

**Side Event**  
**Positive Parenting and Social Inclusion: Vulnerability of Families with Children**  
**Thursday, April 4th, 2019 - United Nations Headquarters (New York)**

**Welcoming Remarks**

**Gender equality and women's empowerment**  
**Esuna Dugarova**

**Introduction**

- Gender equality is about power relations – from individuals to structures and institutions. Yet, unequal power relations often start from home. Many women lack or have limited decision-making power within the family.
- One of the key barriers of gender equality is essentializing women as caregivers. This attitude is rooted in deeply embedded social norms and are reinforced by the neoliberal approach to welfare provision.
- This means that parents may discourage girls from pursuing formal education. Some countries favour sons, which results in a large number of “missing women”.
- The market-led model involves privatization of public goods and services, often at the expense of state regulation and redistribution. Austerity policies see cuts in family and child allowances, old age benefits and care services and often have negative effects on women in low-income households due to their status in the household and care work.

**Evidence**

- Gender equality and women's empowerment are key to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes including economic growth, poverty reduction, and human capital.
- Analysis in my recent paper shows that interventions in women's educational attainment and labour force participation can contribute 3.6%, or US\$4.4 trillion, to global GDP and reduce extreme poverty by 0.5 percentage points by 2030.
- Participation of women in political processes is integral to building strong communities and family well-being. Female parliamentarians are more likely to prioritize education, health, childcare, parental leave, access to employment and pensions. For example, analysis of public expenditures in 27 OECD countries between 1980 and 2011 shows that women's political representation correlates with higher expenditures on family benefits.

**Progress**

- Over recent decades, progress has been achieved in politics, education and employment.
- More women participate in paid employment today, accounting for 31% increase from 891 million to 1.3 billion between 1991 and 2018.
- In more than 46 countries, women hold more than 30% of seats in national parliament.
- A number of countries achieved gender equality in primary and secondary education.
- The persistence of gender inequalities has sparked global movements on the streets, courts and the media to address violence and harassment against women.
- New partners including in the private sector joined global forces to improve gender equality.

## **Persistent challenges**

- Women remain economically disadvantaged, with gender gaps in labour force participation and overrepresentation in the informal sector with limited social protection.
- Participation and leadership in decision-making continues to be gender unbalanced. Just 20% of countries reached gender parity in decision-making positions of the public administration, while in the private sector only 4.8% were CEOs of Fortune 500 companies in 2018.
- Women earn on average 23% less than men, while dedicating on average 138 days more to unpaid care and domestic work.
- GBV is pervasive around the world with serious implications for women's health, economic productivity and second-generation consequences.
- All these negative aspects undermine the realization of women's rights, their participation in decision-making and access to resources and opportunities.

## **UNDP's work**

- Over the past 5 years, significant results were achieved in the areas of women's economic empowerment through livelihood support and women's political participation in decision-making. For example, women accounted for 51% of 37.3 million people who benefited from improved livelihoods in 120 countries. UNDP's support also enabled 304,000 women candidates to participate in national elections.
- UNDP supports countries in addressing women's unpaid care work through facilitating policy reforms and time-saving and environmentally friendly interventions. For example, with UNDP's support, 612,000 women-headed households gained access to clean energy in 2018, which reduced women's time spent on domestic work, improved their income and health.
- UNDP is also working on gender-based violence through reinforcing legal frameworks and policies; providing multi-sectoral services; and improving access to justice.
- However, many results, notably in the economic sphere, tend to be limited to small-scale projects with little transformative impact. In many programmes, women continue to be passive beneficiaries.
- To address this, the new Gender Equality Strategy focuses on achieving structural transformation; shifting gender and power relations; and empowering women as agents of change.
- This is done through priority areas: removing structural barriers and transforming legal, policy and social norms (including women's unpaid care work); tackling multiple forms of discrimination and GBV; advancing women's participation and leadership in decision-making to enable them to exercise their agency; promoting gender-responsive strategies, laws and policies.