



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Sustainable
Development
Goals

Bangkok Office
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau
for Education

TOOL

4

Gender and the global policy environment



© Michal Knitl/Shutterstock.com

Table of Contents

- Objectives 1**
- Key information: Setting the scene 1**
 - Box 1: Sustainable Development Goals1
- Inclusive quality education 2**
 - Self-study and/or group activity: Reflect on the SDGs in relation to gender and education2
 - Self-study and/or group activity: Reflect on SDGs in relation to your context....3
- Gender analysis 4**
 - Self-study and/or group activity: Ideas for gender analysis4
- Further reading 5**
- Handout 1: Background to SDG 4..... 6**
 - Box 2: Substantive obligations for the State under CEDAW (Articles 1–16)7
- Handout 2: SDG 4 9**
- Handout 3: SDG 5 11**
- References 13**



Objectives

This tool will enable trainees to:

- understand the current global policy environment and commitments relating to gender equality and education;
- investigate the commitments their own country has made to gender equality in education.

Key information

Setting the scene

Global commitments to education and poverty reduction have been evolving. The most recent and important change is the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will guide international development across all sectors in the period 2015–2030 (see **Box 1**).

These Goals were adopted by the Member States of the United Nations in September 2015. They are set out in *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*.¹ There are 17 SDGs and 169 targets that seek to build on

the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and complete what the MDGs did not achieve. They aim to realize the human rights of all and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women, men, girls and boys.

The SDGs supersede the MDGs and Education for All (EFA) commitments, which came to closure in 2015. The global SDGs can help to provide an enabling environment for promoting gender equality in education policies and programmes at the national level.



Box 1: Sustainable Development Goals



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



1 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

Inclusive quality education

Education contributes to the achievement of all 17 SDGs.² For example, education is critical for poverty reduction and the alleviation of chronic poverty. It enables those in paid formal employment to earn higher wages and offers better livelihoods for those in the informal economic sector.

The World Education Forum – held in Incheon, the Republic of Korea, 19–22 May 2015 – resulted in the endorsement of the *Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*.³ This sets out the new vision for education for the period 2015–2030, and contains the analysis and proposed actions that have been incorporated into the SDGs.

In the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, the importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all and

as a foundation for achieving all SDGs, is fully recognized.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The goal pays particular attention to ensuring gender equality in education and efforts to “leave no one behind”. No education target should be considered met unless met for all.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 is a stand-alone goal that is also linked to all other goals. It aims to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The goal includes targets aimed at tackling discrimination, violence against women and girls, harmful practices, strengthening public services, equal opportunities, access to sexual and reproductive health, economic rights, enabling technologies and legislation.



Self-study and/or group activity

Reflect on the SDGs in relation to gender and education

Read through the 10 targets associated with SDG 4: ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ (see [Handout 2](#)).

Think about or discuss the following questions:

- Which targets mention gender explicitly?
- Are there other targets that are concerned with gender equality?
- Which targets should your country prioritize?

See [Handout 3](#) on SDG 5: ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’.

Read through the targets and indicators. Which ones do you think are particularly relevant to education? List some reasons why you think they are relevant?

2 UNESCO. 2014. *Sustainable Development begins with Education – How education can contribute to the proposed post-2015 goals*. Paris: UNESCO.

3 UNESCO et al, Ministry of Education, the Republic of Korea. World Education Forum. 2015. *Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*. Incheon: World Education Forum.

To ensure gender equality, education systems must act in a concerted way to eliminate the gender bias and discrimination that results from social and cultural attitudes and practices and economic status.

Governments and partners need to carry out the following:

- Put in place gender-transformative policies, planning and learning environments;
- Mainstream gender equality in teacher training and curriculum monitoring processes;
- Eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in education institutions to ensure that teaching and learning equally benefit girls and boys, women and men;
- Eliminate gender stereotypes and advance gender equality; and
- Put special measures in place to ensure the security of girls and women within, and whilst travelling to and from, education institutions (this must be done in all situations, but in particular during conflict and crises).



Self-study and/or group activity

Reflect on SDGs in relation to your context

Think about or discuss the following questions:

- The SDGs provide a more comprehensive and complex agenda for gender equality in education. How should the new objectives and targets be communicated to key stakeholders in the education sector?
- What is new in the SDG 4 and SDG 5 targets for your country? Do these targets require a radical change in direction for your national education policy and strategy?
- In your opinion, are all the targets fully relevant to your context? Why or why not?
- What concrete actions are needed for the targets to be successfully achieved in your context? To start with, select 3 targets from SDG 4 or SDG 5 to focus your reflections on.
- In your opinion, what actions need to be prioritized?
- What actions need to be taken at the school level to achieve the SDG targets?

Gender analysis



Self-study and/or group activity

Ideas for gender analysis

Gender analysis is a prerequisite to ensure that every step of design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education policies and programmes takes into account gender disparities. The SDG targets will require preliminary gender analysis in country contexts to obtain data to inform the planning of gender mainstreaming strategies and interventions. The first step in such gender analysis is to measure and analyse the existing gender gaps.

Note that some of the SDG 4 targets have sex disaggregated indicators. These are identified for target 4.1, completion of primary/secondary education; 4.2, participation in early childhood education; 4.3, access to vocational training; 4.5, parity of access to all education levels; and 4.6, literacy rates.

The table below features selected SDG 4 targets and indicative strategies (as defined in the Framework for Action). Try to complete the third column concerning gender analysis. Think about or discuss what preliminary analysis is needed from a gender perspective to obtain a clear picture of the current situation regarding gender equality. Write some notes in the third column.

Target	Indicative strategy	Gender analysis
By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.	Define standards and review curricula to ensure quality and relevance to the context, including skills, competencies, values, culture, knowledge and gender responsiveness .	For example: review completion rates for primary and secondary education in your country. Are these disaggregated by sex? What do the results tell us about the differences between boys and girls in completion rates?
By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.	Ensure government reviews education sector plans, budgets, curricula and textbooks, along with teacher training and supervision, so that they are free of gender stereotypes and promote equality, non-discrimination , and human rights and foster intercultural education.	
By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.	Establish a system to collect, analyse and share relevant and timely data on literacy levels and literacy and numeracy needs, disaggregated by sex and other indicators of marginalization.	
By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.	Provide learners of both sexes and of all ages with opportunities to acquire, throughout life, the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are needed to build peaceful, healthy and sustainable societies.	



Further reading

- Cornwall, A. and Rivas, A. 2015. From 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development. *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 36, Issue 2.
- Monkman K. and Webster K.L. 2015. The Transformative Potential of Global Gender and Education Policy. In: Zajda J. (ed) *Second International Handbook on Globalisation, Education and Policy Research*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- United Nations. 2015. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). New York: United Nations.
- UNESCO. 2014. *Sustainable Development begins with Education. How education can contribute to the proposed post-2015 goals*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. 2018. *Gender Review, Global Education Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Vaughan, R.P. 2016. 'Gender equality and education in the Sustainable Development Goals.' Background paper prepared for the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, *Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all*, UNESCO.

Note: Progress against SDG 4 was due to be reviewed in depth at the SDG summit - High-level Political Forum (HLPF) under the 74th Session of the General Assembly in September 2019. Progress is updated annually and key messages shared here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>.



Handout 1

Background to SDG 4

Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, 2000

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000121147>

It proposed 12 major strategies and sets 6 major goals to achieve quality education for all by 2015. The gender-specific goals were:

- **Goal 2:** To “ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.”
- **Goal 4:** To “achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.”
- **Goal 5:** To “eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.”

UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2000

www.un.org/millenniumgoals

The 8 MDGs formed a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest. The education-related goals were:

- **Goal 2:** To “ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.”
- **Goal 3:** To “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.”

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1999

https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women’s empowerment. It seeks to remove all the obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

World Declaration on Education for All, 1990

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127583>

The World Declaration on Education for All – adopted by the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand – spells out targets and strategies to meet the basic learning needs of all. The goal is to have universal access to learning; focus on equity; emphasize learning outcomes; broaden the means and the scope of basic education; enhance the environment for learning; and strengthen partnerships.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>

The Convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It defines discrimination against women and establishes an action agenda for putting an end to sex-based discrimination. In particular, Article 10 of the Convention stipulates specific rights to education that governments ought to ensure. **Box 2** provides some of the substantive obligations for States under CEDAW which are relevant to gender equality in education.



Box 2 Substantive obligations for the State under CEDAW (Articles 1–16)

Articles 1–5 contain the following general obligations of the State under CEDAW:

- a) Article 1 provides a definition of discrimination.
- b) Article 2 requires the State to:
 - embody the principles of equality in national constitutions and laws (Art.2a);
 - prohibit discrimination through legislation and other means (Art.2b);
 - establish legal protection of women (Art.2c);
 - refrain from discrimination (Art.2d);
 - eliminate discrimination by any private actors, e.g. individuals, organizations and enterprises (Art.2e); and
 - modify or abolish discriminatory laws, regulations, customs and practices (Art.2f).
- c) Article 3 obliges the State to put in place all measures for the full development of women.
- d) Article 4 points out that temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of de facto equality (Art.4.1) and measures in favour of maternity (Art.4.2) shall not be considered discrimination.
- e) Article 5 requires the State to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct that are based on inferiority or superiority of the sexes or on stereotyped roles.

Education

Article 10 provides that the State must ensure equal rights in the field of education. It provides that men and women must have the same conditions to access studies and achieve diplomas. This should be ensured in pre-school, general, alternative, technical, professional and higher technical education, and vocational trainings.

It also states that women and men have access to the same curricula, exams, teaching staff, school premises and equipment. Women and girls must be given the same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and programmes of continuing education. It also urges efforts to reduce female student drop-out rates and to address girls who have left school prematurely. Article 10 also highlights the need to eliminate stereotyped concepts in education, in particular by revising textbooks and school programmes.

UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960

http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/DISCR1_E.PDF

The Convention states unequivocally that discrimination in education is a violation of rights enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is UNESCO's first international instrument in the field of education to have binding force in international law. Its purpose is not only the elimination of discrimination in education, but also the adoption of measures to promote equality of opportunity and treatment.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

www.un.org/en/documents/udhr

The right to education for all was recognized by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.



Handout 2

SDG 4

Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The goal pays particular attention to ensuring gender equality in education and efforts to “leave no one behind”. No education target should be considered met unless met for all.



4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes



4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education



4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university



4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship



4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations



4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy



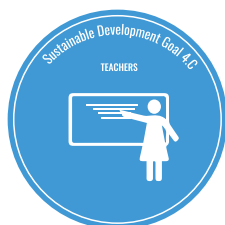
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development



4.a 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.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries



4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.



Handout 3

SDG 5

Sustainable Development Goal 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*

Target	Indicators
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
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	<p>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</p> <p>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</p>
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	<p>5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18</p> <p>5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age</p>
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 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
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	<p>5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments</p> <p>5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions</p>

Target	Indicators
<p>5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences</p>	<p>5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care</p> <p>5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15–49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education</p>
<p>5.A 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</p>	<p>5.A.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure</p> <p>5.A.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control</p>
<p>5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women</p>	<p>5.B.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>5.C.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment</p>



References

UN. 2015. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: UN. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

UNESCO. 2014. *Sustainable Development begins with Education - How education can contribute to the proposed post-2015 goals*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. 2015. *Incheon Declaration and Education for All 2030 Framework for Action*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656E.pdf>.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

**Education
Sector**

**UNESCO Bangkok Office
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education**

Mom Luang Pin Malakul Centenary Building
920 Sukhumvit Road, Prakanong, Klongtoei
Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Email: iqe.bgk@unesco.org
Website: bangkok.unesco.org
Tel: +66-2-3910577 Fax: +66-2-3910866