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UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Background Guide 2022

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Theresa M. McMackin and Pauline Bischoff, Assistant Directors



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2022 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). This year's staff are: Directors Kiki Tamis-Noordman (Conference A) and Sejal Tiwari (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Theresa M. McMackin (Conference A) and Pauline Bischoff (Conference B). Kiki has studied International and European Law, as well as going to Teachers College and currently works as a primary school teacher. Sejal holds a Bachelors of Commerce (Honours) in International Business from MacEwan University and pursuing Masters of Arts in international development from University of Ottawa. Theresa holds a Bachelors of Arts in Historical Studies and an Masters of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and is currently a Graduate Academy Fellow with the Pilecki Institute in Warsaw, Poland. Pauline holds a Bachelors of Arts in Social Sciences from the University of Magdeburg and currently works as a political consultant for social and cultural affairs.

The topics under discussion for UN Women are:

1. Women as Drivers of Economic Recovery and Resilience
2. Combating Gender Inequality to End Poverty

UN Women works to promote cross-cutting gender equality and women's empowerment issues within the UN system. UN Women provides programmatic support to the Commission on the Status of Women, and reports to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. At NMUN•NY 2022, we are simulating the Executive Board of UN Women in terms of composition and size; however, delegates are not solely limited to the budgetary and administrative mandate of the Executive Board. For the purposes of NMUN•NY 2022, and aligning with the educational mission of the conference, the committee can make programmatic and policy decisions on issues within the mandate of UN Women.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2022 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (HRHA) Department, Citlali Mora Catlet (Conference A) and Caitlin Hopper (Conference B), at usg.hrha@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sincerely,

Conference A

Kiki Tamis-Noordman, Director

Theresa M. McMackin, Assistant Director

Conference B

Sejal Tiwari, Director

Pauline Bischoff, Assistant Director

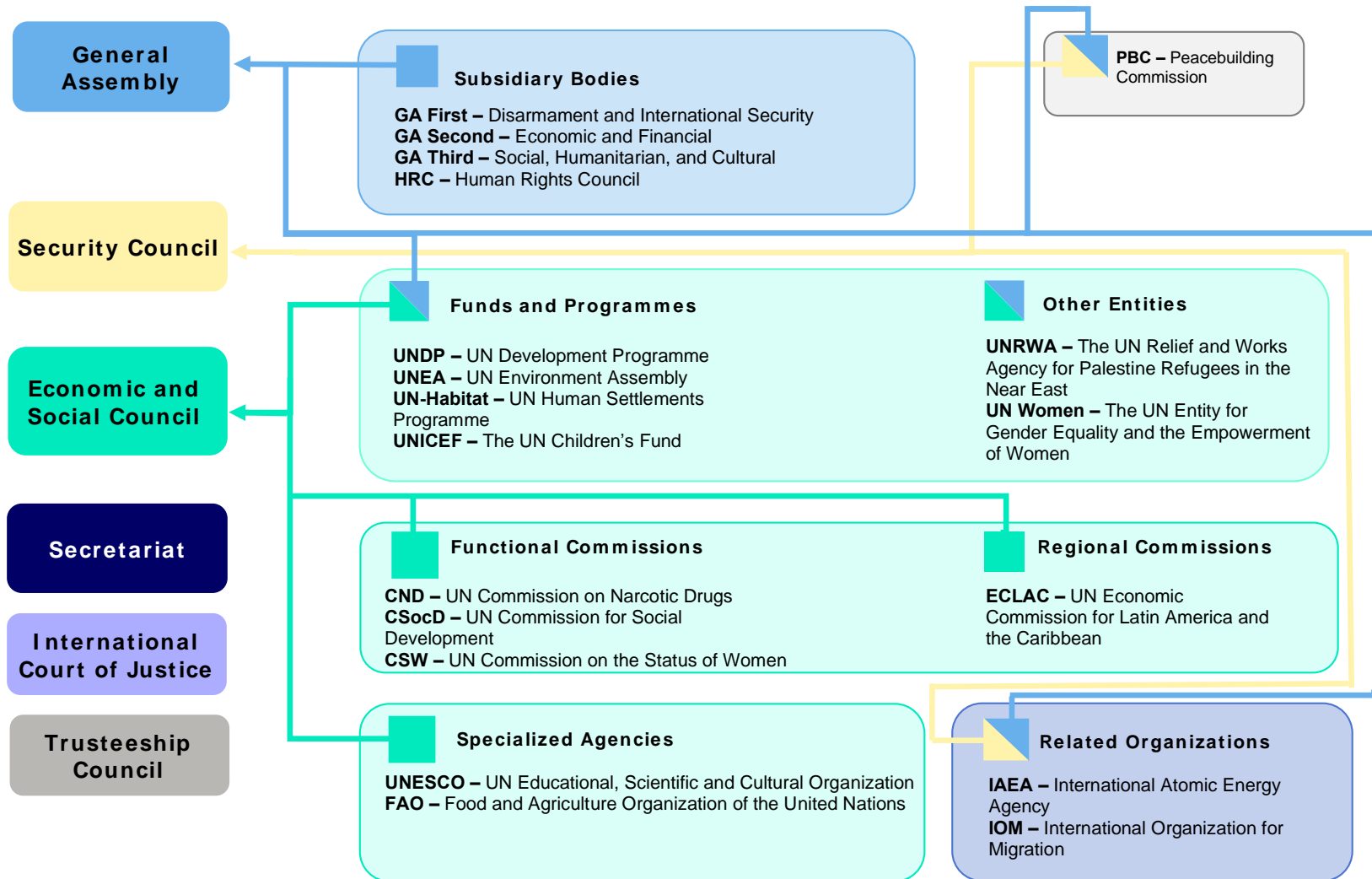


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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is a Programme and Fund of the United Nations, reporting to the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly.¹ To advance efforts on gender equality and women's empowerment at an international level, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in July 2010 with the mandate to “achieve gender equality, women's empowerment, and upholding women's rights.”² UN Women was formed by the amalgamation of four UN agencies: the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat (DAW), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).³ Civil society organizations (CSOs) and activists celebrated the decision to consolidate the resources and mandates of the four gender equality-focused UN agencies into one entity through the General Assembly resolution 64/289 titled “System-wide coherence” (2010).⁴

The work of UN Women is guided by the principles established in several framework documents, including the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) (1979), the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA) (1995), the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), and other norms related to women's rights, gender equality, and human rights.⁵ CEDAW and the BPfA are the cornerstones of the activity of UN Women and provide the overall guiding principles for its work.⁶ Over the past 15 years, UN Member States have also gained a greater understanding regarding the role women play in peace and security as reflected by the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on “Women and Peace and Security”, and subsequent resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), and 2242 (2015), all on “Women and Peace and Security.”⁷ These resolutions establish a foundation for improving the lives of women and girls in areas affected by armed conflict, and guide efforts at the international, regional, and national levels.⁸ Supporting efforts to mainstream the implementation of these global norms, as well as the principle of gender equality is central to UN Women's mandate and at the heart of the organization's mission.⁹

According to UN Women, no country has achieved complete gender equality.¹⁰ During the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate of progress towards closing the gender gap has increased by a whole generation.¹¹ It will now take the international community 135.6 years to achieve full gender parity, according to the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, pointing to the continued importance of UN Women's work.¹²

¹ UN Women, *About UN Women*, 2021.

² UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010.

³ UN Women, *About UN Women*, 2021.

⁴ UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 8.

⁵ UN Women, *Guiding Documents*, 2021.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ UN Women, *Guiding Documents*, 2021; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325)*, 2000; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1820 (2008))*, 2008; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1888 (2009))*, 2009; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1889 (2009))*, 2009; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1960 (2010))*, 2010; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/2106 (2013))*, 2013; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/2122 (2013))*, 2013; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/2242 (2015))*, 2015.

⁸ UN Women, *Guiding Documents*, 2021.

⁹ UN Women, *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021*, 2017.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, 2021.

¹² *Ibid.*

Governance, Structure, and Membership

UN Women is governed by an Executive Board, which is responsible for intergovernmental support and the supervision of all operational activities.¹³ The Board consists of 41 members that are elected by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for a term of three years and are allocated by regions as follows: 10 from the group of African states, 10 from the group of Asian states, four from the group of Eastern European states, six from the group of Latin American and Caribbean states, and five from the group of Western European and other states.¹⁴ The final six seats are allocated to contributing countries, from which four seats go to the countries that provide the highest voluntary contribution to UN Women and two seats to developing countries.¹⁵

At NMUN•NY 2022, we are simulating the Executive Board of UN Women in terms of composition and size; however, delegates are not limited to the strict mandate of the Executive Board as a budgetary and administrative body during the conference. On the contrary, for the purposes of NMUN•NY 2022, and in line with the educational mission of the conference, the committee will be empowered to make programmatic and policy decisions on issues within the mandate of UN Women.

UN Women is headed by an Executive Director, who is considered a senior official at the Under-Secretary-General (USG) level.¹⁶ The current Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, was appointed in 2013.¹⁷ The Directorate performs the administrative functions of UN Women and is responsible for human resources, including employment in operational activities.¹⁸ The Executive Director also reports to the Secretary-General and works to improve system-wide coordination by seeking exchange with other agencies and programs both inside and outside of the UN system.¹⁹ The normative processes of UN Women are funded by the regular budget of the UN.²⁰ However, its operational activities depend on voluntary contributions from its members.²¹ In 2019, UN Women exceeded \$500 million mark in voluntary contributions, marking a 30% increase from 2018.²²

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The mandate for UN Women, articulated in General Assembly resolution 64/289 on “System-wide coherence” (2010) is to provide “guidance and technical support to all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming.”²³ The mandate consists of two dimensions: policy and norm-setting activities, and operational activities in cooperation with UN Member States.²⁴ UN Women also provides substantive policy support to the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the Security Council in their efforts to advance the global agenda on gender equality.²⁵ UN Women is also mandated to hold the UN system accountable for its efforts to mainstream gender across all aspects of its work, including coordinating the

¹³ UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010.

¹⁴ UN Women, *UN Women Executive Board: Members*, 2021; UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ UN Women, *UN Women Executive Board: Members*, 2021; UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010.

¹⁷ UN Women, *Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka*, 2018.

¹⁸ UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, pp. 11-12; UN Women, *About Us: Directorate*, 2021.

¹⁹ UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 12.

²¹ UN Women, *Annual Report 2019-2020*, 2020, p. 14.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 9; UN Women, *About UN Women*, 2021.

²⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2018/2)*, 2017.

²⁵ UN ECOSOC, *Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2018/2)*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women (A/64/588)*, 2010, p. 5.

UN's work for gender equality under the 2030 Agenda.²⁶ While the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, UN Women supports all aspects of the Commission's work by serving as CSW's Secretariat.²⁷ CSW is overall responsible for the formulation of standard-setting policies, while UN Women is responsible for carrying out these policies in its operational activities in the field.²⁸

UN Women's activity includes ensuring gender equality in leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, ending gender-based violence (GBV), peace and security, humanitarian response, youth and girls, the response to human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), governance and national planning, and supporting the 2030 Agenda.²⁹ To fulfill its mandate as a normative body, UN Women works closely with other UN bodies, programs, funds, CSOs, and Member States in designing adequate policies, laws, programs, and services.³⁰ In particular, UN Women functions through various mechanisms, including flagship initiatives, innovation and technology, UN system coordination, ensuring gender parity within the United Nations, training, and research and data.³¹ Within the UN system, UN Women supports the work of CSW by submitting an annual report to CSW informing it about the implementation of the CSW's policy guidance and submits a second annual report to the General Assembly through ECOSOC on UN Women's operational activities, research, policy analysis, and recommendations for further action.³² UN Women is also the lead agency for coordinating events for the International Women's Day and the CSW annual sessions.³³

On an operational level, UN Women facilitates regional conferences with CSOs and national policymakers, and provides training for Member States to help implement standards through technical and financial support.³⁴ This includes support in formulating new laws or strategies, working on national educational programs, training women to run efficient political campaigns, and assisting CSOs in becoming national advocates for gender equality.³⁵ As of 2021, UN Women has National Committees in 12 countries who function as independent CSOs supporting public awareness and fundraising in host countries.³⁶ Depending on the area of action, UN Women works with other programs and funds, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).³⁷ The results of UN Women's operational programs help drive the development of evidence-based normative standards and policies by the CSW.³⁸

²⁶ UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁸ UN ECOSOC, *Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2018/2)*, 2017.

²⁹ UN Women, *What we do*, 2021.

³⁰ UN Women, *Annual Report 2019-2020*, 2020.

³¹ UN Women, *How we work*, 2021.

³² UN General Assembly, *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*, 2010, p. 11; UN ECOSOC, *Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2018/2)*, 2017; UN Women, *About UN Women*, 2021.

³³ UN Women, *United Nations Observance of International Women's Day 2021*, 2021.

³⁴ UN Women, *Annual Report 2017-2018*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/588)*, 2010.

³⁵ UN Women, *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021*, 2017; UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/588)*, 2010.

³⁶ UN Women, *Partnership: National Committees for UN Women*, 2021.

³⁷ UN Women, *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021*, 2017, p. 3.

³⁸ UN Women, *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021*, 2017, p. 13; UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive proposal for the composite entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women: Report of the Secretary-General (A/64/588)*, 2010.

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

UN Women has a significant role to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³⁹ UN Women is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the indicators under SDG 5 (“gender equality”) and has developed an action plan to work with Member States, CSOs, and other UN agencies to develop reporting mechanisms on the progress for SDG 5.⁴⁰ Of the 17 SDGs, 11 have gender-specific indicators, while the remaining six are “gender-blind.”⁴¹ As of 2021, UN Women’s four strategic priorities include increased participation of women in decision-making systems, economic autonomy, life free from all forms of violence, and building sustainable peace and resilience that benefit women equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts.⁴²

UN Women’s *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* (2017) outlines the organization’s priorities, expected outcomes, lessons learned, and guiding principles to achieve gender parity.⁴³ As of March 2021, UN Women has achieved 83% of the assessable indicators under this plan.⁴⁴ As such, maximum output was achieved for “ending violence against women” and the least progress was made towards “global norms for gender equality” as it related to convening dialogues with CSOs to contribute to global policy discussions.⁴⁵ Through extensive consultations, UN Women’s key stakeholders are feeding into the next strategic plan (2022–2025) that aims to build on the 25th anniversary commemoration of BPfA (“Beijing+25”), 75 years since the founding of the UN, 20 years since the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on *Women and Peace and Security*, and 10 years since the creation of UN Women.⁴⁶ UN Women’s Executive Board held its annual session from 21– 23 June 2021 to discuss the draft Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and draft integrated budget estimates for the biennium 2022-2023 with a focus on sharing a rights-based approach to programming, practitioner-based knowledge, high-quality evaluations, and good practices.⁴⁷

In 2021, the Executive Board received a report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 (2019) on the “Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (QCPR),” which reviewed progress on UN Women’s core programs, initiatives, and COVID-19 response and recovery.⁴⁸ The annual session also reviewed the summary results for the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, which together provided \$65 million in grants to 121 projects in 80 countries that have improved 570,000 lives.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Since 2011, UN Women has played a pivotal role in leading and coordinating the UN system in actions to achieve gender equality.⁵⁰ UN Women has a three-pronged strategic approach which focuses on

³⁹ UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² UN Women, *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021*, 2017, p. 12.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ UN Women, *Progress under 2020 Milestones*, 2021.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ UN Women, *Key stakeholders’ perspectives for UN Women’s next strategic plan (2022–2025)*, 2021.

⁴⁷ UN Women, *UN Women Executive Board to convene annual session 2021*, 2021.

⁴⁸ UN Women Executive Board, *Annex V: Implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (QCPR)*, 2021.

⁴⁹ UN Women, *Annex VI: Summary of 2020 results of the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women*, 2021.

⁵⁰ UN Women, *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021*, 2017, p. 7.

strengthening normative policy frameworks, assisting Member States in operational activities, and coordinating the UN system on issues related to gender equality.⁵¹ This positions UN Women to have a substantial impact on achieving gender equality globally.⁵² As such, upcoming priorities for UN Women include work related to SDG 5 and ensuring women are “front and center” of inclusive pandemic recovery.⁵³ In particular, the Generation Equality Forum 2021, held to celebrate 25th anniversary of the BPfA, pushed for six action areas including GBV, economic justice and rights, bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights, feminist action for climate justice, technology and innovation for gender equality, and feminist movements and leadership.⁵⁴ UN Women will continue to rely on cooperation from the international community and commitments from Member States to implement these priorities, and continue sustaining policies and frameworks that support gender equality.⁵⁵

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This report of the Executive Director of UN Women to ECOSOC clarifies the linkage between UN Women and CSW. This source will help delegates identify the distinct features of the CSW as a functional commission reporting to ECOSOC, and UN Women as a composite, operational entity. The report of the Executive Director of UN Women will be helpful to understand how UN Women supports and complements the work of CSW. The report highlights key CSW reports, the relationship with the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Security Council, and UN Women’s role in implementing policy advice and guidance from CSW.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, second regular session. (2017). *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021 (UNW/2017/6/Rev.1)*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <http://undocs.org/en/UNW/2017/6/Rev.1>

The strategic plan gives a comprehensive outlook on UN Women’s priorities as they will continue into the draft of the next Strategic Plan (2022-2025). It also deepens the understanding the mechanisms by which UN Women progresses towards its goals. It puts the work of UN Women in context of the UN system and explains how UN Women is influencing the work of other UN bodies. Delegates will find this source useful as it also clarifies the UN Women’s role in improving coherence and coordination within the UN system, as well as the key outcomes that will be achieved by the work of UN Women under the guidance of the strategic plan.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2020). *The World for Women and Girls Annual Report 2019-2020*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/un-women-annual-report-2019-2020-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3903>

UN Women’s annual report provides an overview of the organization’s policy implementation, normative change, and engagement areas for furthering the goal of empowering women and girls worldwide. The 2019-2020 Annual Report also emphasizes the impacts of COVID-19 on women’s political, economic, and social lives. It provides

⁵¹ UN Women, *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women strategic plan, 2018-2021*, 2017, p. 7.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ UN Women, *Women must be ‘front and centre’ of pandemic recovery, UN chief says*, 2021

⁵⁴ UN Women, *The 2021 Generation Equality Forum: Action Coalitions*, 2021.

⁵⁵ UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018.

critical statistics that mark the scope of current policy reach and outline future action and collaboration areas. Delegates will find this source helpful in developing ideas to amplify UN Women's current work and address current challenges.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2021). *Progress of The World's Women 2019–2020: Families in A Changing World*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2019-2020-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3512>

This flagship report by UN Women provides detailed information on the impacts of COVID-19 in all spheres of women's lives, including political, social, geospatial, and economic. It highlights how the progress made in the last two decades for women's rights and equalities are at risk of regression due to exacerbated challenges posed by the pandemic. Based on multi-level data, UN Women provides a set of policy recommendations to various states and the international community for a better post-pandemic world for women. This source can offer delegates foundational data distributed by country and region so that they can make an informed proposals for furthering the work of UN Women.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-fourth session. (2010). *System-wide coherence (A/RES/64/289)*. Adopted without reference to a Main Committee (A/64/L.56). Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <http://undocs.org/a/res/64/289>

General Assembly resolution 64/289 (2010) established UN Women and is the guiding document to understand the role and mandate of UN Women and its work. The resolution establishes the structure and function of UN Women in detail and establishes the UN Women's standing in the UN system. Delegates will find this source very helpful in becoming familiar with UN Women's mandate.

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2021). *Annex V: Implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System (QCPR)*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2021/2%20-%20as%20annual%20session/documentation/annex%20v%20qcpr%20annex%20reporting%20in%202020.pdf?la=en&vs=2712>

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. (2021). *Annex VI: Summary of 2020 results of the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women*. Retrieved 8 August 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2021/2%20-%20as%20annual%20session/documentation/annex%20vi%20summary%20results%20of%20the%20fge%20and%20the%20untfevaw.pdf?la=en&vs=2726>

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1. Women as Drivers of Economic Recovery and Resilience

*“Gender equality remains the greatest human rights challenge of our time. Economic empowerment is a uniquely potent way for women to achieve greater control over their own lives. Yet, too often, women are unpaid or underpaid and unable to be dynamic economic actors. Inclusive growth cannot occur without their full participation.”*⁵⁶

Introduction

Economic recovery and resiliency have come to the forefront of post-COVID-19 recovery discussions.⁵⁷ As defined in the *UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 (2020)*, economic recovery encompasses the act of protecting jobs and workers, ensuring decent work, and protecting productive assets, productive units, and productive networks during a crisis.⁵⁸ The 2008 report *Post-Conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity* by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines economic recovery as the practice of achieving socio-economic well-being involving food security, public health, shelter, educational systems, and a societal safety net for all citizens.⁵⁹ It also defines economic recovery as laying a foundation for international trade and investment, and establishing transparent banking and financial institutions.⁶⁰

The pandemic has further highlighted existing inequalities between men and women in the economic sector, which even before the pandemic, saw the loss of \$160 trillion in global wealth because of these job and income inequalities as of 2018.⁶¹ Existing gender inequality issues have also become exacerbated during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, as women make up 41% of the labor force in the hardest-hit sectors, which include the service industry and hospitality industry where women are disproportionately represented.⁶² Strengthening women’s economic empowerment and resiliency is a key factor in realizing strong economic recovery globally, as women contribute 37% of the global GDP.⁶³ Gender equality, as a major theme of the United Nation’s (UN) framework *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)*, must be addressed when considering local planning and recovery post-COVID-19 pandemic and after any future disasters.⁶⁴

Microeconomies have been greatly impacted by the pandemic, with women-owned businesses 27% more likely to close down as a result of the pandemic.⁶⁵ Microeconomic resiliency is defined by how a small economic entity, such as a household, can withstand an economic crisis, brought on by natural or unnatural events.⁶⁶ In contrast, macroeconomic resiliency is the ability of an institution, such as a state, to adapt to a crisis and restore basic economic functions.⁶⁷ Both forms of resiliency hold relevance to women’s economic well-being and economic gender equality as the world looks to economically recover post-pandemic.⁶⁸

⁵⁶ UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment*, 2016, p. iii.

⁵⁷ United Nations Department of Global Communications, *UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19*, 2020, p. 17.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵⁹ UNDP, *Post-Conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity*, 2008, p. 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶¹ UN Women & W20, *Women as Drivers of Economic Recovery and Resilience During COVID-19 and Beyond*, 2020.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ UCLG et al., *COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery Handbook*, 2021.

⁶⁵ Hallegatte, S., *Economic Resilience: Definition and Measurement*, 2014.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶⁷ UNDRR, *Reducing Risk and Building Resilience of SMES to Disasters*, 2020, p. 64.

⁶⁸ UN Women & W20, *Women as Drivers of Economic Recovery and Resilience During COVID-19 and Beyond*, 2020.

International and Regional Framework

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) is the foundational global document acknowledging the rights and liberties of all human beings, and enshrines the right to freedom from discrimination regardless of race, sex, and ethnicity for all people regardless of social or political status.⁶⁹ Article 22 and 23 of the UDHR directly highlight the importance of the inclusion of all peoples in economy and society, and the right to access to fair pay and employment.⁷⁰ This document also protects women's rights as human rights, and explicitly calls out gender discrimination as a violation of human rights.⁷¹

Considered one of the most foundational documents outlining the advancement of women's rights, the 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA) was the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women.⁷² The declaration commits to promoting women's economic independence and eradicating the high cases of poverty among women.⁷³ It also ensures women's equal access to economic resources such as land, vocational training, and financial markets to enable women to participate in local and national economies.⁷⁴ A five-year review of the declaration found that women's lack of access to financial markets and assistance continue to impact achievement of the BPfA's recommendations.⁷⁵

Adopted on 18 December 1979, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* is a key document of the UN General Assembly that encourages the inclusion of women in social and economic spheres, such as business and government.⁷⁶ It establishes the need for equal access for women to vocational training, and ensures that the right to work is an inalienable human right for women, and for the economies at-large.⁷⁷ Although the Convention has been adopted by many states, the progress it calls for has not always been honored.⁷⁸ While the convention calls for all women to have equal access to job training and jobs, this has yet be achieved globally.⁷⁹

The Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015.⁸⁰ The declaration specifically calls on women in civil society to promote gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies, which can mitigate the impact of disasters on women by providing frameworks and systems to follow in post-disaster recovery efforts.⁸¹ It also calls on the empowerment of women to support whole-of-society preparation for disasters, and become involved in local and national planning strategies.⁸² The goal of these recommendations is to ensure that women will have equal say in post-disaster economic recovery efforts, and that these recovery efforts as a whole will be more effective because of this input.⁸³

⁶⁹ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² UN Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

⁷³ UN Women, *Global Norms and Standards: Economic Empowerment*, 2021.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ UN Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome*, 2015, p. 209.

⁷⁶ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ OHCHR, *Joint Statement of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the Occasion of the International Day of the Girl Child 2021*, 2021.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ UN General Assembly, *Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283)*, 2015.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

Adopted in 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) act as the cornerstones by which Member States can ensure their economies are gender-inclusive and, ultimately, more sustainable.⁸⁴ SDG 1 (“no poverty”) addresses economic equality, calling for all men, women, and children to have equal rights to economic resources and financial services.⁸⁵ SDG 5 (“gender equality”) is directly tied to the mission of UN Women, and includes targets such as ensuring that women are given economic resources equal to those men receive for the same work, including financial services and access to ownership of property and land.⁸⁶ These SDGs push for the global achievement of women’s economic empowerment based on their indicators, which would measure the SDG by the proportions of women to men in government roles and leadership positions, and the number of those enrolled in social services to alleviate poverty, among other quantitative targets.⁸⁷ SDG 9.a (“industrial innovation and infrastructure”) addresses sustainable and resilient infrastructures in developing nations, including on the African continent, calling on international support to make this possible.⁸⁸ SDG 11 (“sustainable cities and communities”), specifically target 11.5 deals with DRR in preventing loss of life and economic losses due to disasters.⁸⁹ This SDG is particularly relevant in the gendered impacts experienced by members in the wake of COVID-19.⁹⁰

Role of the International System

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is an inter-governmental body overseen by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁹¹ UN Women is the programmatic body created to enact CSW’s recommendations and serve as CSW’s Secretariat, whereas CSW continues to support the UN system by setting agendas and proposing policy and norm changes.⁹² Both organizations work together to promote the same agenda of gender equality and women’s empowerment within Member States.⁹³

In the 65th session of CSW in 2015, the conclusions met at the end of the session enforced the need for women to be included in leadership roles within their communities in cases of economic recovery, and the importance of including young women in these roles in order to grow their leadership experience.⁹⁴ In October 2021, UN Women released the *Effective, Decisive, and Inclusive: Women’s Leadership in COVID-19 Response and Recovery* report, which provided examples on how women’s leadership affected different developed countries, such as New Zealand and Germany.⁹⁵ Examples of effective work included the quick action female leaders took to limit transmission and movement to preventing the spread of the pandemic, and instances of female leaders advising on how to mitigate the social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups.⁹⁶

⁸⁴ UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment*, 2016, p. 1; UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

⁸⁵ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 1: End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere*, 2021.

⁸⁶ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls*, 2021.

⁸⁷ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

⁸⁸ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*, 2021.

⁸⁹ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*, 2021.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, 2021.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ CSW, *Women’s Full and Effective Participation and Decision-Making in Public Life, as Well as the Elimination of Violence, for Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls. (E/CN.6/2021/L.3)*, 2015, p. 5.

⁹⁵ Piscopo & Och, *Effective, Decisive, and Inclusive: Women’s Leadership in COVID-19 Response and Recovery, UN Women*, 2021, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

UN Women released the report *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice* in September 2021.⁹⁷ The report focuses on how women can be incorporated into recovery response, and how to bridge gender gaps in the process.⁹⁸ While highlighting specific examples of how the pandemic has affected women and their societal well-being, it also acts as a roadmap by providing examples on how to rebuild economies by including women as equal partners in the recovery effort.⁹⁹ These examples include proposals to extend social protections to informal workers and incorporate women's farming networks into national food systems.¹⁰⁰

The International Labor Organization (ILO) is the UN entity which promotes the rights of workers by setting labor standards, and promoting decent employment for both men and women.¹⁰¹ A number of ILO declarations and documents pertain directly to the economic empowerment of women in cases of recovery, particularly the *Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* (1998).¹⁰² This declaration promotes the inclusion of special needs groups and women in the economies of Member States in order to ensure equity and social progress.¹⁰³ The ILO and UN Women have also worked together in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, releasing a policy tool in 2021 titled *Assessing the Gendered Employment Impacts of COVID-19 and Supporting a Gender-Responsive Recovery*.¹⁰⁴ This tool offers plans on how to assess the pandemic's impact on women in different labor sectors, such as hourly work and healthcare.¹⁰⁵ The ILO and UN Women have also created the tool called *How to Assess Fiscal Stimulus Packages from a Gender Equality Perspective* (2021), which evaluates how useful stimulus packages are to the people or the sectors they are distributed to through a gender lens.¹⁰⁶

Women in the most vulnerable work sectors have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and need sustainable approaches to recover.¹⁰⁷ UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) jointly published a report in May 2021 entitled *COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery Handbook*.¹⁰⁸ The handbook focuses on the economic recovery of women in the most COVID-19-affected economies, such as those that have been impacted by the lack of workers or by the economic impacts of the pandemic.¹⁰⁹ The handbook also addresses the concerns of female informal workers, including domestic workers, and street and market vendors, and calls on national economies to offer better programs for informal workers, including economic and financial protections, during the post-pandemic economic recovery process.¹¹⁰ As an example of these recommendations having a positive impact, Chile's congress voted in September 2020 to include domestic workers in the country's unemployment insurance.¹¹¹ Similarly, the Brazilian congress approved a cash transfer in March 2020 that provided monthly benefits to 66 million informal workers, nearly one third of the country's population, for a nine month period, the majority of whom are women.¹¹² Beginning in 2013, the work of UN Women in Kenya ensured that 30% of its annual government spending would be reserved for women, youth, and people with disabilities, which includes money for the training of female entrepreneurs.¹¹³

⁹⁷ UN Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice*, 2021.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 21-29.

¹⁰¹ ILO, *About the ILO*.

¹⁰² ILO, *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, 1998.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Fontana, *Assessing the gendered employment impacts of COVID-19 and supporting a gender-responsive recovery*, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ UN Women & ILO, *How to Assess Fiscal Stimulus Packages From a Gender Equality Perspective*, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ UNCDF & UNDP, *COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery Handbook*, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 57.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 59.

¹¹¹ UN Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice*, 2021, p. 28.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 28.

¹¹³ UN Women, *Economic Empowerment*, p. 2.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is the United Nations agency responsible for the study of disaster loss reduction and of the prevention of the emergence of new risks following disasters.¹¹⁴ The UNDRR released the report “Reducing Risk & Building Resilience of SMEs to Disasters” in 2020.¹¹⁵ It addresses how the promotion of resiliency among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can help local and national economies recover more quickly after disasters, which is significant because women are overrepresented in SMEs.¹¹⁶ The goal of the report is to promote SMEs in becoming sustainable, including through the creation of financial outlets exclusively for SMEs and supporting the work of women entrepreneurs.¹¹⁷

Regionally, the African Union (AU) has a number of targeted programs and initiatives for their Member States to work towards economic gender equality.¹¹⁸ In December 2020, a workshop was held in conjunction with UN Women, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the Center for Accelerated Women’s Economic Empowerment.¹¹⁹ The two-day training session was hosted for women entrepreneurs to identify risks and challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic which hinder the fulfillment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the impact on their communities.¹²⁰ The AfCFTA is a project related to the Agenda 2063 program of the AU, which focuses on intra-continental trading and the promotion of African trade worldwide.¹²¹ Agenda 2063 includes a goal to achieve gender equality in the economy and in society, aligning itself with SDG 5.¹²²

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have long been a source of aid to and partnership with UN Women.¹²³ According to the Gender Innovation Lab, women who receive direct cash transfers as loans or payments for their businesses directly into personal bank accounts from aid groups or NGOs are more likely to start businesses and drive economic recovery in their communities because of the finances at their disposal, compared to women who receive no financial backing.¹²⁴ Give Directly is an organization that takes direct donations from people and organizations worldwide, and distributes them to people and communities in the United States and Africa.¹²⁵ Give Directly provides these donations to women through direct money transfers they can easily and quickly access.¹²⁶ It has also formed a partnership with the government of Rwanda in early 2021, in which the government would identify people in need of a direct deposits of \$150 every month based on their financial situations, many of them being women and children.¹²⁷ The initial deposit of money into individual bank accounts in June 2021 reached 4,000 Rwandans and will soon reach nearly 50,000 as the program progresses with the addition of provided individuals by the Rwandan government and the donations earmarked for this program.¹²⁸

¹¹⁴ UNDRR, *Our Work*, 2021.

¹¹⁵ UNDRR, *Reducing Risk & Building Resilience of SMES to Disasters*, 2020.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ AU, *About the African Union*.

¹¹⁹ AU et al., *Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) by AU, UNECA and UN Women Newsletter*, 2021, p. 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹²¹ AfCFTA, *About the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)*.

¹²² African Union, *Agenda 2063: Out Aspirations for the Africa We Want, 2021; African Union, Agenda 2063: Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs*, 2021.

¹²³ UN Women, *Civil Society*, 2021.

¹²⁴ Gender Innovation Lab, *Supporting Women Throughout the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Response and Economic Recovery*, 2020, p. 2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Give Directly, *About Give Directly*, 2021.

¹²⁷ Give Directly, *Respond to COVID-19 in Africa*, 2021.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

The Impact of COVID-19 on Female-Driven Economic Recovery and Resiliency

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed just how fragile women's labor market gains have been globally.¹²⁹ Across 45 countries, one in five women reportedly lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³⁰ Recovery has begun, but the estimated disproportional growth of men's employment will leave 13 million fewer women employed compared to 2019, as more men return to work, but women are left providing care for their families.¹³¹

UN Women has directed much of their attention to alleviating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic for women and girls through policy advising and programs directed at providing women with tools for economic recovery and resiliency.¹³² In Senegal, for example, UN Women is buying stocks of rice cultivation to provide families receiving government aid with food.¹³³ This allows for a supply of funds to the farming market while providing families in need with resources that have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic or have not been affordable.¹³⁴ UN Women has also partnered with the governments of Moldova and Japan to promote the regional project Responding to the Urgent Needs of Women and Girls in Marginalized and Vulnerable Situation Exacerbated by COVID-19 in Europe and Central Asia between June 2020 and May 2021.¹³⁵ The project provided individual and group mentorship on the skills and knowledge needed to start and run a business.¹³⁶ 40 women successfully participated in the project, while over 600 women entrepreneurs participated in business education training.¹³⁷

The fastest growing Member States' economies owe part of their success to the inclusion of women in production, trade, and entrepreneurship.¹³⁸ This success has been achieved with the promotion of education, access to trade and credit opportunities, and the addressing of patriarchal structures in societies.¹³⁹ This means that women also need jobs that will withstand disasters or crisis to maintain economic security during and after the pandemic, and ensure that whole-of-society economic impact is mitigated.¹⁴⁰ For example, in Nepal, women-managed food kitchens, supported by a collaboration between UN Women and the government of Finland, have provided food and jobs for people unemployed during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴¹ The 10 kitchens across Nepal have employed 123 people, mainly women, injecting the local economy with needed capital and providing an essential service simultaneously.¹⁴²

Additional recommendations on how recovery can be gender inclusive are also being released by experts and relevant bodies.¹⁴³ Women 20, a consultative group of the G20 created following the G20 summit in 2014, published their annual *Women 20 Communiqué* (2020), which outlines their recommendations on global measures taken to enable women to successfully participate in economic recovery efforts, especially those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴⁴ The United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs also released an important report in 2020, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*.¹⁴⁵ This

¹²⁹ UN Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice*, 2021, p. 21.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹³² UN Women, *UN Women's Response to COVID-19*, 2020.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³⁵ UN Women, *Young women entrepreneurs from Moldova support the local market with healthy lifestyle-promoting businesses*, 2021.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ UNDP, *Gender and Recovery Toolkit*, 2020, p. 31.

¹⁴¹ UN Women, *Women-managed community kitchens support vulnerable women in Nepal*, 2021.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ UN DGC, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ W20, *Women 20 Communiqué*, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

report touches on the most prevalent risks facing women during the pandemic, such as healthcare loss, unpaid work, and a lack of economic opportunities.¹⁴⁶ The policy brief recommends that countries with capabilities provide direct funds to women and expand social protection measures to informal workers.¹⁴⁷ It also suggests that women in developing nations be given social safeguards to ensure their safety and health, such as healthcare.¹⁴⁸ In addition, attention is called to those women who have lost loved ones and/or property and livestock, and have been unable to access aid by meeting those dispersing it.¹⁴⁹ The brief stresses that special attention should be paid to women because of evolving and complicated circumstances during the current pandemic.¹⁵⁰

Women as Drivers of Economic Recovery and Resiliency in Sub-Saharan Africa

Gender-based discriminatory practices are systemic formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices that restrict or exclude women and curtail their access to rights, justice, resources, and empowerment opportunities.¹⁵¹ According to figures from the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), an estimated \$340 billion is lost each year in sub-Saharan Africa due to gender-based discriminatory practices.¹⁵² The OECD found that discrimination in social settings is lower in southern African countries than countries in central Africa because of the prevalence of conflict in central Africa, demonstrating the important link between conflict or disasters, and gender equality.¹⁵³ However, despite the vulnerability of women in post-disaster zones, there has been progress in sub-Saharan Africa with granting land rights and asset ownership to women and gender-based discrimination has been abolished legislatively in four Member States between 2012 and 2014.¹⁵⁴

In sub-Saharan Africa, 74% of women's employment is informal, in contrast to 61% for men.¹⁵⁵ Informal jobs are jobs where the employees make up a single person or household, and the work often revolves around the selling or bartering of products or services.¹⁵⁶ The informal sector also features employment in underregulated enterprises, such as those owned by individuals or households, are unregistered under national legislation such as tax or social security laws, or are not engaged in agricultural activities.¹⁵⁷ In sub-Saharan Africa, 92% of women are employed in informal jobs, compared to 86% of men.¹⁵⁸ Around 30% of these women are also contributing family workers, meaning that they are unpaid for their work at home and for caregiving services they provide.¹⁵⁹ These numbers demonstrate that women in sub-Saharan Africa can be better drivers of economic recovery and resilience, if they have better access to financial resources and their work is recognized in formal economic systems.¹⁶⁰

UN Women has been working extensively on supporting women entrepreneurs through their South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO).¹⁶¹ Accelerating Women Owned Micro-Enterprises (AWOME) is a project initiated by SAMCO that supports women in building their businesses, creating jobs, and generating more income through training programs.¹⁶² A capacity-building program created jointly by UN Women, the De

¹⁴⁶ UN DGC, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*, 2020.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ OECD, *Sub-Saharan Africa: SIGI Regional Report*, 2016, p. 6.

¹⁵² OECD Development Center, *The Economic Cost of Gender-Based Discrimination in Social Institutions*, 2016.

¹⁵³ OECD, *Sub-Saharan Africa: SIGI Regional Report*, 2016, p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁵ ILO, *Five Facts About Informal Economy in Africa*, 2021.

¹⁵⁶ Hussmanns, Defining and Measuring Informal Employment, *International Labour Organization*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, 2018, p. 21.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁶¹ UN Women, *South Africa Multi-Country Office*.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

Beers Group, and the governments of Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, the project has the aim to reach 1,200 female micro-entrepreneurs by 2020 through training programs and mentorship.¹⁶³

FINCA International, an NGO focusing on providing loans and financial guidance to people in developing communities, has also done extensive work in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶⁴ In Uganda, FINCA offers individual and village banking loans to women, including savings accounts and insurance policies.¹⁶⁵ FINCA has assisted 4.5 million women since 1984.¹⁶⁶ In the same way FINCA offers monetary aid to people in developing communities, the Women's Microfinance Initiative (WMI) does so for women in Africa.¹⁶⁷ WMI is an NGO run by women, that offers microfinance loans to women in rural communities from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania.¹⁶⁸ WMI provides funding, training by women who completed the program, and a support network to aid the women in these countries.¹⁶⁹ With this approach, WMI receives 100% of its loans back from their beneficiaries through their loan payback programs, demonstrating the success of investing in women in fragile or conflict-affected areas.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

Ensuring women's full participation in economic recovery and resiliency will take time, but governments can regain what progress they lost during the COVID-19 pandemic by embracing gender-inclusive economic recovery strategies in order to create a more equal and just future.¹⁷¹ Women should be understood as both the creators and recipients of the benefits of public and private sector funding efforts to rebuild and strengthen the global economy.¹⁷² By encouraging women through international programs and domestic enterprises to build their own presence in their local economies, economic growth is fostered in society at-large.¹⁷³ As the largest group disproportionately affected by job loss, reduced working hours, and bankruptcy, and the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, women have a chance to create strong foundations for economic growth with the assistance of international and domestic agencies.¹⁷⁴ In order to help women become agents of economic recovery and resiliency, Member States should work to ensure income support for female workers and help build support for female employment opportunities, women-owned enterprises, and inclusion of the advice and recommendations of gender experts.¹⁷⁵

Further Research

Progress has been made in acknowledging women's role in economic recovery and resiliency projects, but more progress is still needed to achieve the SDGs in regard to gender equality. When beginning their research, delegates should ask: How can women be supported in taking on a more active role in economic recovery and resiliency planning? What social safeguards can be put into place to ensure support for women in the event of a disaster? How can UN Women facilitate efforts to give direct monetary payments and financial support to women and women-led businesses? How can the gendered impacts of COVID-19 be mitigated, and how can women be fully involved in global economic recovery?

¹⁶³ UN Women, *South Africa Multi-Country Office*.

¹⁶⁴ FINCA, *Where We Work*.

¹⁶⁵ FINCA, *Fighting Poverty in Uganda*.

¹⁶⁶ FINCA, *Where We Work*.

¹⁶⁷ Together Women Rise, *Women's Microfinance Initiative*, 2021.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ UN Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice*, 2021, p. 27.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁷³ UN Women, *From Insight to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ UN Women, *Press Release: UN Women and Women 20 Call on G20 Members to Recognize Women as Drivers of Economic Recovery and Resilience During COVID-19 and Beyond*, 2020.

¹⁷⁵ UN Women, *COVID-19 and its Economic Toll on Women: The Story Behind the Numbers*, 2020.

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations Development Programme. (2019). *UNDP Gender and Recovery Toolkit*. Retrieved 23 June 2021 from: <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-gender-and-recovery-toolkit>

This toolkit was published in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to help integrate women into the post-pandemic recovery efforts. It proposes that the economic recovery of women is linked to their standing in society, and features guidance on how women can enhance gender equality through economic recovery. The toolkit also looks at means through which women can improve economic resiliency, such as being involved in government and disaster risk reduction. The toolkit is an example of the multifaceted ways women and their place in society shape the economic recovery efforts in the aftermath of any crisis. Delegates will find this toolkit useful as it links the recovery efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic to the human rights of women and their right to participate in society, a key focus of UN Women.

United Nations Development Programme & United Nations Capital Development Fund. (2021). *COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery Handbook*. Retrieved 13 June 2021 from: <https://www.undp.org/publications/covid-19-gender-responsive-local-economic-recovery-handbook>

This handbook was published in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and focuses on the importance of local governments in ensuring gender equality through recovery efforts. Women's economic empowerment includes providing of financial resources and the management of them. While there is guidance on how women can enhance gender equality through economic recovery, the toolkit also looks at the other ways in which women can improve economic resiliency, such as being involved in government roles and in disaster risk reduction. Delegates will find this source useful in their research to contextualize what steps need to be taken to engage women effectively in the economy, such as community involvement and the breaking of harmful gendered social norms.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2021). *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice*. Retrieved 17 September 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/feminist-plan-for-sustainability-and-social-justice>

This report is the most recent publication by UN Women on post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery initiatives and best practices. Chapter 2 of this report looks specifically at women's role in the economy, and how both formal and informal work can be reinterpreted and retrofitted to better serve women in times of crisis. Delegates will find this report useful as it is a look into the most recent developments and directions that UN Women has taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and outlines plans that involve multiple aspects of gender equality policy.

United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Retrieved 23 June 2021 from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

The Beijing Declaration is an essential document for UN Women due to its focus on gender equality and the issues impeding a woman's equal access to the economy, leadership roles, and basic human rights. It effectively connects a woman's economic security to the security of society as a whole by establishing that women's involvement in development programs is a human right which they should fully enjoy. Delegates will find the declaration a key resource, as much of the recent work of UN Women is rooted in the declaration's proposals and goals.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2015). *Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (A/RES/69/283)*. Adopted without reference to a Main Committee (A/69/L.67). Retrieved 3 August 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/a/res/69/283>

This declaration serves as the United Nation system's framework for disaster risk reduction and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through the realization of disaster risk reduction in communities. It calls for the inclusion of all people

in DRR practices and planning, and for the gathering of data related to individual communities and groups of people in addition to larger economies. Delegates will find this document useful as it relates DRR to the Sustainable Development Goals. It also elaborates on how best to realize them through preparedness and provides a framework for best practices, such as ensuring full accessibility and creating cross-cutting policies.

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2020). *Reducing Risk & Building Resilience of SMEs to Disasters*. Retrieved 1 August 2021 from: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/resilience-smes>

This report addresses the importance of featuring DRR in a society, specifically in supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to better prepare for disasters and crises. One of the most useful aspects of this report is the inclusion of a Key Terms Annex, where terms related to economic recovery and resiliency are clearly defined. It also features dialogue on the process of “recovery” and “resiliency,” which delegates will find extremely helpful in preparing for committee. This document will be useful to delegates as it further outlines the methods and plans the UN has historically taken to address disasters that impact smaller economies.

United Nations, Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment. (2016). *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment*.

Retrieved 1 August 2021 from: https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/unwomen/empowerwomen/resources/hlp_briefs/unhlp_full_report.pdf?la=en

This report is an analysis published in 2016 detailing the importance of economic equality within Member States. Published one year after the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals, this report acts as an outline from which Member States and the United Nations can understand the work that needs to be done before 2030 to achieve full gender parity. The areas of focus include avenues of economic empowerment, the attention needed to eliminate pay gaps, and working on gender-based stereotypes present in societies and businesses. Delegates will find this document useful as it can serve as a best-practice model for how to address the gender issues stemming from the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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2. Combating Gender Inequality to End Poverty

Introduction

Currently, 247 million women are exposed to extreme poverty, which means living on \$1.90 or less.¹⁷⁶ As women are more likely to experience poverty than men due to gender-based social and economic factors, an examination of poverty and how to mitigate its impacts cannot be gender-blind.¹⁷⁷ The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated issues faced by women and has led to a regression of economic gender equality progress, resulting in an estimated 47 million women and girls expected to be forced into more extreme poverty.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, women now have an 18% higher risk of impoverishment than men.¹⁷⁹ By 2030, this risk is expected to have increased to 21%.¹⁸⁰ To counteract these developments, the United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) is implementing programs to accelerate women's economic empowerment, build social services for affected women, and raise awareness about women's rights.¹⁸¹

Gender gaps are defined as disproportionate differences between the genders, particularly in regards to the opportunities for participation in economy, education, health and safety, and political representation.¹⁸² Disadvantages in these fields can increase the risk that an individual will be exposed to poverty.¹⁸³ Women are already more likely to fall into poverty because of additional gender-based risk factors, such as social discrimination and exclusion, early childbearing, and unpaid care work.¹⁸⁴ Evidence shows that even if women can and are allowed to work, they often do not have the same choice of jobs as men, nor do they receive the same pay.¹⁸⁵ Despite these challenges, women's economic participation brings benefits to the whole of society, such as improved realization of women's rights, more economic opportunities, productivity gains, and an increase in overall economic prosperity.¹⁸⁶ For example, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that increasing female employment rates can add up to \$6 trillion to a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹⁸⁷

International and Regional Framework

In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), the foundational document for human rights within the international community and the United Nations (UN).¹⁸⁸ The UDHR laid the foundations for combating gender-based poverty.¹⁸⁹ Article 2 of the UDHR states that every human should enjoy the same rights, regardless of their gender.¹⁹⁰ Article 26 also

¹⁷⁶ Szmigiera, Gender Poverty Gaps Worldwide in 2020 and 2021 (With a Forecast to 2030), by Gender, *Statista*, 2021.

¹⁷⁷ Bureau of International Information Programs, Chapter 1: Women and Poverty, *Women in the World Today*, 2012.

¹⁷⁸ UNDP, *COVID-19 will Widen Poverty Gap Between Women and Men, new UN Women and UNDP Data Shows*, 2020.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ UN Women, *Women and Poverty*, 2014.

¹⁸² UNICEF, *Gender Equality: Glossary of Terms and Concepts*, 2017, p. 4.

¹⁸³ Peace Corps, *Global Issues: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*.

¹⁸⁴ UN DGC, *Ending Poverty*, UN Women, *Facts & Figures, Poverty and Hunger*, 2012; Wodon et al., *The Cost of not Educating Girls, Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of not Educating Girls*, 2018; Azcona et al., *Four Facts you Need to Know About Gender and Poverty Today*, *UN Women*, 2021; UN Women, *Expert's Take: By Undercounting Single Mothers, We Underserve Families*, 2020.

¹⁸⁵ Bureau of International Information Programs, Chapter 1: Women and Poverty, *Women in the World Today*, 2012; UN Women, *Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value*, 2017.

¹⁸⁶ UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration on Human Rights (A/RES/217 A(III))*, 1948.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

outlines the right to education for everyone, which is an important accelerator for women's economic empowerment.¹⁹¹

In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) with the aim of further enshrining the protection of women's rights as human rights.¹⁹² In the preface of the CEDAW, it recognizes that women who are exposed to poverty are deprived of basic supplies, and CEDAW is therefore an important framework document in explicitly linking economic inequality with gender inequality.¹⁹³ The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 marked another important milestone as it finalized all the significant political agreements of the three previous World Conferences on Women, and formed the cornerstone document, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA) (1995).¹⁹⁴ The BPfA, together with CEDAW, form the cornerstones of UN women's rights mandate.¹⁹⁵ The BPfA comprehensively describes where the specific problems of gendered poverty lie by addressing the structural causes of this issue, and forms the basis for much of the UN's work on gender equality.¹⁹⁶

2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the BPfA.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held a number of events to focus on the progress made since 1995, and the areas where the international community still has more to achieve.¹⁹⁸ The main product of this session was the *Political declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women* (2020), which highlights achievements that have been made towards achieving the goals of the BPfA, and also identifies "12 critical areas of concern," which still require effort and attention.¹⁹⁹ The first of these named areas of concern is women and poverty, followed by women's lack of access to education, health and the economy.²⁰⁰

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda), adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, is the cross-cutting framework established to create targets for the international community to achieve prior to 2030.²⁰¹ Several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the importance of combatting gender-based poverty.²⁰² SDG 1 ("no poverty") aims to end extreme poverty completely, for both women and men.²⁰³ Since education also plays an important role in reducing gender disparities, SDG 4 ("education for all") aims to make education accessible to all, with a particular focus on underserved women and girls.²⁰⁴ This is further supported by SDG 5 ("gender equality and women's empowerment"), which focuses on the achievement of gender equality in all aspects of life, particularly with target 5.1, which states that "discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" must end.²⁰⁵

¹⁹¹ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration on Human Rights (A/RES/217 A(III))*, 1948.

¹⁹² UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979; UN Women, *About UN Women*.

¹⁹³ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

¹⁹⁴ UN Women, *Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September 1995, Beijing, China*.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ UN Women, *The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women*.

¹⁹⁷ ECOSOC, *Political Declaration on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/CN.6/2020/L.1)*, 2020.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁰² UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely weakened the economies around the world.²⁰⁶ As such, many Member States are actively working towards mitigating the impact on women, including the Organization of American States with a launch of a report called *COVID-19 in Women's Lives: Reasons to Recognize the Differential Impacts* in 2020.²⁰⁷ The report not only shows that the weakening of many economic sectors can drive women into relative or extreme poverty, but also offers actions that can be taken to improve these gendered outcomes.²⁰⁸

Regionally, the European Union (EU) has also addressed the fight against disproportionate poverty among women.²⁰⁹ With around 24.4% of the female EU population at risk of relative poverty, the EU adopted the *European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan* in 2021, which is dedicated to 20 principles of social justice, including equal access to economic opportunities.²¹⁰ In 2019, the African Union also unveiled its *African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018-2028*.²¹¹ It aims to ensure that women experience equal participation in society, that their concerns are heard, and that appropriate input of legislation and funding is brought in to support gender equality work.²¹²

Role of the International System

In 2017, UN Women adopted its *UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021* with the goal of supporting the implementation of the BPfA and contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.²¹³ Although it was noted that there has been significant progress toward reducing the overrepresentation of women facing extreme poverty globally, it was also noted that the COVID-19 crisis had a negative impact on women's economic progress.²¹⁴ In September 2021, UN Women adopted its *UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025* which adapts the work of the committee to the specific conditions and the issue of gender-based poverty as considered in light of the COVID-19 crisis economic recovery.²¹⁵

The CSW and UN Women have been closely collaborating on this issue.²¹⁶ In 1996, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) expanded the mandate of CSW with resolution 1996/6 to a leading role regarding the review of work BPfA, and held them responsible for incorporating a cross-cutting gender perspective into the activities of the UN.²¹⁷ While CSW sets global standards for gender equality in the high-level policy area, UN Women seeks to implement them programmatically.²¹⁸ To fulfill its mandate, UN Women helps support intergovernmental consultation, contributes research to prepare policies and recommendations, and provides support to Member States on achieving gender equality aims.²¹⁹ UN Women not only supports policy development, but also the implementation and financial support of these policies.²²⁰ In order to promote its gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, there are National Committees of UN Women in 12 countries which support UN Women's relations with governments and

²⁰⁶ OAS, *COVID-19 in Women's Lives: Reasons to Recognize the Differential Impacts*, 2020.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ European Commission, *Poverty and Social Exclusion*.

²¹⁰ Malgesini, Gender and Poverty in Europe, *European Anti Poverty Network*, 2017; European Commission, *Poverty and Social Exclusion*; European Commission, *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*.

²¹¹ AU, *African Union Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018-2028*, 2019.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ UN Women, *UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (UNW/2017/6/Rev.1)*, 2017.

²¹⁴ UN Women, *UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (UNW/2021/6)*, 2021.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ ECOSOC, *Normative Aspects of the Work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2018/2)*, 2017.

²¹⁷ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*.

²¹⁸ ECOSOC, *Normative Aspects of the Work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2018/2)*, 2017.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ UN Women, *About UN Women*.

local civil society, among other functions.²²¹

Acknowledging the necessities of the economic empowerment of women, UN Women and the United Nations Global Compact launched the Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs) in 2010.²²² The WEPs are guiding principles for the private sector on how to promote “gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community.”²²³ This project has led to the creation of a “CEO Statement of Support” for upper levels of business leadership to sign, committing their companies to ensuring progress on gender equality, promoting women’s professional development, and guaranteeing equality in the workplace.²²⁴ As of 2020, over 2,000 business worldwide have signed the WEPs.²²⁵ The WEPs are also the guiding principles for many other initiatives and programs that UN Women has launched with the private sector.²²⁶

UN Women also works closely with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in individual countries.²²⁷ CSOs often consult UN Women on national and regional gender equality issues, especially the concerns of rural women.²²⁸ UN Women’s works closely with Civil Society Advisory Groups (CSAG), which are currently represented in 38 countries.²²⁹ CSAG consists of 25 members who are prominent leaders from different backgrounds and advise UN Women on gender equality and women’s rights.²³⁰

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) works through on-site programs designed to strengthen women’s economic participation.²³¹ For example, in 2016, with the help of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of Kenya, UNDP launched two graduation projects that have strengthened women entrepreneurship and thus contributed to greater financial stability.²³² Furthermore UNDP, in collaboration with UN Women, launched a portal called “COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker” in 2020, with the aim of monitoring “policy measures enacted by governments worldwide to tackle the COVID-19 crisis”.²³³ At the beginning of 2021, they also called for a temporary basic income to help women who are disproportionately exposed to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.²³⁴

As education is understood as an important accelerator for women’s economic empowerment, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) addresses “gender-responsive and age-sensitive social protection” and promotes the education of girls in order to significantly reduce the risk of poverty.²³⁵ UNICEF also addresses the immediate concerns of children in poverty, with particular attention paid to the high number of girls impacted.²³⁶ As the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought food shortages, which is especially threatening for people being living in extreme poverty, the World Food Programme (WFP) also aims to economically empower rural women.²³⁷ One of WFP’s most important projects, “Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment,” launched in 2014 in collaboration with UN Women,

²²¹ UN Women, *National Committees for UN Women*; UN Women, *Partners*.

²²² UN Women, *Equality means Business, WEPs Brochure*, 2021.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ UN Women, *Employment and Migration*.

²²⁵ UN Women, *Women’s Empowerment Principles*, 2020, p. 2.

²²⁶ UN Women, *Businesses and Philanthropies*.

²²⁷ UN Women, *Civil Society*; UN Women, *Partners*.

²²⁸ UN Women, *Civil Society*.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ UNDP, *Lifting Women out of Extreme Poverty*, 2020.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ UNDP, *COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Fact Sheets*, 2020.

²³⁴ UNDP, *UNDP Calls for Temporary Basic Income to Help World’s Poorest Women Cope with Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2021.

²³⁵ UNFPA, *Population and Poverty*, 2014.

²³⁶ UNICEF, *About UNICEF*.

²³⁷ UNICEF, *Gender-Responsive and Age-Sensitive Social Protection*; UNICEF, *Girls’ Education*.

the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and IFAD, and has reached over 80,000 women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, and Rwanda.²³⁸

Education for All to Break the Cycle of Poverty

The lack of educational opportunities for girls not only affects individuals but is a global problem.²³⁹ The loss of human capital wealth from all girls and women who do not complete 12 years of education is estimated to be between \$15-30 trillion annually.²⁴⁰ A lack of education can be identified as one of the fundamental factors leading to poverty.²⁴¹ Sufficient education can help end poverty for both for boys and girls, because it allows them to escape the cycle of poverty that a family or community may fight for generations.²⁴²

Once barriers to education are removed, girls have a significantly higher chance of escaping the cycle of poverty.²⁴³ Moreover, each additional year of schooling lowers the risk of girls being forced child marriage or giving birth to a child while under the age of 18.²⁴⁴ Education for girls also has a positive impact on health, nutrition and well-being.²⁴⁵ Young girls with sufficient education are more likely to make healthy choices, which prevent them from developing serious health problems or going into debt from inaccessible medical care.²⁴⁶

However, despite this, only 49% of all countries have achieved gender parity in education.²⁴⁷ Girls tend to drop out of school much sooner than boys, and at much higher rates.²⁴⁸ Even if girls have finished primary education, they are still likely to earn only 14-19% more in salary than an uneducated worker would earn.²⁴⁹ A crucial barrier to education is gender stereotypes.²⁵⁰ Girls and women are more likely to be taught and trained for domestic and caregiving tasks, while boys are expected to go to work and support the family financially.²⁵¹ Thus, low-income families tend to prefer sending boys to school over girls, to increase their chances of their family earning more money in the future.²⁵² These social norms can lead to other circumstances that prevent girls and women from gaining sufficient education, such as legislative restrictions that prevent equitable access to education.²⁵³ Other challenges that disproportionately impact girls include long and/or unsafe commutes to school, a high cost for education, child marriages, and gender-based violence.²⁵⁴ Schools are also often not equipped with hygienic facilities and do not maintain gender-responsive teaching skills, which in turn lead to girls performing worse in class and being more likely to drop out of school.²⁵⁵

Through SDG 4 and SDG 5, the need to achieve “education for all” continues to be reinforced in the UN

²³⁸ WFP, *Economic Empowerment of Rural Women Positively Impacts Social Norms and Strengthens Food Security*, 2021; UN Women, *Partners*.

²³⁹ Wodon et al., *The Cost of not Educating Girls, Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of not Educating Girls*, 2018.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Giovetti, *How Does Education Effect Poverty? It Can Help End it*, 2020.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Wodon et al., *The Cost of not Educating Girls, Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of not Educating Girls*, 2018.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ UNICEF, *Girls' education*.

²⁴⁸ Wodon, *Why do Girls Drop out of School and What are the Consequences of Dropping out?*, *World Bank*, 2018.

²⁴⁹ Wodon et al., *The Cost of not Educating Girls, Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of not Educating Girls*, 2018.

²⁵⁰ Their World, *Why Girls Around the World are Still Denied an Equal Chance of Education*, 2017.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Their World, *Why Girls Around the World are Still Denied an Equal Chance of Education*, 2017; UNICEF, *Girl's Education*.

²⁵⁵ UNICEF, *Girl's Education*.

system.²⁵⁶ To counteract the numerous problems related to education and gender inequality, UN Women engages in various programs to promote gender equality and women's rights in the field of education.²⁵⁷ For example, "Voices against Violence" is a co-educational curriculum launched in 2014 by World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), UN Women, and 20 Member States about GBV and the importance of a safe environment.²⁵⁸ It is currently being successfully implemented in 12 countries.²⁵⁹ UN Women is also contributing to equality in education by revising school materials, and examining learning content for gender tolerance.²⁶⁰ "

UNICEF also supports the work of UN Women on this issue by advocating for the elimination of harmful practices that may keep girls out of school, supporting governments in revising their national education plans and policies, and helping strategically allocate budgets to prioritize education for boys and girls equally.²⁶¹ UNICEF also aims to achieve a sustainable and gender-responsive learning environment for every child, including recommending that schools be adapted to the physical and emotional needs of girls, and incorporating gender-sensitive pedagogy and educational materials that are free of harmful stereotypes.²⁶² A major responsibility for ensuring equal access to education also lies with national actors, who must ensure gender-sensitive and gender-equal legislation to ensure that girls and women have equal access to education, and ensure that fundamental structural changes occur.²⁶³

Accelerating Women's Economic Empowerment for Poverty Reduction

Globally, women still face many challenges regarding access to work and full participation in the economy.²⁶⁴ It is estimated that 2.7 billion women do not have the same choice of jobs as men.²⁶⁵ In a 2018 study, the World Bank found that out of 189 economies surveyed, 104 economies still have prevailing laws that keep women from working in specific jobs, including some which allow a woman's husband to prohibit her from working entirely.²⁶⁶ And women that do work earn an average of 77% of the salary that a man receives for the same job and the same amount of work.²⁶⁷ In addition, women spend 2.5 times more time doing unpaid care work than men.²⁶⁸ Childcare, as well as family care, is a high-risk factor for women not being able to go to work.²⁶⁹ It is estimated that unpaid care work can account for 10-39% of GDP alone.²⁷⁰

Gender-based problems also stem from laws that often restrict women's economic participation, which not only affects working and job selection, but also the management of assets and, thus, opportunities for entrepreneurship.²⁷¹ For instance, almost 40% of wage-employed women do not have the same social protections such as pensions, unemployment benefits, or maternity protection as men.²⁷² In other sectors such as agriculture, only 12.8% of women are landowners due to legal barriers that hinder land ownership and control of productive assets in many countries, despite the fact that the agricultural sector employs

²⁵⁶ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

²⁵⁷ UN Women, *Education and Training of Women*, 2014.

²⁵⁸ UN Women, *Voices against Violence*, 2014.

²⁵⁹ UN Women, *Education and Training of Women*, 2014; UN Women, *Partners*.

²⁶⁰ UN Women, *Education and Training of Women*, 2014.

²⁶¹ UNICEF, *Girl's Education*.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ Urban Institute, *Six Ways to Enable Women's Economic Empowerment*, 2016.

²⁷⁰ UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*

one third of the globe's employed women.²⁷³ If women had access to the same resources as men, it is estimated that agricultural output would increase by 4% in developing countries, which would be a significant step towards reducing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.²⁷⁴ According to the World Bank, "gender differences in property and inheritance laws" still exist in nearly 50% of economies.²⁷⁵

Additionally, workplaces may not consistently and sufficiently meet hygienic standards, provide menstrual products, or consider women's specific health needs pre- and post-partum, which makes it difficult for women to attend work at all.²⁷⁶ Relatedly, poor basic infrastructure, such as a shortage of electricity and water, can lead to women investing even more time in caring for the family, which limits the time they can participate in the workforce.²⁷⁷ It is estimated that in 80% of households, women are responsible for the family's water supply.²⁷⁸

Despite these troubling patterns, effective work is being done on the issue.²⁷⁹ Even though unpaid care work is typically not included in the official GDP figures, many studies show the economic value of unpaid care work by examining it through time-use surveys.²⁸⁰ This contributes greatly to the awareness of women's unpaid care work and the significant socio-economic impact it has on the national economy.²⁸¹ Another successful example of pushing back against undervalued care work can be seen through UN Women's supporting 12 women's organizations in Bolivia in implementing their economic projects through providing financial support and expertise, resulting in unpaid care work being formally included in the national budget for the first time.²⁸² UN Women and IFAD have also launched the Broadening Economic Opportunities for Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Latin America (BEO) program in 2013, which aims to support rural women entrepreneurs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Nicaragua.²⁸³

UN Women also continues to work closely with Member States to support them with normative work, including helping to formulate legislation that removes restrictions on women's economic participation.²⁸⁴ For instance, UN Women held a successful consultation in 2013 with the Kenyan government, which resulted in 30% of all government spending now being earmarked for women, youth, and people with disabilities, with a focus on entrepreneurship.²⁸⁵ With UN Women's assistance, Member States are the key accelerators in advancing the agenda of increasing women's economic empowerment.²⁸⁶ Similarly, in 2020, the OECD, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the Center for Arab Women for Training and Research joined forces to achieve fundamental legislative changes in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia that will provide new opportunities for women to participate in the economy.²⁸⁷ UN Women also continues to support CSOs to advance the agenda for women's economic empowerment.²⁸⁸

²⁷³ UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018; Almodovar-Reteguis, Where in the World do Women Still Face Legal Barriers to own and Administer Assets?, *World Bank Blogs*, 2019; UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

²⁷⁴ UN Women, *The Role of Women in Rural Development, Food Production and Poverty Eradication*, 2013.

²⁷⁵ Almodovar-Reteguis, Where in the World do Women Still Face Legal Barriers to own and Administer Assets?, *World Bank Blogs*, 2019.

²⁷⁶ Urban Institute, *Six Ways to Enable Women's Economic Empowerment*, 2016.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

²⁷⁹ UN Women, *Macroeconomic Policies and Social Protection*.

²⁸⁰ Charmes, The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market: An Analysis of Time use Data Based on the Latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys, *ILO*, 2019.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² UN Women, *Macroeconomic Policies and Social Protection*.

²⁸³ Progreso, *Toolbox for the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women Entrepreneurs*.

²⁸⁴ UN Women, *Macroeconomic Policies and Social Protection*.

²⁸⁵ UN Women, *Economic Empowerment of Women*, 2013.

²⁸⁶ OECD et al., *Changing Laws and Breaking Barriers for Women's Economic Empowerment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia*, 2020.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ UN Women, *Macroeconomic Policies and Social Protection*.

The economic empowerment of women has a positive impact on the economic growth and, in turn, growth also has a positive impact on economic empowerment of women.²⁸⁹ Higher economic growth leads to more jobs, which in turn increases the chance that these jobs will be filled by women.²⁹⁰ Therefore a reduction of the structural restrictions on women's economic empowerment results in a significant added value for the economic empowerment of women, and also for the national and global economies.²⁹¹

Conclusion

More women and girls live in poverty than men and boys, and are at a significantly higher risk of becoming impoverished.²⁹² These problems arise from structural gender-based barriers that do not allow women and girls sufficient access to education and economic empowerment worldwide.²⁹³ This not only counteracts achieving the 2030 Agenda, but also results in lost economic potential globally.²⁹⁴ Since UN Women was created in 2010 to achieve global gender equality, they are an important advocate on this issue and work through norms, recommendations, and program implementation to create economic gender equality globally.²⁹⁵ However achieving gender equality will only start with start with the global awareness that poverty is a gendered experience, and the political will needed to deconstruct barriers to full economic gender equality.²⁹⁶

Further Research

In beginning their research, delegates should consider the following questions: What are the differences in the experience of poverty between women and men? What are the reasons that women are more likely to experience poverty than men? How can these reasons be eliminated? What approaches can be taken at the global level, in the UN system, at the national level, and locally to work towards economic gender equality? Furthermore, how can these approaches be implemented and financed? Which experts and CSOs can UN Women call upon to provide expertise and recommendations on this important issue?

Annotated Bibliography

Bureau of International Information Programs. (2012). Chapter 1: Women and Poverty. *Women in the World Today*. Retrieved 17 October 2021 from: <https://opentextbc.ca/womenintheworld/chapter/chapter-1-women-and-poverty/>

This resource will be useful for delegates to learn about the connection between gender inequalities and poverty. The chapter "Women and Poverty" specifically addresses why women are affected differently and more severely by poverty by providing case studies and examples. In doing so, the authors paint a clear picture of the gender barriers and systemic issues that women face that continue to keep them in poverty. The authors also provide important recommendations about how to combat economic gender inequality in practice.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (n.d.). *Partners*. Retrieved 17 October 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships>

As UN Women is a leader in working against gender inequality to end poverty, it is also important to know who they are working with. This resource is important for delegates in

²⁸⁹ Urban Institute, *Six Ways to Enable Women's Economic Empowerment*, 2016.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

²⁹² UNDP, *COVID-19 will Widen Poverty Gap Between Women and Men, new UN Women and UNDP Data Shows*, 2020.

²⁹³ Bureau of International Information Programs, *Women in the World Today, Chapter 1: Women and Poverty*, 2012.

²⁹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015; UN Women, *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*, 2018.

²⁹⁵ UN Women, *About UN Women*.

²⁹⁶ World Bank, *Legal Progress Towards Gender Equality*, 2020.

that they can find out where their resources for addressing gender inequality lie outside of Un Women, and how the committee can rely upon these resources when proposing future projects. UN Women's partners are key to ensuring that sustainable means to achieving gender equity are found and implemented.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2017). *UN Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (UNW/2017/6/Rev.1)*. Retrieved 17 October 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/en/UNW/2017/6/Rev.1>

As the successor to the Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda provides a blueprint for how the international community develop sustainably and equitable. This document lays out fundamental principles and cross-cutting framework shaping much of the UN's current priorities, particularly issues of gender and economic inequality. Since each of the 17 SDGs also specific targets, as well as regular reporting on progress, it is an important document to be familiar with on the issue of economic gender equality, particularly as target progress has stalled under the COVID-19 pandemic.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2021). *UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (UNW/2021/6)*. Retrieved 17 October 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/en/UNW/2021/6>

The updated strategic plan will guide UN Women's mandate of normative support, system coordination, and operational activities for the next four years in advance of the Agenda 2030 deadline. This plan compiles high quality, diverse research findings related to education and economic empowerment of women and girls, among other areas. It not only highlights the problems related to access and opportunities, but also presents specific and concrete policy recommendations. Delegates can gauge UN Women's future action plans based on the 25-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by using this resource and incorporate it into their forthcoming proposals.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2018). *Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment*. Retrieved 17 October 2021 from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

This resource provides a useful trove of facts and figures on women's economic empowerment. This resource will therefore be valuable to delegates in expanding their knowledge about women and poverty and having access to updated statistics that contextualize the scope of the issue. Furthermore, this is an excellent resource to capture the full scope of global economic gender inequality, and also to understand where some of the remaining obstacles to equality lie.

Wodon, Q. et al. (2018). *The Cost of not Educating Girls, Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of not Educating Girls*. Retrieved 17 October 2021 from:

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-07-gpe-high-cost-of-not-educating-girls.pdf>

This paper brings together a variety of high-quality research findings on women and girls' rates of participation in education. It not only highlights the issue of why women and girls often face lowered access to education, but also presents the consequences of this educational underrepresentation. Specifically, this report will also offer delegates the opportunity to address the fundamental impact that education has on women's economic empowerment and the actions that need to be taken for better global access to education.

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