Test your knowledge of the topics we will cover. Please fill out this pre-assessment before beginning the module.

Gender Equality, Sustainable Development, and the SDGs

WOMEN DELIVER

Welcome back to the second module of the Women Deliver Young Leaders Program Digital University! In this second module, we provide an overview of gender equality as it relates to sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The world has come very far as to how we view international development efforts through the lens of gender equality and sustainability—and there is even more progress that we can make together.

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Learning Objectives

In **Module 1**, you learned more about how sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) serves as a bedrock of gender equality. **Module 2** offers information about other factors at play in creating a more equal and just world.

This is especially true in three crucial areas of gender equality, which can serve as both barriers and solutions:

1   Education

2   Economic empowerment

3   Political participation

This module will also help clarify common misconceptions about gender equality, including the false idea that gender is prioritized above other identity groups.

In the second part of this module, you will learn about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These are globally agreed upon goals to reduce poverty by the year 2030. They serve as an important tool for global accountability. As you will learn, gender equality is crosscutting for all the SDGs, and they can be used to help ground your advocacy efforts.

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

1 Describe education, economic empowerment, and political participation as three components that contribute to gender equality.

2 Identify key solutions and explain the benefits of each.

3 Define and summarize the overarching goals of the SDGs.

4 Describe how gender is crosscutting for all the SDGs.

5 Demonstrate how youth play a role in the success of the SDGs.

This module will provide you with the essential gender equality and development knowledge needed to move forward in your advocacy efforts.

Paired with subsequent modules, it can be used as a guide to contextualize your efforts and work towards your own solutions.

This module will take approximately 2 hours to complete. But remember, you are not required to complete it in one sitting.

Introduction to Gender Equality

Gender equality: the state in which access to rights or opportunities is not inhibited based on gender.

As a Women Deliver Young Leader, you are probably already aware of the importance and benefits of gender equality. But it bears repeating: There is a positive ripple effect from advancing and achieving gender equality.

Achieving gender equality requires paying attention to the ways gender impacts people's lives, while also taking into account multiple intersections of individual identities. This concept is known as **intersectionality**, which we learned about in Module 1.

Gender equality does not mean that gender is prioritized over other identity categories. It simply means that gender is taken into account, or mainstreamed, in our movement for gender equality.

In this module, throughout Digital University, and across Women Deliver's advocacy, we do not decontextualize "girls and women" from other identity categories. Gender is taken into account along with other factors such as race, class, and sexuality. This means that "girls and women" are not assumed by default to be white, heterosexual, or cisgender*, for example.

*Note: **Cisgender** is a term to describe a person whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth, whereas **transgender** indicates an individual whose gender identity does not match their sex assigned at birth. Note that **all** gendered terms throughout this text are inclusive of transgender individuals. For example, "girls and women" connotes both cisgender- and transgender-identified girls and women. Non-binary, genderqueer, and gender fluid individuals have gender identities that don't fit neatly into the category of female or male. Their gender may incorporate elements of both female and male, or they may not identify with either gender. It is important to remember that these individuals are also impacted by SRHR issues and are included when taking gender equality into account.

PRONOUNS MATTER

Language can help create welcoming environments or unintentionally reinforce systems of exclusion. As such, the use of personal gender pronouns promotes inclusive experiences for all people. Personal gender pronouns are the words people use to refer to their gender identity. In English, many people use the pronouns "she/her/hers," "he/him/his," or "they/them/theirs." You can not tell someone's pronouns just by looking at them; it is good practice to learn their pronouns when you meet them. While mis-gendering can be harmful, addressing someone by their correct pronoun can be a sign of respect and an effort to move towards a more gender-equal world.

For more on positive and powerful Women Deliver community practices, please see our How We Roll document.

As you will see throughout this module, the ripple effects of gender equality solutions are significant. However, although much work is being done, we still don't live in a gender-equal world. There are many issues, attitudes, and forces preventing us from achieving gender equality.

PERSISTENT BARRIERS TO GENDER EQUALITY INCLUDE:

1 Patriarchy

2 Poverty

3 Sexism

4 Racism

5 Classism: Prejudice or discrimination against individuals or populations from a specific social class or status

6 Homophobia

7 Transphobia

8 Ableism: Prejudice or discrimination against people living with physical, intellectual, or psychological disabilities

9 Ageism

10 Access to education

The barriers mentioned above can hinder progress for gender equality. There is often a lack of prioritization of the issue at hand, funding to address gender equality issues, and inclusive data to drive forward gender-transformative policies and programs. However, historically we have seen intentional, systemic change made as a result of concentrated efforts.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Read through the cards below for a few examples.

Sexism

Over the past several years, scrutiny of the gender pay gap and its inherent sexism has increased around the globe. To combat this, several countries, including Spain, Denmark, and Belgium, now evaluate their practices through a gendered lens. This process is called a "gender audit" and is often related to pay data reporting. These audits are defined as a type of "social audit—rather than a solely financial audit—that aims to determine the effectiveness of gender equality programming."

SOURCE: Center for American Progress, 2017.

Patriarchy

In the 19th century in the United States, American men held exclusive decision-making power when it came to politics and engaging in public affairs, including the sole right to vote. Women challenged the status quo by starting the women's rights movement, also called the Women's Suffrage Movement, in 1848, which led to women gaining the constitutional right to vote in August 1920.

SOURCE: History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, 2007.

Homophobia

In the past 20 years, a number of countries have legalized same-sex marriage. In 2000, the Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage. This paved the way for the now 30 countries and territories to do the same. There is still much work to be done, but the promise of more countries following suit is optimistic.

SOURCE: Pew Research Center, 2019.

Transphobia

In 2012, Argentina's Senate unanimously approved the Gender Identity Law. This law made sex-change surgery a legal right, with the procedure being included in both public and private healthcare plans. Two years later, in 2014, the Danish Parliament followed Argentina's lead and allowed legal gender recognition for transgender people over the age of 18.

SOURCE: CNN Health, 2017.

Ageism

In 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a global campaign to combat ageism, investing half a million dollars in research. This campaign aims to "tackle individual and social attitudes, stereotypes, and behaviors towards people on the basis of their age, as well as the laws, policies, and institutions that either perpetuate ageism or do little to stop it."

WHO's research has found high levels of malleability in societal attitudes tied to age, showing that with intervention, signs of ageism can significantly decrease.

SOURCE: WHO, 2018, NYT, 2019.

Access to Education

UNICEF is doing work worldwide to combat gender inequities in education. In West Bengal, India, UNICEF worked with state offices to combat the high dropout rate by supporting secondary education and non-formal education for 62,000 adolescent girls.

In Pakistan, UNICEF established Accelerated Learning Programs in remote areas disrupted by insecurity and displacement, providing learning opportunities for 31,800 excluded and over-age children.

SOURCE: UNICEF, 2018.

The Investment Case for Gender Equality

Investing in girls and women is imperative to achieving sustainable development.

Investing in the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women will unlock an untapped potential, causing a ripple effect yielding benefits not only for the individual woman but for her family, community, and beyond.

With a clearer understanding of gender equality and its barriers, we can now delve further into ways to find solutions to these issues.

We will look at **three crucial areas** for high returns on investment and global impact on gender equality.

Education   Economic empowerment   Political participation

Let us delve further into what each area entails, including an introduction to how each exists today, examples of solutions for each that are contributing to gender equality, and the benefits of investing our advocacy efforts in these areas.

Gender Equality and Education

When girls and women have the chance to learn, they deliver more equitable, healthy, and prosperous societies.

Education is crucial for empowering girls and women and reducing global poverty. In two-thirds of all countries, girls now enroll in primary school at the same rate as boys (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2012).

However, this global statistic masks inequalities that still exist across many parts of the world. This includes secondary school enrollment rates—where girls are far more likely to be out of school—and a focus on differential learning outcomes and educational achievement.
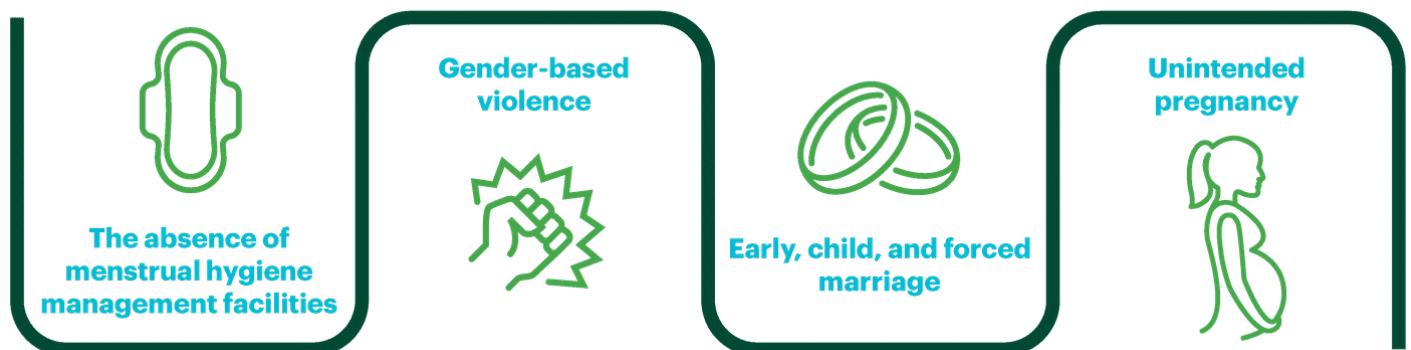
THE WORLD TODAY

63% of illiterate adults are women.

Girls are **1.5x** more likely than boys to be denied their right to education.

SOURCE: Deliver For Good Campaign

Hard realities such as poverty, school fees, and travel distance limit children and adolescents' access to education (UNESCO, 2016). For girls and young women, there are additional barriers that threaten their ability to stay in school.

These include:

The absence of menstrual hygiene management facilities

Gender-based violence

Early, child, and forced marriage

Unintended pregnancy

(UNICEF, 2002)

Marginalized groups—such as racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, individuals who live with disabilities or HIV, those in humanitarian situations, and individuals living in rural areas or slums—face additional barriers to quality education (UNESCO, 2016). There is a wide disparity in educational attainment within the cross-section of wealth and gender. The poorest girls are generally the worst off, even in comparison to the poorest boys (UNESCO, 2016).

Educating girls and young women is a powerful investment benefiting both individuals and society.

As the development community works to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), improving access to quality education and training opportunities for girls and young women needs to be at the forefront of the movement towards gender equality and economic and social progress.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Which of the following are reasons that school-aged girls and adolescent girls might have **limited access to education?**

○ School fees

○ Travel distance

○ Absence of menstrual hygiene management facilities

✔ All of the above

✓

Correct

Yes! All of these reasons can contribute to school-aged girls and adolescent girls having limited access to education.

✕

Incorrect

Almost. This is one reason, but there are more. School fees, travel distance, and absence of menstrual hygiene management facilities are all reasons why school-aged girls and adolescent girls might have limited access to education.

To ensure quality education, keep girls and young women in school, and promote learning opportunities for all girls and young women, interventions and solutions must work across many sectors. The next section will share key solutions to help you combat barriers and protect educational rights.

Solutions Toward Gender Equality and Education

There are many ways to achieve gender parity in education and combat barriers placed on girls and young women to attend school. The key solutions below can be used to catalyze change and improve access to education for all genders.

With real-world examples and frameworks for execution, these solutions will help you move forward with your own work in these areas.

EDUCATION SOLUTIONS INCLUDE:

1 Reduce or eliminate the cost of schooling placed on families and communities

2 Grant access to school for remote communities through improved transportation and infrastructure

3 Expand education initiatives that focus on vulnerable children

4   Improve water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in schools

5   Create safe, supportive, and gender-responsive school environments

6   Engage communities to build support for girls' and young women's education

Let us explore each solution further!

Reduce or Eliminate the Cost of Schooling Placed on Families and Communities

Reducing or eliminating the cost of schooling **directly contributes** to lifting households and communities out of poverty.

INVESTMENT CASE

School costs continue to prevent attendance—particularly at the secondary level—for many girls and young women from poor families. One effective method for boosting their enrollment in school has been to provide financial assistance. **In Cambodia, scholarships given to girls at the end of grade 6 increased school attendance rates by 30% (Beaman et al., 2016).**

But cash incentives alone, without addressing underlying social norms, cannot always trigger effective change.

Evidence suggests that parents are more likely to invest in their daughters' education when the economic opportunities for doing so are clear.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

When governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work together to provide monetary support and raise awareness of the benefits of educating girls and young women, we know that they:

* Are healthier and more engaged in the formal economy

* Earn higher incomes

* Provide more opportunities to their children, such as increased education **(World Bank, 2015)**

SOURCE: The Global Partnership for Education Commission, 2016

True or False: Parents are more likely to invest in their daughters' education when the economic opportunities for doing so are clear.

- ✓ True
- ○ False

Correct

Correct! According to ODI, evidence suggests that parents are more likely to invest in their daughters' education when the economic opportunities for doing so are clear. (ODI, 2018)

Incorrect

Incorrect. According to ODI, evidence suggests that parents are more likely to invest in their daughters' education when the economic opportunities for doing so are clear. (ODI, 2018)

Grant Access to School for Remote Communities Through Improved Transportation and Infrastructure

In many parts of the world, barriers to transportation, including cost of travel and distance to and from school, can make it nearly impossible for girls and young women to receive an education.

INVESTMENT CASE

Evidence has shown that traveling long distances to school is a major barrier to girls' school attendance (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016).

Funding must be allocated to provide access to education for children who live long distances from school (UN Women, 2016). Without it, education is nearly impossible to obtain.

EDUCATION IN ACTION

Photo Credit: Public domain, not copyrighted, no rights reserved, free for any use.
School girls in Samangan, Afghanistan reading in the classroom.

School Access in a Time of Political Unrest

Step 1

CHALLENGE

In Afghanistan, many children could not attend school due to ongoing political unrest. The unrest prevented girls in particular from traveling long distances alone to school.

Step 2

ACTION

A partnership with [USAID and the Afghan Ministry of Education](#) helped close the gender gap in remote communities in northwestern Afghanistan by establishing village-based schools to improve access to quality education for girls. Communities provided school space and program partners delivered educational materials and teacher training.

RESULTS

As a result of communities coming together with NGO support, girls' enrollment in school increased by 52% and test scores improved. [(American Journal of Applied Economics, 2013)](#)

Expand Education Initiatives That Focus on Vulnerable Children and Adolescents

Access to school is not only critical for learning, it also offers children a **protective and normalizing** environment.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ALL

In order for education initiatives to be inclusive for all, it is imperative they focus on vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities and those affected by humanitarian emergencies.

THE SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION

Education systems need to integrate disaster risk reduction and response planning into existing strategies. This ensures they consider the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees of natural and manmade emergencies.

Recognizing the right to education, the Safe Schools Declaration urges countries to ensure the continuation of education during conflict and develop conflict-sensitive approaches to education in humanitarian and development programs (UN, 2015).

ACCESS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Estimates suggest children with disabilities make up one-third, or about 19 million, of the 58 million out-of-school children globally (UN Women, 2015).

In developing countries, 90% of children with disabilities do not attend school (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, 2014).

Due to a lack of infrastructure and resources accommodating their needs, children with disabilities encounter a host of obstacles to accessing quality education. And where girls suffer restricted access to school based on gender alone, **girls with disabilities are doubly impeded**.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) underscores the right to an inclusive education for all children with disabilities. It also recognizes the importance of international cooperation to support national governments in realizing this aim (UNDP, 2013).

TO ADVANCE THE AIMS OF THE CRPD, GOVERNMENTS MUST:

- Involve individuals living with disabilities, including children and adolescents, in the planning and monitoring of school programs and curricula.

- Require a minimum standard of accessibility to all school facilities to accommodate children living with disabilities.

- Invest in teacher training to make education inclusive.

- Create inclusive learning materials.

- Prioritize inclusive educational environments, rather than standalone schools for children living with disabilities.

- Collect disaggregated data to inform policy and practice, build evidence, and monitor progress **(UNDP, 2013)**

What percentage of children living with disabilities **do not** attend school in developing countries?

- ○ 60%
- ○ 70%
- ○ 80%
- ✓ 90%

Correct

Sadly, 90% of children living with disabilities do not attend school in developing countries. While girls suffer restricted access to school based on gender alone, girls living with disabilities are doubly impeded.

Incorrect

Sadly, 90% of children living with disabilities do not attend school in developing countries. While girls suffer restricted access to school based on gender alone, girls living with disabilities are doubly impeded.

Improve Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools

Ensuring that all schools have safe WASH facilities is a proven way to create a healthy school environment and make private menstrual health management possible for adolescent girls (IDEA, 2015).

INVESTMENT CASE FOR WASH IN SCHOOLS

The absence of clean WASH facilities in schools contributes to absenteeism among adolescent girls, particularly in upper primary and secondary school, due to an unmet need to manage menstrual hygiene (UNESCO, 2014).

Yet, a UNICEF survey suggests that less than half of all primary schools in developing countries have WASH facilities on site.

Improving access to WASH not only reduces absenteeism, but it can also bring down the incidence and severity of illness among students (UNICEF, 2012).

School-based hand washing campaigns also reduce illness and absenteeism, emphasizing the role hygiene education can play in keeping children and young people healthy (UNICEF, 2012).

INTEGRATING WASH IN ZAMBIAN SCHOOLS

Photo Credit: Lighton Phiri. Pupils at the prestigious St. Monica's Girls Secondary School in Chipata, Eastern Province pose for a group photo.

Step 1

CHALLENGE

In Zambia, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a critical issue which affects health and education accessibility for girls and women.

Step 2

SOLUTION

Through World Vision Zambia, the first MHM study of its kind was implemented in the country, providing an opportunity to understand MHM barriers and perceptions. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in Southern Zambia (Choma), Northern Zambia (Kasama), and Central Zambia (Chongwe).

To reinforce the importance of this initiative, the study involved the local Ministry of Education as well as health officials. They also enlisted community hygiene promoters to increase participation and interest in the betterment of MHM for communities.

RESULTS

Through the study and its resulting dialogues, World Vision Zambia was able to inspire confidence in girls to discuss their MHM experiences. They also raised awareness community-wide on the importance of improving MHM, including the additions of emergency supplies for management of menstruation and bathing facilities in schools, all aimed at improving health and education for girls and young women.

To learn more about this study and its findings, review the

WASH in Schools Empowers Girls' Education booklet.

Create Safe, Supportive, and Gender-Responsive School Environments

Programs that train teachers on gender-sensitive pedagogy and develop attitudes of tolerance and inclusion have the potential to enhance the educational experience of girls and young women (MSCI, 2015).

INVESTMENT CASE

As we look at improving access to and quality of education, we should consider how gender equality matters in education beyond a focus on girls' education and achieving gender parity in enrollment.

Gender-responsive school environments serve to eliminate explicit and implicit gender biases and discrimination that may originate from cultural and societal norms and practices (UNGEI, 2017).

Key methods to creating safe, supportive, and gender-responsive school environments include:

- Having textbooks and other learning materials that reflect gender equality, demonstrate positive female role models, and refrain from using gender stereotypes (Casserly, 2010)

- Improving recruitment and retention of female teachers (World Bank, 2018)

- Integrating girls into formal school programs and extracurricular school activities, such as physical education and sports teams, in order to boost self-esteem, change gender norms, and encourage healthy, active lives (EY, 2015)

SRHR KEY ISSUES IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

In Module 1, you learned about key issues that contribute to global SRHR impact. Two of these key factors, **protection from gender-based violence (GBV) and comprehensive sexuality education**, also play a significant role in the creation of safe, supportive, and gender-responsive school environments.

Protection from School-Related GBV

School-related GBV affects millions of children and adolescents worldwide. Studies indicate that interventions such as engaging girls in sports, establishing girls' clubs led by trained female mentors, incorporating boys into gender-sensitive education and outreach programming, and creating a forum to discuss gender-related issues can change negative social norms that undermine the rights of girls in schools **(United Nations, UNGEI, 2016)**. Support from parents and the community should be an integral part of interventions **(UNGEI, 2015)**.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Comprehensive sexuality education curricula that include life skills can also play a role in shifting gender roles and norms. Combining sexuality education with teaching about cultural aspects of gender inequality has the potential to build students' knowledge, confidence, and life skills to pave the way to a more equitable society **(UNGEI, 2016)**. Research suggests that sexuality education may be most effective in empowering women when combined with training that provides them with concrete skills to help with transition into future employment **(World Bank, 2012)**.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Integrating girls into extracurricular activities, such as sports teams, has the power to:

- ○ Encourage healthy, active lives
- ○ Change gender norms
- ○ Boost self-esteem
- ✓ All of the above

Correct

These positive outcomes are all possible when girls and young women are intentionally included in activities, especially those that have traditionally discriminated against them.

Incorrect

These positive outcomes are all possible when girls and young women are intentionally included in activities, especially those that have traditionally discriminated against them.

Engage Communities to Build Support for Girls' and Young Women's Education

To effectively improve girls' and young women's educational opportunities, communities must be engaged and **transformed into agents of change** for gender equity in education.

INVESTMENT CASE

Policy changes must be accompanied by larger efforts to bring forth gender equality in communities. Communities need to be sensitized to gender issues and tolerance needs to be promoted with the help of civil society organizations, and traditional or local leaders (Samati, 2016), (UN, 2012).

Paulema Garmai Gweama (Women Deliver Young Leader Alumni, Class of 2018) with students at back to school program in Liberia

WOMEN DELIVER YOUNG LEADER ALUMNI PAULEMA GARMAI GWEAMA

Education for girls and women in rural communities in Liberia has been a key priority for Paulema Garmai Gweama and her team at Youth and Girls Educational Initiative. Paulema and her team work with school administrators, community leaders, and parents to reduce potential social barriers facing girls and women, and encourage attendance from school-aged female students. Focusing on Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 4 (good health and wellbeing, and quality education), they have organized health seminars on basic sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in urban and rural communities. They also provide school supplies and sanitary pads for female students in schools located in rural communities.

Starting this initiative was not simple. Paulema reported that there were many challenges along the way. After conducting a survey within some rural communities in Liberia and identifying a need to engage and increase attendance of female students in the rural schools, and provide them with free, quality education, Paulema engaged multiple stakeholders to address this issue. She continues this work with the goal to prevent teenage pregnancies and poverty in her country.

Benefits of Gender Equality in Education

Investing in girls and women creates a ripple effect that yields multiple benefits, not only for individual women, but also for families, communities, and countries.

Here are a few examples of the multitude of positive outcomes that result when you invest in gender equality in education.

2x

Women with secondary education can earn nearly two times more income than women with no education.

Every additional year of schooling for a girl increases her future earnings by **10-20%.**

Women who are better educated have fewer unplanned children, marry later, have higher earnings, and drive national economic growth.

In 2018 alone, the estimated loss in human capital wealth incurred simply from women not benefiting from 12 years of schooling was estimated to range between **$15 trillion to $30 trillion.**

A one-year increase in girls' education is associated with a **6.5%-9.9%** reduction in child mortality.

Every dollar invested in an additional year of schooling has a return of **$10** in low income countries and **$4** in lower-middle-income countries.

SOURCES: UNICEF, 2013, UNGEI, 2014, UNESCO, 2010, R4D, 2015, World Bank Group, 2018

Take a Break

Before you move on to Economic Empowerment, we recommend taking a brain break.

It is important to give yourself short breaks when absorbing new information. It allows your brain to process the learning.

Now would be a good time!
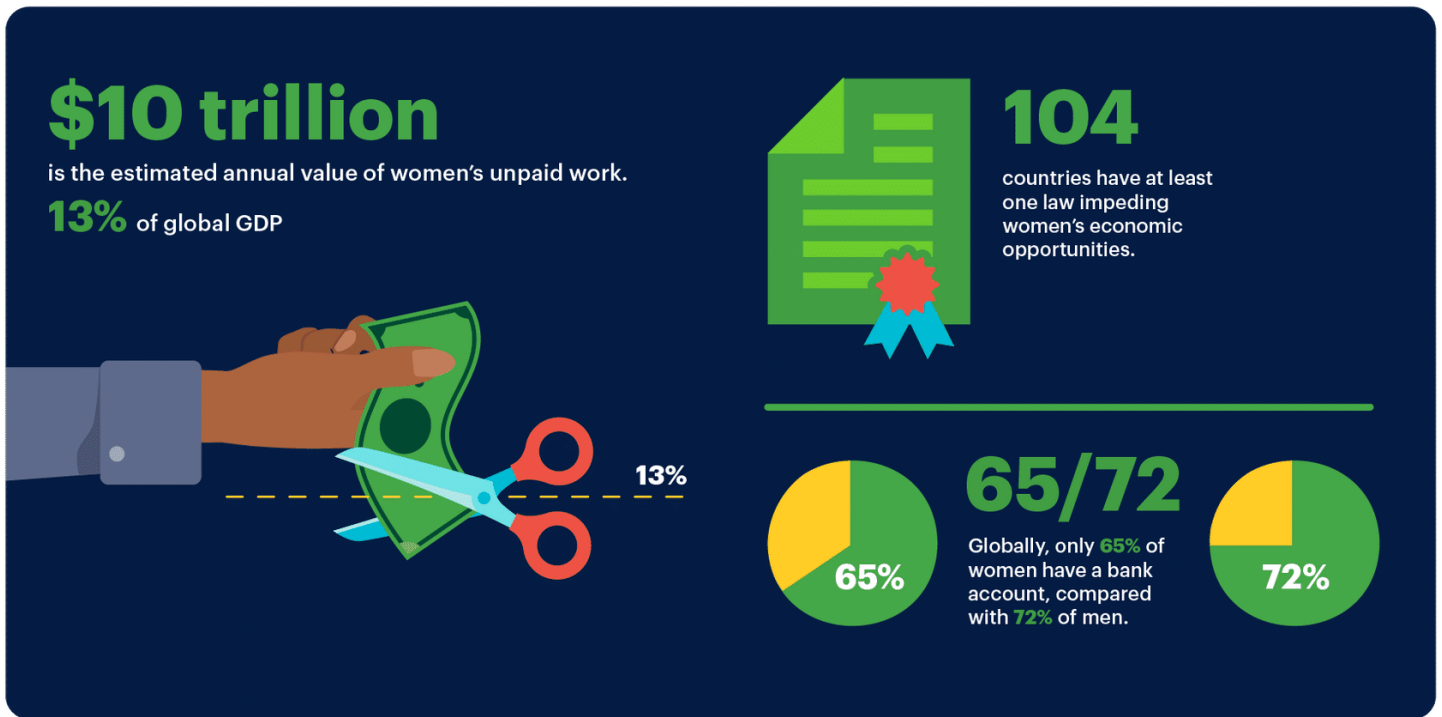
Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment

When women have a **fair opportunity** to earn, they deliver solutions. Equal space in the formal economy is their right and will support poverty alleviation.

Women around the world are resilient and resourceful economic agents—overcoming persistent, gender-based barriers to advance the health, education, and economic security of their families, communities, and nations.

Every day, women demonstrate their power. They build informal and formal businesses out of very little capital. They create networks to maximize limited resources, and shoulder disproportionate care-taking responsibilities. Women succeed despite laws, policies, social norms, and institutions that contribute to gender inequality. It is time for governments and society to stop holding women back.

THE WORLD TODAY

$10 trillion is the estimated annual value of women's unpaid work. **13%** of global GDP

13%

104 countries have at least one law impeding women's economic opportunities.

65/72 Globally, only **65%** of women have a bank account, compared with **72%** of men.

65%

72%

SOURCES: McKinsey Global Institute, 2015, Global Findex Database

Women's economic empowerment has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of them as individuals, as well as their families. Research shows that women typically invest more of their income into their children than men do, which in turn benefits entire households—and entire communities (UN Women, 2015).

Continue to gain a better understanding of the solutions to improving gender equality through economic empowerment.

Solutions Towards Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment

Women's socio-economic autonomy is imperative to achieving gender equality. The following key solutions presented here and in subsequent lessons will help give context, and real-world case studies will illustrate how to advance women's economic empowerment.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT SOLUTIONS INCLUDE:

1 Improve access to non-monetary resources, such as land rights, for women

2 Improve economic literacy and promote inclusive access to financial services

3 Promote women's control over income and joint household decision-making

4 Invest in women's networks and organizing

Let us explore each solution further!

Improve Access to Non-Monetary Resources for Women

Investing in women's access to non-monetary resources, including land and property rights, is **one of the most effective long-term solutions** to advance women's economic empowerment.
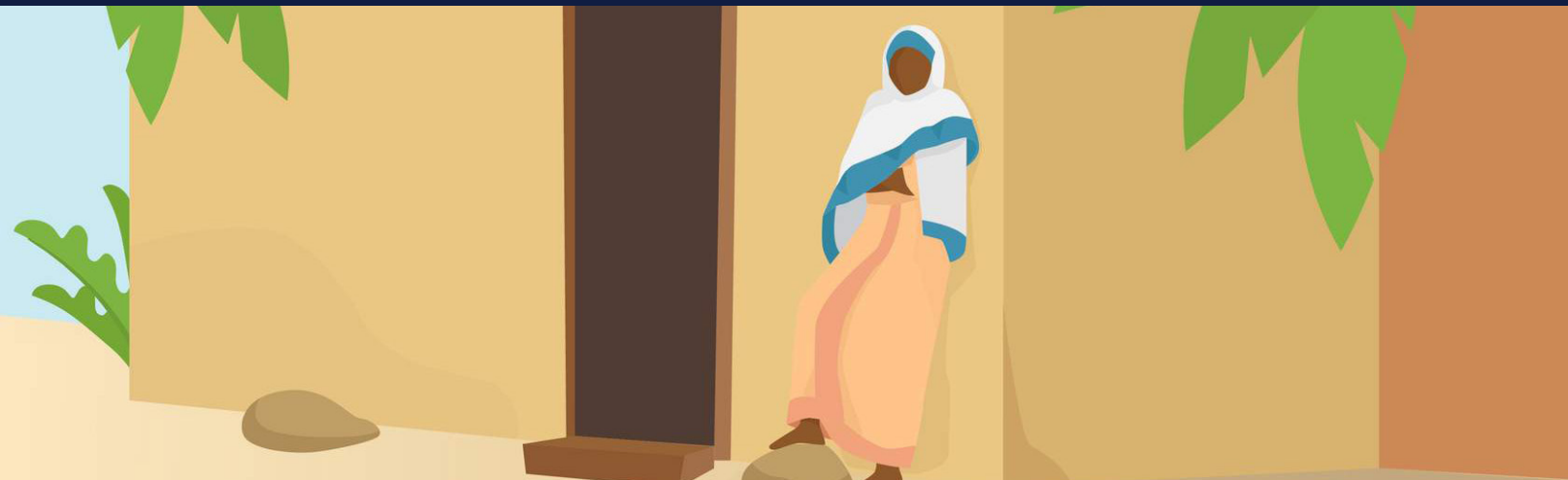
INVESTMENT CASE

When women have the same property and inheritance rights as men, they earn more income than women who do not. A study in Tanzania found that women who had the same property rights as their male counterparts earned up to four times more income than women who did not (Peterman, 2011). But formal and customary laws often conflict when it comes to gender equality across land and property regimes.

In many low- and middle-income countries, national laws and regulations on the rights of rural and indigenous women to inheritance, community membership, and community dispute resolution are unjust, falling short of established international standards (The Journal of Development Studies, 2016).

Fortunately, many efforts are underway around the world to improve and enforce land and resources rights for women. The Land Policy Initiative (LPI) launched a campaign that would require 30% of land in Africa be individually or jointly owned by women by 2025. This goal is attainable through research into existing laws and regulations, advocacy for women's land ownership, and improving efficiency of land administration.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Land Ownership for Senegalese Women

Step 1

CHALLENGE

Photo Credit: Jonathan Torgovnik

In Senegal, deeply entrenched cultural biases have existed against women owning land. There was a clear need to demonstrate the potential benefits of women's land ownership.

ACTION

Photo Credit: Jonathan Torgovnik

The establishment of the [Yaajeende Nutritional Value Chain Project](#) was enacted in order to harmonize legal regulations and customary practice. It called on local leaders to identify culturally-appropriate means for women to gain land ownership.

The program compelled them to identify degraded land that was thought unprofitable and allowed women's groups—as opposed to individual women—to own the land as a collective.

RESULTS

Photo Credit: Jonathan Torgovnik. Women use the income generated to have some financial independence, help with sharing the family expenditures, and not rely on their husband when spending money on their health and education for their children in Thies, Senegal.

The Yaajeende Project worked with the women's groups to make the land profitable, following an integrated approach that incorporates nutrition, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability.

Today, men in the local communities recognize the value of this reclaimed land, as well as the importance of women's collectives to have ownership and decision-making power.

As a result of its successful holistic model, the program was extended by two years, shifting it from a five-year USAID Feed the Future project to a seven-year program.

Before we continue to the next solution, let us pause to check your knowledge.

Studies have shown that women who have the same property rights as their male counterparts earn up to_____ times more income than women who do not.

Four

✓

Correct

When women have the same property and inheritance rights as men, studies show that they can earn up to four times more income than women who do not. Yet formal and customary laws often conflict when it comes to gender equality across land and property regimes.

✕

Incorrect

When women have the same property and inheritance rights as men, studies show that they can earn up to four times more income than women who do not. Yet formal and customary laws often conflict when it comes to gender equality across land and property regimes.

True or False: Research shows that women typically invest equal amounts of income into their children as men do.

✓ True

○ False

✓

Correct

Correct! Research shows that women typically invest MORE of their income into their children than men do, which in turn benefits entire households—and entire communities.

✕

Incorrect

Not quite. Research shows that women typically invest MORE of their income into their children than men do, which in turn benefits entire households—and entire communities.

Improve Economic Literacy and Promote Inclusive Access to Financial Services

Financial inclusion is key to developing a vibrant community of women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses, which in turn can provide jobs to many.

INVESTMENT CASE

Having a bank account and access to credit is a crucial step towards rising above poverty and granting women greater control over their finances [(World Bank Group, 2014)](World Bank Group, 2014).

Fortunately, multiple models now exist, including banks and credit unions, micro-credit institutions, and NGOs.

To be successful, inclusion ventures must increase access to financing, while also building women's financial literacy.
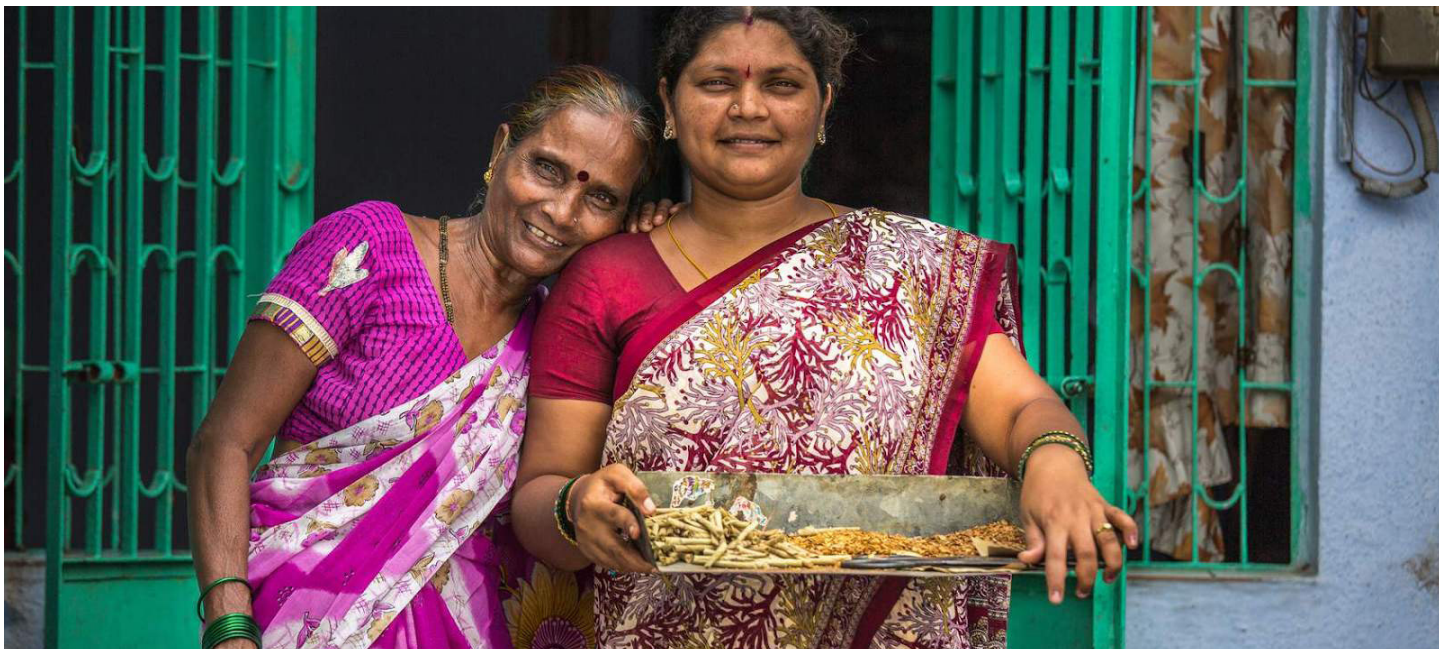
EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL MODELS IN ACTION

Photo Credit: Paula Bronstein. Home-based workers, such as Rookmani and Kavita, are members of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union for poor, self-employed women in the informal sector.

The following are a sampling of models you can use to inform and inspire your own work.

Step 1

THE SHAKTI FOUNDATION

In Bangladesh, the Shakti Foundation is leading a micro-credit disbursement program for farmers and Shakti Foundation employees using mobile money, a technology that allows people to receive, store, and spend money using a mobile phone (NDI, 2015).

Through their dedication to the empowerment of poor women by creating strong economic and social resource bases, the Foundation now serves 520,834 poor households within 53 districts of Bangladesh.

GRAMEEN BANK

When the Grameen Bank began in 1976 in Bangladesh, it launched a worldwide movement towards financial inclusion of women, especially those living in poverty (ODI, 2015).

Since then, the focus on micro-credit has evolved into a need for more comprehensive and systemic financial services for women in poverty such as cash transfers, loans, credit, savings, insurance, and corresponding capacity-building support.

VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS

In Niger, the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) target women living in poor, often rural communities, with little or no access to financial institutions. VSLAs start with savings and low-interest loans and help women gain financial literacy and confidence (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014).

The VSLAs later integrated more formal institutional engagement, such as official bank accounts and credit (NDI, 2013).

Overall, the model has demonstrated consistent positive results increasing women's access to financial tools and income, as well as improving individual and household welfare, such as nutrition, access to health services, and quality of housing (UN Women, 2014).

MODEL SUCCESS

The success of financial inclusion ventures requires opening access to financing while also building women's financial literacy and capacity.

See below for further examples:

- International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Banking on Women Program

- UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality

- Fundacion Paraguaya

- African Development Bank (AFDB) and Inter-American Bank (IDB)

Promote Women's Control Over Income and Joint Household Decision-Making

Evidence shows that it is not merely a woman's increased income, but rather her **control** over that income that helps her achieve economic empowerment.
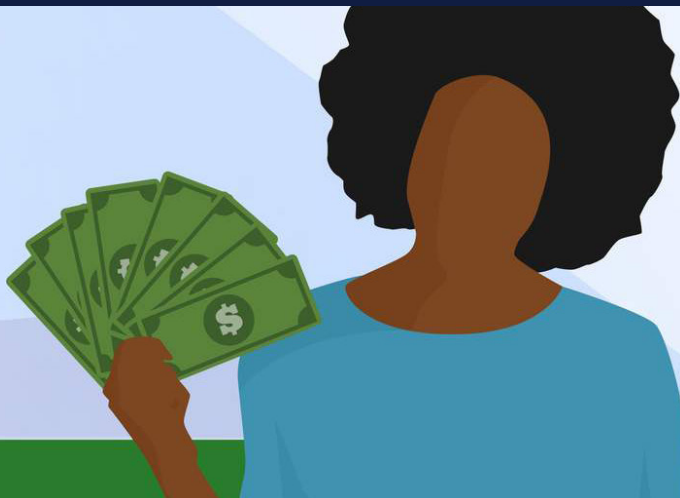
DECISION-MAKING POWER

Women **must** have the ability to invest income into sustainable assets, livelihood expenditures, and their families' and communities' overall health, education, safety, and wellbeing.

These key economic decisions, however, are intricately tied to cultural norms around gender, age, ethnicity, and class, among other factors (EY, 2015).

Oftentimes, this translates into a woman needing to hand over part or all of her income to someone else with more decision-making power in her home or community.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Photo Credit: Antjekristin. People gather around a table for open dialogue on what they want as priorities for their communities in Kigali, Rwanda.

Male Discussion Groups for Economic Change

Step 1

CHALLENGE

In many communities in Rwanda, it was observed that women were unable to exercise their economic decision-making power. Recognizing these significant gaps, Pro-Mundo, a male engagement organization, identified that working with dominant group stakeholders could be a promising approach to help address this issue.

Step 2

ACTION

Pro-Mundo observed that change might be possible if they engaged dominant stakeholders in the group. In 2012, Pro-Mundo created a new model of working with local communities to set up separate discussion groups for men that were connected to already existing Village Savings and Loans (VSL) Groups for women (EMERGE, 2015).

The education sessions encouraged men to reflect on gender norms, examine their personal attitudes and beliefs, and question traditional ideas about decision-making and division of labor, childcare, and household tasks.

RESULTS

The sessions helped the men to better accept their partners' participation in VSL groups, support their goal of economic empowerment, and share more in household tasks, care, and economic decisions (CARE International, 2012).

Invest in Women's Networks and Community Organizing

Women's groups—including cooperatives, collectives, farmer groups, business associations, and trade unions—are the bedrock of sustainable economic development for many women around the world (UN Women, 2016).
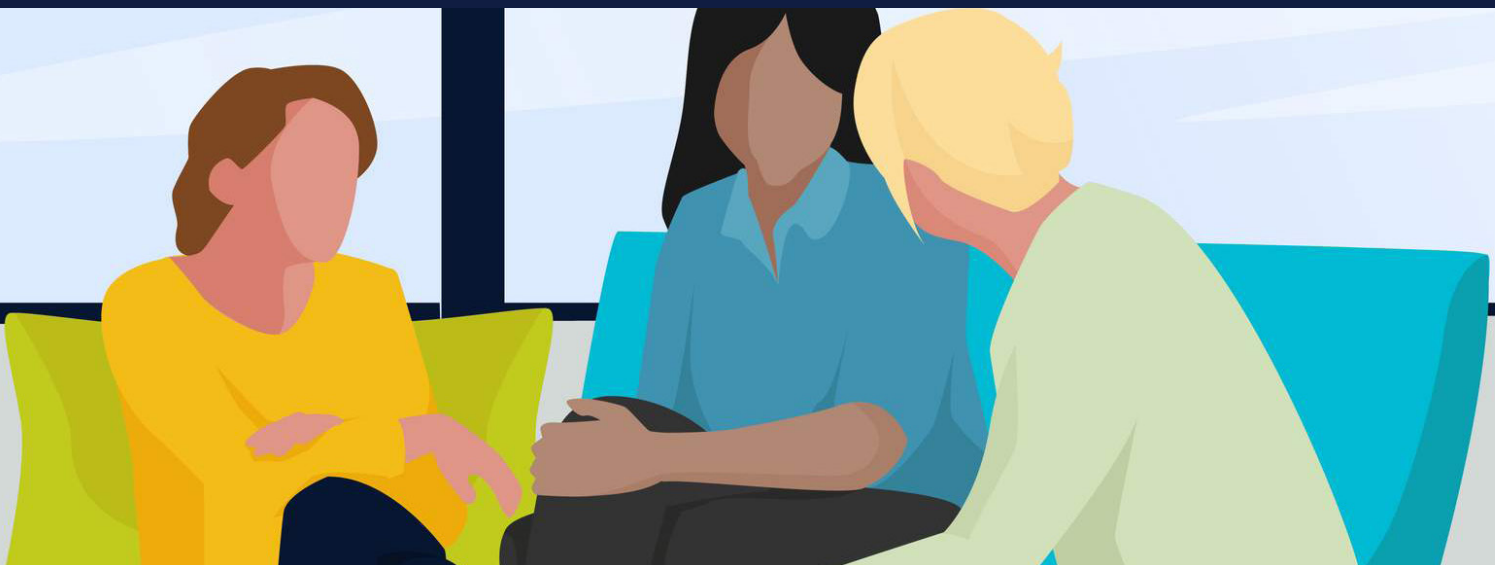
INVESTMENT CASE

Women's groups vary greatly in shape, size, and focus, yet they provide common economic, social, and political benefits. However, very little money is invested in women's groups.

These groups can offer a safe haven in which women of limited means can come together in order to:

- Maximize resources

- Manage risk

- Innovate and experiment

- Build skills and capacity

- Mentor and learn from one another

- Organize and advocate for rights

- Share care responsibilities

- Build confidence

MY MIRROR: Women Deliver Young Leader in Action

Photo Credit: Adobe Stock. A group of women talking and laughing.

Part 1

Rawan Saad, a Women Deliver Young Leader Alumni in Jordan, created the program My Mirror, which worked within schools to pilot an economic empowerment program for girls and young women.

The goal of the program was to help participants develop their own business ideas as social entrepreneurs. Through them, they were able to participate equally in their communities and country as young professionals and social entrepreneurs (Women Deliver, 2016). During the grant period, Rawan's program supported five social enterprises and reached 30 adolescent girls with capacity-building on social entrepreneurship's role in income generation and gender equality.

As a result of her work, Rawan's program inspired girls and young women to become **their own drivers** of economic growth and change.

Benefits of Gender Equality in Economic Empowerment

Increasing women's participation in the formal workforce would raise productivity and provide a diversification of the skill sets seen within the global economy (EY, 2015).

Women undertake the vast majority of the world's unpaid work, including crucial tasks like childcare, caring for the elderly, cooking, and cleaning.

The private sector has a critical role to play and companies that invest in family-friendly, gender responsive policies have found high returns on their investments, including reduced absenteeism and increased productivity (Council on Foreign Relations, 2015).

Fully closing gender gaps in
work would add up to

$28 trillion

in annual GDP by 2025.

If another 600 million women had access to the
internet, **annual GDP could increase
by as much as**

$18B across 144 developing countries.

SOURCES: Intel, 2012, UN Women, 2016

As you can see, economic empowerment yields many improvements and is an extremely impactful and worthwhile endeavor, not only for individual women, but also for families, communities, and countries.

Take a Break

You are halfway through and you are doing great! Now would be another good time to let your brain rest.

Some ideas to help you take a time out:

- Take a few minutes to breathe deeply
- Move your body
- Go for a walk (in nature, if you can!)

Feel free to come back later today or tomorrow to complete the course when you are rejuvenated. You got this!

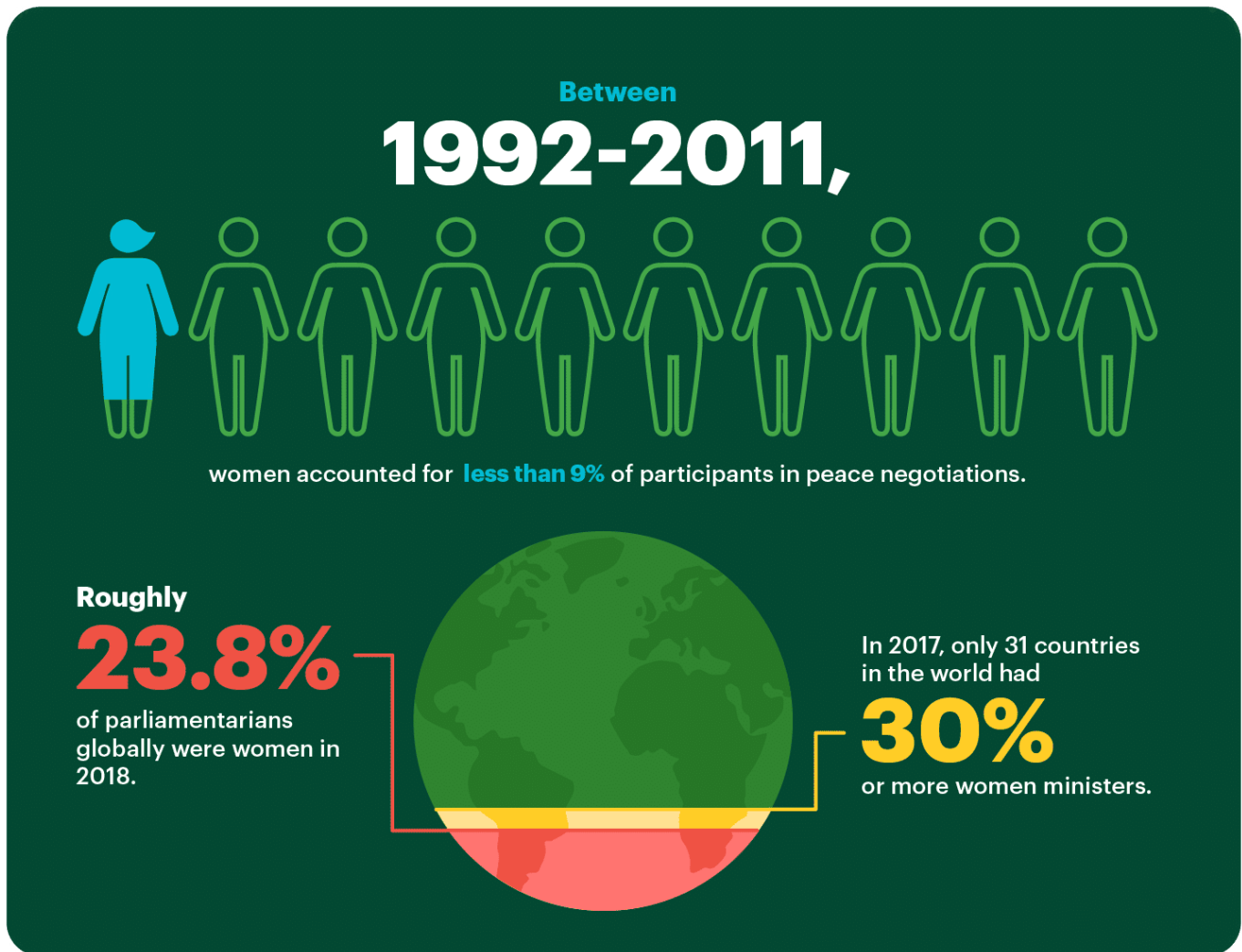# Gender Equality and Political Participation

The ability of girls and women to participate in politics is a human right, upheld by international frameworks and national laws.

Women have a right to engage in civil society, campaign for any candidate of their choosing, vote in elections, be elected or appointed to public positions, and make their voices heard in any process that will ultimately affect them and their communities.

In a world where more than half the population now lives under democracies (Center for Systemic Peace's Polity IV Project), the inclusion and full and equal participation of all citizens has become increasingly critical for good governance, which, in turn, is necessary for development, sustainable peace, and ending poverty (Pew Research, 2019).

By investing in women's political participation, the international community not only moves closer to achieving gender equality, but also to fulfilling the SDGs. You will have a greater understanding of the importance of women's political participation by the conclusion of this module.

THE WORLD TODAY

Between
1992-2011,

women accounted for **less than 9%** of participants in peace negotiations.

Roughly
23.8%
of parliamentarians globally were women in 2018.

In 2017, only 31 countries in the world had
30%
or more women ministers.

SOURCES: NDI, 2016, Reuters, 2015, UN Women, 2011

Many barriers prevent women from taking their place within the political arena, including legal, political, and cultural constraints. Due to restrictive laws and institutional barriers, discriminatory social norms, and disproportionately low access to quality education, healthcare, and other resources, women worldwide continue to be marginalized from the political sphere.

However, reversing discriminatory policies and practices is not impossible. There are many proven solutions to address barriers in institutions, social norms, and individual capacity to amplify women's voices in decision-making processes.

The benefits of including women in political participation are crosscutting, paving the way to:

VOTE

Inclusive, responsive, and resilient democracies

Balanced economic growth

Enhanced peace-building capabilities

SOURCE: UN Women, 2015

Continue on for a better understanding of the solutions to improving gender equality in political participation.

Solutions Towards Gender Equality in Political Participation

There are many ways to achieve gender equality in political participation and combat the barriers to girls' and women's engagement in the political sphere. Below are key solutions that can be used to catalyze change in this area. The following lessons in this section will more deeply examine each solution to help you move forward with your own advocacy work.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION SOLUTIONS INCLUDE:

1 Foster inclusivity in leadership, civic engagement, and decision-making

2 Promote women's participation in conflict prevention and peace-building processes

3 Include adolescents and women who represent marginalized populations

4 Create training and leadership pathways that are gender-sensitive

5 Ensure political environments are free from discrimination and violence

6 Ensure recognition of women in decision-making capacities

Let us explore each solution further!

Foster Inclusivity in Leadership, Civic Engagement, and Decision-Making

Fully addressing the needs of girls and women is not possible without meaningful representation of their interests in top decision-making positions. Evidence shows that an increase in the participation of women in politics affects how their needs are prioritized in policymaking **(World Economic Forum, 2014)**.

INVESTMENT CASE

Women's engagement in leadership positions at both the grassroots and political levels has been shown to result in higher quality education, health, and infrastructure projects, and also boosts women's empowerment and standards of living (EY, 2015), (NDI, 2018).

Evidence suggests that when women are elected to political positions, they can make a difference for girls and women, strongly impacting legislation (National Democratic Institute, NDI). While it is not a guarantee that every woman candidate will pursue pro-woman policies, women are more likely to pursue inclusive policies and respond to constituent concerns (Poverty Action Lab, 2018).

Fully addressing the needs of girls and women is only possible with meaningful representation of their interests in top decision-making positions. Evidence shows that an increase in the participation of women in politics affects how their needs are prioritized in policymaking (World Economic Forum, 2014).

Women also tend to push for positive change around health, community wellbeing, poverty reduction, and family welfare, and are more likely to strive to reach a consensus on policies (ODI, 2015).

LEVERAGING TRANSITIONAL GENDER QUOTAS

What is a gender quota?

In the political sphere, the core aim of establishing a gender quota system is to ensure that women are well-represented in political positions through intentional recruitment.

"An increasing number of countries are currently introducing various types of gender quotas for public elections: In fact, half of the countries of the world today use some type of electoral quota for their parliament" (IDEA, 2020).

When well-designed and properly implemented, quotas, or specific numbers of seats allocated to a particular group, can be effective, temporary measures to increase women's access to decision-making positions. Quotas should be established at all levels of government, not just at the highest levels (e.g., parliament).

USING GENDER QUOTAS FOR SYSTEMIC POLITICAL CHANGE IN SENEGAL
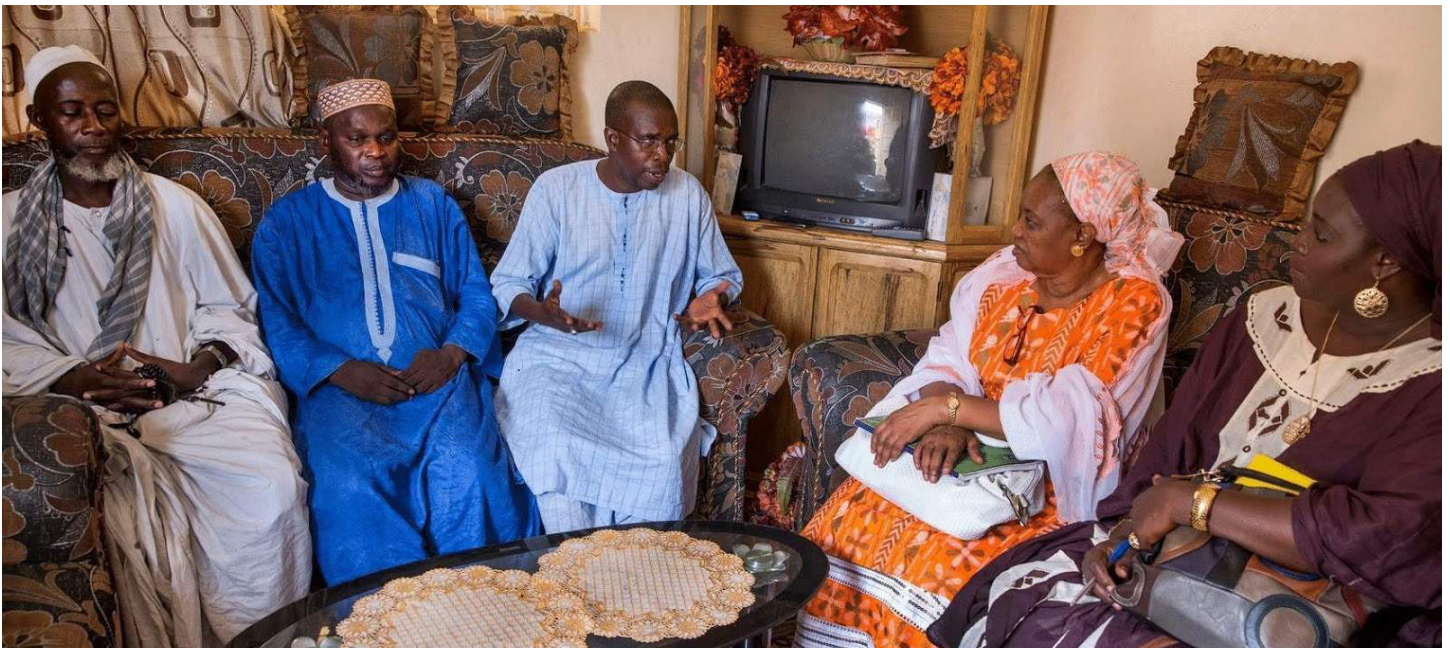

Photo Credit: Jonathan Torgovnik. Women community leaders meet with local religious leaders to discuss issues relating to women's rights, reproductive health, and family planning in Keurmassar, Senegal.

Step 1

CHALLENGE

In Senegal, advocates and policymakers knew gender inequality in political elections was a pervasive issue. Although Senegal's 2001 constitution guaranteed equality between women and men, gender equality was still not reflected in the political sphere. This problem had to be addressed with a systemic solution.

SOLUTION

In 2010, in collaboration with UN Women, Senegal adopted legislation calling for women to have guaranteed seats in all elective bodies at every level of government. It also set mandatory stipulations for absolute gender parity by requiring political parties to include an equal number of women and men on the lists of candidates they submitted (UN Women, 2012).

RESULTS

As a result of the quota system, Senegal's 2012 election resulted in a near balance between men and women in the National Assembly.

"This is the end of a long and hard fight, taken up over several generations. The road has been long, the fight must continue and there is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed," said Fatou Sarr Sow, President of Senegal's Caucus of Female Leaders, the organization set up to facilitate the law's adoption (UN Women, 2012).

Promote Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building Processes

Women must not only be present at formal processes, but also have the capacity to engage in the creation of new governing structures for conflict prevention and peace-building processes (ODI, 2015).

INVESTMENT CASE

Women remain underrepresented in leadership roles within conflict and post-conflict settings. In 2015, women's parliamentary representation in these zones made up 4% less than the 22% global average (UN, 2015). And while 88% of UN-supported peace talks included consultations with women in 2014, three-quarters of all peace agreements from 2000-2015 failed to mention women (UN, 2010), (UN, 2015).

Women's participation in democratic transitions improves the likelihood of peace negotiations ending in agreements. When women are meaningfully included, the likelihood of violence ending within a year increases by 24% (Stone, 2014).

YEMENI WOMEN RECEIVE RIGHTFUL SEAT AT THE TABLE

Photo Credit: Iason Athanasiadis. Yemeni women during event designed to encourage female candidates to participate more fully in the country's first free elections in nearly half a century.

Step 1

CHALLENGE

Inadequate support and persistent negative attitudes toward Yemeni women in power continued to bar them from claiming their place at the table during 2011 peace negotiations associated with an Arab Spring uprising which saw an end to then president Ali Abdullah Saleh after more than three decades of rule (BBC, 2019). Fortunately, their government recognized a need for transformative change.

ACTION

In 2012, the government announced a National Dialogue Conference to bring together all factions of Yemeni society to discuss issues and help draft the new constitution. Twenty percent of the seats were reserved for women. The National Democratic Institute worked with a cross-party women's network to train their members from political parties and civil society in preparation to engage in the National Dialogue and to improve their ability to advocate for issues they cared about.

RESULTS

These gender-specific, peace-building strategies helped create effective and holistic reconstruction and provided an intentional platform for women in the political sphere.

Representation of Young Women and Women from Marginalized Populations

Positions of political power must be **accessible to all**, and not restrictive based on age, education, socio-economic status, geographical origin, or any other demographic characteristic.

INVESTMENT CASE

Young people are often represented in civil society movements, yet they remain underrepresented in formal positions of power despite their capacity to serve as agents of change. In one-third of countries, the minimum age to serve in parliament is 25, yet only 1.65% of parliamentarians are under 30 and only 13.52% are under 40 (UN Women, 2012), (Stone, 2014), (ODI, 2015).

Although young women are more likely to engage in political volunteer work compared to their male peers, the gap between their levels of confidence in their leadership skills and political ambitions grows in adolescence. But women leaders acting as role models can normalize the idea and practice of women holding power; **"Women acting together can shift adverse social and legal norms in their community and polity"** (ODI, 2015).

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

In the political sphere, this tactic helps to ensure that women are well-represented in political positions through intentional recruitment.

- ✓ Gender quotas
- ○ Peace-building
- ○ Conflict prevention

Correct

Correct! When well-designed and properly implemented, gender quotas can be effective, temporary measures to increase women's access to decision-making positions.

Incorrect

Not quite. When well-designed and properly implemented, gender quotas can be effective, temporary measures to increase women's access to decision-making positions.

Create Training and Leadership Pathways That Are Gender-Sensitive

Offering women political leadership and skills-based training provides them with **the foundation they need** to actively participate in politics.

INVESTMENT CASE

Many groups and organizations around the world conduct programs aimed at helping women candidates, legislators, and influencers overcome major political barriers (National Democratic Institute, 2013).

These barriers include lack of financial resources and educational opportunities, as well as unaccommodating governments and geographic restrictions. **Political engagement training can support women to overcome these barriers and take action at local, national, and international levels.**

ELECTORAL SUCCESS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Photo Credit: Office of the Prime Minister, Trinidad and Tobago. Paula Mae Weekes sworn in as Trinidad and Tobago's first woman President.

Step 1

CHALLENGE

In Trinidad and Tobago, gender disparity in political office was a pervasive issue.

Step 2

ACTION

In 2013, a network of women's organizations launched a political training program called "Train, Run, Win, and Lead," educating women on how to run for political office.

RESULTS

As a result of the program, after the first training sessions, half the women who ran for office won seats in local elections, including 21 aldermen and nine women leading statutory committees (UN Women, 2014).

Ensure Political Environments Are Free from Discrimination and Violence

Women will have greater incentive to engage in politics if the political environment is free of discrimination and violence.

INVESTMENT CASE

Violence cuts across all political sectors, including civil society, political parties, electoral processes, and parliaments, and affects politically active women regardless of their roles. While acts of violence against women in politics are directed at individual women, they carry an impact and an intent beyond their specific target—to frighten other women who are politically active, to deter women who are considering it, and to communicate that women should not participate in public life in any capacity (NDI, 2016).

Dismantling masculine stereotypes of power, discriminatory party practices, and threats and acts of violence against women in electoral contexts are all important steps towards building an enabling environment for women's free and equal participation (ParlAmericas, 2014). This includes engaging boys and men in promoting and supporting girls and women as leaders and decision-makers, as well as holding individuals who obstruct women's abilities to engage in leadership roles accountable (UN Women, 2015).

REMOVING POLITICAL RESTRICTIONS FOR WOMEN IN INDIA

Photo Credit: Paula Bronstein. The Young Women Leadership Program empowers women from poor urban communities to break gender, class, and religion-based stereotypes in Patna, Bihar, India.

Step 1

CHALLENGE

In India, before 1992, women were often restricted from elected positions. The 73rd Amendment Act changed that by reserving at least one-third of the seats of all Panchayat (village) Councils. One-third of all Pradhan (heads of the Panchayat) seats were reserved for women (Mahalinga, 2014).

ACTION

Due to the Act's inception, women Panchayat Raj (village committee) leaders became increasingly involved in their communities, ensuring that critical issues such as quality healthcare, education, and financial support were deliberated (Wharton, 2009).

RESULTS

As a result of women's involvement, there was a 62% increase of potable water projects in these communities initiated by a woman leader, as compared to similar communities with male leaders (UN Women, 2017). This is a clear indication of women's participation in local government as essential to inform policy and deliver change.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Violence against individual women not only hurts them significantly, but it also has the power to impact women collectively who want to become politically involved.

- ✓ True
- ○ False

Correct

While acts of violence against women in politics are directed at individual women, they carry an impact and an intent beyond their specific target: to frighten other women who are politically active, to deter women who are considering it, and to communicate that women should not participate in public life in any capacity.

Incorrect

While acts of violence against women in politics are directed at individual women, they carry an impact and an intent beyond their specific target: to frighten other women who are politically active, to deter women who are considering it, and to communicate that women should not participate in public life in any capacity.

Ensure Recognition of Women in Decision-Making Capacities

By publicly recognizing the contributions of women in leadership, the capacities of girls and women are more broadly accepted (UN Women, 2011).

INVESTMENT CASE

Advancing the right of women to serve in positions of leadership and actively participate in decision-making processes can be achieved in part through enhanced visibility.

Public recognition and sharing has the added benefit of dispelling negative gender stereotypes (NDI, 2015).

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA COVERAGE

The media are crucial partners to highlight the positive contributions of women in politics and avoid perpetuating negative gender-based stereotypes, which influence public opinion about the role of women in public life. Female politicians can also gain visibility through support from civil society and other female leaders.

INCREASING FEMALE PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ALBANIA

Step 1

CHALLENGE

In 2009, Albanian President Bamir Topi called on women to not only participate in politics and public life, but to actively strive to be seen and heard in those positions. With 10 of 140 parliamentary seats and 1 of 65 mayoral positions occupied by women, Albania had one of the lowest percentages of elected women in Europe (Women Deliver, 2016).

Step 2

ACTION

In an effort to shift these statistics, the Albanian government invested in women's political development programs and quotas to increase women's effective and visible participation in politics as a means of maintaining a stable, democratic government and economic growth (NDI).

RESULTS

Albania's 2017 national election saw an increase of women parliamentarians to 28%, a new milestone for the country. Efforts continue to boost women's political participation nationally and to secure gender balance in local elections (UN Women, 2017).

Benefits of Gender Equality in Political Participation

Investing in women's right to political participation is a necessary step to achieving global gender equality and democratic governance. Since women in positions of authority tend to advocate for and allocate budgets towards social issues, their involvement in political processes is beneficial for all **(World Economic Forum, 2014)**.

Women in positions of authority tend to:

Advocate

for social issues that benefit all.

Resolve

national crises without resorting to violence.

Allocate

budgets towards social issues including health and education.

Increase

return on equity.

Companies with strong female leadership on their boards have shown a return on equity that is **10.1%** annually, compared to **7.4%** annually for companies without.

SOURCES: The Guardian, 2014, OECD, 2014, Chen, 2009

You have now heard about three crucial areas of gender equality:

Education

Economic empowerment

Political participation

Coupled with your understanding of SRHR from the previous module, we hope you are getting a sense of the numerous and interrelated factors at play in determining when and whether the world is gender equal.

You are also equipped with real-world examples of solutions-oriented approaches to gender equality, which take into account the holistic needs of individuals and communities.

Next, we will turn to the Sustainable Development Goals and learn more about what they are, the history of how they were created, and their relevance to the issue of gender equality and your work as advocates.
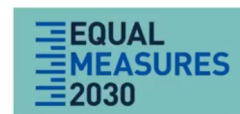
Additional Resources

If you would like to learn about using gender statistics for advocacy, you can check out our webinar here:
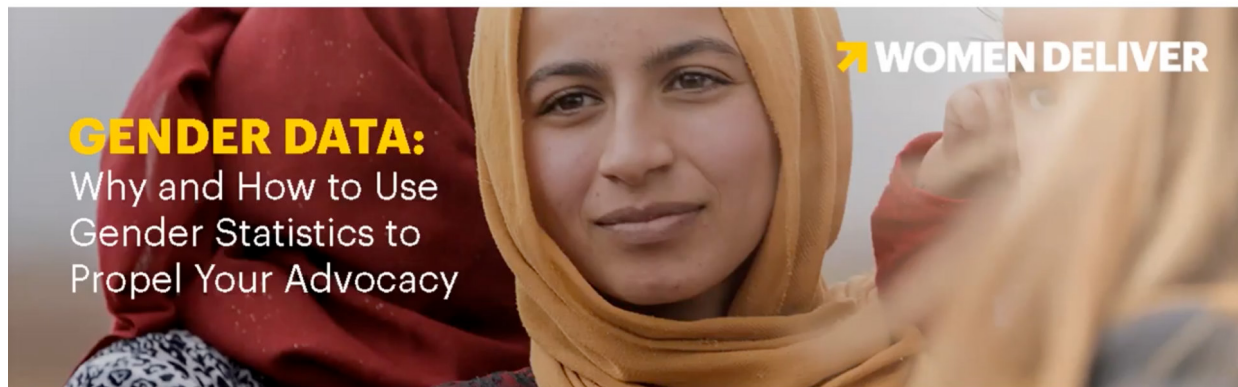
Pause and Reflect

Now that you have learned about the three crucial areas for high returns on investment and global impact on gender equality, take a few moments to breathe and reflect upon how you have seen this work show up in your own community and/or country.

Let your mind wander and feel free to take a brain break before moving on to the next section: The Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction to the SDGs

Throughout this module, we have been referring to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs.

The SDGs act as blueprints for action at the country level.

They galvanize resources, guide policy and program development, and provide a powerful tool for activists to hold governments accountable to commitments made at the international level.

History of the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which outlines the SDGs, is one of the most significant international development documents in history. The timeline below begins with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were a set of global goals that preceded the SDGs. This will give you a clearer understanding of how they were created.

2000

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS ESTABLISHED

The historic Millennium Declaration established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight development goals agreed to by all 191 UN Member States to be achieved by the target date of 2015.

2000-2015

MDGS MOVE FORWARD

The MDGs drove the development agenda between 2000 and 2015. Substantial progress was made, but not all the goals were achieved by the 2015 deadline. This process led to the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2015

POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND SDGS CREATED

Created through an inclusive and multi-stakeholder process, the Post-2015 Development Agenda was one of the most participatory in United Nations (UN) history, with extensive civil society participation and innovative new platforms for online engagement.

During the UN General Assembly in September 2015, 193 countries adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets as part of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs work to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. The Sustainable Development Agenda calls for action by all countries and all sectors.

2030

TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

While the adoption of the 2030 Agenda is not legally binding, instead it acts as a blueprint for action at the country level and establishes the framework for global development efforts.

2015-2030

ANNUAL HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), held in New York City every July to date, is the central UN platform for the follow-up and review of progress towards meeting the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Outlining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

In total, the Agenda for Sustainable Development has **17 Sustainable Development Goals** for completion by 2030.

NO POVERTY
End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

ZERO HUNGER
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.

QUALITY EDUCATION
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

GENDER EQUALITY
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

**9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

REDUCED INEQUALITIES
Reduce inequality within and among countries.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
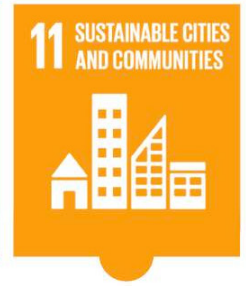
SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
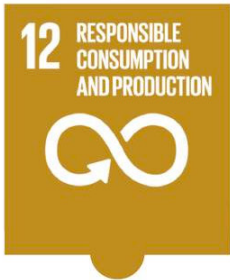
RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
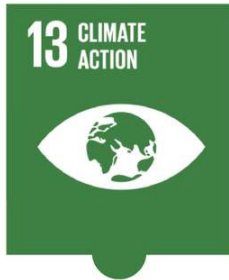
13 CLIMATE ACTION

CLIMATE ACTION
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

LIFE BELOW WATER
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

15 LIFE ON LAND

LIFE ON LAND
Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
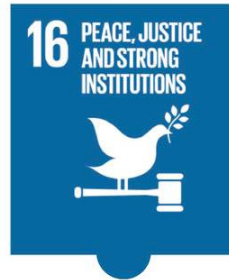
PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

SOURCE: UN Sustainable Development Goals

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

_____is the target date for completion of the agenda for the SDGs.

2030

Correct

Well done!

Incorrect

Not quite. 2030 is the target date.

True or False: The SDGs are a legally binding framework that countries must adhere to.

○ True

✓ False

Correct

Well done! The adoption of the 2030 Agenda is not legally binding, but instead acts as a blueprint for action at the country level and establishes the framework for global development efforts.

Incorrect

This is actually false. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda is not legally binding, but instead acts as a blueprint for action at the country level and establishes the framework for global development efforts.

Using the SDGs As a Global Framework

The SDGs differ from the MDGs by acknowledging a number of **crosscutting issues** that must be addressed to achieve the goals.
To read more visit **"MDGs to SDGs: Top 10 Differences."**

Of the 17 SDGs, two of the goals relate most directly to SRHR and gender equality, but gender is cross-cutting across all goals (UN, 2015).

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all, at all ages.

Subsection 3.7: By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including for family planning, information, and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programs.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Subsection 5.6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

*Note: Each of the 17 SDGs contains numerous subsections. You can read more about each of them here.

Gender Equality Initiatives Tied to the SDGs

Equal Measures 2030 and a number of partners came together to develop a pilot SDG Gender Index to put gender equality in the context of the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Piloted in 2018 and officially launched at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference, this framework allows you to assess the state of gender equality alongside 14 of 17 Sustainable Development Goals. "The 2019 SDG Gender Index enables us to tell a story of global progress, as well as being a tool that gender advocates can use to frame their influencing on the gender equality elements of the SDGs."

While the framework for measurement exists, countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of progress made in the process of implementing the SDGs, which requires quality, accessible, and timely data collection. Global indicators are intended for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and are not necessarily applicable to all national contexts.

Additionally, as you learned in Module 1, **The Deliver for Good Campaign** has been convened by Women Deliver and alongside various **partners** to apply a gender lens to the SDGs, seeing girls and women as whole beings. The focus is not just health, education, or rights, but also essential socio-economic factors such as access to land, clean energy, water, and sanitation, as well as political participation and economic empowerment.

National ownership is key to achieving sustainable development and national reviews will take different national realities, capacities, and levels of development into account. Moreover, it is expected that additional indicators for regional, national, and subnational monitoring will be developed.

The Universality of the SDGs

The principle of universality has a long tradition in the UN system and underlies much of its normative work, for instance, in the realm of human rights. Whereas the MDGs were created in the context of high-income countries giving aid to low- and middle-income countries, a defining feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is its **universal nature**.

It commits all countries to contribute towards a comprehensive effort for global sustainability in all its dimensions—social, economic, and environmental—while ensuring equity, peace, and security. This underscores the idea of the 2030 Agenda as a global partnership for sustainable development **(UN, 2015)**.
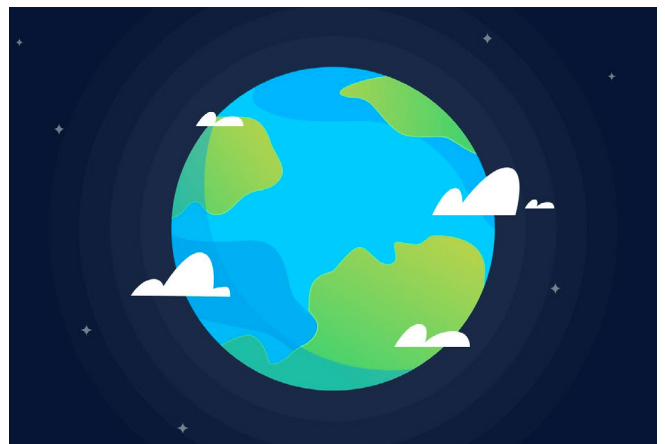
Young People and the SDGs

"Youth are not just beneficiaries of this process – they are essential actors in achieving these Goals."

–Excerpt from _UN and SDGs: Handbook for Youth_

Implementation of the SDGs is underway, and a key group working to achieve them are young people like you. Young people are active advocates, program implementers, and policy-shapers dedicated to improving their communities, nations, and the world.

Young people must be meaningfully involved in all of these processes. Efforts must be made to support their inclusion and address barriers to their participation and engagement (more will be shared about meaningful youth engagement in Module 3). Young people are not a homogenous group, so even more effort to ensure inclusivity and include a broad diversity of young people (such as young people living with disabilities, young people living in poverty, HIV-positive young people, indigenous young people, migrant young people, sex workers, young people living in remote areas, LGBTQIA+ young people, young mothers, and others) is needed.

Although the UN has more work to do when it comes to prioritizing the involvement of youth, here are some of the ways they are currently working to do so:

The UN Secretary-General established an Envoy on Youth in 2013 with a mandate to "harmonize the UN system efforts on youth development, enhance the UN response to youth needs, advocate for addressing the development needs and rights of young people, as well as to bring the work of the United Nations with and for youth closer to them."

Envoy on Youth

To help advance the SDGs, **17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals** are selected every year to work with the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth on efforts to engage young people on the realization of the SDGs. They represent the voices of children and youth around the world.

17 Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals

On the global level, young people represent their countries as delegates of member states, including as part of the **UN Youth Delegate Programme**. In addition, young people serve as speakers at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), Commission on the Status of Women, UN General Assembly, and other global gatherings.

[UN Youth Delegate Programme](#)

Women Deliver Young Leaders in Action on the SDGs

Women Deliver Young Leaders Are Driving Progress Towards the SDGs—and Using Them to Hold Their Governments Accountable

There are many examples of Women Deliver Young Leaders like you engaging in the SDGs to advance gender equality at multiple levels. Read on to hear their stories.

Vivian Onano (Kenya)

Vivian Onano, a Women Deliver Young Leader Alumni, Class of 2016, and now a member of the Women Deliver Board of Directors, spoke at a high-level panel discussion at the United Nations General Assembly. The session focused on the power of partnering for women, children, and adolescents, to thrive and transform the world. Vivian spoke about the importance of water, sanitation, and hygiene on girls' access to education and overall wellbeing, and why these issues are critical to achieving the SDGs.

Vivian's story highlights how the investments and SDGs intersect, why an integrated approach is needed, and one way young people can be involved in global advocacy for the SDGs.

Watch the video below to see Vivian in action.

Original Source: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDpVnf5nsog*

Rand Jarallah (Palestine)

Rand Jarallah participated in a small-group discussion with the Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark, Ms. Ulla Tørnæs in New York City. The conversation centered on youth engagement and the ways in which it is relevant to many thematic priorities, from migration or promoting peace, security, and human rights to ensuring sustainable, inclusive growth.

Rand shared her experiences as a Women Deliver Young Leader and UNFPA Creative Fellow with the Minister, and she engaged in a dialogue on how to facilitate the inclusion of young people in fulfilling the SDGs.

Watch the video below to see another unique way that Rand's role as an advocate is changing people's perspectives.

Original Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnxyrGP7yTc
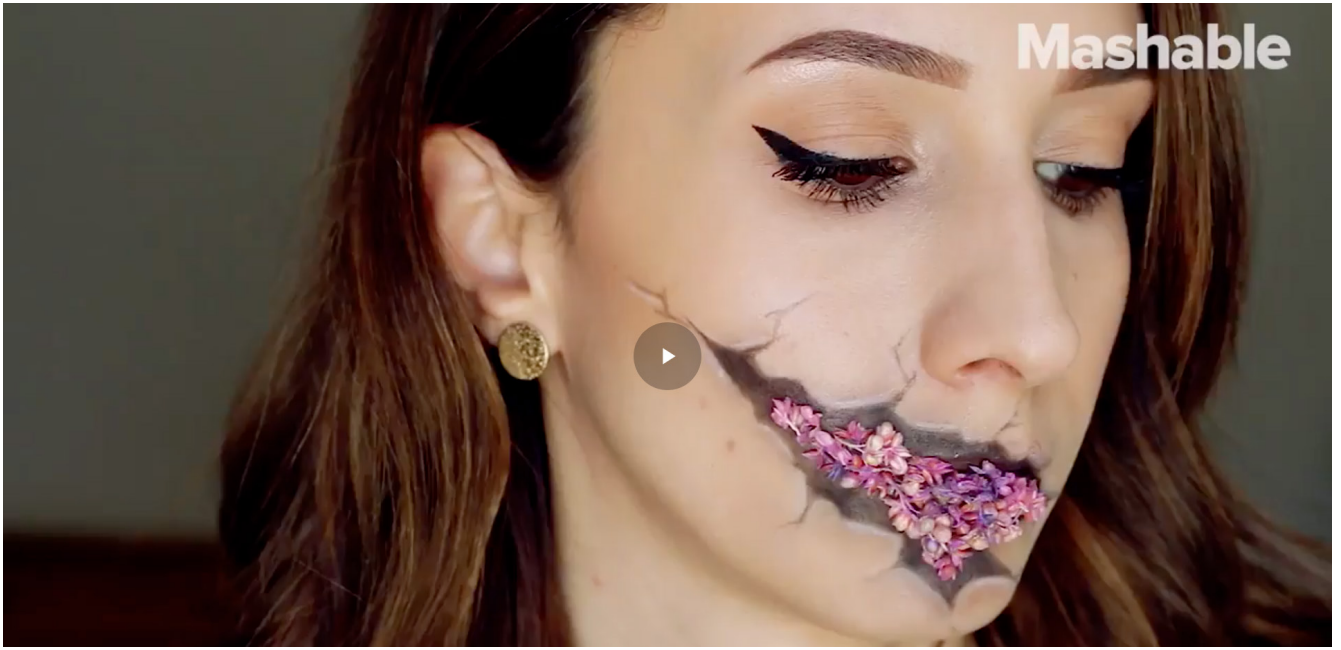
Practice Assignment

Now that you have learned more about the SDGs, let us see how these goals tie into fostering gender equality.

PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT

Select any one of the 17 SDGs and write **one to two paragraphs** about how you would apply a gender lens to this goal.

Example: How is ending hunger (Goal #2) related to girls' and women's empowerment?

Submit your response in the Digital University Forum and comment on two other Young Leader's assignments.

Conclusion

"Be a global citizen. Act with passion and compassion. Help us make this world safer and more sustainable today and for the generations that will follow us. That is our moral responsibility."

–Former UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon, via the United Nations Foundation

In this module, you learned that gender equality is an umbrella term that encompasses many ideas and components—the SDGs are one vehicle to help bring gender equality into reality.

Young people worldwide are helping strengthen gender equality and bring about a more just and equal world for all. They are also implementing the SDGs and ensuring that gender mainstreaming is present throughout.

In the next module, you will begin creating your advocacy campaign, building on your understanding of gender equality and the SDGs.

You will learn the ten steps of the policy advocacy process, as well as the concept of meaningful youth engagement and its integral role in your advocacy work. By the end of Module 4, you should have a complete strategic plan to begin work on advocating for your chosen issue.

Joshua Dilawar (Women Deliver Young Leader Alumni, Class of 2018) at Global Festival of Action for Sustainable Development 2018 in Germany.

DIGITAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Throughout Digital University, you will find valuable resources such as articles, briefs, infographics, and partner sites that we have found to be highly valuable to understanding gender equality and SDGs. Be sure to review these resources and use them to further enhance your knowledge on your journey.

Click the button to be taken to the library.

Almost done! In order to complete the module and move forward, please complete the post-assessment.