



IN BRIEF



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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What's the Issue?

Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

But they also remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Gender discrimination means that women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions. It curtails access to economic assets such as land and loans. It limits participation in shaping economic and social policies. And, because women perform the bulk of household work, they often have little time left to pursue economic opportunities.

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Our Solutions

Many international commitments support women's economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on gender equality. UN Women supports women's economic empowerment in line with these, and with the growing body of evidence that shows that gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economies and sustainable development.

Working with a variety of partners, our programmes promote women's ability to secure decent jobs, accumulate assets, and influence institutions and public policies determining growth and development. One critical area of focus involves advocacy to measure women's unpaid care work, and to take actions so women and men can more readily combine it with paid employment.

In all our economic empowerment programmes, UN Women reaches out to women most in need, often by engaging with grass-roots and civil society organizations. Particularly marginalized groups include rural women, domestic workers, some migrants and low-skilled women. Our aims are higher incomes, better access to and control over resources, and greater security, including protection from violence.



How We Make a Difference

Recent successes from around the world:

MOROCCO: A UN Women partnership with the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women trains Soulalyates women, traditionally excluded from land rights, on leadership and community mobilization. The project helped raise unprecedented attention to their plight in the media and the broader public. In 2012, the Government ruled that Soulalyates women should enjoy equal rights in land transfers.

NEPAL: UN Women's long-standing work with migrant women workers in Nepal has yielded concrete results, such as the creation of a network of returning migrant women workers, legislation that has cemented rights, and regulations that provide protection for the country's 2.7 million migrant workers. Most recently UN Women supported preparation of the Foreign Employment Policy, adopted in 2012, which includes a separate section focusing on the rights of women domestic workers.

TANZANIA: UN Women has helped the Ministry of Trade review key trade and enterprise development policies from a gender perspective. New mechanisms are being put in place to protect women from exploitation, improve access to opportunities under the East African Customs Protocol and support the formation of enterprises.

Globally: In 2012 292 companies in 17 countries signed the Women's Empowerment Principles on corporate social responsibility for gender equality, developed by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, bringing the total number to 594 companies. For more information, see www.weprinciples.org.

THE KNOWLEDGE GATEWAY

UN Women is creating an open global community for women's economic empowerment on the web portal www.empowerwomen.org. This Knowledge Gateway provides opportunities for its members to find and share resources and learning tools; connect with peers and experts; and to discuss, generate new ideas and advocate for women's economic empowerment. It brings together a diverse range of partners, networks and members from international organizations, private sector, governments, academia and civil society.

FACTS AND FIGURES - ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Benefits of economic empowerment:

- When more women work, economies grow. If women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's, the USA gross domestic product would be an estimated 9 per cent higher, the Euro zone's would climb by 13 per cent and Japan's would be boosted by 16 per cent. In 15 major developing economies, per capita income would rise by 14 per cent by 2020, 20 per cent by 2030.
- An analysis of Fortune 500 companies found that those with the greatest representation of women in management positions delivered a total return to shareholders that was 34 per cent higher than for companies with the lowest representation.
- Evidence from a range of countries shows that increasing the share of household income controlled by women, either through their own earnings or cash transfers, changes spending in ways that benefit children.

Women in the world of work:

- In the majority of countries, women's wages represent between 70 and 90 per cent of men's, with even lower ratios in some Asian and Latin American countries.
- As of 2011, 50.5 per cent of the world's working women were in vulnerable employment, often unprotected by labour legislation, compared to 48.2 per cent for men. Women were far more likely than men to be in vulnerable employment in North Africa (55 versus 32 per cent), the Middle East (42 versus 27 per cent) and sub-Saharan Africa (nearly 85 versus 70 per cent).
- If women had the same access as men to productive assets, agricultural output in 34 developing countries would rise by an estimated average of up to 4 per cent. This could reduce the number of undernourished people in those countries by as much as 17 per cent, translating to up to 150 million fewer hungry people.