SDG-5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls

Summary

The UN-SDG-5 addresses the issues of gender inequality and violence, and lays down the importance of gender equality not just as a fundamental human right but also as being beneficial for humanity at large. The aims of SDG-5 include elimination of discrimination, violence (trafficking and sexual exploitation), harmful practices (child marriage, forced marriage, genital mutilation) against women, access to reproductive and sexual health, as well as reproductive rights, and access to equal opportunities in leadership and decision-making roles. HEIs have an important role to play in achieving SDG-5. Some of the steps which HEIs can take in this regard include scholarships for women to pursue higher studies, business incubation centres in HEIs to instill skills among girl students and women for enhancing self-employability. HEIs must plan the scope for flexi- timing, and mandatory child-care centres at workplaces. The Indian government has taken several initiatives like National Rural Health Mission, Janani Suraksha Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, etc. with respect to achieving women empowerment. However, we are far from achieving some of SDG-5 targets at present and need to take many more initiatives to realise it. This chapter presents the status of progress by different countries in achieving this goal and presents recommendations on actions to be taken by the Government, HEIs and Higher Education Regulatory bodies.

Key Recommendations to Achieve SDG-5

- To increase the representation of women in university leadership positions and senior academic roles to at least 50%, HEIs should put workplace gender equity strategies into practice.
- Clean restrooms or e-toilets with vending machines for sanitary napkins, creches, centers for elderly or parent dependents, female common rooms, childcare centers, and sufficient lighting on campus are all amenities that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should guarantee.
- Women workers at HEIs should be able to modify their work schedules to accommodate their other obligations.
- HEIs are responsible for providing sufficient women's security, a helpline,

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monitoring, and transportation for shift and night workers.

- The University Grants Commission's guidelines on the POSH Act and Internal Complaints Cell, as well as those from the Indian government, must be implemented by HEIs.
- The Internal Complaints Cell must receive training workshops and POSH Act orientation from Regulatory Bodies.
- Molestation, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other forms of violence against girls and women in the home and public spaces must all be addressed by government policies that are rigorously enforced.

- Higher education institutions need to educate their staff, students, and the general public—especially those from lower socioeconomic and rural areas—about the unavoidable role that women will play in sustaining humankind on this planet as well as the Indian government's policies regarding molestation, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other forms of violence against women in the home and in public. taking part in national initiatives to stop violence against women and making a commitment to disclose the quantity of sexual assaults that have occurred within the organization.
- In order to evaluate how well HEIs are doing at addressing the problems of employment and service conditions for women, female students, and transgender people, regulatory bodies must establish a policy for gender audits in HEIs.
- The Central or State Government, as well as public or private sector organizations, must impose a requirement requiring equal numbers of female members to be present in the quorum of every expert or selection committee meeting.
- programs like scholarships, mentorship, and other initiatives to guarantee women's access to higher education.

1   Context and Current Status of the SDG-5

1.1   The Context and Status

Sustainable Gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed in UN Development Goal No. 5. According to this, "gender equality is a necessary foundation for a peaceful and sustainable world, in addition to being a fundamental human right." In addition to being rights that women should have, equitable access to education, decent employment, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes also benefit humanity as a whole. The goal of SDG-5 is to end all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls worldwide. It also promotes the implementation of changes that will grant women equal rights, access to resources, and ownership of property. In order to achieve the targets, Goal 5 also pledges to end sexual abuse, forced early marriages, female genital mutilation, violence against trafficking, ineffective participation in decision-making, unequal opportunities for leadership, and the gender pay gap.

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1.2 United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 Targets

SDG-5 has nine targets and 14 indicators that need to be to be achieved. Table 1 provides a list of SDG-5 targets and indicators.

Table 1: SDG-5 Targets and Indicators of SDG 5

Target	Indicators
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against girls and women everywhere around the world	**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 girls and women in public and private places; violence includes trafficking and sexual exploitations.	**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
5.3 Eliminate harmful practices including child marriage, forced and early marriages, as well as female genital mutilation.	**5.3.1** Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
	5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
5.4 Recognize and value domestic work and unpaid care through the provision of public services, and social protection policies, as well as through the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family.	**5.4.1** Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.5 Ensure effective and complete participation, and equal opportunities in leadership at all levels of decision-making in public, economic and political life.	**5.5.1** Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments
	5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions
5.6 Ensure universal access to reproductive and sexual health, and reproductive rights as laid down in	**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

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the "Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,' the "Beijing Platform for Action' and the outcome documents of their review conferences.	**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
5.a Undertake reforms to provide women with equal rights to economic resources, access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property (inheritance, financial services, and natural resources), as per the national laws.	**5.a.1** 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
	5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or Control
5.b Enhance use of enabling technology, particularly information technology and communications t e c h n o l o g y , t o promote women empowerment.	**5.b.1** Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
5.c Strengthen and adopt policies and enforceable legislation to promote gender equality, and women and girl empowerment at all levels.	**5.c.1** Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

Source: https://www.SDG-5data.org/

Women's empowerment and gender equality have caught the attention of academics, feminists, policymakers, and governments across the globe. The Global Gender Report 2017 stated that the constitution of women is half of the world's population, but they are deprived of access to the same level of participation in education, health assistance, economy, earning, and decision-making power.

1.3   Summary of Progress on SDG-5 Implementation Globally

In order to meet the goals of SDG-5, education is crucial, according to UNESCO. "Quality, gender-sensitive education encourages women and girls to participate in all political, economic, and public spheres by ensuring they are heard and have real opportunities to fully participate," the statement reads. Moreover, it helps eliminate customs and behaviors that harm women's and girls' physical, emotional, and sexual health.

Table 2: UNESCO Policy Recommendations on SDG-5

UNESCO Policy Recommendations on SDG-5	
Support the education of girls and women	Through women's empowerment and their participation in science, media, and culture and combating violence in all its forms against women.
Education of women and girls	Through global partnerships for educating girls and women and combating gender-based violence.
Increase women participation	Participation in STI through STEM and Gender Advancement (SAGA).
Increase Gender equality	Through increasing participation of women in ocean science, disaster risk reduction (including Tsunamis), and in ocean-related climate change efforts, promoting women in cultural life, and in the media.
Support women empowerment and gender equality	Through capacity building, research, advocacy, policy advice, and collaborative frameworks.
Generate transformative social change	Through empowering women as creators and producers of cultural goods and services and through supporting them by safeguarding of cultural heritage and their participation in cultural life.
Improve access to information for women	By fostering gender equality in media organizations and do away with gender stereotypes in media content, and by empowering women with ICT skills.

*Source: (*https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/247785en.pdf*)*

The Best Countries to be a Woman in 2021 are Norway, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands (www.globalcitizen.org). Guidelines regarding education regulation to promote gender equality in some of these European countries are as follows:

1.4   Initiatives and Achievements of the Indian Government in SDG-5
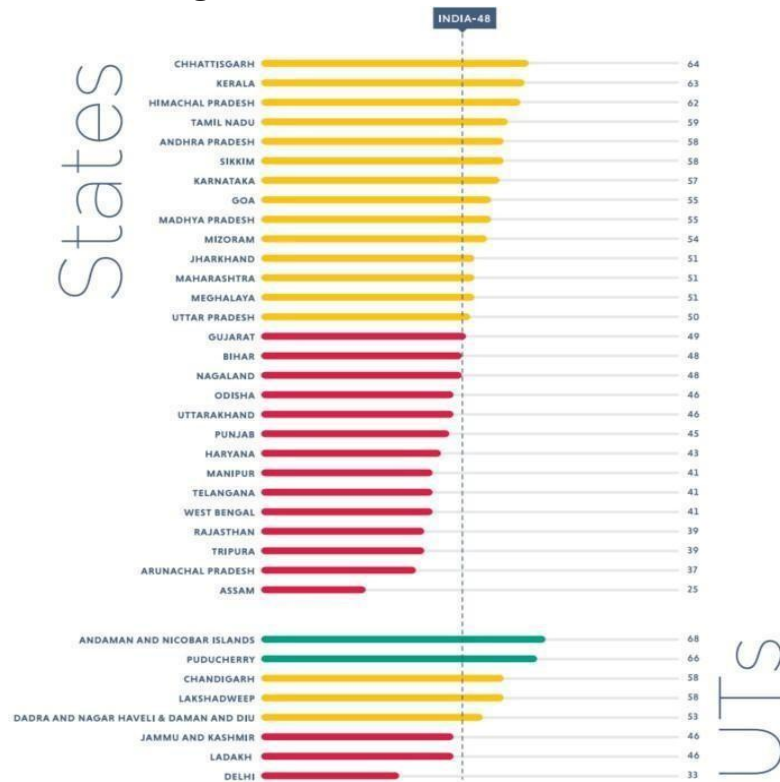
In the Indian context, gender parity is expected to be achieved at all educational levels starting with primary education. Because higher education maximizes critical thinking and research orientation, it is the center of gravity around which gender equality and empowerment revolve. This section provides an evaluation of several states and Union Territories (UTs) in terms of SDG-5 as captured by NITI Aayog (2021). Figure 1 highlights the composite scores of the States and UTs on SDG-5 and the breakdown of the States and UTs by indicator.

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Figure 1: SDG-5 Index Score of States/UTs

State	Score
CHHATTISGARH	64
KERALA	63
HIMACHAL PRADESH	62
TAMIL NADU	59
ANDHRA PRADESH	58
SIKKIM	58
KARNATAKA	57
GOA	55
MADHYA PRADESH	55
MIZORAM	54
JHARKHAND	51
MAHARASHTRA	51
MEGHALAYA	51
UTTAR PRADESH	50
GUJARAT	49
BIHAR	48
NAGALAND	48
ODISHA	46
UTTARAKHAND	46
PUNJAB	45
HARYANA	43
MANIPUR	41
TELANGANA	41
WEST BENGAL	41
RAJASTHAN	39
TRIPURA	39
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	37
ASSAM	25

UT	Score
ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS	68
PUDUCHERRY	66
CHANDIGARH	58
LAKSHADWEEP	58
DADRA AND NAGAR HAVELI & DAMAN AND DIU	53
JAMMU AND KASHMIR	46
LADAKH	46
DELHI	33

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Chhattisgarh and Andaman and the Nicobar Islands are observed to be the top players among all States and UTs respectively.

1.4.1   All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

To encourage female students, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) advocates for gender equality in technical colleges across the country. In compliance with regulatory guidelines, all Indian institutions approved by the AICTE are required to carry out the following events throughout the academic year to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, the elimination of stereotypes, and awareness of gender bias and harmony

1.4.1.a Awards for Girl Students (Recognition or Cash Prize)

The student who receives the highest grade in her first, second, and third year of study is awarded the Medhavi Chhatra Award. Awarded for excellence in entrepreneurship is the Udyamita Award. The Kala Shresthi Award is given to a student who demonstrates exceptional artistic and dance performance. A student receives the MiraBai Award for their outstanding musical performance. The Ojaswi Award is presented for outstanding athletic achievement. The Nivida Award is given for outstanding work in the field of social services. The student who comes up with innovative and cutting-edge ideas in technology is awarded the Navonmesha Award.

1.4.1.b Awards for Women Faculty and Staff Members (Recognition or Cash Prize)

The Maa Saraswati Award is given to female faculty members who bestow student feedback and help students develop their skills.

1.4.2   AICTE Lilavati Award-2020

AICTE established the Lilavati Award in 2020 with the theme "Women Empowerment." The award was given to acknowledge the efforts made by AICTE-approved institutions to treat women fairly and equally in all aspects of their lives.

On October 31, 2021, AICTE and "Aspire for Her" (Consultancy Private Limited Management) inked a Memorandum of Understanding with the goal of enabling the development of a workforce prepared for the future with an emphasis on women's empowerment. The strategic partnership "Aspire for Her" supports the diversity and inclusion programs of progressive, forward-thinking institutions and organizations. The business assists institutions and organizations in recognizing and enhancing diversity, including gender diversity and all other types. The partnership between "Aspire for Her" and AICTE will accelerate India's progress toward accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on improved economic growth, gender equality, decent work, high-quality education, and decreased inequality

1.4.3   National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

One of the main requirements in the NAAC Self-Study Report (SSR) is gender equity. To meet this requirement, each applicant must upload information and supporting documentation on gender equity. Gender equity programmes run by the applicant in the institution for consecutive five years are taken into count for grading.

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1.4.4   **University Grants Commission- India**

Under the UGC's jurisdiction, colleges and universities are required to promptly implement policies that support gender equality. "The government of India envisages engagement of 'gender champions' in all educational institutions across the country to increase the outreach for creating an environment that fosters equal treatment," according to a letter from the UGC to the universities. "In their academic institutions, gender champions are envisioned as responsible leaders who will foster an environment where girls are treated with dignity and respect."

1.5   **HEIs Status: Role of Higher Educational Institutions and Status of Adoption of SDG-5**

The topic of discussion for people all over the world in recent years has been how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can help achieve these goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to "end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all" by concentrating on three areas: social, economic, and ecological. According to a report by the United Nations, gender inequality persists on a global scale, depriving women of their basic rights and opportunities to pursue higher education. Higher education is essential to achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals because it helps people transform their human capital by developing their knowledge and skills, which better prepares them to meet life's challenges. In terms of lowering economic dependency, increasing self- confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, critical thinking, leadership abilities, and the capacity for reasoned decision-making, higher education has a positive correlation with gender equality and women's empowerment. Therefore, it is the duty of the institutions to develop the next generation of global leaders while also bridging the gender gap and encouraging the participation of women in their initiatives, create inclusive leadership roles, and offer parity in professional prospects (Nilsson, 2018). This places a heavy burden on higher education institutions (HEIs) to support the achievement of sustainable development goals, such as gender equality and women's empowerment. Several approaches to accomplish this goal include the following:

- First and foremost, in order to foster an atmosphere that encourages girls to pursue higher education, HEIs need to review their policies. Second, a key element of the right to education must be higher education. Stated differently, the provision of free higher education has the potential to encourage student retention and graduation. Third, and perhaps most importantly, giving girls equal access to career and skill-building opportunities can encourage the next generation of young people to view higher education as a viable goal even in the face of ongoing poverty of all kinds.
- To develop gender-blind knowledge, skills, and competencies, HEIs are putting into practice what are known as "feminist strategic alliances" (Bustelo 2017; Mazur 2017). However, gender equality action plans must be implemented by HEIs in accordance

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with regulations mandated by central governments (Verge, Ferrer-Fons, and González, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the policies and regulations' provisions, the implementation is appalling.

- The topic of women in leadership is another aspect of gender equality. According to the most recent Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2021, women only lead 20% of the top 200 HEIs worldwide. Not very encouraging are the statistics on women in leadership positions in India. Because it is required that a woman hold the position of vice chancellor in universities exclusively for women, less than 7% of vice chancellors in India are female.
- The universities are ranked according to a number of criteria, including "research on the study of gender, their policies on gender equality, and their commitment to recruiting and promoting women," in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings under SDG-5. The low number of Indian institutions in this category mirrors the existing gender disparities in society and raises concerns that India's ability to grow in a gender-inclusive manner will become more challenging if Indian Higher Education Institutions do not take on the responsibility of promoting gender equality.

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