

UN WOMEN CHINA NEWSLETTER 2020: A YEAR OF REFLECTION AND RESILIENCE

UN Women is a global champion for gender equality. We work to create a world in which every woman and girl can exercise her human rights and live up to her full potential. We are a trusted partner for advocates and decision-makers from all walks of life.

Working in China since 1998, initially as UNIFEM, we provide policy advisory, technical and financial assistance to innovative programmes and strategies for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Dear friends and partners,

I'd like to begin this update by sending my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones as we enter a new year. 2020 has been exceptionally challenging, and the resilience we have seen among those we work with at UN Women China has spurred us to produce what I feel is some of our best work under some of our most difficult working conditions. Below, we share with you the ways in which we have brought attention, through advocacy and other collective efforts, to advancing women's rights in China.

It has been a year of reflection, and promise. 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a landmark blueprint agreed by 189 governments to advance women's rights. As countries around the world took stock of their progress during the last quarter century, we were able to celebrate China's remarkable progress in poverty alleviation – meeting the SDG 1, target 1.1, related to eradicating extreme poverty of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ten years ahead of schedule – along with the introduction of a long-awaited civil code, which will create a legislative environment for fulfilling women's rights in China. As highlighted by China's first lady, Professor Peng Liyuan, on the anniversary of the Beijing conference on 16 September 2020, we must all play a role in fostering a culture free of gender bias. Our work, from guiding policy to partnering with the private sector, places us at the forefront of these efforts.

2021 will not be easy. The profound impact of COVID-19 on women's time, health, incomes, and opportunities threatens to again widen the gender gap and reverse the gains we have made. Yet with strong partnerships in place, we aim to take our learning from the past year forward into a better future for women in China. My heartfelt thanks to those that have walked with us this far and we continue to count on your support and solidarity.



A Word from Our Head of Office

Smriti Aryal

SPREADING THE WORD

This year, UN Women China has continued to take its message about gender equality far and wide with social media campaigns and high-profile events.

#MessageToHer
#GenerationEquality

The **campaign** that we kicked off on **International Women's Day** (8 March) united all UN agencies in China in celebrating the role and leadership of women during COVID-19 response efforts. It reached over 56 million views and sparked 37,240 online discussions across Chinese social media.

[Read More](#)

A Spotlight on Innovation

This year saw us working to boost the visibility of women-led innovation in China across different platforms. In one case, almost 9,000 young people tuned in online to hear from the winners – young people themselves – of our social innovation competition. Organised with China's leading tech giant, Tencent, this explored ways to boost #GenerationEquality through social innovation. An online **video** of the event hit 1.2 million views within an hour of being uploaded. Chosen from 1,230 proposals, we'll next be connecting the four winners to partners who can scale their ideas.

[Read More](#)

#ShareTheCare

We have reached more than a million people with our social media campaign about the greater burden of unpaid care work carried by women – and how this has worsened during the pandemic. Led by UN Women with the International Labour Organisation, and supported by the FAO, UNAIDS, and UNICEF, **#ShareTheCare** has reached over 1.3 million views, 1,393 reposts and 1,453 discussions on Weibo. The campaign aims to highlight how unpaid work generates inequality by limiting women's opportunities, their time and their income, among other factors, compared to men.

[Read More](#)

#SheBouncesBack

This social media campaign invited women entrepreneurs in China to share stories of fighting COVID-19 on the economic frontlines. It was part of our project to help women weather the social and economic costs of the pandemic and it reached more than 940,000 people via [Weibo](#) within two weeks of its launch on World Entrepreneurs' Day (21 August).

The series of inspiring stories that we produced as part of the campaign had been viewed 190,000 times on Weibo and WeChat by the end of the year. In-depth coverage by Beijing Television of our exhibition on women's entrepreneurship at the 2020 International Conference on Gender Equality and Corporate Social Responsibility was [rebroadcast widely by the CCTV Media app](#).

Meanwhile, new support will now be provided for women-led SMEs and workers impacted by COVID-19, thanks to the **Rockback Pujli Foundation**. Our programme with the Foundation will help build women's skills and leadership to boost their resilience against future shocks. Read more about the partnership [here](#).

[Read more #SheBouncesBack stories here](#)

MAGICAL MOMENTS

We asked our colleagues for their favourite moments of the year working for UN Women.

Tingting Li, Programme Associate

"It must have been in December when I completed due diligence checks for all 110 enterprises newly signed up to the Women's Empowerment Principles. It gave me a fruitful end to this year of hard work on the WEP team. Big thanks from me to our partners for working with us to create more gender equal workplaces."

Gao Tao, Programme Associate

"This year was the 10th anniversary of UN Women and it reminded me how exciting it was when it was first established, and how far we've come. As a newly joined staff member then I felt a strong sense of ownership and teamwork, and I've been able to see us become a strong driving force for change."

Wenting Zhao, Communications Officer

"For me, it would be seeing more of our media partners and online followers than ever supporting our campaigns to speak up for a better, more equal and inclusive world. Thank you all!"

MAKING THE ECONOMY WORK FOR WOMEN

2020 saw our women's economic empowerment (WEE) team championing female entrepreneurs, working to promote gender equality in the private sector, and supporting women farmers and their networks as part of our work on gender and climate change – all to a backdrop of challenge created by COVID-19.

Chinese companies stepped up for women during the pandemic this year, with 110 signing up to **The Women's Empowerment Principles** or **WEPs**, a set of guiding principles launched by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, for how to promote gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community. This takes the number of Chinese companies to 213 and the global number to more than 3,700 ([find the list here](#)).

Signing up to the WEPs brings the opportunity for **trainings and peer discussions**, including one in which **37 company representatives shared their plans for a gender-sensitive response to the COVID-19 crisis**. The Chairwoman of Toreda, an outdoor and sporting goods company, joined the webinar from Mount Everest Base Camp!

At the **2020 International Conference on Gender Equality and Corporate Social Responsibility** – which we organised with the EU Delegation to China – UN Women presented the first-ever WEPs Awards given in China. Ten awards were presented to business leaders who have excelled at promoting gender equality in their companies. The champions included Handa Industries and IKEA China; [read more about the winners and the event here](#). The awards were well covered by Chinese media, including here by [Xinhua](#) and [RTV via CCTV](#).

[Learn more about the WEPs & sign up here](#)

IN FIGURES: Climate Change Resilience

Supported by The Chanak Foundation, our programme to strengthening the income security and resilience of Qinghai's women farmers in preparation for the changing climate launched in 2018. Since then:

- 55,622** women farmers have directly benefited from our training on topics such as e-commerce and organic farming.
- 6** women's networks have been trained, including officials from the agricultural and financial sectors.
- 316** service providers have been trained, including officials from the agricultural and financial sectors.
- CNY 10,000** is the boost seen to the incomes of members in the women-led Guanzhong Agricultural Cooperative this year with our help, despite the difficulties of COVID-19.

[Read more about our climate change work here](#)

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"Although some men do not want to admit it, they are silently imitating and learning my methods... I feel that my voice can be heard, and I can get a lot of support now."

— Yan Shenglian
A UN Women-trained entrepreneur & rural mentor

PARTNERING FOR CHANGE

Our strategic partnerships continue to raise the visibility of UN Women and its mission in China. Here is our pick of major partnership highlights in the past years' calendar.

8 AUG

Partnering with the **All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)**, we hosted [a virtual global roundtable of ministers](#) and other high-level partners, to discuss the impact that COVID-19 has had on gender equality and women's empowerment. It reviewed how best to promote response and recovery in a way that would help countries meet their SDG 5 targets, guided by priorities identified in the review of the Beijing Platform. With keynote speakers including UN Women's Executive Director and Vice-President and First Member of the Secretariat of the ACWF, Huang Xiaowei, participants represented countries from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

9 SEP

UN Women partnered with the **China Disabled Persons' Federation**, along with UNESCAP, UNFPA and Rehabilitation International, on a [Call to Action](#) on the rights of women and girls with disabilities. This called for a coordinated national and global effort to empower disabled women and girls as part of efforts to curb female poverty, ensure sustainable development and promote women's rights. Read China Daily's coverage [here](#).

12 DEC

UN Women China signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the governmental **New Economy Development Commission of Chengdu**, which aims to secure an equal role for women in the new economy and become a showcase for other cities. Among other plans, this will include setting up a training centre to incubate entrepreneurial and technological talent, building a network of women entrepreneurs that can feed into policy and planning, and generating new research from a gender perspective.

2020 ALL YEAR

Strong support from our media partners: Our tremendous media partners, from Phoenix TV to Xinhua and CGTN, have continued to help amplify UN Women's voice across China's many online and offline channels. See interviews with our Head of Office here, with [Xinhua](#) and [CGTN](#).

"We are committed to creating a positive social impact for everyone across the value chain, and we want to play an important role in creating a fairer and more equal society in the communities where we are present. I am happy and proud for our partnership with UN Women working for more equal and safe homes and workplaces in China."

— Anna Pawlak-Kuliga, CEO and President of IKEA China, a new partner for 2020

WHEN TWO PANDEMICS MET: COVID-19 AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

With COVID-19 intensifying the gender-based violence pandemic in China and across much of the world, the Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) team had their work cut out for them in 2020. Here are a few of their highlights.

16 days of activism against gender-based violence

Our **flagship annual campaign** amplified the call for global action to end violence against women by bridging funding gaps and ensuring essential services for survivors of violence during the COVID-19 crisis, among other actions. In China, the invitation to [Orange the World: Funds, Respond, Prevent! Collect!](#) was responded to by eight major cities, which [hit iconic landmarks in orange](#). It was supported by our major media partners, such as the Xinhua, Phoenix TV and the China Advertisement Association, resulting in high profile billboards and coverage. The campaign also saw support and advocacy across the UN System, including a video from the [heads of CGTN](#) and [The Paper](#). Find out more here with our Chinese language video coverage in [Xinhua](#), [CGTN](#) and [The Paper](#).

Working with community organizations

Early in March 2020, our team reached out to service providers and women's organizations working in prevention and response to violence against women in different parts of the country to better assess the situation and identify ways in which UN Women along with the UN system could offer to support. Through a series of consultation and information gathered, we have developed a new programme that aims that strengthening GBV service delivery capacities and mechanisms including in future emergency situation, which we aim to launch in 2021.

Good news for gender equality

"For me, the best news about gender equality this year in China was absolutely President Xi's mentioning of women's political representation at the UN General Assembly Summit. He called for the creation of new opportunities for women to participate in decision making and be more involved in national, economic, cultural and social governance. Women's political participation is such an important dimension of promoting gender equality and can't happen without political commitment. We are hopeful to see the change happen, with His Excellency Xi Jinping's speech as an excellent starting point!"

— Jinyi Wang, Junior Consultant, UN Women China

BRINGING GENDER INTO TECH

New work on women's empowerment broke ground across China in late 2020 when UN Women and its partners selected eight new grantees for the China Gender Fund for Research and Advocacy.

WOMEN IN TECH

26%

Only 26 per cent of AI and data professionals globally are women.

Two winning projects – the first of their kind – will focus on the lack of a gender perspective in the Artificial Intelligence industry. Another project has turned to the China-Myanmar border in Yunnan province, where many Myanmar women who many Chinese men are living without a legal status, while three other winners aim to tackle gender-based violence and women's empowerment in their regions. Finally, although the past few years have seen many companies and foundations in China become involved in philanthropy, few pay attention to how their funds affect women and men differently. A finalist will research this issue in greater depth and then develop training workshops for philanthropy managers on how to avoid contributing to gender imbalances and promote equality with their funding.

[For more on the winners, read our media coverage from The China Daily](#)

GROWTH AND GAIN: FITTED OUT FOR THE FUTURE

This past year also saw internal changes for UN Women China as we expanded our team and our partners, and reviewed our priorities for the future.

TRUST

REFLECT, OPEN UP, BUILDING

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In keeping with the year's spirit of reflection, we held a series of summer meetings for staff, partners and our experts. Input from academics, government officials and representatives from women's organizations, UN member states and the private sector all fed into our vision and roadmap, which is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025, newly signed between UN agencies in China and the government of China.

We welcomed four new staff members onto the team to support the expansion of our partnerships and programme areas, while a two-day all-staff retreat in December was a chance for us to reflect on the year, develop skills and celebrate our growth into a strong, balanced and inclusive office. With most of us working remotely this year and facing our own personal challenges, we have paid particular attention to our duty of care, including our work-life balance and team building. Added to our busy calendar were a series of trainings and reviews, including with specialist colleagues from the Asia Pacific regional office, to help us enhance our impact on the lives of women and girls in China.

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