



YOUTH LEAP INTO GENDER EQUALITY

UN WOMEN'S YOUTH AND GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY:
EMPOWERED YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN AS PARTNERS
IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

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PREFACE

There are 1.8 billion young people aged 10-24 years old in the world—the largest youth population ever. The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is largely about youth and for the youth. Therefore, we cannot dismiss today's young men and young women as solely the beneficiaries of development or even as the leaders of tomorrow – for they are already leading today! The force and inspirations of our youngest leaders represent one of the critical drivers for accelerating progress on sustainable development and gender equality.

As we recognize the great progress that has been made, we must also acknowledge that for many women, young women, adolescent girls, and girls, progress is not happening nearly fast enough. No country in the world has achieved gender equality, and many are still far behind.

At the current pace of change, it will take 50 years to achieve parity in political participation and 118 years for true pay equality. To break these trajectories and achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030 requires us to take bold and decisive actions. There can be no more “business as usual.” We must rise up to fundamentally shift the way we do business at the United Nations and in the communities where we work.

At UN Women, we recognize the need to include and engage young men and young women with greater seriousness and urgency. We are at a defining moment at which the women's movement and the youth movement must come together with stronger partnerships and greater focus to ensure that the new agenda for sustainable development delivers for all women and girls, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization. This is a critical moment for action.

Our Youth and Gender Equality Strategy seeks to empower young women and young men as partners in achieving gender equality. The LEAPs Framework, includes three thematic pillars – Leadership of young women in all spheres strengthened, Economic empowerment and skills development of young women, and Action on ending violence against young women and girls – and three crosscutting approaches: Strengthening Participation, Voice and Partnerships with young women and their organizations, Partnerships with young men as partners of gender equality; and Intergenerational Partnerships throughout the life cycle to achieve a gender transformative society.

UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy will guide our efforts to work with all our partners to empower youth participation and leadership in achieving gender equality. This strategy and responsibility is shared by all of us and we are counting on you!

Lakshmi Puri

UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

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“IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WOMEN GRAB THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE THERE. YOUNG WOMEN MUST STAY AT SCHOOL MUCH LONGER... THEY MUST BE ASSERTIVE AND NOT BE AFRAID TO TALK AND TO ENGAGE, BECAUSE THIS WORLD BELONGS TO THEM JUST AS MUCH AS IT BELONGS TO MEN. AS PART OF THE AGENDA 2030, YOUNG WOMEN WILL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE BOTH AS ACTORS AS WELL AS PEOPLE THAT WILL BENEFIT FROM THE NEW DISPENSATION.”

*— Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary-General/Executive Director,
UN Women*

1. INTRODUCTION

UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy is a pivotal response for increased youth engagement to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment. Young people across the world have asserted their presence and raised their voices to demand a greater role in shaping their societies' future that have challenged the status quo.

The global youth population—an unprecedented 1.8 billion¹—only adds to the urgency of the youth agenda. The youth upsurge represents a tremendous strategic opportunity to tap into the talents and skills of young people to advance global and national development goals.

UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy is grounded in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the World Programme of Action for Youth, a host of resolutions and outcomes of the United Nations General Assembly on youth, gender equality and the empowerment of women, and the recently agreed, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" document. Moreover, the global review and commemoration of Beijing+20 and the adoption of a dedicated, comprehensive, and transformative Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment for all women and girls coincides with the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth. This is a critical moment for action.

UN Women aims to reinvigorate its work on youth issues against this larger global and institutional backdrop, especially the adoption of SDG 5. UN Women recognizes that both young men and women today possess extraordinary potential to positively transform their communities.

UN Women has put in place a multi-faceted strategy that takes into consideration not only traditional forms of advocacy and engagement, but also new technologies and approaches in engaging young men and

young women. Key elements of UN Women's strategy include reinvigorated partnerships with a wider spectrum of entities, resource mobilization, and active monitoring and evaluation.

About the Strategy

The UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy was developed following a detailed desk review and series of consultations that engaged with different stakeholders from within the UN system, representatives from the public and private sectors, and civil society.

As a first step, the comprehensive desk review evaluated UN Women's existing engagement with youth for gender equality and assessed UN Women's strategic positioning, both in terms of its normative mandate as well as its institutional capacity to work with young women and men in realizing Planet 50-50 by 2030. Following the desk review, an in-depth analysis of the organization's work at the national and regional levels was undertaken, which allowed for a deeper understanding of emerging practices on youth engagement for promoting gender equality in the social, political, and economic spheres.

To get a wide array of perspectives from across the world, UN Women established a Youth Task Group, with representation of youth focal points from the country, region and head office levels, which was continuously engaged with through all the stages of the youth strategy development process. The draft strategy was presented to internal stakeholders including the Youth Task Group following which the revised draft was shared with wider UN audience through the UN Inter-agency Network for Youth Development.

Concerted efforts were made to incorporate opinions of field experts and garner greater buy-in for UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy through a series of online and offline consultations with a wide array of partners from the civil society, particularly youth and youth-led organizations, private sector organizations working on youth issues, and public sector institutions.

¹ UNFPA, The State of the World's Population 2014, "The Power of 1.8 Billion - Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future", UNFPA, 2014.

2. YOUNG WOMEN COUNT

There are more young people between the ages of 10 and 24 today than at any other time in history. Today's generation of young people comprises of almost 1.8 billion of the world's population of 7.3 billion². Of the 1.8 billion, approximately 87 per cent live in developing countries, with 62 per cent living in Asia and 17 per cent living in Africa³. In the world's 48 least developed countries, the majority of the population is children under age 18 or adolescents aged 10 to 19⁴.

These figures are particularly alarming in light of the lack of infrastructure across many developing nations to accommodate the social, economic, and political aspirations of emerging generations. Young women and girls are further disproportionately affected by numerous challenges facing global youth due to gender inequalities that stem from gender-based discriminatory social behaviours and norms.

FIGURE 1

Facts and Figures from United Nations Factsheet on Girls and Young Women⁵

- There are 1.8 billion young people aged 10-24 years old in the world. Of these, 600 million are adolescent girls and young women.
- Trends show that one in three girls in developing countries (excluding China) are likely to be married before the age of 18, and one in nine girls will marry before their fifteenth birthday. In 2010, over 67 million women aged 20-24 had been married as girls. If such trends continue, 142 million girls will be married every year in the next decade.
- Globally, young women aged 15-24 are most vulnerable to HIV, with infection rates twice as high as in young men, at 0.6%. This disparity is most pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 3.1% of young women are living with HIV, versus 1.3% of young men.
- Every minute, one young woman acquires HIV, accounting for 22% of all new HIV infections, with sexual transmission being the dominant mode of infection.
- Figures on the magnitude of human trafficking are difficult to calculate, but using improved methodology, recent 2012 ILO estimates suggest that women and girls make up 55% of the estimated 20.9 million people trafficked.
- Approximately 140 million girls and women in the world have suffered female genital mutilation/cutting, with more than 3 million girls in Africa annually at risk of the practice.

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