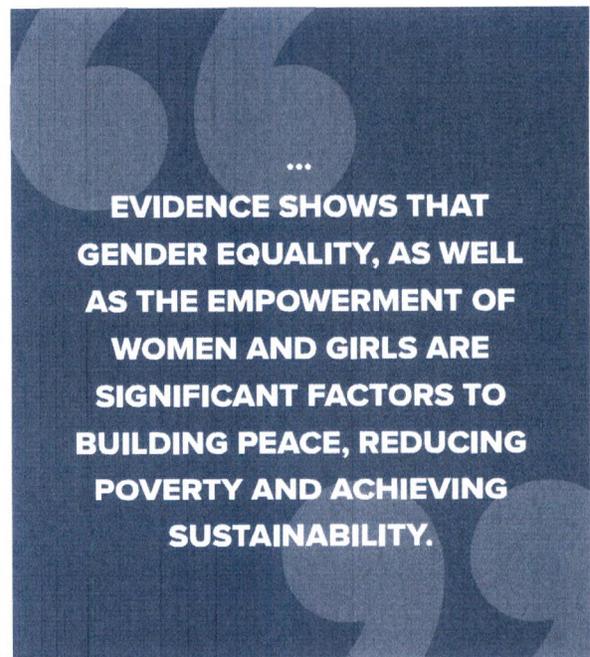


Gender equality is an important part of the foundation for a prosperous world. Without dedicated efforts to address and eliminate gender inequality and discrimination experienced by women and girls, global development targets will remain elusive. Studies indicate that an increase in female labour force participation results in faster economic growth.¹ A new report released by the World Bank Group finds that if women have the same lifetime earnings as men, global wealth would increase by USD \$23,620 per person, on average, in the 141 countries studied for a total of USD \$160 trillion per annum.² At the 2015 Summit, G7 Leaders emphasized that: “Women’s economic participation reduces poverty and inequality, promotes growth and benefits all. Yet women regularly face discrimination which impedes economic potential, jeopardizes investment in development, and constitutes a violation of their human rights.” At the same Summit, G7 Leaders also committed to investing in women’s entrepreneurship as “a key driver of innovation, growth and jobs.”

G7 members are committed to taking concrete action to support women and girls, to allow them to realize their full potential. Evidence shows that gender equality, as well as the empowerment of women and girls are significant factors to building peace, reducing poverty and achieving sustainability.

Removing systemic barriers and increasing greater access to and control over assets such as land, housing and capital, advances gender equality and the empowerment of women which positively impacts the economy of all nations. Women already generate nearly 40% of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP), and there remains an untapped potential for further growth led by women. The OECD estimates that a 50% reduction in the gender gap in labour force participation could lead to an additional gain of about 6% in GDP by 2030, and a further 6% gain (12% in total) if gender gaps are completely eliminated.³ The socioeconomic benefits of gender equality cannot be ignored.⁴

This chapter provides an overview of the evolution of women’s economic empowerment. This G7



priority aligns with recent international development frameworks, which put women and girls at the centre of development efforts.

1.1 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Pillars for Transformative Growth and Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the World Humanitarian Summit’s Agenda for Humanity and the Grand Bargain, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the United Nations Global Compact, all include references to gender equality or equity, and in some cases also include concrete commitments and actions to achieve gender equality and to empower women and girls. These international frameworks build on the foundational work of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and offer increased impetus towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Women’s economic empowerment is critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda. [See Textbox 1: Definition of Women’s Economic Empowerment].