



YOUTH LEAP INTO GENDER EQUALITY

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

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lakshmi Puri

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

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

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

1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

2. YOUNG WOMEN COUNT

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

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

FIGURE 1

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

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

2 UNFPA, 2014, "The Power of 1.8 Billion, Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future", State of World Population 2014

3 United Nations, 2011, "The United Nations Program on Youth", <http://social.un.org>

4 UNFPA, 2014, "The Power of 1.8 Billion, Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future", State of World Population 2014

5 For further information see <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/girls-youngwomen.pdf>

3. UN WOMEN'S WORK WITH YOUTH IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

Young Women's Political Participation and Leadership

UN Women has been providing technical and financial support to i) local young women and young men and youth-led organizations to undertake capacity-building and advocacy initiatives, ii) national and sub-national governments of Member States to introduce desired policy reforms aimed at integrating youth perspectives within the national development agenda, and iii) strengthen capacities of local civil society through the adoption of innovative capacity-building measures.

UN Women has also introduced mentorship programmes for young girls, which aim to build capacities of and develop linkages between young emerging women leaders and prominent women leaders within the public and private sectors. UN Women has also supported young leaders', particularly young women's, access to regional and global forums like the Beijing+20 review conferences, Association of South East Asian Nations' (ASEAN's) Youth Forum, the post-2015 meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Latin American Countries' Regional Youth Forum, and the UN ECOSOC Global Youth Forum.

Economic Empowerment of Young Women

UN Women has initiated **leadership development programmes** that build the capacity of local young men and young women. The programmes address key knowledge gaps observed in Member States, mobilize local youth to advocate for policy reforms, and seek alternative solutions for economic development of local youth, particularly young women. For example, in Eastern and Southern Africa, UN Women introduced the Young Innovators Award to support local youth in developing gender-sensitive agricultural technologies.

UN Women is also supporting local civil society in undertaking **advocacy campaigns** aimed at increasing

access of local youth to quality and gender-sensitive public education and health facilities. In Kyrgyzstan, UN Women signed an MOU with local school authorities following which peer-to-peer education programmes on youth empowerment and rights of young women and men were started in 50 public schools resulting in the mobilization and capacity-building of 300 peer educators.

UN Women has been actively providing **technical advice** that addresses capacity gaps in education service delivery institutions. In Albania, UN Women provided training to the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth on gender-responsive budgeting that resulted in the development of gender-specific objectives for the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth as well as employment qualification and vocational education.

Vocational training has been provided to young out-of-school women in order to help them access decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities such as the provision of computer skills to young women in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in South Sudan, promoting home-based food production for women and girls to improve food security in Pakistan, and the enrollment of at-risk girls from the Nat community, who are vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation, in schools and a computer training programme in India.

Additionally, UN Women is continuously providing **technical advice to national and sub-national governments** of Member States for introducing policy reforms, compliance to international standards and conventions dealing with women's rights, and developing gender-inclusive curricula for public schools. In the Asia-Pacific region, UN Women provided technical support for the development of regional curricula and a teacher's guidance toolkit on how to address and prevent School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV). In Antigua and Barbuda, UN Women trained school guidance officers in programmes related to

violence prevention, empowerment and resilience building for girls and boys of secondary schools.

Ending Violence against Women and Girls

Ending Violence against Women and Girls (EVAWG) remains the primary mandate of UN Women. This entity has been building capacities, and mobilizing local citizenry, particularly young women and young men, to become agents of change in the global movement against violence against women and girls. Youth engagement for EVAWG has been part of various UN Women's signature campaigns including HeForShe, UNiTe, and the Safe Cities initiative. In Eastern and Southern Africa, UN Women is working with university students to raise awareness about VAWG including the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and social media as advocacy tools. Similar initiatives are also being undertaken in other regions. In Albania, the engagement of men and youth for EVAWG through the UNiTe and HeForShe social media campaigns, resulted in official recognition of men and youth as active partners of EVAWG by the Government of Albania. Subsequently, the Government of Albania approved the 'National Plan for Involvement of Men

and Boys as Partners with Women and Girls for Gender Equality and the Prevention of Gender-based and Domestic Violence'.

Young Women and Peace and Security

UN Women continues to work with governments, providing technical support for awareness and advocacy initiatives for the protection and promotion of the rights of young women and ensuring gender equality in post-conflict situations.

In Nigeria, UN Women provided support to the national government to pursue retrieval of girls abducted by Boko Haram. UN Women also initiated a social media campaign in collaboration with African youth to create awareness regarding the situation of the kidnapped Nigerian girls and advocate for their release.

In Jordan, UN Women established youth district councils in two districts, comprising 81 per cent female members. These district councils serve as oversight bodies to hold the government accountable. The youth councils play an instrumental role in generating seed money and voluntary support for refugees and Jordanians living in or near refugee camps.



4. YOUTH AND GENDER EQUALITY: YOUNG WOMEN AS RIGHTS HOLDERS

UN Women acknowledges that young women and girls are rights holders. These rights and commitments are enshrined in global treaties, most notably CEDAW; in policy commitments such as the Programme of Action, agreed upon by 179 countries at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and the resulting Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and more recently, the outcome of the

2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20); in relevant outcomes of the GA, including the Millennium Declaration, which led to the creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); in the resolutions of the Security Council and ECOSOC; and in the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), including, most recently, on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls⁶.



6 Text extracted from UN Women and the Youth Agenda: A Desk Review

5. OPPORTUNITY AND SCOPE FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN IN SDGS

With the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their 169 targets, the world has a new roadmap and a clear timeline for achieving sustainable development and gender equality.

UN Women has a central role in the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and is also in a unique position to mainstream gender perspectives into the wider youth discourse, policies, and programmes and to bring the youth perspective to its ongoing gender mainstreaming work across the UN system and beyond.

Sustainable Development Goals and Targets Aimed at Gender Equality and Empowering Young Women

As advocated⁷ for by the UN Women, gender equality has been defined as a stand-alone SDG as Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender equality has been affirmed as a precondition for sustainable development and all countries have been urged to prioritize gender equality and to ensure that the entire agenda for sustainable development delivers for all women and girls⁸.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls⁹

5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.

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

5.7a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

5.7b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

5.7c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

In addition to SDG 5, gender-sensitive targets in 11 other SDGs constitute a Gender Equality Compact. These

7 [http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015/UN Women-position](http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015/UN%20Women-position)

8 <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/integration/UNWomen.pdf>

9 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015/why-goal-5-matters>

goals and targets provide a distinctive opportunity to transform the lives of young women and achieve gender equality by 2030.

These goals and targets are relevant to many young women and girls, and the youth can and must play a fundamental role in their implementation and monitoring from a youth and gender perspective.

Leaving No Girl or Young Woman Behind

To ensure that the promise to “leave no one behind” is realized, the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda must address the needs of all young woman and girls, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, including, but not limited to: sexual and gender diversity, disability, HIV/AIDS status, rural location, ethnic minority status, class and income, and living in conflict and post-conflict settings. When considering the opportunities and scope for achieving gender equality and sustainable development, the poorest and most vulnerable groups of young women and girls must be prioritized.

Financing for Development

At the recent Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa in 2015, countries agreed on the need for comprehensive financing for development and the need to overhaul global finance practices and generate investments for tackling a range of economic, social and environmental challenges. For decades, there has been chronic underfunding of gender equality and women’s empowerment, which has slowed progress globally¹⁰. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda underlines the urgent need to integrate women’s empowerment and gender issues into financial policy-making and provides a strong foundation to hold stakeholders accountable¹¹.

The Road Map for the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

UN Women has set out ten vectors of action, which aim to create the enabling environment for the implementation and acceleration of the Gender Equality Compact. The “10 I’s”¹² are a clarion call to all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, business communities, the media, academia, men and boys, and youth. They include:

Inspiration from the intergovernmental normative frameworks and human rights conventions, to achieve sustainable development, human rights, peace and security, and humanitarian response and related strategies at all levels.

Implementation: localization through adoption and reform of laws, policies and measures including special measures and actions, the removal of discriminatory laws and policies, and ensuring their full, effective and accelerated implementation.

Indivisibility of the SDGs and targets—horizontal and vertical. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all SDGs must deliver for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Indivisibility of the SDGs and targets—horizontal and vertical.

Integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment across all SDGs and the entire 2030 Agenda, systematic mainstreaming in the implementation of its three dimensions, economic, social and environmental, an all-of-government approach including in development assistance activities and initiatives.

Inclusion of all key stakeholders, particularly civil society, women’s movements, youth, men and boys, faith-based organizations and the private sector for movement building, transforming social norms and addressing the needs of all women and girls, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization.

10 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/financing-for-gender-equality>

11 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/7/financing-for-development-outcome-bolsters-gender-equality>

12 UN Women 2016 Driving the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Institutions: creating, empowering, strengthening and resourcing gender equality and women's empowerment institutions at global, regional, national and local levels, and ensuring that all key institutions— political, economic, judicial, social, cultural, public services, etc.— work in a gender-responsive manner.

Investment: significantly increased and enhanced financial investment and resource mobilization from all sources, including Official Development Assistance (ODA), to close gender equality gaps at all levels.

Information: generating comprehensive gender equality and women's empowerment related value chain of data, statistics, indicators, knowledge hubs, monitoring systems, frameworks, and capacities in SDG implementation, follow-up and review at all levels to assess progress and gaps, and guide policies and actions.

Innovation: driving political, economic and social innovation that is gender equality through deployment of science, technology and innovation, modalities and means of implementation, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and media, including social media, innovative partnerships and advocacy platforms is a priority.

Impact: these commitments must lead to actual change in the enabling environment and make systemic and substantive impact on the situation of all women and girls, especially those most marginalized, and must be the benchmark for accountability. At the same time, for this to happen movement building with the mass mobilization of people for changing social and cultural norms through advocacy and programmes for engagement of men and boys, youth and faith-based organizations, media and entertainment leaders is a must.



6. VOICES OF YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN IN GENDER EQUALITY

1. Youth CSW Forum 2016

The first-ever Youth CSW Forum¹³ convened more than 300 young leaders to share their challenges and successes in working towards gender equality in their local communities and amplify the concerns of youth in the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Youth CSW Forum made the call for the gender-just and youth-accountable implementation of the 2030 Agenda, stressing that gender equality must be inclusive of all identities and experiences and that youth must be recognized as the leaders of today and supported to meaningfully contribute to the global development agenda.

The Youth Declaration¹⁴ – the outcome document of the Youth CSW Forum – advocated for resources, political will, and concrete support to young women and girls in achieving gender equality and sustainable development, for young women and girls to have skills and opportunities to exercise their leadership, for action to end all forms of violence against young women and girls and continued support for survivors of violence, and for all young men and boys to become partners in achieving gender equality.

Key recommendations from the Youth Declaration included:

Gender-Just Implementation of the SDGs

Take action for gender equality and the human rights of all young women and girls as an integral part of achieving sustainable development and the SDGs.

Youth Right to Participation in Leadership and Decision-Making

Fulfill the right to full and equal participation of young men and young women, particularly young women and adolescent girls, in leadership and decision-making at all levels and in all spaces by implementing

gender-just and youth accountable policy, laws, national action plans, programmes and budgets.

Gender Equality and Climate Change

Enhance access to climate change education and information for young women and girls, meaningful participation for young men and women in climate change decision-making processes, and take action to ensure that young women and girls are able to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and HIV and AIDS

Respect and protect Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of all youth, including the right to decide freely on matters related to their bodies and sexuality, the right to comprehensive, evidence-based sexuality education and confidential, high-quality, youth-friendly health services, including HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support, and for discriminatory laws and legal barriers to services and resources to be repealed.

Ending Gender-Based and Sexual Violence, Which Particularly Impacts Young Women and Girls

End gender-based and sexual violence in all its forms, which requires support and resources for youth-led organizations and solutions for prevention, initiatives that tackle the root causes of violence and engage with all youth, and health services and justice systems that support youth affected by gender and sexual-based violence.

Young Women and Girls, Peace and Security

Recognize and support the agency, actions, and leadership of young female through full and equal participation in leadership, decision-making, and negotiations.

¹³ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/3/youth-forum-at-csw60>

¹⁴ <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news/stories/2016/youthcsw-2016-declaration.pdf?v=1&d=20160321T155235>

Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship of All Young Women

Ensure stable, safe, secure, non-discriminatory employment, wages, and career development for all young women, enable young women to participate fully in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields and entrepreneurship, and create space for young women's leadership in all employment opportunities, levels of the workforce, and different sectors.

Youth Migration amidst Global Inequality and Humanitarian Crisis

Address the root causes of migration and to support young migrants during their journeys and once they settle in their new communities, as well as youth-led civil society organizations.

Social and Traditional Media and Technological Solutions for Achieving the Human Rights of All Young Women and Girls

Facilitate access to social media and technology in youth movements, recognizing that it can amplify the voices and advocacy of youth, and implement strong, concrete policies and laws that protect digital spaces from cyber-bullying, harassment, threats, and violence, especially for young women and girls.

Youth, Faith, Feminism, and Gender Equality

Support young women of faith and youth-led faith organizations to promote faith principles that affirm, promote, and protect the human rights of young women, girls, and youth of all genders.

Young Women and Girls in Sport

Support resource programmes and policies that ensure that youth of all genders have equal opportunity to participate fully in any and all types of sports, events, and competitions.

Engaging Young Men and Boys in Solidarity Work for Gender Equality and the Human Rights of Young Women and Girls

Recognize the role and responsibility of young men and boys to engage in solidarity work for gender equality and educate young men and boys at an early age to disrupt rigid gender roles and stereotypes, to foster an understanding of consent, healthy relationships, and ending gender-based and sexual violence, and to promote positive ideas about masculinity and femininity.

Youth-led Civil Society for Gender Equality and the Human Rights of All Young Women and Girls

Create a safe and enabling environment and support and ensure robust resources for gender-just youth-led organizations and networks, young women's and girls' human rights groups, and young gender equality advocates at the local, national, regional and global level.

2. ECOSOC Youth Forum 2015¹⁵

Several calls were made for governments to address gender equality and youth, including a call to fully implement the existing commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action and ensure a gender-sensitive implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) and to create or encourage the establishment of mechanisms at national and regional levels for youth and civil society organizations to hold leaders accountable for the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

3. The World Conference on Youth, Sri Lanka, 2014: Colombo Declaration on Youth 2014

The World Conference on Youth, Sri Lanka, 2014,¹⁶ of which half of the participants were age 18-29, discussed "Mainstreaming Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda," and gender equality was a topic of deliberation.

¹⁵ <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news/stories/key%20messages%20from%20youth%20on%20gender%20equality%20final.pdf>

¹⁶ http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/2014_Colombo_Declaration_On_Youth_With_Annex_En.pdf

4. Malala Day, Youth Resolution 2013

The Malala Day, Youth Resolution¹⁷ was written by the Global Education First Initiative Youth Advocacy Group, a multinational group of 15 young people, after consultation with their peers in over 45 different countries. In response to the “educational emergency,” the Youth Advocacy Group asks governments to respond, and it articulates the youth demand to address the special situations of girls and other marginalized groups with respect to gender equality in education. It emphasizes the equal rights to education of minority populations like pregnant girls and members of the LGBTQ community.

5. African Youth Declaration on Post-2015 Development Agenda 2012

The African Youth Conference on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, held in 2012,¹⁸ led to the development of the African Youth Declaration. The declaration highlighted the need to adopt an upstream approach towards policy formulation, dealing with poverty eradication and development of the most marginalized groups including gender and youth minorities.

6. Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration 2012

The Bali Global Youth Forum was held in 2012.¹⁹ The Forum reviewed the Programme of Action of the ICPD beyond 2014, and the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda. A set of recommended actions were devised, which were laid out in the Bali Youth Declaration. The need to empower young women and adolescents was recommended as a priority area.

7. International Labor Organization (ILO) Youth Employment Forum 2012

The Youth Employment Forum organized by ILO in 2012²⁰ set forth key guiding principles that urged the governments to improve the range and types of apprenticeships and promote young women entrepreneurs by introducing new skills, upgrading existing skills development programmes, and strengthening community involvement, especially to open more occupation for young women.

8. CrowdOutAIDS 2012

CrowdOutAIDS is the UNAIDS Secretariat’s youth-led policy project. It uses social media tools and crowdsourcing technology to enable young people from around the world to develop a set of recommendations for the UNAIDS Secretariat to work more effectively with young people in the AIDS response.

17 https://issuu.com/globaleducationfirst/docs/youth_resolution_print

18 <http://www.beyond2015.org/sites/default/files/African%20Youth%20Declaration%20on%20Post-2015%20Agenda.pdf>

19 <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Bali%20Declaration%20English.pdf>

20 <http://www.ilo.org/global/meetings-and-events/events/youth-employment-forum/lang--en/index.htm>

7. EMPOWERED YOUTH AS PARTNERS IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy seeks to empower both young women and young men to become influential partners in gender equality and women's empowerment.

The UN Women Youth and Gender Equality Strategy is built on UN Women's existing Strategic Plan, which seeks to empower both young women and young men to become drivers of gender equality by 2030. The LEAPs Framework, articulated below, embodies UN Women's strategy on empowering young women and working with young men towards gender equality. The LEAPs Framework includes key themes for the empowerment of men and women to achieve gender equality.

The three thematic pillars for UN Women's strategy include: **Leadership** of young women in all spheres strengthened, **Economic** empowerment and skills development of young women, **Action** on ending violence against young women and girls.

The strategy also makes a case for crosscutting approaches that are fundamental to achieving results for and with young women. These include 3Ps: Strengthening **Participation**, voice and partnerships with young women and their organizations; **Partnerships** with young men as partners of gender equality; and strengthening intergenerational **Partnerships** throughout the life-cycle to achieve a gender transformative society.

UN Women aims to explore multiple avenues for youth participation including capacity development, awareness building, and advocacy to nurture positive social and cultural norms, practices, and attitudes that promote gender equality for young women and adolescent girls.

UN Women will take a multi-pronged approach to promoting youth participation. This includes data & knowledge generation, actively encouraging youth-centric norms, policies, and standards, strengthening

intergovernmental mechanisms and partnerships, strengthening advocacy, and enhancing communication through technology and expertise.

To achieve its stated goals, UN Women's implementation of the Youth and Gender Equality Strategy will work to realize:

- Increased representation of youth voices in international, national and local development programming and policy reforms aimed at enhancing adolescent girls and young women leadership and political participation;
- Equal economic opportunities are available to, and barriers to economic participation are removed for young women to create entrepreneurial and employment prospects for young women;
- Youth are mobilized as influential advocates for driving the social and policy reform agenda to end violence against women and girls.
- Active engagement of boys and young men in partnership with adolescent girls and young women for gender equality
- Increased collaboration between the youth movement and the women's movement to ensure strengthened intergenerational partnerships for gender equality

The aim is to engage with young people as drivers of gender equality by 2030. Youth voices must be reflected in policy reform to enhance women's leadership in political participation and increase opportunities available to all women. Youth must be supported as influential advocates towards policy reform and the agenda to end violence against girls thereby making young women and young men important levers in achieving gender equality and creating social transformation by the year 2030.

GENDER EQUALITY



LEAPs



@unwomen4youth | #LEAPsinGenderEquality



8. KEY LEVERS FOR THE YOUTH AND GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

This section elaborates the key levers that are critical for operationalizing and implementing UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy. It is important to recognize that this will have to be contextualized to the realities across different regions and countries.

Data and Knowledge Generation on Youth and Gender Equality

UN Women will work to generate gender and age disaggregated data. Furthermore, UN Women will engage with young women to generate cutting-edge knowledge products on achieving gender equality and promoting women's rights. The entity will also curate knowledge on young men-led initiatives promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women will also produce youth-friendly knowledge products to promote the participation and engagement of youth in achieving gender equality.

Strengthening Norms, Policies, and Standards

UN Women will work on strengthening youth norms, policies, and standards. Furthermore, UN Women will work toward engendering existing youth policies and their implementation. At the same time, UN Women will work with existing gender norms and policies to bring attention to young women and empower youth as partners in gender equality.

Leveraging Intergovernmental Processes

UN Women will continue to work with Member States and leverage UN mechanisms to strengthen youth participation in gender equality and women's empowerment programmes and processes. For example, hosting the Youth Forum at the Commission on the Status of Women allowed for youth voices to be heard and called for increased accountability to the concerns

of youth. In parallel, UN Women will actively advocate for girls, adolescent girls, and young women's empowerment and human rights at all levels.

Enhance Capacity Development of Youth in Gender Equality

UN Women will partner with universities and training centres to introduce courses on youth participation and gender equality. The entity will lobby to introduce gender-sensitization courses for schools and universities. It will prioritize capacity building of youth-led organizations and networks, focusing specially on capacity building for the most marginalized young women. Additionally, UN Women will work with governments and other institutions to develop and implement programmes for and with young people on gender equality, thereby promoting intergenerational dialogue and partnerships.

Strengthen Advocacy with Youth on Gender Equality

Involving youth in advocacy²¹ and their meaningful participation is central to the human rights based approach to advocacy. It is part of the process of empowering young women and young men as rights holders to demand their rights by creating an environment where they can both voice their concerns, ideas, and recommendations and be heard by decision makers and duty-bearers. It increases dignity, fairness, equity and equality, allowing youth the opportunity to express themselves and participate as citizens in society. UN Women will promote bottom-up and young women-centred advocacy processes, which will highlight the importance of investing in young women's leadership. UN Women will build the capacity of young women as advocates and young men as partners of gender equality. UN Women will continue to work with its evolving pool of goodwill ambassadors

²¹ See http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf

to encourage all young people to take action on gender equality and women's empowerment. The entity will work towards creating a global, national and local community of youth champions in achieving gender equality.

Promote Youth Partnership and Youth-led Campaigns to achieve Gender Equality

UN Women will continue to actively engage young people in its existing campaigns, including UNiTE, HeforShe and Planet 50-50. It will also develop the capacity of young people to campaign online and offline for gender equality.

Promote Communication (Online and Offline) with Young People on Gender Equality

UN Women will leverage traditional and new media and technology, online and offline, to spread awareness and trigger widespread action on gender equality. It will enhance the use of technology to reach youth populations, including the use of unique new tools that have a strong global impact. UN Women will combine traditional and progressive technologies to bring to the forefront of decision-making the voices of the most marginalized young women.

Engaging with Young Women and Young Men through Sports to Achieve Gender Equality

UN Women will use inclusive sports as a means to engage with young women and young men about gender equality. Sports can be a powerful tool to allow young women and men to interact in a non-formal environment and as equals on the playing field. UN Women will also partner with sports teams, noteworthy players, and agencies to further the message of gender equality and women's empowerment and increase youth engagement in gender equality.

Young Women and Men, Technology in achieving gender equality

UN Women will apply new and inclusive technologies that can help organize widespread action on gender equality amongst young women and men. Technology can also be used to increase education, innovation and awareness about gender equality with youth populations in even remote regions with inclusive and participatory strategies to overcome the digital divide. Technology can also enhance the voices and action of young women and men in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.



9. COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

UN Women will take a multi-stakeholder approach to forge and leverage partnerships to promote youth participation in the gender equality agenda. We envision a multilateral approach to leveraging partnerships and promoting youth participation in achieving gender equality: UN Inter-Agency Networks, Civil Society Organizations, Youth-led Organizations and Networks, Youth-Focused Organizations, Private Sector, Foundations, Media and Academia.

Member States: UN Women will actively engage with Member States, specifically Ministries of Youth, Gender and Children, and other relevant ministries, bringing them all together to ensure that the inclusion of gender-specific mandates across negotiated outcomes and agreements also include adolescent girls and young women.

UN Inter-Agency: UN Women will continue to actively engage with the UN Inter-agency Network on Youth Development²² (IANYD), which comprises over 40 UN entities working together to advance youth development. Under this umbrella, UN Women co-chairs the UN IANYD's Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality and leverages the collective power youth-led civil society organizations for the amplification of the young women's agenda. The working group focused on the pillars of the LEAPs Framework, including Young Women's Leadership, Young Women's Economic Empowerment and Skills Development, and Partnerships with Young Men in Gender Equality.

Additionally, UN Women will continue to work with the Secretary-General's Envoy²³ on Youth, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth Employment, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth Refugees and Sports²⁴. To a higher level mechanism such as SG's Special Representative of the Secretary General on Youth: reporting to the GA, SC and HRC.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): UN Women will continue to work with women's organizations, CSOs and people's movements to actively work with young people to be key partners in promoting gender equality.

Youth-led Organizations and Networks: UN Women will actively engage with youth-led organizations and networks, both online and offline, to prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment. Special efforts will be made to collaborate with young women-led organizations and networks.

Youth-focused Organizations: UN Women will develop new partnerships with youth-focused organizations at national, regional, and global levels. It will make special efforts to encourage organizations to enhance their programmes targeting the youth population's active engagement in gender equality.

Private Sector: UN Women will work to engender the private sector's corporate social responsibility initiatives on youth. UN Women will actively work to promote the women's empowerment principles that are also applicable to the young women cohort.

Foundations: UN Women will work to engender the work of foundations that are working on youth issues and partner with those that have already prioritized girls and young women. UN Women may also build a coalition of such foundations to expand investments and finance on youth and gender equality.

Media: UN Women will continue to work with traditional media to take action to eliminate stereotypes and objectification of adolescent girls and young women and promote examples of youth-led action on gender equality. UN Women may also undertake a media campaign that champions young women's leadership and social transformation alongside young men's actions to realize gender equality. UN Women will also actively engage with youth, youth-led organizations and movements through social media to amplify advocacy efforts and support online and offline community building and action to achieve gender equality.

Academia: UN Women will work with women's and gender studies centres to increase academic discourse on the importance of youth involvement in realizing gender equality. UN Women may collaborate with academics to conduct and publish research

22 See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/inter-agency-network-on-youth-development.html>

23 See <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/>

24 See <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sga1459.doc.htm>

on the long-term impact on youth who are working in areas of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Strengthening Youth Perspectives in UN Women's Programmes: UN Women will work to strengthen youth perspectives in existing programmes through its programming in country and regional offices. It will enhance specific youth and gender equality programmes in countries experiencing a youth upsurge, such as in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia including in the context of our Key Flagship Programming Initiatives.

Furthermore, UN Women will particularly look at important issues affecting and engaging young people in conflict and post-conflict and humanitarian settings such as gender-based violence, unemployment, denial of their rights and in such new and emerging issues such as preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism.

1. UN Women's Capacity

UN Women will need to develop capacity at national, regional, and global levels in order to implement the youth and gender equality strategy. Ideally, UN Women will secure technical and human resources in the early stages of strategy rollout, which will allow effective strategy implementation.

UN Women must also be able to secure technical expertise in selected countries, regional offices and headquarters. In the interim period, UN Women may also explore the possibility of working through its management to increase staff time devoted to rolling out of the youth and gender equality strategy. Finally, UN Women will also need to develop a capacity-building programme, both online and offline, on programming with youth on gender equality.

Another critical implication for UN Women is to enhance participation of young women and young men in gender equality. UN Women will invest in

developing youth partnership platforms on gender equality at national, regional, and global levels. This will provide an opportunity for young people to work closely and engage in UN Women's efforts to attain gender equality and promote women's empowerment.

2. Resource Mobilization

This youth strategy requires innovative resource mobilization. UN Women will work with Member States that have clearly prioritized working with the youth as part of their ODA commitments. UN Women will work with emerging donor countries, especially the BRICS, and advocate for stronger investment on youth and gender equality.

UN Women will actively engage with private sector foundations and high-net worth individuals that have prioritized working with adolescent girls, young women and youth as part of their portfolios. UN Women will also explore the possibilities of public giving campaigns that involve youth as donors, philanthropists and champions of gender equality.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

UN Women will work on creating a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Youth Strategy that specifically centres the participation of youth, youth-led, and youth-focused organization. Using online and offline approaches, UN Women will assess the changes in both the conditions and positions of young women in society through active partnerships with youth, youth-led, and youth-focused organizations. UN Women will develop youth-friendly tools for monitoring and evaluating progress towards SDG 5, and achieving gender equality by 2030, that are accessible for young men and young women people around the world.

ANNEX I: DEFINING “YOUTH”²⁵

The UNDP Youth Strategy proposes to focus principally on young women and men ages 15–24 but extend that the age bracket to include individuals from ages 25–30 and potentially through age 35, depending on particular sociocultural circumstances.

For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. Several UN entities, instruments, and regional organizations have differing definitions of youth, which the United Nations Secretariat recognizes.

The following table summarizes these differences:

TABLE 1.

Entity/Instrument/ Organization	Age
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth: 15–24
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth: 15–32
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescent: 10–19 Young people: 10–24 Youth: 15–24
UNICEF/The Convention on Rights of the Child	Child under 18
The African Youth Charter	Youth: 15–35

In many countries across the world the transition to adulthood and autonomy extends past age 24, and even at age 30, a person still needs opportunity for capacity development, either because of competitive employment environments, or to succeed in a leadership position or a political career. Some are of the opinion that the age limit of youth should be reduced, taking into account societal realities around the world (e.g. a young drug user or young mother at the age of 13 should be part of youth programmes to reintegrate them in better and safer environments).

But there are other opinions that the youth age group should not start earlier than 18, which is the voting age in most countries.

Many countries in the world have defined youth ages differently in their national youth policy. The African Youth Charter defines youth up to age 35. In the Pacific, some countries consider youth up to age 40. The USAID Youth in Development Policy also presents a strong case for not limiting the definition at age 25.

The diversity in definitions demonstrates the fluidity of what constitutes “youth.” This fluidity is influenced in large part by the organizations’ and nations’ political priorities, which range from demographic to physiological to sociological rationales. While most countries and institutions adopt an age-based definition, others approach youth as a sociological construct: Youth is a period of transition to adulthood, and that does not always coincide with physiological transitions. The sociological definition accounts for differences in young people’s lived experiences. However, the ways these experiences affect young people are colored by complex social realities and young people’s abilities to process them. Individuals’ conceptions of class, ethnicity or race, and gender shape their identities, but their experiences are also influenced by other factors like geography, physical and social mobility, disability, education, and technology. These combine in infinite ways to produce unique lived experiences.

The key issue in the age-based discussion is the division of “young people” and “young adults”. Although there is crossover, young people tend to be those who are heavily overseen and shaped by policymakers and elders. However, young adults live more independently, perhaps closer to or already participating in the labor market. The policy issue here is supporting “life management”: capacity, resilience in relation to family formation, housing, and employment. The so-called “fault line” is positioned differently in different countries and contexts—hence the discrepancies in age. There is also the recurrent policy question as to

²⁵ UNDP Youth Strategy 2014–2017, United Nations Development Program, Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future.



whether the challenge is to build foundations—for participation, education, healthy lifestyles—or to address challenges like the democratic deficit, civil society capacity building, youth unemployment, drug misuse, or mental health problems.

When designing its Youth Strategy, UNDP held extensive discussions about the age range. Most opinions share the view that UNDP should not just conform to the UN General Assembly definition and define youth by age—rather, it should go beyond that, toward a functional definition that accounts for youth and society's perceptions and expectations of youth. The challenge is to adopt a definition broad enough and flexible enough to withstand different national contexts and the nature of the problems addressed.

While the definition used by the United Nations is important for statistical purposes, the UNDP needs to adapt its programming to national context realities. For example, it is important that country offices in Africa work within the age range adopted by the African Youth Charter.

UNDP seeks to realize young people's potential by supporting education, capacity development, inclusive participation, and civic engagement. The Youth Strategy therefore adopts a flexible age range, whereby UNDP proposes to focus principally on young women and men ages 15–24; but it will extend that youth group to include young people ages 25 to 30 and older, based on contextual realities and national youth policy directives.

ANNEX II: UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

WIDE ACTION PLAN ON YOUTH²⁶

In 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon made working with and for young people a priority of his Five-year Action Agenda for his second term in office.

In doing so, the Secretary-General called for the development of a United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP) to help bolster the work of UN entities on youth development issues.

The main aim of the Action Plan is to enhance the coherence and synergy of United Nations' system-wide activities in key areas related to youth development. It builds on the specific mandates, expertise and capacities of individual United Nations entities, pooling the strengths of the whole United Nations system and promoting joint programmatic work.

Overall Goals

Employment and Entrepreneurship: Ensure greater opportunities for youth to secure decent work and income over the life cycle, contributing to a virtuous circle of poverty reduction, sustainable development and social inclusion.

Protection of rights and civic engagement: Ensure the inherent rights of youth are recognized and upheld to enable young people's engagement in all aspects of their development.

Political Inclusion: Ensure the progressive, substantive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes at local, national, regional and international levels.

Education, including comprehensive sexuality education: Ensure that young people, on an inclusive, equitable and universal basis, are actively learning in formal or non-formal education systems, and are receiving quality education on sexual and reproductive health.

Health: Ensure that young people, on an inclusive, equitable and universal basis, enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

*For the detailed version of the youth strategy, please contact youth@unwomen.org

²⁶ For more information, please see: http://unyouthswap.org/about_youth_swap

ANNEX III: CEDAW IN BRIEF

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW, is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas and promotes women's equal rights. **CEDAW is often described as the international bill of rights for women.**

Article 1 Definition of Discrimination against Women and Girls: Discrimination against women and girls means different treatment from men and boys that prevents them from enjoying their human rights. It includes both direct and indirect discrimination.	Article 11 Employment: Countries must eliminate discrimination against women in employment, including ensuring equal opportunities to choose one's profession and receive equal pay for work of equal value.
Article 2 Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination: Countries are obligated to take action to end discrimination against women and girls in all its forms, by establishing laws and policies to protect women and girls from discrimination and including the principle of equality in constitutions and other national laws.	Article 12 Health Care and Family Planning: Countries must guarantee equal access to health care and ensure women and girls are not discriminated against in health care and have access to services for family planning and reproductive health.
Article 3 Appropriate Measures: Countries must take all appropriate measures to guarantee that women and girls can enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of society.	Article 13 Economic and Social Life: Countries must eliminate discrimination against women and girls in economic and social life.
Article 4 Temporary Special Measures: Countries should adopt temporary special measures to accelerate progress towards gender equality and end discrimination against women and girls.	Article 14 Rural Women and Girls: Countries must take account of the specific problems and important role that rural women and girls play in the survival of their families.
Article 5 Gender Stereotypes: Countries must work to change harmful gender stereotypes about women and girls and men and boys that perpetuate discrimination and limit opportunities for women and girls to achieve their full potential.	Article 15 Equality before the Law: Countries must guarantee women and girls equality with men and boys before the law, including equal access to legal counsel, services, and resources.
Article 6 Trafficking and Exploitation of Prostitution: Countries must end the exploitation of prostitution and trafficking in women and girls.	Article 16 Marriage and Family Life: Countries must eliminate discrimination against women in marriage and family relations. Countries must ensure that women have equal rights as men in their choice of whom to marry and whether to marry, and any matters relating to the birth, adoption, and raising of children. The marriage of a child has no legal effect and countries should take steps to set a minimum age for marriage.
Article 7 Political and Public Life: Countries must eliminate discrimination against women and girls in political and public life.	Articles 17 to 22 These articles detail how the CEDAW Committee works, including its role in monitoring the implementation of CEDAW in countries that have ratified CEDAW.
Article 8 Participation at International Level: Countries must ensure that women and girls have equal rights to represent their country at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.	Articles 23 to 30 These articles deal with the administration of CEDAW.
Article 9 Nationality: Countries must guarantee that women have equal rights with men to acquire, retain or change their nationality, and the nationality of their children. Countries must allow women to pass their nationality to their foreign spouses on an equal basis with men.	Optional Protocol The Optional Protocol introduces additional mechanisms for the implementation of CEDAW, including an inquiry procedure for the CEDAW Committee to address systematic violations and a way for women and girls to submit complaints directly to the CEDAW Committee if they consider their human rights protected by CEDAW are violated.
Article 10 Education: Countries must end discrimination against women and girls and ensure equal rights in education.	

To access the full version, click here <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2016/cedaw-for-youth-brief.pdf?vs=1243>



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