



## **The Role of Gender Equality in Achieving Sustainable Development**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Equality of growth and the independence of women and girls are interdependent. Inequitable resource distribution makes sustainable development impossible without gender equality. Giving men and women equitable access to initiatives, resources, and decision-making without discrimination based on gender is known as gender equality. It also refers to resolving any disparities in the benefits that men and women receive. Empowering women is a vital part of making society last. Different things can be meant by sustainable development and sustainability. Sometimes, it means ensuring that resources and opportunities are shared moderately or that people live within their means. Other times, it means understanding how the economy, society, and environment are connected. Sustainable development is based on democracy, applying the rule of law, and observing fundamental rights, including freedom and equal opportunity. With fairness in how things are shared, there can be sustainability. Women and girls are some of the most influential people who contribute to, carry out, and benefit from sustainable development. "Gender equality" is a cross-cutting issue in action, and if it is not dealt with in a variety of ways, it will not be possible for women to be treated equally. It is vital to recognise what women do to help with sustainable development. The study is descriptive and purely based on secondary data. This study highlights women's critical role as partners and beneficiaries in sustainable development. The study concluded that All SDGs talk about gender sensitisation in one way or another. Women must have the power to eradicate the gender gap and give men and women equal opportunities before gender equality can be attained and sustained.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Sustainable Development Goals, Women's Empowerment

### **Introduction and Background**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development prioritises social inclusion, economic progress, and environmental protection to create a more peaceful, wealthy, and sustainable society. With 169 targets, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 ambitious goals. In 2015, the UN member nations adopted them. to show how each country's development path will affect its future. The SDGs aim for a changed and sustainable society that ensures women's and girls' rights and privileges have not been taken away and detrimental actions concerning women and girls have been successfully abolished in all domains. According to this perspective, human rights and a sustainable world depend on granting women and girls more significant influence and promoting gender equality. The contributions of women to sustainable development are also viewed in the modern world as signs of social transformation, economic growth, peace, and environmental sustainability. As a result, equality between men and women is included (Goal 5) as an overarching theme that will help other goals in the agenda be reached more successfully.

To quantify gender equality and women's empowerment, discussing the potential connections between these concepts and health outcomes is essential. "Gender" and "sex" are often used interchangeably, yet they differ. Gender is socially formed and determined by biology. It includes their roles, rights, and obligations based on their gender. According to Kishor (2006), gender has three key features: a) Gender does not have a value-neutral dimension. Despite the differences, the roles, responsibilities, and privileges attributed to males and females are distinct and unequal. b) Power inequalities between men and women involve power over and power to. Human functioning includes family, cultural, and institutional dimensions of power, including legal and informal rights, access to resources, and achieving knowledge and personal goals. Control over society and household resources and decisions, cultural and religious ideas, and one's and others' bodies are called power over. Men have more authority than women, and in specific fields, they even have control over women. c) Gender is not fixed or unchangeable. Gender roles, rights, and expectations are socially created and may alter over time and throughout regions as society's needs, opportunities, and customs change. (a) and (b) lead to persistent gender inequalities as well as female disempowerment in most societies, especially patriarchal ones like India. Power and resource access inequalities affect populations' health and quality of life. (Kishor & Gupta, 2009)

### **Why Does Gender Equality Matter in the SDGs?**

Women and girls comprise half of the globe's population and represent half of humankind's possibilities. Society benefits as they lead better lives. For example, when women obtain steady employment and high earnings, they address poverty (SDG 1), improve their dependence's well-being, nutrition, and literacy, and support more general goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, and 4.

Ending every form of violence perpetrated on girls and women (Target 5.2) is not just pivotal for SDG 5; it is vital for promoting overall health and well-being (SDG 3). Unfortunately, women who have experienced intimate partner abuse face higher risks of HIV, depression, and alcoholism. Moreover, this violence has long-term impacts on their children, affecting their physical, mental, and social development.

Gender equality plays a crucial role in achieving all SDGs. However, progress across the 2030 Agenda has been uneven. While there is some headway in girls' education, many disadvantaged communities' women and girls fall behind (SDG 4). There are still significant gender differences, especially regarding innovation (SDG 9) and being in the workforce (SDG 8). There is a chance that the number of FGM cases will rise over the next 15 years because progress made toward eradicating female genital mutilation (FGM) and lowering maternal mortality (SDG 3) has failed to keep up with the growth of the population.

Women worldwide face substantial barriers impacting various aspects of their lives. To achieve the 2030 Agenda, it is critical to eliminate these gender-specific limitations and other forms of discrimination. Overlooking gender equality means missing out on its pivotal role in attaining the goals of the 2030 Agenda. (UN Women, 2018)

### *The (un)sustainable development of specific pathways, as well as gender equality*

Since 1950, the global economy has grown by over a factor of 15, with real-world GDP increasing from US\$2 trillion in 1965 to US\$28 trillion in 1995. Neoliberal policies and logic stress the pursuit of private gains by enterprises and individuals in markets as free of state involvement. Economic inequities between countries and regions and within individual communities have developed as GDP has grown. As a result of inequality, unrest, and conflict, they fuel economic instability and weaken stability, fair playing fields, and consumer demand, all of which are necessary for financial sustainability. Many major market-led approaches are socially and environmentally unsustainable, especially regarding gender inequality, pollution, and environmental over-exploitation. Even though economic globalisation has made it easier for women from different classes to get jobs, many of these jobs are still based on discrimination and segregation. In low-paying retail, domestic, and labour-intensive agricultural work, poor women do jobs that are seen as an extension of their traditional gender roles. Because care is usually unpaid and because of how it is done, women are often seen as the only ones who can do it. By ignoring social and ecological limits to growth, market-led development destroys its living foundations, which are people and nature, by over-exploiting them (Wichterich, 2012). The capitalist market economy uses human, social, and natural resources to get better constantly.

Capitalist production perpetuates disparities between genders by shifting social expenditures onto people's homes, communities at large, or the environment to maximise profits. The rise and nature of militarism add to the problems of being unable to live sustainably and the unequal treatment of women. A big part of late capitalism is the so-called military-industrial complex, which comprises the financial, political, and policy ties between government agencies, armies, and the industries that support them. On the other hand, military interventions are often linked to violence getting worse in ways that reinforce patriarchal values and hurt women's rights, dignity, and bodily integrity. (Ruxton, 2004)

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## **Theoretical Framework**

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach guided this study. In 1995, liberal feminists came up with the GAD as an aggressive way to challenge the existing gender inequality. The process emphasises that men and women are different because of how society is set up. Singh (2007) says that GAD considers power relationships to cause inequality and women's isolation. In response, the GAD thrives on addressing the needs and concerns of women by tearing down power structures and ending patriarchal dominance. From the point of view of Connelly et al. (2000), the GAD framework recognises that social networks make it hard for women to participate in all development activities. To do this, the GAD recognises that gender, culture, race, class, and colonial history are linked. They also talked about how discrimination affects women differently. In addition, Connelly et al. (2000) say that The GAD perspective emphasises the importance of women's active participation in developing and implementing development policies.

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## **Objectives of this study**

- This study investigates how women contribute to a country's social, economic, and environmental development.
- Understanding the essential function of equal rights for women in accomplishing sustainable growth was another goal of this study.
- To research the various barriers women face in becoming independent.

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## **Research Methodology**

This study uses a descriptive study design and is based on exploratory research. The study's title is The Impact of Equal Gender Opportunities in Ensuring Sustainable Development. We got information from websites, journals, articles, reports, and books as part of secondary data collection.

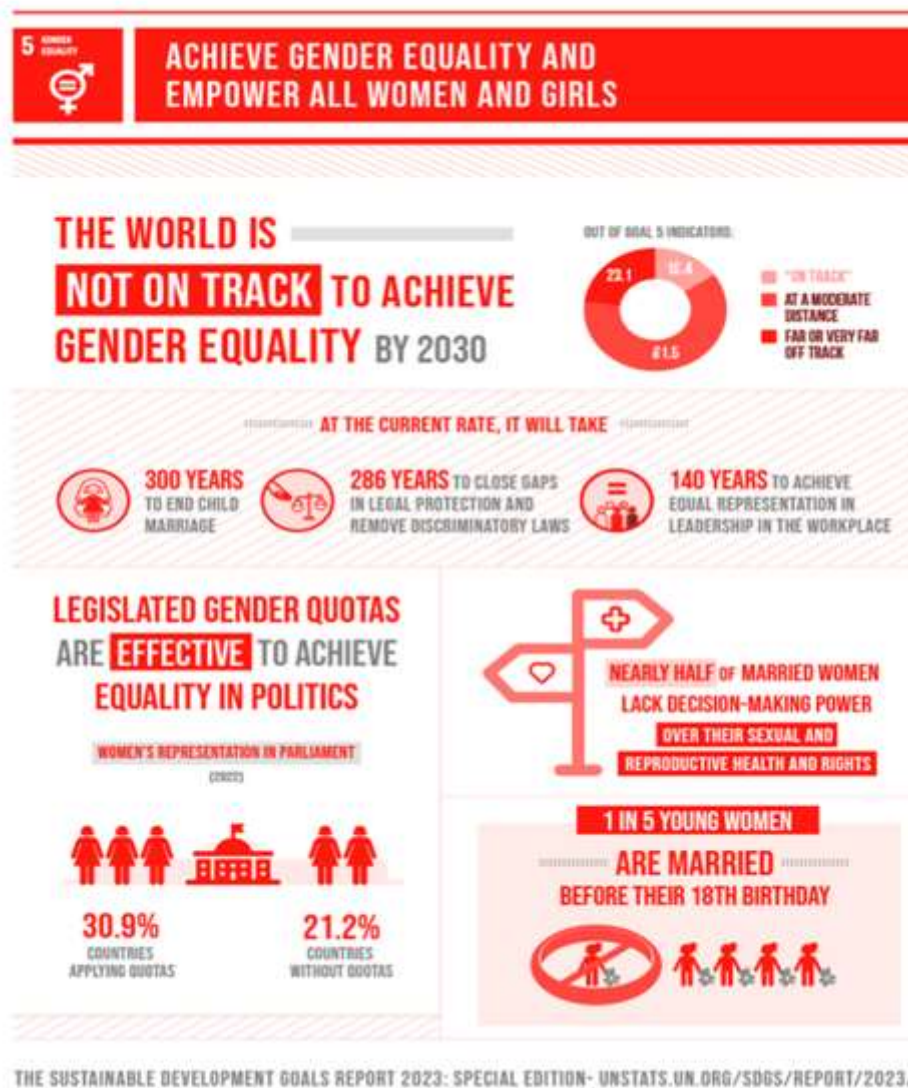
### *Attitude and behaviour change at the individual level*

It is important to remember that women are seen as equal to men for a socio-cultural shift to happen. People must change their wrong knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs about women and gender equality. In the Social-Ecological Model (SEM), knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and ideas are the

most typically measured variables for the individual/intrapersonal level of impact. Personal perspectives and behaviours must be changed to support women's and girls' rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment.

It is essential to change cultural and social convictions, backgrounds, and conventions through community mobilisation, advocacy efforts, and awareness-raising to attain gender equality. Encouraging women's rights, involvement, and equal opportunity at all societal levels is also essential for advancing the community's advancement over time. In 1988, McLeroy et al. The social status is the relationships between distinct groups of individuals, organisations, and information networks. This level includes sources of social resources and identity, which are known to influence social norms and values.

Through information networks, people who work in the media can significantly affect how social norms and values shape how people in a community see gender equality and women's empowerment.



Source: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

*Progress towards increasing the representation of women in management and political positions could be faster.*

As of January 1, 2023, women's representation in national parliamentary lower and single chambers came to 26.5% globally, a slight rise of 4.2 percentage points from 2015 and an average yearly increase of just 0.5 points. Women had 35.5% of seats in local government in 2023, up from 33.9% in 2020. If current trends continue, closing the gender difference in national legislative representation will require more than 40 years, and closing it at the local government level will require another 30 years.

Legalised quotas by gender have proven successful, especially in the nations that have implemented them; in the 2022 election for parliament, the average percentage of women represented was 30.9%, whereas, in the countries without quotas, it was only 21.2%. Due to these programs, the number of women in municipal government has increased by about seven per cent.

Globally, despite women accounting in 2021, they made up about 40% of the workforce, whereas they only held 28.2% of management jobs. Furthermore, and in line with lower rates of female job opportunities, regions including Northern Africa, Western Asia, Central Asia, and Southern Asia recorded the lowest possible percentages of women in managerial positions—roughly 15%. (UN DESA, 2023)

***Women can be empowered by mobile phone ownership, but gender parity remains elusive in many parts of the world.***

The availability of mobile phones is essential for women's empowerment, networking, and making information and services more accessible. Globally, 73% of adults ten years of age and older owned a mobile phone in 2022, up from 67% in 2019. Despite this increase, women were 12% more unlikely than men to purchase a smartphone, a difference that has persisted since 2019. Regional differences in gender distribution are evident; in high-density and middle-income areas, gender parity is getting closer, but it is still elusive in low-income neighbourhoods. In Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia, gender differences are far more pronounced, amounting to over 25%.

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## Discussion

- With only seven years remaining, only 15.4% of Goal 5 indicators containing information are on track, 61.5% are significantly off track, and 23.1% are extremely or very far off target.
- In many areas, little progress has been made. It will take 300 years to eradicate child marriage if current patterns continue; if current trends continue, it will assume 286 years to repeal discriminatory legislation, 140 years to equalise the representation of women in executive and legislative positions throughout the workplace, and 47 years to attain an equal number of women in national parliaments.
- To achieve Goal 5, To remove structural impediments, legislative reforms, investments, and leadership in politics are essential. Moreover, prioritising gender equality is a cross-cutting objective.
- To achieve gender equality, national policies, budgets, and systems must focus on the issue.

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## Concluding remarks and recommendations

- All countries are working hard to escape economic and social crises. They are facing the road to sustainable development and crossing it. However, all technical solutions agree that more needs to be done to encourage freedom for women and gender equality. It is impossible to force sustainable growth from the metropolis to the countryside. Instead, it must come from the country itself.
- Global efforts to close the gaps between men and women have partially succeeded. Gender inequality is still a big problem in every development area, from education to economic inclusion.
- To eliminate gender gaps, we need a clear, relevant, and up-to-date policy on gender equality and empowering women. This policy should provide a framework for integrating women into all work areas.
- Gender inequality cannot be fixed just by putting legal and administrative measures in place. Instead, people need to be taught about the benefits of gender equality. The way people think about women needs to change. The best thing for society would be if men and women treated each other equally and did not take away women's rights.
- The achievement of gender equality among adults, as characterised by equal rights for all and mutual respect between public and private relationships, provides girls and boys with an acute setting to develop gender-equal attitudes and behaviours, contributing to future development goals.
- Millions of poor women need more power to exercise their fundamental human rights and help the world's economy grow and develop.

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