

# A DECADE OF DARING





Durgi Devi is among the more than 2,800 rural women and girls who have joined peer groups as part of a UN Trust Fund-supported violence prevention programme for ethnic minority women in India. UN Women manages the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women on behalf of the UN system.



“Together, we can be game-changers. With the women and girls,  
men and boys of the world, we can make the 21<sup>st</sup> century  
one of irreversible progress—for women and all humanity.”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director

This landmark publication was made possible through the hard work of many dedicated people, too numerous to name. We wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all UN Women staff, donors, partners, beneficiaries, young women, and many others who contributed to this book and helped us share our journey and our vision. A special word of thanks to Professor Fiona MacKay of the University of Edinburgh for insights that laid the foundation of this publication.



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Ardo Djibo Fadimatou, 64, lost eight of her 15 children during the conflict in Central African Republic. She speaks for the over 12,000 women in the Gado refugee camp in Cameroon, as their elected President and leads meetings in UN Women's Social Cohesion Space.







# FOREWORD

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“With the birth of UN Women, we welcome a powerful new agent for progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment ... true gender equality should be our shared legacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

When I stood in the UN General Assembly Hall on 24 February 2011 to celebrate the formal launch of UN Women, I felt an incredible sense of pride knowing that the hard work, dedication, and struggles of so many people were finally coming to fruition.

As UN Secretary-General, I witnessed trying environments for women and girls first-hand everywhere I went. I realized early on that despite the best efforts of the UN to improve the situation for women, it simply wasn’t enough.

So, standing at the famous podium on that memorable New York day, I felt like a proud new father; both overcome with emotion and deeply honored to have streamlined the UN’s critical work on women’s issues and launch UN Women to help deliver on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Ten years on, UN Women continues to represent the most ambitious effort the UN has ever undertaken to accelerate actions to achieve gender equality. And my pride continues to grow every day as I have witnessed its first steps, inspiring growth, and multitude of successes.

**UN Women is the true global champion for women and girls. And while it is just a decade old, it has already achieved so much: UN Women has helped integrate women in political participation and leadership roles at all levels in every continent. It has scaled-up economic empowerment and inclusion. It has fought to end violence against women and girls. And it is leading the response to the COVID-19 “shadow pandemic” that has created and magnified socio-economic gender inequalities.**

However, despite these successes, we must go further to shatter the barriers to gender equality at all levels, everywhere.

Today, as the international community faces historic challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating climate change, and increasing nationalism, we now need to scale-up our efforts in fulfilling UN Women’s guiding vision and mandate.

This is particularly important as the empowerment of women is essential to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by their 2030 target date.

**Indeed, we should remember that across the world, women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of conflict, inequality, poverty, and climate change. These major global challenges are inherently interconnected, and the empowerment of women and girls is a prerequisite to our global response to such challenges.**

To construct a sustainable future for all people and our planet, UN Women must continue to fiercely advocate for the rights, health, education, and wellbeing of all women and girls in every corner of the world.

I am confident that UN Women will lead the fight for our next generations and help illuminate the path towards our shared future.

This is a future that is equitable, peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable; one where true gender equality defines our common legacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.



**Ban Ki-moon**  
Former United Nations Secretary-General  
September 2020



# PREFACE

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“UN Women is the spearhead of the global campaign to uproot and upend discrimination and violence against women, and to ensure this half of humanity has an equal say and seat at the table moving forward.”

I congratulate UN Women on the first decade of their work, and their leadership in mobilizing the United Nations system to deliver for women and girls.

The past 10 years have seen UN Women spearhead global, evidence-based campaigns and programmes to uproot and upend discrimination and violence against women, and to advocate for half of humanity to have an equal say at every decision-making table, be it in peace processes, parliament, or the boardroom.

As we mark this anniversary, it is a moment to take stock of where we are, and importantly, where we need to be.

Discrimination continues to permeate every sphere of the lives of women and girls, at tremendous personal and global costs. Inequality

leadership. The global gender gap has narrowed, but it persists. Not a single country has yet achieved equality in rights, participation and pay.

We are at a watershed moment. The digital revolution is expanding access to information and opportunities – but there are troubling signs that it could reinforce discrimination and exclusion. This is the time to pick up the pace on our efforts, to bridge gaps, and to make a generational shift. Young people, and young women in particular, are mobilizing for greater inclusion, equality, climate justice and human rights for all. As we mark 25 years of the Beijing Platform for Action and ten years of UN Women, we should see this milestone as an opportunity to acknowledge the power and drive of the next generation and to journey beside them, supporting their transformative leadership.

front and centre. This will require us to take bold actions, including quotas and targeted measures, recognizing that equal representation is a fundamental human right. Until women's voices are fully heard in the hallways of power and politics, policies will continue to be based on the opinions and experiences of just half the population.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will require the strength, capacity, and expertise of the whole of humanity. Achieving gender equality is a prerequisite for all the SDGs, which is why I describe Goal 5 as the SDG 'docking station'.

The United Nations is totally committed to supporting gender equality and women's rights, from the highest levels and with the expertise

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