

## IN BRIEF



# UN WOMEN'S SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Photo: UN Women

## What's the issue?

The enduring challenge for adult learning and education is to **reach those who need it most.**<sup>i</sup> **women affected by crisis are being left behind.** We live in a time of multiple, overlapping crises, including conflicts, natural disasters, health emergencies and the persistent and intergenerational challenges of racial, gender and economic inequality. Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as women in conflict, humanitarian and protracted crisis settings, as well as migrants, Indigenous learners, older citizens and people with disabilities continue to miss out, across life times and generations. Participation in adult education is lowest amongst those who have not had the benefit of education in their childhood.<sup>ii</sup> While there has been some progress in the participation of women at the global level, there remains an acute gap in the provision of adult learning and education for women affected by crisis, who have missed out and continue to miss out on an education. Despite the increasing recognition of the value of adult learning and education, investment remains insufficient.<sup>iii</sup>

**Differentiation for the learning needs of women affected by crisis is largely absent.** Women face socioeconomic and gender-based barriers in accessing training and job opportunities,<sup>iv</sup> including poverty, early marriage and pregnancy, geographic isolation, harmful social norms, discriminatory laws, unsafe learning environments, as well as poor infrastructure and learning content. These same barriers often side-line women from entering the digital world to learn online. One third of the world's population, 2.7 billion people, are offline. Women are disproportionately affected, and the situation is getting worse. Women now outnumber male non-users by 18 %, up from 11 % in 2019. Among the world's population that are yet to own a mobile phone, women again outnumber men, and this was by 39 % in 2022.<sup>v</sup>



Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez

The lack of investment to provide access to quality adult education and learning opportunities for women has detrimental knock-on effects like a declining global **women's labour force participation rate of less than 47%, compared to men at 72%**<sup>vi</sup> and missed opportunities in industry and economic growth. **Only 1 in 3 businesses have female participation in ownership (33%)**<sup>vii</sup>. In the last decade, the exclusion of women from the digital world has shaved **\$1 trillion** from the gross domestic product of low- and middle-income countries. Without action, this loss will grow to \$1.5 trillion by 2025.<sup>viii</sup> UN Women is investing in face-to-face, online, and blended adult learning and education to reach those who need it most to **leave no one behind.**

## Our solution

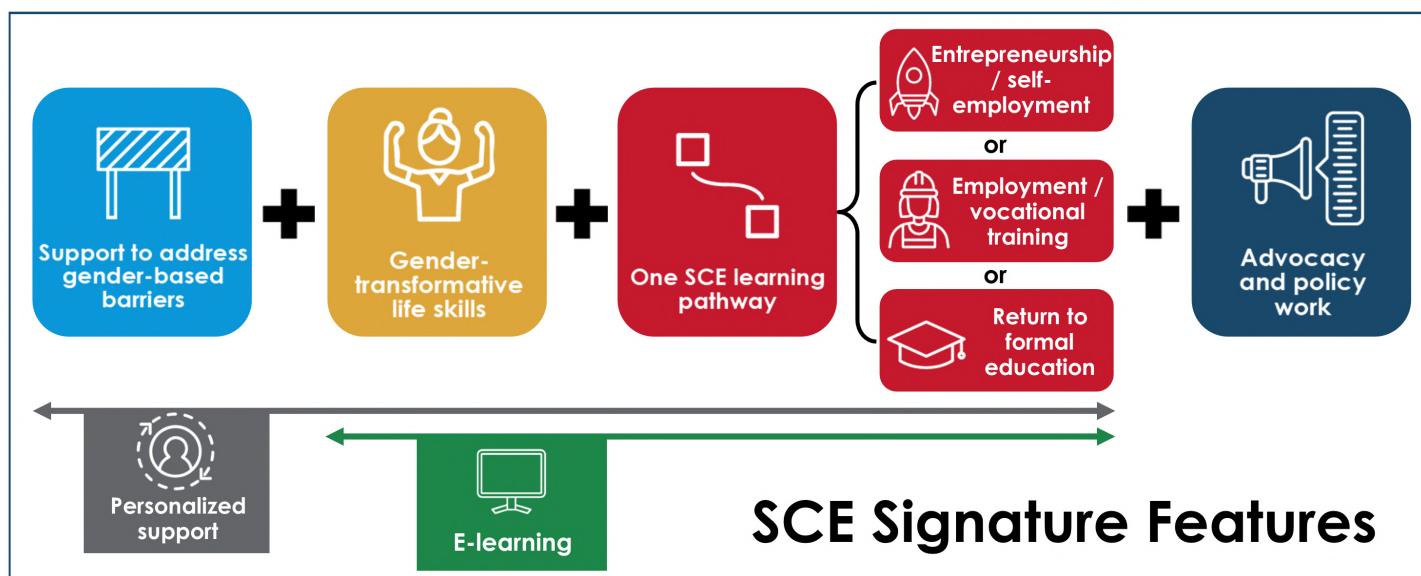


UN Women's SCE programme was created to fill sociocultural, economic, systemic and structural learning and support gaps for adult education for women who have missed out. The SCE pilot phase rolled out in Australia, Cameroon, Chile, India, Jordan, and Mexico.



## OUR APPROACH

The SCE approach comprises four signature features underpinned by personalized support and e-learning to bridge the intersectional adult education and digital divide and leave no women behind.



**Support to address gender-based barriers.** Support is provided to remove the constraints to women’s participation in SCE. Such support can include access to care services to alleviate the care burden placed on women, such as child, disability and elder care, safe and affordable transport to the hubs, and engaging with men in families and communities to build their support. It can also include referrals to complementary social services to access professional support for gender-based violence, housing, personal finances, health or other issues.

**Gender-transformative life skills.** Training and support in this area enable women to develop self-confidence, a sense of agency, and aspirations aligned with their interests, skills and circumstances. It is centred on an awareness of participants’ strengths and the potential of all individuals, and the part that gendered roles, stereotypes and discriminatory norms play in everyone’s lives. Gender-transformative life skills are context-specific and attempt to address intersecting inequalities. This training may provide the opportunity for participants to revisit, adapt or change established attitudes, behaviours and practices at individual, household and community level, often resulting in participants assuming new roles and responsibilities which may differ from socially expected gender roles. It is an essential foundation for subsequent training and for ensuring sustainable change to women’s lives and community resilience.

**Pursuing SCE learning pathway(s).** Women participate in usually one of the three pathways: entrepreneurship/self-employment, employment/vocational training or return to formal education. Each pathway is a progression of courses based on a globally standardized curriculum with locally relevant content tailored to participants in language, imagery and type of media. Industry and government connections are provided to link participants to jobs or business development opportunities during and after training.

**Advocacy and policy work** draws on SCE’s experience on the ground to advocate for removal of the structural constraints to women’s participation in education, training and the workforce. It also advocates for reforms of laws, policies and financial frameworks and the introduction of government programming to enhance women’s economic participation.

In addition, **personalized support** underpins women’s participation throughout their SCE journey. It includes social and instructional support and can be provided through a range of approaches including mentoring, tutoring, peer networks and advisors.

**E-learning** is offered in some form to all participants, whether SCE is delivered through physical hubs or entirely online. E-learning allows flexibility in the delivery of learning with in-person, online, and hybrid approaches used according to circumstances, making it easier for women to participate.

## A holistic model through partnerships

UN Women works with **community-embedded local organizations** who have the experience and community relationships to ensure effective grassroots implementation of the SCE programme and its signature features.

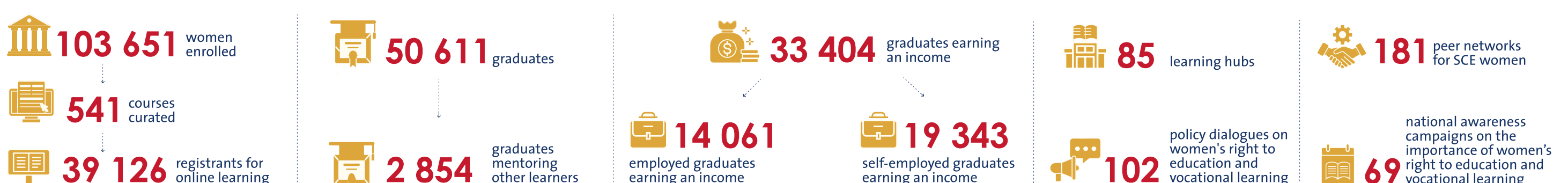
**We offer a global model, and our partners localize our solutions.**

We also work with **governments** to foster enabling legislative and policy environments to support women to pursue second chance education, and partner with governments to introduce second chance education programming for women and accompanying financial frameworks to ensure sustainable, high impact implementation.

In addition, UN Women partners with the **private sector** to ensure workplaces are equipped to employ and retain women who are pursuing a second chance. Private sector stakeholders that champion digital skill acquisition and e-learning for women are also critical to our success, as are stakeholders that seek to procure goods and services from women entrepreneurs. Our partnership model ensures a structural approach which is necessary to complement the holistic approach offered to each woman at the individual level. This model is essential to the sustainability and scalability of the SCE programme.

SCE results as of 31 December 2022

## RESULTS AT A GLANCE



<sup>i</sup> UNESCO. (2022). 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education – Citizenship education: Empowering adults for change.  
<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>iv</sup> ILO and UNICEF. (2018). GirlForce Skills, Education and Training for Girls Now. Geneva, ILO and New York, UNICEF, p. 7.  
<sup>v</sup> ITU. (2022). Measuring digital development: Facts and Figures 2022.

<sup>vi</sup> ILO. (2022). See <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women#global-gap>.  
<sup>vii</sup> The World Bank. (2022). See <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/topics/entrepreneurship>.  
<sup>viii</sup> UN Women. (2022). Progress on the sustainable development goals: The gender snapshot 2022.  
<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.