

Commentary

Women Empowerment and Sustainable Development Goals- Planet 50-50 by 2030; are we on the right track?

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Women and girls are almost half the world’s population and they are on the fronts that’s why often more intensely impacted than other genders by poverty, weather change, food uncertainty, lack of healthcare, and worldwide economic crises. Their contributions are central to outcomes. With the new global 2030 roadmap and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advised by UN Member States on 25 September 2015, included aspects on how women are affected by each of the 17 proposed SDGs, as well as how women and girls can be key to achieving each of these goals.



This editorial focus, on the factorial and the illustrated impact of each SDG on women and girls and some of UN Women’s efforts towards each goal, intergovernmental need of effort and support for strategy change.

Targets

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 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.
- Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- 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.

As SDGs seek to change the course of the 21st century, addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality, and violence against women and girls. Women’s empowerment is a pre-condition for this. Achieving gender equality and sustainable development by 2030 will require pacing up efforts at all fronts, to empower women and girls through specific programmes and advocacy. The need of empowerment of the women is crucial in the society but somehow the proclaimers have

remained ineffective to encompass the actual meaning of these words. In a culture where women were battered in all possible ways and were still deprived of the right to speak, in the very same society which has symbolized women like heroes there are more people killing and dishonoring women on baseless and vague assumptions of sorcery. Women are considered as burdens when they are daughters and embellished to get no education, dowry, safety scarcity. They are suppressed by religious, cultural and social norms in worst of the conditions. There no such positional change occurs after getting married or being a mother. Where relations like marriage considered threat, or remain weak depending on three repeated words (Talaq). In such a society there was this immense need of a seed of women empowerment. Changes have taken their time to grow but today society has reframed itself in a way very different from the past. Girls and women have been given basic and special rights. However, Empowerment is at its place, slowly coming into contact with the wider population it is bringing changes slowly. Education and its worth are immense if we want women to speak of any form of ill treatment that they are facing in any discrete part of the world. Recent cases might not give full proof solutions, but they do promise better future. So we need to stay peaceful and wait for the colors of women empowerment to actually overwhelm the society in a new aura of change.

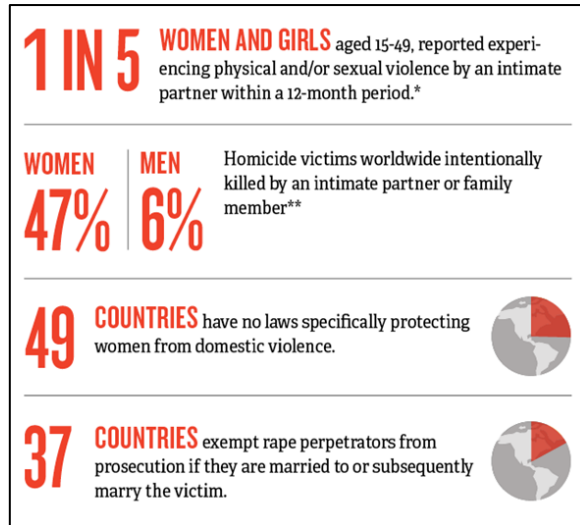
Gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to achieving SDGs. Following is the thematic focus on where women and girls stand against select SDG targets and was produced in support of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at UN Headquarters in New York in July, 2017.

I- Intimate Partners Violence

Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

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 previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.



Data gaps: Data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls is often lacking. This is especially true for women and girls with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrant workers and older women. Even where the data exists, comparability across and within countries remains a considerable challenge for global monitoring.

II- Harmful Practices

FGM
AT LEAST 200 MILLION
women and girls have undergone FGM.*

HAS THERE BEEN PROGRESS?
Over the last three decades, FGM rates have declined by 30 per cent, but progress is not universal and the pace of decline is uneven. Population growth will result in even more women and girls undergoing FGM, if current trends continue.

Child Marriage
OVER 750 MILLION
women and girls alive today were married before their 18th birthday.

HAS THERE BEEN PROGRESS?
Proportion of women between 20 and 24 years of age who were married or in union before ages 15 and 18 (percentage)**

2000: 11% Married/in union before 15, 2.2% Married/in union after 15 but before 18
2015: 8% Married/in union before 15, 19% Married/in union after 15 but before 18

Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

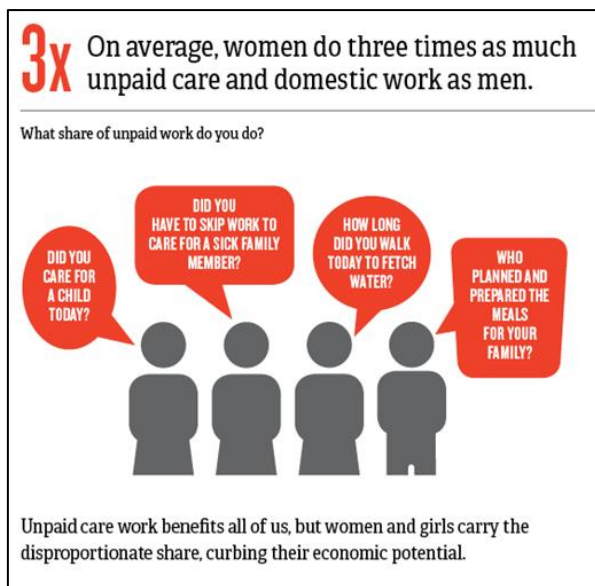
5.3.1 Percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.

5.3.2 Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age group.

Data gaps: The sensitive nature of FGM poses challenges in the reliable collection and comparability of such data, as families are reluctant to provide these details. In addition, prevalence levels among different groups and/or regions within countries are not always available, leaving only national prevalence rates which obscure differences.

III- Unpaid Care And Domestic Work

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



5.4.1: Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age group and location.

Data gaps: Time-use surveys remain unavailable or ad-hoc in many countries, and few are carried out with regularity to allow for trend analysis. Moreover, caring for children, elderly

and the sick often overlaps with domestic work, making accurate person-to-person care statistics difficult to capture.

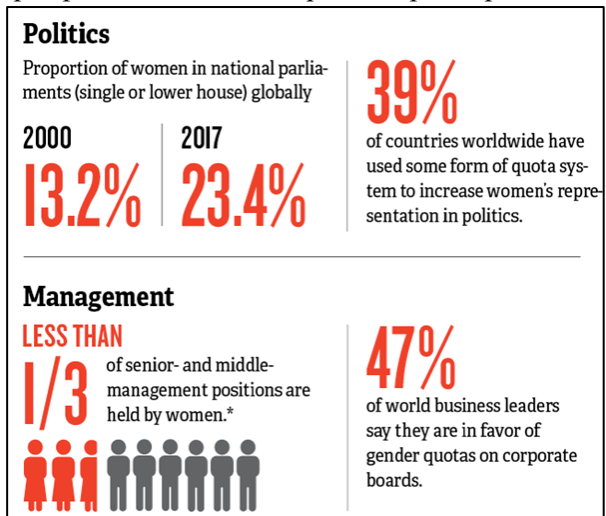
IV- Women in Leadership

Target 5.5: Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments.

5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions.

Data gaps: There is currently no mechanism for the global monitoring of women in local governments. This data is vital to obtain a holistic perspective on women’s political participation.



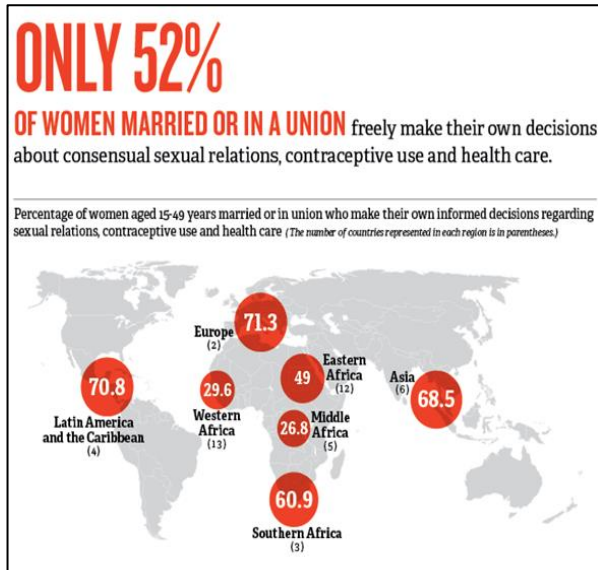
V- Sexual and Reproductive Health & Reproductive Rights

Target 5.6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15-49 who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care.

5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education

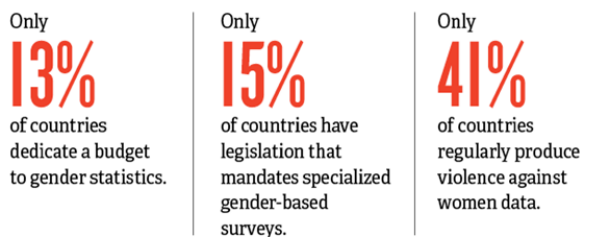
Data gaps: Currently there is no comprehensive overview of data on laws and regulations that guarantee women and men full and equal access



to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education. Moreover, data coverage for indicator 5.6.1 is also limited, with estimates for only 45 countries, and mostly in sub-Saharan Africa.

VI- Gender Data Gap

Data on varying factors that impact women is largely missing. This lack of data makes it harder to accurately identify, analyze and monitor the



separate needs and vulnerabilities of all genders of all age and develop effective solutions and strategies.

Therefore, achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment might be on whole is a stand-alone goal i.e. Goal 5 of the SDGs. However, it is also part of all the other goals, with many targets specifically recognizing women’s equality and empowerment as both the objective, and as part of the solution.

Pakistan; reality and perspective...

Along with many countries, Pakistan also determined that women will have central roles in political, economic and other spheres.

Though Pakistan welcomes a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and calls for investing sufficient resources and adopting appropriate policies to ensure its realization. Pakistan’s initiatives have included the establishment of national and provincial commissions on the status of women that are led by women, and contribute to legislation and policies for women’s empowerment and gender equality. It has strengthened the national policy for development and empowerment of women, and enacted and implemented pro-women legislation, including through amending the criminal law. Women’s empowerment is the first



pillar of a key national planning document, Vision 2025, signaling determination to ensure a more central role for women in political, economic and other spheres of national life. Speaking at the Global Leaders’ Meeting on 27 September 2015, Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif said:

“All countries stand to benefit from empowerment of women.

We are therefore determined to ensure a more central role for women in the political, economic and other spheres of our national life.”

Recommendations

Deep legal and lawmaking changes are largely needed to ensure women's rights and leadership in world and Pakistan. Although many stakeholders and leaders say they are in favor of gender shares on communal boards still women remain understated in leadership and management level positions in the public and private sectors. While there is much less percentage of countries worldwide have women's representation in politics, parity is far from reality—as of 2017. Besides being suppressed by sociocultural, religious and political boundaries and barriers. Though no country in the world is untouched by the pandemic of issues like early marriages, domestic and intimidate partner violence, harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, continue to rob women and girls of equal opportunities. The numbers are staggering' women are still facing difficulties for their rights, and millions of women still die in childbirth. The Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan 2nd from the bottom among 145 countries. Goal 5 aims to address gender equality and women empowerment. Poverty, poor health and illiteracy make almost 50pc of the country's population who are not full participants in the realm of socio-economic development. The low status of women, in fact, deprives the state of realizing the full productive potential of half the population. Mostly in rural areas but not limited to them, and with greater intensity in lower socioeconomic classes but at the same time cutting across the class divide, a very toxic form of patriarchy exists in Pakistan. In it honour is conflated with control of women, resulting in widespread violence against them. There are cases where women are not allowed to leave the house, and even killed over supposed notions of 'honour'. We need to advocate for zero violence, economic and political empowerment, with sexual and reproductive health and rights. These are the most critical building blocks for women's human rights. When a woman has these rights, she can be strong, safe, powerful, and heard.

To this end, at the national level, we must:

- i. Begin assemblies, policies, ideas and measurable goals to ensure gender poise and impartiality in decision-making processes at all levels.
- ii. Expand women's political, financial, communal and cultural prospects and individuality, and sustenance the empowerment of women especially those of indigenous women, those at the grass-roots level, and those of poverty-stricken communities.
- iii. Endorse equal access of women to literateness, education and training, and remove all hindrances to their access to credit and resources.
- iv. The need of the hour is to provide women with harassment-free environment that supports and welcomes women to improve their wellbeing.

So as we are moving in the right direction there is still need of right decisions, reinforcement of implemented policies, advocacy and research based development for Women Empowerment In Pakistan, as there is still a long way to go.

References

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