



GENDER EQUALITY AND THE UPU

WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

Gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys.

Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are male or female.

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

WHY SHOULD POSTAL OPERATORS CARE ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY?

The postal sector employs millions and serves billions worldwide. The Post can help deliver equality to women and men everywhere – both as a major employer, and by increasing access to e-trade, financial, education, health, government and social support services.

HOW DOES GENDER EQUALITY BENEFIT POSTAL BUSINESSES?

Women and men often have different needs. By considering both, Posts can design services that work for everyone, thus boosting customer satisfaction and revenue.

As volumes of letters decline, Posts need to access new markets and develop new services. Women-run small businesses are a growing force in many countries. Posts can support them through logistics, finance and digital tools.

EXAMPLE: SUPPORTING WOMEN IN E-COMMERCE AND TRADE

The International Finance Corporation found that “an additional \$280 billion could be added to the value of the Southeast Asian e-commerce market and \$14.5 billion to the African e-commerce market, between 2025 and 2030, if gender gaps were closed.” Barriers to women’s participation in e-commerce include financial exclusion, limited access to information and markets, limited access to digital technologies and discriminatory policies and social norms. As transport and logistics is a key facilitator for everyone to access e-commerce markets, the Post has an essential role to play to help close gender gaps. Several Postal Operators are supporting gender equality in e-commerce and trade, as highlights in the 2024 TradePost Awards.

Pos Indonesia’s project “The Collaboration Centre & Cash on Delivery Service to Suburban Areas” has connected 3 million MSMEs to the global market with the transformation of post offices into spaces for creation, connection, and innovation. Some 200 collaboration centres offer a physical space for women entrepreneurs to access e-commerce tools and resources, workshops and coaching on various aspects of e-commerce, such as digital marketing and financial management. They also network with others, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Turkish Post run the project “Increasing e-Commerce Skills of Women”, which supports trade inclusion of women entrepreneurs and women cooperatives in Türkiye, with services such as training, special commission rates, and e-commerce support. One entrepreneur, a jewelry designer, said she feels safe delivering her unique, handmade jewelry through Turkish Post parcel services, who collect her shipments directly from her workshop. This highlights that the initiative is driving women’s trade inclusion and boosting economic growth, and positions the Post as a trusted partner for women entrepreneurs.

“I can proudly say that at Bahrain Post our services meet the needs of all women and girls in innovative and inclusive ways. We offer fast and secure delivery services with options to match their busy schedules. Also, we provide customer support services through various channels tailored to women’s needs, ensuring they receive the best possible assistance. Additionally, we offer training and awareness programmes for our female employees to enhance their skills and empower them in various fields.

Bahrain Post is not just a service platform; it is a trusted partner for every woman and girl in their educational and professional careers.”

AYSHA ALMANAEI

Bahrain Post

IS GENDER EQUALITY JUST ABOUT HIRING MORE WOMEN?

Gender equality is about creating fair opportunities for everyone. It is not about hiring unqualified candidates, but about removing barriers to ensure that all qualified people can apply and advance, regardless of their gender.

Gender equality and merit go hand in hand. Equality is about recognizing that historically, certain people have been overlooked, undervalued or explicitly excluded due to bias and stereotypes. True meritocracy can only exist on an equal playing field.

Recruitment is costly for businesses. According to the Harvard Business Review, more diverse companies lure better talent and improve their decision making, customer orientation and employee satisfaction.

EXAMPLE: SWISS POST REMOVING BARRIERS TO EQUAL PARTICIPATION

Swiss Post recognizes that as “a company operating throughout Switzerland to offer high-quality services and products that meet the needs of its customers, the composition of its workforce must adequately reflect the diversity of the Swiss population”. To support this, Swiss Post seeks to support diversity in its workforce through a range of programs targeting recruitment, retention and employee satisfaction, including:

- ensuring that gender-neutral and inclusive language is used in job advertisements.
- advertising all leadership and management roles as a part-time employment level of 70 to 100 percent and as top sharing/job sharing positions.
- indicating the salary range in several job advertisements, to support pay transparency.
- seeking balance in gender and spoken language (across the three national languages) when shortlisting positions for recruitment, and deliberately seeking diverse talent where it is not represented in the shortlist.
- developing programmes to prepare women for their next career steps and supporting retention measures to reduce the turnover rate, for example, the internal women@post network, attractive working conditions, and extended maternity leave.
- training staff on non-discrimination and mutual respect in the workplace.

DOES GENDER EQUALITY SUPPORT NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY?

Approximately half of the world's population are women, yet the rate of women's participation in the workforce is far lower than that of men.

The World Bank's analysis shows that if women could fully participate in the workplace through the removal of discriminatory laws and practices, global gross domestic product (GDP) would increase by more than 20%.

The postal sector can support women's economic participation, both as a direct employer and as a service provider to women-run small businesses and entrepreneurs.



"Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT Macao) is a self-financing government entity. I am proud to be a member of the staff of CTT Macao, where women and girls are empowered through initiatives like flexible work arrangements, equal pay, and advancement opportunities. CTT Macao offers targeted training programmes to enhance skills and create safe, supportive work environments with comprehensive policies. Employee benefits, including healthcare and parental leave, support work-life balance. My experience at CTT Macao has instilled in me a deep sense of professionalism and independence."

JOANNE LEONG I WA

Counter staff of General Post Office,
CTT Macao

“S.E. Poșta Moldovei, playing an important role in the community, contributes to promoting women's rights in society through various actions, such as distributing educational materials on legal rights, health, education, and protection against domestic violence.

These initiatives help women better understand the resources available to them and defend their rights. Additionally, by supporting awareness and information campaigns, the postal service becomes an essential tool for education and social change, assisting women in their decision-making process and contributing to building a more equitable and inclusive society.”

TAISIA RUDEANU

Head of the Operational Service
Chișinău, Poșta Moldovei

DOES GENDER EQUALITY MATTER ONLY TO DEVELOPED COUNTRIES?

Gender equality is a universal principle, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and supported by international agreements ratified by almost all countries.

For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a legally binding treaty to eliminate discrimination against women and promote gender equality in employment, education, healthcare, political participation and marriage/ family life. A total of 189 countries have ratified CEDAW.



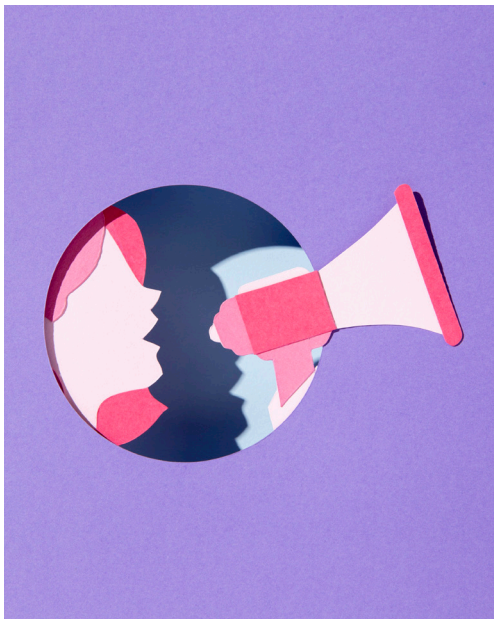
EXAMPLE: POST OFFERING INCLUSIVE FINANCIAL SERVICES

As letter volumes decline, many Posts are expanding their services to meet the evolving needs of their customers. This includes expansion to the provision of financial services. With a global network of 663,000 post offices, serving more than 1 billion postal customers globally, Posts are uniquely positioned to support financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women and under-served communities. For example:

As a key partner in the country's National Family Security Scholarship programme, La Poste Sénégal ensures that cash transfers are paid directly to female heads of households, supporting children's education and strengthening women's financial autonomy. By entrusting women with the management of these funds, the programme reinforces Senegal's commitment to Gender Equality and demonstrates the power of postal services to support change. By offering this service, La Poste Senegal also benefits from additional revenue and increased customer satisfaction. As people come to the post office to collect their money, they also get a chance to familiarise themselves with La Poste better, which helps build their brand.

For over 150 years, Egypt Post has offered financial and postal services of good quality and at affordable rates to citizens all over Egypt. Egypt Post's savings accounts are the most inclusive financial service in Egypt. Egypt Post manages 25 million savings accounts, out of which 4.8 million accounts are held by women, which is the largest number in Egypt, among all financial institutions and banks.

To support financial inclusion, the UPU partnered with Visa and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the Financial Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility (FITAF). The FITAF Programme has supported 20 projects across different postal operators to reach 5.3 million customers, of which 3.1 million (60%) were women. Projects were undertaken within Argentina, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Grenada, Jordan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Morocco, Nauru, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia and Vietnam.



WHAT ARE STRUCTURAL BARRIERS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Historically and to this day, there have been structural barriers that limit both women's and men's opportunities to participate in different aspects of public and private life. These barriers are often driven by gendered stereotypes about the role of women and men in society.

Structural barriers can make it harder for some people to access certain resources

These barriers may include:

Policies that limit people's access to employment, finances or other resources;

Unequal division of care and labour in households;

Gender stereotyping of men and women into different roles in society;

Assigning lower value to women's work (e.g. childcare or nursing).

Sex-disaggregated data can help us to better identify barriers and understand their impact.

IS GENDER EQUALITY GOOD FOR SOCIETY?

Gender inequality can negatively affect both women and men. While women may have less access to fair and equal employment opportunities, men often have less access to parental leave or the flexibility to balance work and personal responsibilities (like being an active father).

By supporting gender equality, we can help everyone to participate fully in different aspects of their lives.

HOW CAN THE POSTAL SECTOR/UPU SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY?

Gender mainstreaming

Mainstreaming a gender perspective means assessing the impact on women and men of any planned action or policy. It integrates women's and men's unique concerns and experiences into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes. The aim is for both to benefit equally in political, economic, and societal spheres, avoiding the perpetuation of inequality. Member countries may choose to undertake gender mainstreaming, in accordance with their national priorities and commitments.

To support gender mainstreaming, apply a gender lens to your policies and programmes. A gender lens is a way of analyzing situations, policies or programmes with a specific focus on how they affect people of different genders. Other lenses, such as age, ability, or culture, can complement this approach to create more inclusive and effective policies. A gender lens helps identify and remove structural barriers and biases rooted in stereotypes or exclusionary practices.

Using a gender lens helps identify and remove structural barriers

and biases that limit access to opportunities due to outdated stereotypes or exclusionary practices.

Knowledge sharing

Approaches to tackling gender equality and supporting the growth of the postal sector vary from one country to another. The UPU, as an international organization, is well placed to support knowledge sharing between countries, allowing successful strategies, lessons learned and challenges to be documented, replicated and improved across different contexts.

Recognizing that each country is unique, the UPU can support international and regional knowledge-sharing activities that highlight how members in different contexts are including underrepresented people in their services. This gives UPU members the opportunity to identify, adapt and scale up successful approaches that suit their context.



EXAMPLE: UPU FELLOWSHIP FUELS LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

In 2024, with funding from its capacity building programme, the UPU granted fellowships to six women leaders in the postal sector to support their participation in the autumn meeting of the Union's supervisory body. The six fellows represented Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, Yemen, Malawi, Vanuatu, and Kyrgyzstan.

This fellowship supports senior women leaders in the postal sector to gain exposure at the international level, including engaging with key international platforms such as the UPU Councils, particularly the CA. This exposure equips them with the tools, networks, and knowledge to champion gender mainstreaming initiatives within their own postal administrations. Through this initiative, women leaders also have the chance to collaborate, share best practices, and mentor each other, creating a supportive network that strengthens both their leadership capabilities and the broader postal sector.

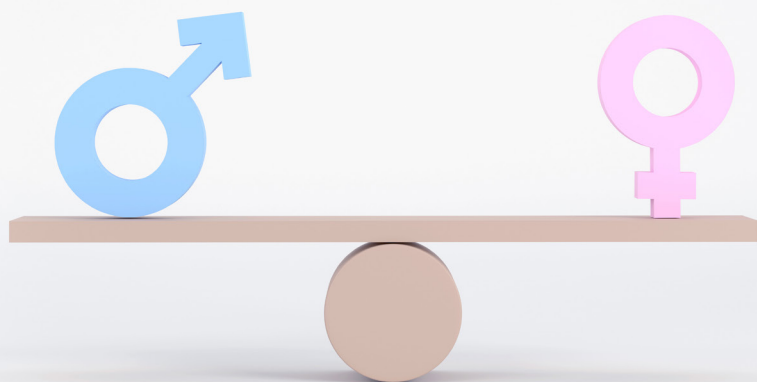
Participants discussed their expectations from the fellowship programme, offered recommendations for strengthening postal services, and highlighted initiatives for advancing women's leadership in their respective countries. From ICT modernization to financial literacy, from regulatory reforms to human resource development, each fellow brought unique perspectives shaped by their professional expertise and national contexts.

"Within the La Poste Group, we engage with our stakeholders, including our start-up partners, and our efforts have paid off. The 'French Internet of Things' accelerator has supported start-ups for 10 years and, through proactive measures, has increased the proportion of women entrepreneurs in the programme from 9% to 50%.

In the beginning, we never exceeded 9% of female founders. We wanted to change this without resorting to positive discrimination. Instead, we focused on how we communicate, how we identify start-ups, and how we reduce biases in project evaluation."

VANESSA CHOCTEAU

General Director of the
Docaposte Institute, La Poste





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