

# TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION:

GENDER EQUALITY  
IN THE 2030 AGENDA  
FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT

The 2030 Agenda is clear: there can be no sustainable development without gender equality. *Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 agenda*, a global monitoring report by UN Women, asks: **How far have we come in turning this new development consensus into results for women and girls, and what is needed to bridge the remaining gaps between rhetoric and reality?**

New data analysis\* in the report puts a spotlight on gender-based discrimination across all 17 SDGs. The goal-by-goal review shows that gender inequalities—deeply rooted and present across all countries—are pervasive in each and every dimension of sustainable development. **See goal-by-goal summary below.**

Using micro-level data, the report shows how across countries, women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are often left behind and excluded from progress.

These groups of women and girls not only lack access to education and health, but also other key measures of well-being including access to clean water, fuel and housing. **See case studies summary below.**

Addressing these challenges requires dramatic advances in statistics, financing and policies for gender equality.

## THE NEED FOR ACTION

The report identifies four key areas for action:

1. Harnessing policy synergies: the demands for implementation are huge—there are 17 goals and gender equality matters for all of them. Integrated approaches to implementation are pivotal to harnessing these synergies.
2. Improving gender data, statistics and analysis to effectively monitor progress for women and girls across all goals and targets.
3. Prioritizing gender-responsive investments, policies and programmes to align action with the principles, values and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.
4. Strengthening accountability through gender-responsive processes and institutions to ensure an integrated approach to implementation, follow-up and review with gender equality at its core.

**See *Policy in Focus* summary below.**

\* NOTE: Data presented are from global databases and may not reflect the most up-to-date country level information. For the most up-to-date country level information we advise that you check with national level sources.

# FACT SHEET – EASTERN & SOUTH-EASTERN ASIA

*Gender-based discrimination—deeply rooted and present across all countries—threatens to undermine the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda in real and measurable ways:*

## 1 NO POVERTY

Globally, there are 122 women aged 25-34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men of the same age group.

In **Eastern and South-eastern Asia**, women are overall less likely to live in extreme poverty than men. The differences, however, are not statistically significant and vary by age. For example, among those aged 25-34, women are over-represented among the poor: for every 100 men aged 25-34 living in poverty in the region, there are 110 women. The number is even higher for the population aged 50-54: for every 100 men in this age group living in poverty, there are 121 women.

## 2 ZERO HUNGER

In nearly two thirds of countries, women are more likely than men to report food insecurity.

Across the **Eastern and South-eastern Asia** region, there are large variations in food insecurity prevalence among women. In **Cambodia**, for example, half of all women are food insecure, four percentage points higher than men. In the **Philippines**, 42% of women are food insecure, a figure slightly lower than for men, 46% of whom are food insecure.

## 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Globally, 303,000 women died from pregnancy-related causes in 2015. The rate of death is declining much too slowly to achieve Target 3.1.

**Eastern and South-eastern Asia** registered large declines in the MMR between 1990 and 2015, from 160 to 59 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births – a 63.1% drop over 25 years.

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

15 million girls of primary-school age will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school, compared to 10 million boys.

In **Timor-Leste**, women aged 15-49 are more likely than men to be illiterate, with illiteracy rates of 31% and 21%, respectively. The figure climbs to 54% for women in the poorest households; compared to 36% of men in the poorest households.

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY

**The 2030 Agenda promises to put an end to barriers that prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential. But significant challenges lie ahead:**

**5.1** In 18 countries across the world, 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.

**5.2** Globally, 1 in 5 women and girls under the age of 50 reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period.

The prevalence of intimate partner violence in **Eastern and South-eastern Asia** is lower than the global average, with 7.8% of women and girls aged 15-49 reporting having experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period. Rates appear to be decreasing in the **Philippines**, where the figure was 7% in 2013, down from 10% in 2008.

**5.3** 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.

In **Eastern and South-eastern Asia**, 15% of women aged 20-24 were first married or in a union before the age of 18, and 2% before the age of 15.

**5.4** Women do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work that men do.

In **Mongolia, Malaysia, and China**, women spend 20%, 19%, and 16% of their day on unpaid care and domestic work. This compares to 9%, 6%, and 6% for men in the same countries. In **Cambodia**, women do as much as 10 times the unpaid care and domestic work as men.

**5.5** Women hold just 23.7% of parliamentary seats globally, an increase of 10 percentage points compared to 2000 – but still way below parity. The average for the **Eastern and South-eastern Asia** region is slightly lower: women hold on average 20.2% of seats in national parliaments. **Timor-Leste** stands out as having the highest proportion of parliament seats held by women for the region, at 32%. The lowest female representation is in **Thailand**, where women hold just 5% of seats in national parliament.

**5.6** Based on data from 45 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, only 52% of women married or in a union freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use and health care.

In **Cambodia**, 76% of women married or in a union freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use and health care.

**5.a** Globally, women are just 13% of agricultural land holders.

**5.b** The benefits of internet and technology are accessible to men at a much higher rate than women, leaving women behind in Internet access and mobile phone ownership.

**Eastern and South-eastern Asia** has the largest gender gap: Only 28% of women had access to the Internet in 2017, compared to 42% of men.

**5.c** More than 100 countries have taken action to track budget allocations for gender equality.

## 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of the world's households without access to water on premises.

## 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Indoor air pollution from using combustible fuels for household energy caused 4.3 million deaths in 2012, with women and girls accounting for 6 out of every 10 of these.

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Globally, the labour force participation rate among prime working-age women (aged 25–54) stands at 63% compared to 94% among their male counterparts.

For the prime working age population (aged 25–54) in **Eastern and South-eastern Asia** in 2017, women's labour force participation rate was a full 19 percentage points lower than that of men: 77% compared to 96%. Notably, labour force participation rates decreased in the region for both women and men over a 20-year period 1997–2017.

## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Women represent 28.8% of researchers worldwide. Only about 1 in 5 countries have achieved gender parity in this area.

**Eastern and South-eastern Asia** outperforms the global average in this dimension, with 33% female representation among researchers. **Thailand** has the highest percentage of women in research positions worldwide, at 56%. **Japan**, where just 15% of researchers are women, ranks lowest in the region.

## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Up to 30% of income inequality is due to inequality within households, including between women and men. Women are also more likely than men to live below 50% of the median income.

Single-mother households are likely to fall below the 50% median income mark: In **South Korea**, 25.2% of single-mother households live below 50% of the median income, compared with 16% of women and 13% of men.

## 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

The global population is becoming more urban, with opportunities and risks for women and girls. The inaccessibility of clean energy sources, clean water, and improved sanitation in slum housing, for example, has adverse consequences on women's health.

In **Cambodia**, 61% of women and girls aged 15–49 live in slums, defined as meeting at least one criterion of the four listed: (1) Lack of access to improved water source, (2) Lack of access to improved sanitation facilities, (3) Lack of sufficient living area, (4) Lack of housing durability. The figure is 53% for both the **Philippines** and **Timor-Leste**.

## 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Investment in public transportation yields large benefits for women, who tend to rely on public transport more than men do.

## 13 CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change has a disproportionate impact on women and children, who are 14 times as likely as men to die during a disaster.

## 14 LIFE BELOW WATER

The contamination of freshwater and marine ecosystems negatively impacts women's and men's livelihoods, their health and the health of their children.

Occupational segregation looms large within fisheries and aquaculture in **Eastern and South-eastern Asia**: 10.4% of those working in fisheries and aquaculture are women. In **China**, 20% of director positions in the seafood industry are held by women; this figure is 8% for **Thailand** and just 2% for **Japan**.

## 15 LIFE ON LAND

Between 2010 and 2015, the world lost 3.3 million hectares of forest areas. Poor rural women depend on common pool resources and are especially affected by their depletion.

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

In times of conflict, rates of homicide and other forms of violent crime increase significantly. While men are more likely to be killed on the battlefield, women are disproportionately subjected during conflict to sexual violence and abducted, tortured and forced to leave their homes.

In **Timor-Leste**, 3.4% of women and girls aged 15-49 have been victims of sexual violence. 1.3% of women and girls in the country have been victims of sexual violence perpetrated by police or military personnel, representing one of the largest such figures worldwide, for the 47 countries examined.

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

In 2012, finances flowing out of developing countries were 2.5 times the amount of aid flowing in, and gender allocations paled in comparison.

## LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Leaving no one behind means the benefits of sustainable development reach everyone. Currently, across countries, it is those women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination who are often the furthest behind. For example, discrimination based on gender and disability combine to create disadvantage, as illustrated by the not in education or employment (NEET) rates for female youth in **Cambodia**. Gaps in the NEET rate are large there: for the population aged 15-24: 64% of females with disabilities are not in education or employment, compared to 27% of men with disabilities. In turn, NEET rates for females and males without disabilities hover around 7-10%.



Evidence from the **Eastern and South-eastern Asia** region indicates that wealth and early marriage rates compound to create large inequalities among women and girls in terms of secondary school completion rates. In **Indonesia**, where the average rate of secondary school completion for women aged 20-24 is 78%, the rate drops substantially, to 33%, for women in the poorest wealth quintile who were married before the age of 18. Over 90% of those in the richest wealth quintile complete secondary school. This simultaneous deprivation is also seen in **Timor-Leste**, where there is a 75% gap in rates of secondary school completion between women from the poorest households who were married before turning 18 and women from the richest households who were married after the age of 18.

## POLICY IN FOCUS

### Harnessing policy synergies

Investments in accessible, affordable and quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) can contribute to the achievement of several gender- and child-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda by, for instance, reducing the time women spend on unpaid care by shifting some of it out of the family (Target 5.4), enabling women to increase their access to employment (Target 8.5) and enhancing school readiness (Target 4.2). Yet inequalities within countries prevent women from the poorest households from accessing quality early childhood education and care. In the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, for example, children aged 3 to 5 in the richest households are nearly 14 times as likely to attend an early childhood education programme as children from the same age group in the poorest households.

### The need for global gender data availability

Gaps in gender data and the lack of trend data make it difficult to assess and monitor the direction and pace of progress for women and girls. The availability of data necessary for global monitoring of the gender-specific indicators is at a mere 26%. This figure is slightly lower for **Eastern and South-eastern Asia**, where 24% of the data necessary for monitoring the gender-specific indicators is available. Monitoring trends in gender-specific indicators in the region is even more challenging, with just 18% of the necessary data available. Unless gender is mainstreamed into national statistical strategies, gender data scarcity will persist.

### Prioritizing gender-responsive investments, policies and programmes

Prioritizing gender-responsive investments pays off. In South Africa, for instance, it is estimated that a gross annual investment of 3.2% of GDP in ECEC would not only result in universal coverage for all 0-5-year-old children, but also create 2.3 million new jobs, raising female employment by 10.1%.

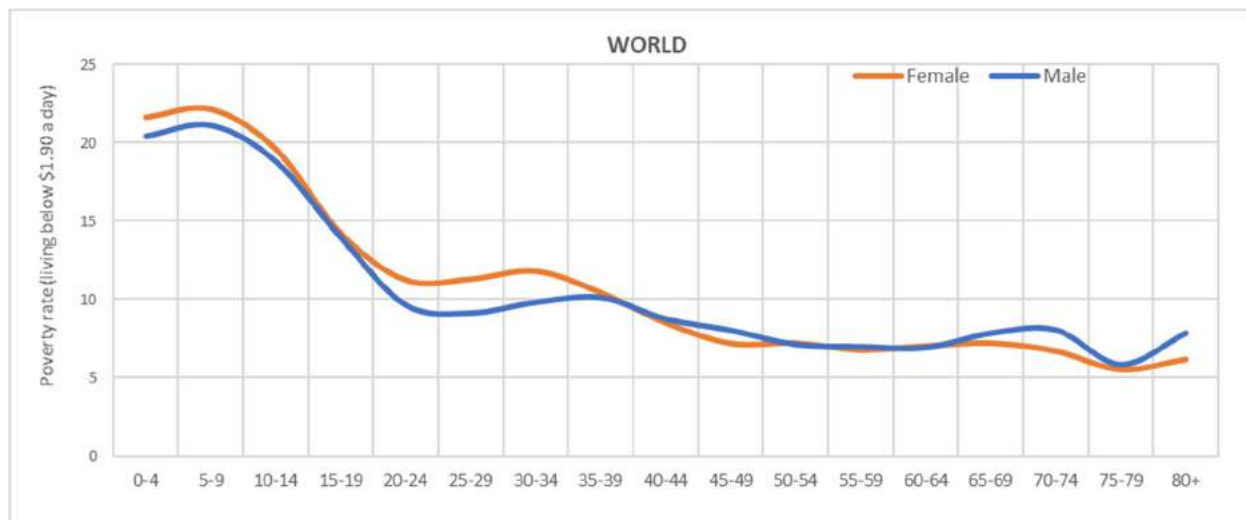
As a priority, action must be taken to eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG). Yet evidence from **Cambodia**, as well as other countries, shows that the intent of VAWG legislation to protect women from violence can be undermined by other laws, including family laws, when 'reconciliation' and 'family harmony' are prioritized at the expense of women's safety. All areas of family laws, including those related to divorce, custody, alimony and property, should therefore be reviewed to ensure that the safety of survivors is prioritized in situations of violence. Thus, it is essential to ensure VAWG legislation is comprehensive and enforced.

## APPENDIX

Note: The below represent a selection of illustrative examples for the Eastern and South-eastern Asia region. Country-specific data may be available; if you are interested in country-specific data, please contact us at [gender.data@unwomen.org](mailto:gender.data@unwomen.org) using the subject line “SDG Report”.

### 1 NO POVERTY

#### Proportion of people living in extreme poverty<sup>a</sup> by sex and age, 2009-2013<sup>b</sup>



Source: World Bank calculations using Global Micro Database 2017.

Notes:

a – Living below \$1.90 a day.

b – Data refer to the most recent available during the period specified for 89 developing countries.

### 2 ZERO HUNGER

#### Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity, by country and sex, 2014-2015

Country	% of females who are food insecure	% of males who are food insecure	Difference (f-m)
Philippines	42.43	45.85	-3.42
Japan	1.43	2.67	-1.24
China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	8.37	9.21	-0.84
China	3.9	4.39	-0.49
Malaysia	16.41	16.59	-0.18

<b>Myanmar</b>	12.72	12.87	-0.15
<b>Republic of Korea</b>	6.61	6.21	0.4
<b>Indonesia</b>	17.38	16.64	0.74
<b>Singapore</b>	3.84	2.39	1.45
<b>Viet Nam</b>	16.56	15.1	1.46
<b>Mongolia</b>	18.57	16.79	1.78
<b>Thailand</b>	7.98	5.11	2.87
<b>Cambodia</b>	50.24	46.29	3.95

## 2 ZERO HUNGER

### Gender gap in prevalence of food security, 2014-2015

<b>SDG Regional Groupings</b>	<b>% of females who are food insecure</b>	<b>% of males who are food insecure</b>	<b>Difference (f-m)</b>
<b>Australia and New Zealand</b>	8.2	10.9	-2.7
<b>Eastern Asia and South-eastern Asia</b>	8.4	8.7	-0.3
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	56.7	56.1	0.6
<b>Europe and Northern America</b>	9.0	8.0	1.0
<b>Northern Africa and Western Asia</b>	28.8	26.8	2
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	30.8	28.0	2.8
<b>Central Asia and Southern Asia</b>	28.2	24.5	3.7
<b>World</b>	23.9	22.4	1.5

Source: UN Women calculations based on data from the FAO Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) survey (2014–2015).

Notes: The FIES measures the percentage of individuals in the national population who have experienced food insecurity at moderate or severe levels during the 12-month reference period. The analysis is based on data from 141 countries collected by FAO in the context of the Voices of the Hungry Project. FAO. 2017.



**Internet penetration rate by sex and region, 2017**

SDG Regional Groupings	Female Internet users as % of total female population 2017	Male Internet users as % of total male population 2017
Australia and New Zealand	53.7	56.9
Central and Southern Asia	41.5	44.6
Eastern and South-eastern Asia	27.8	42.0
Europe and Northern America	75.2	82.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	66.7	65.2
Northern Africa and Western Asia	55.3	59.5
Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	53.7	56.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	18.4	24.6
World	44.7	50.6

Source: ITU (International Telecommunication Union). 2017. *ICT Facts and Figures 2017*. Geneva: ITU.

Note: Internet penetration rates refer to the number of women and men using the Internet, as a percentage of the respective total female and male population.

**Proportion of urban population living in slums, by region (per cent)**

Region	2014	2000
Australia and New Zealand	0.03	0.03
Central Asia and Southern Asia	31.89	46.05
Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia	27.55	38.23
Landlocked Developing Countries	59.00	67.11
Latin America and The Caribbean	21.26	29.31
Least developed countries	62.16	77.97
Northern America and Europe	0.10	0.10
Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	24.15	24.19
Sub-Saharan Africa	55.99	65.04
Western Asia and Northern Africa	22.06	23.11
World	22.77	28.42

Source: UN-Habitat, 2017.