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UNESCO
in Action for
**GENDER
EQUALITY**

2022
2023



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Intersecting Global Crises Cannot Be Solved Without Gender Equality

The compounding global crises that have emerged and amplified over the past two years require transformative, structural solutions if we are to build and shape sustainable and peaceful societies. Education has experienced the largest disruption in history as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis. Biodiversity has seen a steep decline – at alarming rates – on both land and in the ocean. Conflicts and emergencies that destabilise progress towards just and peaceful societies have increased in number, while human rights violations are multiplying in new contexts, including online and offline. The decisions we make and the actions we take – now – will have consequences for generations to come.

None of these intersecting crises can be solved by one country alone and none of them are gender neutral. Placing gender equality at the heart of multilateral action can harness the talents, ingenuity, and visions of one-half of the world's population. The standards of ethics and human rights demand gender equality. So, too, do the numbers. Some of humankind's greatest challenges require efficient and tangible solutions. The paradigm shift is needed now.

Yet, despite a growing demand for equity and justice, the UN now predicts it will take almost three centuries to close the gender gap. Under that reality, UNESCO will continue to meet barriers to its mandate and vision since gender inequality has a direct impact on all areas in which UNESCO works.

This report shows how UNESCO and its partners have provided concrete and effective solutions during the 2022-2023 biennium to advance gender equality. It has reduced inequalities in and through quality education; it has empowered women in science and technology for environmental action; it has promoted inclusion and combatted gender-based violence; it has bridged the digital gender divide and it has promoted gender equality and women's empowerment in crisis, emergency and early recovery contexts.

UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality is more relevant than ever. Together, we can amplify and expand its reach and multiply gender-transformative results for the benefit of women and girls, men and boys, all around the world.

16%
of UNESCO's budget
is dedicated to
gender equality,
which is among the highest
percentage across the
United Nations

UNESCO
in Action for
**GENDER
EQUALITY**

2022
2023



*The Director-General visits
a community cultural center
in Accra, Ghana, in April 2023.*

Message of the Director-General

Nearly 300 years. It will take nearly 300 years to achieve gender equality worldwide, if we do not speed up our efforts. Indeed, the present situation remains worrying. Not only is progress too slow, but the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing situation in Afghanistan, where girls and women have been brutally deprived of their right to learn and teach, have led to major setbacks. Now is the time to send a simple message: we cannot accept half of humanity being left behind for another three centuries. This is why UNESCO has made gender equality a priority throughout its mandate, and why we are mobilizing our tools and our partners.

The first challenge is measuring inequalities – because reliable, accurate data are essential to guide public action. That is precisely the aim of this report. It highlights, for example, that two-thirds of the 763 million adults lacking basic literacy skills are women. On the cultural front, our report *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity*, published last year, highlights the fact that only 33% of film prizes are awarded to women.

The second challenge is action. And in this respect, this report is a source of hope, bearing witness to the progress driven by UNESCO in 2022 and 2023. We have worked tirelessly to promote girls' access to education, for instance. Last year alone, UNESCO accompanied more than 30 countries to review their legislation and strategies on gender equality in and through education. We also stand by Afghan girls and women: working directly with local communities and NGOs, we are running a major literacy campaign in 20 of the country's provinces for 40,000 Afghans, 60 per cent of whom are women.

We are also taking action to promote gender equality in the sciences. UNESCO is working with 45 countries to promote science education for girls, starting at primary level. Our Organization also supports women scientists throughout their careers, notably with the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science International Awards, whose 25th anniversary we celebrated in June 2023.

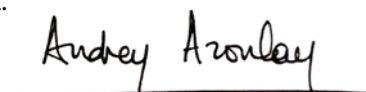
These awards have already honoured more than 4,100 talented women researchers.

At the root of these inequalities are gender stereotypes and discrimination, which affect 9 out of 10 people worldwide. To counter this, UNESCO is stepping up initiatives such as the Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination, scheduled to be held in Sao Paulo in 2023, following Mexico City in 2022. The forum's goal is to enable the exchange of best practices between countries and stimulate the development of new initiatives.

As we know, new technologies must be a priority area for action against discrimination and stereotypes, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence. That is why our Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted unanimously by our Member States in 2021, includes an entire section dedicated to gender equality. Launched in April, our Women4Ethical AI Platform is also helping to implement the provisions of our Recommendation on the ground, ensuring that equality moves from principle to practice.

Finally, we are committed to making the voices of women heard around the world, and in particular women journalists, who are all too often victims of (cyber)harassment, as highlighted in our report *The Chilling*, published in 2021. It was against this backdrop that the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize was awarded in May to Iranian journalists Niloofar Hamedi, Elaheh Mohammadi (Nobel Peace Prize 2023) and Narges Mohammadi, in recognition of their exceptional commitment to defending press freedom and equality, despite the many dangers.

Through all these actions, this publication tells us how far we have come; but, more fundamentally, it warns us of the many efforts we still have to make. Let's not wait 300 more years to react.



Audrey Azoulay

UNESCO'S GLOBAL PRIORITY GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Reduce inequalities and promote learning and creative societies in the digital age through quality education for all

Work towards sustainable societies by preserving the environment through the promotion of science, technology and the natural heritage

GENDER EQUALITY FOCUS

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION

EMPOWER WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

AREAS OF WORK

ACCESS

CURRICULUM
&
PEDAGOGIES

STEM

SCIENTIFIC
LEADERSHIP

ECOSYSTEMS
& BIODIVERSITY

WATER
& OCEANS

- Access to equitable and gender-responsive education and learning, including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is widened
- Laws, policies & strategies for gender equality in and through education developed and implemented
- Gender-responsive teaching, content and learning opportunities are increased
- Gender gap in learning achievements and completion rates reduced

▶ *Contributing to SDG Targets 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7*

- Women's careers in decision-making positions advanced and role models promoted
- Gender transformative science, technology and innovation (STI) policies and Open Science policies enhanced
- Women's and girls' resilience and action for sustainable management of natural resources reinforced
- Gender responsive water and ocean's management and governance promoted

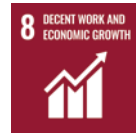
▶ *Contributing to SDG Target 5.5*

CROSS CUTTING THEME

WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY:

ACTIONS

- Awareness raised through advocacy campaigns and public debates
- Capacities and skills strengthened
- National laws, policies and strategies elaboration and revision supported



Build inclusive, just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage

PROMOTE INCLUSION AND COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

DISCRIMINATION & STEREOTYPES

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION & CREATION

DECENT WORK & SOCIAL PROTECTION

- Gender-based threats, violence, discrimination and stereotypes tackled, including in the digital environment
- Learners and learning environments equipped to be safe and healthy
- Women’s working conditions, employment opportunities and economic, cultural and social rights improved
- Gender equality promoted in and through the media and cultural sectors

▶ **Contributing to SDG Targets 4.2a, 5.1, 5.2, 5.6, 8.5, 8.8, 16.10**

Foster a technological environment in the service of humankind through the development and dissemination of knowledge and skills and the development of ethical standards

BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR AI & DIGITAL PLATFORMS

MEDIA & INFORMATION LITERACY

DIGITAL SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

- Ethical standards addressing gender bias in digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) systems developed and implemented
- Equitable and gender responsive access to and use of information and knowledge fostered in the digital environment
- Women and girls empowered with digital skills and competencies
- Women’s leadership in AI and the digital environment supported

▶ **Contributing to SDG Target 5.b**

CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Information, knowledge and data collected, analysed and shared
- Technical assistance and policy advice provided
- Partnerships and networks established, strengthened and fostered

**STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE**

1

**ACHIEVE GENDER
EQUALITY IN AND
THROUGH
EDUCATION**



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**STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE**

2

**EMPOWER WOMEN
IN SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION**



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**STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE**

3

**PROMOTE INCLUSION
AND COMBAT
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE**



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**STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE**

4

**BRIDGE
THE DIGITAL
GENDER DIVIDE**



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**CROSS-CUTTING
THEME**

**WOMEN AND CRISIS
PREPAREDNESS,
EMERGENCY
RESPONSE AND
EARLY RECOVERY**



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In Closing

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STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE

1

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION





သုပျော် ပျော်၊
ဖို့ မေမေခေါ်။
စိုနော်၊
ဆံ့ ဣစိုနော်။

WORKBOOK

**All girls,
all women,
have the right
to a quality
education.
Acting for the
universal right
to education
for girls and
women means
acting for
the dignity
of everyone,
on every
continent. And
it's everyone's
business.**

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO reduces inequalities and promotes learning and creative societies in the digital age through quality education for all by strengthening education systems to be gender-transformative and empowering girls and women, boys and men, to chart a better life and a better future through education.

Reduce inequalities and promote learning and creative societies in the digital age through quality education for all

**ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY
IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION**

ACCESS

CURRICULUM
&
PEDAGOGIES

STEM



Contributing to SDG Targets 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

122 million girls,
about 1 in 5,
are
out of school
(UNESCO, 2023)



63% of the
763 million
illiterate adults
are **women**
(UNESCO, 2021)

Women in STEM
account for just
1/3 of global
post-secondary graduates
(UNESCO, 2023)



1 additional
year of school

can increase a girl's earnings,
when she is an adult,
by up to 20%
(UNESCO, 2021)



Women represent



94% of **pre-primary teaching professionals**
67% in **primary education**
44% in **post-secondary education**

(UNESCO, 2022)



Some countries
lose more than
US\$1 billion a year
by failing to
educate girls at the
same level as boys

(UNESCO, 2021)

STATE OF THE WORLD: PERVERSIVE INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION PUT GENDER EQUALITY AT RISK

Education is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and foster sustainable development. When people have the chance to be educated, their lives and that of their children, families, communities and countries improve. Prospects for good health, social and economic mobility and community leadership increase, while vulnerability to poverty, disease, exploitation, and violence decreases. Critical to this moment of vastly intensified shifts in our human environment, it is education that can provide people of all ages with the tools to acquire the knowledge and skills to adapt to the changes and problems that society faces today and to contribute to building a more equal world.

Overall, access to quality education and career choice remains a privilege. Gender norms negatively affect both girls' and boys' ability to participate fully in education and to benefit from learning, in different ways.

Despite progress towards the achievement of gender parity globally, **the most vulnerable girls and women continue to be excluded from education**. At the current rate of progress, getting all girls into primary school will not happen until 2050. Some 122 million girls – about 1 in 5 – are still out of school¹ and 15 million will never even set foot inside a classroom – the most egregious example being Afghanistan.² Major disparities are masked by some averages: in Chad, 60 per cent of girls are still out of school, while parity has been achieved in Serbia. UNESCO data shows that in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, or Senegal, no more than two out of ten girls can expect to attend upper secondary education.³ Women still account for more than two-thirds of the world's 763 million non-literates.

The reasons for these continued exclusions are multi-layered. In certain contexts, social structures and poverty lead families to keep girls at home to do household and care work. Early marriage or early pregnancy are another cause of girls dropping out of school. In 2022, 2 per cent of countries still explicitly restricted the right to education of married, pregnant, and parenting girls, an area that

requires more targeted policy work at the country level.⁴ Persistent gender stereotyping, which can lead to school-related gender-based violence, is yet another deterrent to attend school.

Gender norms and expectations also hold boys back from engaging fully with learning and contribute to them leaving school early: globally, 128 million boys are out of school. UNESCO's recent data and research highlights that boys are now more likely than girls to repeat primary grades in 130 countries, and more likely to not complete secondary education in 73 countries.⁵ Multiple factors combine to impact boys' motivation and desire to learn. In some countries, boys are expected to leave school early for work, and in others school activities and certain subjects are considered at odds with expressions of masculinity. Online classes and gender segregation contribute to boys' low motivation and disengagement, while harsh discipline, corporal punishment and other forms of school-related gender-based violence have a negative impact on their academic achievement. Boys' engagement may also be affected by real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.





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Some 2,000 participants gather from around the world at UNESCO Headquarters to prepare for the Transforming Education Summit in June 2022.

At the landmark Transforming Education Summit convened by the UN Secretary-General in September 2022, the international education community highlighted the need for gender-transformative education. This approach is crucial to go beyond mere access to education for all and **use education to achieve broader gender equality in society**. Among the different elements of gender-transformative educational programming, there is a need to develop curricula and train teachers on pedagogies that equip learners to overcome harmful gender norms, and to promote gender equality in the classroom, with their families and communities. Educational tools and institutions that are gender-sensitive make it possible to raise awareness on gender issues and create learning environments where girls and boys can prepare for a financially self-sufficient life and contribute to a more stable and just society.

Efforts to promote gender equality must start early and be sustained. Children begin to understand the concept of gender as early as the age of three, and gender stereotypes influence children's self-perceptions and interests starting at this age. Adolescence, and early adolescence in particular, presents another window of opportunity for education as this is a moment when strong social pressures for boys and girls, and those who do not fit into binary notions of gender, push them to conform to existing gender norms.⁶ Promoting gender equality explicitly in curricula and pedagogies, for instance, will support the transformative work boys and men can offer as champions of gender equality.

Women
make up only
25%
of students in
engineering
and ICT

It is critical to tackle gender segregation in specific fields of education, especially in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. **Girls are significantly less likely than boys to pursue studies in the fields of STEM**, even though they are doing at least as well as boys in mathematics and

science in most countries.⁷ In 2016-2018, women in STEM accounted for just one third of global post-secondary graduates.⁸ This gender disparity is alarming, especially as STEM careers are referred to as the jobs of the future, those which drive innovation, social well-being, inclusive growth and sustainable development. The UN anticipates that women will lose five jobs for every one gained through Industry 4.0, compared to the loss of three jobs by men for every one gained. Half of current jobs will have disappeared by 2050. This calls for institutional policies to prepare today's adolescents for new career options and the skills training they require.⁹

The lack of gender equality in science is not just a problem that affects women but can impede a country's development. **By missing out on half of the world's potential, all of society suffers** because its ability to address challenges is undermined. For example, in 50 of 54 countries, girls are less likely to get top marks in mathematics while they outperform boys in learning in general.¹⁰ Even when girls are top performers, only 14 per cent expect to work in science and engineering, compared with 26 per cent of top-performing boys.¹¹ Gaps are greatest in engineering and ICT, where young women make up only 25 per cent of students in these fields in two-thirds of countries that have data.

The current state of education cannot exclude consideration of the **COVID-19 pandemic, a factor that wreaked havoc on education at a global level, starting in 2020**. It upended efforts to give all children access to an education, with over 1.6 billion students across 190 countries forced out of school as a preventive public health measure. Families, governments and institutions must look hard at new opportunities to double-down on advancing gender equality and access to education for all children, especially the most vulnerable and hardest to reach.

UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

In the biennium of 2022-2023, UNESCO advanced gender equality in and through education to benefit all learners by looking beyond the numbers to strengthen education systems to be gender-transformative.

UNESCO's vision is to accelerate the achievement of gender equality in and through education by:

- Ensuring equal access to quality gender-transformative education and reducing gender gaps in completion rates and learning outcomes;
- Developing and implementing gender-responsive curricula and pedagogies; and
- Expanding access for girls and women to STEM education opportunities.

This vision is implemented through UNESCO's mandate to set standards at the global level for policy change, *producing and disseminating data and knowledge* to inform policy change, and translating global standards to *make a difference at the country level*.



#every schoolday counts

Ensuring equal access to gender-responsive education and learning achievements

To build a world that achieves gender equality in and through education, ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and girls and men and boys to education, and empower them to positively shape their lives and futures, UNESCO adopted the *2019-2025 Strategy for Gender Equality in and through Education*.

The Strategy focuses on strengthening education systems to be gender-transformative and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women through education. It calls for:

- Better data to inform action;
- Better legal, policy and planning frameworks to advance rights; and
- Better teaching and learning practices to empower women and girls.

Her Education, Our Future is UNESCO's drive to accelerate action for girls and women's education, by leveraging political and financial commitments, and providing technical support and capacity development to strengthen national education systems.

Box 1 Inclusive Education in Jordan

UNESCO provides technical assistance to the Jordanian Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Higher Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD) on inclusive data collection, management and analysis to better reflect the distinct needs of children with disabilities and refugees. That technical support also attempts to harmonise the Gender Equality National Education Strategy and Action Plan with the National Education Strategic Plan (ESP) so that inclusion and diversity are at the heart of the Jordanian education framework and gender equality is promoted in the classroom, reducing exclusion of girls from education and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence.

In 2022-2023, the UNESCO partnership with the German cooperation agency (GIZ) and the MoE and HCD focused on systems-strengthening and capacity development. A High-Level Roundtable on Inclusion and Diversity in Education was organised in April 2022 followed by a series of orientation sessions and introductory capacity development training with key stakeholders to promote a better understanding of inclusion and diversity in education in the Jordanian context. Workshops were held with 30 pilot schools and 180 teachers and officials. Over 2,200 teachers, school staff, parents, students, and officials were trained in mainstreaming inclusion and diversity.

To further promote inclusive quality education in Jordan, national stakeholders are working together towards revising curricula and textbooks; investing in accessible learning spaces and assistive equipment in schools; and supporting teacher education and training in inclusive pedagogical approaches.

Young women participate in a training on advancing gender equality in the classroom, in Jordan.



UNESCO influences the international agenda on education and gender equality by leading high-level UN, G7 and G20 policy dialogues, and global, regional, and national advocacy initiatives aiming to advance good practices.

Entrusted to lead the Education 2030 Agenda, UNESCO played a central role at the Transforming Education Summit (TES) convened by the UN Secretary-General in 2022 to **elevate education to the top of the global political agenda** and to mobilize political ambition, action, solutions and solidarity to transform education in the face of the global crisis, linked to the recent pandemic. Gender equality was a cross-cutting theme of the Summit and was featured most prominently in Action Track 1 which promotes inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools and was co-led by UNESCO. While there is still progress to be made, 67 per cent of countries (87 countries) made commitments towards gender equality; and 23 per cent (20 countries) committed to mainstream gender in and across the education sector in planning and financing.¹²

A Call to Action: Gender Equality and Girls' and Women's Empowerment in and through Education was launched at the Summit along with the *Global Platform for Gender Equality and Girls' and Women's Empowerment in and through Education*. The Call to Action co-led by UNESCO lays out ambitious steps to be taken by governments, bilateral donors, the UN, the private sector and civil society, with a **vision for change that builds on extensive consultations within the education community**.

The *Global Platform*, with over 70 representatives from governments and civil society, aims to scale up transformative leadership, accountability, innovation, data and financing to advance gender equality through education. It will establish accountability mechanisms to track progress on gender-related commitments made at the TES and other global meetings.

UNESCO was able to **bring gender issues to the table in major dialogues and outcome documents** for world conferences, with specific impact on early childhood care and education, higher education and adult learning, and on artificial intelligence and education. For example, in 2022 the Marrakech Framework for Action made a strong call for gender-transformative adult learning and education. The World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE) convened by UNESCO reaffirmed the right of every young child to quality care and education and urged Member States' renewed commitment and investment.¹³ At the regional level, UNESCO leveraged its leadership in the second Asia-Pacific Regional Education Ministers' Conference to ensure gender equality was a cross-cutting theme.

UNESCO also **produces data and knowledge to inform policy change on education**. During 2022-2023, it has focused on: charting progress towards the Education for All goals (SDG 4) and producing landmark research that shifts the conversation on education and gender equality, especially on engaging men and boys.



A feminist and intergenerational discussion on gender-transformative education took place during the Transforming Education Pre-Summit at UNESCO Headquarters

UNESCO is the **lead agency for monitoring SDG 4 and the right to education**, highlighting inequalities through data collection and analyses with national and regional monitoring strategies to document and review gaps in legal frameworks. Global initiatives around data collection and analysis, like *HerAtlas*, and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' *World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)*, allow UNESCO to apply its unique mandate to support the global movement to improve education for all. These monitoring mechanisms provide evidence that poverty, early marriage, and gender-based violence are just some of the reasons behind the high percentage of out-of-school and non-literate girls and women globally. Concrete changes are already apparent. In 2019, 4 per cent of countries were explicitly restricting the right to education of married, pregnant, and parenting girls. This dropped to 2 per cent in 2022, benefiting millions of girls who can now legally attend school when they marry or become pregnant.¹⁴

New research by UNESCO continues to highlight emerging issues that affect access to education and are linked to gender equality. In 2022, it issued the **first global report to investigate boys' disengagement from and disadvantage in education**, bringing together qualitative and quantitative evidence from over 140 countries.¹⁵ While improving access for girls to educational opportunities continues to be of paramount importance to achieve gender equality in and through education, global efforts must also respond to the educational needs of boys and young men. Addressing boys'

Gender norms also hold boys back from school:

128 million of boys are out of school

disengagement from education not only benefits boys' learning, employment opportunities, income and well-being, it is also beneficial for achieving gender equality overall and has positive economic, social and health outcomes for all society.

UNESCO applies its original research to country-specific contexts to directly support Member States. For the issue of boys' disengagement, the global report includes country case studies in Fiji, Kuwait, Lesotho, Peru, and the United Arab Emirates as a way of illustrating the economic, social and cultural factors



that impact boys' disengagement in order to provide recommendations to Member States to take action. UNESCO has also launched a pilot project to help boys excluded from school continue their education, which has been implemented through two UNESCO-Malala Centres. For example, in Guatemala they developed a programme on *Positive Masculinities* to benefit 50 indigenous young men to continue their education with scholarships to overcome economic hardship. UNESCO also supported gender analyses in the Caribbean in settings where boys are disengaging from education and launched a consortium to work on this issue. Relevant to all Member States is the lesson that **engaging men and boys needs to happen not only to support them to stay in school, but also for men and boys to be drivers of gender equality** – including for the empowerment of girls and women – in real and concrete ways.

Translating global standards, international advocacy, and new research on education and gender equality to have an impact at the country level is a key dimension of UNESCO's unique mandate. For education, it applies a gender equality lens at the country level in two critical areas: first, by developing and implementing gender-responsive curricula and pedagogies that respond to country-specific contexts; and second, by enhancing girls' and young women's participation in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Box 2

UNESCO Delivers on Commitments to the Generation Equality Forum

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is a landmark global initiative, hosted by the governments of Mexico and France and convened by UN Women in partnership with youth and civil society. The Forum is driving commitments in six thematic areas that include gender equality as a central component of Building Back Equal from COVID-19 and fuel significant and lasting change for generations to come. On education, UNESCO has committed to four concrete goals, and reports on them annually to the GEF partnership coalition.

1 Reach 28 million learners in 80 countries with quality gender-transformative teaching and learning that promotes gender equality.

UNESCO has reached 37 million+ learners in over 70 countries through support to gender-transformative policy, planning and pedagogies, learning materials revision, and the promotion of healthy, safe and inclusive learning environments.

2 Hold countries to account on their commitments to gender equality in and through education in UNESCO's role as the officially recognised source for cross-nationally comparative data on SDG 4.

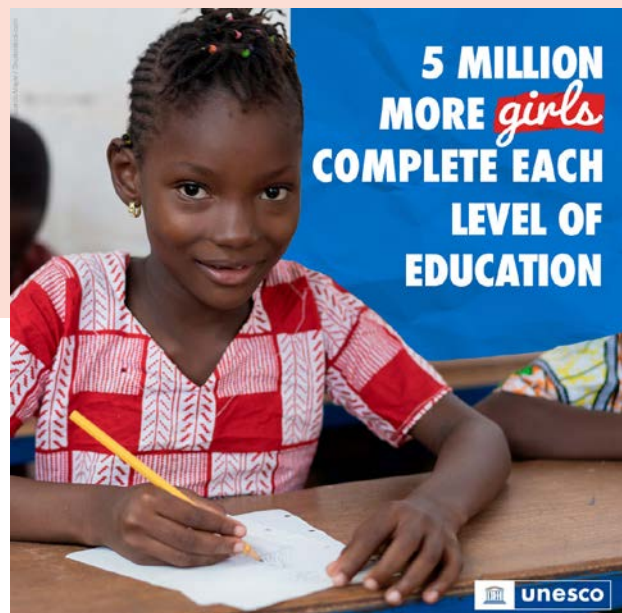
Thought products including landmark publications such as a global report on boys' disengagement from education, UNESCO, UNICEF and partners launched the Global Platform to drive leadership and accountability on gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment in and through education.

3 Monitor the status of 196 countries' legal frameworks on girls' and women's education and support national legal and policy reforms and sector plans to ensure girls' and women's right to education.

The online interactive *HerAtlas* tool covers 196 countries and monitors the right to education for girls and women using 12 indicators. The 2022 status report for the tool shows that its use has increased as a result of a targeted communications campaign.

4 Lead global coordination to support girls' education in the wake of COVID-19 through UNESCO's Global Education Coalition's Gender Flagship.

UNESCO and GEF partners produced and disseminated cutting-edge publications on the gendered impacts of COVID-19 school shutdowns and other extended school closures. The Keeping Girls in the Picture Campaign national roll-out reached over 24 million people in Africa and Asia through creative and diverse communication and advocacy tools.



Implementing gender-responsive curricula and pedagogies

Development and implementation of curricula and pedagogies are the two complementary parts of getting gender equality to take root in the classroom. UNESCO is actively training educators and trainers to be powerful agents of change for delivering the educational response to sustainable development and gender equality. Those **educational change agents require the knowledge, skills, values as well as motivation** to nourish an educational environment that promotes sustainability and a vision for gender equality.

As an example, UNESCO and the Government of Viet Nam have partnered to build the capacities of teachers to promote gender equality, with a focus on ensuring girls' inclusion in education. Funded through the UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education, the project *We are ABLE – Achieving Better Living and Education* has equipped over 2,100 teachers and school administrators (50 per cent women) across 24 lower secondary schools in three provinces with knowledge and skills on school counselling and violence prevention. This has resulted in a significant shift in perceptions and actions regarding girls' education access and retention, as well as the livelihoods of women from different ethnic minority communities.

The campaign *Keeping Girls in the Picture* significantly contributed to the overarching goal of the *We are ABLE* project on improving retention rates. In this context, approximately 10,700 students (5,300 girls and 5,400 boys) in three provinces, and their family members were reached through school-based activities.

In Mali, Nepal and the United Republic of Tanzania, a joint programme with UN Women and UNFPA leveraged UNESCO's country-level presence in education and provided coordinated interventions aimed at empowering adolescent girls and young women to make successful transitions to adulthood through quality education. The first phase of the joint programme (2016 to 2021) reached over 110,000 adolescent girls and young women, trained over 11,000 teachers and administrators and reached over 15 million community members and parents with advocacy outreach.

In 2022-2023, the joint programme in the United Republic of Tanzania focused on developing and strengthening student guidance and counselling systems in 30 primary and 18 secondary schools. It also established safe space clubs (TUSEME – Let us Speak out) in 40 primary and 20 secondary schools to increase safety in school and reduce sexual harassment and other forms of abuse.

Students participate in the We Are ABLE project in Viet Nam.



Box 3

New Horizons for Adolescents in Peru

The *Horizontes* programme rethinks secondary education in rural areas of Peru with a strong focus on addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and school dropout of adolescents, enhancing opportunities for girls and boys to transition to better and more equitable post-secondary trajectories.

In a context where 22.7 per cent of female adolescents from rural areas are already mothers and only 6.2 per cent of women manage to finish higher education, and boys' disengagement with education is increasing in favor of risk behaviours and early jobs, *Horizontes* raises awareness on the need to protect and enhance learning and wellbeing opportunities for every adolescent and restores the protective role of the school to ensure attention to gender gaps, prevent violence and promote safe spaces.

Horizontes has been implemented since 2018 in 45 schools of 6 regions of Peru (Piura, Amazonas, Cusco, Puno, Arequipa and Ayacucho), where 517 teachers are now equipping 6 667 rural adolescents with the tools and support to develop a life-project based on knowledge, technical and emotional skills. This action aims to transform gender stereotypes that limit educational opportunities and prevent unplanned parenthood through socioemotional education that prepare adolescents to make life-choices.

“ Now in schools we do a lot of activities that help us to put together our ‘life projects’. I have discovered that I want to become a doctor. Now I have a goal, a horizon where I want to arrive and a roadmap on how to make it possible.

Gabriela, 16 years old, Cusco, Peru



© UNESCO

By addressing gender-based violence and school dropouts, the Horizontes programme in Peru ensures that adolescents from rural areas complete secondary education.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and President of the Regional Administration and Local Government, trainings built the capacities of guidance counsellors, teachers and district-level education officials on guidance services and gender-responsive learner-centred pedagogy. According to a local official, teenage pregnancies dropped in 2022 and students' confidence and self-esteem increased as a result of the project.

An award initiative at the country level – The *UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education* – supports innovative projects **supporting girls to pursue a career in the field of their choice**. Funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China, the prize is conferred annually to two laureates with an award of US\$50,000 each to help further their work in the area of girls' and women's education.

The 2022 recipients were the projects *Room to Read Cambodia's Girls' Education Programme*, which promotes girls' education in low-income communities, and the *Girls' Livelihood and Mentorship Initiative* (GLAMI), which helps Tanzanian girls at risk of dropout through crucial school transitions. In 2023, the laureates of the prize were the China Children and Teenagers' Fund for the *Spring Bud Project*, which promotes equitable, inclusive and quality education for girls adolescents and the Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education's (PAGE) for the *Star Schools Programme*, which helps girls to overcome challenges to go to school in some of Pakistan's most challenging contexts.



© GLAMI Tanzania*

Providing access for girls and women to education opportunities in STEM

Women represent only one quarter of employees in artificial intelligence and 15 per cent of engineering employees in the 20 leading economies.¹⁶ In response to such alarming inequalities, UNESCO is taking action to support countries to deliver gender-transformative STEM education. It is also committed to raise girls' and women's interest and participation in these fields by promoting informed policies and strategies to reduce the gender gap in STEM.

Grounding global standards on STEM at the country level has taken root with UNESCO's regional support in Latin America and the Caribbean to **shape policies and strategies to improve girls' participation in STEM fields**. Over the last decade, different actors in the region, ranging from government institutions, universities and research centres to civil society and international agencies as well as private companies have launched a range of initiatives aimed at reducing the gender gap in STEM, however an overall understanding of the impact was missing.

In response, UNESCO, in 2022, mapped 184 initiatives in STEM with a gender focus in 16 countries of Latin America in order to identify gaps and opportunities in STEM education.¹⁷ The findings revealed that most of the initiatives in the region are implemented by CSOs and foundations with funds from governments and companies. The initiatives mainly address STEM as a whole with very few initiatives that address math. At the regional level, activities target students between 12 and 18 years old with very little focus on early childhood education. The regional mapping also found that there exist few institutional networks at the regional level on STEM and gender. Based on this revelatory research, UNESCO is now advising governments on the development of gender-transformative STEM initiatives and supporting coordination across partners.

The Tanzanian NGO GLAMI works with 42 partner schools across 11 districts, and was awarded the 2022 UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education.

Box 4

Inspiration for Girls to Participate in STEM in Brazil

#EducaSTEM2030, a nationwide movement launched in 2022 in Brazil, promotes girls and women in STEM through student and teacher online training.

In Brazil, 31 per cent of STEM professional posts are occupied by women; an under-representation that begins with STEM education.

The project developed an online teacher-training in Portuguese that offers a 20-hour self-instructional course on STEM education with a focus on gender equality and transdisciplinary open practices. As a result, 600 secondary school teachers and 600 students have increased capacities in gender-transformative STEM and 1,300 municipal education officers have improved awareness about the importance of girls' and women's role in STEM.

Teachers and administrators are better equipped with newly developed digital pedagogical materials that feature inspiring women in STEM fields. To encourage grassroots mobilisation for girls in STEM, CineSolar, the first travelling cinema in Brazil powered by renewable energy, has reached – with themed sessions on “Girls in STEM” – over 14,735 beneficiaries in vulnerable hard-to-reach communities, including the Amazonas. A second phase of the project will be launched in 2023 to scale up the work.

*“ I want to be an engineer.
I love math. I love calculus.
I love numbers since
I was little, but I felt
discouraged because
it is a predominantly
male area.*

Rayssa Pocine

17 years old, Morpará, Brazil

Similar to STEM, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has the potential to promote the productive participation of women in the labor market, equipping them with the necessary skills to undertake jobs of the future. This potential remains largely unfulfilled for technical and vocational training in certain occupational sectors, particularly those in the STEM sectors. UNESCO supports Member States in **mainstreaming gender equality in TVET policies, strategies, and programmes** so that gender equality considerations positively influence policy priorities and spending patterns.

In 2022, the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) supported 52 TVET trainers and managers from 22 TVET institutions in Africa (Ghana, Madagascar, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda) and Latin America and the Caribbean (Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Grenada, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru), to deliver post-pandemic career guidance and increase the participation and progression of young women and girls into the workforce through STEM-related TVET. Gender-responsive career guidance is intended to inform, empower and give confidence to girls to pursue STEM careers; solve students' challenges; clarify misconceptions; provide emotional and educational support; increase the scope of choosing careers and avoid exploitation and abuse at work.



Coping with the COVID-19 crisis: getting girls back to school

COVID-19 had a devastating effect on women's and girls' access to education and heightened already existing barriers related to sociocultural, economic, and financial factors. For example, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in East Asia and the Pacific, 15 million women and girls were not enrolled in school. UNESCO estimated in 2021 that 1.2 million additional girls in that region are at risk of not returning to school.¹⁸ Further, COVID-19 exacerbated factors that gravely impact girls' educational opportunities, such as child marriage and pregnancy, exploitation and abuse, lower economic and financial capacity, and the digital divide.

The negative impact of the pandemic on equality and inclusion is compounded in two ways. First, the pandemic had serious effects on other elements of children's lives, including their physical and mental health, nutrition, and protection. For example, as of March 2022, about 100 million children in the Asia-Pacific region missed school meals and a hungry child cannot learn effectively. Second, while each factor of exclusion is harmful in itself, the harm is multiplied when a child experiences multiple forms of exclusion – for example, a girl from a non-dominant language group, living in a remote area or with a disability.

Advancing gender equality in education was at the heart of UNESCO's vision as it created the *Global Education Coalition (GEC)* in 2020, an umbrella initiative to **launch strategies around the globe in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the right to education for all**. The Coalition is now reacting to other emergency situations across the world and acting as a platform to advance SDG 4. It brings together 208 partners from the UN family, civil society, academia and the private sector working together to address gender gaps in learning during school closures, including health, protection and education issues that can negatively impact girls' and boys' access to education.

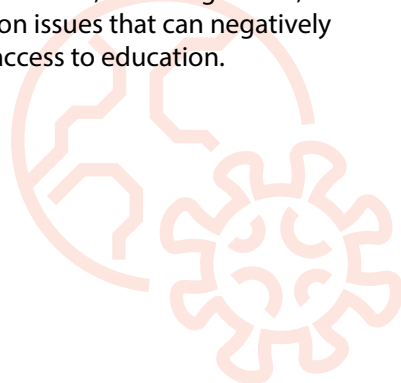
“School closures could lead to an additional 10 million early marriages of girls over the next 10 years. We must therefore give girls the tools they need to succeed – and create an environment that allows them to do so.

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

The initiatives are helping to 'build back equal' by strengthening education systems to be gender-transformative, equitable and resilient. To date, the Coalition has engaged in 233 projects across 112 countries impacting 400 million learners and 12 million teachers around **three central pillars: connectivity, teachers and gender equality**. One of the aims of the GEC is to support five million marginalized girls and young women in 20 countries with the highest gender disparities in education, through training and advocacy by 2025. In 2023, it has reached 1,880,552 of the most marginalized girls and women.

The GEC campaign *Keeping Girls in the Picture* has supported girls' learning continuity and return to school after the pandemic-related closures since 2020. In 2022-2023, the campaign has been rolled out in national contexts, reaching deep into communities through local advocacy, the mobilization of youth networks and community radios and capacity building. In Asia, the campaign produced contextualized materials in Laos and Viet Nam and held activities in 24 schools. The campaign also conducted training programmes, such as training young women community radio volunteers in Laos who produced 18 radio pieces, targeting 11 social norms challenging girls' education. The result was a positive impact with changed perceptions in 30 villages. This biennium also marked progress in communications and outreach. In Zambia, for instance, the *Let's Talk* campaign reached over 4.6 million people, expanding community awareness of the re-entry policy and ensuring teenage mothers' return to school.



Global Campaign Keeps Girls in the Picture in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa was the focus of a targeted multi-country project supported by Wallonia-Brussels International that leveraged the *Keeping Girls in the Picture* campaign to reach nine million people (six million girls and young women) about the importance of girls education in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

In Nigeria, the project was designed around the mobilization of community radio serving rural and remote areas, youth networks and community leaders, reaching across 820 communities and 24 local government areas. To reach local communities, materials were adapted and translated into four local languages. As a result of the project, women changemakers empowered with skills and resources are now driving change for girls' education in their communities, building back more equal societies. To amplify and share the impacts seen in Nigeria, the photo exhibition *Keeping Girls in the Picture in Nigeria – Portraits of Changemakers* was presented in October 2022 at UNESCO Headquarters as part of celebrations for the International Day of the Girl.



© UNESCO/Aderonke Alade

Thanks to the Keeping Girls in the Picture campaign, Gloria Ayodeji, from Nigeria, started an initiative to connect girls with mentors to learn design skills.

“ Education connects girls with people and activities that build their skills and empower them to lead change. With an education, girls know their rights and stand up for what is right.

Gloria

Youth activist from Ibadan, Nigeria

In Mali, more than 30 caravans travelled to hard-to-reach areas to meet with more than 77 communities, sparking discussions to raise awareness with girls, community members, village leaders and parents on the importance of education. The initiative reached 250,000 people, including more than 196,000 girls and women, 3,000 village and religious leaders, and 2,300 youth. With the support of the Ministry of Education and the Education Academy of Timbuktu, and from partners such as the Union of Free Radio and Television Broadcasters of Mali, campaign messages and materials were translated into more than 10 local and national languages to increase local-level engagement.

In Senegal, the project mobilized youth networks, parent-teacher associations, local leaders and women's groups through community-based action, and local and national radio and television platforms. Forums and campaign materials and resources were adapted and translated into three local languages. In 2022, the project reached over 30,000 community members, 10,000 girls and young women, 3,000 village chiefs and 50,000 people nationwide through radio programmes.

In Benin, local monitoring committees were established at the village level following the awareness-raising sessions to ensure girls continue their education. With the support of Benin's Ministry of Pre-school and Primary Education, these efforts mobilized 11 communes of Alibori and Borgou, representing an estimated 1.2 million people. It also reached over 560 schools including more than 172,300 girls in primary school and 58,000 adolescent girls in secondary level.

ASSESSING RESULTS FOR 2022-2023

UNESCO advances gender equality in education, leveraging its mandate to reduce inequalities and promote learning and creative societies in the digital age through quality education for all (Strategic Objective 1). UNESCO is doing so by activating its five main functions – as a laboratory of ideas, a clearing house, a standard-setter, a catalyst for international cooperation and a capacity builder – in order to:

- Widen access to equitable, gender-responsive education and learning, including in STEM;
- Support the formulation and implementation of laws, policies and strategies for gender equality in and through education;
- Provide gender-transformative teaching, content and learning opportunities;
- Equip the education community to reduce the gender gap in learning achievements and completion rates.

Results for 2022-2023 led to both system-wide transformation to benefit all learners and targeted interventions to empower girls and women through education in alignment with UNESCO's *Strategy for Gender Equality in and through Education (2019-2025)*. During this biennium, UNESCO's work considered the entire education process across learning environments and catalysed cooperation and partnerships to safeguard progress made on girls' and women's education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its original research and data collection targeted improvements in STEM initiatives and a push for gains on SDG4. UNESCO took a special focus with capacity building on gender equality in the countries with the greatest gender disparities in education in order to ensure girls and boys, women and men, have equal rights and opportunities for education and empowerment. Global campaigns leveraged communication strategies at the local and global levels to make sure girls stay in school, while international advocacy through summits and conferences put gender equality consistently on the table. With this, UNESCO continues to lay the groundwork so that education can fulfil its potential to give girls and boys the power and agency to positively shape their lives and futures.

UNESCO'S 2022-2023 MONITORING DATA

- **20 countries** (9 in Africa, 4 SIDS) are better positioned to improve **data collection**, knowledge generation and **policy dialogue around gender equality and education**
- **31 countries** (11 in Africa, 6 SIDS) are equipped to formulate and implement laws, policies, and **strategies to advance gender equality in and through education**
- **25 countries** (11 in Africa) have improved capacities to integrate **gender perspectives in curriculum development**
- **3 million learners** in 18 countries have access to **quality gender-transformative teaching and learning**
- **10 countries** (5 in Africa) have improved girls' and women's ability to gain digital skills and **access STEM education opportunities**
- **45 countries** (11 in Africa, 1 SIDS) have reviewed their national **STEM education systems with gender indicators**

Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2022-2023 linked to Strategic Objective 1.

STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE

2

**EMPOWER
WOMEN
IN SCIENCE
AND
TECHNOLOGY
FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION**





Only by tapping into all sources of knowledge, all sources of talent, can we unlock the full potential of science, and rise to the challenges of our time. The world needs science, science needs women.

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO works to promote opportunities for women and girls pursuing scientific careers, especially with a view to protecting the environment. It provides role models and mentors for young women scientists and advocates to empower them to contribute their knowledge on the sustainable use of natural resources and heritage. UNESCO also supports gender-responsive environmental action with a focus on biodiversity, water and oceans.

Work towards sustainable societies by preserving the environment through the promotion of science, technology and the natural heritage

EMPOWER WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP

ECOSYSTEMS & BIODIVERSITY

WATER & OCEANS



Contributing to SDG Target 5.5

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES



Women filled only **6%** of **110 leadership seats** at the 2022 Climate Change Conference **COP27**
(UNESCO, 2022)



13 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves train **women** on beekeeping
(UNESCO, 2023)

The **lack of clean water** claims the lives of **more than 800,000 women and girls** every year



(UN Women & UN DESA, 2022)



10% of Nobel Prizes in natural sciences

have been awarded to **women** since 2011
(UNESCO, 2023)



Only **26%** of 170 countries were actively **working on gender mainstreaming in water management** in 2020

(UN Women & UN DESA, 2021)

Worldwide, **women** account for

33% of **science researchers**

37% of **ocean science personnel**

(UNESCO, 2021, 2022)



STATE OF THE WORLD: SOLUTIONS TO THE INTENSE DEGRADATION OF THE PLANET'S NATURAL SYSTEMS ARE THREATENED BY BARRIERS TO GENDER EQUALITY

The world's natural systems are showing growing signs of stress that could trigger irreversible tipping points unless we reduce this pressure urgently. The demands of growing populations, the unchecked exploitation of natural resources, and increasing material consumption have upended the balance of natural systems. Humanity's harmonious relationship with nature, upheld by indigenous cultures around the world, is at risk of entirely disappearing and with other severe consequences. Biodiversity, both on land and in the ocean, is being lost at an alarming rate: it is estimated that one million of the current eight million known species on the planet are at risk of extinction.¹⁹ Extreme weather conditions like higher temperatures, fiercer storms, rising seas, acidic oceans and unpredictable flooding are all red flags for the more serious consequences of climate change. Interconnected with all of these crises is that of water, one of the Earth's most precious resources on which all life depends, which is under increasing stress from misuse, mismanagement, and commodification.

The degradation of the planet's natural systems has a disproportionate effect on women and girls, across multiple dimensions. When natural resources are strained, women and girls are affected differently and more severely. For instance, in the case of climate change, impacts on agriculture and more intense natural disasters lead to climate change-induced migrations where women and girls make up 80 per cent of those displaced. In the case of water access and use, an in-depth analysis by the UNESCO *World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP)* has shown that gender inequalities are high and persist at all levels, with serious implications for achieving sustainable development. As an example, in several low-income countries and especially for rural and indigenous communities, girls and women are primarily responsible for collecting water resources for household use, which means they often lose out on opportunities to go

to school or hold a job when they must search longer and farther for their household water. In Ethiopia, 45 per cent of families attributed difficulty in accessing water as the reason for not enrolling their daughters in school.²⁰ Other critical challenges include inadequate sanitation services and pollution, as well as shortcomings in transboundary cooperation.

These profound inequalities that intertwine gender inequality and natural resource pressures are rooted in long-standing and socially-constructed norms that make women more vulnerable in crisis situations. In almost all cases, **women have unequal access to and control over natural resources, they receive an unequal distribution of benefits**, and they have less decision-making power over the use of those resources. The case of agriculture illustrates this pointedly: women represent 64 per cent of agricultural workers in low-income countries but less than 15 per cent own their land.²¹ That lack of access to a resource, in this case land, means they cannot reap the ultimate benefits of that resource nor have a voice or leadership in what happens to that resource. And when calamity hits from climate change effects, without land ownership they have no choice but to be the first ones to migrate.

In 2020,
only 26%
of 170 countries
were actively
working on gender
mainstreaming
in water
management



It is clear that women offer unique knowledge and experiences that can help solve climate and ecosystem crises. It is more than just a matter of numbers, as women make up roughly half of the world's human population and therefore represent a huge part of crucial human resources, ideas and innovations that can lead to solutions. Beyond that, women in most communities are the keepers of indispensable ancestral and experimental knowledge. **Indigenous women especially have an important understanding of sustainable land and natural resource management practices.**

By combining the traditional and indigenous with today's grasp of new technologies, the potential for innovation takes on whole new dimensions. Finally, the experience that women and girls have of living the severe and specific negative impacts of climate change and the breakdown of natural systems means they have unique perspectives not only on where the problems lie but how to match those challenges with solutions.

And so it is particularly alarming that, given the severity of our ecosystems' crises and women's unharnessed potential to contribute in an area they are uniquely positioned to do so, women and girls continue to be marginalized in the sciences and natural resource management. **Women are largely under-represented in decision-making processes at all levels.** Despite the fact that in certain countries only 56 per cent of men consider climate change a serious problem – in comparison to 83 per cent of women – women filled only seven of 110 leadership seats (6%) at COP27 in November 2022, and almost all the senior public roles were taken by men.²² In local water management, it has been shown that involving women in planning and implementing water systems creates services that better match their needs and resources and increases overall public acceptance and ownership. Although inclusive stakeholder participation promotes buy-in and ownership, very few women are involved in the governance of water resources.

Prof. Suzana Nunes, from Saudi Arabia, receiving the 2023 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science International Award from Prof. Catherine Ngila, L'Oréal-UNESCO Laureate 2021, in the presence of Jean-Paul Agon, Chairperson of L'Oréal and President of the Fondation L'Oréal, and Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO.



© UNESCO/Marie Etchegoyen

Women and girls face systemic barriers in the field of science that can limit their career advancements, including the lack of role models and adequate professional support as well as outright gender bias and discrimination that prevent them from accessing leadership positions. Although the number of women pursuing scientific careers is gradually rising, their absence is still notable, as women make up only 33 per cent of researchers worldwide, according to recent UNESCO data.²³ The glass ceiling continues to be a reality: only 18 per cent of senior scientific roles in Europe are held by women and only 12 per cent of the members of national science academies globally are women. Meanwhile, 10 per cent of Nobel Prizes in natural sciences have been awarded to women since 2011. Women are also less likely to obtain research grants than men, and when they do, they receive smaller amounts on average.²⁴

The role of women in ocean science, unfortunately, follows the same trend as other scientific fields, according to recent UNESCO data. The global average of women's participation as ocean science personnel is 37 per cent, but that average masks broad inequalities in some countries: only 7 per cent are women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo whereas women represent 72 per cent of personnel in Ireland. The rate is not any better when it comes to researchers, who often hold the key to innovative solutions. On average, only 38.6 per cent of total ocean science researchers are women, a similar level to that reported in 2017.²⁵

For the benefit of the health of our planet, **the tide must shift towards engaging women in a strategic way.** That begins with bringing girls and women into the natural sciences, specifically on water and ocean science, so they may bring knowledge and build capacities to find practical solutions and lead change towards a solutions paradigm. Gender equality in the sciences is crucial to bring diverse perspectives and innovative solutions to drive research in areas such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, climate adaptation and for building resilient communities. It includes engaging all women community members, as primary stakeholders, in resource management to improve strategies and policies. It also means advocating and raising the profile of existing and future women scientists, thought leaders and environmental agents of change as they show a way forward to conserve ecosystems and protect biodiversity on land and in our oceans.

In the **renewable energy sector**
Women represent
only **32%**
of the workforce



UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

To address the nexus of gender inequality and environmental action needed to address the climate crises, UNESCO placed women and girls at the forefront of its work in science, promoting women's leadership and increasing their representation in the fields of science as a primary strategy to confront threats to our natural systems, whether on land, water or in the oceans. Its main lines of action are to:

- Advance the careers of women in leadership and decision-making positions in science;
- Ensure that women and girls lead actions to preserve and protect ecosystems and biodiversity;
- Address gender inequalities in the fields of water and oceans.

In 2022 and 2023 UNESCO's action focused on *setting standards* at the global level for policy change, *producing and disseminating data and knowledge* to inform policy change, and implementing innovative programmes and projects to *make a difference at the country level*.

Advancing the careers of women in leadership and decision-making positions in science

To promote women's professional access to leadership and decision-making roles in the sciences, UNESCO tackles the issue of underrepresentation from multiple angles. First, it provides direct research grants and access to research programmes to women scientists already in the field; then it raises the visibility of women and opportunities in the sciences so that women can advance their careers and access positions of decision-making; it promotes role models, mentorship and networking opportunities; and finally, it actively trains women and girls in scientific fields related to the environment and finding innovative solutions for sustainable development.

UNESCO is **empowering more women to become scientists** so that they may participate in solving the major challenges of the environmental and climatic crises through the L'Oréal-UNESCO *For Women in Science* programme. This initiative has rewarded scientific excellence for 25 years by presenting international awards of 100,000 euros each year to five outstanding women to further support their research and raise awareness of their fields of study. Altogether, the programme has benefited 127 International Laureates, 330 International Rising Talents and more than 4,000 young women researchers, half of them in developing countries. The programme puts women scientists in the spotlight and effectively supports and promotes their careers. It also raises awareness of the challenges faced by women in science and promotes policies and initiatives to address these challenges, especially in critical areas like energy storage systems, hydrogen power systems, and quantum optics. Proof of its success is that six L'Oréal-UNESCO laureates have subsequently received the Nobel Prize in their field of expertise, the last two in 2023. In October 2023, Professor Anne L'Huillier, 2011 laureate, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, and Professor Katalin Karikó, 2022 laureate, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Professor Katalin Karikó, 2023 Nobel Prize Winner and 2022 L'Oréal-UNESCO Laureate, is recognized for her pioneering work on the development of a non-inflammatory mRNA that was used to develop the COVID-19 vaccines.



© L'Oréal Foundation*

Box 1

A Joint Call for Action for Gender Equality in the Sciences

The Global Forum *The Future for Women and Girls in Science* took place at UNESCO Headquarters in June 2023 as part of the week of events organized to mark the 25th anniversary of the L'Oréal-UNESCO *For Women in Science* programme. It was convened to highlight the achievements and challenges for women in science over the past several decades and discuss ways to close gender gaps. This special event gathered prominent and inspiring young scientists, researchers, university students, Member States, UN representatives, and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors. The conclusions of the Global Forum are summarized in a *Joint Call for Action* to guide the future work of UNESCO and its partners to close the gender gap in science in the coming decade.

2022 OWSD Awardee Ashani Savinda Ranathunga from Sri Lanka is a proponent of the “waste to wealth” concept, which turns locally-available industrial and agricultural waste into man-made soil for low-cost ‘green’ construction projects.



© Monash University

This initiative has also built a network of 53 national and regional L'Oréal-UNESCO *For Women in Science Young Talents* programmes covering over 110 countries. More than 250 early-career women worldwide are supported each year with research grants to enable them to pursue their research in institutions at home or abroad and gives them access to targeted leadership training. A new Young Talents Programme covering the Caribbean region was launched in May 2023 to recognise and support two young women scientists each year.

UNESCO is also advancing the professional outlook of women in the sciences through the programmes and actions of its Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD).²⁶ With a special focus on women scientists from the Global South, OWSD empowers women as agents of change in their communities towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. With the support of almost 9,000 members who are committed women scientists working in the Global South, OWSD plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality in science, **encouraging scientific research, building networks of women scientists, and fostering innovation in developing countries.** The initiatives undertaken by the OWSD spread across 51 national chapters of the organisation. In 2022 alone, five new chapters were developed in Latin America and the Caribbean and two in Africa.²⁷

OWSD fills a critical gap by providing more than 200 programmes and activities, and reaching 6,000 people to **elevate the work of women scientists and women and girls aspiring to go into science fields.** In 2022, it provided a competitive 25 fellowships to women scientists pursuing PhDs, including 16 from countries most lagging in science and technology (STLCs) and celebrated the graduation of 28 women with PhDs, of which 84 per cent came from LDCs.²⁸ In parallel, the annual *OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Awards* recognise the achievements of women scientists from the most disadvantaged regions. The most recent six awardees have been working in the areas of climate change, microbiology, geotechnical engineering, aquatic ecology, hydrology, tropical forest ecology and ecophysiology. The recipients heralded from a diverse set of countries, including Bangladesh, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Yemen.

Beyond awards and fellowships, OWSD offered leadership and professional development for women scientists on topics ranging from grant writing to networking and collaboration opportunities and also led awareness-raising campaigns to promote the recognition and visibility of women in STLCs.

UNESCO also grants support to women scientists at the national level through **specific operational programmes**. For instance, in 2022, UNESCO produced new data and a synopsis report entitled “A Braided River: The Universe of Indian Women in Science” critically examining persistent challenges, as well as successes within academia, research, and industry in India and including actionable proposals to retain women scientists in science jobs. Building on this new knowledge, UNESCO also implemented awareness-raising and capacity-building activities addressed to 100 young Indian scientists aimed at narrowing the gap in women’s participation in science and business after completing their higher education studies.

In the field of **science, technology and information (STI) policy**, UNESCO delivered a capacity-building session in February 2023 on gender equality in STI for policy-makers from more than 15 countries, in partnership with the Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States Organisation (OACPS), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. To complement this regional initiative, UNESCO hosted the 8th annual Multi-stakeholders STI Forum, held in May 2023 at the UN in New York, where participants discussed policy initiatives and collaborations towards closing the gender gap in science and technology.

“*This award is an inspiration to me. I am joyful and honoured by the recognition of my work; but I also feel the responsibility to keep pushing boundaries for the women who come behind us.*”

Dr. Heyddy Calderon

2022 recipient of the OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Award, from Nicaragua.

Ensuring that women and girls lead action to preserve and protect ecosystems and biodiversity

In order to engage women and girls as leaders to protect the planet’s ecosystems, UNESCO focuses on three strategies. First, it strengthens the resilience of vulnerable women and girls in the face of climate change; it recognises and promotes women as agents of change to address environmental crises; and it integrates indigenous women’s knowledge and living heritage practices into management systems to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems.

Two of UNESCO’s long-term flagship programmes that focus on ecosystems and indigenous contributions to biodiversity – the *Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme* and the *LINKS Programme* – have been carefully mainstreamed to ensure that women and girls have a central role.

The *Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme*, launched in 1971 promotes the conservation of natural resources through rational use. It places women and girls as key actors in the preservation and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity. This vision is grounded in the 748 UNESCO biosphere reserves in 134 countries in which UNESCO actively supports women and girl’s roles to promote their traditional knowledge and enhance their economic and social empowerment. **Innovative initiatives pave the way for pragmatic and concrete involvement of women and girls in the governance and operation of natural resources.** For instance, in the Trifinio-Fraternidad Biosphere Reserve in Honduras, a women’s network in the local municipality, which serves as part of the Local Management Committee of the Reserve, launched a series of workshops in 2022-2023 on gender, youth, and water in order to contribute local knowledge of the territory to assess the challenges of women’s involvement in the management of shared water resources in the Ocotepeque-Citala Transboundary Aquifer.

Tapping into the *MAB Programme* principles, the UNESCO project *Promoting Bio and Geodiversity for Sustainable Societies in Central Asia* in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, has **built capacities and promoted the leadership of women scientists in the field of geoscience to improve natural resource management.**

In South Africa, 19 women strengthened their capacities in communications through a training workshop in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve in July 2022 in order to share their stories and educate others about their ecological restoration and climate change initiatives. The *Be Resilient Programme*, which focuses on Biosphere Reserves as observatories for climate change adaptation in Southern Africa has undertaken a comprehensive gender analysis through the Gender Research Alliance and produced a framework for mainstreaming gender equality in three on-going projects on disaster risk reduction in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The *MAB Programme* has also proved to be an effective awareness-raising platform for the integration of women and girls, as it was for the 2022 International Mountain Day, when the World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves celebrated the theme “Women Move Mountains” as a way of highlighting how women make a difference in understanding and protecting mountain ecosystems.

At the governance level –both at the global and regional levels – the *MAB Programme* has advanced gender equality and gender parity. Of special note is the election of Alejandra Reyes Pereira (Honduras), from the Instituto de Conservación Forestal as President of the Ibero-American and Caribbean Biosphere Reserve Network (IberoMAB) in January 2022. The new Board emphasizes the issue of gender equity in biosphere reserves, which will be a key pillar of their four-year term.

Gender equality is also a key dimension of the *LINKS Programme* which provides technical assistance to Member States, indigenous peoples, local communities and scientists to mobilize indigenous and local knowledge to address environmental challenges. With a special focus on climate adaptation and prevention of climate extremes, *LINKS* mainstreams gender equality in all of its work, including in the development of publications, national ecosystem assessments, capacity building and the participation of indigenous peoples in policy and knowledge generation processes. In doing so, it **fosters the integration of indigenous women’s knowledge and living heritage practices into management systems to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems**. For instance, in Viet Nam the *LINKS programme* strengthened national capacities and supported coordination across institutions responsible for cultural management and rural development so that policies can be coordinated on local infrastructure development in rural areas. The project empowered local women who practise and safeguard living heritage at the local level and proposed policies that can enhance women’s roles in how living heritage is integrated into rural areas reforms.



© UNESCO ROSA

Citizen scientists identify macroinvertebrates to assess river health in the Cape Winelands Biosphere Reserve (CWBR) through the UNESCO project *Be Resilient South Africa*.



Box 2

Women for Bees in the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve in Cambodia

The *Women for Bees* 5-year programme is co-implemented by UNESCO and Guerlain to support pollination and women pollinators within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Its three focus areas are: the training of women beekeepers to ensure sharing of knowledge and practices; the creation of a network of women beekeepers supported scientifically and technically to ensure sustainable and economically beneficial beekeeping activities; and the analysis and measurement of the benefits of pollination for local ecosystems.

Women beekeepers become part of a global network with dedicated technical support, with an important role in knowledge transmission. The programme also seeks to develop the interactions between humans and biodiversity by providing capacity-building opportunities to communities living in biosphere reserves.

In 2022, Angelina Jolie launched *Women for Bees' 2022 training programme* in Cambodia for 11 women beekeepers including in the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve. This training is one of many trainings around apitourism, beekeeping, and awareness raising on good practices in honey harvesting. Feedback surveys highlighted that women beekeepers feel more confident to continue their own beekeeping projects and are motivated by the

economic aspect. UNESCO is also working with partners to conduct small-scale beekeeping pilots at other locations in Cambodia to create a women beekeeping community and transfer knowledge in the development of a roadmap for a National Plan for Sustainable Beekeeping.

Similar training courses to empower women have been launched in the newly designated Gishwati-Mukura Landscape Biosphere Reserve in Rwanda and in Kafa Biosphere Reserve in Ethiopia.



A participant in the UNESCO-Guerlain Women for Bees programme in Cambodia checks her bee colony as part of the initiative to foster biodiversity conservation and ecotourism development.

© UNESCO/A Juncadeilla

Innovative women leaders are featured in UNESCO's *Green Citizens* initiative, which provides a unique **online platform to bridge UNESCO's scientific expertise with local citizen solutions** and young people's actions to confront climate change. A majority of the 150 citizen-driven, impactful, and replicable local initiatives across 65 countries currently identified by UNESCO to preserve the environment spotlight women and girls as drivers of change. The *Poder y Luz Maya* initiative brings energy-efficient solutions to underserved communities in Guatemala and specifically promotes gender equality through the participation of women rural community leaders affected by climate change. It also empowers women by promoting access to information mechanisms, and the use of new technologies to ensure sustainability. In a similar fashion, the *Trees4Tunisia* project empowers rural women in Tunisia through reforestation and agroecological techniques to generate income from reforestation and restoring soil biodiversity. The initiative is responsible for planting 700,000 trees, empowering over 200 women farmers, and establishing 3 women's cooperatives.

Efforts to **support women as agents of change to face environmental challenges** are also reflected in the *UNESCO World Academy of Sciences (TWAS)* for the advancement of science in developing countries. In 2022, TWAS and the Elsevier Foundation announced in the framework of the COP27 eight winning teams of women living and conducting scientific work in a STLC for scientific projects that have the potential to produce tangible change. The winning teams received grants of around US\$25,000 for projects with three common themes: to strengthen gender equity; to address the climate-related needs of local communities; and to transfer knowledge from scientific research to real-life scenarios. The eight ongoing projects include a range of initiatives, such as establishing sustainable home-gardens in Guatemala, advancing climate literacy among women in Nepal, and empowering women economically through agroforestry in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Other projects are being implemented in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nicaragua, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda.

Gender equality is a top priority of UNESCO's *International Geoscience Programme (IGCP)*, which recognises the **critical role that gender plays in advancing scientific knowledge in Earth sciences and geological diversity** – often referred to as the silent partner of biodiversity. The IGCP programme has narrowed the gender gap over the past eight years by raising the proportion of women project leaders from 19 per cent in 2015 to 42 per cent in 2023. The programme will keep promoting the participation and engagement of girls in geoscience and the retention of women geoscientists in related careers.




UNESCO **#Educatio...** · 16/04/2023 ...

Women & girls are bearing the brunt of war, humanitarian emergencies & climate disasters.

Why do we continue to look away? Let's take action & stand up for **#GenderEquality** — now!

Our Management of Social Transformations Programme helps tackle this issue:
on.unesco.org/most



5
 49
 156
 23,8k

UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme is making inroads on mainstreaming gender equality across its initiatives.

Box 3

Adventures in Science with Women and Glaciers in Central Asia

As global temperatures rise and glaciers are melting worldwide, the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) is increasing. In response, UNESCO launched in 2022 a regional project which allowed nine young women (18-25 years old) from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to delve into the scientific issues behind GLOF at the Golubin Glacier in the Ala Archa National Park in Kyrgyzstan. During a 10-day expedition, a women-led team trained the participants in scientific methods and supported them in the development and presentation of their own scientific projects. The participants learned about climate and environmental changes as well as natural hazards and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in high mountain regions.

Besides targeted capacity building on science, the programme also encouraged critical thinking, curiosity, and expression with the goal to empower a new generation of strong, aware and educated women explorers, scientists and leaders. The project was implemented in collaboration with Girls on Ice Switzerland, the Central Asian Institute of Applied Geosciences (CAIAG), and the University of Fribourg and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

In partnership with Adventure of Science: Women and Glaciers in Central Asia, UNESCO brings a team of young women from across Central Asia to a scientific expedition on the Golubin Glacier in Kyrgyzstan.



© Adventure of Science: Women and Glaciers in Central Asia*

Addressing gender inequalities in the fields of freshwater and oceans

Achieving gender equality in the water domain is crucial in view of the global commitments enshrined in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and in other international gender and water-related agendas. UNESCO leads in this area with a focus on three strategies. First, it generates new knowledge, collects and analyses sex-disaggregated environmental data in order to inform national and regional policies on water and oceans. Second, it trains women in water and ocean sciences and empowers women to take leadership positions in these areas. Finally, it raises awareness at a global level on gender issues, discrimination, and stereotypes encountered in the fields of water and ocean sciences in order to influence the international agenda.

Making gender-sensitive data available and accessible is a key element of UNESCO's strategy to provide scientific evidence on gender inequalities in the field of water and inform policy change. The *UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP)* has developed water and gender indicators, a reference methodology, and practical techniques and tools which are integrated in the UNESCO-WWAP Gender Disaggregated Water Data Toolkit.²⁹ In this biennium alone, the application of this toolkit has been accelerated with capacity development activities and operational projects benefiting 104 experts (60 per cent of women) from 21 countries. Specific trainings tailored to different needs of countries and regions helped to better understand gender concepts in the context of collecting sex-disaggregated water data, conducting gender surveys and analysis on water-related topics, and integrating a gender component into water projects and policies.

Box 4

Gender-Specific Data for Water Policies in the Pacific's Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The *Accelerating Sanitation for all in Asia and the Pacific* project, launched in July 2022, integrates the needs of women and girls into plans and policies on water by strengthening the capacities of governmental institutions and water utilities to collect gender-sensitive data. The project, developed by the UNESCO *World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP)* and the Asian Development Bank, addresses women and girls' needs related to the impact of climatic extremes and demand for sanitation.

The first phase focused on training 20 representatives from 12 Pacific SIDS on the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated water data with gender-responsive indicators based on the UNESCO WWAP Toolkit. In the second phase, these new skills were applied on a country basis, starting with Fiji, where the Water Authority and the Meteorological Service collected and analysed water, climate, and gender data. In 2023, a household survey to inform local policymaking revealed important details about water management and gender roles that affect local water use. For instance, villagers rely predominantly on rainwater for drinking and on groundwater for other daily tasks, while women are responsible for fetching water from wells, and men are primarily designated as decision makers. Concrete examples from Fiji on how to collect and apply data to inform planning and policymaking around water issues will be used to expand the project to other small islands in the Pacific.

An expert from the Water Authority of Fiji interviews a resident from the village of Solevu in the framework of the project Accelerating Sanitation for All in Asia and the Pacific.



© UNESCO WWAP/Laura Imburgia

In the current biennium, UNESCO also released the first study of its kind for the Caribbean on water management and gender, entitled “Water Management and Gender in the Jamaican Rural Breadbasket” (2022), followed by the report “Water Management and Gender in the Rural Farming Ecosystem of Belize” (2023). By expanding its unique role in research and knowledge production, UNESCO sheds important light on new facts on gender that can inform policy and programming on the ground as well as advocacy at the global level.

The **training of women water professionals** has become an important dimension of UNESCO’s *Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP)* and its strategy *Science for a Water Secure World in a Changing Environment (2022-2029)*. One training worked with women on the interpretation of satellite images to forecast climate-related events such as floods or droughts in order to take preventive measures. Under a project on water security in Kenya, the IHP ensured the equal participation and representation of women and men and developed awareness-raising campaigns to change behaviours, challenge gender stereotypes and foster equal opportunities for water utilities that are safe, sustainable, and well-managed.

UNESCO is **promoting equal opportunities for the participation and leadership of women at all levels of ocean science** through its programme *Empowering Women for the Ocean Decade*. As part of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) and in line with the results of the “2020 Global Ocean Science Report,” UNESCO is launching a series of projects developed with a range of partners to get women into the field of water and ocean sciences by accessing education and technology, mentorship, scholarships, networking and public recognition of their contributions. In this same spirit, the *Empowering Women in Hydrography* project, implemented with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) in Monaco, is enabling more women to participate equitably in the field of hydrography and to access leadership positions. Currently, only 6 out of 97 Member States of the IHO have a national hydrographer who is a woman. In Brazil, as a result of *The Women in Blue: Gender Equity for Ocean* project implemented with the Federal University of São Paulo, women are increasing their participation in ocean affairs and climate change and policy discussions.

Box 5

Women’s Contributions to Ocean Sciences

The *Donna di Mare Award* was launched in 2022 and is the first award to celebrate ocean women. In partnership with the Donna di Mare Association, the award focuses on the fundamental woman-sea relationship, to reveal the possibility of a new vision of entrepreneurial activities with a gender perspective. The 2022 *Donna Di Mare Award* was granted to Marta Musso, a young Italian biologist for her travelling project to popularise science and ocean education that aims to tell the story of the sea from the plankton’s point of view.



Marta Musso receives the 2022 Donna di Mare Award for her efforts to popularise science and ocean education.

“ I wanted to start from the small, the invisible, the microscopic to tell the story of our sea and bridge the gap between us and the environment... the project can be implemented both by individuals and through social media, creating a large community.

Marta Musso, Woman of the Sea 2022

“ We recognise the need to address gender data gaps and agree to strengthen the provision of gender-disaggregated data on water to promote gender equality in water-related areas and take positive note of the multi-party Call to Action to Accelerate Gender Equality in Water.

Excerpt from the Dushanbe Declaration adopted in June 2022 as part of the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development

As part of the UNESCO Green Citizens initiative, Agustina Besada and Rocío González set up Unplastify, an Argentinian social enterprise focusing on local action and systemic change to reduce single-use plastic.



© Unplastify*

A third – and critical – strategy lies in UNESCO’s role as an **advocate to influence and advance the international agenda around gender equality and freshwater and ocean sciences**. UNESCO’s main global advocacy tool to accelerate achievement toward SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation is the United Nations World Water Development Report. Initiated in 2015, this flagship publication of UN-Water brings together over 70 UN agencies and partners and supports the mainstreaming of gender issues throughout its coverage. Most recently published in 2023, it highlights not only challenges but also opportunities for the empowerment of women and girls in the water domain.³⁰ Coordinated and published by the UNESCO *World Water Assessment Programme* (WWAP) on behalf of the UN-Water family, the Report provides decision makers with tools to formulate and implement sustainable water policies.

Likewise, the UNESCO WWAP Call for Action to Accelerate Gender Equality in the Water Domain aims to **raise awareness, dismantle stereotypes, and urge government institutions and funding agencies to commit concrete support** to advance gender equality in the water domain. The collection of sex-disaggregated data in the field of water is

prioritised to highlight and address gender gaps and convince policymakers to take urgent measures. The Call for Action is supported by a multistakeholder coalition that includes over 160 members from 62 institutions, 23 Member States and 4 regional organisations which are taking the lead in implementing voluntary actions to accelerate gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment.

ASSESSING RESULTS FOR 2022-2023

UNESCO is taking gender equality to bear on all aspects of its mandate to work towards sustainable societies by preserving the environment through the promotion of science, technology and the natural and living heritage (Strategic Objective 2). It is pushing past the gender divide by promoting gender transformative actions to ensure that:

- Women's careers in decision-making positions in sciences are advanced and role models are promoted;
- Capacities on gender transformative STI policies and Open Science policies are built;
- Women's and girls' action for and resilience to sustainable management of natural resources are enhanced; and
- Gender responsive water and ocean's management and governance are promoted.

Results for 2022-2023 can be found across all regions in UNESCO's research, advocacy and programmatic work. UNESCO has notably supported the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and the production of new knowledge to identify specific barriers faced by women and girls, inform evidence-based policies and monitor progress towards closing the gender gap in sciences, and in particular in the fields of biodiversity, freshwater and oceans. Mentorship, grants, awards and scholarships have been scaled up to provide equal access to quality scientific education, promote women's professional empowerment and participation in leadership positions, and tackle implicit bias in academic and professional settings. UNESCO has thus supported strategic funding opportunities targeted towards women in science, particularly in underrepresented fields related to environmental action as well in developing countries, and the integration of women and girls into natural resource management. Multistakeholder collaboration and partnerships have driven UNESCO's efforts to influence the international agenda to make gender equality in sciences a powerful catalyst for progress in addressing urgent global environmental challenges.

UNESCO'S 2022-2023 MONITORING DATA

- **7 initiatives** implemented in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have **advanced the careers of young women scientists** and given visibility to their innovations and technological research
- **11 countries** (8 in Africa, 1 SIDS) were supported to develop **inclusive gender-transformative STI policies**
- **62 countries** (6 in Africa, 13 SIDS) with strengthened capacities to enhance their resilience to, and **address the challenges faced by women and girls with regard to natural hazards and climate change**
- **10 gender-responsive scientific assessments** conducted and **4 Global Networks** supported to facilitate **transmission of local and indigenous knowledge by women** contributing to ecosystems and biodiversity monitoring
- **12 countries** (4 in Africa, 1 SIDS) supported to **apply gender responsive indicators in water management and governance**
- **10,000 people** (40% women and 800 youth) trained to **address complex water challenges with a focus on women and youth**

Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2022-2023 linked to Strategic Objective 2.

STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE

3

PROMOTE
INCLUSION
AND COMBAT
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE





We must be aware that there is a shadow pandemic right next to us.

A pandemic of violence that compromises gender equality and peace.

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO promotes inclusion to achieve sustainable development and build peaceful societies by tackling gender-based violence, discrimination and stereotypes, including in the digital environment. It works to equip learners and learning environments to be safe and healthy, improve women's working conditions, employment opportunities and economic, social and cultural rights, while also promoting gender equality in media and cultural sectors.

Build inclusive, just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage

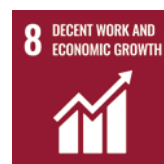
PROMOTE INCLUSION AND COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

DISCRIMINATION
&
STEREOTYPES

FREEDOM
OF EXPRESSION
& CREATION

DECENT WORK
& SOCIAL
PROTECTION

Contributing to SDG Targets 4.2a, 5.1, 5.2, 5.6, 8.5, 8.8, 16.10



KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

640 million women
have experienced
physical and sexual violence
(WHO, 2021)



9 out of 10
men and women
hold fundamental **biases**
against **women**
(UNDP, 2023)



74% of
violations against
women artists

and artworks
depicting women
were acts
of censorship
(Freemuse, 2020)



20% of women journalists
reported having been
attacked offline in connection
with **online violence**
(UNESCO, 2022)

Only
32% of national art prizes
24% of best director and
best screenplay awards
are awarded to **women**
(UNESCO, 2022)



60% of cultural education professionals
are **women** compared to

30% in the gaming industry



26% in audiovisual and interactive media



24% of World Heritage site managers



(UNESCO, 2018, 2021, 2022)

Although **130 countries**
have access to
information laws,
this fundamental right
remains elusive
for many **women**
(UNESCO, 2022)



STATE OF THE WORLD: STEREOTYPES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ERODE THE FOUNDATION OF GENDER EQUALITY

Discriminatory and pervasive social norms against women are the foundation from which gender inequality is sustained. Harmful social norms mean women and girls are marginalized, along with their ideas, their creativity and their contribution to their communities. If left unchecked, deep-rooted discrimination can take the extreme form of gender-based violence. When the physical and psychological safety of women and girls is at risk, they will go silent. They stop going to school and they are unable to work. Their voices are silenced as journalists, artists, scientists, professors and human rights advocates. They are unable to fulfill their potential as problem-solvers, leaders, and bridge-builders. When society allows that to happen, countries and the global community lose half of their human and creative capital, which has lasting impacts on every person's well-being and puts at risk the peace and sustainability that builds resilience for generations to come.

Stereotypes against women and girls are deeply-seeded in almost all corners of the world. Research shows that 9 out of 10 men and women hold fundamental biases against women.³¹ Nearly half the world's people believe that men make better political leaders than women, and two of five people believe that men make better business executives than women. Harmful gender biases and stereotypes are societal beliefs that limit the capacity of women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, to make choices about their lives, pursue professional careers and freely participate in society. It cannot be underestimated, also, how gender norms and stereotypes strongly influence inequalities that affect the health and well-being of children and young people.



Bullying affects
3 in 10
children and
cyberbullying
1 in 10

Counteracting stereotypes and discrimination against women and girls means building a gender-equal paradigm that demonstrates how all of society gains. Beyond changing individual behaviours, the research on biases against women illustrates the need for **policies and social, cultural, and legal structures to truly shift the social norms and beliefs towards a new paradigm**. The approach needs to be multi-pronged and strategic. It must creatively use education, culture, communication, sciences, sports and engage men and boys to help unravel these stereotypes and build new inclusive narratives that lay the foundation for peaceful and sustainable communities.

It all starts with education and partnering with schools where gender stereotypes and discrimination are often normalised. Schools are meant to be safe havens, where children meet friends, socialize and learn how to shape their futures. Yet 246 million learners experience violence in and around schools,³² seriously hampering their education, and their physical and mental health. Bullying and cyberbullying currently affects three in ten and one in ten children respectively.³³ And almost one in three has been physically attacked at least once in a year. Amid its different forms, school violence is often rooted in gender inequalities. Global data shows that one in four young women has already experienced violence by an intimate partner by the time they turn 24, indicating the presence of gender-based violence among school-aged children. Education in healthy, safe and inclusive environments has the power to break that cycle and give children and young people the tools to understand that all forms of gender-based violence are a violation of human rights.

Sports offer an important opportunity to address harmful gender norms and for promoting safe and healthy learners and learning environments. Currently, men and women remain unequally represented in sports, as athletes, in physical education at school and in the sports media industry, where traditional gender norms dominate the way women athletes are portrayed to the public.

Ending **harmful masculinity norms** could reduce **sexual violence** by **69%**

Currently, 85 per cent of girls do not practise enough physical activity³⁴ and even though 40 per cent of all sports participants are women, women's sports only receive 4 per cent of all sports media coverage.³⁵ As physical activity has positive impacts on mental and physical health and self-esteem, increasing girls and women's access to – and recognition in – sports will add to girls and women's overall well-being.

Men and boys play a crucial role in breaking down harmful gender stereotypes and achieving gender equality while promoting cohesion and integration. Indeed, evidence shows that men who adopt more progressive, healthier, and non-violent views of masculinity take better care of others and themselves, and improve their quality of life, well-being, and relationships. Research also suggests that ending harmful gender norms around masculinity could reduce sexual violence by at least 69 per cent and bullying by 40 per cent every year.³⁶

Gender-based violence continues to surge around the world at alarming levels: on average, a woman or girl is killed by someone in her own family every 11 minutes.³⁷

In addition to physical violence, the emergence of online gender-based violence, harassment, hate speech and gendered disinformation are increasingly being used to silence women and girls. Women journalists, artists, politicians, human rights defenders and gender equality advocates who speak out on feminist issues are particularly vulnerable as primary targets.

UNESCO's latest research shows that 73 per cent of women journalists had experienced online violence, numbers which have worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic. They face campaigns of online violence using legal notices, cyber stalking, hacking of social media accounts, and red tagging, among others.³⁸ Those online threats often merge into the physical world as 17 per cent of women journalists felt physically unsafe as a result of online violence. **Violence against women journalists causes mental and emotional trauma**, social ostracization, limitation on mobility, loss of jobs and income, criminalization, and prosecution, often resulting in many women journalists having to leave their countries and relocate.



Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, with Rossy de Palma, appointed UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Cultural Diversity in 2022.

Even less well-documented is violence against women in the cultural sector, where **women artists face very similar levels of varied forms of violence, both online and offline.** Particularly vulnerable are women members of the LGBTI community and artists with a minority ethnic background, who already face limited opportunities to express themselves through art and culture. In 2021, the NGO Freemuse recorded at least 17 women artists who faced legal consequences because of their creative activities, based on work that was deemed 'indecent'.³⁹

Systemic and structural gender inequalities translate into the underrepresentation of women

in almost all professional areas, and threaten their economic participation in every way. Their absence in leadership and governance structures negatively impact opportunities in social, cultural, political and economic fields. In 2022, women represented approximately 32 per cent of employees in senior management positions globally.⁴⁰ With few women leaders as role models, girls' aspirations to undertake leadership positions dwindle.

Globally, women face a gender pay gap estimated to be 20 per cent.⁴¹ Women's working conditions are more precarious than men's, due in part to the fact that they spend three times as many hours on unpaid domestic care work as men. Gender disparities in the fields of media and culture reflect those same inequalities. According to UNESCO data, in 85 per cent of countries, the number of women working part-time in cultural occupations was higher than the number of men.⁴² Research has recently highlighted how restricted opportunities are for women in capacity building and networking, mobility and access to funding in the cultural sector.⁴³ The situation is comparable in the news media, where it is estimated that another 67 years are needed to close the gender equality gap.⁴⁴

Women continue to be underrepresented in almost all cultural and media fields, particularly in leadership positions. Whereas women represent 48 per cent of workers in the culture sector, closer examination of the gender approach to heritage and creativity reveals a limited participation of women in decision-making. For instance, only one in four World Heritage site managers are women and they account for only 29 per cent of senior management, and 31 per cent of executive

management positions in the creative industries. Women also face horizontal segregation in the workforce: they represent just 30 per cent of employees in the gaming industry while they are over-represented in education or administrative tasks. As a result of the underrepresentation of women in the media and cultural sectors, **women's voices and works are still largely underrepresented and given little visibility.** For example, only 1 in 3 of the awards for main film categories of 60 major film festivals worldwide were given to female artists and producers and just 8 per cent of orchestra conductor performances were by women in 2019.⁴⁵

The potential is enormous for the positive effects of including women in the creation and production of media and cultural expressions

and engaging the quality and diversity of women's representation in these fields. Cultural expressions, heritage in all its forms, and media have a unique power to tell untold stories, subvert stereotypes, shed light on our collective values, and shape novel approaches and perspectives on the role of women in society more broadly. Valuing women's contributions to these sectors is a step towards the reduction of stereotypes, and a precondition of inclusive and diverse cultural expressions and narratives and media content. Taking action is all the more important because according to recent data women, remain poorly or wrongly represented in media and cultural content and only 48 per cent of Member States monitor gender equality in the media.⁴⁶ Likewise, only 6 out of the 494 inscriptions on the UNESCO Memory of the World list relate to gender equality, excluding the significant achievements of women throughout history.



It will take
67 years
to close the
gender gap
in the news
media industry

UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

In 2022-2023, UNESCO worked to find innovative solutions to dismantle harmful stereotypes and address gender-based violence in areas that intersect with UNESCO's unique mandate.

UNESCO's vision is to advance gender equality and combat gender-based violence to build inclusive, just and peaceful societies (Strategic Objective 3) by:

- Tackling stereotypes and discrimination harmful to women and girls;
- Safeguarding women's freedom of expression and creation;
- Ensuring women's decent work and promoting their voices in the culture and media sectors; and
- Shaping novel perspectives on the role of women in history and society.

As in all areas, UNESCO works towards its vision through the mechanisms of action specific to its mandate, and complementary to its partners, within the UN and beyond. This includes employing UNESCO's five functions, with a special emphasis on *setting standards* at the global level and influencing the global agenda; establishing a *base of research and analysis* about how and why we need to address gender-based stereotypes and forms of violence; and translating global standards to *make a difference at the country level* in UNESCO's fields of competence, with a focus on the culture and media sectors.

Tackling harmful gender norms, stereotypes and discrimination for inclusive, just and peaceful societies

At the foundation of all gender inequalities are the core values and norms of a society, from which discrimination springs forth in both hidden and explicit forms. In the worst scenario, harmful gender norms and discrimination are manifest in violence, online and offline. UNESCO attempts to confront these corrosive stereotypes head-on. In this biennium, the focus has been trifold: 1) bringing a gender-lens to UNESCO's work on racism and discrimination, where its global convening role is strong;

2) engaging men and boys as allies to break down harmful stereotypes; and 3) working through education to nurture safe and healthy environments free of gender bias and violence.

Building on its cross-cutting mandate, **UNESCO leads global action to fight gender-based violence, discrimination, biases, and stereotypes** which prevent women and girls, men and boys, from fulfilling their potential. The *UNESCO Roadmap against Racism and Discrimination* developed in 2022 provides a renewed operational and strategic framework to enhance the impact of anti-racism and anti-discrimination activities while highlighting the importance of intersectionality. As a flagship initiative, the 2nd *Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination* held in Mexico City (Mexico) in 2022 launched new multilateral collaborations around *UNESCO's Gender-Based Resilience Framework* to develop action-oriented recommendations for policymakers to promote gender equality and engage its positive effects on growth, well-being and development. At the end of 2023, the 3rd *Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination* – in Sao Paulo, Brazil – builds on these initial steps to design gender-transformative strategies and advance practical solutions from the field to engage men and boys for gender equality.

Tenoch Huerta, Jeremy Gilley, Xueli Abbing, Epsy Campbell, and Evelina Cabrera participate in the panel "Leading voices against racism" during the 2022 Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination in Mexico City.



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Box 1

Men and Boys for Gender Equality and to End Gender-Based Violence

The *Transforming MEN'talities Flagship Programme* strives to engage men and boys to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and violence against women. UNESCO, alongside its partners (MenEngage Alliance, Promundo-US, the Sexual Violence Research Initiative, White Ribbon) launched this programme to unveil unequal power dynamics and harmful masculinities (and femininities). It has identified and systematized good practices such as parental leaves, quotas, affirmative action and care economies, and encouraged peer-learning through men's networks with the primary objective of adapting rules, regulations, and practices at the national level.

India has piloted a series of research and operational activities to inform a new framework of good practices to engage men and boys for gender equality and propel a shift in social and cultural norms. The *Transforming MEN'talities* movement picked up momentum in 2022 and 2023, with action plans and pilot projects put in place, based on local needs and featuring male champions of gender equality. In Mongolia, UNESCO provided financial and technical support to implement a public awareness campaign advocating for gender equality and addressing harmful gender norms and bias by engaging men and boys as positive role models. In Morocco, UNESCO raised the profile of the issue at the national level with the publication "Masculinities, femininities and gender relations in contemporary Morocco."



Interview with Ariunbold Usehbayar as part of the Transforming Mentalities project in Mongolia.

In the Caribbean, professionals and youth came together around the theme of best practices to improve men and boys' engagement in advancing gender equality in the framework of the *Sheroes Academy 2022* coordinated with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS-RCO) at the University of the West Indies. To start, 25 young people from 19 Caribbean countries exchanged ideas on how society and stereotypes shape one's idea of masculinity, and then were trained to create and lead their own advocacy campaigns to engage young men as allies for gender equality. A *Sheroes Workshop* followed with 33 young gender equality advocates from 14 different Caribbean countries to share their reflections on the current gender norms prevalent in the region.

“What stood out for me was the plan to include men and boys in conversation spaces like this... men understand that they can be allies and feminists and push messages that are necessary, to dismantle the patriarchy.”

Mario Phillip

Participant from Saint Kitts and Nevis in the 2022 Sheroes Workshop

UNESCO's convening role allows it to **steward other global, local and national dialogues to raise the voices of women and promote gender equality**. In July 2023, UNESCO hosted with local partners the conference on *HERstory: Heroines in the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa* in order to acknowledge and celebrate the role women played in Southern Africa history. Innovative trainings and peer-to-peer mentoring are another way in which UNESCO sheds light on women's contributions to building peaceful societies and protecting the rights of women and girls. The *Global Master Class Against Racism and Discrimination* does this by highlighting gender equality in its curriculum, which was originally launched in 2019 and continues into this biennium, impacting over 2,000 young students in its recent edition.

The institutional platform that UNESCO has for **data-collection and original research has deepened its work in addressing gender stereotypes and social norms** harmful to women and girls. Through the development of cutting-edge toolkits and mappings, UNESCO offers institutions, decision-makers and practitioners essential information, tailored to local contexts, on gender equality to build key capacities on the ground from the Caribbean to Egypt and Central America. These include *A Toolkit for CSOs: Advancing Gender Equality in the Eastern Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago*; *Mapping Gender Studies and Research in Egypt* and *Inclusion and Ensuring the Rights of Women and Girls in the Arab Cities*.

The publication "Arab Women Role Models: Inspiration Pioneers and Changemakers," featuring women role models from ten Arab countries in the arts, journalism, environment, sports, and politics, was released in 2023 to positively influence stereotypes on young women's career choices and to promote gender equality. It reached over 80,000 people through an associated social media campaign.

Guided by the updated UNESCO *Strategy on Education for Health and Well-Being* released in 2022, UNESCO helped to position gender equality at the nexus of education and health to nurture safe and healthy learning environments free of gender bias and violence. The goal is that young people learn to treat each other with respect and dignity and gain skills for solid decision-making and critical analysis. Throughout 2022 and 2023, UNESCO continued its work to **equip teachers to**

end school-related gender-based violence and published a new guide with the UNGEI in 2023 on *School Violence: Why gender matters and how to measure school-related gender-based violence*. As an output of the Global Expert Working Group to End School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV), the purpose of the guide is to help gather data on school violence to design more effective policies and programmes to prevent and respond to violence at all levels, with a whole-school, gender transformative approach. At the country level, UNESCO worked to implement other learning tools, for example, the *Connect with Respect* teacher guide for learners aged 12-14 in seven countries in Asia Pacific, and in Eastern and Southern Africa. UNESCO also worked with its partners such as UNFPA contributing to healthy learning environments by producing age-appropriate technical guides and tools on quality comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), including digital tools, supporting the training of teachers, and conducting national policy and programme reviews. The *Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future* (O3) Programme, supported the development and implementation of high-quality comprehensive sexuality education curricula in sub-Saharan Africa to reduce new HIV infections, early and unintended pregnancy and child marriage. The same approach has also been adapted and implemented in other contexts, in particular in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Asia and Pacific.

UNESCO tapped into **sports' potential to promote health and address gender stereotypes**, as a way of operationalizing the *Strategy on Education for Health and Well-Being*. In November 2022, UNESCO gathered 70 experts from the public, private, and civil society sectors to create a *Fit for Life Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan*, which aims to support national stakeholders to develop inclusive sport policies. With UN Women and the Spotlight Initiative, UNESCO launched in 2023 the first Handbook, *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport*⁴⁷, for policy makers and sports practitioners. It maps out the risks, opportunities, governance structures, legal and institutional sport frameworks, as well as the progress made in and around the sport ecosystem to address gender-based violence, and provides policy guidance on the design of preventive strategies, regulations, incentives and sanctions to address violence against women and girls in sport.

Initiatives have been rolled out at the operational level. In South Sudan, with UNFPA and a local partner, UNESCO organized a girl's football tournament as a way of building positive messaging around women and girls in peacebuilding. In Kenya, awareness-raising workshops were organized with 200 primary and secondary girls around football to

empower them around basic life skills, preventing drug use, early marriage and early pregnancy, and HIV. A series of local workshops supported by UNESCO in Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines promoted girls and gender equality in sports through the project *Training the Next Generation of Women Sport Leaders*.

Box 2 Gender Equality in Health and Education for Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa

The flagship programme *Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future* in sub-Saharan Africa aims to reduce new HIV infections, early and unintended pregnancy, and child marriage, through sustained support to adolescents and their communities on issues of health, education and gender equality. As part of this, UNESCO advocates to governments for the establishment of national plans to support access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and introduce comprehensive sexual education (CSE) programmes in schools and universities. This O3 Programme, supported by Sweden, has reached over 500,000 teachers and 34 million learners in 33 countries in sub-Saharan Africa since it was launched.

In 2022 and 2023, major advances in Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia have led to new policies and strategies to support safer school environments. In Zambia, for instance, 8,800 teachers have been trained to improve the quality and effectiveness of CSE in their classrooms. In Rwanda, support to adolescent girls on effectively managing their menstrual hygiene helps address barriers for girls safety and health so they can go to school. Over 500 young boys and girls participated in an awareness-raising forum on life skills and reproductive health, organized in partnership with Aburugwiro Women's Development Organization (AWDO). In West and Central Africa, 160 officers from the Ministries of Education from 14 countries were trained during a six-month capacity-building programme to address school-related gender-based violence and to integrate core health and well-being indicators into education management information systems.

The second phase of the O3 Programme (2023-2027) launched in June 2023 with the support of France, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland will focus on issues including youth agency, parental engagement, community mobilizing, and increased access for hard-to-reach populations.

Participants in the O3 Programme in Tanzania celebrate the establishment of a Gender Desk.

Altogether, more than 15 Gender Desks were started in 14 universities in Tanzania to promote safe and inclusive campuses and to address gender-based violence.



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Safeguarding women's freedom of expression

At the nexus of confronting gender-based discrimination, violence against women and protecting women's freedom of expression and security in their work environment lies UNESCO's work on **enhancing the safety of women journalists**.

In cooperation with the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ), the extensive study "The Chilling" was released in 2022 highlighting global trends in online violence against women journalists. It describes the extent of attacks against women journalists and the impact on their well-being, their work and press freedom. The study includes wide-ranging recommendations for action, including an online violence response assessment framework.

Building on this landmark research, UNESCO conducted **advocacy and awareness-raising on the intense threats to the safety of women journalists** at the national, regional and international levels, notably in the framework of World Press Freedom Days celebrated in Punta del Este (Uruguay) in 2022 and at UN Headquarters in New York (USA) in 2023. As a result, the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Gender Justice adopted in May 2022, calls attention to the structural barriers that threaten women's right to freedom of opinion and expression, access to digital technology and participation in media.⁴⁸ To spotlight role models and support active women journalists in the field, UNESCO continues to provide awards through the *UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize*. In 2023, it was awarded to three Iranian women journalists, Niloofer Hamedei, Elaheh Mohammadi and Narges Mohammadi, for their outstanding contribution to the defence of freedom of the press in the face of danger. A few months later, Narges Mohammadi wins the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize for her fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her fight to promote human rights and freedom for all.

UNESCO's leadership to **influence the international agenda on the safety of women journalists** includes its advocacy around the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (UNPA). On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the UNPA, UNESCO conducted regional consultations and round tables to identify ways to better integrate the protection of women journalists through gender-sensitive legislation and policies that account for particular forms of online discrimination.

"We are committed to honouring the brave work of Iranian female journalists whose reporting led to a historical women-led revolution. And for that, we are committed to ensuring their voices will continue to echo worldwide until they are safe and free."

Zainab Salbi

Chair of the International Jury of Media Professionals

As a result, prioritising the safety of women journalists, particularly against online violence, emerged as one of the key recommendations of the 10th anniversary of the UNPA at the High-Level Conference in Vienna in November 2022.

At the operational level, UNESCO and its partners have developed a range of **global tools and training programmes addressing online and offline harassment and violence against women** for journalists, media managers and news outlets. For example, building on the success of the English language massive open online course (MOOC) *How to Report Safely*, which reached 1,300 people in 121 countries, UNESCO and its partners launched the French and Spanish versions of this self-directed course on International Women's Day 2022. The course, which provides training to women media workers on how to handle threats and harassment, is being translated into Arabic.

UNESCO's **support at country level on the safety of women journalists takes international standards to the field** to reach local stakeholders. In Pakistan, UNESCO worked with partners to produce a resource kit addressing online safety of women journalists, then hosted roundtable discussions with duty-bearers and women media workers and led three consultations about online violence and digital rights. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO supported the development of a model law on safety of journalists, with specific provisions regarding gender-based violence. The draft law has prompted consideration by parliaments in Chile, Mexico, and Paraguay throughout 2022 and 2023.

Box 3 Freedom of Expression for Women Journalists in Latin America

A new response protocol, based on international standards, has been developed in Latin America to guide police interventions interacting with media and specifically to address violence against women journalists. Over 50 media organisations and 14 police institutions were involved in establishing the protocol through a regional programme of the *International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)* and the *Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and the Safety of Journalists (MDP)*.

The new protocol has been the foundation for providing, across 13 countries, gender-sensitive trainings to police academies and for facilitating dialogue between security forces and the media around issues related to violence against women journalists. For instance, a training-of-trainers was organized with Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa in Colombia in November 2022 and replicated in Ecuador, with Fundamedios in early 2023.

UNESCO has also promoted a media environment conducive to gender equality through the creation of safe spaces such as newsrooms for journalists in Costa Rica and Colombia, especially targeting displaced and diaspora journalists, and adopting a gender-responsive perspective.

Ensuring women's decent work and promoting their voices in the culture and media sectors

UNESCO's commitment to gender equality means ensuring women's access to decent work and social protection and access to leadership positions, notably across media and cultural sectors. That also means promoting women's voices in the public sphere and an improved gender representation and portrayals in journalistic and cultural content, as well as promoting the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights of participation in cultural life and access to information as preconditions for the diversity of cultural expressions and media pluralism.

Guided by its mandate as a laboratory of ideas and to address economic and social inequalities, **UNESCO led research on the economic impacts on women and how to build more resilient social protection programmes** especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. It specifically looked at women's economic vulnerabilities caused by unpaid care work, and the data and knowledge gaps around existing social protections. Translating that research to advocacy, UNESCO advised the high-level decision-makers of the G7 and the G20, and contributed to the Gender Equality Advisory Council Report 2022 with a chapter on the 'Care Economy', coordinating with advocacy groups, such as the Lancet Commissions, the Paris Peace Forum, and the International Women's Forum, among others.

UNESCO's unique mandate on culture is directly in-line with promoting gender equality and breaking down harmful social norms: **women and girls' active participation in the cultural sectors is a prerequisite for diverse and inclusive societies.** By giving girls and women a voice and platform in the sectors of culture and art and showing the value of their contributions, UNESCO is leading in the difficult work of re-shaping damaging stereotypes and social norms that work against gender equality.

Regional training-of-trainers organized with the Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa in Bogotá, Colombia, in November 2022, to discuss the role of the media and law enforcement in promoting freedom of expression and access to information with a gender lens.



At the normative level, UNESCO took decisive steps to **influence policy standards through the 2022 Mondiacult World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development**, which addressed challenges for women working in the cultural sectors and set forth recommendations for future policies. Building on new research presented in the 2022 Global Report “Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity” that shed light on persistent gender pay gaps and unequal access to funding and leadership positions in the cultural sectors, the Mondiacult 2022 Declaration, unanimously adopted by 150 countries, includes concrete commitments to build gender perspectives into cultural policies in a systematic way. It also advocates for culture to be anchored in public policies to enhance educational, employment, and inclusion opportunities for women and youth. As a follow-up, UNESCO launched the elaboration of the 2025 Global Report on Cultural Policies, which will serve to monitor the implementation of UNESCO’s normative instruments, programmes and networks in the field of culture, in line with the programmatic outcomes identified in the landmark Mondiacult 2022 Declaration. The Global Report, which will feed into the discussions at the next World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, will be based on a comprehensive Monitoring Framework including significant and coherent gender indicators to reveal the gender transformative dimension of culture.

From that base of research and international advocacy, UNESCO continued its work to **empower women artists and cultural professionals on the ground**, across a range of countries and regions. It does so by providing technical and entrepreneurship skills and networking, supporting decent employment opportunities in the creative economy and promoting the visibility and acknowledgement of their work. One of the more powerful tools for unravelling negative social norms about women is to put forth inspiring, positive examples of women role models. For example, the *Senegal Talent Campus* provided 100 per cent female technical and vocational education trainings (TVET) in the culture and creative sectors. The Campus supported women cultural practitioners by integrating women professionals into the teaching staff and then, by providing 25 women who were unable to complete their schooling with the opportunity to obtain certified degrees.

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Students of the Senegal Talent Campus, the first training center in the arts and culture in Senegal providing 100% female TVET trainings.

In Peru, UNESCO and the Museum of Art of Lima (MALI) established a long-term scholarship project for women from vulnerable groups to enrol in a Cultural Management Masters programme in order to promote their access to decision-making positions in the cultural sector.

In Ethiopia, UNESCO partnered with the Ethiopian Women Visual Artist Association to develop the capacities of 50 women visual artists with skills in the digital environment.

In Serbia, the project *Gender Equality for Cultural Diversity*, conceived by the Association Independent Cultural Scene and supported by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, created pathways for women to assume a more equitable share of cultural production in the country. A study including a survey among 206 women working in the creative industries helped to identify the root causes of existing gender inequalities. The results informed a tailor-made capacity-building programme that has benefitted 83 women cultural professionals, covering topics such as labour law, fundraising, public relations, and marketing. In addition, a regional mobility programme has allowed 12 of them to participate in a range of Serbia’s festivals, art residencies and exhibitions.

In the film industry, women remain largely under-represented, especially in key creative and decision-making positions and with limited access to training, exchange, and mobility opportunities. UNESCO, in partnership with civil society and creative industries, has **raised the profile of women cultural professionals by creating networking spaces and improving their access to markets**. With support from UNESCO, Indonesia conducted an analysis and action plan on gender equality in the film sector to make its film industry more inclusive. A training syllabus and a guideline for film schools

on gender-inclusive film was developed and tested in 2022 with the aim of training film professionals to be aware of gender dynamics and prioritise social inclusion in their work. In 2023, the project was expanded through regional workshops. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the *We are Diverse project*, implemented by the Ibero-American Federation of Film Arts and Sciences Academies, boosts skills and confidence of female audiovisual professionals from vulnerable groups in seven countries by building entrepreneurial skills and creating and strengthening networks among them.

Box 4 A Space for African Women Filmmakers

Young women African filmmakers have a dedicated space at the *UNESCO-Nara Residency Programme for Young African Women Filmmakers*, which was implemented with the support of Japan in partnership with the Nara International Film Festival in June 2022. The two-week residency brought together nine young women filmmakers from Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa – selected from among 555 applicants – to write, direct and produce a 10-minute documentary under the supervision of Naomi Kawase, the acclaimed Japanese filmmaker and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. The films premiered at the 2022 Nara International Film Festival “Grand Voyage with Africa” and were screened at the 2023 edition of the Pan-African Film & TV Festival of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (FESPACO). FESPACO has been committed to advancing gender equality in African cinema by partnering with UNESCO to advocate, since 2019, for the visibility of women filmmakers.

In 2023, UNESCO partnered for the first time with Netflix to launch an innovative short film competition on *African Folk Tales, Reimagined* from across sub-Saharan Africa. Netflix produced and distributed six short films which were inspired by local cultures and dealt specifically with the position of African women in society.

“*There are not enough stories about women told by women. I will explore a different narrative for the stories we tell of ourselves.*”

Mayowa Bakare

Scriptwriter, Producer and Film Director from Nigeria

Nine young African women filmmakers gather at the UNESCO-Nara Film Residency, an initiative to empower women to produce their own documentary films. They include: Lydia Matata (Kenya), Delphine Yerbanga (Burkina Faso), Uren Makut (Nigeria), Fama Reyane Sow (Senegal), Mayowa Bakare (Nigeria), Joan Kiragu (Kenya), Okuhle Dyosopu (South Africa), Awa Gueye (Senegal), and Floriane Zoundi (Burkina Faso).



© Photo by Kayoko Hoshi, provided by the Nara International Film Festival *

To support women cultural professionals UNESCO has drawn on the recommendations laid out in the “ResiliArt 100” publication launched in 2022 which presented the outcomes of over 355 discussions in 127 countries sharing the realities of cultural professionals in their respective contexts. A direct result of those recommendations was the *ResiliArt Accelerator Programme* launched in 2022 to help women scale up their creative enterprises and provide them with access to new markets. In the Caribbean, under the *Transcultura Programme* supported by the European Union, a unique online incubator and accelerator programme has benefitted 34 Caribbean women entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 35.

In Zimbabwe, an accelerator programme for women cultural professionals addressed the knowledge and capacity gaps around entrepreneurial skills and starting a creative business. These entrepreneurs have analysed their business strategies and outlined the steps required for launching and expanding their creative businesses. They have also been supported by international mentors, other women who are active and successful in the cultural and creative industries in different parts of Africa. The adaptation of the ResiliArt Accelerator is underway in Kenya, where it will also expand and consolidate the professional network of African women creative entrepreneurs.

“UNESCO’s ResiliArt Accelerator has opened my eyes in terms of mapping my music business and bringing my goals to life... especially my last tours in Nairobi and Zanzibar.”
Nasibo, Musician, Zimbabwe

UNESCO has made advances in **mainstreaming gender equality across global standards for the cultural sectors** through the implementation of the *1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist* by developing new knowledge and methodological tools. As part of the *UNESCO-Aschberg Programme*, UNESCO released new research in 2023 that synthesizes the results of the fifth global consultation of Member States, NGOs and INGOs on the implementation of the Recommendation covering 2019-2022, which includes new findings on the working conditions of women artists and cultural professionals.



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Letay Williams, producer of a feature film in Jamaica and beneficiary of the Transcultura programme.

UNESCO also produced in cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO) a methodological guide on the participatory development of a model law on the status of the artist mainstreaming gender equality. At the operational level, UNESCO supported Member States in the **elaboration of gender-responsive regulatory frameworks, policies and measures on the status of artists**. In the Gambia, 487 women artists and cultural professionals were interviewed for the elaboration of a first report on “The Status of Women Artists and Culture Professionals in the Gambia” to guide further policymaking. The report revealed that 70 per cent of women artists and cultural professionals rely on the internet for their work and that only 14 per cent of them reported having access to funding. Building on these findings, 100 women artists and creative professionals received training on digital skills, labour rights, fair contracts, intellectual property rights, resource mobilization, and protection from gender-based violence. The Gambia also passed a regulation to operationalize the National Endowment Fund for Arts and Culture with a specific focus on gender equality to increase women’s access to funding.

Gender equality is central to UNESCO’s promotion of inclusive media and equitable access to information. It advocates for gender-sensitive media content and reporting and access to quality information free from gender bias. It also trains those in the newsrooms, journalism organisations and educational institutions on gender-related issues.

At the country level, UNESCO applied its Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media to conduct **assessments of how well media organisations and regulatory bodies contribute to promoting gender equality** in and through the media. In the State of Palestine, the monitoring study of five media outlets led to the drafting of a code of conduct to regulate editorial policies from a gender perspective. In Ethiopia, the assessment led to the development of gender equality policy guidelines for community radio stations and the implementation of a training programme for over 120 journalists and volunteers. In Nepal, 250 government and media organisation representatives participated in national and local workshops to identify the gaps between community media policy and practice, and how to strengthen gender equality. In Burundi, Ethiopia, and Kenya, decent working conditions for women journalists was the goal for elaborating guidelines for gender equality and anti-harassment policies in the media. Gender mainstreaming activities related to preventing sexual harassment in the workplace and online were also implemented in Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Capacity-building workshops organized by UNESCO in 2022 and 2023 **encouraged journalists to write stories that are gender-sensitive** and to challenge and counter stereotypes about women. Gender-sensitive reporting was integrated as part of wider media development projects in Bangladesh, Burundi, Kenya, Mauritania, the State of Palestine, and Tunisia and a series of webinars on the participation of women journalists in quality reporting and media sustainability were organized in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

In an attempt to **prevent, protect and prosecute violence against women by improving the media coverage of sensitive social issues** in Latin America, such as gender-based violence, more than 2,000 fact-checkers and journalists from Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Peru have been trained in news reporting and fact-checking with a gender perspective. UNESCO also co-organized with UN Women four *Forums on Communicating for Equality* focused on promoting journalism free of discrimination and violence against women, with representatives from Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. Some 500 participants joined live (80 per cent women), reaching an estimated total of 19,000 people.

Box 5 Gender-Equal Access to Information

Based on the principle that access to information is critical for the exercise of civil, political, social, and economic rights, UNESCO advocates for women to have equal access to information so they too can be positioned to make informed and effective decisions across all critical areas of their life, work and well-being. UNESCO initiated this work in 2022 with the policy brief 'Promoting Gender Equity in the Right of Access to Information' which highlights why this right is so important for women to support their leadership and decision-making in education, land ownership, business opportunities, and health, and to protect their own rights in all areas of life. The brief reveals how the right of access to information remains elusive for women in many countries, resulting in severe effects on their economic and political empowerment. Drawing from international and national mechanisms, the policy brief includes recommendations to create gender-transformative policies to increase women's access to information and begin to dismantle pervasive gender discrimination and stereotypes.

A key takeaway from this research is that international and national mechanisms must promote the explicit inclusion of the right to information for women. The Tashkent Declaration of Universal Access to Information, adopted in the context of the global conference held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on September 2022, makes this explicit. The Declaration calls to "take effective steps to ensure equal access of all to information, including women, youth and historically disadvantaged groups, and to build trust around governmental information processes with everyone in society." Building on this Declaration and the new research brief, UNESCO will expand its activities to support Member States in advancing this vision of gender-equal access to information.

Globally, in 2022, 89 media organisations and 19 civil society organisations were trained on gender equality in media operations and editorial content.

This biennium, UNESCO also prioritised **new knowledge products to advance understanding of women's limited access to information** which curtails the full exercise of their fundamental rights. In 2022, UNESCO published the policy brief 'Promoting Gender Equity in the Right of Access to Information' in collaboration with the Carter Center.

Shaping novel perspectives on the role of women in history and society

As advocates and guardians of heritage, women play a key role in the creation, management, preservation, interpretation and transmission of heritage – whether that be living heritage, cultural heritage or documentary heritage. By valuing women's role in culture and giving them a voice, UNESCO leads in breaking down harsh stereotypes and social norms against women that lead to discrimination. UNESCO shows how these facets of heritage have the unique power to tell stories and explore the multiple dimensions of peoples' complex and evolving identities and histories. In 2022 and 2023, UNESCO developed capacity-building materials to **mainstream gender equality in policies related to the transmission of living heritage** and awareness-raising tools on the gender dynamics that are essential in its practice. These include innovative data visualization on the interactions between living heritage elements and gender equality from the initiative *Dive into Intangible Cultural Heritage*, an information sheet on *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Gender-Related Policy*, a video animation *Let's Discuss Gender and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, and a massive open online course on living heritage and sustainable development with a dedicated chapter on gender.

At the national level, UNESCO is also **empowering women to remain guardians of their heritage**. In the Cook Islands, the project *Documentation and Inventory of Peu Karioi* (performing arts) fully involves the Vaine Tini women's organisation through all the activities of identification of this intangible heritage. In Suriname, UNESCO strengthened the capacities of local authorities to elaborate and implement policies and measures to safeguard Intangible



In 2022 and 2023, UNESCO organized Communicating for Equality in partnership with UN Women and the Bolivian Foundation for Journalism, to make visible the importance of journalism to build a society free of violence against women.

Cultural Heritage applying a gender-responsive approach and ensuring that women constituted almost 60 per cent of the participants.

Sustainable tourism strategies around cultural heritage is another entry-point where UNESCO brings a gender dimension to its work in culture. Supporting Members States, UNESCO ensures the fair and meaningful participation of women in the development and implementation of these tourism strategies. In Mexico, a new gender-responsive tourism strategy with sustainable tourism practices and activities to contribute to the preservation of World Heritage Properties is in process of development. A programme has also been set up in Viet Nam to support women's entrepreneurship in the heritage sector as part of UNESCO's Creative Cities initiative.

Documentary heritage is another facet of heritage promoted by UNESCO under the *Memory of the World Programme* (MoW), which was relaunched in 2021. Although documentary heritage bears a responsibility to represent pluralistic narratives and expressions reflecting the contributions and visions of women in history and our societies, much remains to be done as very few items on the *MoW International Register* demonstrate women's contribution. Based on success at the regional level, UNESCO is taking steps to **encourage the nomination and inscription of documentary heritage items that highlight women's accomplishments**. The Call for the UNESCO *MoW International Register* 2024-2025 nomination cycle now mainstreams gender equality, integrating gender criteria to feature women's contributions.

In Asia and the Pacific, a baseline study of the Memory of the World inscriptions conducted in 2020 revealed that only 4 of the 109 inscriptions from the region were related to women's empowerment or women's influence in the history of the region. To address these gaps, the on-going initiative entitled *Women in History—Telling HERstory through Memory of the World* helps to identify, preserve and promote

access to documentary heritage collections in the Asia-Pacific region that tell 'her-story.' UNESCO is setting up a Memory of the World Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, with support from Japan, to highlight gender-related dimensions of existing inscriptions on the regional register and to identify new heritage items that focus on the role of women for future nominations.

Box 6

Gender Equality across Cultural and Heritage Cities in Peru

Peru's extensive cultural wealth –rich in all forms of heritage—and cultural diversity is marked by persistent gender inequalities. Few women hold leadership positions and cultural policies are not gender-responsive. From that gap was born the project *Technical Assistance to the Heritage and Historical Cities Network for Building Resilience with a Gender Approach*, which was implemented in collaboration with the Spanish Cooperation Agency for Development (AECID) and the Peruvian Ministries of Women and Vulnerable Populations, and Culture. Its objective was to close gender gaps and promote the exercise of women's cultural rights.

Implemented in ten major cities of the country, including three World Heritage Cities – Lima, Cusco, and Arequipa – the project strengthened capacities in relation to heritage and gender through three initiatives. Over 400 participants (75 per cent women) contributed to community-based workshops on the intersection of gender and heritage which took local inventories of and emphasized women's contributions to heritage and the need to include a gender perspective in management of cultural and living heritage. To respond to the need for markets for local craft associations, the project launched targeted trainings and support for the development of online craft stores, which benefitted 135 members from 18 women's craft associations and led to the creation of 18 new virtual stores.

As stewards of living cultural heritage, women artisans used this initiative to regain momentum and income from their art following the severe economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The final initiative focused on gender-sensitive cultural management through museums with a series of workshops that built the capacities of 20 museum professionals from 10 cities (Piura, Lambayeque, Trujillo, Cajamarca, Chachapoyas, Iquitos, Lima, Arequipa, Ayacucho, and Cusco). Research and consultations across participants identified 121 living heritage practices made exclusively or primarily by women and pinpointed 21 practices that have the potential to lead to aggression against women or to perpetuate gender discrimination.

The project's innovative capacity-building methodologies on heritage and gender following this pilot in Peru are meant to be adapted and replicated in other contexts to promote gender-responsive safeguards in cultural initiatives.



135 women artisans in Peru, including the Association *Las Mariposas*, were empowered to transmit their ancestral knowledge to new generations and generate income by selling their works at local fairs and online.

© Ministerio de Cultura de Perú*

ASSESSING RESULTS FOR 2022-2023

UNESCO is inter-weaving gender equality through all aspects of its mandate to build inclusive, just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting heritage (Strategic Objective 3). It attempts to close the gender gap by:

- Addressing gender-based threats, violence, discrimination and stereotypes including in the digital environment;
- Equipping learners and learning environments to be safe and healthy;
- Improving women's working conditions, employment opportunities and economic, cultural and social rights; and
- Promoting gender equality in and through the media and cultural sectors.

Results for 2022-2023 can be found across all regions in UNESCO's normative and programmatic work. It has tackled harmful social norms and discrimination by engaging men and boys, including in its flagship programme, and by ensuring gender is integrated into global standards on racism and discrimination. UNESCO is addressing gender-based violence, a top priority, through education for health and well-being which also considers issues of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies. A web of actions – from training programmes to policy work – has been implemented across the globe with an impressive range of media and civil society groups to protect and support women journalists, whose safety and freedom of expression remain threatened, every day. UNESCO is also facilitating gender equality's integration into the culture and creative sectors, especially at the national level, with policies and programmes that improve the status of women artists and recognise the role of women in heritage, in all its forms. This biennium has set the stage for continued momentum to advance gender equality over the next two years and to further deepen impact as it strives for lasting peace and sustainability across all communities.

UNESCO'S 2022-2023 MONITORING DATA

- **14 countries** participated in UNESCO's flagship programmes to address gender-based stereotypes and violence, with the **active engagement of men and boys**
- **16 countries** (4 in Africa) promoted positive role models and confronted **gender-based violence and stereotypes in sports and physical education**
- **23,060,107 learners** (11,770,692 women) **accessed life skills-based HIV and comprehensive sexuality education**
- **60 countries** (20 in Africa, 2 SIDS) and over 200 media institutions and civil society organisations implemented the **UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists** and the Issue of Impunity, with particular attention to the **safety of women journalists**
- **40 countries** (19 in Africa) have increased capacity to improve legislative and institutional frameworks related to **freedom of expression**, access to information, and **mainstreaming a gender-responsive approach**
- **36 countries** (9 in Africa, 4 SIDS) implemented policies and programmes to **support gender equality in the culture and creative sectors** and improved the working conditions of culture professionals, with particular attention to women

Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2022-2023 linked to Strategic Objective 3.

STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE

4

**BRIDGE
THE DIGITAL
GENDER
DIVIDE**



We need to ensure that women and girls benefit from the opportunities offered by the technological transformation – but also, and above all, we need to ensure that they can help shape it, on an equal footing.

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO actively works to reduce the digital gender divide by empowering women and girls with digital, media and information literacy skills and competencies, ensuring equal access to information and empowering women through promoting gender equality in the development and use of digital technologies. This includes developing and implementing ethical standards and guidelines to address bias and barriers that may prevent girls' and women's full participation and leadership in the digital environment, including through Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Foster a technological environment in the service of humankind through the development and dissemination of knowledge and skills and the development of ethical standards

BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

ETHICAL
STANDARDS FOR
AI & DIGITAL
PLATFORMS

MEDIA &
INFORMATION
LITERACY

DIGITAL SKILLS
&
COMPETENCIES



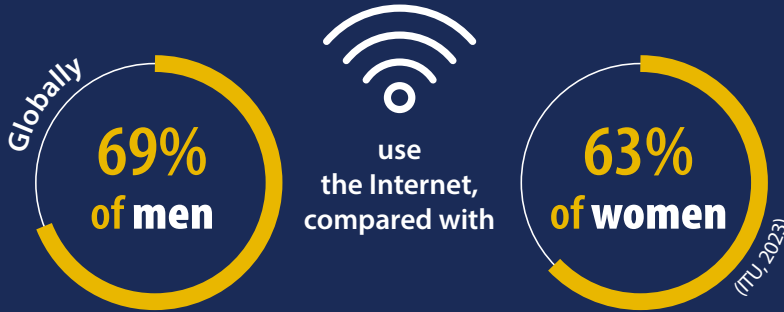
Contributing to SDG Target 5.b

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES



Only **5%** of software developers are women

(Statista, 2023)



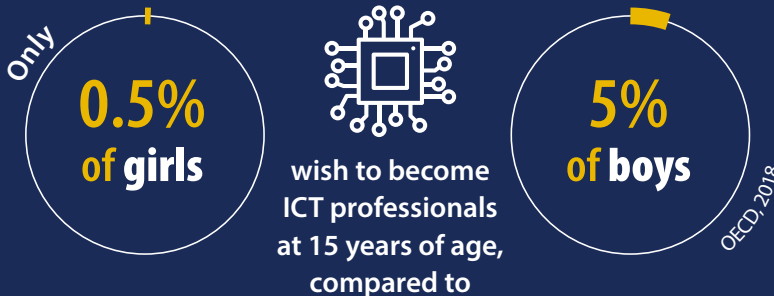
Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education is expected to be worth **US\$ 6 billion** by 2024

(UNESCO, 2021)



Women are **25%** less likely than men to know how to **leverage digital technology** for basic uses

(UNESCO, 2019)



41% of women journalists said they had been targeted by orchestrated **online disinformation campaigns**

(UNESCO / ICJF, 2020)



In 61 out of 115 countries fewer than **30%** of computer science graduates were **women**

(UNESCO, 2021)

STATE OF THE WORLD: FAST-PACED CHANGES IN THE DIGITAL REALM THREATEN GENDER EQUALITY

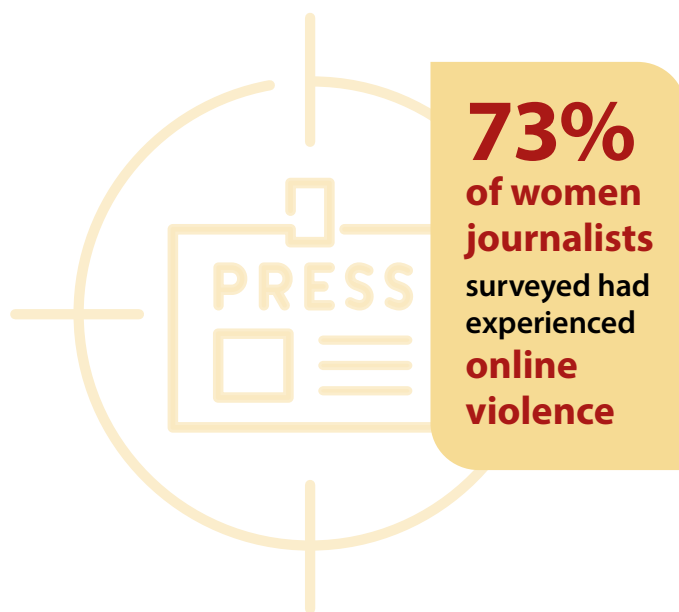
With its role in business, education and everyday human activity advancing at an unprecedented pace, technology can be a powerful catalyst for gender equality and women's empowerment across societies. If used correctly, it holds enormous potential to increase access to information for women and girls and amplify their voices in the public sphere, facilitate economic opportunities, enable networking and mentorship opportunities, and provide new ways of education and skills development.

However, there is **significant evidence that women and girls are being left behind** in these newest of spaces: the digital, artificial intelligence and technology fora that each day are gaining a bigger piece of investment, impact and role in societies around the globe.

To promote gender equality at its core, the role of women and girls must be addressed now, not as an afterthought. If left unchecked, the digital gender divide will repeat – and deepen – existing discriminations and may lead to severely negative impacts on a global scale. New technologies, especially **social media platforms and AI, are contributing to the spread of various forms of discrimination and gender-based violence that occurs or is amplified by the use of technology** such as gendered disinformation campaigns and hate speech.⁴⁹ A troubling example is the trending AI avatar app, Lensa, which is making news around the world for automatically creating non-consensual sexualized or nude photos of its users, mostly women. Based on AI data sets that replicate overtly racist, sexist and discriminatory stereotypes, the result for historically disadvantaged women is even more extreme.⁵⁰

The consequences are likely to be far-reaching and are a harbinger of what is to come if basic standards are not set – and enforced – by the international community. The distribution of images like those on Lensa have the potential to cause major psychological damage for women, and deter them from participation in the public sphere,

whether online or offline.⁵¹ This will have long-term impacts since **women working in jobs with high public visibility – from artists to journalists and scientists – are easily exposed to attacks in digital and online spaces** whose purpose is to silence women and keep them from participating in the public sphere. UNESCO's recent research shows that 73 per cent of women journalists surveyed had experienced online violence, and one out of five have been attacked or abused offline in connection with online violence.⁵² Almost one-third of women journalists surveyed answered that they self-censored on social media and 20 per cent withdrew from all online interaction. An earlier UNESCO study shows that women working in the cultural and media industries face significant challenges particularly because of steep increases in online harassment and abuse.⁵³ This type of exclusion of half the population is a threat to the tenets of democracy and reinforces harmful gender stereotypes and social norms. In parallel, apps like Lensa radicalize men and boys by treating women as expendable, creating a generational change that challenges the trajectory of women's empowerment, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups of women and girls and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.



Right now **the global community has a unique opening to improve opportunities for women to co-create online spaces**, instead of merely going back and feebly adjusting these technological tools and spaces after the fact. One risk is that – if not otherwise altered – a growing digital gender divide may even offset some of the considerable progress that countries have made towards gender equality in recent years.



The **lack of access to technology coupled by the wide-spread illiteracy in media and the digital sphere** are among the main factors contributing to the digital gender divide. As a result, women and girls are at risk of being left behind in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life. This risk is further exacerbated in a world experiencing more frequent crises and conflicts, where marginalized women and girls – including those who are displaced, refugees, and from rural and poor regions – are increasingly isolated without access to critical technologies. Digital literacy is necessary to use information or fact-check potential disinformation about what to do in natural disasters, conflicts or during health pandemics. Indeed, during the COVID-19 pandemic, countries without sufficient ICT infrastructure and well-resourced digital learning systems suffered the greatest disruptions in

education. This deep learning crises has revealed the urgency for closing the gender gap in girls' access to online education, leveraging the potential of technology to advance education and gender equality, and ensuring safe, inclusive and gender-responsive online learning spaces.

Women and girls are often prevented or discouraged from using ICTs or the Internet, a major threat to gender equality that must be reversed. This **exclusion creates a real impact on the competencies and future professional development of women and girls in digital disciplines**. Indeed, women and girls are currently underrepresented in ICT disciplines, in the ICT sector, and in AI development: women represent just 28 per cent of the tech industry workforce worldwide and only 20 per cent of the leadership positions⁵⁴, only 12 per cent of machine learning researchers⁵⁵ and 22 per cent of all AI professional developers.⁵⁶ In terms of software development, 80 per cent is created by male-only teams. Not only are women missing out on job opportunities in a quickly-growing industry, but their absence also means that the needs and perspectives of women are likely to be overlooked in the design of products and services that impact our daily lives.

Women represent only **22%** of AI professionals around the world

Women must be an active part of developing the digital economy to **eliminate gender biases and stereotypes being reproduced through digital platforms, software and programmes generated by AI**. Just like all technologies, AI reflects the values of its creators and developers and are known to carry their own significant cognitive biases into the design and operation of AI systems. The fact that 87.6 per cent of virtual assistants are women and 12.4 per cent of virtual assistants are men shows how conventional stereotypes are perpetuated, and even deepened, once moved into the digital sphere.⁵⁷ Overall, 44.2 per cent of AI systems demonstrate gender bias, with 25.7 per cent exhibiting both gender and racial bias.⁵⁸

Overall,

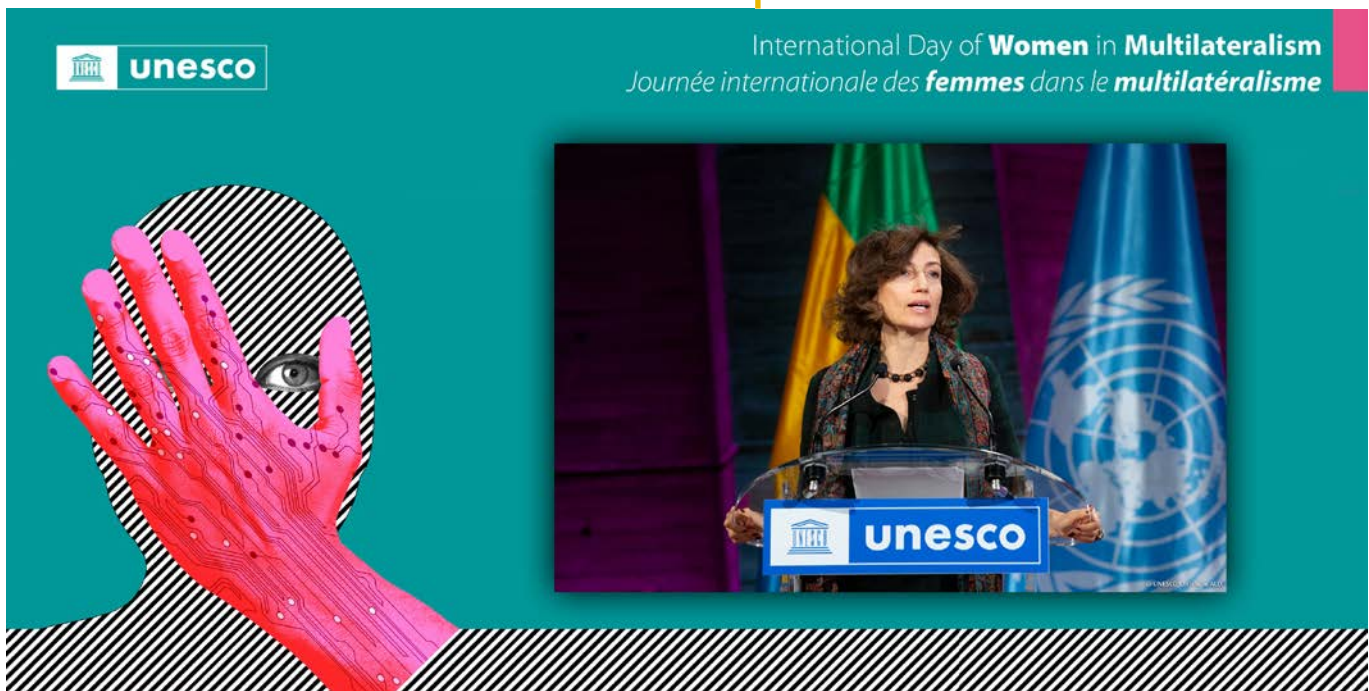
44%
of AI systems
demonstrate
gender bias

While the threats are real and powerful, **the potential for advancing gender equality in these spheres is equally inspiring and possible.**

If the estimated one and a half billion women worldwide who do not have access to the Internet were empowered and mobilized to use these technologies for education, to improve human well-being and advance diversity and inclusiveness, they could transform many of the world's poorest countries.⁵⁹ AI can play a role in improving women's representation in the news by identifying the diversity of sources and also analysing and identifying gender biases and hate speech. It can assess vast swaths of data in order to create and implement stronger ethical rules for AI, including the gender perspective, thereby becoming a tool to maximize the benefits of AI and reduce its risks. This could lead to positive change across a spectrum of critical issues, in terms of democratic participation, inclusive diversity, economic empowerment, freedom of expression, access to media and cultural content, environmental protection and community development.

New developments in AI and applications such as ChatGPT are raising additional red flags. While we still do not have the full picture of how harmful generative AI models may be for women and girls in the future, it is clear that the international community needs to put forth concrete solutions to the structural barriers of entry for women in order to ensure diversity in digital tech companies and among content moderators. There must be **ethical, globally-recognized standards in place that foster inclusive solutions, promote diversity and gender equality.** Such standards can even the playing field, provide more equal opportunities to improve women's digital competencies and skills and regulate the way AI and digital platforms operate.

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, opens the Global Dialogue "Online Gendered Disinformation" in Paris on the occasion of the International Day of Women in Multilateralism, 25 January 2023.



© UNESCO/Christelle Alix

UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

In 2022-2023, UNESCO advanced new and innovative solutions to the rapidly changing arena of digital technologies and especially with the use of AI, thus leveraging its unique mandate to contribute to closing the digital gender divide in a challenging context. UNESCO's vision is to advance gender equality in the digital and technological environment by:

- Ensuring ethical standards for AI and digital platforms that consider women's needs and skills;
- Promoting media and information literacy among women and girls to equip them with the skills necessary to navigate a changing information landscape, and empower them to shape it by 'leveling the playing field'; and
- Empowering women's participation through improved digital skills and competencies.

UNESCO works to ensure that: more women have access to and are literate in media and information technologies, to know their rights and utilize digitised resources; more women are involved in the development of technologies, which requires a larger workforce of women with strong digital skills; and standards are in place so that the tech community develops and applies data sets, social media platforms and AI tools to promote gender equality rather than proliferate and exacerbate gender bias and discrimination.

This vision requires three mechanisms of action that align with UNESCO's five basic functions: *setting standards* at the global level; *establishing a base of research and analysis* about how and why we need to close the digital gender divide; and *translating global standards to make a difference at the country level*.

Influencing the international agenda and setting global standards

UNESCO's convening role as a global institution that promotes human rights, ethical standards and cultural diversity, positions it as a key leader to ensure gender equality is woven into its work on setting global standards for the fast-developing digital environment.

It does this by organizing events and developing frameworks that promote gender equality in the field of digital technology as well as by collaborating with a range of partners to close the digital gender divide in terms of knowledge, skills, access and inclusion.

The landmark *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2021

is guiding a growing number of partners around the world to empower women and girls in this sector. **The gender equality chapter of the Recommendation outlines seven primary points about how Member States can concretely affect advances in AI with a strong gender lens.** This ranges from supporting women's entrepreneurship to putting in place strategies that are vigilant of the inherent harm the current system could produce given the predominant social norms now guiding AI. It also urges the mainstreaming of gender and diversity considerations into all stages of the AI life cycle.

In 2022 and 2023, UNESCO actively promoted the global implementation of the Recommendation as well as that of the Internet Universality ROAM principles (human Rights, Openness, Accessibility, Multi-stakeholder participation) and its gender indicators. In doing so, it has helped governments and other stakeholders assess their national digital environments and policies, promoting the principles associated with the Ethics of AI and Internet Universality. Over one hundred events and workshops organized worldwide have contributed to **increasing public knowledge around the goals of the Recommendation** and sensitizing a range of stakeholders including policymakers, researchers and digital platforms.

Specific to the nexus of three critical priorities – gender equality, Africa and global standards for AI – UNESCO organized the Southern Africa sub-Regional Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Namibia (September 2022) and the Eastern Africa sub-Regional Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Kenya (June 2023).



The event in Namibia brought together nine countries in the Southern Africa sub-region for the first time to discuss the application of AI, its challenges and opportunities and to share best practices with a view to strengthening cooperation and partnership for the ethical, equitable, inclusive, and transparent use of AI. The Forum concluded with the adoption by consensus of the Windhoek

Ministerial Statement on Artificial Intelligence in Southern Africa which recognises the existence of gender bias in AI and its profound impact on the lives of women and girls. It highlights the low numbers of women in AI and emerging technology-related research, development and innovation and demonstrates the gender bias in data and its impact on all of society.

Box 1

Implementation of the *Recommendation on the Ethics of AI*

UNESCO works to reduce the digital gender divide through its normative work. Specifically, it ensured the inclusion of a stand-alone chapter on gender equality – one of eleven chapters – in the *Recommendation on the Ethics of AI*, which helps equip countries with the tools to address the major gender gaps and challenges in the digital world.

The gender chapter of the Recommendation outlines the implementation of the Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM), the first step in supporting Member States to understand the multiple dimensions of their preparedness in confronting challenges posed by AI. Launched in December 2022, the RAM is being conducted in almost 40 countries. Each assessment will result in a country report and a roadmap whereby UNESCO experts can accompany national leaders to chart an ethical and realistic way forward with AI based on each country's governance structure and capacity.

The *Women4Ethical AI Platform*, launched by UNESCO in March 2023, is a new collaborative platform to support governments and companies' efforts to ensure that women are represented equally in both the design and deployment of AI. The platform's members, who are professional women experts, contribute to the advancement of the ethical provisions in UNESCO's Recommendation, with a special focus to:

- Guide the development of digital technologies and artificial intelligence to achieve gender equality, and ensure that the human rights, fundamental freedoms of girls and women are not compromised at any stage of the life cycle of AI systems;
- Ensure that specific funds from public budgets are allocated towards gender-responsive plans, guaranteeing that digital policies include a gender action plan;
- Ensure that the potential of AI systems is harnessed to drive the achievement of gender equality and not to exacerbate the existing gender discrimination;
- Ensure that gender stereotypes and discriminatory biases are not transferred to AI systems, but rather proactively detected and corrected;
- Encourage women's entrepreneurship, participation and engagement at all stages of the AI system life cycle; and
- Promote gender diversity in AI in academia and industry by providing incentives for girls and women to enter this field.

“The establishment of the Women4Ethical AI Platform is the realization of a promise fulfilled.

Itah Kandjii Murangi
Minister of Higher Education,
Training and Innovation
of Namibia

To strengthen Member States' capacities in implementing the Recommendation, UNESCO has developed and tested *the Ethical Impact Assessment (EIA)* and *Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM)*. Both tools feature a strong emphasis on gender to help shed light on imbalances in the field of AI, analyse the laws and policies in place to enhance gender equality in AI, and examine the diversity of the teams building AI systems. UNESCO is also scaling up its gender transformative action in this area through new flagship initiatives, such as the *Women4Ethical AI Platform*.

Gender equality priorities are similarly integrated into the *UNESCO Strategy on Technological Innovation in Education (2022-2025)*, which promotes gender equality, focusing on **girls and women's access and equitable participation in technology and education activities**. It proposes gender-transformative interventions to address gender norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequalities at school, and in society at large, and to empower girls and women to gain more digital skills and competencies.

UNESCO reinforced its normative work to make digital spaces safe for women and girls through the development of long-awaited global guidelines for regulating digital platforms based on a highly participative process involving all relevant stakeholders. These guidelines secure information as a public good while protecting freedom of expression and human rights and offering guidance for independent regulators.

Thirteen **concrete recommendations to provide online spaces free of gender stereotypes, disinformation and hate speech** were made by experts from around the world during the global dialogue "Online Gendered Disinformation: What are the solutions?". Organized on the International Day of Women in Multilateralism (25 January 2023). The global dialogue addressed the pressing issue of social media content governance to make digital spaces safe for women and girls. This includes confronting the harmful narratives that are emerging at an unprecedented speed, forcing women and girls to self-censor or reduce their interaction in online spaces. The recommendations target both government regulators and digital platform companies to address the global problem of gender-based violence and harmful practices that occur through or are amplified by the use of technology.

Box 2

New Guidelines for Regulating Digital Platforms

Version 3.0 of the Guidelines for Regulating Digital Platforms outlines how digital platforms should ensure continuous human rights due diligence, including specific human rights impact assessments and mitigation measures when it comes to online gender-based violence. The Guidelines establish that in order to counter online gender-based violence, digital platforms should:

- Conduct annual human rights and gender impact assessments, including algorithmic approaches to gender-specific risk assessment, with a view to identifying systemic risks to women and girls and to adjust policies and practices to mitigate such risks more effectively;
- Use privacy-protecting technology to provide external researchers access to internal data of platforms to help identify algorithmic amplification of gender-based violence;
- Create dedicated engineering teams that are made up of both women and men who are specifically trained to develop algorithmic solutions to content moderation;
- Develop and launch inclusive structured community feedback mechanisms to eliminate gender bias in generative AI and generative algorithms producing content that perpetuates or creates gender-based violence.



These recommendations were reworked in the framework of the Global Conference Internet for Trust (21 – 23 February 2023) and reflected in the 3.0 version of the draft UNESCO Guidelines for Regulating Digital Platforms. The priority is to ensure that companies establish specific risk assessments and mitigation measures when it comes to gender-based violence, to manage content in alignment with international human rights principles, to be transparent and accountable about the systems and processes that they have in place to counter this type of content and to empower the users and non-users to better understand their interactions in the platforms.

UNESCO's contribution to the annual Commission on the Status for Women (CSW) is another example where **complementary mandates bolster consensus around global standard-setting**. This includes supporting women and girls' education, economic empowerment and engagement in public life. Critical to this is the call for governments to adopt regulations for digital platforms to ensure adequate safeguards to combat new risks, gender stereotypes and negative social norms, an area in which UNESCO is already playing a pioneering role promoting transparency and accountability to combat discrimination.

Box 3

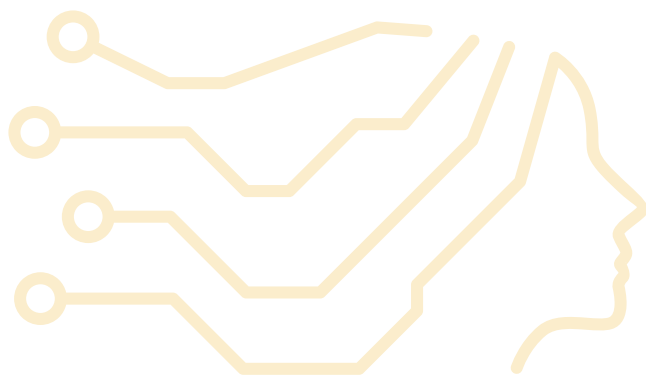
Contributions to the Outcome Document of CSW67

In March 2023, 181 Member States and observers, including around 8,000 participants gathered for the annual CSW conference in New York on “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls,” a thematic area to which UNESCO brought substantive support and expertise. In the preparatory stages, UNESCO contributed to the Secretary General's Report on *Women, Technology and Innovation* and presented two expert papers.⁶⁰ These inputs help lay the foundation for the text of the Agreed Conclusions on critical issues such as digital learning and literacy, online gender-based violence, access and use of technologies and AI. UNESCO directly contributed to new language on the right of access to information and communication. UNESCO's mandate and programmatic priorities are aligned with the CSW Agreed Conclusions calling for the development of digital tools and services to address the needs of all women and girls, especially for their education, economic empowerment, and engagement in public life.



UNESCO's global stage is broad, and its collaboration with UN partner institutions is central to its influential role in the international community. For example, **UNESCO is actively engaging in the Secretary General's initiative, the UN Global Digital Compact**, to be finalized in 2024 and offers an opportunity to chart a clear and ethical way forward on global standards for digital technologies and platforms.⁶¹ Results from both the recommendations on measures to fight gendered disinformation and online gender-based violence and UNESCO's contribution to the CSW67 Agreed Conclusions have been integrated into the draft Policy Brief on the UN Global Digital Compact in two main areas of action.

The first is to strengthen digital literacy and skills of women and girls. The second is to introduce regulations to address gender-based violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology. UNESCO's *Recommendation on the Ethics of AI* and the Guidelines for regulating digital platforms are also included as part of the implementation plan of the Global Digital Compact.



Producing research and knowledge to inspire innovative policies and measures

UNESCO, as a global convener with a respected capacity for solid data collection and analysis, offers the international community a foundation of up-to-date and reliable information and knowledge about the digital gender divide. These inputs support the design of inclusive global standards, strong national policies, and innovative programming. Specific examples from 2022-2023 range from key research on UNESCO's areas of competence to the production of guidelines for policy makers and curriculum for educators and learners.

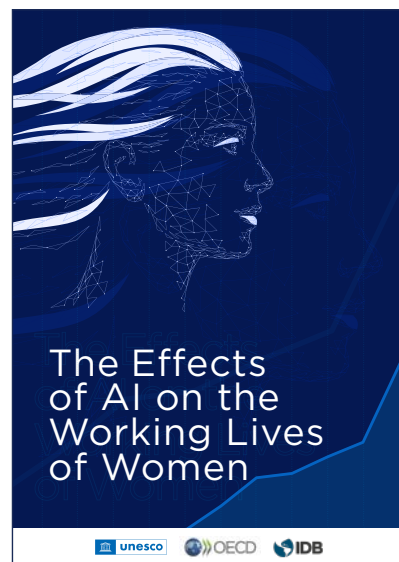
In a context where **digital technology has become a social necessity to ensure education as a basic human right**, UNESCO has invested in raising awareness and developing operational tools to support Member States and partners. These tools help make access to new technologies possible, thereby building competencies and boosting future professional development for women and girls. For example:

- *Innovation and technology for gender equality* (2023) explains how gender disparities remain due to differential access, skills and quality of education and highlights how gender-transformative education can boost innovation and technology.
- *Guidelines for ICT in education policies and masterplans* (2022) proposes policy planning frameworks and a roadmap to examine the digital readiness of local education systems, assess needs of learners and teachers, and plan well-resourced and gender responsive national ICT in education programmes.

In the field of communication, new research has shaped knowledge about the **challenges that digital technologies, including AI presents for the working lives of women**. Persistent obstacles for women and girls include free expression online and in public and access to information. UNESCO has also developed **practical training tools for teachers and learners as well as actors in the judicial sector**. For example:

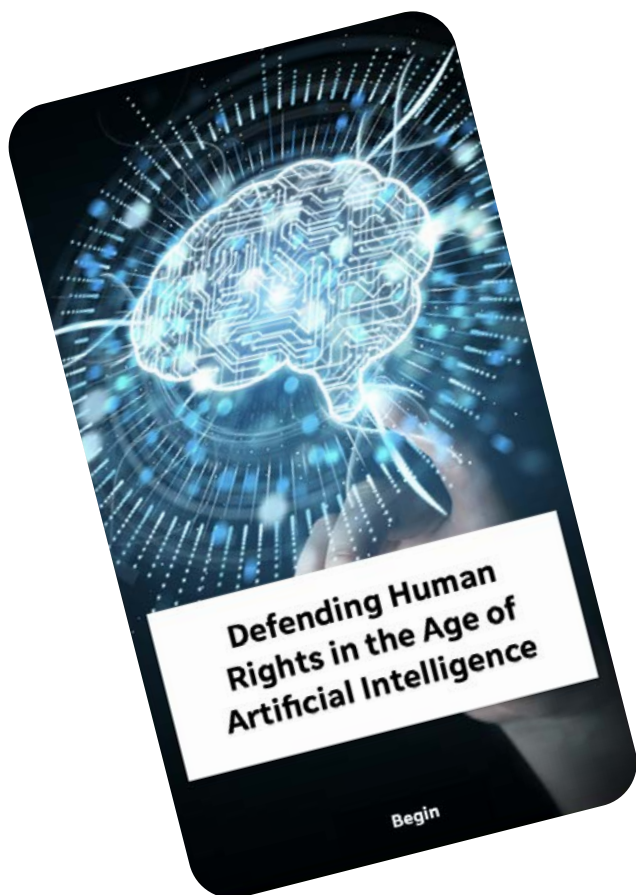
- *Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence exacerbated by Generative AI* (2023) provides an overview of the key factors influencing the availability, scale and intensity of gender-based violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology and shows how this will change in at least six different ways due to the introduction of generative AI. It presents different scenarios based on prompt experiments that test the susceptibility of generative AI models and provides a risk assessment framework.

- *The Effects of AI on the Working Lives of Women* (2022), developed with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Organization for European Cooperation and Development (OECD), in cooperation with the University of Cambridge, raises awareness on the disruptions caused by the use of AI in the workforce from a gender perspective. It considers the challenges and opportunities for women raised through the development and use of AI, which is transforming labor markets around the world. The publication was released on International Women's Day 2022 and is a decisive tool for building digital capacities of civil servants with a focus on women's leadership.



- *Defending Human Rights in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* is a short online learning course on AI and Human Rights adapted to mobile phones for youth aged 16 to 24 launched with UNITAR. In this course, experts break down complex concepts about AI into straight forward activities built around our daily technology interactions. The course, which focuses on how freedom of expression, right to privacy and the right to equality are impacted using AI, mainstreams gender equality and includes a section on AI and Equality. It is now available in 25 languages.

- The course *AI and the Rule of Law: Capacity-building for judicial systems* (2022) examines the role of judicial officers in upholding the rule of law in the digital era, and targets judicial officers, policymakers, academics, and civil society representatives. It mainstreams gender equality and provides an understanding of AI's impact on human rights, algorithmic bias, fairness, and transparency. It also looks at what AI and algorithmic bias mean for equality including issues of surveillance, facial recognition and filter bubbles. Judicial operators from 14 countries were trained in person, while 5,400 judicial operators in 140 countries benefited from UNESCO's capacity-building tools.
- *Promoting Gender Equity in the Right of Access to Information* (2022) examines the importance of access to information as an internationally-recognised human right that remains elusive for women due to inequalities in access. Legal, structural, and cultural obstacles exist for women to access information. However, if harnessed properly, it can help promote and protect women and the advancement of their rights.



Making a difference at the country level



While UNESCO's global platform allows it to set international guidelines and influence multilateral agendas, it also has the mandate and the mechanisms to work at regional and country-levels with programming and policy initiatives on gender equality. This is how it grounds its global mandate: bringing change to the lives of women and girls.

Aligned with its promotion of gender equality as part of the *Recommendation on the Ethics of AI*, UNESCO provides **strategic guidance to support countries to implement the Recommendation on the ground** with practical ethical impact assessments and readiness methodology. This gives concrete tools for countries to address the most severe gender gaps surfacing in the digital environment.

The empowerment of women and girls, specifically through improving digital skills and competencies, is a key element to reducing the digital gender divide. UNESCO implements this by supporting countries to develop gender-transformative curricula and inclusive pedagogical approaches and by providing teaching and learning materials that inculcate those principles. It complements these strategies by supporting girls' access to technology early on in school and expanding access for girls and women to high-quality, free, open and accessible public digital learning platforms and resources, including on coding, robotics, and AI.

Building on the main findings of the groundbreaking publication *Cracking the Code* (2017), UNESCO **invested in gender-responsive training of teachers on digital skills**. That has continued in 2022 in Uganda, where 6,937 students, including 3,600 girls and young women benefited from a participatory training and field visits completed with 42 education stakeholders from across five regions in the country, including the most hard-to-reach areas. The training enhanced understanding of the factors influencing girls' participation, learning achievement and retention; strengthened the capacities of Ministry of Education staff to create gender-responsive educational environments that engage, empower, and inspire girls; and created a support network among different stakeholders to share good practices.

Box 4 ICT Education for Women and Girls in Africa

The project *ICT Transforming Education in Africa*, funded by the Republic of Korea, was implemented in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal from 2020 to 2023 to promote the introduction of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education models in schools and improve institutional environments while fostering equitable and gender-responsive access to and use of information and knowledge in the digital environment.

The project empowers women and girls with digital skills and competencies and includes gender-sensitive perspectives in curricula, frameworks and teaching and learning materials. It also supports champions for ICT studies for girls like Christelle Ogo, who is a science graduate in Côte d'Ivoire and the President of *Sciences et technologies au féminin*, an association she founded while an undergraduate in physics.



© UNESCO/Christelle Ogo

Christelle Ogo, champion for ICT studies for girls and women in Côte d'Ivoire.

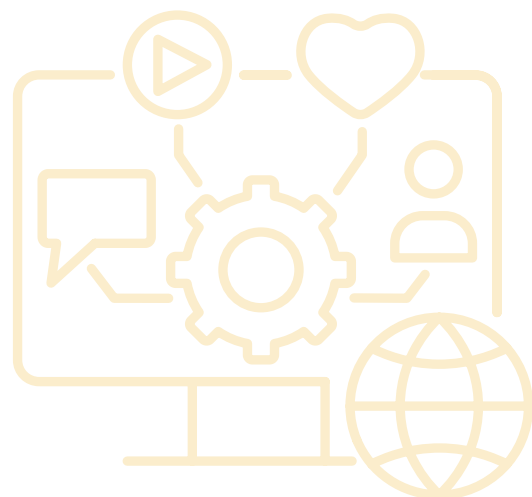
A colleague was about to drop out but thanks to the organisation she continued studying and now she is an engineer.

Christelle Ogo

President of Sciences et Technologies au féminin

Media and information literacy (MIL) is a set of skills and competencies that aim to empower citizens to benefit from and contribute to the digital environment. In educational settings, MIL expands teachers' and learners' capacities to better understand and utilize the digital environment. It can maximize advantages while minimizing harm online, a concept that must be anchored in all education systems in the context of a fast-growing digital environment. Better informed and digitally savvy citizens can develop critical awareness and competencies to detect and counter gender stereotypes in media and digital platforms. A deeper and more challenging area of work is addressing the mindsets, practices and harmful gender norms in communities which prevent women and girls from fulfilling their potential in the digital environment and in the field of digital technologies, such as AI.

UNESCO assists Member States in **developing and implementing national MIL policies and capacity-building strategies that ensure women and girls, men and boys – of all ages – become media and information literate**. This supports their social participation and empowers them to identify and deconstruct stereotypes in media and develop counter narratives.



Box 5

Coding Skills for Girls in the State of Palestine

In early 2023, 69 students and 19 trainers gathered from across Gaza and the West Bank for a six-day camp where students met tech industry mentors, received training courses, and competed in a peer-to-peer Hackathon with the purpose of strengthening digital skills in the context of high youth unemployment. Participants were of diverse ages between 10 and 18 of which 19 (28 per cent) were girls or young women. Ultimately, the top winners of the final Hackathon competition were primarily young women.



“Taking part in a Hackathon in programming and coding was amazing. I’ve gained a lot of technical skills and it was great to meet students and teachers from across the West Bank and Gaza.

Azad Hamdan
Winner of the Winter STEAM Hackathon

Winners of the Winter STEAM Hackathon in Jericho – Sarah Muhammad, Yasmine Gharaibeh and Azad Hamdan, with their coach – receive recognition for their robotic project “Factory Occupational Safety.”

At the global level, the Japan-funded project *Media and Information Literacy for Youth Civic Engagement* brought together youth-led organisations and youth to participate in MIL workshops, webinars, and online training to navigate the digitalized information ecosystem. These include an increased number of gender-specific initiatives such as the Mexican *Yo Cuido Mi Seguridad Móvil* online workshop, which taught girls and young women to analyse the main risks and ways of using social networks safely. In Jordan, youth media organisations focusing on girls and women were involved in the Global MIL Week 2022 national forum, sharing the positive effects of gender-specific media and information literacy training that they have observed on girls’ relationships to themselves, and each other.





Actress Khristina Giles participates in the UNESCO Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination (Mexico, November 2022).

UNESCO also integrated gender equality materials and resources into its social media strategy *Think Critically, Click Wisely Peer-Education Initiative (MIL CLICKS)* which promotes the adaptation and deployment at the local level of the updated MIL curriculum for educators and learners “*Media and information literate citizens: think critically, click wisely!*” thus contributing to promoting inclusion, gender equality, diversity, and pluralism in the digital environment. However, more needs to be done to examine how MIL can be mobilized to advance gender equality and contribute to women and girls’ empowerment.

To complement the specific literacy tools and curriculum guidelines, **UNESCO also advanced awareness-raising campaigns** by supporting key partners with significant public reach at the country level. For instance, UNESCO’s partnership with the movement *HeyUpdateMyVoice* in Brazil was designed to raise awareness about cyber education and demand responses from top tech companies to address gender bias and sexual harassment.

“*I don’t see any fat, black women being happy”, said Khristina Giles, actress, who participated in the multimedia experience organized in the UNESCO Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination (Mexico, November 2022) where different personalities were confronted with the results of an image search engine for concepts such as “happy woman” among others.*”



In Mexico, following the second UNESCO Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination in November 2022, the campaign *#RevolucionaElAlgoritmo* (Revolutionise the Algorithm) was born: an invitation to reflect on how people interact every day with different platforms and digital services, and the co-responsibility between those who develop online spaces and those who feed them. Campaigns like these bring media literacy to the country level, a critical response to the light-speed evolution of these digital spaces.

Box 6

Digital Inclusion in Pakistan

Pakistan has some of the widest digital and mobile gender gaps where 38 per cent of women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone and 49 per cent are less likely to use mobile internet.

During 2022, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has been actively involved in the Multi-Advisory Board for UNESCO's Internet Universality Indicators Assessment conducted in the country. Based on the findings, UNESCO and PTA held bilateral meetings with international and public organisations and the private sector to identify priority areas of intervention with special attention to gender mainstreaming and use of ICTs.

A policy framework was required to help guide the PTA to integrate gender mainstreaming at an institutional level. As a result, UNESCO is supporting the formulation of a digital inclusion and gender mainstreaming strategy, which will help promote access to affordable technologies and digital skills for women and girls. Also, the PTA is successfully working with key cellular and digital service providers to reduce inequalities and to promote digital literacy among women and girls.

“ A holistic strategy for mainstreaming gender in ICTs was needed – UNESCO lit the path for the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority to work with all national stakeholders to embrace digital inclusion by supporting and designing a framework to effectively approach this issue.

Malahat Obaid

Director Public Relations Pakistan Telecom Authority (PTA)

Participants of the Digital Gender Inclusion Strategy workshop gather in Islamabad (March 2023).



© Pakistan Telecommunication Authority*

ASSESSING RESULTS FOR 2022-2023

UNESCO is taking gender equality to bear on all angles of its work to foster a technological environment in the service of humankind through the development and dissemination of knowledge and skills and by establishing core ethical standards (Strategic Objective 4). It is bridging the digital gender divide by promoting gender transformative actions in the areas of ethical standards for AI and digital platforms, media and information literacy (MIL) and digital skills and competencies. Specifically, it is contributing to:

- New guidelines and initiatives addressing gender bias in digital technologies and AI systems;
- Fostering equitable and gender responsive access to and use of information and knowledge in the digital environment;
- Empowering women and girls with digital skills and competencies;
- Supporting women's leadership in AI and the digital environment.

Results for 2022-2023 reflect the global impact of UNESCO's work. Major international advocacy around the *Recommendation on the Ethics of AI* with a gender lens has catalyzed the creation of the *Women4Ethical AI Platform*, galvanizing support of women experts worldwide and ensuring gender is always a part of the conversation on digital advances. This is complemented by its support on national internet policies and increasing legislative capacities and the application of gender-responsive assessments on AI tools. UNESCO has also ensured that girls and women are part of the global push for MIL, supporting Member States and institutions to provide digital skills and competencies for teachers, youth, and women. It has built a base of research and disseminated key AI knowledge products in multiple languages. The Organisation has further built expertise to produce gender-sensitive frameworks for AI's role in education. In this ever-evolving arena of technology, UNESCO is accompanying emerging digital leaps with the requisite expertise to ensure that the principles of gender equality and human rights are upheld.

UNESCO'S 2022-2023 MONITORING DATA

- **Over 40 countries** contributed to the development of the Ethical Impact Assessment (EIA) and Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM), **two tools critical to uncover gender imbalance in the field of AI at the country level**
- **5 countries** (3 in Africa) assessed and **enhanced their Internet policies and digital ecosystems** by applying the Internet Universality Indicators, which include a **cross-cutting set of gender related indicators**
- **Over 12 countries** (5 in Africa) implemented **AI ethics approaches** through national policy and regulatory frameworks, with particular **emphasis on diversity and gender equality**
- **The Women 4 Ethical AI Platform** was launched at the CSW 67 as a mechanism to ensure that **AI is free of gender bias**
- **30 institutions and countries** (8 in Africa, 12 in SIDS) have strengthened **access to digital skills and competencies, with a focus on empowering women and youth**
- **First Ministerial Roundtable on Generative AI in Education** was held to elaborate guiding frameworks for **ethical use of AI in education that are free of gender bias**

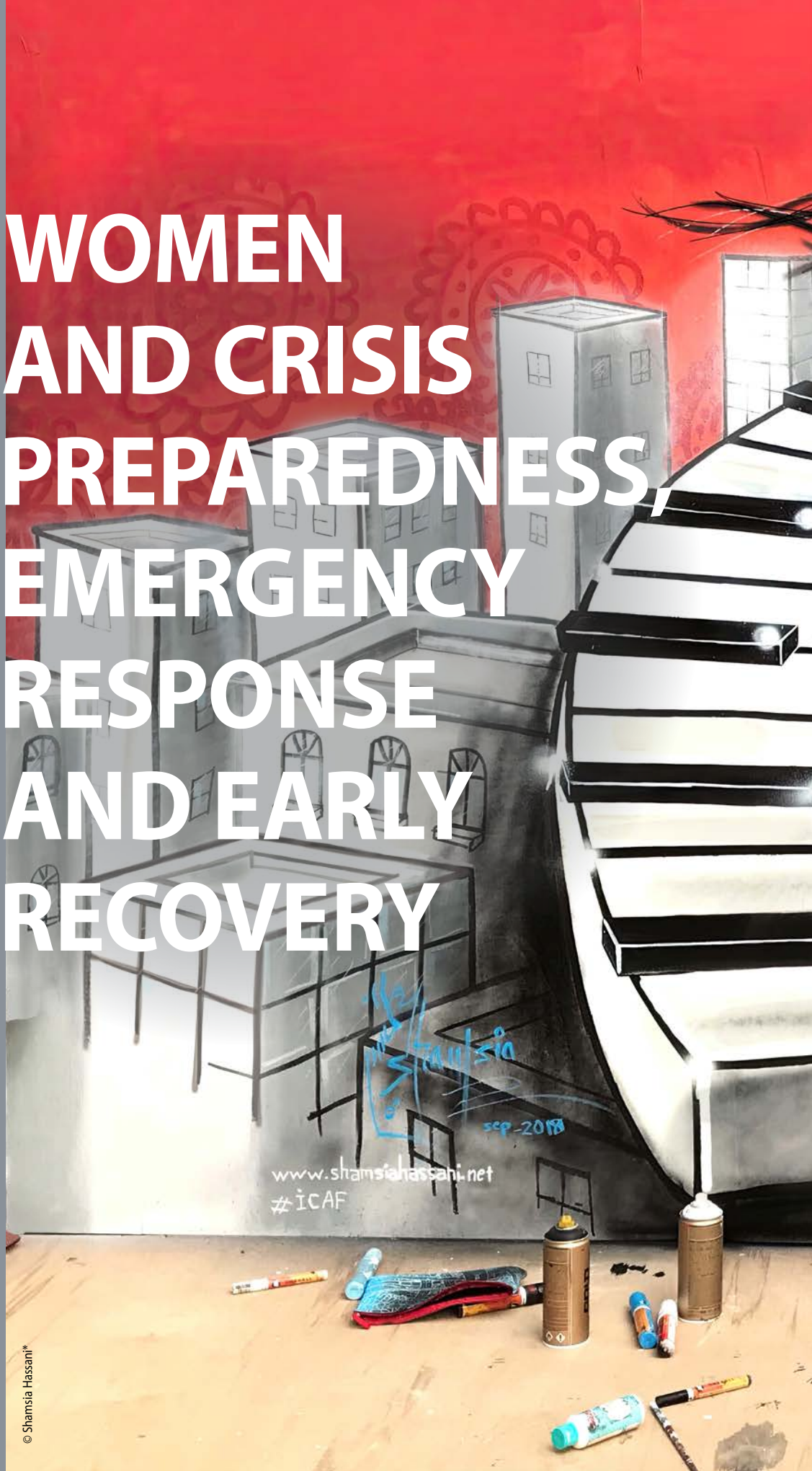
Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2022-2023 linked to Strategic Objective 4.

CROSS-CUTTING
THEME

WOMEN AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS, EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EARLY RECOVERY

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The path towards a gender-equal world is an uncertain one: gradual progress, made over generations, can be wiped out in one fell swoop. The women and girls of Afghanistan know this well. In a few short months, they have lost their most fundamental rights – including the right to education.

Audrey Azoulay

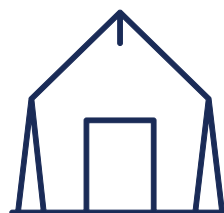
Director-General of UNESCO

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES



614 million women and girls were living in fragile and **conflict-affected contexts** in 2022, 50% higher than in 2017
(UN Women & UN DESA, 2023)

12.4 million women and girls globally were **refugees** in 2021
(UNHCR, 2022)



Around **112 million** school-aged girls are affected by crises globally
(ECW, 2023)



Only **33%** of **peace agreements** included **gender provisions** in 2022
(PA-X Peace Agreements Database, 2023)



Only **13%** of negotiators in major peace processes in the past 30 years have been **women**
(United Nations Security Council, 2020)



4 million girls
have been displaced
by the war in **Ukraine**
and 2,129 education institutions
damaged and destroyed

(UNESCO, 2022)



Violent events
targeting **women**
in conflict-affected
countries have
increased by more
than **50%**

from 2020 to 2022

(ACLED, 2023)

84% of women
media workers
lost their jobs
since the Taliban
takeover in **Afghanistan**



(Reporters Without Borders & the Afghan Independent
Journalists Association, 2021)



80%
of school-aged
Afghan girls

– 2.5 million people – are **out of school**.
Nearly **30% of girls** in **Afghanistan**
have **never entered** primary education

(UNESCO, 2023)



1.4 million girls
in **Haiti** are at risk
of losing their education

following the damage and
destruction of 1,250 schools

(OCHA, 2022)



90%
of **41 crisis-affected countries**
offer limited or **no legal protection**
against violence in schools

(INEE, 2022)



STATE OF THE WORLD: PERSISTENT VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT REQUIRE AN URGENT PUSH TO INCREASE WOMEN'S ROLE IN CRISIS PREPAREDNESS, EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EARLY RECOVERY

As global political, social and resource pressures continue to flame violence and conflict within countries and across national borders, the UNESCO Constitution is more relevant than ever, as it states "Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed." On the basis that there can be no lasting peace without development, and no sustainable development without the full equality between men and women, it provides a mandate for critical work to build a culture of peace.⁶² Yet, as stated by the UN Secretary General:

*Despite normative agreement since the year 2000 and evidence that gender equality offers a path to sustainable peace and conflict prevention, we are moving in the opposite direction. Today, the world is experiencing a reversal of generational gains in women's rights while violent conflicts, military expenditures, military coups, displacements, and hunger continue to increase.*⁶³

In 2022 alone, 100 million people worldwide were forced to flee their homes due to armed conflicts, unstable political contexts, violence, and human rights violations – some of these linked to the recent impacts of climate disruptions and COVID-19.⁶⁴ Some 500 million women live in fragile and conflict-affected countries and women and girls represent 48 per cent of forcibly displaced persons around the world.⁶⁵ Also, one in five refugees or internally displaced women have faced sexual violence.⁶⁶ **While violence and conflict pose far-reaching effects for all parts of society, women are disproportionately affected** because conflict and violence intensify already-existing marginalization and discrimination of women and girls. For instance, the disproportionate care-taking role that women have, and overlapping and compounded

discrimination of women from vulnerable groups translates into extra challenges. They also result in higher levels of gender-based violence: 70 per cent of women and girls experienced gender-based violence during conflicts.⁶⁷

The impact on women and girls, their communities and their countries cannot be underestimated, since their safety and security are pre-conditions to their full and effective participation in public life. Persistent conflict, and related gender-based violence, leads to one of two outcomes: either women are forced to leave their countries, whereby countries lose a key source of knowledge, talent and contribution to peacebuilding and recovery; or women are silenced and consequently excluded entirely from key processes that benefit their countries' emergency response, early recovery and reconstruction. Both outcomes put at risk the core functioning of a country and its future.

The negative effects of violence and conflict on women and girls directly intersect with UNESCO's central mission to build peace, including: increased gender-based violence in all ambits of life, school and work; freedom of expression online and offline, especially for journalists, artists and scientists; access to education; and women's role in public life.

UNESCO data records the risks to women during conflicts, crises and emergencies: 11 murders of women journalists were recorded in 2022 and 2023 (10 per cent of the 109 recorded killed journalists), of which 45 per cent occurred in conflict zones.⁶⁸

Almost
50%
of women
journalists
killed, that
were recorded
in 2022 and 2023,
occurred in
conflict zones



In Afghanistan, 50 per cent of journalists killed since March 2021 were women.⁶⁹ Freemuse recorded at least 17 women artists who faced legal consequences because of their creative activities in 2021.⁷⁰ Violent extremist groups and fundamentalist organisations also target these women specifically for their important roles of voicing the truth about the impact of violence on their communities, and for proposing alternatives.⁷¹ Ultimately, threats and attacks on women cultural, science and media professionals curb democratic debate and freedom of expression, including artistic freedom. They also prevent communities from understanding the positive contribution of women in conflict situations, rather than just relegating them to a role of victim.

For access to education, **the barriers for girls to go to school become particularly acute in the context of conflict and emergency situations.** In crisis-affected regions, 54 per cent of girls are out of school, twice the number of the global average.⁷² A few of the most severe and recent cases highlight just how serious the circumstances are for girls and young women. In Haiti, over 1,250 schools have been damaged or destroyed with a resurgence of insecurity, socio-political tensions, and devastating natural disasters, leaving 1.4 million girls at risk of losing their right to education.⁷³

In Ukraine, 4 million girls have been displaced and 2,129 education institutions damaged and destroyed. In Afghanistan, where 927 schools were destroyed, damaged or closed in 2021,⁷⁴ 80 per cent of girls and young women are currently out of school. In 2022, the de facto authorities banned girls from attending secondary schools, affecting some 1.1 million girls and adolescents, and suspended women's attendance at universities, directly affecting some 103,000 women.⁷⁵

When girls and women cannot go to school or access education, the effects are far-reaching. At the individual level, their psychosocial well-being and physical health are put at risk and lead to an overall negative impact on women's ability to earn income and reach their professional potential. At the societal level, citizens are deprived of their fundamental rights to education which offers men and boys, women and girls, life-saving and life-sustaining opportunities to confront not only crisis situations but also empowers them to combat violent extremism, practise non-violence and help build peace to fortify their communities in post-conflict situations.

21%
of primary school-age girls in crisis affected countries were out of school compared to 9% globally
(INEE, 2021)



Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on a mission to Ukraine, reaffirms the Organization's support for the reconstruction of the country's cultural institutions.

The presence of women in positions of leadership can greatly reduce the likelihood of violent conflict emerging as well as increase the prospects for the peaceful resolution

of existing conflicts. Research has shown that countries with greater gender equality are more likely to resolve conflicts without violence and are less likely to use military force to resolve international disputes. Conversely, countries with more significant gender gaps are more likely to be involved in inter- and intrastate conflict.

The link between political, social and economic empowerment of women and the stability and success of post-conflict reconstruction and governance efforts is also established. Post-conflict actions for urban planning and heritage preservation, conservation, management and

transmission can help to assess the status of women in the local context and their needs in terms of civic participation and governance, infrastructure development, physical safety and health. It can also improve women's economic autonomy and their access to financial, cultural and natural resources. These actions can play a crucial role for including women in decision-making processes concerning the identification and interpretation of the past and the elaboration of future narratives that give greater visibility to the role of women. As bearers of living heritage, keepers of history and memory, role models and messengers, women have an essential contribution to shape more inclusive societies and enhance diversity through their representation and participation in cultural and public life.

Box 1

The Women Peace and Security Agenda and UNESCO's Mission

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is the joint UN response to recognise the disproportionately negative impact of conflict on women and girls and to stress the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The Agenda has been outlined across seven key normative agreements by the UN over the past forty years and crystallised in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security (2000) which outlines why women have such a fundamental role in peacemaking, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and post-conflict recovery.⁷⁶

The Agenda offers a roadmap to address historic marginalization, but also to do things differently and improve results in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Progress is being made: In July 2023, 107 countries and territories have adopted dedicated National Action Plans on women, peace and security, and 86 per cent of those have applied monitoring indicators to track their progress. However, a radical shift is still needed to achieve tangible results. For instance, women's representation in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding decision-making positions remains limited: less than one-third of institutions related to human rights are led by women and only 13 per cent of negotiators in major peace processes in the past 30 years have been women.⁷⁷

UNESCO plays a crucial role within the UN system for the implementation of the WPS Agenda that promotes the contribution of women as agents of change worldwide. In particular, UNESCO works to make sure women and girls in these conflict contexts are not merely erased from public institutions including schools, universities, media, science laboratories or culture sectors under these intensely challenging moments. It ensures that women and girls actively take part in the management of natural resources – the source of many conflicts – and amplifies their voices so they may actively take part in early recovery actions. The Director-General of UNESCO helps raise the profile of women –including women journalists as human rights defenders – by issuing public statements to elevate awareness and alert relevant national and international stakeholders of specific cases.

UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

UNESCO's actions on crisis preparedness, emergency response and early recovery cut across its mandate by promoting gender equality and empowering women with access to education in conflict-affected settings, reaffirming women's crucial role in peacebuilding and preventing violent extremism, and promoting their meaningful participation in the reconstruction of their cultural institutions, heritage buildings and sites.

More specifically, UNESCO and its partners:

- Promote continuity of learning, access to gender-responsive quality education and safe learning environments;
- Protect and amplify the voices and rights of women journalists, artists and scientists;
- Support the participation of women in early recovery actions for the reconstruction of educational and cultural infrastructures and cultural heritage;
- Facilitate women's participation in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

As in all its primary areas of work, UNESCO brings its expertise in its five core functions to bear on the issue of crisis preparedness and emergency response. Specifically, its actions focus on *leading global advocacy, producing and disseminating data and knowledge, creating formal and informal learning and training opportunities, and bringing direct support to women and girls in conflict, emergency and crisis settings.*



© UNESCO / Navid Rahi

Promoting continuity of learning, access to gender-responsive quality education and safe learning environments

UNESCO works at the forefront of the world's most acute crises and provides support to countries suffering from prolonged conflicts to ensure that inclusive quality education remains a priority in humanitarian response and recovery assistance. In conflict and crisis settings, UNESCO prioritises girls' education by ensuring continuity of learning and supporting national partners to provide safe, quality and gender-responsive education that help build learners' resilience.

It does this first by leading global advocacy with education specialists from around the world to build an international consensus around the need to bridge the gap between humanitarian intervention and longer-term development through education. UNESCO also **sets standards in crisis-sensitive circumstances for national education actors**, establishing and deploying policy guidance and technical guidelines to identify priorities and to develop crisis-sensitive planning and curricula, with a special focus on the most vulnerable. For instance, the Policy Brief "Strengthening Ministry of Education Engagement and Leadership in Rapid Education in Emergency Response" helps education authorities at all levels to better respond to emergencies that affect the education sector, mitigate their impacts and build resilience.

Through targeted capacity-building interventions, UNESCO also creates formal and informal learning opportunities for children, youth and adults and **provides lifesaving knowledge and psychosocial support in emergency contexts**. For instance, during the 2022-2023 biennium, UNESCO facilitated engagement in coordinated responses and provided strategic advice and technical support on education in emergencies and protracted crises.

In Afghanistan, where girls and women have been deprived of their fundamental right to education, UNESCO worked during the 2022-2023 biennium with local and international partners in a very complex context to **generate data to monitor the situation and support community assessment and learning.**

Over 1,000 women and young girls aged 15 to 45 are learning how to read, write and calculate through UNESCO's Community-based Basic General Literacy Classes in Afghanistan's Logar province.

Box 2

Resilience for School Children in Ukraine

In Ukraine, where 4.6 million children have been forcibly displaced and 7.5 million children and 1.5 million youth affected by the war, UNESCO responded on multiple fronts to the learning crisis.⁷⁸ For instance, its Global Education Coalition partners ensured the continuity of education through distance learning, mobilizing more than 43,000 Chromebook devices to primary and secondary teachers and facilitating access for students to the All-Ukrainian Online School Learning Management System to provide quality and gender-transformative education.

UNESCO also worked alongside the Ministry of Education and Science to transform the provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) inside the school system, applying a gender lens to all programmes and materials. In this context, the emergency assistance project *Creating an Inclusive Environment for Ukrainian Refugees in Moldova* provided psychological assistance and training on adaptation and emotional support to 90 schoolteachers, 90 children, and 90 mothers.

In addition, jointly with UNHCR, UNICEF and DG EAC, UNESCO led the *Technical Working Group on Refugee Education Data*, to address the lack of quality and disaggregated data in five countries hosting Ukrainian refugees: Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Through its Global Education Coalition, UNESCO supported 50,000 Ukrainian teachers to safeguard learning and maintain quality, gender-equal education in the face of war.

Before the Taliban took power, UNESCO led the largest literacy programme in Afghan history, which reached 1,242,000 learners, including 800,000 women and girls. Today, the *Basic General Literacy Programme* targets 25,000 learners (60 per cent of whom are girls and women) across 20 provinces. Community-based literacy classes are complemented by radio and TV educational programmes aimed at reducing the negative impacts of restrictive mobility. They provide learning opportunities and raise public awareness on the importance of education for girls and young women. UNESCO has also piloted an initiative to facilitate women learners' participation in online programmes provided by overseas universities and access to scholarship opportunities in neighbouring countries. For 150 Afghan women refugees in Iran, UNESCO has provided certified teacher training courses that will enable them to teach in both countries.

In Sudan, UNESCO is mapping the forced displacement of students and teachers both internally and in neighbouring countries to implement education response plans. The conflict has had an alarmingly disproportionate impact on women and children, for whom UNESCO has mobilized initial emergency funding to help the Egyptian authorities support the provision of education to hundreds of Sudanese children, youth and adults who have entered the country.



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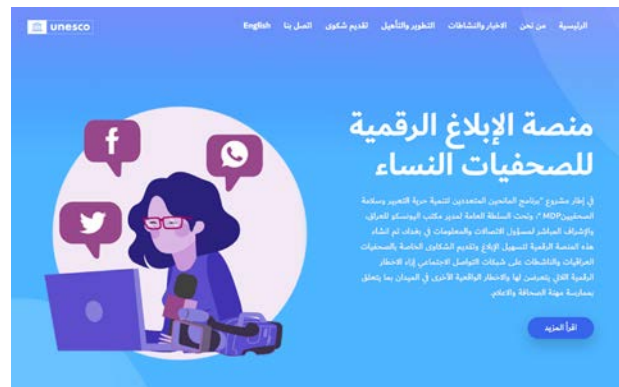
Protecting and amplifying the voices and rights of women journalists, artists and scientists

UNESCO is committed to ensuring that the voices of women are and continue to be heard around the world. In line with its mandate to bolster the free flow of information, ideas and knowledge, and its global priority on gender equality, it works to protect women journalists, artists and scientists and their work in times of crisis, emergencies and early recovery actions.

UNESCO strengthens the capacities of women journalists to safely exercise their profession, provides training on conflict-sensitive reporting with systematic gender mainstreaming and promotes gender-responsive newsroom policies. The aim is to **support the fair and meaningful participation and representation of women in the media, freedom of press and gender-responsive access to information** in contexts of crisis, emergencies and conflicts. In doing so, UNESCO encourages women's inclusion and participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes. It also collaborates with UN Women, UNDP and OHCHR to enhance media diversity and pluralism, promotes understanding, and consolidates peace-building efforts that mainstream gender equality.

In 2022 and 2023, UNESCO supported the dissemination in conflict-afflicted countries of **gender-responsive and transformative tools and resources** to improve the safety of journalistic practices. Among these tools are the massive open online course (MOOC) on *How to Report Safely: Strategies for women journalists and their allies*, which is available in multiple languages, and the *Guidelines for Gender-Responsive Safety Policies in the Media*, alongside targeted capacity-building training sessions.⁷⁹

In Afghanistan, UNESCO supported Afghan journalists and media outlets as part of its mid- to long-term strategy by providing capacity building and safety trainings to women journalists and supporting an internship programme for women journalism students. UNESCO also provided **job opportunities and emergency support to women journalists**, which resulted in media partners maintaining at least 30 per cent of women journalists as part of their workforce.



The Digital Reporting Platform (www.ifdrt.iq) for Female Journalists launched in Iraq, is a fundamental channel for women journalists and social media activists to report digital threats and cyber blackmail.

UNESCO addresses specific needs of women journalists who cover wars on the ground. For example, in Ukraine, over 1700 journalists, a majority of whom are women, have been reached through gender-sensitive measures, including safety trainings, provision of psychological support and legal assistance. To sustain Ukrainian journalists' livelihoods and the continuation of their work to inform the public despite the loss of revenues in the media sector, UNESCO provided emergency financial support to 160 Ukrainian journalists, of which over two-thirds were women and to Ukrainian journalists in exile, who are mainly women. It provided key support to the Press Freedom Centre located in central Lviv, which is jointly run by Reporters without Borders (RSF) and the Institute of Mass Information (IMI) and serves as a resource center for journalists seeking financial or psychological assistance. Of journalists seeking psychological help, 78 per cent were women and around 60 per cent of requests for legal support come from women journalists.

UNESCO's action also focuses on **promoting the role of women journalists and gender-responsive reporting in peacebuilding and recovery processes**. In Uganda, through the *International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)*, UNESCO enhanced the capacities of 80 community journalists, editors and managers of media outlets in peace and conflict-sensitive reporting in the Rwenzori Region. Twenty social media influencers and community opinion leaders were also trained in the responsible use of social media platforms and positive messaging.

Box 3

Media and Educational Content by Women for Women in Afghanistan

Begum Organization for Women (BOW), the only radio station in Afghanistan run entirely for women and by women, operates in an unprecedented context. According to UNESCO data, 95 per cent of women media workers have lost their jobs since August 2021. Of those, 95 per cent were the primary earners in their households. In mid-2022, around 1,500 women and girls were studying journalism in private and public universities. Later that same year, this number dropped to zero after journalism, among other subjects, was banned for women students by the de facto authorities. Since December 2022, women have further been barred from accessing universities altogether.

BOW focuses on the production of public interest content by women journalists to share the struggles and stories of Afghan women and to defend their rights. In 2022, BOW held on-the-ground training sessions for 40 women journalists on physical, psychological and digital safety.

“ Since the takeover of the Taliban, I had totally lost hope that I would be able to continue my work as a journalist... When I was selected for this training, I experienced a new glimpse of hope as I saw more women striving for the same work that I do. When I heard their stories of resilience, I promised myself that I would not let the voice of girls and women in my province be silenced.

Participant in training sessions run by BOW in Afghanistan

In partnership with BOW and with additional funding from the European Union, UNESCO has also facilitated the production of educational broadcasting and on-air schooling content for girls and women across Afghanistan. The programme has been progressively expanded in 2023 to develop more and better content and increase its coverage across Afghan provinces. Today, its mediatic and educational programmes reach more than 15 Afghan provinces, with an estimated listenership of between 500,000 and 600,000 women and girls.

Radio Begum, with UNESCO's support, provides training sessions for women journalists on physical, psychological and digital safety and produces media content by women for women.



© Radio Begum*

The training emphasized the need to include gender perspectives in the professional coverage of peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. A key objective was to encourage journalists to include the voices of women in their reporting and take into account their needs and potential to contribute to peacebuilding processes.

In Iraq, UNESCO supported women's role in post-conflict reconstruction by establishing with local partners a digital reporting platform for Iraqi women journalists in Arabic and English, hosted by the National Committee on Safety of Journalists. A ministerial and judicial order was obtained so that cases could be pursued through the digital platform without having to go to police stations, leading to a surge in reports and to the appointment of 20 additional judges in 2022 who received training on dealing with these complaints. The online reporting platform for Iraqi women journalists received over 600 reports, 86 per cent of which dealt with online threats, and 21 per cent of cases have been solved by the judiciary so far. Through trainings organized with the Iraqi Media Network and the Communication and Media Commission, 48 women journalists have built their capacities on digital tools, digital safety, fact-checking and fighting disinformation in 2022. In 2023, 40 women journalists were trained on digital threats, cyber blackmail and safety.

Box 4

Women's Creative Voices in Crisis and Emergency Contexts

Capitalizing on its sound and unique experience in the field of media and communication, UNESCO continued its efforts to promote women's artistic freedom in conflict and emergency settings, thus promoting the diversity of cultural expressions and inclusive participation in cultural life.

In cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights, UNESCO launched the initiative *Resilience in the Face of Crises through the Lens of Women Artists* in March 2023. A global discussion brought together high-profile women artists from around the world representing diverse disciplines to examine their role in inspiring resilience during times of crisis. It also explored the need to better protect the right to creation and livelihoods of women artists in emergency situations.

To promote dialogue, consultation and awareness-raising, UNESCO launched in 2023 the report "Defending Creative Voices: Artists in Emergencies, Learning from the Safety of Journalists" which focuses on the resilience of artists in emergency contexts, especially that of women artists. This landmark report documents the multiple threats that women artists face in emergency situations, such as online and offline harassment, unexpected loss of income, legal prosecution, violence, censorship, and silencing. It calls on the international community to enhance their support in emergency contexts and recommends new monitoring and emergency assistance policies, with specific attention to women creators.



Ukrainian artists gather as part of their artist residency facilitated by UNESCO after having fled the war. UNESCO granted 38 Ukrainian women artists with a three-month art residency to enable them to continue creating.



© UNESCO/
Annabel Turner

At the operational level, UNESCO supported governments and civil society organisations to **develop gender-responsive standards and policies boosting the protection of women artists and artistic freedom in contexts of crisis**. For example, through the *UNESCO-Aschberg Programme* and with the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund, UNESCO cooperated with artistic institutions and civil society groups – such as Artists at Risk – to welcome 38 Ukrainian women artists and their families who were displaced in 27 cultural institutions in 13 European countries. UNESCO supports the continuity of Ukraine’s artistic life through financing creative projects by Ukrainian cultural institutions, paying specific attention to gender mainstreaming and prioritising creative projects by women – and those that promote gender equality – in the cultural and creative industries.

The protection of scientists and particularly women scientists is an issue often overlooked in conflict situations but is central to UNESCO’s mandate. Building on its 2017 *Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers* – which includes a commitment by Member States to develop policies for the protection and preservation of science in instances of conflict – UNESCO **supports countries to address the challenges facing women scientists**. In this framework, the programme *Pause, Scientifiques en Exil* recognised in 2023 three displaced women scientists: Dr Mursal Dawodi, from Afghanistan, Dr Ann Al Sawoor, from Iraq, and Dr Marycelin Baba, from Nigeria, during the 25th anniversary of the *L’Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards*.



© Nicolas Gouhier*

Dr. Marycelin Baba, from Nigeria, is awarded a medal of honor as part of the programme *Pause, Scientifiques en Exil* during the 25th anniversary ceremony of the *L’Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science International Awards* in 2023.

“ Scientists nurture critical and free thinking, they broaden our perspectives, they create space for peaceful contestation, and challenging prejudices. For all these reasons, they are the best bulwark against fundamentalism and obscurantism.

Professor Edith Heard

Director-General of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), and 2020 Laureate of the L’Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards



We choose peace.



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Supporting the participation of women in recovery actions for the reconstruction of educational and cultural infrastructures and cultural heritage

UNESCO actively supports Member States in early recovery and reconstruction processes to provide safe, quality and gender-responsive education as well as to ensure the meaningful participation of women in rebuilding their countries devastated by conflict or other disasters. **Early recovery and reconstruction in education** has meant working

on different levels to get children back to school. First, this involved the physical reconstruction of school buildings. For example, in the framework of UNESCO's flagship initiative *Li Beirut*, 280 education institutions were rehabilitated within 18 months that brought 85,000 students back to school in 2022. In other cases, this meant targeting children from vulnerable groups that may not have benefitted from immediate assistance, such as in Iraq where UNESCO redoubled its efforts to reach 150,000 out-of-school children (47 per cent girls) from rural areas through its project *Improving Access to Quality and Inclusive Education for Out of School Children*.

Box 5

Women's Leadership in the Urban Recovery of Mosul and Basra Old Cities in Iraq

UNESCO's flagship initiative *Reviving the Spirit of Mosul and Basra Old Cities* (2018-2023) has promoted the stability, resilience and socio-economic development of the country through urban recovery while enhancing women's economic empowerment and livelihoods.

Gender mainstreaming was at the heart of the hiring process for all jobs related to the reconstruction of the Old Cities of Mosul and Basra, supported by the European Union. A tailored approach taking into consideration the existing societal urban structure, including family, ethnic group, religious affiliation, and tribal context, was used to facilitate the inclusion of women, both as paid apprentices and members of the work teams. Also, in 2022, a center for women's empowerment and the preservation of traditional handicrafts was established in Basra.

UNESCO successfully included 261 women in its Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) out of 1568 young vulnerable job seekers, and on-the-job trainings reached 44 per cent of women in construction and 30 per cent of women in engineering. Overall, more than 5,000 jobs have been created as a result of this urban recovery initiative, with a particular focus on youth and women.



© UNESCO

“My mother didn't like the idea of me working on construction sites as they are usually staffed by men. But she allowed me to work when she saw other young women working here.

Iman Taha, a 27-year-old woman working on restoration in Mosul

Graduates of the TVET programme in Iraq work in local reconstruction jobs. The impact of the TVET programme was far-reaching, with some graduates starting their own businesses and working in local jobs that contribute to the economic growth of the country.

Early recovery actions also involved capacity-building interventions to **provide women and girls with new life-skills and options** as their countries begin reconstruction processes. For example, in Haiti, UNESCO worked with the Ministry of National Education and the Regional Public Universities of Haiti to support over 5,000 girls, young mothers and women to acquire literacy, numeracy and income-generating skills to become financially independent. In Yemen, the *Cash for Work: Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Urban Youth* programme, supported by the European Union over a three-year period, offered temporary work opportunities to more than 6,000 young people, most of them women. Those work opportunities were matched with capacity building to address safeguarding cultural heritage and advancing gender equality. The programme prioritised women and youth in its hiring process for supervisory roles as architects, engineers and administrators. As a result, in 2022, the reconstruction of ten historic houses in Zabid were completed by women-only construction teams. Recognising the crucial role of cultural heritage in fostering reconciliation, peace and gender equality, **UNESCO supports women to co-create an inclusive version of history, heritage and memories**, and re-create infrastructure and physical landscapes with their vision for inclusive and safe cities. This approach also contributes to improving the economic autonomy of women as well as to re-shape harmful gender norms.

Facilitating women's participation in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and disaster risk reduction (DRR)

Despite being disproportionately affected by compounding global crises – from violent extremism to unresolved conflicts and climate related emergencies – women are pivotal to building peaceful and sustainable societies that can prevent, endure and recover from such adversities. To this end, UNESCO adopts an inclusive and diverse approach to preventing violent extremism (PVE) and reducing risks of natural disasters (DRR) by ensuring that women's voices, experiences, and leadership are fully integrated across its interventions.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, UNESCO developed targeted **initiatives on preventing violent extremism (PVE)**, hateful ideologies, racism and antisemitism, and in promoting safe and gender-equitable learning environments free from all forms of violence.



© LVMH/ Carolina Arantes*

After unprecedented wildfires raged through the Amazon, UNESCO and LVMH launched a project to train and equip volunteer fire brigades in the heart of the Amazon Rainforest to prevent wildfires.

In violent extremism contexts, local norms for masculinity and femininity have the potential to oppose or confirm extreme narratives. UNESCO takes this into account as it offers a gendered approach in countries where it works on early recovery actions and PVE initiatives. This approach is embedded in the educational tools and materials produced and adapted to local contexts, such as the guidelines on *Addressing Conspiracy Theories: What teachers need to know*, launched in 2022. Capacity-building interventions provided direct support to teachers on how to manage classroom discussions on violence and radicalization and how to create a learning environment that is inclusive and conducive to respectful dialogue and critical thinking.

UNESCO also worked to address the deteriorating levels of security within countries by focusing on the cultural dynamics that can help build social cohesion and prevent violent extremism. For instance, through its Heritage Emergency Fund, UNESCO provided support to four social inclusion projects based on artistic practices and respect of cultural rights in Chad in 2023 to prevent the development of conflicts and the unravelling of community linkages. These projects prioritised vulnerable individuals, including women victims of domestic violence, unaccompanied children, and former Boko Haram recruits.

As the impact of climate-related risks exacerbate inequalities, including gender inequalities, UNESCO mainstreams gender equality in its initiatives to **support Member States in strengthening their skills and resources for reducing risks of natural disasters**. In 2022 and 2023, UNESCO promoted the establishment of open-access and knowledge-sharing platforms on disaster risk reduction (DRR) that benefit from the knowledge of women and girls, especially from indigenous communities and civil society groups.

This knowledge helped to inform UNESCO's research, including its publication "Towards Gender-responsive and Technology-oriented Disaster Management in Eastern Africa", which supports the development and integration of gender-responsive technologies into strategies and action plans for DRR.

UNESCO promotes engagement by civil society – particularly that of women – in the planning and implementation of strategies to reduce disaster risk as part of its approach to engage all key stakeholders. In South Sudan, for example, UNESCO provided training on gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction policies and worked with youth groups to provide a disaster management strategy for schools. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru, UNESCO equipped local residents in the heart of the Amazon rainforest to become volunteer firefighters and prevent wildfires. In total, nearly 700 volunteers of all ages, over half of them women, learned valuable skills, such as how to create effective firebreaks and how to identify risk factors that can turn 'controlled burning' into a potential hazard.

The management of the impact of risks to natural heritage from a gender perspective is also one of the Organisation's lines of work. For example, in Cuba, following the severe damage to the World Heritage property Viñales Valle' caused by the landfall of Hurricane Ian in September 2022, urgent restoration works were launched to ensure the continuity of cultural activities. Afterwards, a series of workshops strengthened local capacities and resilience of local communities to better prepare and respond to future hurricanes. The workshops empowered women, in particular, putting special emphasis on the transmission of their traditional knowledge for DRR and natural cultural heritage. Similarly, as a response to the damage to the World Heritage property Island of Mozambique in March 2022 by Cyclone Gombe, UNESCO launched a series of consultations to gather relevant insights from key stakeholders, with a focus on women and youth, to strengthen community capacities in managing disaster risks and preparedness. The operational projects resulting from the findings of the consultation target girls and young women to ensure the transmission of cultural values and practices including traditional construction techniques.

With the increasing impact of conflicts and emergencies on culture, UNESCO is working to implement its standard-setting instruments and strategies in partnership with UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes and national stakeholders.



Box 6

Gender Equality and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) through Education in Iraq

Building on results achieved and lessons learned from previous programmes implemented in Iraq, the project *Gendered Approach to Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) through Education*, supported by Canada, mainstreamed gender equality into its design, delivery, and impact assessment. By partnering with Iraq's Ministry of Education, it was possible to develop adapted school materials for primary and secondary schools to provide gender-sensitive, high-quality education in schools that are free of violence and discrimination. The *Guide for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments* was endorsed and formally applied by the Ministry in two governorates. The project also involved the training of master trainers to support the use of the materials and pedagogies, the establishment of a community of peace network and the launch of a social media campaign and video series. Overall, UNESCO trained over 9,000 teachers, parents, principals and supervisors, 60 per cent of whom are women, from 250 schools across the country. Eventually, 70,000 learners received the PVE content and gender equality messages on social media.

Specifically, UNESCO is **working with women military officials on the protection of cultural property from destruction in times of armed conflict**. In 2023, the Organization partnered with the United Nations Organisation Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to organize a regional capacity-building workshop targeting women military personnel from national armed forces in 12 different countries of East, Central and West Africa. Based on previous trainings for women military personnel and UN peacekeepers in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan, this was the first such initiative in sub-Saharan Africa. The training focused on the professional development of military women and increasing their participation in the protection of cultural heritage sites and properties, consolidating and reinforcing this unique network of women peacekeepers.



© UNESCO Kinshasa

Women military personnel in Kinshasa learn about strategies to identify and protect cultural properties in times of armed conflict and peacebuilding processes.

UNESCO is also preparing, in collaboration with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, a massive open online course on the protection of cultural property including a specific module on the role of women in the protection of cultural property.

Box 7

UNESCO Gender Equality Initiatives Supported by the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund is the UN's primary financial tool to sustain peace in countries or situations at risk or affected by violent conflict. With the promotion of inclusion through women and youth empowerment as one of its priority windows, it supports UN entities, governments, regional organisations, multilateral banks, national multi-donor trust funds and civil society organisations.

Two-thirds of UNESCO projects funded by the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund in 2022 and 2023 specifically address gender equality. Highlights include three cases, from Central America, North Africa and West Africa:

- In El Salvador, UNESCO is promoting the participation of young women, particularly in rural areas and vulnerable conditions, in local decision-making processes in favour of peace by working on inclusion protocols, facilitating spaces for exchange and political dialogue.
- In Mauritania, UNESCO is strengthening gender equality in the prevention and fight against violent extremism through the integration of a gender dimension in the criminal justice system. It aims to overcome gender stereotypes linked to violent extremism by elevating women's role in intangible cultural heritage, which upholds women as stewards of conciliation and social cohesion.
- In South Sudan, UNESCO is accompanying institutional partners and the people of South Sudan to develop a locally-owned, people-driven and gender-responsive permanent national constitution which will provide the foundation for a peaceful and prosperous country. The project offers three areas of expert support to the constitution-drafting process, namely, capacity development, technical advice and expertise on core values such as gender equality and human rights, civic education and public participation.

ASSESSING RESULTS FOR 2022-2023

UNESCO advances gender equality through its cross-cutting actions on crisis preparedness, emergency response and early recovery, empowering women and girls with access to life-saving assistance in the fields of education, sciences, culture, communication and information. UNESCO is doing so by activating its five main functions to support and empower women and girls in crisis, emergency and recovery contexts by:

- Promoting the continuity of learning and access to gender-responsive quality education and safe learning environments;
- Protecting and amplifying the voices and rights of women journalists, artists and scientists;
- Supporting the participation of women in the reconstruction of educational and cultural infrastructures and cultural heritage;
- Enhancing women's participation in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) interventions.

Results for 2022-2023 led to the establishment of solid partnerships with governmental, international, regional and civil society stakeholders, including women's rights organisations. UNESCO produced and disseminated key knowledge, operational tools and data assessing the situation of women and girls in conflict-settings in its mandated areas to inform national and international strategies and interventions. The deployment of flagship initiatives in countries facing the most serious crises helped position education, science, culture and communication as levers for the empowerment of women and girls for more inclusive, peaceful and sustainable societies. In line with the UN Women Peace and Security Agenda, UNESCO's action will continue to increase women's inclusion and meaningful participation in all peacemaking, peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts and address women's and girl's security and peacebuilding needs. The building blocks for decisive results have been laid, with UNESCO defining the complementarity of its role to bolster action across the UN system for gender equality in conflict settings.

UNESCO'S 2022-2023 MONITORING DATA

- Globally, **43,454 young people received education and information to resist violent and hateful ideologies** and promote the principles of human rights, respect for cultural diversity, gender equality and the rule of law
- **In Afghanistan**
 - **5,000 girls and women** benefited from the **Basic General Literacy programme** across 20 provinces
 - **600,000 women and girls** across 15 provinces accessed **educational radio programmes** produced by women
 - **150 Afghan women refugees** received certified **teacher** training courses
- **In Iraq**
 - **70,000 out-of-school girls** enrolled in primary and secondary education and **1,577 teachers** trained to provide **gender-sensitive education** in rural areas
 - **237 women** trained through the **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** programme in Mosul
 - **30%** of local **engineers** employed in the **Reviving Mosul** and Basra Old Cities project are **women**
- **In Ukraine**
 - **1,200 women journalists** participated in **gender-sensitive safety training** in high-risk environments
 - **18 women journalists** and **38 women artists** and their dependents received **emergency and relocation** support
- **In Yemen**
 - **10 historic houses** in Zabid have been reconstructed by **women-only construction teams**

GENDER EQUALITY AT UNESCO

Gender equality as a global priority not only applies to UNESCO's programmes, but also to its internal functioning and institutional culture. The 2022-2023 biennium marked many achievements and reflects UNESCO's unwavering dedication to promote gender equality not only in the areas of its mandate, but also as part of its day-to-day operations at Headquarters and in field offices.

A New Transversal Strategy: Gender Equality is Everyone's Business

Following the two UNESCO Gender Equality Action Plans for 2008-2013 (GEAP I) and 2014-2019 (GEAP II), gender equality was fully embedded in the main strategic documents of the Organisation for the first time to ensure a more effective, comprehensive and transversal implementation.

73%
of the 2022-2023
UNESCO's workplans
mainstream
gender equality
and **33%** specifically
address the
promotion of
gender equality

The mainstreaming of gender equality in the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and the Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5) strengthened the gender dimension in programming across all Sectors, with 73 per cent of the 2022-2023 UNESCO's workplans mainstreaming gender equality and 33 per cent specifically addressing the promotion of gender equality (Gender Equality Marker – GEM 2 and GEM 3). It also reinforced the monitoring of gender-related outcomes and outputs, with the integration of 24 per cent

of gender-related performance indicators in the Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5). The programmatic budget for gender equality represents 15.5 per cent of the Integrated Budget Framework for the Programme Sectors and IOC for 2022-2023 (US\$168.6 million), a percentage that ranks among the highest in the UN System.

The mainstreaming of gender equality as a global priority is also visible through *UNESCO's Participation Programme*, which supports the implementation of national, sub-regional, inter-regional and regional projects submitted by Member States and NGOs directly related to the mandate of the Organisation. As of 30 June 2023, 124 of 536 requests approved by the Director-General of UNESCO for the 2022-2023 biennium had gender equality as a main priority, representing US\$2.3 million.

This new approach is crucial to make gender equality 'everyone's business.' It is explained and visualized through the Global Priority Gender Equality Framework, which is structured around UNESCO's four Strategic Objectives and cross-cutting theme and based on UNESCO's gender-related performance indicators. The Framework provides for the first time an integrated and intersectoral overview of the Organisation's action for gender equality and sets out ways to broaden interventions and improve, multiply and strengthen results across UNESCO's mandate.

“
From January 2022 to August 2023 UNESCO released 164 publications focused on gender in 19 different languages covering all areas of expertise



55%
of the voluntary contributions for gender equality supported gender-transformative programmes (GEM 3)

The **Division for Gender Equality**, located in the Cabinet of the Director-General, provides strategic policy advice and works with the Programme Sectors and IOC to roll out the UNESCO Global Priority Gender Equality Framework. It actively supports them in all stages of the planning, implementation and monitoring of transformative gender equality actions to respond to new challenges. The Division does so through its core functions for inter-sectoral coordination on gender equality across UNESCO's mandate, knowledge production through research on emerging areas of work, capacity development for UNESCO staff at HQs and field offices, and communication and advocacy actions to promote UNESCO's work on gender equality.

Resolute Support from Member States, Multilateral Organisations and Private Donors

The major programmatic results achieved for the Global Priority Gender Equality in 2022 and 2023 were possible because of the firm commitment of Member States. Between January 2022 and June 2023, 375 donors actively supported gender equality initiatives and programmes, with a total value of US\$128.7 million. Some 55 per cent of the

voluntary contributions for gender equality were directed towards gender-transformative programmes (GEM 3), which indicates the commitment to fostering real and profound change.

UNESCO's top 20 donors collectively represented 89 per cent of the total funds mobilized to operationalize Global Priority Gender Equality.

The funding for gender equality actions predominantly came from governments, which represented

72 per cent of total contributions. Among these top contributors are Sweden, Norway, Italy, France, Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Brazil, China, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Switzerland, and Germany.

UN agencies and multilateral sources have also played a central role, taking an important place among the top 20 contributors. They include the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Adaptation Fund, and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

Among the top private donors that contributed to the UNESCO Global Priority Gender Equality we count a range of foundations, including Alwaleed Philanthropies, Dubai Cares, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Elsevier Foundation. Private companies supporting UNESCO's work on gender equality include Nestlé, Nike, Huawei, and Prada, among others.

A Gender-Transformative Institutional Culture

Gender equality is a core value of the Human Resources Management (HRM) at UNESCO and a key principle of UNESCO's Competency Framework which drives recruitment and performance evaluation processes.

Gender parity figures among the four strategic aims of a new HRM strategy (2023-2027). UNESCO closely monitors gender parity within the Secretariat, including each Sector, Bureau and UNESCO Institute. As of July 2023 the following figures mark significant advances:

- 41 per cent of Directors and Assistant Directors-General are women, positioning UNESCO as the leading UN Specialized Agency with the highest representation of women at the Director level and above.
- 55 per cent of professional category staff are women, which is higher than the average rate in the UN system (48 per cent).
- Women represent 56 per cent of P-3 positions, 52 per cent of P-4s, and 40 per cent of P-5s. The latter marks a major increase from January 2019 when women accounted for 30 per cent of P-5s.
- Efforts need to be made to increase the number of men in the P-1/P-2 grades, where they represent only 32 per cent of the positions.



Women represent 41% of Directors and Assistant Directors-General in UNESCO, the UN Specialized Agency with the highest representation of women in leadership positions

To support gender-inclusive practices and working conditions, UNESCO implements policies for maternity, paternity, adoption, family, and emergency leave, breastfeeding and childcare as well as work-life balance that include staggered working hours and compressed work schedules, part-time work, telecommuting and breaks for extended learning activities.

During 2022 and 2023 UNESCO made progress in establishing and maintaining a policy framework, procedures and mechanisms to prevent and respond to Sexual Harassment (SH) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) across the Organisation in line with established best practices in the UN system. The Ethics Office continued to actively participate in the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Task Force on Sexual Harassment, Workstream 2 on advancing a victim-centred approach, and joined Workstream 1 on the use of behavioural science to prevent and address sexual harassment. Furthermore, in 2022, the Ethics Office issued a total of 2,560 training certificates covering the full spectrum of trainings under its purview including in person and e-format of the Anti-Harassment Workshop, in-person ethics training, ethics e-learning and the PSEA e-learning course.

In the field of audit and evaluation, UNESCO completed seven corporate evaluations with a strong gender focus between January 2022 and August 2023 based on the UN system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) criteria.⁸⁰ New internal tools for auditing gender equality and the empowerment of women were developed and applied and key audit findings on gender equality were regularly reported to the governing bodies of the Organisation and the UN system.

The corporate evaluations of the UNESCO Global Priority Gender Equality resulted in a series of recommendations which were endorsed by the governing bodies of UNESCO. They are currently being implemented around three priority areas to strengthen gender equality throughout the Organisation: clarifying and strengthening UNESCO's gender equality architecture; improving UNESCO's framework, processes and tools for planning, allocation, follow-up and reporting, and; supporting UNESCO field offices and their gender equality outcomes.

Enhanced Gender Equality Skills

Capacity development remains essential for all staff to promote gender equality transformative actions in achieving UNESCO's Strategic Objectives. UNESCO's mandatory e-learning course on gender equality, available in English, French and Spanish, addresses the key concepts of gender equality and supports meaningful gender mainstreaming and gender programming across UNESCO's areas of competence. As of August 2023, 1,715 staff members started or completed the training. To facilitate access to learning modules and tools, a centralized space was created on UNESCO's Gender Equality webpage in 2022 and is regularly updated.

Gender equality is also a common thread through all learning and development initiatives deployed in 2022 and 2023, with a higher participation rate from women overall, at approximately 66.5 per cent. For example, the *Gender Equality Story Circles* training for trainers benefited UNESCO's staff, both at Headquarters and in the field, and was opened to colleagues from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

New modalities of capacity building on gender equality have been established to meet the changing needs of the Organisation for more hands-on assistance and to promote inter-sectoral exchange. For example, a Peer-to-Peer Learning Group was created in 2022 to bring together colleagues from all programme sectors and field offices from all regions as well as the Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP) and the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) to reinforce internal learning and knowledge-sharing on operational lessons to improve the monitoring of gender-related results. At the leadership and strategic level, regular sessions of *Let's Talk about Gender Equality* gathered Assistant Directors-General of the major programme sectors and field offices directors to exchange ideas on gender equality priorities. At the operational level, the Gender Equality Task Team (GETT) works together to ensure a comprehensive monitoring of gender actions across UNESCO's mandate and to find solutions to common challenges, such as the production of gender-sensitive data, communication and visibility of results.

Compliance with the UN system-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality (UN-SWAP)

The UN-SWAP is a UN system-wide accountability framework designed to capture, monitor and measure performance on mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of the UN system and drive progress towards gender-related SDG results. It sets out seventeen performance indicators clustered around six broad areas including results-based management, oversight, accountability, human and financial resources, capacity and knowledge, and communication and coherence.

2022 Report Results for UNESCO as assessed by UN Women:

- UNESCO's 2022 report obtained its highest overall compliance rate to date with 14 of the 16 applicable indicators meeting or exceeding expectations, in particular on strategic planning and reporting on gender related SDG's results, evaluation, and knowledge production and communication.
- UNESCO was commended for its work to introduce the gender equality markers for financial resource tracking and for embarking on phase 2 of the IOS Evaluation the UNESCO Global Priority Gender Equality.
- UNESCO was asked to strengthen efforts to ensure sufficient and sustained human and financial resources for the promotion of gender equality, carry out a capacity assessment and establish a plan based on the needs and requirements of staff at Headquarters and in field offices.

All UN entities are encouraged to improve gender-related budget tracking by implementing the UN System-wide Financial Data Reporting Standard approved in November 2022. UNESCO has already taken action by including the new standard for budget planning and programme monitoring in its *Core Planner* and *Core Manager* tools launched in 2023.

UNESCO GLOBAL COMMUNITY



- UNESCO Institutes and Centres
- UNESCO Chairs
- ▲ UNITWIN Networks

UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality is put into action from the global to the local levels through programmes and projects, advocacy actions, and the production of new data and knowledge products. This work is possible only through the joint action of the entire UNESCO Community.

Across the world, **9 UNESCO Institutes and Centres in 11 countries**, and **40 Chairs and 3 UNITWIN Networks in 27 countries**, bring their unique knowledge, know-how and diverse perspectives to achieve concrete gender results for gender equality.⁸¹



- **7 Chairs and 7 Institutes and Category I Centre** work to achieve gender equality in and through education, under **Strategic Objective 1**.

- **9 Chairs and 1 Category II Centre** contribute to empower women in science and technology for environmental action, under **Strategic Objective 2**.

- **15 Chairs** contribute to promote inclusion and combat gender-based violence, under **Strategic Objective 3**.

- **3 Chairs, 1 Institute, and 2 Networks** contribute with their action to bridge the digital gender divide, under **Strategic Objective 4**.

- **3 Chairs** contribute to **promote women and gender equality in crisis preparedness and emergency response contexts**.

- **3 Chairs and 1 Network** have a **transversal scope** encompassing diverse Strategic Objectives and the cross-cutting theme.

In the 2022-2023 biennium, **7 new gender-related UNESCO Chairs** and **1 Network** joined the Community.

UNESCO Institutes, Chairs and Networks working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

1. International Bureau of Education (IBE), Switzerland
2. Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), Germany
3. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), France, with regional offices in Argentina and Senegal
4. UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Germany
5. UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
6. International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), Ethiopia
7. UNESCO Chair on Women, Sciences and Technology in Latin America, Argentina
8. UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development, Early Childhood, Inclusive Education and Gender, United States of America
9. UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), India
10. UNESCO Chair for the Promotion of Gender Equality, Colombia
11. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions, Peru
12. UNESCO Chair on Youth Leadership in Science, Health, Gender and Education, Kenya
13. UNESCO Chair on Women and Science, France
14. UNESCO Chair on Gender Studies and Education, Dominican Republic • **NEW**

UNESCO Institutes, Chairs and Networks working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

15. UNESCO Chair in Women, Science and Technology, Sudan
16. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Development, Brazil
17. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Decision-making, Côte d'Ivoire
18. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Decision-making, Morocco
19. Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme, UNESCO Category II Center, Iceland
20. UNESCO Chair in Women, Science and Reasoned Water Management in West Africa, Togo
21. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Governance, Dominican Republic
22. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality Policies in Science, Technology and Innovation, Spain
23. UNESCO Chair on the Empowerment of Women through Science and Technology, Egypt
24. UNESCO Chair on Women Participation in Science, Technology and Innovation, Peru • **NEW**

UNESCO Institutes, Chairs and Networks working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

25. UNESCO Chair in Women and Community Health, Kenya
26. UNESCO Chair on Women and their Rights, Morocco
27. UNESCO Chair on Women, Development and Cultures, Spain
28. UNESCO Chair in Media and Gender, China
29. UNESCO Chair in Gender, Leadership and Equity, Mexico
30. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Cyprus

31. UNESCO Chair in Policies on Gender and Equal Rights between Women and Men, Spain
32. UNESCO Chair in Cultural Diversity, Gender and Border Territories, Brazil
33. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, India
34. UNESCO Chair on Improvement in Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Türkiye
35. UNESCO Chair on Gender, Wellbeing and a Culture of Peace, United States of America
36. UNESCO Chair on Gender, Equality and Culture, Türkiye
37. UNESCO Chair for the History of Women in Philosophy, Sciences, and Culture, Brazil • **NEW**
38. UNESCO Chair on Preventing Violence Against Women, Colombia • **NEW**
39. UNESCO Chair on Masculinities and Gender Equality, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland • **NEW**

UNESCO Institutes, Chairs and Networks working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

40. Institute of Information Technologies in Education (IITE), Russian Federation
41. UNESCO Chair in Communication Technology for Women, Republic of Korea
42. International Network on Gender, Media and ICTs, Mexico
43. International Network for Women's Empowerment through ICT Skills and Leadership Education, Republic of Korea
44. UNESCO Chair on Gender and Digital Technologies, Namibia
45. Strategic and Institutional Partnership for the access of Young People and Women to Information and Communication Technologies in Central Africa, Cameroon • **NEW**

UNESCO Institutes, Chairs and Networks working primarily on WOMEN AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

46. UNESCO Chair on Women, Peace and Security: Building Capacity and Resilience through Education and Research, Greece
47. UNESCO Chair on Gender and Vulnerability in Disaster Risk Reduction Support, Japan
48. UNESCO Chair on Building Peaceful Societies through Research on Gender Equality, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland • **NEW**

UNESCO Institutes, Chairs and Networks working on TRANSVERSAL THEMES

49. UNESCO Chair in Women, Society and Development, Poland
50. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development, Türkiye
51. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women's Rights, Italy
52. Network on Gender Equality, Argentina • **NEW**

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors, Artists for Peace and Champions

Through the actions of its Goodwill Ambassadors, Artists for Peace and Champions, UNESCO raises public awareness of its mandate and programmes for gender equality. These personalities use their talent and international recognition to carry forward UNESCO's values and goals around its Global Priority Gender Equality through the events they organize, the projects they carry out and the debates and communication platforms in which they participate. In 2023, **10 UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors, Artists for Peace and Champions** worked to increase the visibility of UNESCO's actions for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Chantal Biya, the First Lady of Cameroon, designated **UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Education and Social Inclusion** in November 2008, is committed to improve the lives of women, vulnerable people and minorities, and to increase social inclusion through HIV/AIDS education and prevention.



The Japanese filmmaker and artist **Naomi Kawase**, designated **UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Creativity and Gender Equality** in 2021, actively promotes the cultural and creative industries as a lever for building more just societies, including for girls and women.



Guila Clara Kessous (France), appointed **UNESCO Artist for Peace** in January 2012, promotes and defends human rights through art. In her capacity as a UNESCO Artist for Peace, she is committed to gender equality.



The Norwegian film director **Deeyah Khan**, designated **UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Artistic Freedom and Creativity** in November 2016, promotes art as a universal language and force for development, dialogue, social cohesion, and gender equality.



Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, appointed **UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador** in June 1997, promotes education, women's rights and microfinance.



Tunisian writer **Ahlem Mosteghanemi**, appointed **UNESCO Artist for Peace** in December 2016, is committed, through her writing, to causes such as social justice, the education of young people affected by armed conflicts, women's rights and the fight against violence.



Liyuan Peng, First Lady of the People's Republic of China, appointed **UNESCO Special Envoy for the Promotion of Girls' and Women's Education** in March 2014, supports girls' and women's empowerment through quality education in the fight against inequalities in education.



The Danish international football player **Nadia Nadim**, designated as **UNESCO Champion for Girls' and Women's Education** in 2019, actively promotes sports and gender equality, education initiatives in favor of young people, and advocates for girls and women's education.



The French artist **Hedva Ser**, designated **UNESCO Special Envoy for Cultural Diplomacy** in 2017, is committed to dialogue across cultures, gender equality and social inclusion as a vehicle for a culture of peace.



The Spanish actress **Rosy de Palma**, designated **Goodwill Ambassador for Cultural Diversity** in October 2022, is committed to creativity, diversity of cultural expression and gender equality.



For UNESCO, gender equality is at the heart of what makes it a unique global institution. Equality is at the core of UNESCO's conviction of how to build lasting peace: it cannot depend merely on the political and economic relationships across nations, but rather on mutual understanding, respect for equal dignity and solidarity. Respect for equal dignity translates to respect for diversity. And that diversity cannot exist if men and women have unequal access to learn, create, decide, lead and contribute. To achieve diversity, we need equality; to achieve equality we require a deeper understanding of why diversity is so important. These are interdependent pieces of the bigger vision that UNESCO carries forward.

A wise woman ahead of her time, Ellen Wilkinson reminds us of the underlying principles of UNESCO that must continue to guide our work. Her words in November 1946 – in one of her final speeches to the British Parliament where she was urging her government to provide full support to the fledgling organization – explained the underlying principles of UNESCO. It upheld “standards of value...putting aside the idea that only practical things matter.” She heralded its unique mandate, stating that UNESCO will “...do great things” with a focus on the human spirit.⁸² We can only uphold the value of that human spirit if we recognise and promote equality across all humans, which means achieving gender equality as a prerequisite to all of UNESCO's work.

“Gender equality isn't just a women's issue, it's a human rights issue that necessitates the active engagement of men and boys.”

This means that for UNESCO, gender equality is everybody's business. While UNESCO has integrated gender issues and equality throughout its work since it was established 78 years ago, it has made a renewed commitment to put gender equality at the forefront of its mandate as a global priority. This past biennium has demonstrated how far-reaching that work goes: covering every continent in which UNESCO is active, its work has impacted the lives of millions of girls, women as teachers, learners, artists, journalists, scientists, migrants and peacebuilders. The coming biennium holds immense potential to expand and formalize this commitment to raise the voices of girls and women, in all areas of UNESCO's mandate.

Together, we achieve results through persistent collaboration with partners of all types: with Member States, across the UN, with local constituencies, and alongside UNESCO Institutes and Chairs, National Commissions, civil society organisations and the private sector, to name a few.

UNESCO's vision for gender equality complements that of its global partners, and drills down on specific areas that are fundamental to its mandate. Each of these pieces are aimed at positively engaging girls and women so that future generations may solve humanity's most difficult challenges, where women and girls contribute as problem-solvers, innovators, and visionaries to chart a clear path forward for the benefit of all of society. That means having equal access to and benefiting from education; being involved in and accompanying AI and new technologies as they develop, from the beginning; re-shaping social norms and ending violence – whether online or offline; promoting women's and girls voices in the public sphere, and advancing the sciences and protecting biodiversity and our natural systems. Especially in Africa, if we do not step forward now to take urgent and exponential action, more women and girls will live in extreme poverty by 2030 than do today.⁸³ If current trends continue, more than 340 million women and girls will still live in extreme poverty by 2030.⁸⁴

Gender equality isn't just a women's issue, it's a human rights issue that necessitates the active engagement of men and boys.

We as humans – just like the natural systems that surround us – are inherently diverse. We celebrate and safeguard that diversity, just as we look to the past to thank the previous generations that have paved the way for us. Now, we must work for the coming generations by upholding UNESCO's ideals in difficult times, where conflict and global pandemics overlap with a breakdown in our natural environment, alongside the challenges of rapid technological changes. The projections for achieving gender equality are dire: it could take as many as 286 years to get to our goal. There is much work to be done. Future generations are depending on us. Action is urgent and there is no time to lose.

We have witnessed that when women and girls flourish, the potential to reach UNESCO's ideals to uphold peaceful and sustainable communities can become a reality. As UNESCO simultaneously holds the flame for diversity and gender equality, we acknowledge our common understanding and are – ultimately – inspired by what ties us all together: our shared humanity.

Begoña Lasagabaster

Director of the Division for Gender Equality



A new artistic creation "SUBSTRATUM – Scratching the Surface" by the artist Vhils, pays tribute to Ellen Wilkinson, the British politician, feminist and reformer, who presided over UNESCO's inaugural General Conference in 1945. The monumental mural was unveiled on 12 July 2023 at UNESCO Headquarters.

NOTES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

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3. UNESCO, 2022, *#HerEducationOurFuture #BreakTheBias: Challenging gender bias and stereotypes in and through education; the latest facts on gender equality in education*, Paris, p. 4.
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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

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CROSS-CUTTING THEME

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GENDER EQUALITY AT UNESCO

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UNESCO GLOBAL COMMUNITY

81. UNESCO Institutes include Category 1 Institutes or Centres are institutionally and legally part of UNESCO, and Category 2 Institutes or Centre are under the auspices of UNESCO but are legally external to the Organization.

IN CLOSING

82. Ellen Wilkinson was a politician in Great Britain and the Minister of Education from 1945 until her death in 1947. She promoted UNESCO from its early days.

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UNESCO in Action for **GENDER EQUALITY**

This report presents UNESCO's actions to advance gender equality across its mandate in 2022 and 2023 and provides a roadmap of UNESCO's vision for gender-transformative work.

This third edition presents key data, best practices and lessons learned, and shows how UNESCO coordinates across its partners to promote gender equality and empower women and girls around the world through education, the sciences, culture, communication, and information.

The report highlights UNESCO's global leadership on a range of key gender equality issues, including girls education, the ethics of artificial intelligence (AI), the protection of women journalists, artists and scientists in conflict situations, and the empowerment of women at the forefront of scientific innovation to address the climate and ecosystem crises. With persistent threats around the world of a backlash against women and girls' basic rights, UNESCO is working at the global level and at the country level to apply its mandate and vision to advance gender equality.



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