

NEWMUN VII

# UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## *Background* GUIDE



**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**  
**(UNDP)**



**Letter from the Chairs:**

**Dear esteemed delegates**

**We are your chairs Aashika Vineesh and Hiba Parkar. It is our honor to serve you as chair of the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP). As students who all started our MUN career as hesitant delegates, we understand that MUN can be daunting to some of you. Here is our advice: Model United Nations is all about research, confidence, and collaboration. With the knowledge gained from our background guide and your independent research, you will be able to come up with a wide range of innovative ideas. And through collaboration, ideas from you and others will form a realistic solution. We as chairs will do our best to make this conference as meaningful as possible while you work to solve a current global issue.**

**If you have any questions regarding the conference, please do not hesitate to contact us. We wish you all the best and look forward to having a fruitful debate with all of you soon!**

**Sincerely,**

**UNDP Chairs**

# **Agenda 1- Advancing Gender Equality through Economic Empowerment**

## **Introduction**

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also one of the main drivers of social and economic development. Across the world, women continue to face barriers that limit their access to education, employment, and financial resources. These inequalities prevent them from achieving independence and restrict the economic growth of their societies. When women have equal access to opportunities, they can participate fully in the economy, contribute to innovation, and help build stronger and fairer nations.

Economic empowerment is at the heart of this goal. It ensures that women have control over financial decisions, access to decent work, and equal chances to lead. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has made gender equality a key focus area because empowering women contributes to poverty reduction, social justice, and sustainable growth. The aim of this background guide is to help delegates understand the causes and consequences of the gender gap in the economy, the frameworks already in place to address it, and possible solutions to create a more inclusive global economy.

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## **Definition of Key Terms**

- **Gender Equality:** Equal access to opportunities, rights, and responsibilities for men and women.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The process through which individuals, especially women, gain access to and control over economic resources.
- **Gender Pay Gap:** The difference in earnings between men and women for similar work.
- **Informal Sector:** Economic activities not regulated or protected by the state, where many women are employed.
- **CEDAW:** The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the UN in 1979.
- **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:** Adopted in 1995, it outlines commitments to achieve women's rights and economic independence.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** A set of 17 global goals established by the UN in 2015, including Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 8 on decent work.

## **General Overview**

**1. What the Issue is About** Advancing gender equality through economic empowerment means providing women and men equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from economic activities. Despite significant progress in recent years, women still earn less than men, face barriers to leadership roles, and carry a greater share of unpaid domestic work.

Global data shows that women make up almost 39 percent of the global labor force but are often concentrated in low-paying jobs or informal work. Many women lack access to credit, property, technology, and training. The COVID-19 pandemic made the gap worse, as women were more likely to lose jobs or leave the workforce due to increased care responsibilities.

**2. Origin and History of the Issue** Efforts to ensure gender equality in the economy began with the founding of the United Nations. The UN Charter of 1945 was the first international agreement to affirm equality between men and women. In 1979, the adoption of CEDAW gave a legal framework to eliminate discrimination. The 1995 Beijing Declaration further strengthened global commitment by identifying women's economic independence as essential to equality.

Since then, many UN agencies, especially the UNDP, have supported programs that help women gain access to financial services, training, and employment. The introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 renewed the global focus on gender equality and inclusive economic growth.

**3. Current Situation** While awareness and policy frameworks have improved, gender inequality in the economy remains widespread. Women perform nearly two and a half times more unpaid work than men, which limits their ability to earn income. Female entrepreneurship is growing but still faces barriers like lack of access to finance and limited digital skills.

Legal discrimination also continues in some countries where women cannot own property or inherit land. Unequal pay, limited maternity protection, and workplace harassment further restrict participation. UNDP's reports show that closing the gender gap could add trillions of dollars to the global GDP, proving that equality benefits everyone.

## **4. Representation and Data**

- Women's global labor force participation rate is around 47 percent, compared to 72 percent for men.
- Women represent only about 28 percent of managerial positions worldwide.
- In many regions, women entrepreneurs receive less than 10 percent of available credit.

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## **Major Parties Involved**

- **UN Women:** Advocates for equal representation and supports programs focused on leadership, employment, and entrepreneurship.
  - **International Labour Organization (ILO):** Establishes international labor standards and promotes fair pay, decent work, and non-discrimination.
  - **World Bank:** Funds projects that expand women's access to finance, property, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
  - **Member States:** Responsible for implementing national policies, reforming laws, and promoting equality through education and employment initiatives.
  - **Civil Society and NGOs:** Engage in advocacy, provide skill training, and support women at the community level to achieve economic independence.
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## **Timeline of Key Events**

- **1945:** The United Nations Charter acknowledges equality between men and women.
  - **1979:** Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
  - **1995:** The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlight women's economic independence as a global priority.
  - **2000:** Introduction of the Millennium Development Goals, with a target on gender equality.
  - **2010:** Establishment of UN Women to lead and coordinate global efforts for women's empowerment.
  - **2015:** Launch of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).
  - **2020:** The COVID-19 pandemic exposes vulnerabilities faced by women in the labor force.
  - **2022:** UNDP launches the Gender Equality Strategy 2022–2025, emphasizing women's leadership and inclusive economic growth.
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## **Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

The UNDP and other international bodies have made several efforts to close the gender gap in economic opportunities. The UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy provides a clear plan to promote equal access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship. It supports governments in implementing gender-responsive policies and developing inclusive financial systems. Through this strategy, UNDP has worked with various nations to reform labor laws, expand social protection, and improve women's access to credit and resources.

UN Women has been instrumental in global advocacy through programs like HeForShe and the Generation Equality Forum, which encourage shared responsibility between men and women in achieving equality. Similarly, the International Labour Organization has set key international standards through conventions on equal pay and non-discrimination. These agreements have guided many countries in developing fair labor laws and practices.

Partnerships with governments and international organizations have produced important results, including the creation of microfinance programs, digital skill initiatives, and vocational training for women. The World Bank and UNDP have also collaborated on data-driven projects to understand barriers and design better economic strategies for women. However, despite all these efforts, progress has been slow in many regions. Limited funding, weak implementation, and cultural barriers still prevent women from achieving full economic empowerment.

## **Legal and Policy Frameworks**

Legal and policy frameworks are crucial for protecting women's rights and ensuring economic equality. Internationally, several key instruments shape this foundation. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) obligates states to guarantee women equal access to employment, property, and resources. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) further reinforces these commitments, identifying economic participation as one of its twelve critical areas of concern.

At the global level, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 5 and 8, guide governments in promoting gender equality and inclusive economic growth. These frameworks encourage countries to remove discriminatory laws, expand women's access to finance, and ensure decent working conditions.

Nationally, countries have introduced their own policies to align with these international commitments. Many have passed Equal Pay Acts, Anti-Discrimination Laws, and Property Rights Reforms to promote fairness in the workplace and society. Governments are also adopting Gender-Responsive Budgeting, which allocates funds specifically to programs benefiting women.

UNDP supports these efforts by providing technical assistance, policy guidance, and training for public officials. It helps member states assess gender gaps, strengthen institutional capacity, and implement effective strategies. Yet, despite progress, weak enforcement, lack of awareness, and

social resistance continue to limit the impact of these frameworks. Strengthening monitoring systems and accountability measures is essential for ensuring that these policies translate into real-world change.

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## **Possible Solutions**

To achieve meaningful change, countries must strengthen legal frameworks that ensure equality in the workplace. Laws should guarantee equal pay for equal work, prohibit workplace discrimination, and protect maternity and paternity rights. Governments must also ensure that these laws are enforced effectively, with regular monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

Access to finance is another key factor. Women often face challenges in obtaining loans or starting businesses due to lack of collateral or financial literacy. Microfinance programs and women-friendly banking policies can help bridge this gap. Promoting education and training is also essential. Investing in skill development, especially in areas like technology and entrepreneurship, can open new career paths for women and reduce dependency on low-income or informal jobs.

Partnerships between the public and private sectors can create inclusive business models that support women's participation and leadership. Finally, better data collection on gender-related economic indicators can guide policy decisions and measure progress effectively. The UNDP should continue supporting member states through technical assistance, capacity building, and policy guidance to ensure that progress is sustainable and inclusive.

## **Moderated Caucus Topics**

1. Empowering Women through Equal Access to Financial Resources and Credit Systems.
2. Addressing Barriers to Female Participation in the Formal Workforce.
3. Evaluating the Role of Education and Skill Development in Women's Economic Empowerment.
4. Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Ensure Gender Equality in Economic Opportunities.

## **Agenda 2: Youth Employment and Skill Development in the Digital Economy**

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### **Introduction**

The rise of the digital economy has transformed the way the world works. Technology has opened new paths for innovation, entrepreneurship, and employment. Yet, while the digital age presents immense opportunities, it also brings major challenges, especially for young people entering the workforce. Many youth lack access to digital education, financial support, and infrastructure needed to succeed in this fast-changing environment.

The youth population, which makes up nearly 16 percent of the global population, has the potential to drive economic transformation if provided with the right skills and opportunities. However, global youth unemployment rates remain alarmingly high, and many young workers are trapped in informal or low-paying jobs.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recognizes that empowering young people in the digital economy is crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. Through skill development, entrepreneurship support, and equal access to financial resources, youth can become active contributors to their countries' economic progress. This guide explores how the digital economy can create opportunities for youth employment, the challenges faced by different countries, and ways to build a more inclusive future.

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## **Definition of Key Terms**

- Digital Economy: Economic activities that rely on digital technologies, such as the internet, mobile devices, and artificial intelligence.
- Youth Employment: The participation of individuals aged 15–24 in the labor force through stable, decent, and productive work.
- Entrepreneurship: The process of starting and managing new businesses, especially in the digital or technology-based sector.
- Digital Divide: The gap between those who have access to modern digital technology and those who do not.
- Skill Development: The process of enhancing abilities, knowledge, and training required to succeed in specific jobs.
- Informal Employment: Jobs that are not legally regulated or protected, often lacking security and benefits.

## **General Overview**

The digital revolution has reshaped the global economy, creating new opportunities for innovation and employment. Sectors such as e-commerce, digital marketing, artificial intelligence, and fintech have grown rapidly. However, these opportunities are not evenly

distributed. In many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, young people face barriers such as limited access to digital education, internet connectivity, and financial resources.

According to the International Labour Organization, over 70 million young people are unemployed worldwide. Many more are underemployed or working in informal sectors. The shift toward digital technologies has created a demand for new skills, but education systems in many countries have not adapted fast enough. Young people often lack training in coding, data analysis, or digital business management — skills that are essential for the modern economy.

In regions like Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, digital literacy levels remain low, and internet access is limited, making it harder for youth to compete globally. On the other hand, countries with strong digital infrastructure, like Singapore, South Korea, and Estonia, have successfully integrated young workers into their technology-driven economies.

The digital economy can be an equalizer if supported by inclusive policies and investments. It enables remote work, innovation, and entrepreneurship regardless of geography. However, without equal access to resources and education, it can also deepen inequality. Bridging this gap is one of the main challenges for the UNDP and its partners.

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## **Current UNDP Initiatives and Projects**

The United Nations Development Programme has launched several initiatives to support youth employment and digital skill development across the globe. The Youth Co:Lab initiative, created in partnership with Citi Foundation, is one of the most successful programs that empowers young entrepreneurs with mentorship, funding, and networking opportunities. It encourages innovative, youth-led solutions to address social and economic challenges using technology. Another major initiative is Digital X, which identifies and supports scalable digital solutions that contribute to sustainable development, such as online learning platforms and digital public services.

UNDP has also introduced the Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS), which works to enhance youth participation in economic growth through training, advocacy, and capacity-building projects. In Africa, Youth Connekt Africa connects young innovators with governments and private sector partners, helping them access digital resources and employment networks. These ongoing projects aim to ensure that youth are equipped with modern skills, financial opportunities, and supportive ecosystems. While these initiatives have achieved measurable success, continuous expansion and collaboration with local governments are necessary to reach underserved communities and ensure lasting impact.

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## **Timeline of Key Events**

- **2000:** The Millennium Development Goals highlight the importance of youth employment.
  - **2015:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are adopted, including Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth.
  - **2016:** UNDP launches the “Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS).”
  - **2019:** The UN Secretary-General’s Strategy on Youth focuses on employment and innovation.
  - **2020:** COVID-19 pandemic disrupts labor markets, highlighting digital inequalities.
  - **2022:** UNDP expands digital literacy initiatives and entrepreneurship support under the “Digital for Development” program.
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## **Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

The UNDP has been actively supporting youth employment through various initiatives. Its “Youth-GPS” program, launched in 2016, aims to provide education, digital skills, and entrepreneurship training. The program operates in over 100 countries and focuses on creating inclusive job markets.

The International Labour Organization has introduced the “Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth,” which encourages governments to design youth-centered labor policies. The World Bank has also invested in projects that promote access to digital infrastructure and support small business startups.

Many countries have begun integrating digital training into their national education systems. For instance, India’s “Digital India” campaign promotes digital literacy across rural areas, while Rwanda’s “Smart Rwanda Master Plan” focuses on building ICT skills among youth. Similarly, countries like Finland and Singapore have created digital hubs and innovation labs to connect young entrepreneurs with resources and investors.

However, the progress remains uneven. Developing countries often struggle with limited infrastructure, low internet penetration, and high education costs. Moreover, gender inequality continues to limit young women’s participation in the digital economy. To create fair opportunities, more targeted efforts are needed to address these differences and ensure that digital growth is inclusive.

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## **Access to Financial Resources and Entrepreneurship**

Access to finance is one of the biggest barriers preventing youth from becoming entrepreneurs. Many young people have innovative business ideas but lack the capital or credit history to secure loans. Traditional banks are often hesitant to fund youth-led or start-up ventures due to high risks. This limits innovation and job creation.

Microfinance institutions, crowdfunding platforms, and digital banking systems have started to fill this gap. UNDP supports programs that help youth gain access to small business loans and entrepreneurship training. For example, digital payment systems and mobile banking have revolutionized access to finance in countries like Kenya and Bangladesh, where platforms such as M-Pesa have empowered millions of young entrepreneurs.

Additionally, entrepreneurship training and mentorship programs are vital for helping youth understand how to manage finances, develop business plans, and market their products. The UNDP has partnered with the private sector and governments to set up start-up incubators, hackathons, and innovation hubs. These platforms not only provide financial support but also mentorship and skill-building opportunities.

To make these initiatives sustainable, governments must create environments that support youth-led enterprises. This includes easing regulations for small businesses, providing tax incentives, and ensuring that credit institutions are inclusive and youth-friendly. When young people are given the financial tools to innovate, they can create jobs for themselves and others, driving economic growth.

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## **Tackling the Drawbacks Faced by Specific Countries**

The challenges of youth employment in the digital economy vary across regions. In developing countries, the main obstacles are poor digital infrastructure, limited access to education, and lack of reliable internet. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, only around one-third of the population has access to the internet. Many schools lack computers or qualified teachers for digital education. This creates a large digital divide between urban and rural areas.

In South Asia, rapid population growth means millions of young people enter the job market each year, but economies struggle to provide enough opportunities. Many end up in informal or low-skilled jobs that offer no long-term stability. Additionally, countries facing political instability or economic crises, such as parts of the Middle East or Latin America, have even greater challenges integrating youth into the workforce.

Meanwhile, developed countries face a different kind of challenge. Automation and artificial intelligence are replacing many traditional jobs, forcing young workers to adapt to changing skill

demands. There is also a growing gap between academic qualifications and practical skills needed in the job market.

Addressing these diverse challenges requires flexible and country-specific solutions. UNDP has been working closely with governments to design national digital strategies that focus on inclusivity. For instance, in countries like Egypt and Vietnam, UNDP has launched training centers that teach youth coding, data analytics, and entrepreneurship. Regional cooperation is also crucial to share best practices and create opportunities for cross-border digital trade.

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## **Possible Solutions**

To ensure that youth benefit fully from the digital economy, countries must prioritize digital education. Schools and universities should integrate computer science, digital marketing, and coding into their curricula. Public-private partnerships can help establish digital training centers in rural and urban areas alike.

Improving access to technology and internet connectivity is equally vital. Governments can work with telecom providers to expand affordable broadband access, especially in remote regions. Initiatives such as free Wi-Fi zones and digital literacy workshops can make a big difference.

For entrepreneurship, governments and international organizations should expand funding programs for youth-led start-ups. This could include low-interest loans, grants, and mentorship opportunities. Encouraging venture capital and innovation funds focused on young entrepreneurs can also promote sustainable growth.

Gender inclusion must remain a priority. Women and girls should have equal access to technology, financial resources, and training programs. Digital platforms can also be used to promote flexible work, allowing women to balance family responsibilities while participating in the economy.

Finally, regional cooperation can help share best practices and create new employment networks. Countries can collaborate to set up digital job platforms that connect skilled youth with remote or freelance work opportunities across borders. With coordinated efforts and targeted investment, the digital economy can become a tool for inclusive development.

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## **Moderated Caucus Topics**

1. Expanding Digital Education and Skill Development Programs for Youth.
2. Improving Access to Finance for Young Entrepreneurs in the Digital Sector.
3. Addressing Regional Inequalities in Digital Infrastructure and Opportunities.

#### 4. Empowering Women and Girls to Participate Equally in Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship

