



WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

According to the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), one of the organisms upon which **UN Women** – a UN entity specialising in the empowerment of women¹ - is centred, “gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys”.

Equality does not mean that men and women are the same, but that responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on the sex with which people are born. This implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both men and women are taken into consideration². To achieve equality, **empowerment processes are required, via which women can “take control and ownership of their lives”³.**

¹ More information about the UN and its specialised agencies: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/funds-programmes-specialized-agencies-and-others/index.html>

² UNESCO indicators of culture for development: Gender equality <https://es.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/digital-library/cdis/Iguldad%20de%20genero.pdf>

³ *Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership*, Background paper (United Nations, 2005), page 6.



THE RIGHT TO EXERCISE THE SAME RIGHTS

Achieving full equality between men and women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women are UN values. When the Organisation was created with the 1945 Charter in San Francisco, amongst its objectives it aimed to “reaffirm faith in the equal rights between men and women”. Later, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly affirmed that **everyone is entitled to all the fundamental rights “without distinction of any kind such as (...) sex”**.

Despite all international texts rejecting any form of gender discrimination, this has not been reflected in the reality of women who have suffered and continue to suffer from violations of their rights, just because they have been born female. The 1967 **Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** established that all acts of discrimination against women constitute an offence against human dignity, calling for States to take on measures to “**establish adequate legal protection for equal rights of men and women**”. Less than a year after it was passed, the elaboration of a **legally binding treaty on women’s rights** was proposed: **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, approved by the General Assembly in

1979. In the foreword, **despite the existence of multiple international and regional legal instruments that recognise gender equality, women still fail to enjoy the same rights as men**. The Convention establishes a series of principles that constitute the **reference framework of the specific requirements of the States to eliminate discrimination against women in political, social, economic and cultural settings**⁴.

Since then, there have been many engagements to achieve gender equality; particularly noteworthy is the **historical Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, approved in the **Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995**⁵. **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, with its nine targets**, constitutes the latest international engagement, from now to 2030, “**to achieve equality between genders and to empower all women and girls**”, thus building on the progress made from 2000 to 2015 with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3.



⁴ *Women’s Rights are Human Rights*, a publication by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 2014.

⁵ More information about the World Conferences on Women before and after Beijing - [Link](#)



SDG 5: HOW TO ELIMINATE OBSTACLES THAT HINDER GENDER EQUALITY

Between 2000 and 2015, MDG 3 bolstered international and national efforts to demonstrate **greater gender equality in three key settings for the development of society as a whole: (1) access to education; (2) decent work; and (3) participation in political life.**

(1) The number of girls without schooling fell by 52 million between 2000 and 2015, increasing the number of girls for every 100 boys from 92 to 97 at primary level, and from 91 to 97 at secondary level. However, **more than 60 million girls around the world continue to lack schooling**⁶.

(2) The proportion of women with paid employment is slowly increasing: from 35% in 1990 to 41% in 2015. However, women have a disadvantage in the labour market: globally, **they receive 24% less than men in similar positions**⁷.

(3) Since the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, the percentage of female politicians increased by 11% in 1995 to 22% in 2015. However, **only 16% of parliamentary leaders (heads of parliament) are women.**

For true equality to exist, Agenda 2030 incorporates the perspective of gender to all the SDG and not just goal 5. **The importance of SDG 5 is that at long last it proposes acting directly at the root of inequality: the obstacles that hinder equality by limiting the opportunities of women:**

- **Violence against women** (goal 5.2): in 2017 in Spain alone, 44 women were murdered by their partners.

1 in every 5 women with partners and girls were subject to physical or sexual violence by a partner or boyfriend. Source: SDG Report 2017.



- **Child marriage** (goal 5.3) continues to affect one in every four children under 18 years of age. **Teenage pregnancy** fell by 21% between 2000 and 2015⁸.

- The time women spend doing **unpaid domestic work and caring for others** (goal 5.4) is almost three times the time spent by men, reducing the capacity of women to partake in other activities (education or paid work).

⁶ *Gender and EFA 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO*

⁷ *Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*

⁸ *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017*



WHO CAN DO WHAT?

ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL



Goal 5.5 seeks to ensure the full and effective participation of women in political and public life.

A good example for United Nations Member States would be to start by ensuring true equality within the internal structure of the UN itself, as so far, for example, there has never been a female General Secretary.

ON A NATIONAL LEVEL



Goal 5.3 proposes eliminating **female genital mutilation (FGM)**, which continues to be a social norm in over 40 countries⁹. Each State must shift international condemnation to its internal regulations. In Spain this bodily injury offence is classified and punished in Articles 147-150 of the Penal Code.

ON A LOCAL LEVEL



The photo of this guide depicts Mrs Inocenta, one of the women that makes up Ixoqi' SA. Discover the work this social company does to empower women in Tecpán, Guatemala – [Video](#).

⁹ Adam Muñoz, M. D. *La Mutilación genital femenina y sus posibles soluciones desde la perspectiva del derecho internacional privado*. Córdoba, University of Córdoba, Publications Service: Andalusian Institute for Women, 2003, p.23.

AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?



“The biggest barrier between all nations, all classes, colours and creeds, is lack of tolerance and understanding...education is the answer”, Oodgeroo Noonuccal.

Infant and Primary Pupils

The collection of stories “On the side of girls” by Adela Turin, seeks to change the way society sees the family and social role of women. The best-known novel is **Candy Pink** (+5 years). The



Real Story of Bonobos Who Wore Spectacles (+5 years), and its illustrations are sure to be loved by Infant classes and the first years of Primary! For older children some of these stories can be acted out and the contents discussed. If you want to address domestic violence with Primary students, you will like [this video](#).

Secondary and Baccalaureate Students

Role-play! Divide class into groups of 5 to represent a family scenario (father/mother, son/daughter, grandmother, etc.) or an office setting (manager, secretary, etc.). Upon finishing, reflect upon their roles: Who did the house work? Are there more “male” and more “female” professions? Comment on this [video about stereotypes in the workplace](#).

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