**UNICEF’s input for the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls’ upcoming report “Human Security of Women and Girls in the Context of Poverty and Inequality”**

# 16. Are there any policies implemented by your organization, or recommended to/applied in States, to protect women and girls from risks and sudden economic shocks derived from crises, and strengthen their resilience and that of the communities they live in?

In recognition of the urgent need and opportunities for social protection programmes and systems to respond to the needs of girls and women better, and contribute to progress towards gender inequality, UNICEF has committed to shifting towards gender-responsive social protection in all contexts – and where tenable, shifting towards gender-transformative social protection work that aims to shift norms and address root causes of gender inequality.

Many country offices recognise that family-friendly policies are a cornerstone of social protection programming that will catalyse gender-equitable parenting and care work. Hence, 56 countries engaged in direct programming on family-friendly policies or advocated for national governments to adopt such policies. UNICEF focuses on four key family-friendly policy areas: parental leave for all parents; breastfeeding support; affordable, accessible, quality childcare; and the provision of child benefits and adequate wages.

# 17. What are the main actions taken by your organizations to reduce poverty of women and girls and/or to reduce their levels of economic inequality?

UNICEF has explicit commitments to increasing the number of countries with gender-responsive or transformative social protection programmes and increasing the number of countries where UNICEF is supporting action on care work and family friendly policies. **The number of UNICEF country offices with specific gender objectives in their social protection work grew from 29 in 2019 to 100 in 2022.** As of January 2022, 43 UNICEF country offices are now targeting results to increase girls’ education through their social protection work, and 40 country offices are targeting results to reduce gender-based violence - whilst 36 country offices are explicitly targeting results to increase women’s and girls’ decision-making power (such as the ability to make decisions about household expenditure).

UNICEF works with governments and private sector actors to effectively integrate gender-responsive dimensions into social protection. Providing vulnerable families with economic support through social protection programmes, such as cash transfers, allows them to direct resources towards all their children, and may provide opportunities to alleviate discriminatory choices that are driven by a combination of poverty and gender norms, such as choosing to prioritise the boy’s education when there is not enough money to pay for more than one child. In addition, poorly designed social protection systems can be inaccessible and severely limit women’s and girls’ economic opportunities and access to benefits, especially for female heads-of-households and other marginalised groups who may be unable to access social protection provisions due to a range of issues, from illiteracy to caring responsibilities.[[1]](#footnote-1)

# 18. Could you mention any concrete action adopted to promote and protect the economic and social human rights of women and girls?

1. In 2017, UNICEF partnered with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) to implement Better Business Practices for Children (BBPC), an initiative to improve maternal and infant nutrition by making workplaces mother and baby friendly. Under the BBPC project, 48 companies established breastfeeding rooms, as mandated by the Health Act, 2017. This legislation protects the rights of breastfeeding mothers in workplaces across Kenya. To design the programme, UNICEF leveraged global evidence on effective workplace policies. The programme was implemented through four distinct channels: the workplace, day-care centres, health-care facilities, and villages. UNICEF also brought together a multi-stakeholder working group to monitor the initiative, including county health departments, the Ministry of Health, KEPSA and Kabarak University. The project is the culmination of UNICEF’s efforts to facilitate family-friendly policies in Kenya over the last eight years. The BBPC initiative continues to focus on infant and maternal health by promoting breastfeeding and advocating for safer work environments and facilities that enable women to breastfeed in both formal and informal workplaces.[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. The early education programme in Turkey – which targets disadvantaged communities, including refugees – offers weekly content and tools for parents to better engage with their young children and promote learning at home. Content is gender responsive and uses audiobooks and parenting guides to promote greater involvement by fathers in their children’s development, and to shift traditional gender roles. The programme is being implemented by UNICEF, the Development Foundation of Turkey, and the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) Regional Development Administration, and to date has reached almost 2,900 fathers and 4,900 children.[[3]](#footnote-3)
3. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed 6 out of 10 children in Argentina under the poverty line. Women working in the informal sector – who make up 38 percent of all wage earners in the country – were particularly vulnerable, as they had no access to unemployment benefits or family or sick leave. The UNICEF Country Office in Argentina has been working to close the gap in access to family-friendly policies using strategies at both the macro and micro level. In partnership with a civil society organisation, UNICEF has generated evidence and advocated for a change in family leave legislation, from both childhood and gender perspectives, to continue building on the country office’s efforts in 2020 to empower women unionists in the informal sector to demand their rights.[[4]](#footnote-4)
4. In January 2022, UNICEF co-organised a workshop on gender-based violence and social protection with the UK Government and the World Bank: [Gender-Based Violence and Social Protection Learning Workshop](https://socialprotection.org/discover/events/gender-based-violence-and-social-protection-learning-workshop). The event offered a forum for learning on global evidence and best practices, as well as offering opportunities to discuss operational challenges and share insights between organisations.
5. UNICEF has carried out a substantial amount of research on gender-responsive or transformative social protection, and produced numerous reports, articles, policy papers, etc to support action to address women and girls’ economic and social inequality and poverty. Below is a selection:
   * An article that was published in *Science* together with co-authors from multiple organisations and countries, analysing [how social protection responds to gender inequities and policy recommendations for what next:](https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abm5922)[Gender-responsive social protection post–COVID-19](https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abm5922);
   * A UNICEF technical note on [Gender-Responsive Protection during COVID-19](https://www.unicef.org/documents/gender-responsive-social-protection-during-covid-19) with applicability and relevance to other shocks;
   * A UNICEF-FCDO) report on [Gender-Responsive “Cash Plus” Programming: Lessons from Practice in LMICs](https://www.unicef.org/documents/gender-responsive-cash-plus-programming-lessons-practice-lmics) with practical recommendations on design and implementation ;
   * UNICEF-UN Women research analysing the extent of gender mainstreaming in social protection strategies and programme design with evidence from 75 low- and middle-income countries: [Mainstreaming gender into social protection strategies and programmes: Evidence from 74 low- and middle-income countries](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/1208-mainstreaming-gender-into-social-protection-strategies-and-programmes-evidence-from-74-lmics.html);
   * A UNICEF-Innocenti systematic review of reviews on gender and social protection: [Impact of social protection on gender equality in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review of reviews](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cl2.1240);
   * A UNICEF-Innocenti conceptual framework on gender-responsive, age-sensitive social protection: [Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/1116-gender-responsive-age-sensitive-social-protection-a-conceptual-framework.html);
   * A UNICEF-FCDO-ODI publication containing a synthesis of recent findings on gender and social protection: [Social Protection & Gender Equality Outcomes Across the Lifecycle](https://www.unicef.org/documents/social-protection-gender-equality-findings);
   * A UNICEF-FCDO-ODI: [Mapping Social Protection Intervention Pathways to Address Barriers to Girls’ Education](https://www.unicef.org/media/115131/file/Mapping%20Social%20Protection%20Pathways%20for%20Girls'%20Education%20FINAL.pdf);
   * A UNICEF-WIEGO-ILO global policy paper on family friendly policies for workers and their children in the informal economy: [Family-Friendly Policies for Workers in the Informal Economy](https://www.unicef.org/reports/family-friendly-policies-workers-informal-economy)

On behalf of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board Gender Working Group, Key resources on social protection and gender-based violence have been compiled at [unicef.org/media/113661/file/SPIAC-B-Resourc-Sheet-on-GBV-Social-Protection.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/113661/file/SPIAC-B-Resourc-Sheet-on-GBV-Social-Protection.pdf).

1. UNICEF Global Annual Results Report 2021, p. 55 [at unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UNICEF Global Annual Results Report 2021, p. 60 [at unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UNICEF Global Annual Results Report 2021, p. 58 [at unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. UNICEF Global Annual Results Report 2021, p. 59 [at unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/122786/file/Global-annual-results-report-2021-goal-area-5.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)