

Issue Brief

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Women & Population

Empowering women and girls—providing them with educational and economic opportunities and securing their health and human rights—is essential in the global drive to eliminate poverty, achieve social justice and stabilize the world’s population. It’s simple—unless the needs and rights of women and girls are addressed, it will be impossible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - the global blueprint for combatting extreme poverty.

For more than a decade, the United Nations Foundation has helped support and address the rights and needs of women and girls. We foster cooperation across United Nations agencies and help link private sector partners with the UN to reduce unmet need for contraception or reproductive health services and family planning, and provide women and girls with economic opportunities and ensure their human rights.

The UN Foundation works with the UN to promote gender equality and empower women and girls.

The UN Foundation’s Women & Population program works together with the UN to promote gender equality and advance the rights and needs of women and girls.

Our program priorities include:

Investing in Adolescent Girls

From its inception, the UN Foundation has helped elevate the rights and needs of adolescent girls. Through advocacy and investment, we galvanize global attention and sustained focus on girls' health, livelihoods, and rights. There are more than 515 million adolescent girls globally, making up part of the largest youth generation in history. Investing in a girl to be educated, healthy, skilled, and empowered today means she will have the tools to reinvest back into her family, her community, and our world. Our investments led to the creation of the United Nations Adolescent Girls Task Force. In March 2010, the Task Force issued a groundbreaking UN Joint Statement on Adolescent Girls pledging to intensify the efforts to protect the rights of adolescent girls. To support the UN in this work, we launched Girl Up, a "for girls, by girls" campaign that gives American girls the opportunity to channel their energy and compassion to raise awareness and funds for UN programs that help some of the world's most vulnerable adolescent girls. Working with the Nike Foundation, we founded the Coalition for Adolescent Girls—a public-private partnership that brings together like-minded organizations to drive fresh perspectives, diverse resources and concrete solutions to the challenges facing adolescent girls in developing countries and launched the Girls Count series, the first comprehensive research focused exclusively on adolescent girls in the developing world.

Promoting Reproductive Health

The UN Foundation is committed to achieving the global goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services by 2015. Currently, 222 million women around the world want – but do not have – access to or information about modern contraception. In recent years, the global community has not adequately prioritized funding reproductive health and family planning, with annual shortfalls around \$8 billion. This shortfall has detrimental effects on women's and girls' health and well-being, as well as that of their families, communities, and our world. Right now, the largest generation of young people ever is coming of age. Nearly half the world's population —3 billion people—is under the age of 25. Through the Universal Access Project, the UN Foundation supports efforts to strengthen U.S. leadership on reproductive health including more funding, improved policies and strengthening advocacy capacity of the NGO community.

Supporting UN Efforts on Women

The United Nations is home to many of the world's most important international institutions for women and girls. UNFPA is the world's voice for reproductive health and family planning; UN Women, which includes the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and works to stem violence against women and girls, promote their leadership and participation, and accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide; and UNICEF provides critical services to girls and young women. Partnering with the United Nations is central to our approach to tackling the world's most pressing issues, especially those connected with advancing key UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) critical to women and girls. These MDGs include goal 3 (promoting gender equality and empowering women) and goal 5 (improving maternal health and achieving universal access to reproductive health).

By the Numbers

- Awarded 533 grants totaling more than \$170 million in support of empowering girls and women
- Co-invested \$43 million from individual, corporate and foundation partners
- Allocated \$50 million for HIV/AIDS prevention programs with \$33.6 million dedicated to women and girls
- Launched the award-winning online "op-ed page," RH Reality Check, to provide and disseminate news, information and commentary on sexual and reproductive health
- Leveraged close to \$12 million from leading foundations to strengthen U.S. leadership on international family planning and reproductive health, resulting in a 30% increase in U.S. funding since 2008
- Invested \$51.7 million in programs benefiting adolescent girls
- Seeded the work of the UN Adolescent Girls Task Force, a group of seven UN agencies working together to improve adolescent girls' lives worldwide
- Supported 40 NGO projects to strengthen U.S. leadership on international reproductive health and family planning