



International Women's Day 2020: Advocacy Kit for Libraries

Every year on 8 March, the world celebrates *International Women's Day*. For many decades, this day has been a moment to celebrate women's achievements and rally for gender equality and women empowerment.

Women's Day in 2020 will hold special significance. 25 years ago, an unparalleled 30.000 activists and representatives from 189 UN Member State governments gathered for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Together, they charted and committed to an ambitious roadmap towards equality, empowerment and development of women and girls worldwide – the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The 25th anniversary of the Declaration and the Platform in 2020 will be marked by a large-scale review process to see how far we have come towards implementing its goals and objectives. The world will have a chance to reflect on what remains to be done – and set a course for future action.

It also falls at the same time as we enter the *decade of delivery* on the Sustainable Development Goals, which enshrine gender equality in Goal 5. Against this backdrop, this year's International Women's Day will take place amid a flurry of forums, workshops and initiatives dedicated to women empowerment.

For libraries, the International Women's Day 2020 offers an opportunity to reflect on how access to information can – and has – contributed to the empowerment of women and girls.

Libraries have long stood for equal and equitable access to information and knowledge. Such access is key to empowerment and the opportunity to improve one's livelihood. That is why, by contributing their knowledge and efforts, libraries can help deliver on many aspects of women's empowerment that access to information facilitates. As all stakeholders explore how to achieve gender equality within the decade, we invite and encourage libraries to celebrate and contribute to the global discussion!

What IFLA is planning

On International Women's Day 2020, IFLA resolves to raise awareness, continue supporting libraries worldwide in their efforts to help women empowerment, and encourage libraries to contribute to the global conversation. To mark this year's International Women's Day, IFLA will:

- **Launch a new SDG story.** [The SDG Stories section](#) of the Library Map of the World is a unique platform to showcase impactful stories of how libraries in different countries contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a valuable tool to document the impact of libraries on their communities, to share experiences and inspire others, and power advocacy. The platform already features [a number](#) of stories focusing on SDG 5, gender equality, showing how libraries have fought for women's empowerment in

different spheres: reproductive health, food security, lifelong learning, employability.

To celebrate International Women's Day 2020, we are launching a new SDG story about women's empowerment! Look out for a story of one library in the southern hemisphere embarking on a project in 2013 that grew, expanded, and earned national recognition for reaching and transforming the lives of many women from a minority community in the country.

- **Look at the role of libraries in Beijing+25.** As part of the review process, countries around the world have prepared national and regional reports to showcase the progress made towards women's empowerment, reflect on achievements and indicate what still needs to be done. IFLA will be looking at how the different national strategies have taken account of libraries, and the role of access to information in their broader gender equality strategies.
- **Encourage a conversation and invite libraries to take action.** We have prepared this advocacy and action kit to encourage libraries to take action on 8 March and beyond, and join the global conversation. You can make use of the key takeaway messages below to power your advocacy and show your support; and take inspiration from the ideas and real-life examples of library contributions to take action and launch your own initiatives!

Key Messages to Share

- 1) "Access to information impacts many dimensions of gender equality – health, education, prosperity, social and political participation. Together, we can ensure that a gender information divide no longer stands in the way of real equality."
- 2) "Informal education is a key part of efforts to equip all women and girls with the skills and knowledge to succeed. Access to informal learning opportunities – including through libraries – can help ensure that no-one is left behind, regardless of age, income or background."
- 3) "A large gender digital gap persists in 2020. Inclusive digital skills initiatives and affordable internet access strategies ensure that more women enjoy the benefits of the information society."
- 4) "Preserve her story! Dedicated collections and specialised libraries make sure that women's voices are kept and shared with care and respect."

Quotes:

- 5) "Information rights, information access, and knowledge are in a virtuous circle with women's empowerment and gender equality" – IFLA DA2I report 2017, p.83.
- 6) "The right of women to access information is essential to their economic empowerment, participation in public life, and the promotion and protection of their human rights" – the [Atlanta Declaration for the Advancement of Women's Right of Access to Information](#).
- 7) "We know information makes a difference for women. We have seen it." - Laura Neuman, director of the Carter Center's Global Access to Information Program. <https://blog.cartercenter.org/2018/03/08/inform-women-transform-lives/>.

- 8) “To keep women’s words, women’s works, alive and powerful” - Ursula LeGuin, “Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places”; motto of the Jessie Street National Women’s Library.

What You Can Do

The work of libraries to empower women and protect their rights takes many forms. Dedicated collections, awareness-raising, learning circles and skills training – share your experiences and successes on this International Women’s Day!

Exchanging ideas and good practices can inspire others and help find new ways to make a difference. The UN Women [Generation Equality](#) campaign is also sharing ideas on [how anyone can contribute](#) to women empowerment – and depending on capacity, there are many different things libraries can do:

- Help women and young people in your communities exercise their rights to access to sexual and reproductive health information. Find and share information about the health services available for them.
- Organise discussions and dialogues to raise awareness and advocate for women’s right to freedom from violence and discrimination.
- Learn facts and figures to power your advocacy to address violence and discrimination against women in your community.
- [Take part in the discussions](#) launched by the #GenerationEquality campaign – read and learn, keep up with the updates on Beijing+25, and share your stories.

You could also take inspiration from the various initiatives libraries around the world have launched to promote gender equality. Read their stories and discover the wide diversity of things libraries can do!

- How can libraries help migrant and refugee women, as well as women in conflict situations, realise their rights to culture and access to information? A [2017 paper](#) based on a Satellite Conference of the Women, Information and Libraries Special Interest Group explored examples and lessons from several countries, from Greece to Rwanda and beyond.
- Find out about several libraries around the world which [focus fully on women](#).
- Read about [a library in Ghana championing reproductive health education](#) among youth.
- Another SGD story focusing on gender equality is about [a Tunisian library that launched a computer literacy club for women](#) to help them access decent jobs and make use of the opportunities that the digital environment offers. [Take a look](#) at the platform to find more stories about libraries championing gender equality.
- A library in Brasil, working with a partner, [organised computer courses](#) for women struggling with depression or other mental health issues. The project helped build their confidence and learn new skills, and raised awareness about an important issue in their community.