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UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

STATE OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN 2017-2018

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"Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."¹

Introduction

The pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women continues to be an effort that requires international attention and progress. The international human rights standards provide an understanding of gender equality – substantive equality for women – that goes beyond formal equality to emphasize women's enjoyment of their rights in practice. Equality should be understood in relation not only to opportunities but also to outcomes. Unequal outcomes may result from indirect as well as direct discrimination.² "The international human rights system clarifies the obligations of States to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. States, therefore, have a proactive role as arbiters of social and economic rights."³

Scale of the Problem

It is the position of UN Women to end violence against women, expand women's choices and capabilities, and give women a voice within households, and in public and private decision-making spheres. Since 2012, much movement has been made towards a more equal playing field; however, there is more that needs to be done. While women frequently enjoy more rights and greater economic autonomy today, demographic trends that include declining marriage rates, a lessening of the link between marriage and parenthood, and longer life spans, particularly for women, create challenging situations for a world population that becomes increasingly female and economically vulnerable as it ages. "Globally, the sex ratio is 95 men per 100 women in the 60 to 64 age group, but declines to 70 per 100 in the 80 to 84 age group, and to 45 per 100 in the 90 to 94 age group."⁴ Furthermore, the inequalities and inequities that women confront

¹ United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals," 2015.

² UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 26

³ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 27

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics," ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/20, 2015, p. 7.

frequently compound when issues of national origin or citizenship, race, religion, socioeconomic status, marital status, status of disability, and orientation are considered. Areas of importance include, but are not limited to, the following: government support that enforces equality for women; economic empowerment for women; and eliminating violence against women.

Women in Politics

Women and girls need the support of their respective local and national governments to ensure equality. Women have continuously expanded their political rights so that, by 2016, 43 countries have reached or exceeded the 30 percent critical mass mark for women in parliament⁵ and 17 women serving as elected Heads of State or Government as of December 2017. While elected officials garner the most attention, women are frequently underrepresented amongst senior civil servants and in other key governmental posts, "including chief statisticians, governors and board members of central banks, ambassadors and permanent representatives to the United Nations."⁶ Alongside women's greater political influence, there has been a growing recognition of women's rights, not only political and civil, but also economic, social and cultural.⁷ "Enabling governance systems are essential for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment."⁸ In practice, an important basis for achieving equality is having laws in place that establish that women and men have equal rights. These then become a "central reference point for political and cultural struggles, driving changes in social norms and popular attitudes, as well as policy shifts."⁹

"International human rights treaties—such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)—are legally binding commitments that require States to respect, protect and fulfil women's rights. As such, they encapsulate a substantive understanding of gender equality that can serve as both a vision and an agenda for action for those seeking to advance women's rights in today's challenging context."¹⁰ With the formalities in place, it is important to ensure that the results of these laws actually eliminate disadvantages to women. The achievement of substantive equality requires coordinated public action in three

⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics," ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/20, 2015, p. 121.

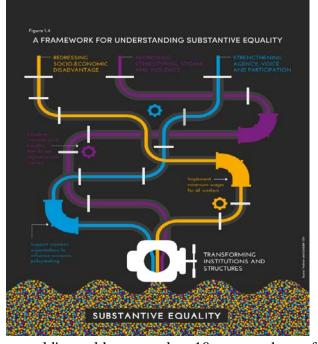
⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics," ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/20, 2015, p. 129.

⁷ UNWOMEN, 2011-2012 Progress of the World's Women – In Pursuit of Justice, page 8

⁸ United Nations, *Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Strategic Plan 2018-2021, 29-30 August 2017, page 14

⁹ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 3

¹⁰ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 4



interrelated areas: redressing women's socioeconomic disadvantage; addressing stereotyping, stigma and violence; and strengthening women's agency, voice and participation.¹¹

Economic Empowerment of Women

The stark realities that confront not only female entrepreneurs but in reality the entire human community were succinctly summarized by John Hendra, UNWOMEN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the High-Level Panel on Women Entrepreneurship to Reshape the Economy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through Innovation in October 2012 when he asserted that "globally women own only 1 per cent of the

world's wealth, earn only a 10 percent share of global income, and occupy just 14 per cent of leadership positions in the private and public sector. And, while women produce half of the world's food, they own a mere one percent of its land.¹¹² While it is immediately evident that current and prospective female entrepreneurs confront a vast panoply of challenges and obstacles, the full extent of many of these challenges and obstacles is not always easily measured. Frequently economic data is incomplete, nonexistent, or must be significantly supplemented by whatever information is available about the informal economy, particularly relevant data about female employment and entrepreneurship. As an example of the lack of readily available relevant data, the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute's (GEDI) 2015 Female Entrepreneurship Index ranks 77 countries, more than double the number of countries from 2014, just over 40% of UN membership. Improving data collection and analysis about female entrepreneurship is a critical first step towards increasing the number of female entrepreneurs overall as well as improving the overall business and investment climate for women.

"Women's economic empowerment depends on the quantity and quality of paid employment; public services; the amount of unpaid work borne by women; access to productive assets, such as land; eliminating cultural and societal barriers that make it less likely for women

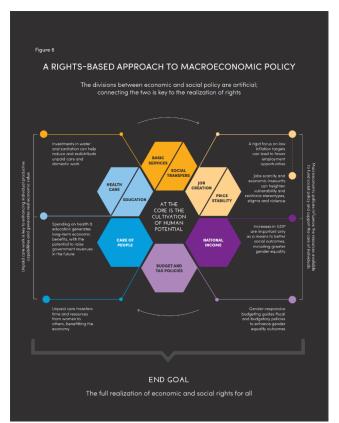
¹² John Hendra, "Opening Remarks at the High-Level Panel on Women Entrepreneurship to Reshape the Economy in MENA through Innovation" October 17, 2012. Found at:

¹¹ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 4

http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/10/women-entrepreneurship-to-reshape-the-economy-in-mena-through-innovation-high-level-panel-during-eu

than men to become entrepreneurs; and core social and labor protections."¹³ Greater economic empowerment for women has been achieved through progressive legislation that has prohibited discriminatory practices, guaranteed equal pay, provided for maternity and paternity leave, and put in place protection against sexual harassment in the workplace Legislation prohibiting discrimination based on sex with respect to inheritance and citizenship, laws that guarantee equality within the family and policies to ensure that women and girls can access services including health and education have also contributed to significant advances in women's standard of living. While examples of countries making immense strides in promoting gender equality abound, in many more, women continue to be deprived of economic resources and access to public services.¹⁴

"Globally three quarters of working age men (15 years old and over) are in the labor force compared to half of working age women. Among those who are employed, women constitute nearly two thirds of 'contributing family workers', who work in family businesses without any direct pay. Everywhere, women continue to be denied equal pay for work of equal value and are less likely than men to receive a pension, which translates into large income inequalities throughout their lives. Globally, on average, women's earnings are 24 per cent less than men's, and even in countries such as Germany—where policies are increasingly supportive of female employment—women on average earn just half as much income as men over their lifetimes. Yet in all regions women work more than men: on average they do almost two and a half times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men, and if paid and unpaid work are combined, women in almost all countries work longer hours than



men each day."¹⁵ In March 2017, Iceland became the first country in the world to introduce legislation that requires companies to prove equal pay - any company found in violation will be subject to a heavy penalty. This piece of legislation helped lead and launch the Equal Pay International Coalition in 2017.

¹³ United Nations, *Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Strategic Plan 2018-2021, 29-30 August 2017, page 15

¹⁴ UNWOMEN, 2011-2012 Progress of the World's Women – In Pursuit of Justice, page 8

¹⁵ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 12-13

The 2017 Commission on the Status of Women's multi-year program for 2017-2019 considered the empowerment of indigenous women as the focus area at its sixty-first session and will consider challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls as the priority theme at its sixty-second session. According to the Commission, "the economic empowerment, inclusion and development of indigenous women, including through the establishment of indigenous-owned businesses, can enable them to improve their social, cultural, civil and political engagement, achieve greater economic independence and build more sustainable and resilient communities, and notes the contribution of indigenous peoples to the broader economy."¹⁶

#MeToo: Sexual Harassment and Assault

Gender-based violence (GBV) continues to plague all human societies. National and local governments, international organizations, including the UN System and regional organizations, law enforcement personnel, health providers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society stakeholders all must be concerned about this endemic violence and committed to ending it. Even in situations that would primarily seem to be concerns about health outcomes, gender-based violence (GBV) and its pernicious effects lead to significantly worse situations and millions of preventable deaths of women and girls. "Injuries are the cause of death with the widest disparities between women and men.... the high levels of female deaths due to injuries, especially in countries in Southern and Eastern Asia, are most likely linked to violence against women and their disadvantaged position in society."¹⁷ In Turkey, 414 women were murdered in 2015, an increase of 41% over the previous year, and changes in Turkish law may only exacerbate this alarming increase.¹⁸

"The best way to stop violence against women and girls is to prevent it from happening in the first place."¹⁹ "Globally, one in three women reports having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives, usually perpetrated by an intimate partner."²⁰ Accurate data can be hard to compare on the subject as not all (are able to) come forward. But it is known that it continues to be a widespread issue. "Over many decades, women's rights activists and researchers have documented how gender inequality and men's power over women create a conducive context for the perpetration of violence against women. As girls and women have entered schools, workplaces, public transport and marketplaces in greater numbers, they are frequently subject to unwelcome scrutiny, harassment and even assault. Violence is also used to punish nonconformity with dominant gender stereotypes, for example in relation to sexual

¹⁶ UNWOMEN, Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work - 2017 Commission on the Status of Women - Agreed Conclusions, page 7-8

¹⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics," ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/20, 2015, p. 33.

¹⁸ Sophia Jones & Nicole Tung, "Women Are Dying in Turkey," *Foreign Affairs*, April 27, 2017.

¹⁹ United Nations, *Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Strategic Plan 2018-2021, 29-30 August 2017, page 16

²⁰ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 52

orientation."²¹ Additionally, violence against women also tends to increase during periods of upheaval and displacement associated with armed conflict and natural disasters, as well as in times of crisis and instability.²²

Countries have not always addressed violence against women when it happened. Women's movements from the 1970s onward has prompted various countries to adopt legislation that criminalizes violence against women. That, alone, is not enough. In many cases, the implementation of these legal provisions is rarely supported by adequate investments in services, in capacity building of service providers, and in the public campaigns needed to effectively prevent violence against women. To properly address these deficits, a significant investment in making homes and public spaces safe for women and girls, and ensuring justice is required in addition to the commitment from policy makers to prevent violence from happening by working towards changing the community attitude that accepts it.²³

Most recently, the #MeToo women's movement - a movement in which people who have been victims of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault have been coming forward, explaining their interactions, and in many cases even identifying their assailant - has been gaining attention and ground, on social media, in Hollywood, and now garnering attention around the world. The movement has been so prominent that TIME magazine named "The Silence Breakers" as Person of the Year 2017 on the cover of the December 18th, 2017 issue which included several women who have publicly come forward in addition to the arm of an unseen woman, in order to symbolize and represent the anonymous women and girls who have come forward in addition to those that have been silenced. A movement about an issue that seemingly sprung up overnight, "it has actually been simmering for years, decades, centuries. Women have had it with bosses and co-workers who not only cross boundaries but don't even seem to know that boundaries exist. They've had it with the fear of retaliation, of being blackballed, of being fired from a job they can't afford to lose. They've had it with the code of going along to get along. They've had it with men who use their power to take what they want from women. These silence breakers have started a revolution of refusal, gathering strength by the day, and in the past two months alone, their collective anger has spurred immediate and shocking results: nearly every day, CEOs have been fired, moguls toppled, icons disgraced. In some cases, criminal charges have been brought."²⁴ Beyond Hollywood, Wall Street, and other prominent figures, women who have

²¹ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 52

²² UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 52

²³ UNWOMEN, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 - Summary - Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, 2015, page 51-52

²⁴ Stephanie Zacharek, Eliana Docterman, Haley Sweetland Edwards, *Person of the Year 2017 – The Silence Breakers* (TIME, 18 December 2017), http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/



"broken their silence span all races, all income classes, all occupations, and virtually all corners of the globe."²⁵

Rights within Marriage

Girls have been subjected to rape, and violence for years; and in many cases were not provided the necessary protector from their attackers. Many have been, and continue to be, forced to marry their rapists to avoid humiliation and public scrutiny and/or to protect their assailant. The "Marry-Your-Victim" law was abolished summer of 2017. "In succession, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon scrap controversial laws that allow rapists to escape punishment if they marry their victims."²⁶ The law encouraged sexual predators to easily evade the law and continue to victimize young girls. "Tunisia's move to eliminate impunity for perpetrators is part of its first national law passed in July to comprehensively tackle violence against women. The long-awaited law recognizes

physical, economic, sexual, political and psychological forms of violence against women and girls. It also seeks to provide protection mechanisms to enable survivors to access necessary services, including legal and psychological assistance."²⁷ In August of 2017 had huge strides for young girls and their rights regarding Marriage. Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean ended child and underage marriage. These countries put into place legislation that protects the child from sexual abuse, revokes many types of legal exceptions, and removes provisions that permit children ages 15-18 to be married with parental consent. India also officially rules that sex with an underage wife is considered rape.

UN System Actions

UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 outlines "the strategic direction, objectives and approaches to support efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030." The Strategic Plan takes into consideration lessons learned in previous years, as well as recommendations from the 20-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform

 ²⁵ Stephanie Zacharek, Eliana Docterman, Haley Sweetland Edwards, *Person of the Year 2017 – The Silence Breakers* (TIME, 18 December 2017), http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/
²⁶ UN Women, *Timeline: Gender Equality, 2017 Year in Review*,

http://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/timeline/yearinreview/2017/en/index.html

²⁷ UN Women, Timeline: Gender Equality, 2017 Year in Review,

http://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/timeline/yearinreview/2017/en/index.html

for Action.²⁸ By January 31, 2018, 188 of 193 UN Member States had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)²⁹, which entered into force in 1981, signaling their commitment to fulfilling the human rights of women and girls and breaking down the barriers to achieving gender equality and justice.³⁰

The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project is a joint initiative of the United Nations Statistics Division and UN Women. Its purpose is to better integrate gender issues into the regular production of official statistics for improved, evidence-based policies. "EDGE aims to accelerate existing efforts to generate internationally comparable gender indicators on health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and asset ownership in three key ways: developing an online interactive platform to disseminate gender-relevant data and metadata on education, employment, and health in line with the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators; developing methodological guidelines on measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective that will be presented to the UN Statistical Commission in 2017; and providing technical support to countries to implement the EDGE methodological guidelines."³¹

Guiding Questions:

What is the status of women and girls in your country in comparison to men and boys? If there are significant differences and/or gaps, what causes these differences and/or gaps and why do they persist?

Do women and girls enjoy equal political rights and representation in your country? What is the current gender composition of the different branches and/or entities of government in your country?

What are your country's policies regarding parental/family leave after childbirth? Is your country considering any potential changes to these parental/family leave policies, and if so, what kinds of changes are being considered and why?

What are the respective percentages of female and male entrepreneurs in your country? Have the percentages changed in recent years? If so, have the percentages become more equitable or has a more pronounced gender gap developed?

What are the respective percentages of female and male employees and managers in your country? Have these percentages changed in recent years? If so, in which direction and why?

²⁸ United Nations, *Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Strategic Plan 2018-2021, 29-30 August 2017, page 14

²⁹ The 5 UN Member States that have not signed and/or ratified CEDAW are: Iran; Nauru; Somalia; Sudan; Tonga; and the United States.

³⁰ UNWOMEN, 2011-2012 Progress of the World's Women – In Pursuit of Justice, page 8

³¹ Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE), https://unstats.un.org/edge

How do women's and girls' health outcomes compare to men's and boys' in your country? Do women and girls enjoy equal access to quality health care providers and facilities in your country? Do your country's health insurance systems and/or providers address the health concerns of women and girls in a timely and equitable fashion?

How can UNWOMEN and the international community most effectively promote universal ratification and adherence to relevant treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?

United Nations Resolutions and Associated Documents:

UN General Assembly resolution 72/234, "Women in Development," (A/RES/72/234), December 20, 2017.

UN General Assembly resolution 72/162, "Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto: situation of women and girls with disabilities," (A/RES/72/162), December 20, 2017.

UN General Assembly resolution 72/154, "The girl child," (A/RES/72/154), December 19, 2017.

UN General Assembly resolution 72/149, "Violence Against Women Migrant Workers," (A/RES/72/149), December 19, 2017.

UN General Assembly resolution 72/148, "Improvement of the Situation of Women and Girls in Rural Areas," (A/RES/72/148), December 19, 2017.

UN General Assembly "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly" A/RES/72/147 December 19, 2017.

UN General Assembly resolution 70/131, "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women," (A/RES/70/131), December 17, 2015.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics," ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/20, 2015.

UN General Assembly resolution 69/236, "World Survey on the Role of Women in Development," (A/RES/69/236), December 19, 2014.

UN General Assembly, "Entrepreneurship for Development" A/RES/69/210 December 19, 2014.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), "Women's Economic Empowerment" E/CN.6.2010/L.5/ECOSOC/CSW March 12, 2010.

