



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Session on SDG 5 and interlinkages with other SDGs: Gender equality

What are the most promising strategies and actions today for overcoming gender inequality and discrimination? How can the empowerment of women and girls accelerate SDG progress and recovery from COVID-19?

Thursday, 7 July 2022, 9 am to 12 pm

Secretariat Background Note

Introduction

The last time SDG 5 – achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – was reviewed at the High-level Political Forum in 2017, there was evidence of some progress being made to advance gender equality, including legal reforms, more girls in school, and fewer child marriages. The percentage of women serving in parliament had increased. Nevertheless, the pace of change was not fast enough, and discriminatory laws, social norms, gender stereotypes and violence against women remained pervasive. Women continued to be underrepresented at all levels of decision-making processes and political leadership.

Challenges and opportunities

The socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 have added to this, disproportionately affecting women and girls, and threatening to push back recent progress and further entrench persistent gender



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inequalities. Disproportionate job and livelihoods losses, derailed education, increased burdens of unpaid care work, and increased rates of gender-based violence are among the struggles women and girls have faced with greater intensity since the onset of the pandemic. During the pandemic women have been more exposed to risk, making up 70 per cent of health care workers. They were also more likely to leave the labour market altogether due to the increasing care burden. Negative impacts are compounded for women and girls who are marginalized based on multiple forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, age, income, geography, disability, or other characteristics. Women migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as forcibly displaced women living in humanitarian crises, are also at heightened risk. Women's health services, as well as social services such as shelters and crisis centers, faced major disruptions that cut lifelines for survivors of violence and undermined sexual and reproductive health services.

Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue with critical interlinkages with all 17 SDGs. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be fully achieved unless gender inequality is addressed. As countries respond to and recover from COVID-19, this requires addressing the root causes of gender discrimination through promotion of gender-responsive laws, policies, institutions, programming, and budgeting across sectors. As it stands only about 40 percent of national-level policy measures are designed to respond to gender-specific risks and challenges. This session will focus on concrete policies and actions that



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can ensure an equitable recovery from COVID-19 that accounts for the needs of women and girls and ensures their representation at all levels of decision-making. It will also consider actions to advance gender equality and empower women and girls in the context of advancing progress across the 2030 Agenda.

Proposed guiding questions

- What is the current status of progress and trends on the SDG 5 indicators and gender equality more broadly?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted progress on SDG 5, particularly considering groups of women and girls facing multiple forms of discrimination?
- How can we redirect financing towards advancing the implementation of SDG 5, including through gender-responsive budgeting, economic access, and international trade? How can gender data help inform this transition?
- In building a gender-equitable recovery from COVID-19, what are some key barriers, opportunities and promising practices in the areas of the social protection, health systems, reproductive rights, and economic opportunities, particularly as pertains to employment opportunities and the care burden.
- Considering the interlinkages between SDG 5 and other SDGs, what are the main barriers and opportunities to advancing gender equality in the areas of climate resilience, natural resources, technology and infrastructure?