



Department  
for International  
Development



# DFID Strategic Vision for Gender Equality

## A Call to Action for *Her Potential, Our Future*



March 2018



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# Foreword from the Secretary of State



**I am immensely proud to be part of a government recognised across the world as a global leader on gender equality. Our work to uphold women's rights and improve the lives of the poorest women and girls is Global Britain at its best.**

This Government's Manifesto commits us to empowering women and girls around the world: working to end the subjugation and mutilation of women; promoting girls' education; and tackling sexual violence in conflict. With the strong support of the British public, we have already changed millions of girls' and women's lives. The UK can stand proud - our work means that girls and women across the world are leading safer, healthier and more prosperous lives, which is in all of our interests. By challenging child marriage, backing the Africa-led movement to end female genital mutilation, preventing violence against women and girls, upholding sexual and reproductive health and rights, and helping girls get a quality education, we are giving girls and women the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

With that pride comes a recognition that we all need to do more. Today we are at a point of decision and opportunity, where in the 12 remaining years of the Global Goals, we still have time to realise their full ambition to address the root causes of poverty and achieve development that works for all people. Gender equality is key to that ambition.

We will not help people lift themselves out of poverty without gender equality. When half the population is unable to achieve their **potential**, when they are prevented from being productive, or when their voices are simply not heard, there can be no sustainable path to development.

Promoting gender equality is about shaping our shared **future**, and is firmly in our national interest. It is about creating opportunities for girls and women to enjoy their rights and to contribute to their country's growth and economy, to shape their communities and their countries' futures. This will build new markets and trading partnerships for the Global Britain of the future, and contribute towards the global security that keeps the UK safe.

As we make hard-headed decisions on how to invest UKaid, we know that empowering women and girls gives us the best return for our investment. If women farmers had the same access to productive resources as men – the land, seed and capital to invest - there would be between 100 and 150 million fewer hungry people worldwide. Enabling women and girls to choose for themselves when they have children allows them to complete their education and to take up better economic opportunities. The Copenhagen Consensus estimated that achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2030, and

eliminating unmet need for modern contraception by 2040, would deliver \$120 of social and economic benefits for every \$1 invested<sup>i</sup>.

Our fast changing economic and digital world brings exciting opportunities that could level the playing field for many girls and women, including girls and women living with disabilities, who are often among the most marginalised. Enabling these women and girls to realise their potential is good for them, good for their economies and good for global prosperity. If we get it right and women and girls benefit equally and safely, the possibilities to reach out and truly transform lives are endless.

This Vision is my **Call to Action** to shape and realise the future we all aspire to, by stepping up, stepping out and seizing the moment to act on gender equality.

In January this year, our government launched a new National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security which puts women and girls at the heart of the UK's work to prevent and resolve conflict. This is essential. Increasingly, the women and girls who face the greatest challenges are those in conflict and crisis situations. We know that empowering girls and women works to improve lasting peace and stability. Without progress on gender equality, achieving a safer world and a safer UK is simply not possible.

We will demand more from the national governments we work with, and we will support the collective voices of civil society, faith organisations, and women human rights defenders and movements, to challenge gender based discrimination and inequality on every front. We will act to ensure that the voices of all women facing sexual exploitation and abuse are heard. We will work with our partners to put in place rigorous procedures to safeguard against this behaviour and report it when it occurs. We will challenge businesses to promote the interests of women, and support those British companies which are at the leading edge of gender equality.

It is only by unlocking women's potential that we will build a safer, more peaceful and more prosperous world for us all, and achieve the ambitious agenda set by the Global Goals. As we adapt to the fast changing world and rise to the new global challenges, girls and women need to be at the heart of our response. I call on us all to step up, step out and act now on gender equality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Mordaunt', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt**  
Secretary of State for International Development

# Call to Action for *Her Potential, Our Future*

This is a Call to Action to everyone, recognising that we all need to take action, in everything we do, if gender equality is to become a lasting reality. If we succeed, girls, women, men and boys across the globe will be equal, empowered and safe – and countries will enjoy lasting prosperity, peace and stability.

We must **all now** step up boldly and bravely to:

- **Challenge and change unequal power relations** between men and women, and negative attitudes and discriminatory practices that hold women and girls back.
- **Build the inter-linked foundations which will have a transformational impact for girls and women:** elimination of violence against women and girls; access to sexual and reproductive health and rights; girls' education; and women's economic and political empowerment, including an increase in women's participation and leadership in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes, at community and national levels.
- **Protect and empower girls and women in conflict, protracted crises and humanitarian emergencies**, to rebuild their lives and societies, by listening to their needs and by increasing the meaningful and representative participation and leadership of women.
- **Leave no girl or woman behind.** Focus where progress is slowest because of multiple discrimination or disadvantage, including for **girls and women with disabilities**.
- **Integrate gender equality in all our work across the board and track delivery through to results** - on jobs, trade, tax systems and the world economy; new technologies; modern slavery; climate change; nutrition; tackling AIDS; infrastructure; and peace agreements.
- **Work across girls' and women's lifecycles and on multiple areas simultaneously, with particular attention to adolescence**, so that the gains in one area create opportunities elsewhere, and results are achieved at scale.
- **Build evidence and disaggregate data** by sex, age and disability, to track who is reached and who is left behind, and how best to achieve gender equality at scale. Make this information publically available.

The Department for International Development (DFID) will lead the way in responding to this Call to Action, working across UK Government to join up and amplify our development, diplomatic, defence and trade approaches to deliver for girls and women. We are asking more of ourselves and of our government, multilateral and civil society partners, including women's rights organisations.

# 1. The opportunity

*The world can be a place where all people are valued and have equal voice, rights and opportunities throughout their lives. In this world, girls and women are free to stand alongside boys and men, equal in their hopes for their future and their ability to achieve their dreams and potential. In this world, they have equal access to education, jobs and economic opportunities, healthcare and justice; they are fully empowered to make choices over their bodies and to take the decisions that will shape their lives. They have freedom to be themselves and freedom from those who would hold them back. They are safe and free from discrimination, exploitation and violence.*

*Gender equality and empowered girls and women are fundamental to building prosperous, resilient economies, and peaceful, stable societies. The gains are essential to delivering lasting outcomes across all the Sustainable Development Goals (Global Goals). Gender equality is in everyone's interests.*

*This is DFID's Vision for 2030 and one which is shared by millions across the world through the Global Goals. This Vision can be a reality. **This is a Call to Action to make it happen.***

**This Call to Action matters.** It matters because every woman, man, girl and boy has the right to reach their potential and not to be held back by discrimination. It matters because the scale of the opportunity presented by enabling girls and women to reach their potential is simply too great to ignore. **It matters now because the Global Goals and all that they aspire to will not be achieved while gender inequality persists**, and we have only twelve more years to achieve them.

**The world must grasp the opportunity that gender equality presents. It is within our reach and we will all benefit.** If all girls and women had an education and access to new technologies, if they could move into employment and leadership roles, and marry and have children later, the benefits would be felt not just by individuals but at scale and by the whole of society. Generational cycles of poverty would be broken - children of women who are educated, and marry and give birth later, are better educated and healthier themselves<sup>ii</sup>. Economic growth would accelerate if women participated equally in labour markets to men. And the world would be safer and more peaceful - educated women who marry later are less likely to experience violence<sup>iii</sup>; and when women participate in peace negotiations, accords are more likely to last.



## Gender equality – the opportunity

- If women had the same role in **labour markets** as men, up to an estimated \$28 trillion (26%) could be added to global GDP in 2025<sup>iv</sup>.
- When women have access to **mobile phones** and the right **digital skills**, they feel safer and more connected, are able to save time and money, and can access life enhancing services such as mobile money, health advice and employment opportunities<sup>v</sup>.
- Women in **politics** prioritise public goods and services that benefit the whole community<sup>vi</sup>. With women at the negotiating table, **peace accords** are 35% more likely to last<sup>vii</sup>.
- If women farmers had the same access to productive resources as men, **agricultural production** in developing countries would increase by 2.5 to 4%, translating to a 12 to 17% reduction in global hunger, or 100 to 150 million fewer hungry people<sup>viii</sup>.
- When women and girls can choose to use voluntary **family planning** and decide whether, when and how many children they have, there are wide-ranging benefits for individual women, their children, families and societies<sup>ix</sup>.



Fatima, 12, left Syria in 2012 and joined fellow Syrian and Lebanese students in Beirut on a Lebanese government enrolment programme, backed by UKaid and UNICEF © Adam Patterson/Panos/DFID

## 2. Within our reach

### **The opportunity of achieving gender equality and the Global Goals is within our reach.**

Over the last decades, tangible gains have been made for girls and women. More girls are enrolling in school; and more women are working, getting elected and assuming leadership positions. Substantial progress has been made in closing the gender gap in primary enrolment, with two thirds of all countries in the developing world achieving gender parity in this area. Women have gained greater legal rights to employment, to own and inherit property, and to get married and divorced on the same terms as men. Governments in every region have made legally binding commitments to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights<sup>x</sup>. And the practice of child marriage is slowly declining - 1 in 4 young women alive today were married in childhood versus 1 in 3 in the early 1980s - and over 17 million individuals have pledged to abandon the practice of Female Genital Mutilation. But there is still much more to do.

### **The UK is proud of the role we have played in these achievements, as a world leader on advancing gender equality and women's rights in development.**

Guided by our Strategic Vision for Girls and Women (2011), DFID has worked with colleagues and partners across and beyond UK Government to leverage a global step change in providing girls and women with equal opportunities to men and boys, and in addressing the harmful behaviours and practices which prevent girls and women from achieving their potential. The UK has an impressive record of bringing critical issues to the world stage, and leveraging ground-breaking international partnerships and commitments - for example, through the London Conference on Family Planning in 2012 and the 2017 Family Planning Summit; the 2013 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies; the 2014 Girl Summit to mobilise action on Female Genital Mutilation and Child, Early and Forced Marriage; the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, also in 2014; and in 2016 the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, and the Girls' Education Forum.

### **Unprecedented investments of UKaid in gender equality have achieved results at scale**

- through, among others: the Girls' Education Challenge programme; UN programmes to enhance the reproductive health and rights of women; investments to accelerate action to end Child, Early and Forced Marriage and to end Female Genital Mutilation; our global work on women, peace and security, and on violence against women and girls; as well as targeted and ground-breaking work to unlock girls' potential and break down barriers through many of our country programmes. Looking forward, DFID's flagship central programme on women's economic empowerment will work to improve economic opportunities and outcomes for women in supply chains. Since 2011, UKaid has improved access to financial services for more than 36 million women; helped 30 million children under five, and pregnant and breastfeeding women, through nutrition-relevant programmes; supported 22.6 million women to access clean water, better sanitation, or improved hygiene conditions; given 10 million women access to modern family planning methods; helped over 5 million girls attend school; and helped 3 million women to improve their land and property rights.

**We should all be proud of these achievements and have confidence and assurance** that, if everyone plays their part now, we can build on these and wider global gains, to make gender equality and the Global Goals a reality.

### 3. Building on what we have learned

**If we are to make gender equality a reality and achieve the Global Goals, we must all accept that business as usual from DFID and our partners is not enough.** We must build on the gains that have been made, applying the knowledge we have learned along the way, and which informs this Strategic Vision and Call to Action.

#### **Responding to the global context: the needs and barriers**

**While gains have been made, they are slow, fragile and fragmented, and huge numbers of marginalised girls and women are being left behind.** Of the 769 million people still living in extreme poverty<sup>xi</sup>, girls and women are disproportionately affected. Access to services, for example secondary and higher education, remains highly unequal. Global indicators mask significant regional disparities, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. Improvements in laws to promote gender equality often do not translate into change on the ground, where deep-rooted discrimination persists; and we are witnessing reversals in women's rights in some cases. Changing deeply held beliefs requires long term and intensive work at local level, including working alongside and mobilising local religious and traditional leaders, given the role faith can play in shaping identity, attitudes and practices.

**The challenges that poor girls and women face are complex, deep-seated and inter-linked.** When she is not equal at home or in society, and is not seen as capable, a woman cannot contribute fully to the household or economy, or influence decisions that affect her life. When she is not empowered to finish school or to get a job; to decide who to marry, who to have sex with and when, and how many children to have; and when she is not safe at home, in school, outside or at work, she cannot participate fully in society, or realise her potential, and she is at greater risk of being trafficked and sold into modern slavery. Evidence shows that combinations of interventions are needed to respond to these inter-linked challenges.

**Girls and women across the world are held back by systematic and entrenched inequality and discrimination.** Women across the globe are paid less, have fewer workers' rights and are more likely to be in low paying jobs than men, while they also still do 60 to 80% of unpaid domestic work<sup>xii</sup> and carry the costs of raising a family. In a context where over 214 million women in developing countries who want to delay or prevent pregnancy are not using modern contraception<sup>xiii</sup>, work and education opportunities are again and again held back by unwanted pregnancy, and women's health and nutrition are negatively impacted.

**The effects of gender inequality are widespread** - in sub-Saharan Africa, it fuels the HIV epidemic, with adolescent girls almost three times more likely than boys to be living with HIV<sup>xiv</sup>. The systemic sexual exploitation and abuse experienced by women and girls can have lifelong and inter-generational effects<sup>xv</sup>. Global prevalence of child sexual abuse is estimated at 18% for girls and 7.6% for boys<sup>xvi</sup>, and approximately 20% of refugee and displaced women experience sexual violence<sup>xvii</sup>. Girls and women are held back because they don't have the same access as boys and men to technology, land or finance. And women are consistently under-represented, not only in parliament, but at every administrative level, and in leadership positions in business.

**A disproportionate number of girls and women living in poverty experience additional discrimination** because of their disability, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexuality, location or other characteristic, which further limits their prospects and opportunities. Over 200 million women with disabilities remain below the poverty line<sup>xxiii</sup>, often because they are considered too difficult or costly to reach.

**Humanitarian crises are increasing, conflicts are increasingly protracted, and inequalities escalate in crisis situations.** Gender-based violence can increase to affect over 70% of girls and women<sup>xix</sup>; child marriage intensifies, and girls and women have even lower access to education and healthcare<sup>xx</sup>- 60% of preventable maternal deaths occur in these situations<sup>xxi</sup>. Refugees and those on migration routes are at increased risk of all forms of violence, trafficking and modern slavery, as well as child and forced marriage. And women are more likely to die in natural disasters, because they have fewer assets and are less able to cope with shocks; and when crisis hits, are less able to flee.

**Negative social pressures and expectations affecting men and boys have an important impact on gender equality.** Young men often face strong expectations from peers, family and society around what men should do, such as owning land or holding a job, which cannot be fulfilled. They may look for other ways to prove their masculinity, including through their sexual behaviour or violence<sup>xxii</sup>.

**Many countries are witnessing shrinking civic space, creating additional challenges for women's rights organisations and movements.** Women's organisations are critical to achieving DFID's ambition for girls and women, but they are often stigmatised and targeted with violence. Supporting them to speak out and tackle gender inequality becomes all the more urgent in these contexts - for example, by promoting national platforms where women's organisations can engage with government, alongside more effective coordination, information-sharing, and protection mechanisms to develop resilience.

### **Gender equality - the challenge**

- Globally, 1 in 3 women are **beaten and/or sexually abused** in their lifetime<sup>xxiii</sup>; over 700 million women alive today were **married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday**<sup>xxiv</sup>; and 200 million women and girls have undergone **Female Genital Mutilation**, 40% before 15 years of age<sup>xxv</sup>.
- Globally, 63 million girls (aged 5 to 15) are **out of school**; and in conflict situations, girls are 2.5 times more likely not to be attending school than boys<sup>xxvi</sup>.
- In low and middle income countries, women are 14% less likely to own a mobile phone than men (38% less likely in South Asia), and use **mobiles and mobile internet** less frequently and intensively<sup>xxvii</sup>.
- It is estimated that it will take 170 years to close the global **gender pay gap**<sup>xxviii</sup>.
- 71% of the estimated 40.3 million people in **modern slavery**, including forced marriage, are girls and women<sup>xxix</sup>.
- Women only make up 23% of representatives in **national parliaments**<sup>xxx</sup>.

## Responding to the global context: the opportunities

**While there is much we have learned about the needs and the challenges, there are also important opportunities presented by shifts in the global context**, which we must all capitalise on to leverage accelerated progress towards the Global Goals.

**We continue to operate in a fast changing world. The changing landscape of poverty and new economic borders create new opportunities, as well as risks which need to be managed, for everyone.** Economic growth has already driven huge reductions in extreme poverty (particularly in East Asia) and by 2030, 80% of the extreme poor will live in fragile states, largely in Africa<sup>xxxii</sup>. Conflict and fragility are set to become the main drivers for extreme poverty and for the persistence of high rates of maternal and infant mortality – which impact disproportionately on girls and women. Tackling the root causes of gender inequalities in these contexts will become even more urgent if girls and women are not to be left behind. We need to ensure that girls and women can access the skills, networks and assets they need to engage in these new economic opportunities through jobs and trade.

**Demographics are fundamentally shifting.** With 1.2 billion people entering the working age population over the next decade<sup>xxxiii</sup>, we must ensure that women and men have a level playing field to benefit from new economic opportunities, if we are to achieve gender equality.

**If we play it right, new technological innovations could mean a stronger political voice and new economic opportunities for all.** By applying a gender equality lens, we can harness the rapid expansion of mobile phones and internet access, to link women and girls up to jobs, finance and markets; and to improve access to services previously out of reach, including for women and girls with disabilities. New technologies create the potential for better networks and for women's voices to be heard, through channels that break down the power relations and social barriers that often stop women from speaking up; and widen the reach of positive role models.

**With conflicts becoming increasingly protracted, discriminatory social norms can be both challenged and reinforced**, as women and men are pushed into new roles. In post-conflict contexts, we must ensure that the process of rebuilding and reforming formal and informal institutions is done in a way which tackles gender-based inequalities. For example, supporting local partners to break down barriers to women's effective entry into community leadership and decision-making roles, and supporting women parliamentarians to be more effective in their roles. Although girls and women suffer disproportionately in crisis situations, they also have an important active role that we must support them to play in mediation and reconstruction, peace-building and humanitarian response – a role which is too often overlooked. Evidence shows that peacekeeping missions which include women are more effective and better able to engage with the local population, particularly girls and women<sup>xxxiii</sup>.

**The Global Goals, including not only Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, but a focus on gender equality throughout the seventeen Goals**, brought with them a global commitment and framework with the potential to put gender inequality in the past.

**There have been notable shifts in the UK's approach to supporting girls and women overseas.** We have seen pioneering UK legislation passed in the 2014 International

Development (Gender Equality) Act, which demonstrates our commitment to considering gender equality through all UKaid spend.

**We have enhanced our collective offer on gender equality, drawing on the combination of development, diplomatic, defence and trade resources we have across UK Government** to amplify our impact for girls and women overseas. These include the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict; the Ministry of Defence’s Gender Champion, the Vice Chief of Defence Staff; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Special Envoy for Gender Equality; and the Department for International Trade’s Trade and Gender Committee. The *UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018 - 2022* and the UK Government’s *Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 - 2020* both bring coherence and greater impact to our work domestically and internationally on these important agendas.

**Together we can use the opportunities of the changing global context to meet the needs and overcome the barriers to gender equality.** By seizing these opportunities, we can accelerate progress towards achieving the Global Goals by 2030.



Akuam Ideya Monti, a widow from Lodwar, Kenya registered with the Hunger Safety Net Programme Phase 2 as part of a cash transfer scheme that supports vulnerable women, and opened a shop to support her family (2014)  
© Hunger Safety Net Programme

## 4. Asking more of our partners and ourselves

The level of need and challenge in achieving gender equality, and the acceleration of progress required, tell us all that we need to do more if we are to deliver the Global Goals. The scale of the opportunity of gender equality tells us that we must seize this chance. It highlights the urgent need for a significant and coordinated shift in approach, for DFID and for all of our partners.

**This 2018 Strategic Vision is a vision for Gender Equality**, recognising that wholesale system-wide change is needed, as well as changes to the lives of individual girls and women; and that men and boys are affected, and must be engaged, if gender equality is to be achieved. **It is a Call to Action to everyone**, recognising that we all need to take action, in everything we do, if gender equality is to become a reality. If we succeed, girls, women, men and boys across the globe will be equal, empowered and safe – and will enjoy lasting prosperity, peace and stability.

A system-wide Call to Action for gender equality is fundamental to our absolute priority of **preventing all forms of violence against women and girls**. The best safeguarding practices and procedures cannot fully prevent sexual exploitation and abuse if they do nothing to tackle the underlying causes, including harmful social attitudes around male sexual entitlement. Demonstrating zero tolerance requires change within organisations, as well as embedding gender equality into our policies and programmes.

DFID will continue to **equip our staff and delivery partners** with the skills, tools and knowledge to better integrate gender equality into policies and programmes, and to **join up across sectors** to take a gender equality portfolio approach. This will include embedding gender equality more fully into our **business systems**, to ensure more effective delivery, tracking of spend and results, and greater accountability to the women and girls whose lives we are seeking to change, and to the UK taxpayer, for delivery on the ground.

We will continue to work increasingly closely **across UK Government** to join up our development, diplomatic, defence and trade approaches to deliver for girls and women. By working together, we ensure that development diplomacy and targeted investments complement and reinforce one another, for greater collective impact in countries where the challenges are greatest, the potential for progress is greatest, and where girls' and women's rights are being rolled back. Together we will demonstrate UK leadership and influence on gender equality on the global stage and in global agreements.

## The Call to Action: Working with our partners to respond

**DFID cannot do this alone. Recognising the scale of the task and the global response needed, we will strengthen our existing partnerships and develop new ones to leverage new opportunities with partner governments, business actors, bilateral and multilateral development and humanitarian agencies, and with civil society.**

**Without a strong international system, the Global Goals will not be achieved.** Building on the recommendations of DFID's Bilateral and Multilateral Development Reviews (2016), we call on our partners to assess themselves against the seven points in this Call to Action and to step up where they are falling short, just as we are doing.

### **DFID calls on our partners to work with us in responding to this Call to Action:**

- A reformed and coordinated **UN development and humanitarian system** is needed, that drives gender equality objectives through better leadership, efficiency, accountability and action; with **UN Women** providing strong coordination and leadership.
- **International financial institutions** need to translate their gender equality strategies into ambitious and effective action and results that can be measured.
- **UN human rights processes** must protect and progress international commitments on gender equality and women's rights, some of which are currently at risk of reversal, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, and marital rape laws.
- **UN member states** must implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions on women, peace and security, which call for increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.
- **Development partners** must take firm action to uphold the highest standards on safeguarding and protection, to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.
- **Global partnerships**, including the **G7, G20 and Commonwealth**, must prioritise the needs, rights and opportunities for girls and women to reach their potential.
- **Partner governments** must commit to creating an inclusive economic and progressive tax system that works for the poorest women, and to respecting human rights and other international obligations on gender equality, in line with DFID's Partnership Principles on non-discrimination.
- **Development partners** must use their diplomatic leverage and partnerships at regional level to support **women's rights organisations and wider civil society**, including faith-based organisations, in promoting gender equality and tackling discrimination.
- The **private sector** must create the incomes, technologies, goods and services girls and women need, including improving access to finance, tackling discrimination in global supply chains, and using the **Commonwealth Development Corporation** and the **Private Infrastructure Development Group** to create economic opportunity and deliver infrastructure for women.



## The Call to Action: DFID's response

**DFID will lead the way in responding to this Call to Action, asking more both of ourselves and of our partners.** Drawing on evidence, reviews and peer feedback, we have assessed ourselves against the seven points of the Call to Action and made decisions about where we need to - and are well placed to - step up; and where we need to stay the course to deliver lasting change:

- **Challenge and change unequal power relations.**

We will continue to tackle discrimination against girls and women, taking an even more consistent and systematic approach. We will systematically tackle the discrimination and barriers that prevent individuals from reaching their potential, and that further entrench gender inequalities. We will continue to work with faith groups at an international level and to engage religious and traditional leaders through our programmes that work over the long term to shift deep-rooted social attitudes.

- **Build the inter-linked foundations which will have a transformational impact for girls and women.**

We will continue our leadership and investment in the four foundations where we have a track record, building on results achieved to date and taking them to scale:

- Ending all forms of **violence against women and girls**: we will work to eliminate all forms of violence against women, girls and boys, in peace, conflict and crisis, including intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence; and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and cutting, and child, early and forced marriage.
- Universal **sexual and reproductive health and rights**: we will continue to support universal sexual and reproductive health and rights for all women and men, ensuring that women and girls can exercise their right to make their own informed decisions about sex and childbearing. This includes action on sex and relationships education, HIV and other sexually-transmitted infections, family planning, safe abortion, and maternal and newborn health. We will deliver on the promises we made at the 2017 London Family Planning Summit. We will prioritise action to leave no-one behind, particularly adolescents, and press for these lifesaving services to be routinely provided in humanitarian responses and the hardest to reach areas.
- **Girls' education**: we will work to improve learning outcomes for girls; ensure transition to secondary school, training or employment; and keep girls safe from violence in schools. We will sharpen our focus on the education of highly marginalised girls, including those affected by conflict and crisis, survivors of violence, girls with disabilities, and those who become pregnant.
- **Women's economic empowerment** and inclusive growth: we will support girls and women to be economically empowered, through better access to, and choice over, jobs in high-growth sectors, with improving working conditions; and better access to digital, financial, land and property assets. We will address the gender-specific barriers to both, including laws and social norms which adversely affect women – the unequal burden of unpaid care work, harassment, violence and discrimination.

We will also use our expertise and networks to step up leadership on a fifth foundation, which - **delivered together** with the above four - will transform the lives of girls and women:

- **Women's political empowerment:** we will support work that gives girls and women a voice and enables them to hold power-holders to account. We will increase their meaningful and representative participation and leadership in informal and formal power and decision-making structures - in communities, and in local administration and planning processes, up to national governments and parliaments. This includes conflict prevention and peace building processes at community and national levels.
- **Protect and empower girls and women in conflict, protracted crises and humanitarian emergencies.**

Building on the strong work the UK is doing through the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018 - 2022, the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit commitments, and the DFID-hosted 2018 Safeguarding Summit commitments, we will step up our work to reduce all forms of violence against girls and women, and to reduce the number of girls and women affected by trafficking and modern slavery. We will support girls and women to access basic services and rights; and to be empowered and equipped to play a vital role in rebuilding their lives, and in building peace, reconciliation and their societies.
- **Leave no girl or woman behind.**

Evidence shows us that the poorest people in the poorest and most fragile places are not benefiting from the development progress of recent years. We will bring a step change in our approach to understand, include and empower the most excluded and vulnerable girls and women, particularly those facing multiple exclusions on the basis of their disability, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexuality, location or other characteristic; or simply because they are the very poorest in society.
- **Integrate gender equality in all our work across the board and track delivery through to results.**

We will continue to set ambitious programme targets, and we will build on our obligations under the UK's Gender Equality Act (2014) to consider gender equality at the outset of all our development and humanitarian assistance, by improving the delivery and tracking of results for girls and women. As well as investing in the five inter-linked foundations, we know that lasting progress rests on moving forward simultaneously and delivering at scale across all sectors. It is essential that the needs, views and lived experiences of girls and women inform our programmes and policies.
- **Work across girls' and women's lifecycles and on multiple areas simultaneously, with particular attention to adolescence.**

We will challenge ourselves and our partners to join up action across sectors to tackle the combined, simultaneous disadvantages girls and women experience - in different areas and at different times of their lives, including adolescence. Change won't be transformational and won't last unless we understand and address the barriers every step of the way - helping girls over the early hurdles of getting the right food, accessing a meaningful education, or not getting married too early; right through to challenging restrictive legislation, supporting women's leadership in business, government service or parliament, and tackling violence in the home and in every public space.

We will **harness the potential of new technological innovations** to reach, include and empower more girls and women by: facilitating their access to health information; increasing their participation in political processes, labour markets and economic

activities; and reducing gender wage gaps through increased demand for new technology-driven skills<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

- **Build evidence and disaggregate data.**

We will invest more in data, to understand who we reach and who is left behind - by age, sex and disability. We will invest in and share evidence and research on what works to overcome the social and structural barriers to gender equality, and to scale up the advances that are made - including on women's economic empowerment, prevention of violence against women and girls, girls' ability to acquire education and skills and to participate in decision-making, and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights.

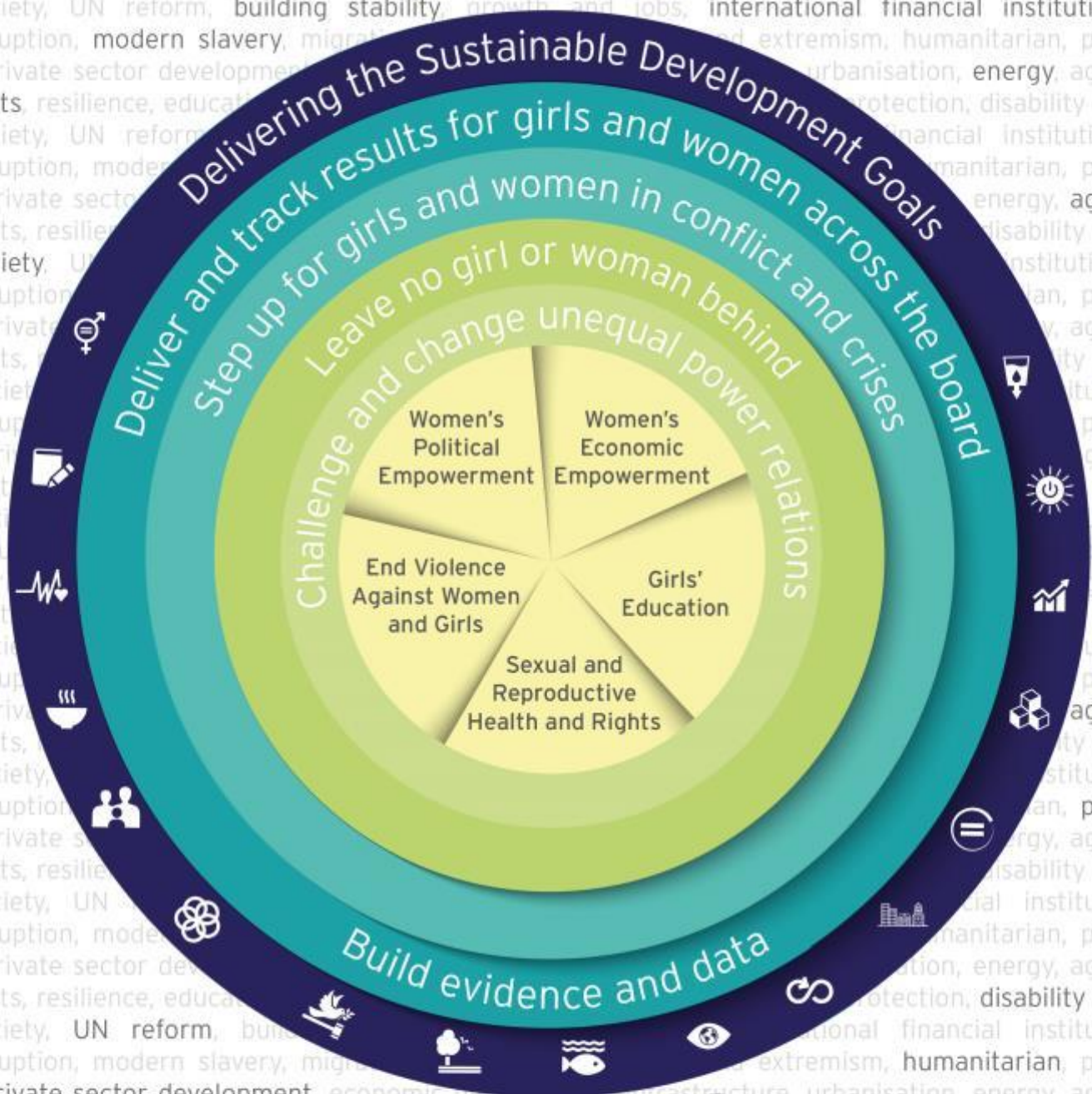


Mary has been working on clearing mines for the last eight months. She has been trained by the UKaid funded HALO Trust, a British charity, to carry out demining work in Zimbabwe (2017) © Rakesh Shah/DFID

# DFID Strategic Vision for Gender Equality

## A Call to Action for Her Potential, Our Future

Gender equality and empowered girls and women are fundamental to building prosperous, resilient economies, and peaceful, stable societies. The gains are essential to delivering lasting outcomes across all the Sustainable Development Goals. Gender equality is in everyone's interests.



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