

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



UNDP GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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Foreword

When the COVID-19 crisis struck in early 2020, it swiftly disrupted the entire world. As the pandemic began to unleash a human development emergency, UNDP moved rapidly with our UN family to help countries prepare and respond to this unprecedented crisis, shifting the Organization's priorities and how it operates.

While the crisis led to an overhaul of our work, one thing it hasn't changed is our commitment to gender equality, which is now stronger and more necessary than ever.

For the first time in recent history, a crisis is threatening to reverse hard-won gains on women's rights and gender equality by worsening pre-existing gender inequalities and power imbalances. We see the disproportionate economic, social and health impacts of the pandemic on women and girls daily, from a surge in gender-based violence to even greater economic insecurity. Women are nearly [twice as likely](#) as men to lose their jobs during this crisis. And yet, alarmingly, women's voices are missing from crucial COVID-19 decision-making spaces, where they remain vastly underrepresented. Without women in decision-making roles and a shift in the power balance, unequal recovery opportunities from the pandemic could be further exacerbated.

While the speed and scale of the response is increasing the risk of women being left behind, we know that with crisis also comes new opportunities. Women are playing a front-and-centre role in the COVID-19 response. As countries determine the best way forward, they can choose to do things differently and to ensure that the rights and needs of women and girls are integrated throughout their recovery efforts. The pandemic can be the tipping point that leads to transformation for people and the planet.

UNDP responded to the COVID-19 crisis together with our partners by moving into different ways of thinking, working and reasserting our gender equality priorities, including through a renewed focus on women's leadership and on the green and care economies. As the technical lead of the UN's socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis, gender-responsive social protection was at the forefront of these efforts. UNDP also quickly ramped up actions to support over 80 countries in countering the exponential rise in gender-based violence, including through the [Spotlight Initiative](#), a European Union-UN partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. With UN Women, we co-created the groundbreaking [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#) to monitor pandemic policy measures and encourage

governments to add a gender lens into their COVID-19 responses. We pushed boundaries to respond to the complex development challenges of today, calling for bold and innovative policies and approaches, including a [temporary basic income specifically for women](#) in developing countries.

This work has been guided by our Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021. Despite the vast challenges posed by the pandemic, UNDP strongly contributed to a more gender-equitable COVID-19 response, while at the same time making large strides last year in implementing the Strategy. This annual report looks at the key results UNDP achieved with our partners in closing gender gaps in 2020, as well as emerging trends and challenges that lie ahead.

As we begin to draft UNDP's next Strategic Plan and Gender Equality Strategy, for 2022-2025, it will be imperative to consider the lessons learned from the past year. We must also ensure that women have the opportunity to play a full role in shaping the pivotal decisions being made right now, as countries respond to and recover from the pandemic. Only so can we truly build forward better, from the COVID-19 crisis towards the Global Goals, and create more gender-equal and resilient societies.



Photo: UNDP/Michael Atwood

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Achim Steiner".

Achim Steiner
Administrator

United Nations
Development Programme



UNDP 2020 Highlights

Gender Equality Gains



1.8 MILLION PEOPLE

directly benefited from UNDP cash transfer programmes,

69%

of whom were women



UNDP remains a

50:50

gender-balanced organization



UNDP in

TOP 5 PERCENT

of all organizations in the **2020 Global Health 50/50 Gender and Health Index**



209 MEASURES

put in place to boost women's full and inclusive participation

80+ COUNTRIES

integrated gender-based violence support into their COVID-19 response



80 COUNTRIES

strengthened women's leadership and decision-making in natural resource management



41+ COUNTRIES

improved gender-responsive social protection with UNDP's support



UNDP rated one of the **BEST-PERFORMING UN AGENCIES**

in the UN System-wide Action Plan



COVID-19 Rapid Funding Facility used gender marker to fund **129 GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROJECTS**



116 PARTNERSHIPS

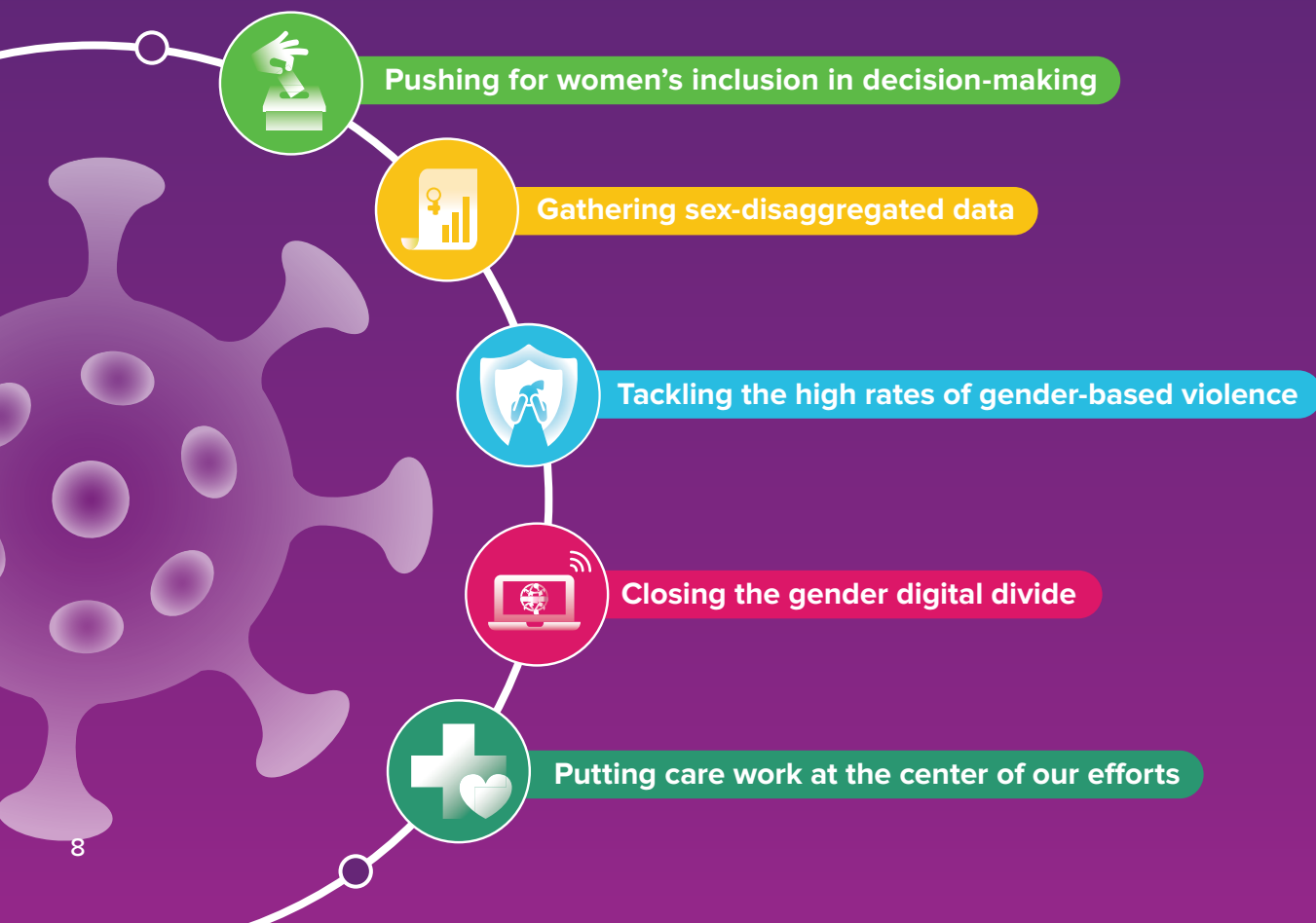
established to tackle discriminatory gender and social norms

The COVID-19 Crisis: A Gender-Equitable Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of global progress towards gender equality, showing just how deep gender inequalities are in the world's political, social and economic systems. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 were exacerbated for women and girls. All of these challenges are even greater in crisis-affected settings.

Once the pandemic hit, UNDP stepped up efforts to provide continued support to governments and our partners and recognized that with crisis also comes the opportunity to do things differently. UNDP quickly identified key priorities to integrate gender equality into the COVID-19 response and established a mandatory gender marker for the new COVID-19 Rapid Funding Facility, which funded 129 gender-responsive projects.

UNDP's key priorities to integrate gender equality into the COVID-19 response include:



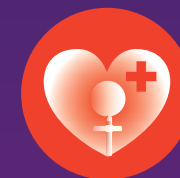
Here are some highlights of UNDP's 2020 gender equality and COVID-19 work:

Gender-based violence



UNDP increased efforts as part of our governance work to address the pandemic-related surge in gender-based violence, supporting more than 80 countries in 2020 to adapt dedicated services and integrate gender-based violence considerations into their COVID-19 efforts. This includes the 26 country offices implementing the [Spotlight Initiative](#), a European Union-UN partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Social protection



As the technical lead of the UN's socio-economic response to COVID-19, UNDP prioritized gender-responsive social protection. In 2020, with UNDP support over 41 countries boosted gender-responsive social protection and 1.8 million people directly benefited from UNDP cash transfer programmes, of whom 69 percent were women. UNDP also called for bold public policies to improve women's social protection, such as a [temporary basic income specifically for women](#).

Women's leadership



Ensuring that women have a seat at the decision-making table remains a priority for UNDP. The pandemic has highlighted how women are still missing from many decision-making spaces, including in the COVID-19 recovery. To improve women's participation and leadership, 209 measures – from electoral quotas to gender-smart business policies – were put in place with UNDP support in 2020.

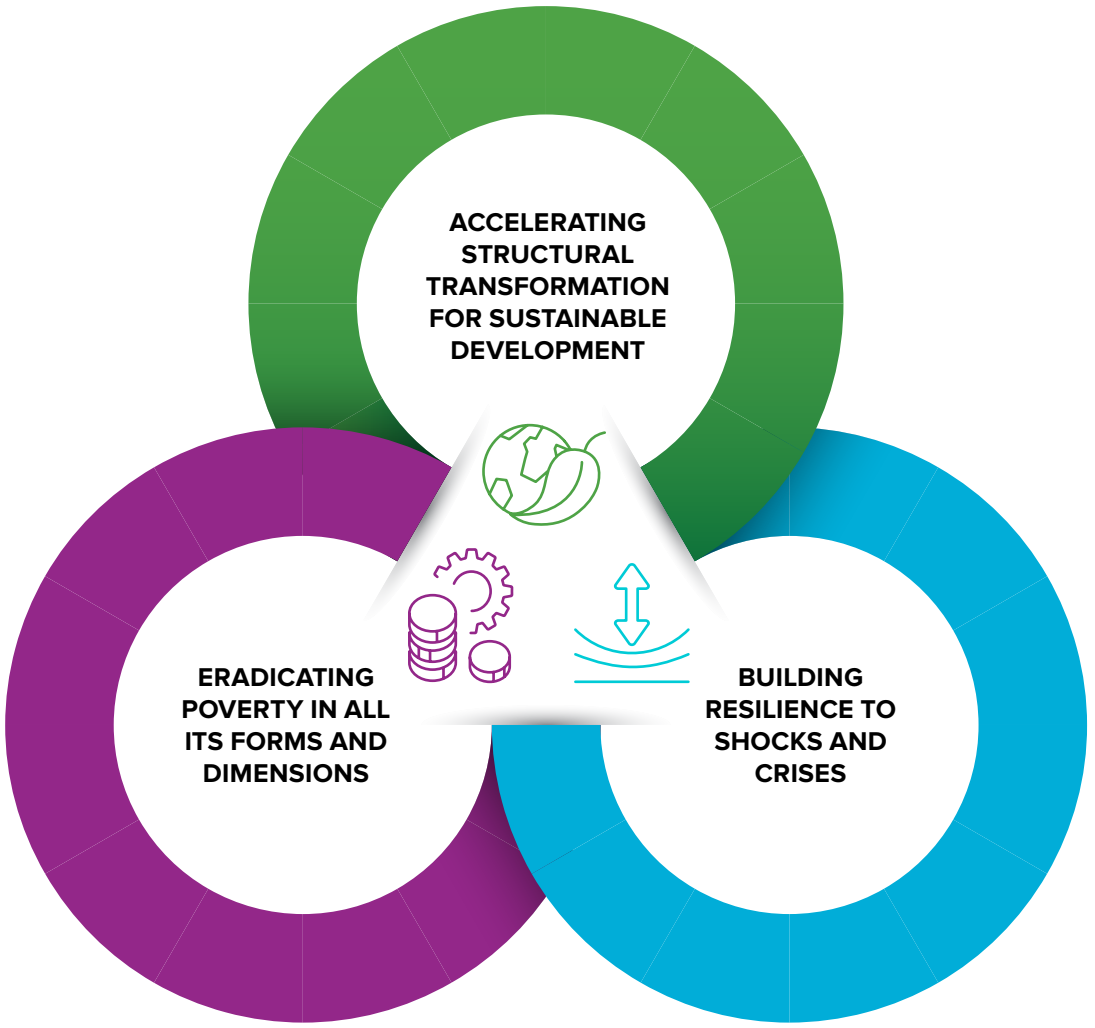
The COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker

In 2020 UNDP and UN Women launched the innovative [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#) to monitor policy measures and encourage governments to add a gender lens into their COVID-19 efforts. The tracker, which includes over 3,100 measures across 219 countries and territories, shows that the global COVID-19 policy response has so far been largely blind to gender equality. For example, only 24 percent of the measures analysed support women's economic security and unpaid care work.



2020 Progress on the Gender Equality Strategy

UNDP's [Gender Equality Strategy](#) is aligned with our [Strategic Plan 2018-2021](#), which is focused on three development outcomes:



Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, UNDP continued to make strong progress on implementing the Gender Equality Strategy, including in our response to the pandemic. Here are some highlights under each of the three development outcomes.

Eliminating Poverty

For the first time in over 20 years, global extreme poverty is expected to rise in part because of the COVID-19 crisis, particularly for women and girls. Up to 105 million women and girls, who are already overrepresented among the world's extreme poor, could be pushed into poverty by 2030 because of the pandemic.¹

In 2020 UNDP worked to address the COVID-19-induced feminization of poverty, with a focus on strengthening gender equality in national planning, removing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment, ensuring gender-equitable access to basic services, and supporting care work. The crisis has shown how societies can take women's unpaid work for granted. Research in **Turkey** supported by UNDP, for example, found that women are doing four times as much unpaid care work as men during lockdowns.

UNDP also boosted efforts to tackle the COVID-19-related rise in gender-based violence, including through the Spotlight Initiative. For example, UNDP partnered with the Sunflower Centres in the **Republic of Korea** to promote one-stop service centres for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence during the pandemic, a practice that was replicated in **Albania** and **Indonesia**.

2020 Highlights



In 2018-2020, with UNDP support 43.4 million women gained access to basic services, financial services, and non-financial assets.



UNDP worked to shift social norms and raise awareness about unpaid care work through media and online campaigns in over 15 countries. In **Jordan** and **Lebanon**, UNDP launched the #EqualPartners campaign to promote egalitarian care and household responsibilities



UNDP helped 71 countries improve gender-equal access to quality health care. For instance, in **India** UNDP trained women, who make up 75 percent of 12,000 government health workers, in the implementation of a mobile and cloud-based smart vaccine logistics system.



UNDP and partners provided access to clean energy for 2.6 million women-headed households in 23 countries.

¹ https://sdgintegration.undp.org/sites/default/files/Foundational_research_report.pdf



UNDP recognized for its women's entrepreneurship work in conflict-affected Yemen

The Ashden Award for Humanitarian Energy recognized UNDP's work in 2020 in helping boost women's entrepreneurship in Yemen. As part of the enhanced rural resilience programme, UNDP, with the Food and Agricultural Organization, International Labour Organization and the World Food Programme, supported 700 women in **Yemen** to set up and manage solar microgrids, get jobs and participate in community decision-making. Connectivity to microgrids reduced energy costs by 65 percent and improved access to clean energy for 10,000 people. The award will allow UNDP to scale up local renewable energy solutions.



Structural Transformation for Real Change

Women have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response, yet they are still largely being left out of decision-making spaces. The UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker shows that women on average still make up only 24 percent of members of the national COVID-19 task forces examined, which could exacerbate unequal recovery from the pandemic.

Recognizing this, UNDP stepped up efforts in 2020 to increase women's leadership and participation in decision-making spaces and continued work to amplify women's voices and address structural barriers and gender-discriminatory practices. Democratic governance remains UNDP's most transformative area of work. For example, UNDP supported temporary special measures, including quotas, in **Armenia, Benin, the Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Jordan, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Somalia** and **Ukraine**. UNDP also strengthened women's capacities in public office through women's networks, caucuses and parliamentary committees.

UNDP also works to promote gender equality in natural resource management and climate action initiatives, including in countries taking part in the [UNDP Climate Promise](#). In 2020, UNDP supported 81 countries to improve climate-adaptive and environmentally sustainable livelihoods for women through financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund. Women are important users and managers of natural resources and UNDP continued to promote women's participation in environmental management, strengthening women's leadership in natural resource management in 80 countries.

2020 Highlights



With UNDP support, 8.1 million women accessed justice in 35 countries, including through legal aid, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and more efficient justice services.



55 countries strengthened women-led community-based associations. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, for example, UNDP support for the civil society platform for the Sustainable Development Goals improved advocacy and led to better gender considerations in the National Development Plan 2021-2025.



50 percent of all registered voters supported by UNDP in 42 countries were women.

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