

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



**UNDP GENDER
EQUALITY STRATEGY
2022-2025
2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

CONTENTS

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FOREWORD

In 2023, the world faced compounding shocks, where governing in a state of emergency became the norm, longstanding democracies came under pressure, and courts became the new frontiers for climate change. We also witnessed growing conflicts and rising polarization within and between countries. Perceived differences were magnified, basic gender equality principles were often targeted, deepening divides, and reversing long-held rights, often overshadowing countries' progress in implementing new laws and measures to improve women's economic rights in 2023. The situation for millions of women and girls, especially those in conflict and crisis settings, became not just dire but devastating.

In this complex context, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) completed the second year of implementing our Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025. I can affirm that today, UNDP is better prepared to address the complexities of gender inequalities. Our interventions are designed more consciously to shift power dynamics, we are making larger and more consistent programmatic investments, and developing stronger partnerships with grassroots and women's organizations. We remain convinced that investing in gender equality is one of the most important contributions we can make to human and sustainable development.

This report offers a glimpse of the many results that have emerged from the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy in 2023. That encompasses providing over 90 million women with access to essential services and helping some 5.4 million women in crisis settings to access jobs and livelihoods. Yet ending poverty requires rethinking economic structures and approaches. To this end, we launched our flagship EQUANOMICS initiative, which has already supported 23 countries in initiating gender-responsive fiscal policy reforms and strengthening gender responsiveness in local and state budgeting. We also accelerated progress towards a green transition, including supporting 14 million women to gain access to clean, affordable energy while investing in energy policy frameworks that facilitate women's participation in energy planning and increase their economic opportunities.

These often life-changing results are only possible with support from all of you: partners from the UN family including UN Women, women's organizations, and civil society. In this context, and given the stark challenges faced by women's activists, in 2023 UNDP has forged new alliances and partnerships with women human rights defenders, working with champions of climate justice and environmental human rights defenders in at least 27 countries.

The commitment we witnessed in 2023, including within government ministries, civil society organizations and other institutions to fundamentally transform ways of working to advance a more equal world is a key source of inspiration and motivation for UNDP to keep going and do more. It is based on the recognition that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a prerequisite to ultimately break through to a greener, more sustainable, and more inclusive world for all.

Photo: UNDP/Michael Atwood



A handwritten signature of Achim Steiner in black ink.

Achim Steiner
Administrator
United Nations
Development Programme



**POVERTY AND
INEQUALITY**

92
MILLION

WOMEN ACCESSED
ESSENTIAL SERVICES



GOVERNANCE

33
MILLION

WOMEN ACCESSED
JUSTICE SERVICES



RESILIENCE

4.7
MILLION

WOMEN GAINED
JOBS AND IMPROVED
LIVELIHOODS



ENVIRONMENT

5.4
MILLION

WOMEN BENEFITED
FROM INITIATIVES TO
PROTECT NATURE



ENERGY

14
MILLION

WOMEN ACCESSED
CLEAN AND AFFORDABLE
ENERGY



GENDER EQUALITY

135
MILLION

WOMEN SUPPORTED
TO REGISTER TO VOTE

28
MILLION

WOMEN OBTAINED
FINANCIAL SERVICES

224,000
PUBLIC SERVANTS

EQUIPPED WITH THE GENDER
EQUALITY SEAL

28
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED ON
GENDER ANALYSIS IN
RECOVERY PLANS

77
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED TO
IMPLEMENT GENDER
AND CLIMATE
COMMITMENTS

75
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED ON CLEAN
COOKING PROJECTS
FUNDED BY GEF AND
GREEN CLIMATE FUND

68
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED TO
EXPAND GENDER
DATA ANALYSES

23
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED ON FISCAL
POLICY REFORMS

43
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED TO
INCREASE WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP AND EQUAL
PARTICIPATION

61
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED WOMEN'S
COOPERATIVES AND
COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT
IN ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTIONS

34
COUNTRIES

SUPPORTED TO SHIFT
GENDER SOCIAL
NORMS

89
COUNTRIES

PROMOTED WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP IN
NATURAL RESOURCE
DECISION-MAKING

106
COUNTRIES

PARTNERED
WITH FEMINIST
AND WOMEN'S
ORGANIZATIONS

UNDP 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



TRANSFORMATION IN TURBULENT TIMES

UNDP's [Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025](#) was born at the end of the COVID-19 crisis, during an acute period of questions about why progress toward gender equality has been so slow, scattered and easily reversed. The call for re-thinking political, economic, and environmental systems rang strong and drove governments to consider shifts to fundamental systems and power structures that continue to generate gender disparities and women's disempowerment.

By 2024, however, the world has become more dangerous and unjust for many women and those facing discrimination linked to factors such as age, class, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity or migration status. Over 380 million women and girls live in extreme poverty and over 600 million live in conflict-affected contexts. The war in Gaza alone has added close to 1 million more women and girls to those displaced. The impacts of climate change and debt are pressuring economies and re-directing limited resources away from

public services. And while the promise of digital transformation grows, the gender digital divide leaves millions of women and girls, especially those living in poverty, on the sidelines.

Despite the obstacles, over the first two years of its implementation, UNDP has found ways to continuously move its Gender Equality Strategy forward, meeting targets in 2023, expanding new areas of work, and showing how structural transformation can unfold through integrated development. Today, UNDP is more equipped to link immediate improvements in the lives of women with long-term investments necessary to dismantle the barriers to sustainable development and gender equality. It is helping governments protect gains and make continued progress by moving gender equality to the centre of political, economic and environmental agendas.

SIGNATURE SOLUTIONS

Progress toward gender equality requires sustained action and dedicated investment. The **Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025** focuses on closing structural inequities and helping women realize empowerment, autonomy, and personal choices. Aligned to **UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-2025**, accelerators for progress span each of UNDP's six Signature Solutions. The following are highlights from implementation across each area.

ACCELERATING CHANGE FOR GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS SIGNATURE SOLUTIONS





Signature Solution 1: Poverty and Inequality

While continuing to address immediate needs for essential services, finance, digital assets, and livelihoods, UNDP prioritized structural reforms through gender-responsive fiscal policies and tax systems, inclusive social protections and comprehensive care systems through 2023.

Debt servicing has hijacked fiscal space in many lower-income countries and crowded out public investments in social services. This negatively impacts women, including as they subsidize the economy through care work. In 2023, UNDP worked in 43 countries on social protection and care. It expanded social protection coverage to a wider number of women and excluded populations through digitalization, improved social registries, outreach and the revision of legislation and national financing strategies. UNDP supported the expansion of early childhood care coverage and a national care policy to advance gender equality in the **Dominican Republic**; the use of biometric identification to reach unregistered women refugees in **Honduras**; and, in **Montenegro**, an e-social registry that integrates services on gender-based violence and social security.

More 2023 Highlights



91.9 million women accessed essential services and almost 28 million women obtained financial services in 2023, with UNDP support.



In 2023, UNDP backed the development and expansion of comprehensive care systems in 13 countries, such as **Peru** setting up a national care system using an innovative care georeferencing tool to trace supply and demand and service gaps.



UNDP expanded support on financing for gender equality to more than 44 countries in 2023, up from 36 in 2022, including on gender-responsive budgeting in 14 countries and leveraging and aligning private finance to 23 countries. Among 85 countries that drafted integrated national financing frameworks, 46 identified gender equality as a priority.



UNDP supported 23 countries in initiating reforms of fiscal policy at the national/federal level, while also supporting local/state planning and budgeting.

EQUANOMICS: Making fiscal policies work for gender equality

In 2023, UNDP launched the flagship programme, **EQUANOMICS**, to make fiscal policies work for gender equality and mobilize support for fiscal policy reforms by looking at public revenue and expenditure. Services to governments have included diagnostics of gender biases and tax and expenditure impacts on the gender poverty gap, capacity development for civil servants, national policy dialogues, data generation and legislative revisions. EQUANOMICS supported ministries of finance and tax authorities to undertake reforms and maintain such changes.

Through EQUANOMICS, UNDP partnered with the **Mongolian** Tax Administration and National Committee on Gender Equality to research the gender-responsiveness of tax policies, with a special focus on personal income tax. It enhanced the capacities of 40 officers of the General Tax Authority, Ministry of Finance, and National Committee on Gender Equality to detect and correct implicit biases in core taxes. The Ministry of Finance is now drawing on their new skills and knowledge to steer reforms that put gender equality at the centre of public finance.

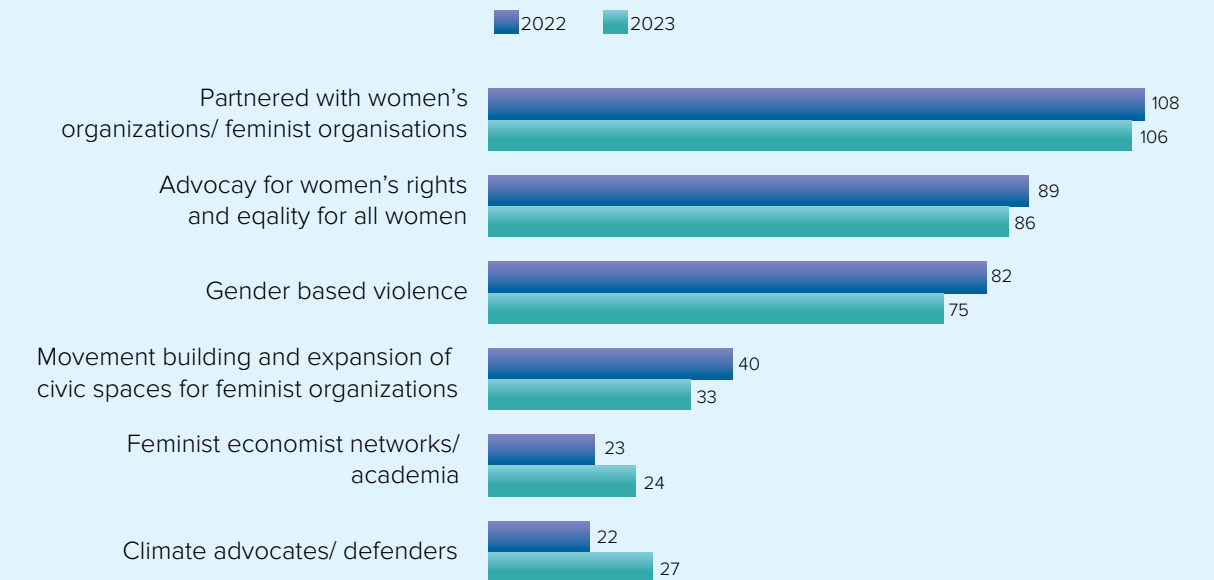


Signature Solution 2: Governance

Disinformation and mistrust, combined with a sense of injustice and insecurity, have polarized societies around the world and resulted in a regression in laws and policies. UNDP continued working with civil society and governments to anticipate and address risks and protect gender equality gains. The Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions expanded, strengthening states' readiness for gender equality.

Supporting women's movement-building in the most challenging environments is more important than ever. In 2023, 106 UNDP country offices partnered with women's or feminist organizations, especially in advocacy, to address gender-based violence and to expand civic space.

Number of countries that partnered with women's or feminist organizations in 2023 by area of focus



Source: UNDP ROAR 2022 and 2023.

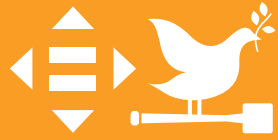
For example, in **Iraq**, UNDP assisted the government in the creation of the Women's Alliance for Development and Climate Justice by uniting three women-led national networks of 68 non-governmental organizations. Collectively, they champion women's rights in the women, peace, and security agenda, and integrate them with actions on climate justice.

More 2023 Highlights



UNDP and UN Women worked with 19 countries in 2023 through the Gender Justice Platform. In **Algeria**, UNDP applies behavioral insights to improve the social reintegration of women prisoners and in **Kyrgyzstan**, UNDP supported the Ministry of Justice to provide free legal aid with a gender-inclusive focus, reaching more than 10,000 individuals.

In 2023, UNDP expanded the [Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions](#) to 30 countries and 91 public institutions, equipping more than 224,000 public servants with skills and tools to dismantle discriminatory norms and increase civic engagement. The **Panama** National Secretary of Science and Technology led by setting targets to increase women's participation in producing scientific knowledge, while the Judiciary Power in the **Dominican Republic** strengthened the gender-responsiveness of judges and increased the number of sentences incorporating a gender lens.



Promoting resilient economic recovery among Afghan women

The rate of women's employment in **Afghanistan** has halved in two years. Supporting women entrepreneurs is the most effective course of action to create opportunities for women. UNDP estimates that bans on women are costing the economy \$1 billion US dollars per year. UNDP supported the creation of more than 60 community kitchens operated by women-led SMEs and establishment of more than 200 women-focused savings groups with 2,975 members who received cash grants for income generating opportunities. Despite facing ingrained discrimination and new limitations, women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan are demonstrating remarkable resilience.

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Signature Solution 3: Resilience

Crises and shocks are never gender neutral. UNDP has maintained life-saving support in crisis and post-crisis settings, working to ensure women have livelihood and labour opportunities to survive and withstand shocks. More support and financing for women's rights groups to lead and participate in peace processes is needed. Ad hoc gender equality approaches in conflict settings remain a real challenge, and more concerted, holistic efforts are necessary as gender inequality bears significantly on the resilience of individuals and whole societies.

In 2023, many strategies have worked to enhance women's access to knowledge, land, credit, technology, social protection, and care services. Nearly five million women gained jobs and improved their livelihoods in 42 countries in crisis or post-crisis settings.

More programmes targeted support for survivors of gender-based violence, individuals living with disabilities and displaced populations, integrating economic activities with mental and psychological support. In **Burundi**, over 200,000 women accessed microcredit and financial skills training, as well as land certificates. Including women's names on land certificates, and recognizing their right to ownership, was a step towards breaking longstanding cultural barriers.

More 2023 Highlights



UNDP increased the use of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in recovery plans and developed gender-responsive early warning systems in 28 countries, including **Angola, Ethiopia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Sierra Leone**. Partnerships with the World Bank and European Union supported **Türkiye** to assess recovery and reconstruction after the devastating 2023 earthquake that resulted in sustainable community-based models to build women's resilience. UNDP's



Gender and Crisis Facility continued supporting countries to develop economic recovery programmes based on gender analyses and structural and social norms transformation. From **Afghanistan to Haiti, the Republic of Moldova, Somalia, South Sudan and Ukraine**, direct support to women caught in economic crises extended life-saving jobs and services.



UNDP helped counter regressive trends by advancing women's leadership and equal participation in decision-making in mediation, reconciliation, and peacebuilding mechanisms in 22 countries. In **Sierra Leone**, UNDP aided the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare in drafting an Affirmative Action Bill on peacebuilding and setting it for parliamentary approval in 2024.



Indigenous women green sorority networks for environmental conservation

In **Mexico**, UNDP helped Green Sorority Networks of Indigenous and rural women in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Yucatán to develop livelihoods and gain skills as environmental stewards. The network strengthens sustainable production practices, promotes financial resilience in the transition to a green economy, and builds space for indigenous women to address environmental degradation.

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Signature Solution 4: Environment

Working with partners from local to global levels, UNDP has deepened understanding of links between gender equality, the environment and climate change. New insights have informed integrated actions that can shift the needle toward both environmental and gender equality outcomes.

To protect and better manage ecosystems and biodiversity, UNDP supported women’s leadership and decision-making related to natural resources in 89 countries in 2023. In 93 countries, UNDP’s Global Environment Facility (GEF) portfolio helped close gender gaps in relation to natural resource access and control.

UNDP’s **Nature Pledge** launched with a commitment to support over 140 countries to protect and restore biodiversity while reducing gender and other inequalities. The Pledge includes a target to promote women’s leadership in natural resource management and close gender gaps in 100 countries. To meet the historic opportunity of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, with two first-of-their-kind targets on gender equality, partnering with municipalities and women’s groups is key. For example, in **Costa Rica** UNDP supported creation of a network of women in the Sixaola River area who use geospatial technologies for better waste management and conservation of natural resources.

Climate Promise has supported over 77 countries to implement gender and climate commitments. In 44 countries, efforts focused on strengthening institutional capacities in the ministries of environment, energy, finance, and gender. With Climate Promise support, 30 per cent of direct grants for Indigenous people and local communities in **Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Kenya** went to women-led projects, supporting them to lead action on forestry, land management and environmental protection.

More 2023 Highlights



In 61 countries, UNDP supported women’s cooperatives and collective engagement in responding to environmental concerns. In partnership with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and Government of **Panama**, UNDP developed the first Regional Action Plan for Human Rights Defenders on Environmental Issues.



UNDP supported an analysis of gender and climate commitments relevant to African countries, exploring conditions and capacities necessary to implement them and the gender-responsiveness of adaptation and mitigation actions.



UNDP helped 19 countries to integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment principles into Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation strategies and action plans. In **Indonesia**, this resulted in higher rates of women’s participation in the national forest monitoring system, ranging from 30 to 53 percent.



Unleashing women's economic empowerment through clean energy

Through the Enhanced Rural Resilience in **Yemen** (ERRY) Joint Programme, UNDP has been supporting women and youth in the provision of solar energy in their communities through solar microenterprises. Trainings and curricula development on solar skills have been empowering rural women to launch their own solar micro businesses and connect with rural and urban dealers' communities. By 2022, 163 solar microgrid enterprises were helping crisis-affected communities in rural Yemen sustain themselves and survive the crisis through income creation and energy generation.

© UNDP Yemen

Signature Solution 5: Energy

Working with countries to transform energy systems to meet climate and development goals, UNDP and partners are steering support to meet the moonshot goal of clean energy access for 500 million people – half being women. Sustainable, accessible energy innovations drive development outcomes that are both inclusive and green and can be gamechangers for gender equality, including by reducing women's time poverty and increasing economic opportunity.

UNDP supported energy access for 14 million women in 37 countries in 2023. The Government of **Niger** connected 170,000 women to clean and affordable energy. In **Somalia**, 13,000 women-headed households were able to access fuel-efficient stoves, solar lanterns, and alternatives to charcoal.

More 2023 Highlights



The UNDP active portfolio of clean cooking projects funded by GEF and Green Climate Fund involved 75 countries and US\$350 million in grants. Energy-efficient cooking stoves reduce deforestation and pollution and women's time poverty, although more efforts are needed to determine the precise amount of time saved by women.



A new initiative, **Powering Gender Equality**, injected dedicated financial and technical support to existing large-scale energy programmes in **Ethiopia, Eswatini, Madagascar** and **Malawi** to improve and demonstrate how to increase women's economic empowerment and leadership, enhance gender-responsive energy governance and support energy policy frameworks that accelerate gender equality.



Ethiopia recently adopted a new national policy to integrate gender equality into energy frameworks, including through an enhanced role for women in energy-related decision-making.



UNDP is working to address the influence of household decision-making and financial controls on energy usage, as well as women's leadership in the green transition. Accordingly, the **Sustainable Energy Hub** recently scaled up support for staff to work at the intersection between gender equality and clean energy, with online dialogues and training courses already engaging over 300 participants.



Signature Solution 6: Gender Equality

UNDP works to advance gender equality across all Signature Solutions of its Strategic Plan – but it prioritizes gender equality as a stand-alone Solution, as well. Signature Solution Six reflects priorities of the 25-year review of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the following ways.

Inclusive economies and women’s economic empowerment:



In 2023, UNDP supported 29 countries to eliminate barriers that perpetuate labour segregation and gender-based discrimination in the economy, including improving access to finance, land, digital assets, and entrepreneurship opportunities. In **Armenia**, a comprehensive National Employment Strategy with a gender perspective includes provisions for refugees and unemployed women.



UNDP worked in 22 countries to close the gender digital divide, which is integral to more inclusive economies. In **Jordan**, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship was supported to build digital skills among young and refugee women, and in **Bangladesh**, the Ministry of Information Communication Technology launch a pilot programme for integrating mental health and psychosocial support to combat cyberbullying that excludes girls from digital spaces.



UNDP supported countries to expand women’s access to, and control over, ownership of land and other property. On the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in 2023, UNDP launched the Her land Her rights campaign, reaching over 12,000 views. In **Burundi**, UNDP facilitated access to quality judicial services for more than 33,000 women, including displaced women, to reduce arrears in treatment land disputes.

Equal power and representation:



Amidst the multiple threats to women in politics and leadership, UNDP continued to advance inclusive political processes by supporting voter registration for 135 million women in 29 countries in 2023.



Efforts in 43 countries to increase women’s leadership and equal participation in public and private institutions resulted in increasing the capacity of women employees in public offices, using women’s networks, caucuses, and parliamentary committees. In the **Arab States**, UNDP helped launch the regional Arab Leadership Academy for Women and the #HerParticipationOurFuture regional campaign.



Temporary special measures including quotas levelled the playing field for women in politics in **Gambia, Georgia, Lebanon, Maldives, Mauritania, the Republic of Tanzania, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Yemen**. New global guidance for UNDP country offices on [introducing temporary special measures](#) launched, showing concrete and proven actions to reduce gender gaps in electoral processes.



A quota in **Yemen**, to involve women in local collaboration platforms, encouraged reflection on women's needs in local government plans and led to the rehabilitation of schools, maternity and childhood hospitals, and vocational centres for women.

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence:



UNDP worked to end gender-based violence in 88 countries in 2023. UNDP's holistic approach, in collaboration with governments, builds capacities to prevent gender-based violence, works to end impunity for perpetrators, and increases access to justice and protection.



UNDP aided in revamping the **Zambia** Police Service Training Curriculum to incorporate modules to protect female officers from gender-based violence in training and on duty, and increased capacities to deliver integrated response services with a one-stop centre.



UNDP supports women to access HIV and other health services, helping reduce their risk of acquiring the virus due to sexual and gender-based violence. To diminish stigma associated with HIV and gender-based violence, UNDP supported the recruitment of female outreach workers in **Egypt**, and established stigma-free counselling centres within NGOs.

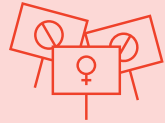


Spotlight Initiative strengthening actions to eliminate gender-based violence

The first phase of the [Spotlight Initiative](#) came to an end in 2023. Over four years, the Initiative that spanned the United Nations development system reached 122 countries, delivered 34 programmes in 25 countries and five regions, and had a total delivery rate of 95 per cent. Almost 500 laws and policies were signed to end violence against women and girls, and 43 countries strengthened national action plans. More than two million survivors accessed services. Prevention campaigns reached 260 million people.

UNDP played an active role in 25 Spotlight-assisted countries. Under its leadership, the conviction rate for perpetrators of gender-based violence doubled in 12 countries. **Belize** developed the first set of national indicators for gender-based violence to improve victim response across health, police, social and judicial services. **Kazakhstan** enhanced sanctions against domestic violence perpetrators and refined administrative measures for prevention.

Reversing backlash against gender equality:



Research, new tools and sharper measurements support UNDP's response to the global backlash against women's rights. The 2023 [Gender Social Norms Index](#) revealed gender bias remains strong, with 90% of women and men holding bias against women and a quarter believing violence against women is justifiable.



Digital tools were expanded and modified to support election and other contexts. In **Libya** UNDP tailored eMonitor+ to provide electoral authorities with knowledge and skills to combat online gender-based violence.



UNDP increased its support to women climate defenders and advocates in 27 countries, including in response to backlash and strengthening climate justice movements.

Changing negative social norms:



In 2023, UNDP implemented 407 prevention initiatives tackling harmful social norms and gender-discriminatory roles and practices in 34 countries, although evidence shows that designing such interventions effectively remains a challenge.



In **Montenegro**, an initiative called "Implementing norms, changing minds" aimed to strengthen women's organizations to inform legislation and policy reform. In **Sierra Leone**, UNDP enhanced the capacity of male motorbike riders, through training on positive masculinity, to act as agents of peace and role models in combatting sexual and gender-based violence.

Better data for policy making:



In 2023, 68 countries expanded gender data analyses. UNDP developed a proposal for a [multidimensional poverty index](#) with a focus on women to support more targeted social protection. In **Pakistan**, a [report on women and digitalization](#) delved into the gender digital divide and provided potential solutions. An [Online Gender-Based Violence Among Women and Girls Assessment](#) in **Zambia** built on existing policies and laws to make recommendations to mitigate online gender-based violence.



Deepening intersectional analyses and integration to leave no one behind

UNDP continues to collaborate on knowledge and tools to apply intersectional analyses. In **Brazil**, a partnership with the Faculdade Baiana de Direito and Jusbrasil resulted in the Racism and Racial Slurs Perpetrated on Social Media study. In **Ecuador**, research on political participation and data from a political parity index showed disparities amongst Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women.

UNDP programmes also work with an intersectional perspective including in **Costa Rica** where stakeholders support the creation of a network of Indigenous and Afro-descendant women to develop a common agenda and practical tools to prevent and address violence against women. In **Mexico**, UNDP assisted in creating an Advocacy Office for Women within the National Electoral Institute, consulting more than 300 Afro-Mexican women to design a training platform on gender-based political violence in preparation for the 2024 electoral process.

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PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING TRANSFORMATION

UNDP continued to pursue new partnerships for gender equality through 2023 and deepen existing ones to advance longer-term advocacy and policy goals.

Collaborating across the UN system



UN Women remains UNDP's primary partner for gender equality in 74 countries, both for strategic planning and substantive programming, and in forging new knowledge. To capitalize on learning from the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, UNDP and UN Women, in partnership with the **Republic of Korea**, launched Promising Practices for Gender Equality: A Catalogue of Practical Solutions, providing a suite of policy options to increase gender-responsiveness and build resilience to future shocks. UNICEF, ILO and OHCHR are among other collaborators.

Strengthening links with civil society



More than 100 UNDP country offices partnered with diverse women's or feminist organizations and movements in 2022 and 2023. In **Georgia**, UNDP financed grants for women-led local civil society organizations to promote dialogues between Geo and Abkhaz communities with a specific focus on the women, peace, and security agenda.

Deepening donor engagement



UNDP continued to deepen engagement with key donors at the global level, including through UNDP Funding Windows. The **Republic of Korea and Luxembourg**, primary partners to the UNDP Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Funding Window, provided critical flexible support to invest in new areas of work such as EQUANOMICS. Fruitful collaboration has continued with the governments of the **United Kingdom, Germany, and France**, among others.

Leaving no one behind



Partnerships with organizations working with people with disabilities and on intersectional discrimination have become more prominent. In **Samoa**, UNDP partnered with Nuanua Ole Alofa to support the development of the Women with Disability Stigma Inventory and capture insights on the experiences of 130 women living with disabilities.

ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITIES

UNDP is scaling up solutions in different fronts to address intersectional discrimination against women based on sex and gender, intrinsically linked to sexual orientation and identity. In 2023, 13 country offices worked on projects supporting the LGBTIQ+ community. UNDP employed rights-based approaches in **Argentina**, where UNDP provided biomedical equipment and training to ensure medical care for women and pregnant people. In Angola, UNDP helped bring together representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Gender, Youth, and Health to create a multisectoral roadmap for the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people. UNDP in Nepal helped develop the National Media Policy on gender-sensitive reporting focusing on LGBTIQ+ communities.

UNDP is also prioritizing the production of robust data for decision making. UNDP in **Jamaica** carried out an LGBTIQ+ study with a meaningful participatory approach and in **Dominican Republic** conducted an LGBTIQ+ survey that inspired government institutions to include a diversity approach in their planning instruments. UNDP also recognizes the value of raising awareness, so it led the Free and Equal Campaign in **Viet Nam**, collecting 32 human stories of transgender individuals and engaging journalists and government agencies for legal support of transgender individuals.

Joining forces with academia and think tanks



UNDP works with academic institutions and think tanks to develop new research and shape advocacy for gender equality. A collaboration with the University of **Bahrain** resulted in a workshop on gender-aware economics for government officials. In 2023, UNDP, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the University of Pittsburgh banded together under a global initiative on gender quality and public administration to conduct national reviews of measures that promote women's leadership and presence in public administration in **Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritius, and Senegal**.

Partnering with the private sector

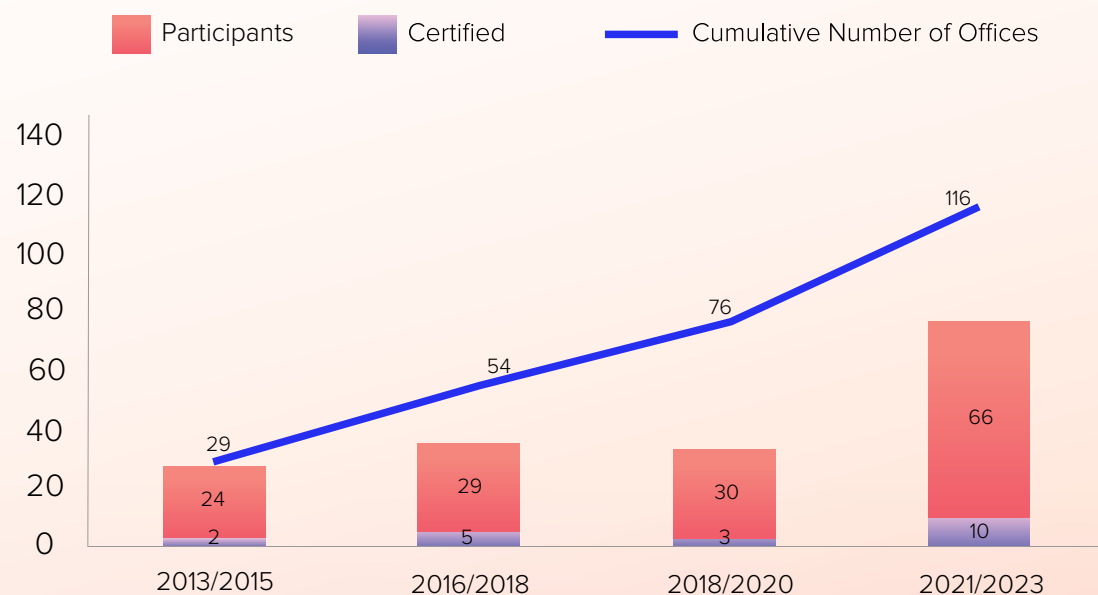


Partnerships with banks and private investors helped redirect financial investments in gender equality. The Gender Equality Seal for the Private Sector remains a main UNDP initiative to promote women's leadership and participation, develop inclusive workplaces and ensure equal pay for equal work. In 2023, 189 private sector companies were awarded the Seal, including in energy, telecommunications, and finance sectors. This benefited more than 450,000 workers, 48% of whom are women. The Stanbic Bank of **Uganda** created a specialized women's banking unit and plans to allocate USD 15 million to women's financial inclusion, including a set of loans already disbursed to more than 1,000 women.

INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION: GENDER EQUALITY SEAL

The Gender Equality Seal for Development is UNDP's flagship initiative to develop capacities and accelerate impacts to achieve transformative results in gender equality. In the 2021-2023 round, 76 country offices voluntarily completed the two-year initiative, with 66 achieving the minimum standards required for bronze, silver, or gold certification. By 2023, the Seal had been fully implemented in 116 country offices over 10 years, which comprises 90 per cent of UNDP country offices.

Number of Gender Equality Seal Offices
2021-2023



Source: UNDP Gender Equality Seal Tracking.

Far more than a certification, the Seal process takes country office participants on a unique journey that connects UNDP core values, learning and a collective sense of purpose with a strict methodology to improve impacts on gender equality. As UNDP's main vehicle to drive institutional transformation required for gender equality agenda, the Seal has impact across all aspects of UNDP's work. The following are highlights from across the Seal building blocks:

1. LEADERSHIP

Country Office senior managers from gold-certified offices go the extra mile to prove commitment by moving beyond comfort zones, changing personal behaviours, and demonstrating power-sharing practices and strategic thinking. UNDP offices that won gold certification in 2023 include **Bangladesh, Burundi, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Nepal, the Pacific Office (Fiji), Paraguay and Samoa (multi-country office).**

2. INTEGRATION AND SPECIALIZATION

The Seal standard of having a full-time gender specialist on staff led to changes in the UNDP gender architecture. Between 2021-2023, 14 new gender specialists were recruited. The **Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific** recruited four subregional gender specialists and a Gender Equality Seal coordinator. All gold-certified offices have a full-time, well-known national senior gender adviser in place, with direct access to decision-makers and an ability to influence national stakeholders.

3. CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND INNOVATION

While 93 per cent of Seal offices have provided training for all personnel, the most effective learning has built on behavioral and individual changes. The **Programme for the Palestinian People** offers a shining example by implementing the Gender Transformative Workshops methodology across field locations. Sessions provided participants with a safe space for self-reflection on personal, social, and religious perceptions of social norms. Ensuring gender capacities of heads of portfolios remains a challenge, as only 42 per cent of Seal offices offered specialized capacity-building to team leads.

4. AN EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE CULTURE

While UNDP can celebrate gender parity overall in staffing, data shows more effort is needed to ensure women are in decision-making positions, particularly in crisis countries. There is also a gender gap in perceptions of UNDP as fostering an equal and respectful workplace, with an anonymous survey showing men view their workplace as more equal and empowering than women. Work/life balance is one of the biggest challenges for all country offices, even the high-performing ones.

5. MATCHING AMBITION WITH FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In 2023, the share of programme expenditures where advancing gender equality and empowering women is a principal or significant objective increased to 69 per cent, up from 66 per cent in 2022. The UNDP office in Burundi has been in the Seal programme since 2017, when expenditures on gender equality reached only 47 per cent. With a gold certification in 2023, the Burundi office attained 84 per cent.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2023, the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, chaired by the UNDP Administrator, took stock of the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025. The United Nations review of gender architecture pointed to the committee as good practice. UNDP established an Advisory Circle comprised of civil society and external experts on energy, women, peace and security, and feminist economics, to continue to help guide implementation of the strategy.

7. COMMUNICATIONS FOR ADVOCACY

In 2023, UNDP launched major publications, such as the twin indices on women's empowerment and parity with UN Women, and communications campaigns supported International Women's Day, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, and other major moments. During the United Nations General Assembly, UNDP produced the web story 'From global emergency to global equality'. UNDP in **China** ran a campaign promoting rural girls in science that reached up to 100 million people. UNDP in **Bangladesh** led a successful campaign on women's safety in public spaces and gender-based violence.



LOOKING AHEAD

UNDP found inspiration and renewed strength during the first two years implementing the Gender Equality Strategy. UNDP is embracing the challenge to deepen its efforts and strengthen analytical capacities to transform norms, values, and power structures.

Key lessons from evaluations also inform our next steps. Going forward, we will:

SUPPORT MORE TRANSFORMATIVE UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

UNDP has taken key steps to better integrate gender equality in social protection, including aspects such as unpaid care and the informal economy. More attention and more support is needed, however, to back transformative national practices to provide adequate social protection to all women.

FOCUS ON WOMEN'S CIVIL RIGHTS

UNDP has amplified support for women to access justice, especially in cases of sexual and gender-based violence and in crises. The next step is to scale work to civil justice matters, such as those related to women's rights to land, natural resources, and inheritance among others.

TRANSFORM NORMS, VALUES AND POWER STRUCTURES

Countries are working to shift gender social norms in various ways. Designing and implementing interventions to transform norms, values and power structures is at the core of accelerating gender equality.

UNDP will continue to look to the Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025 for the guidance, humbly learning from two years of implementation and the profound changes that gender equality requires, to push beyond comfort zones and generate changes in thinking and behaviours, building an enabling environment to advocate for gender equality.



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