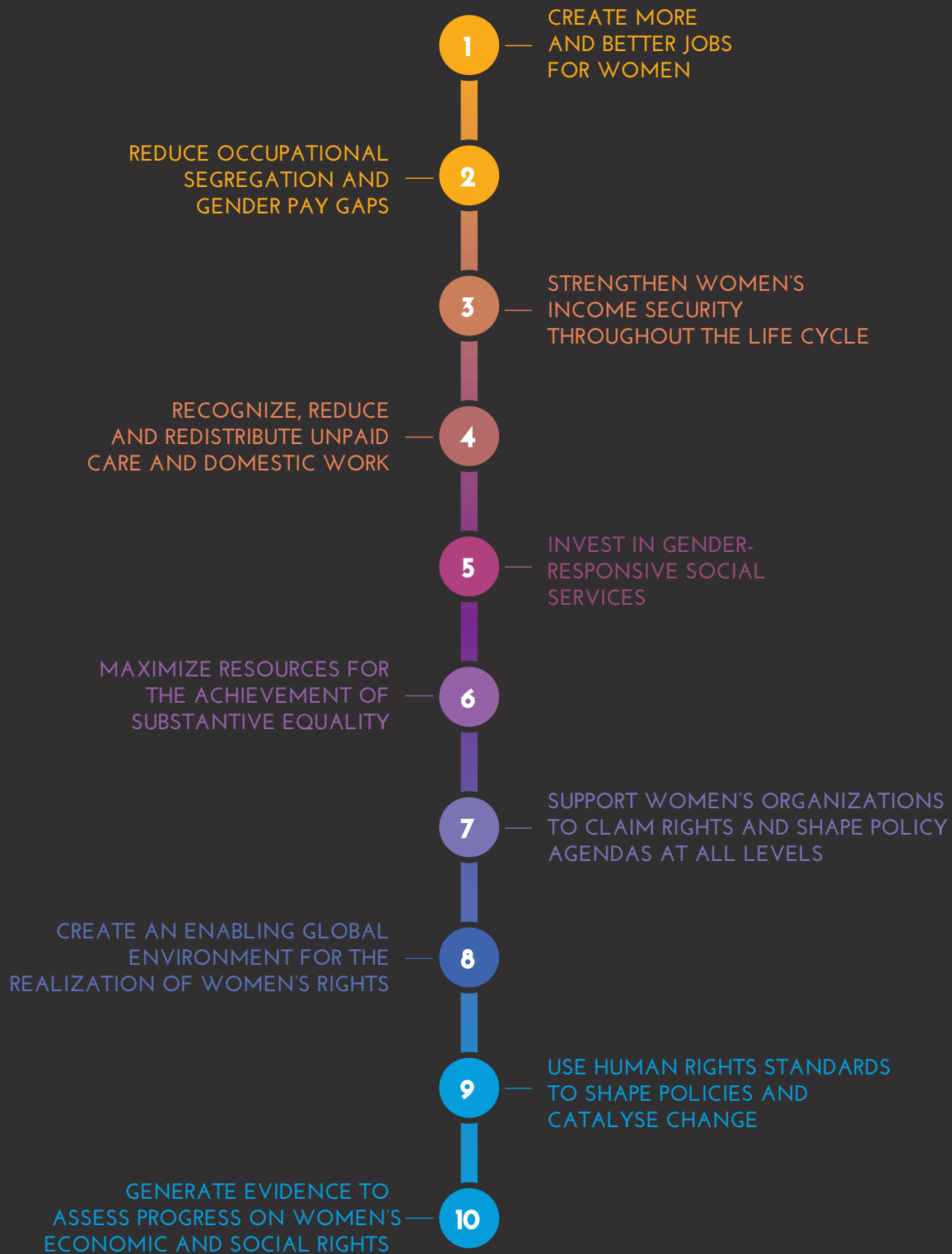


10 PRIORITIES FOR PUBLIC ACTION



1. CREATE MORE AND BETTER JOBS FOR WOMEN

Income from work is a foundation for people’s livelihoods and life chances. However, at global level, women’s labour force participation has stalled (see Figure 2). In addition, economic policies have failed to create enough decent jobs, making it difficult for people to work their way out of poverty. This is particularly true for women, who are over-represented among those in precarious, informal and low-wage employment. With the right economic and social policies, it is possible to reverse this trend (see Box 1).

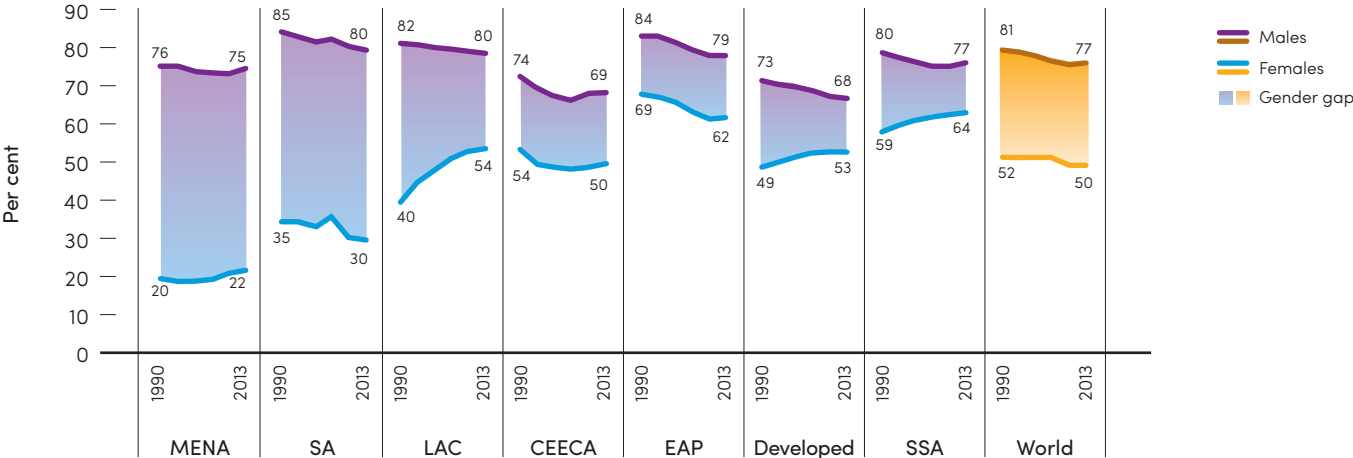
A number of concrete measures are needed to create more and better jobs for women:

- Designing macroeconomic policies that stimulate economic activity and increase demand for labour, rather than focusing on an overly narrow set of targets such as maintaining inflation at very low levels

- Investing in public services to create decent jobs in health, education, child and elderly care, public administration and agricultural extension services
- Increasing the viability of, and returns to, self-employment by investing in transport and other infrastructure, access to markets, training and subsidized credit
- Involving women informal workers in urban planning and decision-making to ensure that city environments are conducive to their work and provide decent and safe working conditions
- Promoting joint land titling, extension services, input subsidies and measures to increase access to markets for women small-scale farmers.

Figure 2
Labour force participation rate by sex and region, 1990–2013

→ Globally, women’s labour force participation rates have stagnated, albeit with significant regional variation



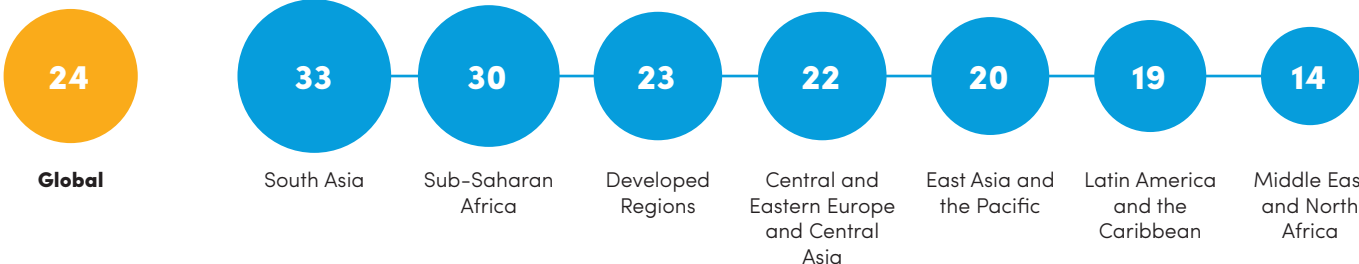
Source: Weighted averages calculated by UN Women using data from International Labour Organization (ILO). 2015. "Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) Database." Accessed January 2015.
Note: See UN Women’s regional groupings for the list of countries and territories included in each region in Annex 7, *Progress of the World’s Women 2015–2016*.

2. REDUCE OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION AND GENDER PAY GAPS

Figure 3

Unadjusted gender pay gap, percentage by geographic region

→ Globally, women earn on average 24 per cent less than men, with variation across regions



Note: See Annex 4 in *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016*, for full list of sources and notes.

Gender-based occupational segregation is pervasive across all regions. Globally, women are over-represented in clerical and support positions (63 per cent) compared to managerial occupations (33 per cent).¹⁸ In addition to occupational segregation, substantial gender pay gaps are a feature of almost all labour markets (see Figure 3).¹⁹

Without redressing women's socio-economic disadvantage resulting from occupational segregation and unequal earnings, substantive equality will remain out of reach. Public action

must address the root causes of occupational segregation, including differences in education, training and experience, as well as deeply ingrained stereotypes about women's and men's roles in society by:

- Properly valuing female-dominated occupations, including care jobs, so that levels of remuneration are commensurate with workers' skills and the contribution of their work to well-functioning economies and societies more broadly

- Promoting education, including basic literacy for adult women, on-the-job training, including in non-traditional skills, and mentoring to enable women to move up the occupational ladder
- Providing careers advice for young women and encouragement to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and other male-dominated subjects, as well as access to technical and vocational education and training, complete with support for unpaid care responsibilities
- Addressing pervasive sexual harassment and violence in the workplace through specific laws, training for staff, adequate grievance procedures and support for women to take their cases through the justice system
- Using targets and quotas to increase women's representation in male-dominated occupations, including in decision-making roles in the public sector.

BOX 1

The role of the state in generating decent work in Brazil

Between 2001 and 2009, 17 million new jobs were created in Brazil, of which more than 10 million were those where employees hold social security cards (*Carteira de Trabalho*). This represents a major turnaround from the 1990s, when unemployment doubled, informality rose sharply and real wages declined.²⁰ It shows that the right government action can yield impressive results, even against a backdrop of increasing flexibility and vulnerability of employment in the global economy.

Women's labour force participation rates rose from 54 to 58 per cent between 2001 and 2009, and the proportion accessing jobs with social security cards increased from 30 to 35 per cent.²¹ The doubling of the minimum wage in the 2000s has also had a significant impact on gender pay gaps. Between 1995 and 2007, the gender pay gap declined from 38 to 29 per cent. Importantly, this decline has been achieved through increases in both women's and men's wages rather than because men's wages have fallen.²²

Brazil's achievements in creating decent jobs are the result of a package of economic and social policies. Macroeconomic policy aimed at inclusive growth has contributed to job creation. Investments in labour inspection, and the simplification of registration costs and tax administration for small and medium-sized firms, have promoted the formalization of jobs and enterprises.²³ The rise in the real value of minimum wages has helped to reduce poverty and has contributed 66 per cent of the decline in inequality between 2000 and 2008. Social protection policies have also had a major impact: a further 16 per cent of the drop in inequality was due to the increase in pension benefits and 12 per cent to the *Bolsa Familia* social welfare programme.²⁴

3. STRENGTHEN WOMEN'S INCOME SECURITY THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE

Due to their unequal employment opportunities and predominance in low-paid occupations, women are particularly vulnerable to economic insecurity and financial dependence. Household surveys show that women of working age are more likely than men to live in a poor household in 41 out of 75 countries with data.

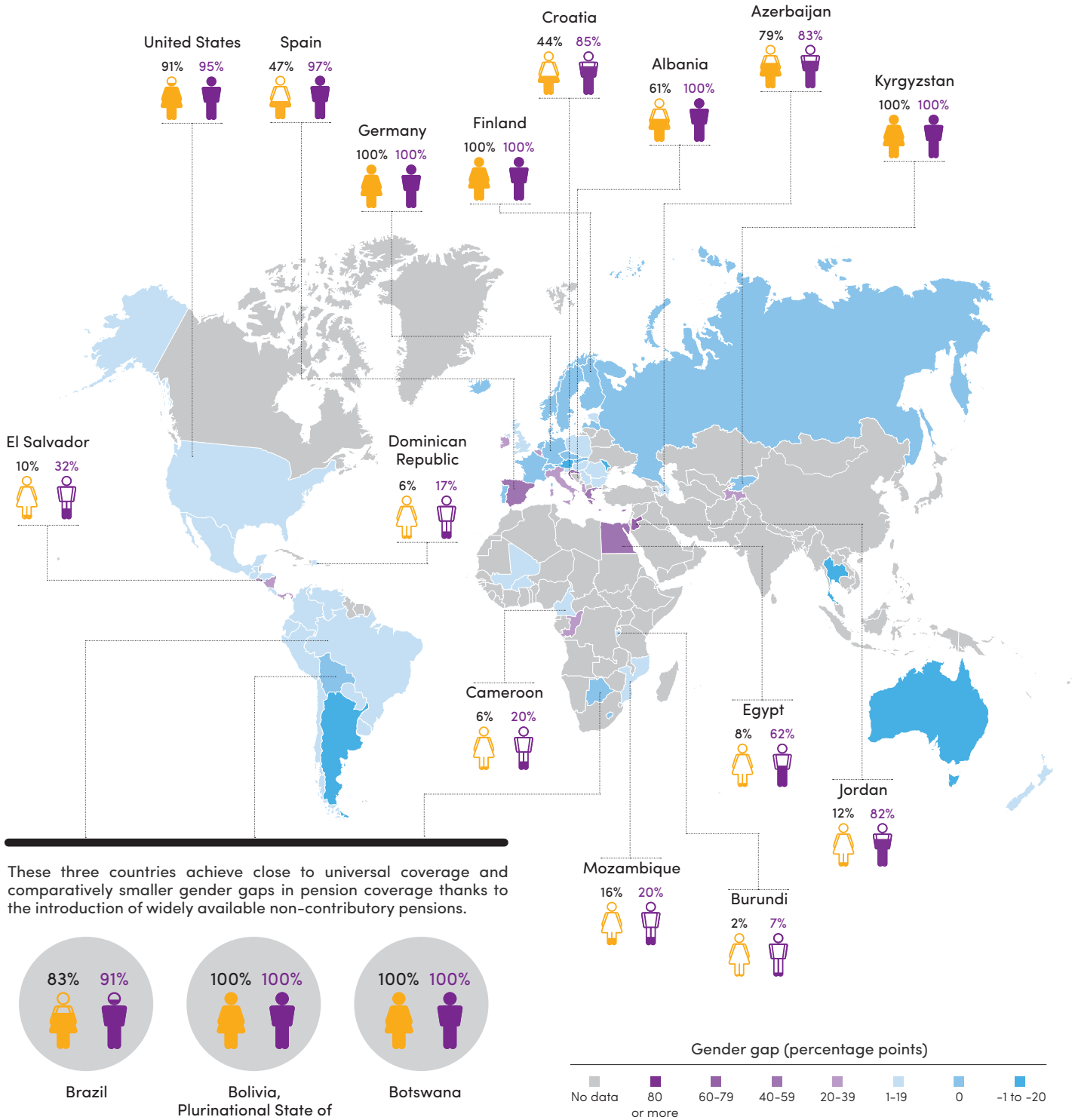
Properly designed fiscal, wage and social protection policies—including minimum wages, family and child allowances and old-age pensions—can be powerful tools to reduce poverty, redress women's socio-economic disadvantage and guarantee their right to an adequate standard of living. These are particularly important in the context of changing demographic, family and household structures and in the face of economic shocks. Concrete steps can be taken to strengthen women's income security by:

- Providing access to unemployment protection, including through public works programmes, and putting a floor under wages through well-designed minimum wage policies, which are also shown to reduce gender pay gaps
- Providing child allowances to support families with the costs of raising children as well as non-contributory pensions to ensure women's income security in old age (see Figure 4)
- Making social transfers unconditional and universal where possible to avoid stigma and stereotyping
- Ensuring cash transfer programmes have women's rights at their heart by involving gender equality advocates in their design and by using them as a mechanism for providing skills training and access to services that enable women's empowerment
- Reforming contributory pension systems to reduce gender gaps in access and benefit levels, including through the introduction of care credits to compensate for contributions 'lost' during periods out of the labour force looking after dependents
- Ensuring that all benefit levels are regularly adjusted to take account of increases in the cost of living.

Figure 4

Proportion of people above statutory pensionable age receiving an old-age pension by sex, selected countries, 2006–2012

—> In most countries, women are less likely to receive an old-age pension than men



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO). 2014. *World Social Protection Report 2014–15: Building Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development and Social Justice*. Geneva: ILO.

Note: Data refer to the most recent available during the period specified. See Annex 5 in *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016*, for a complete list of countries with data. The amount of pension benefits women and men receive differ widely across and within countries. Even if a relatively large share of women and men receive an old-age pension, there may be large gender gaps in benefit levels; or non-contributory pensions, on which women rely more strongly than men.

4. RECOGNIZE, REDUCE AND REDISTRIBUTE UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Unpaid care and domestic work contribute to economic development and human well-being through nurturing people who are fit, productive and capable of learning and creativity. But the burden of doing this work is unequally distributed. In the absence of adequate support for care services, women’s disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work can reinforce their socio-economic disadvantage by constraining their access to education, health care and paid work, as well as their participation in political and cultural life (see Figure 5).

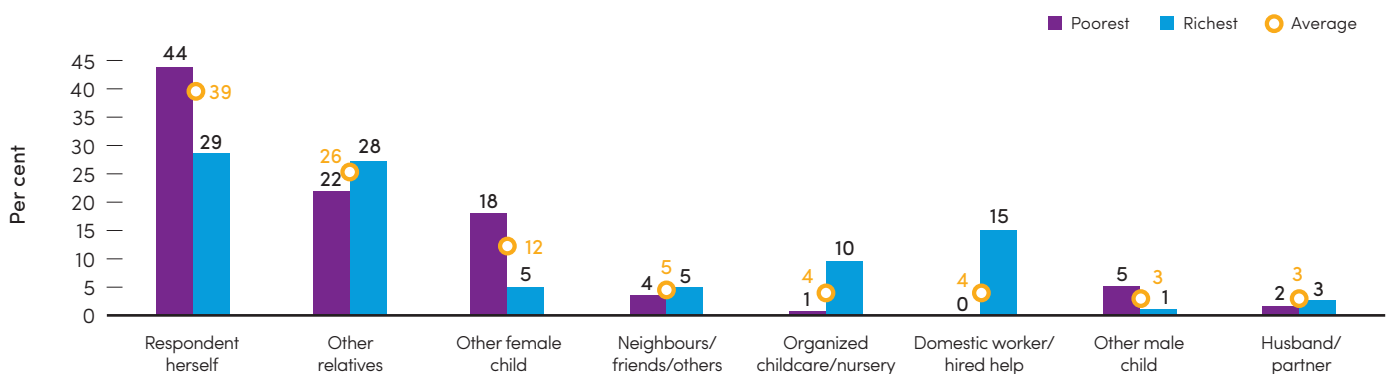
In order to achieve substantive equality for women, unpaid care and domestic work needs to be recognized, reduced and redistributed by:

- Scaling up investments in basic infrastructure, including water and sanitation facilities that are accessible, affordable and meet quality standards
- Strengthening basic social services such as education and health that complement unpaid caregiving and are an important source of employment for women
- Providing support to unpaid caregivers, ensuring that they have a voice in policy-making and recognizing them as part of, but not a substitute for, strong public care systems
- Providing accessible, affordable and quality child and elderly care that is responsive to the needs of working parents and other unpaid caregivers
- Working towards a comprehensive paid leave system, including maternity, paternity and parental leave, available to all workers, including those in informal employment, with special incentives for fathers to take up their share.

Figure 5

Typical childcare arrangement for employed women with children under age 6

→ *Very few employed women in developing countries have access to organized childcare or nurseries*



Source: Unweighted averages calculated by UN Women using data from ICF International. 2015. "The DHS Program Statcompiler." Accessed March 2015.

Notes: N=31 developing countries. Surveys were conducted between 1995 and 2002. This indicator corresponds to the percentage of respondents answering the question 'Who looks after your child(ren) while you are at work?'

5. INVEST IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL SERVICES

Public services are essential for the realization of women's rights and the achievement of substantive equality in many areas. Without adequate health services, for example, women and girls struggle to realize their sexual and reproductive rights. And, as previously discussed, without affordable childcare options, women's right to work is constrained. Investment in public services must to be scaled up and their delivery transformed to respond to women's rights (see Box 2). Concrete steps include:

- Substantially increasing investments in public services, including health, water and sanitation and care services, and ensuring their affordability by replacing user fees with collective forms of financing through, for example, social security or general taxation
- Working towards universal access to affordable health care through national health systems or the effective combination of insurance contributions and public funding
- Bringing essential health-care services closer to women through community health workers and mobile clinics
- Providing integrated services to address violence against women as well as comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, information and education
- Scaling up the reach and quality of care services for children and dependent adults, including people with disabilities and the frail elderly
- Promoting positive relations between those using care services and service-providers by creating awareness about women's rights among staff, providing incentives for them to respect women's rights and ensuring the adequacy of their pay and conditions of work.

BOX 2

Rwanda's rapid decline in maternal mortality

In 2013, sub-Saharan African countries accounted for an estimated 62 per cent of maternal deaths worldwide.²⁵ Most of the complications responsible for women's deaths during pregnancy and childbirth can be prevented by enhancing access to family planning, effective antenatal care and skilled birth attendance, including emergency obstetric care. However, take-up of these services is hampered by lack of information, inaccessible facilities and prohibitive costs. And shortcomings in the quality of care result in failures to diagnose and treat pregnancy-related complications.

Rwanda's experience shows that these barriers can be overcome. Following the 1994 genocide, it was among the poorest countries in the world, its health system lay in ruins and maternal mortality rates were well above the regional average. Yet, Rwanda has reduced the number of maternal deaths faster than most other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, from 1,400 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 310 in 2013. It is one of only four countries in the region that are on track towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of reducing maternal mortality by three quarters between 1990 and 2015.²⁶

A combination of measures lies behind this impressive progress²⁷: the rapid roll out of health insurance removed financial barriers to accessing services, in particular for ambulance transfers to higher-level facilities for emergency interventions; the nationwide expansion of adequately equipped public health centres with decentralized management allows for performance-based financing; well-trained community health workers (CHWs) provide antenatal care and delivery services in health centres as well as promoting hygiene, health insurance and family planning; new mobile technologies help CHWs track pregnancies and enable a quick response to pregnancy-related complications and referral for emergency obstetric care if needed; and CHWs and other health-care professionals are given incentives to meet maternal and child health targets and provide quality care, with regular visits to monitor compliance.

6. MAXIMIZE RESOURCES FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY

Macroeconomic policies can and should support the realization of women's rights (see Figure 6), by creating dynamic and stable economies, by generating decent work and by mobilizing resources to finance gender-responsive public policies, including social protection. Studies show that basic levels of social protection are affordable even for low-income countries. But funding a comprehensive policy agenda for substantive equality will require further resource mobilization as well as making sure that funds are raised and allocated for the benefit of women and girls. Concrete measures for governments include:

- Reprioritizing expenditure by, for example, redirecting military spending to gender-responsive public services
- Raising additional revenue through general taxation by enforcing existing tax obligations and expanding the overall tax base, being attentive to the distributive consequences: income and property taxes, and taxes on luxury items, are generally more progressive than indirect taxes such as value-added tax (VAT), which can also be made less regressive by exempting basic goods and services
- Borrowing at domestic and international level for social investments in education, health and care services that strengthen human capacities and, just like investments in infrastructure, generate future pay-offs, including a skilled and healthy workforce
- Ensuring revenue is raised from the utilization of natural resources through measures such as royalties and earmarking funds to spend on social protection and social services
- Implementing gender-responsive approaches to budgeting to ensure that policies for mobilizing resources and allocating expenditure are fair in their impact on income distribution and supportive of women's rights.

Figure 6

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO MACROECONOMIC POLICY

The divisions between economic and social policy are artificial;
connecting the two is key to the realization of rights



The full realization of economic and social rights for all

7. SUPPORT WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS TO CLAIM RIGHTS AND SHAPE POLICY AGENDAS AT ALL LEVELS

Women's collective action is key to the achievement of substantive equality. It is most effective when women's rights advocates in grassroots and civil society organizations, think tanks and university departments can build strategic alliances with actors in political parties, state bureaucracies and regional and global institutions. This work demands judgment, skill, agility and persistence on the part of advocates, as well as access to information, policy debates and decision-making processes (see story: *Out of the ashes*). Women's agency, voice and participation in these processes can be strengthened by:

- Ensuring a conducive legal framework for women's organizing, including measures to protect space for civil society advocacy on women's rights, and ensuring the right to form and join trade unions
- Scaling up funding for women's organizations to engage in policy advocacy with their governments, including an increase in core and multi-year funding—an area where private and bilateral donors, as well as international organizations, have an important role to play
- Ensuring that women are equally represented in leadership positions in trade unions and other social movements and that women's rights issues are prioritized in collective bargaining processes
- Supporting the creation of feminist knowledge on key policy issues—such as monetary policy, pension system design or health sector reform—that are fundamentally important to women's lives but often require a specialized technical understanding of the field
- Facilitating capacity building among women's organizations to advocate for policy change by, for example, funding training on the gender implications of economic and social policies
- Creating feedback loops from policy implementation through social audits by women's organizations and service users to improve the performance and gender responsiveness of government regulation, social protection and social services.



Photo: UN Women/Saiful huq Omi

→ MAKING PROGRESS/STORIES OF CHANGE

OUT OF THE ASHES

Creating positive change from tragedy in Bangladesh's garment sector

On the morning of 24 April 2013, thousands of factory workers went to work in the eight-storey Rana Plaza commercial building outside of Dhaka. Just hours later the building collapsed, killing 1,137 people and injuring a further 2,500 workers. Most of those who died that morning were women.

Women make up 80 per cent of the 4.2 million strong workforce for the garment export industry and for many, these jobs are the first opportunity for economic independence and a job outside the home. Yet, the Rana Plaza tragedy underlined what a double-edged sword this employment has proved to be. The industry has created tragically unsafe, exploitative and dangerous workplaces where women workers face poor pay, inequality, harassment and violence.

"They are happy to give a woman a job operating a sewing machine, but less happy to see her become a supervisor," says Kalpona Akter, executive director of the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity, who began her working life on the garment factory floor aged 12. "Many of these women are forced to work in unsafe and unfair work environments because they have no ability to change things," she says.

Rana Plaza proved a turning point. The global outrage following the disaster led the Bangladeshi government to announce a raft of changes to its labour laws, including easing restrictions on workers forming trade unions, hiring additional factory inspectors and increasing the minimum wage for garment workers by 77 per cent.

At the same time, international clothing brands sourcing from Bangladesh joined with trade unions, international worker solidarity movements and non-governmental organizations to create the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety. So far over 190 brands from over 20 countries have signed the Accord, covering 1,500 factories employing around 2 million workers. In 2014 its network of 110 independent engineers carried out inspections at hundreds of sites, identifying more than 80,000 safety issues and suspending production at 17 factories.

"The Rana Plaza disaster created a platform for workers to organize themselves," says Kalpona. "In the last two years about 200 new garment workers unions have been registered, where 65 per cent of the leadership and the majority of members are women. The challenge is how we can make these changes sustainable."

These challenges are considerable. Despite the new labour laws, still only 5 per cent of garment workers and fewer than 300 factories are unionized. The United Nations-backed Rana Plaza Donors Fund, set up to provide injured workers and relatives of those who died with US\$40 million of compensation, is still \$9 million short of its target. There is optimism, however, that out of the ashes of Rana Plaza, positive changes can endure.

"The women on the factory floors in Bangladesh are beginning to feel like their voices are finally being heard," Kalpona says. "And this is a real step forward."

8. CREATE AN ENABLING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE REALIZATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Global economic integration has constrained the ability of governments, to varying degrees, to use macroeconomic policy to create an enabling environment for the realization of economic and social rights. For example, it is difficult for developing countries to mobilize resources when other countries act as tax havens or maintain very low tax regimes.

The current system of global governance reinforces the divide between economic and social policy and the lack of attention to distributive outcomes, including gender inequalities. Investment in human development and gender equality are considered domestic policy issues and are therefore not prioritized in global economic policy forums. Concrete measures to create an enabling global environment for the achievement of substantive equality for women include:

- Promoting economic stability and preventing shocks and crises, which always hit the poorest hardest, through macro-prudential policies that aim to mitigate economic volatility and the risk of financial crisis, as well as capital controls and better regulation of international financial markets
- Improving global coordination to eliminate tax havens and reduce tax avoidance and competition in order to enable countries to mobilize resources more effectively in a globalized context
- Ensuring that international trade and investment agreements do not curtail policy space in a way that undermines the realization of women's rights by, for example, creating barriers to the expansion of public health services or public transportation
- Increasing the accountability of global economic and financial institutions for the distributive impacts of their actions, including on gender equality
- Formally adopting a common approach, based on the Maastricht Principles, to the extraterritorial obligations of States, transnational corporations and international institutions
- Democratizing the institutions of global economic governance by amplifying the voices of poorer countries and civil society organizations in decisions that affect them.

9. USE HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS TO SHAPE POLICIES AND CATALYSE CHANGE

It is imperative to bridge the gap between global human rights standards, on the one hand, and policies to advance women’s rights, on the other. By defining substantive equality, the international human rights system has underscored that equality should be understood in relation to outcomes as well as to opportunities, pointing to the structural causes of inequality and setting out the obligations of States to address them.

Almost all countries have ratified CEDAW, but many retain reservations that limit its implementation (see Figure 7). The human rights system, including the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, special rapporteurs and national and regional human rights bodies can further support governments to formulate and monitor policies to meet their

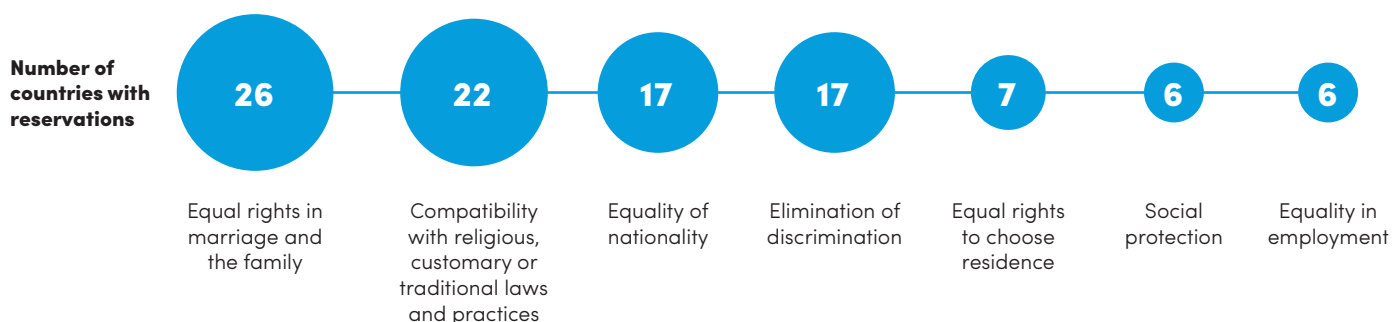
obligations and realize substantive equality for women by:

- Providing guidance on how the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work can be advanced through economic and social policies
- Providing clarification and guidance on how macroeconomic policies can support, rather than constrain, women’s enjoyment of their rights
- Proposing concrete steps as to how the implementation of social protection floors at the national level can ensure that women are able to enjoy their right to social security on an equal basis with men.

Figure 7

Reservations to CEDAW

—> *Almost all countries in the world have ratified CEDAW, but many countries retain reservations which limit its application in practice*



Source: See Annex 6 in *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016*.

10. GENERATE EVIDENCE TO ASSESS PROGRESS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Data gaps on women's economic and social rights remain very large. In view of the monitoring requirements for the post-2015 development agenda, there have been calls for a 'data revolution'. This 'data revolution' needs to be engendered, to enable the production of more and better evidence, disaggregated by sex, socio-economic status, geographical location, race and ethnicity, to capture the multiple and intersecting inequalities that women face. There is a need for coordinated support and funding from donors and governments to national statistical offices, especially those in low-income countries, to ensure the consistent and timely production of gender statistics in a wide range of areas. Priorities include:

- Complementing global poverty statistics with measures of women's access to personal income from labour market earnings or social protection, as a proxy for their economic autonomy
- Regularly conducting time-use surveys and ensuring their comparability across countries and over time to assess the impact of public policies, economic shocks and environmental disasters on women's work burdens
- Increasing the number of countries that regularly collect sex-disaggregated statistics on informal employment
- Developing standards for the collection and analysis of statistics on gender pay gaps, including methodologies to capture gender inequalities in earnings from self-employment
- Supporting the ongoing development of new methodologies for the measurement of women's asset ownership and entrepreneurship
- Producing comparable, disaggregated statistics on the benefit levels of child and family allowances, unemployment benefits and old-age pensions
- Developing standards and methods for assessing the quality of social services, including their responsiveness to the rights of women and girls
- Conducting regular surveys on violence against women and girls based on globally agreed standards
- Investing in civil registration and vital systems to ensure that births and deaths are accurately recorded in order to improve the quality and availability of data on maternal and child mortality
- Developing and funding other sources of evidence, including qualitative research, to capture dimensions of inequality that are not easily measurable but crucially shape women's and girls' enjoyment of rights, including stigma and deprivation of voice and agency.