

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Announces \$80 Million Commitment To Close Gender Data Gaps and Accelerate Progress for Women and Girls

New initiative will promote gender equality and support the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

May 17, 2016: SEATTLE/COPENHAGEN – In her keynote speech today at the Women Deliver conference in Copenhagen, Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, announced that the foundation will commit \$80 million over the next three years to close gender data gaps and help accelerate progress for women and girls around the world. Alongside the Gates Foundation’s commitment, partners across governments, nonprofits and philanthropic organizations have also agreed upon [a new statement of principles](#) regarding gender data and its importance for accelerating development outcomes.

Data holds power: It demonstrates the size and nature of social or economic problems, and brings clarity around who is falling through the cracks. Through reliable data, women and girls’ lives can become visible and counted, helping to inform programming and hold leaders to account. However, a lack of comprehensive, current information about women and girls, especially in developing countries, hinders efforts to advance gender equality. If the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) are to be reached by 2030, the world must advance its knowledge about women and girls’ lives and livelihoods, their welfare and well-being, and their contributions to their communities, countries and economies.

“By adopting the SDGs the world agreed to achieve gender equality by 2030. But we cannot close the gender gap without first closing the data gap,” said Melinda Gates. “We simply don’t know enough about the barriers holding women and girls back, nor do we have sufficient information to track progress against the promises made to women and girls. We are committed to changing that by investing in better data, policies and accountability.”

The Gates Foundation’s new \$80 million commitment will support efforts that:

- **Fill critical gender data gaps**, including knowing how much time women and girls spend on unpaid work around the world, and what implications this has on their life chances and choices, such as completing education, getting jobs or starting businesses.
- **Improve the accuracy and reliability of data collection**, which can reveal at a large scale who owns assets like land, property or credit.
- **Equip decision makers with more timely and clearer evidence about programs and interventions that are working** and those that are not, so they can be redesigned quickly and more effectively.
- **Support civil society in holding leaders to account** for the commitments they’ve made to women and girls, helping maintain the political will to achieve gender equality.

Continued

- **Amplify and strengthen organizations and platforms** that keep gender equality at the center of global and national development efforts.

Since its founding 16 years ago, the Gates Foundation has focused on solving global health and development problems that disproportionately affect women and girls, in areas including family planning; maternal, newborn and child health; nutrition; agriculture; and financial services. The commitment announced today builds on this work, and that of the Gates Foundation’s partners around the world.

Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said: “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims ‘to leave no one behind’. To bring all women and girls to the finishing line in 2030 at the same time as everyone else, we must be able to target them and their needs, and see what progress we are making. Through our new flagship program initiative ‘Making Every Woman and Girl Count,’ UN Women commits to supporting countries to improve the production, accessibility and use of gender statistics.”

For additional information about the Gates Foundation’s announcement and content on women and girls issues:

- [Medium: Melinda Gates](#)
- [Gender Data Animation](#)
- [Women and Girls Hub: By News Deeply](#)
- [Closing the Gender Data Gap](#)
- [Grand Challenges – Putting Women and Girls at the Center of Development](#)

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About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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