

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



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Youth and Gender Equality

Women, and young women in particular, face structural discrimination due to the patriarchal nature of most societies. Young women are often amongst the most marginalized, vulnerable and – if they live in rural/remote areas, or precarious human settlements – hardest to reach young people. Young women make up nearly half of the world's population, yet are regularly prevented from accessing basic services and decent employment. Unleashing the potential of girls and young women is an effective pathway to addressing poverty, improving access to health, education and sanitation, making societies more inclusive and reducing violence in communities.

The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of young women is central to UNDP's mandate and intrinsic to its development approach. This effort includes advocating for women's and girls' equal rights, combating discriminatory practices and challenging the roles and stereotypes that affect inequalities and exclusion.

Gender equality, centered in human rights, is recognized both as a development goal on its own and as vital to accelerating sustainable development. Unless young women are able to fully realize their rights, human development will not be advanced. It is crucial to approach young women's systematic inclusion as a condition of youth empowerment overall. While gender equality can be approached as a specific thematic area of work, singling it out as a condition of youth empowerment overall represents a commitment to ensure gender equality in every process, at every level and across issue areas.

MATTERS OF FACT

- There are currently around 900 million adolescent girls and young women in the world – the largest generation in history.
- Young women face multiple challenges – such as:
 - Lower wages (24% less than men).
 - Early pregnancy and marriage (in developing countries more than 1/3 girls and young women are married before they turn 18).
 - Pregnancy and child related deaths (the number 1 killer of women aged 15-19).
 - Gender based violence (30% of young women aged 15-19 experience violence by a partner).
 - Health issues (for example, young women aged 15-24 are 8 times more likely than men to be HIV positive).
 - Employment (for example, only 45,9% of young mothers work, whereas 83,6 of young fathers do).
 - Political inclusion (for instance women only occupy 14,8% of ministerial positions globally).
 - Legally (various legal barriers exist – for instance on land rights in numerous countries, contributing to the fact that globally only 19% of land holders are women).
- Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is also a cross-cutting priority in the 2030 Agenda, with SDG5 specifically committing to "Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls", and including various targets and indicators for young women.



UNDP's approach

UNDP promotes the empowerment of young women through programmes across its global network, which spans more than 170 countries and territories. UNDP's Youth Strategy "Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future" 2014-2017, sets out the vision for our work on youth, while UNDP's "Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017" aims to integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women into every aspect of our work.

UNDP supports the empowerment of women and girls both through gender-specific targeted interventions as well as by addressing gender concerns in the developing, planning, implementing and evaluating of all policies and programmes. UNDP recognizes the meaningful involvement of young women and young men in participatory decision-making and development processes as vital to achieving sustainable human development, and is committed to promoting and supporting young women's empowerment at all levels.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda will require strong partnerships between young people and all stakeholders so that the challenges faced by youth are addressed, their contributions recognized, and they are included at all levels of decision-making. UNDP's approach is founded on partnering with young women and young men across all dimensions of sustainable development to provide viable opportunities for them to be at the table, bring evidence, inform decisions and influence strategies, development priorities and budget allocations.

UNDP supports the mainstreaming of youth and gender equality issues in development planning, inter-ministerial and inter-sectorial coordination, and works closely with partners in civil society, including young women's organizations, informal networks, national youth and gender machineries, media, etc.

UNDP in action

Global: In July 2016, UNDP launched its first Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace – Youth-GPS (2016-2020), a 5-year global programmatic offer on youth empowerment. Recognizing the importance of both young women and young men to make progress on both the youth, and the broader development agenda, Youth-GPS mainstreams gender equality throughout its outputs and features a dedicated window on supporting young women's empowerment.

UNDP is working to accelerate efforts to promote young women's participation and leadership in public life, empower young women economically, and support the inclusion of young women's voices, needs and contributions, including in the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

UNDP has also been providing extensive support to national policy development and implementation in the five regions, through the provision of evidence-based policy guidance and programmatic support and by promoting the active participation of youth, including the most marginalized and vulnerable, in all spheres of society.



Photo: © Tatia Dolidze, Georgian Youth Delegate to the United Nations

In **Armenia**, UNDP has supported the inclusion of young women in decision-making and government, as well as promoting women and youth leadership and engagement in local governance processes, through the Women in Local Democracy Project – WILD (2012-2016), which contributed to an increase in female candidates standing for positions in government.

In the **Arab States**, the Youth Leadership Programme II, launched in 2016, includes Gender Equality as 1 of 4 thematic areas, and aims to enhance and promote young people's leadership skills as a tool to develop gender equal, sustainable and innovative solutions to the challenges facing their communities.

In **Brazil**, UNDP supported 20,000 Afro-Brazilian women in taking the streets in 2015 to call for the protection of human rights and work towards more women in decision-making, particularly in Parliament. This followed the UNDP-supported "Young Women Leaders" initiative, a mentoring project to strengthen the leadership of young women activists by fostering the exchange of intergenerational experiences with women in top positions.

In **Mali**, UNDP provides financial support to a solar power programme that aims to make renewable energy accessible to all. The project involves more than 30,000 people, primarily women and youth, and provides rural communities with access to electricity – a rarity in rural Mali.

In **Timor-Leste**, UNDP initiated a capacity building project in 2013 aimed at recruiting more young women to the National Police. One of the objectives of the initiative was to respond more effectively to gender-based violence, since 30-50 percent of Timorese women suffer abuse from their partners at some point.

For more information, visit:

www.undp.org/youth

youth@undp.org

[@UNDP4Youth](https://twitter.com/UNDP4Youth)

Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
United Nations Development Programme
304 East 45th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10017

March 2017



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