

Open letter to World Leaders: Rapid change on gender equality is possible but you must accelerate progress

This year marks 25 years since 189 countries committed to the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights ([The Beijing Platform for Action](#)) and also marks the [10 year countdown](#) to the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects for people across the world. We won't be able to realize this vision if we don't ensure that girls and women have equal rights and opportunities. **And yet, to date no country has achieved gender equality.** As representatives of leading organizations championing gender equality, we're raising the alarm about the pace of progress. There is no time left for business as usual: gender equality can be achieved for billions of girls and women by 2030, but it requires everyone to move faster.

We've found that, **if the current pace continues, 67 countries – home to 2.1 billion girls and women – will not achieve any of the key gender equality targets we studied by 2030.** Our new report, [Bending the Curve Towards Gender Equality by 2030](#), looks at five vital targets for which data were available: access to contraception, girls' education, political leadership, workplace equality laws, and safety.

More than a third of the 129 countries we studied have been moving slowly, or even in the wrong direction, on at least four of the five issues over the past decade or two. At the global level, for example, there has been almost no progress on perceptions of safety: If current rates continue, it will take more than six generations for all girls and women to report feeling safe walking at night.

When we look behind the global averages, however, the data also reveal reasons for hope. On each of these five issues, there were countries who made fast progress over the past ten or twenty years, sometimes astonishingly fast. For example, in Rwanda access to contraception moved from covering 12 per cent of girls and women in 2000 to 69 per cent in 2018. In Ghana the percentage of girls who completed secondary school grew from just 5 per cent in 2003 to over 40 per cent 12 years later. And several countries have made rapid progress on having women represented in Cabinet positions (including Uruguay which went from zero women Ministers to 42 per cent in less than 15 years, Canada which went from 30 per cent to parity in four years, and Ethiopia which went from 10 per cent to 48 per cent women in just one year).

If every country followed the pace of fast-moving countries on these issues over the next decade, nearly three-quarters of the world's girls and women could instead be living in countries that met four or all five of the gender equality targets we studied by 2030.

Compared to the current pace, that would mean 400 million more girls and women would have access to contraception to plan if, when, and with whom they have children, and 85 million more girls would complete secondary school by 2030. By shifting political will, women's representation in powerful government positions and workplace equality laws could change almost overnight.

The size of the challenge shouldn't be underestimated. Countries are starting from very different points, and every context is different. **But as a leading global coalition working every day in partnership with girls and women and gender equality champions from across the world**, we see what is possible when governments prioritize gender equality, make coordinated and targeted investments, and bring feminist movements, women-focused organizations, and girls and women themselves to the decision-making table.

When your representatives meet at the United Nations for the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) next week, you must ask yourselves if your country is poised to bend the curve towards gender equality over the next decade.

How did your country fare on the [SDG Gender Index](#) (released by our EM2030 partnership in 2019) and what were its weaknesses? Are your countries moving in the right direction on gender equality? **What is stopping your country from putting in place the laws, policies and budget allocations that have long been promised to girls and women in global agreements like [The Beijing Platform for Action](#) and the [SDGs](#)?**

Ask these questions, act on the answers, and use your power to make bold commitments that will set your countries' course towards gender equality over the next decade. By doing so - and by **announcing these commitments publicly and loudly at the [Generation Equality Forum in Paris this July](#)** - you can contribute to creating a gender equal world. A gender equal world that, evidence shows us, would be healthier, wealthier, more productive, more peaceful, and more just.

Signed by:



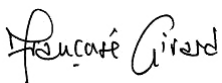
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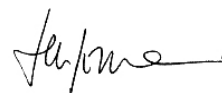
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