

FACT SHEET: THE EQUAL FUTURES PARTNERSHIP—FROM PROMISE TO PROGRESS

The Promise of Equal Futures

In response to President Obama’s challenge to other heads of state to break down barriers to women’s political and economic participation, on September 24, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton launched the [Equal Futures Partnership](#) on behalf of the United States along with 12 other founding members (Australia, Benin, Bangladesh, Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, the Netherlands, Peru, Senegal, and Tunisia; as well as the European Union). Each founding member made national commitments to policy, legal, and regulatory reforms to promote two mutually reinforcing goals: expanded economic opportunity for women and increased political and civic participation by women at local, state and national levels. Multilateral stakeholders including UN Women and the World Bank and leading businesses and non-profit institutions also pledged support for the partnership.

Moving from Promise to Progress

Following the [launch](#) of the initiative, Equal Futures members have worked to identify priorities for action through consultations with civil society and other stakeholders and by establishing coordinating bodies or steering committees to develop and oversee the implementation of Equal Futures commitments. Going forward, Equal Futures countries will report on progress within the Partnership, and evaluate and strengthen commitments to ensure real impact.

Highlights from progress on U.S. commitments:

As a founding member of the Equal Futures Partnership, the United States [made commitments in four key areas](#), and has achieved significant progress in each of these areas. Highlights include:

Opening Doors to Quality Education and High-Paying Career Opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math: Federal agencies and private partners have made great progress on connecting young women to high-quality science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)-related resources. In just seven months, over 20,000 students interacted with 500 women mentors via Harvey Mudd and Piazza’s online platform *WitsOn*, while the National Science Foundation, Office of Personnel Management, and non-profit partners joined forces to train Federal scientists and engineers on serving as a resource for girls interested in STEM.

Promoting Civic Education and Public Leadership for Girls: The Administration has advanced new efforts to promote girls’ leadership and civic education, including sponsoring an “app challenge,” hosting a conference on girls’ leadership and civic education at the White House with the Department of Education and the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), and advising on the development of a new initiative, Teach a Girl to Lead (TAG) – featuring online resources and a national speakers’ bureau.

Breaking the Cycle of Violence and Ensuring Economic Security for Survivors of Violence: To ensure that women who are victims of domestic violence are getting the support and tools they need to achieve economic independence, the Administration is now providing training on employment rights to lawyers and consumer advocates, working with state domestic violence coalitions and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to ensure that victims know about employment protections under federal law, and expanding research on domestic violence to include information about economic abuse.

Expanding Support for Women Entrepreneurs: The Administration has strengthened support for women entrepreneurs at all stages of life with the launch of an online training course in April 2013 targeting women aged 50 and above and an expansion of a targeted youth entrepreneurship program in January 2013.

Highlights from other founding member progress reports:

Australia: Australia is working to improve women's representation and leadership in male-dominated industries and is finalizing a toolkit for employers in male-dominated industries, which outlines effective mechanisms and strategies for recruiting and retaining women. Australia is also committed to meeting the gender balance target of 40 percent women on Government boards by 2015. In November 2012, Commonwealth, state, and territory governments agreed to establish the National Centre of Excellence (NCE) to reduce violence against women and their children beginning in early 2013.

Bangladesh: Bangladesh has drafted its National Action Plan to implement its Women Development Policy 2011, and will finalize the plan through a wide consultation process involving all the stakeholders. In addition, Bangladesh is now finalizing new rules and procedural guidance for enforcement of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act at the district and sub-district level.

Benin: Benin has committed to addressing laws, policies, and regulations that restrict women's participation in the economy and in public life. To advance these efforts, the Executive has proposed a national multi-sector mechanism to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. Benin is also making progress in developing a program of action to advance women's participation in the 2013 elections.

Denmark: In December 2012, Denmark passed a new bill on increasing the number of women on company boards and in management positions. Denmark's new efforts to expand training for municipalities and front line staff on violence against women and in the family have seen over 4,000 professionals trained in one-day courses. Denmark also launched its National Strategy on Honor-Related Conflicts, to cover the period from 2012-2015.

European Union: The EU has been active in women's empowerment through programs like Spring Forward for Women financial assistance for North Africa adopted in October 2012, outreach with the High Level Conference on Women's Leadership in the Sahel region in April 2013, and financial support to the deployment of independent human rights observers from civil society organizations in Mali. All 15 EU Common Security and Defense Policy missions and operations now have gender and/or human rights advisors as part of their teams. The EU increased funding for programs to address violence against women in Albania, Mexico and Timor-Leste, and announced EUR 3.7 million in funding to support its Member States' activities to raise awareness of violence against women and a further EUR 11.4 million for NGOs and others working with victims.

Finland: Finland's commitment to mainstreaming gender equality in its democracy and citizen participation policies, with a focus on ensuring women, including in immigrant communities, equal opportunities to participate, is proceeding on schedule. A report will be submitted to Parliament in early 2014, with a chapter on these efforts. Finland's review of the impact of tax policies and income transfers on economic equality will take place throughout 2013 and serve as the basis for the gender impact assessment of tax policy reforms. On gender sensitivity in education and training, a working group submitted a strategy to the Minister of Education in December 2012, and recommendations are being discussed between different ministries.

Indonesia: Indonesia established and is implementing a memorandum of understanding to advance women's participation in national and local elections and is launching a gender mainstreaming strategy to advance

women in decision-making positions in the executive branch. Indonesia is also committing to additional specific policy reforms to advance women's economic empowerment, including clarifying and strengthening the definition of female-headed households and formalizing the definition of women-owned businesses.

Jordan: The Jordanian National Commission for Women along with its partners prepared a Jordanian National Action Plan to implement Jordan's commitments towards the Equal Futures Partnership, which will be launched soon. Jordan continues to make progress on women's leadership, from raising the number of female judges to 142 of 928, or 15 percent, of the judiciary to electing 18 women to parliament in January 2013. In addition, the Jordanian National Commission for Women developed and sent to parliament a list of proposed policies and legislative reforms required for 2013 to expand gender equality.

The Netherlands: To meet the commitment of encouraging employers to increase their present ratio from nine percent of women on boards of directors and supervisory boards to 30 percent, the Netherlands has started the "Talent to the Top" initiative. The Netherlands also strengthened programs to engage young people in preventing violence against women. Internationally, the Netherlands established the *Women on the Frontline* initiative to strengthen the financial and organizational management of women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa. This initiative is open for other partners to join.

Peru: To advance greater political participation of women, in November 2012, the Executive Branch presented the initiative of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations to Congress signed as Bill No. 1779/2012-PE. This bill would require alternating between men and women candidates on ballots as a mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of the gender quota in political parties, which currently stands at 30 percent. At the moment, this bill is under debate in the Congress. To advance women's economic empowerment, the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion's program JUNTOS is playing a central role in Peru's financial inclusion strategy, including for rural women. Users of JUNTOS (including approximately 650,000 mothers) already have savings accounts at the Banco de la Nación and a significant percentage of them also have a debit card that allows them to make financial transactions.

Senegal: Senegal has made progress in implementing a comprehensive program to operationalize its gender parity law on women's political participation in advance of local elections in 2014. This has included a capacity building workshop for new members of parliament and election monitoring training with a gender perspective. In addition, Senegal enacted programs to promote women's voices in media at the local level, particularly in rural communities.

Tunisia: Tunisia has reaffirmed its commitment to finalizing a constitution that respects universal human rights including the fundamental rights of women, as well as comprehensive national policies to encourage women's participation in public life. In addition, Tunisia continues to make progress in reactivating its National Strategy on violence against women and in advancing economic opportunity for women, calling at the December 2012 Forum for the Future event for a Regional Women's Enterprise Fund and for the creation of a regional network of shelters and a research center on violence. In addition, the Government's "National Employment Strategy 2013-2017" has incorporated a number of policy reforms aimed at women's economic empowerment.

Welcoming New Members

Belgium, Croatia, Latvia, Morocco, New Zealand, Sierra Leone, Thailand, and Timor-Leste have joined the Partnership since September, and have begun developing commitments. Mexico and Italy have also delivered letters of intent to join. All new members will share progress on their commitments by September 2013.

Highlights from new member commitments include:

Belgium will strengthen women's participation in legislative bodies and politics, and will support efforts to ensure women's participation on corporate boards as well as protect leave for caretakers and flexible work policies, and will monitor and evaluate its efforts on all these fronts.

Croatia has developed a national action plan for Equal Futures to promote women's political participation, strengthen the social and economic position of rural women, advance female businesses and women in the labor market, and support international efforts to empower women.

Latvia is committing to reducing labor market segregation, expanding efforts to improve women's health care, including sexual and reproductive health by 2014, and building the capacity of law enforcement to address human trafficking.

Morocco will speed up and strengthen its program of institutional and legal reform and strengthen implementation of the government's plan on gender equality, and in particular redouble its focus on gender-based violence.

New Zealand will launch a "commitment to action" through which private and public sector partners agree to increase gender diversity in leadership, and in 2013, will focus on effective pathways for female leadership talent within the workplace.

Sierra Leone is committing to assessing and reforming laws, policies, and regulations that restrict women's participation in the formal economy, and in particular, will review and reform its land policy to ensure gender equality. In addition, Sierra Leone will focus on implementing its National Action Plan on gender-based violence, and implementing a 30 percent quota for women in governance at all levels.

Thailand will build on ongoing and comprehensive efforts to promote gender equality across political, social, and economic spheres by promoting new efforts to address gender bias and attitudes as a root cause of inequality in society.

Timor-Leste will focus on women's participation in local government, as well as expanding women's economic empowerment by transitioning women from micro to small and medium enterprises. In addition, Timor-Leste will focus on gender-based violence as a key barrier to women's political and economic participation.

Support from the World Bank and the Private Sector

To advance the goals of the Equal Futures Partnership, we are collaborating with multilateral stakeholders and the private sector to help countries strengthen and implement their efforts.

The **World Bank**, host of the second high-level Equal Futures meeting, will continue to work with Equal Futures partners to identify opportunities for collaboration to promote women's rights in each country and support implementation of country commitments, through technical assistance and provision of loans where appropriate. To support the scaling up of Equal Futures activities, the World Bank will help synthesize lessons from the partnership, and disseminate them in a flagship report on Voice, Agency and Participation.

Together with **UN Women**, the World Bank will also create and disseminate knowledge around the Equal Futures themes.

In response to President Obama's call to action, several leading U.S. businesses, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations have also made commitments to advance women and girls' economic and political empowerment at home and abroad. They are dedicating themselves to launching new and innovative programs to support women and girls in STEM fields, connecting women entrepreneurs to markets and supply chains, and supporting research to advance girls' leadership.

By September 2013, we plan to establish a dialogue with the private sector to strategically align Equal Futures country commitments and private sector resources and expertise.

New commitments from the private sector include:

Equipping 100,000 girls to build mobile learning capacity: HTC Founder and Chairwoman Cher Wang commits to donating 100,000 tablets to school girls in the Asia Pacific region to augment their classroom learning experience, particularly on STEM subjects, with a comprehensive and collaborative mobile learning platform containing digital textbooks, open-source and proprietary content.

US-China Women-LEAD: Hyatt Hotels will partner with the China Women's University, the All-China Women's Federation, the U.S. Department of State, and the University of Chicago to support Chinese and American female college students' leadership development in August 2013.

Growing existing Equal Futures commitments supporting women and girls in STEM: New private and non-profit partners have teamed up with previous Equal Futures collaborators to help meet the U.S. goal of opening doors to women in science and engineering, with Chegg and non-profit Techbridge signing on to Causecast's GIT Inspired! (Girls in Technology) campaign, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Teachers Without Borders, the Global Earthquake Model (GEM) Foundation, and the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) bolstering access to open educational resources (OER) and the efforts of the U.S. Geological Survey to educate girls about earthquake science in high-risk areas across the globe.

Joining the Equal Futures Partnership

We welcome additional countries and stakeholders joining the Equal Futures Partnership. Government representatives and other interested stakeholders may email EqualFutures@state.gov for more information. The next meeting of the Equal Futures Partnership will be in September on the margins of the UN General Assembly.