

Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



What is Goal 5?

While great progress has been made in the past decades in the advancement of women and girl's rights, they continue to face violence and discrimination on the basis of gender continues across the globe. The goal of achieving gender equality broadly encompasses the view that that both men and women should receive the same rights and access to opportunities throughout economic, political and social spheres of society. Despite a record 143 countries constitutionally guarantee gender equality and 189 states are party to the [UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW). Yet in 2016 discrimination and violence against women in the public and private spheres continue to be epidemic, enforced through laws, stereotypes, and social norms. The benefits of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls can produce innumerable positive effects throughout society due to the all-encompassing role that women and girls play in daily life. Such steps are essential to realizing each of the 17 SDGs, making gender equality both a free-standing goal and cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The fifth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals seeks to end gender based discrimination and violence against women and girls, ensure full participation and access to political and economic rights, provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, education and access to information. Additional reforms seek to ensure access to ownership and control of land, financial services and inheritance. Gender equality and empowerment is not limited to these rights, and are not that Goal 5 seeks to obtain, but these are rather a few overarching aspects of gender equality. Along with all other Sustainable Development goals, Goal 5 takes an integrative approach, and seeks to expand on the progress made from the Millennium Development Goals, to ensure a global commitment to equality and empowerment of women and girls. The targets are aimed at addressing the root causes of gender-based inequality, yet remain ambiguous to respect state and cultural traditions. Targeted national strategies need to encourage recognition of the universality of women's rights overall and participation in the conversation of including gender equality as an essential component of economic growth and development.

What Are The Targets?

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 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
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- 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 and nationally appropriate
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- 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

Means of Implementation

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



Is This Possible?

Ensuring the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide will require cultural and societal shifts in the way we think. Goal 5 embodies just how transformative this agenda is, calling for both cultural and legal shifts throughout the world. There is not only legal but also social norms must be addressed and overcome to achieve gender equality. The current approach through international pressure to change laws and practices has proved dismal. Despite 70 years of efforts through the UN in documents like the [UN Charter](#), the [Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), the [Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), and many treaties and resolutions, there is still much to be done. A foreseeable problem is that there is no timetable to achieve these goals. This means, the responsibility falls onto governments both nationally and locally to ensure sufficient progress is being made.

Achievement of Goal 5 will be crucial to achieving sustainable development because of the pervasive nature of gender-based inequality. Governments need to take this challenge head on, through the creation of national implementation plans, ensuring sufficient financing, and an effective monitoring and reporting body. This will be either greatly aided or inhibited by the development of indicators and the establishment of national review boards. Effective indicators may prove to be the critical aspect of ensuring progress is made. These indicators must be comprehensive, yet comparable. This will prove to be a very difficult task, because they must take into account both qualitative and quantitative measurements in measuring economic aspects, as well as societal and cultural norms. Local circumstances must be taken into account, meaning indicators will need to vary from state to state, however still be able to be used for comparable regional and international measurements. Goal 5 presents another instance where disaggregated data will be critical and only achievable through a multi-stakeholder approach.

State governments will not be able to achieve this goal alone. There must be constant cooperation between state, local, and regional governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society. While this is an international commitment, progress will only be seen if each state and locality recognizes the vital importance of gender equality and empowerment. There cannot be true equitable and sustainable development without the protection and empowerment of women worldwide, which Goal 5 seeks to ensure.

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