationships with LSM; lack of government support for LSM-ASM collaboration; lack of incentives for LSM engagement with ASM; and the potential for other agents (such as the Ghana University of Mines and Technology) to broker positive capacity-building opportunities between LSM and ASM.

A recurrent theme in all the workshops was the need for women to organize better. Naila Kabeer and others, writing on ‘organizing women in the informal economy’, quotes from Shalini Sinha that “studies on women have suggested that fear cripples women to effectively organize to receive common resources for their collective good.”⁴ Women have been brought up in fear of their husbands, employers and communities. They live in constant fear of losing their livelihoods, starvation, losing their children to illness and being thrown out of their homes. However, ECA’s research on women in ASM alluded to another dimension or constraint to organizing: opportunism has led to a scramble for resources by the apex women’s mining organizations at the expense of rural women. Most of the ASM groups were organized only on paper and at the executive level, with no outreach activities for women at grass-roots level.

Women miners’ associations and women’s cooperatives are an area of potential opportunity for capacity development and provision of improved services to members. Governments, development partners and financial institutions often find it easier to engage with and provide support to groups rather than individuals.

Gender balance and empowerment of women in Azerbaijan

*Professor Hijran Huseynova, Chairperson of the State Committee for
Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan*

The twenty-first century has become a time of new opportunities, new thinking and rapid development for women. Women of the world have passed through a long struggle to achieve success and promote their rights.

Azerbaijan does not stand beyond these processes. The first secular school for girls in the Eastern world was opened in Azerbaijan during the period of oil 'renaissance' in 1901. Suffrage for women was introduced in 1918 by the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, thus making Azerbaijan the first Muslim country where women got equal political rights with men. The position of Azerbaijani women in society, social life and family has changed dramatically. Azerbaijani women have always demonstrated strong will, courage, purity and devotion and have played a special role in the life of our society, and in the formation of our national and moral values.

The period of the collapse of the totalitarian system and the gaining of independence in very difficult conditions in the 1990s set new duties and obligations for Azerbaijani women. The formation of a market economy and reforms in different spheres demanded new responsibilities and a further increase of women's role in society. Enormous strides have been made for the establishment of favourable conditions for women and the promotion of gender balance in economic and social policy. The participation of Azerbaijani women at the Fourth World Conference on Women and joining the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action can be considered as a turning point of the women's movement in Azerbaijan. The ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1995 became the next progressive step towards the advancement of women.



Image: State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The first secular school for girls in the Muslim East, opened in Azerbaijan in 1901

In 1998 the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, Heydar Aliyev, signed an order on 'Increasing women's role in Azerbaijan and strengthening their social protection', followed by the decree on 'Implementing state policy regarding women in the Republic of Azerbaijan' in 2000. As a result, a governmental body responsible for formulating and pursuing state policy on all aspects of the promotion and protection of women's rights and their empowerment, the State Committee on Women Affairs, was created in 1998. In February 2006, the committee's competences were broadened to include the issues concerning family and children, and it was renamed to the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. The establishment of 11 regional Family Support Centres under the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs was a very important achievement in strengthening the institutional framework to address the key gender issues in rural areas, identify children and women in need of special care in the community, and provide juridical consultations and psychological aid to women and children from vulnerable groups.

In order to solve the gender problems arising from financial causes, the gender review of the state budget was prepared in Azerbaijan. As a result of the development of the concept of gender budgeting, the gender factor is being taken in consideration during the distribution of financial resources.

The Government of Azerbaijan made significant progress and achievements to improve the legislation on the advancement of women and gender equality. Since the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Guarantees of Gender Equality (2006), important amendments have been made to other legislation.

The law on 'On Combating Domestic Violence' (2010), 'On Social Service' (2011), amendments to the Family Code on equalization of the minimum age of marriage for women and men to 18, amendments to the Criminal Code on prohibition of early and forced marriages (2011), and free compulsory medical check-ups before marriage (2014) were adopted to ensure women's rights. A number of state programmes including the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development for 2008-2015, the 'National Action Plan for increasing the efficiency of protection of human rights and freedoms' in 2011, the 'State Program on implementation of the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2011-2015' the 'State Program on improving mother and child health' and the 'State Program on socio-economic development of regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan' contributed to the provision of employment, increasing incomes and well-being of the population and women significantly. The newly adopted development concept 'Azerbaijan 2020: look into the future' once again proved that gender problems remain the centre of attention. Measures to prevent gender violence, creation of equal opportunities for women on the labour market, promotion of women at workplaces and expanding their opportunities to occupy leading positions are defined as the main direction of the state policy. A number of special documents such as the 'National Action Plan for Gender Equality' and 'Family Strategy of Azerbaijan', and the creation of a system to monitor evasion of education and early marriages, are being worked out for implementation.



Image: State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Educate a girl, educate a nation: combating stereotypes starts at an early age

One of the components of women's active participation in political and public life is their economic independence. It facilitates poverty reduction, ensures advances in women's economic and social performance and in many cases eliminates gender-based discrimination in society. President Ilham Aliyev pays significant attention to the activities of business entities and the creation of favourable conditions for the development of private enterprise. The loans provided by the state and the work carried out by the National Fund on Assistance for Entrepreneurship also provide extensive support to the development of women's businesses, especially in rural areas.

As a result of adopted measures, a decrease of the poverty rate among women from 49 per cent to 5.9 per cent has been achieved in the country. Today 69.2 per cent of working women are involved in the private sector and 30.8 per cent of them in the public sector. In 2015 the share of women entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) reached 28 per cent in Azerbaijan, while earlier their share in SMEs was only 4 per cent.

Another example of support for rural women willing to increase the level of their economic activity is the project on Promoting Rural Women's Participation in the Social and Economic Life. This joint project of the United Nations Development Programme and the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs strengthens the role of rural women in community-based decision-making through capacity development and network building in 2011-2016. The Government also tries to strengthen women's entrepreneurship by organizing business forums, conferences and other events. In the framework of the United Nations Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia, where Azerbaijan has been chairing for six years, two international forums for women entrepreneurs were held. This has given an additional opportunity to strengthen networks among women entrepreneurs at national, regional and global levels.



Azerbaijan's Under-19 women's football team: today Azerbaijani women are active players in constructive processes in the country

One of the today's important tasks is the elimination of gender-based violence. Special monitoring groups on gender-based violence and violence against children were established in the country with the participation of different state organizations (the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, and the Azerbaijan Attorney General) and executive powers. As an effective monitoring mechanism, these local monitoring groups examine the situation and the effectiveness of the implemented measures in places, determine the families at risk and provide support for them, analyse the causes of violence, provide protection for the victims of violence and ensure appropriate assistance to carry out such functions as coordination of gender-based violence prevention and response efforts among different state institutions. To improve the collection, analysis and use of data and research to enhance gender-based violence prevention, the Government of Azerbaijan has already started the establishment of a countrywide online database on violence against women. Roundtables, specific television programmes and newspaper supplements with the aim of awareness-raising campaigns are conducted on a regular basis. Consequently the number of domestic crimes decreased from 1,543 to 867 during the period 2009-2015, and the number of registered crimes on violence against women decreased from 4,696 in 2009 to 2,248 in 2015.

Azerbaijani women are represented in all spheres of our society. The Government has taken concrete measures to challenge prevalent stereotypes and to encourage women to participate actively in political and public life, especially in the regions and rural areas. In combating stereotypes we start preventative work from an early age. Awareness-raising campaigns help younger generations to choose the correct orientation in life. With this goal, every two years we conduct an All-Republican Forum of Children-Leaders. Girls, jointly with state officials and members of parliament, analyse and express opinions on challenges they encounter and try to find ways to solve them.

National congresses of Azerbaijan women have also been very important in demonstrating the potential of women and their ability to make changes in society. In 2013, 2,000 women representing all regions of Azerbaijan participated at the Fourth Congress under the motto 'Unity for development'. Women are very active in political and public organizations. For example 46 per cent of the members of the Leading New Azerbaijan Party are women. There is special Women's Council of the political parties which positively influences enhancement of the role of women in the political life of the country.

By implementing projects on the participation of women in politics, including 'Women Leadership in Self-Governance', the Government tries to encourage women's participation in political process and increase their representation during elections. As a result significant progress has been achieved at the municipal level. Thus, the representation of women at municipal level has increased from 4 per cent in the municipal election of 2004 to 26.5 per cent in the election of 2009 and 35 per cent in the elections of 2014. The use of the administrative reform that appoints, at each regional-administrative level, a woman deputy to the governor, and the training of these future women leaders in the administration of the state, creates a very important opportunity for women to play a major role in the development of the country, especially in its social policy. The number of woman deputy heads of executive powers increased from 35 to 78 and one woman was appointed to the position of head of executive power in recent years.

The women of Azerbaijan still face a number of challenges. The occupation of the historical territories of Azerbaijan by Armenia and the continuation of aggression is one of the main obstacles to development. As a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, more than a million people became refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), over half of whom are children and women (156,000 women refugees and 297,731 IDPs). A great effort is being carried out today for their reintegration into society. The state of Azerbaijan does its best in order to provide these women with deserved education, medical insurance and normal living standards.

Today Azerbaijani women are active players in constructive processes going on in the country. Mehriban Aliyeva, the First Lady of Azerbaijan, the president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and goodwill ambassador of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, has made great efforts in raising and solving the problems of Azerbaijani women. Being a professional politician and humanist, focusing on the promotion of national values and culture, and showing great efforts in raising social problems to a worldwide scale, Mehriban Aliyeva is a great example for local women as well as those worldwide.

We can state that a gender culture is closely bound with the development of our country. Placing the needs of women at the heart of policymaking and public services delivery, the Government underlines its commitment to strengthening the foundations of a society where women can access and benefit from opportunities on an equal footing with men.

Promoting gender equality and women's participation through community-driven development

*Joel Mangahas, Human and Social Development Division, South-East Asia Department;
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Asia, home to more than half of the world's population, has an unfinished agenda in achieving gender equality; empowering all women and girls remains a serious challenge. Gender equality, critical in its own right, is essential for improved inclusive growth, faster poverty reduction, and better education and health outcomes for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation, as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.

The Philippines ranks among the top gender-equal countries in the world. Yet many women still suffer from gender inequality — having lesser access to basic services; stereotyped as weak, powerless and vulnerable; and relegated to a secondary role in the home and in the community. Gradually, yet

markedly, a community-driven development (CDD) project of the Philippine Government, the Kalahi-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS) managed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development since 2003, has made inroads on gender inequality.

CDD promotes equity and inclusiveness, efficiency and good governance. Equity and inclusiveness are achieved by effectively targeting vulnerable and excluded groups, putting resources under the direct control of poor people, and scaling up poverty reduction measures as needed. Studies show that the efficiency of CDD results from the demand-driven allocation of resources, reduced corruption, lowered costs and increased cost recovery, and better quality of goods and services. Good governance is promoted through greater transparency and accountability in the use of resources resulting from community participation in decision-making processes.



A newly built three-classroom school building/evacuation centre constructed by men and women in Sorsogon Province

Image: Yukiko Ito, Asian Development Bank

Key Gender Action Points

Gender Action Point	Goals
Social preparation and subproject identification	At least 50% women's participation in all meetings on infrastructure prioritization and design
Enhanced gender integration in KC-NCDDP guidelines and materials	Ensure preparation of simplified and harmonized technical guidance notes on mainstreaming gender in KC-NCDDP processes
Subproject implementation and operation and maintenance (O&M)	Ensure 20-30% of the paid jobs created by the project go to women (by the end of the project) Ensure that the O&M plan provides 20-30% of paid jobs to women
Capacity development	Establish balanced (50%) women's participation in all community capacity development activities generated through the project
Grievance redress system (GRS)	Disseminate information on the GRS, its reporting channels, and sanction measures to community members
Staffing and tasks of area coordination teams and community facilitators and training	Ensure progress towards 50% women's representation in leadership positions in community volunteer committees, including the barangay (village) representation teams (by the end of the project)
Enhanced competence of community volunteers (CVs)	Ensure that female CVs are provided opportunities in the expanded barangay and municipal development councils (as a strategy to utilize and sustain CV skills and enthusiasm learned through participation in KC-NCDDP) by the end of the project
Capacity development	Ensure gender orientation and training (basic to advanced) are incorporated in the overall KC-NCDDP capacity development programmes for partner agencies (barangay and municipal government officials, Municipal Inter-Agency Committee, and municipal gender and development focals)
Staffing	Incorporate gender-mainstreaming responsibilities in the terms of reference and performance targets of programme management offices
Monitoring and evaluation	Ensure that KC-NCDDP process evaluations incorporate a review of gender dimensions and recommendations

In 2013, Kalahi-CIDSS was scaled up into the Kalahi-CIDSS National Community-Driven Development Program (KC-NCDDP), covering 847 municipalities located in 58 provinces and 14 regions across the country. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in supporting KC-NCDDP, focuses assistance in restoring basic social services to and rebuilding the municipalities devastated by typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan). Through CDD, communities are involved in designing and implementing the rehabilitation and reconstruction of small-scale community infrastructure; residents also actively participate in local governance. KC-NCDDP trains these residents and equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills for them to be effective in such a role.

KC-NCDDP's cornerstone for participation is the community empowerment activity cycle (CEAC) which ensures that special groups in the community — women, ethnic minorities and the poorest — can express their, and not the community's elite's, preferences. The CEAC promotes women's engagement in community activities by integrating gender requirements into the cycle's different stages — from social preparation, project development, prioritization and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. Through the support of municipal officials and project-based staff, communities identify subprojects that can address their needs and improve their well-being. These subprojects include small-scale community infrastructure —

access roads, water supply systems, health stations, day-care centres, school buildings, seawalls and post-harvesting facilities. An ADB survey in 2012 reveals the strong participation of women in selecting subprojects under Kalahi-CIDSS: 91 per cent said that women spoke at barangay (village) assemblies when subprojects were selected, and 94 per cent said that women's views were considered at the assembly.

KC-NCDDP further enhances gender empowerment by implementing the 11 key action points in ADB's Gender Action Plan (GAP). These action points are accompanied by sub-indicators that are monitored throughout project implementation for better gender equality results and outcomes. For example, the GAP provides a road map for KC-NCDDP to address gender equity by setting targets, such as achieving 50 per cent women's participation in meetings, 20-30 per cent of paid jobs given to women, and 50 per cent of leadership positions given to women in the volunteer committees.

As of March 2016, 59 per cent women actively participate in community capacity development activities to learn about participatory situation analysis, project proposal development, community finance/procurement, community infrastructure, operation and maintenance, gender and development, community monitoring, and the grievance redress system. The project information management system further reveals that of the community volunteers, 55 per cent are women leaders heading



Image: Department of Social Welfare and Development

Women from Zamboanguita, Negros Oriental Province prove they can work in construction as they take part in building their subproject

community committees, and 20 per cent of the total paid labourers are now women, a large increase from the baseline of 3 per cent for skilled and 5 per cent for unskilled labour at the start of the project. This large increase in paid labour was a result of strategically offering jobs to women beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfer programme, and of encouraging discussion in pre-construction meetings on how women can be more engaged in paid jobs. Women also acquired new skills — such as welding, plumbing, carpentry, masonry, electrical installation, tile setting and hollow block making — through non-traditional training, thus increasing their opportunity to be hired during subproject construction, and even beyond.

KC-NCDDP continues to build the confidence of women, enabling them to play an important role in decision-making on matters affecting community development. Some even become barangay officials; their constantly active participation in KC-NCDDP activities has earned them the trust of other community members. Many have learned to express community priorities and implement subprojects that would provide or restore basic social services to their communities. A study reveals that some men, proud of their wives' accomplishments, even show support by taking over some household chores.

The following stories capture the life-changing experiences of women as they participate in development subprojects, and thus gradually chip away the prevalent gender inequality in their communities.

In Sorsogon Province, about 600 kilometres southeast of Manila, women played key roles in their communities: helping build much-needed infrastructure, identifying priority subprojects during barangay assemblies, and providing

administrative support during implementation. Women also helped in actual physical construction, a field traditionally dominated by men in the Philippines.

One of these women is Lorna, a 41-year-old mother of four, who shovelled gravel and sand, and carried hollow blocks to build the now fully functional three-classroom school building in Barangay Tres Marias, Donsol. A single parent, she toils with a wholehearted focus on providing basic and other necessities for her children. Before engaging as a paid labourer she has served as housemaid and caregiver, and continues to do so. Now she earns extra income from cooking and selling food at the town market. Asked if she would again engage in similar paid labour, she said yes unequivocally, and quipped, “Women can also do what men can do. I can even saw and cut steel and metal!” More seriously, she added, “I don’t want my children to experience the poverty I experienced, that’s why I work hard.” All her children are studying — the eldest in twelfth grade vocational high school and the youngest in fourth grade. A model of perseverance and leadership for her children and the community, Lorna also regularly attends barangay assemblies, striving to participate and suggest solutions on matters affecting their daily lives.

In Barangay Gimagaan, Donsol, Loida is one of 30 women out of 83 paid labourers who built the flood mitigation structure that has kept their streets, houses and lives safe from yearly devastating floods. The 31-year-old mother to a nine-year-old girl applied for the job to augment the minimal income from her small organic farm of vegetables and rice. She is also a community volunteer leader and a member of the subproject’s monitoring and implementation team.



Image: Yukiko Ito, Asian Development Bank

Women volunteers from Bulusan, Sorsogon Province support the construction of their seawall subproject to protect the community from floods

“The importance of women extends beyond the home,” she explained. “I feel empowered as a woman, being able to contribute financially to support my family’s needs as well as to serve my neighbours and others through the subproject.”

In Barangay Dapdap, Bulusan, Nena, a 47-year-old Kalipi (women’s organization) member, vividly recalls how the male workers on their seawall left the subproject site early one day in November 2015. Only she and Elisa, another woman worker, stayed until the expected heavy rains and strong south wind made landfall later. With determination, courage and strong will, they took advantage of the low tide and, equipped with shovels and pails, worked until night-time. She feels good every time she shares her story, her self-awareness and self-discovery evident as she said, “Not only men can do this. I realize that we women workers are just as able, and perhaps even more committed, to completing challenging tasks such as what we experienced.”

Bella, a 54-year-old mother of six from Barangay San Roque, Bulusan, simply wanted to earn a little more income for the family. She worked as a nanny in Kuwait for six years until she returned to the Philippines to take care of her own four very young children at that time. Now a coconut farmer and handicrafts maker, she helps augment the family income whenever she can. Work opportunities that the subproject presented, she said, provided monetary benefits and equal chances for women and men in the community. More than her labourer’s salary, she cherishes her husband’s pride in her contribution to the evacuation centre, something the community had long needed and dreamed of having. “My husband didn’t believe I was serious in taking up that kind of job,” she said. “But when he and our children finally saw me

working at the subproject site, they finally did, and would always tell their friends that I helped build it. My husband respects me even more these days. He now helps me in the kitchen and cooks rice. This is how we show our kids — some of them all grown up now — that a mother and a father should help each other in raising the family.”

Statistics and stories from the field clearly paint this picture: KC-NCDDP has contributed significantly to building the confidence of women, enabling them to play an important role in decision-making about community development, especially in rural communities where women play a secondary role. Equipped with new skills, they can contribute to the family coffer. They have peace of mind and feel secure knowing that the subprojects they helped build are essential for their families and the community. They have enhanced their analytical, management, and decision-making and leadership skills. Finally, they are starting to realize their potential as human beings — certain that with proper training, skills, determination and government support, they can lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

Several gender equity issues still remain unresolved, and achieving gender equality is likely to be a long haul. Yet KC-NCDDP, led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development and supported by international organizations such as ADB, has started the ripple that can only develop into waves as it continues to empower more women, eventually promoting gender equality. Slowly but surely, the multiple benefits and dividends of women’s effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership in CDD have started to cascade.

Empowering women through Islamic finance

Kristonia Lockhart, Senior Gender Specialist, Social Capacity Development Division, Islamic Development Bank

At the dawn of the new millennium, the international community has embarked on a new global agenda. The many lessons learned over the past 15 years during the Millennium Development Goals era have been transformed into an even more ambitious agenda with aspirations for a more equitable and human-centric development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in September 2015 by world leaders have changed the narrative from reducing extreme poverty to ending it, with greater attention to sustainable development.

To successfully realize the SDGs in a timely manner, certain prerequisites have to be met. Among the critical issues to be addressed, financial stability, financial inclusion and shared prosperity stand out.

The poor are socially excluded; they find themselves voiceless and powerless. These are key determining factors of poverty and material deprivation as indicated by their lack of access to livelihood opportunities. The concept of social exclusion is complex and multifaceted. It refers to individuals and societies and to disadvantages, alienation and lack of freedom. It is manifested both formally, through laws and government institutions, and informally, through community and familial relations. In poor societies, economic exclusion is at the heart of

the problem. When people are excluded from the main source of income, their first priority is survival and a basic livelihood. The size of the financially excluded population is enormous: according to the United Nations approximately 3 billion people lack access to formal financial services such as bank accounts, credit and insurance.

While both men and women face similar barriers to access finance, evidence suggests that these barriers are higher for women. Discriminatory social norms and unequal social and economic structures have led to women and girls being disproportionately represented among the world's poor. The reasons for this include culture, lack of traditional collateral, women's lower income levels relative to men, and financial institutions' inability to design appropriate products and outreach strategies to reach women.

Furthermore, in Muslim majority countries there is faith-compounded financial exclusion. An estimated 72 per cent of people living in Muslim majority countries do not use formal financial services even when they are available. Some people view conventional products as incompatible with the financial principles in Islamic law. Islamic finance has gained traction around the world over the years. It links finance with the real economy in a substantial way and maintains the link at each point in time in a fair and transparent manner.

Islamic finance offers promising potential solutions in these critical domains. In fact, the major financial areas Islamic finance has contributed to — namely financial stability, financial inclusion and shared prosperity — could be instrumental in ending poverty, achieving food security, ensuring healthy lives, achieving gender equality and promoting peaceful and inclusive society. Additionally, innovative Islamic financial instruments especially for infrastructure development, such as Sukuk, the Islamic equivalent of bonds, can also be used to mobilize resources to finance water and sanitation projects, sustainable and affordable energy, and to build resilient infrastructure and shelter.

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Group is a multilateral institution aiming to promote comprehensive human development, with a focus on the priority areas of alleviating poverty, improving health, promoting education, improving governance and prospering the people. IDB is striving to promote Islamic finance, including Islamic microfinance, among member countries to enhance financial inclusion and empower low-income families.

IDB has extended Islamic lines of financing for the establishment of Islamic microfinance institutions in member countries and non-member countries under its Technical Support Program

Guinea: producing traditional clothing

A young Guinean woman saw an opportunity to provide traditional clothing to the wealthy. She started her own boutique by importing fabric and accessories from France and Germany and tailor-making garments for her local clientele. She started with her own resources and bought three sewing machines. As demand grew, she turned to Crédit Rural de Guinée to provide financing amounting to GF30 million, to purchase and negotiate the price for additional sewing machines and employ a few tailors. Today her business has grown to GF90 million and she employs 15 people.



(TA), to reach out the poor and informal entrepreneurs. The Microfinance Development Program (MDP) provides technical assistance to develop the Islamic microfinance sector and assists in establishing or strengthening Islamic microfinance institutions by way of equity participation and developing regulations. The MDP offers interventions in close consultation with the member countries' governments or institutions depending on their specific needs. Eight countries are benefiting from the TA/MDP including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sudan, Senegal, Tunisia, Egypt, Pakistan and Tajikistan. In some countries the projects are completed; for instance in Sudan, IDB has assisted in establishing the Irada microfinance institution (in partnership with Bank Al Khartoum) and Bank El-Ebdaa' (in partnership with the Arab Gulf Program for Development, or AGFUND) which are self-sustaining institutions focused on poverty alleviation through providing Islamic microfinance. Several initiatives have been introduced to enhance financial inclusion.

IDB Islamic Microfinance Facility

IDB has established the Islamic Microfinance Facility, a highly focused initiative to help economically empower disadvantaged women and productive households by eliminating livelihood barriers through Islamic microfinance. IDB attributes the success of this programme to three basic principles:

- doing business with the poor and unemployed
- supporting Income-generating activities by providing productive assets
- financial products ensure equitable distribution of wealth in the value chain through profit and risk sharing among stakeholders.

Through this programme, strategic partners are identified to accompany and transfer knowledge to the targeted beneficiaries while also having a share in the profits.

The IDB Islamic Microfinance facility through the three basic principles addressed both social and economic inclusion and not just financial inclusion of women.

1. Microfinance institutions supported through the facility treat women as business partners. Traditional collateral is of secondary importance when the focus is to conduct trade and investment with productive women.
2. The asset-based nature of Islamic Microfinance products ensures that the financing provided is for productive purposes and mitigates the risk of women coerced to borrow on behalf of their male counterparts, while leaving them indebted.
3. The risk and profit sharing nature of Islamic Microfinance products enhances women's bargaining power in the value chain that is often dominated and controlled by men. Through their financing, Islamic Microfinance Institutions help women to get higher prices for their products and lower prices for the inputs that they require.

Business success in Guinea

In 2001 IDB provided support to the Government of Guinea to help empower the country's poor through a microfinance project. The project aimed to increase access to finance for micro and small enterprises, to support the institutionalization of local microfinance institutions and to disseminate information and training on Islamic finance. To date, over 10,000 people have

Benin: empowerment through financial inclusion



"These loans have helped us a lot. Before, we had to ask our husbands if we wanted money, now we are independent. Thanks to this programme I can now also read, write and count ... so I can calculate what I spend and what I sell, and work out my profit."
— Blandine Dansou, Maria Gbê women's group, Cotonou

benefited from the project. The project helped to strengthen the nation's agricultural, trade and industrial sectors by facilitating the creation and growth of numerous financially sustainable and productive micro and small enterprises that will continue to make valuable contributions to Guinea's economy for years to come.

The project originally set out to finance 600 activities through its microfinance institution partners, but in the end more than 650 activities were able to benefit from IDB's funding. It had a tremendous positive impact on the participating micro-entrepreneurs, 62 per cent of whom were female (against a target of 50 per cent). Health conditions and school enrolment rates in beneficiary families improved; given the average family size of nine people in Guinea, the project directly contributed to improving the living conditions of almost 6,000 people. In a country with few opportunities for securing a respectable living, IDB's project gave budding entrepreneurs a chance to make an honest living and even provide employment to others in their communities. This was of particular benefit to women.

With a 97 per cent repayment rate IDB has been able to create a revolving fund that continues to operate with equal rates of success. The fund has already extended funding to more than 600 additional activities, bringing the total number of clients to over 1,200. IDB's systematic introduction of Islamic finance created a strong demonstration effect that was felt across the donor community in Guinea. By the end of the project, upwards of 50 per cent of financing facilities offered by other donor agencies were being channelled through similar Islamic modes of financing.

Integrated Microfinance Support Program

IDB has established the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development (ISFD) as a Waqf (trust), with the aim to reduce poverty in IDB member countries by focusing on supporting pro-poor growth, human development (especially improvements in health-care and education), and enhancing the

productive capacity and sustainable means of income for the poor. In 2008 IDB and ISFD launched the Integrated Microfinance Support Program to tackle the lack of access to working capital within IDB member countries.

In 2010 IDB and ISFD engaged in a partnership with the Government of Benin to assist the country in achieving its poverty reduction goals to increase people's access to microfinance. This programme develops its products on the principles of participatory Islamic microfinance, which has proven very popular among the beneficiaries. There is strong demand for more such products, and Islamic microfinance clearly has a major role to play in Benin's fight against poverty.

Benin suffers from high levels of poverty and illiteracy, problems that leave youth and women with few opportunities to become economically active. It was ranked 165th out of 187 countries in the 2015 Human Development Index,¹ but the country is striving to improve its standing through a range of strategies.

The programme aims to increase employment opportunities, boost economic activities and reduce poverty for 200,000 people per year by improving their access to sustainable microfinance services, market-oriented training and business opportunities. The Integrated Microfinance Support Program targeted six main groups: micro and small enterprises including new start-ups; female heads of households; unemployed youth graduates or those with professional diplomas; skilled labourers, traders and craftspeople; deprived rural families; and the active handicapped.

It had six components; three related to programme management and the following three, which guided its main activities:

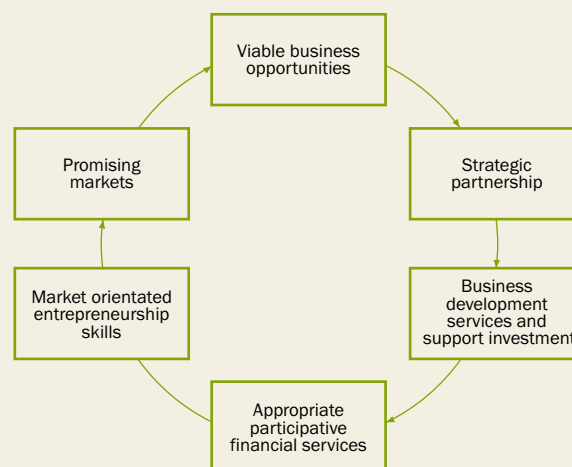
- 'Revolving microfinance schemes for ultra-poor people and micro and small enterprises' provided two lines of microfinance: small loans for income-generation activities for groups of ultra-poor people, of which at least 70 per cent would be women; and larger loans for micro and small enterprises, economically active poor people and unemployed youth. Both used Islamic microfinance.
- 'Capacity-building for microfinance institutions' entailed tailored training and support programmes, through which national and private institutions were to benefit from training to support the introduction of Islamic microfinance principles, products and practices.
- The 'Market-oriented vocational training and awareness campaigns for ultra-poor people' component was undertaken by national partners. It comprised a pro-poor vocational literacy and awareness programme, and practical apprenticeship programmes.

The initial aim was that at least 70 per cent of the programme beneficiaries should be women. But by 2015, 90 per cent of those who benefited were women — about 150,000 in total. And the benefits are not just financial; the women describe the pride, unity, independence and happiness that have changed their lives for the better since they were able to access working capital to expand their activities.

One example is the Saint Trinité group. Located in the heart of Contonou's poor Yagbé quarter, its 250 members include widows, disabled people and other very poor women. Together, they mainly buy fish, which they then smoke or fry for sale. Their president, Celestine Kounduho, explains

The IDB Islamic Microfinance Facility approach

(i) Founding microfinance support on eliminating main common livelihoods barriers of access to:



(ii) Considering the poor as a business partner not credit consumer

Source: IDB

how their lives have changed: "We had never taken any credit nor had access to markets before. We started with a CFAF30,000 (US\$60) loan. When we repaid this we were able to borrow more, and now we are working with money from a CFAF100,000 (US\$200) loan. The group is growing and we can reach out to others. We work and sell together, and now have the money to buy materials so our children can go to school, and extra moneys helps us at home."

The programme's first phase ended in June 2014, but the revolving fund that was established continues to fund women's groups and small business ventures. By November 2015, around 150,000 ultra-poor women (those earning less than US\$1.25 a day) had benefitted from microfinance, as well as 15,000 men. The programme has yielded many tangible benefits — and valuable experiences to build upon in the future.

IDB believes that an Islamic financial inclusion model can play a very important role in promoting empowerment and gender equality. Empowerment, as understood and promoted within the context of development and poverty reduction, is a multidimensional and interdependent process that encompasses dimensions of social, economic and political empowerment. The rationale behind this is that the creation of an enabling environment for female entrepreneurship will tackle the underlying causes of women's and girls' economic and social exclusion, constraints of equitable opportunities and participation. This will increase women's and girls' agency and they will have genuine access to and control over economic resources, participate in the family and community decision-making processes and have more power to balance their roles and mobilize against or report violent incidents. This in turn will respond to their strategic gender needs and enhance their ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit equitably from development.

An African Development Bank lens on financial empowerment of women in Africa — aiming higher

Bernadette Dia Kamgnia and Jacqueline Odula Lyakurwa, African Development Bank

The battle for gender parity was internationally recognized at the September 1995 Beijing declaration¹ which committed to the empowerment and advancement of women. Building on the global momentum, the first African Union Summit in 2001 adopted the principle of gender parity, and slightly more than a year ago, the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union declared 2015 the Year of Women's Empowerment.

Notwithstanding global recognition of the urgency of gender equality, a 2013 World Bank Enterprise Survey revealed that female participation in (business) ownership averages over 25 per cent across the region, and that women's businesses have a significant observed low capitalization level compared to men's, irrespective of whether the business is new or existing.² These findings were supported by a 2014 African Development Bank (AfDB) evaluation which found that gender issues were often minimally addressed in many of the bank's projects.³ The few operations targeting women were structured as partial credit

guarantees.⁴ Beyond these empirical studies, anecdotal evidence suggests that women in Africa continue to experience pervasive poverty and discrimination as a result of legal, cultural and socioeconomic structures. This has resulted in women having limited access to education, financial services, agricultural value chains, and participation in policymaking processes.

In support of its regional member countries, AfDB has, since its inception in 1964, launched programmes and policies to directly and indirectly address gender equality. The bank ensures that its own internal structures and processes show demonstrable concern over gender equality; and that its projects and programmes are equally sensitive to gender issues.⁵ Indirect programmes and projects have targeted food security with the rationale that they increase rural household incomes and welfare, and thereby empower women. These include those in water management, tree planting, forestry, and improving access to markets through the construction and maintenance of rural roads. Direct interventions to enhance women's access to finance have mainly been in the area of microfinance targeting



Image: AfDB

The rehabilitation of a 2,000 cubic metre storage barn at Damango has enabled more stable incomes for women



Images: AfDB

Ghana: sheltered stalls with water supply and sanitary facilities are generating positive impacts for women

women. For instance, between 2002 and 2012, AfDB financed over 90 microfinance projects worth over US\$400 million, of which the lion's share was dedicated to women.⁶ AfDB interventions also include support for women-owned small and medium enterprises which most often takes the form of lines of credit to financial institutions for on-lending to eligible enterprises.

A review of the AfDB Gender Equality Index summarized performance of the 54 African countries during the period 2011-2015 revealed that while access to a loan from a financial institution for women of 15 years old and above is highest in West Africa, loan access is not negligible in Northern and Eastern Africa where it is the lowest. An important caveat to these survey results is that access to a loan does not necessarily imply the ability nor the capacity wherewithal (contract negotiation, financial knowledge, collateral and so on) that are required to approach a formal financial institution for a loan for personal or business purposes. This is further proved by the Global Findex which reveals that women are less likely than men to have a formal bank account,⁷ which is the first step to applying for a loan from a financial institution.

An FSD Africa study in Mozambique concluded that women's levels of education and product awareness are lower than men's (33 per cent) and women are less likely to turn to banks for financial advice than men. Additionally, they are less aware of the advantages of having a bank account, less likely to know or visit financial services access points and less likely to have either identity documents or proof of residential address.⁸ In Mauritius, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, females report inability to maintain the minimum balance as a barrier to having a bank account.⁹ One can safely deduce that the root cause of women's economic empowerment is zero or low starting capital/finances and wealth. These findings collectively point to the need for the AfDB, national governments, regional bodies, the private sector and the development community to adopt initiatives that will strategically address the root causes of women's poverty in Africa.

Cognizant of the need for more catalytic action and more targeted interventions to address economic empower-

ment of women in Africa, the bank launched its Gender Strategy, themed 'Investing in Gender Equality for Africa's Transformation', in 2014. The bank has since adopted a holistic multisectoral approach to enhancing women's economic empowerment to level the playing field for men and women for opportunities to engage in economic activities and earn income. Five strategic areas of engagement¹⁰ have been identified in promoting women's economic empowerment. The Gender Strategy focuses on three pillars — legal status and property rights; economic empowerment; and knowledge management and capacity building.

Institutionally, AfDB also adopted its 'High Five' priorities in September 2015: Light up and power Africa; Feed Africa; Industrialize Africa; Integrate Africa; and Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa. These five priorities link directly with the Gender Strategy's implementation approaches and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Given that agriculture is the mainstay of women's incomes in Africa, initiatives particularly address constraints faced by women in

Côte d'Ivoire: Emerging from Conflict

The focus of Emerging from Conflict, a gender-based component of a multisector support project, was to provide services to and empowerment of victims of gender-based-violence during the period December 2007 to December 2012. This project was launched after the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2001 that saw gender-based violence grow to affect 67 per cent of women. The project specifically established integrated service centres for medical, psychosocial, economic, legal and judiciary services for gender-based violence survivors. It also established income-generating projects for women's associations where gender-based violence victims were encouraged to join, empowering them economically and limiting the harm caused by isolation and social stigma. To ensure continuity, the project trained six non-governmental organizations (AWECO; l'Organisation Nationale pour l'Enfant, la Femme et la Famille; l'Organisation pour le Développement des Activités des Femmes; Cases; Horizon Vert; and Organisation pour les Droits et la Solidarité en Afrique). The project was declared winner of the United States Treasury Development Impact Honors in 2013.

Rwanda: One Cow per Poor Family

The AfDB Dairy Cattle Development Support Project (PADEBL) substantially supports the project 'One Cow per Poor Family' (Girinka). The project seeks to reduce child malnutrition rates and increase household incomes of poor farmers. This is achieved by providing poor households with a heifer. Each cow provides nutrition, employment, a stable source of income and is a source of manure to assist small-scale cropping activity.

More than 203,000 families have benefited from the programme while the target is to reach 350,000 Rwandese families by 2017. Beneficiaries lauded the project's impact, with most of them stating that the income from the surplus production of milk had enabled them to educate their children, subscribe to the national health insurance scheme, upgrade their homes and improve their living conditions. In addition to the purchase and distribution of heifers, PADEBL is implementing other support activities such as the construction of milk collection centres, artificial insemination, and vaccination campaigns for project beneficiaries.



Image: AfDB

Selling milk output as a result of Girinka: each cow provides nutrition, employment and a stable source of income

Ghana: Fufulso-Sawla Road and Community Development Project

The Fufulso-Sawla Road and Community Development Project was inaugurated in August 2015. This project is located in the northern region of Ghana between the towns of Fufulso and Sawla (148 kilometres). It provides the shortest direct link between Temale and Wa (the northern region's two regional capitals) and links two regional corridors. The area is one of the poorest regions in Ghana with an estimated population of 400,000. The project has generated several positive impacts on women and on gender equality at the household and community levels. The road construction created temporary jobs for women as skilled and unskilled workers. It also provided opportunities for ancillary activities such as the sale of meals at the construction sites.

More long-term and substantial income-earning opportunities have been created, such as the market centres that have formalized small businesses and expanded trading with other markets in the country. The four market centres each feature 72 sheltered stalls with water supply and sanitary facilities, and four large lorry parks with a surface area of approximately 5,000 square metres. Incomes are also more sustainable with the completion of the rehabilitation of a 2,000 cubic metre grain storage barn at Damango. Employment opportunities have also been enhanced with the construction of a Conservation Museum at Mole National Park.



Image: AfDB

The Fufulso-Sawla Road and Community Development Project has created long-term income-earning opportunities for women through new market centres

agricultural trade and investment; legal status and property rights; and transport and logistics facilitation.

This strategic approach addresses the majority of challenges faced by women in the 'road economy' that also takes into account cross-border trade challenges while enhancing national and regional agricultural value chains. The approach has been proven to deepen AfDB's engagement with gender issues by strengthening gender mainstreaming in all of the bank's country and regional operations and strategies.

Emphasis has been placed on rehabilitating and building new infrastructural facilities to increase access to clean water and sanitation, clean energy and health facilities. The bank also improves cross-border trade, especially in agriculture, with a focus on gender-responsive free trade agreements. To increase women's access to financial services, AfDB supports financial literacy training for women and recently launched the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA). AFAWA aims to address the critical elements of the entrepreneurship ecosystem of

women in business in Africa, in particular finance, to support their economic empowerment, reduce vulnerability and unleash their unused potential for equitable growth. In sum, addressing the economic empowerment of women requires a holistic approach, and lessons learned from past success stories of AfDB projects have paved the way for the holistic approaches derived from its Gender Strategy.

Addressing the financial empowerment of women in Africa collectively points to the need for AfDB, national governments, regional bodies, the private sector and the development community to adopt initiatives that strategically tackle the root causes of women's poverty in Africa. Success stories prove that there is an undisputed case for facilitated gender finance for women in Africa. Holistically one would prioritize projects that provide employment, enhance injection of wealth into the local economies and increase multiplier effects through improved savings, increased capital for further investment and increased purchasing power. Join us.

Empowerment of women and girls in Muslim South-East Asia

Osman Bakar, Distinguished Professor and Director and Norhazlin Pg Muhammad, Deputy Director, Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam; and Ariffin Abu Bakar, Head of Public Relations, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Brunei Darussalam

There follows a brief account of the contemporary state of affairs of the societal life of women and girls in Muslim South-East Asia, from the perspective of gender equality and empowerment. The focus is on the geo-cultural region often referred to by scholars as the Malay-Indonesian world. Identified with this geo-cultural region are the modern states of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, all of which are predominantly Muslim, and the significant Muslim minority communities of Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Kampuchea. In all, more than 250 million people of the Islamic faith live in the region.

Thus we have in view a fairly broad picture of the social progress collectively charted by the more than 125 million women and girls belonging to this major geo-cultural branch of the global Muslim umma (community) since their independence from colonial rule. This large group of women and girls shares a common cultural universe as shaped by Islam, their common religion and their common Malay ethnicity, notwithstanding their strikingly diverse sub-ethnic groups.

A notable feature of the sociocultural development of these Malay-Muslim females over the past half a century is their relative success in harnessing traditional and modern



Image: Royal Brunei Airlines

Royal Brunei Airlines' first all-female pilot crew

resources for achieving gender equality and empowerment in a rather remarkable compatible manner. The traditional resources in question, in the shape of ideas, values and moral precepts, are primarily furnished by religion, especially its revealed law (Sharia), and indigenous cultural traditions and customary practices popularly known as *adat*. As for modern resources, these are mainly provided by modern education, both secular and religious, and modern legal reform, again both secular and religious.

The historical encounter between Islamic law and pre-Islamic local customs that lasted centuries resulted in an evolving interrelationship between these two traditional sources of law and social ethics in which harmony and compatibility eventually prevailed over tension and conflict. In this newly prevailing cultural order the Sharia largely takes precedence over *adat*. However in a few notable cases *adat* overrides the Sharia. Such is the case with the well-known *Adat Perpatih* on issues of inheritance which is practised in Negeri Sembilan, one of the 14 states forming the Malaysian Federation, and in Minangkabau in the Indonesian island of Sumatera. While the Sharia seems to provide greater inheritance rights to males the *Adat Perpatih* favours females, which may be seen as a kind of socioeconomic empowerment. Notwithstanding this anomaly and a few controversial issues like the practice of female circumcision, there has largely been harmony between tradition and modernity, and within tradition itself between religion and *adat*. The religion of Islam is widely viewed in the region as pro female empowerment. The following examples provide a good glimpse of the kind of empowerment Malay-Muslim females have enjoyed, especially in the last 50 years.

Modern education

The Malay-Muslim concern with modern education in the region was noticeable as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. The concern became widespread due to two main factors. The first factor was the educational needs of the colonial economy, and the second was the democratization of religious education under the impact of the modern Muslim reformist movement that swept much of the Muslim world in the early twentieth century. The first factor resulted in the gradual development of schools of all levels to cater to the needs of Western-style secular education and colonial manpower. The medium of instruction in these secular schools was either native Malay or the language of the colonial ruler in question. In Indonesia the European language was Dutch, while in Brunei Darussalam, Peninsular Malaysia (Malaya) and Singapore it was English.

The second factor resulted in the modernization of religious education, especially in terms of teaching curricula and the incorporation of modern academic subjects. In religious schools throughout the region, the medium of instruction was either Malay or Arabic or both. Although during the colonial period enrolment of girl students in both co-educational and all-girls schools could already be seen in the decades prior to the Second World War, it was only in the post-war years that more serious attention was given to female education from primary to university



Datin Dr Hjh Anita Binurul Zahrina binti POKLWDSS Hj Awang Abdul Aziz, the first woman vice-chancellor of Universiti Brunei Darussalam, at a flag-raising ceremony during Brunei National Day

levels. In Malaya, the first all-girls boarding secondary school, Tunku Kurshiah College, was established in 1947 while its male equivalent, the prestigious Malay College Kuala Kangsar was built more than four decades earlier in 1905. Malaya and Singapore only had their first university in 1949 when the University of Malaya was established in Singapore. Indonesia, however, had a longer track record in tertiary education. The National University of Indonesia, the first in the country, was established in 1849. The Bandung Institute of Technology was also established before the Second World War (1920). Among the best well-known modern schools, colleges and universities in Islamic studies built during the latter part of the colonial period was the Islamic University of Indonesia, founded in 1945 in Yogyakarta, and the Islamic College in Klang established in 1955. In Brunei Darussalam, His Late Majesty Al-Sultan Sir Hj Omar 'Ali Saifuddien established an all-girls Arabic religious secondary school in 1966 when the country was not yet independent. All these early high schools and universities enabled the enrolment of the earliest groups of female students in high schools and universities in the three countries.

However, it was upon national independence that greater opportunities were open to girls to obtain education at all levels. This democratization of education paved the way for female empowerment that has witnessed remarkable progress especially since the 1980s. This decade marks the beginning of a new trend in education in which female students outperformed male students. It is now a phenomenon in the region to see female students accounting for as high as two-thirds of the total intake in universities and colleges due to the better academic performance of girls in upper-secondary school or pre-university examinations. It is also a significant change to see female university students



Image: Attorney General's Chamber

Brunei Darussalam's current Attorney General, Datin Seri Paduka Hajah Hayati binti POKSDSP Haji Salleh

outsmarting their male counterparts not only in the social sciences and the humanities but also in the hard sciences, including the engineering sciences. The contemporary phenomenon of female students dominating the graduation list is likely to have far-reaching effects on the gender equation in the employment pattern. Likewise, in many universities in the region, female academics of all ranks are now of comparable numerical strength if not already outnumbering their male counterparts, at least in some of the fields of specialization.

Women in the modern workforce

According to Brunei Darussalam's 2011 population census, women constituted 48.4 per cent of the population. Statistics show that the participation of women in the national workforce is increasing at a fast rate. Already the employment of women in the civil service, the largest employer in the country, reflects their demographic strength.

The *Global Gender Gap Report 2015*, published by the World Economic Forum, reported that Brunei has moved up by 10 places from its 2014 position, with an improved economic participation and opportunity score due to more female legislators, senior officials and managers as well as female professional and technical workers. The civil service witnessed the appointment of women as permanent secretaries, deputy permanent secretaries, directors-general,

directors and deputy directors. Such appointments are in line with the Brunei National Development Plan 2007-2012 which stresses the need to enhance a more active participation of women in national development by providing them with the opportunity to hold higher positions in the public and private sectors, including at the level of policymakers and legislators.

The Brunei Government of His Majesty has taken a giant step towards giving women equal rights in government services. Such a significant step has helped to remove misunderstanding about the ideas of segregation and women's inequality in leadership, as it enables access and opportunities for emerging leaders are made equal for both men and women. Service of married civil service women who were previously employed on a month-to-month basis is made permanent, thus giving them greater access to benefits, privileges and entitlements such as education allowances for their children, higher rates of travel allowance and qualifying for government housing, Employee Trust Fund and Supplemental Contributory Pension, a plan which includes a survivorship protection clause and benefits on reaching retirement age.

Brunei's Moral Pillars and Work Ethics of the Civil Service are an essential work ethics framework based on universal Islamic values. Male and female civil servants cohesively strive to produce good quality service through common



Halimah Yacob (far right), a Malay Muslim and the first woman Speaker of Singapore's parliament, during the opening session of parliament

shared values, regardless of any gender inequality, inculcated towards creating a culture of excellence.

Within the fair treatment and equal rights given to women in the civil service, Islam sees a hidden jewel behind their nature/physicality. Women in Islam are considered the bearers of lineage and a vital component towards achieving sustainable development. Under this consideration, the Government has enacted the Maternity Leave Order 2011 in which female officers and staff employed on a permanent service, month-to-month, contract, site-staff, open-vote and daily paid basis are entitled to apply for maternity leave of 15 weeks or 105 days. The leave includes full salary paid for those who have been in service more than six months or 180 days, while those who have been in service for less than six months (90-180 days) will only be paid half.

The sublimity of Islam encompasses and is not limited to the needs and health interests of mothers during their pre- and post-natal period. It also firmly promotes and supports optimal breastfeeding (exclusive breastfeeding from birth to six months and continuous breastfeeding up to two years) as a key component of sustainable development.

Professional leadership and civil society

Having made significant progress in education and gained economic security, many women graduates and professionals are now contributing to the development of civil society

and non-governmental organizations in pursuit of women's empowerment. Many women graduates in the region are now seen to be providing a leadership role in this civil society movement. A good number of them have risen in prominence to the ranks of national leaders in their respective fields of expertise. They may be regarded as significant agents of empowerment for their gender in the years to come in practically all sectors of public life.

In Brunei Darussalam, a national organization known as the Council of Women Brunei Darussalam was established in 1984. The council comprises 13 women's associations whose activities range from religious, welfare and social works to youth and business concerns. Viewed as a whole, the core issues with which the council is concerned are women, social and child rights. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore there are older and more well-established women's organizations that have made significant contributions to women's empowerment, especially in education. The Muhammadiyah, the second-largest social organization in Indonesia which boasts more than 30 million members, established in 1917 its women's wing called Aisyiyah with the main objective of empowering Indonesian women in all fields of life. In Malaysia, the United Malays National Organization was established in 1946, and its dominant ruling party since independence has a women's wing that is also known to have made a major contribution to the empowerment of Malaysian women.

Implementing the Gender Responsive and Participatory Budgeting project in Penang local government

Shariza Kamarudin, Manager, Gender Responsive and Participatory Budgeting Programme, Penang Women's Development Corporation

Penang is one of the 14 states in Malaysia. It is situated on the north-west coast of Malaysia and comprises two parts — Penang Island and Seberang Perai in Peninsular Malaysia. It has a population of about 1.6 million people. Penang is popular for its cultural heritage and its capital city, George Town, has been accorded the status of a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage City. The people of Penang are multiracial, multicultural and multi-religious. Penang has always been a famous destination for tourism in Asia. It is highly urbanized and economically developed compared to other states in Malaysia.

The new state government which gained power in 2008 declared its aim to develop Penang into an international city and ensure that it runs a people-centred government. The Chief Minister defined the following criteria for making Penang an international city:

- a 'people-oriented government' which will enrich everyone by an equitable share in the economic cake, empower the people with rights, opportunities and freedom, and enable them with skills and knowledge
- social cohesion and inclusion which results in a shared society that allows democratic participation, respect for diversity and individual dignity, equal opportunities and prohibition of discrimination
- the building of reciprocity, reputation and trust through civic education and communication for a strong civil society.

The state government has adopted the principles of competency, accountability and transparency to represent its commitment to good governance. At the same time it has made a commitment to promote gender equality and social justice in all areas of governance. These commitments are the fruits of the initial work done by gender advocates in Malaysia, consisting of members of women's organizations and academics.

In 2010, a conference on 'Gender Mainstreaming: Justice for All' was organized in Penang by the state-funded Gender Equality and Good Governance Society and the Women's Development Research Centre of Universiti Sains Malaysia.

One of the recommendations was for the Penang state government to adopt and implement gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), linking its institutionalization in the state to the overall promotion of gender equality and good governance.

GRB is not something new to Malaysia. In 2004, the United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development piloted GRB in five ministries in Malaysia. Following this, three treasury call circulars duly encouraged other ministries and agencies to use GRB in their programmes and activities. However, the latest call circular is more strongly worded, requiring various ministries and agencies to prepare their budgets using a gender analysis budget approach. Penang is the only one to initiate GRB at the state level.

In 2011, a few capacity-building workshops were organized in Penang with regard to preparation for the adoption

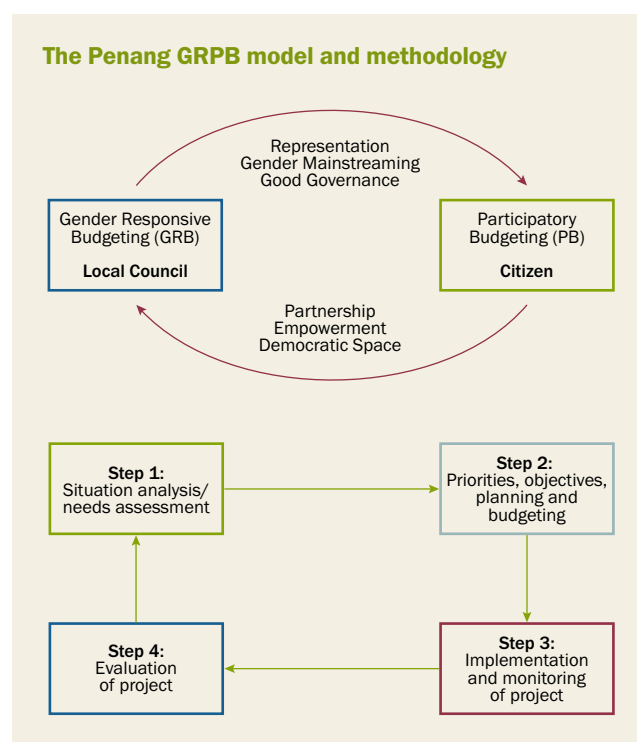




Image: PWDC

Voting day at the PPR Jalan Sungai and PPR Ampangan housing project

of GRB in the state. Key officials and senior government personnel participated in these workshops. The commitment of the state government eventually gave rise to the setting up of the Penang Women's Development Corporation (PWDC) in November 2011 as a fully-funded state agency dedicated to the mission of promoting gender equality and social justice. Penang is the first and only state in Malaysia to have formed such an agency.

PWDC's vision is to mainstream gender into the policies and programmes of all sectors to achieve gender and social justice in the state of Penang. GRB has become the flagship programme in PWDC. A scoping exercise was done in 2011 to study the best approach for implementing GRB in Penang. The outcome from this was a project document on the Gender Responsive and Participatory Budgeting (GRP) project in Penang local government. It set the direction and a plan of action that need to be followed in implementing GRPB at the local government level in Penang.

A smart partnership started in 2012 between PWDC and the two local councils — Penang Island City Council (Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang or MBPP) and Seberang Perai Municipal Councils (Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai or MPSP) — to implement GRB in Penang.

The GRPB people-oriented model of Penang shows the amalgamation of GRB and participatory budgeting (PB) where the two types of budgeting processes play a complementary role to make sure gender sensitivity and inclusivity are in place to promote gender equality and social justice. Regina Frey, a gender expert from Berlin, makes a point

that "PB is not automatically gendered and GRB was not originally meant to be participatory." The GRB methodology analyses decision-making on public expenditure in the context of implications on gender equality and attempts to bring development and changes that will make budgets more gender-equal. The PB model, on the other hand, introduces processes in which citizens can directly influence aspects of budget decision-making.

The name of the GRB project was formally changed to the GRPB project after the Asian Regional Conference on GRB: Transforming Institutions, Empowering Communities, which was held in Penang in 2014. This was to reflect the due emphasis and importance of both approaches to budgeting. PWDC won a special mention award at the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy in 2014 for its innovative combination of participatory processes with gender responsive measures through community projects. The GRPB methodology gave people the power to play their roles as active citizens and to become partners — not just beneficiaries — with the local councils, especially in formulating policies and making decisions in the key areas that affect their lives. The methodology comprised four steps.

Step one entailed a situational analysis/needs assessment through a survey, focus group discussions or voting on needs and allocations. The survey was a basic demographic survey to gather background data on the context of the project. For the focus group discussions, five groups were consulted to understand the needs of both women and men. These were: children/teenagers (aged 18 and under);

youth (aged 19-30); adults (aged 31-55); senior citizens (aged 56 and above); and disabled people. Focus group discussion questions included:

- What are the issues/problems you experience?
- Why do these issues/problems occur?
- How can these issues/problems be resolved?

Residents voted based on a 'priority needs' list that emerged from the focus group discussions. Each individual (including residents aged 10 years and above for housing projects) was given ballots to vote for their prioritized items.

Step two used the outcomes of step one for planning and budgeting. Decisions were based on project feasibility, technical considerations and budget availability. Step three was the implementation of the project, and in step four the project was monitored and evaluated.

Project one: housing

Project one was a housing project at two low-cost apartment complexes owned and managed by MPSP and MBPP. Projek Perumahan Rakyat (PPR) Jalan Sungai comprises two 22-storey blocks housing 529 three-bedroom units, and PPR Ampangan is a 10-storey block of 250 low-cost three-bedroom units. Each block has an average rental of RM110 (US\$35) a month.

The project started with a household survey to get information on the background of the residents. Women formed the majority of residents in both places, at 53.5 per cent in PPR Jalan Sungai and 53.4 per cent in Ampangan. The numbers for each focus group discussion were planned (based on the information compiled in step one), to ensure diversity in representation of gender, age and ethnicity in both PPRs. Special interactive sessions with children aged 10-13 sought to create

awareness and educate the children about gender issues in their homes and surroundings through drawing and colouring.

Overall more women, many of them housewives, aged 31-55 attended the focus group discussions than men and women from other age groups. Through the discussions, a list of the residents' important needs was compiled and classified according to themes, projects and programmes that the community could work on in their own apartment complexes. All residents aged 10 and above were eligible to vote. An encouraging 69.5 per cent of the 1,667 PPR Jalan Sungai residents and 67.5 per cent of the 886 PPR Ampangan residents who were eligible participated in the voting process. At the end of the three-day voting process, most PPR Jalan Sungai residents chose building maintenance as their top concern, while PPR Ampangan residents voted for a recreational park as their highest priority.

The project planning, budgeting and implementation proved to be the most challenging as it stretched to over 10 months of numerous consultations among local councils, residents and the GRB team. This was because of the technicality of implementation, which had to follow standard procedures laid down by local councils, as well as internal problems within the communities.

Project two: Campbell Street Market rejuvenation

In 2015 the GRPB methodology was tested out in MBPP and MPSP public facilities projects that involved a much wider community. In the past, the method would be to get architects/planners to propose designs based on general specifications and recommendations made by MBPP in the tender documents. However, for this project MBPP decided to implement the GRPB process and duly sought the help and involvement of PWDC.

Priorities voted for by the residents of PPR Ampangan and PPR Jalan Sungai

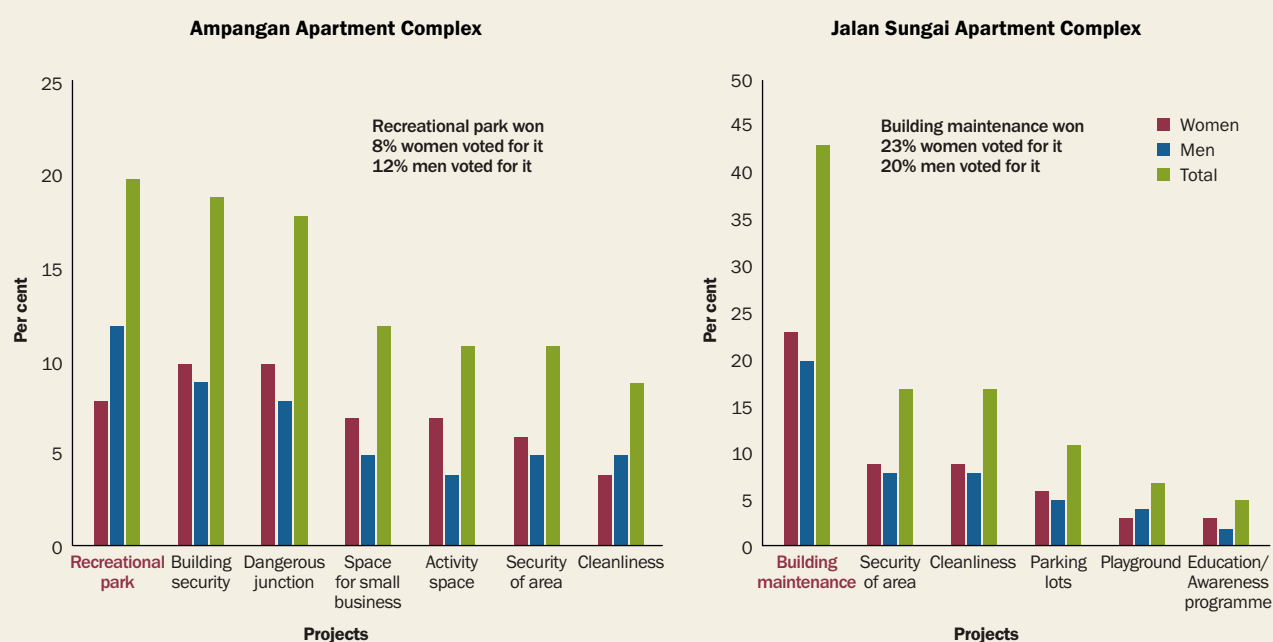




Image: PWDC

The Campbell Street Market project with hawkers

Public projects implemented using GRPB methodology included upgrading and rejuvenating the Campbell Street Market in George Town city under MBPP. The market, which was built around 1900, is one of the heritage buildings in Penang. It had become fairly dilapidated and in need of a makeover. The process involved a series of consultations with stakeholders, including market stall holders, patrons of the market, traders operating in the vicinity of the market, and shop owners operating around the market.

Focus group discussions involving women and men traders were held separately for vegetable, poultry, beef, mutton, fish and seafood and dried foodstuff traders. All of them were provided opportunities to give feedback on their expectations, needs and preferences concerning the proposed renovations.

A questionnaire was also designed and both market patrons and non-patrons who live and/or work within a 3 kilometre radius were randomly selected to give their feedback. The questionnaire also covered views on family and gender-friendly facilities such as a breast feeding room, a diaper changing room and privileged parking for family/pregnant ladies. At the same time, it also sought the views of respondents on special wheelchair access for the disabled, privileged parking for the disabled and CCTV to enhance security for all. The project is now at step two, the planning and budgeting stage.

Implementing GRPB in Penang

Community representatives including women and young men were involved in the process of implementing GRPB in Penang, assisting in the survey and mobilizing people to attend focus group discussions and to vote.

The GRPB project has also facilitated the entry of other non-governmental organizations, especially at the housing projects. The community work at PPR Jalan Sungai, for example, has drawn in a women's group to conduct a series of awareness programmes on violence against women for women residents. Another women's group, Soroptimist International Penang, organizes skill-building sessions on computer skills, cooking and sewing for women at PPR Jalan Sungai. Penang Arts-Ed, a community-based non-profit organization that uses arts and culture for education and community empowerment, conducts programmes for the children and youth at PPR Jalan Sungai. Arts-Ed works with the young girls and boys through programmes on videography, dancing, and creating art and crafts from recycled items.

There is inconsistency in the commitment and time invested by residents and local council representatives. GRPB processes can be time-consuming because they include many complex layers of planning and consultation between the residents and local councils. In addition, negotiating with fragmented interest groups in the communities is a long and complex process. Often, it was a challenge to get the people to come together.

However, this participatory approach to planning for a project provides the respondent stakeholders with a sense of ownership. They are happy to be consulted as they have a stake in the success or failure of the planned renovation project.

The two local councils — MBPP and MPSP — are now in midst of implementing the Strategic Plan of Action for Institutionalizing GRPB 2016-2018 in their respective institutions.

Championing women: All India Women's Conference

*Mythily Jagannathan, author, presenter and All India Women's Conference Member; and
Chandraprabha Pandey, writer, translator and All India Women's Conference Member for Art and Culture*

All India Women's Conference (AIWC) is one of the premier women's voluntary organizations in India, involved in the field of women's education and empowerment for the last 85 years. Its founder was Margaret Cousins, an Irish woman who urged her Indian compatriots to take heed of the changing world and the new socialist movements that were auguring change and equality of the sexes in the West. She wanted the same new consciousness to permeate the Indian social fabric.

Pioneering, well-educated Indian women rose to the challenge. AIWC was registered under the Societies Registration Act in 1930. From inception, AIWC has been deeply concerned about the economic, social and legal needs of women and has played a major role in the enactment and modification of laws pertaining to dowry, child marriage and more. The organization has always adopted a participatory approach in the implementation of its programmes, focusing on women's education, health (physical and mental), capacity-building, income generation and so on through its network of branches.

What we know today as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were actually targeted back in 1928 by AIWC. Here are some examples of AIWC's outreach on selected SDGs.

SDG 4: literacy and education

Education is key to gender equality and the overall empowerment of women. It has been a major concern of AIWC, which was founded to target the education of girls and women. The



A computer class at the AIWC Vocational Institute

literacy rate of women in 1927 was very low. AIWC made strenuous efforts to address different groups of girls and women and adopted its education programmes to include everyone so that 'no one was left behind'.

Through its more than 520 branches, AIWC tried to make education inclusive and address the needs of Indian women in remote rural areas. Schools from primary class to 10+2 (equivalent to the International Baccalaureate and General Certificate of Secondary Education levels in the west) benefit countless students.

Some specially designed programmes are:

- Skill-based literacy programmes for women in remote areas, slums etc
- Computer training centres and vocational courses run by AIWC branches
- The AIWC Vocational Institute, affiliated with the National Institute of Open Schooling, providing certificate courses in computer science, beauty culture, textile block printing, cutting and tailoring and Ayurveda for income-generation and employability
- A three-month programme, 'Home Health Care Attendants', for elderly persons in collaboration with the Indian Red Cross Society.

SDG 5: gender equality

Gender equality is known as the stand-alone goal as it is dedicated to the elimination of poverty, inequality, injustice and all forms of violence against women and girls. Stark gender disparity



Students training in beauty culture at the AIWC Vocational Institute

remains in social, economic and political fields, and efforts must be made to cut the root causes of discrimination and deep-rooted biases against women and girls. Since its inception, AIWC has played an active role in initiating and campaigning for legislative reforms to do away with many social evils and customs plaguing the lives of women, such as Sati and child marriage.

AIWC helped in getting the following Acts passed:

- Sarda Act (1929), raising the age of marriage to 18 years
- Special Marriage Act, 1954
- Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act, 1955
- Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956
- Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956
- Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women Act, 1956
- Maternity Benefits Act, 1961
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Devadasi Act, 1982.

Gender equality can be achieved only when women's fundamental rights are ensured – including the right to property, inheritance, land rights, equal pay, safety at home and in the workplace, and freedom from domestic violence. To ensure such rights AIWC campaigned and helped to pass and amend a number of Acts favouring women, including the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences, Prohibition of Child Marriage, and the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act to curb female feticide.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment in 1992 gave women political empowerment by reserving one-third of seats in legislative bodies, from the village level tier of local government (Panchayat) to parliament. Equal political participation will help in influencing government policies and planning. AIWC and women's organizations are still fighting for 50 per cent reservation for women for a 50:50 planet.

AIWC founded a number of pioneering institutions, many of which now function as autonomous apex bodies in their respective fields. These include:

- the Lady Irwin College for Home Science, New Delhi (established 1932) which now offers graduate and postgraduate courses in a variety of subjects
- the Family Planning Centre (established 1943), now the Family Planning Association of India
- the Save the Children Committee (established 1943), now the Indian Council of Child Welfare
- the Cancer Research Institute (established 1952), Madras
- the Amrit Kaur Bal Vihar for Mentally Retarded Children (established 1964), New Delhi, now run by the Mentally Retarded Children's Society
- Working Women's Hostels in many parts of the country for women who have to leave their homes to take up careers
- short-stay homes giving assistance and shelter to distressed women
- AIWC's Old Age Homes which offer refuge, dignity and comfort to women in the sunset of their lives.

AIWC has been actively participating in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women since the Beijing world Conference in 1995. Every year its delegates organize side events in collaboration with other organizations, present civil



Image: AIWC

AIWC has initiated programmes to enhance the skills of rural women and generate employment opportunities

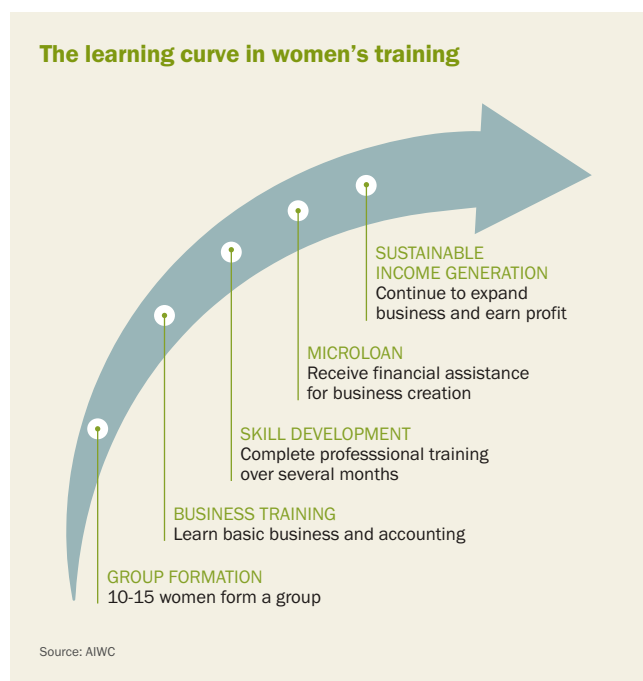
society's concerns and give recommendations to improve the status of women and empower them. It also presents its own good practices that help in improving women's status. AIWC is a partner in several international agencies dealing in specialized development areas.

Empowering rural women

Another aim of SDG 5 is empowering the rural poor. About half of the 90 million rural population dependent on agriculture and related occupations are women who are deprived of basic needs. They suffer the greatest hardship from poverty and lack of access to a better life. AIWC has initiated numerous programmes to enhance women's capabilities through training and generate employment opportunities. This approach enhances women's dignity by doing away with the perpetual donor-recipient cycle of welfare schemes for the poor.

Branches receive financial support for training and setting up enterprises by women. This is returned by branches in instalments as the enterprise progresses. An added component is basic education, nutrition, hygiene, sanitation and leadership training. Skills training of women is conducted at district level, in subjects relevant to the area such as dairy farming, food processing, tailoring, store-keeping, credit management, herbal gardens and medicinal products.

A major step towards raising the status of women is organizing sales of the work of women artisans at handicraft and cottage industry fairs and festivals. At Shilpkala Utsav, the annual crafts bazaar organized by AIWC, women artisans from all corners of the country are sponsored to bring their goods for sale. A dazzling variety of handicrafts, textiles and artwork is displayed and sold at the three-day festival. The purpose is to provide women a platform to showcase their best work and learn about new and popular designs and trends.



The Sabrang ('many-coloured') cultural festival is now a popular feature of the crafts bazaar. Visitors are treated to presentations of music, dance, martial arts, yoga and a variety of musical instruments. Thus the women's craft bazaar presents the rich legacy of art and culture.

AIWC has also funded the training of women elected to local self-government bodies (Panchayats) in many states. In 1999, training programmes by AIWC were sanctioned by the Ministry of Rural Development with the collaboration of the United Nations Children's Fund. Women who had not stepped out of their homes, shown their faces or spoken in public learned to participate in governance, discuss and deal with local problems. Participatory learning action methods brought out the innate intelligence, practical wisdom and leadership of women, with a widespread impact on the education of girls and the status of women in society.

Rural/urban resource centres are set up in coordination with branches and, after years of financial support, become self-sustaining. Through them, the community is involved in planning and organizing programmes. They deliver services like health care, prevention of malnutrition and diseases, maternal and infant care, senior citizens day care and counselling. Computer classes, for which free computers are provided, draw youth in large numbers.

AIWC's adoption of villages in different parts of the country has led to improvement in social parameters of growth as well as the economic well-being of the community. Sadhrana village, adopted by AIWC in 2002, is a success story of socio-economic uplift for an entire village with widening impact circles in nearby villages, especially on youth. In addition to very popular condensed computer courses, training women in processing, packaging of fruits and vegetables, making bags and mats from jute, and other products based on local raw materials, has led to sustainable income generation.

AIWC is also involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of women. Hundreds of thousands of women traditionally

employed in the bidi (tobacco rolling) industry in seven states were released from their endless toil and exploitation, through the efforts of AIWC in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. After many months of intervention, women were organized into self-help groups, trained in alternate vocations and financed to start enterprises. These include sari weaving, dairy, pottery, coir products, tailoring and embroidery, food processing and catering. This led to a rapid rise in community health and well-being.

SDG 7: affordable and clean energy

AIWC's pioneering efforts in promoting renewable and clean energy are aimed at reducing women's drudgery and their exposure to respiratory ailments caused by smoke. Since 1981 AIWC, in collaboration with government departments, has taken up nationwide programmes creating awareness, demonstrating and training women masons. Thanks to these efforts improved, smoke-free wood stoves (chulhas) were accepted in a big way, saving millions of women from smoke pollution.

In the late 1980s, AIWC was the leading non-governmental organization (NGO) that popularized biogas technology for fuel and organic manure. In the last decade, AIWC has been involved in disseminating solar technology for domestic needs and drying agriculture produce. The latter was taken up as a means of livelihood for rural women, who solar-dry and pack surplus produce for sale. AIWC's clean energy programmes have been recognized in international forums.

In 2013 the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change approved Observer status for AIWC. As part of the Gender Constituency AIWC organizes awareness and advocacy programmes and workshops with the help of its branches, to make the masses aware of the causes and impact of climate change and the importance of their role in mitigating and arresting it.

AIWC's role over eight decades

In 1928, when Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy entered the Madras Presidency Legislative Assembly, she was the first and only woman legislator in the entire country. AIWC, led by the redoubtable Margaret Cousins, had successfully fought and changed the constitutional rules for electing legislators. That was the start of a long journey, crossing several milestones of women's empowerment through education, legal rights, political rights, health care and socioeconomic progress. The common purpose behind these endeavours is to awaken both government and civil society to the need for women to live with happiness, dignity and security on equal footing with men; to fulfil their own potential, and take responsibility for a happy and sustainable society.

On the international scene, the early emergence of AIWC was due to the efforts and assistance of the British women's movement and Annie Besant's work for the Theosophical Society, which found a congenial home in India. AIWC now enjoys consultative status with several United Nations agencies. Today, with over 500 branches grouped in nine zones throughout the country, with widespread grass-roots outreach and coordination with government and NGO networks, AIWC is meeting new challenges, and marching towards new goals.

The Mongolian experience on actions to ensure gender equality

Bolormaa Mashlai, former Head of Secretariat and Secretary of the National Committee on Gender Equality, Government of Mongolia; and Munkhsaruul Mijiddorj, Human Rights Activist, Gender Expert and former Programme Manager, National Center Against Violence

The Government of Mongolia supported the Beijing Platform for Action in 1994, and adopted and implemented the National Programme on Advancing Women's Status in 1996. The Government conducted a mid-term assessment and revised the programme as the National Programme on Gender Equality in 2002. It also adopted the Law on Combating Domestic Violence in 2004.

In addition to its involvement in these legislations and programmes, the Government established the National Consul of Gender Equality in 1996 to enact a national system on gender issues. In 2001, the National Consul was extended as the National Committee on Gender Equality (NCGE). It was a significant step in gender mainstreaming.

The NCGE has operated under the Prime Minister since 2005 according to the resolution of the Government of Mongolia. This structure was confirmed by the new Law of Mongolia on Promoting Gender Equality (LPGE), which the Parliament of Mongolia adopted in 2011. The cost of the NCGE operation has been covered within the budget of the Prime Minister of Mongolia since 2006. The budget amount has increased annually, through the efforts of the Government of Mongolia. The NCGE also has experience in providing knowledge on gender issues among government officials and policymakers in order to link implementation of the LPGE with other laws and programmes.

Therefore, the NCGE adopted the mid-term strategy and national programme on implementation of the LPGE in 2013-2016, as well as the concepts and purposes of the related laws and national programmes. For the first time, the Government of Mongolia adopted a strategy to fulfil the implementation of the law that requires intersectoral coordination.

The NCGE became part of the national-level system to support the implementation of the LPGE. The NCGE's role and responsibility has changed: as a national-level operating organization it consists of an informal secretariat team, subcouncils, and subcommittees.

The NCGE appointed the first gender focal point positions at the nine districts, 16 ministries (at the time) and 21 provinces, with the aim to build the national capacity of the ministries for strengthening functions on gender equality. The resolution meant that according to the law for Government officials, the focal points received an additional 30 per cent of salary payment. It was an effective influence in strengthening the national system and building people's capacity on gender mainstreaming.

The gender issue itself requires intersectoral coordination. According to the mid-term strategy the NCGE aimed to adopt a sectoral gender strategy based on the concept of each sector. Initially, the Ministry of Environment and Green Development had adopted the first ever sectoral gender strategy. At that time there was a female minister (former Member of Parliament Sanjaasuren Oyun).

The NCGE has held the gender-sensitive budgeting training among officials from the Ministry of Finance with support from the United Nations Population Fund since 2014. Thanks to the ongoing training, the Minister of Finance adopted the sectoral Gender Strategy in 2016.

The Ministry of Finance Gender Strategy will affect the reduction of poverty and allocate the gender-sensitive state budget. Gender-sensitive budget implementation can target groups to ensure gender equality in Mongolia. Currently the Ministry of Health is working to adopt the sectoral Gender Strategy with support from the World Health Organization.

The NCGE has organized lobbying activities among MPs with support from the International Labor Organization (ILO). It aims to include articles in the new draft law on labour regulation related to the prohibition of gender discrimination, and to demand that all employers carry out a wide range of gender-neutral actions and initiatives in the workplace.

The NCGE has learned from its long-term practical experiences that it is important to have trained personnel and gender experts enacting gender mainstreaming at the national level. Therefore, the National Gender Experts' Group is composed of experts specialized in gender equality and human rights issues in accordance with the requirement for their skill and knowledge for developing gender-sensitive policy, programmes and planning. The National Expert Team is in charge of gender audit, analysis and reviews responding to the challenges faced in the process of promoting the gender equality agenda.

The National Gender Team consists of nine members, all of whom were trained in gender auditing and certified with support from ILO. After completing the training, the team members practiced gender auditing of the policy and programmes from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection, and Trade Unions. The NCGE believes it is necessary to run stable training for people on creating gender-sensitive policy and legislation. Therefore, it has begun to collaborate in the development of gender-sensitive policy, programmes, manuals and



Image: NCGE

'Strengthening women — strengthening democracy' at the Women's Forum of the Community of Democracies, Ulaanbaatar, April 2013

guidelines as well as organizing training with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Actions against gender-based violence

In the last 20 years there has been significant progress in the prevention of violence against women and girls as well as gender-based violence in Mongolia. This has been achieved through working closely with United Nations organizations and other international organizations.

The Parliament of Mongolia adopted the Law to Combat Domestic Violence (LCDM) in 2004. The National Centre Against Violence (NCAV) NGO has been monitoring implementation of the LCDM and remains in charge of the protection of domestic violence victims. NCAV recognized that LCDM needs to link to other laws and interlink between sectors based on their practice. NCAV initiated the development of a draft LCDM in 2012 and has collaborated with the Minister of Justice and the working group. After long-term lobbying, the police involvement and response to domestic violence cases has improved. Regular police statistics often include domestic violence case data based on different locations, ages and dates.

One of the forms of gender-based violence is human trafficking in Mongolia. In 2005, the Government of Mongolia adopted the National Program on Combating Trafficking in Persons to protect women and children from sexual exploitation. In addition, Parliament approved the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons in 2012. Unfortunately, although the law was passed its implementing mechanism has been weak.

However, civil society organizations built the National Anti-Human Trafficking Network, which includes services for working with victims, prevention as well as the protection of victims, and NGOs such as the Gender Equality Center, the Human Security Research Center and the Center for Human Rights and Development.

The Law on Promotion of Gender Equality, article 11, legalized the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Since 2001, civil society organizations have built a network against sexual harassment in the workplace. For the past 15 years they have been combating sexual harassment in the workplace

through various actions such as public campaigns, case lobbying, training and capacity-building journalists, developing manuals, brochures and learning from the country's experiences.

Women's economic empowerment

Over the past decade, Mongolian economic development has been based on the mining sector. In reality, there are still emerging issues among women due to negative economic influences.

Sustainable development and peace are only available when equal participation of both men and women is supported in social development and fulfilled throughout the economy, politics, culture and freedom. Therefore, equal participation significantly influences the strengthening of women's economic empowerment, preventing gender-based violence, increasing women's participation in society, and reducing both domestic and social pressure.

To improve women's economic empowerment, it is important for everyone to be employed equally, without discrimination according to their age and gender, and for each to be able to own land and property. Budget allocation should be transparent to create opportunities for women to access social profit and fulfil their economic rights. Hence, we need to extend gender-sensitive budgeting.

Since the Beijing Platform in 1995, Mongolia has focused on strengthening women's economic empowerment and capacity through its inclusion in policies and programmes. Lately, the NCGE has been focusing on rural women's development.

According to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, it is a requirement to consider building technical skills to access technology for improving women's economic empowerment. Hence, the NCGE has developed a national sub-programme on strengthening women's economic empowerment based on joint project implementation with the Asia Foundation since 2013. The national sub-programme covers the goals of improving existing laws, changing social negative stereotypes and the culture against women, providing required skills for women to run small businesses as well as developing a bank-friendly system, and improving women's participation at the decision-making level in the economic sector.



An exhibition organized by the NCGE to promote women's small businesses included showcasing hand-crafted manufacturing

Notably this requires the amendment of the current Law on Small to Medium Enterprise, to enable the development of small and medium enterprises based on the reality in Mongolia. This is because any sector's restructuring requires the setting up of a supportive legal environment as well as a friendly system and structure.

Women's participation in decision-making

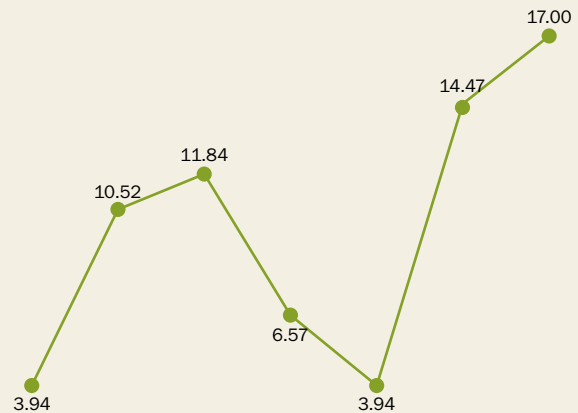
The Government of Mongolia committed to increase women's participation in the decision-making process up to 30 per cent by 2015 (Millennium Development Goal 3) but it couldn't achieve this mission. However, in the Parliament Election of 2014, for the first time 11 female members were elected. In 2016, 13 female members were elected to parliament.

We are often asked why women need to participate in politics. We respond that both men and women live together and their needs are different. These different needs should be represented differently in the laws, policies and programmes. Only women understand women's needs and situation.

Article 10 of the LPGE stipulated that women's representation in decision-making positions of central and local public administration offices should not be less than 15-40 per cent. Efforts have been made towards establishing a 40 per cent quota for women at the local *aimag* (province), city and district level Hural (parliaments). Women's share and participation in decision-making positions at the *aimag*, *soum* (second level administrative subdivision), city, district and *horoo* (subdistrict) levels remain modest due to the stereotyped and patriarchal attitudes among society. The NCGE developed a recommendation on establishing a 30 per cent quota for women at the election with a women's caucus of political parties and civil society organizations.

Women's participation in parliament has improved, but a concerted effort is required to achieve 50-50 by 2030

● Participation of women in parliament



1992-1996	1996-2000	2000-2004	2004-2008	2008-2012	2012-2016	2016
3.94	10.52	11.84	6.57	3.94	14.47	17.00

Source: By year election (Election General Committee)

The recommendation was included in the revised Law on Election just before the Parliament Election of 2016. Unfortunately, male Members of Parliament changed the quota from 30 per cent to 20 per cent a month before the election. This has also happened before, in the 2008 election.

The election result shows a need to improve women's knowledge, skills and economic situation as well as journalists' gender sensitivity for supporting women's political participation. Furthermore, there is a need for concerted effort to achieve SDG 5 and to make women's and men's participation 50-50 by 2030.

The NCGE has learned that we need to think about a stable system and structure for implementing existing legislation, despite some advances in the legal environment. For instance, due to a lack of monitoring systems on the effective implementation of laws, the result of the long-term movement against gender-based violence may be diverted. In order not to go backwards from our achievement, we need to change the attitudes of male politicians, enact a stable policy and develop a new way of doing things.

The NCGE believes it is important, in addition to capacity-building for women, to raise the awareness of male politicians and decision makers as well as public attitudes on gender equality and mainstreaming.

Furthermore, this requires the setting up of a stable system which can run national-level training, surveys, research and public awareness campaigns despite project support only from international organizations, agencies and donors. Another important issue is that of educating human resources and the next generation, in order to bring changes in society. To ensure that gender mainstreaming is a long-term and comprehensive systematic action, it needs to work close to people's hearts and minds so it can change their attitudes and stereotypes. As a result of sustainable actions, countries will achieve the Sustainable Development Goal.

Enabling women to realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life

Women's Commission of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Enabling women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life is the mission of the Women's Commission (the commission) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Appointed by the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, the commission is tasked to take a strategic overview of women's issues, develop a long-term vision and strategy for the development and advancement of women, and advise the Government on policies and initiatives which are of concern to women.

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was extended to Hong Kong in 1996, has continued to apply to the HKSAR following resumption of exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong by China on July 1, 1997, under the principle of 'One Country, Two Systems'. The HKSAR has all along been faithfully implementing CEDAW in accordance with the Basic Law and local laws.

In January 2001, the HKSAR Government established the Women's Commission as a high-level central mechanism to promote the well-being and interests of women in Hong Kong. Currently, the commission is chaired by a non-official and comprises 20 non-official and three ex-officio members.

Coming from diverse backgrounds, the non-official members bring to the commission a wealth of knowledge and expertise from different professions and community services.

The commission has adopted a three-pronged strategy, namely the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women through capacity-building and public education to advance the status of women and enhance gender awareness of the public. To discharge its duties, the commission advises the Government on the development of appropriate policies and initiatives, identifies priority areas for action, engages in independent surveys and research studies, and maintains close ties with local and international women's groups and service agencies. The commission also plays an important role in assisting the Government in faithfully implementing the CEDAW as extended to HKSAR.

The commission has been proactively advocating and promoting gender mainstreaming as a key strategy in achieving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming seeks to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, policies and programmes. The aim is to ensure that women and men will have equitable access to, and benefit from, society's resources and opportunities.

In 2002, the Government accepted the commission's recommendation on the introduction of gender mainstreaming into various policy areas on an incremental basis. To facilitate this process, the commission developed a Gender Mainstreaming Checklist, comprising a series of simple questions, to assist Government officers in evaluating the gender impacts of new and existing public policies, legislation and programmes in a more systematic way. Between 2002 and 2014, the checklist was applied to more than 50 policy and programme areas, covering welfare, public building design, rehabilitation services, healthcare and village representative election, etc.

In 2014, the commission recommended that the time was ripe for the Government to 'institutionalize' gender mainstreaming as a regular feature in its policy-making process. The Chief Executive of the HKSAR accepted this recommendation. In January 2015, the Chief Executive announced that all Government bureaux and departments would be required to refer to the checklist and apply gender mainstreaming to formulating and evaluating Government major policies and initiatives. Starting from April 2015, all Government bureaux and departments have been mandatorily required to, having regard to the checklist, formulate and include an assessment on gender implications in their policy submissions. The gender implication



Members of the Women's Commission celebrated the International Women's Day 2016

Image: Women's Commission of Hong Kong



Image: Women's Commission of Hong Kong

Over 150 participants attended the Seminar on Gender Mainstreaming in December 2015



Image: Capacity Building Mileage Programme

The Graduation Ceremony of the Capacity Building Mileage Programme is conducted every year to present certificates to graduates

assessments need to be cleared by the Labour and Welfare Bureau which is responsible for servicing the commission.

The Government has also been proactively promoting gender mainstreaming in the non-governmental sector. As announced by the Chief Executive of the HKSAR in January 2016, the Government has launched a pilot scheme in encouraging non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the social welfare sector to refer to the checklist and apply gender mainstreaming when formulating their policies and programmes. This pilot scheme is now running smoothly.

To enhance Government officers' understanding and awareness of gender-related issues and to facilitate their application of gender mainstreaming in their daily work, the Government and the commission have provided various types of training to officers at different disciplines and ranks. These include across-the-board gender-related training, tailor-made training programmes to suit specific departments' operational needs, establishment of a web portal on gender mainstreaming as a resource and experience-sharing platform, launching of an online training programme on gender awareness to enable officers to receive training in a flexible manner. Since 2001, a total of about 10,000 officers from various disciplines and ranks have received gender-related training. The commission has also published its 'Gender Mainstreaming Guidebook' and has been organizing gender mainstreaming seminars from time to time.

In 2003, a network of gender focal points (GFPs) was established in Government bureaux and departments. Under the GFP mechanism, a directorate or senior officer from each Government bureau and department is appointed to serve as the contact/resource person to assist in raising awareness and understanding of gender-related issues and promote gender mainstreaming initiatives in their respective areas. At present, there are some 80 GFPs in the Government network.

In 2008, the commission established another GFP network in the 18 district councils of the HKSAR to promote gender mainstreaming at district level, and to enhance collaboration between the commission and district councils on gender issues. In 2016, the Government established another GFP network for NGOs in the social welfare sector. So far,

this NGO network has enrolled more than 110 GFPs. The Government will, in the light of the operating experiences of this NGO network, explore the possibility of further expanding the GFP network in the non-governmental sector.

The HKSAR is an international business and financial centre. Hong Kong now has a population of more than 7 million, with slightly more than half of them being female. Men and women have equal rights of access to 12 years of free education and equal employment opportunities as protected by the local laws. Females now account for more than half of our student enrolments in the undergraduate programmes as well as over 60 per cent of the students in taught postgraduate programmes. Among senior management positions in private business, more than 30 per cent are held by women. These facts and figures reaffirms the commission's firmly-held belief that there is no lack of women with talent, ability and enthusiasm who are willing to serve on the wide range of Government advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs) to provide advice on the development and public affairs of Hong Kong.

Back in 2004, the commission advised, and the Government accepted, that there should be a gender benchmark for appointing women as non-official members of ASBs, and the first gender benchmark of 25 per cent was then adopted as a working target for all Government bureaux and departments to follow. By the end of 2009, the overall ratio of female non-official members among ASBs (gender ratio) was 27.3 per cent. On the advice of the commission, the Government increased, in 2010, the gender benchmark from 25 per cent to 30 per cent, and a gender ratio of 32.3 per cent was achieved in April 2014. The commission then recommended that the gender benchmark be further increased to 35 per cent. The Chief Executive of the HKSAR announced in his 2015 Policy Address that he accepted the commission's recommendation.

The commission believes that women should be able to build capacities for self-reliance, make informed decisions and realize their full potential so as to promote women's well-being. The commission is particularly keen to meet women's needs and interest in continuing education, and it pioneered, in March 2014, its signature Capacity Building Mileage



Image: The Hong Kong Southern District Community Women's Association

Funded by the Funding Scheme for Women's Development, a training workshop on floral art was organized to enhance women's employability

Programme (CBMP). This programme is designed to encourage women of different backgrounds and educational levels to pursue life-long learning and self-development. Courses are conducted flexibly in three modes through face-to-face classroom lessons, radio broadcast and e-learning on the Internet, supplemented with optional learning activities.

The CBMP courses cover a wide range of topics including health, financial management, interpersonal relationships and communication skills, as well as other practical day-to-day issues. The CBMP is run jointly by the Open University of Hong Kong and a commercial radio station. Over 80 women's groups and NGOs collaborate in conducting face-to-face courses and optional learning activities. Since its establishment in 2004, the CBMP has recorded a cumulative enrolment of over 87,000. To further promote the culture of lifelong learning and maintain a peer support network, the Capacity Building Mileage Programme Student Association was established in October 2008, and there are now around 430 members.

In 2011, the commission launched the Funding Scheme for Women's Development to provide funding support to women's groups and relevant NGOs for organizing programmes and activities conducive to women's development. The funding scheme comprises a total of HK\$2 million every year, half of which is allocated by the commission to women's groups and relevant NGOs organizing regional or territory-wide activities; and the other half is distributed through the 18 district councils to women's groups and relevant NGOs in organizing district level activities. The theme for the funding scheme in

2012 and 2013 was 'Women Wellness'. The theme was changed to 'Women Employment' in 2014 and 2015. Since the launch of the funding scheme, the commission has funded 86 women's groups and NGOs to organize around 200 programmes in promoting women wellness and women employment.

The commission conducts research and surveys from time to time to gain a better understanding of women's needs and issues that concern them, and to shed light on policy formulations that might impact on women. From September to December 2013, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the commission tasked the Census and Statistics Department to conduct a survey on time-use patterns and women's employment to help understand the time-use patterns and time allocation for women and men in Hong Kong in undertaking paid work, homemaking and social services, and so on. The survey also aimed to record women's concerns and needs as they leave or re-enter the job market. Over 10,000 households were interviewed in the survey and some 26,000 persons participated in it. The survey findings, announced in July 2015, have served as a useful reference for NGOs, employers in the private sector, as well as for the Government in formulating relevant policies, employment practices and other related measures.

The Women's Commission cherishes its partnership with women's groups in Hong Kong and overseas. Working in concert with the Government and men and women in the local community, the commission remains fully committed to driving its mission of enabling women to fully realize their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

Omani women's empowerment

Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, Sultanate of Oman

Omani women have achieved a great leap in their development and empowerment. They hold many positions, including leadership positions, in the political, economic, social and cultural rights spheres. These achievements were made possible by the Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed, who ensured since the early 1970s that women were the main partner and the second pillar, alongside men, in advancing development and progress and building the community.

The Sultanate adopted the approach of empowering women to achieve its goals in many areas. The first of these was legal and constitutional developments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Regulations and laws are derived from the Statute of the State, which is the most important reference in the rights of women. The statute makes no distinction between men and women in regard to their public rights and obligations and public office, and it is intended to achieve justice and equality of opportunity between Omanis.

The basic law was issued by Royal Decree 101/1996 and amended by Royal Decree 99/2011. It is the supreme legislation in Oman and all laws and regulations must be issued in conformity with its provisions. Thus its provisions pay a great detail of attention to women. Article 9 forms the foundations of governance in the Sultanate, and refers to equality of various kinds.



Women participating in the police force: Omani women represent 42 per cent of workers in the public sector

The guiding principles of State Policy Article 12, on social principles, are that the state will enact laws that protect the employee and employer and regulate the relationship between them. Public service is a national service entrusted to caretakers, and state officials must target the interests of and service to the community in the performance of their public duties. Citizens have equal access to public office under conditions established by law.

Article 17 stipulates that "all citizens are equal in law, and they are equal in public rights and duties, without distinction due to race, origin, colour, language, religion, creed, social status or domicile."

Article 3 of the Interpretation and General Provisions Act of 1973 provides that "the words which denote or refer to the masculine include the feminine. The masculine pronoun, manifest and latent, includes the feminine." In light of this article, Omani legislation refers to the masculine, which includes masculine and feminine.

The Sultanate joined the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women under the provisions of Royal Decree 42/2005. This convention is part of the applicable law of the country. Government agencies are responsible for the judicial application of its provisions and must not issue any instructions or regulations incompatible with the convention.

Women are entitled to obtain a passport without the approval of their guardian. Note that the Statute of the State guarantees freedom of residence and movement to all citizens as stipulated in Article 18. The Sultanate also adjusted the land entitlement governmental act under the provisions of Royal Decree 125/2008, ensuring women's equal access with men to a piece of land.

Another area of focus was women's education. Article 13 of the Statute of the State stipulates that education is a fundamental pillar of a state-sponsored community. The state provides public education, combats illiteracy and encourages the establishment of private schools and institutes. Omani women have achieved high levels in basic education and higher education, as well as accessing to senior positions and specialized areas.

Statistical indicators illustrate this equality. Omani public schools have an equal percentage (50 per cent) of male and female students. In private schools, the ratio is 55 per cent male and 45 per cent female students. Higher education institutions in the Sultanate admit 39 per cent male students and 61 per cent female, while for those outside the Sultanate the ratio is 59 per cent male students and 41 per cent female. The percentage of females in vocational training centres increased from 43 per cent in 2012/13 to 50 per cent in 2014/15.



Image: Ministry of Social Development, Oman

Women play a key role in preserving the country's heritage

Political leaders and the Government encouraged women's political participation with the goal of promoting the presence of women in parliament. The law on election of members of the Advisory Council (Royal Decree 58/2013) states the terms of election to the council in conformity with the provisions of the Statute of the State, so that women have the right to stand and vote in parliament.

Omani women were first appointed to the Gulf Cooperation Council Shura in 1994, in an experiment that began in Muscat. Many efforts have been made to qualify candidates for the Shura Council and to implement training programmes in the electoral process and campaign management for female candidates of the seventh and eighth sessions of the council. A training guide was issued to male and female candidates for board membership. The Interior Ministry organized seminars, called Consultative Forums, in all provinces of the Sultanate. These forums aimed to guide voters on the importance of the role of Shura Council members and the importance of electoral participation. They were broadcast on Omani television.

Omani women currently occupy ministerial positions in the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education, and a woman holds the rank of Minister of the Public Authority for Craft Industries. Two women also occupy deputy secretary positions, in the Ministry of Manpower for technical education and training, and as undersecretary of the Ministry of Tourism.

Women represented 17 per cent of the Council of State during the seventh period (2015-2019). One woman member was elected as vice-president for the first time since the creation of the council. Women represented 1.2 per cent of participants in the Shura Council in the 2015-2019 term. Four women ran as ambassador, and 3 per cent of participants in municipal councils were women in the 2012-2016 term.

The proportion of women employed in auxiliary functions was 19 per cent (head of claim, first and second under a general allegation, and associate) in 2015.

Eleven per cent of Omani lawyers were women in 2014. Women currently occupy 22 per cent of supervisory and leadership positions such as consultant, expert, assistant general manager or director. In addition, 11 per cent of diplomatic service roles are taken by women.

Women's participation in public life has also developed. Omani Women's Associations are considered social institutions with a deep and active history in the social life of Omani society. They attract a considerable number of members, who dramatically contribute to the development of their local society through voluntary work and planned events. The number of Omani Women Associations had grown to 60 by the end of 2015.

Charitable associations and institutions provide an opportunity for women to participate in charitable efforts and social programmes for the benefit of society. At the end of 2015 there were 28 charitable associations and institutions in Oman.

Occupational associations aim to promote awareness and professional linkages for their members. There were 28 of these associations at the end of 2015.

Community clubs are voluntary social institutions aiming to strengthen the bonds of friendship and love between members of the same community. The number of these clubs reached 15 by the end of 2015.

Omani women's participation in the economic field is regarded as an important role in society. The Omani market has seen an increasing contribution from Omani women in the economic field in recent years.

At the legislative level, Royal Decree 55/1990 was issued as the Trade Law, in which Article 21 states that anyone reaching



Women occupy decision-making positions in Oman's political, economic, social and cultural rights spheres



Omani women participate in international conferences and foreign seminars

the age of 18 years with no legal impediment in respect to his person or business can initiate commercial trading, whether a man or a woman.

The Civil Service Law ensures that all women working in the government sector enjoy the same employment opportunities as men. They must also be equal with men in terms of wages, all functional benefits and vacation days. This includes the situation of all jobs, including senior positions.

Omani labour law includes provisions to equate women with men. The law has addressed in its provisions the term 'worker' regardless of gender. It also guarantees advantages such as the right of women not to be compromised in social functions, and respect for their nature.

The Social Security Law issued by Royal Decree 87/1984 ensures the care of women and access to a social security salary in cases of divorce, inability to work, desertion by their husbands, widows, unmarried daughters and elderly women.

Omani women are allowed to do business in their home for specific activities by the provision of Ministerial Decree 4/2011, issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Oman has worked to establish a number of support mechanisms for women's participation in economic life. The Al Rafd Fund was created by Royal Decree 6/2013. It was initiated with a capital of RO70 million to enable and support entrepreneurs and initiators among the young men and women under social security, and to support jobseekers and rural women as well as professionals and artisans of both genders. It also funds existing projects of small and medium enterprises.

The General Authority for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises was established by Royal Decree 36/2013. Its aim is to strengthen the role of small and medium enterprises with the ability to provide multiple job opportunities for Omani youth of both genders.

The General Authority for Manpower Record was established by Royal Decree 98/2011. Within the terms of reference for its establishment is the creation of a database about the

manpower in all units of the state administration and private sector enterprises. It is also mandated to create a database for job-seeking citizens.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Oman has allocated a committee, called the Businesswomen Forum, which focuses on the issues of women entrepreneurs and the study of the problems and obstacles they face in the market. Other committees were also established for women entrepreneurs at the provincial level, and 146 women are enrolled in the committees' boards at the level of the Sultanate. The National Center for Statistics and Information provides statistical data broken down by gender for all the relevant authorities.

The National Business Centre was established in 2012 to support Omani business pioneers of both genders in the development of successful business ventures. The centre also supports and embraces small and medium Omani enterprises to contribute to advancing the Omani economy and create new jobs in the Omani market.

Women represent 41 per cent of workers in the public sector, 47 per cent of those in the civil service, and 23 per cent of workers in the private sector.

Looking towards the future, the Social Work Strategy of the Ministry of Social Development (2016-2025) consists of six main themes: social protection, social welfare, family and community development, persons with disabilities, associations and institutions, and institutional support. The strategy is based on the three guiding principles of equity, empowerment and social inclusion. Its six strategic pillars are focused on gender and the institutionalization and integration of women in social, economic and political issues.

The National Strategy for Women in Oman (2016-2040), with the theme 'to enhance the quality of life', includes strategy on several elements: the rule of law, decision-making, knowledge, enabling environment, civil society, community cohesion, business and finance. Women represent 85 per cent of the members of the committee participating in the preparation strategy.

Gender equality and women's empowerment in Sikhism — the epitome of womanhood

Prabhjot Kaur, Member, and Birendra Kaur, Vice-President, Institute of Sikh Studies

The times of Guru Nanak (1469-1538 CE), founder of Sikhism,¹ were fraught with social inequalities of every kind, be these based on religion, race, caste or gender. 'Might is right' was the law of the land. Centuries-old social stratification was the cause of exploitation and the degradation of man. In the midst of such an utterly deplorable scenario, the condition of woman was even worse, irrespective of the stratum to which she belonged. She was at par with animals, untouchables, and considered the lowest of the low, a gateway to hell. Her existence was, thus, subhuman. The Guru, however, by arousing the conscience of the people, raised a powerful voice in her favour. In those times of monarchy, kings were considered God-incarnate and, like God, without any blemish. Guru Nanak reasons in the Sikh scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*: 'How could woman from whom kings are born be reviled?'²

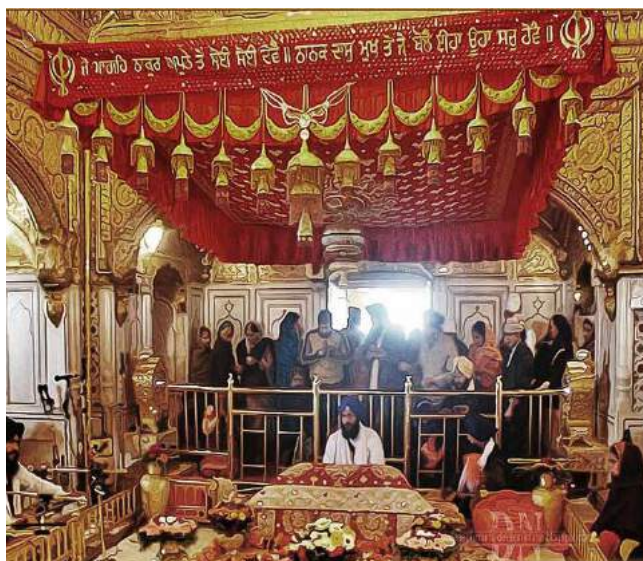
The Guru's ideology of 'one God of all humanity' addresses not only gender inequality, but every kind of inequality that may be prevalent in any society. He pronounced that 'Almighty is the Father, Almighty is the Mother; and all human beings are God's children'. Guru Nanak also sees a friend/relative in God, and a husband with every devotee denoted a woman. Reference to God with both genders, and

reference to men and women with the same gender, renders the issue of gender inequality non-existent, a non-issue. To him, the issue was neither man in relation to man nor man in relation to woman, but to weave a beautiful relationship between the All-Powerful and the person, be it he or she, or be one from any religion, region, race or caste.

The Guru, thus, bestows equality as well as dignity to women. A Sikh woman does not have to ask for these; they are her birth rights. Consequently, her life changed drastically as the taboos related to her gender were now gone: now, she was not considered impure during her menstrual cycle or after childbirth; she began to participate in all religious activities; she could be initiated and also initiate others; she could be a religious head; she was not to wear a veil to cover her face; families that indulged in female infanticide were to be socially boycotted; child marriage and dowry were prohibited; widows could remarry.

The Guru created an environment where women could live a life free from any indignities. They recognized as real all feminine urges and emotions. Household duties performed by women were not considered insignificant. Rather, caring for the family, performed so naturally and lovingly by women, is seen as godlike. Spiritual flavour is lent to these activities by comparing the love of a mother for her child to the love of God for His creation.

The nine succeeding Gurus further provided equal opportunities of education, training in martial arts, religious and political leadership roles, and endowed responsibilities and duties on women. Women thus involved themselves wholeheartedly in the making of a new social order. This journey started with Mata Khivi, wife of the second Guru, Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552), who became the first administrative head of the Guru's free communal kitchen, *langar*, and helped establish it as a permanent institution in Sikhism. Years later, when the third Guru, Guru Amar Das (1479-1574), gave structure to the Sikh *panth* (nation) and organized his preachers into 22 teaching districts or *manjis* (literal translation: type of seat), he put Bibi Amro, daughter of the second Guru, in charge of one of these districts. As the Guru's representative, she also had the responsibility of collecting revenues and making decisions for the welfare of her diocese. By the time of the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), women were even confident enough to fight in the battlefield alongside men if needed. Women would also nurse the wounded in the battlefield, and undertake daring activities. Mata Sundri, the tenth Guru's wife,



Men and women worshipping inside Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple)



Image: Kanwar Singh

Mata Bhag Kaur, a Sikh woman warrior, along with Sikh men warriors

courageously and successfully steered the Sikh community for 40 years through turbulent times after the Guru's demise. She issued *hukamnamas* (edicts) under her own seal and authority. Later, during the Sikh confederacies and Sikh Rule (1716-1849), women proved to be good administrators, political advisors to the rulers, and rulers themselves.

The community thus raised the self-esteem and confidence of woman. She transformed into a persona and experienced the belief to be able to perform any feat possible in the domain of human capabilities. Women began to venture out with men on equal footing in every human enterprise. In short, they participated in every sphere, and in equal measure, towards improving the lot of one and all. A Sikh woman feels duty-bound to live up to the confidence that the Gurus have reposed in her.

The experience of women in other parts of the world, however, was at a variance. It was in the twentieth century, five centuries later, that they had to protest, organize movements and wage long drawn-out struggles to seek basic human rights.

While women today have excelled in every field, the ideal of a dignified existence for them is still wanting. In the advertising and cosmetics industries, women are portrayed as mere physical beings, and specific standards of beauty and fashion are outlined by fashionistas as norms to influence the gullible populace. However, the Guru's concepts of beauty and fashion, delineated centuries ago, put the modern-day notions to question. According to the Guru, beauty is an inner quality, and not the narrowing down to or crowning of 'Miss Universe' or 'Mr Universe'. He

broadened the ambit to include one and all, by promoting that beautiful is one who inculcates virtues; that is to say, one who adorns oneself with truthfulness, compassion, contentment and piety. And his pronouncement on the external appearance is to maintain the body in its natural form, respecting the sexual dimorphism that nature has fashioned for humankind. In other words, the Guru expects his followers to be beautiful within and natural without. The Guru also makes statement about what criteria to base one's attire and food habitude upon: Wear and consume not what causes pain to the body and/or generates negative thoughts in the mind.

Sincere efforts of governments to ameliorate the condition of women, such as introducing social welfare schemes and legislating for their safety at home and in the workplace, are the need of the hour and deserve all appreciation. But without a respectful place in society, woman lacks what it takes to feel like a worthy human being. The Guru's approach is to transform the psyche of both men and women so as to create an ideal world. While the Guru instils self-confidence in women, he highlights to men the importance of woman at every stage of their life. Respect for women had to be integral to their values. Adultery was prohibited. The Gurus had planned to take the *panth* to the pinnacles of glory and for that it was important that people had a strong moral character. There was a strict injunction never to overpower a weak person in need and rather to rescue such a one. Such values motivated the Sikh warriors to rescue women abducted as booty in wars, even at risk to their own lives. Even the women from the opponent's camp were to be treated with



An interfaith meeting organized by the Institute of Sikh Studies

respect. Thus, the Gurus struck the precise balance to raise the very level of existence of both men and women.

The Gurus also redefined prevailing concepts and practices which were derogatory or discriminatory to women in relation to men, by attributing altogether new meanings to these. For example: *yogi* (an ascetic who shuns social responsibilities) is not the one who is celibate, but one who remains committed to one woman; *pati parmashwar* (concept that husband is God) was changed to *parmashwar pati* (God is husband); *purdah* (veil) is not to cover a woman's face, but man's misplaced perception of her; *sati* is not the wife who is to burn herself on the pyre of her husband, but one who lives in remembrance of her deceased husband. Also, the patriarchal tradition that lineage runs through male members of the family and is projected through their surnames stood negated when the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, replaced the surnames of all Sikh men and women with 'Singh' (lion) and 'Kaur' (crown prince) respectively. This meant an independent identity for her, irrespective of whether she is married, divorced or single – she remains 'Kaur' throughout life. Such a nomenclature abolishes not only the supremacy of man in patriarchy but also that of woman in matriarchy. It's worth noting that in the process of giving equality to one gender, the status of the other is not compromised.

The Guru makes spirituality the vehicle of change. Men and women are considered spiritual beings, whose aim in life is to merge with the Almighty. The Guru, in fact, considers virtues inherent to women as ideal, indispensable to convey the pining of the human soul for the Almighty. He therefore ascribes feminine gender to all human beings in his compositions. For this, the simile of a 'bride' for a devotee and 'spouse' for the Almighty is used in the hymns at places. Husband and wife are not considered those who merely live together, but those who merge their soul with

God, and live as two bodies having one soul. The path prescribed by the Guru for the merger of the soul-bride with the Almighty-Spouse is through inculcating God's virtues and attributes in oneself; otherwise all embellishments, such as garlands of flowers, fragrances, mascara and all, as used by a bride to look beautiful, are a waste.

Human virtues, vices and emotions are not gender-specific, yet certain qualities and features in the two genders vary, given the specific biological roles each performs as designed by nature for the propagation of the species. Physical differences are mere biological dualities, and mutual appreciation is the only way forward. Femininity and masculinity are thus to be cherished, and each gender is to complement and supplement itself with the qualities intrinsic to the other. As the Guru sees similar potential and promise in both genders to grow in every sphere, be it spiritual, social or political, the Sikh ideal is to be a 'saint-warrior', that is, each is to inculcate the piety of a saint and the bravery of a warrior.

The Guru revolutionized the way women viewed themselves and the way they were viewed by others. His wisdom is indispensable to put an end to all kinds of dichotomies and divisions in society and bring about a healthy shift in the consciousness of the people. The fact that the spiritually-awakened Sikh woman performed so well in all areas of human endeavour without the subjugation of one gender to the other, speaks volumes about the inherent potential in this visionary approach.

Guru Nanak, indeed, is the pioneer of the journey of the emancipation of women. The Guru has bestowed upon women more than what women have sought so far; they are yet to comprehend the vision of the Guru. The dignity and status the Guru accords to women, and which was put into practice more than six centuries ago, is unparalleled. And, it is there for the taking.

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2. The study is online available for free at: <http://star-www.giz.de/pub?r=42679>
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<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.artech.appinfoemp.informativo&hl=de>
and
<https://itunes.apple.com/ie/app/junt-s/id1039895342?mt=8>
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The future we want: towards a better world through Sustainable Development Goals

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Promoting gender equality and women's participation through community-driven development

1. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this publication and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use.

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