

Gates Foundation makes \$2.1bn commitment at Generation Equality Forum

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently announced a \$2.1bn commitment during the Generation Equality Forum to advance women's economic empowerment, strengthen women and girls' health and family planning, and accelerate women's leadership. Convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, the forum takes place in Paris from 30 June to 2 July.



Melinda Gates. Source: World Economic Forum, CC BY-SA 2.0, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

"The world has been fighting for gender equality for decades, but progress has been slow. Now is the chance to reignite a movement and deliver real change," said Melinda French Gates, co-chair of the Gates Foundation. "The beauty of our fight for gender equality is that every human being will gain from it. We must seize this moment to build a better, more equal future."

Three focus areas

The foundation's \$2.1bn commitment over the next five years will advance activity in three areas: economic empowerment, health and family planning, and accelerating women in leadership. Funding includes:

- **Economic empowerment:** \$650m over five years: An expansion of the foundation's existing work on women's economic empowerment, this funding will support women's empowerment collectives, strengthen the care economy, improve women's financial inclusion, and reduce barriers to paid work.
- **Family planning and health:** \$1.4bn over five years: This reaffirms and expands the foundation's commitment to family planning and women's health, with a focus on increasing options and access to contraceptives and support for a network of family planning partners, including UNFPA Supplies Partnership, Family Planning 2030, the Global Financing Facility, and the new Shaping Equitable Market Access for Reproductive Health initiative.
- **Accelerating women in leadership:** \$100m over five years / \$230m over 10 years: This is an all-new funding commitment to accelerate women's inclusion in leadership roles, primarily in health, law, and economics. It includes a contribution to a new fund by Co-Impact that aims to dismantle systemic barriers to gender equality and women and girls' leadership around the world.

"Gender equality must be at the centre of the world's efforts to make progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals," said Bill Gates, co-chair of the Gates Foundation.

"Prioritising gender equality is not only the right thing to do, it is essential to fighting poverty and preventable disease. The Generation Equality Forum is an opportunity to hold leaders accountable so that we can ensure that all people, everywhere, have the opportunity to live healthy, productive lives."

Pandemic-driven inequality

The Gates Foundation also released [new data](#) that show pandemic-driven inequality is growing at an alarming pace, driven by disruptions to women's health services, job losses in sectors where women are overrepresented, and a sharp increase in caregiving needs and other unpaid work. "Ripple effects of the pandemic have conspired to rob women and girls of opportunity," said French Gates.



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According to the International Labour Organization:

- Unemployment for women rose by nine million in 2020 compared to 2019 and is projected to increase another two million in 2021. This pattern is not true for men, who are projected to see unemployment decrease in 2021.
- Total global female employment in 2021 is expected to remain 13 million below its 2019 level. By contrast, total male employment is expected to return to close to its 2019 level, exacerbating existing inequalities in the workforce.

New data by Eurasia Group also highlight that gender-equal policies can fuel the global economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Providing access to childcare for women around the world who currently lack it could deliver up to \$3tn of additional GDP each year by enabling them to participate in the labour force.
- Instituting cash transfer programmes globally could lift up to 100 million women out of absolute poverty, which is defined as living on less than \$2 per day.

“Women and girls already faced unique barriers to their full participation in social and economic life, and the latest data show that the pandemic has only sharpened gender disparities,” said Mark Suzman, CEO of the Gates Foundation. “Each data point represents a woman fighting for a better future, and this funding reflects our longstanding commitment to support all women in their fight for a fairer and more equal world.”

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