

Clean Water



USAID Indonesia / Public domain

A safe source of water sustains healthy communities

Throughout the world, 748 million people don't have access to clean water. Water that is not safe to drink may spread diseases and expose people to harmful substances such as lead. In many parts of the world without running water, women are responsible for collecting water. This is substantial labor can put them at risk if they move through unsafe areas. In other parts of the world, potable water is becoming unaffordable. Unsafe water puts families and communities in jeopardy.

Property Rights



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Equitable property rights promote sustainable land use

Many countries do not allow women to own property, which means they cannot make decisions about how to use available land and resources. Around the world, only 10–20% of landholders are women, and those women often have tenuous control over their property. If the man who owns local land works elsewhere, then it is difficult for a family (or community) to use resources sustainably.

Medical Care



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Sustainable communities provide health care for all

In many parts of the world, women don't have access to health care. They may not be able to travel to a provider, they may not be able to afford it, or they may be stigmatized for their choices. As a result, women are especially vulnerable to negative health outcomes. Yet, at the same time, women are often seen as the family caretakers. A sustainable society would ensure medical access to all people of all genders, ensuring ensure women are empowered to take care of their health.

Family Planning



Emily Maletz for the NISE Network

People and the environment benefit from family planning

Enabling and empowering women to make their own choices about family size and timing is beneficial to families and to the environment. Family planning helps communities cope with and adapt to the inevitable changes brought by climate change. Being able to decide when or if to have children makes it easier for families and women to adjust to their environment, making a community more resilient.

Safe and Plentiful Food



Stephen Morrison / Africa Practice for AusAID / CC 2.0

More equitable societies produce more food

Around the world, much of the burden for feeding a family falls on women. And feeding a family doesn't only mean cooking: it can include buying, growing, or foraging for food. Their social and legal position often makes this process more difficult for women, as they may have restricted movement, ability to earn money through paying jobs, or control over available land. Research shows that places with the greatest inequalities between men and women also tend to have lower, crop yields per acre.

Safe Communities



Marcel van den Bergh / Dutch government / CC 1.0

Threat of violence limits opportunities

All over the world, gender-based violence and sexual harassment limits the ability of women and girls to move freely, study, work, access essential services, participate in public life, and enjoy recreation. When women and girls are prevented from participating in public life for fear of their personal safety, it introduces inequalities in all aspects of their lives and reduces opportunities throughout their lives.

Jobs and Opportunities



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Good jobs and fair wages allow everyone to thrive

In many places, women take on more unpaid work than men do, and women in the labor force are often paid less than men for the same work. Globally, only 63% of women aged 25 to 54 are in the labor force compared to 94% of men of the same age. Meanwhile, the global wage gap is estimated to be 15–20%. Gender discrimination in the types of work available and the compensation makes it difficult for women to support themselves and their families.

Education



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Education helps everyone reach their potential

The United Nations considers education the right of all people, and the foundation for vibrant lives for girls and women, their families, and their communities. Education is key to lifting families and communities out of poverty. More education also tends to slow population growth, which results in lower CO₂ emissions. Access to education not only empowers individuals, it also enables social and environmental sustainability.

Capital and Financing



Dan Lundberg / CC 2.0

Funding allows businesses and families to thrive

Financing can help women grow businesses, but women's access to capital is sometimes limited by lack of rights or availability. Without micro loans and similar support, important purchases can't be made, opportunities dwindle, and sustainable practices can be out of reach. Furthermore, when women's earnings go up, they tend to reinvest much more of it into education, health, and nutrition for their families and communities than men do.

Healthy Oceans



W. Carter / CC 1.0

Sustainable oceans support sustainable communities

One billion people rely on our oceans for their sustenance and income. Increased pressure on fisheries reduces fish populations in both developed and developing worlds. A collapsed fishery can leave families, and especially women, vulnerable due to a lack of food and income. Rising ocean temperatures threaten fish populations and contribute to sea level rise, which endangers coastal communities. Decisions about how to manage oceans and fisheries largely exclude women.

Free Movement



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Sustainable communities provide transportation and the right to travel

The ability to move freely gives women access to work, family, resources, and food. In some countries, women need to be escorted by a male relative in order to leave their home. In other countries, women's movement may be hampered by lack of safe public transportation. Worldwide, more women rely on public transport than men—and investment in safe, sustainable transportation benefits everyone.

Clean Energy



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Clean energy keeps people and land healthy

"Clean energy" means different things around the world. In developed countries, clean energy refers to electricity that is produced with less pollution and CO₂ emissions. In other parts of the world, it means clean-burning cooking and heating fuel that doesn't damage the lungs. The burden of gathering fuel and the effects of soot and smoke often fall on women in developing countries. Everywhere, clean energy protects both people and the environment during extraction, production, and use.

Internet Access



Todd Huffman / CC 2.0

Digital inclusion creates employment and economic opportunities

Computer skills and Internet access are essential to advancing women's rights. Worldwide, around 2.3 billion women do not have any Internet access, and women are 1.6 times more likely than men to report a lack of skills as a barrier to Internet use. Increasing digital access and literacy will increase women's opportunities for employment, education, and political engagement.

Forest Protection and Management



Bhupendra Shrestha / CC 4.0

Sustainable forestry supports sustainable communities

Around the world, 1.6 billion people rely on forests as their primary source of food, fuel, and income. In many of these societies, women traditionally take the role of gathering food and fuel. If forest resources are no longer available nearby, women must travel farther to meet their family's needs. This can endanger the women, their families, and the forests. Managing forests sustainably, and avoiding deforestation, can benefit an entire community by providing stability and sustenance.

Representation in Government



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Equal representation promotes fair governance

Worldwide, women tend to be underrepresented in local, regional, national, and international governance. This exclusion keeps societies from reducing gender disparities, since women's voices are left out of decision making. Additionally, history shows that societies that include women in leadership positions tend to be more peaceful and, as a result, more sustainable.