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# UNESCO's **contribution** to the Women's Empowerment Working Group

UNESCO implements its Global Priority Gender Equality by providing solutions to reduce inequalities in and through education, empowering women in science and technology for environmental action, promoting inclusion and combating gender-based violence, bridging the digital gender divide and supporting women's empowerment in crisis, emergency and early recovery contexts.

# Introduction

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Building on the G20 Leaders' Declaration in New Delhi in 2023, the Brazilian Presidency of the G20 established a Working Group on Women's Empowerment for the first time.

This group is intended to **strengthen the debate on gender equality** and to **support G20 countries to address gender inequalities** and work towards the achievement of SDG 5 through the dissemination of best practices on public policies for the promotion of women's and girls' rights. Taking stock of the initiatives to promote gender equality undertaken within the G20, the work will be carried out in line with the overarching priorities of the Brazilian Presidency, under the motto "Building a just world and a sustainable planet".

As a partner of the Working Group on Women's Empowerment, and building on its cross-cutting mandate and unique expertise on education, the sciences, culture, communication and information, **UNESCO has a significant comparative advantage to make substantial contributions** to the three priorities identified by the Brazilian Presidency: Equality, Confronting Misogyny and Violence and Climate Justice.

# Equality & Autonomy

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It is critical to tackle gender inequalities in STEM education as **girls are significantly less likely than boys to pursue studies in the fields of STEM** in most countries. UNESCO's data shows that from 2016–2018, women in STEM accounted for just one third of global post-secondary graduates. This disparity is alarming, especially as STEM careers are referred to as the jobs of the future, those which drive innovation, social well-being, inclusive growth and sustainable development. And yet, women make up only 33 per cent of scientific researchers worldwide.

**Women and girls face systemic barriers in the field of science** that limit their career advancements, including the lack of role models and adequate professional support as well as outright gender bias and discrimination that prevent them from accessing leadership positions. The glass ceiling continues to be a reality: only 12 per cent of the members of national science academies globally are women. Women are also less likely to obtain research grants than men, and when they do, they receive smaller amounts on average.

The lack of gender equality in science can impede a country's development. **By missing out on half of the world's potential, all of society suffers** because its ability to address challenges is undermined. The tide must shift towards engaging women in a strategic way.

**12%**

of the members  
of the national  
academies of  
science are  
women

**1/3**

of global post-  
secondary  
graduates in  
STEM are  
women

# UNESCO's contribution

## UNESCO's Call to Action to Close the Gender Gap in Science

Launched on the occasion of the 2024 International Day of Girls and Women in Science, this Call to Action builds on the insights emerged from the UNESCO Global Forum on 'The Future for Women and Girls in Science' (June 2023). It integrates contributions from a multitude of stakeholders, including international organizations, government institutions, non-governmental organizations and academia as well as from the private sector, which form the basis for key actionable recommendations to tackle the root causes of the gender gap by (i) Dismantling gender stereotypes and biases in science; (ii) Opening educational pathways for girls in science; and (iii) Creating workplace environments that attract, retain and advance women scientists.

Under the **International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development** (2024-2033), UNESCO supports and monitors progress in the implementation of this Call to Action in G20 countries.

## New data and policy brief for public policies on gender equality and STEM

UNESCO is launching a survey to collect and analyze new data from G20 countries on students and professionals working in STEM. The survey will cover a range of factors that influence the achievement of gender equality in STEM studies and careers such as discouragement of girls to enter STEM studies and of women graduates to pursue careers in STEM fields. It will also examine issues of harassment, barriers to leadership positions, pay gaps, etc.

The results will be published in a Policy Brief aimed at informing discussions at the G20 Summit in November 2024 and guide the development of policy initiatives to promote gender equality in STEM education and in scientific professions around the world.



Equality & Autonomy

# Confronting Misogyny and Violence

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**Discriminatory and pervasive social norms against women are the foundation from which gender inequality and technology-facilitated gender-based violence are sustained.** When the physical and psychological safety of women and girls is at risk, they are unable to fulfill their potential as problem solvers, leaders, and bridge-builders. When society allows that to happen, countries lose half of their human and creative capital, which has lasting impacts on every person's well-being and puts at risk the peace and sustainability that builds resilience for generations to come.

Gender-based violence continues to surge around the world at alarming levels. In addition to physical violence, **the emergence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence is increasingly being used to silence women and girls.** Women journalists, artists, politicians, human rights defenders and gender equality advocates, as well as women with diverse backgrounds, are particularly vulnerable as primary targets of online threats that are often realised in the physical world.

**If left unchecked, AI will repeat - and deepen - existing discriminations** and may lead to severely negative impacts on a global scale. AI and the newest generative AI models are contributing to the spread of various forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence such as gendered disinformation campaigns, cyber harassment, and hate speech and to the amplification of harms against women and girls.

**58%**

of young women and girls have experienced online harassment on social media

**44%**

of AI systems demonstrate gender bias

# UNESCO's contribution

## UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI in G20 countries

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The Recommendation (2021), which is the only universal normative instrument addressing gender equality and AI, equips governments with the tools to address the major gender gaps and challenges in the digital world. It outlines seven primary strategic areas for how Member States can support women's entrepreneurship and participation in all levels of decision-making as well as take action to address gender-based violence. To implement this Recommendation, UNESCO developed the Ethical Impact Assessment and Readiness Assessment Methodology to help shed light on gender inequalities in the field of AI, analyse the laws and policies in place to enhance gender equality in AI, and examine the diversity of the teams building AI systems.

UNESCO also launched in 2023 the **Women 4Ethical AI Platform**, which provides a unique space for global gender quality leaders in frontier technologies to combine their strengths and influence to support the implementation of the Recommendation with a gender lens.

## Governance of Digital Platforms addressing online gendered disinformation and gender-based violence

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On the occasion of the International Day of Women in Multilateralism 2023, UNESCO issued global recommendations on combating hate speech and gendered disinformation online to make digital spaces safe for women and girls, especially given the new and harmful narratives that are emerging at unprecedented speed, including the impact of generative AI.

These recommendations informed UNESCO's Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms to urgently address the global problem of online gendered disinformation and gender-based violence using international human rights law and the principles of equality, diversity, transparency, accountability as their compass. They offer guidance for independent regulators and other stakeholders to provide online spaces free of gender stereotypes, disinformation, and hate speech and ensure that digital spaces are safe for women and girls.

## **Development and dissemination of new knowledge and actionable policy recommendations**

UNESCO pioneers research to improve the understanding on the challenges and opportunities of technology and AI for gender equality and to support **informed policy action intended to eliminate gender biases and technology-facilitated gender-based violence** being reproduced through AI systems. Some of the most relevant knowledge products include:

**1. Challenging systematic prejudices: an investigation into bias against women and girls in large language models (2024)** investigates bias and stereotypes against women and girls in large language models (LLM) platforms and reveals worrying tendencies. It reports on how women are described as working in domestic roles far more often than men and are frequently associated with words like "home", "family" and "children", while male names were linked to "business", "executive", "salary", and "career".

**2. Your Opinion Doesn't Matter, Anyway: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in an Era of Generative AI (2023)** demonstrates how generative AI has amplified existing methods and increased the potential avenues for technology-facilitated gender-based violence faced by many communities online.

It presents the results of experiments conducted to anticipate the impact of generative AI on the safety of women and girls and shows that gender-based harms resulting from the misuse of generative AI technologies is substantial.

**3. The Chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists (2021-2023)** documents the experiences of over 900 women journalists worldwide through a survey and extensive interviews. Recommendations on how to address online violence against women journalists stemming from this landmark report address Member States, news organizations, internet companies, civil society, and legal actors, providing them with concrete steps to effectively tackle this threat to freedom of expression, journalists' safety and access to information.



# Climate Justice

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It is estimated that **158 million women and girls are pushed into poverty as a direct result of climate change.** But with **less than 3% of climate-funds being allocated to women-led organizations**, it is crucial to ensure adequate funding to enable local organizations to implement more effective initiatives targeting those left further behind.

**Climate extremes exacerbate existing inequalities and power dynamics that reinforce restrictive gender norms and stereotypes.** This means women and girls are even less likely to access necessary resources and services and are more vulnerable to multiple forms of gender-based violence. As many as 80 per cent of those displaced by climate change and natural disasters are women and girls. They are also 14 times more likely to die in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

Yet when it comes to women's leadership, the evidence paints a dismal picture. **Women are largely under-represented in decision-making positions at all levels** in the field of climate change. Only 15 out of 133 world leaders participating in the COP 28 were women, similar to previous years.

A paradigm change is needed to redress the current situation. Global responses to the climate crisis will not be effective unless women are in the driving seat, ensuring that mitigation and adaptation measures are inclusive and leave no one behind.

**+ 800 000**  
women and girls  
lose their lives  
every year due to  
the lack of clean  
water.

**80%**  
of those displaced  
by climate change  
and natural  
disasters are  
women and girls.

# UNESCO's contribution

## Bringing its unique expertise focusing on the intersection between education, emergencies and climate action

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UNESCO works to ensure access to education, which is at the same time one of the most affected sectors, and the most effective mitigation measure to face environmental emergencies and the climate crisis. Education enables women and girls to strengthen their resilience in the wake of climate emergencies; to have access to life saving information; to lead and design mitigation and adaptation measures; and to demand accountability on climate-related decisions and actions. Education is also crucial for the resilience of the whole society, as for each additional year of education that girls acquire, a country's resilience to climate disasters increases by 2-3 percentage points on average.

## Mainstreaming gender equality within the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development

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To realize its commitment to empower women in ocean sciences, UNESCO works to promote gender mainstreaming into the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

To this end, UNESCO is elaborating a policy brief covering the G20 countries to bring the gender perspective to the 10 thematic Challenges that will be addressed throughout the UN Ocean Decade. It will notably address the critical role of women in protecting biodiversity, promoting sustainable and equitable ocean economy, increasing community resilience to ocean hazards, and changing humanity's relationship with the ocean. It will also assess through qualitative and quantitative information the disproportionate impact of ocean-based climate change on women and girls.

## Call for Action “Gender Equality to solve the Climate Emergency”

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The Global Dialogue on Gender Equality and the Climate Emergency, organized in the framework of the 2024 International Day of Women in Multilateralism, brought together renowned personalities and climate experts from across the globe who shared their insights on gender equality as part of the solution to address the climate emergency. The results of the dialogue have been compiled as a set of actionable recommendations for (i) Empowering women as leaders in multilateral forums to tackle the climate crisis; (ii) Promoting women's knowledge, actions and networks for climate justice; (iii) Mainstreaming gender in climate financing policies and decision-making processes; and (iv) Combating gender-based violence linked to climate crisis.

At the operational level, the UNESCO Call for Action to accelerate the achievement of gender equality in the water domain, together with a Multi-stakeholder Coalition composed by Member States, UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs, private sector and civil society, acts as a catalyst for the implementation of these recommendations through advocacy, policy, gender-equal funding, and the development of innovative tools.



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To close the gender gap, we need to start with the issue of climate financing.

Yolanda Sanchez

Director of the Latin American Marine Educators Network

### ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS:

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**Empowering women as leaders in multilateral forums to tackle the climate crisis**



**Promoting women's knowledge, actions and networks for climate justice**



**Mainstreaming gender in climate financing policies and decision-making processes**



**Combating gender-based violence linked to climate crisis.**

