

**Sustainable Development Goal 5**

*An Expert Group Meeting in preparation for HLPF 2025: Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based**solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs**for leaving no one behind*

New York, 21st January 2025

**Concept Note**

1. ***Introduction***

The theme of the 2025 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is “Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-basedsolutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGsfor leaving no one behind”. The 2025 HLPF will have an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goals 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The HLPF will provide an opportunity to assess progress on these goals at the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and to identify what can be done to radically accelerate progress on SDG implementation in the remaining five years, connecting with other intergovernmental processes such as the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing+30), the 3rd UN Ocean Conference, the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), and the Second World Summit for Social Development..

In preparation for the review of SDG 5 – and its role in advancing sustainable development across the 2030 Agenda, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (UN-DESA/DSDG) and UN WOMEN, together with other partners, are organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM).

The objective of the meeting will be to take stock of progress towards SDG 5; to identify innovative solutions that could accelerate progress toward SDG 5 while also generating synergies and addressing trade-offs with other goals and targets; to consider new challenges that may have emerged since the Goal was last reviewed including in relation to the intensifying climate crisis, slow recovery from COVID-19, multiple conflicts, and economic turmoil among others; to identify lessons learned and good practices on SDG 5 implementation over the past 10 years; and to reflect on ways to harness the political momentum from the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future to deliver on SDG 5 by 2030.

These discussions will help inform the HLPF, assist in planning its sessions, and contribute toward identifying collaborations and programmes of work on SDG 5 going forward from 2025.

1. ***SDG 5***

The world continues to lag in its pursuit of gender equality by 2030. Parity in women’s participation in public life remains elusive, and in management positions, at current rates, parity will require another 176 years (SDG 5.1)[[1]](#footnote-1).

Violence against women persists, disproportionately affecting those with disabilities (SDG 5.2). The Internet, while offering significant opportunities and information, can expose women and girls to online harassment and abuse. A study of 51 countries revealed that 38 per cent of women had personally experienced online violence. Only 1 in 4 reported it to the relevant authorities and nearly 9 in 10 opted to limit their online activity, thereby increasing the gender digital divide. Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women increased during the pandemic as women spent more time online[[2]](#footnote-2).

Harmful practices that target women and girls are decreasing but not at a rate keeping up with population growth (SDG 5.3). Child marriage and female genital mutilation violate the rights of girls and have lifelong consequences. An estimated 640 million girls and women were married in childhood globally, with one third in India alone. Some progress has been made. One in five girls was married before 18 today compared to one in four 25 years ago; 68 million child marriages were averted in this period. Over 230 million girls and women have undergone female genital mutilation. Some countries have made strides towards ending it, but new estimates show an increase of 30 million cases compared to eight years ago.

Heavy burdens of unpaid domestic and care work trap women in poverty and inequality (SDG 5.4). On average, each day, women spend 2.5 times more hours on unpaid domestic and care work than men.The disproportionate burden on women is even worse in lower-income households, contributing to poverty, inequality and precariousness, including by limiting labour-market participation. Overall, 24.3 million more females live in extreme poverty compared to males. By 2030, a projected 8.1 per cent of females (compared to 7.6 per cent of males) will linger in extreme poverty, with gender inequalities contributing toward missing the central SDG target[[3]](#footnote-3).

Women’s participation lags in political representation and the labour market (SDG 5.5). As of 1 January 2024, women occupied 26.9 per cent of seats in national parliaments, up from 22.3 per cent in 2015. In local government, women occupied 35.5 per cent of elected seats in 2023. When women participate, they find narrower avenues for advancement. While gender gaps have closed at all levels of education globally, upper-secondary disparities remain concerning in three of eight regions[[4]](#footnote-4). While women account for 40 per cent of global employment, they only occupied 27.5 per cent of managerial positions in 2022, the same share as in 2016. Nearly all countries have gender gaps in digital skills and STEM, which significantly impacts the participation and leadership of women and girls in innovation and digital transformation.

While there are some positive trends, far too many women still cannot realize the right to decide on their sexual and reproductive health (SDG 5.6). Data from 69 countries show that 56 per cent of married or in-union women aged 15–49 can decide on their sexual and reproductive health and rights, ranging from 38 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa to over 80 per cent in Europe. New data from 32 countries show that 19 have seen a positive trend in women’s ability to make decisions on sexual and reproductive health, particularly in Eastern and Southern Africa. Conversely, Western and Central Africa has experienced notable declines.

1. ***Framing the issues***

Women and girls continue to face discrimination and societal biases dictating their place in society, their roles, and responsibilities. These ideas are holding everyone back.

The COVID-19 pandemic and multiple crises that have rocked the world in recent times have pushed women’s progress backwards, reinforcing traditional gender roles (women as caregivers) and impacting jobs and livelihoods in sectors where women were working in large numbers (such as informal work). The COVID-19 crisis also drove a spike in some forms of violence against women including domestic violence, compounded by money, health and security stresses, movement restrictions, crowded homes and reduced peer support[[5]](#footnote-5).

Women are bearing the brunt of the climate meltdown. With less access to land, education, information and financial resources, women are most affected by extreme climate events, such as floods and droughts. Social protection measures are largely missing where they are needed the most urgently. In the 20 countries that are on the frontlines of the climate crisis more than 90 per cent of the population do not have access to any form of social protection cash benefit, be it child and family or unemployment benefits, or any support that can protect them from the ravages of climate change[[6]](#footnote-6).

Unsurprisingly, extreme poverty is projected to deepen for women and girls globally. By the end of 2022, around 383 million women and girls will live in extreme poverty compared to 368 million men and boys. If current trends continue, by 2030, more women and girls will live in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa than do today. Women are more likely than men to experience food insecurity, and the gender gap is growing. Since 2015, the gender gap in moderate or severe food insecurity has widened in five out of seven regions[[7]](#footnote-7).

Women are systematically being left behind. Targeted and intentional policy making is needed to counter the disadvantages that women particularly face to urgently support progress on SDG 5. Advances in Science and Technology fields have great potential but at the same time can perpetuate exclusion and biases against women and gender inequality. Advance in STEM must ensure participation of women and girls and prevent harm and discrimination towards women and girls.

Women and girls must be able to participate in education, in the labour force and the public sphere on the same terms as men. On average, across countries, long-run GDP per capita would be almost 20% higher if gender employment gaps were closed[[8]](#footnote-8). Empowered and educated women can lead meaningful lives and fulfil their innate potential. They can also unleash progress on development across their societies, families, and nations. Women’s and girls’ success has synergies with every other SDG. Holding back half of humanity is holding back progress on all of the SDGs.

The review of SDG 5 will discuss the sustained commitments needed to change biased social norms, eliminate harmful practices and abolish discriminatory laws. This begins with equality in women’s rights including in the law and in practice. Enhancing women’s roles in leadership and decision making and adequately scaling up investments in gender equality on national, regional and global scales will be highlighted. The synergies and multiplier effects of gender equality will be emphasized.

The UN has identified six investment pathways for revitalizing SDG implementation, known as the Six Transitions. While gender equality is not a distinct transition, all six depend on realizing it, alongside urgent complementary action on key areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, such as ending violence against women, equal participation in decision making, and women, peace and security. The review of SDG 5 will highlight the interconnections among gender inequality and the six transitions.

1. ***Key questions***

Stock taking:

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

*How does progress vary regionally? What can be learnt from the regional patterns?*

Lessons learned from first 10 years of the 2030 journey:

*What lessons have been learnt in policy making for gender equality in the last 10 years of implementation?*

*What can be done differently from the past and what should be reinforced and accelerated? What are the biggest impediments to progress?*

Challenges and impediments to shifting course:

*What are the most intractable underlying inequalities and injustices that prevent advances on women and girls’ empowerment?*

*What are the interests and power dynamics that pose the biggest challenge to change in social norms and discrimination against girls and women?*

*How have recent crises changed the dynamics of gender inequality and what policy instruments might be needed to overcome these new or deepening pressures?*

Opportunities and solutions for transformative change:

*What are some science- and evidence- based advances that can help achieve gender equality?*

*What are some new opportunities and alliances that can be leveraged in the achievement of SDG 5?*

*How can synergies with other goals be realized?*

1. ***Contribution to HLPF 2025***

The knowledge and insights of experts from all regions, sectors and stakeholders including government, civil society, youth, academia and the private sector will be crucial for addressing these questions. The EGM will serve to bring together a cross-section of expertise on SDG 5 to help:

* Provide substantive inputs into the thematic reviews at the 2025 HLPF and its outcomes;
* Identify cases from regions and specific countries (including those that are conducting or have conducted Voluntary National Reviews) that illustrate challenges or highlight innovative practices;
* Suggest effective resource persons for thematic sessions at the HLPF, as well as contributors to blog posts, e-discussions and other activities leading up to the HLPF;
* Inform collaborations and programmes of work going forward from 2025.
1. ***Participation and organization***

The EGM is part of a broader review of SDG 5, including reviews of specialized reports from United Nations systems partners and research institutions. Some of these inputs will also provide background material for discussions at the EGM.

Participation at the EGM will be by invitation. A limited number of experts from think tanks, academia, NGOs, the private sector and Governments will be invited. Experts from the UN system and other international organizations will also be invited to participate.

UN-DESA/DSDG and UN WOMEN will prepare the event in consultation with other UN agencies. DESA/DSDG will also coordinate across other DESA divisions.

Individual sessions at the EGM will address specific themes. The mode will be interactive, with all participants encouraged to speak openly and informally.

The EGM will be conducted in English. Presentations/papers/remarks will be made available online.

**ANNEX 1: SDG 5 Targets**

SDG 5.1

End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

SDG 5.2

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

SDG 5.3

Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

SDG 5.4

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

SDG 5.5

Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

SDG 5.6

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

SDG 5.a

Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

SDG 5.b

Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

SDG 5.c

Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

1. The data in this document are from United Nations. [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/) unless otherwise stated. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.ilo.org/publications/flagship-reports/world-social-protection-report-2024-26-universal-social-protection-climate [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/overview [↑](#footnote-ref-8)