

Beijing+25: Accelerating Progress for Women and Girls

The Way Forward



6. Reform and scale up multilateral support for equity.

The world is in critical need of effective multilateralism and cross-border cooperation. COVID-19 threatens global progress on human rights and economic development and adds to the multiple challenges that transcend national borders—gender inequality, climate change, displaced populations, and more. A primary goal of international institutions—most notably the UN system and international finance institutions—is to mitigate and manage global challenges and promote cooperation. The report identifies promising ways to promote and accelerate commitments from multilateral actors.

The United Nations should take the lead in developing a comprehensive gender equality framework and ensuring robust implementation of policies and practices.

Amplifying women’s leadership and meaningful participation in formal and informal peace processes is critical to building inclusive, sustainable peace. Centering women in peacebuilding in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security on its 20th anniversary, backed by institutional, financial, and legal support systems, will leverage women’s contributions to political stability and economic progress for all.

The United Nations has identified women’s rights and gender equality as a priority, yet these commitments are not reflected in much of its decision-making. Lagging progress on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda illustrates the tremendous gulf between rhetoric and reality. Twenty years after Resolution 1325 was adopted, there are very few women in UN leadership and management positions—women make up just 2 percent of mediators, fewer than 5 percent of military contingents, and slightly more than 10 percent of peacekeepers.

The United Nations itself must become a role model in implementing gender parity targets by increasing the numbers of women in leadership and senior management positions, promoting women’s recruitment and retention, and ensuring that operations observe the highest standards of behavior to create a conducive environment for participation. Women’s perspectives and participation must also be fully integrated throughout the work of the United Nations, rather than confined to the silo of “women’s issues.”

International financial institutions should promote and accelerate gender equality more strongly.

The World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), along with regional development banks, need to accelerate work on women’s advancement.

Since 2011, the IMF has been led by women who have spotlighted women's inclusion in loan programs and country recommendations. Former Managing Director of the IMF Christine Lagarde made the "inclusive economy" a central tenet of her leadership, while Lagarde's successor, Kristalina Georgieva, vowed to fight for greater gender equality and female labor force participation at the IMF and around the world. These leaders set a high standard by placing gender equality at the core of international development.

Despite these commitments, greater accountability is needed to ensure that international financial institutions bridge critical gaps in implementation and accelerate progress on their gender commitments. Organizations like Gender Action are working to hold these institutions accountable, collaborating with civil society monitors and local community groups to ensure that attention to women's rights and gender justice is integrated into all areas of development finance.

Especially in the time of COVID-19, international financial institutions must collaborate with the World Health Organization, other UN agencies, and bilateral partners to ensure that the SDGs are fully integrated into recovery efforts. The economic, social, and political advancement of women are interdependent processes that must be championed together, a call that cannot be answered without multilateral support.

Multilateral actors should galvanize collective action on global crises.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic reinforce the importance of investing in public goods such as universal healthcare, education, and strong social safety nets. The United Nations, international financial institutions, and other multilateral actors must pave the way for a more equitable and resilient future by spearheading collective action that matches the scale of the crises.

Multilateral actors are vital in fostering gender-responsive approaches to climate action and measuring progress in dealing with the gender dimensions of climate

risks across related policy frameworks on gender equality, climate change, and women, peace, and security. As outlined in the 2020 Joint UNEP, UN Women, UNDPPA, and UNDP report Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change, priority actions include:

- Increasing targeted financing by investing in programming that uses sustainable resources, capitalizes on women's peacebuilding activities, and supports women's leadership in addressing climate-related security risks.
- Disseminating information on good practices and lessons learned.
- Developing a multidimensional indicator framework to track progress at the intersections of climate-related risks and gender equality.

In order to address both COVID-19 and climate change, building back better will require strong multilateral commitments and cooperation among governments, international institutions, multinational corporations, NGOs, and civil society. International agreement on the SDGs, the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the crises created by COVID-19 should generate the impetus for action. Multilateral agencies need to recommit to the frameworks they created and then deliver on their commitments. Marginalized voices need to resonate throughout international institutions to ensure inclusive efforts. In sum, global challenges demand global solutions.