



Growth in identity politics

A shift toward worldwide gender parity is one of the most hopeful long-term trends to have emerged in recent years. A gradual decline in patriarchy in many countries means women are playing a bigger role in public life. The empowerment of women is also an important part of achieving development goals – something that is increasingly recognised by governments, business and NGOs.

Equal access to health and education for both men and women is increasingly the norm, [1] and gender-related targets are helping to keep up the momentum behind this trend. However, progress is slow and highly uneven across different regions, and there has been much less progress on narrowing social, economic and political gaps.

Women who are safe, healthy, educated and empowered to realise their potential can transform their families, their communities, their economies and their societies, and should play a much more equal role in shaping world events as we move through the 21st century. [2]

Footnotes:

1. UN (2013). A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development, pg 35.
2. UN (2013). A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development, pg 35.

Implications

- The increasing importance of women's empowerment for achieving development goals could result in major improvements to women's status in developing countries.
- A lack of women's rights often goes hand in hand with skewed economic development, social problems (including poverty, insecurity, lack of access to basic assets, fragmentation, fundamentalism, violence, wars and HIV/AIDS), as well as environmental issues such as land degradation, pollution, disasters and ecological change – all of which can only be solved through proactive policies and development efforts.

Current trajectory

- Globally, women held 24% of senior management roles in 2013, a three-point increase from 2012. [1]
- In China, 51% of senior management positions were held by women (a 26% increase from 2012). [2]
- The proportion of businesses employing women as CEOs has risen from 9% to 14%. [3]
- In 2013, the national parliaments of Rwanda (64%), Andorra (50%), Cuba (49%) and Sweden (45%) had the highest proportions of seats held by women. [4]
- Globally, the share of women employed outside of agriculture rose to 40% between 1990 and 2010, but rose only to 20% in Southern Asia, Western Asia and Northern Africa. [5]

- Worldwide, females aged 15–24 have lower literacy rates (87%) than males (92%). However, the gap has closed somewhat since 1990, when the corresponding figures were 79% and 88%. [6]
- Two thirds of all countries have reached gender parity in primary education, but secondary education for girls still lags behind. However, in many high-income countries girls have an advantage with regard to access to and completion of education, outnumbering male students at the tertiary level. [7]
- Today, there are 775 million illiterate adults, of whom two thirds are women. [8] In least developed countries, one third of women aged 15 to 24 were illiterate in 2012. [9]
- 27 countries including Barbados, Nepal and Saudi Arabia do not allow women to confer their nationality on their children, and more than 60 countries do not afford women the same right as men to acquire, change or retain their nationality, or confer their nationality on their husbands if they were born elsewhere. [10]
- According to the UNODC’s Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, the most common form of human trafficking in Europe and Central Asia (66%) and Africa and Middle East (53%) is sexual exploitation. The victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly women and girls. Surprisingly, in 30% of the countries that provided information on the gender of traffickers, women made up the largest proportion. [11]

Footnotes:

1. [Grant Thornton International Business Report \(2013\). Women in senior management: setting the stage for growth](#)
 2. [Grant Thornton International Business Report \(2013\). Women in senior management: setting the stage for growth](#)
 3. [Grant Thornton International Business Report \(2013\). Women in senior management: setting the stage for growth/fn\]](#)
- Only 19% of board roles around the world are held by women. [fn][Grant Thornton International Business Report \(2013\). Women in senior management: setting the stage for growth](#)
 - [World Bank \(2013\). Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments \(%\)](#)
 - [UN \(2013\). Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015: Fact Sheet](#)
 - World Economic Forum (2014). Education and Skills 2.0: New Targets and Innovative Approaches, pg 25.
 - UNICEF (2012). Formative evaluation of the UN Girls’ Education Initiative.
 - UNICEF (2013). Envisioning education in the post-2015 development agenda.
 - UNICEF (2013). Envisioning education in the post-2015 development agenda.
 - [UNHCR \(2014\). Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2014](#)
 - [UNODC \(2014\). Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014](#)