



New research: 2.1 Billion Girls & Women Live in Countries That Won't Achieve Gender Equality Targets by 2030 at Current Pace

2020 Marks 25 Years Since Countries Signed Up to Most Progressive Blueprint Ever for Advancing Women's Rights (The Beijing Platform for Action)

Read Report Here (Embargoed until 06:00 CET on 5th March 2020):

[Bending the Curve Towards Gender Equality by 2030](#)

New York - New research launched today finds that **half of countries studied (67 out of 129 countries) – home to 2.1 billion girls and women – won't achieve any of five key gender equality targets by 2030 if their current pace continues.** The report, [Bending the Curve Towards Gender Equality by 2030](#), was released by the [Equal Measures 2030](#) (EM2030) partnership and covers five key gender equality targets: access to contraception, girls' education, political leadership, workplace equality laws, and safety. **More than a third of countries have been moving slowly – or even in the wrong direction – on at least four of these five issues over the past decade or two.**

"Far too many countries have been stagnating or even backtracking on vital issues that affect the lives and futures of billions of girls and women, such as whether they finish school or if they have equal rights at work. Globally, progress towards gender equality is limping along," said Alison Holder, Director of Equal Measures 2030.

Looking at past progress on the five issues studied, the research found that:

- **Access to contraception** – a key issue for gender equality and for poverty reduction – has moved slowly at the global level over the past two decades and several countries have moved in the wrong direction.
- Globally more girls are **completing secondary school** than ever before (with the rates increasing nearly 2% each year over recent decades) but the percentage of girls that finish secondary school in many developing countries still remains extremely low, and there are even countries from across the world moving in the wrong direction (including Russia, Egypt, Sri Lanka, and Bulgaria).
- **Women's representation in powerful government positions** has improved globally in recent decades, but little of that change happened in the last ten years and 40 (out of 129) countries have lower percentages of women in ministerial roles than they did twenty years ago.
- Many countries have made improvements in their **workplace equality laws**, but still only 36 of the 129 countries studied had done enough to receive a top score (based on data collected by the World Bank, that measure legal protections for women in the workplace every year).
- The issue that has progressed most slowly at the global level over the past ten or twenty years is **girls' and women's perceptions of their personal safety**. Nearly half of women globally don't feel safe walking in their area at night and this figure has barely changed since 2006. In fact, perceptions of safety worsened in nearly half of the countries studied.

“This report shines a light on how little improvement we’ve seen on fundamental issues like whether women feel safe walking in their own neighborhood at night, which has barely changed or even worsened in the last decade. Women’s safety directly impacts on all aspects of their lives – from their own education and that of their children, to which jobs they pursue, and their social mobility,” said Sivananthi Thanenthiran, Executive Director of the [Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women \(ARROW\)](#).

“The takeaway from this report is clear: At the current pace of progress, none of us will live to see a world where men and women are truly equal,” said Mark Suzman, CEO of the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#). “The data that Equal Measures has collected and crunched should give all of us a new sense of urgency. We all must do more to take up the cause of gender equality.”

But the research also found **examples of countries – from all regions of the world – that made rapid progress on the five issues studied**. For example, in Rwanda, access to contraception moved from covering 12 per cent of girls and women in 2000 to 69 per cent in 2018. In Ghana, the percentage of girls who completed secondary school grew from just 5 per cent in 2003 to over 40 per cent 12 years later. And several countries have made very fast progress on having women represented in Cabinet positions (including Uruguay which went from zero women Ministers to 42 per cent in less than 15 years, Canada which went from 30 per cent to parity in four years, and Ethiopia which went from 10 per cent to 48 per cent women in just one year).

The report found that if **all countries matched the pace of fast-moving countries over the next decade, nearly three quarters of the world’s girls’ and women could instead live in countries that would reach four or even all five of these gender equality targets by the year 2030**.

“What this research shows is that rapid change on gender equality is possible. Of course, every context is different and there is no single recipe. But, by making concrete changes in laws, policies and budget decisions, governments and other champions can drive real change for girls and women,” concluded Holder.

Reacting to the research findings, Françoise Girard, President of the [International Women’s Health Coalition](#) (IWHC) delivered a call to action: “Twenty-five years ago, governments committed to achieve gender equality. This report shows that they need to do much more to live up to their promise. More than that, it highlights the opportunity before us. With political will, financial resources, and the power of the feminist movement, our vision for [Generation Equality](#) can be realized. We call on world leaders to prioritize equality, and to work with feminists globally to accelerate progress.”

Notes to the Editor:

- [Bending the Curve Towards Gender Equality by 2030](#) can be downloaded and the data explored on the EM2030 Data Hub at data.em2030.org
- The five key gender equality issues studied in the report were: access to modern family planning methods (access to contraception), girls’ completion of secondary education, ministerial or senior government positions held by women, laws on women’s workplace equality, and women’s perceptions of safety
- The *Bending the Curve* research builds on data from the [2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index](#), the most comprehensive tool to measure the state of gender equality aligned to 14 of the 17 SDGs. The index covers 129 countries in five regions and 51 issues ranging from health, gender-based

violence, climate change, decent work and others. The [2019 SDG Gender Index](#) data can be explored at data.em2030.org. The Index will be updated around every two years until 2030.

- An [Open Letter](#) signed by leaders from EM2030 partner organizations, released today alongside the [Bending the Curve Towards Gender Equality by 2030](#) report, called on world leaders to use this data to hold themselves to account for the gender equality promises they made in the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and [The Beijing Platform for Action](#) (the ambitious blueprint for women's rights that is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year).

About Equal Measures 2030:

- Equal Measures 2030 (EM2030) is a unique cross-sector partnership of leading organizations from civil society and the development and private sectors. We connect data and evidence with advocacy and action—using existing gender equality related data, supporting calls to fill data gaps, and training and equipping advocates to use data and evidence in their efforts to reach the transformational agenda of the SDGs by 2030.
- The current partnership is a joint effort of leading regional and global organizations from civil society and the development and private sectors, including: the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Comité de América Latina y El Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres (CLADEM), Data2X, the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), KPMG International, ONE Campaign, Plan International, and Women Deliver.