



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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SDG 5 and Interlinkages with other SDGs – Gender Equality

15 July 2025, 10:00 - 13:00

Conference Room 4

Secretariat Background Note

*Thirty years since the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, gender equality remains elusive.*¹ With just five years remaining until the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs, none of the targets under SDG 5 have been fully met, with persistent challenges continuing to stall progress. Moreover, progress has been uneven across different regions, with marginalized communities facing the greatest setbacks. There will be significant costs across the entire 2030 Agenda if gender equality cannot be achieved,² underscoring the urgency of decisive action towards SDG 5.

Progress since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 has been slow and fragile. Between 2019 and 2023, 56 legal reforms were enacted to advance gender equality.³ However, no country has closed the legal gaps necessary to secure women's rights, with critical shortcomings in areas such as unpaid care work, access to sexual and reproductive health services, and gender parity in political and corporate leadership. The outlook for financing is not encouraging, with projections indicating that if current government spending trends persist, the annual funding shortfall to close the gender gap will reach \$360 billion.⁴ This shortfall hinders critical gender-responsive programs, including those focused on combating violence against women and girls, improving maternal health and increasing women's economic participation.

¹ A/80/81-E/2025/62. Report of the Secretary-General on Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

² UN-Women and DESA. 2024. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024. New York: UN-Women and DESA.

³ Ibid.

⁴ [The costs of achieving the SDGs: Road to gender equality. UNCTAD.](#)



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Expanding women's participation in the technological future can have multiplier effects. Women drop out of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and STEM careers at high rates ("leaky pipeline"). Women account for only 35 percent of all STEM graduates.⁵ Gender stereotypes, gender pay gaps, and limited opportunities for growth and promotion lead to the underrepresentation of women in digital sectors. Online harassment discourages women from entering technological fields or taking on leadership roles. Globally the share of female researchers, at 31.5 per cent, has changed little since 2011.⁶ This lack of women's participation is a lost opportunity and has serious implications, seen for example in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning models that include bias against women and minorities, and sexist language in large language models. Promoting the participation of more women in AI development and integrating gender-transformative design principles in technology can mitigate these biases. Training, mentorship, networking and better career support for women, along with human-centered, gender-responsive approaches and better regulation and oversight of AI are needed.

We must close persistent financing gaps that hold women back. There has been a decline in official development assistance (ODA) to reduce gender equality and there is a need for innovative financing models such as gender lens investing, blended finance and gender budgeting. A stronger gender perspective is needed in international development cooperation, climate and humanitarian finance, venture capital for startups and businesses, and other areas, as also addressed by the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) including accountability and tracking of Government spending on (and results of) policies. The gender-responsive allocation of international climate finance remains a challenge, with only a fraction of resources directly benefiting women and girls. Financing must be directed to policies with the greatest impact for gender equality, but the lack of data is a barrier to identifying these.

It is essential to dismantle discriminatory laws, stereotypes, and unequal norms. Governments must prioritize regional and national implementation of existing human rights and legal frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Achieving SDG 5 requires strong political leadership, dismantling of discriminatory laws and

⁵ UN-Women and DESA. 2024. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024. New York: UN-Women and DESA.

⁶ Ibid.



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targeted investment in women and girls. Access to sexual and reproductive health must be recognized as a critical aspect of poverty eradication and achieving the SDGs, with a focus on integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into healthcare systems, leveraging synergies with SDG 3. An integrated approach towards addressing gender-based violence, sexual exploitation of women and girls and trafficking with other SDGs is also key. Implementing existing laws and scaling up programs for a holistic approach to addressing violence against women and girls is important, including through strengthening and financially supporting women's rights movements and working closely with interlinked sectors including education and health.

Opportunities lie in community-driven, inclusive solutions for environmental challenges, including in agrifood systems. The intersection of climate change and gender equality presents unique challenges and opportunities for advancing sustainable development and building resilience. Successful initiatives include training women in distributed renewable energy systems and providing entrepreneurial support – so that women do not remain only as users, but also become owners, managers and distributors of energy. Ensuring access to apprenticeships in local energy companies further enables hands-on training. To encourage rural women to take up adaptive farming practices and technologies, gender-based constraints to accessing and mobilizing resources need to be addressed. Enhancing access to gender-responsive advisory services to promote climate resilience among rural women is important, as is promoting participatory extension methodologies such as farmer field schools, allowing women to experiment with climate-adaptive practices in a low-risk setting and increasing the number of female extension agents to improve women's comfort in seeking advice and adopting sustainable practices. Such approaches can empower rural women to make informed decisions and translate their adaptive actions into meaningful improvements in their agrifood systems.

Targeted interventions and gender-responsive social protection systems can break the intergenerational cycle of feminization of poverty. There is a critical need for comprehensive, sustainable, and universal social protection systems designed to address the diverse needs of women and girls. These systems must cater to specific groups, such as young women, single mothers, caregivers, and marginalized populations. Flexibility and accessibility are important, with a focus on strategies like bringing services closer to communities, establishing one-stop shops for holistic service delivery, and creating tailored opportunities to meet varied needs. Accountability is vital for progress, with clear, measurable targets to track the impact of gender-responsive social



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protection systems. By pairing measures with strong accountability frameworks and measurable targets, social protection initiatives can become more effective and inclusive.

We must fill data gaps and ensure that data and analysis serve as tools to drive tangible improvements in people's lives and achieve the SDGs. Intersectional data to identify policy gaps and align SDG 5 with other goals can help build synergies. There is a need to move beyond data silos and fragmented databases towards a more integrated approach that aligns gender data efforts with the overarching objectives of the SDGs. Relying on quantitative data alone can obscure broader realities. A mixed-methods or multi-sectoral approach of integrating qualitative data, triangulation of data collected or space for anecdotal information can help to contextualize numbers, provide a deeper understanding of lived experiences and fill in gaps where quantitative data cannot be collected. Expanding frameworks like the Data Value Chain to incorporate feedback loops, ethical considerations, and qualitative insights offers a more inclusive and contextual approach to data collection and analysis. It is important for Governments to partner with different actors and stakeholders, including civil society organizations, to discuss and align definitions to be incorporated into national systems and to build trust with communities more broadly.

It is key to develop initiatives and programming that engage men and boys in the promotion of gender equality. Men and boys must be equal partners in the promotion of gender equality by sharing the care burden and championing fairer laws and norms. It is important to sensitize boys and young men about their behaviours both offline and online, addressing toxic masculinity and harmful narratives spread through technology. The engagement of men and boys is essential in addressing misogynistic narratives spread via digital context that reinforce discrimination and incite violence against women and girls and can also encourage men and boys to take an active part in efforts to prevent and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence, including in the digital sphere.

Proposed questions for discussion

- What are the trends in SDG 5 targets? Which areas have seen the most progress and which ones are furthest behind?





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- What lessons have been learnt in policymaking for gender equality in the last 10 years of implementation? What can be done differently in the next year, and what should be reinforced and accelerated? What are the biggest impediments to progress and how can we rapidly address these?
- What are the science- and evidence- based policy solutions that can help achieve gender equality? How can synergies with other Goals be realized, while putting women and girls at the center?
- How can the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women continue to guide efforts to achieve SDG 5, particularly in the context of the HLPF thematic review? How can we leverage the commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Pact of the Future in advancing SDG 5?