While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment under the [Millennium Development Goals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Unfortunately, at the current time, 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15-49 have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner within a 12-month period and 49 countries currently have no laws protecting women from domestic violence. Progress is occurring regarding harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), which has declined by 30% in the past decade, but there is still much work to be done to completely eliminate such practices.

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world.

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.

The rates of girls between 15-19 who are subjected to FGM (female genital mutilation) in the 30 countries where the practice is concentrated have dropped from 1 in 2 girls in 2000 to 1 in 3 girls by 2017.

In 18 countries, 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.

One in five women and girls, including 19 per cent of women and girls aged 15 to 49, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months. Yet, 49 countries have no laws that specifically protect women from such violence.

While women have made important inroads into political office across the world, their representation in national parliaments at 23.7 per cent is still far from parity.

In 46 countries, women now hold more than 30 per cent of seats in national parliament in at least one chamber.

Only 52 per cent of women married or in a union freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use and health care.

Globally, women are just 13 per cent of agricultural land holders.

Women in Northern Africa hold less than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The proportion of women in paid employment outside the agriculture sector has increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015.

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

In Southern Asia, a girl’s risk of marrying in childhood has dropped by over 40% since 2000.

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 decisionmaking in political, economic and public life

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

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, in particular 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

While some indicators of gender equality are progressing, such as a significant decline in the prevalence of female genital mutilation and early marriage, the overall numbers continue to be high. Moreover, insufficient progress on structural issues at the root of gender inequality, such as legal discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes, decision-making on sexual and reproductive issues and low levels of political participation, are undermining the ability to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Recent data from 106 countries show that 18 per cent of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence in the previous 12 months. The prevalence is highest in least developed countries, at 24 per cent.

The practice of child marriage has continued to decline around the world, largely driven by progress in South Asia, where a girl’s risk of marrying in childhood decreased by about one quarter between 2013 and 2018. In sub-Saharan Africa, levels of child marriage have declined at a more modest rate.

At least 200 million girls and women have been subjected to female genital mutilation, based on data from 30 countries where the practice is concentrated and where nationally representative prevalence data is available. In these countries, the prevalence of this harmful practice declined by one quarter between approximately 2000 and 2018.

According to recent data from some 90 countries, women devote on average roughly three times more hours a day to unpaid care and domestic work than men, limiting the time available for paid work, education and leisure and further reinforcing gender-based socioeconomic disadvantages.

Women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of political leadership. As at 1 January 2019, women’s representation in national Parliaments ranged from 0 to 61.3 per cent, with the average standing at 24.2 per cent, an increase from 19 per cent in 2010. At the local level, data from 99 countries and areas show that women’s representation in elected deliberative bodies varies from less than 1 per cent to 48 per cent, with the median of the distribution at 26 per cent. When legislated gender quotas are adopted, significantly higher proportions of women are elected at both national and local levels.

While women represented 39 per cent of world employment, only 27 per cent of managerial positions in the world were occupied by women in 2018, up only marginally from 26 per cent in 2015. The proportion of women in management has increased since 2000 in all regions except in least developed countries.

In 51 countries with data on the subject, only 57 per cent of women aged 15 to 49, married or in union, make their own decisions about sexual relations and the use of contraceptives and health services.

Over the past 25 years, there has been progress in reforming laws towards improving gender equality, yet discriminatory laws and gaps in legal protection remain in many countries. On the basis of data collected across four areas of law in 2018 from 53 countries, almost a third have legal gaps in the area of overarching legal frameworks and public life (e.g., constitutions, antidiscrimination laws, quotas, legal aid); more than a quarter have legal gaps in the area of violence against women; and 29 per cent and 24 per cent have legal gaps in the employment and economic benefits area and in the marriage and family area, respectively.

Despite progress in implementing gender-responsive budgeting globally, gaps remain in country efforts to establish comprehensive and transparent tracking systems. Based on 2018 data from 69 countries, 13 countries fully met the criteria of having in place a tracking system that measures and makes publicly available gender budget data, and 41 countries approached the requirements.