



#YOUTH2030

# 6<sup>th</sup> Economic and Social Council Youth Forum CONCEPT NOTE

## Thematic Breakout Session

“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”

30 January 2017  
CONFERENCE ROOM B

2:30 – 4:30 pm

United Nations Headquarters, New York

### 1. Background and Context

Women and girls make up more than half the world’s population — and they are on the frontlines — often more deeply impacted than men and boys by poverty, climate change, food insecurity, lack of healthcare, and global economic crises. In this regard, gender equality has been recognized and affirmed as a precondition for the realization of sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 is a promise to “achieve (not just promote) gender equality and empower all women and girls.” The 2030 Agenda declares that justice for women and girls and their human rights matter because they are half of humanity, and their needs and potential cannot and must not be ignored.

The theme for this year’s forum: “The role of Youth in eradicating poverty in a changing world” brings to the forefront the critical importance of empowering young women and girls today for a truly transformative future. The achievement of full human potential and sustainable development is not possible if feminization of poverty continues, if young women and girls continue to be denied the full realization of their human rights and opportunities. The eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and the relationship between gender equality and women’s empowerment and poverty eradication is irrefutable. It stresses the need for ensuring an adequate standard of living for women and girls, throughout their life cycle, including through social protection systems, equal access to food security, environmental sustainability, and commit to supporting their full, equal and effective participation in society, the economy, and political decision-making.

Additionally, there must be an end to gender-based discrimination, in order to fully eradicate poverty. Systemic gender inequality and discrimination reinforce cycles of poverty that



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disproportionately impact women. The figures are dismal and will persist unless targeted actions are taken to address yawning gaps.

- The global gender wage gap has remained 24 per cent for almost twenty years.
- The unpaid care gap, despite improvements in some countries, on average, women still do at least 2.5 times more unpaid care work than men.
- The gap in decent work for women remains, with 75 per cent of women working in informal and low-wage conditions.
- From a macroeconomic perspective, the impact of the global recession which was not gender-neutral and even as the global economy recovers, this “uneven recovery” is markedly patchier in terms of a lack of opportunities for women.

Statistics have shown that an increase in female labour force participation—or a reduction in the severe gap between women’s and men’s labour force participation—results in faster economic development. Yet a serious gender gap in labor force participation rates of young women remains. Apart from their detrimental effects on future wages, employability and job security, youth unemployment and underemployment constitute significant important costs for society. The fact is, therefore, that young women’s economic empowerment lies at the heart of sustainable development in every way, but realizing this goal fundamentally depends on transforming power relations and structural inequalities at all levels—in households, markets and States, and in all different sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, manufacturing, science, technology, sport and services—to enable young women to be decisive actors who shape the terms and conditions of their participation in economic life.

There needs to be a change in the current trajectory for young women and girls. A strong ecosystem that supports young women’s access to climate smart agriculture, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, quality education, and social protection is critical. UN Women’s Strategy on Youth and Gender Equality pays particular attention to strengthening **leadership** and **economic empowerment and skills development** of young women. The strategy also calls **action** to end all forms of violence against young women and girls – including economic, political and social discrimination. In this regard, UN Women, and the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD)’s Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality, with the support of UN Women and MGCY, will convene a panel discussion on the role of young women in eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.

#### **Objectives:**

To provide a platform for Member States, young leaders, and youth organizations to identify innovative solutions to systematic gender inequalities that affect young women’s effective participation in eradicating poverty. ***The discussions will focus on the importance of creating a sustainable ecosystem of support for young women’s leadership and economic empowerment.***



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***The panel will also discuss how action at the local level can create momentum in support of these goals at the global level.***

To identify emerging issues and 'next steps for planning engagement towards the HLPF and help create a youth engagement plan towards it.

The panel will bring together local and international advocates who focus on youth empowerment, economic development and gender equality, from grassroots youth movements to international organizations.

The panel will feature members from the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development's Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality and emphasize the importance of youth voice, meaningful youth participation, and leadership and gender sensitive and transformative approaches in sustainable development and poverty eradication.

#### **Flow of the Session and Issues at Stake**

The session will be conducted in a talk show format, with a moderator and panelists. Each panelist will address the following issues and then take comments and questions from the floor. The following key issues will be discussed:

- What are the challenges to addressing discriminatory policies and laws?
- Economic empowerment and intergenerational partnerships
- The case for financing and investing in young women economic empowerment.

Questions for consideration:

- How can we mobilize and support youth and young women-led initiatives, organizations, and networks to promote young women's economic empowerment and eradicate poverty?
- How can the interlinkages between gender-based violence, poverty, and development be transformed to translate into actionable solutions that eradicate poverty?
- How can we promote young women's leadership in STEM and STEAMD and other emerging industries, particularly those that are historically male-dominated and how can we capitalize on the emergence of new technologies?
- How can we ensure that the opportunities for young women, and our efforts to eradicate poverty reach the most marginalized young women, including, young women with disabilities, LGBTQI young women, young women in conflict and post conflict settings, and indigenous young women?
- How can we create the conditions at the local level and the international level, example policy standards, political will, funding, and resources?

#### **Proposed Panelists:**

"The role of young women in poverty eradication and promoting prosperity"



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**Moderator:** Allyson Humphrey, Youth Partnership Analyst, UN Women

**Panelist**

- Jennifer Fraser, Director, College Organizing, ONE
- Diana Rusu, Community and Knowledge Management Specialist, UN Women
- Shaun Johnson, Co-Founder, Startup Institute
- Mary Kate Costello, The Hunger Project & Co-chair UN Women’s Young Women’s Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Task Force.
- H.E. Karen Ellemann, Minister for Equal Opportunity, Denmark **(TBC)**

**Potential Questions for the Audience**

- What are some of the local solutions and innovations that youth and young women in your communities are doing to support and promote young women’s leadership, economic empowerment, and poverty eradication?
- What do youth and young women in your local communities need to support these efforts?
- As youth leaders and activists, what do you need to effectively hold your governments and the UN accountable in our shared goals of young women’s economic empowerment, poverty eradication, and sustainable development?

**Suggested Reading Materials**

Driving the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/8/driving-the-gender-responsive-implementation-of-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development>

United Nations World Youth Report:

<http://www.unworldyouthreport.org/>

*Progress of the World’s Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights - UN Women:*

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/4/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2015>

World Program of Action for Youth (WPAY):

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>

*United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP):*



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[http://unyouthswap.org/system/refinery/resources/2015/03/26/19\\_07\\_16\\_511\\_swap.pdf](http://unyouthswap.org/system/refinery/resources/2015/03/26/19_07_16_511_swap.pdf)

*UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development:*

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/what-we-do/un-inter-agency-network-on-youth-development.html>