

5
GENDER
EQUALITY

KEY ASKS

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SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

SDG 5 aims to level the world's playing field for women and girls by 2030 with dedicated attention to addressing all forms of gender discrimination across Goal areas. This includes eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, ending harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), and restoring women's and girls' control over their own bodies through universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. SDG 5 also aims to correct socio-economic imbalances and inequalities by giving due value to unpaid care and domestic work – which is borne predominantly by women and girls – through necessary public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, and by promoting shared responsibility within the household. Finally, SDG 5 promotes the empowerment of women and girls by expanding access to and use of information and communications technology for education, employability, income-generation, and civic participation. UNICEF encourages governments to prioritize adolescent girls' issues, empowering them with the education and skills required to realize their full potential and access opportunities in the 21st century economy; while simultaneously also reducing the likelihood of child marriage, unwanted pregnancy, and HIV infection.

The onset and ongoing crisis of the global COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced gender inequalities and exacerbated inequities, especially for the most vulnerable children. Widespread unemployment and economic insecurity, added to significant service disruptions related to maternal health, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, and education, have jeopardized the lives and well-being of millions of women and girls, and poor women and their families – including female-headed households and single mothers, and the vast numbers engaged in informal employment – are at the extreme ends of suffering. Adolescent girls face higher risks of violence, child marriage and dropping out of school, even after schools reopen, due to underlying discriminatory gender norms. An estimated 10 million more child marriages and 2 million more cases of FGM are expected to occur over the next decade due to disruptions in programmes to end these practices. Childcare and school closures as well as the growing care needs of older people and the sick have exponentially increased the burden of unpaid care work borne by women and pushed them out of the workforce at higher rates than men.

There has been a surge in reports of gender-based violence (GBV) since the start of the pandemic. The COVID context has increased risk factors that drive the regularity, intensity, and frequency of violence against children and women. Quarantine and restriction measures have removed exit options for women and children in homes that are not safe, increasing their risk of emotional, physical, and sexual violence. Recent estimates show that for every three months that the COVID-19 lockdown measures continue globally, an additional 15 million cases of GBV are expected.



KEY ASKS

1. **Give adolescent girls all the opportunities they deserve as they mature to adulthood.** Address the specific and interconnected challenges, as well as harmful gender norms and stereotypes faced by adolescent girls across outcomes, that limit their opportunities as they grow into adults. UNICEF's targeted priorities for adolescent girls include:
 - Promoting nutrition, pregnancy care, and prevention of HIV/AIDS and human papilloma virus (HPV);
 - Advancing secondary education, learning and skills, including STEM;
 - Preventing and responding to child marriage and early unions;
 - Preventing and responding to GBV in emergencies;
 - Facilitating accessible and dignified menstrual hygiene management (MHM).
2. **Support women's economic empowerment and redistribution of care responsibilities through investments in family-friendly policies across workplaces.** Promote family-friendly policies for all caregivers working in the formal and informal

sectors, across both private and public systems. This is particularly important for women in vulnerable situations and low-income families, where children may be most at risk of being deprived of basic rights and services. This includes the following complementary elements:

- Establishing policies of parental leave, infrastructure facilities, quality childcare and child benefits.
- Promoting equal sharing of childcare responsibilities among female and male caregivers in the household.

3. Address the gender data gap through timely collection and use of gender-disaggregated data. Build systems and improve capacities for effective gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data collection, analysis, and use, to inform and support leadership, commitment to and accountability for gender equality goals. The following SDG targets are most closely related to UNICEF's core gender equality priorities:

Target 5.1	End all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere.
Target 5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
Target 5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
Target 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.
Target 5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
Target 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.



MONITOR -- THE IMPORTANCE OF DISAGGREGATED DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USE

Addressing inequities in gender outcomes and access to adolescent girls' services requires investment in the timely collection, analysis, and use of disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data (e.g., by gender, age, education, wealth quintile, migrant status, ethnicity, geographic area, disability status, etc.). This supports identification of marginalized groups, barriers and emerging issues, and possible limitations of programming, and offers opportunities to adjust programmes to ensure they are fit for purpose. To enable effective use of such data, adequate systems and capacities are required that allow for systematic monitoring and that encourage greater accountability. Good data collection systems allow governments to consistently identify and address bottlenecks that limit the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and affordability of quality adolescent girls' interventions. Such systems help to ensure evidence-based programmatic decisions and course correction.

The following are SDG indicators that are most closely related to UNICEF's priorities focused on adolescent girls:

5.2	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and over subjected to physical, sexual, or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the last 12 months, by form of violence and by age group.
5.2	5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, in the last 12 months, by age group and place of occurrence.
5.3	5.3.1 Percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.
5.3	5.3.2 Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM/C, by age group.



INVEST -- SOCIAL SPENDING AND PROGRESS ON RESULTS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

The economic return on investing in girls and women is high and drives a diversity of positive social and economic development outcomes. National budgets need to explicitly account for gender equality and gender action plans must be budgeted and resourced adequately. Improved reporting on expenditures and programmes that have direct and indirect impacts on increasing gender equality should be pursued. Further, strengthened monitoring and reporting on gender targets will provide the data and evidence required to prove return on investment and continue resource mobilization and allocation in future financial cycles.

Both the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) recognize the link between gender-responsive child and youth-focused investments and growth. UNICEF works to support data and evidence generation for better and greater public investment in children, and encourages Governments to:

- **Increase visibility and coherence of investments on women and girl-focused SDG priorities that are of a cross-cutting nature**, and which sit less easily within traditional sectoral budgets. Interventions in areas like child protection, gender equality, adolescent development, nutrition, and early childhood development cut across sectors and are not always classified under sectoral budgets, which can result in gaps, duplication, poor coordination, or omission.
- **Adopt principles of results-based reporting to spending on women and girls, with a focus on equity and effectiveness**, including gender equality. Examples include tracking of spending that explicitly addresses geographic disparities of services for children and adolescents (quality and access) and inequities among different population groups in access to public social services, or other matters.



ACTIVATE -- AWARENESS-BUILDING AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH – BOTH GIRLS AND BOYS

Inclusion of children, adolescents, and youth – girls and boys – is fundamental to achieving key economic and social objectives, including a competitive labour force, sustained economic growth, improved governance, and vibrant civil societies. Adolescent girls should be included as agents of change who have the potential to jumpstart economic growth and spur the innovation needed for a sustainable future. Building a more inclusive digital world will provide new opportunities for the economic empowerment of young women and can help bridge gender gaps. It is critical to ensure consultations with child and youth groups have equal representation of female and male voices. At the same time, engaging adolescents, particularly girls, in conceptualizing and developing innovative, technology-based solutions for social impact has produced impactful programmatic results. UNICEF works to support the meaningful participation of children, adolescents, and youth, and encourages Governments to:

- **Actively involve children, adolescents, and youth – both girls and boys - in local and national planning processes in development and humanitarian contexts** through consultation and other participatory means, and as part of ongoing efforts to make children, adolescents, and youth aware of key issues, inspire their positive action and expand the space for their participation in accountability mechanisms and activities. This should be part of a continuum to engage children, adolescents, and youth regularly, meaningfully, and consistently as agents of change to influence behaviours and social norms including gender stereotypes amongst themselves, their households, and their communities. It goes beyond engagement just for the purposes of reporting periods, but rather systematizing the engagement of young people in a variety of ways and across media and communications channels, including digital platforms (including U-Report), participatory theatre, intergenerational community dialogues, community and children's radio, participatory video, school clubs, TV Edutainment, and child-participatory research.
- **Establish institutionalized mechanisms for promoting participation and implementing recommendations from children and adolescents – both girls and boys** by ensuring that there is a responsive audience, dedicated budgets, accountability mechanisms and feedback loops.
- **Provide spaces for children, adolescents, and youth – both girls and boys - to learn about, discuss and act on the SDGs, including gender equality.** UNICEF can support this effort through our existing work in this space and in creating child-friendly education and entertainment materials through our foundational partnerships on the [World's Largest Lesson](#). [UNICEF's Youth Activate Talk Methodology](#) is also a platform for children to express their ideas on the SDGs through a variety of mediums.