

# How I Learned To Love The New World Order – Joe Biden, 1992

January 25, 2021

On April 23, 1992, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article (read below) by Joe Biden titled, “*How I Learned to Love the New World Order*,” in which Biden reveals his allegiance to the agenda.

Not many are aware that after the so called dissolution of the British Empire, the company just went underground and resurfaced with new identities. It is known by many names – Empire 2.0, the [Deep State](#), the Hidden Hand, the New World Order etc.

Below we publish the article in full penned by Joe Biden in 1992 for the education of our readers.

## How I Learned to Love the New World Order

Biden, Joseph R Jr.

Wall Street Journal. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: Apr 23, 1992. pg. A13

### Abstract (Summary)

Joseph R. Biden Jr defends his view that the Pentagon’s new strategy which appoints the US as a sort of world monitor could render the US a hollow superpower. Biden explains why he reacted the way he did to the plan.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1992

A13

## How I Learned to Love the New World Order

Imagine my surprise when a Wall Street Journal editorial appointed me dean of the Pat Buchanan school of neo-isolationism. My credentials? Believing that the Pentagon’s new strategy – America as “Globo-cop” – could render the United States a hollow superpower.

All agree we need the military capacity to defend our vital interests – by ourselves when need be. The question is grand strategy. With the Journal’s endorsement, the Pentagon has called for a Pax Americana: The U.S. should cast so large a military shadow that no rival dare emerge.

American hegemony might be a pleasant idea, but is it economically, political-

### Counterpoint

By Joseph R. Biden Jr.

ly or even militarily wise? Bristling with weapons, we would continue our economic decline, while rising industrial and financial giants in Europe and Asia viewed our military pretensions with indifference or contempt.

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney outdid even the Journal, dipping deep into the well of Cold War argumentation to accuse Pax Americana critics of thinking “America’s world presence is somehow immoral and dangerous.”

Why doesn’t the Journal stop the name-calling, get its schools sorted out, and court an honest debate over America’s proper role in the new world order?

Pat Buchanan’s “America First” preaches martyrdom: We’ve been suckered into fighting “other” people’s battles and defending “other” people’s interests. With our dismal economy, this siren song holds some appeal.

But most Americans, myself included, reject 1930s-style isolationism. They expect

to see the strong hand of American leadership in world affairs, and they know that economic retreat would yield nothing other than a lower standard of living. They understand further that many security threats – the spread of high-tech weapons, environmental degradation, overpopulation, narcotics trafficking, migration – require global solutions.

What about America as globocop? First, our 21st-century strategy has to be a shade more clever than Mao’s axiom that power comes from the barrel of a gun. Power also emanates from a solid bank balance, the ability to dominate and penetrate markets, and the economic leverage to wield diplomatic clout.

Second, the plan is passive where it needs to be aggressive. The Journal endorses a global security system in which we destroy rogue-state threats as they arise. Fine, but let’s prevent such problems early rather than curing them late. Having contained Soviet communism until it dissolved, we need a new strategy of “containment” – based, like NATO, on collective action, but directed against weapons proliferation.

The reality is that we can slow proliferation to a snail’s pace if we stop irresponsible technology transfers. Fortunately, nearly all suppliers are finally showing restraint. The maverick is China, which persists in hawking sensitive weapons and technology to the likes of Syria, Iran, Libya, Algeria and Pakistan – even while pledging otherwise.

The Senate has tried to force China’s leaders to choose between Third World arms sales (1991 profits of \$500 million) and open trade with the U.S. (a \$12.5 billion annual Chinese surplus). Even though we have convincing intelligence that China’s leaders fear the use of this leverage, the president inexplicably refuses to challenge Beijing.

Weapons containment can’t be foolproof; and against a nuclear-armed North Korea, I would support pre-emptive military action if necessary. But let’s do our best – using supplier restraint and sanctions against outlaw sellers and buyers – to avoid having to round up the posse. Why not an anti-proliferation “czar” in the cabinet to give this objective the prominence it urgently needs?

Third, Pax Americana is a direct slap at two of our closest allies – Japan and Germany—and a repudiation of one of our

*Rather than denigrating collective security, we should regularize the kind of multilateral response we assembled for the Gulf War. Why not breathe life into the U.N. Charter?*

great postwar triumphs. For years, American leaders argued that building democracy in Europe and Asia would guarantee stability because democracies don’t start wars. Now the Pentagon says we must keep our military large enough to persuade Japan and Germany “not to aspire to a greater role [even] to protect their legitimate interests.”

How has our success suddenly become a threat? It hasn’t, but the Pentagon plan could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. By insulting Tokyo and Berlin, and arrogating to ourselves military stewardship of the world, we may spark the revival no one wants.

Secretary Cheney says he wants the allies to share the burden on defense matters. But Pax Americana puts us on the wrong end of a paradox: Hegemony means

that even our allies can force ever greater U.S. defense spending the more they try to share the burden!

Fourth, collective security doesn’t rule out unilateral action. The Journal says I’m among those who want “Americans . . . to trust their security to a global committee.” But no one advocates that we repeal the “inherent” right of self-defense enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Secretary Cheney says his plan wouldn’t undermine support for the U.N. Who would know better than the U.N.’s usually understated secretary general? If implemented, says Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Pentagon’s strategy would spell “the end of the U.N.”

Rather than denigrating collective security, we should regularize the kind of multilateral response we assembled for the Gulf War. Why not breathe life into the U.N. Charter? It envisages a permanent commitment of forces, for use by the Security Council. That means a presumption of collective action—but with a U.S. veto.

Rather than defending military extravagance, the Bush administration should be reallocating Pentagon funds to meet more urgent security needs: sustaining democracy in the former Soviet empire; supporting U.N. peacekeepers in Yugoslavia, Cambodia and El Salvador; and rebuilding a weakened and debt-burdened America.

If Pentagon strategists and their knee-jerk supporters could broaden their horizons, they would see how our superpower status is best assured. We must get lean militarily, revitalize American economic strength, and exercise a diplomatic leadership that puts new muscle into institutions of collective security.

Sen. Biden is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s European Affairs Subcommittee.

## FULL TEXT:

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# The Way Forward: Gender Equity by Design

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/matter-of-impact/the-way-forward-gender-equity-by-design/>

In Matter of Impact, we intend to cast a close eye on a single topic or issue with short features, video, and case studies.

In the quiet of their homes, women are shouldering a staggering increase in unpaid labor and caretaking springing from the Covid-19 crisis, while facing a spike in domestic violence. They also are more likely to have lost their jobs in pandemic lockdowns and many of the remaining jobs have put them at elevated risk of contracting the virus. It is bracingly clear: the economic and social toll of Covid-19 will be paid disproportionately by women and girls, even as studies show equality is good for economies and societies as a whole.

The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, with support from The Rockefeller Foundation and in collaboration with former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, released a report on Sept. 10 which provides a roadmap for a changing world. Marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing, China in 1995, the new report offers a strategy for accelerating gender equity progress, building upon the original Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In this second edition of our online magazine Matter of Impact, we focus on the ongoing work to achieve gender equity. The Rockefeller Foundation's Sundaa Bridgett-Jones examines the extra burden carried by women of color and names an opportunity of the moment: to finally build true solidarity in the women's movement. The Foundation's Deepali Khanna explains why prioritizing women entrepreneurs will help communities recover faster. A Nigerian woman lighting the way in the male-dominated sector of renewable energy shares how her sister's memory influences her, and in India, brave women who have been repairing water handpumps in rural villages throughout the pandemic gather on Zoom to sing together in Hindi: "We shall overcome."

Much has been said about the opening created by this challenging spring and summer. Together, we have a chance to recreate not the same world, but a more just one. The voices gathered for this edition offer a glimpse of that way forward . . .

[\*A Moment for Deeper Solidarity in The Women's Movement\*](#)

[\*Beijing+25: Accelerating Progress for Women and Girls\*](#)

[\*Investing in Women: Why Female Entrepreneurship Will Recharge Our Global Economy\*](#)

[\*Nigerian Women's Perspectives Light the Way in the Renewable Energy Sector\*](#)

[\*Standing Firm Beside Underserved Women in Asia\*](#)

[\*Climate Justice in the Time of Covid-19: 5 Lessons From Women and Girls Leading the Fight\*](#)

[\*Investing in Women Farmers to Reduce Food Waste and Fight Hunger\*](#)

[\*The Great Equalizer or Divider: Technology for Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment\*](#)

# In the Year of Women’s Rights Anniversaries, Now is the Time to Make Foreign Policy Feminist

- Lyric Thompson — Director of Policy and Advocacy, International Center for Research on Women
- Sundaa Bridgett-Jones — Former Chief Partnerships and Advocacy Officer

01.16.20

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/in-the-year-of-womens-rights-anniversaries-now-is-the-time-to-make-foreign-policy-feminist/>



Women across Mexico marched against gender violence and patriarchy in a national day of action to raise awareness about violence against women on April 24, 2016. Photo: teleSUR / Clayton Conn

Mexico became the latest country to launch a distinctly “feminist” foreign policy, an approach to foreign relations aimed at advancing gender equality, promoting peace and combatting the most egregious challenges of our day: climate change, gender-based violence, migration. This approach is new and bold—with only five countries that have announced feminist foreign policies—but we believe it holds considerable promise as a tool to organize and catalyze action on the most important issues of the day.

It's a watershed year for actions like this. 2020 is a year of anniversaries, including the fast approaching 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the result of the Fourth World Conference on Women, wherein world leaders and thousands of women's rights activists gathered to debate and ultimately enshrine women's rights as human rights in international law. This marked a fundamental shift from the rights of women being treated as a niche issue to a broader recognition of those rights as fundamental to the overall success of society.

The Beijing Conference had special significance for U.S. foreign policy. Then First Lady Hillary Clinton's speech was a major moment for the United States, as it ultimately set in motion a number of efforts to elevate and codify a focus on gender equality and women's human rights in U.S. foreign policy and practice.

This year, we also celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace, and Security, which was adopted to protect, involve, and elevate women in conflict and peacetime operations. UNSCR 1325 was the first major and binding mandate to assert the protection of women from violence associated with conflict and champion their meaningful roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. The resolution has since been adopted in national law by 83 countries, including the United States.

UNSCR 1325 and the Beijing Declaration were major policy innovations in their time and set the frame for numerous ensuing national and global level policy precedents in the decades following their launch. As the world prepares to mark these important moments with events throughout the year, we're considering how to honor the legacy of these pivotal policies with sustainable action.

After more than a year of our own careful research and consultation on this question, decades of advocacy driving global feminist movements and the 2014 debut of Sweden's first of its kind policy, feminist foreign policy presents an important pathway for enshrining rights and enabling sorely needed progress both on our past commitments and those we couldn't have anticipated at the time, like climate change.

Recently, ICRW and The Rockefeller Foundation convened leading thinkers in feminist foreign policy from civil society and governments, including those that have announced feminist foreign policies — Sweden, Canada, France, and now Mexico[1] — in an attempt to distill a common definition and approach. What is feminist foreign policy and how can it enable real and lasting change in line with women's human rights and gender equality standards. These are the very questions we seek to answer.

Feminist foreign policy presents an important pathway for enshrining rights and enabling sorely needed progress both on our past commitments and those we couldn't have anticipated ... like climate change.

The result is an emerging framework for feminist foreign policy to be launched at the upcoming United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. This framework will provide activists inside and outside of government with the tools they need to push for bold commitments to advance gender equality and women's human rights. That means everything from more women in senior leadership positions in government—a common indicator of the extent to which an institution is seeking to challenge patriarchal culture—to investing more budget dollars in programs that will advance gender equality and support women and other marginalized populations.

It means full-throated support for even the most difficult or contested rights, such as sexual and reproductive rights, as well as increasing investment in peace and environmental integrity. It means calling on governments to “[prioritize] gender equality and environmental integrity, [enshrine] the human rights of all, [seek] to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures, and [allocate] significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision.” And it means that we must set goals, establish benchmarks, and hold our governments and ourselves accountable. The time for paying more than lip service to feminist ideals in foreign policy is now.

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[1] Luxembourg has also announced that a feminist foreign policy is currently under development

# Beijing +25

Accelerating Progress  
for Women and Girls





## Acknowledgements

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## Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace and Security

Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace and Security seeks to promote a more stable, peaceful, and just world by focusing on the important role women play in preventing conflict and building peace, growing economies, and addressing global threats like violent extremism and climate change. We engage in rigorous research, host global convenings, advance strategic partnerships, and nurture the next generation of leaders. Housed within the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, the Institute is headed by the former U.S. Ambassador for Global Women’s Issues, Melanne Vermeer. For more information, visit [giwps.georgetown.edu](http://giwps.georgetown.edu).

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## The Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation advances new frontiers of science, data, innovation, and equity to solve global challenges related to health, food, power, and economic mobility. As a science-driven philanthropy focused on building collaborative relationships with partners and grantees, The Rockefeller Foundation seeks to inspire and foster large-scale human impact that promotes the well-being of humanity throughout the world by identifying and accelerating breakthrough solutions, ideas, and conversations. For more information, visit [rockefellerfoundation.org](http://rockefellerfoundation.org).



# Beijing +25

This report was developed in conjunction with a high-level group of global women leaders and Generation Equality leaders, a cohort of eight women leaders, activists, and policymakers who brought their perspectives to this report.

## Global women leaders

**Michelle Bachelet**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Chile

**Hillary Rodham Clinton**, Former United States Secretary of State

**Patricia Espinosa**, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**Drew Faust**, Former President of Harvard University

**Julia Gillard**, Former Prime Minister of Australia

**Dalia Grybauskaitė**, Former President of Lithuania

**Natalia Kanem**, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund

**Susana Malcorra**, Former Foreign Minister of Argentina

**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**, Executive Director of UN Women

**Reema Nanavaty**, Head of Self-Employed Women's Association of India

**Marta Lucía Ramírez**, Vice President of Colombia

**Mary Robinson**, Former President of Ireland

**Judith Rodin**, Former President of The Rockefeller Foundation

**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**, Former President of Liberia

**Carolyn Tastad**, Group President for North America at Procter & Gamble

**Margot Wallström**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

## Generation Equality leaders

**Shaharзад Akbar**, Chairperson for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

**Leila Alikarami**, Lawyer and Human Rights Advocate, Iran

**Laura Alonso**, Former Head of the Argentina Anti-Corruption Office

**Ikram Ben Said**, Founder of Aswat Nissa, Tunisia

**Chouchou Namegabe**, Founder and CEO, ANZAFRIKA, Democratic Republic of the Congo

**May Sabe Phyu**, Kachin Women's Rights Activist, Myanmar

**Trisha Shetty**, Founder and CEO of SheSays, India

**Virginia Tan**, Co-Founder and President of Lean In China



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## Foreword

**W**e live at a watershed moment for women. Seldom has the world so urgently needed gender equality. It is up to us to demand it.

In 2020, a global health pandemic and faltering economy have exacted an especially cruel toll on women. And yet, women on every continent are rising to the challenge of COVID-19. From frontline workers, caregivers, and humanitarians risking their own lives, to heads of state safeguarding the lives of others, women are steering us through this crisis. And women deserve equality and justice in return, once and for all.

Whether the pandemic, mass unemployment, or climate change, the burdens of today's world weigh disproportionately on women, widening the gender gap in low wages, poor health outcomes, barriers to education, and surges in domestic violence, displacement and conflict.

Twenty-five years ago, representatives from 189 countries and tens of thousands of women activists converged in Beijing to demand gender equity and justice. That, too, was a watershed moment. Not only for the scope of the gathering, or the force of its message that “human rights are women’s rights,” but for its Platform for Action, the most comprehensive blueprint for women’s equality in history. Action was demanded, and action was taken—leading to advances in education, health care, political representation, and legal remedies to discrimination.

Yet today, work remains to be done. Institutional and structural sexism continue to deprive women—especially women of color—of fair wages, or wages at all, for their contributions to their economies. In some countries, there is not even a word for rape. In most, a culture of impunity thrives, allowing the subjugation,

humiliation, and silencing of women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted in their homes and workplaces. Virtually everywhere, antiquated norms calcify gender biases, perpetuating workplace discrimination, economic dependency, obstacles to political power and educational opportunity, and lethargy in writing and enforcing laws protecting women’s rights.

When women step up to demand progress, raising their voices on and offline, they are too often met with derision and blame, and even violence. This worrisome pattern of scapegoating is only getting worse in a climate of economic insecurity, political alienation, and fear of change. Let’s be clear: A rise in gender activism has coincided with a rise of authoritarian leaders—from the United States to the Philippines to Russia to Brazil and beyond—who cling to a rigid ideology of male privilege and supremacy that denies women their voices and their value. This cultural backlash, meant to stifle and suppress the potential of half the world’s population, is thwarting the progress we’ve made, and threatens progress still to come.

So, we must resist and persist. And insist.

We can wait no longer.

Even in the current crucible of global crises and gender discrimination, there is reason for hope. Beginning in 2017, a groundswell of protest on behalf of women’s rights led millions of people to march in solidarity through city streets and town squares around the world. At the same time, courageous women on every continent began sharing their own stories of sexual and gender-based exploitation. Mobilizing new technologies, they were able to blend their voices into a global chorus that grew into a global movement. Just as the

worldwide marches and the energy of #MeToo have helped weave women's narratives into the larger tapestry of human history, we must seize this moment of peril and promise and write the next chapters of our story until we achieve full equality.

And we can.

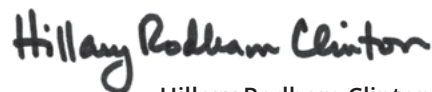
What follows is a roadmap for the future that builds on the Beijing Platform for Action. Relying on the wisdom and experience of accomplished women from every sector, and the fresh insights and aspirations of young women leaders, the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and The Rockefeller Foundation have compiled a groundbreaking report outlining gaps in women's progress since 1995 and strategic levers for change moving forward.

*Beijing + 25: Accelerating Progress for Women and Girls* offers a comprehensive framework for what a post-pandemic world must look like for women. It calls

for resetting gender norms, bridging gaps between law and practice, countering backlash to gender equality, fostering democratic inclusion and accountability, and harnessing technology as a means to empower women and girls. It provides local, national, and global examples of policies and programs that work. And it showcases new, cutting-edge tools from mobile apps to climate justice designed to erase gender inequities that COVID-19 has so vividly, and irrefutably, exposed.

Finishing the unfinished business of the Beijing platform is an urgent strategic imperative that all world leaders, men and women alike, must embrace. Not with tired ideas and incremental steps, but with the boldness, passion, and resources needed to capitalize on the extraordinary events of this hour in ways that will transform our world for the better.

Our time is now. We must meet this moment.



**Hillary Rodham Clinton**  
Former United States Secretary of State



## Executive summary

In 1995, an unprecedented 17,000 participants and 30,000 activists streamed into Beijing and produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The declaration was grounded in a determination to “advance the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity.” Twenty-five years later, alongside the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this progressive blueprint remains a powerful inspiration for advancing women’s rights. In fact, it has gained credence as a crucial organizing framework for a post COVID-19 world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our lives, surfacing severe gender inequalities that many have been trying to address for years. Responding to the scope and severity of the pandemic is straining every system that influences all aspects of daily life—our public health infrastructure, economy, social and cultural dynamics, and politics. Yet COVID-19 also presents an unprecedented opportunity to rethink, reset, and build back better, particularly for women and girls. Indeed, the decision-making frameworks of the next 12 to 18 months will shape human interactions for the rest of this century and beyond. That creates a window for real systems change—and a responsibility to act now.

As we lean into the response to this crisis, we must bring a renewed sense of urgency to building a global community—with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the center—in which everyone, especially women and girls, can be hopeful about the future. While the divisions and inequalities in our world may seem greater than ever, so is our ability to rise above them.

Since 1995, there have been important gains for women and girls—parity in education in many countries, far fewer deaths in childbirth, more women elected to parliament and leadership positions in government and business, and reduced discrimination under the law.

Yet major gaps persist on multiple fronts. Women’s paid labor force participation has stagnated globally, and women still carry the heaviest burden of unpaid work at home. Every year, 13 percent of women experience sexual or physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner, with prevalence rising to 18 percent in fragile and conflict-affected countries.<sup>1</sup> Women remain largely excluded from decision-making—in governments, from the local to the highest levels; in peace negotiations; and in corporate leadership. Part I of the report provides an overview of these patterns, with attention to current regional differences in women’s well-being and inclusion.

The COVID-19 pandemic risks rolling back women’s modest gains and slowing or even reversing progress. Major threats to women’s lives and livelihoods include the health risks faced by frontline workers, a majority of whom are women; rising rates of intimate partner violence; resistance to women’s rights and to access to sexual and reproductive healthcare; growing injustice in the labor force; discriminatory laws and lack of

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*The COVID-19 pandemic serves as an unprecedented opportunity to rethink, reset, and build back better, particularly for women and girls.*

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legal identity; and repercussions for forcibly displaced women.

The good news is that innovative interventions are emerging from states and nonstate actors, including efforts to prevent and respond to intimate partner violence, address the disadvantages facing poor and marginalized women, and support the collective action of women and women's organizations. These efforts are moving to the fore amid the challenges of COVID-19. The SDGs, committed to by 193 governments in 2015, are at the heart of recovery and of what needs to be done, and they make clear that responding requires informed and inclusive action.

This report was developed in conjunction with a high-level group of global women leaders—listed on page iii—to reflect on continuing challenges and provide solutions for overcoming persistent obstacles to gender equality. This high-level group was joined by the Generation Equality leaders, a cohort of eight women leaders, activists, and policymakers who brought their perspectives to this report.<sup>2</sup> Their wisdom and experiences are reflected in these pages. Institutionally, the report represents a collaboration between the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and The Rockefeller Foundation.

## Five strategic levers for change

Several levers and potential entry points, connected in important ways, have emerged as critical to accelerating and sustaining progress for women and girls on the ground. Part II highlights five key levers for progress and presents concrete examples of promising practice.

### **Lever 1. Resetting gender norms**

Discriminatory gender norms have impeded progress toward the Beijing goals on multiple fronts.<sup>3</sup> Changing current gender norms has emerged as a global priority.<sup>4</sup> Some promising examples include:

- *Recognizing and redistributing unpaid care work.* Paid time off can be supported by programs like MenCare+, which has offered fatherhood preparation courses and information campaigns in Brazil, Indonesia, Rwanda, and South Africa to address fathers' reported feelings of being unprepared or ill-informed about caring for children.<sup>5</sup>
- *Leveraging media platforms.* The media can play a transformative role in advancing gender equality and addressing harmful norms by amplifying

women's voices and representing women as experts and storytellers. The Population Media Council uses entertainment programming to positively shift norms through media. To create powerful, context-specific content, the council hires local writers and producers<sup>6</sup> whose programming has reached 500 million people across Africa, Asia, and the Americas.<sup>7</sup>

- *Boosting girls' life skills and aspirations.* Providing girls with training in soft skills and access to capacity-building programs helps develop confidence, overcome harmful internalized norms, and reduce the likelihood of child marriage.

### **Lever 2. Bridging gaps between law and practice**

Progress on legislative reform has been extensive, but implementation often lags. Transforming policies into realities requires commitments at all levels, including:

- *Implementing government reforms to strengthen enforcement of gender equality protections.* A review of laws against domestic violence suggests that comprehensive approaches can pay off, as in Sweden, which coordinated a broad set of policies to implement its extensive legal framework for preventing violence against women.<sup>8</sup>
- *Engaging community leaders to improve sexual and reproductive health and reduce violence.* SASA! is a community-led intervention for catalyzing changes in norms and behaviors that perpetuate gender inequality, violence, and HIV vulnerability for women. Established in Uganda, SASA! is now reportedly used in 25 countries and more than 60 organizations in various contexts, including refugee camps, high-density urban communities, and faith-based institutions.<sup>9</sup>
- *Allocating adequate resources.* Investments in social protection, women's centers, and sexual and reproductive health are examples of necessary interventions but are often chronically underfunded.

### **Lever 3. Countering backlash to gender equality**

Resistance to gender equality can come from many sides, typically from men (who benefit from the status quo), fundamentalist groups, and populist governments that demonize and misrepresent gender equality as a threat to "traditional values." Political violence against women activists, political leaders, and demonstrators has emerged as a prevalent form of backlash. Two broad strategies emerge to counter backlash:

- *Rallying collective action.* Global, national, and grassroots efforts to counter backlash include mass



demonstrations, social media campaigns, and other forms of collective action. Armenia's landmark 2013 legislation on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women met powerful backlash fueled by ultranationalist groups, but women's groups successfully countered the opposition using social media as a megaphone.

- *Navigating resistance.* Resistance to gender equality can occur at all levels, from international organizations to the workplace. In Victoria, Australia, VicHealth<sup>10</sup> has outlined strategies to manage and counter backlash in conversations, including identifying allies, recognizing domination techniques, being prepared to listen, and considering framing strategies to debunk myths around gender equality.

#### **Lever 4. Fostering democratic inclusion and accountability**

Women play major roles as decision-makers and as monitors holding decision-makers accountable. Measures to increase the representation of women have boosted gender equality in elected bodies, advanced the inclusion of women's groups, promoted social movements at grassroots levels, and fostered action for peace, climate justice, and adaptation.

- *Changing attitudes about leadership.* The panchayat gender quotas in India have long shown that seeing is believing, as seeing women in local leadership roles positively changed attitudes toward women's leadership.<sup>11</sup>
- *Advancing peace and security through collective organization.* Where women have been excluded from formal political processes, women's movements have led to mass action campaigns in many cases. During the 2019 revolution in Sudan, women led demonstrations calling for justice and successfully campaigned for the revocation of former President Omar al-Bashir's Public Order law that regulated what women could wear, whom they spoke to, and what job they could hold.
- *Taking action for climate justice.* Women officials at the local level have been at the forefront of climate action and are mobilizing through networks like Women4Climate, created by 20 women mayors of the C40 Cities group.<sup>12</sup> Young and indigenous women have also led actions to protect the environment, as seen in the work of The Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad and the activities of young activist Greta Thunberg.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Lever 5. Harnessing technology**

Technological innovation holds promise for empowering women and girls on multiple fronts, in part because it enables evading or leap-frogging traditional constraints and structures. Technology can be a gateway to women's economic empowerment. This is especially the case for new digital technologies that were largely unavailable at the time of the Beijing Conference.

- *Amplifying women's voices.* Social media can act as a force multiplier in campaigns for gender equality by raising awareness at often unprecedented speed with unrivaled reach, giving a voice to women who have long been muted in public spaces. Inspiring a global movement, the #MeToo hashtag has been widely used in 85 countries and translated into many languages.
- *Enhancing physical security.* Apps and other online platforms can increase women's access to justice, expose areas of insecurity, and deter violence against women. SafeCity visually maps cases of sexual assault across major cities in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America, aiming to both protect women from future violence and break the silence surrounding abuse.<sup>14</sup>
- *Advancing women's economic opportunities and entrepreneurship.* Technology is a gateway to new public spaces, markets, and information with major potential for boosting women's economic activity and participation. A GSMA survey across 11 developing countries—including Colombia, Jordan, and Kenya—found that nearly two in three women reported that mobile phones had given them new access to employment and business opportunities.<sup>15</sup>

### **The way forward**

The pandemic is causing a profound paradigm shift that is reconfiguring how we approach every aspect of social and economic life, adding renewed energy and commitment to actions to eradicate persistent gender gaps and inequalities. Part III presents an overarching strategy comprising seven pillars for building back better in a way that eliminates the gaps.

#### **1. Support the collective action of women, especially grassroots organizations**

Many grassroots organizations have a unique understanding of their communities' needs and priorities yet lack the ability to engage as decision-makers at the

highest levels. Creating a culture of recurring conversation and feedback between local voices and high-level leadership will be key to ensuring inclusive progress.

### ***2. Recognize and support youth leadership***

Bridging generational divides and engaging youth as active partners are essential for creating a broad base for advancing the gender equality agenda. While today's youth have unprecedented technological capacities, participation needs to be extended to rural and underserved areas in order to democratize digital access and enable widespread participation.

### ***3. Pursue intersectional demands for justice***

From race to ethnicity, sexual orientation to poverty status, rural to urban livelihoods, prioritizing an intersectional approach to gender equality that recognizes women's diverse identities and experiences will drive progress across the global agenda.

### ***4. Engage with powerful men and traditional authorities***

Women will not win the fight for gender equality alone. Enlisting support from powerful men—from the highest level to the local and household levels—will accelerate the movement toward equality by helping to overcome resistance and promoting norms of power sharing between men and women.

### ***5. Catalyze the private sector as a key partner***

The private sector is powerfully positioned to accelerate women's progress in the workplace, in the media,

and in entrepreneurship. Greater cooperation is needed among the private sector, governments, and international institutions.

### ***6. Reform and scale up multilateral support for equity***

The compounding effects of COVID-19 on the barriers to equality demand strong multilateral action and reaffirm the importance of building resilient institutions during good times as well as bad. Ensuring that the rhetoric of global institutions is translated into reality is a top priority.

### ***7. Expand access to better data***

Data disaggregated by sex and other demographic indicators are key to addressing the intersectional challenges facing women. Without more and better gender-specific data, properly tracking the implementation of the gender equality agenda is impossible.

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Now is the time to champion the organizational and decision-making frameworks that will shape the next 25+ years. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is the crucial framework for a post-COVID-19 world, but it must be fully implemented to be effective. Taking stock of progress, persistent gaps, and what works and drawing on the experience of women leaders and youth activists, Beijing + 25 provides the foundation and inspiration to accelerate change. Our suggested way forward outlines inclusive and effective approaches to finally realize and build on the vision of 1995.



## Introduction

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action—adopted by consensus following the mobilization of nearly 50,000 government delegates, experts, civil society representatives, and activists at the Fourth World Conference on Women—embodies the commitment of the international community to achieve gender equality and to provide better opportunities for women and girls. The declaration evinces a determination to “advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity.” Twenty-five years on, it remains a powerful inspiration for advancing women’s rights.<sup>16</sup>

The urgency and scale of the COVID-19 crisis demand bold solutions. While responding to the pandemic is threatening lives and straining resources, it also presents an unprecedented opportunity to reshape social, cultural, and economic dynamics—to rethink, reset, and build back better, particularly for women and girls. This has created a window for transformative change—and a responsibility to act.

The COVID-19 global crisis has thrown the disparities and risks facing women and girls into stark relief—not least the economic repercussions and worsening threats to women’s safety in the home—underlining the importance of keeping longer-term goals in mind, even in an emergency.

As we lean into the response to this crisis, we must bring a renewed sense of urgency to building a global community—with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the center—in which everyone, especially women and girls, can be hopeful about the future. While the divisions and inequalities in our world may

seem greater than ever, so is humanity’s ability to resolve them.

This report was developed in conjunction with a high-level group of global women leaders (see page iii) to reflect on continuing challenges and provide solutions for overcoming persistent obstacles to gender equality. This high-level group was joined by the Generation Equality leaders, a cohort of eight women leaders, activists, and policymakers who brought their perspectives to this report.<sup>17</sup> Their wisdom and experiences are reflected in these pages. Institutionally, the report represents a collaboration between the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and The Rockefeller Foundation.

Part I presents the broad picture, revealing major areas of the Beijing Platform—from the world of work to politics and leadership—where progress has been too slow, nonexistent, or reversed.

Part II examines several levers and potential entry points that have emerged as critical to efforts to accelerate and sustain progress for women and girls. Concrete examples are identified as promising practice.

Part III outlines strategies for the ways forward that emerged from discussions with women leaders.

Throughout, the report is deliberately selective in its focus and does not provide comprehensive coverage of

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*“Gender equality and women’s rights are essential to getting through this pandemic together, to recovering faster, and to building a better future for everyone.”*

—António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

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