

THE POWER OF 4 BILLION

INCLUSIVE AGENDAS FOR WOMEN & YOUTH



CONCEPT NOTE

Empowering women and youth – who together make up 62% of the global population – empowers us all. There are currently 4.6 billion women and youth in the world, and in most places, they are more likely to be at a disadvantage in terms of health, education or jobs and other economic opportunities. Rather than marginalising more than half of the world's people, the international community must heed the call to convert strength in numbers into strong and sustained development for all. It is time to recognise women and youth issues as issues that impact development for all, today, in 2030 and beyond.

Indeed, pro-women and pro-youth policies are prerequisites for achieving the universal ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. While the empowerment of women and youth are important development goals in their own right, the multiplier effect that these policies have on development and economic outcomes makes them essential to the new universal development agenda. A growing body of evidence shows that economies are stronger in countries where women and youth actively participate in all aspects, from education to politics and the job market. Greater female education, bargaining power and earnings also translate into greater investments in children and youth's education and health, leading to more sustainable development and more stable societies for all.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide a roadmap for how to empower women and youth for universal benefits. Now is the time to turn words into action, targets into real results.

This means that everyone has a stake in youth employment. As many as 600 million jobs will need to be created worldwide over the next 15 years to maintain current employment rates, which will have far-reaching negative effects if not achieved. The challenge is that the majority of youth today in developing countries are low-skilled and low-educated, widening the productivity gap. Policies will need to be targeted to address the skills gap of this large group of disadvantaged youth.

This also means that while everyone has a stake in advancing gender equality. Nearly 90% of the world's 143 economies have at least one legal difference restricting women's opportunities. Of those, 79 economies have laws that restrict the types of jobs that women can do. Empowering women drives more peaceful societies, a baseline for universal development. Recent OECD research shows that while women's active participation contributes to peace and resilience, unequal gender relations can drive conflict and violence.

To galvanize the international community, the OECD dedicates its 2018 Global Forum on Development to discussing, debating and determining the best way forward for turning the promise of women and youth empowerment into reality. Experts, youth and government representatives will lead conversations on tailoring jobs for youth, especially rural youth, addressing skills mismatch, increasing women's access to economic opportunities by recognising and reducing women's unpaid care and domestic work, and on understanding the links between gender inequality and conflict.

