

# BACK TO NORMAL

2022 **SDG  
Gender  
Index**



# IS NOT ENOUGH

**EQUAL  
MEASURES  
2030**

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This report was written and edited by **Angela Hawke**. It was designed by **Julie Brunet of datacitron**, with creative leadership from **Saran Koly**.

The **2022 Equal Measures 2030 (EM2030) SDG Gender Index** was created by **Albert Motivans**, with **Aurélie Acoca**. The data and analysis for this report were led by **Albert Motivans**, with **Aurélie Acoca**, **Coretta Jonah** and **Anuja Patel**.

Lead contributors for Section 2 (About the Index) and Section 3 (Key findings) of the report were **Alison Holder** and **Albert Motivans**, with **Aurélie Acoca** and **Coretta Jonah**. Lead contributors for Section 4 (A fractured world) were **Alison Holder** (COVID-19, Intersectionality, Austerity, International justice and solidarity) and **Shannon Kowalski** (Ecological collapse, Political polarity) with **Martha Flynn** (COVID-19, Intersectionality). Lead contributors for Section 5 (Blueprint for change) were **Martha Flynn** (on laws, leadership), **Aarushi Khanna** (on public services), **Charlotte Minvielle** (on leadership), **Albert Motivans** (on gender data gaps), **Amanda Austin** (on feminist movements) and **Paula Trujillo** (on girls and young women).

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## FOREWORD

# HOW IMPORTANT IS THE 2022 SDG GENDER INDEX?

Don't we already know that things have improved for girls and women in recent decades, from increased access to education and the growing number of women in leadership roles, to the strengthening of feminist movements around the world? Can this Index really tell us anything we don't already know about global progress on gender equality? Is there more to do, even after \$40 billion was pledged at the Generation Equality Forum in Paris in June 2021?<sup>1</sup>

The answer to these questions is a resounding yes. If we are to reach the vision laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for people and our planet, we must track progress – or the lack of it – with a gender lens across the whole of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>2</sup> And we must use the resulting data to drive accountability for gender equality commitments. The SDG Gender Index is the most comprehensive tool available to do precisely that.

Yes, there has been some measurable progress towards gender equality since the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing,<sup>3</sup> and yet none of us lives in a country that has achieved the full promise of equality envisioned in the SDGs nor are most countries on track to achieve those goals by 2030.

Even if most countries worldwide seem to be making some advances on gender equality, tools like the SDG Gender Index are essential to sound the alarm at the slow pace, the limited scale and the profound fragility of these advances. This is vital as we navigate in light of global shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and other ongoing and future crises that we know will follow.

The Index has been developed by the EM2030 partnership, which brings together national, regional and global leaders from feminist networks, civil society, international development and the private sector to connect data and evidence with advocacy and action on gender equality.

The partnership is driven by a shared belief: that data can expose inequality and injustice, motivate change and drive accountability. The 2022 SDG Gender Index is the result of years of dialogue and learning across our 'global to local' partnership and beyond.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated our discussions and thinking around the Index, even though it is too soon to gauge its full impact on girls and women, in all their diversity, worldwide. One thing is clear, however: the pandemic has exposed and intensified the severe and intersecting inequalities that were already holding them back, long before any of us had heard of COVID-19. What matters now is what we do next.

As well as illustrating the many challenges, the Index has a positive message: that rapid progress is possible. The Index data, and the clear policy recommendations we have drawn from the Index findings and our collective experience,

chart a course based on the vision of EM2030: a just, peaceful and sustainable world, where all girls and women have equal power, voice, opportunity and access to their rights, in line with the SDGs.

**Alison Holder,**  
Director, Equal  
Measures 2030

**Sivananthi KV  
Thanenthiran,**  
Executive Director,  
ARROW

**Anita Zaidi,**  
President of the  
Gender Equality  
Division, Bill & Melinda  
Gates Foundation

**Milena Páramo Bernal,**  
Regional Coordinator,  
CLADEM

**Emily Courey Pryor,**  
Executive Director,  
Data2X

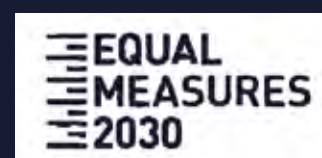
**Memory Zonde-  
Kachambwa,**  
Executive Director,  
FEMNET

**David McNair,**  
Executive Director Global  
Policy, ONE Campaign

**Stephen Omollo, CEO,**  
Plan International

**Neal Myrick,**  
Global Head, Tableau  
Foundation

**Kathleen A. Sherwin,**  
Interim President and  
CEO, Women Deliver



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation



data2x<sup>o</sup>



*With a third of countries either making no progress on gender equality or moving in the wrong direction, our Index shows the world is off track on the SDGs. The seeds for the fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic were sown long before the virus started spreading: millions of women were already dealing with a squeeze on household budgets, poor health care and evaporating social safety nets. But the Index also shows that rapid change on gender equality is possible and provides a “blueprint” for governments to help make that change happen.*

Alison Holder,  
Director, Equal Measures 2030

*With less than a decade left for Agenda 2030 the 2022 SDG Gender Index comes at an opportune time! Data show that even before COVID, progress was slow. The intra-regional gaps on education and gender equality goals in Asia are dramatic and alarming. It's a call to action for governments to prioritize investing in achieving gender equality!*

Sivananthi KV Thanenthiran,  
Executive Director, ARROW

*In every dimension of life, data is key to track progress and identify issues that backslid. COVID-19 jeopardized what women in Latin America and the Caribbean have achieved with great effort. The Index provides a baseline to monitor the impact of the pandemic, especially on those issues where negative trends are already apparent like women's participation in the labor market, unpaid care work, and violence against women, and to advocate for accelerated action towards gender equality.*

Milena Páramo Bernal,  
Regional Coordinator, CLADEM

*Despite nearly all countries in the world committing to bridge the gender equality gap, evidence shows that African women are still under-represented in leadership positions, from ministerial roles (just 26 per cent held by women) to parliaments (just 24 per cent). Countries in the region should learn from Rwanda's transformative leadership which has the highest proportion of women in parliament and cabinets, contributing greatly towards passing progressive policies and laws. We also need to address the data gaps that exist, which can make women's contributions to policy-making invisible especially on issues to do with the Care Economy.*

Memory Zonde-Kachambwa,  
Executive Director, FEMNET

*This research shows just how far we are from the goal of gender equality. But what gets measured gets managed – and this data shows us who needs to invest more, and where they should focus their energy. It's now up to governments, businesses and civil society to take this data seriously and act.*

David McNair, Executive Director  
Global Policy, ONE Campaign

*If we are to achieve gender equality and the goals laid out in the SDGs, it's vital we are able to pinpoint the biggest challenges facing girls and women across the globe, and track progress. The SDG Gender Index enables us to do this. It also warns us of how fragile progress can be to shocks. To prevent further regression, in an already grave situation, urgent 'gender transformative' action is needed now by the world's leaders to secure sustainable progress for girls' and women's rights.*

Stephen Omollo,  
CEO, Plan International

*Tableau Foundation believes that data can help shine a light on inequity in all forms. The new SDG Gender Index helps illuminate critical threats to achieving gender equality and the associated global goals. We must all work together to achieve the 2030 agenda, and the SDG Gender Index can serve as a roadmap for how we get there without leaving women and girls behind.*

Neal Myrick,  
Global Head of Tableau Foundation

*The 2022 SDG Gender Index is its most inclusive and comprehensive one yet. It pinpoints precisely what issues require more targeted and immediate action, while underscoring how systemic gender inequalities continue to be, globally, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. For Women Deliver, the Index is a vital tool that equips us with the data needed to progress, secure, and safeguard girls' and women's rights – in all their intersecting identities – within the SDGs and beyond.*

Kathleen A. Sherwin,  
Interim President and CEO, Women Deliver

## ACRONYMS

<b>BFF</b>	Black Feminist Fund	<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (plus any and all gender identities and sexualities)
<b>CO2</b>	Carbon dioxide	<b>MBRRACE-UK</b>	Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the UK
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties	<b>ND-GAIN</b>	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index
<b>CRR</b>	Center for Reproductive Rights	<b>ODA</b>	Official development assistance
<b>ECLAC</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>EM2030</b>	Equal Measures 2030	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<b>TRIPS</b>	The Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
<b>FS Index</b>	Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace)	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence	<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>GSMA</b>	Global System for Mobile Communications (originally Groupe Spécial Mobile)	<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>IBP</b>	International Budget Partnership	<b>UNSD</b>	United Nations Statistics Division
<b>IEA</b>	International Energy Agency	<b>UNTC</b>	United Nations Treaty Collection
<b>ILGA</b>	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association	<b>V-DEM</b>	Varieties of Democracy Institute
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization	<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund	<b>WBL</b>	Women, Business and the Law
<b>IND.</b>	Indicator (of the EM2030 SDG Gender Index)	<b>WEDO</b>	Women's Environment & Development Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration	<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum
<b>IPU</b>	Inter-Parliamentary Union	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee		
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Union		
<b>JMP</b>	Joint Monitoring Programme for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene		

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

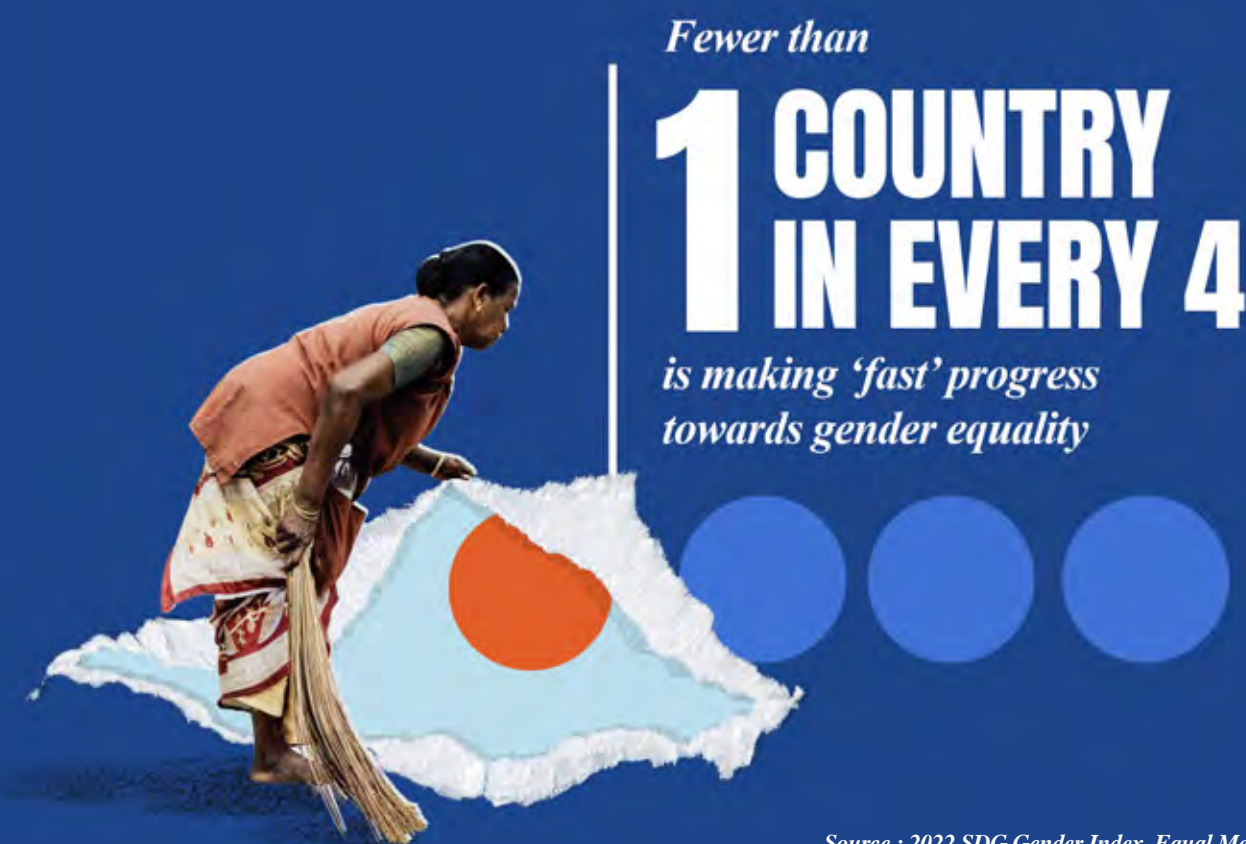
## Progress on gender equality is slow, at best

The 2022 SDG Gender Index sounds the alarm on gender equality, revealing that global progress has been slow and marginal – at best – over the past five years. Less than a quarter of countries are making ‘fast’ progress towards gender equality, while a third are making no progress or, worse still, are moving in the wrong direction.

Efforts are being made to make the world more gender equal, but this is happening far too slowly. As a result, we are not on track to meet the 2030 deadline for the achievement of gender equality as demanded by the SDGs. The new SDG Gender Index – the most comprehensive global index available to measure gender equality – finds that progress in some regions and countries and

Figure 1.

**SOUNDING THE ALARM ON GLOBAL PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY**



Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.

on key gender issues has stalled or shifted into reverse gear. This 2022 edition of the Index, developed by the EM2030 partnership, provides data from 2015 and 2020 to build a picture of progress (or the lack of it) on gender equality.

While it is too early to gauge the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls and women\* worldwide, there are fears that the halting and limited progress made since 2015 may have been too fragile to withstand such an onslaught. The pandemic has shone a light on the gender fault lines that were hampering progress towards the SDGs long before COVID-19. Countries are still held back by the lack of decent work for women, by inequalities that stifle the potential of particular groups of girls and women – often those who are already the most marginalized – and a continued lack of investment in the public services and care infrastructure that could ease their burden.

The Index confirms that ‘getting back to normal’ is simply not ambitious enough, given that the ‘normal’ that prevailed before COVID-19 was failing to deliver progress at the scale, pace and intensity needed for sustainable gender equality. As seen in crisis after crisis – from economic downturns to conflicts and climate disasters – hard-won progress on gender equality often buckles under pressure and its lack of resilience becomes all too apparent. Given the impact of such disasters in the past, what can we expect from the pandemic? History suggests that girls and women could well see further erosion of the safety nets on which they rely, with dire consequences, in particular, for those who are already the most marginalized.

The Index captures inequalities in the status of girls and women across countries. But, to understand these inequalities within countries and across different population

groups, we need to unpack the Index score ‘average’ and examine individual indicators that allow disaggregation by individual characteristics. This can reveal substantial differences in progress by racial or ethnic group, by disability status, by economic

**THE ‘NORMAL’ THAT PREVAILED BEFORE COVID-19 WAS FAILING TO DELIVER PROGRESS AT THE SCALE, PACE AND INTENSITY NEEDED FOR SUSTAINABLE GENDER EQUALITY**

status and other key characteristics. Worse, many of the characteristics and inequalities that affect the lives of girls and women are not measured at all. Girls and women are not one homogenous group, and lasting progress on gender inequalities must recognize and address not only the many disparities, but also their intersectionality (and the data needed to measure this).

At the level of the national average, the Index shows, however, that progress on gender equality is possible. This report sets out a blueprint for change that can ease the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls and women – and therefore on social and economic development – and reinvigorate the long-term quest for sustainable gender equality.

\* EM2030’s vision for gender equality includes girls and women in all their diversity as well as gender non-conforming and non-binary persons.



Figure 2.

## THE BIG PICTURE OF GLOBAL PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

### KEY FINDINGS



- ◆ **Progress on gender equality has been too slow, too fragile and too fragmented:** there was little progress on gender equality at a global level between 2015 and 2020.
- ◆ **If current trends continue,** the world will reach an **Index score of only 71 out of 100 by 2030**, the deadline for the achievement of the SDGs.
- ◆ **Not one of the 144 countries in the SDG Gender Index has achieved gender equality**, and no country is the world's best performer – or even among the world's top ten performers – across all SDGs. Every country has more to do to realize the vision of gender equality embedded within the goals.
- ◆ **Less than a quarter of countries are making 'fast progress'** towards gender equality; **a third of countries are either making 'no progress'** at all or are moving in the 'wrong direction'.
- ◆ On the positive side, **more than half of countries worldwide are moving in the right direction** on gender equality.
- ◆ However, in 2020, **more than three billion girls and women still lived in countries with 'poor' or 'very poor' scores** for gender equality.



### THE CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- ◆ The **COVID-19 pandemic** has exposed the deep fault lines in gender equality that have intensified the impact of the pandemic on girls and women.
- ◆ An **intersectional lens** is vital. Without understanding how inequalities combine and accumulate, it is hard to identify the problems and, therefore, the solutions.
- ◆ **Ecological collapse** has a profound impact on girls and women, who see their resources dwindle and their responsibilities expand.
- ◆ Gender equality has become a **political battlefield** in an era of increasing political polarity. There is growing opposition to many human rights, and the rights of girls and women are a favourite target.
- ◆ **Austerity measures** have become the 'go to' option for countries in response to crises. But the resulting cuts to public services hit girls and women first and hardest.
- ◆ **International justice and solidarity are in short supply.** Countries that bear the least responsibility for climate change lack the necessary support, and there has been little improvement in aid effectiveness over the past decade.

### OVERVIEW OF

### THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2022 SDG Gender Index sets out a blueprint for change, based on six cross-cutting themes that often characterize the countries and regions making some progress on gender equality.

#### Reform and apply inequality laws

Countries that reform and fully implement gender equality laws have better health, nutrition and educational outcomes for women and their families, more resilient employment for women, and more women in their parliaments.

#### Invest in public services and social (including care) infrastructure

The social transformation needed for gender equality must be funded, which requires gender-responsive budgets, progressive taxation and strong investment in public services and public (including care) infrastructure.

#### Promote the leadership, participation and voice of girls and women

The key is to combat gender norms and promote role models, with the greater visibility of women in public life creating a virtuous circle of participation.

#### Close the gender data gaps

This means investing in improving data infrastructure and formalizing the idea of a gender data ecosystem, but also mobilizing and building bridges between different stakeholders and data communities, and making good use of 'big data'.

#### Invest in, create space for, and listen to feminist organizations and movements

Little progress on women's rights would have been made without pressure and advocacy from these organizations and movements. They need proper resourcing and safe, secure spaces in which to operate and advocate.

#### Work with and empower girls and young women

Their voices should be heard in the decisions that affect them. Programmes, policies and laws designed with and for them, and funding for their groups, are critical for accelerated progress towards gender equality.



Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.



## 2. ABOUT THE 2022 SDG GENDER INDEX

### Purpose

The 2022 SDG Gender Index, developed by EM2030 – the leading global partnership on accountability for gender equality and the SDGs – provides a snapshot of where the world stands on the vision of gender equality embedded in the 2030 Agenda,<sup>4</sup> a vision long fought for by gender advocates worldwide. Working on the basis that you can't fix a problem that you don't understand, the Index provides the hard evidence needed to hold governments to account for gender equality commitments, in line with the SDGs. By showcasing where progress is happening – and where it isn't – the Index aims to drive action on gender equality such that momentum towards equality becomes resilient, sustainable and, ultimately, unstoppable.

### Coverage

The Index covers 56 key indicators across 14 of the 17 SDGs (see Annex 1), with each goal represented by between three and five gender-related indicators. The Index captures data from 144 countries – 135 of which have data for two time points, which makes it possible to track progress for those countries between 2015 and 2020. The Index now covers 98 per cent of the world's girls and women, up from the 95 per cent covered by the first edition of the Index in 2019.<sup>5</sup> EM2030 also provides deeper analysis for its seven current focus countries (Burkina Faso, Colombia, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Senegal) and three current focus regions (Africa, Asia and Latin America).

### Added value

There are a growing number of gender indices, but the 2022 SDG Gender Index is unique for at least three reasons. First, while the Index follows the structure of the SDGs, it adds a gender lens across each of the goals, including the many that lack such a focus in the official framework, or those where no data are reported at present to monitor progress. The Index makes it possible, therefore, to track progress across most of the goals (and not just SDG 5 on gender equality).

Second, given the data gaps in official SDG monitoring, the Index draws on available gender-related SDG indicators, and complements them with a wider range of data sources to provide a timelier and more comprehensive picture of progress. This includes tracking of legal frameworks that address gender equality (e.g., laws related to equality in the workplace, abortion rights, sexual orientation, etc.), global survey data that capture women's views about different aspects of their lives and societies, and other data collections that are conducted by a range of data producers (including the World Bank, civil society organizations (CSOs) and think tanks) on a global and regular basis.

And third, the Index tracks progress over time, allowing benchmarking since 2015 and scenario-building to provide insights into how (and whether) gender indicators are progressing towards the attainment of the SDGs by the 2030 deadline.

### What's new ?

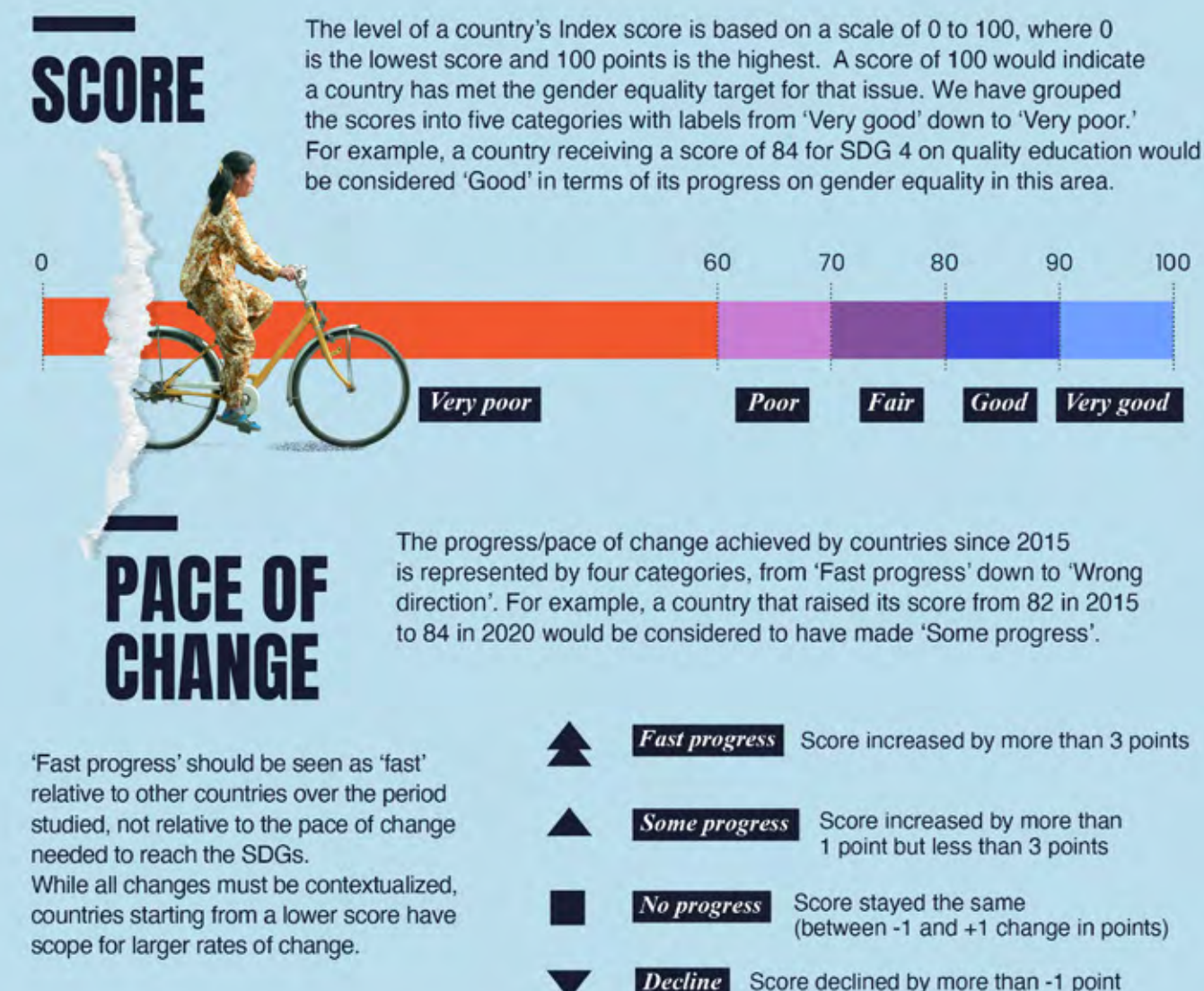
This 2022 Index builds on, and replaces, the 2019 SDG Gender Index. The results generated by the two are not comparable. This is due to changes in the composition of indicators and improvements in the index methodology. Fifteen new indicators have been added to the Index since the previous edition in 2019. These cover issues such as women's access to justice; their freedom to discuss political issues; the legal frameworks that recognize LGBT rights; and more. At the same time, nine indicators that appeared in the first edition of the Index are not included

in the 2022 edition. This is for several reasons, including because country coverage worsened, because data custodians (e.g., the World Health Organization (WHO) on obesity, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on social expenditure) had not updated indicators in time for the 2022 Index analysis, or because data initiatives were no longer collecting the data. Indicators that we were not able to carry forward into the 2022 Index include those in critical areas such as social

Figure 3.

### HOW TO READ THE INDEX SCORES

Source: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.





protection, women's representation in judicial posts, and women's views of social norms related to intimate partner violence.

Changes have also been made to enhance the methodology – specifically in relation to how scores are aggregated to create the Index in response to guidance from global Index experts.<sup>6</sup>

Country Index scores can be interpreted both in terms of the level (where they stand relative to gender equality targets), and change (where their 2020 scores stand relative to their 2015 scores). Countries are also ranked according to their score (see Figure 3).

Trends or changes over time provide a useful complement to the scores (or country rankings). As the Index shows, some countries that have relatively low scores in 2020 may have made promising progress in recent years, while others that have achieved consistently high scores may have seen their progress stagnate or slip back. The Index shows that country scores can move up or down – and often by significant margins – within the space of five years.

## Limitations

While the 2022 SDG Gender Index remains the most comprehensive SDG-aligned gender index available, it must contend with an ongoing lack of gender data that are globally comparable and disaggregated by, for example, age, class, race and gender identity, as well as sex.

As noted, the Index includes data on 14 of the 17 SDGs, but there is a lack of comparable data specific to the three SDGs related to the environment: SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production; SDG 14 on life below water; and SDG 15 on life on land. The official SDG indicators for these goals tend to focus on environmental rather than social impact (let alone gender) and therefore we are not yet able to examine progress for girls and women for these SDGs.

Nevertheless, we have made an effort to include several indicators on gender and the environment in other parts of the Index.

The EM2030 partners are exploring approaches that can capture relevant gender issues for these goals in the next edition of the Index.

The data included in the Index may, in some cases, have been subject to the typical time lags and reflect the situation in a year or two prior to the reference year, depending on the data source. The reference years for all indicators and other relevant metadata are available on the EM2030 Data Hub (see <https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/data-hub/>). It should also be noted that the Index measures progress between two time points: 2015 and 2020. It does not, therefore, reflect the likely impact on girls and women of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020. The next edition of the Index will include more recent data and evidence on the impact of the pandemic. However, this report does draw on issue-specific or smaller-scale research to argue that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality has been, and will continue to be, severe (see Annex 3).

Finally, EM2030 acknowledges that the SDGs (and, as a result, the Index itself) do not address structural power relations, nor the obstacles faced by gender-diverse groups that are embedded in those structures. The EM2030 partnership is committed to advocate for more and better gender data to accurately measure and understand intersectional inequalities, including deeper feminist critique that departs from gender-binary language and that challenges existing social, economic and political systems that perpetuate all forms of inequality.

# 3. KEY FINDINGS

## Overall findings

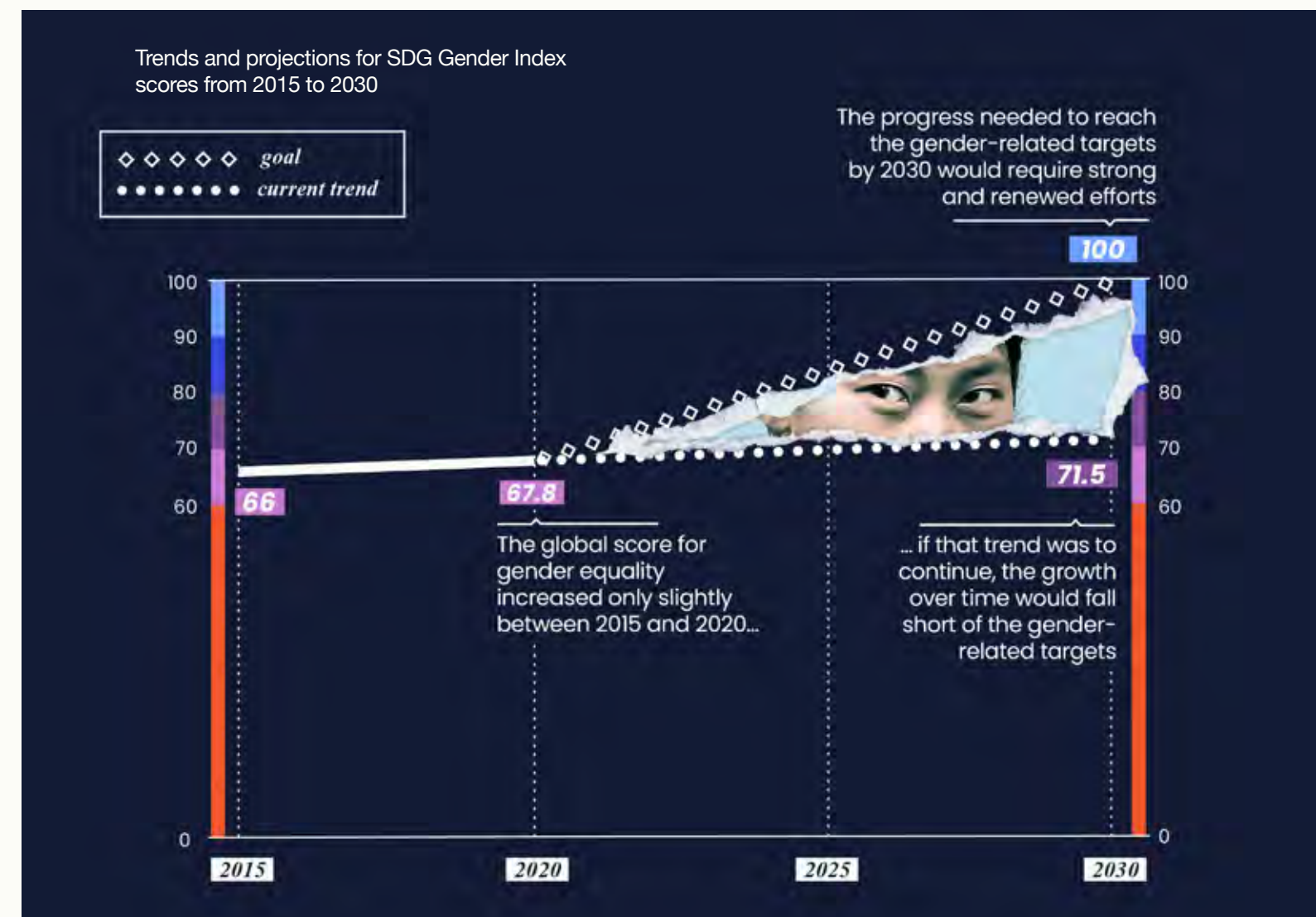
The 2022 SDG Gender Index finds little progress on gender equality at the global level between 2015 and 2020. The global Index score for gender equality stands at just 67.8 in 2020: only a slight improvement of less than two points since 2015.

If current trends continue, the global score will only reach 71 out of 100 by 2030, the deadline for the achievement of the SDGs (see Figure 4). And even this projection could

be seen as optimistic, given the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has already had on the well-being of the world's girls and women (see Section 4: *The COVID-19 pandemic: highlighting the world's gender equality fault-lines* and Annex 3).

Figure 4.

## PROGRESS ON GLOBAL GENDER EQUALITY TOO SLOW TO MEET TARGETS BY 2030





Rank	Country	Score	Change in points	Rank	Country	Score	Change in points	Rank	Country	Score	Change in points
1	Denmark	90.4	▲ 1.0	51	North Macedonia	72.5	▲ 1.3	101	Cambodia	60.5	▲ 4.7
2	Sweden	90.3	■ 0.1	52	Moldova	72.4	▲ 5.1	102	Botswana	60.3	■ 0.9
3	Norway	90.2	▲ 1.5	53	Belarus	72.3	▼ -1.3	103	Ghana	59.9	▲ 3.8
4	Iceland	89.0	■ 0.1	54	Kazakhstan	72.0	■ 0.8	104	Iran	59.7	■ 0.7
5	Finland	88.9	■ 0.8	55	Trinidad & Tobago	71.4	▲ 1.7	105	Lebanon	58.2	■ 0.1
6	Austria	88.7	▲ 1.9	56	South Africa	70.9	▲ 1.6	106	Myanmar	57.7	-
7	Netherlands	88.3	■ 0.6	57	Bosnia & Herzegovina	70.7	▲ 2.9	107	Bangladesh	57.7	▲ 2.7
8	Switzerland	87.8	■ 0.6	58	Mongolia	70.6	▲ 4.3	108	Rwanda	57.3	▲ 1.4
9	Luxembourg	86.7	■ 0.2	59	Malaysia	70.3	▲ 3.6	109	Lesotho	57.1	▲ 1.6
10	Ireland	85.5	▲ 2.9	60	Thailand	70.1	▲ 1.8	110	Kenya	56.2	▲ 1.1
11	New Zealand	85.3	▲ 1.4	61	Philippines	69.8	▲ 1.1	111	Venezuela	55.8	▼ -6.7
12	Spain	84.8	▲ 2.5	62	China	69.7	▲ 2.0	112	Tanzania	55.7	▲ 4.4
13	Belgium	84.7	■ -0.4	63	Uzbekistan	69.4	■ 0.6	113	Senegal	55.2	▲ 4.8
14	Australia	84.7	▲ 1.0	64	Viet Nam	69.4	▲ 2.2	114	Mozambique	54.6	▲ 2.8
15	Estonia	84.3	▲ 1.0	65	Ukraine	69.3	▲ 3.4	115	Gabon	54.5	-
16	Canada	84.2	▲ 1.9	66	Panama	69.2	▲ 2.1	116	Eswatini	54.2	-
17	France	83.8	▲ 2.2	67	Mexico	69.0	■ 0.2	117	Benin	53.7	▲ 9.3
18	United Kingdom	83.7	■ -0.8	68	Kyrgyzstan	68.7	■ -0.7	118	Gambia	53.5	▲ 3.9
19	Slovenia	83.4	■ -0.8	69	Ecuador	68.7	▼ -1.1	119	Cameroon	53.1	■ 0.9
20	Singapore	83.0	▲ 2.8	70	Qatar	68.5	-	120	Zimbabwe	53.0	■ -0.8
21	Germany	83.0	■ 0.7	71	Russia	67.8	▲ 3.6	121	Côte d'Ivoire	51.7	▲ 3.6
22	Czechia	82.6	▲ 1.9	72	Morocco	67.7	▲ 2.7	122	Iraq	51.2	▲ 5.0
23	Portugal	82.5	▲ 2.6	73	Dominican Rep.	67.6	▲ 1.5	123	Pakistan	50.6	▲ 2.1
24	Lithuania	81.3	■ 0.9	74	Paraguay	67.6	▲ 1.8	124	Zambia	50.4	▲ 1.7
25	Israel	81.3	▲ 3.1	75	Colombia	66.8	■ -0.1	125	Ethiopia	49.8	▲ 1.3
26	Latvia	80.4	■ 0.7	76	Indonesia	66.7	▲ 1.8	126	Burkina Faso	49.4	▲ 3.2
27	Cyprus	80.2	▲ 2.8	77	Turkey	66.5	■ -0.4	127	Togo	49.2	▲ 2.5
28	Croatia	79.7	▲ 2.7	78	Brazil	66.4	■ -0.8	128	Angola	49.2	-
29	Malta	79.3	▲ 1.9	79	Peru	66.2	▲ 1.6	129	Uganda	49.0	■ 0.2
30	Slovakia	79.0	▲ 1.8	80	Jordan	66.2	▲ 2.1	130	Nigeria	48.4	■ -0.7
31	Uruguay	78.7	▲ 2.8	81	Jamaica	66.1	■ 0.7	131	Malawi	48.0	■ 0.8
32	Italy	78.0	▲ 1.8	82	Tajikistan	66.0	▲ 5.0	132	Liberia	47.7	▲ 3.4
33	Hungary	77.9	▲ 2.1	83	Tunisia	65.9	▲ 2.0	133	Mali	47.6	▲ 3.5
34	Poland	77.7	▲ 1.0	84	Belize	65.6	-	134	Madagascar	47.3	▲ 2.6
35	Japan	77.5	■ 0.8	85	Oman	65.6	-	135	Mauritania	46.0	■ -0.7
36	South Korea	76.9	▲ 2.8	86	Sri Lanka	65.5	▲ 1.5	136	Sierra Leone	44.4	▲ 1.9
37	Greece	76.7	■ 0.3	87	Azerbaijan	65.5	▲ 1.0	137	Guinea	44.3	▲ 2.4
38	United States	76.6	▲ 2.2	88	Nicaragua	65.1	■ -0.1	138	Burundi	43.6	▲ 1.9
39	Serbia	76.6	▲ 4.0	89	Kuwait	64.9	▼ -1.3	139	DR Congo	43.3	▲ 4.0
40	Montenegro	76.5	▲ 1.6	90	El Salvador	64.6	▲ 2.8	140	Niger	43.3	▲ 2.9
41	Costa Rica	76.3	▲ 1.5	91	India	64.5	▲ 4.1	141	Sudan	43.1	-
42	United Arab Emirates	76.2	▲ 5.0	92	Saudi Arabia	64.4	▲ 8.6	142	Yemen	39.3	-
43	Mauritius	75.3	▲ 1.6	93	Algeria	64.3	▼ -1.3	143	Afghanistan	38.2	▼ -1.9
44	Argentina	74.5	■ -0.6	94	Nepal	64.2	▲ 6.7	144	Chad	35.6	■ 0.7
45	Armenia	74.3	▲ 6.7	95	Bolivia	63.2	■ 0.1				
46	Albania	74.2	▲ 3.8	96	Egypt	62.4	▲ 5.8				
47	Bulgaria	74.0	■ 0.2	97	Lao PDR	61.2	▲ 2.3				
48	Georgia	73.4	▲ 4.7	98	Guatemala	61.2	▲ 1.4				
49	Chile	73.3	▲ 1.2	99	Honduras	61.0	▲ 2.8				
50	Romania	72.8	■ 0.3	100	Namibia	60.7	■ 0.6				

Figure 5.

## NO COUNTRY HAS ACHIEVED THE PROMISE OF GENDER EQUALITY ENVISIONED IN THE SDGS

- ▲ **Fast progress**  
Increase of more than +3 points
- ▲ **Some progress**  
Increase between +1 and +3 points
- **No progress**  
Change between +1 and -1 points
- ▼ **Decline**  
Decrease of more than -1 point

Not one of the 144 countries in the Index has fully achieved the promise of gender equality envisioned in the SDGs (Figure 5), and not even the top-scoring countries are on track to hit the targets for every goal and indicator.

## Trends in global gender equality: progress, but too slow and patchy

More than half of countries worldwide – 91 out of the 135 with comparable data – made progress on gender equality since 2015: 28 countries (21 per cent) made ‘fast progress’; while 63 (47 per cent) countries made ‘some progress.’ However, even for these countries that made progress, the improvement in Index scores was, in general, quite small (an average improvement of around 3 points out of 100).

A significant proportion of countries (around 1 in 3 countries, or 32.6 per cent) either made no progress at all or moved in the wrong direction since 2015 (see Figure 6). The six countries that moved in the wrong direction on gender equality to a noticeable extent (with their scores dropping more than 1 point between 2015 and 2020) were Venezuela

(-6.7 points), Afghanistan (-1.7 points), Algeria (-1.3 points), Belarus (-1.3 points), Kuwait (-1.3 points), and Ecuador (-1.1).

There are countries that made relatively large leaps on a range of gender equality issues between 2015 and 2020. The 10 countries that saw the greatest improvements in their Index score were Benin (+9.3 points), Saudi Arabia (+8.6 points), Armenia (+6.7 points), Nepal (+6.7 points), Egypt (+5.8 points), Moldova (+5.1 points), Iraq (+5.0 points), Tajikistan (+5.0 points), United Arab Emirates (UAE) (+5.0 points), and Senegal (+4.8 points). For a further breakdown of the goals and issues that drove these countries’ relatively fast progress, see *Annex 4*.

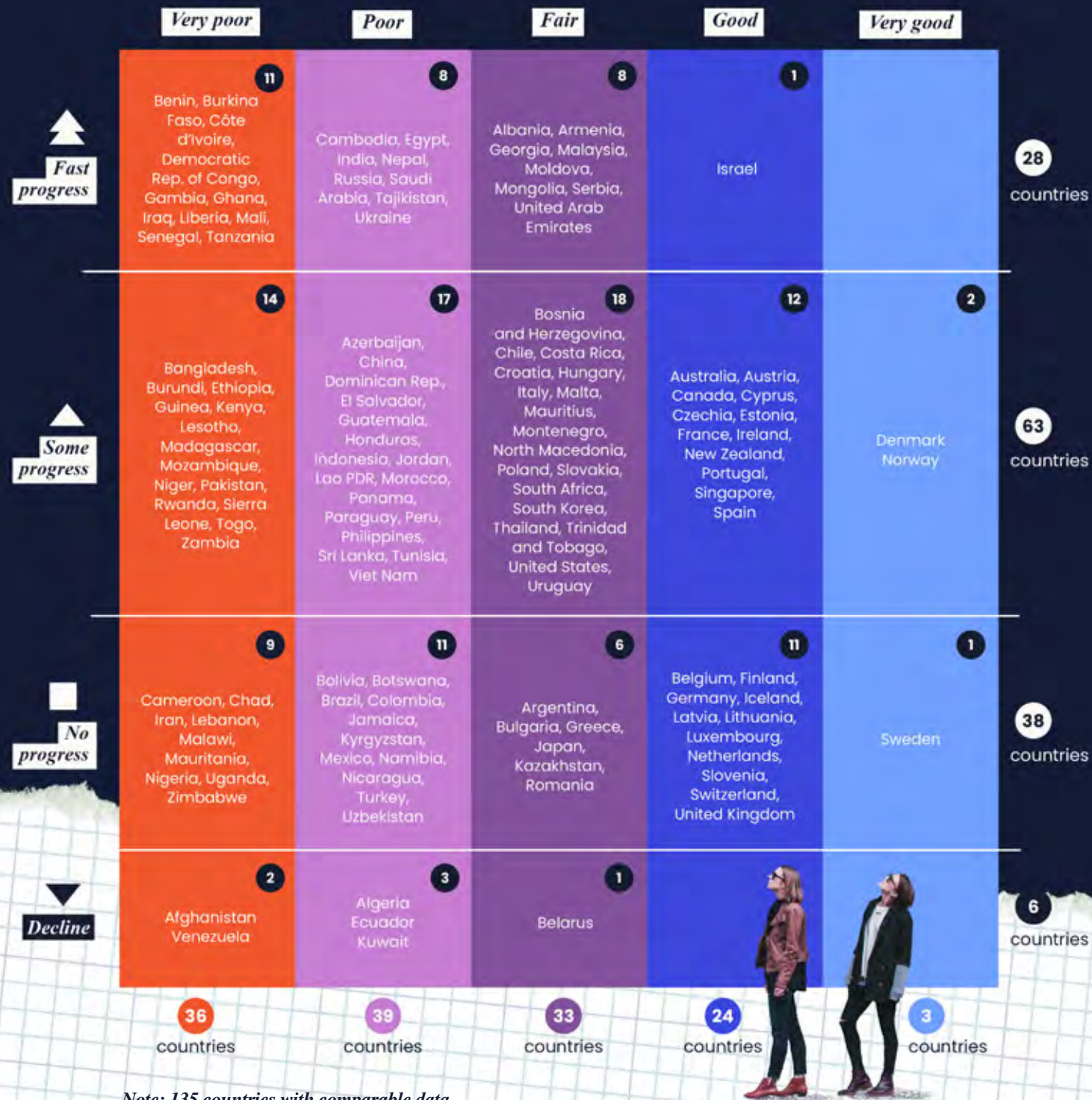
While significant gender equality challenges remain, this group of ten fast-moving countries have made noticeable strides on a range of gender equality issues in just a few years. With the exceptions of Saudi Arabia and the UAE (which are both high-income countries), the other fast-moving countries in this list are middle-income countries. While each of them still needs to make further progress on gender equality (the average Index score across this group of ten fast-moving countries was ‘very poor’, at just 58 out of 100), it is encouraging to see that some countries are at least going in the right direction and at a relatively rapid pace.

**SOME COUNTRIES ARE GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND AT A RELATIVELY RAPID PACE**



Figure 6.

## MORE THAN HALF OF COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE MADE PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY BETWEEN 2015 AND 2020



Note: 135 countries with comparable data

Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.

## The state of global gender equality in 2020: still too many girls and women left behind

While it is encouraging that many countries have been making progress on gender equality – albeit too slowly – in 2020, the world still had more than three billion girls and women living in countries with scores that were ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ for gender equality (see Figure 7).

The Index rankings show that richer countries tend to have higher scores on gender equality. However, Figure 8 shows that a country’s Index score cannot be explained by its national income or economic status alone. The United States (USA), for example, had one of the highest national per capita incomes in the world in 2020, yet its Index

score shows that gender equality in that country is at broadly the same level (between 76 and 77 points) as that of Costa Rica, Greece and South Korea, which all have far fewer resources at their disposal. Serbia has a similar Index score to the USA but a national income that is more than eight times lower. In addition, some countries in Eastern Europe, like Czechia and Slovenia, have gender equality scores that equal those achieved by countries with national per capita incomes that are twice as high, such as Germany and Singapore.

Figure 7.

## MORE THAN THREE BILLION GIRLS AND WOMEN LIVED IN COUNTRIES WITH ‘POOR’ OR ‘VERY POOR’ SCORES FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN 2020



Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and UN DESA.

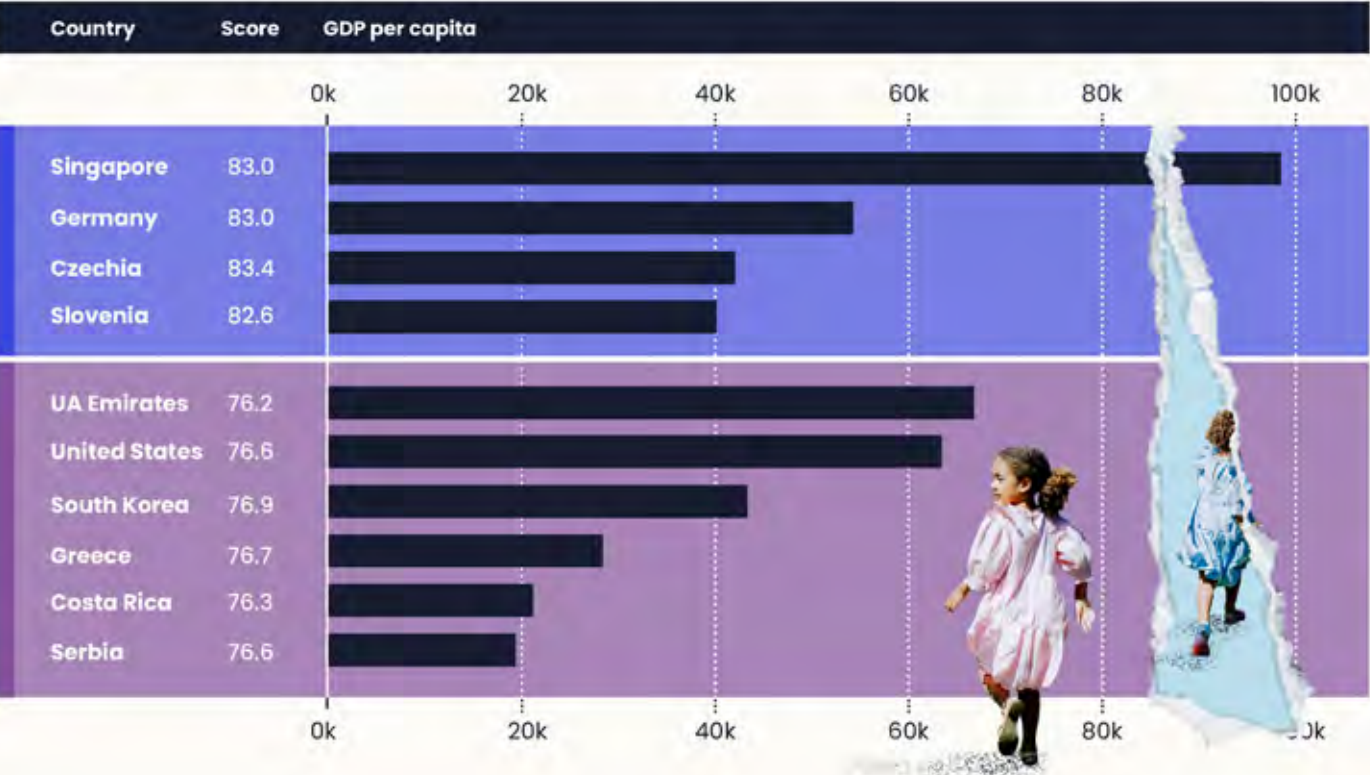


Figure 8.

SOME COUNTRIES ACHIEVE MORE FOR GENDER EQUALITY WITH FEWER RESOURCES

SDG Gender Index scores and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per Capita, 2020

All of these countries have scores of around 83 (Good) or 76 (Fair) on the Index, although they have very different levels of GDP per capita



Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and World Bank.

Findings by SDG and issue

What does the Index say about global progress by individual SDG? Figure 9 shows the world's strongest and weakest SDGs in terms of gender equality. On average, the highest scores worldwide have been achieved for SDG 6 on water, SDG 7 on clean energy, SDG 2 on nutrition and SDG 1 on poverty.

The three SDGs with the lowest global average Index scores are SDG 17 on

partnerships, SDG 13 on climate and SDG 16 on justice. These three low-scoring goals contain key cross-cutting issues that both directly and indirectly affect gender equality, and yet the world continues to fall short on all three.

In terms of pace of change, the greatest progress globally since 2015 has been seen on SDG 9 on innovation, with 'fast progress' of 7.8 points by 2020. This has been driven by women's wider access to online financial services and to the internet in

general. However, while this is the goal with the greatest improvement in its scores since 2015, the average score for SDG 9 in 2020 was still just 62.3 points or 'poor'. So, despite the progress made, there is still some way to go.

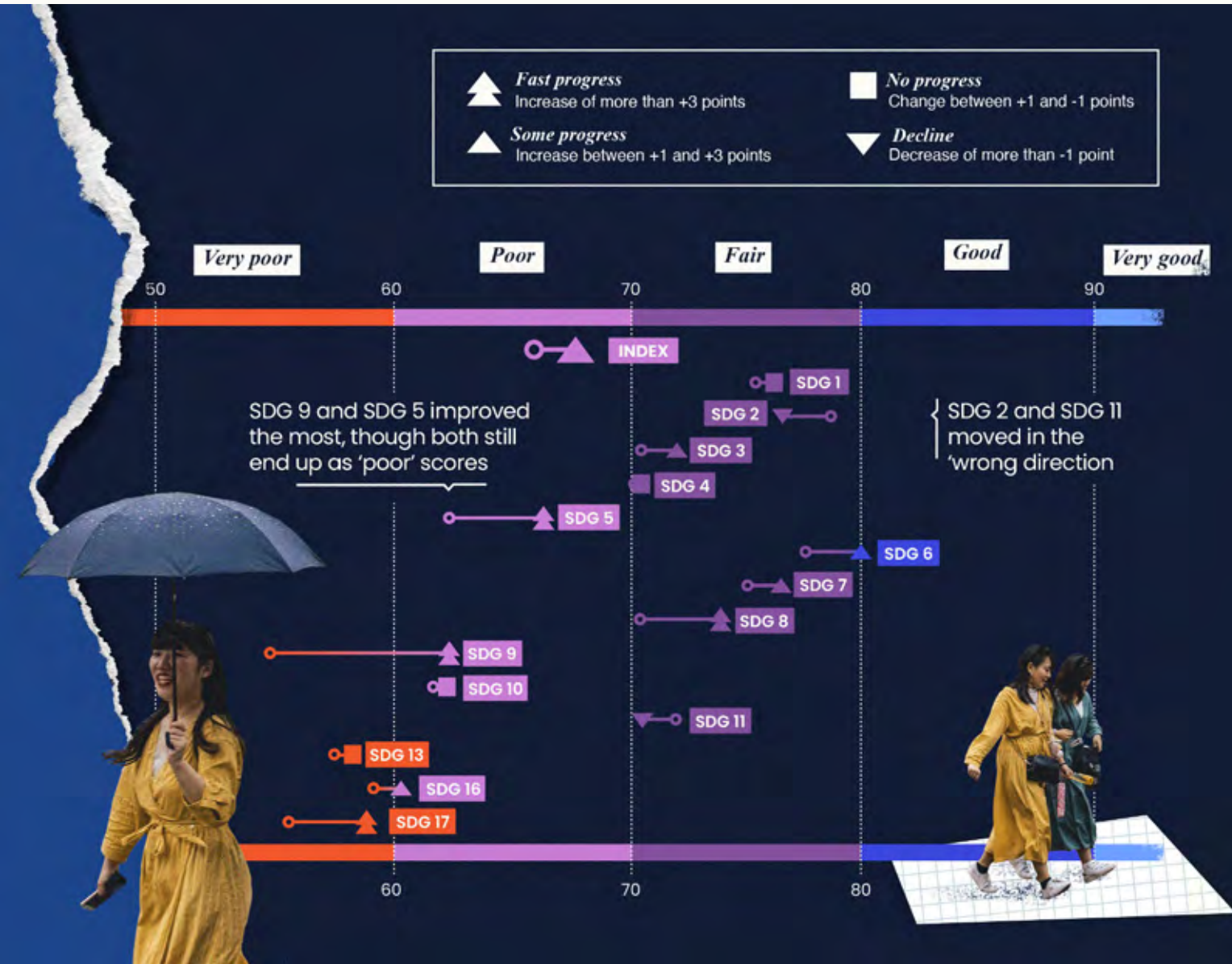
The flagship goal for gender equality, SDG 5, shows the second biggest increase between 2015 and 2020 globally, with 'fast progress' (+4.1 points). This improvement has been driven by indicators that capture women's political participation in both elected

governments and governmental leadership roles and, to a lesser extent, by changes in legal frameworks on the grounds for abortion. Even so, the average score on SDG 5 in 2020 is still 'poor' (at 65.4 points). Again, more effort is needed.

Figure 9.

WIDE VARIATION IN GENDER EQUALITY SCORES BY SDG

Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.





No single country is the world's best performer – or even among the world's top ten performers – across the individual SDGs

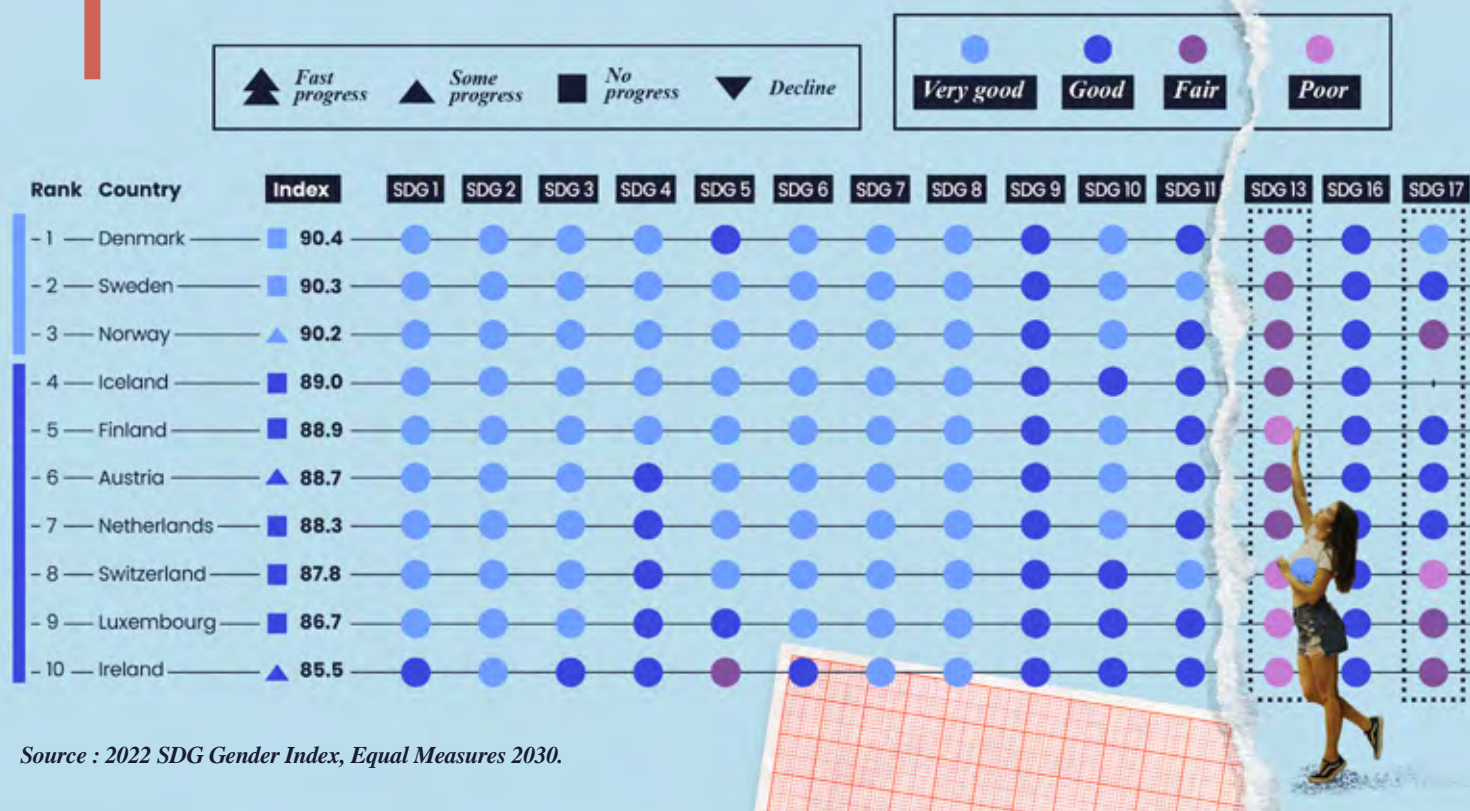
The power of the Index extends beyond the big picture illustrated by overall Index scores to look at each country's strengths and weaknesses on a goal-by-goal basis. This shows that every country has more to do on gender equality, even those with high scores on the Index overall (see Figure 10). For example, we can see that high-performing countries have weaknesses on gender equality for SDG 13 on climate and SDG 17 on partnerships.

The Index can serve as a tool or a 'warning light' to draw attention to problematic areas. It can also help to identify 'bright spots' and pockets of progress. This nuanced picture can prompt deeper analysis and more probing questions about the underlying issues and what is driving progress, stagnation or decline in a country or worldwide.

Pockets of progress and compelling success stories can be found among 'lower-performing' regions and countries

The Index also allows us to look at gender equality in terms of country performance on individual issues or indicators. From this we can see areas of progress, and compelling success stories can be found even among countries that have lower index scores overall.

Figure 10. EVEN TOP-SCORING COUNTRIES ON THE INDEX LAG BEHIND ON SOME SDGS AND GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES



Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.



Figure 11. 'SURPRISING' FINDINGS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.



For example, Denmark (90.4), Sweden (90.3), Norway (90.2), Iceland (89.0) and Finland (88.9) take the top five spots in the Index overall. However, even these high-scoring countries have room for improvement on some gender issues.

Take the share of ministerial roles held by women (Ind. 5.5): a key measure for SDG 5 on gender equality. On this indicator, Denmark ranks 40th worldwide, with women holding just over 30 per cent of such roles in 2020. Whereas Costa Rica and South Africa reached the target for gender parity in ministerial posts in 2020.

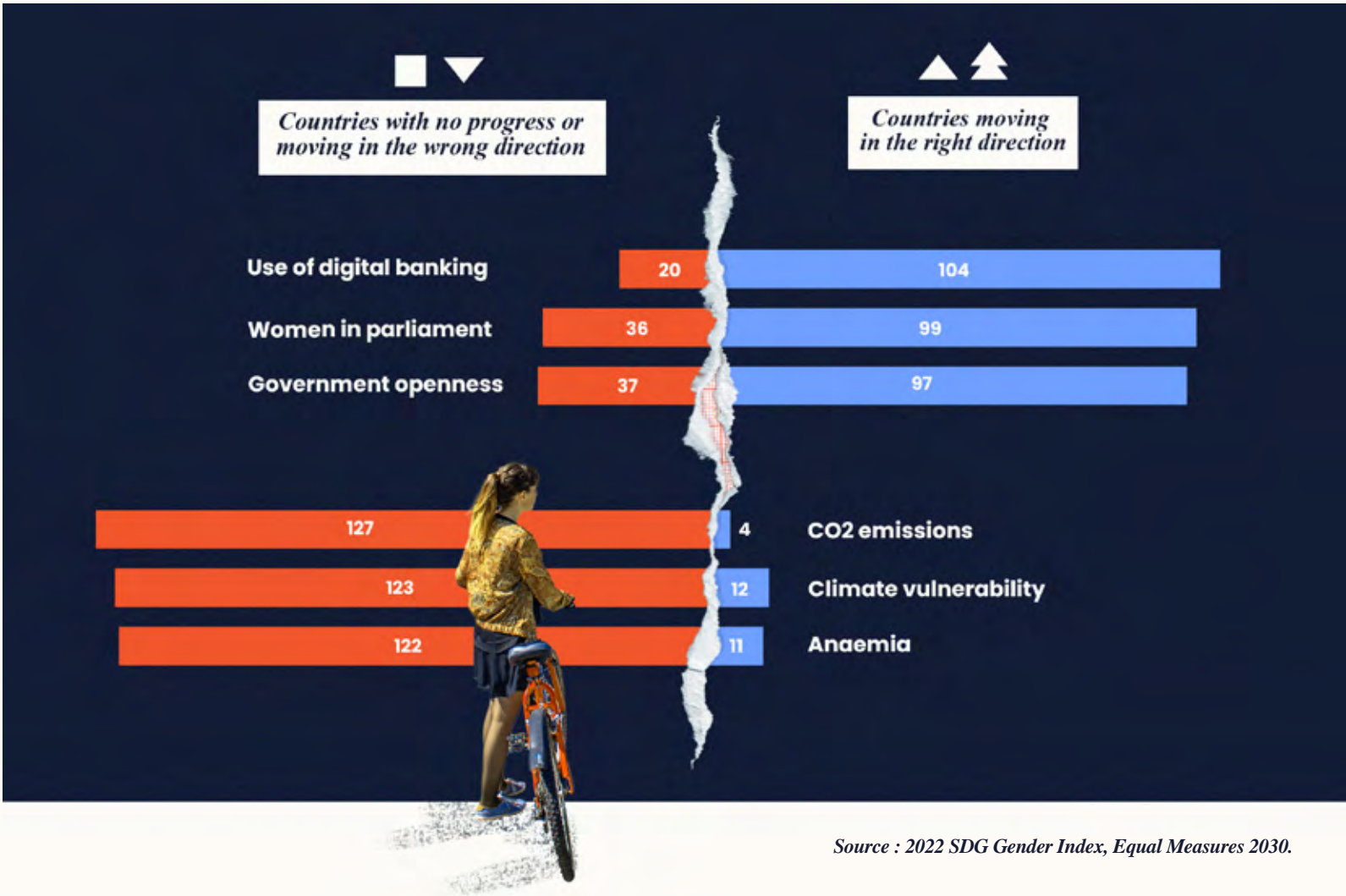
And Sweden ranks 64th in terms of its share of women in science and technology research (Ind. 9.4), an indicator that is used to measure progress towards SDG 9 on innovation, with just 33 per cent of such positions held by women in 2020. On the other hand, countries such as Bulgaria, Malaysia, Mongolia, Paraguay, Thailand and Uruguay had already met the target for gender parity in science and technology research positions in 2020.

By looking at the individual issues that make up the SDG Gender Index, we can see that there are ‘bright spots’ even among countries with lower scores on the Index overall (see Figure 11).

**A mixed picture of progress on individual gender equality issues: some issues have significant momentum in the right direction and other issues have the opposite**

By looking at average progress on the individual issues that make up the 2022 SDG Gender Index, we can see that there is a very mixed picture. On some issues in the Index the majority of countries are moving in the right direction: but on other issues the majority of countries are moving in the ‘wrong direction’. For example, Figure 12 shows that a large proportion of countries are either making ‘no progress’ or are moving in the ‘wrong direction’ on carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions (Ind. 11.2), climate vulnerability (Ind. 13.3) and anaemia amongst non-pregnant women (Ind. 2.3). On the other hand, most countries are making ‘some progress’ or ‘fast progress’ on women’s use of digital banking (Ind. 9.1), women in parliament (Ind. 5.4) and views on state legitimacy and openness (Ind. 16.4).

Figure 12.  
**ISSUES WITH MANY COUNTRIES MOVING IN THE 'RIGHT' AND 'WRONG' DIRECTION BETWEEN 2015 AND 2020**





**A girl who is 10 years old today,  
will be this age by the time her country  
achieves gender equality on these  
key issues**

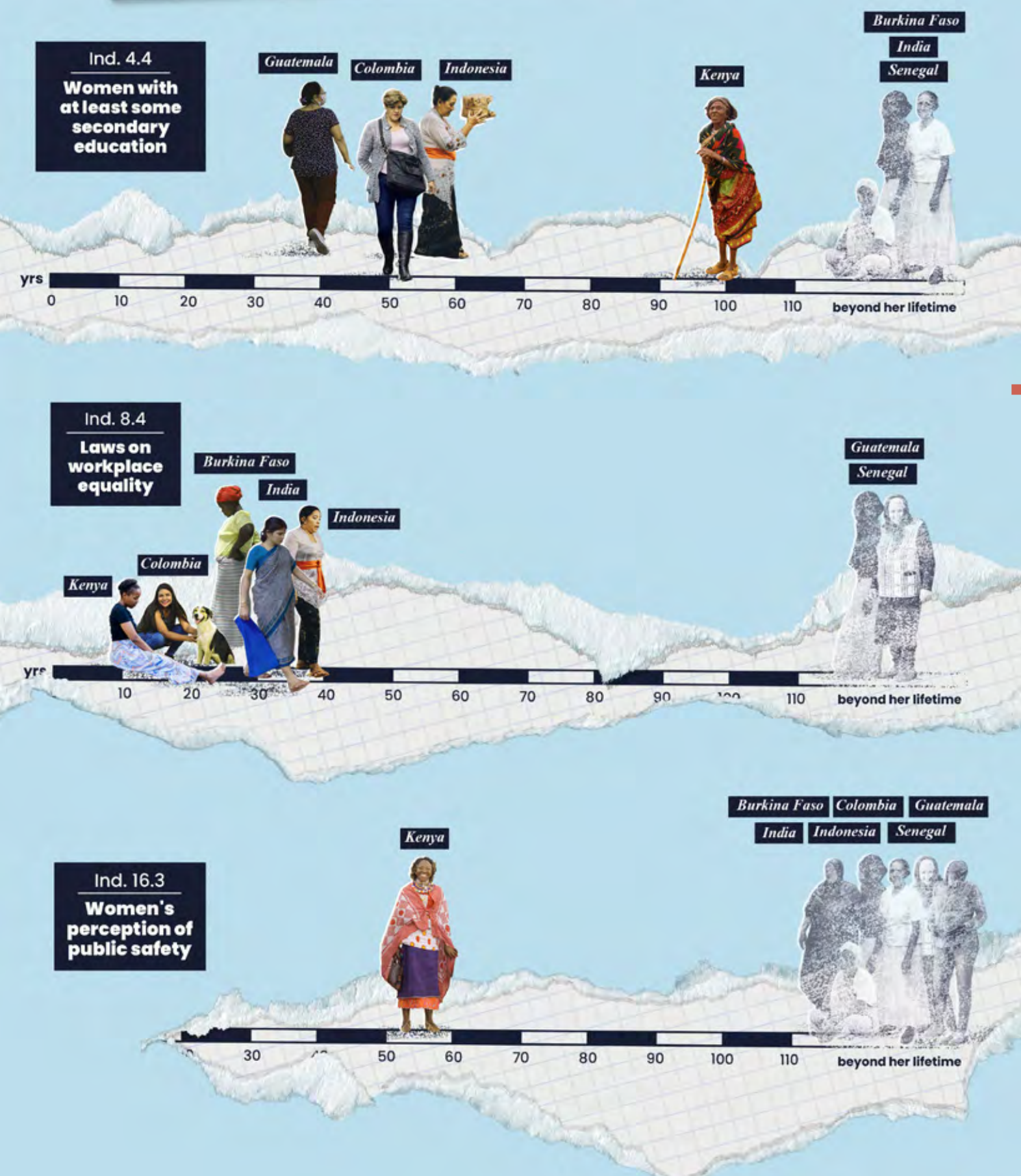


Figure 13.

**HOW OLD WILL A GIRL  
WHO IS 10-YEARS-OLD  
TODAY BE BEFORE  
HER COUNTRY ACHIEVES  
KEY GENDER  
EQUALITY TARGETS?**

**‘Are we there yet?’: how many years  
until equality will be reached for key  
gender issues?**

A powerful way to understand the trajectory for gender equality is to examine past trends and use these to forecast progress into the future. This method of forecasting, however, requires each country to have several comparable data points to provide an accurate picture of the trends. It is not possible to do this across the entire Index, due to lack of sufficient data. Yet, we were able to do so for four of the Index indicators.

The SDG Gender Index-linked ‘Are we there yet’ online calculator (see [gef.equalmeasures2030.org](https://gef.equalmeasures2030.org)) provides forecasts of a subset of indicators from the Index: women's access to family planning (Ind. 3.3), women who have attained at least some secondary education (Ind. 4.4), workplace equality laws (Ind. 8.4), and women's perceptions of public safety (Ind. 16.3). The forecasts, based on the assumptions that past trends will continue, provide an idea of how many years it would take a country to reach the target for equality on a particular issue (see Figure 13).



# NO REGION IMPROVED BY MORE THAN THREE POINTS IN THEIR INDEX SCORE SINCE 2015

## Findings by region

At the regional level, only marginal improvements have been made in gender equality. No region has registered an improvement of more than three points in their Index score since 2015. As shown in Figure 14, it is the lower-scoring regions like the Middle East and North Africa that saw the biggest increase in their Index score – and therefore the greatest improvement in gender equality – between 2015 and 2020. Regions like Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and North America were more gender equal to begin with (with higher Index scores in 2015) but made less progress over this period.

**Europe and North America** is the most gender equal region, with the highest average Index score in 2020 (80.0 or ‘good’); however, it made little progress between 2015 and 2020, with an improvement of only 1.7 points, or ‘some progress’. The European and North American countries that made the most progress during this period include Armenia (+6.7 points), Moldova (+5.1 points) and Georgia (+4.7 points), while Slovenia (-0.8 points) and the UK (-0.8 points) made ‘no progress’, and Belarus moved in the ‘wrong direction’ (-1.3 points) between 2015 and 2020.

Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific had very similar levels of gender equality in 2020, based on their average Index scores. This resulted because Asia and the Pacific improved by 2.2 points making ‘some progress’ between 2015 and 2020, effectively ‘catching up’ to Latin America and the Caribbean. Meanwhile, Latin America and the Caribbean made ‘no progress’ over the same period, with an average increase in Index score of just half a point to 67.6 in 2020. Both regions have Index scores that remain in the ‘poor’ category for 2020.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, El Salvador (+2.8 points), Honduras (+2.8 points) and Uruguay (+2.8 points) made the most progress on gender equality between 2015 and 2020, though none of these three countries made ‘fast progress’ compared to countries in other regions. Brazil (-0.8 points) and Argentina (-0.6 points) stagnated, making ‘no progress’. And Venezuela (-6.7 points) and Ecuador (-1.1 points) both moved in the ‘wrong direction’. Venezuela’s Index score dropped by more than any other country in the world between 2015 and 2020.

In **Asia and the Pacific**, the countries leading on progress in gender equality include Nepal (+6.7 points), Tajikistan (+5.0 points), Cambodia (+4.7 points) and Mongolia (+4.3 points), while Afghanistan (-1.9 points) moved in the ‘wrong direction’. Afghanistan saw the second largest drop in its score of all countries in the world, with only Venezuela’s score dropping further.

The **Middle East and North Africa** region achieved a score of 65.8 (‘poor’) in 2020 but it is the region that registered the highest improvement from 2015 to 2020 (+2.6 points). A closer look at the country level, however,

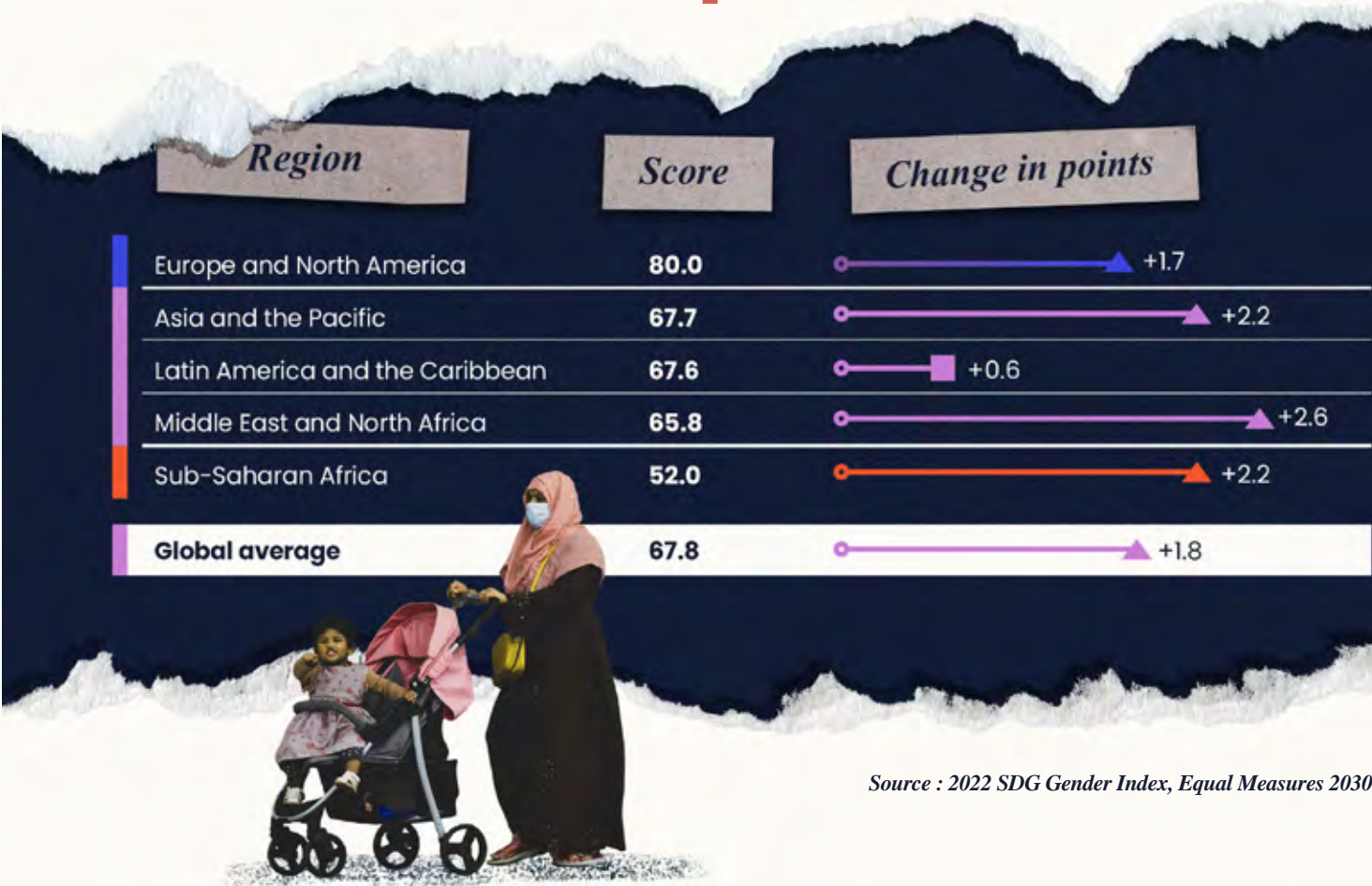
reveals diverse shifts within the region, with some countries making marked gains such as Saudi Arabia (+8.6 points), Egypt (+5.8 points), Iraq (+5.0 points) and UAE (+5.0 points), while others have seen declines in their Index scores such as Algeria (-1.3 points) and Kuwait (-1.3 points).

**Sub-Saharan Africa** has seen ‘some progress’ on gender equality over time, although its increase of 2.2 points between 2015 and 2020 leaves the region with an overall Index score of just 52 (‘very poor’) in 2020. Progress has been mixed for its

three lowest-scoring countries: Democratic Republic of Congo (‘fast progress’, +4.0 points), Niger (‘some progress’, +2.9 points) and Chad (‘no progress’, +0.7 points). The biggest improvements have been seen in Benin (+9.3 points), Senegal (+4.8 points) and Tanzania (+4.4 points), all considered to have made ‘fast progress’. In fact, Benin tops the list globally for progress in its Index score, with the largest increase of any country between 2015 and 2020.

Figure 14.

## REGIONAL AVERAGE INDEX SCORES AND CHANGE FROM 2015 TO 2020



Source : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.



## Findings on the seven EM2030 focus countries

### BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso made 'fast progress' on gender equality between 2015 and 2020, but it still ranks quite low (126th in the world). Even after the improvement, at 49.4 points it scores 'very poor' on gender equality. While the country advanced two places in the regional rankings for sub-Saharan Africa over time, it fell back two places in the global rankings. Burkina Faso has made progress on SDG 9 on innovation, SDG 3 on health and SDG 4 on education. However, there has been stagnation and decline in other key areas, including SDG 2 on nutrition, SDG 16 on justice, and SDG 10 on inequalities.

### COLOMBIA

Colombia ranks 75th in the world in the Index, with a score of 66.8 points ('poor') – close to the regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean (67.6 points).

The country made 'no progress' between 2015 and 2020, and it has been overtaken in the overall Index by other countries that have made more progress up to 2020 (such as Morocco and Russia). As a result, Colombia fell by six places in the global rankings and by

one place in the rankings for the region, with the country now placed 11th in the region, after Paraguay. Colombia has made progress on SDG 9 on innovation, SDG 6 on water, and SDG 7 on clean energy. However, it has seen stagnation and decline on SDG 2 on nutrition, SDG 1 on poverty and SDG 11 on sustainable cities.

### GUATEMALA

The Index shows that gender equality in Guatemala improved slightly from 2015 to 2020, with the country making 'some progress'. With a score of 61.2 points in 2020, Guatemala ranks 98th globally in the Index. No change in its regional ranking over time leaves the country 19th out of 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Guatemala has made progress on SDG 9 on innovation, SDG 3 on health and SDG 16 on justice. However, the country has also seen stagnation and decline on SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and SDG 5 on gender equality.



### INDIA

India made 'fast progress' towards gender equality between 2015 and 2020, according to the Index. Its score improved from 60.4 to 64.5 over time – but the country retains a rating that is still only 'poor' and that is below the average score for Asia and the Pacific of 67.7 for 2020. In all, India scores below the regional average for 11 of the 13 goals included in the Index (there were not enough data to calculate a score for SDG 9 on innovation for India). India has made progress on SDG 13 on climate, SDG 8 on work, and SDG 6 on water. However, there has been stagnation and decline on SDG 2 on nutrition, SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 11 on sustainable cities.

### INDONESIA

Indonesia scores 66.7 points in the Index for 2020, reflecting a slight improvement of 1.8 points on its score since 2015, and ranks 76th globally. This score is just below the average of 67.7 for the Asia and Pacific region for 2020, leaving Indonesia in 15th position among the region's 26 countries. Indonesia has made progress on SDG 13 on climate, SDG 9 on innovation, and SDG 6 on water. However, the country has seen stagnation and decline on SDG 11 on sustainable cities, SDG 2 on nutrition and SDG 10 on inequalities.

### KENYA

Kenya has seen limited progress in its overall Index score. While its score increased from 55.1 points in 2015 to 56.2 points in 2020, it remains 'very poor', ranking 110th in the world and 8th in sub-Saharan Africa. There has, however, been significant progress on several goals including SDG 9 on innovation, SDG 17 on partnerships and SDG 7 on clean energy. There has been stagnation and decline in other key areas, including SDG 2 on nutrition, SDG 1 on poverty and SDG 11 on sustainable cities.

### SENEGAL

Senegal's Index score presents a mixed picture for gender equality. The country receives an overall Index score of 55.2 in 2020, and while this is 'very poor', the score improved by almost 5 points over 2015 to 2020. This leaves Senegal ranked 113th in the Index globally. Senegal performs relatively well within sub-Saharan Africa, ranking 10th out of the 36 countries included in the Index across the region. Senegal has made progress on SDG 9 on innovation, SDG 17 on partnerships and SDG 8 on work. However, the country has seen stagnation and decline on SDG 2 on nutrition, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and SDG 7 on clean energy.



## 4. A FRACTURED WORLD: THE BACKDROP FOR GENDER EQUALITY

As well as capturing key evidence on progress towards the SDGs by goal, region and focus countries, analysis of the SDG Gender Index also confirms the importance of the context for gender equality.

In particular, the Index illuminates six contextual issues that shape aspects of equality for girls and women the world over: the COVID-19 pandemic, intersectionality, ecological collapse, political polarity, austerity, and international justice and solidarity.

### 1. The COVID-19 pandemic: highlighting the world's gender equality fault lines

It is too early to gauge the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls and women worldwide, but there are valid fears that the limited progress made on gender equality since 2015 was too fragile to withstand such an onslaught. The Index measures progress on gender equality between 2015 and 2020 and cannot, therefore, capture the complete picture. Yet every research study to date on the pandemic that has touched on gender has raised the alarm. In addition to the examples below, *Annex 3* compiles a range of recent research studies that reflect concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different aspects of gender equality.

On health, a study by Nair et al. across five States in India finds significant increases in maternal mortality as a result of the loss of access to sexual and reproductive health services during the pandemic, with a 23 per cent increase in deaths due to maternal complications.<sup>7</sup> On employment, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has estimated that women's loss of employment during the pandemic equates to the loss of at least a decade of progress.<sup>8</sup> On education, a study by the Presidential Policy and Strategy Unit (Kenya) and the Population Council finds that 16 per cent of vulnerable adolescent girls did not return to schools when they reopened in January 2021, compared with 8 per cent of adolescent boys.<sup>9</sup> And the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that the pandemic may cause an additional 13 million child marriages by 2030.<sup>10</sup>

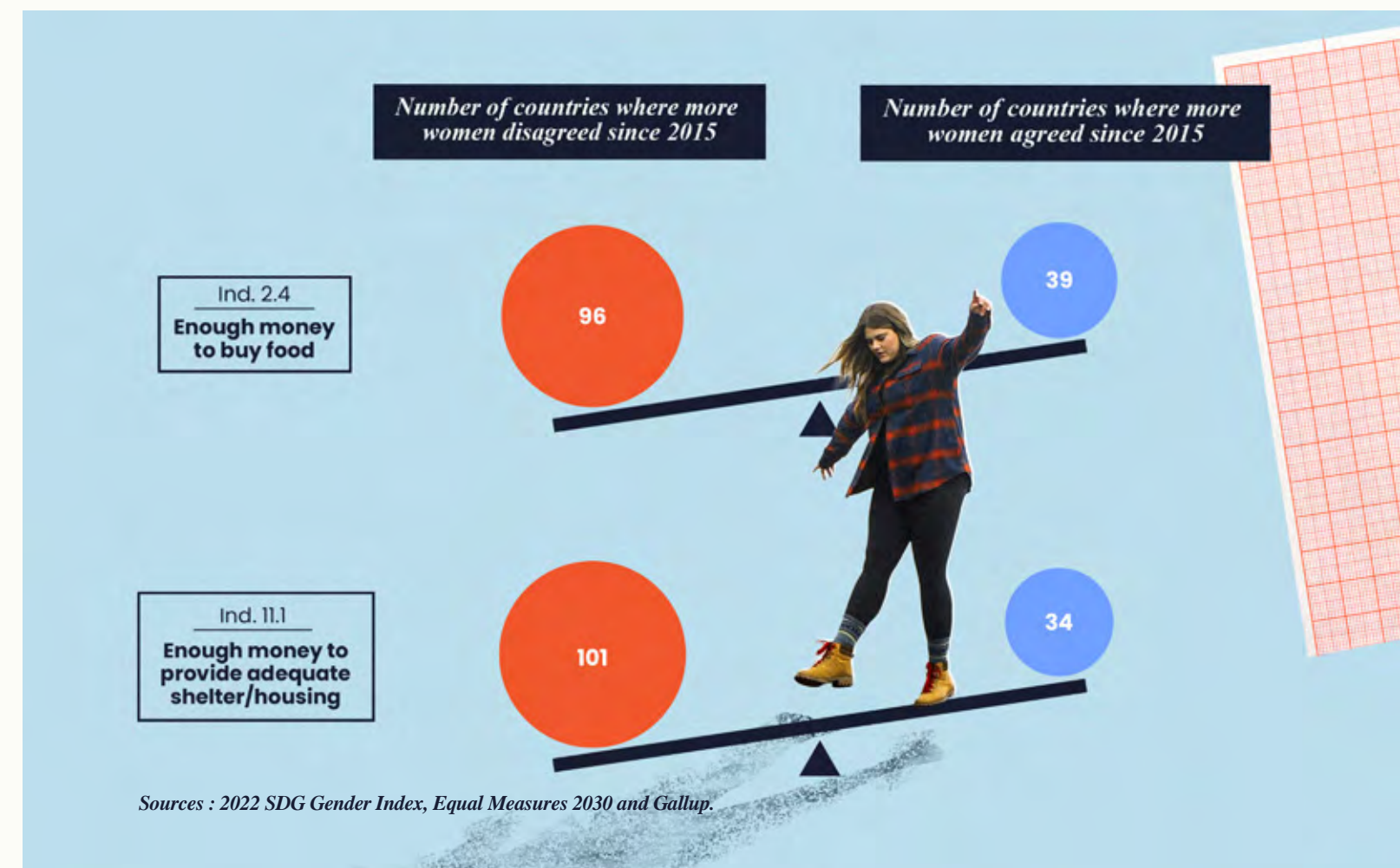
The impact on gender-based violence (GBV) is already thought to be severe, with Oxfam reporting a surge in calls to helplines of between 25 and 111 per cent in the first months of the pandemic across ten countries.<sup>11</sup> In a survey of 15 countries by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in October 2020, almost two-thirds of refugee and displaced women reported increased domestic violence during the pandemic, and more than half reported increased sexual violence.<sup>12</sup>

The key question now, however, is not about what happened, but why. Why has the pandemic had such an immediate, severe and already measurable impact on gender

**EVERY RESEARCH  
STUDY TO DATE ON  
THE PANDEMIC THAT  
HAS TOUCHED ON  
GENDER HAS RAISED  
THE ALARM**

Figure 15.

**WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD REPORTED GREATER CONCERN ABOUT THEIR HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SITUATION IN 2020 THAN IN 2015**





equality? The answer lies in long-term structural weaknesses. The pandemic has highlighted the gender fault lines, confirmed by the SDG Gender Index, that were hampering progress long before COVID-19. As seen in past crises – from economic downturns to conflicts and climate disasters – hard-won progress on gender equality often buckles under pressure.

The seeds of this crisis for women around the world were sown long before the pandemic (a finding in line with conclusions drawn by others, including the World Bank).<sup>13</sup> Take, for example, the existing gaps in essential services, social protection and care systems. Millions of women have had to contend with lack of access to quality health care, the lack of social safety nets and the lack of support such as paid leave. They were already over-represented in the precarious and informal jobs that have evaporated in the pandemic. By digging into the Index data, we can

**THIS PANDEMIC WILL NOT BE THE LAST GLOBAL SHOCK: WE NEED A RECOVERY THAT IS TRULY ‘FUTURE-PROOF’. A FUTURE-PROOF RECOVERY MUST BUILD RESILIENT SYSTEMS, AND THIS MEANS CLOSING GENDER GAPS**

see that economic hardships were already apparent in women’s perceptions of rising costs for food (Ind. 2.4) and housing (Ind. 11.1) between 2015 and 2020 (see Figure 15).

As a result of such structural gaps, the pandemic has hit women particularly hard, and their recovery is likely to be slower. As the Index shows, ‘getting back to normal’ is simply not ambitious enough, given that the pre-COVID-19 ‘normal’ was failing to deliver gender equality.

Some forecasts, including from the IMF, predict an economic bounce back for all regions in 2022 with slowdowns in growth then projected through 2026.<sup>14</sup> But will this rapid recovery – if it materializes – address the gender gaps showing up in the Index data or will it overlook, or even exacerbate, gender inequalities?

Right now, the signs are not looking good. UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have found major gaps in the extent to which countries’ COVID-19 response policies have been ‘gender sensitive’ (i.e., they address violence against girls and women, strengthen women’s economic security, or support unpaid care). Only 42 countries, just 19 per cent of the 219 analysed, have mounted a holistic response spanning all three domains. Indeed, 32 countries seem to have had no gender-sensitive COVID-19 response measures at all.<sup>15</sup>

A gender-neutral recovery will leave girls and women even further behind. This pandemic will not be the last global shock: we need a recovery that is truly ‘future-proof’. A future-proof recovery must build resilient systems, and this means closing gender gaps.



Figure 16.

## DISCOURAGING TRENDS IN LEVELS OF ‘PERSONAL AUTONOMY, INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION’

Sources : 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and Freedom House.

## 2. Intersectionality: looking beyond the averages to capture the full picture

EM2030 knows from its experience in building the SDG Gender Index and working with feminist organizations around the world that it is a struggle just to find data that are disaggregated by sex, let alone by other key determinants such as race, ethnicity, religion, language, disability status, age and gender identity. Measuring intersectional and structural inequalities is a global challenge,

with the nature of those who are excluded and left behind varying by region, country and even within countries.

We know, however, that inequality – measured on economic terms – has increased within countries and shows a strikingly high persistence over time.<sup>16</sup> The Index itself reveals worrying trends on levels of personal autonomy and individual rights (Ind. 10.2) (see Figure 16) – an area that has a particular impact on girls and women from marginalized groups.



## THOSE WITHOUT POWER REMAIN ‘UNCOUNTED’, WHICH MEANS WE LACK THE DATA NEEDED TO HIGHLIGHT THE IMPACT OF INEQUALITIES ON THEIR LIVES

Some indicators in the Index do, however, allow the disaggregation needed to see how particular groups of girls and women are affected more than others by a particular issue. There are, for example, some disaggregated data on race and maternal mortality (Ind. 3.1) from the USA and the UK. A 2019 report by Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries across the United Kingdom (MBRRACE-UK) finds that Black women in the UK are five times more likely to die during pregnancy or up to six weeks after delivery than White women, with women of Mixed ethnicity facing three times the risk and Asian women almost twice the risk.<sup>17</sup> In the USA, the National Institute of Health estimates that the maternal mortality rate among Black women is 3.5 times higher than among White women.<sup>18</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed gaps between groups within countries, with a report by UN Women in 2020 finding that Black women in the UK were over four times more likely to die from COVID-19 than White women.<sup>19</sup> The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has also reported on the intersections across gender and migration

status in care work (an area of high risk for COVID-19 infection): women account for 70 per cent of the global health workforce, with many of these being migrants.<sup>20,21</sup> According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 16 per cent of nurses across their Member States are foreign trained.<sup>22</sup>

These systemic inequalities, and the data gaps that allow them to persist, are not going unnoticed. Historically marginalized groups are coming together to close the data gaps. These include Data 4 Black Lives<sup>23</sup> and the Racial Equity Data Lab.<sup>24</sup> The data and other evidence provided by advocates are essential to understand group-based inequalities.

They, and others, are using data as a key tool in the fight for justice, recognizing that the lack of data on intersectional inequalities is not always accidental. The obscuring of exclusion is often a matter of political expediency: a way to divert attention and avoid taking radical action to rectify historical discrimination and inequality. As Alex Cobham wrote in 2019: ‘The phenomenon of being ‘uncounted’: the choice of who and what goes uncounted, excluded from gathered statistics or chosen metrics, is a question of power’.<sup>25</sup>

It is a vicious circle – those without power remain ‘uncounted’, which means they lack the data needed to highlight the impact of inequalities on their lives. This, in turn, curtails their ability to ‘make the case’, to fight the injustice they face and to have their needs prioritized in public policy discussions.

Data and evidence are about so much more than mere numbers. Disaggregated and well-used, they are vital tools for empowerment and equality, as outlined in this report’s recommendation on gender data (see *Section 5: Close the gaps in gender data*). As seen across the SDGs, context is all. And context demands an intersectional lens, rooted in intersectional data.

## 3. Ecological collapse: fuelling gender inequality

There are clear intersections between the drivers of climate change and gender inequality. Economic and social systems that rely on the exploitation of nature also rely on cheap labour from women, colonized and racialized groups. They are the natural consequences of economic policies that depend on the commodification of natural resources and on women’s labour, including the unpaid care they provide, to support market-driven economic growth.<sup>26</sup>

The impacts of climate change are differentiated and compounded by existing inequalities. Women, girls and others who experience often intersecting forms of social marginalization and discrimination, including LGBTQIA+ people, migrants, racialized communities, people with disabilities and those living in poverty, suffer the worst consequences of climate change and natural disasters.

These consequences are the result of a complex web of factors that both increase their vulnerability to crises and hamper their ability to adapt. Such interlocking factors include a lack of access to resources and assets, precarious employment and limited access to social safety nets, and a lack of access to health care. At the same time, they must also contend with increased environmental health risks, greater care-giving burdens, greater violence and a lack of autonomy over their lives.<sup>27</sup>

For example, as we have seen in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, a woman’s burden of care intensifies during any time of crisis. A woman caught up in an environmental disaster may well have to spend more time trying to secure food and clean water and caring for relatives who may be cut off from essential services. Her increased burden of care may limit her ability to access emergency resources, such as food and fuel and other

services. She may even curb her own nutrition to provide for her children and other household members.<sup>28</sup>

Climate change and climate-related disasters also exacerbate intimate partner and other forms of GBV in multiple ways.<sup>29</sup> Violence is used:

- to control and enforce skewed power relations and existing gender inequalities around household and community resources, particularly when there is increasing climate-related pressure on natural resources
- to quell resistance from communities in response to land-grabbing or forced displacement driven by large-scale development projects
- to silence women environmental defenders, particularly when they engage in activism or speak up for their rights
- in the aftermath of natural disasters and other emergencies, particularly as men struggle to deal with post-traumatic stress, financial hardship, scarcity of food and other stressors.

Climate change and environmental risks also have an impact on sexual and reproductive health in multiple ways. They undermine maternal health, and reinforce barriers to sexual and reproductive health services, particularly in the aftermath of climate-related disasters.<sup>30</sup>

There are also gender differences in terms of the responses to climate change. Women play unique roles that contribute to conservation, as well as adaptation and mitigation. Yet, the lack of data on many of these issues, combined with a lack of women on decision-making bodies related to climate change (Ind. 13.1) and disaster risk reduction, renders women’s needs invisible in many contexts.<sup>31</sup>



Evidence from programmes that are responding to climate change, as well as adaptation and mitigation projects, demonstrate that they may even reinforce existing inequalities and disadvantages unless they are designed with gender and social transformation as a primary goal – rather than a ‘nice to have’.<sup>32</sup>

One major problem is that the data rarely allow for the gendered examination of environment and climate issues. As UN Women has noted:

- data on population-based indicators on the environment are not consistently disaggregated
- additional indicators are needed to capture gender-differentiated drivers and impacts of environmental degradation, climate change and climate disasters, as well as vulnerabilities and ability to cope, and the contributions made by women to conservation and to climate-change mitigation and adaptation
- evidence on progress in addressing gender equality through environmental policy is limited.<sup>33</sup>

## WOMEN ARE ON THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR WELL-BEING IS PROFOUND

As a result of data gaps, we faced significant challenges in reflecting indicators to measure ecological collapse with a gender lens in the Index. For example, we have been unable to include SDG 12, SDG 14 and SDG 15 because of a lack of global and relevant social impact indicators for these goals, let alone indicators that can be used to understand how these issues affect girls and women in particular.

Despite these data challenges, however, the Index includes several measures that help us understand progress towards key environmental targets that will have an impact on girls and women. On the measures we could include, the Index data show cause for significant concern. CO2 emissions (Ind. 11.2) and climate vulnerability (Ind. 13.3) are the two indicators in the Index that have the largest number of countries either making ‘no progress’ or even moving in the ‘wrong direction’. This is consistent with the finding that, in the majority of countries (84 out of 135), fewer women were satisfied with their government’s efforts to preserve the environment in 2020 than in 2015 (Ind. 13.2).

On the more positive side, the Index shows that climate change leadership is becoming more gender equal, and more women are participating in climate change leadership (Ind. 13.1) (see Figure 17).

In short, ‘gender and the environment’ is an area where major gaps in the data must be addressed. Women are on the frontline of climate change and its impact on their well-being is profound. Measures to combat this existential threat can only succeed if women are visible and heard, and if the response is informed by their lived experience.

Figure 17.

### PROGRESS ON WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN CLIMATE CHANGE DELEGATIONS

Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and WEDO.



## 4. Political polarity: the politicization of gender equality

The past decade has seen gender equality and human rights move towards the centre of the world’s political debates. For every advance for women’s voice, visibility and empowerment, we can see a ‘pushback’ – often politically motivated. Around the world, political leaders have tapped into, exacerbated and capitalized on social anxieties around gender and social justice to build and consolidate their power. Concerns about civic space are reflected in the Index indicator on women’s ‘freedom of

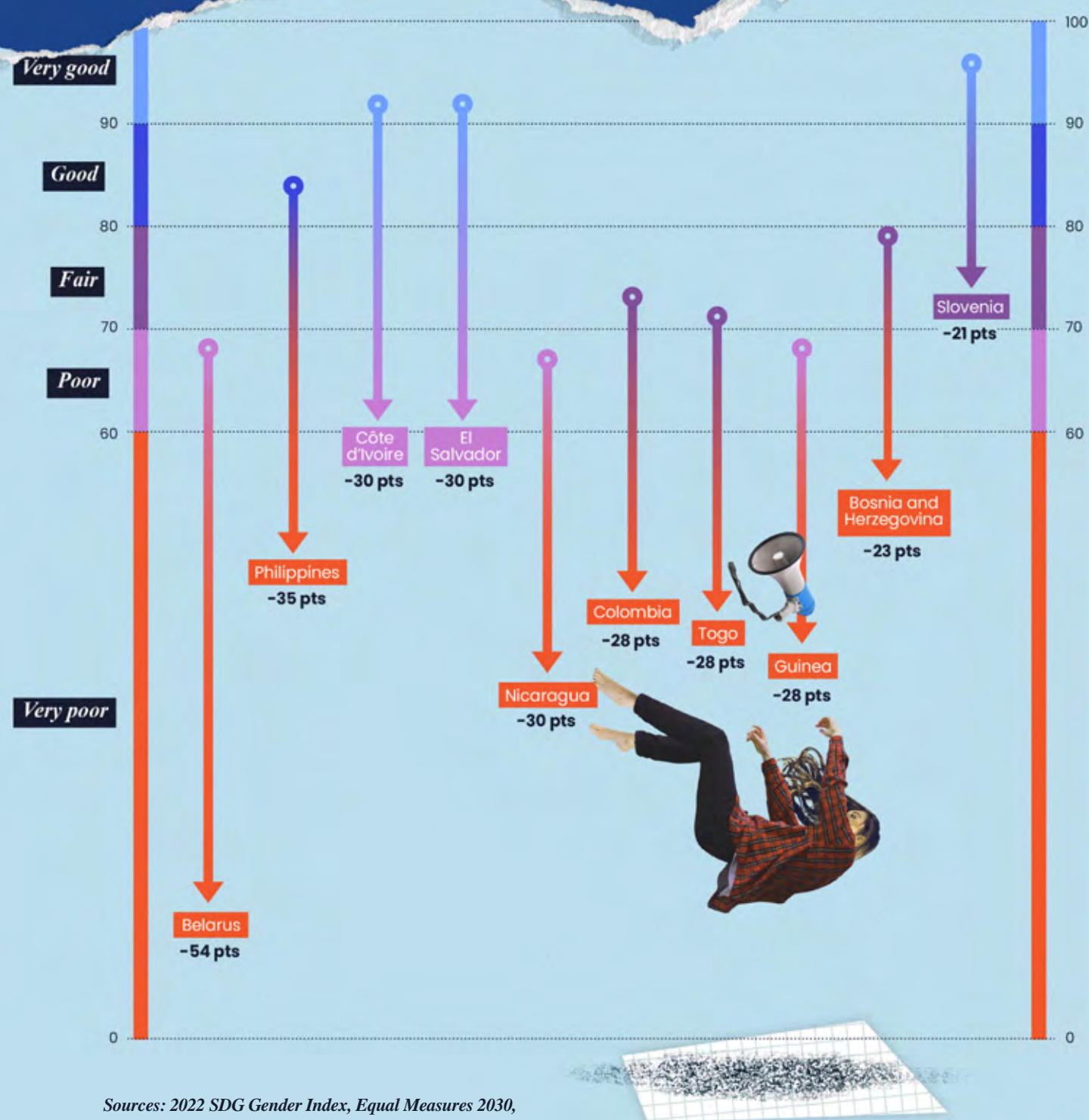
discussion’ (Ind. 10.4) (see Figure 18), which worsened globally between 2015 and 2020.

This perilous situation has been created by anti-rights and often fundamentalist groups who peddle a myth: that feminists and other activists are trying to impose an ‘extreme’ gender ideology on societies.<sup>34</sup> Such groups tell their followers that strategies to advance gender equality and human rights are direct attacks on culture, religion or the ‘traditional’ family. While they have mobilized opposition on a broad range of human rights issues, a favourite target has been the rights of girls, women and gender non-binary people to control their own bodies and their own lives.<sup>35</sup> In many places these groups have mounted



Figure 18.

## SEVERAL COUNTRIES SAW MASSIVE DECLINES IN WOMEN'S FREEDOM TO DISCUSS POLITICAL ISSUES (2015 TO 2020)



Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030, and Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-DEM).

campaigns to undermine comprehensive sexuality education,<sup>36</sup> abortion,<sup>37</sup> same-sex marriage,<sup>38</sup> the rights of transgender people<sup>39</sup> and strategies to address GBV, in particular, intimate partner violence.<sup>40</sup> This has reinforced the need to support feminist movements around the world, as recommended in this report (see *Section 5: Invest in, create space for, and listen to feminist organizations and movements*).

While there may be different issues and tactics at the centre of the political debate on gender and human rights in different countries, anti-gender equality rhetoric is now found everywhere.<sup>41</sup> It has been used by politicians throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and the Middle East as a tool to gain and maintain social and institutional power. Orbán in Hungary,<sup>42</sup> Bolsonaro in Brazil,<sup>43</sup> Duda in Poland,<sup>44</sup> Erdoğan in Turkey<sup>45</sup> and Trump in the USA,<sup>46</sup> for example, have all put anti-rights messages and policies at the very heart of their campaigns and have followed through with laws and policies that undermine gender equality.

In many cases, attacks on gender equality and bodily autonomy are a first shot at undermining democratic and inclusive political and social systems and consolidating social and institutional power. In Hungary, for example, Orbán's restrictions on gender studies programmes in universities<sup>47</sup> have led to broader attacks on the rights to freedom of speech and opinion, undermining academic freedom, the independence of the media and other democratic institutions.<sup>48</sup>

In stark contrast, and encouragingly, we see political leaders who have positioned the promotion of gender equality and the dismantling of anti-rights policies as key parts of their platforms. In the USA, for example, Biden's 2020 political platform included specific initiatives to roll back Trump policies like the Global Gag Rule,<sup>49</sup> which prevented non-USA based organizations that

received USA health funding from providing or referring people for abortion or advocating the liberalization of abortion laws. Since his election, Biden's administration has followed through on many of his promises to promote gender equality through laws and policies in the USA and development programmes abroad.<sup>50</sup>

In Argentina, Fernández was elected on a platform that promised abortion law reform and progress on women's and LGBTQIA+ rights.<sup>51</sup> Under his leadership, the country has decriminalized abortion (see *Section 5: Standing on the shoulders of giants: the long journey to abortion rights in Argentina*), has expanded access to comprehensive sexuality education and has implemented policies to create social safety nets for women who work as paid and unpaid caregivers, among other actions.

In line with broader trends of both progress and backlash on key gender equality issues, our Index finds a mixed picture on laws related to sexual orientation (Ind. 10.5). Many countries (69) have been making advances in terms of more progressive laws, but many (66) are going the wrong way.

These positive examples of progress give us some grounds for optimism. However, as with every other example of progress on gender equality, such efforts are often fragile and risk being reversed with the next election. The result is a volatile and often hostile political environment for gender equality and human rights, where election swings can mean either two steps forward or two steps back in the road to equality for girls, women and gender-diverse people.



## THE RESULT IS A VOLATILE AND OFTEN HOSTILE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### 5. Austerity: a political choice rather than fiscal necessity

Austerity measures – cuts in government spending, and the reeling in of the welfare state and of state regulations – have been the ‘go-to’ option for countries worldwide in response to a whole range of crises. The popularity of austerity, and its perception as the only ‘prudent’ approach, accelerated in the wake of the 2007/08 global financial crisis. For many low-income countries or countries in economic crisis, austerity is not necessarily a matter of choice, but is imposed as a condition for grants and loans from international financial institutions (IFIs) or multilaterals like the European Union (with one prime example being conditional loans to Greece, Italy and Spain after the global financial crisis).<sup>52</sup>

Austerity hits women particularly hard for a number of reasons,<sup>53</sup> all of them linked to the structural inequalities which show up across the Index. First, the public sector in most countries is dominated by female workers, who bear the brunt of job losses triggered by austerity. Second, cuts in public services increase women’s care burdens, and expose them to greater health risks and violence. Third, women are over-represented in precarious and informal work sectors, and

any weakening of labour market rules only heightens their risks in the workplace, from exploitation to physical dangers. Finally, any dismantling of the welfare state will, inevitably, have a negative impact on marginalized women living in poverty.

A recent study by ActionAid shows that every single low-income country that received advice from the IMF to cut or freeze public employment in the three years prior to the study had already been identified by the WHO as facing a critical shortage of health workers.<sup>54</sup> Again, the impact is felt most keenly by women, both as those reliant on public health services and as a major share of the health workforce that is affected by cut-backs.

We are often told that it is vital to reduce government budget deficits, and that there is ‘no magic money tree’ for social programmes.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the Index shows that two-thirds of countries increased their military spending between 2015 and 2020 (Ind. 17.1) (see Figure 19). And vast amounts of money have been found in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including furlough payments for workers in some countries, running into the trillions of dollars.<sup>56</sup> This suggests that austerity is often a political choice rather than a fiscal necessity.

Nevertheless, the calls for austerity have continued – and some would argue have been amplified – in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, even though the crisis requires health and social care systems to function better than ever. Oxfam and Public Services International (PSI) have found that 84 per cent of the IMF-backed COVID-19 loans encourage, and in some cases require, poor countries hit hard by the economic fallout from the pandemic to adopt tougher austerity measures in the aftermath of the health crisis.<sup>57</sup>

Figure 19.

### TWO-THIRDS OF COUNTRIES INCREASED THEIR MILITARY SPENDING BETWEEN 2015 AND 2020

Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and World Bank.



Decades of under investment and already harsh cuts to public services and social programmes have left countries of all income levels struggling to respond to the pandemic itself, with the heaviest toll borne by girls and women from marginalized groups. Ecuador, Brazil and the UK are three countries that have faced decades of austerity measures, that are making ‘no progress’ or moving in the ‘wrong direction’ on the Index, and that have also been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ecuador, for example, is one of just six countries with an overall Index score that moved in the ‘wrong direction’ between 2015 and 2020. The country has endured years of austerity (backed by the IMF), with public investment in the health sector falling 64 per cent in just two years from 2018 to 2020.<sup>58</sup> In the context of these health system cutbacks, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit Ecuador hard: it has one of the highest excess death rates in the world, with 64 per cent more deaths than expected in 2020.<sup>59</sup>



Brazil's Index score stagnated with 'no progress' between 2015 and 2020. Over this same period, Brazil's constitutional amendment (CA95) capped social expenditures and investments at 2016 levels for the next 20 years,<sup>60</sup> with expenditures that benefit women reduced by 58 per cent.<sup>61</sup> Despite having the second highest number of COVID-19 deaths worldwide, Brazil has accelerated its austerity measures in response to the pandemic, including cuts in spending on day-care centres, on measures to combat GBV, and on areas where women make up the bulk of the workforce, such as health and education.<sup>62</sup>

The UK also made 'no progress' on its Index score between 2015 and 2020, registering the worst performance amongst the Group of 7 (G7) countries on Index progress. A decade of austerity has been linked to the fact that around 1 in 20 UK households needed a foodbank between 2016 and 2020.<sup>63</sup> Even before the pandemic, in some areas of the UK 'most' children were living in poverty.<sup>64</sup> The tightening of austerity measures in response to COVID-19 has had serious consequences for women: a domestic violence sector that was already reeling from years of austerity-driven cuts has struggled to respond to soaring demands for help during the pandemic.<sup>65</sup>

Austerity 'orthodoxy' is a major impediment to gender equality. The near-universal and chronic undervaluing and underfunding of care systems reflects the low value our societies place on women's care work – whether paid or unpaid. Austerity places a further squeeze on families and communities, and pushes women, in particular, to breaking point.

6. International justice and solidarity: time to deliver on the commitments made

The 2022 SDG Gender Index paints a gloomy picture when it comes to international solidarity. While the Index shows that no country has reached gender equality, the countries towards the bottom of the Index are those with fewer resources and extremely high levels of absolute poverty and are more likely to be fragile or conflict affected. It is true that a country's income does not predict how gender equal it is (see Section 3: *The state of global gender equality in 2020: still too many girls and women left behind*). Yet it is also true that fulfilling the rights of girls and women requires resources and that the poorest countries require international justice and solidarity in order to meet their gender equality targets.

Having said that a country's income is not a predictor of its Index score, the fact remains that every country needs a certain level of resources to guarantee rights (see Figure 20). Among the 20 countries with the lowest Index scores for 2020 (below 50 points), all but Malawi feature on the OECD's 2020 list of fragile states. We are not looking at a level playing field. The 144 countries covered by the Index do not share a common starting point – many of the countries with 'poor' or 'very poor' Index scores are burdened by historical disadvantages linked to colonial legacies and an international order (on issues from trade to taxation) that favours countries that are already rich and powerful.

Figure 20.

STARK CONTRAST IN WEALTH OF COUNTRIES AT THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF THE INDEX



Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and World Bank.



Global investment, justice and solidarity are prerequisites for genuine worldwide progress on gender equality. And yet we have witnessed reversals in all three areas since 2015, when 193 countries signed the historic SDG agreement.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a cautionary tale about the poor state of international solidarity. In the face of a virus that has no respect for national borders, the world's richest countries have contributed to a 'vaccine apartheid' that leaves poor countries unprotected. As of September 2021, 77 per cent of the world's vaccine doses had gone to people in wealthy countries, with less than 1 per cent reaching people in low-income countries.<sup>66</sup>

Climate change is another crisis with no respect for borders.<sup>67</sup> A lack of solidarity is increasing the costs and risks for poor countries, and particularly for girls and women, while widening the economic gaps between rich and poor countries. As a result, those countries that bear the least responsibility for climate change are falling further behind. At the 2021 UN Conference of the Parties (COP) climate summit in Glasgow, delegates from developing countries condemned rich countries for failing to provide the promised annual \$100 billion for climate action – a promise that dates back to 2009.<sup>68</sup> A growing lack of trust towards richer countries as a result of vaccine hoarding has been cited as exacerbating tensions at the 2021 climate change conference;<sup>69</sup> a concrete example of how international justice and solidarity actions – or the lack thereof – are connected.

In a world that faces ever-more interconnected challenges, and that has pledged to make collective progress in line with the SDGs, we would expect improvements in international aid to match the scale of the need. Analysis has shown, however, that there has been little improvement in aid effectiveness over the past decade.<sup>70</sup> For example, more than half of all contracts funded by international aid are still won by contractors from the donor's own country, despite the concrete commitments made by donors to reduce this practice.<sup>71</sup>

Many low- and middle-income countries rightly have a renewed focus on 'domestic resource mobilization'. But even here they face barriers that are hard-wired into the international system. One example is the reluctance of rich countries to support the 'TRIPS Agreement waiver proposal',<sup>72</sup> which would temporarily waive intellectual property rights protections for COVID-19 vaccine technology. This would allow other companies to enter the market (bringing jobs and economic benefits for the new vaccine-producing countries) and scale up vaccine access, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The reluctance of many rich countries is a stark reminder of an unfair international trade regime that continues to disadvantage poorer and less powerful countries, regardless of the social and economic costs of prolonging the pandemic.

Similar criticisms can be made of the international tax system. Collectively, countries lose a total of \$483 billion in tax each year to global tax abuse committed by multinational corporations and wealthy individuals – enough to fully vaccinate the

global population against COVID-19 more than three times over.<sup>73</sup> While lower-income countries are hit hardest by such abuse, the global tax rules are determined by a subset of powerful OECD countries.<sup>74</sup> Not surprisingly, many lower-income countries want the rule-making on international tax to shift from the OECD to the UN.<sup>75</sup>

We know that resources, international cooperation, and action to right power imbalances and international injustices are needed to help ensure gender equality – but what are the prospects for this in a world that seems to be turning inwards?

There are positive signs amidst the gloom. There is momentum building, for example, behind the concept of Global Public Investment (GPI).<sup>76</sup> GPI seeks to replace the outdated concept of international aid, moving beyond the 'donor-recipient' dynamics to a new universal funding mechanism – any country can contribute and any country can benefit, with investment aiming to fund global priorities and tackle global challenges.

Gender equality has also proven to be a mobilizing issue for the global community: the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) in June 2021 was the largest global feminist gathering since 1995. The Forum saw commitments of over \$40 billion pledged for gender equality by governments, donors and corporations – representing 'the largest-ever collective infusion of resources into global gender equality'.<sup>77</sup> The Forum and the commitments linked to it represent a new opportunity to deliver the international justice and solidarity that are needed for gender equality.

**THE GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM IN JUNE 2021 WAS THE LARGEST GLOBAL FEMINIST GATHERING SINCE 1995. THE FORUM SAW COMMITMENTS OF OVER \$40 BILLION PLEDGED FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY GOVERNMENTS, DONORS AND CORPORATIONS - REPRESENTING 'THE LARGEST-EVER COLLECTIVE INFUSION OF RESOURCES INTO GLOBAL GENDER EQUALITY'**



# 5. BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE: SIX RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY BY 2030

The nuanced picture behind the SDG Gender Index data shows that it is impossible to draw definitive policy recommendations that apply across 144 countries of different income levels, 5 regions and 56 gender equality issues. However, drawing on our Index analysis and the experience of our ‘global to local’ gender equality partnership, we outline six recommendations that, taken together, provide a blueprint for change that could not only ease the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls and women, but that could also reinvigorate the long-term quest for sustainable gender equality. All six of these recommendations are cross-cutting themes that often appear in the countries and regions that have made progress on gender equality.

From legal reform to working with feminist movements, these recommendations provide the guidance needed for countries to ensure that they make the rapid progress needed to reach key gender equality targets by 2030. In each case, these recommendations are enhanced by commentary pieces from prominent thought leaders from around the world.

## 1. Reform and apply inequality laws

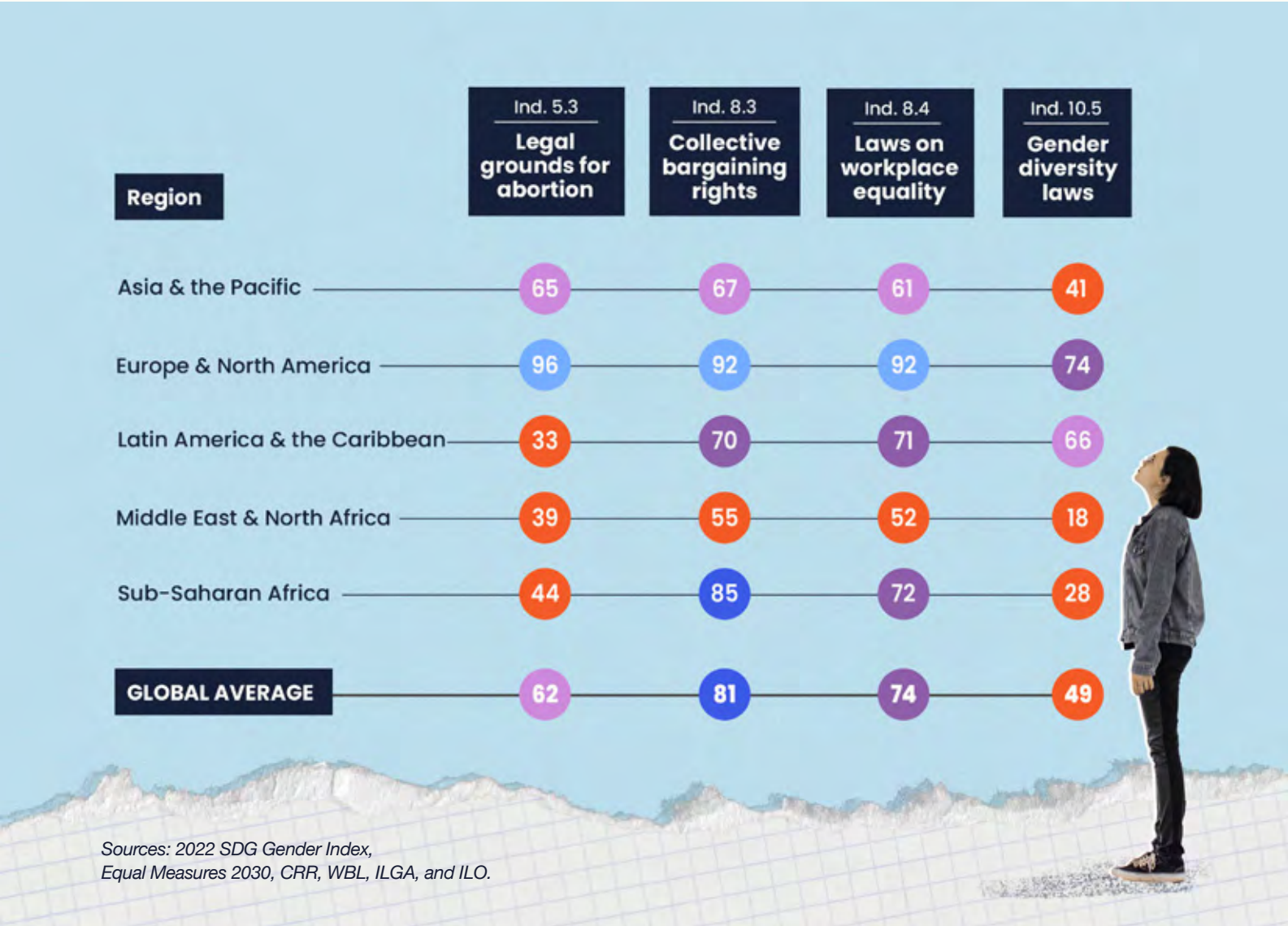
Laws to ensure gender equality are vital – but these are only as strong as their implementation. They cannot, on their own, change the lived realities for girls and women. However, countries that make good use of laws to facilitate women’s economic inclusion, for example, have been found to have better health, nutrition and educational outcomes for women and their families,<sup>78</sup> more resilient employment for women and more women in their parliaments.<sup>79</sup>

Equally, discriminatory laws must be removed or reformed to uphold the rights and meet the needs of girls and women. Yet laws worldwide continue to reinforce their inferior status, rendering them doubly vulnerable to age- and gender-based discrimination.<sup>80</sup> The Index also finds that 88 countries receive a ‘very poor’ grade on laws related to ‘sexual orientation and same-sex attraction’ (Ind. 10.5).

The Index includes nine indicators that capture the legal foundations for gender equality, revealing minimal progress on many crucial measures. The world is already graded

Figure 21.

### SCORES ON KEY GENDER EQUALITY LAWS VARY WIDELY BY REGION





as ‘poor’, for example, on women’s access to justice (Ind. 16.1), and things are getting worse. Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and North America moved in the ‘wrong direction’ on

## EVEN LEGAL ‘WINS’ CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED

this issue from 2015 to 2020.

The Index also shows that gender equality laws vary widely by region (see Figure 21).

Even legal ‘wins’ cannot be taken for granted. While many countries have expanded access to abortion – notably Argentina and Mexico – Nicaragua, Poland and the USA have all taken recent steps to roll back legislation that enables safe, legal abortion (Ind. 5.3): a critical indicator for reproductive rights and justice. The world gets a ‘poor’ grade on this indicator, with little progress between 2015 and 2020.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, almost every country has laws against domestic violence, but the Index shows that millions of women in the region still feel unsafe walking in their own neighbourhoods at night (Ind. 16.3). Similarly, research suggests that significant changes made to inheritance laws in India have not necessarily led to greater gender equality: women still only account for 14 per cent of landowners.<sup>81</sup>

Rapid change is possible, however, if there is political will for legislative change. Senegal, for example, has seen women’s political representation (Ind. 5.4) almost double since a 2010 law requiring gender parity on all electoral lists,<sup>82</sup> achieving one of the highest scores in the Index for 2020 for parliamentary

representation. There has also been progress on workplace equality laws (Ind. 8.4) in every region between 2015 and 2020.

Citizens are increasingly pushing their governments to transform laws on paper into concrete progress. In Indonesia, for example, EM2030 partner KAPAL Perempuan works with government and community leaders to ensure that a 2018 change in the national legal age of marriage for girls translates into reduced rates of child marriage.<sup>83</sup> They and many other advocates know that laws can only drive change when they are bolstered by political will and matched by policy and budget commitments, public campaigns and steady shifts in gender norms.

## 2. Invest in public services and social (including care) infrastructure

The social transformation needed for gender equality must be funded, which requires gender-responsive budgets, progressive taxation and strong investment in public services.<sup>84</sup>

Public spending cuts and austerity measures have a disproportionate impact on women worldwide,<sup>85</sup> as shown in *Section 4: Austerity: a political choice rather than fiscal necessity*. Cuts in state funding for the care economy<sup>86</sup> increase women’s burden of unpaid care work, reduce women’s engagement in paid employment, and place further strain on their health. These structural and economic challenges are exacerbated by gender-insensitive tax policies, such as family-based taxation that penalizes secondary earners (often women)<sup>87</sup> and by indirect taxes, such as value added tax. These penalize the poor, as individuals spend a greater proportion of their income on essential goods and services.<sup>88</sup>

## SENATOR MARÍA de los Ángeles Sacnun

### 1. Reform and apply inequality laws

## STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS: THE LONG JOURNEY TO ABORTION RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA

December 2020 was a landmark moment for women in Argentina: my country became only the fourth in South America to legalize abortion.<sup>90</sup> As pro-choice activists took to the streets to celebrate the adoption of the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy Bill,<sup>91</sup> President Fernández tweeted: ‘Safe, legal and free abortion is law...Now we’re a better society that is increasing women’s rights and safeguarding public health’.

What the rest of the world did not see, however, was the long journey that brought us here. It reminds us why laws are important, but also why laws alone are not enough. What matters is the process.

Important building blocks had to be in place before the Bill could become a possibility: each of them making their own contribution to gender equality. First, women had to be visible and active in politics. Here we could build on a long history of political engagement by women, starting with the creation of a political party specifically for women in 1949, with dozens of women from the Female Peronist Party occupying legislative positions by the early 1950s. We could stand on the shoulders of the courageous women who came before us.

Another building block was the creation of the Ministry of Gender and Diversity: crucial for the enactment of the Bill and for its future enforcement. Similarly, the Commission of Women worked non-stop on the Bill,

convening representatives and senators. To keep it on the agenda and in the public eye, every two years the Campaign for Legal, Safe and Free Abortion presented a Bill to parliament to legalize abortion on demand.

Change, however, cannot be driven only from the top down: it takes alliances and consensus-building. Civil society played a key role, with activists taking to the streets – a tradition that is part of Argentina’s DNA. We created a national ‘sorority’ that generated unstoppable momentum, propelling the Bill on to the congressional agenda in 2018.

The final building block was the need to learn from adversity, no matter how painful. The Bill failed in 2018, but this triggered a shift in approach. What was missing was an additional law to balance the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy Bill. The result was the ‘1,000-Day Plan’, a Bill that requires the State to support a woman who wants to continue with her pregnancy but who lacks the resources to do so. I see this as proof of a respectful state that will walk alongside her and respect her decision. What’s more, this is the Bill that got us across the line in December 2020.

I felt such joy on the day we won. I see lessons here on how to build consensus in Argentina and beyond for progressive state policies for women. Those lessons need to be learned quickly: the feminization of poverty will increase as a result of COVID-19. We must push for post-pandemic economic models that are fair, so that we can live free of poverty and inequality.







## CRYSTAL SIMEONI

*Director of Nawi – Afrifem Macroeconomics Collective (The Nawi Collective)*

2. Invest in public services and social (including care) infrastructure

## TIME FOR A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN STATE AND CITIZEN

We all have the right to good-quality public services – from health to education, and from social protection to decent work – and, as women, to be seen and valued. These rights are enshrined in a multitude of conventions, constitutions and declarations. And they lie at the very heart of the social contract between the state and citizen: the understanding that we choose our governments and that, in return, we receive the public services we need for our survival, development and well-being.

But in country after country, this social contract is morphing into a contract between the state and private finance. We are now witnessing ‘Season 2’ of the structural adjustment that began to privatize public goods and services 30 years ago, in what has been described by Fadekemi Abiru as a ‘spiralling race to the bottom’.<sup>92</sup>

As a result, an entire generation of young people, particularly in Africa, has no living memory of access to state-funded, universally accessible quality public services, and women continue to struggle to pay for services that should be state-funded. If you remove – or delegate – the state’s responsibility to educate its children, heal its sick and protect its most vulnerable, you rip the heart out of the social contract. You reduce the chances of what I call wholesome citizenship, with every citizen able to access the services they need to live a full and dignified life.

Privatization is, by its very nature, siloed and vertical. It cannot substitute for the horizontal, cross-sectoral public services that are crucial for the achievement of the global goals for gender equality. When it comes to the privatization of public services, women may face a double hit: on the supply side, their public-sector jobs are lost or threatened; and on the demand side, the services they need may move beyond their reach.

There are, as always, rays of light. Here in Kenya, for example, the government of Tharaka-Nithi County has established a crèche at Chuka open-air market – a publicly funded service that enables women traders to bring their children to work with them.<sup>93</sup> This shows the beginning of a shift to social protection mechanisms that feminists around the world have been calling for over many years. It contributes to a shift from micro interventions to systemic change that creates a genuine social contract.

First, ensuring that movements work collaboratively has never been so important. One example is the struggle for public services, where questions around resourcing are core to the narrative. At the same time, there is a robust tax justice movement fighting to curb illicit financial flows from regions like Africa. Ensuring that these two fronts of struggle work together is important.

Second, we need to hear more southern voices. Current definitions of the care economy, for example, may reflect the views of northern actors. But what does the care economy mean in an African context? We need space to develop our own narrative and definitions. And we are taking steps to do so at Nawi Afrifem Macroeconomics Collective, where a portal collates the voices of African thought leaders on this issue and more macro-level economic themes.<sup>94</sup>

Finally, as the title of this report says: back to normal is not enough. The COVID-19 pandemic has up-ended many public services, but it has also made us pause to examine the way the global economy works. What has happened to the girls and women who haven’t had access to the webinars, to the online classrooms? Are they now falling even further behind? And if so, how do we change that?

It is not enough for policies and programmes to ‘add women and stir’. The answer lies in well-resourced, well-staffed and highly valued public services that reach out proactively to ensure universal access. The way in which our global and national systems work is a construct. Which means they can be reconstructed to build a new social contract that works for everyone, including girls and women.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Research shows that we would all benefit from investments in the care economy: investing public funds in childcare and eldercare services is known to be a high-return investment that is more effective in reducing public debt than any austerity policy.<sup>89</sup>

Data gaps make it very challenging to measure public investment and public services and infrastructure globally, let alone to do so with a gender lens. However, the globally comparable data we have been able to compile for the Index confirm that there is a clear cause for concern: SDG 17 on partnerships is the lowest scoring goal in the entire Index, with a ‘very poor’ global average score of 57.8 for 2020.

Looking deeper at the issues within SDG 17 in the Index, we see that tax revenue as a percentage of GDP (Ind. 17.2) is low in many countries and regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia and the Pacific. Tax revenue is crucial for investments in public services; not surprisingly, these regions also continue to score poorly on many indicators related to the well-being of girls and women. This can be seen in a regional average Index score of ‘very poor’ for sub-Saharan Africa (52 out of 100), while the score for Asia and the Pacific is ‘poor’ (67.7 out of 100).

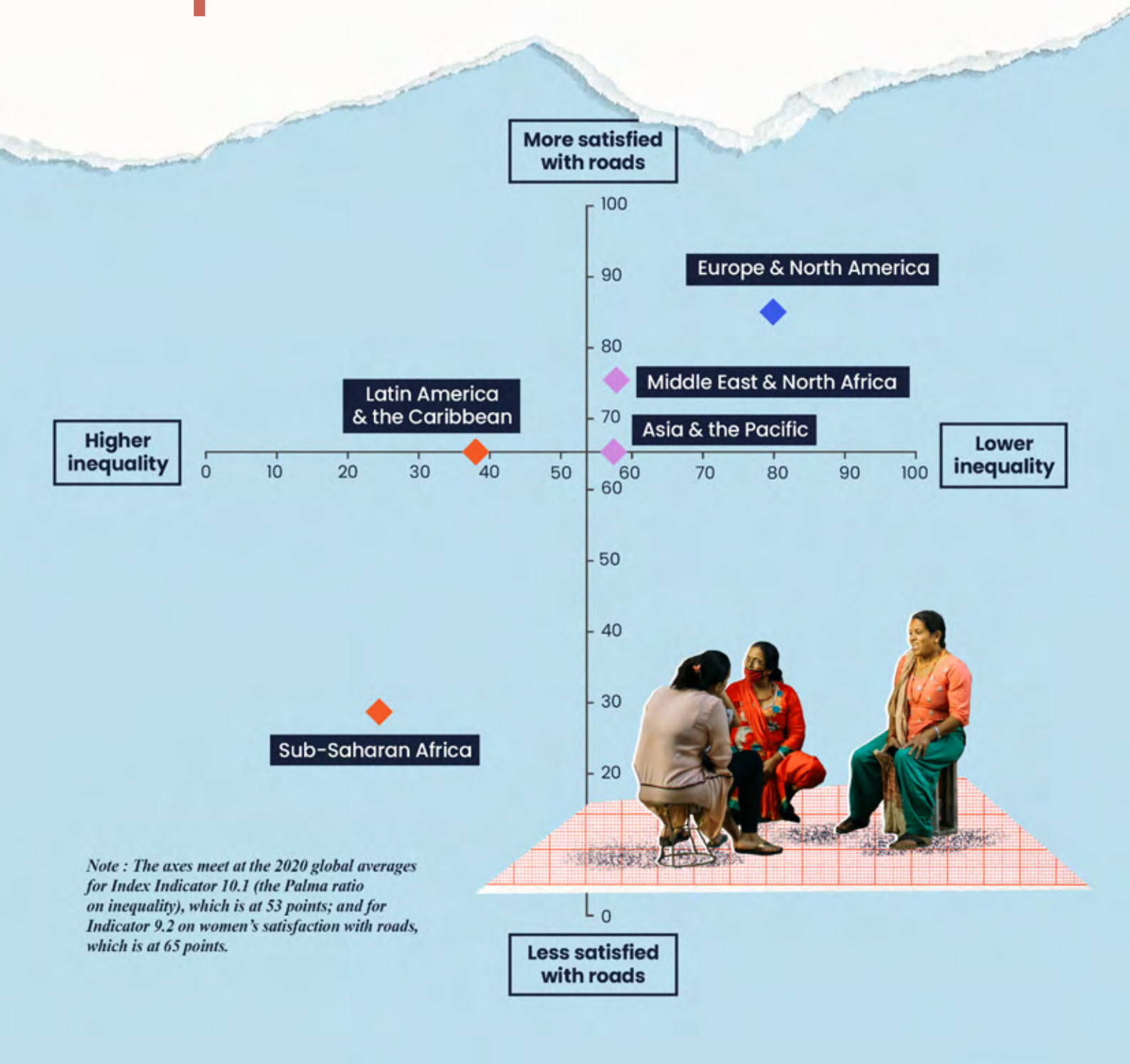
Research has shown that investments in public services and infrastructure reduce income inequality by an average of 20 per cent.<sup>95</sup> Data from the Index support the relationship between public investment and economic inequality: in regions with high rates of income inequality (Ind. 10.1), women are far more likely to indicate they are not satisfied with the quality of roads (Ind. 9.2) (see Figure 22).

The Index highlights major weaknesses globally on public budgeting and whether this is disaggregated to measure the impact on different groups, including girls



Figure 22.

**IN REGIONS WITH HIGH ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, WOMEN ARE ALSO LESS SATISFIED WITH PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**



Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030, UNU-WIDER and Gallup.

and women. The indicator that measures whether countries are disaggregating their public budgets on dimensions such as gender, age, income or region (Ind. 17.3) is the lowest scoring indicator in the Index, by a large margin. The average score on this indicator was just 20 out of 100 for 2020. Even countries that score well on the Index overall, like New Zealand, Slovenia, Czechia, Germany and Portugal, have a score of zero on this measure. On the other hand, progress is possible. Countries including France,<sup>96</sup> Mexico,<sup>97</sup> India<sup>98</sup> and Bangladesh<sup>99</sup> have already met the target for disaggregated budgeting. And other countries, like Canada,<sup>100</sup> have made recent advances in gender-based analysis.

A combination of well-designed fiscal policies and tax reforms can generate the revenue needed for progress towards the gender-related SDGs<sup>101</sup> in ways that will also create resilience to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, governments should reform their tax systems to promote the redistribution of wealth, with a gender lens to ensure that women (and the poorest and most marginalized women in particular) benefit. They should eliminate regressive corporate and personal tax exemptions that favour the richest.<sup>102</sup> More international cooperation could also help governments recoup the half a trillion dollars thought to be lost to cross-border tax abuse and evasion each year.<sup>103</sup>

Second, governments must invest more in public services and social protection. Governments should ensure that unpaid care work is visible in national statistics and that publicly funded care services are affordable and accessible.

Third, all countries should follow the lead of those with gender-responsive budgets. This requires a gender analysis of national

budgets to ensure adequate funding for the implementation of policies and programmes for gender equality.

**3. Promote the leadership, participation and voice of girls and women**

The participation of girls and women in public life is not only a core human right but it is also essential for countries' social and economic health. The benefits are clear: a report by

**THE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE ALSO SHIFTS PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP**

Kings College London and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy notes greater recognition of women's issues in legislation and policies when they can exercise leadership roles.<sup>104</sup> Yet girls and women are too often absent from the decision-making spaces that shape their lives: their lack of participation is often dictated by gender norms about leadership,<sup>105</sup> as well as poverty, care burdens<sup>106</sup> and violence against female public figures.<sup>107</sup>

The Index shows (see Figure 23) that while some countries and regions have made rapid progress on women's representation in their parliaments (Ind. 5.4) and ministries (Ind. 5.5), the global score for these indicators remains 'very poor' for 2020. Even this masks further disparities, with the women who are present



in formal political spaces often from more privileged backgrounds.<sup>108</sup>

The Index also shows women's continued lack of representation through measurement of the gender balance of national delegations to UN COP climate summits (Ind. 13.1). Progress on this indicator stalled in Europe and North America between 2015 and 2020 and fell back in Latin America and the Caribbean. Even though several countries have made progress on this measure (see Figure 17), at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, women accounted for, on average, 33 per cent of government delegates, just as they did in 2019 and 2020.<sup>109</sup>

Change in women's leadership and representation can be swift, however. France has seen more women on corporate boards since 2011 legislation required public and large unlisted companies to ensure that at least 40 per cent of board directors are women.<sup>110</sup> Yet, while political quotas have worked in countries such as Senegal (see *Section 5: Reform and apply inequality laws*), entrenched gender norms elsewhere still confine girls and women to 'appropriate' roles and spaces. Kenya's 2010 Constitution, for example, states that no public body can have a workforce that exceeds two-thirds of the same gender, yet only 21 per cent of the country's parliamentarians are women.<sup>111</sup>

The key is to combat gender norms and promote role models. A study in India finds that the presence of female leaders in village councils influenced girls' aspirations, parents' expectations for their daughters, and how long girls stayed in school.<sup>112</sup> The visibility of women in public office also shifts people's perceptions about leadership – a step

towards ending the gender norms that hold girls and women back.<sup>113</sup>

It is also essential to address structural inequalities and discrimination. Measures to ease the burden of care work, for example, can free up women to take on leadership roles. Progress can also be accelerated by investment in education and training on civic participation, mentorship schemes and programmes that enhance girls' aspirations.

#### 4. Close the gaps in gender data

The development of the 2022 SDG Gender Index faced data challenges and trade-offs in compiling the most relevant gender-related indicators that could support a robust tool to monitor progress.

It builds on experience with the 2019 Index and introduces new indicators to tackle shortcomings in data coverage. Some existing indicators had not been reported by countries or compiled by data custodians such as UN agencies. Some of the indicators that could not be retained due to these gaps relate to social assistance expenditure, obesity amongst women, women's perceptions of partner violence, the share of women justices, and others.

In addition to the challenges of data gaps, the Index has had to contend with indicators that are not able to capture the gender dimension of an issue at all. There are, for example, issues that are difficult to measure or that relate to consumption at the household level. Such issues include household access to water or exposure to unclean cooking

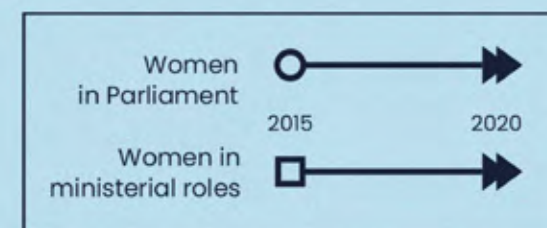
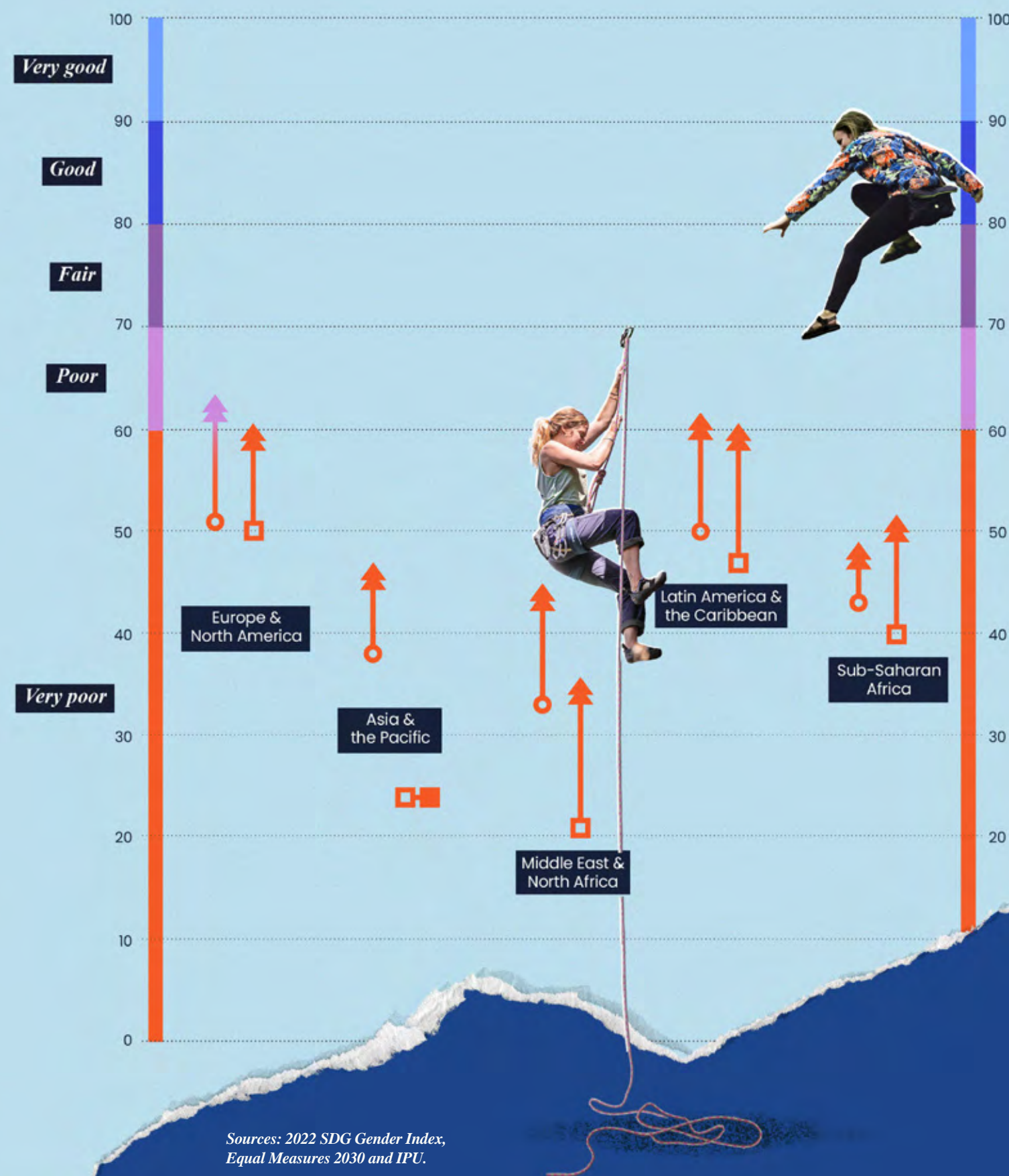


Figure 23.

#### THE SHARE OF WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT: LOW BUT IMPROVING

Score based on a scale where 50% gender parity = 100 points





fuels, both of which disproportionately affect girls and women in particular, but gendered aspects remain invisible in the data.

As discussed in *Section 4: Intersectionality: looking beyond the averages to capture the full picture*, there are profound gaps in data that make intersectional analysis impossible and that hamper our understanding of how inequalities intersect to affect different groups of girls and women.

Many data producers aim to increase the supply of data to reduce gender data gaps, and there is a pressing need to establish gender data ecosystem standards and infrastructure. As Figure 24 shows, many countries are making progress on ‘open’ and ‘disaggregated’ statistics.

But data supply cannot be transformational on its own. It must be coupled with demand-led approaches to engage and empower those who work on these issues. A renewed focus on demand will also help data producers identify, prioritize and fill the gender data gaps that matter most to data users, including gender equality advocates.

Several factors hamper this demand, however. Feminist organizations are rarely engaged in processes related to data production and this means that their information needs are often not articulated or met. Decision makers, meanwhile, tend to see gender data as desirable but not essential, given the limited repercussions if gender targets are missed.

This low demand for data leads to inadequate investment in the human capital and resources needed to close the gaps and improve data quality, placing severe limits on the use of gender data itself. Finally, a ‘data skills shortage’ (linked to lack of resources; see *Section 5: Invest in, create space for,*

### 3. Promote the leadership, participation and voice of girls and women

## IF YOU’RE NOT ANGRY, YOU HAVEN’T BEEN PAYING ATTENTION

What is gender equality about if it is *not* about women’s leadership, participation and voice? Yet women are having to defend all three. It’s no surprise that women are underrepresented in every aspect of leadership and decision-making, especially when it comes to government bodies. Even the limited progress we’ve made is continuously challenged – with backlashes and setbacks for every forward step.

What makes this so frustrating is that progress on leadership, participation and voice can and does happen, as seen at every level, including in parliaments around the world. One prime example is Afghanistan, which, as of February 2021, had exceeded the quota for women in parliament set out in its 2004 Constitution, with women holding 27 per cent of seats.<sup>114</sup> In the space of 20 years, the presence of women parliamentarians in Afghanistan shifted perceptions of what leadership looks like, with the quota generating its own momentum. Basically, more women were elected *because* more women were qualified to be elected. The recent catastrophe in that country, however, shows how quickly progress can unravel. As of November 2021, only three countries worldwide had *more than 50 per cent* of their (Lower House) parliamentary seats held by women: Rwanda remains the global leader

## DR. LINA ABIRAFEH

*Global women’s rights expert and Executive Director of the Arab Institute for Women (AiW) at the Lebanese American University*



with 61.3 per cent, followed by Cuba with 53.4 per cent and Nicaragua at 50.6 per cent.<sup>115</sup> Meanwhile, women accounted for only around one-third of Lower House parliamentarians in the UK (34.3 per cent) and just over one-quarter of representatives in the USA (27.6 per cent).<sup>116</sup>

We are living in an era of pushback: from the erosion of abortion rights in Texas to anti-rights policies in Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland and Turkey that aim to silence voices that are already muffled – namely those of women and girls. Here’s how I see it: if you’re not angry, you haven’t been paying attention. Now we need to take that anger and channel it into something actionable.

We must meet policymakers and practitioners, academics and activists, community workers and senior leaders on their own ground, having done our homework on what motivates them. We must make the case for women’s leadership, participation and voice by demonstrating the benefits for

societies and economies, as shown by this Index. We must package the data we already have in a way that lands with those who have the power to make things move, recognizing that we need to make things meaningful for those who don’t use our lingo. We need to reach farther and include more people in our fight. That means using every available tool, from reports to Tik-Tok, and from databases to comic books.

We must confront relentless ‘whataboutery’. When we talk about violence against women, for example, the response is often: ‘But what about men?’. To which I say: ‘Please fight for that. We’ll be your allies and walk beside you.’ Working on one does not negate the other. Our causes align, and equality is better for all of us.

Right now, we need to claim and defend our space, our voice and our movement. And then we can move forward.





## DR. MAYRA BUVINIC

*Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development and Data2X*

### 4. Close the gaps in gender data

## MEASURING AND SHOWCASING WHAT WOMEN DO

In an ideal world, all policies would be informed by robust gender data. In reality, however, this depends on whether women are seen - and, therefore, counted and valued.

So much of what women do takes place in 'invisible' spaces - in domestic production, in the informal economy, in unpaid care - and has been overlooked in official statistics. As a result, policies may not benefit women, may overlook them, or may even reinforce gender inequalities. In short, what is not valued is not measured, and what is not measured cannot inform policy.

In addition to a lack of data, much of the data that we have on women is bad. And bad measurement leads to bad policy. Take data on employment. For decades, questionnaires to gauge employment participation were designed in a way that did not capture women's productive activities accurately, that consistently underreported their unpaid work in households, firms and farms, and

that made them seem more economically dependent on men than they really were. In the agriculture sector, labour force surveys have tended to overlook the value of women's subsistence production (with women often selling some of their produce in the market). This may be rooted in an old assumption: that farmers are men. As a result, agricultural development policies have often missed the mark.

An exaggerated perception of women's economic dependency on men has sometimes been reinforced by the design of surveys, particularly the emphasis on the 'head of household'. The default position has been that this is a man, even where a woman is the breadwinner. A persistent perception that women are either economically dependent or not interested in finance also means a lack of financial products designed for them. The end result is that policies, programmes and services may be looking the wrong way, ignoring at least half of their potential clients or consumers of their products, before they even start.

We are, however, starting to see a shift, with growing efforts to gather data on the many dimensions of women's lives. The Women's Financial Inclusion Data (WFID) Partnership, for example, is working to improve the production and use of sex-disaggregated data on access to and use of financial services to close the gender gap in financial inclusion.<sup>117</sup>

Women's work in agriculture - paid or unpaid - is also being measured. The World Bank

and African Development Bank, for example, now have major programmes that target women and more agricultural policies are coming on-stream to reach women farmers specifically. The World Bank is also focusing on land rights and titles, including the promotion of a simple adaptation of land-title legal documents to include two signatures and two boxes for pictures- one for her, one for him - to establish joint ownership. These positive steps are the direct result of women's movements getting much better at advocating for more comprehensive and unbiased measures, and showcasing what women do.

We now need more granular data to identify the girls and women who should be prioritized in policies and programmes. This is particularly important for the design of robust post-pandemic economic recovery programmes that will benefit all.

An intersectional lens is key, with data to capture aspects of social exclusion that relate not only to gender, but also to age, race, disability, sexual identity and more. This is no easy task. First you have to convince people that this matters. Second, you have to overcome logistical challenges, including the need for large sample sizes, with possible cost implications. Third, you have to test your definitions, recognizing that some people may not wish to self-define themselves as, for example, a person with a disability, or as a member of the LGBTQI community, if they fear stigma as a result. Refugees and migrants may also prefer to stay below the radar in contexts where they fear exposure to the authorities.

This is where gender advocates with good data skills are crucial to ensure the safe, effective and transparent use of statistics. As key policy influencers, they need to understand how to gather, unpack and use data to drive change. They can then build a compelling business case for policymakers on the benefits of gender-informed policies for economies and societies as a whole.

and listen to feminist organizations and movements) amongst feminist organizations inhibits their ability to transform gender data into information that can be used and communicated by both decision makers and advocates alike.

Closing the gender data gaps demands action in five key areas.

First, gender equality stakeholders need to move out of thematic 'siloes' to mobilize data communities across different sectors and issues. A cross-cutting lens is essential, and such an approach would generate greater leverage to influence and engage in data production and to share good practice.

Second, bridges need to be built between stakeholders and official statistics systems. It is important to work with the agencies producing key data sources, such as population censuses, household surveys and administrative data collections, to ensure that these sources reflect and regularly report accessible data on high-priority gender equality issues.

Third, partnerships between civil society and the research community need to be strengthened. Gender equality stakeholders can leverage the data skills and knowledge of researchers and make them allies in identifying bias and generating solutions to measurement challenges.

Fourth, it is important to improve the data skills of civil society, while recognizing that these stakeholders rightly place significant value on human stories and qualitative approaches. By understanding and speaking the language of data, alongside other storytelling-led approaches, civil society can influence key advocacy audiences and advance their specific issues.

Finally, 'big data' should be used to close gender data gaps. New technologies offer new approaches, as well as new challenges in ensuring data privacy and related protection concerns.



Figure 24.

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON  
'DISAGGREGATED STATISTICS' SINCE 2017**

**3 COUNTRIES  
IN EVERY 4**

*made progress  
on disaggregated  
statistics between  
2017 and 2020*



Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and Open Data Watch.

**5. Invest in, create space  
for, and listen to feminist  
organizations and  
movements**

Feminist movements play a critical role in the promotion of gender equality. A 2016 study from the OECD confirms that 'few of the normative advances on women's rights would have been possible without the advocacy of women's rights organizations and movements to raise public awareness,

pressure governments for change, and hold governments to account for implementation of laws and policies'.<sup>118</sup>

Research suggests that feminist movements are effective in promoting gender equality for a variety of reasons:

- They bring a depth of knowledge and expertise on gender equality issues and draw attention to the specific rights and needs of their constituencies within discriminatory structures.

- Their autonomy and exclusive focus on gender equality enables them to analyse gendered structures and norms across a broad range of thematic issues, even those that are framed as more 'urgent' than gender equality. This also allows them to build solidarity with other movements like climate change, pacifism and labour rights.
- They raise the voices and priorities of those who have often been excluded from decision-making tables.
- They apply 'bottom-up' pressure, shining a spotlight on where governments are falling behind on their commitments to gender equality.

- They have been successful in working transnationally to influence the creation of a range of international human rights frameworks that can be leveraged by feminists around the world to apply 'top-down' pressure on governments.

Despite and perhaps because of their efficacy, girls' and women's rights and feminist organizations worldwide face persistent obstacles to their collective action and advocacy. As evidence of this, the Index finds that, although there has been progress in some countries, the extent to which women can discuss political issues in private and public spaces (Ind. 10.4) has decreased or stagnated in every region from 2015 to 2020 (see Figure 25).

Figure 25.

**WOMEN'S FREEDOM TO DISCUSS POLITICAL  
ISSUES WORSENS IN EVERY REGION (2015 TO 2020)**



Sources: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030 and V-DEM.



Evidence from Civicus also shows a shrinking civic space for organizing during the COVID-19 pandemic and that countries, including France, Guinea and Thailand, have used the pandemic to justify more crackdowns and restrictions.<sup>125</sup> Human Rights Watch found that since January 2020, at least 83 governments have used the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to silence critics and adopt repressive laws that criminalize free speech.<sup>126</sup>

EM2030 partners have themselves found that virtual meetings have resulted in more closed policy and decision-making spaces; limited face-to-face interaction with policymakers has reduced the ability of advocates to influence the outcome of key negotiations.

Even where collective action is possible, girls' and women's rights organizations lack funding. A 2020 study by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) finds that only 0.2 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) reaches women's rights organizations, leaving 99 per cent of the \$50 billion in aid for gender equality in 2018 with development agencies, governments or large international NGOs (INGOs).<sup>127</sup> Women's funds like MamaCash see and feel these challenges: between 2016 and 2018 it could only fund 3 per cent of the 5,500 feminist groups that applied for support because of its own limited funding.<sup>128</sup> And heavy reporting requirements set by donors and INGOs that fund feminist organizations can perpetuate and reinforce the systemic barriers faced by smaller groups, widening the gap between those that have access and those that do not.

Gender equality is only possible if feminist and women's rights organizations have the

## 5. Invest in, create space for, and listen to feminist organizations and movements

### KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: RESOURCING FOR FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

When you look at what feminist movements have achieved with very limited resources, just imagine what they would achieve with their fair share of funding. My passion is to make that happen, but there is a long way to go. There is no shortage of money: billions of dollars are committed to gender equality across ODA, private philanthropy and corporate- sector initiatives. But only a small fraction of the funding reaches feminist movements.

In 2013, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) revealed that the median annual income of feminist organizations around the world was just US\$20,000.<sup>119</sup> That is a pittance, when you look at the impact they were having, from sexual and reproductive health to education, and from feminist leadership to trans rights: they were leading the way. By 2018, feminist movements were still receiving less than 1 per cent of all gender-focused development aid.<sup>120</sup> And the closer we look, the more disparities we find. Analysis of the most recent funding data (2018) reveals that just 0.1 to 0.35 per cent of global philanthropic aid goes to feminist movements led by Black women.<sup>121</sup>

## AMINA DOHERTY

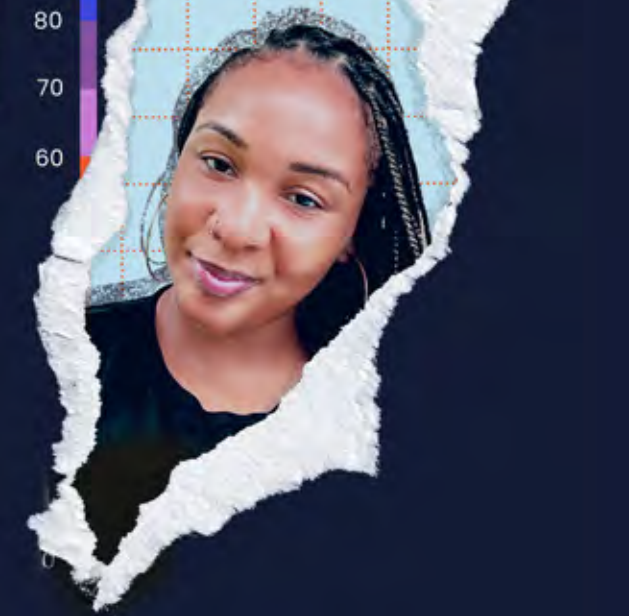
*Board Co-Chair of the Global Fund for Women, Co-founder of the Black Feminist Fund*

That is why we created the Black Feminist Fund (BFF). We provide the core funding that keeps the lights on and supports basic institutional needs, like paying the rent. And we are there for the long run – for up to eight years – rather than providing project-based support that evaporates after a few months. The BFF is part of a welcome surge of funds and initiatives to fund feminist movements and organizations – a growing community that aims to make it easy, to ensure that women are not spending hours filling in forms and ticking boxes. The Equality Fund, the International Trans Fund and the Initiative Sankofa d'Afrique de l'Ouest (ISDAO), which prioritizes the LGBTQIA+ community in West Africa – all of these are getting the money out there. It seems we are moving in the right direction, with the Ford Foundation providing US\$15 million in seed money to jump-start the BFF,<sup>122</sup> and the Government of Canada contributing CA\$300 million to the Equality Fund, among others.<sup>123</sup>

Now we need a sharper focus that centres on an intersectional approach: recognizing the way in which so many different factors can define who we are and what women

and gender-expansive people can access (or not). The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the double, triple, even quadruple burden that falls on the shoulders of women, often combining with race, class, and sexuality, with LGBTQIA+ individuals, for example, facing particular challenges. An intersectional lens makes it easier to see and tackle the gender connections that are spread across the SDGs, even though the Goals themselves are almost silent on racism and on racial and ethnic discrimination.<sup>124</sup> Finally, we need to ensure that feminist funding responds to feminist movements and what they are saying, and that it supports those who do this work every day. *Our* job, ultimately, is to make *their* job easier.

100  
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## DESPITE AND PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THEIR EFFICACY, FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS WORLDWIDE FACE PERSISTENT OBSTACLES TO THEIR COLLECTIVE ACTION AND ADVOCACY

funds that they need to pursue progress. Donors should adapt and transform their practices to meet the needs and realities of these organizations, involving them in the design of financing mechanisms and ensuring they receive direct, core, flexible and sustainable funding.

Governments should also ensure that feminist movements and organizations can operate safely within an enabling civic space by deepening connections across social justice movements. This means removing barriers to collective action and protecting the human rights and security of feminist activists. Governments should also seek out and value the voices and data of feminist movements and organizations to identify progress, gaps and areas for action, drawing on the expertise of girls and women who are pushing for change.

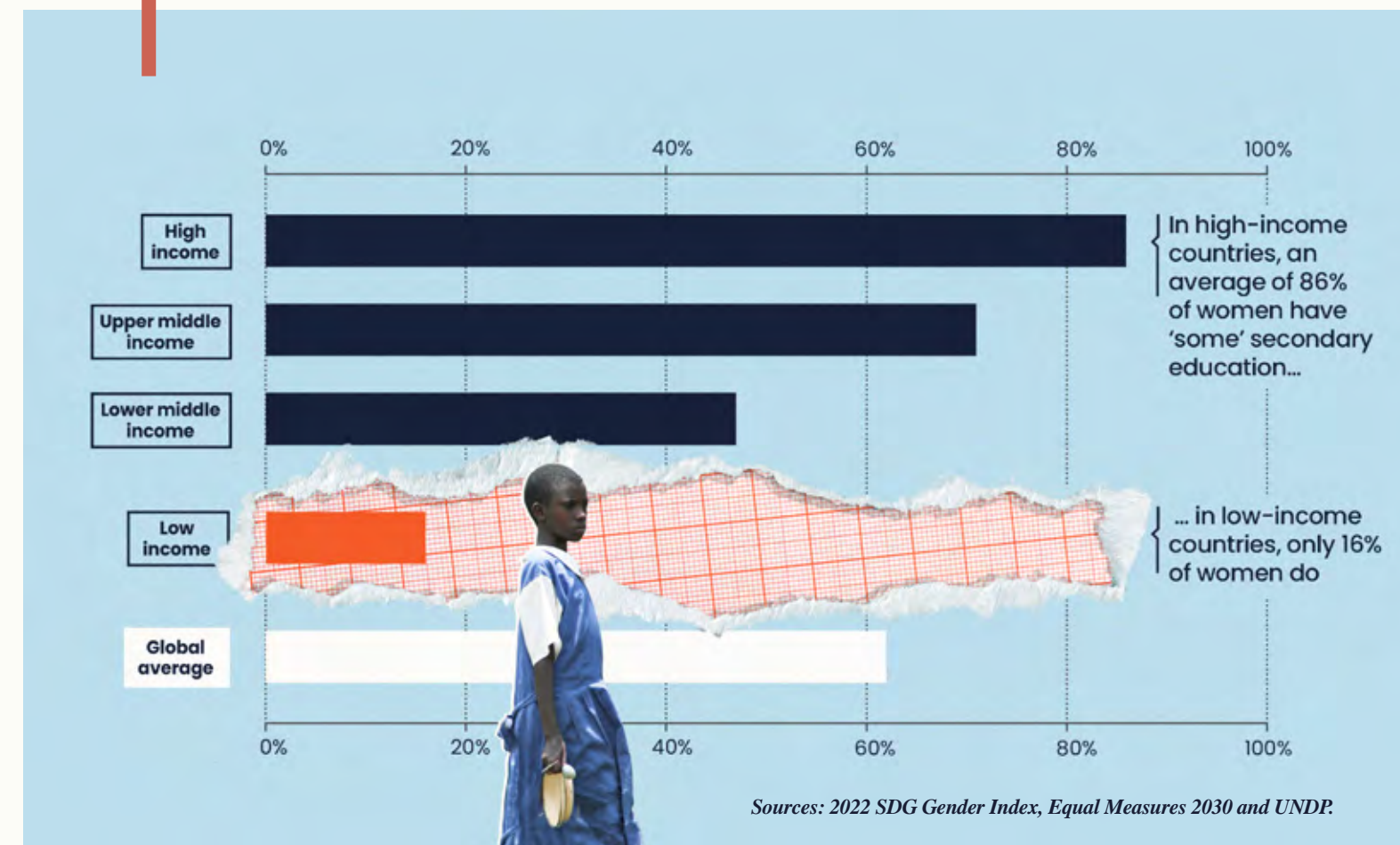
### 6. Work with and empower girls and young women, and girl- and youth-led organizations

Girl- and youth-led organizations are powerful advocates for gender equality, speaking out against patriarchy, racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression.<sup>129</sup> They have led movements to fight the climate crisis and uphold the right to safe and legal abortion.<sup>130</sup> And yet governments and authorities around the world still under-value and overlook their voices in decisions that affect them.

Humanitarian crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbate the discrimination and inequalities girls and young women face. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) found that, at the peak of the pandemic in April 2020, schooling was disrupted for over 1.5 billion learners in more than 190 countries.<sup>131</sup> Projections suggest that 11 million girls might not return to school and that girls aged 12–17 years are at particular risk of dropping out of school in low- and lower-middle-income countries.<sup>132</sup> Two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have cut their education budgets since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; these cuts are likely to have an adverse effect on girls' enrolment in particular.

Figure 26.

### LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO FACE CHALLENGES IN ENSURING THAT EVERY GIRL AND YOUNG WOMAN GOES TO SECONDARY SCHOOL



The Index shines a light on issues that especially affect girls and young women in relation to their health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, risk of early marriage, and public safety. However, a wider lack of age-disaggregated data on key indicators precludes a fully comprehensive analysis of gender equality for this age group in particular.<sup>134</sup>

One of the measures in the Index relevant to girls and young women is the early marriage indicator (Ind. 5.1). According to 2021 research from Girls Not Brides, the global prevalence of child marriage has decreased by around 15 per cent since 2010, meaning that 25 million girls were not married over the last decade. Yet advances have been uneven, and more action is needed to accelerate progress.<sup>135</sup>





## JUDICAELLE IRAKOZE

*President of the Board and Executive Director of Choose Yourself*

Every single person has a responsibility to make this happen, but this is also about the systems and institutions that shape our lives. It starts with governments adopting gender equality practices and policies, including the way children are educated: making sure that girls have the same opportunities as boys, and that their schooling gives them a voice. Families need to shake off a toxic culture where girls are left behind, consigned to domestic chores while boys are encouraged to show leadership. And we need to change mindsets across the board, from 'this is how things are' to 'this is how things change'.

We can help by hitting policymakers with the facts and figures to show them the reality, show them that it is unacceptable, and show them how we move forward – always coming with solutions. Remind them that effective policies mean changing norms. We have many countries with progressive laws, but those laws may not trickle down to communities that hold on to toxic cultures. Laws that have abolished school fees, for example, will not ensure that a girl goes to school if her parents don't see the benefit of her education.

We have to move as one, bringing communities with us. This means recognizing that girls know what they want. They may not have all the statistics and expert knowledge, but they need to be heard. There are two compelling reasons for this: first, if we don't hear them, they won't trust us; and second, every time we make a decision about a group of people without them, we're *wrong*. So rather than trying to 'save' girls and young women, let's work with them. They are increasingly claiming their rights: our job is to rally behind them, amplify their voice and let them grow.

6. Work with and empower girls and young women, and girl- and youth-led organizations

## FROM 'THAT'S HOW THINGS ARE' TO 'THIS IS HOW THINGS CHANGE'

Africa, my continent, is overwhelmingly young.<sup>133</sup> This should be such an advantage, but too often we leave girls and young women out of key conversations. As a result, we miss the chance to connect with girls, and to help them grow into powerful agents of change. Of course, women must be empowered, but the lessons they have learned during childhood are already embedded into their daily lives and will be so much harder to uproot.

We have a reality where most girls are not given the same opportunities as boys, and they have little chance to advocate for themselves. I grew up in a culture where boys are raised to imagine themselves in powerful professions, while girls are raised to imagine themselves as wives and mothers. As well as limiting our education and opportunities, these norms put limits on our own dreams. We must make sure that girls have the chance to dream: to see themselves as powerful from the moment they are able to think and speak for themselves. This is how girls grow into women who can dismantle inequality.

According to our Index data, only sub-Saharan Africa managed to reduce its child marriage rates (Ind. 5.1) between 2015 and 2020 – down from 24.2 to 22.9 per cent of young women who were married between the ages of 15 and 19 years. Mali and Sierra Leone have shown the greatest progress in the region, with rates down from 53 to 44 per cent, and from 31 to 19 per cent, respectively. Asia and the Pacific has gone in the 'wrong direction' on this indicator, and there has been 'no progress' in the Middle East and North Africa, Europe and North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the pressure: UNICEF projects that an additional ten million girls will marry by 2030 due to the conditions associated with the pandemic.<sup>136</sup>

We know that secondary education is also a crucial measure of empowerment and opportunity for girls and young women. The Index shows that the share of girls with at least some secondary education (Ind. 4.4) rose in all regions between 2015 and 2020. And these gains have also translated into increases in the average number of school years that a girl starting school can expect to complete (Ind. 4.2). However, the share of girls with at least some secondary education only reached the target of 100 points in eight countries in 2020, and all of these are in Europe and North America. Low-income countries, in particular, continue to face challenges in ensuring that every girl and

young woman goes to secondary school. The disparity in secondary education for girls and young women varies dramatically depending on a country's income (see Figure 26).

Despite their crucial role as leaders and advocates, girls and young women struggle to be heard, funded and to advocate in safety. Data on funding for their organizations are limited, but the meagre funds reaching women's rights organizations and anecdotal evidence from girls themselves suggest significant funding gaps. Programmes, policies and laws designed with and for girls and young women, and funding for the groups they organize and lead, are critical for accelerated progress towards gender equality.

## DESPITE THEIR CRUCIAL ROLE AS LEADERS AND ADVOCATES, GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN STRUGGLE TO BE HEARD, FUNDED AND TO ADVOCATE IN SAFETY



ANNEX 1

INDEX AND INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

ANNEXES  
&  
SOURCES



SDG	INDICATOR	SDG FRAMEWORK (Y/N), REF. NO.	SOURCE
1. POVERTY	1.1 Proportion of the population living below the national poverty line	yes, 1.2.1	World Bank and OECD
	1.2 Proportion of employed women living under the international poverty line of \$1.90 purchasing power parity (PPP) per day	yes, 1.1.1	International Labour Organization (ILO)
	1.3 The extent to which laws afford women and men equal and secure access to land use, control and ownership	no	Women, Business and the Law (WBL)
	1.4 Proportion of women who report feeling comfortable with their household income	no	Gallup
2. NUTRITION	2.1 Proportion of the population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption (per cent of population)	yes, 2.1.1	UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) via World Bank
	2.2 Food insecurity of women, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	yes, 2.1.2	FAO
	2.3 Prevalence of anaemia amongst non-pregnant women (aged 15-49 years)	yes, 2.2.3	WHO
	2.4 Proportion of women who report having had enough money to buy food that they or their family have needed in the past 12 months	no	Gallup
3. HEALTH	3.1 Maternal mortality ratio (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)	yes, 3.1.1	WHO
	3.2 Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years)	yes, 3.7.2	UNDP via World Bank
	3.3 Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods	yes, 3.7.1	UN Population Division (UNPD)
	3.4 Proportion of women who report they are satisfied with the quality of health-care in their area	no	Gallup
4. EDUCATION	4.1 Proportion of female students enrolled in primary education who are over-age	no	UNESCO
	4.2 Expected years of schooling for females	no	UNDP
	4.3 Proportion of young women (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	yes, 8.6.1	ILO
	4.4 Proportion of women (aged 25+) with at least some secondary education	no	UNDP
5. GENDER EQUALITY	5.1 Proportion of women aged 15-19 years old who have been married	no	OECD
	5.2 Proportion of women who report that, if in trouble, they have relatives or friends they can count on to help them whenever they need them	no	Gallup



SDG	INDICATOR	SDG FRAMEWORK (Y/N), REF. NO.	SOURCE
	<b>5.3</b> The extent to which there are legal grounds for abortion	no	<i>Center for Reproductive Rights</i>
	<b>5.4</b> Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	yes, 5.5.1	<i>IPU via United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)</i>
	<b>5.5</b> Proportion of ministerial/senior government positions held by women	no	<i>IPU via World Bank</i>
<b>6. WATER</b>	<b>6.1</b> Proportion of population using at least basic drinking water services	yes 6.1.1	<i>WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</i>
	<b>6.2</b> Proportion of population using at least basic sanitation services	yes 6.2.1	<i>WHO/UNICEF JMP</i>
	<b>6.3</b> Proportion of women who report being satisfied with the quality of water in the city or area where they live	no	<i>Gallup</i>
<b>7. CLEAN ENERGY</b>	<b>7.1</b> Proportion of population with access to electricity	yes, 7.1.1	<i>World Bank</i>
	<b>7.2</b> Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology	yes, 7.1.2	<i>WHO</i>
	<b>7.3</b> Proportion of women who are satisfied with the quality of air where they live	no	<i>Gallup</i>
<b>8. WORK</b>	<b>8.1</b> Wage equality between women and men for similar work	no	<i>World Economic Forum (WEF)</i>
	<b>8.2</b> Proportion of women recognized as ‘contributing family workers’ (as a percentage of total employment for female employment)	no	<i>ILO</i>
	<b>8.3</b> Extent of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights in law	yes, 8.8.2	<i>ILO</i>
	<b>8.4</b> Extent to which the country has laws mandating women's workplace equality	no	<i>WBL</i>
	<b>8.5</b> Proportion of women who hold a bank account at a financial institution	yes, 8.10.2	<i>World Bank via UNSD</i>
<b>9. INNOVATION</b>	<b>9.1</b> Proportion of women who have made or received digital payments in the past year	no	<i>World Bank</i>
	<b>9.2</b> Proportion of women satisfied with the quality of roads in the city or area where they live	no	<i>Gallup</i>
	<b>9.3</b> Proportion of women with access to internet service	yes, 17.8.1	<i>International Telecommunication Union (ITU)</i>
	<b>9.4</b> Proportion of women in science and technology research positions	yes, 9.5.2	<i>UNESCO</i>

SDG	INDICATOR	SDG FRAMEWORK (Y/N), REF. NO.	SOURCE
<b>10. INEQUALITIES</b>	<b>10.1</b> Palma inequality ratio (the share of income of the richest 10% of the population divided by the share of income of the poorest 40%)	no	<i>United Nations University (UNU-WIDER)</i>
	<b>10.2</b> Level of personal autonomy and individual rights and freedom from discrimination	no	<i>Freedom House</i>
	<b>10.3</b> Proportion of ratified human rights instruments regarding migration	no	<i>United Nations Treaty Collection (UNTC), ILO and International Organization for Migration (IOM)</i>
	<b>10.4</b> Extent to which women can openly discuss political issues in private and in public spaces	no	<i>V-DEM</i>
	<b>10.5</b> Extent to which laws criminalize, protect or recognize sexual orientation and same-sex conducts	no	<i>International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)</i>
<b>11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES</b>	<b>11.1</b> Proportion of women who report that they did not have enough money for adequate shelter/housing in past 12 months	yes, 9.4.1	<i>Gallup</i>
	<b>11.2</b> CO2 total emissions from fuel combustion in metric tons	no	<i>International Energy Agency (IEA)</i>
	<b>11.3</b> Proportion of women who report they are satisfied with public transport in their area	yes, 11.1.1	<i>Gallup</i>
	<b>11.4</b> Proportion of the urban population living in slums	no	<i>UNSD</i>
<b>13. CLIMATE</b>	<b>13.1</b> Extent to which the delegation representing the country at the COP meeting is gender balanced	no	<i>Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)</i>
	<b>13.2</b> Proportion of women who report they are satisfied with efforts to preserve the environment	no	<i>Gallup</i>
	<b>13.3</b> Level of climate vulnerability	no	<i>Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index (ND-GAIN Index)</i>
<b>16. JUSTICE</b>	<b>16.1</b> Extent to which women have secure, equal and effective access to justice	no	<i>V-DEM</i>
	<b>16.2</b> Female victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 women	yes, 16.1.1	<i>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)</i>
	<b>16.3</b> Proportion of women aged 15+ years who report that they feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live	yes, 16.1.4	<i>Gallup</i>
	<b>16.4</b> Extent to which a state is viewed as legitimate, open, and representative	no	<i>Fund For Peace, Fragile States (FS) Index</i>
<b>17. PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<b>17.1</b> Military expenditure as a percentage of GDP	no	<i>World Bank</i>
	<b>17.2</b> Tax revenue as a percentage of GDP	no	<i>World Bank</i>
	<b>17.3</b> Extent to which a national budget is broken down by factors such as gender, age, income, or region	no	<i>International Budget Partnership (IBP)</i>
	<b>17.4</b> Disaggregation of statistics	no	<i>Open Data Watch</i>



ANNEX 2

MORE THAN JUST THE NUMBERS:  
ON BUILDING THE EM2030 SDG GENDER INDEX

*Based on a conversation between Albert Motivans (EM2030's Head of Data and Insights) and Angela Hawke (Report Writer and Editor)*

The construction of the Index is about far more than the numbers. It is a complex process that spans the selection and engagement of potential partners, consultations with stakeholders and experts, the identification of relevant gender-related indicators, and then the long and painstaking task of finding data for most of the countries in the world. Too often, the data do not exist in a form that is current, disaggregated or comparable. And very often, the data do not exist at all. Spotting these gaps in the data, and promising initiatives that still do not cover many countries is, however, useful in itself. The question then is how or if those gaps can be filled and initiatives leveraged further. Sometimes you have to find out what is missing in order to go forward.

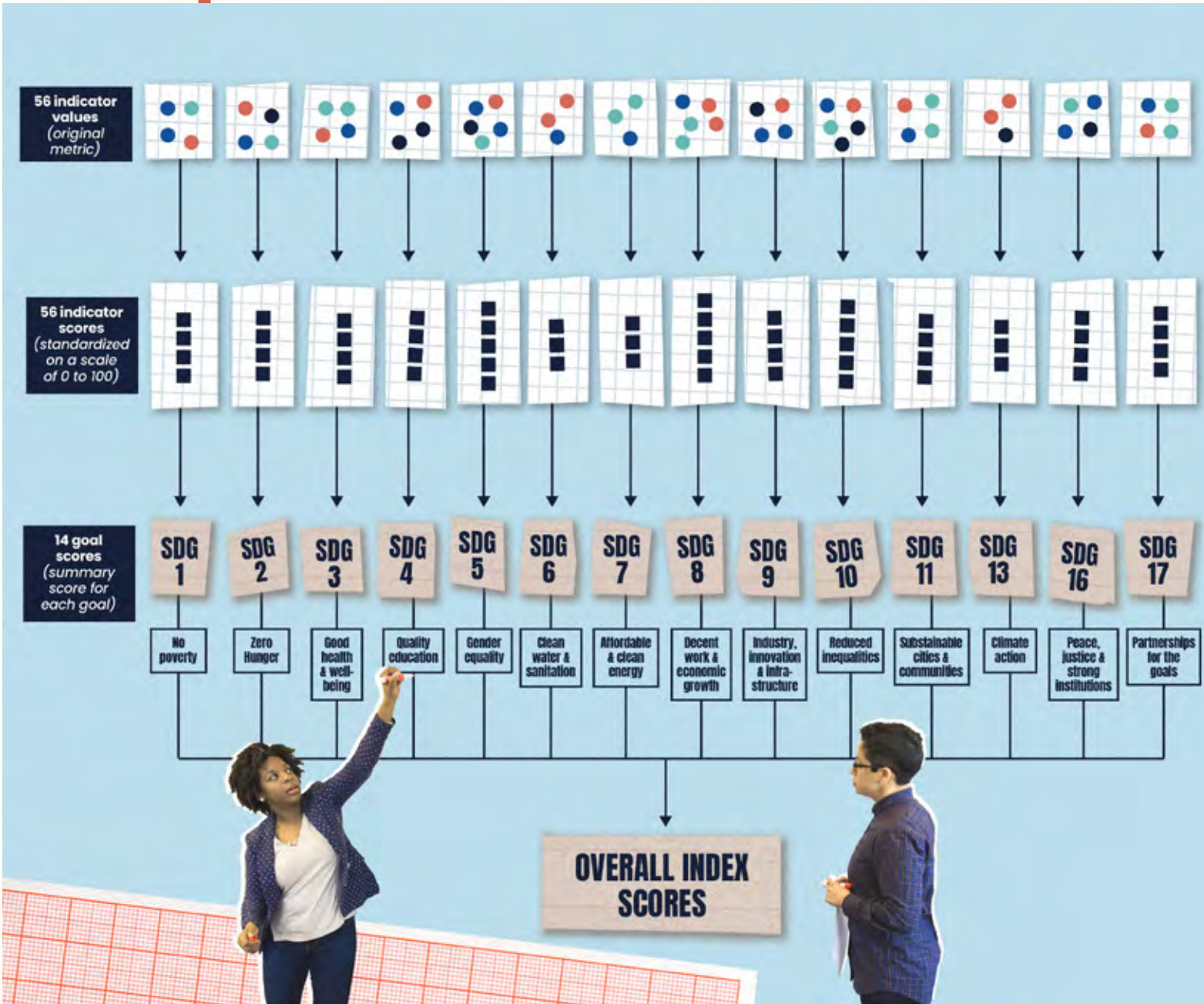
A good number of the gender-related indicators in the Index are part of the 'official' SDG framework, where data quality is maintained by data custodians at the global level (like UN agencies). But far from taking indicators ready-made 'off the shelf', EM2030 also creates indicators that are tailored specifically to track gender equality. Working with research and civil society partners, we find promising and rigorous global data collection efforts. We might find initiatives which frame gender issues with strong concepts and collect data but only for a small group of countries. Where we find data at the global level, we may need to develop the 'scoring rubric' with the partner, test it and, if that process succeeds, create a new indicator. And we do that across the SDGs.

The aim is to augment the SDG indicators, which rightly are chosen to capture development outcomes. For example,

the SDGs aim to increase the proportion of children who are not only in school, but who are actually learning. This means setting the bar for data at a higher level, because simply counting the number of children in school is not sufficient. This also makes it harder to measure progress and means that gender-specific indicators are very spotty. However, our view is that we can't wait for the data gaps to be addressed. We must also use the data we have, even if not perfect because we simply cannot wait until 2030 to learn that countries are off-track on gender equality. Where there are gaps in the data, our quest is to find other indicators that can still signal progress – or the lack of it – even if, for example, progress related to a legal framework may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving gender equality.

The process can be intensive. The aim is also to make the SDGs more 'gender smart'. Many of them make no mention of girls or women, and we find, build and analyse the indicators to fill that gap. We have to identify the relevant specialist partners/data producers. We have to work together to figure out what we are going to look for, and then go and look for it. We might find it, or we might not. If we do find it, we have to test it, and see if the data are out there. And then we have to do that across every SDG. We do not always succeed: as the Index shows, while there are a number of indicators on gender and the environment (including women's views on water and air quality, the use of water and clean fuels in households, women's representation in climate negotiations) we continue to search for robust gender data on the SDGs related specifically to the environment – (SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production, SDG 14 on life below water and SDG 15 on life on land.)

Figure 27  
CAPTURING THE BIG PICTURE OF GLOBAL GENDER EQUALITY:  
CONSTRUCTING THE SDG GENDER INDEX



Source: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.

Further information about the methodology underlying the SDG Gender Index is available on EM2030's website at <https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/>.



## ANNEX 3

# EARLY EVIDENCE ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON GENDER EQUALITY

## Access to sexual and reproductive health services

- Rutgers/Young Lives survey, April 2021:<sup>137</sup>
  - Online survey of 2,700 young people from Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda and Zimbabwe: one-third of young people reported that they were not able to access the family planning services they needed.
- Nair et al. study, September 2021:<sup>138</sup>
  - A study across five States in India finds significant increases in maternal health complications and maternal mortality due to sexual and reproductive health services access during the pandemic: rates of hospital admissions due to septic abortion were 56 per cent higher than pre-pandemic and there was a 23 per cent increase in deaths due to maternal complications.

## Women in the labour force

- ILO policy brief, July 2021:<sup>139</sup>
  - Globally, between 2019 and 2020, women's employment declined by 4.2 per cent, representing a drop of 54 million jobs, while men's employment declined by 3 per cent, or 60 million jobs.
  - In 2021, women were still 25.4 percentage points less likely to be in employment than men.

- In 2021, in Asia and the Pacific, men's employment was projected to surpass its pre-crisis level, while women's was likely to remain below its 2019 level.
- ECLAC brief, February 2021:<sup>140</sup>
  - The pandemic will lead to a reduction in women's employment representing the loss of at least ten years' progress.
  - 56.9 per cent of women in Latin America and 54.3 per cent in the Caribbean work in sectors that are expected to be hardest hit in terms of jobs and incomes.

## Education and learning

- Population Council, June 2021:<sup>141</sup>
  - Survey of nearly 4,000 adolescents living in urban settlements and rural counties in Kenya finds that 16 per cent of vulnerable adolescent girls compared to 8 per cent of adolescent boys did not return to school when schools reopened in the country in January 2021.
- UNESCO, March 2021:<sup>142</sup>
  - At the peak of the pandemic in April 2020, schooling was disrupted for over 1.5 billion learners in more than 190 countries.

- Projections suggest that 11 million girls might not return to school. Girls aged 12–17 years are at particular risk of dropping out of school in low- and lower-middle-income countries.
- Two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have cut their education budgets since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; cuts that are likely to adversely affect girls' enrolment.

## GBV and links between GBV and precarity/shocks

- Oxfam, November 2021:<sup>143</sup>
  - Findings from ten countries show an increase of between 25 and 111 per cent in calls to domestic violence or GBV helplines during the first months of the pandemic.
  - Globally, only 0.0002 per cent of \$26.7 trillion of pandemic response funding opportunities was available to deal with GBV.<sup>144</sup>
- IRC report, October 2020:<sup>145</sup>
  - Survey in 15 countries finds that 73 per cent of refugee and displaced women

reported increased domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and 51 per cent reported increased sexual violence.

## The digital divide

- UNICEF research, August 2020:<sup>146</sup>
  - At least 463 million – or 31 per cent – of schoolchildren worldwide cannot be reached by the digital and broadcast remote learning programmes that were enacted to counter school closures during the pandemic.
- GSMA report, June 2021:<sup>147</sup>
  - Across low- and middle- income countries, there are still 234 million fewer women than men accessing mobile internet.
  - While COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns have increased the need for connectivity, in some countries, there are early signs that the pandemic may be disproportionately and negatively impacting women's handset ownership.



ANNEX 4

THE TEN FASTEST-MOVING COUNTRIES  
FROM 2015 TO 2020 AND ISSUES  
WHERE SCORES INCREASED THE MOST

COUNTRY	INDEX SCORE, CHANGE AND GLOBAL RANKING	DRIVERS OF PROGRESS (GOAL AND ISSUE)
BENIN	2015: 44 2020: 54 Score change: +9 2020 global rank: 117	SDG 6 Access to clean water SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking; women's perceptions of road quality SDG 13 Women in climate change leadership; women's perceptions of environmental policies SDG 17 Disaggregated statistics
SAUDI ARABIA	2015: 56 2020: 64 Score change: +9 2020 global rank: 92	SDG 1 Women's perceptions of household income SDG 6 Access to clean water; access to sanitation SDG 7 Women's perceptions of air quality SDG 8 Laws on workplace equality; women's access to bank accounts SDG 9 Women's access to internet; women's perceptions of road quality SDG 13 Women in climate change leadership SDG 16 Women's access to justice SDG 17 Disaggregated statistics
ARMENIA	2015: 67 2020: 74 Score change: +8 2020 global rank: 45	SDG 1 Women's perceptions of household income SDG 5 Women in parliament SDG 8 Women's access to bank accounts SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking SDG 13 Women in climate change leadership
NEPAL	2015: 58 2020: 64 Score change: +7 2020 global rank: 94	SDG 1 Women's land rights SDG 5 Women in parliament SDG 6 Access to sanitation SDG 8 Laws on workplace equality SDG 17 Transparent national budgets
EGYPT	2015: 57 2020: 62 Score change: +6 2020 global rank: 96	SDG 5 Women in parliament; women in ministerial posts SDG 8 Laws on workplace equality; women's access to bank accounts SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking; women's access to internet SDG 13 Women in climate change leadership SDG 17 Disaggregated statistics
MOLDOVA	2015: 67 2020: 72 Score change: +5 2020 global rank: 52	SDG 5 Women in ministerial posts SDG 8 Laws on workplace equality; women's access to bank accounts SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking; women's perceptions of road quality SDG 13 Women in climate change leadership SDG 16 Women's access to justice; female victims of homicide
TAJIKISTAN	2015: 61 2020: 66 Score change: +5 2020 global rank: 82	SDG 3 Women's perceptions of quality of health care SDG 6 Women's perceptions of water quality SDG 8 Women's access to bank accounts SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking SDG 16 Women's access to justice

COUNTRY	INDEX SCORE, CHANGE AND GLOBAL RANKING	DRIVERS OF PROGRESS (GOAL AND ISSUE)
IRAQ	2015: 46 2020: 51 Score change: +5 2020 global rank: 122	SDG 6 Access to sanitation SDG 8 Laws on workplace equality; women's access to bank accounts SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking; women's access to internet SDG 17 Disaggregated statistics
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	2015: 71 2020: 76 Score change: +5 2020 global rank: 42	SDG 5 Women in parliament SDG 8 Laws on workplace equality SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking SDG 13 Women in climate change leadership
SENEGAL	2015: 50 2020: 55 Score change: +5 2020 global rank: 113	SDG 3 Access to family planning; women's perceptions of quality of health-care SDG 8 Laws on workplace equality; women's access to bank accounts SDG 9 Women's use of digital banking SDG 13 Women in climate change leadership; women's perceptions of environmental policies; climate vulnerability SDG 17 Disaggregated statistics

Note: The difference in subtracting the 2020 score by the 2015 score may not always equal the score change due to rounding.

Source: 2022 SDG Gender Index, Equal Measures 2030.



# FOOTNOTES & SOURCES

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2 United Nations (UN), Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (New York: UN, 2015), <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

3 UN Women, “Fourth World Conference on Women,” Beijing, September 1995, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/fwcwn.html>

## 2. About the 2022 SDG Gender Index

4 UN, 2030 Agenda.

5 EM2030, Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality: Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index (Woking: Equal Measures 2030), <https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/2019-sdg-gender-index-report/>

6 Eleni Papadimitriou and Giulio Caperna, JRC Statistical Audit of the equal Equal measures Measures 2030 SDG GenderIndex. (Brussels: Joint Research Centre, European Commission, 2019), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/09421>

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## ABOUT EM2030

Equal Measures 2030 is a collaboration of national, regional and global leaders from feminist networks, civil society, international development and the private sector. We connect data and evidence with advocacy and action on gender equality, to transform the lives of women and girls and realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The current partnership is a joint effort of leading regional and global organizations from civil society and the development and private sectors, including: the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres (CLADEM), Data2X, ONE Campaign, Plan International, Tableau Foundation and Women Deliver.



**CONTACT**

**US**

### EQUAL MEASURES 2030

(based at the Plan International headquarters, at the time of publication)  
Dukes Court, Block A, Duke Street,  
Woking, Surrey GU21 5BH, United Kingdom

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND DATA HUB:

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