



## **Virtual Workshop—Women's Economic Empowerment and Control Over Time in Sub-Saharan Africa**

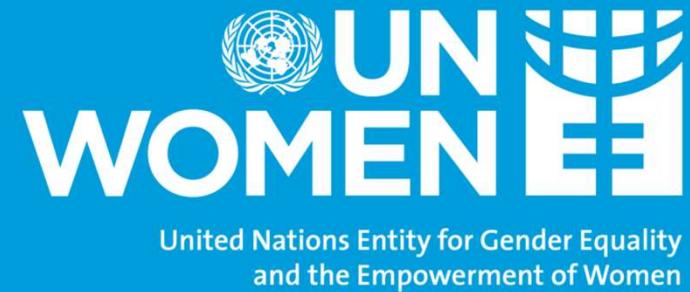
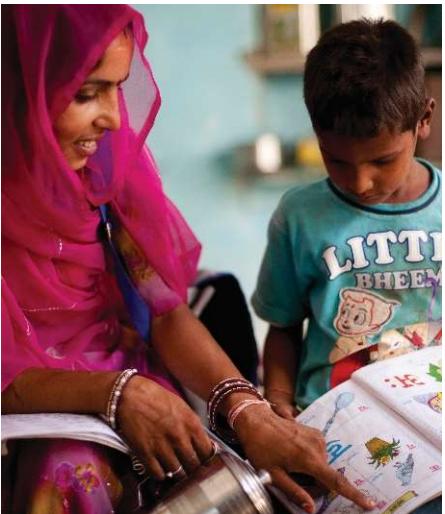
Session 2. Policy Roundtable: Challenges in Achieving Women's Economic Empowerment)

Day 2-Tuesday 2 November 2021, 10-11:55 AM (NY Time)

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## UN Women's programmatic Response to the Gendered Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

1. Background.
2. The COVID-19 Pandemic and its toll on Women.
3. UN Women's Global Programmatic Response to COVID-19.
4. Conclusion and Way Forward.

# Background

1. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, marked a turning point for the global fight on poverty, gender inequality, and other forms of inequalities.
  
2. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the achievement of full human potential and sustainable development is not possible if women and girls, continue to be denied their full human rights and opportunities, including equal opportunities with men and boys for decent employment, equal access to social protection, and equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work.

# Background (continued)

- ❖ Many of the 1 billion people living in poverty around the world work informally and many of them are women. In this context, accelerating the transition of women from informal to full and productive employment, including decent work cannot be achieved without making sustainable job creation a key policy objective of economic growth strategies.
- ❖ In 2021, some 435 million women and girls globally – or 13 per cent of the female population – will be struggling to survive on less than \$1.90 a day, including 47 million that will be pushed into extreme monetary poverty by COVID-19.
- ❖ Social protection is one of the key features of decent work. However, evidence shows that women represent the majority of the 73 per cent of the world's population with no or only partial access to social protection. So, expanding women's access to social protection will not only contribute to reducing poverty by increasing household incomes, but also reduce women's intersecting vulnerabilities.

Mounting evidence has shown that women and girls are disproportionately represented among the world's poor, and these gaps continue to widen. There are three major constraints that push women into or keep them in poverty:

- I. While productive employment and decent work remains the basic route out of poverty for individuals, communities and societies, women continue to face multiple forms of discrimination in labour markets.
- II. Women continue to face persistent challenges in terms of access to productive resources, economic opportunities, and social services, depriving them of tools to cope with economic shocks and other structural barriers to their economic, mental, and social well-being.
- III. Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work continues to constrain their ability to fully participate in education, training, employment, and other forms of income generating activities.

- ❖ The closures of elementary schools, early childhood education, along with health safety restrictions, have exacerbated care demands on women during the crisis,<sup>19</sup> and exposed widening gender gaps, and the inadequacy and vulnerability of care and social protection systems around the globe .
  
- ❖ While several advanced and middle-income countries have responded to the crisis, this was not the case for low-income countries who lack the fiscal space to undertake such measures. However, even in countries where specific policies were implemented to respond to the crisis, the UN Women/UNDP Global Gender Response Tracker shows that only 10 percent of social protection, employment, economic and fiscal measures analyzed are directed towards women's economic security, and only eight percent of measures on social protection and employment are directed towards care.

- ❖ Globally, 750 million women work in the informal sector, and nearly 510 million, or 40 percent of all employed women, work in hard-hit sectors, including accommodation, food service, and wholesale, and retail trade .
  
- ❖ Overall, despite making up just 39 percent of global employment, women account for 54 percent of job losses .

- ❖ Globally, 247 million women (aged 15+) will be living on less than \$1.90 per day in 2021, compared to 236 million men.
- ❖ In Sub-Saharan Africa, 132 million women (aged 15+) will be living on less than \$1.90 per day in 2021, compared to 124 million men.
- ❖ Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (where 87 per cent of the world's extreme poor live) will see the largest increases in extreme poverty, with an additional 54 million and 24 million people, respectively, living below the international poverty line as a result of the pandemic.

## Women's Access to Decent Employment:

By all measures, women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis. UN Women's work to promote decent employment opportunities for women has focused on those hard-hit sectors of the economy.

- ❖ UN Women, in partnership with the ILO, developed an applied policy guidance tool to strengthen governments' capacity in the promotion of sectoral and industrial policies that tackle occupational and sectoral segregation and enhance women's access to decent employment opportunities..
- ❖ In Colombia, Kosovo, **Rwanda**, and Ukraine, UN Women's technical support to governments helped strengthen the gender responsiveness of their national COVID-19 economic recovery plans, including advocacy efforts to implement employment and labour market policies in sectors disproportionately employing women, and support for women-owned businesses.
- ❖ UN Women advocated for measures such as VAT exemptions on food and socially important goods and services (lowering utility rates). This has critical gender implication, given the evidence showing that women spend a greater share of their limited income on such expenditures (**Chad**, Kazakhstan, and **Kenya**)

### **Women's Access to Productive Resources and Social Protection:**

Women's ability to access productive resources (land, finance, agricultural inputs/technology, etc.) and social protection play a critical role in helping women escape poverty or cope with the impact of COVID-19.

- ❖ UN Women places strong emphasis on improving women's livelihoods in the context of its COVID-19 response. Through its Joint Programme with FAO, IFAD and UN Women] on ['Accelerating progress toward the economic empowerment of rural women' (JP RWEE) / rural women's economic empowerment], some 125,000 rural women and farmers, along with 384,000 of their family members, have benefitted from greater access to sustainable livelihoods and productive resources, such as finances, energy and climate-resilient infrastructure, as well as improved food security and nutrition.
  
- ❖ In the global fight against poverty, UN Women considers social protection a key focus area of its COVID-19 response. In 2020, UN Women helped decision makers in 64 countries and development practitioners take ownership in building gender-responsive national social protection systems in their respective COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

## Women's Access to Productive Resources and Social Protection (continued):

- ❖ In Thailand, joint efforts by UN Women, ILO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration helped strengthen the capacity of relevant line ministries to deliver child support grants, disability and old age allowance schemes to more than 1 million beneficiaries.
- ❖ UN Women strengthened the gender-responsiveness of national COVID-19 responses and recovery plans on social protection in Albania, Armenia, Colombia, Jordan, Liberia, Mexico, **Mozambique**, Myanmar, **Rwanda**, Thailand, **Uganda** and Ukraine. In Lebanon, 140,000 female-headed households received cash assistance provided under the Emergency National Poverty Targeting Programme.
- ❖ In Myanmar, following a request from the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry, UN Women provided technical guidance to ensure gendered actions and contribution to the government's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan. Adopted measures included expansion of cash grants, and income support for salary for workers taking care of their children during lockdowns ( **Senegal**, **Nigeria**, Myanmar).

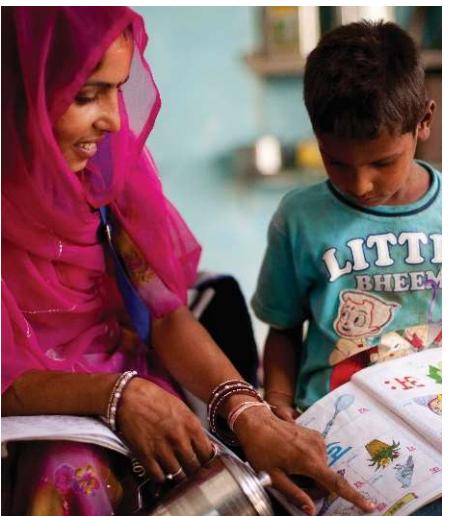
## Recognize, Reduce, and Redistribute the Burden of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work on Women:

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of care systems around the world and highlighted the need to address the disproportional burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women. Evidence shows that the closures of elementary schools, early childhood education, along with health safety restrictions on older relatives to provide childcare, have exacerbated care demands on women during the crisis.

- ❖ In Ecuador, UN Women collaborated with UNDP and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion in the design of “Transfers for Care” programmes that will be incorporated into national emergency response cash transfer packages.
- ❖ UN Women has taken a global leadership role in developing a methodology, and policy guidance tool in partnership with the ILO, to make the policy case for sustained investment in social care infrastructure, as a mean to not only meet an urgent need for families, but also to generate decent employment opportunities for women. In 2020, the methodology was used in **Côte D'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal, Rwanda, and Tanzania**, to make policy case for expanding free universal childcare.

## CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

- ❖ Implementing policies to achieve full employment and inclusive growth, which promote gender equality in labour markets. Emphasize that inclusive growth must be able to generate enough labor demand to create formal sector jobs and reverse the growing informality of work, which has left more women and men in precarious situations.
- ❖ Those already in poverty and vulnerable worker (disproportionally women) will be excluded by the targeting of social protection programs. For instance, unemployment insurance typically does not cover informal workers, which are primarily women. So, providing universal “household-level” transfers in areas/sectors severely affected by COVID-19 can help address this issue. Expanding women’s access to productive resources are also critical in helping lift them out of poverty or help them cope with various shocks.
- ❖ The pandemic has intensified women’s unpaid care and domestic workloads. While men report doing more, women continue to do the lion’s share of this work – with important ripple effects for their physical/mental health, as well as their economic vulnerability and implication for their children. This calls for structural and transformative change that includes building comprehensive care and social protection systems accompanied by supportive macroeconomic policy reforms.



Thank you

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