



Women's Empowerment

Equality of opportunity between men and women is a key indicator of long-term social stability and economic advancement. By empowering women and promoting gender equality we can enable communities, economies and businesses – including our own – to prosper.

Increasing diversity

Our ambition is for Vodafone to become the world's best employer for women by 2025

Gender balance

26% of our senior leadership team and 30% of our Vodafone Group Board are women

Connecting women

We aim to connect an additional 50 million women living in emerging markets



Women's Empowerment

The global context

Equality of opportunity between men and women is a key indicator of long-term social stability and economic prosperity. Over the last two decades, there has been significant progress in closing the global gender gap, particularly in areas such as education and health. However, major challenges remain.

Relative female economic disadvantage is a common characteristic across cultures and societies. One study estimates that at current rates of progress in closing the 'gender gap' in the workplace, women will not reach parity with men – in terms of pay and employment opportunities – for another 170 years¹. An estimated 54% of working-age women worldwide are active within the formal economy (as opposed to the black or grey economy) compared with 81% of men. The comparative lack of women in senior, better-paid roles means that the global average for women's earnings is around half that for men. There are also indications that this differential has expanded in recent years².

The gender gap is greatest within patriarchal cultures in emerging markets; however, there are also systemic inequalities within even the most advanced economies. Women and men enter the workplace as young adults with equivalent skills

and in broadly equal numbers; however, as their careers evolve, a much greater proportion of men than women enter middle and senior-level roles. A significant proportion of women either leave the formal workforce altogether or remain within it but in more junior roles than their male peers. This 'leaky pipeline' of female talent is evident worldwide; only four out of more than 190 countries have equal numbers of male and female legislators, senior officials and managers³.

Maternity represents a significant inflection point for many women. A lack of support through pregnancy and childbirth and the challenge of balancing childcare with working life accounts for the departure of large numbers of women from the workplace. Women often experience difficulties in rejoining the workforce after taking a career break to bring up children or support their family. Others may return to work but find fewer opportunities for promotion and progression than their male counterparts⁴. This is a lost opportunity. A new study from KPMG indicates that, at a global level, if more skilled women on a career break were encouraged and able to re-enter the workplace (and on the assumption that they would not displace others in doing so), the maximum potential boost to economic activity worldwide would be around €103 billion, with the potential addition to total household earnings in the region of €290 billion⁵.

In emerging markets, the gender gap tends to arise earlier in life. An estimated 130 million girls around the world are currently out of school and are more likely to remain excluded from education than boys⁶. Evidence suggests that women in emerging markets are more likely to live in poverty than men⁷, and it is estimated that every day approximately 830 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth⁸.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals recognise that gender equality is core to the effective functioning of modern society. It is estimated that measures to enable women and girls to thrive alongside men and boys could improve public health, increase productivity and grow prosperity, adding US\$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025⁹.

Vodafone and women's empowerment

We employ more than 108,000 people and are one of the largest foreign investors in many of the countries in which we operate. We also provide employment opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people across our global supplier base of more than 17,000 companies. We have a strong commitment to diversity and women's empowerment within our own business and believe that achieving greater gender parity

will strengthen our company significantly over time. We have therefore identified Women's empowerment as one of our three core global transformation goals.

4 out of 190

countries have equal numbers of male and female legislators, senior officials and managers

Communications technology can play a critical role in women's empowerment. Even a basic mobile provides a woman with the freedom to communicate, ask for help, learn, set up and run a business and – as we explain later in this Report – achieve financial security. Mobile technologies also enhance a wide range of public services and economic activities of direct relevance to women and girls in emerging markets: from vaccinations and maternal healthcare to increased crop yields for smallholder farmers and mobile banking financial services for self-employed homeworkers.

Our emerging markets serve more than 320 million active¹⁰ mobile customers, an estimated 110 million of whom are women. We have already developed many mobile technologies that are changing women's lives (as we explain later in this section) and have set ourselves the goal of bringing the benefits of mobile to an additional 50 million women living in emerging markets, including women in some of the world's poorest communities.

200 million

fewer women than men own a mobile phone worldwide

It is estimated that more than 1.7 billion women in low and middle-income countries do not own a mobile phone¹¹. Worldwide, women are 14% less likely to own a mobile than men. This equates to a 'mobile gender gap' of approximately 200 million women who are unable to use a mobile to manage their daily lives and seek opportunities to grow and learn. Some of the reasons for this are economic; however, many are linked to cultural norms.

Closing the mobile gender gap would have a positive socio-economic impact for women and society as a whole. It also represents a commercial opportunity. It is estimated that connecting more women (and increasing the mobile usage of existing women customers) to reach parity with men could enhance industry revenues by around US\$170 billion from 2015 to 2020¹². There is therefore a very strong alignment between a critical societal need and a global industry commercial opportunity.

Our commitment to women's empowerment begins at the top of the company. Vodafone's diversity and gender equality activities are overseen by the Vodafone Group Board and are led directly by our Group Chief Executive, who is one of 10 global chief executives acting as champions for the UN Women's global solidarity movement for gender equality, *HeForShe*.

Our aspiration is to be the world's best employer for women

We seek to be a company whose global workforce reflects the customers we serve and the broader societies within which we operate. We believe our strong commitment to diversity is a source of business strength, enabling us to understand better the needs of the men and women, families and businesses who rely on our networks and services.

The need for gender equality in the workplace has been recognised for decades – with an increasing number of statutory obligations in developed countries. However, women remain under-represented in many workplaces (and strikingly so at the most senior levels).

Our long-term ambition is to become an employer whose track record in attracting and retaining female talent is so strong that we are widely considered to be the world's best employer for women by 2025. By demonstrating leadership as a 'beacon employer' in each of the countries in which we operate, we believe other companies will seek to emulate our approach, thereby further expanding the range of opportunities for women across the broader working world. Shortly after the period under review, Vodafone was recognised as one of [The Times Top 50 Employers for Women](#) – a list compiled together with the UK not-for-profit organisation Business in the Community.

Programmes such as our ground-breaking global maternity policy and our *ReConnect* initiative to bring women back into the workforce after a career break are designed to address the challenge of the 'leaky pipeline' (explained earlier) and maximise our ability to recruit, retain and develop women at every level of our workforce. Our medium-term goal is to increase the proportion of senior women managers (including senior leadership team) globally to 30% by 2020, up from 25% as at March 2017, and with a view to increasing that proportion over time.

Vodafone Italy strives towards gender equality

During the year, the Chief Executive of Vodafone Italy hosted a conference in support of the UN Women's *HeForShe* campaign attended by the heads of Italian businesses, NGOs, universities and institutions as well as the Vodafone Group Chief Executive and other senior Vodafone leaders. Our Vodafone Italy Chief Executive also led meetings in eight local offices with hundreds of employees in order to raise awareness of Vodafone's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Vodafone Italy has nominated a number of Listening Champions – senior employees in each of their main locations who act as role models and promote our policies on diversity and inclusion. The business has also included a *Maternity Angels* programme under which a colleague is assigned to stay in contact with female employees on maternity leave and help them settle back into the workplace upon their return. Women returning from maternity leave also benefit from flexible working – including homeworking – for up to two days per week.

Women now hold 31% of senior management roles.

ReConnect – bringing skilled women back into the workforce

Worldwide, there are an estimated 55 million skilled women of middle-management level and above who are not in work following a career break, often after having children. This isn't just a lost opportunity for women and their families; it also means that businesses such as Vodafone are missing out on a huge pool of potential talent, insight and experience. However, getting back into work can be difficult; in recent research, 80% of women who have taken a career break said more support was needed to help them return successfully to the workplace¹³.

In 2017, Vodafone launched *ReConnect*, a new programme that will bring talented women in 26 countries back into the workplace after a career break. The programme includes training, coaching and induction programmes to refresh and enhance professional skills to help returners prepare for re-entry to the workplace and progress their careers.

Our target is to hire 1,000 *ReConnect* women over three years in areas such as Technology, Commercial, HR, Finance, Legal, External Affairs, Customer Operations and Business Intelligence & Analytics. This will increase

the number of women in management roles; around 10% of all of our external management hires worldwide will be recruited through the *ReConnect* programme.

ReConnect joiners will be able to take advantage of flexible working options and a phased return to work, such as a four-day week for the first six months. Measures to ensure an effective and inclusive recruitment process include unconscious bias training for all hiring managers.

"I felt like my career break wiped clean all of my previous career achievements; it was as if I had never worked. It is very hard being a working mum but it is manageable with the right support. ReConnect gave me this."

Burcu Erdur, a senior manager with Vodafone Turkey who took part in the pilot *ReConnect* programme



Embedding our commitment to diversity

It is made clear in our mandatory [Code of Conduct](#) that respect for diversity is integral to the behaviours expected from everyone who works for Vodafone. We do not tolerate prejudice in any form and strive to ensure that every colleague has the opportunity to thrive in a workplace that is welcoming and supportive. Those rules are reinforced through every aspect of people management.

30%

of our managers to be women by 2020

We have a number of programmes underway to embed our commitment to diversity and gender balance. Leaders play an essential role: our induction programme for senior leaders across Vodafone addresses the importance of gender balance and inclusion, and all managers are encouraged to undertake unconscious bias training to raise awareness of assumptions and beliefs that can skew decision making and undermine inclusion and diversity.

Every quarter, we track progress against our 2020 global target to increase the proportion of women managers globally to 30%. The outcomes from that quarterly analysis are reviewed by HR directors in local markets and professional functions to identify challenges and devise approaches to remedy any shortcomings. Vodafone's global gender balance is reviewed twice a year by our Group Executive Committee – led by the Group Chief Executive – with updates presented to the Vodafone Group Board.

We offer a range of mentoring, coaching, training and peer support programmes for women across Vodafone. As an example, our Women in Technology Network now has more than 1,500 members and more than 80 local market and professional function representatives. The network holds global webinars every quarter as well as face-to-face meetings locally.

Flexibility and support for working parents

Research by KPMG indicates that recruiting and training new employees to replace women who do not stay in the workforce after having a baby could cost businesses worldwide up to US\$47 billion every year. We are focused on ensuring that working parents are encouraged and supported to return to work for us after the birth of a child and can be confident that they have the potential to grow their careers while raising a family.

In 2016, we became one of the first organisations in the world to introduce a global minimum maternity policy. This applies to employees at all levels in every country in which we operate, including countries with little or no paid statutory maternity leave. Over 4,000 of our female employees have gone on maternity leave over the last two years; all were eligible to benefit from the policy, which offers at least 16 weeks fully paid maternity leave, plus full pay for a 30-hour week for the first six months.

We offer flexible working, part-time working and homeworking policies across many of our local markets – taking advantage of Vodafone's remote working technologies – which are designed to make it easier for women and men to balance family and work commitments.

Examples of individual local market flexible working practices include:

- Vodafone Italy employees are encouraged to work from home for one day each week;
- Vodafone Turkey employees benefit from flexible working hours and can choose earlier or later start or finish times to help them balance work and personal commitments; and
- full-time employees of Vodafone India can take an unpaid sabbatical (from 90 days to more than one year) to look after children or family members or to develop skills and interests.

Supporting working parents at Vodafone Egypt

Vodafone Egypt aims to be the most family-friendly employer in the country and is introducing policies to help retain female employees after they have children. It has launched Vodafone Day Care – in collaboration with one of the top childcare providers in Egypt – to provide an on-site childcare facility at its head office offering convenient and high-quality childcare for employees with young children. Vodafone Egypt currently has 22% women in management and leadership roles and is actively working towards the goal of 30% female representation by 2020.



Celebrating women's achievements

We want to raise the profile of female role models and celebrate women's achievements with visible support from our senior leaders. Recent examples include our global webinar on International Women's Day. This was watched live by more than 2,500 employees worldwide (including 20 local market chief executives and their senior leadership teams) and was led by our Group Chief Executive. The webinar was one of a series of more than 30 events (including roundtable discussions, networking events, role-modelling and mentoring sessions and training) that took place over one week, with communications reaching more than 50,000 employees.

How are we doing?

We are making progress towards our target of 30% women in management and leadership roles across our local markets and professional functions. However, the proportion of women in our management and global leadership roles is still not as high as we would like. To date, 15 of our local markets and also our joint venture

in Australia and our associate Safaricom in Kenya have achieved more than 30% female representation and some have achieved, or are well on their way to achieving, true parity.

26%

of the senior leadership team are women

One-third of the directors of the Vodafone Group Board are women, as of 1 June 2017. We also encourage greater female participation in non-executive and advisory roles outside Vodafone; we provide support to senior women executives within Vodafone who would like to take on non-executive board roles with other companies to complement their Vodafone careers.

Our experience at the other end of the career path – recent graduates entering the world of work for the first time – provides good grounds for optimism about Vodafone's future leadership cadre. During the year, women accounted for more than 55% of the intake into our *Discover* graduate development programme and 52% of the intake into our *Columbus* leadership fast-track graduate scheme.

Female employees at Vodafone (%)	2015	2016	2017
Women in senior leadership team (top 175–225 employees)	22	24	26
Women in senior management (1,100–1,600 employees)	23	24	25
Women in middle management (6,000–7,500 employees)	26	27	28
Women (all non-management employees)	37	37	38

Sharing the benefits of diversity in Ireland

In Ireland, 66% of our senior leadership team and 48% of our management population are female. Diversity has been prioritised from the top with a focus on organisational culture and embedding equality into all elements of people management. This includes a commitment to flexible working and ensuring a balance of men and women in all recruitment shortlists and interview panels to guard against the impact of unconscious bias. Training and support is provided to empower leaders to create an inclusive culture.

A number of our male senior employees support the Men Advocating Real Change (MARC) initiative. During the year, we hosted the first-ever MARC event in Ireland. The session took place in our offices in Dublin and was attended by 30 chief executives and senior male leaders from 40 Irish businesses and organisations.

"Since the programme launch, our senior male leaders are more active and engaged in our diversity and inclusion strategy."

James Magill, HRD, Vodafone Ireland



Changing women's lives through mobile

Our ambition is to expand the benefits of mobile to a greater number of women at all levels of society through a range of targeted commercial programmes. We also aim to use our mobile technologies to enhance the quality of women's lives in three key aspects:

- enabling financial inclusion;
- improving health and wellbeing; and
- building skills and entrepreneurship.

We believe our actions over the years ahead will make a material difference to women, families, communities and national economies across the countries in which we operate. As explained earlier in this Report, our aim is to bring the benefits of mobile to an additional 50 million women living in ten emerging markets including women in some of the poorest communities on earth. Significant progress towards this target has been made in the first year. We now have an estimated 110 million active female customers, 9.4 million more than last year, through commercial programmes that are overseen by the Chief Executive of our Africa, Middle East and Asia-Pacific region. For example, our *Women First* programme in Turkey provides women in rural areas with mobile phones and access to the internet. A key element of the programme is the *Women First Advertisement Service*. This enables self-employed women homeworkers with little experience of technology to use a mobile phone to advertise their products on one of Turkey's biggest online marketplaces. Women simply send information about their products via a text

message, which is then posted online on their behalf, enabling them to access large numbers of customers. The *Women First* programme has now reached approximately 700,000 users.

Progress towards our 50 million women goal

	Estimated number of female customers (millions)
Baseline: 2016	100.3
Total: 2017	109.7
Progress against baseline	9.4

Enabling financial inclusion

More than 2 billion people globally still do not have access to banking facilities¹⁴. The majority of them are women. This makes it difficult to manage household finances, save or run a business. There is therefore both a social need and a business opportunity in improving women's access to financial services.

A decade ago, Vodafone and our Kenyan associate, Safaricom, developed the first mobile money transfer service, M-Pesa. M-Pesa is simple to operate (payments are transmitted and received using technology available on even the most basic mobile phones), highly secure (transactions are protected with enterprise-grade encryption), and cheap and convenient.

Vodafone now offers M-Pesa in 10 countries: Albania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique,

Romania and Tanzania. As of March 2017, M-Pesa was used by almost 31 million customers¹⁵ through a network of more than 300,000 agents and processed over 6 billion transactions. The services now play an important role in the broader economies of several countries.

With a mobile phone and an active M-Pesa account, even people on very low incomes gain control over their financial affairs. For example, their exposure to common risks in a low-income, cash-based society – such as street robbery and petty corruption – is significantly reduced. Through services such as *M-Shwari*, *M-Pawa* and *KCB M-Pesa*, customers are also able to access mobile interest-bearing savings accounts and micro-loans. M-Pesa is used to manage business transactions of all sizes, and in several countries is also used for the distribution of salaries, pension payments, and the disbursement of agricultural subsidies and government grants.

50 million more women in emerging markets will benefit from access to mobile through our strategy

Access to M-Pesa helps put power over the family's finances into women's hands, enabling them, for example, to save money each week to pay for a child's education or to secure a small loan to set up a business working from home. We estimate that in 2016, we had 10.1 million active female M-Pesa customers representing 40% of our M-Pesa customer base¹⁶.

Business Women Connect in Tanzania

In sub-Saharan Africa, access to financial services can be extremely challenging, particularly in rural areas. In a region where most people run their own small enterprises, either alone or with family members, traditional gender roles mean that women often find it harder than men to access land, equipment and other assets that can enhance their capacity to grow their businesses and improve their livelihoods.

Building on the success of M-Pesa and M-Pawa, Business Women Connect (BWC) is designed to increase business income and economically empower female micro-business owners in Tanzania by introducing them to mobile savings and offering them business training. BWC was launched in 2016 as a partnership between TechnoServe, Vodacom, ExxonMobil Foundation, the World Bank and the Centre for Global Development. Since its launch, the programme has trained nearly 3,000 women in the use of M-Pawa and, of those, nearly 2,000 have received additional business skills training.

The next stage of the project is to conduct research to increase our understanding of how mobile services can most effectively help women save, invest in their business and increase their earnings.

BWC is now launching in Mozambique with a pilot programme that will help 400 women access mobile finance through M-Pesa.



Enhancing livelihoods in rural India

In India, only 26% of women are employed compared with 74% of men¹⁷. Female entrepreneurs face many challenges in growing their businesses, particularly in rural communities. Research shows that owning a smartphone can help business owners reach more customers, boost sales and increase their incomes.

Smart Snehidi is Vodafone India's first commercial proposition focused exclusively on low-income women in rural areas. The programme is run in partnership with the NGO Hand in Hand. It enables women to purchase an affordable smartphone with free mobile internet access and receive training on how to increase their digital literacy and use the internet to grow their businesses.

Customers can also access an online community via their smartphones where they can sell products or services and gain access to microfinance loans. The *Smart Snehidi* programme was launched in late 2016 in three districts in Tamil Nadu.

"I own a grocery shop. After joining Smart Snehidi, I'm able to check prices of groceries in the city wholesale market online. I can choose to travel to the city only when prices are low, allowing me to buy at a lower price and sell at a higher price. My profits have increased after I started using Vodafone internet on my new smartphone."

Kavita, Kanchipuram district

Improving health and wellbeing

Worldwide, around 400 million people lack access to essential health services¹⁸. Screening, prevention and treatment services that are considered routine in the developed world are limited or even non-existent in low to middle-income countries. For example, every year around 800,000 women die of cervical and breast cancer; but where a woman lives will largely determine her chance of survival¹⁹. Two-thirds of breast cancer deaths and 9 out of 10 deaths from cervical cancer occur in low and middle-income countries²⁰.

We have developed a range of mobile technologies (often in partnership with the Vodafone Foundation) that enhance primary healthcare and preventative services in our emerging market local businesses. For example, in South Africa we are working with the National Department of Health to operate a mobile-based system to monitor drug stock levels and prevent shortages across 3,200 clinics nationwide.

400 million

people lack access to essential health services

Many of these programmes are particularly important for women and their young children. For example, in Lesotho our *Mobilising HIV Identification and Treatment* programme uses mobile technologies to improve access to treatment for HIV positive children and pregnant women.

Connecting women to emergency healthcare in Tanzania

Women in Tanzania are more than 40 times more likely to die from preventable causes during pregnancy and childbirth than women in the UK²¹. One challenge is the lack of ambulances to transport women to hospital during an emergency. Sengerema and Shinyanga DC provinces in northern Tanzania, for example, cover an area the size of Belgium with a population of more than 2 million but are serviced by fewer than 10 ambulances. These areas are believed to have some of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the world.

Mobilising Maternal Health, a programme led by the Vodafone Foundation, aims to reduce maternal and newborn deaths by connecting mothers to healthcare services. Its mobile taxi service helps get pregnant women to hospital in an emergency. Following a call to the toll-free 24/7 maternal emergency hotline, one of more than 100 district taxi drivers will be dispatched, at no cost to the patient, to take them to the nearest facility for treatment.

Since its launch in July 2015, the hotline has received more than 3,700 emergency calls, and 'ambulance taxi' drivers have transported more than 3,300 women for emergency care, saving an estimated 240 lives. The programme is delivered in partnership with NGOs Pathfinder International and Touch Foundation and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Making healthcare more affordable in Kenya

Nearly half of all healthcare in Kenya is paid for directly by individuals needing treatment. Many Kenyans therefore rely on healthcare that is funded by donor organisations²². M-Tiba is a mobile wallet service for healthcare that aims to improve access to healthcare by making it easier for Kenyans to save and receive funds for medical treatment.

With M-Tiba, users can put money aside regularly to cover future healthcare expenses and also receive funds from donor organisations or family members that can only be spent on healthcare. The service uses M-Pesa so customers can make cash-free payments for their treatment at registered clinics, and donor organisations are able to track payments and ensure that funds are used correctly.

M-Tiba was developed by our associate Safaricom and healthcare finance organisations PharmAccess Foundation and CarePay. More than 146,000 people are now using the M-Tiba health wallet, almost half of whom are women. This includes approximately 27,000 female slum dwellers in Nairobi who receive donor funds via M-Tiba to pay for HIV treatment and other medical expenses as well as around 1,000 women who have received maternity care at Gertrude's Children's Hospital.

"M-Tiba has helped change our life. Before we never used to go to the hospital immediately. Now I have my money in my health wallet in my phone. I can rush to the hospital, get treated and get well."

Gladys Akinyi



Violence against women is another major public societal and health problem. Global estimates indicate that around one in three women worldwide will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes, often at the hands of their partner or ex-partner²³.

60,000

women have used the TecSOS emergency alert service

Vodafone and the Vodafone Foundation have developed a number of different products and services that focus on the safety and security of women in vulnerable domestic circumstances. For example, our Easy Rescue smartphone app in Turkey enables women at risk to alert friends covertly that they need help simply by shaking their phone. Another example is the TecSOS emergency alert service (see box, right) that has been used by more than 60,000 women at risk of domestic abuse in five countries.

Supporting victims of domestic violence in South Africa

Gender-based violence remains a significant issue across South Africa. We are working with the Department of Social Development to provide a mobile-based safety alert system for victims of abuse and assault, connecting them to a 24/7 call centre in the event of an attack. The service includes geolocation so the victim can be located and tracked, enabling call centre handlers to alert nearby support staff and emergency services and direct the victim to the nearest police station, hospital or refuge. The service also provides social workers with details shared by the victim, updating case files for follow-up.

Women who contact the call centre receive counselling and advice from trained social workers. They are offered support to help them report crimes to the police and to be referred to local services for further assistance. During the year, the call centre was contacted almost 90,000 times.

Helping women at risk of violence with TecSOS

TecSOS is a device adapted for victims of domestic violence. It has a hidden function: with one single action it initiates a priority call straight to the control room of the emergency services, enabling the woman at risk to be located and assisted. TecSOS was developed by the Vodafone Spain Foundation. To date, TecSOS devices have been used by over 60,000 women across Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the UK.

In the UK, for example, TecSOS is now used by 36 police services across the country with almost 12,000 people benefiting to date. Independent evaluations of the service have shown that it increases arrest rates, reduces police response times, saves money and improves women's confidence.

In Spain, we are supporting Atenpro, a national service for women at risk of domestic abuse in partnership with the Red Cross, the TecSOS Foundation and the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality. Women can use the TecSOS device to call for help, and also benefit from counselling and psychological support from qualified Red Cross professionals and regular follow-up calls to check on their health and wellbeing.

"TecSOS saved my life and I wouldn't be here today without it."

TecSOS user and victim of domestic violence, UK

Building skills and entrepreneurship

There are few better ways to enhance a girl's opportunity to thrive in life than to provide her with a good education. However, many girls in poorer emerging markets enter adulthood without even the most basic literacy and numeracy skills. It is estimated that in low-income countries 16 million girls aged 6 to 11 will never start school – twice the number of boys²⁴. Even more attend school when young but drop out early: it is estimated that only around one in 100 girls in rural India reaches the final year of school.

Women who have received some form of education up to secondary school level benefit from higher incomes (on average, up to 20% more throughout their lifetimes) than girls without schooling. They also tend to have better health outcomes. It is estimated that investing in the education of young girls to ensure they complete secondary school would generate a US\$21 billion dividend for developing countries²⁵.

Many parents across all cultures and demographics recognise the benefits of an education for girls as well as boys and do all they can to equip their children with the skills needed to become economically active in the modern world. However, even with supportive and willing parents, access to education beyond basic primary teaching is very difficult for many children in low and middle-income countries. Schools can be remote or expensive and teaching resources scarce.

Mobile technology can increase access to quality education, especially for people in remote areas. The Vodafone Foundation is a global pioneer in

developing innovative digital teaching and remote learning technologies for deployment among some of the most isolated and vulnerable social groups in emerging markets including refugees in camps in sub-Saharan Africa. The Foundation's programme connects classrooms to the internet, provides solar power, tablet computers, mobile content and teacher training – together with access to educational content and resources – to previously remote and isolated communities. The Foundation is championing the education of refugees, targeting a potential 3 million young people in refugee camps across the countries in which we operate by 2020; see our *Instant Schools for Africa* case study on page 37 of Youth Skills and Jobs for more information.

- 1 [Global Gender Gap Report 2016](#)
- 2 [Women at Work Trends, ILO, 2016](#)
- 3 [Global Gender Gap Report 2016](#)
- 4 [KPMG research for Vodafone, 2017](#)
- 5 [KPMG research for Vodafone, 2017](#)
- 6 [Policy Paper 7, UNESCO, 2016](#)
- 7 [The Full Participation Report, 2015](#)
- 8 [WHO Maternal Mortality, 2016](#)
- 9 [McKinsey Global Institute Report, 2015](#)
- 10 Based on 30-day active customer figures for the ten emerging markets in the 50M women goal
- 11 [Bridging the Gender Gap Report, GSMA 2015](#)
- 12 [Bridging the Gender Gap Report, GSMA 2015](#)
- 13 [KPMG research for Vodafone, 2017](#)
- 14 [The World Bank Overview](#)
- 15 30-day active customers (financial transaction within last 30 days)
- 16 Albania, DRC, Egypt, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Romania and Tanzania
- 17 [Labour force participation rates, ILO, 2014](#)
- 18 [Tracking universal health coverage: WHO/World Bank, 2015](#)
- 19 [Lancet report, 2016](#)
- 20 [WHO programme, 2012](#)
- 21 [World Bank Data on maternal mortality](#)
- 22 [Financing Health in low-income countries, World Bank, 2016](#)
- 23 [Violence against women, WHO, 2016](#)
- 24 [UNFPA, State of World Population 2016](#)
- 25 [UNFPA, State of World Population 2016](#)
- 26 [Labor force, female \(%\), ILO](#)

Eradicating illiteracy through mobile learning

In Egypt, one in three women is unable to read and write. This is reflected in the female labour participation rate; Egypt has one of the lowest proportions of women in the workplace in the world²⁶.

The Vodafone Egypt Foundation's *Knowledge is Power* programme uses mobile technology to increase literacy among Egyptian adults, with a particular focus on women. A free Vodafone literacy app uses pictures and a talkback function to make learning easier and more flexible. It can be downloaded onto any smartphone (there is also a basic featurephone version) and enables women to learn at home at their own pace and in their own time. The app is used in combination with local classroom sessions run by trained volunteers and classroom facilitators. Participants attend three to six months of classes, with a final exam provided by GALAE, Egypt's General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education.

Since the launch of the *Knowledge is Power* programme in 2011, more than 480,000 learners have enrolled in classes. Around 70% of those who complete the course are women, helping to remove a major barrier to individual empowerment, economic growth and participation in society.





Sustainable Business Report 2017

Our Sustainable Business Report 2017 details our strategy which is founded on Vodafone's long standing commitment to responsible behaviour. At the centre of that strategy, which was launched in last year's report, is the intention to work towards three global transformation goals which have the potential to deliver meaningful socio-economic benefits for our customers and for wider society. The strategy also includes a significant focus on corporate transparency with a particular emphasis on four areas that are the source of greatest public concern.

[Download the full Report](#)

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