



A Gendered Look
into the
High Level
Political Forum
2019

Authored by: Galin Dechoian
Edited by: Devan Zingler



Introduction:

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the core United Nations platform on Sustainable Development. It is the mechanism which follows up on UN Member States' implementation of the 2030 Agenda and seeks to hold governments accountable by encouraging them to submit national reviews on their progress toward the 2030 Agenda. Each year, the HLPF focuses on a different theme and reviews a different set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This year's theme was "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality". The following set of goals were reviewed:

- [Goal 4](#): Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- [Goal 8](#): Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- [Goal 10](#): Reduce inequality within and among countries
- [Goal 13](#): Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- [Goal 16](#): Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- [Goal 17](#): Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

As the HLPF adopts inter-governmentally negotiated political declarations, this report analyzes each of the 6 goals through a gendered lens and emphasizes the importance of taking a gendered approach in implementing each of the goals. Additionally, this publication focuses on how each goal impacts women and girls and how their involvement makes a global difference. Each goal is explored through a gendered analysis, backed up by examples of good practices from around the globe. These case studies demonstrate innovative and gender-sensitive practices that governments have implemented in their efforts toward the 2030 Agenda.

The purpose of this report is to present how women and girls can have an effective impact on societies and governments when they are given a chance to take part in global discussions that may affect change. More importantly, this publication emphasizes how women and girls play a significant role in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goals and Targets

Overview

According to the report of the Secretary General, “many developing countries still lack basic infrastructure and facilities to provide effective learning opportunities and environment”. Sustainable Development Goal 4 focuses on ensuring inclusive and quality education for all, and promotes lifelong learning opportunities. “Sub-Saharan Africa ranks the lowest on the list, where less than half of the schools have access to electricity, computers and even drinking water”. Consequently, Sub-Saharan Africa faces the biggest challenge in this regard. However, there are still many people in the world who do not have access to basic education. Education has a proven impact on character development and the well-being of children and adults. Moreover, quality primary education needs to be free and accessible for both girls and boys.

“In 2015, an estimated 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age worldwide – more than 50 per cent – were not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. Of these, about two thirds were attending school but were not learning in the classroom, or dropped out of school”. These issues are still relevant today. Globally, there has been little progress in the percentage of primary school teachers who are trained: “It has been stagnating at about 85 per cent since 2015. The proportion is lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (64 per cent)”. A substantial increase of qualified and trained teachers is needed, as well as an expansion of the number of scholarships available to students globally, especially in less developed countries. Consequently, ensuring everyone has equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education is crucial in achieving the 2030 Agenda.¹

Benefits of Integrating a Gender Lens into SDG 4:

- Every additional year of schooling for a girl increases her future earnings by 10 to 20 percent.²
- Hiring and training more women teachers would provide new and different role models for girls. Teachers may act as their advocates by presenting the girls’ perspectives and needs.³

¹ Report of the Secretary General <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

² World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation>

³ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/37133393.pdf>

- In a region where girls receive seven or more years of education, the number of child marriages and child mothers are reduced.⁴
- Girls who complete basic education are three times less likely to contract HIV.⁵
- A child born to a literate mother is 50% more likely to survive past the age of 5. Every extra year of education reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5 to 10 per cent.⁶

Case Studies and Best Practices

Philippines: For quality education: the legal framework for institutionalizing the Alternative Learning System, a program that allows disadvantaged adults to finish primary and secondary education, has been set. The Department of Education, working with the private sector, has been reaching out to what they call the last mile, which includes out-of-school youth and other vulnerable groups, to deliver education services.

Mauritania: Targeted programs aimed at increasing primary, inclusive and adapted educational provision, giving new opportunities to out-of-school children and children in disadvantaged areas have been put in place.

Turkey: Turkey has spent more than 37 billion USD for the well-being of 3.6 million Syrians in Turkey to date. They can have the same access to public services as Turkish citizens, especially for education, healthcare and humanitarian needs.

Conclusion

Goal 4 ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. This goal plays a crucial role in achieving a better and more equal future. Eliminating gender disparities and ensuring equal access to all levels of education for boys, girls and adults takes us a step closer to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The participation of youth in both formal and informal educational training is extremely important to build a more developed and equal future. Moreover, it is just as important to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability- and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

⁴ United Nations Population Fund <https://www.unfpa.org/child-marriage>

⁵ Global Campaign for Education <http://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/82-83-2010.pdf>

⁶ United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization
<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/globalpartners-key-messages.pdf>

Goal 8: Promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goals and Targets

Overview

One of the biggest challenges the world still faces today is the gender pay gap. More progress is needed in this regard. According to the report of the Secretary General, “Data from 45 countries suggest that gender inequality in earnings is still pervasive: in 89 per cent of these countries, the hourly wages of men are, on average, higher than those of women, with a median pay gap of 12.5 per cent.” Moreover, we need to make sure that there is equal pay for equal value.

While labor productivity grew at the global level in 2017 - the fastest growth registered since 2010 - achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification and innovation is an important goal that needs more focus and attention.⁷ This can be done by strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to insurance and financial services for all.

The protection of labor rights is also crucial in achieving the 2030 agenda; we need to promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers and unpaid care workers. Additionally, there needs to be an increase in national compliance with labor rights based on International Labor Organization Resolutions and national legislation by sex and migrant status.⁸

Benefits of Integrating a Gender Lens into SDG 8

- Women’s economic empowerment is central to realizing women’s rights and gender equality.⁹
- Empowering women in the economy and closing gender gaps in the world of work are key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁰
- Women’s economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes. For example, increasing the female employment rates in Organization for Economic

⁷ Report of the Secretary-General <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018>

⁸ Report of the Secretary-General <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018>

⁹ UN Women <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

¹⁰ UN Secretary-General <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>

Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries to match that of Sweden could boost GDP by over USD 6 trillion.¹¹

- Women's economic equality is good for business. Companies greatly benefit from increasing employment and leadership opportunities for women, which increases organizational performance.¹²
- The integration of maternity protection as part of social and economic policy should be recognized in all regions because it is central to decent work and productivity for women.

¹¹ International Monetary Fund

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/05/31/pp053118pursuing-womens-economic-employment>

¹² UN Secretary-General <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>

Case Studies and Best Practices

New Zealand: The government has put in place a range of measures, including the 2017 Families Package, which has boosted the incomes of low income families.

Rwanda: National Strategy for Transformation is working to create 1.5 million decent and productive jobs by 2024 supported by the National Employment Programme.

Pakistan: A national poverty alleviation program, *Ehsaas (Compassion)*, was launched in 2019 to expand social protection, and support human capital development throughout the country.

Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan is investing in innovation initiatives and innovative ideas within the spectrum of SDG accelerators. In 2018 alone, the national innovation contest attracted 220 proposals from young Azerbaijani entrepreneurs, researchers and scientists focused on solutions to some of the pressing challenges towards the implementation of the SDGs.

Conclusion

Goal 8 focuses on the promotion of inclusive and sustainable growth, as well as productive employment for all. Economic development and gender equality go hand-in-hand; therefore, more steps need to be taken to empower women's economic development and growth. One solution for this might be making more investments in women-owned initiatives and connecting more women entrepreneurs to markets. Additionally, we must empower more women to take part in the global market, which will cause the global economy to develop and prosper.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goals and Targets

Overview

It is crucial to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, economic or other status. In order to achieve the 2030 Agenda we must encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment to states where the need is greatest, particularly in the least developed countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes. According to the report of the Secretary General, “income inequality continues to rise in many parts of the world, even as the bottom 40 percent of the population in many countries has experienced positive growth rates.” Moreover, inequality within and among nations continues to be a significant concern despite progress and efforts at narrowing disparities of opportunity and income.

Benefits of Integrating a Gender lens to SDG 10:

- The median female share of the global workforce is 45.4 percent. Women’s formal and informal labor can transform a community from a relatively autonomous society to a participant in the national economy.¹³
- Women’s small businesses in rural developing communities not only can be an extended family’s lifeline but also can form a networked economic foundation for future generations.¹⁴
- Women migrant workers were responsible for sending half of the estimated \$601 billion in remittances worldwide in 2016 which shows that hiring and employing women is good for worldwide economic development.¹⁵
- Women’s economic empowerment includes women’s ability to participate equally in existing markets and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions.¹⁶

Case Studies and Best Practices:

Sierra Leone: The government is funding STEM education for girls and supported the launch of the First Lady’s “Hands-Off Our Girls” campaign to end child marriage.

¹³ Global Volunteers <https://globalvolunteers.org/global-role-of-women/>

¹⁴ Global Volunteers <https://globalvolunteers.org/global-role-of-women/>

¹⁵ Western Union

<http://ir.westernunion.com/news/archived-press-releases/press-release-details/2016/Western-Union-Pays-Tribute-to-Global-Women-Work-Force-as-World-Economic-Change-Agents-and-Calls-for-Greater-Recognition-and-Integration/default.aspx>

¹⁶ UN Women <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

Kuwait: Kuwait has implemented all-inclusive social protection programmes. It has also devised capacity development programmes ensuring vulnerable groups are being empowered and given the means to be autonomous and economically productive.

Azerbaijan: The Azerbaijani government established the “Sustainable and Operative Social Protection Agency” to assure equal access for all to public and social services.

Conclusion

Goal 10 is about reducing inequality within and among countries and focuses on encouraging official development assistance and financial flows. We must ensure women’s equal participation in existing markets, as well as improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets, and strengthen the implementation of such regulations. These are fundamental steps that need to be taken in order to achieve the 2030 agenda.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goals and Targets

Overview

Climate change has been escalating at rates much faster than projected. SDG 13 focuses on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impact. “Global climate finance flows increased by 17 percent in the period 2015–2016 compared with the period 2013–2014”.¹⁷ However, while positive steps are being taken towards financing the climate crisis, access to strengthened capacities need to be expanded at a much faster rate. As indicated by SDG 1, which focuses on eliminating global poverty, “during the period 1998–2017, direct economic losses from disasters were estimated at almost \$3 trillion. Climate-related and geophysical disasters claimed an estimated 1.3 million lives”. Furthermore, plans and accelerated actions are needed on mitigation, preparedness and prevention. States need to integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies and to promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related management in least developed countries, including focusing on women, youth and marginalized communities. We must strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries, which include improving education, and raising awareness on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

Benefits of Integrating a Gender Lens to SDG 13:

- Communities do better in resilience and capacity building strategies when women are involved in planning. Women are usually the first responders in community responses to natural disasters, leaders in disaster risk-reduction and contribute to post recovery by addressing the early recovery needs of their families and strengthening community building.¹⁸
- Indigenous women have experienced the impact of climate change and have been forerunners and leaders in environmental conservation. Their knowledge and expertise contribute greatly to building resilience to climate impacts and to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁹

¹⁷ Secretary General report

¹⁸ UN Women

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/5/news-promoting-womens-leadership-in-disaster-risk-reduction-and-resilience>

¹⁹ UN Climate Change <https://unfccc.int/news/5-reasons-why-climate-action-needs-women>

- The traditional skills and knowledge that women have about natural resource management in areas such as innovation, waste and energy are effective tools in climate action strategies.²⁰
- It is important for women working in agriculture to be involved with climate change mitigation. Once engaged, these women can incorporate Climate-Smart Agricultural (CSA) practices and sustainable farming into their daily lives, thus increasing food security for themselves and their families.²¹

Best Practices and Case Studies:

South Africa: A carbon tax has been adopted, and significant investments are made in renewable energy, cleaner public transport, energy efficiency, waste management and land restoration initiatives.

Pakistan: Programmes such as Clean and Green Pakistan as well as Recharge Pakistan have been launched. These Nature Based Solutions for Ecosystem Restoration are leading examples of climate action among developing countries, with co-benefits to improve biodiversity and livelihood generation.

Liechtenstein: By consistently promoting solar energy, Liechtenstein has been the “solar world champion” since 2015 with the highest per-capita installed photovoltaic capacity.

Conclusion

Gender equality is critical in the fight against climate change. Environmental degradation represents a serious threat to achieving the SDGs. Moreover, women and girls need to feel as empowered as men and boys to safeguard the environment. States need to ensure investment and the implementation of a gender-sensitive approach to disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities. Women must be included in the creation of policies and strategies concerning environmental protection including disaster response. Along with strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards, the previously mentioned points are vital steps that we need to take in order to combat climate change and its impact.

²⁰ UN Climate Change <https://unfccc.int/news/5-reasons-why-climate-action-needs-women>

²¹ Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
<https://www.cgiar.org/news-events/news/gender-shapes-responses-climate-change-new-tools-measuring-rural-womens-empowerment/>

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goals and Targets

Overview

It is important to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, including ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture. Moreover, there needs to be advances in ending violence and promoting the rule of law because attacks and conflicts in civil societies are holding back the progress of development. According to the report of the Secretary General, “Various forms of violence against children persist. In 83 countries (mostly from developing regions) with recent data on the subject, nearly 8 in 10 children from 1 to 14 years of age were subjected to some form of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment at home”. This is an alarmingly high number that presents the violent and abusive environment that we live in. Additionally, we need to promote the rule of law at both national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all. There also needs to be a protection of fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. These steps can be achieved by enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

Benefits of Integrating a Gender Lens to SDG 16:

- Women influence peacebuilding processes so that they go beyond defining peace as the absence of violent conflict and focus on the principles of inclusion, good governance and justice. Women need to be present to discuss issues such as genocide, impunity and security if a just and enduring peace is to be built.²²
- Women’s centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in peacebuilding essential.²³

²² United Nations Population Fund

<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/3F71081FF391653DC1256C69003170E9-unicef-WomenWarPeace.pdf>

²³ https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Peacebuilding_Manual/Women%27s_Role_in_Peacebuilding

-
- Women's empowerment should be seen as inherent to the process of building peace. When women engage in peace building, they often challenge sexist beliefs along with other discriminating structures.²⁴

²⁴ https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Peacebuilding_Manual/Women%27s_Role_in_Peacebuilding

Best Practices and Case Studies:

Iraq: The government has established a high anti-corruption council, and made reforms of the financial management and service delivery systems.

Burkina Faso: The government established the High Council for Reconciliation and National Unity and the High Council for Social Dialogue to promote social cohesion and increased budget allocations for security and defense to effectively combat terrorism and violent extremism.

Conclusion

SDG 16 focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. States need to significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, and combat all forms of organized crime. They also need to reduce the number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention. The development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels is extremely important in achieving this goal to substantially reduce all forms of corruption and bribery.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Goals and Targets

Overview:

SDG 17 focuses on strengthening the means of implementation, including mobilizing additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources, as well as building on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development. According to the report of the Secretary-General, “Progress on some means of implementation targets is moving rapidly: personal remittances are at an all-time high, an increasing proportion of the global population has access to the Internet”. However, major challenges remain as there are ongoing trade tensions. “Enhanced international cooperation is needed to ensure that sufficient means of implementation exist to provide countries the opportunity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”. In order to achieve SDG 17, we need policy and institutional coherence, which involves adopting investment promotion regimes for the least developed countries, as well as encouraging effective public and civil society partnerships.

Benefits of Integrating a Gender Lens to SDG 17:

- The advancement of women is considered to be one of the key elements for social development as it plays a vital role in economic, social and political development. Therefore, the full participation of both women and men is critical for sustainable development.²⁵
- Unequal economic participation of men and women is the cause of opportunity inequality, power imbalance and income disparity that exist all over the world.²⁶
- Focusing on women’s economic empowerment is crucial in implementing cooperation and partnerships; women and girls must be at the center of gender-sensitive and equity-responsive policies and agendas to implement global partnerships and fulfill the SDGs.²⁷

²⁵ Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council
[https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/10-50143_\(e\)_desa_dialogues_ecosoc_achieving_gender_equality_women_empowerment.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/pdfs/10-50143_(e)_desa_dialogues_ecosoc_achieving_gender_equality_women_empowerment.pdf)

²⁶ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/49170475.pdf>

²⁷ Girls Globe
<https://www.girlsglobe.org/2015/11/27/sdg-17-the-significance-of-gender-equality-in-strengthening-global-partnerships/>

- It is important to increase women's political participation at all levels of decision making and make gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting the standard strategy in national government policy making.²⁸

Case Studies and Best Practices:

Timor-Leste: The government is saving the proceeds of its natural oil and gas resources for future generations through its sovereign wealth Petroleum Fund. Ensuring future withdrawals are invested strategically will help reduce dependence on oil.

Serbia: The Focus Group of the National Assembly of Serbia for the Development of Control Mechanisms for the Process of Implementation of the SDGs creates a legal framework and ensures budgeting for the SDGs. Through liaising with regional and international stakeholders, it is becoming central in promoting public advocacy of the SDGs.

Ghana: A national SDGs reporting platform has been launched to make disaggregated data available.

Conclusion:

It is important to revitalize global partnerships for sustainable development. In order to achieve SDG 17, there needs to be an average worldwide weighted tariff, in addition to debt services as a proportion of exports of goods and services. In the implementation of Goal 17 governments will have to address the unequal access to productive resources, the restriction of access to community-managed services and the prevalent provision of poor quality to ensure that they make far-reaching contributions to create enabling environments to address the underlying structures of inequality which are crucial to consider within the mandate and objective to strengthen and revitalize global partnerships.

²⁸ Women Deliver https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Good_Campaign_Brief_8_092016.pdf

Conclusion

Although the theme of 2019's High Level Political Forum was "empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", the world still has a long way to go to achieve equality. This report demonstrates how different countries are taking action towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, while acknowledging the progress the world still has to achieve. While there is a separate SDG for gender equality (SDG 5), a gender perspective and the principle of equality must be integrated into each Goal. It is extremely important for women and girls to be included in every aspect of this world-changing development.

In 2019-2020 the UN must include a gender perspective, gender equality and inclusiveness in their efforts to achieve the SDGs. 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which has been the most visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and girls everywhere. It was adopted by 189 governments committed to taking strategic action in 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment and the girl child.²⁹ While the global women's movement has developed and the status of women and girls has improved somewhat in the past 25 years, many obstacles remain.

In order to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action that governments signed almost 25 years ago, gender equality must be implemented in each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. As long as there are systematic barriers that hold women and girls back, they will continue to be undervalued and experience different forms of violence and discrimination both publicly and privately. Starting with the SDG Summit at the 74th United Nations General Assembly, Beijing+25 provides the world an opportunity to successfully move the needle on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development.

²⁹ Beijing Platform for Action
https://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf