



**WHY ADDRESSING WOMEN'S INCOME AND TIME
POVERTY MATTERS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, on the theme of “why addressing women’s income and time poverty matters for sustainable development”, was first issued by the United Nations in 2019 as a Report of the Secretary-General (A/74/111).

ABOUT THE COVER

The cover depicts a woman holding an hourglass in both hands. The hourglass is a symbol of the multiple demands on women’s time and the double-bind they experience in their role as earners and carers. The wave within the hourglass alludes to the difficulty of finding balance in contexts where time and income poverty coincide.

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SUMMARY

The *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* is focused on selected emerging development themes that have an impact on the role of women in the economy at the national, regional and international levels and is presented to the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly at five-year intervals.

The present (eighth) *World Survey* is focused on the ways in which time and income poverty combine to shape and constrain the lives of women. An analysis of poverty rates by sex and age shows that gender gaps in poverty are at their widest among women between the ages of 25 and 34 years. This coincides with the family-formation and child-rearing phase in the life course, during which women and their households face increased expenses associated with having children while also having less time available for engaging in paid work. The resulting time constraints and depletion of human capabilities are not only acute for the women themselves but may also spill over to the next generation when, for example, unpaid care and domestic work is delegated to girls, jeopardizing their education and training opportunities.

To reverse this pattern, the report presents a policy agenda geared towards preventing and addressing poverty among women in an integrated manner at critical stages of their life course. Universal social protection systems, including paid maternity and parental leave and child and family transfers, can effectively reduce poverty among women by providing income security at a time when families face increased expenses. These must be complemented by labour market interventions that can help women build sustainable livelihoods and assets to support themselves in the longer term and investments in time-saving public services (e.g., childcare, transport) and basic infrastructure (e.g., household-level access to water and electricity) to reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work. Implemented together, this policy package would make a major contribution to not only the eradication of poverty but also the achievement of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

From a macroeconomic point of view, spending on policy interventions that reduce women's time and income poverty should be considered as investment rather than consumption in light of the many positive externalities they create for individuals, economies and societies. While constraints on fiscal space and competing claims on government resources pose significant challenges, they are not insurmountable. In most developing countries, there is significant scope for mobilizing additional resources and for using gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that these are allocated in ways that address the rights and needs of poor women.

FOREWORD

Today, our world grapples with deep and interlocking global challenges, from the existential threat of climate change, to pervasive poverty and growing inequality, to shrinking democratic and civic spaces and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. As we imagine and act upon sustainable and transformative responses to these challenges, the World Survey 2019 affirms that attention to gender equality remains of paramount importance.

The report provides incisive analysis of the 'double bind' of simultaneous time poverty and income poverty experienced by many women, especially those in low-income contexts. Analysis of poverty rates by sex and age show us that gender gaps in poverty are widest when women are aged between 25 and 34. This period of life often coincides with the time where many women are creating families and having children. As they do so, the demand for unpaid care work rises, as do household expenses. And yet, this is the same time when women face significant barriers in accessing the paid work or other income that would help them to meet those needs, and it has implications for their risk of poverty, capacity to save money, and ability to access to education and health care. These challenges are exacerbated in contexts of inadequate public services and infrastructure, as well as during periods of crisis.

As States and other stakeholders work towards a just and sustainable future, policy frameworks must account for these gendered realities, and the ways in which they affect women's access to resources. In order to be truly sustainable, development strategies must address women's disproportionate load of unpaid care and domestic work, and the widespread economic insecurity that they face. Universal social protection systems, gender-responsive labour market interventions and the provision of basic infrastructure and public services are key to strengthening the resilience of women and their families.

As we move into an ever-uncertain future, it is essential that the societies and economies we build work for everyone. Attending to gender inequality is a key dimension of ensuring that our collective future is a sustainable future, with space for every person to flourish.

The World Survey was presented to the General Assembly in June 2019.



**Phumzile
Mlambo-Ngcuka**
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CHAPTER 1

ABOUT THE WORLD SURVEY ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

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