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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, as mandated in Economic and Social Council resolution [2018/8](#), serves as a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It covers challenges with regard to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and the part they can play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In its resolution, the Economic and Social Council called upon all States to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and encouraged the regional commissions to undertake regional reviews in order to feed the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level into the global review.

* [E/CN.6/2020/1](#).



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I. Reigniting the vision of Beijing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

1. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 as a comprehensive and visionary agenda for achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights for women and girls. It contains a call for the removal of systematic and structural barriers that prevent women and girls from enjoying their human rights across social, economic, political and environmental domains, and policy actions to achieve the vision. States concluded that the redistribution of power and resources between women and men in the public and private spheres was inextricably tied in with the broader goals of achieving equality for all, sustainability and peaceful, inclusive and democratic societies.

2. The vision of Beijing was reaffirmed in 2015, when States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with human rights and gender equality as core principles and the ambitious aims of eradicating poverty, reducing multiple and intersecting inequalities, addressing climate change, ending conflict and sustaining peace. Building on the Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda underscores that, for development to be sustainable, its benefits must accrue equally to women and men and that women's rights will only become a reality in the broader context of efforts to protect the planet and ensure that all people may live in dignity.

A. The vision of Beijing only partly realized

3. Fundamental shifts in the global gender equality landscape have taken place over the past five years. Rising inequalities and economic exclusion are a symptom of development models in which gains are not shared equitably. Pushback against gender equality is becoming stronger. The world is also facing a climate crisis fuelled by the over-exploitation of natural resources. Rapid technological change is having an impact on every aspect of economic, social and political life, creating opportunities and risks. Women's movements around the world, with young feminists leading the way, are increasingly calling for economic, social and environmental justice and systemic change. Well-educated, "digitally native" young women are taking an increasingly visible and active role in demanding a more just and sustainable future. Their aspirations, however, are being blocked by the spread of precarious employment and increasing economic insecurity.

4. Since 2015, States have stepped up the introduction and reform of legislation, policies and programmes to advance gender equality. Globally, the top priorities over the past five years, as reflected in national reports, have included:

- The elimination of violence against women and girls.
- Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care.
- Political participation and representation.
- Good quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls.

Priorities in developing regions reflected the global priorities. In developed regions, more attention has been paid to women's right to work and their rights in the workplace, the issues of unpaid care and domestic work, work-family conciliation and efforts to change negative social norms and gender stereotypes. Strengthening women's participation in environmental sustainability, gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience, and digital and financial inclusion, have received the least attention globally.

5. New policy and programmatic directions have emerged over the past five years:
- Three quarters of States have introduced or strengthened maternity, paternity or parental leave or other types of family leave, recognizing the need to address the disproportionate burden of responsibility placed on women for unpaid care and domestic work.
 - Social protection programmes to eradicate poverty among women and girls have been strengthened or introduced in 70 per cent of States.
 - Gender-responsive budgeting is being implemented in more than half of States.
 - Laws and regulations on violence against women and girls facilitated by technology have been strengthened or introduced in more than half of States. They are focusing more on tackling sexual harassment and a small but growing number of States are addressing violence against women in politics.
 - The number of countries with national action plans on women and peace and security has increased by 52 per cent since 2015.
 - Women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance has been supported in 61 per cent of States.

6. Discriminatory laws continue to be revoked: between 2008 and 2017, 274 legal reforms regarding gender equality were carried out in 131 countries.¹ More girls are in school than ever before and more countries have reached gender parity in school enrolment (see sect. III.B). The global maternal mortality ratio fell from 342 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 211 per 100,000 in 2017 (ibid.). Over the past decade, the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel increased by 12 percentage points (ibid.). Women's political representation has doubled since 1995, but men still hold 75.7 per cent of the seats in parliament (see sect. III.D).

7. Overall, however, progress falls short of what States committed themselves to in 1995. In some areas, it has stalled and even reversed. Women aged between 25 and 34 are 25 per cent more likely than men to live in extreme poverty (see sect. III.B). The gender gap in labour force participation remained unchanged between 1998 and 2018, at 31 percentage points, and women are concentrated in precarious forms of work (see sect. III.A). Improved education among women has done little to shift deeply entrenched occupational segregation in developed and developing countries and the global gender pay gap continues to be 20 per cent. Women continue to carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work. In developing countries, that includes arduous tasks such as water collection, for which women and girls are responsible in 80 per cent of households that do not have access to water on the premises (see sect. III.E). Women remain significantly underrepresented in or locked out of decision-making and leadership roles across all sectors. Globally, in 2018, only 27 per cent of managerial positions in government, large enterprises and other institutions were held by women (see sect. III.D).

8. Violence against women and girls remains pervasive. Globally, 17.8 per cent of women aged between 15 and 49 years who have had partners have been subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months. In the least developed countries, that figure rises to 24 per cent (see sect. III.C). In 2017, 137 women were killed by an intimate partner or other family member every day. The proportion of women with unmet needs for family planning has stagnated at 10 per cent since 2000 (see sect. III.B). In 2019, 190 million women of reproductive age worldwide who wanted to avoid pregnancy did not use any contraceptive method.

¹ World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2019: A Decade of Reform*, (Washington, D.C., 2019).

Maternal mortality is alarmingly high in countries affected by conflict and crisis, with half of those countries presenting high or very high ratios of 399 or more deaths per 100,000 live births (see sect. III.E). Significant efforts will be needed to bring the maternal mortality ratio under 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030, in line with target 3.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination, including based on age, class, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity or migration status have made the least progress. Women in rural areas are still much less likely to have access to skilled health personnel when they give birth than their urban counterparts (see sect. III.B). Refugee girls are more likely to be out of school than refugee boys and their non-refugee peers. Globally, women aged between 20 and 24 in the lowest wealth quintile are 3.7 times more likely to give birth before the age of 18 than those in the highest quintile. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex women around the world are at heightened risk of violence and harassment (see sect. III.C). The failure to make progress for the most marginalized groups of women and girls is in direct contradiction to the commitment to leaving no one behind.

10. The level of resources and investment in institutions and implementation frameworks for gender equality remains woefully inadequate. Only 4 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) was focused on gender equality in 2017, a drop of 7 per cent over the previous year (see sect. III.D). In the past five years, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has continued to draw attention to the need to enhance the mandates and areas of responsibility of and funding for national gender equality mechanisms, signalling persistent institutional deficits for advancing gender equality. In 2018, the proportion of peace agreements with gender-responsive provisions stood at only 7.7 per cent, down from an average of 26 per cent between 2001 and 2010 (see sect. III.E).

11. In some regions, gender equality has suffered setbacks, including restrictions on sexual and reproductive health and rights and attempts to remove comprehensive sexuality education from school curricula and gender studies from tertiary education.² Accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action will require transformational policies, systemic change, multilateral cooperation and a commitment to achieving gender equality and full respect for the human rights of women, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. Decisive and coordinated action is needed to counter and prevent violence, harassment and the abuse of women human rights defenders.

B. Unequal distribution of development gains undermines progress towards inclusive and peaceful societies

12. The share of the world's population living in extreme poverty decreased from 36 per cent in 1990 to 10 per cent in 2015.³ Although progress has been uneven across regions, women and men around the world have benefitted from poverty reduction.

13. Poverty reduction has not, however, been accompanied by an equitable distribution of development gains. In fact, inequalities of income and wealth have increased in developed and developing countries. Between 2011 and 2016, growth

² See [A/HRC/38/46](#); Conny Roggeband and Andrea Krizsan, "Democratic backsliding and backlash against women's rights: understanding the current challenges for feminist politics", background paper prepared for the expert group meeting on Beijing plus 25, New York, September 2019.

³ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.I.6).

rates among the bottom 40 per cent of the population were higher than the national average in 50 out of 92 countries with comparable data (E/2019/68, para. 31). Even so, the bottom 40 per cent received less than 25 per cent of the overall income during that period. In many countries, an increasing share of income is accruing to the top 1 per cent.

14. The failure to distribute the gains of development equitably is dividing societies. The perception of intense economic insecurity, on the one hand, and the concentration of wealth, on the other, are fuelling fear and distrust. The ensuing social tensions and insecurities have provided fertile ground for the rise of exclusionary, xenophobic and misogynist groups that are threatening democratic values and institutions.⁴

15. Over the past 10 years, the quality of democracy has deteriorated in a growing number of countries. That has been expressed in declining freedom of expression, closing spaces for civil society, the erosion of the rule of law and a rise in hate speech.⁵ In 2018, 1.14 billion women lived in countries where civil society was repressed.⁶ In that context, the backlash against gender equality is taking the form of regressive legal and policy changes, the hollowing out of institutions mandated to advance gender equality and on the shrinking of civic space for women's rights organizations.⁷

16. Growing inequality has spurred social discontent and instability. More countries are experiencing some form of violent conflict than at any time in the previous three decades. Violence and persecution are driving forced displacement to a new high. A record 70.8 million people fled war, persecution and conflict in 2018.⁸ Conflict and crises significantly hold back progress for women and girls on all indicators of sustainable development. Yet, there remains a heavy focus on security rather than peace. Global military spending has been gradually on the rise since a dip in 2014 and is now 76 per cent higher than the post-cold war low in 1998.⁹

C. Current systems do not work for all, especially women and girls

17. Growing inequalities are a result of economic models that have neither enabled the redistribution of wealth and resources in order to create shared prosperity, nor generated investment in policies to buffer people against poverty and vulnerability.¹⁰ Economic models have failed to create decent work and livelihoods and largely depend on women's unpaid care and domestic work (A/74/111). The widespread economic and social damage caused by the 2008 financial crisis and current uncertainty have revealed the risks of excessive financialization and weak regulation:

⁴ Chase Foster and Jeffry Frieden, "Compensation, austerity and populism: social spending and voting in 17 Western European countries", paper prepared for the Seminar on the State and Capitalism since 1800 (December 2019); Branko Milanovic, *Capitalism Alone: The Future of the System that Rules the World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2019).

⁵ V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Facing Global Challenges: V-Dem Annual Democracy Report 2019* (Gothenburg, Sweden, University of Gothenburg, 2019).

⁶ UN-Women calculation based on 33 countries and areas (out of 179 in total) with severe or substantial repression of civil society organizations in 2018 (see V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Facing Global Challenges*) and female population (see United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2019*).

⁷ Roggeband and Krizsan, "Democratic backsliding and backlash against women's rights".

⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018* (Geneva, 2019).

⁹ Nan Tian and others, "Trends in world military expenditure 2018", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute fact sheet (April 2019).

¹⁰ *World Economic and Social Survey 2017: Reflecting on Seventy Years of Development Policy Analysis* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.17.II.C.1).

short-term boom-and-bust cycles have come at the expense of decent work, public investment in human well-being and longer-term sustainable growth.¹¹

18. The world stands on the brink of a new wave of austerity measures. An analysis of International Monetary Fund expenditure projections for 189 countries indicates that, by 2021, approximately 5.8 billion persons¹² will live in countries affected by austerity, among them 2.89 billion women and girls, almost three quarters of the world's female population.¹³ Fiscal austerity has consistently produced regressive outcomes, especially for low-income women, given their greater reliance on public services and transfers, their role as default care providers when services are eroded, and their strong presence as front-line public sector workers that have been subjected to cuts.¹⁴

19. Dominant economic models are also based on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, including extractivism, that drive the over-exploitation of natural resources, a loss of biodiversity and the rapid advance of the climate crisis.¹⁵ In 2017, worldwide material consumption reached 92.1 billion tonnes, up from 87 billion tonnes in 2015 and a 254 per cent increase from 27 billion tonnes in 1970, with the rate of extraction accelerating every year since 2000 (E/2019/68, para. 33). Global green-house gas concentrations also reached new highs in 2017 (ibid., para. 34). Environmental degradation disproportionately affects low-income countries and the most marginalized women who have contributed least to the crisis. The destruction of women's livelihoods, which depend heavily on the natural environment, contributes to rising food insecurity and morbidity and increases the burden of unpaid care and domestic work.¹⁶ Environmental degradation also poses risks to peace and security through the massive displacement of people and increased competition for scarce natural resources.

D. Rapid technological and demographic shifts change the gender equality landscape

20. Technological advances, including artificial intelligence, automation and robotics, are expected to lead to massive change in all areas of life. Technological change is not gender neutral. Evidence for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries for which data are available shows that women are underrepresented in companies and professions that shape technological development and innovation.¹⁷ New technologies have also awakened concerns about fairness and inclusion, privacy and autonomy, accountability and transparency, including the heightened exposure of women and girls to the risk of violence and abuse in technology-enabled spaces. Technological advances could be harnessed to advance gender equality as they open up new avenues to mobilize and

¹¹ *Trade and Development Report 2019: Financing a Global Green New Deal* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.D.15); United Nations, *World Economic and Social Survey 2017*.

¹² Isabel Ortiz and Matthew Cummins, "Austerity: the new normal – a renewed Washington Consensus 2010–24", working paper (Initiative for Policy Dialogue and others, October 2019).

¹³ UN-Women calculations based on 126 countries or areas that will face austerity in 2021. Definition of austerity based on Ortiz and Cummins, "Austerity: the new normal"; population estimates based on United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2019*.

¹⁴ UN-Women, *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality* (New York, 2014).

¹⁵ See A/69/156; United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Global Gender and Environment Outlook* (Nairobi, 2016).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Judy Wajcman, "The digital revolution: implications for gender equality and women's rights 25 years after Beijing", background paper prepared for the expert group meeting on Beijing plus 25, New York, September 2019.

connect women around the world but, without proper regulation, they might simply replicate inequalities of the past or even exacerbate them.¹⁸

21. Major demographic trends, such as ageing and migration, have significant implications for gender equality. In 2018, for the first time in human history, persons aged 65 years or over outnumbered children under 5 years of age worldwide.¹⁹ By 2050, 16 per cent of the world's population will be over the age of 65, up from 9 per cent in 2019. Women comprise 55 per cent of those aged 65 years or over and 61 per cent of those aged 80 years or over.²⁰ Women are more likely than men to prioritize family over paid work, with potentially adverse implications for their income security in old age; they are also more likely to report chronic illness, disabilities and difficulties with self-care than men, largely due to greater longevity.

22. In most of sub-Saharan Africa, and in parts of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, recent reductions in fertility rates have caused the working age population (25–64 years) to grow faster than other age groups, creating the potential for a demographic dividend (economic benefits of a youthful working population).²¹ To reap that dividend, governments need to enable young women to fully develop their potential, including by addressing child marriage and adolescent fertility, which continue to hamper their access to education. Even where the educational achievements of women have improved, the transition to work remains difficult. Many well-educated young women and men in developing countries have difficulty finding work but the former are especially affected by unemployment.

E. Need for systemic change and greater accountability

23. States must do more to turn the transformational vision of the Platform for Action into policy and fulfil the human rights of women and girls. For example, policies on women's economic empowerment should focus not only on increasing their participation in order to boost economic growth, but also on expanding public investment with a view to redistributing the burden of unpaid care and domestic work. Promoting the involvement of women in peace processes should lead to their participation in governance in post-conflict situations. Policies to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women should take into account the gender-based economic and social drivers of environmental degradation.

24. Around the world, young women are leading movements for change on issues ranging from democracy, education, migrants' rights and the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people to economic and climate justice and the response to mass shootings, on the understanding that only when the human rights of women and girls are fulfilled can other forms of inequality, exclusion and injustice be ended.²² They are also demanding an end to violence against women and girls and that their sexual and reproductive health rights be upheld. Men are increasingly using their positions of power to challenge gender inequality and advocate change.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.XIII.8).

²⁰ UN-Women, "Long-term care for older people: a new global gender priority", Policy Brief, No. 9 (New York, 2017).

²¹ *World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights*.

²² Maxine Molyneux, "The new feminist activism 1970–2019: intergenerational perspectives", and Ruth Milkman, "Gender, intersectionality and social movements: a new political generation", expert papers prepared for the expert group meeting on Beijing plus 25, New York, September 2019.

25. The private sector can play an important role in making globalization fairer for and more inclusive of women. Since 1995, it has been making a growing contribution to development, gender equality and human rights principles through voluntary codes and agreements, with a focus on providing women with decent working conditions, meeting environmental and labour standards and paying a fair share of taxes. As the private sector's influence in the area of sustainable development grows, its actions relating to and accountability for women's and girls' human rights should be brought fully into line with the Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda.

26. In the face of complex challenges that threaten progress on all aspects of sustainable development, the need to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action has acquired renewed urgency and could put the world on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. The primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda lies with States. Women's organizations, as key actors for advancing gender equality, need support in their demands for accountability from governments and other powerful actors.

More investment in gender equality and women's empowerment

27. The investment required to implement the Platform for Action has never been calculated but financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has been manifestly insufficient. Financing gaps persist in areas as basic as education, where 43 countries still invest less than what is needed to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all.²³ Ending preventable maternal deaths, covering all unmet needs for family planning and eliminating gender-based violence by 2030 will require some \$264 billion over the next decade. However, only \$42 billion of ODA is expected to be spent on those areas between 2020 and 2030.²⁴

28. Now is the time to act collectively with urgency to realize gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls, for today's generation and the next. Another generation of women cannot wait for equality. Action has to focus on eight priorities to accelerate progress to achieve gender equality, empowerment of women and the realization of human rights of women and girls, as set forth in the Platform for Action (see also sect. IV):

- Removing all discriminatory laws and prioritizing gender-responsive implementation and institutional frameworks.
- Breaking silos and building integrated approaches to implementation based on human rights standards and principles.
- Reaching the most marginalized groups of women and girls and ensuring that no one is left behind.
- Providing adequate funding to meet gender equality commitments.
- Accelerating the growth in women's participation in all aspects of decision-making and creating enabling environments for women's rights organizations.
- Transforming social norms to create cultures of non-violence, respect and equality.
- Harnessing technology for gender equality.
- Closing data and evidence gaps to effectively monitor progress.

²³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, Not Walls* (Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 2018).

²⁴ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "The cost of the transformative results that UNFPA is committed to achieving by 2030", Nairobi Summit fact sheets (November 2019).

II. The review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action

29. In resolution 2018/8, the Economic and Social Council decided that the Commission on the Status of Women, at its sixty-fourth session, would undertake a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In this review, challenges regarding the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through a gender perspective, are assessed.

30. In the resolution, all States were urged to undertake comprehensive national reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the regional commissions were encouraged to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level could feed into the global review due to be conducted by the Commission at its sixty-fourth session in March 2020.

31. Four regional reviews were completed by the end of November 2019 and the fifth one will take place in January 2020.²⁵ Findings from the regional reviews, where available, have been reflected in this report:

- The Economic Commission for Africa held the African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing+25) from 28 October to 1 November 2019 in Addis Ababa, under the auspices of the African Union fourth Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, on the theme "Realizing women's rights for an equal future". A political declaration, key messages and priority actions were adopted.
- The Economic Commission for Europe held the Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting on 29 and 30 October 2019 in Geneva. The outcome of the meeting was presented in a Co-Chairs' summary.
- The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Review from 27 to 29 November in Bangkok. The Asia-Pacific Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was adopted at the conference.
- The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held a high-level meeting on progress made in implementing the Platform for Action after 25 years on 28 November 2019 in Amman. Priorities for future action were set forth in an outcome document.
- The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean will hold the fourteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in January 2020.

32. The review and appraisal process has led to the mobilization of more than 3,000 civil society organizations around the world. In reviewing the efforts of States to implement the Platform for Action, they have taken part in regional consultations, forums and expert group meetings and prepared reports, outcome documents and calls for action on the basis of priorities and recommendations. Some States report having

²⁵ Reports for the regional reviews and the outcome documents of intergovernmental meetings at the regional level will be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women, see www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations#regional-review-processes.

consulted civil society in the preparation of their national reviews; in some cases civil society organizations have drafted parallel reports.

33. The United Nations has also conducted an assessment of its support for the implementation of the Platform for Action (box II.1).

Box II.1

United Nations support for the implementation of the Platform for Action

Member States bear the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform of Action but the United Nations also plays a critical role in supporting its realization. Since 1995, it has worked to create and enhance an enabling environment for gender equality and the empowerment of women, including in the context of United Nations reforms.

Gender considerations are routinely reflected in strategic planning, gender policies exist and corporate and country-level accountability frameworks for gender equality are in place. In the past five years, the United Nations has strengthened its infrastructure in order to better deliver on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

United Nations country teams support governments in their efforts to integrate gender considerations into national development and common country programming. They also provide advisory services, technical support and capacity-building to strengthen the relevant legal and policy frameworks.

In the past five years, United Nations entities have prioritized: (a) eliminating violence against women; (b) changing discriminatory social norms; (c) improving access to good quality education; and (d) increasing women's political participation. Some have also focused on improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The issue of unpaid care and domestic work is receiving more attention.

A growing number of United Nations entities are engaged in: (a) improving access to social protection; (b) expanding access to skills and training in new and emerging fields, especially science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and digital fluency; and (c) using technology to facilitate efforts to end violence against women and girls.

Areas that have received attention from the least number of United Nations entities include: (a) the financial inclusion of women; (b) gender-responsive disaster risk reduction; (c) digital inclusion; and (d) basic services and infrastructure. Against the backdrop of climate change and the importance of digital technology for economic and social inclusion, United Nations entities should prioritize action in those areas.

The Secretary-General launched a system-wide strategy on gender parity in September 2017, with the goal of achieving parity at senior leadership levels by 2021 and across the United Nations at all levels by 2028. Most entities have plans to achieve those targets and create an inclusive and modern workforce. The Secretary-General has prioritized a review of financing for gender equality in the United Nations and strengthened measures to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse in the Organization.

III. Progress in implementing the Platform for Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

34. The twenty-fifth anniversary review and appraisal of implementation of the Platform for Action is the first comprehensive review of its type to be undertaken since the 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015. Under the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in themselves constitute a goal (Goal 5) and a means for achieving the other goals, all of which contain gender-related targets. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective is crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The importance of the links between gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals was further clarified in the agreed conclusions of the Commission's sixtieth session.

35. As the most comprehensive global road map agreed upon by States to achieve gender equality, empowerment of women and the realization of women's and girls' human rights, accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action will directly contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The approach to reporting on progress taken in this report, based on six clusters, highlights the alignment between the two frameworks (annex I).

36. Since an integrated, human rights-based approach is at the heart of the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, the human rights of women feature across the six clusters. Human rights principles, including the principles of interdependence and indivisibility of rights as well as equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability, are critical for achieving gender equality. The full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, is called for in the Platform for Action. Under the Convention, gender equality is understood as substantive rather than merely formal equality. Achieving such equality requires redressing women's socioeconomic disadvantage; tackling stereotyping, stigma and violence; and strengthening women's agency, voice, leadership and participation. It also entails the transformation of institutions and structures that reinforce and reproduce patterns of discrimination and unequal power relations between men and women.²⁶ Accelerating progress on formal equality by removing discriminatory legal provisions and introducing laws to advance gender equality is an urgent first step (box III.1).

Box III.1

Ensuring equality and non-discrimination under the law

Under the Platform for Action and target 5.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 5, States have undertaken, as a matter of urgency, to revoke discriminatory legal provisions and enact laws to advance gender equality.

At the five-year review of the implementation of the Platform for Action, States set themselves the target of revoking discriminatory provisions in legislation by 2005. Progress has been made: 191 constitutions now contain provisions on equality and non-discrimination and 24 include stand-alone provisions on women's rights. The World Bank found that, between 2008 and 2017, 274 legal reforms on gender equality had been introduced in 131 countries.^a In the past 10 years, progress has been most significant in sub-Saharan Africa.

²⁶ See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendations No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures and No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention; UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

Nevertheless, with discriminatory laws in many forms still in place, the world has fallen far short of the target set for 2005. Discriminatory laws affect more than 2.5 billion women and girls around the world. For example, daughters and sons are still treated unequally in more than one in five countries for which data are available; and male and female surviving spouses do not have equal rights to inherit assets from each other in one in five countries. Under the law in 29 countries, women cannot head households in the same way as men.^b Women may not obtain a divorce in the same way or on the same legal grounds as men in 45 countries.^c In 25 countries, women are denied the right to pass their nationality on to their children on an equal basis with men.^d Eleven constitutions contain “claw-back clauses” that allow exceptions to provisions on non-discrimination in matters of personal law. A key challenge is that personal status and family law are often privileged over civil law in plural legal systems, where codified law, religious legal systems and indigenous or customary legal codes coexist.

^a World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2019*.

^b World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2018: Key Findings* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

^c Ibid.

^d UNHCR and others, “Gender discrimination and childhood statelessness” (August 2019).

37. The Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda apply to all people in all countries and States are called on to ensure that all women and girls, regardless of their location, situation and circumstances, enjoy their human rights. The principle of “leaving no one behind” focuses on addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality and their root causes, and the need to meet all goals and targets for all countries, all peoples and all segments of society. That principle is common to all six clusters, and the focus on it draws attention to the way in which policies and laws interlock with structural, power and political dynamics to deepen inequalities.²⁷ As shown below, women and girls from poor and socially marginalized groups are often among those left furthest behind because of overlaps between gender and other forms of inequality. The chapters below reflect a life-course perspective for women and girls, emphasizing the focus of the Platform for Action on the specific situation of women, as well as girls.

38. Against that backdrop, the chapters below contain a review of progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action in the context of the 2030 Agenda, in six integrated clusters. Each section starts with an explanation of the focus of the cluster concerned and continues with an assessment of global trends using global quantitative databases,²⁸ where available, followed by an assessment of action taken by States, drawing on 166 national reports (annex II) and relevant literature. Statistical information is derived from the national reports, where quantification was possible.²⁹ An attempt has been made to identify promising practices but information in the national reports on the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes is limited. Each section concludes with an overview of remaining challenges and actions needed to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action.

39. Over the past five years, a number of intergovernmental bodies, in particular the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council and its special procedures, have built on the Platform for Action to advance the normative framework

²⁷ Diane Elson, “Push no one behind”, CDP Background Paper, No. 43 (New York, 2018).

²⁸ This report uses the regional groupings used to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals, see <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups/>.

²⁹ The quantitative information in the report is, as applicable, based on the 155 reports that had been received by 30 September 2019.

on gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights of women and girls. Since 2015, the Commission has adopted agreed conclusions on: women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development (sixtieth session); women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work (sixty-first session); challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls (sixty-second session); and social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (sixty-third session). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women continues to advance the normative framework on the human rights of women and girls (box III.2)

40. Regional conventions and instruments have also continued to expand the normative framework on gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights of women and girls. Important guidance relating to the implementation of the Platform for Action is contained in such instruments as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

Box III.2

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the implementation of the Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda

Under the Platform for Action, States are urged to implement all human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Since 2016, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has increasingly linked the obligations of States under the Convention to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including with regard to gender equality. The Committee has regularly engaged with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, underscoring the link between sustainable development and the realization of women's human rights and the critical role of the Convention in the implementation and achievement of the Goals.

To help States to fulfil their human rights commitments, the Committee has continued to interpret the normative content and scope of the Convention through its general recommendations, of which it adopted five between 2015 and 2019.

- General recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice underscores that the right of access to justice is essential for the realization of all of women's human rights and emphasizes its importance in diverse legal systems and all areas of law for all women (see sect. III.A, C and E).
- General recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women underscores the link between the environment and the human rights of women and the fact that rural women in developing and developed countries are deeply affected by poverty, economic and political exclusion, climate change and natural disasters, and a lack of access to infrastructure, services and social protection (see sect. III.F).
- General recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, further defines the obligations of States parties, underscores the gender-based nature of violence against women, sets forth its structural causes and multiple and intersecting

forms and underlines that violence occurs in all spheres of human interaction, including technology-mediated environments (section III.C).

- General recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education emphasizes the need to address gender-based discrimination and stereotyping in education and ensure access to education for women and girls (see sect. III.B).
- General recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change emphasizes the disproportionate impact that climate change and disasters have on women and girls and the need for concerted efforts to protect and promote their human rights at all stages of climate change and disaster prevention, mitigation, response, recovery and adaptation (see sect. III.F).

Since 2015, one State (South Sudan) has acceded to the Convention, bringing the total number of States parties to 189, but the goal of universal ratification, contained in the Platform for Action, has not been achieved.

Under the individual communications and confidential inquiry procedures of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, women denied justice at the national level may seek international redress for violations of their human rights. As at November 2019, 113 States were parties to the Optional Protocol and the Committee had found violations under the Convention in eight cases covering a wide range of issues.

A. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Key messages

- Progress in closing the global gender gap in labour force participation rates has stalled and the precarious nature of women's jobs, labour market segregation, the global gender pay gap, and the disproportionate burden placed on women for unpaid care and domestic work persist.
- In the past five years, States have worked to build women's economic independence by: improving paid leave for carers; expanding childcare services; strengthening laws and policies to reduce the gender pay gap and labour market segregation and providing women with support to make the transition from informal to formal work and become entrepreneurs.
- Significant gaps remain in efforts to strengthen women's economic independence and security. Prevailing economic models, which have exacerbated inequalities and failed to generate decent work, continue to undermine the effectiveness of action taken by States.
- More must be done to invest in childcare and long-term care services and to help informal workers denied basic labour rights and entitlements, including in global supply chains where women tend to be overrepresented, to move into formal work; labour market segregation must be addressed, not only by increasing the representation of women in male-dominated sectors but by encouraging men to enter female-dominated occupations.
- Such actions are all the more urgent given the challenges posed by artificial intelligence and automation. They should accompany efforts to make the creation of decent work a policy priority, increase fiscal space to support investment in services and infrastructure and reduce and redistribute the burden of unpaid care and domestic work.

41. Economic independence (critical area of concern F) is central to women's well-being, the enjoyment of human rights, amplifying their voices within and beyond their families and giving them the option to exit abusive relationships.³⁰ Increasing the access of women to resources, whether through paid work, asset ownership or social protection transfers, is critical for addressing poverty (critical area of concern A, see sect. III.B). It can trigger shifts in the balance of power in the home, giving women greater socioeconomic security and decision-making power and helping them to buffer their households from economic privation.³¹ Decent work and universal social protection and care systems are key to ending poverty (Sustainable Development Goal 1), ensuring inclusive development by tackling extreme inequality of income and wealth (Goal 10), enabling just transitions to sustainable production and consumption patterns (Goal 12) and enhancing macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and cohesion (Goal 17). Current orthodox economic, especially neoliberal, policies are not generating the level and type of employment and livelihoods needed to make growth inclusive. The Platform for Action provides important guidance for achieving inclusive development, decent work and well-being for women.

42. It is essential to anchor the economic empowerment of women in human rights standards and principles. Although the broader and improved education of women and their greater participation in the labour force fuels economic growth, the reverse does not necessarily hold: the comparative advantage of growth based on labour-intensive exports may rely on lower wages paid to women.³² Growth based on extractive industries or land enclosure and appropriation can disrupt women's access to resources and livelihoods and "push them behind". Approaching the economic empowerment of women solely as a matter of economic growth may mean harnessing their time, knowledge and resources to serve development ends without ensuring their rights.

43. The importance of the right to work (full and productive employment) and rights at work (equality and non-discrimination, fair, safe and just working conditions, and the right to organize in unions) are underscored by the standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), is particularly significant for ensuring women's economic security. The ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) is important for the promotion of a safe and decent working environment for all, especially with regard to violence and harassment directed at women in the workplace (see sect. III.C). In the agreed conclusions for its sixty-first session, the Commission underlined the importance of managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment (E/2017/27). In those of its sixty-second session, it set out the steps necessary to overcome persistent inequalities, discrimination and barriers faced by women and girls living in rural areas, and measures to lift all rural women and girls out of poverty and to ensure the realization of their rights, well-being and resilience (E/2018/27).

44. In recent years, important normative advances have been made in recognizing the contribution of unpaid work to human well-being and economic prosperity, most notably through target 5.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals. In that target, which goes beyond counting the value of unremunerated work in satellite accounts, the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute such work through investment in social protection systems and sustainable infrastructure is underscored.

³⁰ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World* (New York, 2019).

³¹ Mieke Meurs and Rita Ismaylov, "Improving assessments of gender bargaining power: a case study from Bangladesh", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 25, No. 1 (2019).

³² Stephanie Seguino, "Gender inequality and economic growth: a cross-country analysis", *World Development*, vol. 28, No. 7 (July 2000).

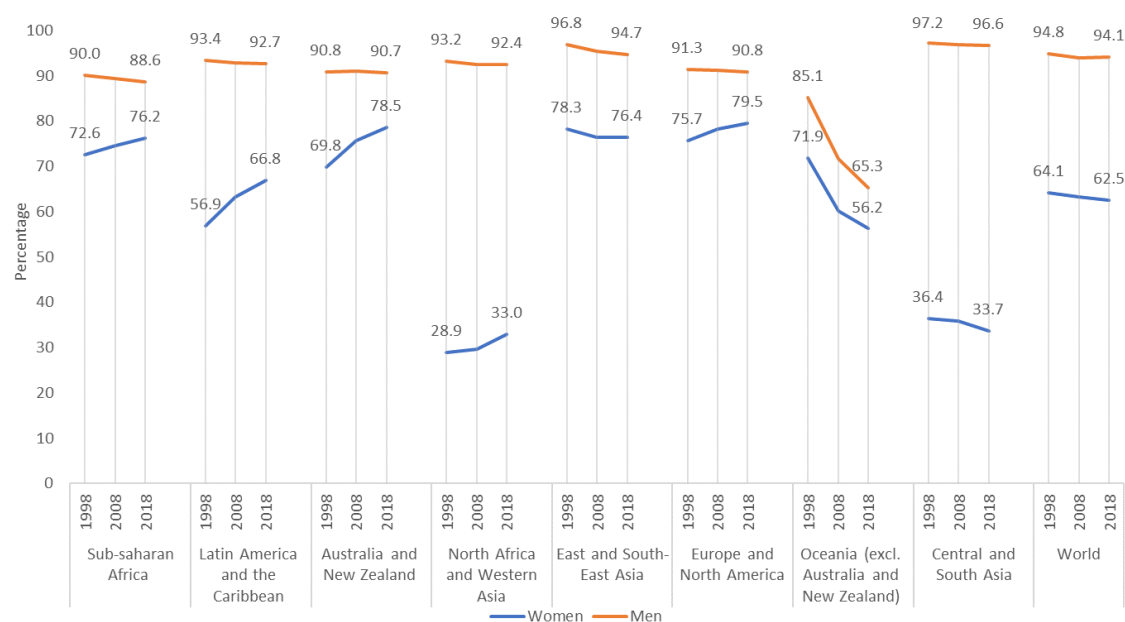
1. Global and regional trends

Progress in closing the global gender gap in labour force participation rates has stalled, and women remain concentrated in low-quality, insecure forms of work

45. The global gender gap in labour force participation rates of 31 percentage points barely changed between 1998 and 2018 (figure A.1). In spite of progress in closing the education gender gap (see sect. III.B) and a rapid decline in fertility in developing countries, sustained gains in women's labour force participation rates in that period were made only in Latin America and the Caribbean. In contrast, the rate in Central and South Asia dropped 2 percentage points from an already low base.

46. The impact of globalization on women's access to decent work has been mixed. In some contexts, growing numbers of more educated women have gained access to export-oriented manufacturing employment. The share of women employed in global supply chains in emerging economies tends to be higher than their share in total employment, and there are concerns about wages and working conditions; the low prices paid to suppliers create pressure down the supply chain to reduce costs, which can lead to downward pressure on wages.³³ In many other contexts, trade liberalization has led to job losses, especially in manufacturing, sometimes larger for men than women, and at other times the reverse.³⁴ The increasingly capital-intensive nature of industries in developing countries has been associated with a decline in the female share of employment, or "defeminization".³⁵

Figure A.1
Labour force participation rate among individuals aged 25–54, by sex and region (1998–2018)



Source: Families in a Changing World: Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020 (New York, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), 2019).

Note: Data refer to latest available in the reference period for 188 countries, which cover most of the world's population aged 25–54 in 2018.

³³ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Decent Work in Global Supply Chains* (Geneva, 2016).

³⁴ Sophia Kan and Stephan Klasen, "Macroeconomics and gender: recent research on the linkages between economic growth and women's economic empowerment" (2018).

³⁵ Sheba Tejani and William Milberg, "Global defeminization? Industrial upgrading and manufacturing employment in developing countries", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 22, No. 2 (2016).

47. Unemployment rates remain unacceptably high, especially among women.³⁶ A major global challenge is the high rate of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Worldwide, 30 per cent of young women and 13 per cent of young men were classified as NEET in 2018.³⁷ High rates of youth unemployment mean that countries are not reaping this demographic dividend.

48. Labour force participation rates do not capture many quality-related dimensions of paid work. In most developing countries, the majority of women work informally and unprotected by labour regulations or social security. Not all workers in informal employment are poor but there is a strong correlation between poverty and informal work. Moreover, most people who take up informal work do so not by choice but as a result of a lack of opportunities in the formal economy.³⁸

49. Within the broad category of informal work, women are more likely than men to work in more vulnerable settings, including as contributing family workers and home-based workers.³⁹ For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, female labour force participation is relatively high, reaching 76 per cent in 2018 (figure A.1). That largely reflects the importance of agriculture in the region and women's roles in it: 33 per cent of all female workers in sub-Saharan Africa, as opposed to 15 per cent of their male counterparts, are contributing family workers on family farms and enterprises, where they often receive no remuneration.⁴⁰ Even where women are directly remunerated for the informal work they do, their earnings may not provide an adequate standard of living. In low and middle-income countries, as many as one in four working women and men live below the moderate poverty threshold (\$3.10 per day in purchasing power parity terms), placing them in the category of the working poor.⁴¹

Despite rising rates of female education, occupational and sectoral segregation persists in both developed and developing countries, and in emerging and well-established sectors

50. Improved levels of education among women and girls have not translated into a reduction in occupational segregation by gender or the elimination of the gender pay gap. In developed countries, even as women have reached near parity with men in terms of labour force participation and educational attainment, occupational and sectoral segregation has persisted to a remarkable degree. Between 1980 and 2011, occupational and sectoral segregation by sex actually grew in more developing countries than those in which it declined.⁴²

51. As a result of occupational segregation, the gender pay gap has proven to be persistent, linked to the fact that pay in sectors and occupations in which mostly women are active is less than in those that are dominated by men.⁴³ Women continue to be paid approximately 16–22 per cent less than men.⁴⁴ While women may be placed

³⁶ ILO, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends 2019* (Geneva, 2019).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, 3rd ed. (Geneva, 2018).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ UN-Women calculations using data from ILO, ILOSTAT database, available at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/> (accessed 28 October 2019).

⁴¹ ILO, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends 2018* (Geneva, 2018), table E3.

⁴² Mary Borrowman and Stephan Klasen, "Drivers of gendered sectoral and occupational segregation in developing countries", Discussion Paper, No. 222 (Göttingen, Germany, University of Göttingen, 2017).

⁴³ Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "The gender wage gap: extent, trends and explanations", *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 55, No. 3 (September 2017).

⁴⁴ ILO, *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What Lies Behind Gender Pay Gaps?* (Geneva, 2018).

below men in the wage structure in all countries, the extent of the gender wage gap depends on overall wage inequality.⁴⁵

52. The changing nature of work as a result of the proliferation of digital platforms and other changes associated with the digital revolution, in developed and developing countries, holds new possibilities for women's employment, but also presents risks. According to research by ILO, the online economy will be no more inclusive than the regular economy; women represent only one out of every three crowd-workers and the gender balance is particularly skewed in developing countries.⁴⁶ In the OECD countries for which comparable data are available, gender inequalities are already evident in technological sectors.⁴⁷ Digitalization may also contribute to the further informalization of paid work due to gaps in existing labour regulations and a lack of access to social protection.⁴⁸ The gig economy may present women with opportunities but may also reinforce gender stereotypes and the expectation that women should undertake paid work only within the confines of the home.⁴⁹

Women continue to face significant barriers in accessing and owning land

53. A persistent barrier to women's economic security in agriculture is the lack of equality in terms of their ownership of and access to land. Their command of assets has an important bearing on their economic independence in case of marriage or union dissolution, whether due to separation, divorce or death of a spouse. With regard to the inheritance of family property, daughters and sons are still treated unequally in more than one in five countries for which data are available; and male and female surviving spouses do not have equal rights to inherit assets from each other in one in five countries.⁵⁰ Unequal inheritance rights persist in North Africa and Western Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Central and South Asia.

54. In many parts of the world, especially in Africa and Asia, the equality of women may be further constrained by customary law where it overlaps with civil law. Women often have their usufruct rights stripped at the time of divorce or widowhood, with property grabbed or its use rights disputed by members of the wider family, leaving such women and their children without property (E/CN.6/2018/3).

There are stark inequalities among women in the world of work

55. Some groups of women face compounded inequalities in the world of work. For example, available data show that, compared with women without disabilities, women with disabilities tend to have lower levels of educational attainment and are more likely to be inactive and suffer from multidimensional poverty. NEET rates indicate that young women with disabilities are more likely to be excluded than men with disabilities or women without disabilities (figure A.2).

⁴⁵ Jill Rubery and Mathew Johnson, "Closing the gender pay gap: what role for trade unions?", ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) Working Paper (Geneva, 2019).

⁴⁶ ILO, *Digital Labour Platforms and the Future of Work: Towards Decent Work in the Online World* (Geneva, 2018).

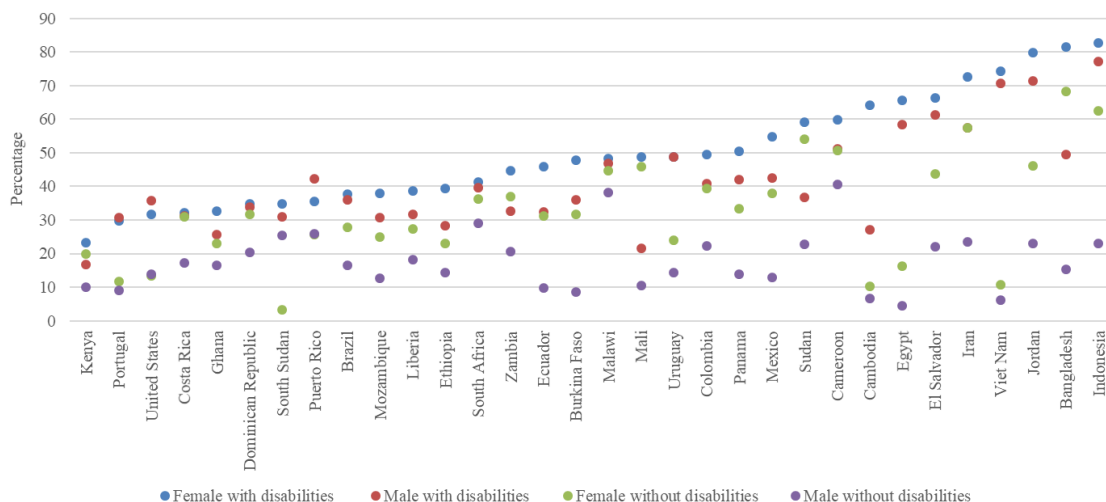
⁴⁷ Wajcman, "The digital revolution".

⁴⁸ Jacqueline O'Reilly, Florian Ranft and Max Neufeind, "Introduction: identifying the challenges for work in the digital age", in Max Neufeind, Jacqueline O'Reilly and Florian Ranft, eds., *Work in the Digital Age: Challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution* (London, Rowman and Littlefield International, 2018).

⁴⁹ ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work For All* (Geneva, 2019).

⁵⁰ UN-Women calculations using data from World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2018*. See also <https://wbl.worldbank.org/#> (accessed 11 January 2019).

Figure A.2
People aged 15 to 24 not in education, employment or training (2005–2015)



Source: *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, UN-Women, 2018).

Notes: For each country, the latest data was used from censuses dating from 2005 or later. In the case of India, the 2014 census is used. In most country samples it is explicitly stated that only permanent conditions were considered disabilities. When multiple possible disabling conditions were reported, they were aggregated into a single summary variable. Where samples provide several degrees of difficulty, disability status was assigned to those marked as “significant” or “severe” difficulty.

The provision of unpaid care and domestic work disproportionately remains women’s responsibility the world over

56. Time-use surveys from around the world reveal that, when paid and unpaid work are combined, women work longer hours overall than men do.⁵¹ Over the past four decades, women have taken on more paid work but there has been little movement in the opposite direction. Women’s overall workloads have intensified into a “double shift”, leaving little or no time for rest and leisure. Women do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men, although gender differences vary from one country to another and are particularly stark in developing countries.⁵² The gender gap is at its widest in North Africa and Western Asia, where women do almost six times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. In poorer households, unpaid work is often delegated to school-age girls, which has an adverse impact on their education and well-being, or to grandmothers who are already in paid work or in need of care themselves.⁵³

57. Rural women tend to spend more time than their urban counterparts on unpaid care and domestic work, given generally poorer access to infrastructure such as running water or labour-saving technology.⁵⁴ Household wealth or income status can also make a difference, as poorer women (although not men) make up for services they cannot afford by increasing their unpaid time inputs. Women’s unpaid care and domestic work is more intense in households with young children; the amount of work

⁵¹ UN-Women, *Progress of the World’s Women 2019–2020*, fig. 5.2. Based on average differences in female/male unweighted means.

⁵² UN-Women, *Progress of the World’s Women 2019–2020*.

⁵³ Deepta Chopra and Elena Zambelli, *No Time to Rest: Women’s Lived Experiences of Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work* (Brighton, United Kingdom, Institute of Development Studies, 2017).

⁵⁴ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work* (Geneva, 2018).

diminishes as the youngest child grows.⁵⁵ The presence of young children (under 6 years of age) in the household is thus also associated with lower women's labour force participation rates, while it has the opposite effect on men's labour force participation rates.⁵⁶

2. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

58. To ensure women's economic independence and rights, the Platform for Action calls for equal access to employment under appropriate working conditions, equal control over resources and assets, elimination of occupational discrimination and segregation, recognition and support for all forms of unremunerated work, and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for all women and men. It also identified the importance of women's collective presence and voice in the institutions that govern the economy.

59. Based on the national reports, policy and programmatic trends in implementation emerged in four areas: (a) strengthening access to paid leave, care services and time-saving infrastructure; (b) addressing labour market segregation and the gender pay gap; (c) improving the quality of employment in rural and informal economies; and (d) supporting women-owned enterprises, including through financial services.

(a) *Strengthening access to paid leave, care services and time-saving infrastructure*

60. Work-family reconciliation policies can play a pivotal role in creating a level-playing field for women and men. They include paid maternity, paternity and parental leave and the provision of care services and time-saving infrastructure.

61. Three quarters of States have prioritized action to introduce or strengthen maternity, paternity or parental leave or other types of family leave and thereby advance gender equality in paid work. Maternity leave is essential for the health, nutrition and well-being of mothers and their infants; paternity and parental leave encourages men to participate in caregiving, especially when the leave is a mandatory individual right that cannot be transferred to the other parent.⁵⁷ However, globally, only 41.1 per cent of women with a new-born receive maternity benefits, with regional coverage as low as 15.8 per cent in Africa and 33.4 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, compared with over 80 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.⁵⁸ The challenge for many developing countries is to design leave systems that cover informal workers.

62. Many countries, especially in Europe and Latin America, reported that they had put provisions in place to expand leave for fathers and that they were conducting awareness-raising campaigns on men's caregiving role. Nonetheless, only a small proportion of men worldwide benefit from paternity and parental leave schemes. In 2016, only slightly more than half of all countries provided fathers with paid statutory leave entitlements, usually of relatively short duration.⁵⁹

63. Sixty-three per cent of States reported that they had expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable. Access to affordable and good quality childcare, however, remains far from universal. In the European Union, for example, 31 per cent of households experience difficulty in accessing such services, with

⁵⁵ Debbie Budlender, ed., *Time Use Studies and Unpaid Care Work* (New York, Routledge, 2010).

⁵⁶ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*, fig. 4.5.

⁵⁷ Erin M. Rehel, "When dad stays home too: paternity leave, gender, and parenting", *Gender and Society*, vol. 28, No. 1 (February 2014).

⁵⁸ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017–19: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2017).

⁵⁹ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs*, fig. 3.8.

affordability cited as the main barrier.⁶⁰ In developing countries, access to pre-primary education is limited. On average, only 39 per cent of children in developing countries enjoyed such access in 2014, compared with 87 per cent in developed countries. Children in the poorest households are almost six times less likely to receive pre-primary education than children in the richest.⁶¹ In low-income countries, the relative lack of a paid care workforce poses a significant challenge.⁶² In several developing countries, efforts are being made to expand the provision of childcare by various means, in some instances as part of a comprehensive approach to care needs throughout people's lives (box A.1).

Box A.1

New directions: Expanding care provision in India (Tamil Nadu) and Uruguay

In India, the Integrated Child Development Services scheme provides half of children under 6 years of age (almost 83 million) with food, health checks and vaccinations and, in some cases, childcare and preschool services. In States such as Tamil Nadu, the federal programme has been strengthened to improve the coverage and quality of services and the conditions of care workers, who are primarily women. The programme has delivered promising results, including the regular availability of nutritious food, preschool education for children aged 3 to 6 years, opening hours and locations that cater to women, as well as better training and wages. It is also focused on marginalized groups, such as Dalit communities.

In Uruguay, the Integrated National Care System is designed to meet the care needs of people throughout life (young children, persons with disabilities and frail older persons) and protect the rights of their caregivers, paid and unpaid. The system complements key social protection policies (such as parental leave and disability allowances) with three key elements: a range of services (childcare, personal assistants for people with disabilities, long-term care services); measures to improve the working conditions of paid care workers and support for unpaid family caregivers; and promotion of the equal sharing of unpaid care responsibilities between women and men. The comprehensive and gender-responsive approach was informed by an open and participatory process for redesigning the national social protection system and the specific expertise and active participation of women's rights organizations and gender equality advocates.

64. Close to half of States reported that they had expanded support for older persons and others needing intense forms of care. Specific actions included setting up community and home-based care services and establishing leave provisions for employees to care for adult family members. Nonetheless, female family members continue to form the backbone of long-term care by providing unpaid care.⁶³ Models of care for older persons that rely exclusively on families are becoming untenable, owing to the physical distance between generations (especially as a result of migration), the fact that older persons increasingly have few or no adult children to care for them and the rising rate of participation by women in the labour force. Globally, long-term care tends to be financed through out-of-pocket payment, which

⁶⁰ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Beijing+25: The 5th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States* (14254/19 Add.2).

⁶¹ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Education for People and Planet – Creating Sustainable Futures for All* (Paris, 2016), annex, table 4.

⁶² UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*, fig. 5.8.

⁶³ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*, fig. 5.10.

only the more affluent can afford.⁶⁴ The coverage and sustainable financing of long-term care systems requires urgent attention.

65. One third of States reported that they had invested in time- and labour-saving infrastructure, such as public transport, electricity, water and sanitation, to reduce the amount of time spent by women on unpaid care and domestic work. Such investment was a high priority for States in Central and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (64 and 61 per cent of States, respectively). Particularly in low-income contexts, women are likely to be penalized in terms of pay, time poverty and well-being where investment is inadequate and policies are not integrated, for example in the absence of paid leave and accessible and affordable infrastructure and public services (A/74/111).

(b) *Addressing labour market segregation and the gender pay gap*

66. Continuing the trend in implementation reported in 2015, more than 80 per cent of States and regions reported having strengthened laws and workplace policies to advance gender equality in terms of employment and pay. Initiatives include prohibitions on discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women, and equal pay legislation, as well as gender-responsive labour market policies. More attention is being paid to sexual harassment in the workplace (see sect. III.C).

67. Many countries have enacted laws and implemented policies to address the gender pay gap and overcome labour market segregation. Specific initiatives include laws on equal pay for work of equal value, as well as measures for pay transparency and monitoring, gender pay audits and certifications. Equal pay audits help to uncover practices that deepen the gender pay gap, such as ambiguous pay scales, managerial discretion over starting salaries and performance pay, and the lack of transparency and secrecy over pay.⁶⁵ States need to do more to regulate the conduct of gender pay audits by employers, monitor the gender pay gap, carry out other measures on workplace gender equality and disclose the information systematically and regularly.

68. Raising the minimum wage is an important means by which States are boosting the earnings of women workers at the lower end of the pay scale and reducing the gender pay gap. Countries are also addressing the pay and conditions of low-wage workers, including domestic workers, by enforcing written contracts, a minimum wage, social protection and the right to a safe and healthy work environment. The number of countries that have ratified the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), nearly doubled from 16 in November 2014 to 29 in October 2019. More needs to be done to address the working conditions of other vulnerable categories, including agricultural, home-based and contributing family workers.

69. Several States have also introduced collective pay agreements, which can reduce the gender pay gap among higher wage-earners, and policies to promote greater representation of women in senior and highly paid positions. It is essential that women organize in trade unions in order to secure provisions in collective agreements that advance gender equality. Even in sectors with high rates of female employment and union membership, more needs to be done to ensure that women reach leadership positions in unions.

70. In some States, policies have been introduced to boost the representation women in non-traditional areas of employment, in particular those relating to STEM and technology, and reduce gender-based labour market segregation. Attracting women to the technology sector and retaining them in such male-dominated workplace cultures is difficult.⁶⁶ Strategies to increase the presence of women in technology are often

⁶⁴ Xenia Scheil-Adlung, “Long-term care protection for older persons: a review of coverage deficits in 46 countries”, ESS Working Paper, No. 50 (Geneva, ILO, 2015).

⁶⁵ Jill Rubery, “Tackling the gender pay gap: from individual choices to institutional change”, Policy Brief, No. 6 (New York, UN-Women, 2016).

⁶⁶ Wajcman, “The digital revolution”.

focused on mentoring or unconscious bias training, putting the onus on individuals to change, rather than shifting workplace cultures that exclude women.⁶⁷

71. States provided limited information on policies to encourage men to take up jobs in female-dominated sectors, especially care professions such as childcare and long-term care.

(c) *Improving the quality of women's employment, especially in informal and rural economies*

72. In 37 per cent of countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, North Africa and Western Asia, measures were taken to help women to move from informal to formal employment. They include the registration of informal businesses, including those owned by women, improved access to social protection for informal workers (see sect. III.B) and improved labour market regulation, including of paid domestic work. The focus on improving work conditions for paid domestic workers is promising, given that it is the single most important source of employment for women in many developing countries and a growing source of employment for migrant women around the world.

73. A 2019 review of International Monetary Fund (IMF) country reports shows that, in the name of austerity, many countries are under pressure to enforce labour market “flexibilization”, which usually entails limiting salary adjustments, decentralizing collective bargaining and making it easier for enterprises to hire employees on temporary contracts. Such reforms are being considered by 44 developing and 35 high-income countries.⁶⁸ Based on past experience, those measures are likely to hit women workers particularly hard.⁶⁹ More accountability for workers' rights is needed in global supply chains in highly competitive, low-cost markets that currently escape legal scrutiny.⁷⁰ Monetary and fiscal policies need to be geared towards promoting full employment and the creation of decent work.

74. States reported on initiatives to increase access to better quality work for marginalized groups of women and girls. Many reported having implemented public works programmes with high rates of female participation. Several countries reported that single mothers, young women or minority women had been given priority access to such schemes. Some are facilitating access to training and employment opportunities for women with disabilities, using targeted and universal measures (box A.2). In Europe, several countries reported having taken specific measures to support the integration of migrant and refugee women into labour markets.

Box A.2

Leaving no one behind: training and employment support for women with disabilities in Germany, the Republic of Korea and Uganda

The mobilization of disability rights groups and advocates had led to the ratification by 180 States of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by October 2019. States have strengthened policy and programmatic efforts to support women's access to training and employment opportunities but much remains to be done. Many national initiatives focus on the promotion of inclusive employment by revoking discriminatory legislation, the provision of inclusive job services in the

⁶⁷ Alison T. Wynn, “Pathways toward change: ideologies and gender equality in a Silicon Valley technology company”, *Gender and Society* vol. 34, No. 1 (2019).

⁶⁸ Ortiz, and Cummins, “Austerity: the new normal”.

⁶⁹ Jayati Ghosh, *Economic Crises and Women's Work: Exploring Progressive Strategies in a Rapidly Changing Global Environment* (New York, UN-Women, 2013).

⁷⁰ Sharan Burrow, “United Nations treaty on business and human rights vital for economic and social justice”, *Social Europe*, 28 October 2019.

public and private sectors, inclusive education and training and social protection schemes that do not discourage employment.^a

In Uganda, the Government has put in place affirmative action measures to enhance political representation of persons with disabilities at all levels, from local councils to the national parliament. Some councillors with disabilities are promoting the application of affirmative action measures to the labour market. District councillors in Kampala, for instance, advocate the creation of an accessible reserved space in one of the busiest districts of the city for vendors with disabilities, many of them women. The Uganda Women Empowerment Programme and Youth Livelihood Fund provide training in entrepreneurship skills and financial services to designated groups and promote the inclusion of women with disabilities in their groups.^b The Association of Microfinance Institutions of Uganda has acted to give persons with disabilities equal opportunities to access financial services, overcoming the false assumption that persons with disabilities represent a higher risk group.^c

In Germany and the Republic of Korea, employment policies are designed to ensure that people with disabilities can access the type of paid work that they wish. In Germany, people with disabilities have access to an integrated system of employment, instead of sheltered workshops, which perpetuated segregation and exclusion from the broader labour market. Under the Federal Participation Act (2016), employers who hire workers with disabilities are entitled to cash incentives. That enables such workers to make the transition from sheltered workshops and, if the transition is unsuccessful, to return to those workshops.^d

In the Republic of Korea, businesses owned by people with disabilities or the employees of which make up at least 30 per cent of the workforce are entitled to tax advantages and easier access to financing and loans. Anti-discrimination legislation has also been passed but awareness of its existence is limited.^e Such policies need to be coupled with awareness-raising campaigns among employers, colleagues and the general public.

^a *Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations publications, Sales No. 19.IV.4).

^b Hisayo Katsui, *Disabilities, Human Rights and International Cooperation: Human Rights-Based Approach and Lived Experiences of Ugandan Women with Disabilities*, The Centre for Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities Publications Series, No. 8 (2012).

^c *Disability and Development Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 19.IV.4) p. 162.

^d Elisa Fiala, "A brave new world of work through the lens of disability", *Societies*, vol. 8, No. 27 (2018).

^e Se Kwang Hwang and Alan Roulstone, "Enterprising? Disabled? The status and potential for disabled people's microenterprise in South Korea", *Disability and Society*, vol. 30, No. 1 (2015).

75. Several countries have implemented measures to facilitate women's access to land and to make agricultural extension services more readily available and responsive to the needs of women farmers, including through more female extension agents. A few countries have reported the introduction of loans and subsidies directed at women or taken up to a significant degree by them. Agriculture remains central to food security and women's livelihoods, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Gender gaps in agricultural productivity persist in those regions, not because women are less efficient but because they lack equal access to assets and farming material.⁷¹ Despite the positive steps taken in some developing countries, large-scale land investments by foreign and multinational companies have frequently led to the

⁷¹ Cheryl R. Doss, "Women and agricultural productivity: reframing the issues", *Development Policy Review*, vol. 36, No. 1 (January 2018).

violation of women's rights to agricultural land and blocked their access to common pool resources, such as pastures and ponds, without consultation or compensation.⁷²

(d) *Supporting women-owned enterprises, including through financial services*

76. In 81 per cent of countries, it was reported that supporting women's entrepreneurship is a key priority, including as a means of poverty reduction, through better access to financial services, information and skills development. Entrepreneurship encompasses anything from survival-oriented, informal micro-enterprises to large-scale, highly profitable businesses with a significant workforce. Women's enterprises, particularly in developing countries, tend to be concentrated at the small-scale end of the spectrum, hiring few, if any, workers, often home-based and reporting low returns.⁷³ Within the informal economy, only 1.4 per cent of women workers can be categorized as employers (3.4 per cent of men), in other words those who employ staff to run their businesses. A much higher proportion (36.3 per cent) work for themselves.⁷⁴ Globally, less than 2 per cent of women in work are employers. Support measures for entrepreneurs therefore target a very small part of the female labour force. More diverse measures are thus needed to increase women's economic security, including by improving the quality of employment and livelihoods for women.

77. Some 49 per cent of States reported that they had adopted measures to improve women's access to financial services, such as savings, insurance, remittances and credit, and thereby enable them to start and grow their own businesses. However, their access to formal financial services remains inadequate. Globally, 74 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women had an account at a formal financial institution in 2017.⁷⁵ Individuals may have a bank account simply to receive their pay or a pension and may allocate the monies to routine household expenses without being able to accumulate any savings. In Central and South Asia, North Africa and Western Asia, the gap between the share of men and share of women with such accounts has declined since 2011 but in sub-Saharan Africa it has increased. Women also have less access to loans, in particular formal ones, which increases their reliance on informal money lenders, who often charge higher interest rates. As a remedy, most States continued to offer microcredit and subsidized loan schemes targeted at women-owned enterprises or individual women entrepreneurs. It is difficult to draw general conclusions about microfinance, given the sector's heterogeneity and diversity of contexts. Nonetheless, the poorest and most marginalized groups are more likely to leave the schemes, especially when they live in poor, remote and sparsely populated areas with limited business opportunities. Proximity to roads and markets can enhance the impact of such schemes.⁷⁶

78. Many States reported having taken measures to improve digital and financial literacy. Digital technologies have given rise to a new generation of financial services that could help to bridge the gender gap in account ownership, increase women's participation in the formal financial system and provide them with greater privacy

⁷² Michael Levien, "Gender and land dispossession: a comparative analysis", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 44, No. 6 (2017). Kristina Lanz, Elisabeth Prügl and Jean-David Gerber, "The poverty of neoliberalized feminism: gender equality in a 'best practice' large-scale land investment in Ghana", *Journal of Peasant Studies* (2019).

⁷³ Naila Kabeer, *Gender, Livelihood Capabilities and Women's Economic Empowerment: Reviewing Evidence Over the Life Course* (London, Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence, 2018).

⁷⁴ ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy*.

⁷⁵ Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and others, *The Global Findex Database 2017: Measuring Financial Inclusion and the Fintech Revolution* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018). See also <https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>.

⁷⁶ Kabeer, *Gender, Livelihood Capabilities and Women's Economic Empowerment*.

and control over their finances.⁷⁷ In order to harness that potential, States and businesses need to ensure that digital financial services are accessible, affordable and safe for women. That remains a challenge in view of persistent gender gaps in access to and use of mobile phones as well as digital and financial literacy. Moreover, the measures taken need to be complemented by safeguards to protect women's data and regulations to prevent the use of algorithms that may lead to gender bias in the assessment of client risk or creditworthiness, thus undermining women's access to credit.

3. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

79. In order to increase women's economic independence, States have strengthened family leave provisions, expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable, and invested in time-saving infrastructure. However, many women and men, especially where informally employed, do not have access to paid maternity or parental leave. Access to affordable and quality childcare services and long-term care services remains far from universal in most countries. Labour market segregation, which underpins the gender pay gap, persists in developing and developed countries. A more comprehensive approach is needed to build women's economic security.

80. States should prioritize action in three areas: the expansion of childcare and long-term care services, with the aim of achieving sustainably financed universal coverage, integrated with paid family leave for all regardless of employment status; the extension of efforts to formalize informal employment for workers denied their basic labour rights and entitlements, including home-based workers, contributing family workers and women workers hidden in global supply chains, and prevention of the informalization of formal jobs as a result of austerity and technological change; the reduction of labour market segregation and the gender pay gap, by increasing women's representation in non-traditional areas, particularly STEM, and encouraging men to take up jobs in female-dominated sectors, including care professions.

81. The creation of decent jobs, people-centred support and environmental protection should be the key priorities of systemic, macroeconomic policies. The promotion of full employment, good jobs and adequate wages should be an explicit goal of monetary and counter-cyclical fiscal policies.⁷⁸ Governments, for example, could step in as the "employer of last resort" through public works programmes. They could apply public investment strategies to create jobs for women and build much-needed physical and social infrastructure, such as rural road networks, green urban transport systems and care services, which would also serve to free up time for women. Macroeconomic policies require targets and tools to optimize job creation, ensure gender equality in employment and improve the earning capacity of women farmers. Central banks can play a critical role, not only in making credit more easily available to women, but also by stimulating private investment in enterprises and jobs. They can also counter destabilizing cross-border capital movements through capital controls⁷⁹ in order to reduce the risk of economic crises, which often have a disproportionately adverse impact on women's access to resources, services and jobs.⁸⁰ A legally binding global instrument is needed to help to close accountability gaps with regard to the rights of workers in global supply chains and to combat corporate impunity. Leading standard-setting organizations are now moving beyond incremental improvements and voluntary codes of conduct to call for the more

⁷⁷ H el ene Molinier, *Leveraging Digital Finance for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* (New York, UN-Women, 2019).

⁷⁸ Stephanie Seguino, "Tools of macroeconomic policy: fiscal, monetary and macroprudential approaches", in Diane Elson and Anuradha Seth, eds., *Gender Equality and Inclusive Growth: Economic Policies to Achieve Sustainable Development* (New York, UN-Women, 2019).

⁷⁹ UNCTAD, *Trade and Development Report 2019* (see sect. I, footnote 11).

⁸⁰ UN-Women, *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality* (see sect. I, footnote 14).

systematic disclosure of data on environment, social and governance issues in order to monitor corporate performance on sustainability outcomes, including gender equality indicators such as the gender pay gap.

B. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Key messages

- Extreme poverty has declined globally but continues to affect women disproportionately; tackling the root causes of women's poverty will be critical for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 by 2030.
- Women's and girl's access to social protection and public services has improved, but significant gaps and biases remain within and across countries and regions.
- States have taken measures to improve access to social protection, good quality education and life-long learning for women and girls; and to enhance their access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health.
- Expected future austerity measures pose a threat to progress on the affordability, accessibility and quality of public services, particularly for the most marginalized groups of women and girls.
- To harness synergies and address the multiple dimensions of women's poverty, States should move beyond sectoral and towards systemic approaches that address women's risks and vulnerabilities over the course of their lives and support the transformation of unequal power relations.

82. From a gender perspective, social protection and social services are most effective in reducing poverty (critical area of concern A, Sustainable Development Goal 1) and inequality (Goal 10) when they address women's rights and needs throughout life and are delivered in an integrated and coordinated manner. Coordination is also critical to harnessing the synergies between different policy interventions. Family-related cash transfers, which are an increasingly prevalent component of social protection systems, can enhance girls' school enrolment (critical area of concern B, Goal 4) and women's access to maternal health services (critical area of concern C, Goal 3) as well as improving household nutrition (Goal 2). Affordable early childhood education and care services are critical for women to enter and remain in the labour market (critical area of concern F), secure social protection entitlements through decent work (see sect. III.A), and lift themselves and their families out of poverty (critical area of concern A, Goal 1). The poverty-reducing effect of pensions for older women will be enhanced if accompanied by investment in affordable geriatric and long-term care services that respond to their needs and to those for which they may provide unpaid care (critical area of concern C, Goals 3 and 5). Together with international human rights standards, the Platform for Action provides important policy guidance for eradicating poverty through gender-responsive social protection and social services, such as education and health.

83. In 2019, at its sixty-third session, the Commission stressed the need for integrated approaches to the design, implementation and evaluation of social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure in order to free up women's and girls' time, support their mobility, enhance their access to economic opportunities and strengthen their resilience to shocks. It also underlined the importance of comprehensive, participatory, gender-sensitive poverty eradication strategies that address social, structural and macroeconomic issues in order to ensure

an adequate standard of living for women and girls, and called on States to: establish or strengthen inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors; improve the design, implementation and evaluation of social protection systems based on context-specific assessment of risks and vulnerabilities; ensure that quality public services are available, affordable, accessible and acceptable to all women and girls; identify and remove barriers that constrain women's and girls' access to public services; ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services and promote universal access to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support; strengthen gender-responsive social protection programming and planning in the context of humanitarian responses to natural disasters, armed conflict and post-conflict situations; provide HIV-sensitive social protection measures; and help migrant workers at all skills levels to obtain access to social protection in countries of destination and to profit from the portability of applicable social security entitlements and earned benefits (E/CN.6/2019/L.3).

1. Global and regional trends

Extreme poverty declined between 1990 and 2015, but progress has slowed, and, at the current rate, is insufficient to meet the goal of eradicating poverty by 2030

84. Globally, the share of the world's population living in extreme poverty decreased from 36 per cent in 1990 to 16 per cent in 2010, and to 10 per cent in 2015.⁸¹ Much of that reduction since 1995 has been driven by China and, more recently, South Asia. The pace of poverty reduction has been much slower in sub-Saharan Africa, where it was 42 per cent in 2015, down from 48 per cent in 2010 and 55 per cent in 1990.⁸² In recent years, the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa has risen and is higher than the number of poor people in the rest of the world combined. About 79 per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas.⁸³

85. From a human rights and gender perspective, current poverty measures present certain limitations. The \$1.90-a-day poverty line is an extremely low threshold.⁸⁴ Estimates suggest that raising the threshold only slightly (to \$2.50) would add another 600 million people to the 736 million living in extreme poverty.⁸⁵ At \$5 a day, proposed by some as an "ethical poverty line"⁸⁶, the number of people living in absolute poverty would be 3.5 billion.⁸⁷

86. Conventional poverty measurements are based on household survey data where aggregate household-based income or consumption data are used to calculate per capita income (A/74/111). That presents a major challenge for estimating women's income poverty, because household measures of poverty do not consider how differences in the power and position of household members, based on sex and age,

⁸¹ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019* (see sect. I, footnote 3).

⁸² Global SDG Indicators Database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed November 2019).

⁸³ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*.

⁸⁴ For example, see, Sanjay G. Reddy and Rahul Lahoti, "\$1.90 per day: what does it say?", *New Left Review*, vol. 97 (January–February 2016).

⁸⁵ Andy Sumner, "Global poverty and inequality: change and continuity in late development", *Development and Change*, vol. 50, No. 2 (March 2019).

⁸⁶ For example, see Peter Edward, "The ethical poverty line: a moral quantification of absolute poverty", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 27 No. 2 (2006). Some economists propose a poverty line of \$12.50 as a global standard (see Lant Pritchett, "Monitoring progress on poverty: the case for a high global poverty line", Development Progress Working Paper, No. 2 (London, Overseas Development Bank, 2013).

⁸⁷ Sumner, "Global poverty and inequality".

shape the intra-household allocation of resources.⁸⁸ This means that poor women do not necessarily live in the poorest households.⁸⁹

87. Multi-dimensional measures of poverty have evolved beyond income-based poverty measures and capture simultaneous and overlapping deprivations such as lack of, or limited access to, health care, family planning, housing, education and infrastructure.⁹⁰ However, most of those tools still rely heavily on household-level indicators and therefore are of limited use for the purpose of measuring women's poverty. The recently developed individual deprivation measure has been designed to overcome the challenges posed by the lack of multidimensional poverty data at the individual level and includes previously neglected gender-specific indicators such as time-use.⁹¹ Taking this measure to scale requires new data collection, which is time and resource-intensive.

Across regions, poverty remains gendered, with gender gaps being particularly pronounced among adults aged 25–34 years

88. Despite those limitations, analysis of household-level data from 91 developing countries shows that overall, women and girls are 4 per cent more likely than men and boys to live in extreme poverty. Gender gaps are widest among those aged between 25 and 34 years; women in that age group are 25 per cent more likely than men to live in extreme poverty (figure B.1).⁹² That is equivalent to a total of 49 million poor women, compared with 40 million poor men. The gender gap in poverty after age 24 coincides with the child-rearing phase in life, during which women and their families face increased expenses associated with having children, while also experiencing time constraints for engaging in paid work due to caregiving responsibilities.

⁸⁸ Amartya Sen, *Gender and Cooperative Conflicts*, WIDER Working Paper, No. 18 (Helsinki, 1987); Bina Agarwal, "'Bargaining' and gender relations: within and beyond the household", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 3, No. 1 (1997).

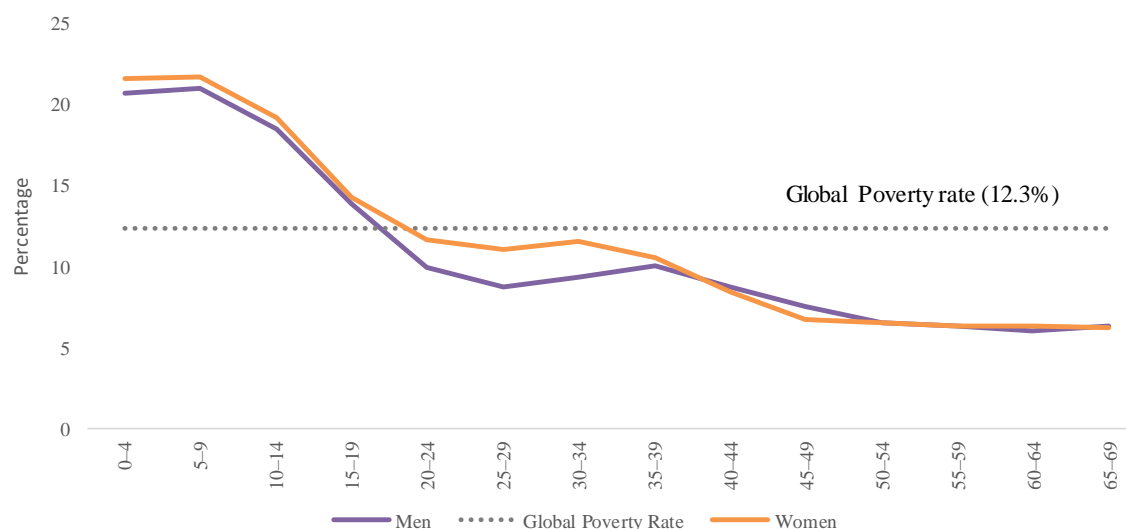
⁸⁹ Naila Kabeer, "Gender, poverty, and inequality: a brief history of feminist contributions in the field of international development", *Gender and Development*, vol. 23, No. 2 (2015); Caitlin S. Brown, Martin Ravallion and Dominique van de Walle, "Are poor individuals mainly found in poor households? Evidence using nutrition data for Africa", NBER Working Paper, No. 24047 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017).

⁹⁰ Sabine Alkire and James Foster, "Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement", *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 95, Nos. 7–8 (2011); Gisela Robles Aguilar and Andy Sumner, "Who are the world's poor? A new profile of global multidimensional poverty", CGD Working Paper, No. 499 (Washington, D.C., Centre for Global Development, 2019).

⁹¹ Sharon Bessell, "The individual deprivation measure: measuring poverty as if gender and inequality matter", *Gender and Development*, vol. 23, No. 2 (2015).

⁹² See [A/74/111](#). The gender gap narrows and is no longer evident among individuals aged 35–39 and 40–45. That is probably a result of a confluence of factors, including older children in the home entering the labour market and women joining or rejoining the labour force, which improves household income.

Figure B.1
Proportion of people living in extreme poverty (\$1.90 a day), by age and sex



Source: *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2019* (New York, UN-Women, 2019).

Note: The analysis is based on the latest data from 91 developing countries, covering 78 per cent of the world's population.

89. In high- and middle-income countries, relative poverty measures confirm the disproportionate vulnerability of women to poverty, with single mothers being particularly affected. Across 25 countries with available data in Europe and North America, for example, single-mother households are three times more likely to fall below the poverty threshold of 50 per cent of median income than dual-parent households.⁹³

Globally, women's and girls' education and health outcomes have improved, along with access to services and social protection, but significant gaps remain in some regions

90. Over the past 25 years, considerable progress has been made in the education and health outcomes of women and girls, with declining maternal mortality rates, rising literacy and improved access to social protection and public services. Many countries have rolled out non-contributory social protection schemes, such as conditional cash transfers and social pensions, often putting money directly in the hands of women who otherwise tend to be disproportionately excluded from contributory social protection. However, in 2015, only 29 per cent of the global population was covered by comprehensive social security systems with the full range of benefits, from child and family benefits to old-age pensions.⁹⁴

91. Education is the area in which the situation of women and girls has improved the most since 1995. Between 1995 and 2018, the number of girls of primary and lower-secondary school age out of school nearly halved and their enrolment in higher education increased.⁹⁵ Globally, gender parity in enrolment was achieved at the

⁹³ UN-Women calculations based on data for 25 countries from Rense Nieuwenhuis and Laurie C. Maldonado, "Single-parent families and in-work poverty", in Henning Lohmann and Ive Marx, eds., *Handbook on In-Work Poverty* (Cheltenham, United Kingdom, Edward Elgar, 2018).

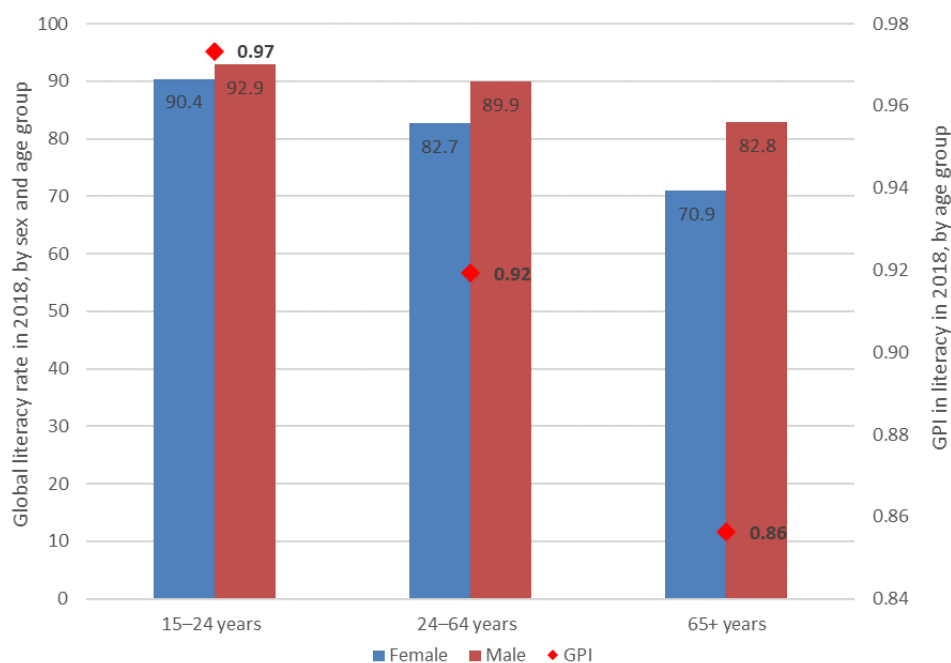
⁹⁴ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017–19*.

⁹⁵ UN-Women calculations based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Education Statistics database, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed September 2019).

primary and secondary levels in 2009. At the tertiary level, women started to outnumber men in 2004.⁹⁶ South Asia has seen the fastest progress, achieving parity or close to parity at all levels.⁹⁷ By contrast, sub-Saharan Africa is far from parity at all levels, especially in upper-secondary education.

92. North Africa and Western Asia, which have experienced stagnation, largely owing to conflict, are the furthest from parity in primary education.⁹⁸ Damage to infrastructure during crises compounds the problem by severely compromising access to services.⁹⁹ By 2017, fewer than 20 per cent of conflict-affected or fragile States had achieved parity in lower-secondary education, compared with slightly more than half of countries globally.¹⁰⁰

Figure B.2
Global literacy and the Gender Parity Index (2018)



Source: UN-Women calculations based on statistics of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Education Statistics database, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed October 2019).

93. In terms of education outcomes, global literacy rates have also improved for all alongside a steady reduction in the gender gap in literacy, especially among younger cohorts. In 2018, almost 90 per cent of women aged between 15 and 24 years, up from 80 per cent in 1995, knew how to read and write, compared with 93 per cent of men (figure B.2). However, the gender gap in literacy for older age groups remains

⁹⁶ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*.

⁹⁷ In 2017, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for South Asia was 1.07 for primary education, 1.04 for lower secondary, 0.96 for upper secondary and 1 for tertiary, according to the latest estimates of UNESCO Institute for Statistics, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed 19 September 2019).

⁹⁸ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*.

⁹⁹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Children with disabilities in situations of armed conflict", discussion paper (2018).

¹⁰⁰ UN-Women calculation based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics, GPI database, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed September 2019). Based on a sample of 58 fragile and conflict-affected countries facing crises between 2013 and 2017.

significant. In 2018, about 773 million adults aged between 25 and 64 years worldwide, 63 per cent of them women, lacked basic reading and writing skills.¹⁰¹

94. Better access to health-care services has brought progress for women and girls on key health indicators. Globally, life expectancy has continued to rise, with women now outliving men in all regions. Maternal mortality fell from 342 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 211 per 100,000 in 2017.¹⁰² Improved access to maternal health care, including assistance during delivery by skilled health personnel, has helped; 81 per cent of all births take place in the presence of skilled health personnel.¹⁰³ The rate remains lowest, at 47 per cent, in sub-Saharan Africa, where two thirds of the world's maternal deaths occur.¹⁰⁴ Conflict and crises often hamper access to maternal health care. Of the 22 countries in which fewer than two thirds of births were attended by skilled health personnel by 2018, 17 experienced conflict between 2013 and 2018.¹⁰⁵

95. The global trend to lower fertility and later childbearing has continued, reflecting greater reproductive choice (E/CN.9/2019/2). In 2019, the global fertility rate was 2.5 births per woman, down from 2.9 in the mid-1990s. With the exception of sub-Saharan Africa (4.8 births per woman) and Oceania¹⁰⁶ (3.4 births per woman), all regions had rates below 3 births per woman (E/CN.9/2019/2). The adolescent fertility rate declined from 56 births per 1,000 adolescent girls in 2000 to 44 in 2018.¹⁰⁷ Adolescent fertility rates are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where 27.8 per cent of women aged between 20 and 24 years gave birth before the age of 18, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, with 18.2 per cent (figure B.3).

96. The proportion of women with unmet needs for family planning has stagnated at 10 per cent since 2000 and the proportion of women who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods (Sustainable Development Goals indicator 3.7.1) has increased only slowly, from 74 to 76 per cent between 2000 and 2019.¹⁰⁸ In 2019, 190 million women of reproductive age worldwide who wanted to avoid pregnancy did not use any contraceptive method, up from 156 million in 2000.¹⁰⁹ Lower and lower-middle income countries made up three quarters of countries in which less than half of the need for family planning was met with modern methods in 2019. There are significant regional disparities. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 55 per cent of the need for family planning is being met with modern methods. Less than half of that need is being met with modern methods in 42 countries or areas, including 23 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹⁰ Better access to modern contraception could help to prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce the number of abortions, and lower the incidence of death and disability related to complications in pregnancy and childbirth. That, in turn, would contribute to poverty reduction and development.

¹⁰¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Education Statistics database, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed October 2019).

¹⁰² WHO and others, *Trends in Maternal Mortality 2000 to 2017: Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division* (Geneva, WHO, 2019).

¹⁰³ UNICEF and World Health Organization (WHO), SDG 3.1.2 Skilled Attendance at Birth database, available at <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/delivery-care> (accessed November 2019). Data available for 2006–2012 and 2013–2018.

¹⁰⁴ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*.

¹⁰⁵ UN-Women calculations based on Global SDG Indicators database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed November 2019).

¹⁰⁶ Excluding Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁰⁷ *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*.

¹⁰⁸ *Family Planning and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Data Booklet* (ST/ESA/SER.A/429).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

97. Globally, HIV treatment coverage has more than doubled and is higher among women than men, largely owing to programmes to eliminate vertical transmission (from mother to child) of HIV.¹¹¹ In 2018, an estimated 18.8 million women (15 years and older) were living with HIV, or 52 per cent of all adults living with HIV.¹¹² A little over two thirds of such women had access to treatment in 2018.¹¹³ However, young women continue to be particularly affected by new HIV infections. In 2018, young women and adolescent girls accounted for 61 per cent of the total estimated 510,000 new HIV infections among young persons aged between 15 and 24 years globally.¹¹⁴

Women and girls who face multiple and intersecting inequalities remain disproportionately affected by poverty and exclusion from social protection and public services

98. Women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination remain disproportionately excluded from social protection and public services, which has an adverse impact on their health and educational outcomes and hampers their ability to escape poverty. Women in rural areas (67 per cent) remain much less likely to have access to skilled health personnel when they give birth than their urban counterparts (89 per cent).¹¹⁵ Between 2010 and 2018, parity in terms of primary school completion in rural areas was achieved in 40 per cent of countries, but in 57 per cent of countries in urban areas. Inequalities widen as the level of education increases.¹¹⁶ Poorer and less well educated girls, as well as those living in rural areas, are also most likely to give birth before they are 18 years of age.¹¹⁷ Globally, women aged between 20 and 24 years in the lowest wealth quintile are 3.7 times more likely to give birth before the age of 18 years than those in the highest wealth quintile (figure B.3).

¹¹¹ Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *Miles To Go: Closing Gaps, Breaking Barriers, Righting Injustices* (Geneva, 2018).

¹¹² UNAIDS, “People living with HIV receiving ART”, AIDS Info database. Available at <http://aidsinfo.unaids.org/> (accessed November 2019). Estimates are for 2018.

¹¹³ Ibid.

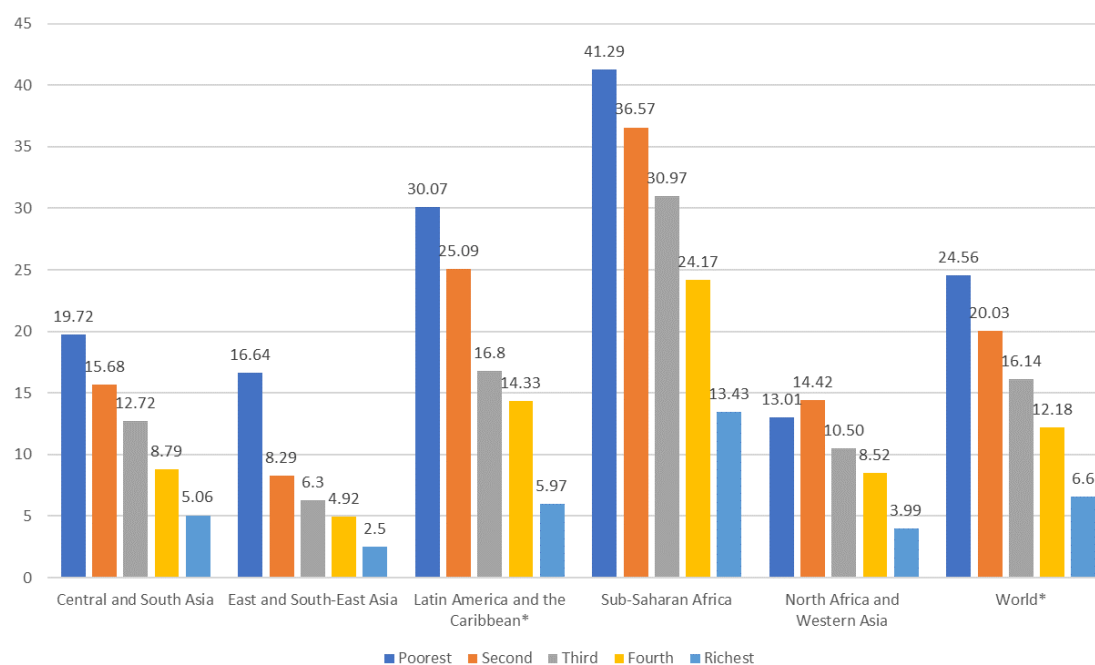
¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ UNICEF, “Delivery care”, Maternal and Newborn Health database. Available at <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/delivery-care/>.

¹¹⁶ UN-Women calculation based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Education Statistics database, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed November 2019). Estimates are for 99 Member States with GPI available for location.

¹¹⁷ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*.

Figure B.3
Women aged 20 to 24 who gave birth before age 18, by region and wealth quintile (latest available year)



Source: *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020* (New York, UN-Women, 2019)

Notes: A woman is considered to have given birth by age 18 if her first live birth was before age 18. The exact indicator is calculated using the methodology provided in Shea Oscar Rutstein and Guillermo Rojas in *Guide to DHS Statistics* (2006). The same methodology was replicated for multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS). In the case of countries where both demographic and health surveys (DHS) and MICS were available, the latest available survey was used. Estimates were weighted using the population of women aged between 20 and 24 years using *World Population Prospects 2017*. The analysis covers 92 countries, comprising 58.9 per cent of the world's female population aged between 20 and 24 years. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the data cover 53.5 per cent of the population, and in North Africa and Western Asia, the data cover 57.4 per cent of the population.

* Estimates are based on less than two thirds of the population and should be treated with caution. In all other regions, aggregates are based on data covering two thirds or more of the population. Population coverage was insufficient to calculate regional aggregates for Australia and New Zealand, Europe and North America and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

New waves of austerity measures and the increasing privatization of public services are deepening inequalities with a disproportionate impact on women and the poor

99. An analysis of IMF country reports and expenditure data indicates that, after the major contractions in expenditure of 2011 and 2016, another wave of public spending cuts will affect 130 countries from the year 2020 onwards.¹¹⁸ Previous waves of fiscal contraction have had regressive outcomes, especially for low-income women, given their greater reliance on public services and transfers, their role as default care providers when services are eroded, and their strong presence as front-line public sector workers.¹¹⁹ The two most common channels of fiscal adjustment globally, pension and social security reform (affecting 86 countries) and cut-backs in public sector employment and wages (80 countries), are again likely to disproportionately hurt women, who already face significant disadvantages in access to pensions and

¹¹⁸ Ortiz and Cummins, "Austerity: the new normal".

¹¹⁹ UN-Women, *The Global Economic Crisis and Gender Equality*.

represent 61 per cent of the education workforce and nearly 70 per cent of the health and social sector workforce globally.¹²⁰ Only 10 per cent of countries that reported having implemented or planned austerity measures have assessed their impact on women and girls.

100. With persistent constraints on public budgets, privatization and public-private partnerships have been increasingly promoted as an alternative for financing and delivering public services. Between 2005 and 2015, the proportion of students attending private school increased in 105 out of 127 countries with available data and fell in only 22.¹²¹ In low- and middle-income countries, 37 per cent of family planning services, 44 per cent of antenatal care and 40 per cent of delivery care is covered by private providers.¹²² Greater provider choice is often assumed to strengthen accountability, allowing people to avoid poor quality services by “voting with their feet”. However, human rights bodies and special procedures have raised concerns that uncontrolled growth in private provision is in fact deepening inequality and segregation (see [A/69/402](#) (2014), [A/70/342](#) (2015), [A/73/179](#) (2018), [A/73/396](#) (2018) and [A/HRC/41/37](#) (2019)). While women and girls from richer households may be able to access established private schools and clinics, poor and marginalized women and girls are more likely to rely on underfunded public services or informal, often unregulated private providers ([A/74/111](#)).

2. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

101. Providing women with sustainable routes out of poverty and ensuring their right to an adequate standard of living require addressing persistent inequalities in access to social protection and public services. Based on the national reports, policy and programmatic trends in implementation have emerged in three areas: (a) strengthening women’s access to gender- and age-responsive social protection systems to end women’s poverty; (b) ensuring quality education and life-long learning for women and girls; and (c) providing women with access to affordable, good quality health services.

(a) *Strengthening women’s access to gender- and age-responsive social protection systems to end women’s poverty*

102. Gender- and age-responsive social protection systems, including floors, are critical for providing income security at specific junctures in the lives of women when they are most vulnerable to poverty. Seventy per cent of countries reported that they had introduced or strengthened social protection as part of their efforts to eradicate women’s poverty. Social protection comprises schemes that provide comprehensive, life-long protection, including child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, old-age benefits, disability benefits, survivors’ benefits and access to affordable medical care ([E/CN.6/2019/3](#)). Gender gaps in social protection coverage and benefit levels remain widespread. The global gender gap in access to old-age pensions, for example, stands at 10.6 percentage points.¹²³ Even where women are relatively well covered, their benefit levels tend to be lower than men’s.¹²⁴ In the European Union, for example, women’s pensions are on average 36.6 per cent lower than men’s. In Africa, Asia and

¹²⁰ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs*.

¹²¹ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8: Accountability in Education – Meeting our Commitments* (Paris, 2017), p. 47.

¹²² Independent Accountability Panel, *Private Sector – Who is Accountable for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health?* (Geneva, WHO, 2018).

¹²³ ILO, *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, 2016).

¹²⁴ European Commission, *Report on Equality Between Women and Men in the European Union* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2018).

the Arab States, in particular, overall social protection coverage remains low because of underinvestment.¹²⁵

103. Thirty-six per cent of countries reported measures to strengthen women's access to contributory social protection schemes and reduce gender bias in that regard. Countries in Europe reported on measures to strengthen women's pension entitlements through pension credits that compensate for periods taken out of employment to care for children or other dependents and the stipulation of pension splitting upon divorce. Such measures are designed to redress the way in which labour market disadvantages and caring responsibilities hamper women's access to social protection, particularly where entitlements are closely tied to employment, as in the case of most insurance-based or contributory schemes. The extent to which those measures can offset the negative impact of austerity measures on women's income security in old age remains uncertain. IMF country reports show that tighter contribution requirements are being considered as part of impending pension reforms in 49 developing and 37 high-income countries.¹²⁶

104. Forty-nine per cent of countries reported measures to improve access to social protection for specific population groups, including women in informal employment and migrant and refugee women. The extension of contributory schemes to them remains a key challenge, especially in developing countries. In some countries, workers in informal wage employment, such as domestic workers or employees in informal enterprises, have been reached by measures to encourage or mandate employers to contribute their share. Many workers in informal self-employment, however, are unable to make even low levels of regular contribution and have no recognized employer to make contributions. This is especially true for women in informal self-employment and unpaid family work. Significant subsidies from general government revenue are required to make up for the limited contributory capacity of those groups.¹²⁷

105. Fifty-two per cent of countries reported that they had implemented non-contributory cash transfer programmes, mostly targeted at poor households with young children. Also referred to as social assistance, such programmes have contributed to an increase in social protection coverage, particularly among women. The benefits are often paid out to mothers and tied to conditionalities, such as taking children for regular health checks or participating in parenting workshops. In addition to a reduction in poverty and child labour and a boost in school attendance and the use of health services, cash transfers are also associated with a rise in women's and girls' decision-making power, reductions in physical (but not emotional) abuse by male partners and a reduced risk among adolescent girls of infection with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases.¹²⁸ Whether the conditions attached to transfers play a role in producing such positive outcomes remains an open and much-debated question.¹²⁹

106. Fifty-four per cent of countries reported that they had introduced or strengthened social protection for unemployed women. States highlighted unemployment insurance reforms, training and retraining, and job placement services.

¹²⁵ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017–19*.

¹²⁶ Ortiz and Cummins, "Austerity: the new normal".

¹²⁷ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016*.

¹²⁸ Francesca Bastagli and others, *Cash Transfers: What Does the Evidence Say? A Rigorous Review of Programme Impact and of the Role of Design and Implementation Features* (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2016); Sarah J. Baird and others, "Effect of a cash transfer programme for schooling on prevalence of HIV and herpes simplex type 2 in Malawi: a cluster randomized trial", *The Lancet*, vol. 379, No. 9823 (April 2012).

¹²⁹ Stephen Kidd, "To condition or not to condition: what is the evidence?", *Pathways Perspectives on Social Policy in International Development*, No. 20 (Orpington, United Kingdom, 2016).

Across regions, States reported high participation rates among women in public works programmes for the long-term unemployed or underemployed, sometimes accompanied by the implementation of gender quotas, or the stipulation of on-site childcare provision and sanitation facilities, regulation of women's workloads and a focus on sectors that are more likely to employ women.

107. In another positive development, more attention is being paid to non-contributory social pensions, with 41 per cent of States reporting that they had taken measures in that area over the past five years. Many, including several in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, now run universal social pension schemes. Social pensions are not tied to previous contributions and can thereby help to close gender gaps in pension coverage. Such schemes are available in different forms: universal, means-tested or pension-tested. Women stand to benefit most from universal or pension-tested schemes that are focused on individuals rather than households.

108. A number of countries reported that they were increasingly using digital technology in the administration and payment of social protection benefits. Such technology has the potential to improve efficiency, accountability and transparency and can contribute to reaching women more effectively. However, there are concerns about new risks and biases that may come with the automation of social protection systems. The collection of vast amounts of biometric and other data for the purpose of identifying social protection beneficiaries, paying out benefits and monitoring compliance with conditionalities may unfairly force recipients, fearing violation of their privacy, to forego their right to social security.¹³⁰ There is also evidence that the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence in automated decision-making systems can be exploited “to profile, police and punish the poor”¹³¹ rather than to facilitate their access to benefits, particularly in the context of austerity (A/74/493). Because women are more likely to live in poverty and be responsible for the care of others (see sect. III.B.1), they are likely to feel the impact of those trends even more acutely than men.

109. Low benefit levels and narrow targeting of non-contributory schemes remain a significant challenge in many contexts. Targeting poor and vulnerable groups is intended to channel limited resources to those who need them the most but it can inadvertently reinforce the exclusion and stigmatization of already disadvantaged groups. There is evidence, for example, that the most deprived women and girls do not necessarily live in the poorest households that are often targeted for assistance.¹³² Fear of discrimination and stigma may discourage poor or marginalized women from accessing transfers even when they are entitled to them. Conditionalities, in turn, can reinforce gender stereotypes about parenting as a maternal duty, increase demands on women's time and undermine their position as rights-holders when benefits are taken away in case of non-compliance.¹³³

110. Some of the features of universal basic income, a proposal that has resurfaced in recent years in response to growing income insecurity and job losses associated with automation, offer an alternative to the targeted, conditional and often household-based approach of existing non-contributory schemes (box B.1).

¹³⁰ Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, “The use of biometric technology in social protection systems: a gender perspective”, paper prepared for the expert group meeting on Beijing plus 25, New York, September 2019.

¹³¹ Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 2018).

¹³² Brown, Ravallion and van de Walle, *Are Poor Individuals Mainly Found in Poor Households?*

¹³³ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*.

Box B.1

New directions: universal basic income from a gender perspective

In the light of the limitations of existing non-contributory social transfers, which are often narrowly targeted and conditional, proposals for a universal basic income, which vary considerably, are characterized by four promising features: (a) they are *universal*, paid to all members of a political community, which could reduce exclusion errors and stigmatization; (b) they are paid to *individuals* rather than households, meaning that women's access would not be mediated by those with whom they live; (c) they are *unconditional*, meaning that they do not require previous social security contributions or the fulfilment of behavioural requirements that can weigh heavily on women; and (d) they are *continual*, paid out as a regular benefit, providing a reliable and continuous source of support that is critical if cash transfers are to contribute to women's empowerment.^a

Views differ on the potential of universal basic income to advance gender equality. Some feminists have endorsed the idea, arguing that having an independent income would increase women's bargaining power and their ability to exit abusive relationships and exploitative work arrangements.^b It would also provide recognition for the value of unpaid care and domestic work and encourage a greater sharing of responsibilities between women and men.^c Others, however, caution that a universal basic income would do little to challenge gender norms concerning the division of labour and, especially in the context of fiscal constraints, may crowd out funding for services important for gender equality, such as childcare and care for the elderly.^d

If adequate, a universal basic income could provide some degree of income security for all, reducing the exclusion and stigmatization that many women experience in existing social protection schemes. There is, however, the risk that it would amount to little more than a minimal safety net while providing a justification to scale back employer responsibility for social security and privatize public services.^e How structural inequalities and differential needs would be affected by a universal basic income also remains unclear. Single mothers, women with disabilities and older women, for example, often face additional expenses related to care for others and would probably lose out if a flat-rate universal basic income replaced benefits and services that respond more directly to their needs.

Proposals for a universal basic income need to be looked at within a broader consideration of gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors, to ensure that such proposals are aligned with the commitment to provide basic income security to all, while responding to women's specific rights and needs over throughout their lives by complementing, rather than displacing, the provision of higher levels social protection and public services.

^a Caitlin McLean and Ailsa McKay, *Beyond Care: Expanding the Feminist Debate on Universal Basic Income*, Working Paper Series, No. 1 (Glasgow, Wise Research Centre, 2015).

^b See A/HRC/35/26; Carole Pateman, "Democratizing citizenship: some advantages of a basic income", *Politics and Society*, vol. 32, No. 1 (March 2004).

^c Almaz Zelleke, "Institutionalizing the universal caretaker through a basic income?", *Basic Income Studies*, vol. 3, No. 3 (2008).

^d Alison Koslowski and Ann-Zofie Duvander, "Basic income: the potential for gendered empowerment?", *Social Inclusion*, vol. 6, No. 4 (2018); Barbara R. Bergman, "Basic income grants or the welfare state: which better promotes gender equality?", *Basic Income Studies*, vol. 3, No. 3 (2008).

^e Isabel Ortiz and others, *Universal Basic Income Proposals in Light of ILO Standards: Key Issues and Global Costing*, ESS Working Paper, No. 62 (Geneva, ILO, 2018).

(b) Ensuring quality education and lifelong learning for women and girls

111. Education is one of the most powerful tools for expanding women's and girls' capabilities, shifting harmful and discriminatory norms, eradicating poverty and boosting sustainable development. Despite the enormous progress made in girls' education in recent decades, gaps remain. The quality and gender-responsiveness of education and training provided also require close attention.

112. States reported ongoing efforts to overcome barriers, including those of an economic nature, through loans, grants, scholarships and cash transfers and provide girls with incentives to attend and complete school. They also reported initiatives to create enabling school environments, boost the numbers of girls in male-dominated fields of study, assist in the transition from school to work and encourage lifelong learning for women.

113. Globally, 60 per cent of States reported measures to promote safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environments. They most commonly include awareness-raising campaigns at school and for young people, the provision of teaching materials and prevention training for teachers and educators, school-based programmes against psychological violence, cyberharassment and cyberbullying, and cyber safety education for students, parents, teachers and educators.

114. In most countries the majority of teachers are women. There is, however, a shortage of female teachers in certain contexts, in particular in rural and displacement settings. In countries with more rigid gender norms, female teachers can attract girls to school and improve their learning outcomes.¹³⁴ Even in countries with a majority of female teachers, proportionately fewer women than men rise to school leadership positions.

115. Although progress on policies to empower young people, in particular girls, have been challenged in some cases,¹³⁵ three quarters of States reported initiatives to make curricula more gender-responsive and eliminate bias. Two thirds reported measures to improve gender equality and human rights training among teachers and educators. In addition to eliminating stereotypical representations of gender roles in school textbooks, programmes and curricula and delivering education focused on human rights, gender equality and comprehensive sexuality education, some countries focused more on diversity and inclusion, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

116. Thirty-seven per cent of States reported that they had worked to improve school infrastructure. In East and South-East Asia the figure was 86 per cent, and in Central and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa 60 per cent. Safe and adequate sanitation in schools, with separate toilet facilities, measures to reduce stigma and better amenities for menstrual hygiene management, was a key area of improvement. The lack of adequate sanitation facilities disproportionately affects adolescent girls. Globally, 23 per cent of schools were lacking sanitation services in 2016, and just over half had a basic hygiene service.¹³⁶

117. Around half of States, especially those in East and South-East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania, reported measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies and to enable adolescent girls to continue their education when pregnant or mothers. Prevention of adolescent pregnancies appeared to be less

¹³⁴ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Gender Review – Creating Sustainable Futures for All* (Paris, 2016).

¹³⁵ Roggeband and Krizsan, "Democratic backsliding and backlash against women's rights" (see sect. I, footnote 2).

¹³⁶ UNICEF and WHO, *Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Global Baseline Report 2018* (New York, 2018).

of a priority in Central and South Asia, Europe, North Africa and Western Asia. Progress has been made in the enactment of laws to protect the right of adolescent girls to stay in school during pregnancy and motherhood but four countries in sub-Saharan Africa still enforce a total ban on pregnant girls attending public school.¹³⁷ Even where continued access is guaranteed under the law, girls struggle to continue their education because of weak implementation and the absence of practical support, such as childcare services.¹³⁸ Many countries reported that they had carried out awareness-raising campaigns to prevent adolescent pregnancy but few reported measures to improve school retention among pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers.

118. Close to 60 per cent of States reported initiatives to remedy the underrepresentation of girls and women in STEM learning. In Europe, 72 per cent of countries reported measures in that area, compared with East and South-East Asia (33 per cent) and Central and South Asia (40 per cent). Specific measures included digital empowerment programmes and training in partnership with industrial companies and the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, initiatives to combat stereotypes and increase women's interest in and access to STEM-related training and education.¹³⁹ Most countries lack coherent policy frameworks to promote the participation of women and girls in technology education or institutional mechanisms for their advancement in STEM education and research.¹⁴⁰

119. Seventy-one per cent of States reported that they had taken measures to improve girls' access to technical and vocational training, which is critical for addressing the lower rate of transition from school to work among women compared with men. Specific measures included investment in the quality of such training, the expansion of job-based training or apprenticeships, strengthened upper-secondary school curricula and new short-degree cycles. Some States reported that efforts had been made to encourage women to enter non-traditional sectors through such training. In many cases, however, such programmes continue to perpetuate gender stereotypes, by channelling female students into fields such as food and nutrition, cosmetology and sewing.¹⁴¹

120. Efforts continue, especially in Europe, to encourage women re-entering the workforce to take up vocational training. States have implemented specific skills training for women, including in literacy and through apprenticeships and non-formal education initiatives. In many developing countries, limited literacy and basic skills among adult women, particularly those in rural areas, mean that they cannot take full advantage of adult education and lifelong learning opportunities. The need for adult education is also often overlooked in humanitarian settings and the opportunity to build up skills for resilience and support women's economic empowerment is thus missed.¹⁴²

121. A major challenge for meeting global commitments on education is the chronic lack of public investment. UNESCO estimates that countries should allocate at least between 4 and 6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) or at least 15 to 20 per cent of total public expenditure to education to ensure that good quality, inclusive and

¹³⁷ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019; UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report 2018 – Meeting Our Commitments to Gender Equality in Education* (Paris, 2018).

¹³⁸ UNESCO, *Early and Unintended Pregnancy and the Education Sector: Evidence Review and Recommendations* (Paris, 2017).

¹³⁹ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*.

¹⁴⁰ Wajeman, "The digital revolution".

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019*.

equitable education is provided for all. In 2017, at least 43 countries across regions and income levels did not meet either benchmark.¹⁴³

122. The persistent underfunding of public education coincides with the rapid rise in the scale and scope of private actors in education, putting at risk the commitment to leave no one behind. In many contexts, this has increased inequality in educational opportunities as the poor are concentrated in increasingly underfunded public schools or so-called low-fee private schools, while higher income groups opt out of public systems altogether (see [A/69/402](#), [A/HRC/29/30](#), [A/70/342](#) and [A/HRC/41/37](#)). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women emphasized in its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education that “privatization has specific negative consequences for girls and women, and in particular girls from poorer families”. Families may be less willing to invest in girls’ education based on the perception that the return on educating girls may be lower than in the case of boys. Private education providers also often fail to promote decent work for teachers, among whom women predominate. The primary strategy of low-fee private schools for keeping costs down, for example, is to hire teachers at below the public school teachers’ salary scale and often below the minimum wage.¹⁴⁴

(c) *Ensuring women’s access to affordable, good quality health services*

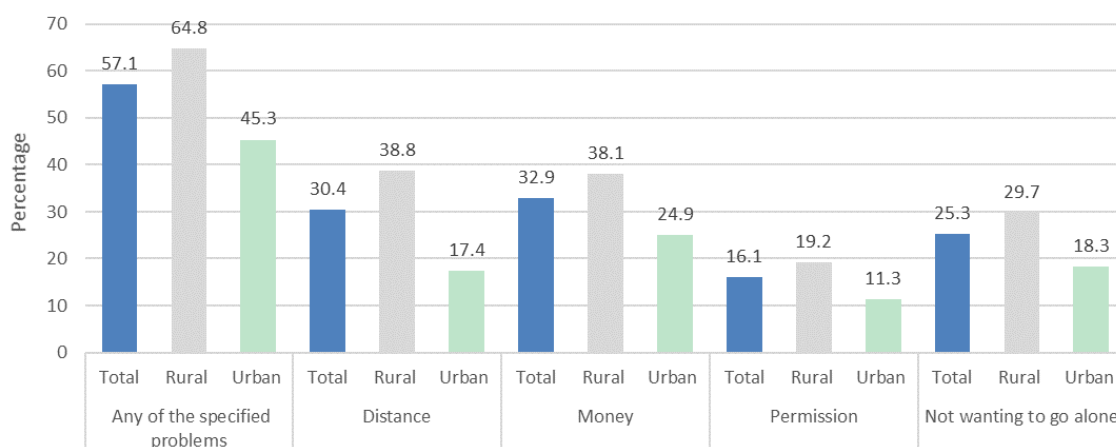
123. Access to affordable good quality health services, including for sexual and reproductive health, is critical for women’s empowerment, health and well-being, and for the eradication of poverty. Data from 53 developing countries shows that 57.1 per cent of women report experiencing at least one of four problems in accessing health care (figure B.4). Geographical and financial barriers were most frequently cited by close to one third of women, followed by social barriers such as not wanting to go alone (25.3 per cent) and needing to obtain permission (16.1 per cent). Barriers are often compounded for women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Rural-urban differences are particularly pronounced, with twice as many rural women reporting distance as a problem than their urban counterparts. In developed countries, too, women and men continue to face difficulties associated with long waiting times, delays in getting appointments, long distances and excessive costs.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Prachi Srivastava, “Questioning the global scaling up of low-fee private schooling: the nexus between business, philanthropy and PPPs”, in Antoni Verger, Christopher Lubienski and Gita Steiner-Khamsi, eds., *World Yearbook of Education 2016: The Global Education Industry* (Abingdon, United Kingdom, Routledge, 2016).

¹⁴⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Beijing+25*.

Figure B.4
Proportion of women who reported difficulty in obtaining access to health care in developing countries (latest available year)



Source: UN-Women calculations from ICF International; Demographic and Health Surveys. STATcompiler, <http://www.statcompiler.com> (accessed June 2019).

Note: Data refer to the Demographic and Health Surveys (2010–2017) for women aged 15–49 years in 53 developing countries. For this analysis, difficulty in gaining access to health care is defined based on the percentage of women who reported having “big problems in accessing health care for themselves when they are sick” and by the type of problem (distance to health facility, paying for treatment, obtaining permission to get treatment, not wanting to go alone). Estimates for the pooled sample were weighted using the population of women aged 15 to 49 years (based on Department of Economic and Social Affairs statistics for 2015) while the rural and urban estimates were weighted using the 2015 population projections for women aged 15 to 49 years living in urban and rural areas contained in *World Urbanization Prospects 2014*.

124. Two thirds of States reported having taken action to promote access to health services for women and girls through the expansion of universal health coverage and public services. Universal health coverage funding mechanisms are meant to reduce or eliminate the need for out-of-pocket payments. Common measures reported by States to address financial barriers included the extension of social or community-based health insurance as well as the free or subsidized provision of specific services, such as maternity care, HIV testing, human papillomavirus vaccines and screening for breast and cervical cancer. Ensuring that universal health coverage reforms systematically address the full range of sexual and reproductive health issues and rights remains a significant challenge.

125. States reported continued investment in health care infrastructure, including primary clinics and maternity waiting homes, as well as health extension services for rural and remote areas through mobile clinics and community health worker programmes. A few countries reported that they were using technology, such as mobile phone-based health information, counselling and monitoring, drones (to deliver emergency health supplies) and electronic health records to connect refugees and asylum seekers to the health system upon arrival. Several States reported specific measures to make health systems more inclusive of migrant women and girls (box B.2).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Gita Sen, Veloshnee Govender and Salma El-Gamal, “From principle to practice: universal and gender-responsive health care”, background paper prepared for the expert group meeting during the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, September 2018.

Box B.2

Leaving no one behind: towards universal health coverage for migrant women

Migrant women and girls often face significant barriers to obtaining access to health services, including lack of health insurance, language barriers, fear of discrimination and lack of information. In some regions, the pregnancy and birth outcomes of migrant women lag behind those of non-migrants.^a

Measures to improve access to health services for women on the move have been taken by countries of origin and destination. The Philippines has a large emigrant population; 60 per cent of those living abroad are women, many of whom work as nurses and domestic workers in more affluent countries.^b The national health insurance scheme, PhilHealth, has been extended to migrant workers but its reimbursable benefits are often insufficient to cover medical costs incurred abroad. Bilateral labour agreements are therefore being negotiated with countries that recruit Filipino migrants, requiring overseas employers to provide the same health insurance benefits to Filipino migrant workers as to locally hired employees.^c The Indonesian Government is negotiating similar bilateral agreements that include minimum standards for wages and benefits and access to health care or health insurance for Indonesians working overseas.

Thailand is a major destination for migrant women, especially domestic workers, not all of whom have regular migration status. In 2001, Thailand began implementing a universal health-care scheme with access for migrants irrespective of their status. In 2005, coverage was extended to dependents, including spouses and children. A number of initiatives have been conducted to engage directly with migrant communities, including through mobile clinics, bilingual information services, one-stop centres and workplace outreach. Migrant health workers have been recruited to bridge communication gaps between patients and caregivers, make home visits and provide general public health information. Nonetheless, cultural, linguistic and financial barriers mean that only around half of all migrants are covered by health insurance. In 2018, more than 800,000 irregular migrants were uninsured.

Progress has also been made in other regions to ensure access to health care irrespective of migration status. In Spain, for example, the right of irregular migrants to obtain access to free health care, which had been withdrawn in 2012, was restored in 2018.^d The authorities of cities like Madrid took additional measures to raise awareness and set up complaint and redress mechanisms for cases in which migrants are denied access to such services.

^a WHO, *Report on the Health of Refugees and Migrants in the WHO European Region: No Public Health without Refugee and Migrant Health* (Copenhagen, 2018).

^b Commission on Filipinos Overseas, *2015 CFO Statistics on Philippine International Migration* (Manila, 2017).

^c WHO, *Women on the Move: Migration, Care Work and Health* (Geneva, 2017).

^d Helena Legido-Quigley and others, "Spain shows that a humane response to migrant health is possible in Europe", *The Lancet Public Health*, vol. 3, No. 8 (August 2018).

126. Forty-nine per cent of countries reported that they had provided gender-responsiveness training for health service providers, with a specific focus on training and protocols to support health care in the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls (see sect. III.C). Women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are most affected by poor quality health services. Violence and fear of violence, stigma and discrimination, and unpaid care work responsibilities are the main barriers women face in gaining access to HIV treatment

and care services.¹⁴⁷ Some European countries reported specific actions to improve access to health services for people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.

127. Most countries have taken action to improve the quality of maternity care, including through safe motherhood programmes, clinical guidelines and standards of care, tailored birth plans, more midwifery units, home visits, birthing classes and efforts to involve men in prenatal check-ups, parenting training and delivery. However, many women continue to lack basic maternity care and others experience medically unjustified interventions without their voluntary, express and informed consent.¹⁴⁸ Caesarean section rates higher than 10 per cent, for example, are not associated with lower maternal and newborn mortality on a population level. Nonetheless, 18.6 per cent of births in 121 countries occur by Caesarean section, with regional averages ranging from 7.3 per cent in Africa to 40.5 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁴⁹ Studies show that younger and less educated women, women from poor and rural backgrounds, indigenous, Afro-descendent and migrant women, women with disabilities, unmarried women and single mothers are particularly affected by non-consensual procedures, abuse and neglect during childbirth.¹⁵⁰ In Latin America, such practices are increasingly being discussed as cases of obstetric violence¹⁵¹ and several countries in the region reported having taken measures to address the issue.

128. Eighty-six per cent of States reported that they had expanded specific health services for women and girls, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. States reported efforts to increase the supply of and encourage demand for contraceptive methods to prevent unwanted pregnancies, including through free or subsidized contraception and emergency contraception. In some States, however, access to sexual and reproductive health services is still restricted by law for unmarried women and adolescents. The need to obtain consent from a parent or guardian, for example, may deter adolescents from seeking access to family planning, HIV testing or counselling. Only 57 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 years who are married or in a union make their own decisions about sexual relations and the use of contraceptives and reproductive health services.¹⁵²

129. Thirty-seven per cent of States reported on abortion. Legal reforms decriminalizing abortion or expanding the grounds on which abortion is legal were reported by 9 per cent of States across Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Oceania and South Asia. Others reported that existing laws were increasingly being challenged. In countries where unsafe abortion is prevalent, the lives and health of the poorest and youngest women are most at risk. Some countries where abortion is legal reported on the implementation of policies and measures to ensure that it is affordable and that women can obtain access to it safely. Some States reported that

¹⁴⁷ AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC), ATHENA Network and Salamander Trust, *Key Barriers to Women's Access to HIV Treatment: A Global Review* (New York, UN-Women, 2017).

¹⁴⁸ Michelle Sadler and others, "Moving beyond disrespect and abuse: addressing the structural dimensions of obstetric violence", *Reproductive Health Matters*, vol. 24, No. 47 (2016).

¹⁴⁹ Ana Pilar Betrán and others, "The increasing trend in Caesarean section rates: global, regional and national estimates: 1990–2014", *PLoS ONE*, vol. 11, No. 2 (2016).

¹⁵⁰ Meghan A. Bohren and others, "How women are treated during facility-based childbirth in four countries: a cross-sectional study with labour observations and community-based surveys", *The Lancet*, vol. 394, No. 10210 (November 2019); Myra L. Betron and others, "Expanding the agenda for addressing mistreatment in maternity care: a mapping review and gender analysis", *Reproductive Health*, vol. 15, No. 143 (2018).

¹⁵¹ Sadler and others, "Moving beyond disrespect and abuse".

¹⁵² UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2019* (2019).

post-abortion care was available to women. In others, measures against women who try to use such services, including in the case of miscarriages, remain in place.

130. The sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls remained a focus, with several States reporting on the creation of youth-friendly or youth-only health centres that provide confidential legal, medical and psychological advice and support. Measures to prevent early childbearing and sexually transmitted diseases continue in most States through awareness-raising campaigns, the dissemination of information, including on dedicated websites and mobile applications, and access to contraception. Curricula that address gender and power are associated with significantly more positive outcomes, including reduced rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, than those that do not.¹⁵³ Over half of States reported that they had strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programmes. Several States reported that they are pursuing gender-responsive and rights-based approaches to comprehensive sexuality education.

131. States also continued to report efforts to broaden access to HIV prevention, treatment and care for women and girls. Frequently cited measures included programmes to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and initiatives to prevent violence against women and eliminate child marriage. Some States reported efforts to address new infections among young women through national HIV plans and measures to promote their access to HIV testing and prevention services. However, knowledge of HIV prevention among adolescent girls and young women has remained low in the past two decades, with only 3 in every 10 women aged 15 to 24 years having comprehensive knowledge about HIV.¹⁵⁴ To reduce the rate of new HIV infections among young women and adolescent girls, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa, prevention services need to pay greater attention to unequal gender norms and broaden women's and girls' knowledge on the subject.

132. Across States, sufficient and sustained financing for public health systems remains one of the greatest hurdles to be overcome in order to ensure access to good quality services for all women and girls. While public health spending has increased in most regions, it remains woefully inadequate for ensuring universal access, particularly in poorer countries. In 2016, high-income country governments spent 500 times more on health per capita than low-income countries.¹⁵⁵ On average, families and individuals in low- and lower middle-income countries shouldered around 40 per cent of total health costs through out-of-pocket spending, compared to 15–20 per cent in high-income countries.¹⁵⁶ According to an analysis of IMF country reports and spending data, 33 governments, including 14 in developing regions, were considering health reforms in the context of fiscal consolidation, typically involving the imposition of user fees, reductions in medical staff and higher co-payments for medicines¹⁵⁷ which, in the past, have been shown to be more adverse for women than men.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Paul Montgomery and Wendy Kerr, *Review of the Evidence on Sexuality Education: Report to Inform the Update of the UNESCO International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education* (Paris, UNESCO, 2016).

¹⁵⁴ UNAIDS, "Women and HIV: a spotlight on adolescent girls and young women" (Geneva, 2019).

¹⁵⁵ UN-Women calculations based on World Bank, World Development Indicators database, available at <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/> (accessed November 2019).

¹⁵⁶ Ke Xu and others, "New perspectives on global health spending for universal health coverage", (Geneva, WHO, 2018).

¹⁵⁷ Ortiz and Cummins, "Austerity: the new normal".

¹⁵⁸ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016*.

3. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

133. States reported that they had made significant efforts over the past five years to reduce poverty among women, including through better access to social protection and public services. That has resulted in important gains, providing more women with access to cash, narrowing gender gaps in literacy and improving maternal health. States have also reported a range of measures to make social protection systems and public services more responsive to women's rights and needs. Those efforts need to continue in order to close remaining gaps, especially for women and girls from poor and marginalized groups. To avoid stigma and ensure fiscal and political sustainability, initiatives for those groups need to be part of broader efforts aimed at establishing universal systems based on solidarity, risk-sharing and redistribution.

134. To harness synergies and address the multiple dimensions of women's poverty, States should move beyond sectoral policies towards systemic approaches that combine social protection and public services to address the risks and vulnerabilities that women and girls face over the course of their lives. Three policy priorities emerge from the review. First, States should gear social protection and public services more clearly to the transformation of unequal power relations. Access is often not enough to achieve that goal, and synergies may be lost if structural barriers to gender equality remain unaddressed. Second, putting sexual and reproductive health and rights at the centre of social protection, health and education policies is critical for the empowerment of women and girls and has the potential to accelerate progress in the implementation of the Platform for Action as a whole. Third, in order to ensure that the closing of gender gaps in educational attainment translates into more equal employment opportunities, technical and vocational education and training programmes need to address more consistently the labour market barriers women face and support their participation in "non-traditional" fields.

135. Ending women's poverty requires a major shift in economic thinking and a radical reconfiguration of economic power relations to ensure sustainable financing for gender-responsive public services and social protection systems. Such spending should be viewed as an investment in the light of the positive externalities they produce for individuals, economies and societies. Fiscal policies should therefore be designed to reduce gender and other inequalities, including through progressive income and wealth taxes. Social protection and public services should be the object of public sector investment rather than private sector profitability. The impact of privatization and public-private partnerships on women and girls, particularly those from poor and marginalized groups, needs to be assessed carefully and accountability mechanisms put in place to ensure quality, accessibility and affordability for all without discrimination.

C. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

Key messages

- Violence against women and girls, rooted in unequal power relations between women and men, persists as a silent and endemic crisis.
- Rapid changes in technology and media are creating new spaces for the perpetration of violence against women and girls.
- To ensure women's and girls' freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes, States have prioritized action to: strengthen and enforce laws on violence against women in public and private spaces; ensure that women have access to justice; provide them with greater access to support services; prevent violence against

women and girls before it occurs; and recognize the impact of technology and media on gender stereotypes and violence against women.

- Long-term investment is required to implement laws and policies, comprehensive and coordinated services for women and girls, and tackle gender inequality as the root cause of violence.
- Due diligence principles must be upheld to ensure that the media and technology do no harm by perpetuating gender stereotypes and violence against women and girls.

136. In recent years, a growing number of global and national movements, such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, #BalanceTonPorc and #NiUnaMenos, have emerged to draw attention to the pervasive nature of violence against women and girls (critical area of concern D) and demand greater accountability and more action. An unprecedented number of women have spoken out about violence, breaking the silence on its systematic nature. It has been shown that violence against women and girls is rooted in unequal power relations between women and men, from everyday discrimination and sexual harassment to “honour” killings and femicide.

137. The persistence of gender stereotypes and negative portrayals of women in the media (critical area of concern I) have been identified as a factor contributing to violence against women and girls and gender inequality more broadly. Ensuring women and girls are free from violence, discrimination, stigma and stereotypes is essential to achieving substantive equality, but also crucial to the achievement of several of the Sustainable Development Goals, such as poverty eradication (Goal 1), health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4) and decent work (Goal 8). Tackling violence against women also contributes to creating more peaceful and non-violent communities for all (Goal 16), given that violence against women is one of the strongest predictors of the eruption of conflict in a country.¹⁵⁹ The Platform for Action provides key policy guidance on how to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and on ensuring a balanced portrayal of women in the media.

138. Since the review in 2015 of the implementation of the Platform for Action, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences has shed light on emerging issues, including violence against women in politics (A/73/301) and violence facilitated by technology (A/HRC/38/47). A growing number of special procedures of the Human Rights Council are also contributing, in their thematic reports on topics such as trafficking, human rights defenders, migrants, and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, to a better understanding of violence against women and girls as a cross-cutting human rights issue.

139. The ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), has put a spotlight on women’s experiences of violence and harassment in the world of work. In the Convention, the formal and informal sectors are addressed, the need for workers and their advocates to be involved in drawing up policy and practices is recognized, support for victims and survivors is mentioned and domestic violence is included as an area of focus.

1. Global and regional trends

140. Violence against women and girls is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm

¹⁵⁹ UN-Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York, 2015).

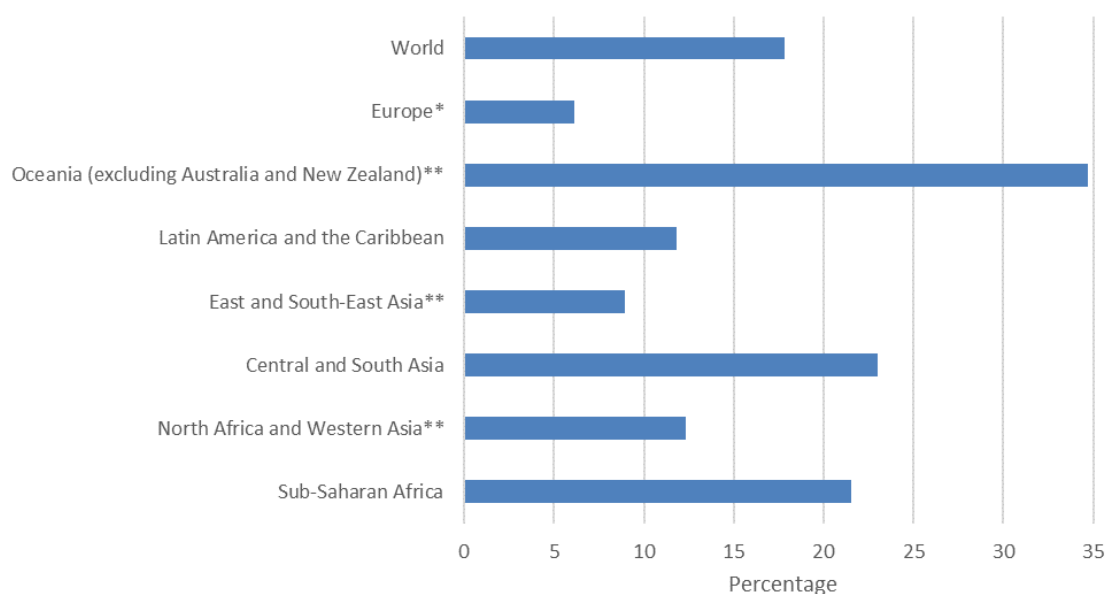
or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (General Assembly resolution 48/104, art. 1). Women and girls are subject to different and intersecting forms of violence, mostly perpetrated by men, in a variety of contexts – in times of peace or conflict, or in the wake of conflict – and in diverse spheres: the family, the community and broader society.

Violence against women and girls persists at alarming rates across the world

141. Data on violence against women and girls indicate that it affects women in all countries and across all socioeconomic groups, locations and education levels. The most recent data is on intimate partner violence and domestic violence. Data from 106 countries indicate that 17.8 per cent of women and girls aged 15 to 49 years who have ever been married or in a union have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months (E/2019/68 and figure C.1). The figure rises to 30 per cent when considering violence by a partner experienced during women’s lifetime.¹⁶⁰ There is significant regional variation in the prevalence of violence in the previous 12 months, at its highest in least developed countries (24.3 per cent). Limited data and problems of comparability render global and regional trend analysis impossible.

Figure C.1

Proportion by region of women and girls aged 15 to 49 years subjected to physical or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months



Sources: Sustainable Development Goals indicator 5.2.1, based on DHS, MICS and other national surveys conducted between 2010 and 2018.

Notes: * Data are presented for Europe and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), instead of Europe and North America and Oceania, respectively, given that comparable data for North America, Australia and New Zealand for this indicator are not available.

** Caution is advised when interpreting regional figures for East and South-East Asia (based on seven countries with a population coverage of 13 per cent) and North Africa and Western Asia (based on six countries with a population coverage of 41 per cent), as they are not fully representative of the populations in those regions.

¹⁶⁰ WHO, *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence* (Geneva, 2013).

142. Recent data on non-partner sexual violence is limited. Based on data from 56 countries and two territories, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2013 that 7.2 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 years globally had reported experiencing non-partner sexual violence.¹⁶¹

143. Global data on sexual harassment is unavailable, although #MeToo and other advocacy platforms indicate it is pervasive. A 2014 study of 42,000 women in the European Union found that every second woman (55 per cent) had experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15 and one in five (21 per cent) in the 12 months before the survey. Among women who had experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15, 32 per cent indicated that the perpetrator had been someone from the employment context – such as a colleague, boss or customer.¹⁶² A multi-country study from the Middle East and North Africa region found that between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of women had experienced sexual harassment in the streets and that between 31 per cent and 64 per cent of men had committed such acts.¹⁶³ A survey in Australia of more than 30,000 university students found that 32 per cent of female students had been sexually harassed at university, compared with 17 per cent of male students; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students were at particular risk.¹⁶⁴ Women in political and public life, including politicians, journalists and human rights defenders, are often sexually harassed because they challenge traditional power dynamics (see sect. III.D).

144. Trafficking remains a global problem, with 24,000 detected victims, mainly adult women, recorded in 2016.¹⁶⁵ Increasingly, girls are also falling victim to trafficking and together, women and girls represent more than 70 per cent of detected victims. More than four out of every five trafficked women and nearly three out of every four trafficked girls are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, 35 per cent of those trafficked for forced labour are also women.

145. Violence against women can be lethal. It is estimated that, of the 87,000 women who were intentionally killed in 2017 globally, more than half (50,000) were killed by an intimate partner or other family member. In other words, 137 women around the world are killed by a family member every day.¹⁶⁶ More than one third (68 a day) were killed by their current or former intimate partner.¹⁶⁷

146. Global data on violence against women in particular groups or contexts is limited. Some studies, however, indicate that women are at greater risk of violence where they suffer from multiple forms of discrimination or are particularly marginalized, for example if they are indigenous, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, living with a disability or have an insecure migration status.¹⁶⁸ All forms of violence against women and girls are also exacerbated in situations of humanitarian crisis and conflict (see sect. III.E).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women: an EU-Wide Survey – Main results* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2014).

¹⁶³ Shereen El Feki, Gary Barker and Brian Heilman, *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa* (Cairo and Washington, D.C., UN-Women and Promundo, 2017).

¹⁶⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities* (Sydney, 2017).

¹⁶⁵ *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.19.IV.2).

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide: Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls 2018* (Vienna, 2018).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Rashida Manjoo, “The continuum of violence against women and the challenges of effective redress”, *International Human Rights Law Review*, vol. 1, No. 1 (2012).

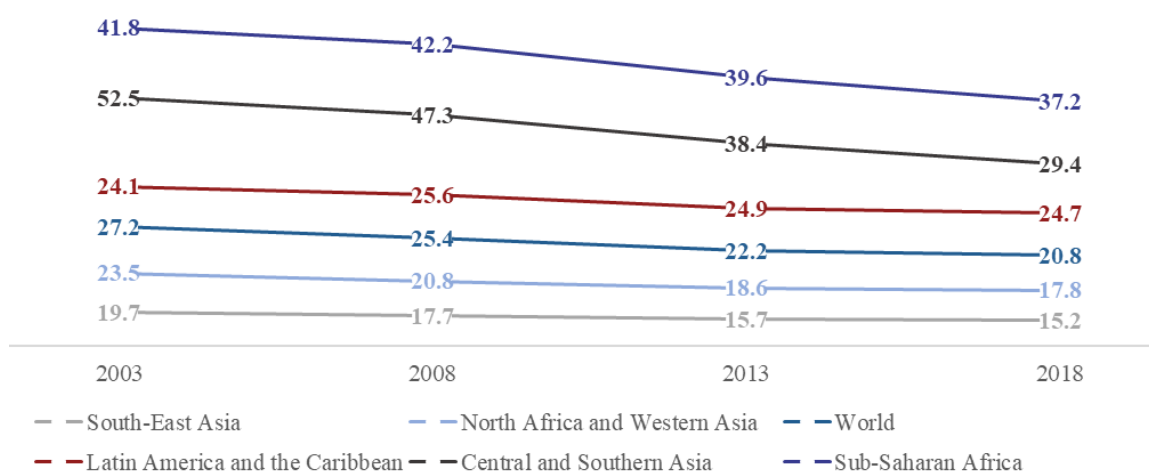
Girls are at particular risk of different forms of violence, with projected population growth threatening progress on eradicating harmful practices

147. Girls are at particular risk of different forms of violence because of their age and gender. Worldwide, around 15 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years have experienced rape (measured as forced sex).¹⁶⁹ Data from 30 countries indicate, however, that only 1 per cent of them sought professional help.¹⁷⁰

148. An estimated 650 million women and girls in the world today were married before the age of 18 years. In the past decade, the global rate of child, early and forced marriage has declined. South Asia has experienced the largest drop, from 49 per cent to 30 per cent (figure C.2). The rate remains high in sub-Saharan Africa, where almost 4 out of 10 young women were married before their 18th birthday.¹⁷¹ According to data from 30 countries, at least 200 million women and girls have been subjected to female genital mutilation. The prevalence of the practice, however, dropped by 25 per cent between 2000 and 2018.¹⁷² Projected population growth, however, means that the overall number of girls in countries with available data who undergo female genital mutilation each year or who are married early will rise.¹⁷³ Estimates show that, if efforts are not accelerated, more than 150 million girls will marry before their 18th birthday by 2030.¹⁷⁴ There is also an increasing trend towards the medicalization of female genital mutilation.¹⁷⁵

Figure C.2

Women aged 20 to 24 years married or in a union before the age of 18, by region (2003–2018)



Sources: UN-Women calculations based on Sustainable Development Goals indicator 5.3.1, UNICEF global databases, 2019.

¹⁶⁹ UNICEF, *A Familiar Face: Violence in the Lives of Children and Adolescents* (New York, 2017).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ See www.unicef.org/stories/child-marriage-around-world; UNICEF, *Is Every Child Counted? Status of Data for Children in the SDGs* (New York, 2017), p. 54.

¹⁷² See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-05/>.

¹⁷³ See www.unicef.org/stories/child-marriage-around-world; UNICEF, *Is Every Child Counted?*

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Leah Selim, “What you need to know about female genital mutilation: how the harmful practice affects millions of girls worldwide” (UNICEF, 6 February 2019).

Changes in the technology and media landscape are creating new spaces for violence against women and girls

149. Rapid advances in technology, with their wide reach and accessibility, provide another avenue for violence against women, offline and online. Mobile phones and the Internet are used for online trolling or harassment of women, trafficking of women and children, cyberstalking, violations of privacy, censorship and the hacking of email accounts, phones and other electronic devices, and increased targeting of women human rights defenders and other women in political and public life. Global data is not available; however, a regional study has found that 1 in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyberharassment since the age of 15 (including having received unwanted, offensive and sexually explicit emails or SMS messages, or offensive, inappropriate advances on social networking sites). The risk is highest among young women between 18 and 29 years of age.¹⁷⁶ Technology is also increasingly used to facilitate human trafficking.¹⁷⁷

150. Among other factors, stereotypes and the significant underrepresentation of women in the media play a significant role in shaping harmful attitudes of disrespect and violence towards women. In 2015, women made up only 24 per cent of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, as had been the case in 2010.¹⁷⁸ Despite the democratizing promise of digital media, women's poor representation in traditional news media is also reflected in digital news, with women making up only 26 per cent of the people in Internet news stories and media news tweets.¹⁷⁹ Only 4 per cent of traditional news and digital news stories clearly challenge gender stereotypes.¹⁸⁰

2. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

151. Based on the national reports, policy and programmatic trends in implementation emerged in four areas: (a) strengthening and enforcing of laws that address violence against women and ensuring women's access to justice; (b) increasing women's access to support services; (c) preventing violence against women and girls; and (d) recognizing the impact of technology and media on violence against women and gender stereotypes.

152. National action plans continue to be the overarching framework for most countries in their efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. Globally, 68 per cent of States reported that they had introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls in the past five years. Efforts were fairly consistent across all regions. A positive development is the increasing focus of national action plans on addressing violence experienced by diverse groups of women and girls. However, inadequate funding, implementation and monitoring make it difficult to translate plans into results.

(a) Laws on violence against women and women's access to justice

153. The global and regional normative framework calls for comprehensive laws that address all forms of violence against women and girls as a systematic violation of women's human rights and form of discrimination, providing for the prosecution of perpetrators and setting out State obligations to prevent violence and protect, empower and support survivors. Laws to address violence against women should be

¹⁷⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against Women*.

¹⁷⁷ Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, "Human trafficking and technology: trends, challenges and opportunities", Issue Brief, No. 07 (2019).

¹⁷⁸ Sarah Macharia, *Who Makes the News? 2015 Global Report* (Toronto, World Association for Christian Communication and others, 2015).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

embedded in a broader legal framework based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

154. More than four fifths of States reported action to introduce, strengthen, implement and enforce laws to combat violence against women. The focus on law reform, enforcement and implementation was consistent across all regions. States have strengthened such laws by: increasing protection for victims; increasing penalties for perpetrators and expanding the category of domestic violence perpetrators to include other family members; criminalizing different or additional forms of violence such as femicide, sexual harassment (box C.1), domestic violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and trafficking; expanding definitions of violence, for example by including psychological and economic violence in the definition of domestic violence; and introducing new standards of consent with respect to rape. Several European States have established positive legal obligations for government bodies to respond to violence against women.

155. Significant gaps in legal protection against violence against women remain. In 2018, the World Bank found that nearly one in four countries did not have laws on domestic violence.¹⁸¹ Only 42 per cent of countries have laws that explicitly criminalize marital rape. Data from 53 countries show that 68 per cent of those countries lack rape laws based on the principle of consent.¹⁸² Discriminatory family law provisions regarding women's rights in marriage, divorce, custody and migration have a significant bearing on the safety and well-being of victims and survivors of violence and prevent women from leaving violent relationships. In recent years there has been a growing shift to gender neutrality in laws on violence against women,¹⁸³ which makes the unequal gendered power relations as the root cause of violence invisible and serves to justify the scaling back of women-only services for victims and survivors.

Box C.1

Strengthening legal protection to address sexual harassment across multiple spheres

A promising trend in recent years has been the strengthening or expansion of legislation to address sexual harassment, whereby it is recognized as a form of discrimination that can take place in many contexts, such as public spaces, employment, education and in the provision of goods and services. It should also be recognized in law that sexual harassment can occur in vertical and horizontal power relationships.^a There is a limited but growing number of legal provisions against sexual harassment in public spaces, including at the city or municipal level.

In Barbados, for example, a new law was introduced in 2017 to address sexual harassment in employment, including the initiation of unwanted physical contact, unwelcome sexual advances or requests, and the use of sexually suggestive words, comments, jokes, gestures or actions. Employers are required to establish and communicate a clearly articulated policy on sexual harassment in the workplace.

In 2019, the Labour Code and the Code of Administrative Offences in Georgia were amended with a view to curbing sexual harassment at work and in public spaces. Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual behaviour against the person that aims to violate or indeed violates their dignity and creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The legislation includes financial sanctions for sexual harassment in public spaces and allows the Public Defender to

¹⁸¹ World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2018*.

¹⁸² UN-Women and United Nations, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals".

¹⁸³ Information from reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the period 2015–2019.

monitor employers, issue recommendations and monitor compliance with anti-discrimination law.

In 2018, France adopted a new law covering sexist insults, degrading or humiliating comments, or hostile and offensive “sexual or sexist” behaviour towards a person in public areas, schools or workplaces. In the Philippines, laws have been passed in two cities on sexual harassment in public spaces. In Quezon City, the Gender and Development Code was amended in 2016 to penalize sexual harassment of women in public spaces. In 2018, City Council of Manila passed an ordinance with provisions on types of sexual harassment, such as catcalling, wolf-whistling, leering, groping and others. It provides for clear and simple procedures mandatory training.^b

Nonetheless, significant shortcomings in the coverage, implementation and enforcement of sexual harassment laws remain. Of 189 countries, 35 have no such legislation; 59 have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace; 123 have no laws on sexual harassment in education; and 157 have no laws on sexual harassment in public spaces.^c

^a Jane Pillinger and others, *Handbook Addressing Violence and Harassment against Women in the World of Work* (New York, UN-Women and ILO, 2019).

^b UN-Women, “Safe cities and safe public spaces for women and girls global flagship initiative: international compendium of practices” (2019).

^c World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2018*.

156. States have taken a number of initiatives to implement and enforce laws to improve women’s access to justice, including: the establishment of specialized courts or procedures for domestic violence and sexual violence; free legal assistance; training on violence against women for the judiciary and law enforcement officers; guidelines or protocols for courts and law enforcement agencies on responding to violence against women; and strategies to improve the efficiency of court processes, such as the implementation of electronic monitoring systems. Some States allow victims and survivors to give evidence without having to face perpetrators, including by testifying via videoconference. Specialist mobile courts have emerged to improve access in rural and remote areas. The availability of protection orders remains one of the most common measures.

157. Significant barriers continue to hamper the implementation and enforcement of laws. They include a lack of resources, institutional obstacles, patriarchal systems and gender stereotypes prevalent in services such as security, police and justice institutions. Low reporting rates indicate that women continue to face obstacles and have little confidence in the formal justice system. In most countries with available data, less than 40 per cent of women who suffer violence seek help.¹⁸⁴ Of those who do, less than 10 per cent appeal to the police.¹⁸⁵ Women in rural and remote areas are held back by the distance to courts and law enforcement personnel and linguistic and cultural barriers. In low-income contexts, the courts and law enforcement agencies often lack capacity to respond effectively and, where women do report violence, they often respond in an inappropriate manner, for example through the inconsistent application of protection orders, which can actually increase the risk of or justify violence.

¹⁸⁴ *The World’s Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.15.XVII.8).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

(b) Women's access to support services

158. Support services for women who have experienced violence work best when they are comprehensive, well-coordinated, interdisciplinary, accessible, of good quality, sustained and multisectoral, responding at all levels and informed by the perspectives of survivors.¹⁸⁶ They should be victim-centred, focused on women's human rights, safety and empowerment, and designed to avoid secondary victimization (A/HRC/35/30, para. 42).

159. Eighty-seven per cent of States reported that they had introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence, including through: the creation of telephone hotlines and case management and referral services; the establishment of specialized women's police stations or women's units at police stations; the setting up of specialized courts linked with other support services; the provision of counselling and legal services; training on violence against women for government bodies and service providers; housing support, including shelters; and the provision of health services for survivors. Recognizing the need to enhance the economic independence of women who leave abusive partnerships, a few States reported that they helped victims and survivors to enter paid work.¹⁸⁷ Some States also reported on the introduction of coordination, oversight and monitoring bodies to improve the coverage, consistency and responsiveness of services.

160. Technology is increasingly being used, in particular in developed countries, in support and referral services. Mobile phone applications, for example, are being developed to facilitate access by victims and survivors to the police or support services. Global Positioning System (GPS) support is being used to locate the person requiring assistance. More attention is also being paid to violence against women and girls in the design of broader public services, for example women's safety in public transport or in water and sanitation policies. Employers and workers' organizations are also playing a growing role in responding to violence (box C.2).

161. Key problem areas include a chronic lack of services, difficulty in gaining access to them, a shortage of funding and the failure to create an integrated approach between such services and measures such as protection orders, which in turn increases the risk of exposing women to further harm (A/HRC/35/30). Services such as mobile phone applications need to be part of a set of comprehensive essential services. Mental health services and long-term support for survivors in the areas of housing, education and employment are also lacking. The failure to coordinate between and within sectors, in addition to being inefficient, drives up the risk of women being left unaided. States provided little information on efforts to improve the quality of services. Women's specialist services require sustainable resourcing.

Box C.2**Violence against women, including domestic violence, as a labour rights issue**

A significant innovation under the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), is the recognition that employers and workers' organizations have a role to play in responding to domestic violence. Domestic violence has historically been viewed as a private matter that affects people at home rather than at work. The Convention provides that workers who experience domestic violence have a right to support and protection in employment, that they should not be discriminated against

¹⁸⁶ UN-Women and others, *Module 1: Overview and Introduction – Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence; Core Elements and Quality Guidelines* (2015).

¹⁸⁷ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*.

for falling victim to domestic violence and that employers should provide flexible work, protection and leave for such victims.

States are paying more attention to domestic violence as a workplace issue. A number of them have adopted laws that provide for the role of employers in responding to domestic violence. In the province of Cordoba, in Argentina, for example, public sector workers are entitled to take leave in the case of gender-based violence. In New Zealand, any person experiencing domestic violence is entitled by law to 10 days of paid leave from work. They are also entitled to fast-tracked flexible work conditions to ensure their safety.

Workers' organizations and employers have also started to address domestic violence. In Brazil, waste-picker cooperatives in Brazil are using participatory action research to understand women's experiences of domestic violence and action needed in the context of work.^a Similarly, in Pakistan, an association of women health workers has responded to violence experienced by women community health workers in their families, including economic violence, whereby male relatives control women's incomes, by providing space to share experiences and providing support through fellow workers.^b Public and private sector organizations in Australia have responded to domestic violence as a workplace issue by providing paid domestic violence leave, training managers to identify, support and provide referrals to victims of domestic violence, and providing financial and housing support to victims who are employees.^c

^a Pillinger and others, *Handbook Addressing Violence and Harassment against Women*.

^b Ibid.

^c Male Champions of Change, "Playing our part: lessons learned from implementing workplace responses to domestic and family violence", November 2016.

162. States have increasingly focused services on women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Some have established services for indigenous women led by indigenous women. A number of European States have established tailored support services for refugee and migrant women who have experienced violence, including by integrating services for victims of violence into accommodation services for refugees. More attention is being paid to violence experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (box C.3) and services and support programmes are being provided for adolescent girls and domestic workers. States, however, provided little information on support services for older women who experience violence, indicating a gap in service provision.

Box C.3

Leaving no one behind: Support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people who have experienced violence

There is a growing focus on support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people who experience violence. Evidence suggests that lesbian and gay people experience intimate partner violence at similar rates to those in heterosexual relationships, but service providers often lack awareness of the issue.^a Lesbians, transgender women and gender-diverse people are also subjected to hate violence, whereby individuals are targeted for transgressing expected gender norms and stereotypes. Such violence can involve known and unknown perpetrators and can include physical, psychological and sexual violence. So-called "corrective rape", for example, has been reported in several countries as a means of "converting" victims to heterosexuality (A/HRC/38/43). In some cases, rape is perpetrated by family members, or they collude with the perpetrators.^b Victims attempting to obtain

protection or support are often subject to further harassment, humiliation, abuse or arrest based on discrimination and prejudice (A/73/152).

Several steps must be taken to enable lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex survivors of violence to obtain care and access to justice. Discriminatory laws must be repealed.^c The links between violence based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and other aspects of identity or socioeconomic status, and the needs of survivors experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, must be addressed.^d There is a need to tackle institutional discrimination against such people and to bolster understanding among support service providers, medical professionals and law enforcement officers, including through training, by allowing survivor advocates from that community to take part in legal proceedings and providing low-cost legal aid for people of that community. Improving access to existing services that deal with violence against women, ensuring access to affordable and safe housing and promoting inclusivity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in communities, the workplace, politics, education and health care facilities is also critical for lowering the risk of violence.^e

Several States reported efforts to provide support services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people who had experienced violence. In the Netherlands, specific alliances and partnerships have been established, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex organizations and other service providers, to address the increased vulnerability to violence of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women. In Bangladesh, transgender individuals, also known as *hijras*, have been recognized as a third gender. In response to the discrimination and violence experienced by them, the Government provides them with economic support. In Lesotho, the national policy framework on eliminating violence against women includes specific protection of the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

^a Monica Campo and Sarah Tayton, *Intimate Partner Violence in Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer Communities: Key Issues* (Melbourne, Australian Institute of Family Studies and Child Family Community Australia, 2015).

^b Sanchita Srivastava and Purnima Singh, "Psychosocial roots of stigma of homosexuality and its impact on the lives of sexual minorities in India", *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 3, No. 8 (August 2015).

^c See the Yogyakarta Principles (2006) and the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (2017), available at <http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles-en/official-versions-pdf/>; Lucas Ramón Mendos, *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2019*, 13th ed. (Geneva, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, 2019).

^d See A/74/181; California Coalition against Sexual Assault, "Ending sexual violence: an intersectional approach", 2017.

^e See the Yogyakarta Principles (2006) and the Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (2017). See also A/74/181.

163. Data is lacking to inform policies and programmes. Despite significant developments in recent decades in measurement methodologies, the regularity of data collection and comparability across and between countries remains a challenge, limiting the extent to which progress can be monitored. Sample sizes for age-disaggregated data need to be expanded to younger and older women in order to understand their experiences of violence. Significant data gaps exist on some forms of violence, particularly sexual harassment in private and public spaces, gender-based killings of women, sexual harassment and violence facilitated by technology, and violence against women in politics. Data is also lacking on survivors, perpetrators, service provision and justice outcomes through administrative records.

(c) Preventing violence against women and girls

164. The need to prevent violence against women by addressing its root causes and risk factors is widely recognized. Prevention should, however, be pursued in synergy with adequate response services and a functioning justice system. Prevention requires interventions at different levels – individual, relationship, community and society – to transform unequal gendered power relations and address gender inequality, including intersectional discrimination, as well as risk factors.¹⁸⁸ No single intervention will end violence against women; combined, long-term strategies are more likely to be successful.¹⁸⁹

165. Globally, 67 per cent of States reported that they had introduced or strengthened strategies to prevent violence against women and girls. There was significant regional variation in the attention given to prevention. Public awareness campaigns to change attitudes constituted the most common form of action (89 per cent of States), followed by initiatives in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sexuality education (58 per cent), grassroots and community-level mobilization (52 per cent), working with men and boys (48 per cent), perpetrator programmes (40 per cent) and changing the way women and girls are represented in the media (35 per cent). Few States have comprehensive or long-term strategies to prevent violence against women.

166. Public awareness campaigns have addressed diverse forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, rape, street-based or workplace harassment, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and trafficking. A limitation of most such campaigns is that they are short term and devoted to single issues. Long-term programmes using multiple avenues are more effective.¹⁹⁰

167. Community mobilization and activism programmes designed to challenge unequal power relations and discriminatory social norms are promising. Women’s rights organizations have historically played a critical role in developing such programmes. Effective interventions have a strong basis in theories of gender and power and use a combination of behaviour change strategies and opportunities for interpersonal communication.¹⁹¹ Initiatives designed for women, men, girls and boys together have proven more effective than those for men and boys alone. More research is needed on how community-based prevention models can be scaled up to the national level and what additional initiatives could complement community-level work.

168. Comprehensive prevention needs to be woven into a broad range of policies, programmes and initiatives for institutional change. A strategy to challenge harmful gender roles and stereotypes in the family will be more successful where women enjoy equal property rights or public services exist to support the equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work. Evidence suggests that combining women’s economic empowerment and gender-transformative interventions could prevent

¹⁸⁸ UN-Women and others, “A framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women” (2015); WHO and others, “Respect women: preventing violence against women” (WHO/RHR/18.19, 2019).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.; Emma Fulu, Alice Kerr-Wilson and James Lang, “Effectiveness of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls: a summary of the evidence”, (London, What Works to Prevent Violence, 2017).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Rachel Jewkes, Erin Stern and Leane Ramsoomar, “Preventing violence against women and girls: community activism approaches to shift harmful gender attitudes, roles and social norms – evidence review”, (London, What Works to Prevent Violence, 2019).

intimate partner violence and strengthen the economic position of women and families.¹⁹²

(d) *Impact of technology and media on violence against women and gender stereotypes*

169. Addressing online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls requires national legislative, regulatory and policy measures. Sixty-four per cent of States reported that they had engaged in awareness-raising initiatives directed at the general public and young people in educational settings; 62 per cent reported having introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions; and 26 per cent reported having worked with technology providers to set and adhere to good business practices. States reported that they had introduced new laws on cyber and electronic violence and harassment and criminal penalties for capturing and sharing sexual images without consent and online interactions with minors; they had also established legal clinics, telephone hotlines and online help portals for victims and implemented awareness-raising programmes, in particular for children and young people, to increase knowledge of the risks and dangers of technology.

170. States provided limited information on how they are working with or regulating technology providers to hold them accountable for keeping women safe online. Technology and ICT providers should be required to uphold women's human rights by conducting due diligence and applying all core international human rights and women's rights standards to their platforms and providing women with fast and effective remedies.

171. The pervasiveness of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the media remains a particular challenge. The media can help to shift understanding of and norms regarding violence against women and girls and to promote positive norms in support of gender equality.

172. Addressing the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and gender bias in the media has not been prioritized to the same extent as other aspects of the Platform for Action. Some 49 per cent of States have provided training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls; 45 per cent have promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media; 35 per cent have enacted, strengthened and enforced legal reforms to combat discrimination or gender bias in the media or introduced binding regulations for them, including with regard to advertising; 34 per cent have supported the media industry to develop voluntary codes of conduct; and 21 per cent have established or strengthened consumer protection services to receive and review complaints about media content or gender-based discrimination and bias in the media. Some States have begun to introduce standards and practices on the reporting of violence against women and girls in the media to challenge harmful myths and stereotypes.

173. Efforts to engage the media to address stereotypical representations and report responsibly on violence against women have been focused on training for journalists. More needs to be done to standardize media practices and establishing regulatory mechanisms to ensure consistency and accountability. Standards and practices should also be applicable to online and social media.

¹⁹² Andrew Gibbs and Kate Bishop, "Preventing violence against women and girls: combined economic empowerment and gender transformative interventions – evidence review", (London, What Works to Prevent Violence, 2019).

3. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

174. Violence against women and girls has been a top priority for States but rates of such violence remain alarmingly high. Deeply ingrained cultures that excuse, minimize and normalize violence persist and rapid technological change is creating more spaces for violence. States have prioritized the introduction, implementation and enforcement of laws on violence against women and the establishment of support services for survivors. Although more attention is being paid to prevention, overall efforts remain ad hoc and short-term. Public funding remains woefully inadequate, too often leaving women's organizations and civil society to fill the gap.

175. To ensure women's freedom from violence and stigma, action is urgently needed in three areas. First, States should ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and prioritize services for women and girls, with specific attention to the long-term needs of survivors, such as housing, education and employment. Ensuring that women have access to justice is critical. Second, a comprehensive, evidence-based and long-term approach to prevention is needed, using multiple avenues to transform social norms and unequal power relations between women and men. Lastly, States should uphold due diligence principles to ensure that media and technology do not facilitate violence against women or perpetuate harmful and stereotypical portrayals of women and girls.

176. Ensuring women's freedom from violence and stigma requires challenging entrenched norms of male dominance in families, communities, and economic and public life, making justice systems work for women to end impunity, and fostering norms of respect, non-discrimination and equality. Eliminating violence against women and girls ultimately requires a shift in the mindset of society: rather than as an inevitable part of life, violence against women and girls should be seen as preventable with investment and action commensurate with the scale of the problem.

D. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Key messages

- Women's representation in national and local elected deliberative bodies has been steadily increasing, but change is incremental and not sufficiently transformative.
- Institutions continue to lack authority, capacity and resources for effectively advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Progress has been made in implementing gender-responsive budgeting but financing for gender equality remains woefully inadequate.
- Shrinking civic space and increasing attacks on women in political and public life are undermining accountability for meeting gender equality commitments.
- States have prioritized action to accelerate women's participation through temporary special measures; strengthen gender-responsive institutions; and enhance accountability for gender equality.
- To accelerate progress, action is needed to: ensure the effective implementation of temporary special measures, eradicate discriminatory practices in political institutions and ensure women contribute substantively to decision-making; strengthen national machineries for gender equality, systematically implement gender-responsive budgeting, collect gender statistics and integrate a gender perspective into all policies and planning; and create safe, participatory and enabling environments for women's rights organizations and human rights defenders. Eradicating violence, harassment and abuse of women in public life is an urgent priority.

177. In recent decades, the visibility of women in decision-making positions has grown, underlining that the full and equal participation of women (critical area of concern G) is essential for achieving gender equality and driving progress towards sustainable development. Women's participation in public life (critical areas of concern G and J), together with strong institutions for gender equality (critical area of concern H), are necessary for advancing gender equality laws and policies and ensuring accountability. In spite of the progress made, women remain significantly underrepresented in all aspects of decision-making and attacks on women in public life have become more common. Women's civil society organizations play a critical role in demanding accountability from decision makers for upholding the human rights of women and girls (critical area of concern I) and monitoring the implementation of policies. Participatory and inclusive institutions and policy-making processes are essential if civil society is to play its role in strengthening accountability. The Platform for Action provides important guidance for ensuring women's participation in all areas of decision-making, building gender-responsive institutions and fostering greater accountability.

178. Over the past five years, a growing understanding of the importance of women's participation and gender-responsive institutions for achieving gender equality has been reflected in normative frameworks. In its resolution [73/248](#), the General Assembly called on national legislative authorities and political parties to adopt codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or revise existing ones, stating zero tolerance for sexual harassment, intimidation or any other form of violence against women in politics. In its agreed conclusions on the priority themes covered between 2016 and 2019, the Commission highlighted actions to accelerate progress on the issues covered through strengthened institutions, enhanced leadership and participation of women and girls and increased resources. It underscored the critical role of civil society in implementing the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, stressed the value of an open, inclusive and transparent engagement with civil society in the implementation of measures for those purposes and highlighted the role and contributions of women human rights defenders and, where they exist, national human rights institutions.¹⁹³ The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development contains detailed commitments for tracking resource allocation for gender equality and women's empowerment, gender-responsive budgeting and financing for gender equality. Those efforts have continued apace in the context of the financing for development follow-up dialogues.

1. Global and regional trends

Women's representation in national and local elected deliberative bodies has increased, but progress is slow

179. Over the past 25 years, women's representation in national parliaments has doubled from 12 per cent in 1995 to an average of 24.3 globally in 2019¹⁹⁴ with the global median representation of women at 21 per cent. That leaves more than three quarters of seats controlled by men.

180. Only 17 States (9 per cent) have achieved or surpassed the target of gender balance in their parliaments (at least 40 per cent women). Of those, only four have more than 50 per cent women and 13 have between 40 per cent and 49 per cent women in parliament (figure D.1). The type of electoral system and the use of legislated quotas have been key in achieving such high representation of women. In 15 of the 17 States, proportional or mixed electoral systems are in use and 8 of them employ

¹⁹³ See [E/2016/27](#), [E/2017/27](#), [E/2018/27](#) and [E/2019/27](#).

¹⁹⁴ UN-Women calculations based on Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data, as at 1 January 1995 and 1 January 2019.

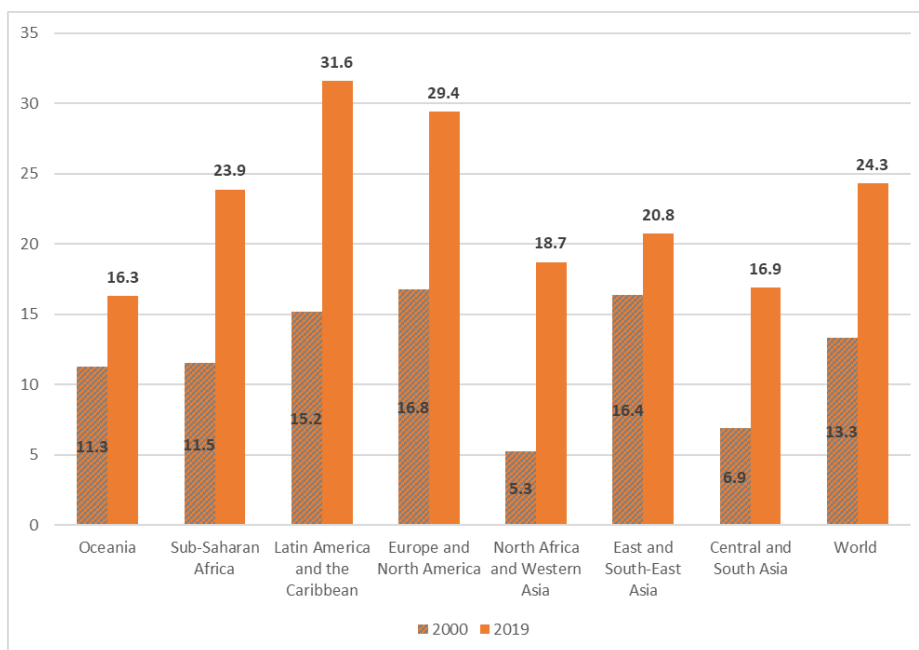
gender quotas. In a further 33 parliaments (17 per cent), between 30 per cent and 39 per cent of members are women.¹⁹⁵ Of those, 23 use proportional or mixed electoral systems and 18 have gender quotas.

181. In 6 out of 10 States, between 10 per cent and 29 per cent of members of parliament are women, with little improvement over the past 10 years.¹⁹⁶ Most of those States do not operate electoral quotas. In 26 States (14 per cent), women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians. In three of them there are no women members at all (figure D.2). Most of those States use majority electoral systems and have no legislated gender quotas.

182. There are important regional divergencies (figure D.1). In Latin America and the Caribbean, 31.6 per cent of parliamentarians were women in 2019 (double the proportion in 2000 at 15.2 per cent), the highest proportion of any region. Oceania had the lowest (16.3 per cent). Between 2000 and 2019, the most substantial progress was made in North Africa and Western Asia, where women's representation increased from 5.3 to 18.7 per cent. The slowest progress was in East and South-East Asia, where the proportion rose from 16.4 per cent to 20.8 per cent.

Figure D.1

Percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments, by region (2000 and 2019)



Source: UN-Women calculations based on IPU archive data on proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, as at 1 January 2000 and 1 January 2019.

183. The level of representation of women in local councils largely mirrors the situation at the national level. The median across 118 countries was 26 per cent as at 1 January 2019, ranging from 1 per cent to 50 per cent. Women's representation is at 40 per cent or more in close to 1 out of 10 countries and between 30 per cent and 40 per cent in one fifth of countries.¹⁹⁷ In countries where the representation of women in local government is higher, they tend to be better represented in national

¹⁹⁵ UN-Women calculations based on IPU data, as at 1 January 2000 and 1 January 2019.

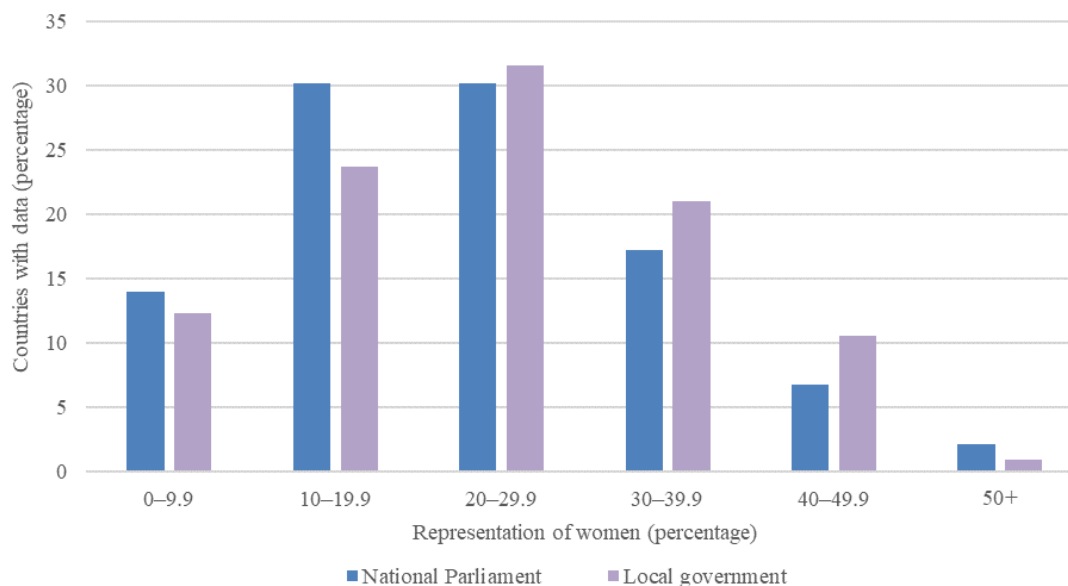
¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Global SDG Indicators database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>.

parliaments, suggesting the importance of an enabling context and the use of legislated gender quotas at the national and local levels.

Figure D.2

Distribution of countries, women’s representation in parliament and local government (2019)



Source: UN-Women calculations based on IPU archive data on the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (as at 1 of October 2019) and the Statistics Division’s Global Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database for the proportion of seats held by women in deliberative bodies of local government (as at 1 January 2019).

184. Women continue to be significantly underrepresented in the highest political positions. In October 2019, there were 10 women heads of State (6.6 per cent) and 13 heads of government (6.7 per cent) across 22 countries, compared with four heads of State (2.6 per cent) and eight prime ministers (4.3 per cent) across 12 countries in 1995.¹⁹⁸ In 2019, women held 20.7 per cent of ministerial positions, up from 16 per cent in 2010.¹⁹⁹ Increasingly, women are leading ministries beyond social or family-related sectors, such as trade, industry and defence.²⁰⁰

185. Women’s participation in decision-making and leadership positions in other sectors has not grown greatly. Globally, 27 per cent of managerial positions in government, large enterprises and other institutions were held by women in 2018.²⁰¹ That same year, on average, women made up 43.6 per cent of the civil service workforce but only 29.6 per cent of leadership positions.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ UN-Women’s calculations based on a list from the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service (on file with the Secretariat and available for consultation), and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), “Data sheet No. 4: a chronology of women of state or government”, in *Women in Politics: 60 Years in Retrospect* (Geneva, 2006).

¹⁹⁹ UN-Women calculations based on data from UN-Women and IPU, “Women in politics: 2010” and “Women in politics: 2019”.

²⁰⁰ UN-Women and IPU, “Women in politics: 2019”.

²⁰¹ UN-Women and United Nations, “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals”.

²⁰² Wilson Centre, “Roadmap to 50x50: power and parity in women’s leadership” (Washington D.C., 2018).

186. In the media, only one in four decision makers, one in three reporters and one in five experts interviewed globally is a woman.²⁰³ Women also remain largely underrepresented as sources and protagonists of media stories.²⁰⁴

Institutions continue to lack authority, capacity and resources for effectively advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women

187. In the Platform for Action, three key components were set forth with regard to institutional mechanisms: the creation or strengthening of national machineries and other governmental bodies; the integration of gender perspectives into legislation, public policies, programmes and projects; and the generation and dissemination of data and information disaggregated by sex for planning and evaluation.

188. In 1995, almost all governments had a national machinery for the advancement of women. By 2018, 192 countries had one or more dedicated gender equality mechanisms or focal points.²⁰⁵ National machineries are key to ensuring that national planning, decision-making, policy formulation and implementation, budgeting processes and institutional structures contribute to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women (E/2018/27). They have spearheaded the development of action plans, facilitated the removal of legal impediments to equality and coordinated gender mainstreaming in national development plans.²⁰⁶

189. At the regional level, it was found in a 2019 study by the independent European Institute for Gender Equality that all 28 European Union member States had established governmental gender equality bodies by 2012, but that since then there had been a noticeable decline in their status and authority. Between 2012 and 2018, the number of member States in which bodies were positioned at the highest level or formed an entire ministry declined from 16 to 9. In some cases, those bodies were weakened by restructuring and budget cuts.²⁰⁷ In a 2016 study covering Latin America and the Caribbean, it was found that inadequate financial resources and, in some cases, a growing dependency on donor funding, reduced the effectiveness of national gender equality mechanisms.²⁰⁸ That was compounded by low levels of technical capacity and decision-making power and limited political will to prioritize gender mainstreaming. The national reports indicate similar trends across other regions, suggesting that little progress has been made since 2015.

190. In the past five years, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has continued to assess the impact of the mandates and funding of national gender equality mechanisms on the implementation of the Convention. It has recommended that States parties ensure that mechanisms are provided with adequate human, technical and financial resources. It has also recommended that States parties clearly define or strengthen their mandates and ensure that they have the authority to discharge them, including for effective coordination across government and collaboration with other stakeholders, in particular civil society.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ UNESCO, *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Global Report 2017/2018* (2018).

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ UN-Women, *Directory of National Mechanisms for Gender Equality October 2018* (2018).

²⁰⁶ Valentina Resta, Zohra Khan and Katherine Gifford, "Institutions for gender equality", in *Sustainable Development Goal 16: Focus on Public Institutions – World Public Sector Report 2019* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.H.1).

²⁰⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Beijing+25*.

²⁰⁸ Victoria Díaz García, *Los Mecanismos Nacionales y Regionales de las Mujeres en América Latina y el Caribe Hispano* (Panama, UN-Women, 2016).

²⁰⁹ Information extracted from reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the period 2015–2019.

Progress is being made in implementing gender-responsive budgeting, but financing for gender equality remains woefully inadequate

191. More governments have implemented gender-responsive budgeting to promote changes in budget laws, policies and systems of public finance management. Under the Sustainable Development Goals, States are measuring progress towards the systematic tracking of budget allocations for gender equality based on three criteria (figure D.3).²¹⁰ The first criterion is the intent of a government to address gender equality, which is assessed by identifying whether policies, programmes and resources are in place. The second is the existence of mechanisms to track resource allocations to those policy goals. The third is the existence of mechanisms to make resource allocations publicly available to increase accountability to women. Progress has been made on all criteria but many countries have yet to establish comprehensive systems to track allocations for gender equality and assess their impact. Analysis of data from 69 countries and areas shows that only 13 countries (19 per cent) fully meet the criteria and that 41 countries (59 per cent) meet at least one.²¹¹

192. International financing for gender equality has increased over the past years. The portion of bilateral allocable aid from OECD countries destined for gender equality (as a significant and principal policy objective) increased between 2009 and 2016–2017 from 23 per cent to 36.5 per cent. However, such aid as a principal objective decreased by 7 per cent between 2016 and 2017, and represented only 4 per cent of the total in the period 2016–2017.²¹² Funding for gender equality policies and programmes is thus falling behind what is needed to meet related commitments. In some sectors, such as economic and productive ones, gender equality programming accounted for as little as 1 per cent of total aid.²¹³

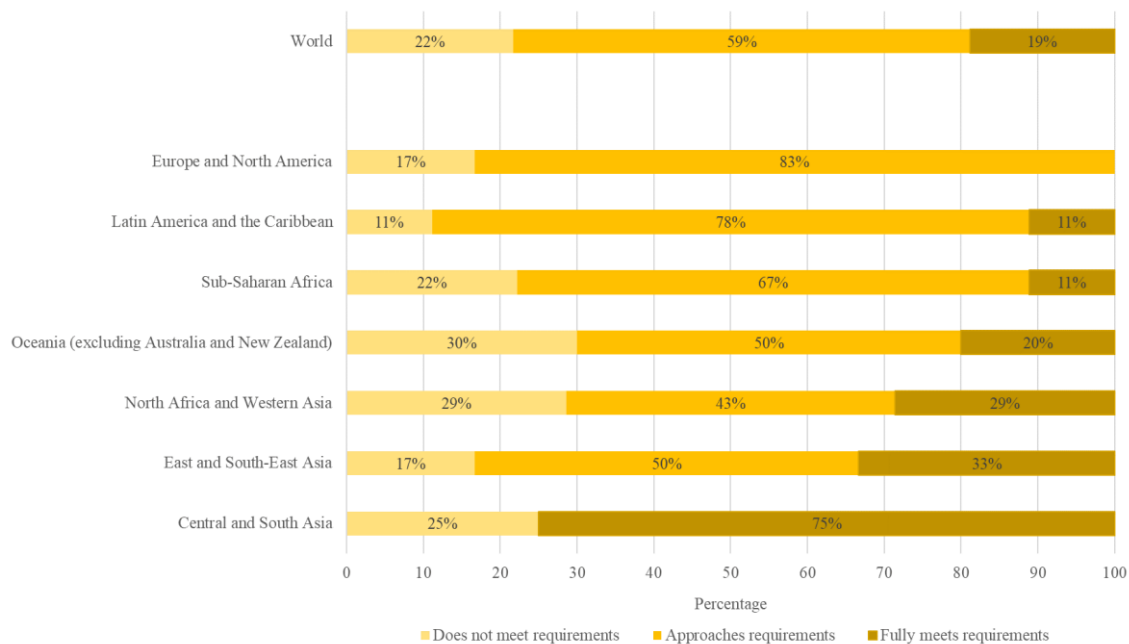
²¹⁰ Sustainable Development Goals indicator 5.c.1; Global SDG Indicators database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed November 2019).

²¹¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-05/>.

²¹² UN-Women calculations based on data from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Gender Equality Policy Marker database, available at www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm. There were 24 donors for 2009 and 30 for 2017. The share of additional donors does not significantly change the trend.

²¹³ See OECD, “Aid in support of gender equality and women’s empowerment”, DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker database, available at www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/aidinsupportofgenderequalityandwomensempowerment.htm.

Figure D.3
Proportion of countries with gender equality budget allocation tracking systems (2019)



Source: Sustainable Development Goals indicator 5.c., see Global SDG Indicators database, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/>.

Notes: Data are derived from an assessment of country systems to track allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment, based on reporting on three criteria collected through a questionnaire; the proportion represents the percentage of reporting countries that fully meet the three criteria for the indicator; data is collected through the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The sample is based on 69 countries globally (6 countries each in Europe and Northern America and East and South-East Asia, 9 countries for Latin America and the Caribbean, 27 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 10 countries for Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, 7 countries for North Africa and Western Asia, and 4 countries for Central and South Asia).

Global standards and methodologies for gender statistics have expanded

193. The number of global standards and methodologies for collecting gender-related statistics and data disaggregated by sex has continued to grow, especially in the context of monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. The minimum set of gender indicators has been fully aligned with indicators for the Goals and new methodologies and standards have been developed (box D.1) As of April 2019, among the quantitative gender indicators, there were 34 Tier 1 indicators, 13 Tier 2 indicators, four Tier 3 indicators and one indicator classified as both Tier 1 and Tier 2.²¹⁴ Among the qualitative indicators, there are 10 Tier 1 indicators and one Tier 2 indicator.

Box D.1

New gender indicators to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals

United Nations agencies and national institutions have worked together to develop new methodologies and standards to monitor targets under the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, to monitor women's representation in local government (indicator 5.5.1), United Nations entities work with electoral

²¹⁴ United Nations, Statistics Division, "The United Nations minimum set of gender indicators: a product of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics" (30 April 2019).

management bodies to produce and disseminate statistical summaries on women and men elected in local elections and to integrate that indicator into the regular programme of statistical activities of national statistical offices.

Joint methodological work with international organizations, national statistical offices, ministries of finance and experts has also contributed to the development of a new global standard to measure countries' efforts to track and publicly report their gender budget allocations (indicator 5.C.1). The compilation of global data began in 2018.

After expert consultations and the development of a survey instrument and guidelines, UN-Women, the World Bank and the OECD Development Centre developed a methodology to track progress on the elimination of discriminatory laws and the enactment of legislation to advance gender equality (indicator 5.1.1). National machineries for gender equality and national statistical offices are working closely together to collect data.

Shrinking space for civil society and increasing attacks on women in public life undermine accountability for implementation of commitments

194. Over the past five years, the capacity of women to hold decision makers to account has been undermined as civil society, in particular women's rights organizations and feminist groups, has come under increasing pressure.²¹⁵ Since 2008, repression of civil society has deepened in 26 countries, while conditions have improved in only 17.²¹⁶ By 2018, the civil and political rights of 1.14 billion women around the world were being adversely affected by shrinking civic spaces as pressure on civil society and repressive responses to collective mobilizations mounted.²¹⁷ In many countries, funding for women's rights and the capacity to fulfil them has receded as forces opposed to gender equality have gained visibility and political influence.²¹⁸

195. Women in public life, including politicians, journalists and activists, are increasingly subject to harassment, violence and cyberbullying. Women human rights defenders are at particular risk. Between 2014 and 2018, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders issued 181 communications to 60 States on women human rights defenders (see [A/HRC/40/60](#)). Documented attacks on them included public shaming and defamation campaigns; judicial harassment and criminalization; online attacks; physical or sexual violence, torture, killings and forced disappearances; threats to and attacks on family members, or by family members, because of their activities; and attacks against their collectives and movements.

2. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

196. Based on the national reports, the following trends in implementation have emerged: (a) the growing participation of women through temporary special measures; (b) the strengthening of gender-responsive institutions; and (c) enhanced accountability for gender equality.

²¹⁵ CIVICUS, "State of civil society report 2019: the year in review", March 2019.

²¹⁶ V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Facing Global Challenges*.

²¹⁷ UN-Women calculation based on 26 countries and areas facing increasing repression of civil society organizations in 2018, and female population from *World Population Prospects 2019*.

²¹⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Beijing+25*.

(a) *Growing participation of women through temporary special measures*

197. States reported on a range of measures to promote the political participation of women, with 63 per cent having amended constitutions, laws and regulations to promote such participation, including through electoral reform, temporary special measures (such as quotas), reserved seats, benchmarks and targets.

198. In 2019, nearly 80 countries introduced legislated gender quotas. On average, in countries with quotas, women were elected to 26 per cent of seats in parliament, compared with 23 per cent in countries without quotas.²¹⁹ The design and enforcement of quota systems is key. In countries where they include rules on the ranking or alternation of candidates on a list, where women are placed in winnable positions, together with enforcement measures and sanctions, an average 33.4 per cent of members elected were women.²²⁰ Sanctions can include the rejection of lists of candidates that do not comply, or financial penalties in cases where elections receive public funding. In many cases, low targets are still set. Some countries, however, are moving towards a target of 40–60 or even parity.²²¹

199. Electoral systems are another important factor. Women are elected in far greater numbers (30.5 per cent) in proportional representation systems than in majority or plurality systems (19.2 per cent). The proportion of women elected in mixed systems is 23.3 per cent. States need to do more to review the differential impact of electoral systems on women.

200. Additional measures, such as dedicated funding, capacity-building and awareness-raising are also needed. Two thirds of countries reported that they had implemented capacity-building, skills development and other measures to support women's political participation at the local and national levels in the past five years. Some 45 per cent reported initiatives to enhance opportunities for mentorship, leadership training and political campaigning, which are often government-led or supported by civil society organizations. A total of 41 per cent of States reported that they had prioritized the participation of minority and young women through awareness-raising and mentorship programmes. More needs to be done in that regard.

201. Several States have gender-balanced cabinets. In September 2019, there were 14 cabinets with 50 per cent women members or more²²² (two in 2005²²³) and a further eight with between 40 and 49 per cent women members (five in 2005). Commitments to gender parity for all branches and at all levels of government are extremely rare.

202. Entrenched discrimination in political institutions, combined with women's lack of resources and disproportionate share of care responsibilities, are longstanding barriers to women's political participation and leadership. In 2019, 47 per cent of the world's population believed that men make better political leaders than women.²²⁴ In many cases, the growing involvement of women in political life and leadership has been met with intimidation and violence, especially at the local level. Informal patriarchal networks and powerful local elites can often be hostile to women and

²¹⁹ UN-Women calculation based on the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IPU and Stockholm University, Gender Quotas database, available at www.quotaproject.org (accessed November 2019); IPU, New Parline: The IPU's Open Data Platform database, available at <https://data.ipu.org/> (accessed November 2019); and additional legislative information.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Democracy as gender balance: the shift from quotas to parity in Latin America", *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, vol. 4, No. 2 (2016).

²²² iKNOW Politics, "Here are the most gender-balanced cabinets in the world today", September 2019.

²²³ IPU and UN-Women, "Women in Politics: 2005" (2005).

²²⁴ OECD, *SIGI 2019: Global Report – Transforming Challenges into Opportunities* (Paris, 2019).

exclude them. Some 16 per cent of States reported measures to prevent and investigate cases of violence against women in public life and to prosecute and punish the perpetrators. New laws and initiatives to combat harassment and political violence against women in a small but growing number of States (box D.2) are a promising sign.

Box D.2

Strengthening national commitments to tackle violence against women in politics and public life

Following a decade-long campaign by locally elected women, the Plurinational State of Bolivia became, in 2012, the first country in Latin America to adopt a law criminalizing violence against women in politics and public life, in which a distinction is made between political harassment and political violence.^a In 2018, that legislation was complemented by a law on political organizations. Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru later followed suit, primarily under pressure from activists and feminists working to address crimes “directed at women as women with the purpose of encouraging them to withdraw from politics”.^b In 2017, the Organization of American States issued its Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life.

In the past five years, countries such as Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria have reported documenting and tracking in real time violence against women in elections. Nigeria and Tanzania have moved to reform electoral codes of conduct and provide services to survivors.^c Other efforts have included training for the police and security forces.

The access of survivors to and gender-responsiveness of criminal justice systems and support services must be improved. More must be done to identify and criminalize violence against women throughout the political cycle: when they run for office, during voting and while they are in office. Data collection needs to improve and violence against women in politics and public life must be more closely monitored.^d

^a UN-Women and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Preventing Violence against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide* (2017), pp. 74–76, 79 and 80.

^b Mona Lena Krook and Juliana Restrepo Sanín, “Gender and political violence in Latin America: concepts, debates and solutions”, *Política y Gobierno*, vol. XXIII, No. 1 (2016).

^c UN-Women and UNDP, *Preventing Violence against Women in Elections*.

^d Julie Ballington, “Turning the tide on violence against women in politics: how are we measuring up?”, *Politics and Gender*, vol. 14, No. 4 (December 2018).

(b) *Strengthening gender-responsive institutions*

203. National machineries that are funded adequately and vested with the appropriate mandate and authority, together with a robust gender mainstreaming strategy, are critical for ensuring that gender equality commitments are translated into policies and programmes. States reported on a range of structures to oversee gender equality policies, including stand-alone ministries, sections of ministries, commissions, specialized policy units, gender focal points, independent bodies such as ombudsmen and more temporary structures such as advisory councils or committees.

204. Some 79 per cent of States reported that gender equality is a key priority in their national strategy for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Only half, however, actively involve national machineries for gender equality in that process. National machineries thus remain side-lined from core government strategy decisions.

205. Several countries reported efforts to broaden the impact of their national machineries by extending vertical policy coordination from their central location in government to subnational and municipal levels. In some countries, national machineries have been established in the office of the prime minister. Many countries also reported the further decentralization of gender equality mechanisms, including across local government through gender focal points.

206. Gender mainstreaming, the process of assessing the impact on women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels, continues to be the core strategy for accelerating progress on gender equality. States have worked on mainstreaming gender in policies and programmes for such issues as poverty eradication, education, health, employment, agriculture, disaster risk reduction, migration and combating violent extremism. Many have also worked to bolster cooperation between national machineries and ministries. In some countries, inter-sectorial coordinating structures have been established to spearhead and coordinate gender mainstreaming in ministries, departments and agencies. States also reported measures to enhance policy coordination by creating gender mainstreaming focal points in legislative, judiciary or executive institutions (including ministries) to integrate actions across portfolios, in dialogue with national machineries.

207. Four fifths of States reported having a national action plan for gender equality, with 55 per cent reporting that the action plan has been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. However, only 37 per cent of States reported that such plans had been costed and provided with sufficient resources in current budgets.

208. States continue to make it a priority to ensure that budgets are gender-responsive. Half reported that they track the proportion of the budget allocated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. They commonly issue directives or guidelines and use data disaggregated by sex to inform budget decisions. Fewer States, however, conduct gender impact assessments or produce gender budget statements or audits, which limits understanding of the tangible results of budget allocations. Capacity constraints in gender analysis and a lack of connection between strategic planning and budgeting processes are key challenges.

209. Some States have integrated gender assessments into policy formulation and produce audit statements on how programmes and budgets contribute to gender equality. In well-developed gender-responsive budgeting practices, gender perspectives are mainstreamed at each step of planning, execution and reporting processes and work across all sectors. They generate data and insights to inform strategic decisions in the next planning and budgeting cycle and contribute to increased budget transparency and government accountability.

210. States continue to prioritize the collection of data disaggregated by sex as a means of informing and monitoring gender equality policies and programmes. Some 81 per cent of States reported that they had initiated data collection and compilation on indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 5 and on gender-specific indicators under other Goals. Data collection on areas such as violence against women and girls or the measurement of unpaid care work through time-use surveys, which are usually more time and resource intensive, has also increased: 106 countries have comparable national prevalence data on intimate partner violence for the period 2005–2017 and 80 countries having conducted time-use surveys since 2005.²²⁵

²²⁵ Global SDG Indicators database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed November 2019); United Nations, Statistics Division, “Allocation of time and time-use”, Gender Statistics database, available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/timeuse/> (accessed November 2019).

211. Significant challenges with data collection and statistics to monitor progress on gender equality remain. Many countries do not report on some of the standard sex-disaggregated indicators needed and other key factors for assessing women's status are not measured systematically. Data are missing for 69 per cent of Sustainable Development Goal gender indicators globally. The figure for Oceania is highest (79 per cent), followed by Africa (69 per cent), the Americas (67 per cent), Asia (66 per cent) and Europe (62 per cent).²²⁶

(c) *Enhancing accountability for meeting gender equality commitments*

212. In addition to formal institutions for accountability, civil society plays a crucial role in holding decision makers to account by monitoring gender equality commitments and demanding redress when duties and commitments are not met. Seventy-two per cent of States reported that they had set up mechanisms to involve civil society in the monitoring of implementation of the Platform for Action. In some cases, however, consultation mechanisms are being dismantled or women's rights advocates are being excluded from formal consultations, which is undermining the monitoring and implementation of gender equality policies.²²⁷

213. States provided limited information on efforts to protect women human rights defenders, including community activists, union leaders, academics, environmental activists, health and development workers, lawyers, journalists, parliamentarians and judges. A range of innovative practices and policy tools and mechanisms have been developed, including international policy guidelines, national and regional legislative frameworks, protective mechanisms and new programmes of national human rights institutions. A handful of countries in Africa and Latin America have adopted laws to protect women human right defenders. Creating a safe and enabling environment for them requires systematic and coordinated solutions that prioritize women and "vulnerable" groups through preventative, gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches.²²⁸

214. Ensuring the equal participation of women in the media is critical for properly reflecting their perspectives, shaping public debate and holding decision makers to account. Twenty-three per cent of States reported that they had provided support to women's media networks and organizations. Ensuring the rights of women journalists and press freedom is critical to the implementation of the Platform for Action. These forms of media are crucial to amplify the voices of different groups of women, including those belonging to vulnerable or excluded groups. A worrying trend is the growing frequency of threats, intimidation and harassment directed at women journalists in traditional and social media.²²⁹

215. National human rights institutions, which have been established in 81 per cent of States, are playing a growing role in monitoring and responding to violations of women's rights. They can monitor States' compliance with gender equality commitments, collect individual complaints of discrimination, develop thematic reports and, in some cases, conduct investigations into individual complaints. In 46 per cent of the States in which such institutions are in place, they have a mandate to focus on gender equality or gender-based discrimination.

²²⁶ Papa Seck and Samrat Maskey, "Use data to take the guesswork out of policymaking" (UN-Women, 2019).

²²⁷ Roggeband and Krizsan, "Democratic backsliding and backlash against women's rights" (see sect. I, footnote 2).

²²⁸ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, *Towards Effective Integral Protection Policies for Human Rights Defenders* (Washington, D.C., 2017).

²²⁹ Alana Barton and Hannah Storm, *Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media: a Global Picture* (International Women's Media Foundation and International News Safety Institute, 2018).

3. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

216. Temporary special measures continue to play a catalytic role in accelerating women's representation in national and local politics and other private and public decision-making bodies. Gains thus far, however, have fallen short of the full and equal integration of women in decision-making. There is an urgent need to strengthen national machineries and boost gender mainstreaming. Despite the growing focus on gender-responsive budgeting, national gender equality plans and strategies remain significantly under-resourced. Moreover, shrinking civic space and the growing frequency of attacks on women in public life are undermining accountability.

217. To accelerate progress, States should prioritize actions in three areas. First, in order to boost the effectiveness of temporary special measures, more must be done to improve implementation, ensure the commitment of public officials and political parties and eradicate gender discriminatory social norms and practices in political institutions. That includes sanctioning political parties that do not comply with quotas in candidate lists, ensuring that funding is available to women candidates and reviewing the impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women. Second, States should ensure that adequate resources are allocated to national gender equality action plans and implement gender-responsive budgeting across the board. Ministries of finance should work closely with national machineries, other ministries and parliaments to ensure that budgets are gender-responsive. Finally, in addition to creating safe and enabling environments for women's rights organizations to hold decision makers to account, preventative, gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches should inform policies to protect women human rights defenders.

218. At the systemic level, achieving the vision of the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda requires putting gender equality at the centre of all areas of policymaking, with strong accountability mechanisms. This requires ensuring that national machineries for gender equality have a clear mandate, the status and authority, and the human and financial resources necessary to spearhead gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming. Open, inclusive and participatory processes are needed so that women's rights organizations can influence and monitor gender-responsive laws and policies. States should also eliminate systemic discrimination and violence against women in public life and hold the perpetrators of violence, harassment and abuse against such women to account.

E. Peaceful and inclusive societies

Key messages

- Since 1995, instability, conflicts and humanitarian crises have become more complex and increasingly protracted; they are affecting more people than ever before and are holding back progress for women and girls.
- The implementation of global commitments on women and peace and security has been undermined by a lack of accountability, inadequate funding and increasing military spending. Since 1995, global military spending has nearly doubled, to a new high of \$1.82 trillion in 2018.
- Violence against women in times of conflict and crisis is widespread, while prevention efforts and services and justice for survivors generally remain weak.
- In the light of strong evidence that women's participation in peace processes strengthens outcomes, more efforts are needed to advance that goal.

- States have prioritized action to: support women’s leadership and decision-making in conflict resolution and humanitarian action; protect women’s human rights in periods of conflict and crisis; create gender-responsive post-conflict and post-crisis recovery policies; and implement gender-responsive conflict and crisis prevention.
- Achieving the vision of Beijing requires accelerated action to strengthen accountability for the gender-responsive design and implementation of peace agreements and humanitarian action at all levels, including women’s full, equal and meaningful participation, a greater focus on women’s economic rights post-conflict and post-crisis, and more effective prevention efforts by addressing the root causes of conflict, violence and instability.

219. Violent conflicts and humanitarian crises are more complex, last longer and affect more people than ever before. Growing inequalities (Sustainable Development Goal 10) have exacerbated division and distrust and increased tensions over resources, thereby creating fertile ground for conflict within and between countries. There is growing evidence on the links between the level of gender inequality (Goal 5) and gender-based violence in society with conflicts and the intensity of their violence (Goal 16).²³⁰ Gender inequalities often become worse in times of conflict and crisis, with devastating impact on women and girls’ enjoyment of human rights (critical areas of concern E and I).

220. The leadership and equal participation of women in all aspects of peace processes is critical for consolidating their positive outcome and improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action, and thereby creating more inclusive societies (Goal 16). In post-conflict contexts, women’s economic security (Goal 8) is critical for their well-being and the recovery and resilience of families, communities and societies and the sustainability of peace (Goal 16). Creating peaceful and inclusive societies requires addressing the structural drivers of conflict, including militarism and the arms trade. The Platform for Action provides important policy guidance for achieving peaceful and inclusive societies with gender equality as a central priority.

221. The growing normative framework on women and peace and security, humanitarian action and the rights of refugees continues to boost understanding of the connection between gender equality, sustainable development and peace. In 2016, Security Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#) and General Assembly resolution [70/262](#), on sustaining peace with a strong focus on women’s participation, were adopted. The Peacebuilding Commission has continued to emphasise the importance of gender equality for peace, including through the adoption of a gender strategy. The need to integrate gender analysis into efforts to address terrorism and violent extremism has been recognised by the Security Council and the General Assembly (see Security Council resolutions [2242 \(2015\)](#) and [2395 \(2017\)](#) and General Assembly resolutions [70/291](#) and [72/284](#)) and the critical role of young women in the emerging agenda on youth, peace and security has also been highlighted.²³¹

222. Intergovernmental forums on peace and security are increasingly integrating a focus on women. The Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security was established in 2016 to hold regular consultations on urgent concerns in country-specific situations. The Peacebuilding Commission is the only intergovernmental

²³⁰ United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).

²³¹ Graeme Simpson, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (UNFPA and Peacebuilding Support Office, 2018).

body with a dedicated gender strategy. Nonetheless, some push-back on gender equality and women's human rights in the Security Council has been evident. Resolution 2467 (2019), its ninth on women and peace and security, was the first on that subject not to be adopted unanimously.

223. In 2019, the International Criminal Court handed down, for the first time, a conviction for crimes of sexual violence, which in this case were committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ruling reflects the growing recognition under international law of sexual and gender-based violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity or acts of genocide and, if upheld on appeal, will be the first such conviction by the Court.²³²

224. The Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women are focusing more on the links between gender equality, women's human rights and peace. The Committee's general recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post conflict situations (2013) provides States with another tool when reporting on their progress.

225. At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, States committed themselves to more robust gender-equality programming, increased leadership by women and girls in humanitarian action and respect for the rights of women and girls under international humanitarian law. However, under the Grand Bargain, an agreement between the largest donors and aid providers to address the humanitarian financing gap, gender equality was not at first taken into consideration. A friends of gender group was subsequently established to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed throughout the Grand Bargain workstreams.

226. In 2016, world leaders committed their countries to protecting the human rights of all refugees and migrants in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (General Assembly resolution 71/1). That was followed in 2018 by the global compact on refugees, in which Member States are called upon to promote the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls, measures to protect women and girls from violence, and women's economic empowerment.

1. Global and regional trends

227. By the end of 2018, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide had reached an unprecedented 70.8 million, about half of them women and girls.²³³ The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance was estimated at 131.7 million, only 93.6 million of whom were likely to receive aid in 2019.²³⁴ It is estimated that more than half of the world's poor will be living in countries affected by high levels of violence by 2030.²³⁵

228. In recent years, there has been a rise in terrorism and violent extremism, the impact of which includes devastating and indiscriminate violence against civilian populations and infrastructure. A common thread in the strategies of extremist groups is their attacks on the rights of women and girls.²³⁶ Misogyny, defined as hostile sexist attitudes and support for violence against women, correlates strongly with support for violent extremism.²³⁷

²³² See, for example, International Criminal Court, *The Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda*, Case No. ICC-01/04-02/06, Judgment, 8 July 2019.

²³³ UNHCR, *Global Trends* (see sect. I, footnote 8).

²³⁴ United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019* (New York and Geneva, 2018), p. 4

²³⁵ United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace*.

²³⁶ UN-Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*.

²³⁷ Melissa Johnston and Jacqui True, "Misogyny and violent extremism: implications for preventing violent extremism", policy brief, October 2019.

229. Climate change and environmental degradation will, if unchecked, exacerbate complex emergencies, compound tensions and fuel insecurity (see sect. III.F). Vulnerable communities around the world are already feeling the impact and women are bearing the brunt of the resulting loss of livelihoods, food security and mobility, increasing competition for scarce resources and political and economic instability. In turn, instability and violent conflict leave communities poorer, less resilient and ill-equipped to cope with the effects of climate change.

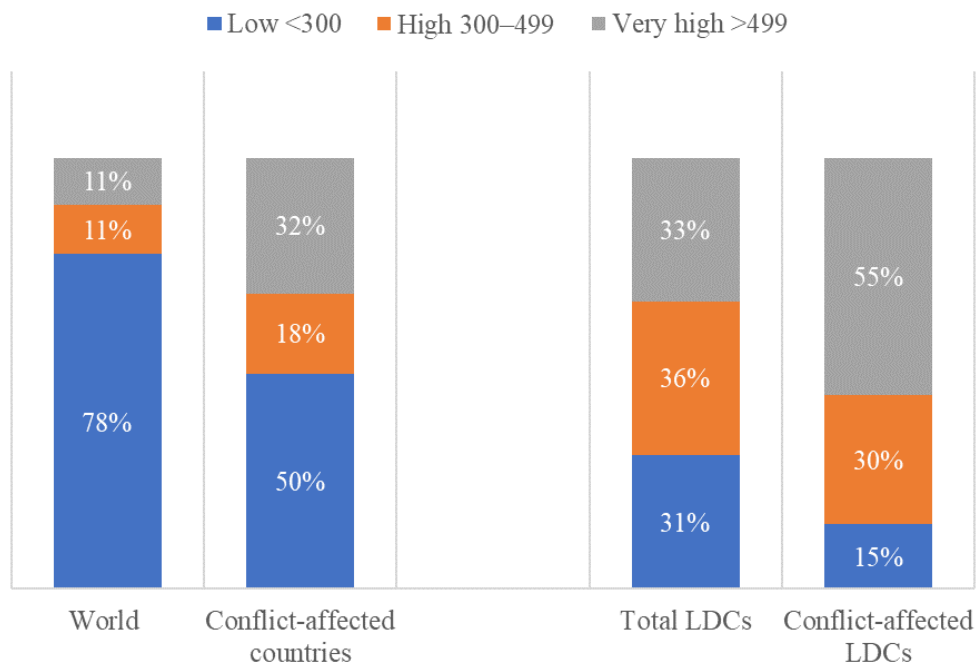
Conflict and crisis significantly hold back progress for women and girls

230. Conflict and humanitarian crises hold back progress for women and girls on a range of economic and social indicators, including the right to food, education and health amid social and economic collapse, the breakdown of infrastructure and public services, and restrictions on movement. They also fuel violence against women, including by intimate partners and against those who are active in the public sphere, and sexual violence perpetrated by combatants as a tactic of war, as well as leading to an increase in the rate of child marriage.

231. Peace and stability are preconditions for sustainable development and gender equality. At the same time, gender equality is essential for creating inclusive societies. In countries affected by conflict and humanitarian crises, progress for women and girls on key economic and social indicators is held back as a result of the breakdown of basic infrastructure and public services. The latest available data indicate high or very high levels of maternal mortality (300 deaths per 100,000 live births or more) in half of countries affected by crisis or conflict, more than double the proportion (22 per cent) of countries worldwide (figure E.1).²³⁸ The proportion is even higher among least developed countries affected by crisis or conflict, among which 85 per cent have high or very high ratios of maternal mortality, compared with 69 per cent for all least developed countries.

²³⁸ For the present report, crisis/conflict-affected countries are defined as those currently on the agenda of the Security Council and which have been considered by the Council at a formal meeting; countries with peacekeeping or special political missions; countries that received programmatic funds from the Peacebuilding Fund during 2018; and countries that received programmatic funds from the Central Emergency Relief Fund in 2018.

Figure E.1
Distribution of countries by level of maternal mortality ratio (2015)



Source: Statistics Division, Global SDG Indicators Database.

Note: The sample size is 183 countries (including 45 least developed countries); and 38 conflict-affected countries (including 20 least developed countries) facing crises between 2013 and 2015. The classification of low, high and very high reflects that used in *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2015).

232. Girls' education also suffers in countries affected by crisis and conflict (see sect. III.B). Fewer such countries than the global average achieve gender parity, in particular in secondary education: in roughly two thirds of them, more boys than girls are enrolled, while that is the case in only around one third of countries globally.²³⁹ Lower rates of schooling for girls (in particular at the secondary level) are matched by rising rates of child, early and forced marriage: during conflict and crises, when the level of sexual violence escalates, families sometimes marry off their daughters young in the hope that that will protect them from sexual violence and perceived dishonour (see sect. III.C). Nine of the 10 countries with the highest rates of child marriage are affected by conflict or crisis.²⁴⁰

Violence against women in contexts of conflict and crisis remains widespread

233. According to conservative estimates, at least one in five displaced or refugee women has experienced sexual violence.²⁴¹ The link between the availability and

²³⁹ UN-Women calculations based on the latest available data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, "Gross enrolment ratio", Gender Parity Index database, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed October 2019). The sample size is 185 and 173 countries for lower and upper secondary education, respectively; and 58 and 45 fragile and conflict-affected countries facing a crisis between 2013 and 2017 for lower and upper secondary education, respectively.

²⁴⁰ Women's Refugee Commission, *A Girl No More: The Changing Norms of Child Marriage in Conflict* (New York, 2016).

²⁴¹ Alexander Vu and others, "The prevalence of sexual violence among female refugees in complex humanitarian emergencies: a systematic review and meta-analysis", *PLoS Currents Disasters*, ed. 1, 18 March 2014.

misuse of small arms and gender-based violence is well established.²⁴² In 2019, the Security Council received information about more than 50 parties to conflict credibly suspected of having committed or instigated patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of conflict on its agenda (S/2019/280). Recent United Nations commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions have also shed light on the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a tactic of terror, torture and displacement and on the fact that, in some cases, it may be an indicator of genocide (A/HRC/37/CRP.3 and A/HRC/42/CRP.4).

234. There is also evidence that political violence, harassment and hate speech targeting women, including leaders, peacebuilders, human rights defenders and voters and candidates in elections, is on the rise in countries affected by conflict and crisis.²⁴³ Political demonstrations prominently featuring women or women's rights issues are more likely to be met with excessive force than other demonstrations.²⁴⁴

Women's participation in peace processes remains limited

235. In spite of the evidence of the contribution that women make at various stages and levels to resolve conflict and negotiate peace (see sect. E.2 (a)), exclusion has remained the norm in formal peace processes. Between 1992 and 2018, women made up only 13 per cent of negotiators, 3 per cent of mediators and 4 per cent of signatories in major peace processes.²⁴⁵

236. Between 1990 and 2016, the proportion of peace agreements that included references to women increased (figure E.2) from an average of 12 per cent between 1990 and 2000 to 32 per cent between 2011 and 2015. General references to equality increasingly were replaced by more specific commitments and actions on women's participation or violence against women and girls.²⁴⁶ In recent years, that trend has been reversed. In 2018, only four of 52 agreements reached (7.7 per cent) contained gender-responsive provisions (S/2019/800). That steep decline may, in part, be owing to the fact that many of the agreements are of a local and early stage nature, which tend to include fewer references to gender issues. Nonetheless, it underscores the importance of focusing on the inclusion of women from the outset and at all levels of peace negotiations.

²⁴² See, for example, Security Council resolution 2220 (2015); and Coordinating Action on Small Arms, "Women, men, and gendered nature of small arms and light weapons" (ISACS 06.10:2017(E)V1.0), 2017.

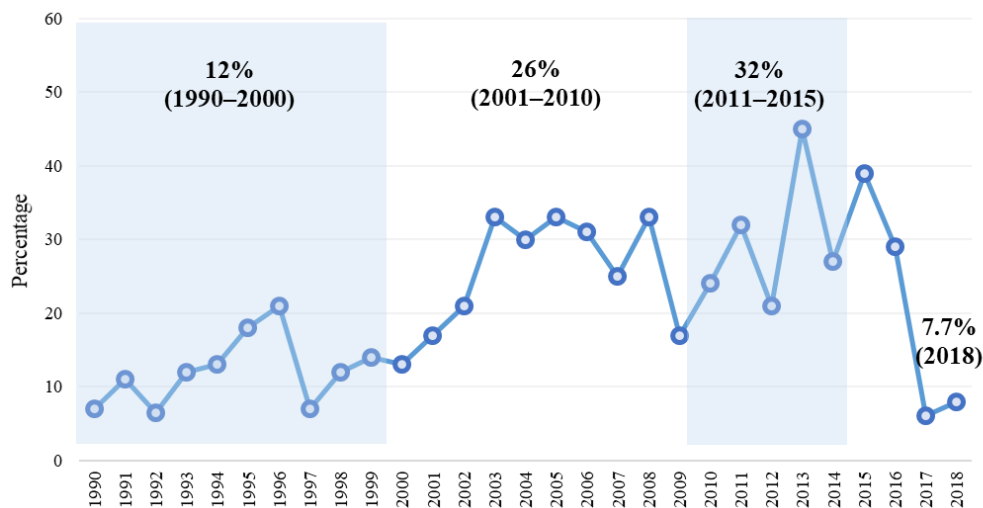
²⁴³ Twice as many such events were reported in the first quarter of 2019 than in the first quarter of 2018. See Roudabeh Kishi, Melissa Pavlik and Hilary Matfess, "'Terribly and terrifyingly normal': political violence targeting women", May 2019.

²⁴⁴ Roudabeh, Pavlik and Matfess, "'Terribly and terrifyingly normal'".

²⁴⁵ Data from the Council on Foreign Relations, Women's Participation in Peace Processes database, available at www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes (accessed 23 October 2019).

²⁴⁶ UN-Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*.

Figure E.2
Proportion of peace agreements with provisions on women, girls and gender issues (1991–2018)



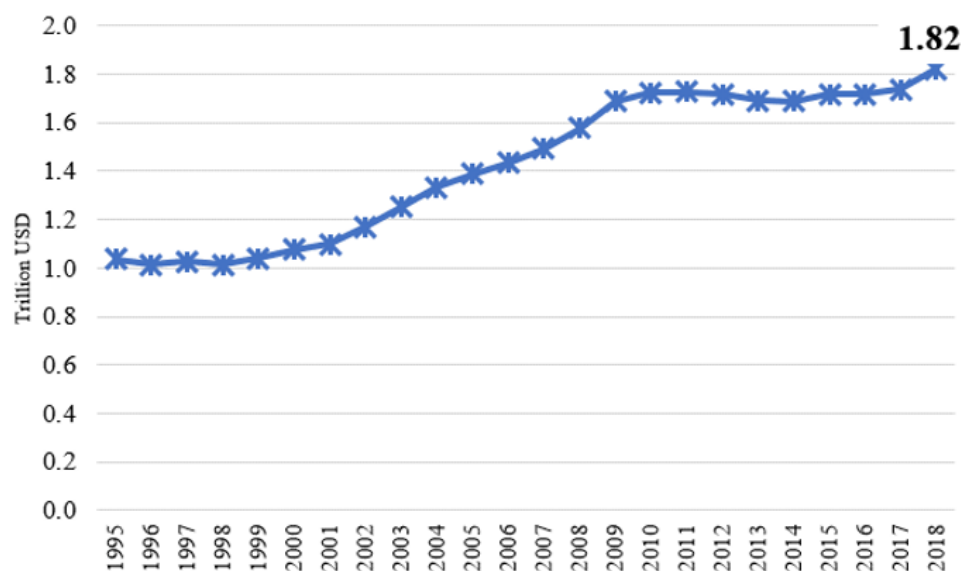
Source: University of Edinburgh, PA-X Peace Agreement Research Database. Available at <https://www.peaceagreements.org> (accessed October 2019).

Note: Peace agreements are defined in the database as formal, publicly-available documents produced after discussion between protagonists to conflict and mutually agreed to by some or all of them with a view to ending the conflict.

Global commitments are being undermined by increasing military spending

237. Women’s peace advocacy over the past 25 years has been focused on the links between achieving gender equality and peace, reducing military expenditure, controlling the availability of armaments and promoting non-violent forms of conflict resolution. Such activism has contributed to the negotiation of major treaties, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (1997), the Arms Trade Treaty (2013) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2017). Under the Arms Trade Treaty, States parties are required to take into account in their arms export assessments the risk of those arms “being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children” (art. 7, para. 4). However, the implementation of global commitments on disarmament has been stymied by increased military spending, the continued spread of small arms and light weapons, the development of new weapons and growing tensions between rivals armed with nuclear weapons (S/2019/800). Global military spending nearly doubled from 1995 levels to \$1.82 trillion in 2018 (figure E.3). Such spending deprives national budgets of resources for social spending, which is critical to achieving gender equality. In about one third of countries for which data are available, government military spending is higher than health expenditure.

Figure E.3
Global military spending (1995–2018)



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database. Available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex> (accessed October 2019).

Financing for women and peace and security and humanitarian action fails to match the scale of the challenge

238. Although financing for action on women and peace and security since 2015 has improved, there is still a significant gap. That is particularly the case with funding for women's organizations, for the response to violence against women and for programmes to improve gender equality and women's empowerment. Bilateral aid in support of mainstreaming gender equality and women's human rights in fragile and conflict-affected contexts reached an average of \$19.5 billion per year in the period 2016–2017 (S/2019/800). The overall share of aid allocated to promote gender equality in some form in fragile country situations is 42.6 per cent, higher than ever before. However, only 4.9 per cent of that aid has been used for programmes or projects with the primary objective of improving gender equality and women's empowerment, a level similar to previous years (ibid.).

239. Between 2016 and 2018, funding for services and programming to address gender-based violence in emergencies accounted for just 0.12 per cent of all humanitarian funding.²⁴⁷ In 2019, that figure rose to 0.3 per cent.²⁴⁸

240. The recognition of the vital role women's organizations and movements play in conflict and crisis-affected contexts has not been matched by increased access to direct, flexible and sustainable funding. In the period 2016–17, just 0.2 per cent (\$82 million) of total bilateral aid to countries in fragile situations and affected went directly to women's organizations (S/2019/800). Under the Grand Bargain, 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding was to be earmarked for local and national

²⁴⁷ Mendy Marsh and Meredith Blake, *Where Is the Money? How the Humanitarian System Is Failing in Its Commitment to End Violence Against Women and Girls* (International Rescue Committee and Voice, 2019).

²⁴⁸ See <https://fts.unocha.org/global-funding/overview/2019>.

responders. By 2018, however, only 14 per cent had been achieved and there was no information on what proportion went to women's organizations.²⁴⁹

241. Pooled funds, such as the Peacebuilding Fund, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, are strategic tools to encourage financing for gender equality in peace and security programming. In 2018, the Peacebuilding Fund allocated two fifths of its \$183 million in grants to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (A/73/829); in the same year, one fifth of the Central Emergency Response Fund's \$500 million funding was allocated to projects with gender equality as a principal objective.²⁵⁰ The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund has so far allocated more than \$9 million to women's organizations in 10 countries and has set a target of \$40 million by the end of 2020.²⁵¹

2. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

242. The national reports indicate policy and programmatic trends in four areas: (a) support for women's leadership and decision-making in conflict resolution and humanitarian action; (b) protection of women's human rights in periods of conflict and crisis; (c) gender-responsive post-conflict and post-crisis recovery policies; and (d) gender-responsive conflict and crisis prevention. Those areas are closely linked. Women's participation, for example, depends on them being free from violence. Relief, recovery and prevention of conflict require both the participation and protection of women.

(a) *Women's leadership and decision-making in conflict resolution and humanitarian action*

243. Some 59 per cent of countries reported that they had promoted or supported women's participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. That figure increases to 75 per cent of the countries affected by conflict and crisis.²⁵² Initiatives have included training and capacity-building, the development of guidance tools and the provision of networking opportunities.

244. These measures are critical because women's meaningful and substantive participation has the potential to improve and strengthen peace processes and outcomes. There is a strong correlation between women's groups exercising significant influence on the negotiation process, and the chance that an agreement will be reached and implemented, compared with when women's groups exercise weak or no influence.²⁵³ Furthermore, in cases in which women are signatories to peace agreements (which is an indicator of their substantive participation in the negotiations), on average the agreements last longer than in cases in which they were not.²⁵⁴ One explanation is that women signatories are often linked to women's civil society groups, which are critical for bringing key gender equality issues into the process and ensuring their implementation (box E.1).

²⁴⁹ See www.local2global.info/research/the-humanitarian-economy/gb19.

²⁵⁰ See <https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-country>.

²⁵¹ See <https://wphfund.org/>.

²⁵² Of countries affected by conflict and crisis, 36 submitted reports.

²⁵³ Thania Paffenholz and others, *Making Women Count: Not Just Counting Women – Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations* (Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative and UN-Women, 2016).

²⁵⁴ Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Piia Bränfors, "Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace", *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations*, vol. 44, No. 6 (2018).

Box E.1

Strengthening peace through links with women's civil society groups

Case studies from peace processes demonstrate that female delegates and signatories are often connected with constituencies of women's civil society groups. Together, they can exercise influence to extend the scope of peace agreements, creating a broader base of accountability and support for their implementation.

In Colombia, women's civil society groups organized a national summit of women and peace to demand an inclusive process and, as a result, women made up one fifth of the Government's negotiating team and 43 per cent of the delegates from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Women in civil society organizations also played a pivotal role in rallying public support for the talks and, working with the female negotiators, managed to have issues such as land rights, including for indigenous women, the prevention of and reparations for sexual and gender-based violence, and women's political participation incorporated into the talks agenda.^a

In South Sudan, 44 women's organizations established the Women's Coalition to strengthen women's participation in the high-level revitalization forum. The Coalition's women strategy team provided technical support to all the women participants and helped make sure that women's issues remained central in the formal peace talks in Addis Ababa. In the peace agreement, South Sudanese women negotiated a 35 per cent quota for women's representation in executive bodies and two additional seats for women in the key institutions for the implementation of the agreement.^b

^a See www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/explore-the-data; Virginia M. Bouvier, "Gender and the role of women in Colombia's peace process" (New York, UN-Women, 2016).

^b Helen Kezie-Nwoha and Juliet Were, "Women's informal peace efforts: grassroots activism in South Sudan", CMI Brief No. 2018:07 (Bergen, Norway, 2018).

245. Women's participation and leadership in humanitarian action was less of a priority for States, only 43 per cent of which reported having promoted equal participation of women in humanitarian and crisis response activities, especially at the decision-making level. Only one quarter of the countries experiencing conflict or crisis that submitted reports indicated that they had taken such steps.

246. Under the Grand Bargain, government, United Nations and non-governmental organization stakeholders have committed themselves to ensuring that effective processes for participation and feedback are in place for people affected by humanitarian crises and their communities.²⁵⁵ The localization agenda, focused on the participation of national and local actors in humanitarian responses, provides opportunities for engagement with women's organizations. However, in 2018, local women's organizations were consulted in only 56 per cent of planning processes for humanitarian response plans. More needs to be done to ensure that women's expertise is taken into account.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/a-participation-revolution-include-people-receiving-aid-in-making-the-decisions-which-affect-their-lives>.

²⁵⁶ UN-Women, "The IASC gender accountability framework report: 2018" (August 2019).

247. Structural barriers to meaningful participation by women and women's organizations need to be addressed through the provision of opportunities to generate sustainable income, so that women can have sufficient economic autonomy to participate; the creation of safe spaces for women and girls, which can be the first step in organizing, raising awareness and boosting participation; and sustained and strategic work to address discriminatory social norms that stop women from participating and taking on leadership roles.

(b) *Protecting women's human rights in times of conflict and crisis*

248. Violations of women's rights in conflict, especially violence against civilians, peacebuilders, first responders and human rights defenders, remain common. A comprehensive approach to protection, strengthening the security sector and the provision of services needs to be embedded in all areas of humanitarian action.²⁵⁷ However, only 28 per cent of countries reported measures to protect civil society and women's human rights defenders (see sect. III.D).

249. One third of countries have taken measures to boost the security sector, including by recruiting more for peacekeeping operations and to the police and armed forces. That is particularly important for tackling sexual exploitation and abuse; evidence suggests that increasing the proportion of women in the military leads to a reduction in allegations of abuse.²⁵⁸

250. Alongside access to justice (see sect. III.C), comprehensive services for survivors of violence, including safe spaces, health care and psychosocial support, are essential to meet immediate needs, and enable recovery and long-term well-being. One third of countries reported that they had improved access to violence response services for conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women. Good practices include the creation of women-friendly spaces in refugee camps and reception centres to coordinate the provision of health-care services, peer support, case management and, in some cases, language interpretation. Although only 20 per cent of countries reported that they had provided women and girls, including refugees, in humanitarian settings with access to sexual and reproductive health services, some good practices are emerging (box E.2).

Box E.2

Sexual and reproductive health care in emergencies

Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence need culturally sensitive, confidential and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health-care services to prevent sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.^a Minimum standards include measures to ensure infection control, safe deliveries and management of obstetric emergencies, treatment for sexual violence survivors, provision of contraceptives, treatment for infections, HIV post-exposure prophylaxis, safe abortion (to the full extent of the law) and post-abortion care.^b

After an earthquake in 2015, the Ministry of Health in Nepal worked with partners to set up 132 mobile reproductive health camps in affected regions. They distributed emergency reproductive health kits, deployed nurses and medical teams to provide skilled birth attendance and distributed individual clean delivery kits, with

²⁵⁷ See Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions into Humanitarian Action: Reducing Risk, Promoting Resilience and Aiding Recovery* (2015).

²⁵⁸ Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, "Explaining sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions: the role of female peacekeepers and gender equality in contributing countries", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 53, No. 1 (January 2016).

special facilities for adolescents. One month after the earthquake, antenatal care, delivery services and C-section services were available in most districts, and reproductive health outreach was available in many remote communities. After the immediate crisis, 50 shelter and transition homes were established to provide free accommodation with access to maternity services for pregnant and post-partum women. More than 100,000 people affected by the earthquake were able to obtain access to those services.^c

^a Judy Austin and others, “Reproductive health: a right for refugees and internally displaced persons”, *Reproductive Health Matters*, vol. 16, No. 31 (2008); Ian Askew and others, “Sexual and reproductive health and rights in emergencies”, *Bull World Health Organ*, vol. 94, No. 5 (2016); Sarah K. Chynoweth, “Advancing reproductive health on the humanitarian agenda: the 2012–2014 global review”, *Conflict and Health*, vol. 9, No. 1 (2015).

^b UNFPA and others, *The Interagency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming* (UNFPA, 2019).

^c Pushpa Chaudhary and others, “Humanitarian response to reproductive and sexual health needs in a disaster: the Nepal earthquake 2015 case study”, *Reproductive Health Matters*, vol. 25, No. 51 (2017).

251. Other approaches to the prevention of violence in emergencies are emerging, especially in the area of intimate partner violence, which is one of the most common forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and crisis settings.²⁵⁹ Community mobilization approaches involving analysis of gender power inequalities to replace harmful social norms with new positive ones have been introduced in refugee camps and are showing promise.²⁶⁰ School-based peace education, combined with broader community engagement, including with parents, religious leaders, civil society and government officials, has also demonstrated positive results in some conflict-affected contexts.²⁶¹

(c) *Post-conflict and post-crisis recovery policies for gender equality and inclusive societies*

252. Post-conflict recovery represents a window of opportunity to reform constitutions, recast political institutions and address longstanding institutional and structural barriers to gender equality to create more peaceful and inclusive societies. Where traditional social, economic and political relations are disrupted and women have taken on new roles as breadwinners, combatants and leaders of peace movements, gender stereotypes and social norms can be unsettled, opening the way for women to take on new leadership positions in families, communities and nations. The implementation of gender-responsive post-conflict recovery planning frameworks and policies by governments and the United Nations can help to capitalize on such opportunities.

253. National action plans on women and peace and security have been a key vehicle for encouraging women’s participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. As at September 2019, 82 countries and territories had such plans, a 52 per cent increase since 2015 (S/2019/800). They have facilitated the recruitment of more

²⁵⁹ Global Women’s Institute and others, “No safe place: a lifetime of violence for conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan” (2017).

²⁶⁰ Sophie Namy and others, “Balancing fidelity, contextualization, and innovation: learning from an adaptation of SASA! to prevent violence against women in the Dadaab refugee camp”, *Gender and Development*, vol. 27, No. 2 (2019).

²⁶¹ Julienne Corboz and others, “What works to prevent violence against children in Afghanistan? Findings of an interrupted time series evaluation of a school-based peace education and community social norms change intervention in Afghanistan”, *PLoS ONE*, vol. 14, No. 8 (2019).

women into the security sector, the appointment of more women to key decision-making positions in peacebuilding and conflict-resolution processes, the dissemination of information among women about how to protect their rights and security and the passage of new laws on sexual violence.²⁶²

254. One focus area of such plans is the rule of law, based on human rights, the strengthening of which is critical to building sustainable and inclusive peace. The infrastructure of justice systems is often left in tatters by conflict or crisis, sharpening the challenges women face in obtaining access to justice. Inclusive, gender-responsive legal assistance, support for gender-sensitive security sector reform, and capacity-building and gender training for law enforcement personnel are thus essential.

255. Gender-responsive laws, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, provide the foundation for the rule of law. Some 37 per cent of countries reported that they had implemented legal and policy reform to prevent and redress violations of the rights of women and girls in situations of conflict or crisis. Fewer (23 per cent) reported having strengthened institutional capacity, including of the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms, during conflict and crisis response. That proportion is slightly higher (31 per cent) when only countries affected by conflict and crisis are analysed.

256. There is a growing focus on holistic, survivor-centred approaches to justice. They incorporate judicial and non-judicial processes, and include criminal justice, reparations and truth-seeking. Reparations programmes have also gained momentum to provide compensation, rehabilitation, restitution of land and other rights and guarantees of non-repetition to victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Truth commissions are increasingly addressing human rights violations experienced by women and girls (S/2019/800). Such efforts need to be scaled up in order to ensure justice for the many women and girls that continue to experience widespread and disparate violations of their rights.

257. Only a few countries reported measures to support women's economic security in post-conflict recovery policies and programmes. In most conflict-affected countries, the rate of female participation in the labour force rises, especially among female-headed households.²⁶³ Although their employment is often low quality, such as informal self-employment or unpaid work on family farms, their entry into labour markets is associated with improved household and community welfare. Often, however, women lose their jobs in the aftermath of conflict as traditional gender norms reassert themselves and returning combatants monopolize scarce job opportunities.²⁶⁴ States therefore need to focus on women's economic security in post-conflict recovery.

²⁶² Caitlin Ryan and Helen Basini, "UNSC resolution 1325 national action plans in Liberia and Sierra Leone: an analysis of gendered power relations in hybrid peacebuilding", *Journal of Intervention and State-Building*, vol. 11, No. 2, (2017); Amy Barrow, "Operationalizing Security Council resolution 1325: the role of national action plans", *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer 2016); Annika Björkdahl and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic, "Translating UNSCR 1325 from the global to the national: protection, representation and participation in the national action plans of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda", *Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 15, No. 4 (2015).

²⁶³ Patricia Justino, "Violent conflict and changes in gender economic roles: implications for post-conflict economic recovery", in Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and others, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2018); Patricia Justino, "Women working for recovery: the impact of female employment on family and community welfare after conflict", in *UN-Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security* (New York, UN-Women, 2012).

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

258. Women's economic security and access to public services is critical not only for the realization of women's human rights and well-being, but also for the recovery and resilience of families and communities and societies and the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies. Post-conflict economic policy-making poses a major challenge for women's economic security. Economic recovery policies, often influenced by the loan conditionalities imposed by international financial institutions, are narrowly focused on infrastructure investment, twinned with austerity measures that have an adverse impact on areas important for gender equality.²⁶⁵ Measures to create jobs tend to favour male employment and public spending cuts weaken already fragile social infrastructure, such as health care and education, and lead to the transfer of such work to women, adding to their unpaid care burdens.²⁶⁶ Greater attention to gender-responsive economic recovery policies is needed.

(d) *Ensuring gender-responsive conflict and crisis prevention*

259. Prevention of conflict is a founding principle of the United Nations. Global action and investment remain focused on responding to crises rather than preventing them: for every \$7 spent by the United Nations on responding to conflict, only \$1 is spent on prevention.²⁶⁷ Only six countries, including three affected by conflict or crisis, reported that they had lowered military spending or reallocated it to social policies over the past five years.

260. Just over one third of countries reported having integrated a gender perspective into the prevention and resolution of armed conflict. Over the past five years, women leaders and groups have been more engaged, often at the grassroots and local levels, in preventing conflict and building peace across all regions. Examples include: mediating and resolving community, interpersonal or tribal disputes before they escalate into conflict; negotiating between armed actors at the local level to halt the escalation of communal tensions, broker ceasefires or create civilian safe zones; coordinating humanitarian and relief initiatives; monitoring post-conflict elections; and implementing peace education programmes.

261. Recognizing, supporting and funding women's local prevention and peacebuilding efforts also contributes to conflict analysis and early warning systems. Some 31 per cent of countries affected by conflict and crisis reported that they had implemented gender-sensitive conflict analysis and early warning and prevention mechanisms. Gender-specific indicators, such as restrictions on women's movement and escalating violence against women, can signal growing tensions and militarization and should be included in early warning systems and situation analyses.²⁶⁸ Such analysis should not just focus on women as victims but also consider their role as actors in conflict and leaders in mediation, reconciliation and peace efforts, and be used to engage with them in the design of conflict-prevention strategies.

3. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

262. With the approach of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the United Nations is redoubling its efforts to close implementation gaps and address six key priorities ([S/2019/800](#)). States have increasingly integrated global peace, security and humanitarian agendas into their national action plans and prioritized the participation of women in peace processes and security sector reform.

²⁶⁵ Jacqui True and Barbro Svedberg, "WPS and international financial institutions", in Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2019).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace*.

²⁶⁸ UN-Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*.

States, the United Nations, civil society and other humanitarian actors are working to make crisis and emergency relief efforts more gender-responsive. Implementation, however, continues to fall short of commitments made.

263. States should prioritize action in three areas. First, women and their organizations need to have sufficient funding and protection from threats to their security in order to achieve greater representation and leadership in peace and security and in humanitarian action. Peace brokers, international organizations and governments need to make sure that peace processes are fully inclusive, support the appointment of women mediators and negotiators, encourage inclusive delegations and exert pressure if women are absent or underrepresented. Second, programmes and services relating to violence against women, sexual and reproductive health services and survivor-centred justice need to be scaled up in countries affected by conflict and crises. Third, more must be done in the aftermath of conflict and crises to reshape society by prioritizing access by women to resources and employment and investing in vital public services.²⁶⁹

264. A systemic shift in approaches to conflict prevention, addressing the root causes of conflict, violence and instability, would bring into sharper focus the structures of global inequality and uneven development that fuel conflict by creating tensions between different social groups and enable the global arms trade to flourish.

F. Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building

Key messages

- Land degradation, biodiversity loss, global warming and pollution constitute widespread and interlinked environmental crises.
- Environmental degradation and climate change disproportionately affect the most marginalized women and girls by exacerbating underlying inequalities, including women's unequal access to land and natural resources, sustainable infrastructure and public services, jeopardizing their income and food security, health and livelihoods.
- To address the gender impact of environmental degradation, States have prioritized action to: weave a gender perspective into environmental, climate and disaster risk reduction policies; strengthen the capacity of women to build climate resilience; reduce the impact of natural disasters on women and girls; and promote women's participation in environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation.
- Climate and environment policies and action are not sufficiently integrated with efforts to advance gender equality and not enough attention is being paid to the gender-related drivers and impact of environmental and climate crises.
- States should design, finance and implement gender-responsive policies and programmes with the involvement of those most affected by crises and deliver sustainable and affordable infrastructure and services to build resilience.
- A just transition is needed to a regenerative economy geared to ecological and social well-being through climate stabilization, biodiversity conservation and, at the same time, decent work and social protection for all.

²⁶⁹ Jacqui True, "The women, peace and security agenda 25 years after Beijing: what difference could a feminist political economy perspective make?", paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on Beijing plus 25, New York, September 2019.

265. Since 1995, and particularly in the past five years, the process of land degradation, biodiversity loss, global warming and the spread of pollution have accelerated rapidly and intensified into widespread and interlinked environmental and climate crises. The activism of women, in particular young women and rural and indigenous women, at the forefront of environmental movements underlines that environmental degradation has a particular impact on women and girls, especially in rural areas (critical area of concern K). The environmental and climate crises are driven by economic models based on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, land use, natural resource extraction and dependency on fossil fuels (Sustainable Development Goal 12), in particular in industrialized countries. The consequences of climate change (Goal 13) amplify existing gender inequalities, including in relation to poverty (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), sustainable water and energy provision (Goals 6 and 7) and livelihoods (Goals 5 and 8). There is a growing recognition of the need for a transformative policy approach. Given the synergies between action on gender equality, the environment and sustainable development, the Platform for Action provides important policy guidance for achieving gender equality at the heart of environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation initiatives.

266. Growing attention to integrating gender equality as a priority in environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation is reflected in normative commitments made by States. In the agreed conclusions of the sixty-second and sixty-third sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission underscored the need for gender-responsive strategies to address environmental and climate challenges and to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls. The importance to women of access to sustainable water supplies and sanitation, energy and transport, public spaces and land was also made clear ([E/2018/27](#) and [E/CN.6/2019/L.3](#)).

267. The mainstreaming of gender equality, the empowerment of women and their enjoyment of human rights are enshrined in the Rio conventions. Gender action plans include the Convention on Biological Diversity 2015–2020 Gender Plan of Action, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Gender Plan of Action (2017) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Gender Action Plan (2018). Under the Paris Agreement of 2015, it is recognized that the issues of climate change, gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of their rights are all linked.

268. The Global Environment Facility, the financial mechanism for the Rio conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements, also adopted a policy on gender equality in 2017 as a means of working with governments, the private sector and civil society to connect global environmental benefits and gender equality; support improved access by women to and their use of and control over resources, including land, water, forests and fisheries; enhance women's decision-making with regard to natural resources and their role as agents of change; promote sustainable livelihoods and income-generation opportunities such as conservation, rehabilitation and restoration actions for women; and invest in building women's skills and capacity. Among climate finance instruments, the Green Climate Fund stands out as being the first to integrate a gender perspective from the outset of fund operations. Gender mainstreaming is central to its objectives and guiding principles, and a gender-sensitive approach is embedded in its governing instrument and related policies, including its gender policy and action plan of 2015.

1. Global and regional trends

Since 1995, the environmental crisis has intensified, with devastating impacts on the most marginalized women and girls

269. Land degradation, caused to a great extent by rapid expansion and unsustainable management of agricultural and grazing lands, affects 3.2 billion people, especially rural communities and smallholder farmers.²⁷⁰ The very poor in drylands, which comprise around 40 per cent of the world's land area, are the worst affected, with women and children suffering most from drought, food insecurity, displacement and other consequences.²⁷¹

270. Moreover, human influence on the natural environment has left up to one million species facing extinction in the near future, resulting in a catastrophic loss of biodiversity, threatening the earth's interconnected ecosystems, human life, settlements, sources of food, clean water and air, and demolishing natural defences against extreme weather and natural disasters.²⁷² Globally, indigenous peoples, local communities, the urban poor and women and girls tend to be the most land and resource insecure and thus suffer inordinately from the effects of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.²⁷³

271. Rising levels of greenhouse gas emissions are contributing to an unprecedented rate of global warming. The consequences of climate change are well understood: warming, acidifying and deoxygenizing oceans; melting ice caps and rising sea levels; variable weather patterns and extreme weather events (floods, droughts and wildfires); changes in flora and fauna populations and loss of habitats; and threats to agriculture, food security and human settlements and health.²⁷⁴ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found that climate change exacerbates poverty and inequalities, especially those of gender, age, race, class, caste, indigeneity and (dis)ability, and that its impact on marginalized groups is greater still owing to unequal power relations, constraints on their voice and agency and their limited access to land, resources, public services and sustainable infrastructure.²⁷⁵

272. Pollution, linked to land and water degradation, ecosystem and biodiversity destruction and climate change, is the greatest environmental cause of disease and premature death – an estimated 9 million premature deaths in 2015 – and especially affects the poor, women and children in low- and middle-income countries, and minorities and the marginalized in all countries.²⁷⁶ Most air pollution is caused by fossil fuel combustion in high- and middle-income countries and the burning of biomass in low-income countries, which is also a major contributor to climate change.

273. Environmental degradation and climate change amplify existing gender inequalities because of the persistent unequal relations of power between men and women in the household, in the environment, across economies and throughout

²⁷⁰ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, *Summary for Policymakers of the Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration*.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, document IPBES/7/10/Add.1.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*; and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*.

²⁷⁵ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Global Warming of 1.5°C*.

²⁷⁶ Philip J. Landrigan, "The Lancet Commission on pollution and health", *The Lancet*, vol. 391, No. 10119 (February 2018).

societies.²⁷⁷ The position of women is made worse by the low level of their participation in decision-making and their dependence on and unequal access to land, water and other natural resources and public services and infrastructure. The burden of unpaid care and domestic work that they carry is exacerbated by the emigration of men, or when women and their families are obliged to seek alternative livelihoods or migrate because of environmental or climate disasters.²⁷⁸ Rural and indigenous women are especially vulnerable.²⁷⁹

274. The capacity of women to withstand and recover from natural disasters is impaired by gender inequalities. Mortality among women is significantly higher than among men and poverty among women worsens in disaster-prone areas. The situation is compounded by their limited mobility and the structural barriers and social norms that constrain their decision-making power in households and political participation in communities.²⁸⁰

275. The gender-related impact of environmental degradation and climate change is well understood but less attention has been given to their gender-related drivers. The unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, exploitation of natural resources, wealth accumulation and fossil fuel industries that contribute to the environmental crisis reflect intersecting gender, race and class inequalities. The well-off, primarily in developed countries, benefit the most from the current structures, while marginalized women, primarily in developing countries, who have contributed least to the crisis, stand to lose the most.²⁸¹

Environmental degradation has serious impacts on women's access to, use of and control over land and other natural resources around the world

276. Significant gender inequalities remain in terms of access to, use of and control over land and other natural resources. They affect women greatly, in particular owing to their reliance, in many cases, on agriculture, forests and fisheries for survival. Globally, almost one third of employed women work in agriculture, including forestry and fisheries, and agriculture remains the most important source of work for women in low- and lower-middle income countries (see sect. III.A).²⁸²

277. Women consistently own less land than men, regardless of how ownership is defined, and in many cases the gender gaps are considerable.²⁸³ Only 14 per cent of agricultural landholders are women, although regional variations are significant.²⁸⁴ Women and men have equal rights to own, use and control land in law and practice in only 29 per cent of the 180 countries that were studied. In 68 per cent of them, the ability of women to claim and protect land assets is limited by customary, religious

²⁷⁷ UNEP, Global Gender and Environment Outlook (see sect. I, footnote 15).

²⁷⁸ Sierra Club and UN-Women, "Women on the move in a changing climate: a discussion paper on gender, climate and mobility", December 2018; International Food Policy Research Institute, *Global Food Policy Report 2019* (Washington, D.C., 2019); UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*.

²⁷⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The State of Food and Agriculture: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security* (Rome, 2016); ILO, *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: from Victims to Change Agents through Decent Work* (Geneva, 2017).

²⁸⁰ UN-Women, *Leveraging Co-Benefits between Gender Equality and Climate Action for Sustainable Development: Mainstreaming Gender Considerations in Climate Change Projects* (New York, 2016).

²⁸¹ Joni Seager, "Gender equality and environmental sustainability in the age of crisis", paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting on Beijing plus 25" (New York, September 2019).

²⁸² ILO, *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, 2016); ILOSTAT (2019).

²⁸³ Cheryl Doss and others, "Gender inequalities in ownership and control of land in Africa: myth versus reality", IFPRI Discussion Paper, No. 01308 (Washington, D.C., 2013).

²⁸⁴ UN-Women and United Nations, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals".

or traditional laws and practices. In 9 per cent of countries, women do not have the same legal rights as men to own, use or control land.²⁸⁵

278. The situation is made worse by growing pressure on land around the world, illustrated by the phenomenon of land-grabbing and the spiralling commodification of land. Land markets are rarely inclusive and ownership is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, with international investors eyeing vast tracts of land, especially in Africa. Indigenous women and women farmers are disproportionately affected by large-scale land grabs and dispossession because of their unequal access to and control over land and natural resources, coupled with limited mobility, access to justice and decision-making power in the household and the community.²⁸⁶

Women's and girls' access to public services and sustainable infrastructure is compromised by environmental degradation and climate change

279. Women and girls' access to public services and sustainable infrastructure and transport is compromised by environmental degradation and climate change. Women and girls are most affected by the breakdown in public services and infrastructure, such as water and energy provision, when natural disasters and extreme weather events occur. Even in developed countries, women are largely overlooked in environment and climate policies in terms of their unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities, paid work and ultimately their resilience and that of their communities.²⁸⁷ The lack of data disaggregated by sex or gender statistics in key sectors, such as land, energy, water and sanitation, limits understanding of the gender-related impact of environmental degradation.

280. Global electrification reached 89 per cent of the population in 2017. Access in urban areas was almost universal (97 per cent), while rural areas lagged behind (79 per cent).²⁸⁸ Global access to clean fuels and technology for cooking reached 59 per cent in 2016.²⁸⁹ Some 3 billion people, mostly in rural and peri-urban areas, still cook with polluting stove and fuel combinations.²⁹⁰ In sub-Saharan Africa, up to 92.2 per cent of the rural population relies on solid fuels for cooking.²⁹¹ Families rely on women and girls to collect solid fuels (wood, crop wastes, charcoal, coal or dung), which contributes to their time poverty. According to data from 13 countries in the region, girls in households that use solid fuels for cooking spend an average of 18 hours a week gathering fuel.²⁹² The use of solid fuels also means cooking over open fires or dirty stoves, exacerbating energy poverty and household air pollution. In 2016, exposure to such household air pollution caused 3.8 million deaths worldwide²⁹³ and women and young children were the worst affected.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁵ OECD, *SIGI 2019*.

²⁸⁶ UN-Women and OHCHR, *Realizing Women's Rights to Land and Other Productive Resources*, 2nd ed. (forthcoming).

²⁸⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Beijing+25*.

²⁸⁸ World Bank, "Access to electricity, rural (percentage of rural population)", Sustainable Energy for All database. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.RU.ZS> (accessed November 2019).

²⁸⁹ WHO, *World Health Statistics 2018: Monitoring Health for the SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2018).

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ UN-Women and United Nations, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals".

²⁹² WHO, *Burning Opportunity: Clean Household Energy for Health, Sustainable Development, and Well-being of Women and Children* (Geneva, 2016); UN-Women and United Nations, "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals".

²⁹³ WHO, *World Health Statistics 2018*.

²⁹⁴ WHO, "Household air pollution and health", fact sheet (May 2018); and John R. Balmes, "Household air pollution from domestic combustion of solid fuels and health", *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, vol. 143, No. 6 (June 2019).

281. Safely managed drinking-water services were available to 71 per cent of the world's population in 2017. While an estimated 85 per cent of people in urban areas had such access, the figure for rural areas was only 53 per cent.²⁹⁵ The poorest people in rural areas, especially those who are charged with collecting water, suffer the most. Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80 per cent of households without access to water on premises in 61 developing countries for which data are available.²⁹⁶ The resulting time burden is compounded by drought, desertification and water scarcity, which compel women and girls to travel longer distances; 207 million people still use water sources that are more than 30 minutes away from where they reside.²⁹⁷ Communities lacking improved water sources and sanitation facilities are primarily located in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.²⁹⁸ Nonetheless, in 2017, 13 per cent more of the world's population had access to improved drinking water sources located on premises than in 2000 and 292 million more people were sharing improved sanitation facilities.²⁹⁹ Women and girls are the worst affected by the lack of clean, safe and private sanitation facilities. Lack of clean water, safe sanitation and hygiene was associated with 870,000 deaths in 2016, mostly in Africa.³⁰⁰

Women's participation in climate-related decision-making has increased in recent years, but remains far from parity

282. The equal participation of women in climate-related decision-making is vital for delivering social, economic, environmental and climate resilience benefits. Enabling their participation in natural resource management leads to better governance and conservation,³⁰¹ and the application of gender quotas makes forest conservation and climate interventions more effective and leads to a more equal sharing of benefits.³⁰²

283. The participation of women in climate-related decision-making processes and intergovernmental climate negotiations at the global level has increased in recent years but remains far from parity. Between 2013 and 2019, their level of participation as delegates to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change rose from 29 per cent to 38 per cent, partly as a result of the implementation of the Framework's gender action plan through awareness-raising, training and capacity-building activities (FCCC/CP/2019/9).

2. Action taken by States to implement the Platform for Action

284. Women remain marginalized in environment and climate policy and decision-making processes and implementation. Meeting the commitments in the Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda requires gender-responsive policy frameworks; a reduction

²⁹⁵ UNICEF and WHO, *Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000–2017: Special Focus on Inequalities* (New York, 2019). Monitoring under Goal 6 on universal access to water and sanitation has changed from assessing “improved or unimproved” water sources to “safely managed” water services. Improved drinking water sources have the potential to deliver safe water. Safely managed drinking water should be accessible on premises, available when needed and free from contamination. See WHO and UNICEF, *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines* (Geneva, 2017).

²⁹⁶ UN-Women and United Nations, “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals”.

²⁹⁷ WHO, *World Health Statistics 2018*.

²⁹⁸ World Bank, *Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals 2017: from World Development Indicators* (Washington, D.C., 2017).

²⁹⁹ UNICEF and WHO, *Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000–2017*.

³⁰⁰ WHO, *World Health Statistics 2018*.

³⁰¹ Craig Leisher and others, “Does the gender composition of forest and fishery management groups affect resource governance and conservation outcomes? A systematic map”, *Environmental Evidence*, vol. 5, No. 6 (2016).

³⁰² Nathan J. Cook, Tara Grillos, and Krister P. Andersson, “Gender quotas increase the equality and effectiveness of climate policy interventions”, *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 9 No. 4 (April 2019).

in the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation, climate change and natural disasters on women and girls; the collection of data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics; and capacity-building to bolster women's climate resilience and their involvement in conservation.

285. The national reports highlight trends in implementation in four areas: (a) integrating a gender perspective into environmental, climate and disaster risk reduction policies; (b) building climate resilience among women; (c) reducing the impact of natural disasters on women and girls; and (d) promoting women's participation in environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation.

(a) *Environmental, climate and disaster risk reduction policies and the gender perspective*

286. Integrating a gender perspective into policies on the environment, climate and disaster risk reduction is a critical first step in order to address the needs and priorities of women and girls and to overcome the multiple and intersecting forms of inequalities and discrimination they face as rural, indigenous or migrant women, or on the basis of their sex, age, location, income or other factors, in relation to the drivers and impact of environmental degradation and climate change. A gender-responsive environment and climate policy framework will ensure that women and girls engage in and benefit equally from those policies and their implementation.

287. States have taken steps in that direction, enacting policies that reflect the growing understanding of the link between gender equality and environmental sustainability. Examples include the integration of gender equality and women's participation in national environment and natural resource management laws and the adoption of sectoral gender-responsive plans for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. In one country, a promising strategy has been adopted on gender and multiculturalism in environmental resource management, with the emphasis on intersectionality. Increasingly, States are also integrating environment and climate change considerations into their policies on gender equality.

288. A growing number of States are mainstreaming gender equality considerations into their climate policies, such as those on low carbon development, and in their climate change strategies and mitigation and adaptation measures. In some cases, that also involves analysis of the gender-related impact of climate change and environmental degradation and evaluations of women's contribution, roles and resilience. Some 20 countries have developed and are implementing climate change gender action plans, under which women are seen as active agents of change.³⁰³ Effective plans are tailored to specific contexts, demand-driven and designed by multi-stakeholder groups from the grass roots up. They stimulate capacity-building, intra-governmental coordination and cooperation between government and diverse constituencies, encompass a wide range of issues and contain actions and indicators at multiple levels, from rural and urban households to national policy spheres.³⁰⁴

289. Under the policies and guidelines adopted by some States, the different needs of men and women and the role of women as participants and decision makers in disaster risk management are taken into consideration. Provision is made for gender risk analysis and the prevention of violence and sexual exploitation in emergency and crisis settings. Some States have introduced standard operating procedures on

³⁰³ The Global Gender Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature has facilitated these plans in partnership with governments and with the support of the Government of Finland and the United States Agency for International Development.

³⁰⁴ Global Gender Office, International Union for Conservation of Nature, *The Art of Implementation: Gender Strategies Transforming National and Regional Climate Change Decision Making* (Gland, Switzerland, 2012).

responding to gender-based violence in emergencies, including mechanisms for referring victims of violence to appropriate services based on their specific needs and ensuring continuity in sexual and reproductive health and rights services in emergencies and disasters.

290. In the national biodiversity strategies and action plans that States parties prepare under the Convention on Biological Diversity, gender considerations have been integrated in multiple ways: 14 per cent of 174 countries include women's empowerment or gender equality as a guiding principle; 24 per cent of the most recent plans include at least one specific gender-related activity; 15 per cent reference women as keepers of traditional ecological knowledge as farmers, fishers and indigenous elders; 24 per cent refer to women as stewards of the environment. Only in 4 per cent are women seen as agents of change.³⁰⁵

291. Under the Paris Agreement, States parties are required to prepare, communicate and maintain nationally determined contributions. They encompass efforts to reduce national emissions and adapt to climate change. An analysis of contributions of 190 countries shows that 64 include a reference to women or gender, 15 refer to women as decision makers or key stakeholders in climate change policymaking, and 6 refer to women as agents of change.³⁰⁶

292. States have yet to fully integrate gender equality considerations into environment and climate plans and policies, including in their national reporting under the Rio conventions. There was a lack of information in the national reports on gender-responsive climate financing or investment in gender-responsive environmental conservation.

(b) *Strengthening climate change resilience among women*

293. The key to building climate change resilience is to systematically address gender gaps in responses to climate change. In that respect, States have increased women's access to, use of and control over land, water, energy and other natural resources. Access such as through tenure security or rights to communal lands can help to build climate resilience through, for example, sustainable agriculture and sustainable livelihoods. It is promising that 64 per cent of reporting States from North Africa and Western Asia and 56 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa have acted to improve women's access to and control over resources, especially given limits on women's land and resource rights in those regions. However, only 38 per cent of countries overall have done so.

294. Some States are supporting diversified climate-resilient livelihoods through community-based natural resource management. In one initiative, 30 per cent of newly developed areas are allocated to women in order to promote their participation in agriculture. Other programmes include training, campaigns and events to build a gender dimension into land initiatives and encourage and help women to implement sustainable land practices. Nature-based solutions and those that combine ancestral knowledge with modern technologies (box F.2) are encouraging. For such initiatives to be sustainable, provision needs to be made for income security and social protection for women and their families, as well as ensuring that women's unpaid care and domestic work burdens are reduced rather than increased.

³⁰⁵ Barbara Clabots and Molly Gilligan, *Gender and Biodiversity: Analysis of Women and Gender Equality Considerations in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans* (NBSAPs) (Washington, D.C., Global Gender Office, International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2017).

³⁰⁶ See <https://genderclimatetracker.org/gender-ndc/introduction>.

295. States are also supporting the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls to respond to the adverse effects of climate change, including in the application of gender-responsive mitigation and adaptation strategies. Women producers and farmers and women's cooperatives worldwide are increasingly adopting a combination of sustainable ancestral, indigenous and modern technological practices. They include the use of drought-tolerant and fast-maturing crop varieties that conserve agricultural biodiversity, soil and water conservation techniques that restore degraded land and store water in the soil, and agroforestry approaches that diversify production, restore soil fertility and control soil erosion, desertification and deforestation. Greater access to land and other productive resources, extension services, early warning systems, climate information, credit, savings, insurance, and alternative livelihood options are essential for building resilience.³⁰⁷

296. States are promoting equal employment in the green economy as a means of building resilience. Actions have focused on enabling women who are off grid to become marketers and distributors of clean energy products or engage in solar energy projects, creating employment opportunities for women in environmental conservation, training women in remote and rural areas on waste management, composting and recycling, or improving water supply and sanitation delivery by promoting the presence of women in management and as hydrologists. Several States have joined the Equal by 30 campaign, which strives to achieve equal pay, leadership and opportunities for women in the energy sector (box F.1). Such campaigns and active labour market policies are needed to avoid reproducing patterns of occupational segregation and gender pay gaps in the green economy. More attention is being paid globally to a just transition to sustainable jobs, with the aim of reversing decades of environmental degradation and attaining greater income equality. However, there has been little discussion of the gender dimensions.³⁰⁸

297. Only 23 per cent of States reported that they were evaluating the impact of environment policies and sustainable infrastructure projects on women and girls, and only 20 per cent were working to protect indigenous women's conservation practices.

Box F.1

Gender equality in sustainable energy transitions

There has been an important shift in recent years away from treating women as a vulnerable group and seeing them instead as key agents of change as consumers, producers, innovators and decision makers in the energy sector. Energy initiatives and projects led by women, especially sustainable energy solutions at the community level, are enjoying increasing success. According to a recent survey of renewable energy organizations, women represent 32 per cent of full-time employees, as opposed to the 22 per cent global average in the oil and gas industry; women continue, however, to hold mostly administrative rather than STEM positions.

Sustainable energy infrastructure can provide much needed energy access, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and boost opportunities for women's empowerment and employment. To move towards universal access, energy programmes often promote off-grid solutions, such as mini-grids and decentralized technologies. Large-scale renewable energy projects, on the other hand, can pose risks that need to be assessed and mitigated.

Decentralized sustainable energy solutions are particularly significant for women and girls. Women's enterprises and cooperatives are installing and managing decentralized renewable energy mini-grids that supply electricity for domestic and income-generating activities in areas not served by national grids. Solar-powered

³⁰⁷ FAO and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018: Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition* (Rome, FAO, 2018).

³⁰⁸ UNCTAD, *Trade and Development Report 2019* (see sect. I, footnote 11).

pumps, for example, provide water for irrigation. Solar dryers, micro-hydro grain mills, solar grinders and solar refrigeration systems are important forms of technology for food processing and storage and adding value to products. They help to reduce food waste, improve food security and cut down on labour and time spent by women in manual processing and collecting water.

Reducing the \$372 billion spent each year by countries on fossil fuel subsidies and reallocating between 10 per cent and 30 per cent of the savings to renewable projects would help to pay for the transition to sustainable energy. At least 50 countries have undertaken some level of fossil fuel subsidy reform since 2015.^a Their experience has shown that, to be successful, reforms should be gradual, building on dialogue and based on broad public support, with clearly articulated objectives and benefits. Such reforms should go in tandem with improved social protection for vulnerable and low-income households, including large-scale subsidy benefit transfer schemes and unconditional cash transfer programmes.^b Fuel subsidy reform would allow for greater investment to ensure that women and girls benefit equally from sustainable energy. At the same time, it would cut global emissions by a quarter and halve the number of early deaths caused by fossil fuel air pollution.

Sources: Fossil Fuel to Clean Energy Subsidy Swaps: How to Pay for an Energy Revolution (Geneva, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2019); *Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective, 2019* (Abu Dhabi, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)); *Renewables 2019 Global Status Report* (Paris, REN21); “One step forward, two steps back: fossil fuel subsidies and reform on the rise” (Laura Merrill and Nina Quintas, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 27 May 2019) and “How reforming fossil fuel subsidies can go wrong: a lesson from Ecuador” (Franziska Funke and Laura Merrill, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 24 October 2019).

^a Laura Merrill and Nina Quintas, “One step forward, two steps back: fossil fuel subsidies and reform on the rise”, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 27 May 2019; and Franziska Funke and Laura Merrill, “How reforming fossil fuel subsidies can go wrong: a lesson from Ecuador”, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 24 October 2019.

^b Ibid.

(c) *Reducing the impact of natural disasters on women and girls*

298. The capacity of women and girls to withstand and recover from disasters is greatly affected by gender inequalities. In most disasters, female mortality is significantly higher than that for men and women fall deeper into poverty in areas hit by such disasters. Those results are compounded by women’s limited mobility and decision-making power in the household and community.³⁰⁹ Gender-responsive policies and programmes are thus crucial for identifying, preventing and alleviating the disproportionate impact of natural disasters on women and girls.

299. A majority of States (56 per cent) reported that they supported women’s participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation policies, programmes and projects; 90 per cent of countries in Oceania and 71 per cent of countries in East and South-East Asia reported initiatives in that regard. Many also reported that, in the past five years, they had strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness about the vulnerability of women and girls to environmental degradation and disasters, including 64 per cent of reporting countries in Oceania and 60 per cent of reporting countries in Central and South Asia. Only 24 per cent of States reported having undertaken to promote women’s access to services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation in times of disaster.

300. Several States have implemented programmes to reduce the impact of disasters on women by supporting the livelihoods and health security of women and children

³⁰⁹ UN-Women, *Leveraging Co-Benefits Between Gender Equality*.

in disaster-prone areas, by providing safe drinking water and social protection, or by considering the special needs of different groups of women in disaster situations. Some reported on disaster risk management and climate change training with a gender perspective for government departments and community leaders, efforts to build the capacity of civil society to address the needs of women, children and persons with disabilities during disasters, and plans to help emergency responders to identify and offer assistance to victims of gender-based violence.

301. States are working to ensure that women have access to payments, insurance and compensation in the face of climate change and natural disasters. Under some programmes, women obtain financial services through self-help groups and village savings and loans associations, cash grant payments for disaster relief and recovery, and agricultural risk and insurance funds to compensate for material and financial losses resulting from climate change.

302. By promoting research and analysis, States are contributing to a better understanding of the needs of women and girls in relation to disasters and informing more inclusive policies and strategies. Some countries are conducting gender assessments of national disaster risk reduction policies, programmes and strategies, and of risk management and disaster response and recovery. Several States are working to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex. In one initiative in the Pacific region, indigenous methodologies are being used to disseminate information and collect data on gender and the impact of climate change. Other countries are producing sex-disaggregated data on the number of victims of natural disasters.

303. Some States have taken steps to involve women in all phases and at all levels of disaster risk management and disaster risk preparedness initiatives.

(d) *Women's participation in environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation*

304. The full participation of women and their agency in decision-making at all levels on environment and climate is key for their well-being and resilience. Structural barriers and discriminatory social norms, however, continue to limit their decision-making power in the home and their social and political participation in the broader community.

305. A majority of States (61 per cent) reported that they supported women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance. The figure was especially high in Oceania (90 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (80 per cent). Specific actions include sectoral gender strategies and action plans that aim to increase women's participation in decision-making at the local level, such as in associations of the users of forests, water and pastures, and engagement in environmental projects and initiatives at all levels. The participation of indigenous and Afro-descendent women has also received some attention (box F.2).

306. Some countries have called for a minimum of 40 per cent women's membership of protected area management boards and water committees, 30 per cent membership of local planning and management committees for forest resources and gender parity in village natural resources management committees.

Box F.2

Participation of indigenous and Afro-descendent women in conserving biodiversity

Indigenous peoples comprise 5 per cent of the world's population but they manage or have tenure rights to more than a quarter of the earth's surface, including 35 per cent of intact forests and at least a quarter of above-ground carbon in tropical forests, and protect 80 per cent of global biodiversity. Those areas are characterized by better natural

resource management, less pollution and a slower decline in the number of species. It is thus essential for conservation and sustainable development to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to land, including the rights of indigenous women to indigenous territories and communal lands, and to strengthen their institutions.

The Women's Council of the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin is empowering indigenous women in the region to advocate and lead conservation efforts and defend their territories, based on indigenous and local knowledge and practices and the principle of free, prior and informed consent. It is also contributing to the movement pressing for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to draft a general recommendation on indigenous women.

In Brazil, the Xikrin indigenous women of Bacajá living in the Amazonian rainforest in Pará State have organized themselves and engaged supportive partners to increase their knowledge, skills and leadership for environmental and community well-being. Seeing a need to make their role and responsibility in natural resource management more visible within and outside their communities, they have, over the past five years, developed a diverse portfolio of sustainable resource management and production projects in partnership with key government and non-government stakeholders. Those projects, which are led by women, support the sustainable harvest and commercialization of non-timber forest products, such as Brazil nuts and *babaçu* coconut oil, and further the sustainable use and conservation of rainforest biodiversity.

In Colombia, which hosts almost 10 per cent of the world's biodiversity, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities hold title to and manage 35 per cent of national territory, including half of the country's remaining forests. The women of Afro-Colombian communities have reacted to a changing climate, deforestation, encroachment on indigenous lands and armed conflict through a process of self-strengthening centred on *azoteas*, an ancient method of farming traditional medicinal and aromatic plants in elevated gardens. Not only are those gardens adaptable to variable climate conditions, they promote environmental balance and integrity and are the foundation of local cuisine, medicine and identity. Women's organizations have supported community members, and women and elders in particular, to revive, document and promote ancestral practices, protect endangered species and act as stewards of local knowledge. As a result, evidence-based local farming systems have been formalized and scaled up. The growing use of the *azoteas* has allowed women to influence decision-making on territorial planning and land use, thereby expanding inclusive community ownership of biodiversity conservation.

Sources: "A spatial overview of the global importance of indigenous lands for conservation" (Stephen T. Garnett and others, *Nature Sustainability*, vol. 1, No. 7, July 2018); "Supporting indigenous peoples who manage intact forests is crucial to achieving climate goals", (Wildlife Conservation Society and others, September 2018); Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, document IPBES/7/10/Add.1; "Indigenous women: keepers of the Amazon rainforest" (Luciana Lima and Eduardo Vieira Barnes, The Nature Conservancy, 4 August 2019); "Women, culture, and territory: safeguarding biodiversity by protecting ancestral culture in Colombia" (UNDP, Global Environmental Facility, 2 July 2019).

3. Priorities for future action and accelerated implementation

307. Many of the policies and initiatives reported by States have potential but they tend to be fragmented and fail to address the gender-related drivers and impact of the environmental and climate crises. Not enough attention has been paid to the potential impact of policies and inaction on marginalized groups as climate change and environmental degradation continue to intensify inequalities. Poor women and girls,

particularly in underserved rural and urban communities, are at the greatest risk of being left behind.

308. States should prioritize action in three key areas. First, planning and policies need to be more gender-responsive and their implementation properly funded. Second, sustainable and affordable infrastructure and services are critical for building the resilience of communities and anticipating and responding effectively to natural disasters. Third, more needs to be done to ensure that the voices of those most affected are heard by decision makers. The effective management of natural resources, disaster risk reduction and response, environmental governance and climate action requires a gender-responsive approach.

309. Broad, properly funded transformative strategies that have gender equality as a central concern are needed to forestall the collapse of the environment, the extinction of whole species and irreversible climate change and for humanity to survive without plunging millions into poverty and displacement. Dominant models of economic growth and development, rooted in the extraction and combustion of fossil fuels, the extraction of other natural resources, the clearance of land and forests and industrialization that pollutes land, water and air must be transformed. Through their collective action, women have put the spotlight on the need to create a new, regenerative economy, geared towards ecological and social well-being and care for people and the planet. A gender perspective for a just transition towards climate stabilization and biodiversity conservation should encompass decent work and social protection for all and investment in the care economy. Aligned with the commitments of the Platform for Action, one of the aims of a regenerative economy would be to reverse trends that worsen climate and environmental degradation and exacerbate violence and instability.

IV. The way forward: lessons learned and priorities for accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda

310. The global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action shows that States have continued to make efforts in many areas that are critical to advancing gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' human rights. However, transformative policies leading to accelerated and irreversible change on a broad scale remain necessary. Commitments have not been matched by action, investments or accountability.

311. Challenges in the global environment are also undermining the potentially positive effect of action taken by States. For example, while most States have focused on increasing girls' access to quality education and supporting women's economic empowerment, difficulties in generating decent jobs, shifts in the labour market due to technological change and a lack of investment in care services have meant that women remain concentrated in informal, non-standard work and that gender gaps in labour force participation have hardly changed. There is an impressive body of international law and norms on women and peace and security. However, broader cultures of violence and the scant progress made in promoting the meaningful participation of women in peace processes have an adverse impact on women's human rights and on the chances of building peaceful and inclusive societies.

312. As the world struggles with economic uncertainty, growing inequalities, increasing political polarization, environmental threats and violent conflict, there is even greater urgency to achieve gender equality. Feminist movements have repeatedly pointed out that the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities that

perpetuates gender inequalities, poverty and vulnerability is the root cause of problems facing the world today. Young women are at the forefront of movements calling for systemic change in an integrated manner across all dimensions of sustainable development. The usual approach of addressing symptoms rather than causes has led to a state of perpetual crisis. It would be better to fix the systems that perpetuate inequality by redistributing power and realizing women's and girl's human rights.

313. The review of measures taken by States indicates that a range of actions, both immediate and more systemic and longer-term, is needed to accelerate progress in each of the six thematic clusters (box 4.1).

Box 4.1

Actions to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda

Inclusive development, decent work and well-being

- Expand childcare and long-term care services aiming for universal coverage and integrate services with paid family leave provisions for all workers.
- Extend labour rights and entitlements for informal workers, ensuring coverage for women in the most vulnerable forms of informal work, and take action to prevent further informalization in the context of austerity measures and technological change.
- Reduce labour market segregation and the gender pay gap by increasing women's representation in non-traditional areas and encouraging men's employment in female-dominated sectors.
- At a systemic level, make decent work, the environment and caring for people the key priorities of macroeconomic policies.

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

- Gear social protection and public services towards the transformation of unequal power relations, moving beyond access to gender-responsive design and implementation.
- Put sexual and reproductive health and rights at the centre of social protection, health and education policies for the empowerment of women and girls.
- Ensure that technical and vocational education and training programmes transform gender stereotypes by supporting women's participation in non-traditional fields and addressing barriers faced by them in the labour market.
- At a systemic level, provide sustainable financing for gender-responsive public services and social protection systems through fiscal policies that reduce gender and other inequalities, including through progressive income and wealth taxes.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

- Prioritize funding to enforce laws ensuring women's access to justice and provide comprehensive and well-coordinated services, with specific attention to the long-term needs of survivors, such as housing, education and employment.

- Invest in comprehensive, evidence-based and long-term approaches to prevention, using multiple avenues to transform social norms and unequal power relations between women and men.
- Uphold due diligence principles to ensure that media and technology do not facilitate violence against women or perpetuate harmful and stereotypical portrayals of women and girls.
- At a systemic level, ensure women's freedom from violence and stigma by challenging entrenched norms of male dominance, making justice systems work for women to end impunity and fostering norms of respect, non-discrimination and equality.

Participation, gender-responsive institutions and accountability

- Strengthen the implementation of temporary special measures, eradicate discriminatory gender norms and practices in political institutions and take action to eliminate violence against women in public life.
- Ensure adequate resources for national gender equality action plans and implement gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors.
- Create safe and enabling environments for women's rights organizations to hold decision makers to account and protect women human rights defenders through preventative, gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches.
- At a systemic level, ensure that strong national machineries have clear mandates, status and authority and adequate resources, along with open, inclusive and participatory processes that allow women's rights organizations to influence and monitor gender-responsive laws and policies.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

- Ensure inclusive peace processes at all levels and stages, by supporting the appointment of women as mediators and negotiators, encouraging inclusive delegations, exerting pressure if women are absent or underrepresented, providing economic resources for women's participation and ensuring their physical security.
- Expand programmes and services to prevent and respond to violence against women, provide sexual and reproductive health services and deliver survivor-centred justice in conflict and crisis-affected countries.
- Focus more on women's economic rights in the wake of conflicts and crises and prioritize women's access to resources, employment and investment in vital public services.
- At a systemic level, address the root causes of conflict, violence and instability, including global inequality, and structural drivers of conflict.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

- Develop, properly fund and implement gender-responsive environment and climate policies and planning.
- Prioritize the universal delivery of sustainable, affordable and gender-responsive infrastructure to build community resilience and respond effectively to natural disasters.
- Ensure the full and equal participation of women in decision-making on natural resource management, disaster risk reduction and response, environmental governance and climate action.

- At a systemic level, move from economic models rooted in the extraction of natural resources and fossil fuels to a regenerative economy, geared towards ecological and social well-being and care for people and the planet.

314. There are also eight cross-cutting priorities for action informed by lessons gleaned from the implementation of the Platform for Action. Putting them into action is critical for the implementation of the Platform for Action and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Remove discriminatory laws and prioritize gender-responsive institutional frameworks

315. Considerable progress has been made, owing largely to advocacy by women's organizations, in removing discrimination and introducing laws to advance gender equality but governments are far from reaching the target of removing all discriminatory laws, which was set for 2005. Even where States have introduced comprehensive legal protections, significant gaps and barriers continue to prevent women and girls from fully enjoying their legal rights, owing to poor implementation and enforcement. For example, even where countries have comprehensive laws on violence against women, women often lack access to police and justice services or, worse still, experience further stigma and shame at the hands of law enforcement officers or the judiciary when they report violence and seek redress. Although in most countries there are now no formal restrictions on women's employment or property rights, vast gaps in labour force participation, access to social protection and asset ownership remain the norm.

316. Key institutions and mechanisms for promoting gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights of women and girls, such as national gender equality mechanisms and national human rights institutions, remain chronically underfunded and lack the political support or recognition they need to fulfil their mandates. The decline of key justice, policy oversight and accountability mechanisms, where democracy is being eroded, also undermines the implementation and enforcement of laws and policies to advance gender equality and women's ability to claim their rights and hold decision makers accountable. As increasingly little room is left for civil society to influence decision-making, so women's organizations are also increasingly being denied the opportunity to play an important role in monitoring gender equality commitments.

317. States should: urgently review discriminatory laws and take steps to eliminate them; close the gap between formal laws and the practical enjoyment by women and girls of human rights; and strengthen inclusive and democratic institutions and processes to ensure accountability for and responsiveness to the issues of gender equality and women's and girls' human rights.

Break silos and build gender-responsive and integrated approaches to implementation based on human rights standards and principles

318. At the heart of the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda is the need for an integrated approach. However, implementation continues to occur largely in silos. In that way, the opportunity for synergies between different policy interventions is missed. For example, sustainable energy sources are not only important for the environment but can also reduce the burden on women of unpaid care and domestic work and generate new forms of decent work for them. Broadly embedding gender equality in all aspects of peace processes, rather than confining the women and peace and security agenda to the issue of sexual violence in conflict, contributes to peace and inclusive sustainable development. In addition to making sure that gender

equality is addressed as a cross-cutting priority across the social, economic, political and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, all areas must themselves be integrated.

319. Integration across all areas of the Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals aligns with the principle of the indivisibility of human rights in efforts to achieve substantive equality for women. For example, a woman who leaves a violent relationship needs access to justice, a safe place to live, medical care and decent work in order to maintain an adequate standard of living for herself and her dependents. Policies and programmes also need to be informed by human rights standards and principles; for example, rather than providing benefits and services in a top-down manner, social protection programmes need to be designed with the full and effective participation of women, and in a way that does not violate their right to equality and non-discrimination by, for example, perpetuating gender stereotypes.

320. Policies should also strengthen synergies between the economic, social and environmental dimensions to achieve gender equality and sustainable development. Dominant economic models have not led to the creation of decent employment conditions or adequate public investment in areas needed to achieve gender equality. They have, rather, increased inequality and driven unsustainable patterns of production and consumption that underlie the climate crisis. In many parts of the world, labour market deregulation has fuelled the expansion of non-standard forms of work among women and undermined their ability to organize collectively. Privatization and public-private partnerships have failed to deliver better and more accessible services for women and girls but instead have contributed to growing inequality and fragmentation. Ensuring women enjoy their human rights requires a fundamental change in the economic model, the key priorities of which should be the creation of decent work, the environment and caring for people.

321. States should: fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, paying attention to the interdependence and indivisibility of rights; integrate gender equality across the economic, social, political and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and peacebuilding strategies and plans; focus on the integration of and synergies between all dimensions; reconfigure economic power relations by developing regenerative economic policies to promote human well-being and care, environmental sustainability and social inclusion and solidarity.

Reach the most marginalized groups of women and girls and ensure no one is left behind

322. Inclusive, peaceful and sustainable development requires that no one be left behind. Young women with disabilities experience significant exclusion from employment and education, compared with their male counterparts. Girls who are poor or live in rural or conflict-affected settings are especially disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment. In some regions, the pregnancy and birth outcomes of migrant women lag behind those of non-migrants. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons are at greater risk than others of violence and harassment. Indigenous women lag behind non-indigenous women on a range of indicators, including with regard to education and health. While there is a growing focus on disaggregating data, it is equally important to examine how laws, policies and programmes can be made truly universal by reaching and benefiting marginalized groups.

323. It is equally important to ensure that laws and policies do not serve to leave women behind. Policies are never neutral in their impact on marginalized groups of women and girls, whether they be austerity measures that limit women's access to public services, restrictions on access by migrant women to health services, land

appropriation that curtails the livelihood of indigenous women or the closure of formal channels of participation for women's organizations. The growth in the private provision of services is also deepening inequalities and segregation, as poor and marginalized women and girls are more likely to rely on underfunded public services or informal, often unregulated providers.

324. States should focus more on making sure that laws, policies and programmes become truly universal and thereby benefit all women and girls, and that policies are systematically evaluated to ensure they do not create or reinforce inequalities and marginalization.

Match commitments to gender equality with adequate financing

325. Inadequate funding for gender equality continues to be a major challenge. While many countries track budget allocations for gender equality, national gender equality strategies and plans remain significantly under-resourced, hindering the full implementation of the Platform for Action. Moreover, global tax competition, tax avoidance and illicit financial flows have concentrated resources in the hands of a powerful few, while depriving public budgets of much needed resources for gender equality. Heeding the commitments in the 2030 Agenda and the Platform for Action, redressing illicit financial flows and tax evasion, and shifting spending away from the military and into social investment could help to unlock resources for gender equality. The mobilization of private sector resources, through public-private partnerships, requires regulation, oversight and systematic and careful evaluation to ensure alignment with international human rights principles and standards.

326. Spending on gender-responsive social protection and public services should be seen as an investment, rather than consumption, in light of the many positive externalities they create for individuals, the economy and society. Such investment can generate employment and fund the building of much-needed physical and social infrastructure, such as rural road networks and safe urban transport systems that enhance the mobility of women and girls and their access to markets and schools, or services that meet care needs and support working families. Investment is particularly critical for accelerating gender equality in post-conflict contexts.

327. States should: strengthen efforts to mobilize more domestic and international resources for gender equality, including through progressive income and wealth taxes as well as official development assistance (ODA); prioritize financial resources for national gender equality mechanisms and local, national, regional and global women's organizations; and regulate the private sector to ensure its compliance with human rights standards and accountability for gender equality, including in the context of public and private partnerships. Developed countries should meet their ODA commitments, including those to the least developed countries, with a strong focus on gender equality across all sectors. International finance institutions should be held accountable for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights.

Accelerate women's participation in decision-making and create enabling environments for women's rights organizations

328. Women remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making at all levels, including local governments, the management of environmental resources, national planning and development structures, national parliaments, peace processes and global governance. Their participation is of critical importance, as a matter of justice and equality and because it can keep gender-specific concerns on the agenda. Participation means more than just presence in decision-making forums. It is about the effective articulation of issues that matter to different groups of women, the ability

to influence and monitor policies and the creation of strategic alliances across political parties, sectors and organizations to advance gender equality as a matter of social responsibility. Women's equal representation in all areas of decision-making would send a powerful message to the next generation about their future possibilities.

329. Progress has been stymied by the growing political influence of forces opposed to gender equality and increasing levels of violence, abuse and harassment experienced by women in political and public life, including human rights defenders, politicians and journalists. The participation of women's rights organizations in shaping and monitoring the implementation of laws, policies and programmes to advance gender equality is therefore critical. Efforts to create an enabling environment for the participation of women's rights organizations have been limited. Support and encouragement for cross-issue alliances and coalitions has been inadequate. However, a new generation of feminists is playing an increasingly visible role and must be given space and support.

330. States should: urgently address the barriers to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels, including by taking action to end discriminatory cultures of political institutions and eliminate threats of violence and intimidation; replicate and expand temporary special measures to increase women's representation in decision-making; ensure enabling and participatory processes for women's rights organizations with respect to the implementation of the Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda; significantly increase funding for such organizations; and protect women human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment for their work.

Transform social norms to create cultures of non-violence, respect and equality

331. The persistence of discriminatory social norms and gender and cultural stereotypes constitutes a significant obstacle to the implementation of the Platform for Action. Such norms and stereotypes are evident in education, the division between women and men of paid and unpaid care and domestic work and patterns of occupational segregation, which are often based on socially ascribed gender roles. Norms that entrench expected gender roles are at the root of violence against women and girls and serve to exclude women from decision-making in all areas, including peace processes. For women, transgressing a social norm can have significant implications and can lead to violence and even death.

332. At the same time, norms and stereotypes are contested and subject to change in the face of economic, social and political changes as well as women's organizing and community mobilization. For example, in recent years, women's movements have brought sexual harassment into the arena of public debate as never before, creating a potential tipping point where sexual harassment and sexual assault are no longer accepted as the norm. Education is now largely accepted as a right for girls as well as boys and social norms concerning women in paid work have changed. Similarly, the increasing representation of women in sport reflects changing social expectations. Discrimination, however, remains evident in gender segregation in the choice of subjects in education, the gender pay gap in work, and in sport. Men and boys have a key role to play in challenging discriminatory social norms and also stand to benefit when they change, as it becomes possible to move away from sometimes harmful gender roles expected of men and boys.

333. States should: prioritize change in discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes to unlock progress in all areas, including by supporting community-based women's rights organizations; fully engage men and boys in challenging those norms as allies in achieving gender equality; ensure that changes in norms and stereotypes are integrated into education systems; promote positive norms

in support of gender equality through the media; and regulate the media and technology providers to ensure that they do not promote harmful stereotypes and social norms.

Harness the potential of technology to advance gender equality

334. The growing importance of technology presents opportunities and risks with regard to the implementation of the Platform for Action. Technological change is having an impact on women's employment opportunities through the proliferation of digital platforms and new forms of work that often lack access to basic entitlements or social protection. On the other hand, time-saving technology also has the potential to reduce the drudgery of women's unpaid care and domestic work and is playing a growing role in the provision of services by broadening their reach and availability. However, the use of technology in social protection systems has been linked to punitive approaches and violations of privacy rights. While technology can facilitate access to services by women who are exposed to violence, it is also creating new spaces for violence, abuse and harassment of women and girls. Technology enables women to mobilize and organize across borders and different areas of interest.

335. Technology has the potential to improve the lives of women and girls and to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda. With the right interventions and levers, it can be geared towards the achievement of social goals. Without regulation and appropriate policies, however, it could serve to deepen gender inequality and vulnerabilities. There is also an urgent need to bridge the development divide, so that women and girls everywhere might benefit from technological developments.

336. States should: set priorities for and fund technological development and innovation in a way that advances gender equality, promotes inclusion and respect, enables collective action and contributes to a sustainable environment; ensure that all women and girls benefit equally from technological advancements by closing the gender digital divide and enabling women's equal participation in the design of technology; and implement laws, policies and regulations to combat the risks inherent in technology for gender equality, including online violence, abuse and harassment, threats to privacy rights and bias in artificial intelligence and robotics.

Close data and evidence gaps to monitor progress effectively

337. The lack of data for effectively monitoring progress towards gender equality is a significant challenge. Much of the statistics and data disaggregated by sex, age, location and other factors that are needed to monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda are still not produced regularly by countries to enable trend analysis. Although there has been greater focus on and investment in generating such data in the past five years, shortfalls in capacity to do so remain a source of concern, especially in developing countries. In addition to quantitative data, there is a need to invest in other types of research, including qualitative research, to provide a more nuanced understanding, for example, of the extent to which laws and policies that are in place are not applied or have unintended negative consequences for women and girls.

338. States should: invest more in statistical capacity and regularly generate data to monitor the implementation of gender equality commitments; and support and better fund research and expertise on gender equality, including in higher educational institutions.

Annex I

Alignment of the Platform for Action critical areas of concern with the Sustainable Development Goals

| <i>Report cluster</i> | <i>Critical areas of concern</i> | <i>Sustainable Development Goals</i> | <i>Cross-cutting critical areas of concern and themes from the 2030 Agenda</i> |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| A. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work | F. Women and the Economy | SDG 5 | I. Human rights of women L. The girl-child Human rights Leaving no one behind Universality |
| | | SDG 8 | |
| | | SDG 10 | |
| B. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services | A. Women and poverty | SDG 1 | |
| | B. Education and training of women | SDG 3 SDG 4 | |
| | C. Women and health | SDG 5 | |
| C. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes | D. Violence against women | SDG 5 SDG 11 | |
| | J. Women and the media | SDG 16 | |
| | D. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions | G. Women in power and decision-making | |
| H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women | | SDG 17 | |
| J. Women and the media | | | |
| E. Peaceful and inclusive societies | E. Women and armed conflict | SDG 5 SDG 16 | |
| F. Environmental conservation, climate action and resilience-building | K. Women and the environment | SDG 2 | |
| | | SDG 12 | |
| | | SDG 13 | |
| | | SDG 14 | |
| | | SDG 15 | |

Annex II

Regional distribution rates of responses to the questionnaire

| <i>Economic Commission for Africa</i> | <i>Economic Commission for Europe</i> | <i>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</i> | <i>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</i> | <i>Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia</i> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Algeria | Albania | Antigua and Barbuda | Afghanistan | Bahrain |
| Angola | Andorra | Argentina | Australia | Iraq |
| Benin | Armenia | Bahamas | Bangladesh | Jordan |
| Botswana | Austria | Barbados | Bhutan | Kuwait |
| Burkina Faso | Azerbaijan | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Cambodia | Lebanon |
| Burundi | Belarus | Brazil | China | Oman |
| Cabo Verde | Belgium | Chile | Fiji | Qatar |
| Cameroon | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Colombia | Iran (Islamic Republic of) | Saudi Arabia |
| Central African Republic | Bulgaria | Costa Rica | Kiribati | Syrian Arab Republic |
| Chad | Canada | Dominican Republic | Malaysia | United Arab Emirates |
| Comoros | Croatia | Ecuador | Maldives | State of Palestine |
| Congo | Cyprus | El Salvador | Marshall Islands | |
| Côte d'Ivoire | Czech Republic | Grenada | Micronesia (Federated States of) | |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | Denmark | Guatemala | Mongolia | |
| Djibouti | Estonia | Guyana | Myanmar | |
| Egypt | Finland | Honduras | Nepal | |
| Eswatini | France | Mexico | New Zealand | |
| Ethiopia | Georgia | Nicaragua | Pakistan | |
| Equatorial Guinea | Germany | Panama | Palau | |
| Gambia | Hungary | Paraguay | Philippines | |
| Ghana | Iceland | Peru | Republic of Korea | |
| Guinea | Ireland | Saint Kitts and Nevis | Samoa | |
| Kenya | Israel | Saint Lucia | Solomon Islands | |
| Lesotho | Italy | Suriname | Thailand | |
| Liberia | Kazakhstan | Uruguay | Timor-Leste | |
| Libya | Kyrgyzstan | | Tonga | |
| Madagascar | Latvia | | Tuvalu | |
| Malawi | Liechtenstein | | Vanuatu | |
| Mali | Lithuania | | Viet Nam | |
| Mauritania | Luxembourg | | | |
| Mauritius | Malta | | | |
| Morocco | Montenegro | | | |
| Mozambique | Netherlands | | | |
| Namibia | North Macedonia | | | |
| Niger | Norway | | | |
| Nigeria | Portugal | | | |
| Rwanda | Republic of Moldova | | | |
| Sao Tome and Principe | Romania | | | |
| | Russian Federation | | | |

| <i>Economic Commission for Africa</i> | <i>Economic Commission for Europe</i> | <i>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</i> | <i>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</i> | <i>Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia</i> |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Senegal | Serbia | | | |
| Seychelles | Slovakia | | | |
| Sierra Leone | Slovenia | | | |
| South Africa | Spain | | | |
| South Sudan | Sweden | | | |
| Sudan | Switzerland | | | |
| Togo | Tajikistan | | | |
| Tunisia | Turkey | | | |
| Uganda | Turkmenistan | | | |
| United Republic of Tanzania | Ukraine | | | |
| Zambia | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | | | |
| Zimbabwe | Uzbekistan | | | |
| 50/54 | 51/56 | 25/33 (44)^a | 29/43 (53)^b | 11/12 (17)^c |

Notes: A total of 166 national reports were received by UN-Women, either directly from States or through the regional commissions. The table reflects the distribution by regional commission. Reports have been listed under one region only. The number in parentheses reflects the total number of members of the corresponding regional commission.

^a The membership of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean includes 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and 11 countries in Asia, Europe and North America.

^b The member countries of the Economic Commission for Africa that submitted reports and are also members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia are: Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.

^c The member countries of the Economic Commission for Europe that submitted reports and are also members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.