



Women's Economic Empowerment drivers

An evidence review of progress since the
UN High-Level Panel in 2016

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Query Question:

1. Since 2016 and considering the effect of new global challenges, what has been the status, trends, challenges and evidence gaps in women's economic empowerment, according to each of the seven UNHLP drivers?
2. What are the global initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment under each of the seven UNHLP drivers?
3. What policy recommendations are there for the UK to work towards transformative women's economic empowerment outcomes?

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DFI	Development Finance Institutions
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
G7	Group of Seven
GAP	Global Acceleration Plan
GEAC	Gender Equality Advisory Council
GIL	Gender Innovation Lab
GSP	Gender-Sensitive Procurement
GRP	Gender-Responsive Procurement
INMUJERES	National Institute of Women in Mexico
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
K4D	Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Country
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Questioning and Intersex
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSME	Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprise
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSVI	Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

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SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN HLP	United Nations High Level Panel
WBL	Women, Business and the Law
We-Fi	Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative
WEP	Women's Empowerment Principles
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising
WOW	Work and Opportunities for Women
WSME	Women-Owned and -Led Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise

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Executive Summary

The United Nations High Level Panel (UN HLP) on women's economic empowerment was launched in 2016, supported by UN Women in collaboration with the UK government. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has submitted a request to the Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) Helpdesk to understand, using desk-based research, what has changed globally on women's economic empowerment over the past six years.

Status, trends, challenges and evidence gaps in women's economic empowerment

This report looks at the latest evidence on the seven drivers of transformation of women's economic empowerment, as outlined below and in more detail in Annex A. There is more evidence on status and trends for drivers 1-4 (tackling adverse norms; ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws; recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care; and building assets) and less for drivers 5-7 (changing business culture and practice; improving public sector practices in employment and procurement; and strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation). It also looks at the impacts of four major global challenges since 2016 on women's economic empowerment and finds more evidence on the effects of COVID-19 and conflict, but less evidence on the effects of climate shocks and the rise of authoritarianism and nationalism.

Driver 1: Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models: There is some evidence that attitudes and social norms around women's economic empowerment are slowly improving, particularly around girls' education and the transition to work. However, some norms remain deeply rooted such as women's responsibility for childcare. There is limited evidence on the status and trends of promoting positive role models since 2016, although there has been some academic work on this topic. Conflict often disrupts adverse gender norms that open up new opportunities for women's mobility and jobs, although there can be resistance to new norms. School closures during COVID-19 meant that often male-female households defaulted to women undertaking childcare alongside paid work.

Driver 2: Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations: There is strong evidence on the status and changes in legal protection and discriminatory laws since 2016. The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) index has shown steady improvement in women's legal rights since the UN HLP was launched. However, women globally still only have three-quarters of the legal rights of men, with high regional disparities. Conflicts can lead to lifting of restrictions on women entering certain professions (European Parliament 2020). Countries responded to COVID-19 with divergent legal reforms, from reducing paternity leave in Fiji to the institutionalisation of childcare services in Bangladesh (World Bank 2022b). Since 2020 the Taliban in Afghanistan has barred education for girls over 12 and the United States Supreme Court repealed Roe vs Wade, fuelling anti-abortion movements worldwide (Amnesty International 2021, Saldinger 2022). There is a small body of evidence on women's land rights and how these rights are impacted by climate shocks, including from World Bank's Africa Gender Innovation Lab.

Driver 3: Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care: There is no systematic global database to measure the trends in women's unpaid care work, although there are data sets which provide a snapshot of the situation. There is mixed evidence on whether the distribution between men and women's unpaid care work has changed, but in all countries women dedicate more time than men (ILO 2019). Since 2016, there has been more emphasis on women's paid care roles in addition to their unpaid care work, and various studies have established the benefits of childcare provision to the private sector, to governments and to individual women. COVID-19 increased women's unpaid care work, due to school closures, care for the sick and reduced formal care services

(Duragova 2020, UNECE 2020, UN Women 2020). During conflict, women generally perform more unpaid care work and may increase violence and harassment which may limit a survivor's ability to work (Queck 2019, ILO 2022b). In addition, climate change can increase women's care and domestic workloads (AfDB 2018; Björkman-Nyqvist 2013; Chigwanda 2016; ILO, 2017a). For example, in Pakistan, water shortages are increasing the time female farmers spend on water collection, with severe negative health impacts (Nerine Butt et al. 2020).

Driver 4: Building assets - digital, financial and property: In general, data on women's control over assets is scarce, especially on women's and men's ownership, control or management of land (UN Women 2019). There are still wide gender asset gaps, although there has been some progress on reducing the gender gap in digital and financial assets. Since 2016 there has been a shift towards global lending which promotes women's access to investment funds and other finance. COVID-19 has accelerated the use of digital assets, but evidence is lacking on how this has affected women. Conflict limits women's access and ownership of land. Violent conflict and displacement can limit women's access and ownership of land as their land ownership may be threatened if they are separated from their husband or male relatives (Queck 2019).

Driver 5: Changing business culture and practice: There is no systematic tracking system of private sector culture and practice which makes it difficult to grasp status and trends, although signatories to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) is on the rise. An ILO (2019) survey of nearly 13,000 businesses worldwide found that 40% of respondents indicated their enterprise culture as gender-inclusive. The global #MeToo movement has led to major changes in the culture around sexual harassment in the workplace in many organisations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Women and IFC (2020) found many examples of businesses promoting well-being and health; enabling equal access and use of digital technologies; ensuring equal access to financial and non-financial services; strengthening inclusive supply chains and support for women-led businesses; preventing and mitigating gender-based violence; and providing flexible policies.

Driver 6: Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement: There are no systematic international tracking systems for public sector practices in employment and procurement. However, there is some data to understand the current status and trends for both. Gender-sensitive procurement in the public sector seems to have been gaining momentum, both by national governments and at international organisations. There have been several recent guidance materials on gender-sensitive procurement. However, there is a lack of data on how new global challenges have affected gender-sensitive procurement and employment practices in the public sector. During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments shifted to emergency buying which likely resulted in less attention to gender equality (Boyd et al. 2020).

Driver 7: Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation: There is no quantitative data available to show the trends in women's visibility, collective voice and representation. However, there is evidence that women's membership in trade unions and cooperatives is increasing, and organisations such as Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) and Self-Employed Woman's Association have experienced increased visibility. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has recently emphasised the importance of the social and solidarity economy (SSE). Women's movements can resist oppressive nationalist politics such as in Brazil where the Black women's movement resisted against nationalist resurgences (Oxfam 2021). Women, especially Indigenous women and young women, are organising environmental and climate change movements (OECD 2021, Ramdas and Garcia 2021). Lastly, conflict can be both a driver of women's movements and a barrier; volunteering and community organising has been a positive coping strategy for both men and women during the Ukraine conflict (UN Women and CARE 2022).

Global initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment

Several large global initiatives have addressed multiple drivers of women's economic empowerment over the past years, including: the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Group of Seven (G7) Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC), the Global Alliance for Care, Generation Equality, ILO Conventions on gender equality, Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), 2X Collaborative, and UN Women. Global initiatives have mostly focused on Driver 5: Business Culture and Practice, and Driver 3: Unpaid Care and Work, with the least focus on Driver 7: Visibility, Voice and Representation. Many global initiatives are too nascent to understand their impact on UNHLP drivers.

Policy recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed at UK government policy and programme staff, and are based on the evidence portrayed in this report. Prioritisation of recommendations should be discussed internally at FCDO and other HMG departments, recognising that some recommendations will be more relevant for some countries than others.

Driver one: Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models

- Invest in girls' education and mitigate the barriers they face in attending school, while at the same time aiming for broad-based economic growth.
- Help girls transition to quality work in non-traditional occupations.
- Promote more egalitarian norms around gender roles, such as through mass and social media and community-, school- and workplace-based education, and targeting boys/men.

Driver two: Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations

- Undertake gender analyses, invest in the gathering of sex-disaggregated data and track global trends.
- Engage with a broad range of stakeholders at both national and local levels to conduct gender analysis and agree on/achieve a list of effective and durable reform of gender-discriminatory laws.
- Enact parenthood and pay policies that can contribute to changing social norms.

Driver three: Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care

- Provide state-funded and private-sector childcare infrastructure to allow mothers to remain in paid employment.
- Invest in gender-sensitive infrastructure to reduce and redistribute the time women spend on unpaid work and care.
- Design and implement care policies that are rights- and needs-based, follow a life-cycle approach and reflect the voices of the most concerned.

- Influence International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Bank (WB), Global Alliance for Care and others to produce harmonised and comparable global modules on time use and a database to assess time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, with data disaggregated by sex.

Driver four: Building assets - digital, financial and property

- Promote women's equal right to access, use and control land, property and other productive resources through participatory and harmonised approaches to the formulation of laws and policies.
- Ensure the affordability and relevance of mobile phones to women, while investing in literacy and digital skills to increase access.
- Promote legislation that ensures that women and men have the same rights to open a bank account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution suited to their needs.

Driver five: Changing business culture and practice

- Work with partner governments to ratify ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work and promote the adoption and enforcement of sexual harassment legislation and policies in employment.
- Work with digital platforms to reduce harassment and violence against women, invest in specialised law enforcement officials and raise awareness to Internet users of their rights.
- Establish and implement a system to track private sector culture.

Driver six: Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement

- Incentivise gender-responsive procurement processes in the public sector.

Driver seven: Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation

- Support and encourage meaningful consultation with women's rights organisations and other affected groups.
- Institutionalise support on the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).
- Work with partner governments to remove discriminatory laws, promote legal recognition of informal workers and widen coverage of social protection systems to enhance the entitlements of informal workers and entrepreneurs.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Background to the United Nations High Level Panel

The United Nations High Level Panel (UN HLP) on women’s economic empowerment was launched in 2016, supported by UN Women in collaboration with the UK government. Recognising that the economic empowerment of women - to succeed and advance economically and to make and act on economic decisions—is a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the purpose of the UN HLP was to lead the discussion on closing the persistent gaps in women’s economic empowerment (UN Women, 2016). The Panel was made up of representatives from governments, international financial institutions and the private sector (UN Women, 2016).

In 2016 the UN HLP launched their first report, “Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment” (UN Women, 2016). Based on six months of research, the report included a rigorous examination of the case for women’s economic empowerment and the landscape across four women’s worker groups - women in the informal sector, women in agriculture, women entrepreneurs and women in the formal sector. It identifies seven primary drivers (see Figure 1) of transformation of women’s economic empowerment and includes proven and promising interventions under each driver. A description of each driver can be found in Annex A. According to its website, in January 2018 the “UNHLP has completed its mandate. The project, which facilitated the work and outputs on the Panel, has now ended as planned” (UNHLP 2018).

Figure 1: The UNHLP Women’s Economic Empowerment drivers



1.2 Background to this query

Since the UN HLP first convened in 2016, there have been several major new global challenges causing significant shifts in the women’s economic empowerment landscape. There is a need to understand what has changed with respect to women’s economic empowerment over the past 6 years, including the current status and evidence gaps for each driver, and the impacts of the new

global challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, to the rise of authoritarianism and nationalist politics around the world.

Going forward, the UK will continue to play a leading role in promoting progress on the UN HLP recommendations and will relaunch efforts to achieve the SDG 2030 targets. To do this, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) needs to have a better understanding on progress to date and to engage with experts to define a United Kingdom position and influence the overall agenda. This Helpdesk query summarises the evidence base from 2016 to date, with reflections on the impacts of new global challenges, and lists global initiatives to promote women’s economic empowerment under each driver. It offers policy recommendations for FCDO/other UK government departments to consider. This query aims to answer three questions:

- a) Since 2016 and considering the effect of new global challenges, what has been the status, trends, challenges and evidence gaps in women’s economic empowerment, according to each of the seven UNHLP drivers?
- b) What are the global initiatives to promote women’s economic empowerment under each of the seven UNHLP drivers? This could include a consideration of resources, initiatives, partnerships and experts.
- c) What policy recommendations are there for the UK to work towards transformative women’s economic empowerment outcomes?

1.3 Methodology

This rapid review has been undertaken through desk-based research of existing work in women’s economic empowerment since 2016. It is a rapid review, and does not take a comprehensive or systematic review standard. Existing evidence reviews and mixed-methods studies have been prioritised. It aims to balance qualitative and quantitative data and a range of evidence across low- and middle-income countries. It includes a reflection on the strength/robustness of evidence according to each of the drivers, with evidence gaps clearly stated.

We are grateful to the Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development (K4D) Research Helpdesk for providing an annotated bibliography of key publications structured according to each of the seven UN HLP drivers and to FCDO for providing further evidence they have collected internally on the status of women’s economic empowerment. Policy recommendations have been formed in collaboration with FCDO.

1.4 New global challenges

This query examines the impacts of the following four major global challenges since 2016 on women’s economic empowerment. Global economic crises have been a major challenge over the past few years and cross-cut COVID-19, climate shocks and conflicts.

- **COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic has had a direct effect on morbidity and mortality. Together with government restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, this has led to several indirect effects: an increase in health and care needs, economic shocks due to people’s inability to work (either due to their health or government restrictions), increases in violence against women, and negative effects on education due to the closure of schools, unequal digital access whilst learning at home,

and an increased drop out of students when schools reopened. Even countries and regions which have had low COVID-19 prevalence rates, such as the Pacific Islands, have seen economic consequences due to a collapse in the tourism sector and government restrictions to curb the spreads of the virus. Globally, between 2019 and 2020, women's employment declined by 4.2%, representing a drop of 54 million jobs, while men's employment declined by 3%, or 60 million jobs (ILO 2021a).

- **Climate shocks:** There has been increasing recognition of the negative impacts of climate change on the planet and society. Climate change has a worse effect on people in the most climate-affected countries (e.g. Small Islands Developing States), low-income countries which have not been able to adapt, and marginalised groups such as women and people with disabilities who are often left out of planning processes. Indirect effects of climate shocks include food insecurity and migration. Women are not inherently more vulnerable to climate shocks, but social and cultural gendered norms and power dynamics results in women often experiencing the worst effects. For example, women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die during a climate-related disaster due to gendered differences in capacity to cope and insufficient access to early warning information (UNDP 2016).
- **Conflicts:** Conflict and violence has been on the rise; in 2016 more countries experienced conflict that at any point in almost 30 years (UN 2020). There have been several different conflicts around the world since 2016, including in Ukraine, Yemen, Afghanistan and Ethiopia. As well as deaths and a contravention of human rights, these conflicts have led to millions of people seeking refuge in other countries, and indirect effects such as global economic shocks due to the interruption of supply chains. Conflict increases the risk of gender-based violence including sexual violence and trafficking, and often results in higher burdens of unpaid care work for women and a lack of access to essential services such as sexual and reproductive health care (OHCHR 2023).
- **Rise of authoritarianism and nationalism:** In several countries, such as India, Brazil, the Philippines and the USA, there has been a shift towards nationalist political leaders and authoritarianism. The past 16 years have seen a steady decline in global freedom, with nearly 75% of the world's population living in a country showing democratic declines (Freedom House 2022). This has led to the marginalisation of groups such as women, LGBTQI+ people and refugees, and the rollback of their rights.¹ In some cases, such as when President Trump in the USA brought in the 'Global Gag Rule' on reproductive rights, this has had national and international effects (Ahmed 2020). The rise of authoritarianism and nationalism closes the civic spaces for women's rights organisations to advocate for women's economic empowerment and other rights and shifts social norms about women's roles.

1.5 Structure of the report

This report is structured into four parts: Section 1 provides an introduction to the query, its objective, methodology and background information; Section 2 provides the evidence on strengths, trends and impacts of new global challenges for each of the UNHLP drivers and status updates on the recommendations made in the UNHLP report; Section 3 analyses the strengths and weaknesses of recent global initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment and lists key interventions, resources, partnerships and experts; and Section 4 provides policy recommendations, structured by

¹ LGBTQI+ is an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning and intersex. The '+' represents people who are part of the community, but for whom LGBTQI does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.

UNHLP driver. The report has several annexes: Annex A is a description of UNHLP drivers and Annex B summarises the impacts of new global challenges on the seven drivers.

2. Status, trends, challenges and evidence gaps in women's economic empowerment

Strength of the evidence on women's economic empowerment varies across the drivers, with more evidence on status and trends for drivers 1-4 (norms and role models; legal protections; unpaid care work; and building assets) and less for drivers 5-7 (business culture and practices; public sector practices; and visibility and voice). In general, there is more quantitative data available on **proxies** of women's economic empowerment (e.g. female labour force participation, women in leadership roles, performance of women-owned businesses) rather than the **drivers** of women's economic empowerment. There is plenty of evidence on 'what works' for changing business practices (driver 5) and public procurement (driver 6), including good practice case studies, but less evidence on trends and the effects of new global challenges. No clear patterns were found in terms of status and trends in different geographies or by income levels of economies.

The UNHLP recommendations were vague but ambitious and, according to the data found, none of the recommendations have yet been achieved in full. The overall trend of progress on each driver is denoted by arrows for each driver below. There are also tables included to understand the status of the recommendations made in the UNHLP report.

More evidence has been found on the effects of COVID-19 and conflict, but less evidence on the effects of climate shocks and the rise of authoritarianism and nationalist politics. See Annex B for a summary table of the effects of the new global challenges on each driver.

Driver 1: Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models



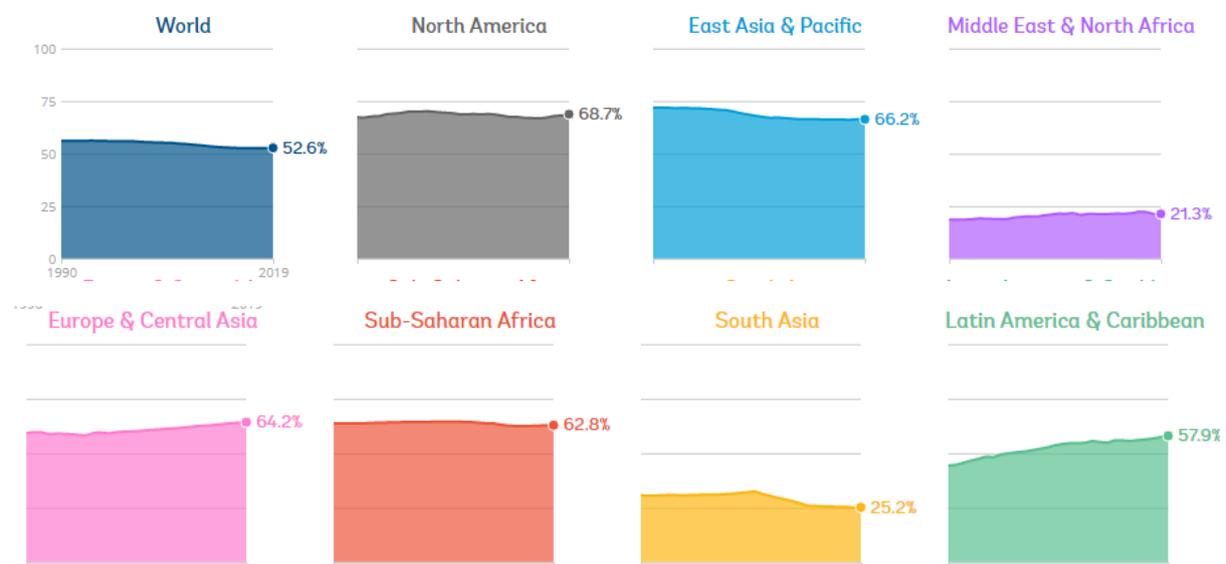
There is some evidence that attitudes and social norms around women's economic empowerment are slowly improving, particularly around girls' education and the transition to work. However, some norms remain deeply rooted such as women's responsibility for childcare. No evidence was found on the status and trends of promoting positive role models since 2016.

Awareness of gender equality is high, although many women and men have discriminatory attitudes on gender. In 2019, UN Women and Unstereotype Alliance undertook a one-off gender equality attitudes study in ten countries (Colombia, India, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, The Philippines, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and United States). They found that whilst people are aware of significant gender gaps in the economy (e.g. 43% think that it is easy for most women to be hired as skilled workers, compared to 55% for men), gender norms justify gender discrimination. For example, 28% of men and 21% of women think that a woman should not earn more than her husband, and 34% of men and 24% of women think that – for the same job – men should be paid more than women. At the same time, there is an overwhelming consensus that gender equality is important for the country's

future success (e.g. 91% believe in equal pay for equal work regardless of a person's gender) (UN Women and Unstereotype Alliance 2020).

Attitudes towards women's work have changed faster than women's labour force participation rates. Drawing on quantitative datasets (e.g. Demographic Health Surveys) since 1995, Harper et al. (2020) analyse changing gender norms and attitudes over time. They find that whilst there has been little increase in women's labour force participation (see Figure 2) and the time women and men spend on paid and unpaid work up to 2019, during COVID many of these trends have been reversed (see Driver 3 below) and attitudes have often changed more than gendered work patterns. In most countries, the proportion of people who agree that men should have priority for jobs, if jobs are scarce, has fallen. Rising education levels, shifts in economic structures that create more job opportunities, and more gender-egalitarian laws and policies can all interact in a virtuous cycle, leading to shifts in gender norms around work (Harper et al. 2020).

Figure 2: Regional trends in female labour force participation from 1990 to 2019



Source: (World Bank 2022c)

Rising levels of education for girls has led to increases in women's economic participation (World Bank 2022c). The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) measures discrimination against women in social institutions across 180 countries. SIGI data from 2019 found that some norms have been changing in a positive way. For example, in Asian and African countries parents have been placing greater value on girls' education and young men aspire to marry educated young women who can financially support the family due to their increased earnings potential from education. This increased value given to educated women has been associated with delays in the age of first marriage and pregnancy, while correcting unbalanced sex ratios at birth (OECD 2019a). In the MENA region, however, a high proportion of women have tertiary education but are still not expected or encouraged to take up paid work due to gendered social norms (Islam et al. 2022). Globally, social expectations on gender roles still stigmatise working mothers; around 50% of the world's population believe that children suffer if the mother takes on paid work outside the home (OECD 2019a).

Adverse social norms weaken the implementation of gender-sensitive laws and policies and justify harmful and discriminatory practices. For example, paternity leave, on its own, is not enough to redistribute caring responsibilities within the household if men choose not to take it for fear of social

stigma or because they feel their job might suffer from it. Therefore, while 91 countries worldwide have some sort of paternity-leave provisions in place, few fathers are taking time off to care for their children (OECD 2019a). While 160 out of 190 countries have legislation that specifically addresses domestic violence, still one in three women is subjected to physical or sexual violence, usually by an intimate partner (World Bank 2022d). Perrin et al. (2019) find that the harmful social norms that sustain gender-based violence include women's sexual purity, protecting family honour over women's safety and men's authority to discipline women.

Since 2016, there has been some academic work on the effect of positive role models. For example, Olsson and Martiny (2018) use secondary evidence to show that long-term exposure to counter-stereotypical role models (such as mothers in non-traditional work, female politicians and female university lecturers) is positively correlated with aspiration towards, and engagement with, counter-stereotypical roles. However, they assert that more assessments of real-world interventions are needed. Campos et al (2015) examine the characteristics associated with women entrepreneurs crossing over into male-dominated sectors in Uganda and find that two factors have a positive association: (1) information on the higher profit potential in many male-dominated sectors, which induce women to switch into these sectors, and (2) male role models, such as fathers or politicians, who help introduce women entrepreneurs to male-dominated sectors. In an experiment in the Republic of Congo, Gassier et al (2022) tested an intervention to address informational constraints around returns from male-dominated sectors, with the aim of encouraging young women to apply for training in more profitable male-dominated sectors. The results showed that young women were 28.6% more likely to apply to a traditionally male-dominated trade when receiving information on trade-specific earnings, suggesting that this information on earnings is a low-cost intervention could be an important tool for reducing occupational segregation and closing gender gaps in earnings.

Beyond serving as role models, men and boys can play other critical roles in closing gender gaps in economic outcomes. In Cote d'Ivoire, an intervention that offered agricultural training to couples from smallholder rubber-producing households and included the development of joint household action plans, increased women's management in rubber production, increased agricultural labor supply from men and women, increased household use of agricultural inputs, and increased overall production, compared to those who did not fill out a joint action plan (Donald et al. 2022). In Uganda, small incentives paired with a couples' workshop encouraged sugarcane farmers to transfer outgrower contracts into their wives' names, leading to notable increases in women's agency and control over productive resources (Ambler et al. 2022). Encouraging couples to cooperatively manage household resources can help include women in higher-value agricultural activities, offering an opportunity to promote market inclusion.

Table 1: Current status of the UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations for Driver 1

UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations (Driver 1)	Current Status
<p>1. Eliminate, prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls.</p>	<p>A 2018 analysis of prevalence data from 2000-2018 across 161 countries by the World Health Organisation found that worldwide, nearly 1 in 3, or 30%, of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence or both (WHO 2021).</p>

<p>2. End gender discrimination and change stereotypes gendering roles and abilities.</p>	<p>Gender discrimination and stereotypes still exist, but as detailed above, there is some evidence that social norms around women’s work are improving (except for childcare).</p>
<p>3. Eradicate the stigmatisation of informal workers and support their organisations.</p>	<p><i>Unclear – stigmatisation of informal workers is not being monitored.</i></p>

The effects of new global challenges

Shocks and protracted crises can change norms about women’s work in different directions, depending on the causes and nature of any particular crisis. While the range of work acceptable for women often expands in a crisis, norms around who is responsible for unpaid work and care are less likely to change (Harper et al. 2020). In times of crisis, adolescent girls’ vulnerability can also heighten, when schools close and economic opportunities diminish, adversely affecting their life trajectories (Bandiera et al. 2018; World Bank 2020).

Conflict has been a major driver of social norms change over history. Conflict often disrupts adverse gender norms in ways that open up new opportunities for women’s mobility and jobs. In 2018, research to explore gender perspectives in the context of armed conflict in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine, found that normative images of the “male breadwinner” and “defender”, and of the “female house-keeper”, “mother”, and “housewife” were still strong; ideas about the “right/proper/expected” behaviour of men and women surfaced frequently throughout the interviews and focus group discussions (PAX 2019). However, the research also found that female soldiers, members of administrations, activists, volunteers and medical workers were contributing to a change in gender perceptions, leading to a shift in gender roles with women taking on traditionally male roles outside of the home (PAX 2019). Reactions to this shift were not always positive and sometimes resisted, including feelings of disappointment over women not acting traditionally and negative psychological impacts for men who fail to meet expectations over their role as a “defender” (PAX 2019). Similar findings have been found in refugee populations in Germany, whereby women take on more responsibilities outside of the home, and there are marginal shifts in unpaid work responsibilities in the home, but women still do the majority of household work whilst contributing more equally to household women (Getliffe and Khan 2020).

Since the conflict in Ukraine escalated in 2022, gender roles in Ukraine have continued to change. A gender analysis based on surveys and interviews in April 2022 found that women are increasingly becoming heads of households and leaders in their communities as men are conscripted (UN Women and CARE 2022; Specia and Ducke 2022). However, women remain largely excluded from formal decision-making processes related to humanitarian efforts, peace-making, and other areas that directly impact their lives (UN Women and CARE 2022).

COVID-19 has also had a major effect on changing gender norms. When households had to work from home due to government restrictions and were faced with home-schooling children, the majority of male-female parent households around the world defaulted to women undertaking the majority of

childcare alongside paid work. A study of monthly enterprise data from business owners across 50 countries via Facebook throughout 2020 and in 2021, showed that, globally, female-led firms were, on average, 4 percentage points more likely to close their business and experience larger revenue declines than male-led firms during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with the gender gap in firm closures persisting into 2021 (Goldstein et al. 2022). School closures and women's greater share of the increase in the domestic and care work burden underpinned women's higher rates of firm closures. COVID-19 has therefore entrenched attitudes that women are responsible for childcare, leading to persistent gender pay gaps and job segregation, and worryingly set back attitudes towards domestic violence (UN Women and Unstereotype 2022). Miller et al. (2022) find that there was a significant reduction in women's online job searches during lockdowns, alongside a significant increase in men's, which may have entrenched attitudes that women's work is only in the home.

However, some evidence shows that in some situations gender roles became more egalitarian during the pandemic. A study of respondents in the U.S., Germany, and Singapore found that among couples who had been employed at the start of the pandemic, men expressed more egalitarian gender-role attitudes if they became unemployed but their female partners remained employed. However, women expressed more traditional attitudes if they became unemployed and their male partners remained employed (Reichert et al. 2020). We did not find any similar evidence for low- and middle-income countries.

Research from UN Women suggests that there is a 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women and girls. Data from police, hotlines, and analysing big data from online searches and social media posts, UN Women found that violence has increased since the start of COVID-19. A survey of 16,000 women covering 13 countries found that one in two women reported that they or a woman they know experienced a form of violence since the start of the pandemic. Violence has often coincided in many countries with a reduction in services to support survivors, partly due to operational challenges and reduced funding for law enforcement agencies and local women's organisations (UN Women 2022b).

We did not find any primary research on how the rise of **authoritarianism and nationalist politics** is affecting gender norms. However, many nationalist parties emphasise the importance of traditional gender roles in the family (Fangen and Skjelsbaek 2021). Legal reform can change gender norms to be more egalitarian (Jenkins and Hearle 2022), so a rollback in women's legal rights *could* result in more traditional gender norms.

No evidence was found on how **climate shocks** have been affecting gender norms in recent years.

Driver 2: Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations

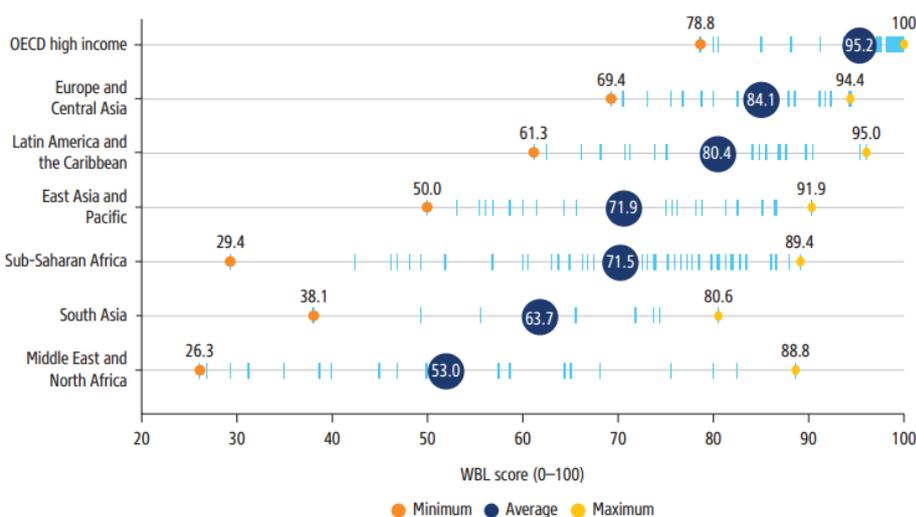


There is strong evidence on the status and changes in legal protection and discriminatory laws since 2016. The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law index has shown steady improvement in women's legal rights since the UN HLP was launched. However, women globally still only have three-quarters of the legal rights of men, with high regional disparities.

The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) index has measured the laws and regulations that affect women's economic opportunity in 190 economies since 2009. Using eight indicators of women's economic life, the WBL index score assesses how discriminatory the laws are in each economy, with a higher score indicating more gender equal laws (a score of 100 indicates legal gender parity).

Women have fewer legal rights than men, especially in the areas of pay and parenthood. The most recent WBL report, using data from October 2021, found the global average WBL score is 76.5 out of 100, indicating that a typical woman has just three-quarters of the rights of men (World Bank 2022d). The most persistent gaps are in the areas of Pay and Parenthood, as many economies have yet to remove restrictions or introduce legal rights and benefits such as legally mandated parental leave and outlawing the dismissal of pregnant women. As shown in Figure 3, among regions, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) high-income region, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean have the highest average scores. The Middle East and North Africa has the lowest average score of 53.0 (World Bank 2022d). Refugee women face additional legal barriers to participate in the economy (IRC 2019).

Figure 3: Dispersion of WBL scores by region



Source: World Bank (2022d)

Although it will take time to reach gender legal parity globally, there has been steady improvement in women’s legal rights since the UN HLP was launched. Since 2016, the global average score has increased, and so have average scores across all types of economies and regions. The largest increases have been in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa regions, although these are still the regions with the least gender legal parity as shown in Table 2. The new parliamentary bill in India, “Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) bill, 2021”, currently under review, would increase the marital age of women from 18 years to 21 years (on a par with men) to reduce early marriage. In 2020, 27% of all young women in India were married before 18, down from 47% in 2010 (UNICEF 2020).

Table 2: A comparison of the WBL index in 2016 and 2022

	2016	2022	Change	
Global Average	72.5	76.5	+4.0	
Types of economies	Low-income economies	59.4	65.5	+6.1
	Middle-income economies	70.5	74.0	+3.5
	High-income economies	82.3	86.3	+4.0
Regions	OECD high-income	93.4	95.2	+1.8

	Europe and Central Asia	81.7	84.1	+2.4
	Latin America and the Caribbean	78.2	80.4	+2.2
	East Asia and the Pacific	69.3	71.9	+2.6
	Sub-Saharan Africa	66.3	71.5	+5.2
	South Asia	56.9	63.7	+6.8
	The Middle East and North Africa	42.7	53.0	+10.3

Source: World Bank (2022e)

Legal reform and better protection for women will not lead to women’s economic empowerment by itself. Laws need to be translated into local languages, enforced properly and monitored, and the interaction between a law and the surrounding social norms is a key factor as to whether the general public will comply with it.

No evidence was found on the status and trends for gender-responsive regulations since 2016. Regulations which apply a gender lens can improve the business enabling environment for women-owned businesses and support their participation in industry and trade (Congrave et al. 2020).

Table 3: Current status of the UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations for Driver 2

UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations (Driver 2)	Current Status
1. Reform laws discriminating against women and enact legislation enabling gender equality.	Gender legal parity is improving, but women globally still only have three-quarters of the legal rights of men (World Bank 2022b).
2. Expand social protection coverage for all.	More than 4 billion people still lack any social protection (ILO 2021b).
3. Create an enabling legal environment for informal workers.	There are still many gaps in the legal environment for informal workers around the world (WIEGO 2022). Around 100 countries have now made submissions regarding ILO Recommendation No.204, to reform legal frameworks to protect informal workers and promote the formalisation of their work.
4. Increase women’s access to justice, legal awareness and legal aid.	<i>Unclear – this is not being monitored.</i>

The effects of new global challenges

Shifting political and economic contexts often accelerate discriminatory legal reform (Jenkins and Hearle 2022). For example, **conflicts** can result in labour shortages in male-dominated industries or a recognition of economic benefits of a higher female labour force participation, which can lead to lifting

of restrictions on women entering certain professions (European Parliament 2020). In some countries, post-conflict constitutional reforms have eliminated discriminatory laws, and women's participation in constitutional reform is rising (Queck 2019). However, no empirical evidence was found on the effect of recent conflicts on discriminatory laws. Anecdotal evidence from Afghanistan, Yemen and Ethiopia points to the opposite, with more restrictive legal contexts for women.

The impacts on caregiving from **COVID-19** has highlighted the need for childcare reform and parental leave policies (World Bank 2022b). The 2021 WBL Report found parental leave reforms to be few and far between, and not always moving in the right direction. For example, Fiji temporarily lowered paid paternity leave from five days to two days citing job instability in the pandemic (World Bank 2022b). There have been some positive examples of childcare policy reform. Bangladesh introduced The Child Daycare Centre Act 2021 which institutionalised the provision of childcare services for children from four months to six years and made it easier to register as a childcare provider (World Bank 2022b).

COVID-19 also resulted in greater policies and resources targeted at social protection. For example, between April 2020 and June 2022, the World Bank doubled its pre-COVID-19 social protection portfolio, providing over USD14 billion to 60 countries (World Bank 2022b). Little attention was paid to gender in the COVID-19 social protection response (Gavrilovic 2022). According to ODI (2021), crisis response mechanisms were often implemented under the remit of time-bound emergency legislation, therefore many of the crisis adjustments in legal or regulatory frameworks are expected to be temporary. However, in a few countries, such as Jordan and Peru, there are indications that protocols will be extended or become potential precedents for similar adjustments in response to future shocks. In recognition that many informal workers were being left out of social protection schemes, a few governments and donors re-directed women's informal work to respond to COVID-19 and improved access to finance (Hearle and Chaturvedi 2020). For example, in India self-help groups in the USD750m World Bank's National Rural Livelihoods Mission have produced 19 million masks, 100,000 litres of sanitizer and 50,000 litres of handwash (World Bank 2020 in Hearle and Chaturvedi 2020). In Thailand, the government rolled out cash grants of 5000 Bhat (about 50% of minimum wage) and emergency lower interest loans to support workers not covered by social insurance (OECD 2020a in Hearle and Chaturvedi 2020).

Women's land rights are crucial for communities to cope with **climate variability and shocks**, and is a major cause of the gender differentiated impacts of climate change (Livingstone and Jenkins 2021). In 2016, women comprised 15% of agricultural land holders in sub-Saharan Africa and 11% of land holders in Asia (excluding Japan) (Landlinks 2016). There is a small body of evidence on the current status of women's land rights, including how these rights are impacted by climate shocks. World Bank's Africa Gender Innovation Lab (GIL) has a repository of papers and briefs on property rights, including a policy brief on the top policy lessons in Women's Property Rights (see Gender Innovation Lab 2020). Several Africa GIL studies review the environmental and gender impacts of land registration programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, Ali et al. (2011) examine the environmental and gender impacts of a pilot land titling programme in Rwanda and find that the programme caused farmers to invest in soil conservation measures with a particularly pronounced effect among women, who prior to the intervention suffered from higher levels of tenure insecurity. In Benin, findings from an impact evaluation of a large-scale randomised control trial of a rural land registration program show that tenure security improvement through demarcation caused farmers to plant more trees, cultivate perennial crops, and, among women farmers, it also showed an increase in fallowing (Goldstein et al. 2016). A follow-up study revealed that the programme also reduced forest loss by 20 percent (Wren-Lewis et al. 2020). The FCDO-funded Land Investment for Transformation programme worked with the Ethiopian government to improve land tenure for farmers and boost their productivity, especially among women. The FCDO-funded Land Governance for Economic Government (LEGEND), completed in August 2022, had a similar aim: to ensure secure land rights for

women and ensuring women benefit from land ownership. In 2019, the World Bank launched a global campaign 'Stand for Her Land', which aimed to close the gap between law and practice on women's land rights (World Bank 2019).

The rise of **authoritarianism and nationalist politics** has had major negative impacts on women's legal rights over recent years. Birchall (2020) found several studies that document an increased backlash around women's rights and feminism in international law since 2016 – particularly in United Nations spaces. A growing number of studies highlight that not only has progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action been stalling, but women's rights advocates are now fighting against the roll back of women and girls' rights, due to the conservative agendas of influential countries (Birchall 2020).

Since 2020, the **rollback of women's rights** globally has accelerated, leading to higher gendered inequalities in some countries (Amnesty International 2021). After seizing Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban have implemented oppressive restrictions on women and girls' rights across Afghanistan, including barring girls over 12 years old from education (Amnesty International 2021). In July 2021, Turkey withdrew from the landmark Istanbul Convention – a ground-breaking and comprehensive framework for combatting gender-based violence and ensuring the rights of survivors in Europe. The decision marks a rollback for women's and girls' human rights in Turkey and has also emboldened anti-rights advocates across several other countries in the region (Amnesty International 2021). Both the Taliban and Turkish government have been labelled authoritarian and repressive (OHCHR 2022; Altınörs and Akçay 2022).

In June 2022, the United States Supreme Court repealed Roe v Wade, restricting women's access to reproductive healthcare in the United States. Reproductive health advocates say this may have consequences globally, by fuelling anti-abortion movements and exacerbating stigma (Saldinger 2022). The 2022 SDGs report found that 1.2 billion women and girls of reproductive age (15-49) live in countries and areas with some restriction on access to safe abortion (UN Women and DESA 2022).

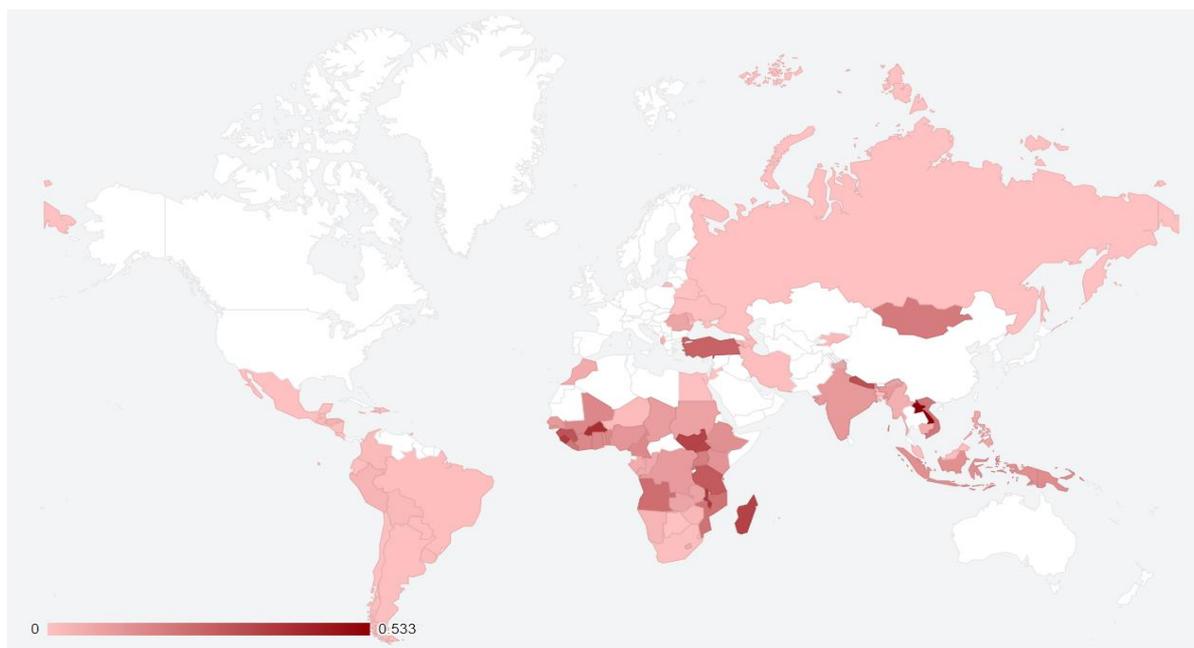
Driver 3: Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care



There is no systematic global database to measure the trends in women's unpaid care work. However, evidence points to little change in the distribution between men and women and that unpaid care work may be on the rise.

There is mixed evidence on whether women's time spent on unpaid care work has changed, but there is clear evidence that women spend far more time on unpaid work. In every country around the world, gendered social norms dictate that women do more unpaid work and care than men. On the one hand, Harper et al. (2020) finds that from 1995 to 2020 there was little change in the time women and men spend unpaid work globally, though the overall trend was towards greater gender equality in many countries. On the other hand, UN Women's 2015-16 *'Progress on the World's Women'* report found that women do nearly 2.5 times unpaid and domestic work as men, with the largest gender disparities in time spent cooking, cleaning and caring for household members (UN Women 2015b). In the period 2019-20, this figure had increased to three times as much, suggesting a deteriorating trend (UN Women 2019). Based on existing time-use surveys from 76 countries, ILO (2019) found that in every country women dedicate more time than men to unpaid care work. Globally, the average time devoted to unpaid care work for women is 4 hours 37 minutes a day (almost 20% of a 24-hour day), whilst for men it is 1 hour 51 minutes a day (or 8% of a 24-hour day). The time dedicated to unpaid care work, as a share of population, is particularly high in Laos PDR, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Malawi and Sierra Leone (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Women's unpaid work, as a share of the population



Source: G²LM|LIC - Jobs of the World Project (2022)

Notes: Data is for low- and middle-income countries only, and has been collected and harmonised from all available censuses and Demographic and Health Surveys. The dates of these censuses and Demographic and Health Surveys vary.

Since 2016, there has been more emphasis on women’s paid care roles in addition to their unpaid care work. For example UN Women have built on the original *‘Toolkit on recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care,’* which was a product of the UNHLP on WEE, to publish *‘A toolkit on paid and unpaid care work: From 3Rs to 5Rs’* in 2022 (UN Women 2022a). The additional two ‘R’s are to reward and represent paid care work by promoting decent work for care workers and guaranteeing their representation, social dialogue, and collective bargaining (UN Women 2022a).

Various studies have estimated the benefits of childcare provision to the private sector, to governments and to individual women. 21 out of 22 studies from lower- and middle-income countries found that an increase in access to childcare improved mothers’ labour force participation or earnings (World Bank 2022a). Similarly, a study that collected data from mobile phone surveys in India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa found that for every USD1 invested in quality childcare, USD3 in generated income for women is anticipated in Nigeria and USD7 return in income in South Africa. However, these figures somewhat decrease if the national employment rate is accounted for (CGD 2022). In rural settings, childcare provision has also proven to improve women’s economic outcomes and child development outcomes, including in the context of a social protection programme in Burkina Faso (Ajayi et al. 2022) and among female farmers in the DRC (Donald et al. 2018). The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has also carried out studies into the business case for employer-supported childcare (see IFC 2017). There are relatively few studies on other aspects of unpaid care work such as care for the elderly or domestic work (fetching water, cooking, cleaning etc.).

Table 4: Current status of the UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations for Driver 3

UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations (Driver 3)	Current Status
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<p>1. Recognise, redistribute and reduce care work.</p>	<p>Women are still spending many hours each day on care work, and much more time than men. Over 50 countries have seen their WBL 'Parenthood' score increase since 2016 (World Bank 2023)²</p>
<p>2. Ensure decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers.</p>	<p>This is not being monitored but many migrant care workers still do not have access to decent work.</p>
<p>3. Foster social norm change to redistribute care from women to men and ensure that care is their equal right and responsibility.</p>	<p>There has been little change in the distribution of unpaid care work between men and women.</p>

The effects of new global challenges

A clear worldwide impact of **COVID-19** has been the increase in women's unpaid care work as a result of school closures and reduced care supply (both formal care services and family) (Duragova 2020). While care needs for the elderly have increased, the employment of women in care centres has declined as facilities have had to close or reduce service provision. This has resulted in women enduring a disproportionate share of increased care at home (UNECE 2020). UN Women's Rapid Gender Assessment surveys using data from 38 countries have also confirmed that women have done the vast majority of unpaid care work (UN Women 2020). Similarly, CGD (2021a) estimate that on average, in low- and middle-income countries, working age (15-64) women worked 217 additional unpaid hours compared to 70 for men, from January to October 2020 during periods that schools were closed. Girls' unpaid workloads have also increased, with parents receiving more help from daughters than sons (UN Women 2020). More women than men have been leaving the workforce and are unable to rejoin due to their increased unpaid care workloads (Alfonsi et al. 2021, UN Women 2020). Studies from South Africa and India show that even after the re-opening of schools and childcare services, women were still performing a high number of hours on childcare whereas time spent by men had reduced (Mosomi et al. 2020 and Deshpande 2020b, both in Elsayed and Bandiera 2021).

Conflict situations can exacerbate the unequal distribution of unpaid work and care. The absence of men during times of conflict, along with care of people with injuries and disabilities, can increase the time women spend on household work (Queck 2019). This is exacerbated by limited access to basic infrastructure services. In Iraq, women spend on average six times as many hours as men on unpaid work and care, and in West Bank and Gaza, the ratio is four to one (Queck 2019). Women often bear a disproportionate burden of care responsibilities for young and elderly family members. Fragile and conflict affected countries often have high unpaid care work burdens due to high rates of fertility, averaging around four children per woman, but that number is declining (Queck 2019). Refugee women may experience additional burdens from being displaced (e.g. having inadequate supplies for

² The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law indicator on 'Parenthood' score is based on whether paid leave of at least 14 weeks is available to mothers, whether the government administers 100% of maternity leave benefits, whether there is paid leave available to fathers, whether there is paid parental leave, and whether dismissal of pregnant workers is prohibited.

cleaning results in these chores taking more time) and inaccessible childcare options (Gettliffe and Khan 2020).

Crises often increase various forms of violence and harassment, with some populations being particularly at risk of increased violence, such as women and girls with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, and adolescent girls, amongst others. In addition to immediate harm, violence can lead to trauma and long-lasting mental health problems, severe physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies, all of which may limit a survivor's ability to work or attend school. Given the stigma of sexual violence, survivors may be discriminated against in the workplace and may be denied access to resources that are crucial for their livelihoods (ILO 2022b).

In Ukraine, prior to the escalation of the 2022 conflict, women were spending 24.6 hours per week on unpaid care work compared to men's 14.5 hours (FAO 2022). Since the escalation, a rapid gender analysis found that respondents consistently noted that the amount of unpaid work for men and women has increased as public services such as social services, medical, education and childcare facilities are disrupted by the war (UN Women and CARE 2022). Women in particular bear more responsibility than men for the care of children and dependent family members due to forced family separation. Some interviews found that men's responsibility for care work has also shifted due to loss of paid work, which in some cases has meant they take up more unpaid care work (UN Women and CARE 2022). Paid work has also been impacted, with 28% of female interviewees and 33% of male interviewees reporting that their income has been one of the areas most impacted by the war (UN Women and CARE 2022).

Climate change impacts and shocks such as water scarcity, forest depletion or rising temperatures can increase women's care and domestic workloads and pull girls out of school to help with these tasks (AfDB 2018; Björkman-Nyqvist 2013; Chigwanda 2016; ILO 2017a). Women and adolescent girls, particularly from rural areas and in Indigenous communities, are likely to take more time sourcing water and firewood as these resources become more scarce under climate variability (ILO 2017b; Berhman et al 2014; Goh 2012). A 2020 case study analysis of female farmers in Pakistan found that water shortages were increasing women's time spent on water collection, with severe negative impacts on women's health and well-being (Nerine Butt et al. 2020). A study that uses household level data from 641 households in 12 villages in Bihar, India, found that women have poor access to agriculture extension and training programmes, resulting in fewer coping skills in the event of a climate shock- a situation that exists in many other countries (Mehtar et al. 2016).

No evidence was found on the impact of the rise of **authoritarianism and nationalist politics** on unpaid care work, although as noted under driver 1, many nationalist parties emphasise the importance of traditional gender roles (Fangen and Skjelsbaek 2021). Austerity policies often leave women to make up the shortfall in public spending through their unpaid care work (GADN 2018).

Driver 4: Building assets – digital, financial and property



In general, data on women's control over assets is scarce, especially on women's and men's ownership, control or management of land (UN Women 2019). There are still wide gender asset gaps, although there has been some progress in terms of digital and financial assets.

Table 5: Comparison of statistics from UNHLP report in 2016 to latest statistics

Statistics from UN HLP report in 2016	Updated statistics in 2022
Worldwide, some 2.3 billion women do not have any Internet access (UN Women 2016).	Globally, in 2020, 62% of all men were using the Internet, compared with 57% of all women (ITU 2021).
More than 1.7 billion women do not own a mobile phone (UN Women 2016).	More than 372 million women in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) still do not own a mobile phone, compared to 239 million men (GSMA 2022).
57% of women globally have a financial account, against 64% of men (UN Women 2016).	In 2021, globally, 74% of women and 78% of men had a financial account (Demirgüç-Kunt et al. 2022).

Women have less access to productive and financial resources than men. The OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database includes indicators related to laws and practices surrounding land, non-land and financial assets, as well as women’s workplace rights. In 2019, the global level of gender discrimination in access to productive and financial resources was 27%, with regional disparities highly correlated with disparities in women’s participation in the formal economy (OECD 2019b). Europe stands out as the best performer with a gap of 13%, while other regions lag behind: the Americas at 22%, Asia at 34% and Africa at 39%. Table 6 provides OECD 2019 data on women’s access to productive and financial resources (not including women’s workplace rights):

Table 6: Data on building assets

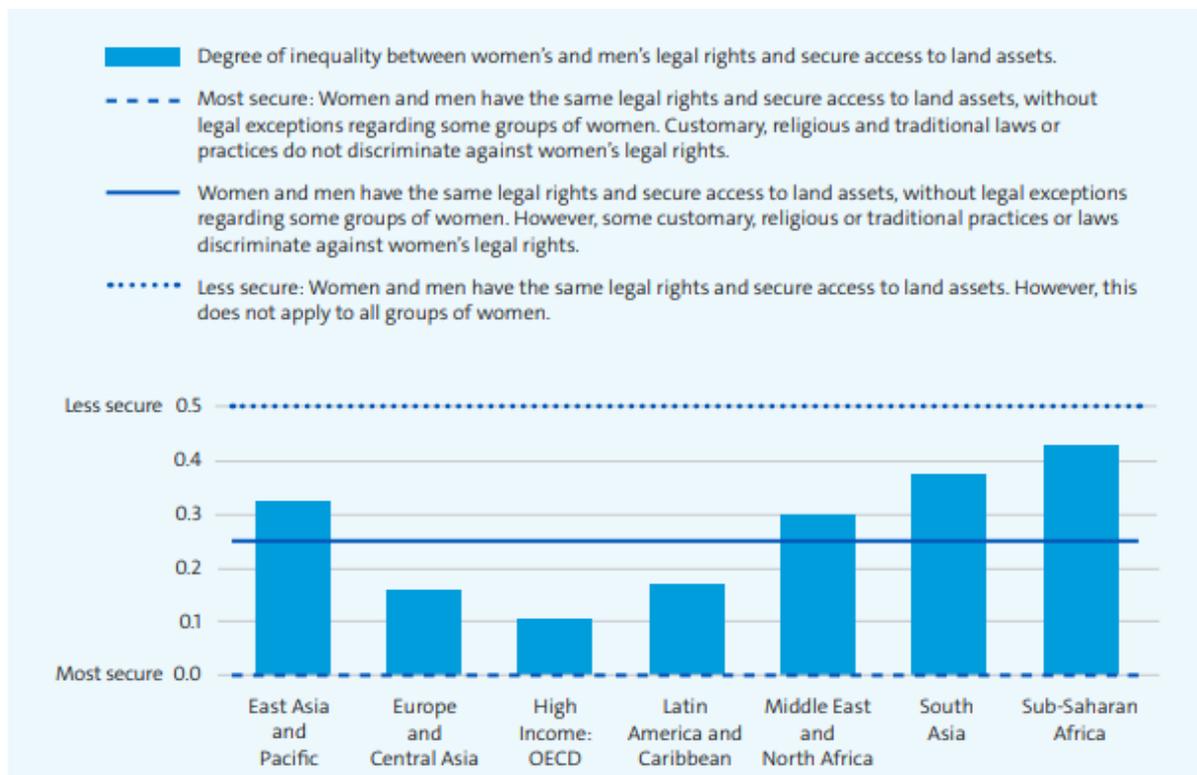
Secure access to land assets		Secure access to non-land assets		Secure access to formal financial services	
Law	Practice	Law	Practice	Law	Practice
In 127 out of 180 countries women do not have the same legal rights and secure access to land assets as men	On average, across the 93 countries where data is available, women make up only 18% of agricultural holders (with control over decision making)	In 105 out of 180 countries women and men do not have the same legal rights and secure access to non-land assets	On average, across the 50 countries where data is available, women only make up 9.5% of house owners (not including where women are joint owners)	In 94 out of 180 countries women and men do not have the same rights to open a bank account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution.	On average, across 152 countries, women make up 45% of the adults aged 15 years or above who have an account at a financial institution (including joint account holders)

Source: OECD (2019b)

Note: The conceptual framework for the 2019 Gender, Institutions and Development Database was entirely revised, which makes comparisons with the previous edition (2014) difficult.

There are some strong regional differences in gendered differences in access to land. Figure 5 shows that sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are two of the regions with the highest inequality between women’s and men’s legal rights and secure access to land assets. In sub-Saharan Africa for example 30% of women own land compared to 70% of men, indicating a particularly stark difference (CGD 2021b). In contrast, Europe and Central Asia, OECD High Income countries and Latin America and Caribbean are regions with more secure legal rights and secure access to land.

Figure 5: Level of insecurity of women's access to land assets, 2019



Source: UN and UN Women (2020) using a chart created by UN Women using data from OECD's Gender, Institutions and Development Database.

Since 2017 there has been slow progress in mobile ownership rate for women in LMICs. In 2021, 59 million additional women in LMICs started using mobile internet, a significant drop from 2020 when nearly twice as many started (GSMA 2022). Women remain 7% less likely than men to own a mobile phone and are 16% less likely to use mobile internet (GSMA 2022) (see Figure 6 and 7). Gendered disparities in digital device start during childhood. In a Young Lives longitudinal study of 11,784 children in Peru, Vietnam, Ethiopia and India, boys are generally more likely to have access to digital devices, especially in India (see Table 7 below) (Cueto et al. 2018).

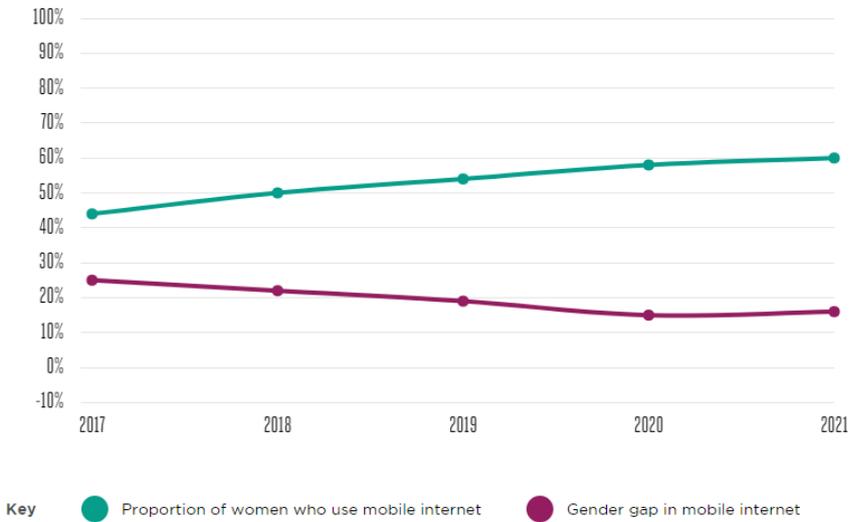
Table 7: Marginal effects on computer and internet usage for boys many times in life

	ETHIOPIA		INDIA		PERU		VIETNAM	
	Use computer	Use internet						

Variable: Sex = Male	Younger Cohort	-3.0**	1.3	3.1*	6.4***	0.5	1.5	-0.1	-0.7
	Older Cohort	0.4	8.9***	8.1***	18.6***	2.2	1.4	5.6*	-1.3

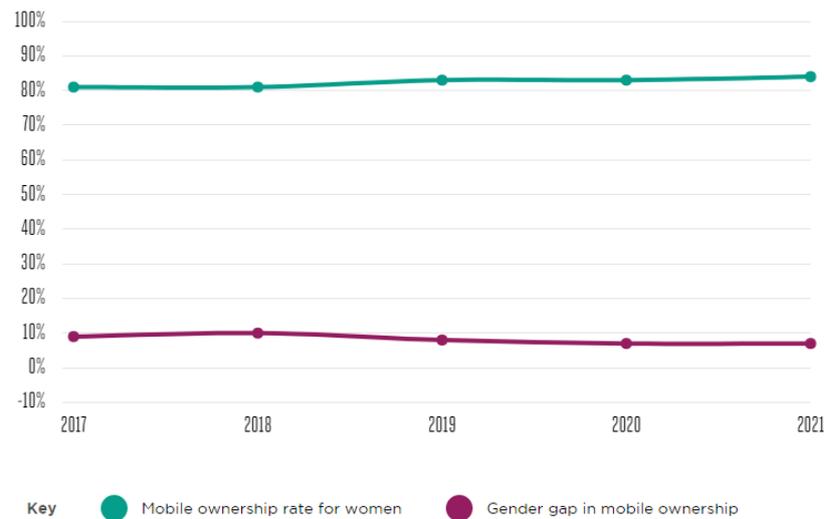
Note: marginal effects are shown as percentages. ***p<0.001, ** p<0.01, *p<0.05. Younger cohort is 15 years old and older cohort is 22 years old at the time of data collection.

Figure 6: The evolution in women's mobile internet usage in LMICs



Source: GSMA (2022)

Figure 7: The evolution of the mobile ownership gender gap in LMICs



Source: GSMA (2022)

Digital gaps are wider for women with disabilities. Research in Kenya, found 21% of women with disabilities own a smartphone, compared to 32% of men with disabilities (Aranda Jan 2019).

Smartphone ownership can be particularly useful for people with disabilities because smartphones have additional accessibility features such as digital text magnifiers and voice command (Aranda Jan 2019).

The gender gap in bank account ownership has been shrinking, albeit slowly, and there are large regional differences. According to the 2021 Global Findex Database, 76% of adults around the world had an account at a bank or financial institution, with account ownership increasing by 50% from 2011 to 2021 (Demirgüç-Kunt et al. 2022). However, the gender gap in account ownership in developing economies has made slower progress, falling to 9% from 6% in that time period. There are also significant regional differences in the gender gap for financial account services: in sub-Saharan Africa it is 12%, it is 13% in the Middle East and North Africa but only 3% in East Asia and Pacific (Demirgüç-Kunt et al. 2022).

Since 2016, there has been a shift towards global lending which promotes women’s access to investment funds and other finance. For example, the 2X Challenge was founded in 2018 by the Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) of the G7 nations with the aim to shift more capital towards investments that enhance women’s economic participation in developing countries. The global gender finance initiative surpassed its original fundraising goal of USD 3 billion of DFI capital by over 100% (\$6.88 billion invested between 2018 and 2020) and has set a new target of USD 15 billion by the end of 2022. British International Investment, the UK’s DFI, will target at least 25% of all new investments as having a ‘2X Challenge’ gender lens over its new strategy period (2022-26).

Innovative interventions—including financial products for women who lack collateral and gender bias trainings for loan officers—are being piloted, and when effective, scaled up to help close gender gaps in access to financing. For example, in Ethiopia, a recent study showed that using psychometric credit scoring (which generates credit scores based on personality and behaviour rather than credit history) as a substitute for collateral during the due diligence process helped to increase women entrepreneurs’ access to larger individual-liability loans and boost their firm survival during the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict, indicating the promise of innovative technologies to extend finance to underserved markets (Alibhai et al. 2022). In Turkey, an experiment conducted with 77 loan officers in Turkish banks found that 35 percent of the loan officers were biased against female applicants, with women receiving loan amounts \$14,000 lower on average compared with men—suggesting that gender bias training may help less-experienced loan officers to better discern loan application quality, thereby improving financing of business loans to women (Alibhai et al. 2019). Interventions that offer women greater privacy regarding their earning can also be effective to increase women’s savings and earnings. In Côte d’Ivoire, a study tested a financial innovation among female workers in cashew-processing plants: a direct-deposit commitment savings account designed to make it easier for workers to convert productivity increases into long-term savings, which cannot be accessed by others. The savings accounts increased labour productivity and earnings by 11 percent for workers who were offered the accounts (Carranza et al. 2022).

Table 8: Current status of the UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations for Driver 4

UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations (Driver 4)	Current Status
1. Ensure women’s equal access to and control over productive resources, including land, labour and capital.	There are wide gender gaps in women’s access to assets. For example, on average, across the 93 countries where data is available, women make up only 18% of agricultural holders (with control over decision making) (OECD 2019b).

<p>2. Encourage stakeholders of a country to assess how women are progressing along the digital inclusion continuum.</p>	<p><i>It was unclear in the UNHLP report which digital inclusion continuum this is referring to. This is not being monitored.</i></p>
<p>3. Enable women's voice to shape digital, financial and property products, services and policies.</p>	<p><i>This is not being monitored.</i></p>

The effects of new global challenges

There is some evidence that **COVID-19** has accelerated the use of digital assets, but evidence is lacking on how this has affected women in particular. The pandemic spurred unprecedented progress in opening social protection digital accounts and sped up investments in digital infrastructure and tools (Sirtaine et al. 2022). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in developing economies, more than a third of adults who paid utility bills from an account did so for the first time, although this is not disaggregated by sex (Demirgüç-Kunt et al. 2022). Data from IMF's Financial Access Survey finds that the number of borrowers declined for men and women during the pandemic while deposit related indicators remained steady (Shirono et al. 2021).³

Violent **conflict** and displacement can limit women's access and ownership of land (Queck 2019). Where women's land rights depend on men, their ability to secure and enforce land ownership may be threatened if they are separated from their husband or male relatives (Queck 2019). Women are less likely than men to possess documentary evidence of their land tenure and if they return after displacement and register a dispute about their land, women are more likely to experience violence (NRC 2021). Displacement also limits women's access to financial services. Forcibly displaced populations face many additional barriers to access formal financial services, such as documentation and language challenges and discrimination (IRC et al. 2021).

Mobile banking is a potential route to deliver financial services amid infrastructure and mobility constraints in fragile and conflict affected countries. In Cameroon and the Republic of Congo there was an almost 70% increase in the share of adults with a mobile money account from 2014 to 2021 but this data is not disaggregated by sex (Demirgüç-Kunt et al. 2022).

Climate shocks can have devastating impacts on land and property assets. However, no evidence was found on how climate shocks have impacted women's access to assets in recent years.

No evidence was found on how the rise of **authoritarianism and nationalist politics** has affected women's assets.



³ The findings of this study are preliminary due to the limited sample size and the need to control for omitted variables.

Driver 5: Changing business culture and practice



There is no systematic tracking system of private sector culture and practice which makes it difficult to grasp status and trends, although signatories to the Women's Empowerment Principles is on the rise. The global #MeToo movement has led to major changes in the culture around sexual harassment in the workplace in many organisations.

The #MeToo movement has resulted in strengthened employee protections and measures to promote women's progression into management roles. The global #MeToo movement that started in late 2017 after the arrest of Harvey Weinstein, who was found guilty of rape, sexual assault and abuse against women working in the film industry. Since then, workers have protested against a lack of protection against sexual harassment in the workplace, and companies where there have been allegations of sexual assault have seen their stock value plummet (Norton 2022). As a result, companies in the United States have moved to strengthen employee protections, updated their policies related to sexual misconduct and taken steps to increase female leadership (Norton 2022). The #MeToo movement has also had an impact on sexual harassment in the workplace in low- and middle-income countries such as Colombia, Kenya, India and the Philippines (Devex 2018).

However, sexual harassment in the workplace is still widespread and is a major barrier to women's economic empowerment. In particular, online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls is evolving and expanding, including sexual harassment, stalking and 'zoom bombing'.⁴ Innovations, including virtual reality and the metaverse, are creating new digital spaces for misogyny and sexual violence. Women from ethnic minority, Indigenous women, LGBTQI+ women and women with disabilities are at even greater risk of violence (Bahous 2022).

A proxy to a global quantitative measurement or database on changing business culture and practice are the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). Launched by the UN Global Compact and UN Women in 2010, the WEPs offer guidance to business on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. By June 2015, 1,000 businesses worldwide had signed up to the WEPs (UN Women 2015a). At the time of writing, 7,017 businesses had signed up (WEPs 2022). The countries with the most WEP signatories are Brazil, Turkey, China and India (WEPs 2022). There are also currently over 200 large organisations in 50 countries across five continents which are Economic Dividends for Gender Equality certified (EDGE 2022).

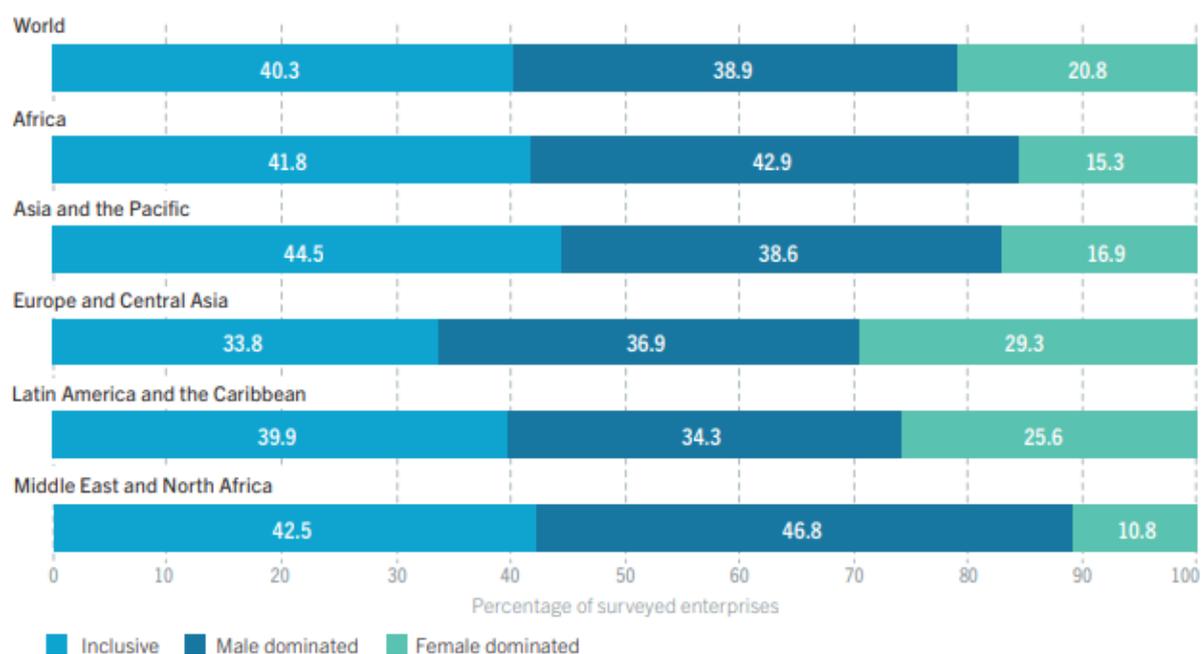
A global ILO survey finds that most businesses are not gender inclusive. ILO (2019) reports on findings from a survey of 12,940 businesses (60% male respondents, 40% female respondents) across 70 countries worldwide. On average 40% of respondents in the survey indicate that their enterprise culture is gender-inclusive, 39% state that it is male dominated and 21% say it is female dominated (see Figure 8).⁵ Over 90% and 87% of respondents who indicated their company culture is male dominated stated the Chief Executive Officer and the Board Chairperson is a man respectively. Under a Business-as-usual Scenario, it will take until 2030 to reach 30% women on boards and until 2045 to reach gender parity (WEF 2021b). At least 30% representation of women at board and executive-

⁴ "Zoom bombing" describes the practice of disrupting or infiltrating a video conference call and showing racially charged or sexually explicit material to the unexpected participants.

⁵ ILO considers a workplace as gender-inclusive when both men and women can generate meaningful change through ideas, decision-making and performance.

committee level globally is an important goal, and is the crux of [The 30% Club](#) launched in the UK in 2010.

Figure 8: Assessment of gender diversity in organisational culture, by world and region



Source: ILO enterprise survey (2018) in ILO (2019)

Table 9: Current status of the UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations for Driver 5

UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations (Driver 5)	Current Status
1. Conduct an internal self-audit (on pay, employment, leadership, Corporate Social Responsibility and supplier engagement).	<i>Recommendation aimed at private sector and not being monitored.</i>
2. Incentivise frontline management to set and meet targets for gender inclusion.	<i>Recommendation aimed at private sector and not being monitored.</i>
3. Set procurement targets for sourcing from women-owned enterprises (see Driver 6 below)	<i>Recommendation aimed at private sector and not being monitored.</i>
4. Map value chains to ensure ethical sourcing and workers' rights.	<i>Recommendation aimed at private sector and not being monitored.</i>

The effects of new global challenges

There is little data available on how **COVID-19** has affected business culture and practice. However, the 2021 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report found that ILO data suggested 5% of all employed women lost their jobs, compared with 3.9% of employed men (WEF 2021a). There was also a marked decline of women hired into leadership roles, reversing progress across multiple industries (WEF 2021a). The “double-shift” of paid and unpaid work faced by women with children contributed

to increased stress, anxiety around job insecurity and difficulty in maintaining work-life balance (WEF 2021a).

UN Women and IFC developed a survey that was disseminated globally via social media, newsletters and targeted outreach, to understand what businesses have done to support women in the workplace during COVID-19 (UN Women and IFC 2020). They found examples of businesses implementing policies and interventions across six thematic pillars: promoting well-being and health; providing flexibility and family-friendly policies; enabling equal access and use of digital technologies and platforms; ensuring equal access to financial and non-financial services; strengthening inclusive supply chains and support for women-led businesses; and addressing, preventing and mitigating gender-based violence (UN Women and IFC 2020).

In addition to affecting women's unpaid work, **conflict** can also affect women's paid work. In Ukraine, income has been severely impacted by the 2022 war, with many people losing their jobs due to displacement, business closures, damage/destruction of infrastructure and logistics, physical inaccessibility of place of employment, shelling and other physical security threats (UN Women and CARE 2022). To mitigate this, some employers implement flexible working arrangements and payment strategies such as unpaid leave, part-time work, salary reductions and teleworking (UN Women and CARE 2022). Women and men whose work can be conducted remotely, such as those working in the male-dominated IT sector, have been less impacted by the war (UN Women and CARE 2022).

In terms of **climate**, we did not find any evidence on how particular climate shocks have affected business culture and practice. However, the context of the global climate crisis and a closing window for action is leading to shifts in business culture and practice, including an increasing focus on Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) risk management and commitments to reach 'net-zero'. Over 10,000 companies of all sizes have joined the 'We Mean Business' coalition, and between 2015 and 2020, companies with approved science-based net-zero targets reduced combined scope 1 and 2 emissions by 29% on average (We Mean Business Coalition 2023).⁶ The transition to net-zero will have gender differentiated impacts on an already unequal workforce, with women more likely to lose their jobs as they are overrepresented in jobs perceived as unskilled and 'low value', and less likely than men to access skills and training for new 'green jobs' (WOW Programme 2021). The FCDO-funded WOW Programme is currently working with businesses which are proactively trying to promote women's economic empowerment in their supply chains whilst transitioning to net-zero.

We did not find any evidence for how **authoritarian and nationalist politics** are affecting business culture and practice.

⁶ 'Net-zero' is achieved when greenhouse gas emissions resulting from a company's activities are reduced to as close to zero emissions as possible, with any remaining emissions 'offset' by removals of emissions. Scope 1 and 2 emissions are owned or controlled by a company, whereas scope 3 emissions are a consequence of the activities of a company but occur from sources not owned or controlled by it.

Driver 6: Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement



There are no systematic international tracking systems for public sector practices in employment and procurement. However, there is some data to understand the current status and trends for both. Gender-sensitive procurement in the public sector seems to have been gaining momentum, both by national governments and at international organisations. There are many recent guidance materials on gender-sensitive

Prior to 2019 there were few examples of Gender-Sensitive Procurement (GSP) in the public sector.

A rapid K4D survey of 40 multilateral, bilateral and non-profit organisations in international development, humanitarian aid or similar sectors found that only a few international public sector organisations were implementing GSP practices (Combaz 2018). The organisations that had piloted or fully applied GSP had overwhelmingly chosen a model that seeks mainly to increase sourcing from women-owned or women-controlled businesses (Combaz 2018).

In 2019 the UN established the Task Force on GSP which resulted in increased gender-sensitively in procurement practices.

In 2020-21 the Task Force, chaired by UN Women, collected baseline data from members of the Procurement Network on their GSP practices. Although many of the organisations do not appear in both surveys, the K4D rapid survey and Task Force's surveys are generally comparable to understand how gender-sensitive procurement practices in international public sector organisations have changed. Figure 9 below shows that for the organisations where there is data in both 2018 and 2021, there has been a general trend towards improved and mainstreamed GSP practices. Notably, the World Bank Group set a goal in 2018 to more than double its share (to 7%) of corporate procurement spent on women-owned businesses as Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers by 2023. Through process changes, outreach, capacity building and technology leverage, the share by end of FY20 was 4.5%, an increase from FY18 (3.7%) and the FY17 baseline (3.1%) (World Bank 2021a).

Figure 9: A comparison of GSP practices in international organisations from 2018 to 2021

2018 (Source: Combaz 2018)			2021 (Source: Gender-Responsive Procurement Task Force)	
Organisation	GSP?	Specifics	GSP?	Specifics
ILO	Yes	In ad-hoc ILO project procurement operations through women's participation in workforce for a set contract	Yes	Commitment to non-discrimination and gender equality policy in all ILO procurement activities through sustainable procurement. This is reflected in the Procurement Manual, general terms and conditions of contracts. The Gender-Responsive Procurement (GRP) approach and related tools are implemented in specific ILO development cooperation programmes/projects, including through procurement.
UN Women	Yes	Full implementation across UN Women, focus on women-owned businesses, though some attention to other models (e.g. suppliers' gender balance in workforce or gender equality policies)	Yes	GRP provisions are included in the procurement process, documents and tools. Organisation sets targets for GRP and measures progress against defined indicators.
UNDP	Yes	Piloting in Somalia and Gambia, gender criteria at regional hub in Panama; focus on women-owned businesses but attention to more diverse aspects too (e.g. suppliers' gender balance and gender equality policies); & UNDP-wide, rating for women empowerment policy in Requests for Proposals and Pass/Fail in Invitations to Bid	Yes	Mainstreaming gender through sustainable procurement. Works at project level to contribute to GRP, including through procurement.
UNIDO	Yes	Launching initial, limited, non-mandatory steps, focus on suppliers' gender balance and equality policies	Yes	Procurement Manual endorses GRP as a solution for gender equality. GRP aspects are included in general terms and conditions of contracts. Gender is mainstreamed in projects, including through procurement.
UNOPS	Yes	Initial, non-mandatory implementation, focus on women-owned businesses	Yes	GRP is embedded in the Sustainable Procurement Framework, which is part of its Procurement Manual, and includes gender considerations for procurement processes. There is a supplier diversity programme in place – UN Office for Project Services Possibilities.
World Bank	Yes	Starting up, focus on women-owned businesses	Yes	Corporate target on GRP spend and GRP provisions in processes and documents.

Dominican Republic and Kenya are cited as good practice examples of GSP data available for public sector organisations at the national level. For example, a new public procurement strategy in the Dominican Republic led to an increase of 16 percentage points in contracts awarded to smaller businesses owned and led by women from 2012 to 2019 (UN Women and Open Contracting Partnership 2021). A regulation in Kenya reserving 30% of government procurement for women-owned enterprises led to increased tenders awarded to women: 7.4 billion KSh (approximately US\$ 66.9 million) in 2015/16 to 15.5 billion KSh (approximately US\$ 140.2 million) in 2018/19 (UN Women and Open Contracting Partnership 2021).

The Worldwide Bureaucracy Indicators show that women have entered the paid public sector workforce in increasing numbers globally. Data is scarce, but as of 2021, the female share of employment in the public sector globally was 46% (World Bank 2021b). Evidence is lacking on changing public sector practices in employment.

Table 10: Current status of the UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations for Driver 6

UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations (Driver 6)	Current Status
1. Promote gender equality in public sector employment by establishing gender targets or quotas for hiring and measuring progress.	Women now make up 45% of the public sector workforce globally (World Bank 2021b).
2. Promote women-owned enterprises and women's collectives by considering establishing and tracking government-wide targets for women's participation in procurements.	Women's participation in government procurement is increasing, with several national governments using targets.
3. Provide support for informal and agricultural workers by reforming procurement laws and regulations to allow collective enterprises to bid on public procurements.	<i>Unclear – this is not being monitored.</i>

The effects of new global challenges

There is a lack of data on how new global challenges have affected gender-sensitive procurement and employment practices in the public sector. COVID-19 has led to governments shifting to emergency buying, rather than taking a strategic procurement approach. Emergency buying is likely to lead to governments paying less attention to the perceived 'nice-to-haves', such as gender equality and social inclusion in the procurement process (Boyd et al. 2020). Empirical data on whether this has happened in practice is lacking. There is also an evidence gap on how public sector practices have been affected by conflict, climate shocks and the rise of authoritarian and nationalist regimes.

Driver 7: Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation



There is no quantitative data available to show the trends in women's visibility, collective voice and representation. However, there is evidence that women's membership in trade unions and cooperatives is increasing. The ILO has recently emphasised the importance of the social and solidarity economy.

There is some progress in the ratification of relevant ILO conventions and there have been around 100 submissions on the reform of legal frameworks to protect informal workers (see Table 11). The UNHLP top priority recommendations under this driver were more specific and measurable than the other drivers, so the status has been easier to determine.

Table 11: Current status of the UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations for Driver 7

UNHLP Top Priority Recommendations (Driver 7)	Current Status
<p>1. Ratify and implement ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).</p>	<p>ILO C.87: Since 2016, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Sudan and the Republic of Korea have ratified the convention, bringing the total to 153 ratifications. The 30 countries which haven't yet ratified are predominantly based in the Middle East and North Africa region and the East Asia and Pacific region as well as New Zealand and the USA.</p> <p>ILO C.98: Since 2016, Canada, Mexico, Vietnam, and the Republic of Korea have ratified the convention, bringing the total to 168 ratifications. The 19 countries which haven't yet ratified are based in the Middle East and North Africa region and the East Asia and Pacific region as well as the United States.</p>
<p>2. Reform legal frameworks to protect informal workers and promote the formalisation of their work in line with ILO Recommendation No. 204.</p>	<p>Since Recommendation No. 204 was made in 2015, around 100 countries have made submissions regarding this recommendation.</p>

Source: NORMLEX (2022)

There has been a strengthening in the campaign for the rights of women informal workers in recent years. This has been most notably by Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) and Self Employed Woman's Association (SEWA). WIEGO is a global network dedicated to improving the conditions of women informal workers, striving for equal opportunities, rights, protection and voice. With a similar mandate, SEWA is a woman's trade union that started in India, working towards economic and decision-making self-reliance and work that provides economic and social security. WIEGO and SEWA are both receipts of the Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) Fund, a programme funded by FCDO.

ILO has set up the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), a grouping of a wide range of entities to serve the collective and/or general interest, based on principles such as voluntary cooperation. The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, chaired by ILO, was formed to recognise the importance of SSE, which is made up of enterprises, organisations and other entities

that are engaged in economic, social, and environmental activities. It includes, for example, self-help groups, microfinance groups and collectives of informal workers. In its 110th Session, 2022, the ILO (2022c) adopted a resolution concerning decent work and the SSE, which includes a commitment to develop a strategy and action plan on the topic by November 2022 (ILO 2022a).

The knowledge base surrounding SSE practices, dynamics and contributions, as well as SSE–SDG linkages, have been increasingly well documented. This is via the work of civil society organisations, researchers, government agencies and SSE practitioners. While research on the gender equality performance of SSE organisations and enterprises compared to profit-oriented enterprises is scarce, limited evidence from developed countries points to SSE organisations having increased female participation, including in leadership positions, compared to the private sector (UNTFSSSE 2022).

Women’s participation in cooperatives is significant in several sectors and has been increasing (UNTFSSSE 2022). In agriculture, where women have often been under-represented, cooperative numbers are growing, particularly in regions of Africa and Asia where more autonomous cooperatives have emerged during economic and political liberalisation (UNTFSSSE 2022). In India and Nepal, there has been an increase in women who are group farming through pooling of resources (Sugden et al. 2020). Globally, women’s participation is particularly high in savings and credit cooperatives as well as retail cooperatives (Esim 2021).

Women’s membership of trade unions has increased over the last ten years (ILO and ITUC 2020). In November 2019, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) numbered over 200 million members in 332 affiliated organisations in 163 countries and territories across the world, of whom more than 80 million were women, or 42% of members (ILO and ITUC 2020). Higher female unionisation rates are found in the public sector, where more women tend to be employed (ILO and ITUC 2020). In terms of women’s leadership of trade unions, the average representation of women in the highest decision-making bodies amongst ITUC affiliates is 28% (ILO and ITUC 2020). Women trade unionists are helping drive trade union action to dismantle traditional and persistent structural barriers at the intersections of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and class and have been advocating on issues such as gender-based violence and harassment prevention, and a just transition for climate justice and industrial transformation (ILO and ITUC 2020).

The effects of new global challenges

In the absence of government policies, cooperatives have played a key role in the **COVID-19** response for informal workers. For example in India, SEWA distributed COVID-19 care packages including health and ration kits (World Cooperative Monitor 2021).

Conflict can be both a driver of women’s movements and a barrier. In Myanmar, a diverse landscape of women-led organisations has grown even more so in response to the military’s coup d’état in February 2021 (Saferworld 2022). However, in Yemen, feminists are often told ‘*now is not the time for women’s rights*’ due to the conflict situation (Yemeni Feminist Movement 2020). Cooperatives, including women’s cooperatives, also have the potential of lessening the devastating impacts of conflict and creating conditions for sustainable post-conflict recovery (ILO 2010). Volunteering and community organising has been a positive coping strategy for both men and women during the Ukraine conflict (UN Women and CARE 2022).

Women’s movements can organise a backlash against oppressive **nationalist politics**. In Brazil, the Black women’s movement has employed strategies of grassroots organising, institutional politics, counter narratives to resist nationalist resurgences (Oxfam 2021). The ‘Women United Against Bolsonaro’ movement, started through a Facebook group, organised reportedly the largest women-led march in Brazil’s history (Carranca 2018). In Iran, in September 2022, the death of 22-year-old

Mahsa Amin in the custody of ‘morality’ police after an alleged violation of the strict legal dress code was a catalyst for a sustained feminist uprising against the Iranian government. As of February 2023, it is estimated that over 500 people have been killed in the demonstrations and almost 20,000 have been arrested (Issawi and Banisnath 2023).

Similarly, as one of the worst affected groups from **climate change**, women are organising environmental movements. Indigenous women’s groups in particular have been on the frontline of organising and campaigning on environmental issues (Ramdas and Garcia 2021). Whilst women often lack a voice in international decision-making processes, women, particularly young women (e.g. Greta Thunberg, Vanessa Nakate) are prominent among the leading global campaigners against climate change and ensuring effective environmental protection, including in developing countries (OECD 2021).

3. Global initiatives to promote women’s economic empowerment

This section presents ten of the larger global initiatives which have addressed multiple drivers of women’s economic empowerment over the past years.

Many global initiatives are too nascent to understand their impact on UNHLP drivers, and there is a lack of independent evaluations of these types of initiatives. As Table 12 below shows, the drivers with the most global initiatives are Driver 5: Business Culture and Practice, and Driver 3: Unpaid Care and Work.

Table 12: Global initiatives working across the seven drivers

	Activities	Social norms	Legal reform	Unpaid care	Building assets	Business culture & practice	Public procurement & employment	Visibility, voice, representation
2X Challenge	Working with the financial sector to bring a gender lens to investments					X	X	
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	An international convention to eliminate sex- and gender-based discrimination	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Commission on the Status of Women	The principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

G7 GEAC	High-level policy recommendations and commitments by G7 countries			X	X			
Global Alliance for Care	International and national policy commitments on care work from the public sector, civil society, philanthropy and the private sector	X	X	X		X		
Generation Equality Forum	A well-publicised stakeholder forum, resulting in USD 40 billion of commitments	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
International Labour Organisation	A UN agency aimed at advancing social and economic justice through setting international labour standards		X	X		X	X	X
UN Women	Traditional development programming and research, together with innovative partnerships	X		X		X	X	
We-Fi	A collaborative partnership supporting women entrepreneurs		X		X	X	X	X

2X Challenge

The 2X Challenge was founded in 2018 by the Development Finance Institutions of the G7 nations. The aim is to shift more capital towards investments that enhance women's economic participation in developing countries, and to increase access to entrepreneurship, leadership opportunities, quality jobs and products and services that empower women. The 2X Challenge set out qualifying criteria (see Figure 10 below) for investment which is becoming the gold standard for global gender-lens investing. The global gender finance initiative surpassed its original fundraising goal of USD 3 billion by 100% and has set a new target of USD 15 billion by the end of 2022. The increased target aims to further support women to access quality jobs, build resilient businesses and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

Changed Remits and Mergers

At the Generation Equality Forum in 2021, the 2X Challenge transformed into the 2X Collaborative, and is a global industry body for gender lens investing (GLI) convening the full spectrum of investors, capital providers and mobilisers. At the GenderSmart Investing Summit in 2022, it was announced that GenderSmart and the 2X Collaborative will be merging under a new brand of 2X Global with a launch date set of 1st January 2023.

Figure 10: The 2X Challenge investment criteria

		Threshold
Direct Criteria	1	Entrepreneurship
		1A. Share of women ownership 51%
	<i>OR</i>	1B. Business founded by a woman Y/N
	<i>OR</i>	
2	Leadership	2A. Share of women in senior management 30%
		<i>OR</i>
<i>OR</i>		
3	Employment	3A. Share of women in the workforce 30 - 50%*
		<i>AND</i>
<i>OR</i>		
4	Consumption	4. Product or service specifically or disproportionately benefits women Y/N
<i>AND</i>		
Indirect	5	Investments through Financial Intermediaries (FIs)
		5A. <i>On-Lending facilities</i> : Percent of the Investor/FI loan proceeds or percent of FI’s portfolio supporting businesses that meet direct criteria 30%
<i>OR</i>	5B. <i>Funds</i> : Percent of portfolio companies that meet the direct criteria 30%	

Source: 2X Challenge (2021)

In channelling large amounts of finance from the public and private sector towards ‘gender-smart’ businesses, gender-lens investment promotes Driver 4: Building assets – digital, financial and property, Driver 5: Changing Business Culture and Practice, and Driver 6: Public Procurement and Employment.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979 and came into force on 3 September 1981. CEDAW’s purpose is to eliminate sex- and gender-based discrimination by any person, organisation or enterprise, including discriminatory stereotypes. As of November 2022, there are 197 states parties (OHCHR 2022).

The CEDAW Committee is a geographically diverse and expert UN treaty body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Convention. Through its General Recommendations the CEDAW Committee provides authoritative guidance on state obligations under CEDAW and elaborates and explains legal standards on women’s equality, empowerment and justice (Chinkin and Yoshida 2020).

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. There are annual meetings on a specific topic related to gender equality. At the annual meetings, progress and gaps in the implementation of key global policy documents is discussed, and Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women’s enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to the United Nations Economic and Social Council for follow-up.

The 66th session was held in 2022 and the priority theme was climate change. The ‘review’ theme, one that was discussed as a main theme in a previous year, was progress on women’s economic

empowerment in the changing world of work. Under the review theme, several recommendations were made under the following headings:

- Strengthen normative and legal frameworks
- Integrate gender perspectives into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes
- Expand gender-responsive finance
- Enhance gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex
- Foster a gender-responsive, just transition

G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC)

Founded under the Canadian G7 Presidency in 2018, the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) is an independent group of experts appointed by each G7 country. The GEAC develops recommendations on how the G7 should work together to ensure women are at the heart of its policy making. The GEAC aims to champion the core principles of freedom, opportunity, individual humanity and dignity for women and girls around the world. It is complemented by Women7, a group of civil society organisations that promote gender equality and women's rights within the G7 process.

In March 2021 under the UK's G7 Presidency, the GEAC made the following recommendations (G7 GEAC 2021):

1. Resources to redress the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls.
2. A COVID-19 recovery and response that takes account of the needs of women and girls.
3. At least 12 years of gender-transformative education for all.
4. Strengthened **domestic and international social care infrastructure, and access to affordable quality care, including childcare.**
5. **Equal access to capital and labour markets**, through removing barriers and creating opportunities for jobs and funding for women to thrive in the modern economy, and tailoring policies to support women-owned micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
6. Gender-responsive trade.
7. A gender-responsive approach to climate financing, investment and policies.
8. **Commit to prioritising progress towards gender parity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)** through concrete action.
9. **Action to address the digital gender divide.**
10. An end to the stereotyping and unequal treatment of women in the media.
11. Global action to end violence against women and girls through increased investment in prevention and response; the ratification of relevant conventions, including the Istanbul Convention; and enhanced support for eradicating female genital mutilation.
12. Action to tackle online harassment and abuse of women and girls.
13. Condemnation of sexual violence used as a method of war as an international red line, by developing an International Convention to denounce it.
14. Continued action to drive monitoring of progress on gender equality, and accountability on commitments.

The recommendations promote the UN HLP drivers on unpaid care and work, and building assets. They also address the new global challenges of COVID-19 and increasing climate shocks. Little

evidence was found on how these recommendations have been actioned. However, we found some evidence on the progress of the G7's women's economic empowerment work from previous years.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) work on gender equality

ILO is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social and economic justice through setting international labour standards. Regular ILO Action Plans for Gender Equality (e.g. 2016-17, 2018-21) guide the mainstreaming of gender throughout the ILO's work including on its flagship 'decent work' agenda; technical and development cooperation projects at global, regional and country levels; policy advice, products and research; and country strategies and decent work country programmes.

Since 2016, the ILO has mainstreamed gender in its 'Future of Work' initiative, resulting in the launch of the 'Women at Work Initiative'. The Women at Work Initiative, which aims to address discrimination that undermines access to decent work, low pay and the absence of equal pay, a lack of recognition, unequal distribution and undervaluation of care work, and violence and harassment. In 2019, the Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) was adopted, which has been ratified by 22 countries as of November 2022 (NORMLEX 2022). The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work includes a transformative agenda on gender equality and in 2021 the ILO adopted the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient (ILO Evaluation Office 2021). There has also been an increase of country programme outcomes in which gender equality made a "significant" contribution: from 39% in 2016–17 to 48% in 2018–19 (ILO Evaluation Office 2021).

Global Alliance for Care

The Global Alliance for Care is a global multi-stakeholder initiative launched by the National Institute of Women in Mexico (INMUJERES) and UN-Women at the 2021 Generation Equality Forum. The Alliance is a space for co-creation, cooperation and collaboration, to share practices, articulate dialogues and generate advocacy and inter-institutional action, which accounts for the different roles of its members in implementing the care agenda. The website lists various commitments at the international and national levels. The international commitments are:

- Promote the **generation of data and evidence**, including costing studies and measurements of the economic value of care work; and create communities of practice that foster an active exchange of experiences and best practices in care.
- Promote **regulatory frameworks and legislative reforms** that recognise the rights of care providers and recipients, and that support comprehensive actions and policies in care.
- Launch concrete actions by States, communities and **the private sector, to develop and increase services and investment in social and physical care infrastructure**.
- Expand financial means such as fiscal space, for the progressive implementation of universal and sustainable care systems.
- Promote policies, interventions and transformative actions to **foster positive social norms**, such as awareness campaigns on co-responsibility of care.

- Advocate and promote the care agenda within local, national, regional and international spaces including through multilateral and international cooperation.

There is a clear focus on UN HLP Driver 3: Unpaid Care and Work. In addition, social norms, discriminatory legal reform and changing business culture and practice are also promoted.

As the Global Alliance for Care was only launched a year ago, there are currently no independent evaluations available. No critical views on the Global Alliance for Care within grey literature were found.

Generation Equality

Generation Equality was launched in at the 2021 Generation Equality Forum. Convened by UN Women, Generation Equality aims to ensure that the bold ambitions of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action on women's rights are finally implemented, and that the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved. Generation Equality also aims to expand public support for gender equality, with a particular focus on catalysing the energy, activism and ideas of young people. The Forum launched a 5-year action agenda encapsulated in a Global Acceleration Plan (GAP) for gender equality, which defines the most critical actions necessary to accelerate progress and references principles of feminist leadership, transformative change and intersectionality. The Forum also launched a Global Compact on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action and six Action Coalitions:

- Gender-Based Violence
- **Economic justice and rights**
- Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- Feminist action for climate justice
- **Technology and innovation** for Gender Equality
- **Feminist movements and leadership**

At the Generation Equality Forum, stakeholders made over 1,000 policy, programme and financial commitments. As Generation Equality was only launched a year ago, there are currently no independent evaluations available. Some criticisms were found within grey literature.

Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi)

Hosted by the World Bank Group, the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) is a collaborative partnership among 14 governments including the UK, eight multilateral development banks, and other public and private sector stakeholders. It supports women entrepreneurs through improvements in **access to finance, networking, public procurement, and laws, regulations and policies** (Siegrist 2022). Founding financial contributors have committed \$355 million to date.

We-Fi targets a particular group of women workers (entrepreneurs), rather than a particular driver. In doing so, it promotes Driver 2: Discriminatory Legal Reform, Driver 4: Building Assets, Driver 5: Changing Business Culture and Practice, Driver 6: Public Procurement and Employment, and Driver 7: Collective Voice, Visibility and Representation.

UN Women

Although the UNHLP itself has had little visible activity in recent years, UN Women has been highly active in a variety of women's economic empowerment initiatives, often in partnership with other organisations. For example:

- Adverse gender norms change: UN Women engage in several programming initiatives to challenge adverse gender norms. For example, the high-profile campaign *HeForShe*.
- Unpaid care and work: UN Women have published many resources on unpaid care work, most recently '*A Toolkit on paid and unpaid care work: From 3Rs to 5Rs*'.
- Business culture and practice: UN Women have spearheaded the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), which now have over 7,000 signatories from the private sector.
- Public sector procurement and employment: UN Women chair the Task Force on Gender-Responsive Procurement and have published several key documents on gender-sensitive procurement, together with other organisations.

4. Policy recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed at UK government policy and programme staff and are based on the evidence portrayed in this report. Prioritisation of recommendations should be discussed internally at FCDO and other HMG departments, recognising that some recommendations will be more relevant for some countries than others. It will be important to have ongoing monitoring of how recommendations are being implemented, which will allow others (such as women's rights organisations) to hold actors to account for commitments made. Policies, strategies, action plans and programmes on women's economic empowerment, structured around the UNHLP drivers, should be linked with other pillars of gender equality such as ending gender-based violence, political participation and climate action (OECD 2022).

As mentioned in Section 3, many global initiatives are too nascent to understand their impact on UNHLP drivers, and there is a lack of independent evaluations of these types of initiatives. Therefore there is a lack of evidence of which partnerships are most suitable to scale-up work on women's economic empowerment. However, on the limited evidence there is, some broad recommendations can be made, while recognising that they need to be tailored to individual national and sub-national contexts, which recognise women's diverse circumstances:

- **Ensure strong enforcement and implementation, with systematic tracking and accountability mechanisms** in place to monitor progress and allow adjustments to be made based on evidence. Dashboards have been used effectively by the G7 GEAC, We-Fi and Generation Equality and used to report on progress to date. Fund regular reviews and evaluations to take stock of successes and shortfalls, with corrective measures put in place if required.
- **Build gender data into national statistics, and to strengthen countries' capacities to collect and use sex-disaggregated data** such as through the UK-funded and UN Women-led flagship initiative Making Every Women and Girl Count programme (Women Count). Women Count is a multi-stakeholder global strategy that aims to create a radical shift in how gender statistics are used, produced and promoted to inform policy and advocacy on gender equality. Wherever possible, it is important to also collect disability-, age- and geographical-disaggregated data, in accordance with the Inclusive Data Charter (FCDO 2019). There may also be a need to collect disaggregated data on displaced people. The UK may also consider

collaboration with 2X (and Data2X's Women's Financial Inclusion Data Partnership) and the World Bank data portal to improve data availability and use.

- **Meaningfully involve southern-based women's rights organisations** in the institutional architecture, and responsiveness to their needs and priorities. This should avoid backlash to partnerships with firms and organisations with poor human rights records. It is also important to have organisations that represent women in all their diversity, such as organisations representing women with disabilities, Indigenous women, LGBTQI+ women, displaced women etc.
- **Provide greater capacity development on women's economic empowerment within institutions**, so the responsibility for gender equality outcomes does not lie with gender experts alone. It is important that capacity is not just raised on gender tagging/classification of projects but also on how to achieve gender outcomes and impact. Gender specialists should have adequate resources to perform their roles. High-level corporate requirements are likely to incentivise organisations to prioritise action to address gender gaps (Smith and Jenkins 2022).
- **Ensure that partnerships involve a wider group of stakeholders wherever possible.** Partnerships that involve government, private sector and civil society are more likely to have legitimacy, and are more likely to consider their interests and incentives.
- **Account for various global challenges which threaten progress on women's economic empowerment.** There needs to be a recognition that certain issues which have gained greater prominence in recent years, such as climate change and gender-based violence, are integrated into policy and programming. Further research needs to be conducted on the effects of authoritarianism and nationalist politics.
- **Set up and activate governance structures to reach the most marginalised (vulnerable/at-risk) women in the event of emergencies such as** health pandemics, climate crises or economic shocks, to ensure gains on women's economic empowerment are not lost. This could be set up through gender-based budgeting.
- **Attach equal importance to women's control over income and their voice and agency, as important facets of women's economic empowerment.** The FCDO definition of women's economic empowerment is "Women having the ability to succeed and advance economically, and the power to make and act on economic decisions to enhance their well-being and position in the society" (Calder et al. 2020).
- **Exchange policy experiences and strategic information about partnerships on women's economic empowerment with other global actors**, including what has worked and has not worked and why (OECD 2022), considering climate shocks, conflicts, the rise of authoritarianism and nationalism and health crises such as COVID-19.
- **Refer to international standards, instruments and commitments on women's economic empowerment**, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, selected international or regional labour standards, Sustainable Development Goals or commitments made in other fora such as G20 or G7 (OECD 2022).

This section is structured according to individual drivers for the sake of readability. In reality, however, initiatives that target multiple drivers are more likely to lead to transformative women's economic empowerment outcomes.

Driver 1 – Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models

Invest in girls' education and mitigate the barriers they face in attending school, while at the same time aiming for broad-based economic growth. Rising education levels among girls, together with a strong economy and gender-egalitarian policies, have led to shifts in attitudes on gender norms in work (Harper et al. 2020). Hanmer and Klugman (2016) use Demographic and Health Surveys from 58 countries to demonstrate that completing secondary education and beyond has consistent large and positive associations with women's agency and empowerment, highlighting the importance of investing beyond primary schooling. On the demand-side, governments should focus on increasing the availability and quality of jobs which influences women's labour force participation and therefore demand for female education. On the supply-side, schools should accommodate girls who are menstruating, pregnant or have children, ensure safe transport to schools, have curricula that does not reinforce traditional gender roles and a balance of male and female teachers (ODI 2016).

Help girls transition to quality work in non-traditional occupations. Activities to aid the transition to work include skills training and youth employment initiatives and exposing young people to a wide range of work options through talks in schools, mindset training, work experience and through the media. Providing information to young women and their parents about the returns to different work activities has shown promise in overcoming barriers related to gender norms and stereotypes about suitable jobs for men and women, and in encouraging young women to enter male-dominated and better-paid fields (IYF 2018 in Harper et al. 2020). A particular focus should be on encouraging girls/women to enter the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sector, and to aim for leadership positions. Through their presence in these fields, women leaders can, in turn, help to shift norms about women's capacities and 'appropriate' work for people of particular genders (Harper et al. 2020). Interventions are to focus on stereotypes in occupational *and* the domestic domain if they are to be comprehensive enough to facilitate real change in the perceived future career choices for girls.

Promote more egalitarian norms around gender roles, such as through mass and social media and community-, school- and workplace-based education, and targeting boys/men. Without shifts in boys' attitudes to unpaid care work for example, girls may be unlikely to pursue high productive and highly paid jobs due to difficulties with balancing it with unpaid care work responsibilities (Hochschild and Machung 2012 in Olsson and Martiny 2018). Where social norms contest whether women should work, media and non-formal education have shown promise in promoting more supportive norms. Warrell (2020) argues that it is important to spotlight women succeeding on their terms, such as managing to balance unpaid care work responsibilities with paid work, and use a diversity of role models with different types, stories, personalities and perspectives. Mass and social media initiatives showing ordinary men and male celebrities carrying out care and domestic work can have the potential to change attitudes and norms around unpaid care work (Marcus and Page 2014, Van der Gaag et al. 2019, both in Harper et al. 2020). Indeed, support for women working outside the home increased by 53% among listeners to Population Media Centre's 'Cesiri Tono' radio drama broadcast in Mali. Gender sensitisation through extra-curricula clubs, such as the Taaron Ki Toli programme in Haryana, India, has helped adolescent boys and girls develop more positive views about the acceptability of women working (Menon, 2018 and Dhar et al., 2020, both in Harper et al. 2020). These approaches need to be supported by policies that expand decent work opportunities for women (Harper et al. 2020).

Driver 2 – Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations

Undertake gender analyses and invest in the gathering of sex-disaggregated data and track global trends. This will determine which laws should be repealed and which laws should be introduced to protect women workers. National partners, academia, think tanks, and women's organisations should be consulted in the preparation of country gender analyses and in monitoring the implementation of

legislation. The gathering of sex-disaggregated data across all sectors as part of a gender analysis can raise awareness of the impact that discriminatory laws have on women's and girls' lives. Where the difficulty in gathering data is due to a lack of national capacity, programmes should also support capacity development within the National Statistics Bureau and in relevant Ministries and other public authorities. Support for the improved collection of disaggregated data also assists partner countries to measure progress towards the achievement of the SDGs (European Parliament 2020).

Engage with a broad range of stakeholders at both national and local levels to conduct a gender analysis and agree a list of effective and durable reform of gender-discriminatory laws. There are risks involved in only engaging with those women's rights organisations and like-minded actors that are champions of the reform, as they may become exposed as recipients of international donor support and be susceptible in some contexts to criticisms that they are not working in the national interest. It is important to also engage the public at large and with community or religious groups that are either neutral or yet to be convinced of the value of the reform (European Parliament 2020). In a context where statutory and customary laws coexist in a plural-legal system, community and religious leaders must be involved (OECD 2019a). It may even be necessary to engage specific public institutions; for example, law enforcement agencies in the case of a new law to combat domestic violence. Otherwise, there is a danger that reforms may not be sustainable in the longer term, or that new laws will not be effectively implemented (European Parliament 2020).

Enact parenthood and pay policies that can contribute to changing social norms. Globally, maternity leave has been found to significantly increase women's labour force participation and reduce gender gaps in earnings (Gonzalez et al. 2015). Progressive step changes in parental leave laws may have a "magnet effect" by changing social norms along with the legal reform (Aldashev et al. 2012). It is also important to have a simultaneous focus on paternity leave provisions so that social norms around the gendered division of care work are not reinforced (Chopra and Krishnan 2019). Parental laws must replace lost income if they are to be effective (Van der Gaag et al. 2019 in Harper et al. 2020). Focus is to be particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, where scores for the WBL index are lowest. Post-conflict regimes can often be a suitable time to enact new legislation, building on a recognition of the economic benefits of a higher female labour force participation during the conflict. Policies on parental leave should not be changed, even during a crisis such as COVID-19.

Driver 3 – Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care

Provide state-funded and private sector-funded childcare infrastructure to allow mothers to remain in paid employment. Quality and affordable care services, including childcare, can create both decent jobs and enable primarily women to return to work after the COVID-19 related disruption (Hearle and Chaturvedi 2020). The responsibility of childcare should be shifted from individual women and families to the state and the private sector. This is particularly true in conflict situations and in settings highly affected by climate change. Governments must ensure that fiscal consolidation and austerity measures in response to social and economic crises do not restrict investment in and the quality of public care systems (UN Women 2022a). IFC's work on employer provision of childcare provides a strong case for legislation that require companies to provide childcare options, as has happened in Brazil, India and Jordan (see IFC 2017). The example from Bangladesh which has institutionalised the provision of childcare services for children from four months to six years provides an interesting case for other countries to follow.

Invest in gender-sensitive infrastructure to reduce and redistribute the time women spend on unpaid work and care. Affordable water, sanitation, and hygiene services as well as electricity supply for rural and remote areas can support women's productive and unpaid care work. This is especially true in contexts of water scarcity and forest depletion. Better access to transport services that are safe

and affordable and improved street lighting for safety will enhance women's productivity and mobility (Hearle and Chaturvedi 2020). Access to transport will reduce unpaid time commuting to work, fetching water and so on.

Design and implement care policies that are rights- and needs-based, follow a life-cycle approach and reflect the voices of the most concerned. This means that care packages offer an integrated continuum of policies and services from pregnancy up to old age. This spectrum of policies and services should be responsive to multiple specific and often overlapping care needs, and be available to all including the elderly, people with disabilities, displaced people and people living with HIV. Policies should be informed by the active participation of those who provide and receive care, through social dialogue and co-responsibility, including in enforceability and accountability mechanisms. Policies should be adequately and sustainably funded while also reflecting national and local contexts and circumstances (ILO 2021b). Sex-disaggregated data would be able to highlight the needs of the most concerned by care policies.

Influence ILO, World Bank, Global Alliance for Care and others to produce a harmonised and comparable global database to assess time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, with data disaggregated by sex. Improved measurement of the amount, kind, and distribution of unpaid care work between men and women within families and communities (through time-use surveys and other instruments), decent work deficits, and occupational segregation will help shape better and more gender-responsive care policies and systems. Incorporating unpaid care work in national and international statistics and in measures of economic progress is crucial for recognizing the value of care and its contributions (UN Women 2022a).

Driver 4 – Building assets – digital, financial and property

Promote women's equal right to access, use and control land, property and other productive resources through the participatory and harmonised approaches to the formulation of laws and policies. Laws should be effectively consolidated and harmonised to provide consistent and coherent legal and policy frameworks. In doing so, the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women should be taken into consideration. This is to be done through their informed, active, meaningful and effective engagement in the formulation of laws, policies and programmes. There should be joint administration of marital property, ensuring that clear consent requirements are in place for the transfer or sale of such property. In addition, it is important to ensure equality between women and men in all matters related to inheritance as well as in the event of divorce and dissolution of marriage. Women must also have legal protection against forced eviction (UN Women 2020).

Ensure the affordability and relevance of mobile phones to women, while investing in literacy and digital skills to increase access. This may include a review of sector-specific taxes and fees that may exacerbate the cost barrier to mobile ownership and use, reduce investment and have a disproportionate impact on women. These include taxes on airtime, devices, information campaigns and social media usage. It may also include implementing and supporting initiatives to help reduce the price of devices and services for consumers such as supporting financial institutions and local interest rates. To make mobile phones more relevant for women, governments can make public services available online, such as cash transfers, to demonstrate the value and relevance of the internet to women and their families. Women with disabilities would disproportionately benefit from accessible digital government services such as interactive voice response helpline, use of simple terminology, and icons, symbols, pictures, videos in addition to text. Women and girls may need to take part in public education and digital literacy initiatives to increase their confidence and awareness of benefits (GSMA 2022).

Promote legislation that ensures that women and men have the same rights to open a bank account and obtain credit at a formal financial institution suited to their needs. This could include legislation to remove any bank requirements for a male relation's signature to enter into contracts or open a bank account, and promoting the requirement for women's names to be recorded in legal documentation of joint ownership of assets used as loan collateral. Depending on the context, it might be that legal barriers have to be removed to official identification and changing collateral requirements for banks allowing them to accept moveable or unconventional collateral, such as machinery or intellectual property, as an alternative (Hearle and Smith 2021).

Driver 5 – Changing business culture and practice

Work with partner governments to ratify ILO Convention No. 190 (C190) on violence and harassment in the world of work and promote the adoption and enforcement of sexual harassment legislation and policies in employment: The #MeToo movement has led to major changes in the culture around sexual harassment in the workplace worldwide, and emphasised the need for legislation to prevent harassment in the world of work. ILO C190 is the first international treaty to recognise the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. It represents a historic opportunity to shape the future of work based on dignity and respect for all (ILO 2023). Social dialogue is an important step in building a sense of ownership during the ratification process and will likely result in ensuring effective implementation (ILO 2023). Policy support is needed to identify changes that need to be made in national laws and policies to comply with the convention. Once the convention is ratified and legislations regarding sexual harassments and employment policies have been adopted, continued support is needed to build awareness of these legal changes, establish the organisational structure and responsibilities to monitor compliance, and hold offenders accountable. This could be done alongside strengthening the enforcement of existing domestic violence legislation. The UK ratified ILO Convention No. 190 (C190) on 7th March 2022.

Work with digital platforms to reduce harassment and violence against women, invest in specialised law enforcement officials and raise awareness to Internet users of their rights. COVID-19 has meant that women's work is often done online, and it is predicted that this shift will be permanent for many women. Governments can ensure training for law enforcement officials addressing online violence, and invest in specialised justice officers. Working in partnership with women's rights organisations, they can raise awareness about existing safety protocols, how users can report cases of abuse and access essential services online. Governments can also work with digital platforms to set high-level and clear commitments to uphold women's and girls' safety in online spaces. These include the design and improvement of tools and systems that prevent, detect, respond and monitor online violence as well as filtering, blocking and taking down illegal content on the Internet, in particular non-consensual filming and sharing of intimate images (UN Women 2022a).

There are several coalitions/alliances that the UK could work with, and there are various UK pieces of legislation that could be drawn upon. The UK is already a partner of the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse, which is bringing together a host of different stakeholders to prioritise, understand, prevent and address technology-facilitated gender-based violence. The UK could also work with the Global Coalition for Digital Safety, which has recently called for governments to supported victims and survivors of abuse or harm, including facilitating access to justice and resources tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, and ensure their

perspectives and needs inform policy making.⁷ The UK launched a new Science and Technology Framework in March 2023, but there is no mention of online harassment or violence (UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology 2023). However the Online Safety Bill is currently going through parliament which will introduce a new regulatory regime to address illegal and harmful content online.⁸

Establish and implement a system to track organisational culture on gender equality and social inclusion in the private sector. Private sector companies could establish criteria that define inclusion in areas of the business; measure and report on process, both internally and externally, using sex-disaggregated data (as well as data disaggregated by disability, age and geography); and incorporate gender markers into ongoing reporting obligations. External stakeholders could be surveyed regularly to understand their perceptions, and companies could report annually on lessons learned and good practices on their websites. Governments could promote these changes through legislation or raise awareness of the business case for gender equality. A recent piece of UK legislation is the requirement of organisations of 250 or more employees to report their gender pay gap, which could be an example of best practice for companies to follow in other countries even if it is not legislated.

Driver 6 – Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement

Incentivise gender-responsive procurement processes in the public sector. Governments could enact policy and legislative frameworks that explicitly support or actively promote gender-responsive procurement, drawing on the recent momentum in this area and various publications. This could include preferential treatment for women-owned MSMEs such as set asides and targets for total procurement spending per year and other forms of preferential treatment, including gender-responsive clauses in supplier codes of conduct, establishing regular spot-checks and audits, and reporting on gender in supply chains. Other examples include using e-procurement systems, building capacity to help women-owned MSMEs apply for government contracts, establishing women-owned business certification, and simplifying administrative procurement and company registration processes. It could also involve buying from gender-responsive enterprises to create more gender-responsive value chains, such as sourcing from suppliers that have a gender balance in the workforce across all levels of seniority and strong gender equality policies, or are committed to recruiting a percentage of women for the awarded contract (Combaz 2018). Lessons can be learned from the Dominican Republic and Kenya, which have both increased funding to women-owned businesses through new public procurement strategies. Some lessons could be learned from the UN Task Force on Gender-Responsive Procurement.

Driver 7 – Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation

Support and encourage meaningful consultation with women’s rights organisations and other affected groups, including organisations representing informal workers. Ensure that the needs, priorities and interests of a diverse range of women are reflected in government policy such as elderly women, adolescent girls, women with disabilities, Indigenous women, LBT+ women, displaced women etc. Encourage partnerships with and channel funding to women’s rights organisations, business networks and women’s cooperatives. Policy and legislative changes are to be informed by women’s rights organisations and business networks from the Global South if they are to remain relevant and sustainable. Broad-based partnerships are more likely to have success, such as Wilton Park, part of FCDO, which connects public sector, private sector and CSOs for dialogue to “*develop new perspectives and deliver innovation in international policy*” (Wilton Park website). Dialogue events could occur on the new global challenges as identified in this report. Organisations such as WIEGO, Homenet South

⁷ [Global Coalition for Digital Safety - About \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org/)

⁸ [A guide to the Online Safety Bill - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/)

Asia and SEWA Bharat have supported women informal workers through education and advocacy materials. Girls and women should be consulted from formal decision-making processes and can play advocacy role in holding governments to account.

Institutionalise support on the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). This could happen via framework laws, as in Cameroon, France and Uruguay; the creation of ministries, as in Luxembourg, Nicaragua and Senegal, or other State entities with direct responsibility for SSE; medium-term SSE development plans and strategies, as in Costa Rica and Morocco; and bipartisan or multiparty support, as in Italy, the Republic of Korea and Tunisia. Policy statements and design that support SSE should be matched by corresponding budget allocations, the regulatory environment and policy implementation at national, sub-national and local levels. It is important for governments to review whether fiscal, investment, industrial, competition and trade policies are synergistic with SSE, and to adapt if necessary. Effective spaces should exist for social dialogue, allowing SSE actors to co-design and co-implement policy at multiple levels of governance (UNTFSSSE 2022).

Work with partner governments to remove discriminatory laws, promote legal recognition of informal workers and widen coverage of social protection systems to enhance the entitlements of informal workers and entrepreneurs. For example, addressing discriminatory legal provisions that prevent women from starting independent businesses (such as in Bhutan, Pakistan and Surinam) or from accessing certain formal jobs; and widening the recognition of informal workers in labour laws (Hearle et al. 2019). Governments are to also ratify and implement ILO Domestic Workers Convention 2011 (No. 189), ILO Home Work Convention 1996 (No. 177) and the 2019 Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190). Integrated approaches to social protection and taxation are needed, drawing on experiences in Latin America, that encourage extension of rights and social protection to informal workers, while not discouraging small businesses from registering or hiring workers through excessive taxation (Stuart et al. 2018 in Hearle et al. 2019). There is increasing recognition of the need for universal/near universal or categorical targeting (for example targeting female-headed households) in social protection measures (Alfers 2020).⁹

⁹ Universal/near-universal responses aimed at all people residing in a country, all of those below a 'high' income threshold or all those who are not covered by social assistance, social insurance or stable income, are likely to reach women informal workers more effectively than any other approach (Alfers 2020).

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Annex A: Description of the UNHLP drivers

1. Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models

Women's economic empowerment is affected by norms—the rules of conduct considered acceptable by a dominant group or society. Norms can often be firmly entrenched in society, sometimes taking decades to change. The UN HLP focusses on adverse gendered social norms, for example norms around women bearing the brunt of unpaid care work, and economic norms, such as norms which stigmatise the informal economy. Tackling these adverse norms allows women more economic opportunities.

2. Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations

Laws play a key role in fostering women's economic empowerment. For example, laws that provide equal rights for women and men in inheritance, land tenure and access to employment give women equal economic opportunities. Weaker legal rights are associated with lower labour force participation for women, decreased asset ownership, fewer women owned businesses, fewer women as business leaders and a higher gender wage gap (Gonzales et al. 2015, Htun et al. 2019, Islam et al. 2019, Hyland et al. 2020).

3. Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care

The provision of care is fundamental to human development. At some time in our lives, we all require and provide care. Care is essential for the development of people who can participate fully in economic, social and political life and for the reproduction of the workforce (UN Women 2016). Due to gendered norms around women's roles, all over the world women spend more time on unpaid work and care. This reduces their time available for paid work, leading them to seek lower paid part-time and/or informal work, as well as having to forego leisure time. Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid work and care drives improved social and economic outcomes for women.

4. Building assets – digital, financial and property

Women's ownership, use of and benefits from assets (e.g. property, land, livestock, digital and financial assets) are more limited than men's, even when women's property rights are guaranteed by law (UN Women 2016). Women tend to own less assets, and assets of lower value, than men resulting in a "gender-asset gap" (Deere et al. 2013). When women are able to build their digital, financial and property assets, there are wide-reaching benefits. For example, property and mobile phone use and ownership gives women the ability to access formal credit, register a business, and use mobile banking.

5. Changing business culture and practice

The private sector is an important driver of women's economic empowerment, as well as a critical contributor to other drivers through partnerships with the public sector and other key actors. About 16% of women who do paid work are employed by the public sector, and the rest work in a variety of diverse private sector organisations from large corporations to small informal firms (UN Women 2016). The cultures and practices of these private sector businesses therefore have significant impacts on women's economic opportunities. At the same time, there are clear benefits to the private sector from improving their business culture and practice, including attracting and retaining top female talent (UN Women 2016).

6. Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement

Each year, governments purchase trillions of dollars' worth of goods, works and services. In developed countries, public procurement accounts for 10% to 15% of the gross domestic product (GDP), whilst in developing countries this averages more than 30% (UN Women 2016). Yet women-owned businesses receive only an estimated 1% of the total annual spent (UN Women 2016). At the same time, women form the majority (52%) of employment in the public sector globally, yet on average they receive less pay than their male counterparts (UN Women 2016). Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement with a gender lens, for example through procurement targets for women-owned enterprises, can therefore be a driver for women's economic empowerment.

7. Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation

The rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining are fundamental labour and human rights, enshrined in several ILO conventions. Organising allows working women to voice their needs and demands more effectively, advocate for an enabling legal and policy environment, enhance their bargaining power, and increase access to markets on fair and efficient terms (UN Women 2016).

Annex B: Impacts of new global challenges on the seven drivers

	Gender norms	Legal reform	Unpaid care work	Assets	Business practices	Public sector procurement & employment	Voice, visibility and representation
COVID-19	<p>Mostly negative effect as women's roles (e.g. unpaid care work) become more entrenched. Some evidence showed positive changes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Mostly positive changes - reforms to childcare and parental leave policies</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p>Negative effect, unpaid care work has increased, and women have taken on the brunt</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Little data - potentially accelerated access to digital assets</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Women more likely to lose jobs and less likely to be hired into leadership roles. Some examples found of positive business policies</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>No evidence but emergency buying is likely to decrease GSP</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Some evidence of cooperatives playing a key role in the COVID-19 response</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>
Climate shocks	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Negative effect – unpaid care work increases due to climate change</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Some examples found of women's movements mobilising on environment</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>

<p>Conflicts</p>	<p>Mostly positive effect - changes in gender norms as women take on new roles in the community</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Negative effect – women’s unpaid care work has increased in Ukraine</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Increases in mobile money accounts</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p>Some evidence found on e.g. flexible working policies in Ukraine</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Some evidence of increased volunteering and community organising, and women-led movements, in conflict</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>
<p>Shift towards authoritarianism and nationalist politics</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Negative effect - there has been a major rollback in women’s legal rights, including reproductive rights globally, and girls’ education in Afghanistan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>No evidence</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p>	<p>Some examples found of women’s movements mobilising as backlash against nationalist politics</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>