

THE
Full Participation Plan



The Full Participation Project
NO CEILINGS

We all have a role to play. This plan challenges governments, multilateral organizations, civil society, foundations, academics, the private sector, and even individuals—not just women and girls, but also men and boys—to act. Now is the time to continue our work and to hold ourselves accountable, so we can ensure a promising future for the next generation of women and girls—and their families, communities, and countries.

In 1995, at the historic United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in a hall filled with delegates from 189 nations, the world spoke with one voice to declare that “women’s rights are human rights.” Twenty years later, equality for women and girls still remains a matter of human rights, justice, and fairness. It is also a strategic imperative. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, we cannot afford to leave the talents of half of the world’s population on the table.

Today, strong evidence demonstrates that gender equality is critical to economic prosperity and global security. When women participate in their economies, poverty decreases and gross domestic product (GDP) grows: Closing the gap in women’s labor force participation and entrepreneurship could lead to GDP gains of up to 35 percent. When women and girls are healthy and educated, their children and families prosper: Evidence shows that educated women have healthier children, and even one extra year of schooling beyond the average can increase women’s wages by about 10 percent. Women’s leadership strengthens both public and private institutions by increasing the diversity of perspectives represented. And a growing body of evidence suggests that women’s contributions to resolving conflict can lead to more sustainable peace.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Conference and the adoption of a Platform for Action calling for the full and equal participation of women and girls, as well as the culmination of negotiations at the United Nations on a new set of global sustainable development goals. It is a time to measure progress, celebrate accomplishments, and set a course for the future. The *No Ceilings Full Participation Report* assesses the data on the gains and gaps in progress for women and girls over the past two decades.

The data show that headway has been made in advancing the status of women through legal frameworks and institutions. Leaders in government, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society have committed to improving the status of women and girls. And we have seen forward movement in areas—including health and education—where the world has come together to raise awareness, dedicate resources, and exert political will.

However, the data also tell us that too many women and girls are not yet seeing this progress in their own lives. Although increasing numbers of countries have laws prohibiting gender discrimination, some nations still do not provide sufficient legal protection of the rights of women and girls. Even where strong laws exist, implementation and enforcement often lag behind. Efforts to advance gender equality lack sufficient resources. Social and cultural norms remain difficult to change. The work remains unfinished.

We stand at a critical moment. Awareness of the importance of gender equality has spread from the streets to state capitals. Powerful tools, such as mobile phones, the Internet, and social media, create unparalleled reach and awareness. And a broad range of partners—from the private sector to the faith community—offer talents and resources that can accelerate the full participation of women and girls.

We all have a role to play. This plan challenges governments, multilateral organizations, civil society, foundations, academics, the private sector, and even individuals—not just women and girls, but also men and boys—to act. Now is the time to continue our work and to hold ourselves accountable, so we can ensure a promising future for the next generation of women and girls—and their families, communities, and countries.



To address the unfinished business that remains, we need to ensure that rhetorical and legal commitments lead to real change in the lives of women and girls. *No Ceilings* has identified five principles to accelerate progress and ensure that commitments to gender equality translate into measurable improvements on the ground.

PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

- 1 **Guarantee equality under the law.** Over the past two decades, legal support for gender equality has expanded significantly—through international agreements that have established women’s human rights, as well as changes in national constitutions, laws, and policies. However, formal gender discrimination persists in too many places, and legal barriers still limit the rights of women and girls. Even where laws exist, too often they go unenforced. All forms of discrimination against women and girls should be eliminated, and gender equality should be guaranteed—on paper and in practice.
- 2 **Change norms and attitudes that hold women back.** Deeply embedded social or cultural norms can influence whether a girl will be fed or attend school, whether a woman can work and in which job, and even whether she is physically safe at home or in her community. To reach full participation for women and girls, discriminatory gender norms and biases must be changed—both to lift women’s and girls’ aspirations and to shift community beliefs and behaviors that limit choices and opportunities.
- 3 **Focus on girls and the most marginalized.** Despite progress over the past 20 years, gains have not been shared by all. Discrimination against girls undermines their ability to reach their full potential. Gender gaps are most pronounced among those women and girls who are marginalized—including those who are ethnic, racial, or language minorities; disabled; LGBT; from poor households or rural areas; or living in emergency, conflict, or post-conflict situations. All women and girls, regardless of geography or status, must have the same equal rights and opportunities.
- 4 **Provide adequate resources.** Despite strong evidence that gender equality is central to prosperity and stability, policies and programs to support gender equality historically have been underfunded. Government investments must be increased to address the gap between policy commitments and the allocation of adequate resources. Private sector investment in programs to promote gender equality should be encouraged, including through public-private partnerships. And funding should be tailored strategically to capitalize on the potential of women and girls.
- 5 **Measure results.** Disaggregating data by sex and age, as well as factors like race, ethnicity, geography, and income, is vital to driving smarter, more strategic investments that will improve programs, influence policy, and ensure accountability for results. However, we lack adequate data to monitor the full participation of women and girls in many areas of life. Gender data gaps should be closed—including in the areas of violence against women and girls, formal and informal employment, unpaid work, asset ownership and control, and civil registration and vital statistics—and particular attention should be devoted to improving data focused on the world’s poorest women, about whom the least is known.



Informed by the data in the *Full Participation Report*, *No Ceilings* has identified ten priorities for the 21st century to **unlock the potential** of women and girls, **ensure their security**, and **create opportunity** for them to compete and succeed.

These priorities intersect. Education relates to the opportunity to get a decent job; violence affects health and has economic costs. These issues cannot be addressed in silos, but instead should be treated as linked—because discrimination or barriers in one area can limit opportunities in multiple ways and, likewise, eliminating those hurdles can have cascading positive impact in the lives of women and girls.

PRIORITIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Unlock Potential

We need to ensure autonomy for women and girls in family and civic life; promote access to and completion of secondary education; guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights; and end harmful practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

- 1 **Ensure autonomy for women and girls in family and civic life.** Record numbers of countries have laws prohibiting discrimination or violence against women and girls. However, the majority of countries still treat women differently than men in at least one area of the law, and gender-based legal discrimination persists, particularly as related to family and civic life.
 - *Eliminate gender discrimination in family life, including laws on marriage, divorce, guardianship of children, and freedom of movement.*
 - *End gender discrimination in civic life by providing the opportunity to participate in the military and by ensuring equality in nationality and citizenship laws—which may prevent mothers from passing on their nationality to their children on the same basis as fathers.*
 - *Expand access to legal recourse and services so that women and girls are equipped to exercise their rights.*

- 2 **End child marriage and FGM/C.** Child marriage and female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) violate the human rights of girls and have lifelong consequences—threatening their health and physical safety, curtailing their education, and perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty.
 - *Support at-risk girls and those already married by providing education and skills training, developing support networks, and offering financial incentives to girls and their families to delay marriage and childbearing until adulthood.*
 - *Encourage countries to enact, strengthen, and enforce laws prohibiting FGM/C and child marriage and laws requiring birth and marriage registration, which can help protect girls against exploitation.*
 - *Educate and mobilize communities to elevate the value of girls and transform detrimental norms and attitudes that perpetuate child marriage and FGM/C.*

3 Ensure completion of a quality secondary education. While girls' access to primary schools has increased significantly during the last two decades, progress has been less encouraging at the secondary level. Too many girls fail to advance to or complete secondary school, children are not learning even basic reading and math skills, and girls are unprepared to transition to higher education or the workforce.

- *Ensure completion of equitable, quality secondary education for all girls, including out-of-school girls who are poor, disabled, pregnant or parenting, or from rural or conflict-affected areas.*
- *Remove barriers, such as school fees and transportation costs, which inhibit access to and completion of secondary school.*
- *Ensure a safe learning environment by preventing school attacks, gender-based violence, and harassment in or on the way to school.*
- *Improve learning outcomes and equip girls with the training and knowledge to successfully transition into the labor force or higher education.*

4 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Despite clear evidence that women's health is critical to their well-being and autonomy as well as to the health of children and families, significant gaps remain—particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Although the global rate of maternal mortality has been nearly halved, almost 290,000 women and adolescent girls continue to die unnecessarily each year because of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth and, of these, an estimated 22,000 women die annually from complications of unsafe abortion. Over 220 million women who want to prevent pregnancy do not use modern methods of family planning. And in some parts of the world, women—especially young women and adolescent girls—are disproportionately affected by HIV.

- *Provide universal access to a full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including access to family planning, information, maternity care, and safe abortion where not against the law.*
- *Address the major direct causes of maternal mortality and morbidity, including hemorrhage, infection, high blood pressure, obstructed labor, and complications from unsafe abortion, and ensure that all births are attended by skilled health personnel with access to basic emergency obstetric care.*
- *Provide access to, prevention, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV prevention, treatment, and care.*
- *Strengthen health systems to ensure high-quality, integrated sexual and reproductive health services.*

Ensure Security

To foster fair and effective governance and to ensure safety and security, we need to end gender-based violence; enable women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery; and promote women's roles in protecting the environment.

5 End gender-based violence. Gender-based violence continues to be one of the most common human rights abuses in the world, affecting one in three women worldwide. This violence threatens women's and girls' physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being. Research suggests that incidents of violence against women and girls are significantly under-reported and seldom end in conviction. Many countries do not provide adequate support services or access to justice for survivors.

- *Adopt laws that prohibit, punish, and redress all forms of violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence; strengthen judicial and law enforcement systems by increasing the capacity of legal personnel and the police; ensure that violence is reported and perpetrators are prosecuted and convicted; and expand access to justice for women and girls, including through education about their legal rights.*
- *Improve the delivery of quality, holistic support services for survivors of violence from the health, education, security, and justice sectors, including by ensuring immediate physical and mental security.*
- *Eliminate all forms of exploitation and abuse of women and girls, with a focus on ending the trafficking of women and girls by protecting the legal rights and safety of those in potentially exploitable situations.*
- *Support prevention efforts and social norm change through education and public awareness campaigns—including for men and boys—and address violence against children, a risk factor in the perpetration and experience of adult violence.*

- 6 Enable women’s participation in conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery.** While recognition of the importance of including women at the peace table has risen on the international agenda during the last twenty years, women remain systematically excluded from reconciliation and post-conflict processes. Because women are excluded, negotiations and the settlements that follow often fail to incorporate women’s voices in determining and shaping post-conflict priorities, limit women’s access to relief and recovery assistance, prevent accountability and redress for the human rights violations suffered by women and girls—including gender-based violence in conflict—and ultimately undermine prospects for long-term peace and stability.
- *Guarantee women’s inclusion in peace and security decision-making processes, including peace-building efforts, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs, constitution building, and other post-crisis governance processes.*
 - *Prioritize protection, accountability, and justice in conflict and post-conflict settings by ensuring that transitional justice processes address human rights violations against women and girls and support the recovery and reintegration of survivors of violence.*
 - *Support post-conflict police, military, and justice sector reform efforts to develop institutions that are inclusive, non-discriminatory, and accountable, including by increasing women’s participation in security institutions and strengthening engagement with civil society.*
 - *Focus on the needs of women and their families in the provision of assistance to refugees and internally displaced populations, including unaccompanied women and girls, women head of households, and pregnant, disabled, or older women.*

- 7 Promote women’s roles in protecting and securing our environment.** Environmental degradation is a significant threat to the stability and peacefulness of communities and nations around the world. Because of their central responsibility for producing food and collecting water, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to environmental challenges—including climate change—but have a critical role to play in developing effective responses.
- *Integrate women fully into negotiations and decision-making on environmental issues, including climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and other climate policies.*
 - *Capitalize on women’s knowledge and role as stewards of natural resources to help protect, sustain, and manage the environment.*
 - *Expand equitable control over productive and natural resources and basic services, including sustainable energy, land, clean cookstoves, and clean water and sanitation.*

Create Opportunity

To ensure that women and girls can participate fully in economic, political, and civic life, we need to eliminate obstacles to women's economic participation; promote women's leadership in both the public and private sectors; and improve opportunities to study science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and take full advantage of the power of technology.

8 **Eliminate barriers to women's economic participation.** The highest echelons of the economic sphere remain largely male, and women's labor force participation has stagnated over the past two decades—dropping from 57 percent to 55 percent globally—despite strong evidence that women's economic participation benefits families, communities, and economies. In that same period, the gap between men's and women's labor force participation has remained virtually unchanged, and women continue to be relegated in greater numbers to informal sector jobs and low-wage work. In economies around the world, legal obstacles, institutional barriers, and social norms inhibit women's employment and entrepreneurship.

- *Eliminate legal barriers to women's economic participation by ensuring the equal rights of women to own and inherit property, sign a contract, register a business, access financial services, open a bank account, and work in an environment free from sexual violence and harassment.*
- *End pay disparities between men and women, and ensure that all women are able to earn a living wage under fair and decent working conditions.*
- *Encourage the enactment of policies to support the economic participation of those with family responsibilities—including paid family and medical leave, quality, affordable child-care and elder care, and workplace flexibility and predictable scheduling practices—and promote shared decision-making and responsibility in households.*
- *Expand women entrepreneurs' access to markets through mentorship and technical assistance programs, promoting information on regulatory environments and market opportunities, and providing equal opportunity to obtain government and corporate contracts.*
- *Ensure that women, particularly in rural areas, have equitable access to natural resources, and expand availability of modern productive resources, technology, and services, including agricultural technologies.*

- 9 **Increase women's leadership.** Women remain underrepresented in decision-making processes in the public and private sectors. They occupy less than a quarter of parliamentary seats around the world; are underrepresented in state capitals, courtrooms, and village councils; constitute only five percent of Fortune 500 CEOs; and are outnumbered in board rooms and trade associations.
- *Promote women's equal participation and leadership in public life by eliminating discriminatory practices that discourage women's civic engagement and by establishing training programs and networks to grow the ranks of women in civic leadership positions.*
 - *Encourage private sector efforts to boost women's representation in the management of private companies—from board composition to executive, middle-, and low-level management positions—through efforts including training programs that build a pipeline to women's leadership, as well as institutional reforms to promote the recruitment and retention of women.*
 - *Address stereotypes and biases—whether explicit, implicit, or internalized—that limit opportunities for women's leadership.*

10 **Close the gender gap in ICTs and STEM.** Information and communication technologies (ICTs), including connectivity to the Internet and access to mobile phones, are creating new avenues for participation—through, for example, mobile banking and dissemination of vital health information. Access to ICTs will shape economic, social, and political opportunities for the next generation of women and girls. However, a large gender divide in access, usage, and ownership of ICTs persists, especially in developing countries. In addition, despite projected shortages of STEM employees and the global economic shift towards information technology, women are far less likely than men to study STEM or enter STEM professions—jobs that often pay the highest wages.

- *Close the gender gap in mobile phone access and use, with a focus on lowering the total cost of mobile ownership, and eliminate constraints that prevent women from using mobile phones, including social norms, control over economic resources, lower levels of literacy and education, and language barriers.*
- *Close the gender gap in Internet access and use by expanding access to affordable platforms, developing digital and information literacy training programs, leveraging existing public access centers, and promoting gender-sensitive content and policies—including privacy protections.*
- *Encourage girls' STEM learning by increasing girls' exposure to and involvement in STEM education, and investing in the development of rigorous and inclusive STEM curricula and teacher training.*
- *Encourage women to pursue a full range of STEM fields and professions through active engagement, mentorship, training programs, and expanded support for entrepreneurs, and address the biases and other cultural challenges women face in the STEM workforce.*

LEARN MORE AND PARTICIPATE

NOCEILINGS.ORG

No Ceilings teamed up with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop a comprehensive and data-driven analysis of the status of women, girls, and gender equality since 1995, when the world declared with one voice that “women’s rights are human rights.” The findings of this report have been released through an online data visualization at noceilings.org—and have informed the principles and priorities in the *Full Participation Plan*.

NOT-THERE.ORG

The popular perception of many Americans today is that the current state of gender equality is “good enough.” However, a deeper review of the data compiled by *No Ceilings* definitively shows that we are “not there” yet on gender equality—at home or abroad. To draw attention to this reality and spur action at scale, we’re joining forces with celebrities, leading publications, fashion and consumer brands, influencers and the social community. NOT THERE aims to inspire a generation to learn more and take action for the full participation of women and girls. Learn how you can join this effort at Not-There.org.

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ABOUT NO CEILINGS

No Ceilings: The Full Participation Project is an initiative led by Secretary Clinton and Chelsea Clinton to advance the full participation of women and girls around the world. Access to equal rights and opportunities for women and girls is the unfinished business of the 21st century and is essential for achieving prosperity, stability, and security across the globe. *No Ceilings* brings together global partners to build an evidence-based case for full participation and accelerate progress for women and girls. Learn more at clintonfoundation.org/noceilings.

ABOUT THE CLINTON FOUNDATION

The Clinton Foundation convenes businesses, governments, NGOs, and individuals to improve global health and wellness, increase opportunity for women and girls, reduce childhood obesity, create economic opportunity and growth, and help communities address the effects of climate change. Learn more at clintonfoundation.org.

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Argonne National Laboratory



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