**Defining National Policies on Gender Equality Using SDGs**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly **SDG 5 – Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls**, play a crucial role in **defining national policies on gender equality**. As highlighted in international frameworks such as the **1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the **1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, and the **1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, gender equality has been recognized as a fundamental human right and development goal.

The **United Nations** has consistently urged governments, including India, to **integrate gender perspectives** in all forms of national decision-making, including **legislation, policy frameworks, programs, and budgets**. The SDGs serve as a **comprehensive guide** to ensure that national policies address issues like equal access to education, employment, political representation, healthcare, and protection against gender-based violence.

For example, the document notes:

*“The United Nations has repeatedly invited governments and other social agents to integrate a gender perspective in their legislation, policies, plans, programmes and projects. For example, in all of the recently-developed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), women have a critical role to play...”*

This has led to the creation and refinement of **national gender policies**, such as:

* **National Policy for Women**
* **POSHAN Abhiyaan**
* **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**
* **Gender Budgeting in Union Budgets**

Thus, SDGs are not only international goals but also **tools to guide and shape national policy priorities** that advance gender equality in a structured and accountable manner.

**Influencing National Budget Allocations on Gender Equality (2025–2026)**

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**—especially **SDG 5: Gender Equality**—have played a critical role in guiding India’s budgetary decisions. For the **2025–2026 fiscal year**, the Government of India has continued to emphasize **gender-responsive budgeting**, a process through which public resources are allocated to promote equal opportunities for women and address gender-specific needs.

The idea of aligning budget with SDGs is rooted in international commitments highlighted in frameworks like the **CEDAW** and the **Beijing Declaration**, which call for governments to integrate a gender perspective across all public planning, including budgets.

From the notes:

*“The United Nations has repeatedly invited governments and other social agents to integrate a gender perspective in their legislation, policies, plans, programmes and projects...”*

In line with this:

* The **Gender Budget Statement (GBS)**, introduced in 2005–06 and refined over the years, continues to be part of India’s Union Budget in 2025–26.
* In **2025–2026**, allocations have focused on schemes such as:
  + **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**
  + **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**
  + **One Stop Centre Scheme**
  + **Mission Shakti**, which consolidates women’s safety, empowerment, and welfare under one umbrella.

These allocations reflect the government's effort to:

* Reduce gender disparities in health, education, and employment.
* Support women’s safety and economic empowerment.
* Improve data and monitoring of gender outcomes through gender-disaggregated budgeting.

Thus, SDGs directly **influence how funds are allocated**, ensuring that financial planning supports the broader goals of gender justice, empowerment, and sustainable development.

**Reviewing the impact of national policies ON GENDER EQUALITY**

In 2025, the Government of India undertook detailed reviews of its national policies on gender equality to assess their effectiveness in addressing disparities and promoting women's empowerment. Key programs such as Mission Shakti, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), and the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) were evaluated for their outcomes in improving access to health, education, protection, and economic opportunities for women. The review process, guided by SDG 5 (Gender Equality), utilized gender impact assessments and gender budgeting tools to measure the success of these initiatives. For instance, while BBBP showed increased female enrollment in secondary education and PMMVY improved maternal health awareness, challenges like uneven implementation across states, lack of grassroots awareness, and delays in benefit delivery were also identified. Moreover, the Ministry of Women and Child Development expanded gender budgeting across more ministries, yet gaps remained in evaluating long-term impact. The review emphasized the need for better disaggregated data, outcome-based evaluations, and more inclusive policymaking to ensure that gender equality is effectively embedded in India’s development strategy.

**Addressing key pressure on gender equlity leading to unsustainability**

In 2025, addressing the key pressures on gender equality that contribute to social and economic unsustainability became a significant focus for the Indian government. Persistent challenges such as gender-based violence, unequal access to education and healthcare, low female labor force participation, and unpaid care work continued to hinder sustainable development. These systemic issues not only limited individual potential but also affected national productivity and inclusive growth. Recognizing this, India integrated gender-sensitive approaches across major policy areas, particularly through Mission Shakti, gender budgeting, and targeted welfare schemes. Efforts were made to expand child care infrastructure, support safe working environments for women, and increase access to digital and financial literacy programs. However, deep-rooted social norms, lack of local-level implementation capacity, and limited intersectional analysis remained critical barriers. To ensure sustainability, the government emphasized the importance of transforming patriarchal structures, promoting shared responsibilities in caregiving, and ensuring that all policy interventions consider the diverse realities of women, especially those from marginalized communities. These actions aligned with SDG 5, reinforcing that true sustainability cannot be achieved without addressing the foundational inequalities that undermine gender justice.

**gender equality Helping to balance economic, social and environmental pillars in policy making**

In 2025, gender equality played a crucial role in helping to balance the economic, social, and environmental pillars of policymaking in India. Recognizing that sustainable development requires the integration of all three dimensions, the government adopted a gender-inclusive approach across key sectors. Economically, increasing women’s participation in the workforce and promoting women-led enterprises contributed to household income growth and national productivity. Socially, policies aimed at improving access to education, healthcare, and safety for women and girls addressed long-standing inequalities and enhanced community well-being. Environmentally, the active involvement of women in climate resilience programs, rural water management, and sustainable agriculture led to more inclusive and effective environmental outcomes. These strategies acknowledged that women often bear the brunt of climate-related and social crises, making their inclusion vital for designing equitable and lasting solutions. By embedding gender perspectives in all stages of policy—from design to implementation—India worked toward a more balanced and resilient development model, in line with SDG 5 and the broader Sustainable Development Goals framework.