

A close-up photograph of a woman with a weathered face, wearing a dark headscarf and a patterned shawl. She is carrying a young child on her back. The woman's expression is somber, and her hands are visible at the bottom of the frame, one holding a small object. The background is a dark, textured surface.

Achieving gender equality around the world could increase global gross domestic product (GDP) by \$12 trillion in a single decade.

Barriers to success for women and girls

The potential of women and girls to help build a better world cannot be ignored—but neither can the harsh realities facing vulnerable populations. These include the threats faced in fragile states, the continued existence of poverty in many parts of the world and the social contexts that can limit women and girls' ability to succeed.

Instability can lead to poverty. An increasing proportion of the world's poorest citizens live in countries and regions that are deemed "fragile" due to the risks of violent conflict, climate and environmental hazards, or economic and political insecurity. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the number of people living in extreme poverty in fragile states will grow from 480 million to 523 million between 2015 and 2030.⁷

Poverty persists even in the absence of conflict. While poverty rates have declined globally, more than a tenth of the world's population (766 million people) still lives in extreme poverty, earning on average less than US\$1.90 a day.⁸ Half of the