

General Assembly Presentation

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In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created “UN Women, the United Nations Entity TO PROMOTE Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

On September 7, 2023 the UN issued a report entitled: “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023”. The report tracks gender equality across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite global efforts, the world is falling short of achieving gender equality. The UN study highlights the need for 360 billion in investment per year and identifies 11 key roadblocks which need to be overcome in order to achieve these goals by 2030.

They Key Roadblocks are:

1. Lack of women in leadership

With just 27 per cent of parliamentary seats, 36 per cent of local government seats, and 28 per cent of management positions held by women, there is a lack of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes, hindering comprehensive policy formulation.

2. Poverty and lack of economic opportunities

More than 340 million women and girls are projected to live in extreme poverty by 2030. This represents a staggering 8 per cent of the global female population surviving on less than USD 2.15 a day. Social protections, access to decent work, and other support systems are urgently needed to provide a path out of poverty.

3. Workplace discrimination and inequalities

Only 61 per cent of prime working-age women participate in the labour force, compared to 91 per cent of prime working-age men. This affects both economic growth and societal progress. In 2019, for each dollar men earned in labour income, women earned only 51 cents.

4. An imbalance in unpaid care work

On the current trajectory, the gap between the time spent by women and men on unpaid care will narrow slightly, but by 2050, women globally will still be spending 9.5 per cent more time (2.3 more hours per day) on unpaid care work than men. This persistent gap limits women's participation in education, employment, and other opportunities.

5. Social norms and cultural practices

Harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation persist. Globally, one in five young women is married before age 18. The prevalence of child marriage highlights the need for attitudinal shifts and the promotion of legal frameworks that safeguard women and girls' rights.

6. Inadequate access to education and health care

An estimated 110 million girls and young women may remain out of school by 2030. Stalled progress in reducing maternal mortality and expanding educational opportunities call for targeted interventions to meet the 2030 goals.

7. Food insecurity

Nearly 24 per cent of women and girls are expected to experience moderate to severe food insecurity by 2030. Empowering women in food and agricultural systems by enhancing access to land and resources is vital for ensuring food security and economic growth.

8. Violence against women and girls

Each year, 245 million women and girls experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner. Older women also face higher rates of poverty and violence than older men.

9. Inadequate funding for gender equality initiatives

Only 4 per cent of total bilateral aid is allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment. The additional investment needed for achieving gender equality by 2030 is estimated at USD 360 billion per year.

10. Legal barriers and poorly enforced legislation

At least 28 countries do not have laws granting women equal rights to enter marriage and initiate divorce, and 67 countries lack laws prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination against women. Where legislation does exist to promote gender equality, effective implementation remains a challenge.

11. Lack of access to clean energy and sanitation

An estimated 341 million women and girls are projected to lack electricity by 2030. Universal access could significantly reduce poverty and improve women's health.

With just seven years remaining to achieve the 2030 targets, concerted efforts and funding are more necessary than ever. Each step forward, no matter how incremental, brings us closer to a future where gender equality is not just a goal, but a reality.

Leaving no one behind

Furthermore, the UN report notes that as the world's population ages, older women's challenges and contributions are often overlooked. Discrimination, economic insecurity, and violence plague older women, necessitating policies that support their engagement, healthcare, and well-being.

Nobel Prize in Economics

In addition, on October 9, 2023, Claudia Goldin, Professor of economics at Harvard University, won the Nobel prize on Economics for her research on labour-market inequality over the past 200 years.

Trend line

Goldin showed that female participation in the labour market did not have an upward trend over this entire period, but instead forms a U-shaped curve.

Aggrarian society

Men and women worked largely shoulder to shoulder at home, on the farm. Large families lived together, and all contributed to the economy of the household.

The industrial revolution

The Industrial Revolution drove married women out of the labour force, as production moved from home to factory and evolving social norms regarding women's responsibilities for home and family changed. Women's wages rose between 1920 and 1850.

Early 20th century

When service-sector jobs proliferated and high-school education developed, the pay gap decreased again for women due to the surge in white collar employment, and clerical jobs.

After industrialization, however, workers were increasingly paid periodically, in part because measuring an individual's output became trickier.

Therefore, more ambiguous factors grew in importance, such as ideas about how long a worker would stay on the job. This penalized women, who were expected to quit when they had children.

Further in early 20th-century America, companies barred married women from obtaining or retaining employment. Women had to choose between career or family. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, banned such behaviour.

1960 2005

During the twentieth century, women's education levels continuously increased, and wage gap decreased further. Women's expectations changed due to more effective family planning options and between 1967 and 1979, the share of 20–21-year-old women who expect to be employed at 35 jumped from 35% to 80%. It was career then family or vice versa.

2005

In the U.S. since 2005, progress in closing the wage gap has been halted. Women currently make about 82 cents for every dollar a man earns. Historically, Goldin found that differences in education and occupational choices could NOT explain this gender gap in earnings.

More recently, Goldin found that the bulk of the current earnings difference is between men and women in the same occupation. That is, when women and men hold the same job, men get paid more. This issue largely arises with the birth of the first child. It is not uncommon for women to be removed from executive or managerial positions once they became mothers. Even after the children leave the nest and a woman increases her hours of work, most never catch up.

Ms. Goldin also blames “greedy” jobs, such as being a consultant or lawyer, accounting finance which offer increasing returns for long (and uncertain) hours. Parents need somebody to be on-call at home in case a child falls ill and needs picking up from school or needs cheering on at a concert or football match. That is incompatible with a greedy job, which requires being available for last-minute demands from a client or boss. No one person can do both. Both partners could take on less demanding jobs, but then the couple would earn less as an economic unit, she explains.

As a GLOBAL organization, how can IFA do its part in the business world and participate in creating solutions for the problems outlined by the United Nations and Claudia Goldin.

1. Clearly IFA is having success at recruiting well qualified women to the governing bodies and play leadership roles: ie Executive Board, the PSC and the Supervisory board. Global WIN Committee

Natalie Quinones Exec. board

Ana Claudia Utumi Chair of Global WIN Committee

Sarah Blakelock SB
Ifueko Okauru SB
Luisa Scarcella PSC
Shefalia Goradia WIN Committee PSC Liason
Odile Courjon WIN
Birgit Fassbender WIN
Sahel Assar WIN
Isabelle Richelle WIN
Luciana Yanez Salgado WIN
Leena Domat Brett WIN
Suzanna Fernandes da Costa WIN

2. By establishing the WIN Global Committee, IFA has provided an opportunity for women to demonstrate their leadership, managerial and technical skills while increasing their network globally.

3. For the branches, who have organized a local WIN organization, they are providing a forum to women where they can develop their skills, demonstrate their expertise and develop a professional network.

4. One important feature that has come to light is the need to involve Senior women, not only in the global WIN committee but also in the branches. We are very fortunate in the Global WIN Committee that Shefali Goradia, Chairman of Deloitte, in India, member of the PSC, has agreed to become a member of the WIN committee. I cannot overestimate the value that a diverse committee from the point of view of age and experience, provides in terms of offering to junior members, mentorship opportunities, professional introductions, career advice as well as friendship.

5. It is important for the leadership in local IFA branches to read the Global WIN activity report to be found on the IFA.nl website. 47 countries reported. It has taken us 3 months to compile this information.

If you do not know what the WIN committee is doing in your country or if you don't work hand in hand with your WIN committee to further the interests of IFA, then, while you are here, in Cancun, you may want to speak to your counterparts who have outstanding and very successful WIN Committees in their local branches, and ask them to share with you the secrets to their success.

Of special mention are Japan, Austria, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and Peru.

5. As I step down from Chair of GWIN committee and pass the baton to my colleague Ana Claudia Utumi. I feel comfortable, that WIN has had a good start globally and that Ana, with all your help and participation, will be able to move up the participation and contribution of women in order to the next higher level.