



5 GENDER  
EQUALITY



# GENDER EQUALITY: WHY IT MATTERS

## What's the goal here?

To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

## Why?

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. But, today gender inequality persists everywhere and stagnates social progress.

As of 2014, 143 countries have guaranteed equality between men and women in their Constitutions but 52 have yet to take this step.

## What happens if gender equality is not ensured?

Inequalities faced by girls can begin right at birth and follow them all their lives. In some countries, girls are deprived of access to health care or proper nutrition, leading to a higher mortality rate.

As girls move into adolescence, gender disparities widen. Child marriage affects girls far more than boys. Globally, nearly 15 million girls under age 18 are married every year—or 37,000 each day.

On average,  
**women**  
in the labour  
market still  
earn **24**  
**per cent**  
less than men  
globally.

Marrying young also affects girls' education. About one third of developing countries have not achieved gender parity in primary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia, girls still face barriers to entering both primary and secondary school.

### How does gender inequality affect women?

Disadvantages in education translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market.

Women's and girls' empowerment is essential to expand economic growth and promote social development. The full participation of women in labor forces would add percentage points to most national growth rates—double digits in many cases.

### Are there any other gender-related challenges?

Yes. Worldwide, 35 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.

An estimated 133 million girls and women have experienced some form of female genital mutilation/

cutting in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East, where the harmful practice is most common with a high risk of prolonged bleeding, infection (including HIV), childbirth complications, infertility and death.

### But, why should gender equality matter to me?

Regardless of where you live in, gender equality is a fundamental human right. Advancing gender equality is critical to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and the well-being of girls and boys.

Investing in education programmes for girls and increasing the age at which they marry can return \$5 for every dollar spent. Investing in programs improving income-generating activities for women can return \$7 dollars for every dollar spent.

### What can we do to fix these issues?

If you are a girl, you can stay in school, help

empower your female classmates to do the same and fight for your right to access sexual and reproductive health services.

If you are a woman, you can address unconscious biases and implicit associations that can form an unintended and often an invisible barrier to equal opportunity.

If you are a man or a boy, you can work alongside women and girls to achieve gender equality and embrace healthy, respectful relationships.

You can fund education campaigns to curb cultural practices like female genital mutilation and change harmful laws that limit the rights of women and girls and prevent them from achieving their full potential.

To find out more about Goal #5 and other Sustainable Development Goals, visit:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>



**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**  
17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD