



EMPOWERING WOMEN –EMPOWERING HUMANITY:  
UNIDO AND THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION



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## BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

In September 1995, the United Nations brought together almost 50,000 women and men from civil society, international organizations and national governments for its Fourth World Conference on Women. The event launched the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which to this day remains the most progressive blueprint on achieving gender equality and marked the beginning of a global movement for women's rights and women's empowerment.

In July 2013, the UN Economic and Social Council requested that the Commission on the Status of Women review the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption. The review, otherwise known as Beijing+20, also assesses the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and addresses opportunities for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda.

To date, Member States have initiated national-level reviews of their progress in the implementation of the Beijing agenda. Preliminary findings show that much progress has been achieved in the last 20 years – particularly with regard to the education of girls and the participation of women in the labour market – but the job is certainly far from done. Despite gains in education and economic participation, in many countries women are still doing most



of the unpaid care work and are restricted to lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs, which limits their ability to participate in and benefit from industrial development and economic growth.

This brochure features UNIDO's contributions to the Beijing agenda, highlighting the good practices and challenges the Organization has come across in the last 20 years of its implementation.

### UNIDO AND BEIJING+20

UNIDO's vision is a world where economic development is inclusive and sustainable and economic progress is equitable. Gender equality is central to UNIDO's work as it is not only a matter of human rights, but also a precondition for sustainable development and economic growth.

UNIDO's contribution to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action focuses on five critical areas of concern:

- Women and poverty
- Education and training of women
- Women and the economy
- Women and the environment
- Women in power and decision-making

UNIDO's work over the last 20 years in the priority areas of the Beijing agenda demonstrates its continuing contribution to gender equality and the empowerment of women within the broader development goals of creating shared prosperity, advancing economic competitiveness and safeguarding the environment.



## WOMEN AND POVERTY

Women and girls make up 70% of the world's extreme poor. The majority of them live in rural areas, where communities are resource-poor and isolated, and subsist on small-scale productive activities. UNIDO works to improve enterprise development and employment opportunities in these communities, targeting vulnerable groups such as indigenous populations, refugees, women and youth. For example, UNIDO aims to reduce gender inequalities among the rural poor so that the resilience of communities is strengthened, scarce resources are used efficiently and economic growth is sustainable. Its technical cooperation services help to integrate rural women and men into local and global value chains and improve the quality and diversification of their products, leading to more jobs, higher income, and improved overall well-being.

To maximize entrepreneurial and economic opportunities for rural women, UNIDO targets sectors with a high potential for wealth creation, food security or export promotion. In countries such as Bolivia, China, Pakistan, Panama and Peru, UNIDO has developed projects in these sectors to increase the capacities and upgrade the skills and knowledge of both women and men in rural communities.

UNIDO also works to develop competitive agro-industries in order to create jobs and sustainable livelihoods for the rural poor. By providing technical assistance, UNIDO aims to strengthen agro-industrial capabilities and linkages to facilitate economic transformation in rural communities, particularly among women and youth. For example, UNIDO provides rural women and men equal access to new agro-technologies and skills upgrading. In addition, it assists them with process optimization, compliance with quality and environmental standards and identification of market opportunities.

### UNIDO IN ACTION

In Liberia and Ghana, UNIDO conducts multi-skills training to reintegrate Liberian refugees, improve their livelihoods and alleviate poverty. The vocational courses range from IT software and hardware to beauty care, baking and dressmaking. In addition, the trainees are provided toolkits and training in business skills. 82% of the 557 participants, who successfully completed the technical trainings, were women. As a result, the project enhanced the skills and technical capacities of the women trainees, helping them to more than double their income.







## UNIDO in Mali: Shea butter production

At least 1,200 women have received training in production and quality control systems.



In Mali, UNIDO provided assistance to women in rural communities who rely on shea butter production for their income. The women shea butter cooperatives were provided production equipment, appropriate technologies and training as well as direct access to international markets. Around 160 women cooperatives are now engaged with three shea processing centres set up by UNIDO and at least 1,200 women received training in production and quality control systems. As a result of the project, product quality and safety improved, total sales of the co-operative groups doubled and women's incomes increased significantly.<sup>1</sup>

In Peru, UNIDO partnered with other UN agencies to develop creative industries in indigenous communities where women own around 50% of the small-scale handi-craft businesses in the targeted regions. By completing training in manufacturing and marketing skills, the participants increased their work efficiency and integrated new designs in order to diversify their product lines. Over 65% of the total training participants across four targeted regions were women.<sup>2</sup>



Training at UNIDO-SCANIA  
project in Iraq



## EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

In the last decades, women's participation in vocational learning and higher education, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, has improved but is still relatively limited. Closing this gap would allow women to enter and compete in labour markets on an equal basis with men who generally occupy most science and technology-related jobs. Additionally, investing in girls' education is a way to initiate transformative change in society. Studies show that relative to men, educated and empowered women invest more on the health and education of their children and communities, allowing future generations to reap the benefits from their education.

UNIDO helps to close the education gap through its youth entrepreneurship education programmes taught in schools in Angola, Armenia, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Iraq, Mozambique, Rwanda and the countries of the Manu River Union. These programmes remove gender-discriminatory barriers as often seen in regular schooling while creating an environment where girls and young women are encouraged to take on non-traditional career paths and develop a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, business and self-employment.

UNIDO also provides women and men equal access to vocational training and skills upgrading opportunities in renewable energy technologies, national quality institutions (e.g. standardization, metrology, etc.) and new technologies in food processing that strengthen their qualification in STEM disciplines and at the same time challenge gender stereotypes.

### UNIDO IN ACTION

In Iraq, UNIDO partners with Scania to provide technical training targeting 300 students per year, out of which 40% are women. In 2012, the training academy opened in Erbil and currently offers courses that are generally seen as non-traditional domains for women – from maintaining and operating heavy machinery to computer literacy. In 2013, the programme added courses in after-sales support and business management.<sup>3</sup>



## UNIDO IN ACTION

In several different countries, UNIDO has helped more than 416,000 students in 1,500 schools through its Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programmes. First launched in 2001, the programme assists schools in the development of their own curriculum, tools and textbooks to provide girls and boys practical training in entrepreneurship such as identifying business opportunities and assessing resources for establishing a business. Currently, the programme is present in 11 countries and due to its success it plans to continue its expansion.<sup>4</sup>

In The Gambia, UNIDO provides women and men equal access to renewable energy trainings for aspiring entrepreneurs. Initially, only 10% of the trainees were women because the skill level of the courses was higher than the present skill level of the women in the communities. In response, the project designed intermediate training courses to directly address the special capacity needs of women. As a result, the women who participated in the intermediate training courses were then able to take and successfully complete the full training programmes alongside the men.



UNIDO in Mozambique  
Youth Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programme





## WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

According to the International Monetary Fund's Managing Director, Christine Lagarde, gender equality can be achieved through "the 3 L's: Learning, Labour and Leadership"; three areas that are interlinked and equally necessary for women's participation and empowerment in the economy. Women's economic participation and empowerment lead to a stronger and more diverse workforce, increased economic productivity, higher and more sustained periods of growth, and an improved standing of women in their families and communities. The exclusion of women from labour markets, on the other hand, imposes real costs on society. When women do not participate equally in the workforce, economic productivity is stifled, additional revenues and innovation are lost, and economic growth is stalled.

UNIDO thus aims to reduce gender inequalities in economic structures and policies. Through its policy advisory services, UNIDO promotes the creation of more inclusive and sustainable frameworks for economic competitiveness and industrial growth. It enables women to participate more equally in the development of industrial policies and works with countries to ensure their industrial strategies and plans incorporate a gender perspective.



UNIDO Director General Li Yong and Regional Programmes and Field Representation Branch Director Amita Misra visiting the Tema Industrial Park in Ghana.



UNIDO's initiatives economically empower women and promote their participation in industrial sectors both as entrepreneurs and employees. They provide women with increased opportunities for entrepreneurial, business, vocational and technical skills training as well as access to technological upgrading and business support services to enable them to start their own enterprises and compete in global markets.

*"ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY CANNOT TAKE PLACE WITHOUT WOMEN. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IS CRUCIAL FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND UNIDO IS COMMITTED TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN ITS WORK."*

LI YONG, DIRECTOR GENERAL, UNIDO



## UNIDO IN ACTION

In Viet Nam, UNIDO conducted a study that examined the traditional, regulatory and internal gender-based challenges experienced by women entrepreneurs. The Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry took up the policy recommendations in their policy advocacy efforts vis-à-vis the Government which led to the inclusion of gender equality considerations in small and medium enterprise development programmes and action plans.<sup>5</sup>

As part of its capacity building activities, UNIDO created a gender mainstreaming guide for its work in supporting the implementation of the *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)*. The guide specifies entry points to better integrate women in country coordination mechanisms for the reduction of POPs and in national policy-making on the management of new POPs.

In Pakistan, UNIDO's Women's

Entrepreneurship Development Programme trained over 10,000 women in production techniques for textiles, gems and mosaics as well as business management and entrepreneurship. In addition, the programme helped over 6,000 women set up new enterprises and 680 women became "master trainers" who continue to deliver the programme's training courses.<sup>6</sup>

In Morocco, UNIDO assisted over 400 women in its Women's Entrepreneurship Programme by improving the competitiveness of small-scale olive oil production, textile, and fruit- and vegetable-drying enterprises that are managed and owned by women. The women entrepreneurs were trained in business management, good manufacturing, traceability systems and food safety. As a result, they experienced a 40% increase in productivity and a 50% increase in income.<sup>7</sup>



UNIDO's Women's  
Entrepreneurship  
Development Programme







## WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Women in developing countries are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change because they are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood. However, their pivotal role in natural resource management also serve as a strength; drawing on women's experiences, knowledge and skills, and supporting their empowerment will make responses to safeguarding the environment, developing climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, and advancing green technology and innovation more effective.

Recognizing the differences between women and men in the use and management of natural resources, knowledge of the environment, livelihood strategies, and access to and control over energy services is key for UNIDO when promoting more inclusive and sustainable industrial development paths. Working with national partners, UNIDO takes care to address the needs and priorities of women and men in its environmental and energy interventions, particularly when establishing national cleaner production centres and introducing resource efficient and cleaner production methods.

Moreover, UNIDO supports universal access to clean, reliable and affordable energy sources and promotes the use of energy efficient and renewable energy technologies. In its technical cooperation, UNIDO ensures that women and men have equal access to awareness raising and training sessions on renewable energy and energy efficiency services. Additionally, UNIDO promotes the participation and leadership of women in the development of sustainable energy policies and regulatory frameworks for industry as well as the identification of energy efficient solutions and technologies.



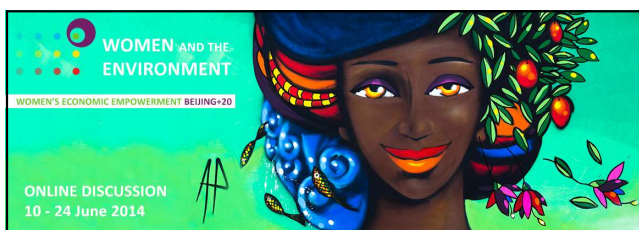


## UNIDO IN ACTION

In Burkina Faso, UNIDO helped over 1,600 women in the beer-brewing sector by providing 1,000 fuel-efficient cook stoves for productive activities. Due to a 40-50% reduction in the firewood consumed, the women were able to improve production efficiency and increase their profits. The decreased exposure to indoor smoke improved the health of the women and their families, and the higher incomes helped to improve the social standing of the women beer-brewers. The success of this project has triggered demand for similar projects in other countries, such as Chad.<sup>8</sup>

In Mozambique, UNIDO partnered with other UN agencies to provide water and renewable energy to rural communities. UNIDO installed renewable energy systems -- solar foot pumps and a biogas digester -- for water supply, irrigation and electricity supply for 2,000 women and men across several communities, and also delivered training on the maintenance of systems, climate change awareness and renewable energy. 50% of the training participants were women. Not only did the project provide women and men with equal access to energy, but also unexpectedly inspired the women to take up entrepreneurial activities using the new technologies. The trained women formed small farming cooperatives to cultivate land and sell surplus agricultural products at local markets. Due to the positive outcomes of the project, the Government of Mozambique and the National Energy Fund (FUNAE) have replicated and rolled out these good practices to other rural communities.<sup>9</sup>





UNIDO co-hosted an e-discussion on the Knowledge Gateway for Women's Economic Empowerment to promote information sharing and advocate for an enhanced role of women in environmental management. The e-discussion "Women and the Environment" attracted 4,070 women and men from 166 countries. UNIDO, alongside a panel of nine other experts, moderated a total of 179 substantive comments from participants.<sup>10</sup>

UNIDO co-sponsors the SEED Gender Equality Award, together with UN Women and supported by the international law firm Hogan Lovells, to raise awareness and provide support to promising social and environmental enterprises owned or managed by women. The prize not only provides a financial contribution, but winners also benefit from high-level profiling with government officials, development institutions and businesses, access to knowledge exchange networks, as well as advisory support from Hogan Lovells.

In 2014, three SEED Gender Equality Awards were granted to enterprises from Zimbabwe, Nepal and Bangladesh focusing on food security and rural entrepreneurship.<sup>11</sup>

In West Africa, UNIDO provides technical assistance to the ECOWAS Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) and supports its Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access. As a result, gender considerations are now incorporated into institutional frameworks, networking, knowledge sharing and capacity-building efforts. UNIDO also helped organize a Ministerial Conference on Energy and Gender for the Mano River Union (MRU), resulting in the development and adoption of a framework action plan on women's economic empowerment through energy access by the MRU member countries.<sup>12</sup>







## WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

In the private sector, men generally occupy most seats on corporate boards or in senior management. This results in a common misconception that men are better suited to decision-making roles than women. Emerging research by Catalyst, however, found that the companies with the best financial results were the ones with more than three women board of directors. Moreover, related studies suggest that women in leadership roles tend to be more forward-looking, resulting in less risky behaviour and more concern for sustainability, consensus-building, and compassion in the workplace. Even so, very few women, especially in developing countries, manage to break through the glass ceiling and move up the executive ladder, limiting the visibility, voice and value of women in business.

To address this, UNIDO works towards increasing women's participation and influence in company management structures as well as national policy and decision-making processes. UNIDO projects provide pathways for the economic empowerment of women, allowing them to generate their own income and therefore, establish a stronger platform for their voices to be heard. UNIDO supports women's leadership by partnering with the private sector, for example, in offering global online training programmes on entrepreneurship, enterprise development and management skills.





Worldwide, gender inequalities persist with regards to

Resources and opportunities

Participation in decision-making processes

Specific vulnerabilities to environmental degradation

## Introducing the Women in Green Industry Chapter

The Women in Green Industry Chapter responds by putting the gender-environment nexus on the discussion table and by connecting women with a shared interest in green industry.

### UNIDO IN ACTION

UNIDO, jointly with UNEP, created the Women in Green Industry Chapter as part of its global Green Industry Platform initiative to connect female professionals working in green industry and institute a forum for information sharing and exchange. Women play an active and substantial role in the management and conservation of natural resources, yet inequalities still exist with regards to access to resources and opportunities and participation in decision-making processes. Responding to these challenges, the Women in Green Industry Chapter aims to promote a stronger engagement and leadership as well as increased decision-making by women in green industry, through awareness raising, networking and peer support, and the exchange of success stories and good practices. Through the Chapter, the Green Industry Platform brings the connection between gender and environment to the discussion table, in close coordination with other agencies and global knowledge and business networks. The Chapter also portrays female professionals who have successfully established themselves in the green industry field and serve as role models for others to follow their example – a step towards more women in power.<sup>13</sup>

*“... SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CAN AND SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT WITH THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN MIND.”*

HEINZ LEUENBERGER,  
DIRECTOR OF UNIDO’S ENVIRONMENTAL  
MANAGEMENT BRANCH





## THE WAY FORWARD

Guided by UNIDO's Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2009), the Organization uses gender mainstreaming as a strategy to promote gender equality throughout its policies, programmes and business practices. By strengthening its staff capacity, integrating accountability and quality control mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, regularly participating in global forums, inter-agency meetings and knowledge platforms related to gender and industry, and by integrating a gender perspective into its own internal business practices, such as strategic planning, human resources and financial management, evaluation and oversight, UNIDO aims to fully institutionalize gender equality. Through the systematic mainstreaming of gender into all of its programmes and projects, UNIDO has been able to contribute considerably to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and at the same time advance towards its own inclusive and sustainable industrial development goals.

While significant progress has been made, there is still more to be done in gender mainstreaming UNIDO's work. Building on the results achieved, increased efforts are needed to fully integrate gender equality as

a central pillar of inclusive and sustainable industrial development and further enhance global impact. In this context, UNIDO strives to strengthen its advocacy for gender equality and women's empowerment in all industrial sectors, particularly at decision-making levels, as well as to encourage girls' and women's participation in STEM education and training. In addition, UNIDO will accelerate its efforts to compile and disseminate gender-relevant and sex-disaggregated industrial statistics. UNIDO will also continue to strengthen its capacities through ongoing gender mainstreaming skills training for its own staff and will offer gender-sensitization training for its country-level partners and stakeholders. To further enhance accountability and coordination within the Organization, UNIDO is currently strengthening its gender focal point network and developing a gender marker system to track gender-related resource allocation and expenditure. Last but not least, UNIDO will continue to actively contribute to information and knowledge sharing with its Member States, partners from the private sector and sister UN organizations to further support the achievement of global goals on gender equality and women's empowerment.

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