
INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5 (GENDER EQUALITY)

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this article is on the evolution of international laws on Gender equality. The concept of gender equality has transgressed the arena of the international perspective. It is not simply termed as a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for peaceful, progressive and sustainable world. The development of gender equality under SDG 2030 in the international forum is being discussed. The agenda, action plan taken to promote gender equality in the world including programme of action under by the UN and gender prospective spheres has been thoroughly analysed in this article.

If we look at the international perspective of gender equality, the discrimination faced by women has been quite regressive. This could be summed under the following:-

- I. Globally, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18 and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone FGM.
- II. The rates of girls between 15-19 years who are subjected to FGM¹ (female genital mutilation) in the 30 countries where the practice is concentrated have dropped from 1 in 2 girls in 2000 to 1 in 3 girls by 2017.
- III. One in five women and girls², including 19 per cent of women and girls aged 15 to 49, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months. Yet, 49 countries have no laws that specifically protect women from such violence.
- IV. In 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence.
- V. Globally, women are just 13 per cent³ of agricultural land holders.
- VI. While women have made important inroads into political office⁴ across the world, their representation in national parliaments at 23.7 per cent is still far from parity.
- VII. In 46 countries⁵, women now hold more than 30 per cent of seats in national parliament in at least one chamber.
- VIII. Only 52 per cent of women⁶ married or in a union freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use and health care.

¹ https://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf (last visited on May 14, 2020)

² Violence in children and adolescents available at https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Violence_in_the_lives_of_children_and_adolescents.pdf (last visited on August 23, 2020)

³ Empower women available at <https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwomen/resources/hlp%20briefs/unhlp%20full%20report.pdf?la=en>

⁴ <https://www.undocs.org/E/2017-66> (last modified on August 4, 2020)

⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20womenlgthembriefuswebrev2%20pdf.ashx> (last modified on September 5, 2020)

⁶ Ibid

- IX. Women in Northern Africa hold less than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The proportion of women in paid employment⁷ outside the agriculture sector has increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015.
- X. In Southern Asia, a girl's risk of marrying⁸ in childhood has dropped by over 40 per cent since 2000
- XI. More than 100 countries⁹ have taken action to track budget allocations for gender equality.

Gender based discrimination includes sexual, physical violence against girls and women, harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation and child marriage, denial of basic education to girls, improper health and hygiene facility especially for girls, lack of awareness on sexual health, diseases, workplace inequalities, political and economic inequalities on women.

Issues concerning gender equality in the world

- a. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a human rights issue that affects girls and women worldwide. As such, its elimination is a global concern. In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a milestone resolution calling on the international community to intensify efforts to end the practice. More recently, in September 2015, the global community¹⁰ agreed to a new set of development goals – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which includes a target under Goal 5 to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and FGM/C, by the year 2030. Both the resolution and the SDG framework signify the political will of the international community and national partners to work together to accelerate action towards a total, and final, end to the practice in all continents of the world. More and better data are needed to measure progress towards this common goal.

⁷ Food and Agricultural Organisation available at <http://www.fao.org/3/am307e/am307e00.pdf> (last visited on September 25, 2020)

⁸ https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf (last modified on September 8, 2020)

⁹ Forum of gender equality available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf (last visited on October 3, 2020)

¹⁰ Supra n 1, p 2

- b. Violence against women is an issue that has been continuing till this date. Violence like rape, sexual assault, workplace harassment, domestic violence and honour killing have been prevalent since time immemorial. Granting unequal legal rights make women increasingly vulnerable to all sorts of crime committed against them. There exists sexual subjugation¹¹ of women in every field of social, political and economical aspect.
- c. Discriminatory low wages is yet another issue concerning gender equality. Even in developed countries women are at a disadvantaged position when it comes to their salary. Men are paid more than women. Women are treated as inferior section in the workplace. It is stated that women earn just 77 percent of what men earn for the same amount of work done.
- d. Access to education for a girl child has been a distant dream for some countries. Countries like Sudan, Libya¹², and Afghanistan have low female literacy rate. Similarly, in certain parts of Pakistan and Middle Eastern countries where there is prevalence of Islamic dominance, issues “Fatwa” opposing female education. In the process of restricting the right of a girl child to go to school, many organisations have bombarded schools and institutions providing education, simply because of the fact that women aren’t allowed to study as it is against their religious sentiments.
- e. Women in the Middle Eastern countries except the countries of Tunisia, Iran and parts of Egypt, do not have the right to pass citizenship on to their children, whereas men have the ability to pass it to their children. The human rights of women in the Middle Eastern countries and parts of Northern Africa are systematically denied.
- f. Child marriage is a concept that is still in practice. According to the UN, 40% of young women in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa¹³ are married off at the age of 18 years. It increases the chance of complications in childbirth which result even in the death. Child marriages are practised in majority of the Middle Eastern states as well as African states where there is an acute problem of poverty. An estimated 140 million girls are married at an early age between the year 2011-2020.
- g. Gender selective abortion is practised in India and other Asian countries. In countries like North America, Europe the ratio of girl over boy is higher whereas in India the ratio of men is higher in comparison to women, which is an indicator of sex selective

¹¹ <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-subjection-of-women> (last visited on June 21, 2020)

¹² UNICEF: Access to education in Sudan available at <https://www.unicef.org/sudan/education> (last modified on July 4, 2020)

¹³ New findings on child marriages in Sub-saharan Africa, available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27938375/> (last modified on July 6, 2020)

abortion. Although under certain legislation including Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostics Technique Act 1994 bans abortion, yet it is still continued illegally. 225 million women in the developing countries contribute to 74 million unplanned pregnancies and 36 million abortions every year¹⁴. Due to lack of awareness of the reproductive health, women especially in the rural and backward areas suffer maternal death, infection and other health concern.

Gender discrimination in Education

There are multiple and diverse links between gender equality and the fulfilment of the human right to education. The pervasive denial of the human right to education experienced by women and girls across the globe – as shown, for instance, two thirds of the world's non-literate adults are women – is a striking example of gender discrimination. Education is an enabling and transformative right. As pointed out by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)¹⁵, the right to education "has been variously classified as an economic right, a social right and a cultural right. It is also a civil right and a political right, since it is central to the full and effective realization of those rights as well. In this respect, the right to education epitomizes the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights.

1. A strong education system, in line with the principle of non-discrimination, is key for redressing gender injustice in wider society, and for overcoming social and cultural norms that discriminate against girls and women. CESCR has also clearly stated that "the prohibition against discrimination enshrined in article 2 of the Covenant [of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights] is subject to neither progressive realization nor the availability of resources; it applies fully and immediately to all aspects of education and encompasses all internationally prohibited grounds of discrimination".

2. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) therefore sees the challenge posed by gender discrimination in education as multiple: policy and practice in education needs to be re-oriented to ensure the deconstruction of gender stereotypes as well as the promotion of equality of experience and relations for both sexes in education, thus addressing power

¹⁴ Global citizen forum available at <http://www.globalcitizen.org.in> (last visited on September 19, 2020)

¹⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/cescr/pages/cescrindex.aspx> (last visited on July 25, 2020)

imbalances that perpetuate gender inequality and leveraging access to all rights by woman and girls.

Education is strongly embedded in CEDAW, in ways that reflect this rich relationship between gender equality and the right to education. CEDAW's General Recommendation 3¹⁶, as well as article 10 of the main convention, expresses clearly the role of education in addressing wider gender discrimination based on stereotyping and biased cultural norms.

3. The human right to education and non discrimination is further affirmed by a number of other international treaties. Along with the clear expression of a universal right to education in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the provisions on gender-equitable education in CEDAW¹⁷, the most significant expressions of these rights are found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966) and the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. Governments further committed themselves to ensuring gender equality in education in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000)¹⁸, the Millennium Development Goals (2000), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the World Declaration on Education For All (1990), which stated that “the most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation.”

Yet despite these numerous treaties, States and the international community still largely treat education as a development goal and not as a right. GCE believes that a clear rights-based understanding of education is crucial to overcoming gender discrimination and to re-orienting education towards the promotion of greater gender equality in society as a whole.

4. There has been undeniable progress made in improving gender parity in education in the three decades since the entry into force of CEDAW. The number of girls out of school fell by more than 40% from 1999 to 2008, and girls now constitute 53% of those children out of school, as opposed to 60% at the start of the millennium. The MDGs called for gender parity at primary and secondary education by 2005, a target that was clearly missed; nevertheless, it

¹⁶ General recommendation adopted by Convention of elimination of discrimination against women available at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/index.html> (last visited on September 3, 2020)

¹⁷ Civil Society Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 2017.

¹⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1681Dakar%20Framework%20for%20Action.pdf> (last visited on September 9, 2020)

is encouraging that at an aggregate level, the world is now closer to achieving gender parity, at least so in primary education.

The preliminary findings of GCE's¹⁹ global survey of gender in schools show that more than one fifth of girls in secondary schools are unhappy Gender Discrimination in Education: The violation of rights of women and girls 3 with their gender, and nearly two fifths have been made fun of at school for being a girl. In sub-Saharan Africa, there is a 10 percentage point gap between girls' and boys' primary school completion rates, and in only seven of the 54 countries in sub-Saharan Africa do girls have a greater than 50% chance of going to secondary school.

GCE's survey shows that gender stereotypes still prevail in schools, particularly around male and female aptitudes, as do unequal power relations, as shown in, for instance, the fact that girls are far more likely to perform classroom chores. This perpetuates gender inequalities within the education system and society as a whole. It is hardly surprising, then, that nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterate people are women.

6. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is a civil society coalition which calls on governments to act immediately to deliver the right of every girl, boy, woman and man to a free quality public education. Since our formation in 1999, millions of people and thousands of organizations – including civil society organizations, trade unions, child rights campaigners, teachers, parents and students have united to demand Education. The quality public education for all is achievable, and we therefore demand that governments north and south take their responsibility to implement the Education for All goals and strategies agreed by 180 world governments at Dakar, in April 2000, and since agreed time and again.

7. GCE's Global Action Week in 2011²⁰ focused on gender equality in education. GCE mobilized members and schools in over 100 countries to discuss gender discrimination in education, and to call for politicians to 'Make it Right'²¹ for gender equality in education. We presented parliamentarians, ministers and heads of state with demands in the form of

¹⁹ Spotlight Synthesis Report: The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in Brazil. Accessed 19December 2017 available at <https://brasilnaagenda2030/2017/07/spotlightreportcswgbrazilhlpf20o7pdf> (last visited on December 19, 2020)

²⁰ https://campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/GCE_INTERIM_Gender_Report.pdf (last visited on December 20, 2020)

²¹ <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/publishers/gce-global-campaign-education> (last visited on December 22, 2020)

manifestos and petitions. The GCE coalition continues to campaign and lobby on the global, regional and national stage to ensure gender justice prevails within and beyond schools. GCE seeks to present the CEDAW committee with information that indicates the current state of gender equality in education globally.

On 2nd October, 2020 more than 100 countries committed to concrete actions that would advance gender equality for women and girls everywhere at a virtual high-level meeting during the UN General Assembly. This gathering under the theme “Accelerating the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls” marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action²² the most comprehensive roadmap for women and girls’ empowerment.

The Beijing Declaration²³ and Platform of Action is a strong call to action for the removal of systematic and structural barriers that prevent women and girls from enjoying their human rights across social, economic, political and environmental domains, and sets out a comprehensive catalogue of policy actions to achieve the vision. However, 25 years after its adoption, global leaders recognized that the redistribution of power and resources between women and men in the public and private spheres, which is inextricably tied in with the broader goals of achieving equality for all, has not been achieved. Overall, the progress falls far short of what States committed themselves to in 1995.

In a Political Declaration²⁴ adopted during the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2020, Member States reaffirmed their political will for action. They also recognized that new challenges have emerged and identified specific means for tackling these gaps and challenges. Some of these include eliminating all discriminatory laws; breaking down structural barriers, discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes—including in the media; matching commitments to gender equality with adequate financing; strengthening institutions to promote gender equality; harnessing the potential of technology and innovation

²² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration> (last visited on December 26, 2020)

²³ Resolution 1 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action The Fourth World Conference on Women, 4 - 15 September 1995, available at https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf (last modified on August 3, 2020)

²⁴https://www.unwomen.org//media/headquarters/attachments/sections/news%20and%20events/stories/2020/cs_w64-politicaldeclaration.pdf?la=en&vs=1220 (last visited on September 29, 2020)

to improve women's²⁵ and girls' lives; regularly collecting, analyzing and using gender statistics; and strengthening international cooperation to implement commitments to gender equality.

The report of the UN Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action²⁶, with inputs from 173 countries, flagged that commitments have not been matched by action, investments or accountability and that an approach of addressing symptoms rather than causes has led to a state of perpetual crisis.

In addition, the far-reaching social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are disproportionately affecting women around the world, from a significant rise in violence against women²⁷, including domestic violence, to women's disadvantage in labour markets, carrying the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work and an estimated increase of 9.1 per cent of the poverty rate²⁸ for women. It is estimated that due to the pandemic, in 2021, 47 million additional women and girls will be pushed into extreme poverty, bringing the total to 435 million. The consequences of the pandemic threaten to undo decades of progress and many of the hard-won advances.

During the event, leaders recommitted to turn the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action into a lived reality for all women and girls. Towards this end, they will accelerate action towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality²⁹. They will also work for further implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Maputo Protocol, the Istanbul Convention and other instruments and treaties. Participants in the Action Coalitions³⁰ of the Generation Equality Forum will take concrete steps for

²⁵ UN Women available at www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/general-assembly (last visited on November 2, 2020)

²⁶ <https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2020/3> (last visited on October 27, 2020)

²⁷ Focus on violence against women available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/press-release-focus-on-violence-against-women-at-the-un-general-assembly> (last modified on October 21, 2020)

²⁸ Gender equality in the wake of covid-19 available at <https://www.unwomen.org/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5142> (last modified on October 23, 2020)

²⁹ UN high level meeting on the 25th anniversary of the fourth world conference on women available at <https://www.un.org/pga/75/event/high-level-meeting-on-the-twenty-fifth-anniversary-of-the-fourth-world-conference-on-women/> (last visited on October 26, 2020)

³⁰ Action Coalition available at <https://forum.generationequality.org/action-coalitions> (last visited on November 4, 2020)

realizing measurable results.

Actions are taken to tackle all forms of violence against all women and girls, to mitigate the impact of climate change and achieve gender parity in public and political life, including in parliaments and in countries and societies around the world. This include implementation of social protection measures, wage subsidies and care services to counter the gender-specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, enhancing land ownership/rights, equal pay measures, and support for women in the informal economy and women entrepreneurs. Enhanced collaboration with civil society to create safe spaces for women and girls to exercise their voice and leadership and ensure enjoyment of their human rights is also needed.

While the current COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges, leaders committed to seizing the opportunity for transformative change, keeping focused on closing the gender digital divide to ensure that women and girls can contribute to, and benefit from technology and innovation.

“In 1995, the nations of the world adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action³¹. The most comprehensive and transformative global agenda, for the achievement of gender equality has made significant progress. President of the 75th Session³² of the United Nations General Assembly Volkan Bozkir stated, yet no country can claim to have achieved gender parity, and the current crisis threatens to erode hard-earned gains.

In the opening segment of the High-Level meeting, Secretary-General António Guterres called for a strong push to meet the unfulfilled promise of the Beijing Platform for Action. “It starts with the equal representation of women in leadership positions, in governments, boardrooms, in climate negotiations and at the peace table – everywhere decisions are taken that affect people’s lives.” He added: “Achieving this will require targeted measures including affirmative action and quotas. This is a human rights issue and a social and economic imperative”.

Building on the foundation laid by the government representatives and more than 30,000 civil

³¹ Supra note 138

³² <https://www.unscn.org/en/news-events/upcoming-events?idnews=2073#:~:text=15%2D30%20September%202020,be%20Tuesday%2C%2022%20September%202020> (last visited on July 8, 2020)

society representatives who attended the Fourth World Conference³³ on Women and its NGO Forum in Huairou, China, is imperative to build back better after the pandemic. This means bringing women to the centre of decision-making, and putting in place the structural changes that intentionally enable this.

UN Women called for actions to change the course of history for women and girls, through bold leadership, unwavering political will and urgent investment, especially in women's organizations, women's ministries and agencies and with young feminists leading change. The women³⁴ of the world believe in the UN and the solidarity of nations.

The UN Decade for Action³⁵ to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals is the world's chance to transform the lives of current and future generations of women and girls. In support of the UN Decade of Action, UN Women has launched six Action Coalitions, which are global, innovative, multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize governments, civil society, youth-led organizations, UN agencies and the private sector to catalyze collective action and drive increased investments to deliver concrete, game-changing results to advance gender equality.

The Action Coalitions will be presented at the Generation Equality Forum³⁶, a civil society-centered, global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the Governments of Mexico and France, in partnership with civil society. In his remarks Emmanuel Macron, President of France, announced the new timeline for the Forum³⁷ to take place in June 2021 in Paris, France. The Forum will present a vital moment for activism, feminist solidarity, and youth leadership to achieve transformative change.

Incentive Measures for Sustainable Development goal implementation under the International Regime on Gender Equality

³³ Solidarity across generations is vital for sustainable development, UN special event hears: Via UN News Centre, Link: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/08/solidarity-across-generations-is-vital-for-sustainable-development-un-special-event-hears> (last visited on August 5, 2020)

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Sustainable Development –A decade of action available at

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/> (last modified on November 13, 2020)

³⁶ <https://forum.generationequality.org/> (last visited on November 21, 2020)

³⁷ Why the Action coalition on Feminist movement and leadership must call for investment in gender gap available at https://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AC-Brief_FeministMovementsandLeadership.pdf (last modified on November 10, 2020)

SDG was universally accepted by a total of 193 countries at the United Nations Conference in 2015. A major part of a new sustainable development agenda includes 169 targets covering aspects of eradication of poverty, mitigating hunger and ensure prosperity of the people around the globe. These specific 17 goals of sustainable development have a time-bound agenda to be achieved by the end of 2030. SDG are the translated version of MDG to establish a framework of development and co-operation around the world.

The MDG though launched in 2000 to tackle developmental issues could not meet the needs of the people in its entirety, yet it made significant improvement in global poverty rate which decreased in 15 years, HIV AIDS rate of person being infected went down to the rate of 40%, and over one billion people got access to clean drinking water facility. In order to successfully tackle the issues related to development, the 17 SDG's were established. Several incentive measures were taken by the world community for the successful implementation of SDG which are to be discussed hereunder:-

- I. The role of government is primordial for the successful implementation of SDG. As per the report of UNIDO, Industrialisation and manufacturing process have taken up the work of achieving SDG of lowering poverty levels and betterment of income distribution among the people and lessening the divide between rich-poor in developing countries, where MVA has outpaced the GDP growth by 25%.
- II. To represent voluntary national reviews of SDG implementation, 43 UN member nations have participated in the UN High level political forum on Sustainable Development.
- III. To provide equitable resources for the development of the nation

During the Covid-19 crisis, women has played a pivotal role in the world community, be it as a health professional or acted as a frontline leader. The risk factors women faced during the Covid-19 pandemic include the following:-

- I. Women tend to play a disproportionate role to the disease response. Their part as a health professional like doctors nurses or even as community volunteers providing relief to the people suffering from the deadly virus places them at an increased risk of infection.
- II. Women in labour force have been hit hard by the economic fallout. They have worked disproportionately in insecure labour force. Lockdown has prevented them from meeting the basic amenities of their families.

- III. During the covid-19 pandemic, gender based violence on women have increased abnormally. The rate of domestic violence and sexual assault against women have risen to a higher rate as the households are placed under strain in countries especially, middle-east, Africa and India.
- IV. The health services are overstretched; as a result women and girls are at risk. They tend to suffer the highest amount of discrepancies. Essential health care services related to women have been diverted from pre-natal and post-natal health care to sexual and reproductive health care facilities.

The women and children especially girl child are required to have an effective, equivalent voice during any crisis. The gender responsive approach³⁸ on SDG has been taken as a vital step in promoting the rights and privileges of women around the globe.

Despite establishment of appropriate laws on protection and equal representation of women on the international platform, full gender equality remains unreached. Women already spend about three times as many hours in unpaid domestic and care work as men. During lockdowns imposed under Covid-19 restriction there has been increasing risk of violence against women and girls. Cases of domestic violence³⁹ have increased by 30% in some countries. Women are on the front lines of fighting the corona virus. Women account for 70% of health and social workers 25% in national parliaments 36% in local government in 2020.

To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, UN has implemented SDG Goal 5 on gender equality. Women and girls represent half of the world's⁴⁰ population and therefore also half of its potential. But, today gender inequality persists everywhere and stagnates social progress. Women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of political leadership.

Across the globe, women and girls perform a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic work. Inequalities faced by girls can begin right at birth and follow them all their lives. In some countries, girls are deprived of access to health care or proper nutrition, leading to a higher mortality rate.

³⁸ Women as frontiers of Covid 19 available at <https://youtu.be/X8TKIxNVbXc> (last visited on April 18, 2020)

³⁹ https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/E_Infographic_05.pdf (last visited on July 6, 2020)

⁴⁰ Hannah Richie and Max Roser, Gender Ratio. Available at <https://ourworldindata.org/gender-ratio/text/And/globally/20/202017/theaverage/live/longer/than/men> (last modified on April, 2, 2020)

International commitments to advance gender equality have brought about improvements in some areas: child marriage and In 2019, only 28% have engaged in managerial sectors worldwide and the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) have declined in recent years, and women's representation in the political arena is higher than ever before. But the promise of a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality, and where all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed, remains unfulfilled. In fact, that goal is probably even more distant than before, since women and girls are being hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic⁴¹.

Gender inequality has affected women in several manners. The disadvantages in education translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market. Women's and girls' empowerment is essential to expand economic growth and promote social development. There are numerous gender related challenges that the world needs to give focus on.

35 per cent of women between 15-49 years of age have experienced physical and/ or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. 1 in 3 girls aged 15-19 have experienced some form of female genital mutilation/cutting in the 30 countries in Africa⁴² and the Middle East, where the harmful practice is most common with a high risk of prolonged bleeding, infection (including HIV), childbirth complications, infertility and death. The COVID-19 lockdown further caused domestic violence to increase in many countries, showing the critical importance of social protection for women and girls.

The Spotlight Initiative, an EU/UN⁴³ partnership, is a global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Regardless of where you live in, gender equality is a fundamental human right. Advancing gender equality is critical to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and the well-being of girls and boys.

⁴¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women> (last visited on September 12, 2020)

⁴² An Overview of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa: Are the Women Beneficiaries or Victims? Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7536110> (last visited on February 3, 2021)

⁴³ EU Spotlight Initiative available at <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment> (last visited on September 5, 2020)

The **Istanbul Convention**⁴⁴ frames violence against women as both a cause and a consequence of the inequality between women and men that persists in society. It sets out a comprehensive set of legal obligations to prevent such violence, protect and support women victims and to ensure justice through more effective prosecution. The holistic approach it requires to this end also includes the need to place women victims at the centre of all measures taken and to ensure their empowerment.

The reports and recommendations emanating from its monitoring mechanism (GREVIO⁴⁵ – Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention) set out guidance to States Parties to the Istanbul Convention as to how to step up measures to improve the prevention and combating of all forms of violence against women. Its purposes perfectly align with targets 2 and 3 of SDG 5⁴⁶ on the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres and the elimination of all harmful practices⁴⁷, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings⁴⁸ is a ground-breaking and comprehensive instrument which is of relevance notably to achieving target 5.2 of Goal 5, target 8.7 of Goal 8 and target 16.2 of Goal 16. While building on existing international instruments, the convention goes beyond the minimum standards agreed upon in them and strengthens the protection afforded to victims.

The convention has a comprehensive scope of application, encompassing all forms of trafficking and taking in all persons who are victims of trafficking (women, men or children). The convention makes particular reference to children's vulnerability in trafficking and requires States to take special account of their need for special protection and assistance.

The convention is not restricted to Council of Europe member States; non-members States and the European Union also have the possibility of becoming Party to it. The implementation of

⁴⁴ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home> (last visited on September 18, 2020)

⁴⁵ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio> (last visited on September 10. 2020)

⁴⁶<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046e60a> (last visited on September 19. 2020)

⁴⁷<http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680464e9f> (last visited on November 7, 2020)

⁴⁸ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/19> (last visited on December 2, 2020)

the Anti-Trafficking Convention by the State Parties is monitored by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the Committee of the Parties.

UNDP's role in Sudan, India and African countries on SDG Goal 5

UNDP has been entrusted with the work of implementing SDG goals in 170 countries and territories. It has supported countries to tackle with complex challenges and achieve the sustainable development through SDG integration. The SDG 2030 agenda aims to benefit the entire people, planet and prosperity. UNDP is helping countries to accelerate the progress in economic, social and humanitarian aspect through integration of SDG.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has formulated an annual report on Gender Equality strategy (2018-2021)⁴⁹ in the year 2019. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a massive spike in gender related violence. 92% of women workers are employed informally with limited social protection. The 2019 UNDP Human Development Report stated that the world community has a major gender gap for which the progress on SDG goal 5 has been slow.

The UNDP has worked in 26 countries to ensure that 1.7 million women are benefitted from and improvised livelihood after the post pandemic scenario. 80 countries are estimated to tackle gender based violence through the EU-UN Spotlight⁵⁰ Initiative. Women are contributing to the energy efficiency, as stated by the UNDP women of nearly 2000 poor household in Sierra Leone⁵¹ are using clean energy cook stove which has reduced their time spent in cooking, and health risk. 20 countries are supporting UNDPs gender responsive social protection including creation of national social institutions and policies that integrate gender equality.

Women's rights movement including MeToo⁵² demonstration has accelerated the progress on gender equality. In 2019 UNDP supported 17 countries to integrate gender equality into their nationally determined contribution process. It ensured 48 percent of registered voters in 39

⁴⁹ UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021 available at <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/undp-gender-equality-strategy-2018-2021.html> (last visited on December 9, 2020)

⁵⁰ EU, UN "SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE" INSPIRES URGENCY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GIRLS, RELIEFWEB AVAILABLE AT [HTTPS://RELIEFWEB.INT/REPORT/ZIMBABWE/EU-UN-SPOTLIGHT-INITIATIVE-INSPIRES-URGENCY-END-VIOLENCE-AGAINST-WOMEN-GIRLS](https://RELIEFWEB.INT/REPORT/ZIMBABWE/EU-UN-SPOTLIGHT-INITIATIVE-INSPIRES-URGENCY-END-VIOLENCE-AGAINST-WOMEN-GIRLS) (LAST MODIFIED ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2020)

⁵¹ Poverty Measurement In A Post- Conflict Scenario: Evidence From The Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey 2003/2004 available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/poverty/AbujaWS-SierraLeone.pdf> (last visited on September 14, 2020)

⁵² <https://news.un.org/en/audio/2019/02/1033692> (last modified on September 19, 2020)

countries under UNDP electoral assistance are women. It had assisted countries to implement national policy framework to remove obstacles in the path of women empowerment.

The global programme has been initiated by UNDP on strengthening rule of law and human rights to adopt non-discriminatory laws, promote women's⁵³ access to justice and address sexual and gender based violence to nearly 40 conflicts and crisis affected countries.

The Year 1,000,000 Women in Crisis⁵⁴ initiative aims to economically empower 1 million women in 24 countries.

Flagship programmes on promoting gender equality in the year 2019 include the following:-

- I. Human Development Report, 2019 – Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today, inequalities in human development in the 21st century
- II. Gender Social Norms Index
- III. Gender Justice and Equality before the Law in the Arab States Region
- IV. Parliamentary Handbook on the women, peace and security agenda under UN Security Resolution 1325
- V. Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights

Many African countries especially Zambia⁵⁵ has been affected the most. It had recently faced drought, flood and intense climate risk which have made the life of female farmers in the field miserable. The maize and groundnut farm production has been destroyed due to heavy flood; so many women are forced to find an alternative to earn money. The rural families in Zambia are unable to obtain loan from the bank due to their poor condition and having no land title to be placed as collateral. They are at a high risk of climate⁵⁶ adversity. The age-old customs prove the vulnerability of women. The UNDP in coalition with UN involving the FAO and World Food Programme alongwith the Ministry of Agriculture has been helping small-scale

⁵³<http://www.unwomen.org//media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/unwomen-evaluation-handbook-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1401> SDG News from Around the World • COP23: UN chief urges more ambition, leadership and partnerships for the climate change: via UN News Centre, Link: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58090#.Wg5wDTvhXIU>

⁵⁴ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/2/the-indian-labour-market-a-gender-perspective> PDF Access Link: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/>

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ COP23: UN chief urges more ambition, leadership and partnerships for the climate change: via UN News Centre, Link: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58090#.Wg5wDTvhXIU> (last visited on December7, 2020)

female farmers to transform their farming into a drought resistance source of income i.e. goat rearing.

The Green Climate⁵⁷ Fund Gender and social specialist, Songowayo Zyambo stated that all of US\$7.3 billion projects are committed to provide gender equality and women empowerment to the developing countries. Now, 8000 farmers, mostly women are trained in animal husbandry and goat rearing. Each farmer is given 5 goats, and tools to prevent disease, build up of sheds and tackle breeding management. Not only do the women⁵⁸ sell goats to put food on their table, but they are also able to use the goat manure as fertilizer in their gardens. This is allowing them to grow vitamin-rich vegetables in abundance, provide their children with healthier meals and valuable sources of protein from the goat meat and milk, and improve climate-resilience, nature-friendly farming practices. The SCRALA project provides small-scale farmers with goats to give them an alternative source of income in case their crops fail.

Goat farming in Zambia is set to grow in importance with huge demand from Saudi Arabia, which now wants to import as many as one million animals a year. Zambia only has about four million goats being reared largely by small-scale operators — not nearly enough to meet the new demand. In the capital Lusaka, goats sell for between US\$25 and US\$30 depending on their size and breed. Many newly energized women farmers are looking to expand their herds to take advantage of a potential surge in demand.

Through UNDP's Strengthening Livelihoods Security for Peace and Recovery in Darfur Project, internally displaced women learned leatherwork, building on local practices to create practical, high-quality and lucrative in-demand products such as wallets, baskets, shoes, bags and decorative items.

Violence against women and girls has skyrocketed as the social, mental and economic toll of the months-long lockdown⁵⁹ has taken hold. "We have no time to waste — preventing and addressing gender-based violence must be effectively integrated into our COVID-19 efforts," said Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS.

⁵⁷ Goats bring stability to women farmers in Zambia available at <https://undp.medium.com/goats-bring-stability-and-income-to-female-farmers-in-zambia-981c80a6a025> (last visited on December 12, 2020)

⁵⁸ SDG News from Around the World available at <http://www.unwomen.org//media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/unwomen-evaluation-handbook-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1401> (last visited on December 14, 2020)

⁵⁹ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fgwh.2020.00004/full> (last modified on November 29, 2020)

Nearly 243 million women have been abused by the spouse or partners during the last 12 months of the pandemic period. In France and Cyprus⁶⁰, reported cases have increased by 30 percent since March. Even in Singapore, a country that got a relatively quick grip on the corona virus, with fewer than 60,000 cases and 28 deaths, reported violence is up 33 percent.

The upsurge is straining even the best healthcare systems, and domestic violence shelters are reaching capacity. The challenges are compounded by normal resources being diverted to the COVID-19 response. The UN's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence⁶¹, from 25 November to 10 December, will take place under the theme: "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, and Collect!" It will draw attention to the extent of a too often hidden issue, and suggest ways governments and communities can make effective action a key part of their COVID-19 response plans.

UNDP⁶² is urging policies that commit to long-term funding to support survivors and police and justice systems. We are working with more than 80 countries to prevent and respond to the rising rates of violence against women and girls. This includes ensuring that survivors' needs are met and that women participate in the process to build forward better, with their concerns, expertise and opinions incorporated into all levels of the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Malawi's successful response included initiatives to empower women financially. They distributed cash transfers, fiscal relief, skills training and business stimulus packages. Lebanon is taking a similar route, integrating GBV⁶³ prevention within cash-for-work programmes. In Mexico UNDP, in collaboration with UN Women, is establishing phone and online platforms to support vulnerable women in LUNAS centres, which are safe spaces where women can receive a monthly allowance, and, where appropriate, get away from their aggressor.

In Botswana⁶⁴, wider community efforts are having great success. Tribal chiefs, school teachers, farmers and nurses in the country are raising awareness and advising the government on their

⁶⁰ Editorial, Lockdown around the world bring rise in domestic violence, The Guardian March 28, 2020 available at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence> (last modified on November 12, 2020)

⁶¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism>

⁶² UN Women: Ending violence against women available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women> (last modified on September 30, 2020)

⁶³ UNHCR Lebanon, evaluation of UNHCR prevention and response to SGBV in the refugee population of Lebanon, available at <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/5c23c2ad4.pdf> (last modified on October 12, 2020)

⁶⁴Shadow pandemic available at <https://undp.medium.com/covid-19s-shadow-pandemic-c137f0ffb46b>

villages' challenges and needs.

UNDP and UN Women have launched the **COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker**⁶⁵. It includes more than 2,500 measures in 206 countries that directly address women's economic and social security, along with measures to address gender-based violence. So far it shows that while many countries are prioritizing women's needs in their COVID-19 efforts, most are not doing enough and about 20 percent of countries are doing nothing at all.

UNDP Gender Team Acting Director Raquel Lagunas stated that most countries' gender-responsive COVID-19 efforts are focused on addressing violence against women and girls. Governments must step up and treat gender-based violence response services as essential services and integrate them into their national recovery plans, scale up comprehensive programmes and policies, and boost women's active participation and leadership.

⁶⁵ <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker> (last modified on October 29, 2020)