POLICY BRIEF

Build Sustainable Financing and Partnerships for Girls and Women

Facts, Solutions, Cases, and Calls to Action

OVERVIEW

Donor and national investments targeting gender equality and girls' and women's health, rights, and wellbeing remain insufficient to achieve the ambitious targets set for gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[1] More work and commitments are needed to improve the lives of girls and women, thus enabling communities and nations to unlock their full potential. Under the sustainable development agenda, development actors from across the spectrum have an opportunity to abandon traditionally siloed approaches and work together to positively impact girls' and women's lives through financial investment and strengthened multi-sectoral partnerships that deliver on an integrated agenda. This policy brief identifies interventions that can propel sustainable progress.

SECTION 1: FRAMING THE ISSUE

Despite the needs and challenges that girls and women face in accessing healthcare, education, resources, and equal opportunities in the workforce and political arena, investments to empower, engage, and open access for girls and women remain insufficient. While it is encouraging to see an increase in the number of commitments and partnerships devoted to gender equality and to girls' and women's health, rights, and wellbeing, the commitments by and partnerships between governments, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector have not been sufficient to close the gender-equality gap and provide key opportunities to spur development across communities and countries.

While investments targeting girls and women have been increasing, they often miss the mark. In 2016–2017, members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) provided an average of $44.8 billion per year, or 38% of their bilateral allocable aid, to gender equality and women's equality efforts, which was an increase from previous years.[2] Yet, funding for dedicated programs that target gender equality and women's empowerment as a principal objective remains low at 4%.[3] Furthermore, the financing gap to achieve the SDGs in developing countries is between US$2.5 trillion and $3 trillion per year.[4] Targeted focus in funding is essential to meeting SDG 5's objective of giving women equal access to economic resources, control over land and property, and recognition of unpaid work.[5] Further, long-term commitments from organizations and countries alike are required to ensure funding is sustained and predictable.

Governments also need to step up support by expanding financing across areas influencing the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women and ensuring a fair share of the GDP is spent on issues like universal health coverage and access to sexual and reproductive health services.[6] More than half of the global population, or 55 percent, lacks social protection coverage,[7] and as extreme poverty disproportionately affects women, this absence of a safety net hits them hardest.[8] An estimated 800 million people spend more than 10% of their household budget on healthcare, and each year nearly 100 million are impoverished by the cost of out-of-pocket health expenses.[9] By 2030, there will be a $176 billion gap between the financing needed to provide populations with quality, affordable healthcare and the funding that will actually be available in the 54 poorest countries.[10] This has significant consequences for the sexual and reproductive health of girls and women. For example, approximately 214 million women of reproductive age in the developing world would like to avoid pregnancy, but are not using modern contraception.[11] Providing girls and women in developing regions with necessary sexual and reproductive healthcare and maternal and newborn healthcare would cost $8.56 per person per year, on average, and would result in the prevention of 67 million unintended pregnancies, 36 million abortions, 224,000 maternal deaths, and 2.2 million newborn deaths.[12]

The confluence of poverty, environmental vulnerability, and fragility continues to affect significant numbers of poor people. By 2030, it is predicted that 46% of the global poor will live in settings of fragility, conflict, and violence.[13] In 2018, 135 million people across 42 countries required humanitarian aid amounting to $25 billion, but funding for that aid fell short by more than a third.[14] The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that nearly 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020, which will require $28.8 billion in funding.[15] International humanitarian assistance remains a critical resource to meet the needs of people affected by crises, especially as the impacts of climate change, infectious diseases, and violent conflicts continue to worsen.

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Building sustainable financing and partnerships for girls and women is linked to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, including:

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

- **1.a** Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions
- **1.b** Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all

- **3.8** Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
- **3.d** Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction, and management of national and global health risks

The private sector is increasingly engaged in advancing gender equality and recognizes both its ability to address the unique challenges that girls and women face and the business benefits of investing in women's rights and health. More than 2,700 companies globally have signed on to the statement of support introduced by the CEO of the Women's Empowerment Principles, declaring a commitment to making progress for women across the workplace, marketplace, and community.[16, 17] The United Nations Foundation, along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, and Merck for Mothers, launched the Private Sector Action for Women's Health and Empowerment, which has secured 11 commitments from companies with large supply chains to invest more in the health and welfare of their female workers.[18] A growing body of evidence demonstrates how the private sector can benefit from investing in women as leaders, employees, entrepreneurs, customers, and community partners, and in marketing that breaks gender norms and stereotypes.[19] The private sector can also play an important role in investing in and leveraging science and technology to better reach and serve girls and women, as well as providing assistance during humanitarian crises.[20]

Despite these commitments and private-sector initiatives, more needs to be done. Women continue to face significant obstacles to gaining quality employment and leadership roles within the private sector. In 2018, informal employment played a major role in women's exposure to inadequate working conditions in more than 90% of sub-Saharan African countries, 89% of South Asian countries, and 75% of Latin American countries.[21] Pay gaps persist across many industries, and women continue to face difficulty accessing products and services that could improve their health and wellbeing and that of their families.[22] The private sector has a wide-ranging role to play in advancing women—who represent their employees, producers, suppliers, partners, and community members—and much to gain from doing so. The momentum has never been stronger, and businesses have an opportunity to be creative in their approaches to partnerships and collaborations to extend the impact of their efforts.

Partnerships among different sectors are key to tackling the complex and multifaceted nature of gender inequality. Such partnerships can drive progress forward, cutting across different sectors and bringing people with diverse skills, experiences, and resources together to addresses common challenges.[23] For example, a coordinated approach across different sectors is required to pursue women's economic empowerment. To achieve progress, governments need to reform policies that limit women's access to labor markets; financial institutions need to design and market financial products that are accessible for women; companies need to ensure pay equity; and civil society organizations need to raise awareness and advocate for women's economic empowerment at the local, national, and global levels.[24]

SECTION 2: SOLUTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

To achieve the SDGs, policies and pledges to invest in girls, adolescents, and women must be tied to resources that can sustain critical programs and initiatives for the long run. And as countries reap economic gains from development and growth, they must increase domestic funding for programs and social services that benefit girls and women, such as healthcare, education, and social protection programs. Effective, multi-stakeholder partnerships that convene the public and private sectors are key to tapping into the strengths of all.

There are demonstrated strategies that can help build partnerships and target resources to close the health and gender-equality gap and empower girls and women. These include:

- Develop innovative partnerships, increase development assistance, and mobilize domestic resources to specifically and equitably meet the needs of girls and women.
- Support country-level capacity building towards accountability for taxation and budgeting, including gender budgeting.
- Develop gender-sensitive national and sub-national systems of social protection, taxation, and redistribution.
- Effectively and meaningfully engage private-sector actors and private financing in partnerships for development.
- Integrate across sectors to build collaborative approaches that are gender responsive.

Develop Innovative Partnerships, Increase Development Assistance, and Mobilize Domestic Resources to Specifically and Equitably Meet the Needs of Girls and Women

In order to close the gap in development assistance allocated for gender equality, bilateral and multilateral donors must boost and refocus their funding for initiatives that address the needs of girls and women. This includes tackling areas that have previously received minimal funding, such as women's economic development; sexual and reproductive health and rights; advancing women's roles in peace and security; and better leveraging and integrating existing investments across sectors to include a stronger focus on the needs of girls and women. To ensure that financing is sustained and equitable in both the private and public sectors, international governance bodies that promote innovative development financing and regulate global financial flows should be strengthened. Governments must also mobilize existing resources and more efficiently utilize frameworks already in place. This can be accomplished by bolstering education, job training, health systems, early childhood development, and other opportunities that have influence on an individual's productivity

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- **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.a** 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.c** 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

SDG 10: Reduce inequalities within and among countries

- **10.4** Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage, and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality
- **10.5** Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations

in order to strengthen human capital. Investments in human capital are associated with stable growth, which can provide governments with a functional framework from which to implement new partnerships and innovations to meet the needs of girls and women.[25]

Case Study: Every Woman Every Child

Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) is an innovative global movement spearheaded by the UN Secretary-General that serves as a platform for transformative global partnerships, uniting efforts across sectors to realize an integrated agenda for women, children, and adolescents. The EWEC Global Strategy serves as a detailed roadmap for countries to begin implementing the SDGs through the lens of women's, children's, and adolescents' health and wellbeing, reducing inequities, strengthening fragile health systems, and fostering multi-sectoral approaches in order to end all preventable deaths and foster healthy communities, vibrant economies, and resilient societies. The Global Strategy also calls on governments and other stakeholders to take action across sectors.[26, 27] Significant progress has been made since the launch of the strategy. In 2017, an estimated 62% of pregnant women received four or more antenatal visits.[28] In 2018, an estimated 77% of women of reproductive age who were married or in a union had their family planning needs met with a modern contraceptive method.[29]

Case Study: Global Financing Facility in Support of Every Woman Every Child

The Global Financing Facility (GFF) was established in support of EWEC to improve the health and quality of life of women, adolescents, and children, and end preventable maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent deaths. The goal of GFF is to prevent up to 3.8 million maternal deaths, 101 million child deaths, and 21 million stillbirths in high-burden countries by 2030.[30] The GFF aims to marshal more than $57 billion between 2015 and 2030 through smart financing, crowding in additional domestic resources and strengthening country ownership, further mobilizing development assistance for health and improving coordination of this assistance, and streamlining financing mechanisms against government priorities represented in the investment case.[31]

The current development of the GFF incorporates both direct and indirect pathways to improving sexual and reproductive health and rights. Direct pathways include delivering interventions such as providing contraceptives, aligning efforts of healthcare providers, raising awareness, and integrating the delivery of services.[32] Indirect pathways include creating stronger, more resilient healthcare systems and working toward health financing reform.[33] These broad efforts aim to solve health system bottlenecks in order to allow for sustainable improvement of women's health outcomes in the long term.

The GFF replenishment aims to raise an additional $2 billion for the GFF Trust Fund for 2018–2023 to support the 50 countries with the highest maternal, newborn, and child mortality burdens and funding.[34] The replenishment event in November raised more than $1 billion and was so successful that nine additional countries joined the GFF in March 2019. This brings the total number of GFF-supported countries to 36, and these countries account for 67.2% of the preventable maternal and child mortality burden.[35]

Support Country-Level Capacity Building and Accountability for Taxation and Budgeting, Including Gender Budgeting

National fiscal resources are essential for financing and achieving gender equality. To that end, public spending must reflect girls' and women's needs and priorities, and should be tracked to measure its impact on gender equality and women's rights.[36] Governments can do this by: 1) Developing fair and progressive tax systems that address gender biases in tax policies;[37] 2) Developing tax incentives to support women's ownership of land, businesses, and resources;[38, 39] 3) Accurately pricing and allocating resources for national policies, strategies, and plans focused on gender equality across the public sector;[40] and 4) Integrating these domestic initiatives with sustainable development financing strategies.[41]

Members of the international community must also hold one another accountable for national taxation enforcement. In 2016, for example, the UN Committee mandated to oversee compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) criticized Switzerland for its financial secrecy policies, which allows for and encourages wealthy individuals to avoid taxation.[42] When large amounts of tax revenue are lost due to wealthy individuals avoiding taxation, governments are forced to cut public services, which disproportionately affects women.[43, 44]

Tax justice is a key opportunity to impact women through macroeconomic initiatives. Taxation is one of the most sustainable sources of financing for the provision of public goods and services and is a vital mechanism for addressing inequality, including gender inequality. Illicit financial flows (IFFs) are increasingly recognized as undermining efforts to close financing gaps, specifically in relation to financing the SDGs.[45] IFFs also have a negative impact on vertical equity and the progressiveness of tax systems, which disproportionately affects women.[46] When IFFs are rampant, they prevent governments from fulfilling their human rights obligations, including to girls and women, by limiting their resource base. Reducing IFFs increases the opportunities for access to and equitable distribution of financing that includes girls and women, such as access to healthcare and social services.

It is important to push for the creation of an intergovernmental global tax body to ensure that all countries have a say in the regulations and frameworks governing taxation. The OECD designs standards to be implemented globally, but developing countries have no representation in these standard-setting processes. An intergovernmental tax body could ensure a globally agreed-upon system that could be more transparent and fairer for all.[47]

- **10.6** Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions
- **10.b** Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels

- **16.4** By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime
- **16.8** Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

SDG 17: Revitalize the partnership for sustainable development

- **17.1** Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection

Gender budgeting is an approach that uses fiscal policy and administration to promote gender equality and the development of girls and women. Fiscal authorities at all levels of government can assess the needs of men and women; identify key outcomes or goals; plan, allocate, and distribute public funds; and monitor and evaluate achievements.[48] Gender budgeting holds that governments should prioritize the needs of women and enhance facilities and opportunities available to them. Such budgeting must be intersectional, allowing greater funding for women from socioeconomically, ethnically, or otherwise marginalized groups that require extra support to compensate for systematic discrimination.

Countries' varying approaches and levels of success at implementing gender budgeting reflect each country's varying goals and administrative capabilities.[49] Only 19% of the 69 nations where data was available in 2018 met the criteria for gender budgeting stipulated under the SDGs.[50] Another 60% of countries "approached" these requirements, per UN data, but did not fulfill them.[51] Well-structured fiscal policies and sound public financial management systems have the potential to improve gender equality by using tax revenue to increase the supply of female labor, improve family benefits, subsidize childcare, bolster social benefits that increase the net return in women's work, and offer incentives for businesses to encourage female employment.[52, 53] For example, 90% of the countries in the UN dataset have policies in place to address gender gaps, but only 43% report adequate resource allocations to implement them.[54]

Case Study: Gender Responsive Budgets in Kerala

The state of Kerala in India initiated a gender budgeting process at the local government level in 1998, mandating that local bodies allocate certain plan funds devolved by the state specifically for women. This was implemented through the introduction of the Women's Component Plan (WCP), which earmarked 10% of the state's budget toward programs specifically targeted to women.[55] The programs are determined by women at the local level through participatory processes at village-level meetings called Grama Sabhas. The funds address the economic empowerment of women through self-help groups (SHGs) and income generation programs under the poverty eradication mission of the Kerala government—the Kudumbashree. The total outlay earmarked for women and bridging the gender gap accounted for only 5.5% of the total state budget outlay in 2008–2009. That amount increased to 8.5% in 2010–2011 after a gender audit was done, and in 2016–2017 it increased to 9.54%.[56, 57] Consequently, Kerala performs very well on multiple development indicators, including literacy, absence of poverty, and low infant mortality rates.

Case Study: Strengthening Health Financing Accountability in Sierra Leone[58]

In 2012, Sierra Leone's government cut the national health sector budget allocation. E4A-MamaYe worked with Save the Children; Budget Advocacy Network; the Freetown Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Consortium; and other civil society members of the Budget Advocacy Working Group on a nationwide health budget advocacy campaign. The campaign, which coincided with the 2012 general elections, called for increased allocation, efficiency, and transparency of spending for mothers and children. As part of the campaign, E4A-MamaYe produced district health budget tracking scorecards, which presented Ministry of Finance data on the allocation and disbursement of health funds. They were written using simple, nontechnical language so that citizens could understand the key messages and take action. Thousands of scorecards were shared at district electoral forums attended by political candidates, community members, and health activists. Since the 2012 election, the proportion of the total government budget allocated to health increased from 7.4% in 2012 to 11.2% in 2014. By 2019, this number slightly decreased to 10% of the total government budget, but with a government commitment to progressively increase in subsequent years.[59] Despite the impact of the scorecards, transforming political commitments into implementation has been challenging, and accountability remains a long-term process.

Develop Gender-Sensitive National and Sub-National Systems of Social Protection, Taxation, and Redistribution

Supporting the development of social protection and redistribution to mitigate increasing inequalities within and among countries is vital for sustainable development.[60] With strong tax and budgeting systems, governments can invest in social transfers—including for health coverage, family allowances, unemployment benefits, and pensions—that protect women, men, and young people facing poor health, unemployment, unpaid care responsibilities, and old age.[61] Social policies that target women, like cash transfers and childcare support, need to be designed to address the most socioeconomically disadvantaged without reinforcing gender stereotypes or stigmatizing need.[62] Collecting data and monitoring these programs should be robust and disaggregated at all levels in order to ensure that the benefits reach those most in need.[63]

Case Study: Brazil's Bolsa Família Program

Brazil is among the most unequal societies in the world. In 2011, more than 3% of the population lived in extreme poverty, and almost half of the population lived in vulnerable situations.[64] The Bolsa Familia Programme (BFP), created in 2003 by President Lula,[65] provides qualifying families with a small monthly cash transfer.[66] The program is managed by the central government and implemented and operated by Brazil's municipalities. The average monthly benefit is $43, with an operating cost of 0.5% of GDP, making it a relatively inexpensive program. Eligible families have monthly per capita incomes equal to or less than R$77 (US$20), and families with incomes up to R$154 are eligible if they have children under 18. Cash benefits are paid directly to each family through an electronic payment system. The amount paid each month depends on the size, makeup, and income of the family.[67] In order to withdraw their cash transfers, beneficiaries must demonstrate that their family has met the program's health and education conditions, which include regular

- **17.2** Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries
- **17.3** Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources
- **17.4** Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief, and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress
- **17.5** Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries
- **17.9** Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation

vaccinations and check-ups and school attendance and performance.[68, 69] From 2003 onwards, the BFP has expanded its coverage, reaching nearly 13.8 million families by 2015—a total of 48 million people, or one-quarter of Brazil's population.[70]

BFP is impressive in its ability to reach the poorest of the poor. In 2004, nearly three-quarters of cash transfers from the BFP reached families in the bottom income quintile, and the majority of the remaining 25% was given to the next-lowest income quintile. Since the introduction of the BFP, poverty incidence has declined consistently. Under-5 child mortality and nutrition health outcomes have improved among BFP families, and children of families that receive BFP benefits are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to graduate than children from non-BFP families. BFP recipients are likely to look for work, keep working, and work as farmers or small-scale entrepreneurs.[71]

Effectively and Meaningfully Engage Private-Sector Actors and Private Financing in Partnerships for Development

The private sector has a significant role to play in financing for development, particularly in terms of creating jobs, strengthening infrastructure, and providing technologies and services that are key to social development, including along the supply chain.[72] Yet some companies have had a negative impact on women's rights in the workforce, and the privatization of health services has, historically, limited access to quality, affordable healthcare.[73] To increase collaboration and improve business practices, some private-sector companies and foundations have started to work closely with governments and civil society to identify new ways to provide goods and services to vulnerable populations, support financial inclusion for women, and improve their lives across the value chain, including by encouraging and supporting women in leadership positions.[74] Investing in women-owned businesses and integrating them into larger corporate supply chains is good for business: women-owned businesses contribute significantly to the world economy, generating millions of employment opportunities.[75]

Case Study: Mobile Banking in Tanzania[76]
The Mastercard Foundation and FINCA, an organization that works to alleviate poverty by operating a network of microfinance initiatives in 23 countries, formed a partnership in 2013 and launched a mobile banking project in Tanzania. Nearly one-third of FINCA clients in Tanzania now have access to and are utilizing banking services and saving deposits. Mobile banking provides many added benefits, including less travel time, timely deposits, and lowered risks associated with traveling with cash. FINCA Tanzania also worked with mobile operators to reduce costs and provide effective transactions. The Mastercard Foundation and FINCA hope to pass along their best practices and lessons learned in order to help other microfinance institutions effectively implement similar programs.

Case Study: Private-Sector Partnership and Collective Action in Kenya[77]
Kenya is among the top 10 countries worldwide in terms of maternal mortality. Six Kenyan counties (administrative sub-districts) with the very highest rates of maternal mortality have been targeted in an ongoing public-private partnership that includes the government of Kenya, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank, and private-sector entities. Companies including Safaricom, MSD, Philips, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), and Huawei have contributed money and in-kind aid to support activities designed to strengthen supply chain management for health commodities, increase availability and demand for youth friendly health services, build health professionals' capacity, and increase access to health facilities and medical innovations. The initiative plans to target more than 3.5 million women, newborns, children, adolescents, and family members by 2020.

Case Study: Offering Women-Centered Banking Services in the Dominican Republic[78]
Women make up 70% of university graduates and are the primary financial providers in more than half of all households in the Dominican Republic, but the demand for financing among women and women-owned businesses is largely unmet. Banks sometimes lack knowledge of their female clients and have limited capacity to develop products suited to women's needs, preferences, and behaviors. To address these issues, the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Banking on Women program partnered with Banco BHD León (BHDL), one of the largest banks in the Dominican Republic, to help BHDL address women's needs and become the nation's bank of choice for women.

Working together, IFC and BHDL identified four segments of women customers who had unmet needs. They then identified services that would meet these needs, bundling specific sets of nonfinancial services along with key product offerings. These services addressed many of women's concerns, including saving time; promoting individual and family wellbeing, education, and health; and growing their businesses. The new women's business line produced an internal rate of return of more than 35%, along with a return on assets of 20% for individuals, 14% for small enterprises, and 12% for medium-sized businesses. Internally, BHDL made efforts to improve gender equality and working conditions for women, including providing equal pay for women and men, monitoring of hiring and promotion by gender, providing gender-sensitivity training, and opening lactation centers at two of its offices. As of 2017, 64% of BHDL's senior managers are women.

Integrate Across Sectors to Build Collaborative Approaches That Are Gender Responsive

The SDGs were designed with a cross-sectoral, integrated, or nexus approach to partnerships in mind. This differs from the sectoral or siloed approach to multi-stakeholder partnerships from the MDGs era. There are various nexuses between sectors that are identified through the SDGs, such as the education, gender, and health nexus, and the energy, food security, and poverty eradication nexus.

- **17.16** Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries
- **17.17** Encourage and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

These nexuses require more integrated partnership models, both within governments and between organizations, in order to achieve the SDGs. New partnerships should look closely at how targets under one goal may affect targets under other goals, and existing partnerships or inter-governmental collaborations should incorporate other targets from other goals so as to enable greater integration and synergies.[79]

One example of a UN-led, multi-stakeholder partnership leveraging cross-sectoral approaches is the Green Industry Platform, which provides a forum for catalyzing, mobilizing, and mainstreaming action on green industry around the world. The Green Industry Platform proposes a concrete pathway to long-term economic growth and sustainable development. It encourages the more efficient use of energy and raw materials; promotes environmentally sound modes of consumption and production; contributes to cleaner and more competitive industrial development that does not lead to adverse health outcomes and helps reduce pollution and reliance on unsustainable use of natural resources; and recognizes the importance of the gender-environment nexus, seeking to address the issues surrounding women's empowerment and gender equality in green industrial development.[80]

Case Study: The Partnerships Playbook[81]
To address the need for greater collaboration and coordination among stakeholders in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, global leaders came together at the 2016 meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) to identify innovative approaches to development and produce a set of 10 principles that should animate all multi-sectoral partnerships working on achieving the SDGs. Organizations including Every Woman Every Child, the Global Partnership for Education, Sanitation and Water for All, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, and Zero Hunger Challenge jointly issued a Partnerships Playbook that codifies these 10 principles in a set of common values and practices for forming effective partnerships in the hope that other organizations will act cooperatively on the 2030 Agenda. This set of best practices laid out how multi-stakeholder initiatives can inspire action from government, the private sector, and civil society; build shared values; and leverage skills across sectors to accelerate progress against national priorities. The Partnerships Playbook joins a list of 28 Global Partnership Initiatives that have been adopted by GPEDC as voluntary, member-led commitments to advance development cooperation.

SECTION 3: THE BENEFITS OF INVESTMENT

Evidence shows that financing gender equality and the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women can help ensure stability and longevity as well as catalyze the growth and efficiency of development initiatives. At the same time, cross-sector partnerships incorporate the participation of the most vulnerable, promoting truly sustainable development. All sectors should evaluate their investments through a gender lens so that gender equality and human rights are maintained as long-term goals. If all stakeholders invest wisely in the promotion of gender equality and leverage the strengths of key players across sectors, countries will benefit from economic growth.

Convening expertise and resources in support of equality for girls and women reaps tangible benefits across sectors, including:

- **Health:** For every $1 spent on primary health goods and services in 74 high-burden countries, almost $9 worth of economic and social benefits would be gained due to lower morbidity and mortality by 2035.[82] This includes avoiding as many as 147 million child deaths, 32 million stillbirths, and 5 million maternal deaths.[83] Investments in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health yield at least a 10-fold return through better educational attainments, workforce participation, and social contributions.[84] For example, it is estimated that every $1 invested in meeting the unmet need for contraceptives yields as much as $60–$100 in long-term benefits from economic growth.[85] Investments in early childhood and adolescent health and development yield at least $100 billion in demographic dividends.[86]
- **Education:** Every additional year of secondary schooling for a girl increases her future earnings by 10% to 20%.[87] Women with tertiary education are 25.4 percentage points more likely to participate in the labor force than women with primary education or less.[88] In 2018 alone, the estimated loss in human capital wealth incurred simply from women not benefiting from 12 years of schooling was estimated to range between $15 trillion to $30 trillion.[89]
- **Peace and Security:** Investing in gender equality results in better outcomes for peace and stability.[90] Between 1992 and 2018, women constituted only 13% of negotiators, 3% of mediators and 4% of signatories in major peace processes.[91, 92] When women are included in peace processes, there is a 20% higher probability of an agreement lasting at least two years, and a 35% higher probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years.[93]
- **Economic Growth:** If women's informal labor were recognized and women were to participate in the economy at the same rate and level as men, there could be a $28 trillion increase in global GDP by 2025.[94] Similarly, if each U.S. state matched the fastest rate of improvement toward gender parity in work over the past decade, $2.1 trillion of incremental GDP could be added in 2025—10% higher than the status quo. This would be achieved by adding $475 billion in capital investment in 2025 to create 6.4 million jobs: 40% from higher female labor force participation, 30% from narrowing the gap between men and women who work part time and full time, and 30% from changing the mix of sectors in which women work to increase employment in more productive ones.[95]

Relevant International Agreements:

- The ICPD Programme of Action (1994)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
- Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015)
- Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health (2001)
- The Monterrey Consensus (2002–2008)
- The Doha Declaration on Financing for Development (2008–2015)
- Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (2015)
- Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030)
- Every Woman Every Child Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030)
- Report of the High-Level Working Group on the Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents (2017)
- Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-bring for All (2019)
- UN High-Level Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage (2019)

- **Financial Benefits:** Companies with at least three women on their board in 2011 outperformed those with none, with a return on equity (ROE) of 10 percentage points compared to -1 percentage points and an earnings per share (EPS) of +37% compared to -8% in 2016.[96]
- **Demographic Dividend:** Many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, stand to benefit greatly from investing in their young populations. Investing in young people, particularly girls' education and health—including access to family planning and comprehensive sexuality education—has the potential to boost economic growth. Investing in young people also requires linking education and social development to productive employment later in life. Evidence suggests that in Africa and Asia, an 11% loss in gross national product is directly linked to malnutrition, and scaling up nutrition interventions targeting pregnant women and young children yields a return of at least $16 for every $1 spent.[97, 98] Children who are malnourished during their first 1,000 days of life are more susceptible to infectious diseases and have lower cognitive abilities.[99] As a result, early undernutrition or overnutrition can considerably hinder a country's economic growth.[100] Making investments in sexual and reproductive health and contraceptive access yields a triple dividend for young people: a better life now, a better future for themselves, and a better life for future generations.[101]

SECTION 4: CALLS TO ACTION

The very nature of building financial resources and partnerships for women requires the involvement of diverse stakeholders. A great deal of responsibility falls on country-level authorities, but businesses, donors, and multilateral organizations also have a critical role to play in focusing funding priorities on girls and women to reflect SDG targets and indicators. Furthermore, they must develop cross-sectoral partnerships to boost effective financing and programs, help build capacity of government authorities to effectively monitor and audit taxes and budgets, and implement quality social protection schemes to improve the lives of girls and women.

Citizens must also get involved to hold their communities, employers, regional representatives, and countries to account to develop sound, equitable budgets in line with global commitments and SDG targets, as well as to call out corruption and negligence in all sectors.

In order to achieve greater political commitment and better and smarter investments to power progress for all, many different constituents—governments, civil society, academia, media, affected populations, the United Nations, and the private sector—must work together to take the following actions for girls and women:

- Focus on women, children, and adolescents in political and funding priorities across SDG targets and indicators, and ensure time-bound implementation of transparent, reliable funding streams that honor the commitments made in international and regional agreements. (Most relevant for: governments, civil society, the United Nations, and the private sector)
- Increase spending through integrated and innovative approaches (including progressive taxation), and develop gender-responsive budgets in line with the SDG commitments made to girls and women. (Most relevant for: governments)
- Support countries to effectively monitor and audit taxes and budgets to finance SDG investments. (Most relevant for: governments, civil society, academia, the United Nations, and the private sector)
- Develop new partnerships across sectors, foster horizontal investments across the continuum of care, account for social determinants of health, and work toward more sustainable domestic financing to boost the implementation of the SDGs and help meet country priorities. (Most relevant for: governments, civil society, academia, media, affected populations, the United Nations, and the private sector)
- Account for, develop, and manage sound, equitable budgets in line with funding the SDGs. (Most relevant for: governments, civil society, the United Nations, and the private sector)
- Strengthen government accountability and call out corruption and negligence in all sectors. (Most relevant for: civil society)

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