

High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2026

Women's Major Group Position Paper

2026



**Women's
Major Group**

Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions
for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its
Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all

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ABOUT THE WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP

The Women's Major Group (WMG) was created in 1992 at the Earth Summit to represent the voices of women and girls, in all their diversity, within the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and UN processes dedicated to sustainable development. Today, it is a global network representing over 1,500 feminist civil society organisations worldwide, advocating collectively for gender equality and sustainable futures. This position paper was **developed through extensive consultation with our members and reflects key priorities and perspectives on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the achievement of Agenda 2030.**

We have less than five years to meet Agenda 2030. We call upon Member States to treat Agenda 2030 as an urgent priority. States must adopt national, gender-responsive SDG action plans and designate accountable institutions to collect, analyse, and report, at a minimum, gender-, race-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data. Where official efforts fall short, shadow reports and grassroots monitoring remain essential tools for accountability.

Yet stronger national efforts are not enough. Achieving the SDGs also hinges on a robust and fully funded UN and multilateral system capable of promoting a feminist vision for sustainable development towards the 2030 deadline and beyond.

Our demands must carry beyond HLPF 2026—guiding COP31 on climate, COP17 on biodiversity, the World Social Summit, and the UN General Assembly's 2030 review—and build on the milestones that came before, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Financing for Development agenda to keep feminist priorities coherent across all processes.

WHY WE REVIEW ALL SDGS

Our submission reviews all 17 SDGs through an intersectional feminist lens, reaffirming that all SDGs are crucial to achieving economic, social, and environmental justice, given the overlapping nature of their targets and indicators. **However, we include special features on the SDGs under review for HLPF 2026:** SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, SDG 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals.



INTRODUCTION

The world is deeply at odds with the promises of Agenda 2030. With less than five years to meet Agenda 2030, any progress is being actively dismantled—by militarism, corporate capture, political authoritarianism, and the rapid rolling back of hard-won rights. **Globally, only 35% of SDG targets [are](#) on track, nearly half are moving too slowly, and almost 18% are regressing.** In the Asia-Pacific, 88% of SDG targets are [projected](#) not to be achieved by 2030.

Developing countries [face](#) an annual US\$4.8 trillion financing gap for SDG implementation, all while being punished by an unjust debt system that leaves them [spending](#) US\$1.4 trillion yearly on debt servicing. But there is no shortage of resources, only skewed political choices: in 2025 alone, billionaires [added](#) US\$2.2 trillion to their collective wealth, and global military spending hit a [record](#) US\$2.88 trillion.

The feminist and people's movements that have sustained Agenda 2030 face a profoundly hostile landscape. Anti-gender politics and anti-rights actors—emboldened by far-right governments and reactionary transnational networks—are systematically targeting the gains of the 2030 Agenda. This goes far beyond the erosion of agreed language at intergovernmental negotiations. We are witnessing the strategic capture of key institutional positions, including at the highest levels of UN leadership and within Member States, alongside the dismantling of gender equality programmes, rollbacks on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and the delegitimation and criminalisation of women's human rights defenders. These efforts do not only undermine decades of progress toward gender equality: they weaken international commitments to human rights, dignity, and inclusive development across the entire Agenda.

Feminist and civil society organisations are facing widening restrictions on participation. Restrictive laws and legislation, including "foreign agent" laws increasingly [used](#) against civil society in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and beyond; the proliferation of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs); and the escalating repression of human rights defenders, are all eroding the conditions required for participatory and accountable governance. Cuts to official development assistance, combined with increased donor conditionality, have deepened funding shortfalls for feminist organisations. In aid-dependent and crisis-affected contexts, emergency delivery increasingly substitutes for long-term, flexible, locally led development. This funding gap leaves feminist, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, LGBTQI+, youth, and grassroots activists to bear more responsibility with fewer resources.

The crisis of multilateralism, which we explore further in the SDG 17 feature section, is inseparable from the broader unravelling of Agenda 2030. Trust in international institutions has been profoundly eroded by the selective application of international law, the impunity extended to some actors that is systematically denied to others, and the failure of the Security Council and the broader UN system to prevent or halt atrocities in Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan, Iran, and beyond.

The US has been unapologetic and overt in its efforts to undermine the multilateral system and norms of cooperation. Since the start of 2026, it has been increasingly belligerent in its use of extraterritorial measures—including sanctions [against](#) Iran and Palestinian NGOs, naval blockades against Cuba, and the abduction of President Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela. In January 2026, the US [withdrew](#) from 66 international organisations, including 31 UN bodies. At the same time, it has been championing a parallel "peacebuilding" architecture in Trump's [Board of Peace](#) initiative, to which it will [direct](#) US\$10 billion in public funds—all while the US still [carries](#) nearly US\$4 billion in outstanding dues to the UN itself. For a [fee](#) of US\$1 billion, even Member States governed by war criminals can become permanent members of an institution that is actively seeking to undermine the UN as the world's multilateral peace body.

We take seriously the legitimate concerns of feminist movements that have seen the multilateral system fail them, time and again. But despite that erosion of trust, our demands are grounded in the recognition that the total unravelling of the multilateral system would serve only the most reactionary and capital-aligned forces. Feminist movements have spent decades advancing and defending the human rights gains embedded within multilateral institutions, and we remain invested in a system of global cooperation capable of delivering justice, gender equality, and collective solutions.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY: STRUCTURALLY MARGINALISED PEOPLES/GROUPS

Throughout this paper, we refer to “women, girls, and other structurally marginalised peoples/groups.” While we do not specify this full grouping in every instance for the sake of brevity, we affirm that our definition of marginalised communities is inclusive of, but not limited to, the following: women, young women, girls, adolescents, and gender-diverse people, in all their diversity, from marginalised, vulnerable and historically criminalised communities, especially communities discriminated by caste, class, race, income, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, or social status such as Dalits, Bahujans, Adivasi and Indigenous Peoples, De-notified and Nomadic Tribes, religious minorities, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with disabilities, widows, older women, women and girls living with HIV and other illnesses, women and girls who use drugs, transgender people, sex workers, domestic workers, workers in the informal sector, survivors of trafficking in persons, women who live in remote or rural areas as herders, women deprived of liberty/in closed institutions, women and girls in rural and remote areas, women and girls living in poverty, stateless persons, women and girls from migrant, immigrant, refugee, forcibly displaced, and internally displaced communities, among others.



GOAL 5. GENDER EQUALITY

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

GLOBAL DATA SNAPSHOT: GENDER EQUALITY TODAY

There are many areas where we see promising progress on gender equality, including:¹

- **Legal reform:** Over the past five years, 99 legal reforms have advanced gender equality by removing discriminatory laws and strengthening legislative frameworks for women's rights.
- **Political participation:** As of 1 January 2025, women occupied 27.2% of seats in national parliaments, an increase of 4.9 percentage points since 2015.
- **Education:** Globally, girls have now overtaken boys in school enrolment and completion rates.
- **Data:** Data used to track indicators on SDG 5 on gender equality has improved to 57.4% in 2025, up from 47% in 2022. However, over half of national statistics offices have faced funding cuts since January 2025, threatening the availability of gender data for policymaking.

But, at the same time:²

- **Affordable and clean energy:** On current trends, 896 million women could still be without clean cooking fuels and technologies by 2030, including 523 million in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Clean water and sanitation:** Around 14% of countries still have weak or no mechanisms for integrating gender considerations into water management.
- **Digital infrastructure:** Internet use remains unequal by gender, with 70% of men using the internet, compared to 65% of women.
- **Extreme poverty:** 9.2% of women and girls live in extreme poverty, compared to 8.6% of men and boys.
- **Unpaid care and domestic work:** Women and girls spend around 2.5 times more hours each day on unpaid care and domestic work than men.
- **Food security:** There are nearly 64 million more food-insecure adult women than adult men.
- **AI and employment:** Women's jobs are more exposed to potential disruption (including job displacement) from generative AI, with 27.6% of women's employment globally potentially affected, compared with 21.1% of men's employment.
- **Informal employment:** In low-income and lower-middle-income countries, women have higher informal employment rates than men by 4.7 and 4.6 percentage points, respectively.³
- **Conflict exposure:** In 2024, 676 million women and girls lived within 50 kilometres of a deadly conflict event—the highest figure recorded since the 1990s.

CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

CREATING AFRICAN-LED SPACES TO AMPLIFY WOMEN'S VOICES IN GLOBAL GENDER POLICY

[Launched](#) in 2022 by the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Africa Disrupt CSW was established to dismantle the structural barriers (restrictive visa processes, economic constraints, burdensome accreditation, and capped delegation sizes) that routinely excluded and stifled the participation and voices of African women and girls from global spaces, specifically the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Held annually in a different city in Africa, this key alternative space brings together feminists, activists, policymakers, and advocates from across the continent to engage and contribute to CSW processes and outcomes.

¹ This data was taken from the [UN SDG Gender Snapshot Report 2025](#).

² This data was taken from the [UN SDG Gender Snapshot Report 2025](#), except where otherwise noted.

³ This data was taken from [ILOSTAT](#) (n.d.).

Since its founding, Africa Disrupt CSW has grown from 60 representatives across 20 African countries to over 200 delegates from 21 countries. Each edition has fostered critical dialogue and a collective outcome document capturing African women's demands—from digital rights in Malawi, to poverty and financing in Cameroon, to Beijing +30 accountability in Botswana—contributing to African civil society's engagement with CSW outcomes. Africa Disrupt CSW was [recognised](#) by UN Women as a model for meaningful investment that has created space for African women to participate in the CSW process, built capacity for women who are engaging in the CSW process for the first time, and offered a platform for reviewing and providing input into the draft pre-CSW consultation and global CSW session outcome documents.

CSW69 in Gaborone [produced](#) the Africa Women and Girls Recommendations for the Revitalisation of CSW, a product of engaging with over 3,000 stakeholders across all five subregions of Africa. Most recently, Africa Disrupt CSW70, held in March 2026 in Accra, Ghana, continued to broaden country representation by bringing in even greater participation from countries that had previously been underrepresented, with a particular emphasis on ensuring the inclusion of women and girls from conflict-affected countries across Africa.

Women in leadership and decision-making or technical roles

Women remain underrepresented in almost all decision-making and leadership roles, including in parliaments, senior management, urban planning, WASH governance, climate resilience initiatives, regulatory bodies, investment committees, and energy governance and decision-making bodies. Women that face overlapping forms of structural marginalisation are often held back by "[sticky floors](#)," which constrain them within the lowest status positions of an organisation. Even in the 80-year history of the UN, a woman has still never [served](#) as Secretary-General. As of January 2024, 113 countries had [never](#) had a woman Head of State or Government, and in 141 countries, they accounted for less than one-third of Cabinet members, while seven countries had no women ministers at all.

Women are particularly underrepresented in the realm of economic governance and macroeconomic decision-making, which in turn limits the integration of gender-focused fiscal, labour, industrial, energy, trade, debt, and climate policies. As of 2024, just 16% of central bank governors worldwide [were](#) women. At the European Central Bank and G7 central banks, an IMF survey [found](#) that under half of the employees were women—but women comprised an even lower one-third of economist or manager roles.

Inequalities faced by women and girls with overlapping forms of marginalisation

In informal settlements and climate-affected contexts, women are often most affected by policy failures but least represented in planning and resource-allocation decisions. For instance, in Bangladesh, women's involvement in disaster preparedness is [higher](#) than men's (46% vs 34%), yet men outnumber women by around six to one in local disaster management committees. This disparity illustrates how women in climate-affected contexts are central to household and community preparedness, all while being excluded from the formal structures that shape climate resilience planning and resource allocation.

LGBTQI+ people, especially trans and non-binary people, [face](#) particular discrimination in employment, education, healthcare, housing, political participation, and public life. Anti-rights and anti-gender movements are [contributing](#) to rollbacks in gender identity rights, LGBTQI+ protections, SRHR, and inclusive education. Hate crimes are on the rise in the US and Europe, with LGBTQI+ people in the US [being](#) 9 times more likely to be targeted than non-LGBTQI+ people.

Women and girls with disabilities [face](#) compounding barriers across the same domains, including through marginalisation from peacebuilding, justice, and early recovery processes. They are frequently [excluded](#) from SRHR policy and service design, while also facing violations such as forced sterilisation, coerced contraception, and denial of the right to form a family. In crisis, conflict, displacement, and militarisation, these exclusions are further [intensified](#). People with disabilities [face](#) high mortality during crises at a rate that is four times higher than those without disabilities, especially where infrastructure and services are [inaccessible](#)—and where relief, recovery, and reconstruction plans lack a gender-transformative, disability-inclusive lens.

Data and financing for SDG 5

Progress towards SDG5 is obstructed by the lack of disaggregated data on gender—but also data disaggregated by race, disability, gender identity, caste, migration status, age, and income, all of which are necessary to evaluate and address intersecting inequalities. Without data, it is not possible to have genuinely inclusive financing, policy design, sectoral planning, and institutional accountability. In the Asia-Pacific region, for instance, 52 SDG targets [lack](#) sufficient data to measure progress towards Agenda 2030—and SDG 5 faces particularly persistent data gaps. SDG 7 on energy remains one of only six SDGs without a dedicated gender indicator, a gap that renders women's energy poverty and exclusion from the energy transition largely invisible in global accountability frameworks.

Without data availability, countries are less equipped to direct financing where it is most needed. **Developing countries need an additional US\$420 billion each year to [achieve](#) gender equality commitments under SDG 5**, yet resources are not reaching the countries and communities where low-income women and girls are most concentrated. Gender-responsive budgeting, where governments have systems in place to track how public funds are allocated to gender equality, is only used in one in four countries.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

GBV—including femicide, sexual violence, trafficking, disappearances, hate crimes, and harmful practices—[remains globally widespread](#), as we explore further under the thematic analysis on SDGs related to social justice. In Asia-Pacific, WMG members [note](#) particularly severe patterns, including high rates of intimate partner violence among young women, and over 80 million girls and women [affected](#) by female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C). The high persistence of GBV is also reflected in child and early forced marriages globally, with East Asia and the Pacific [accounting](#) for 93 million cases, or 14% of the global total. In Latin America, femicide rates [reported](#) in 2025 show that at least 19,100 women were victims of femicide, accounting to a regional mean of 11 women being murdered each day in the hands of intimate partners or with reasonings related to gender.

Persistent GBV severely impacts activists, rights defenders, and women who are part of racial minority groups. Women human rights defenders, feminist activists, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, LGBTQI+, and grassroots organisers [receive](#) threats and experience intimidation, criminalisation, and exclusion from governance and peacebuilding. Broadly, women are blocked from decision-making about peace and security despite obligations and commitments under CEDAW and the WPS Agenda, and amidst a rise in transactional dealmaking and narrow, exclusionary peace negotiations.

Violence is also increasingly digital (i.e. technology-facilitated gender-based violence, or TfGBV), including through AI-generated deepfakes, online harassment, hate speech, surveillance, disinformation, racism, and technology-facilitated sexual exploitation. Women journalists, politicians, activists, LGBTQI+ people, and women in public life face particular targeting, limiting their participation in democratic spaces. In Yemen, for example, Amnesty International [documented](#) cases of women subjected to online blackmail and harassment on Facebook, including threats to share intimate, fabricated, or culturally sensitive images. Survivors faced severe psychological harm, social isolation, victim-blaming by authorities, bribery demands, and weak access to justice, while platform reporting systems remained inaccessible and poorly adapted to local contexts. Local digital rights initiative SANAD [reported](#) receiving at least four cases of online blackmail a day by 2023, 95% of which were faced by women.

FEMINIST DEMANDS FOR SDG 5

Women's leadership & representation

- **Implement targeted quotas, affirmative action, gender parity measures, and capacity-building programmes across political, economic, and decision-making spaces.** These must be complemented by measures addressing workplace culture, bias, mentorship, and organisational practices, in order to foster inclusive institutions that support retention, advancement, and belonging. Without these complementary changes, gains in representation may be temporary or fail to translate into equitable outcomes.
- **Adopt transparent recruitment and promotion systems, conduct pay-equity audits, and set measurable targets for women's representation** in boards, senior management, and investment committees.
- **Ensure the meaningful participation and leadership of women**—including grassroots, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, disabled, and migrant women—in all stages of policy design, implementation, monitoring, and review.
- **Protect civic space and women human rights defenders**, guaranteeing safe, resourced, and institutionalised participation of feminist civil society in all frameworks.
- **Embed the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as a cross-cutting dimension of women's participation across all thematic areas**, with a view towards enhancing conflict prevention and peace.

Legal frameworks & enforcement

- **Ratify CEDAW and implement binding, well-funded, and structural actions to advance SDG 5 by 2030.** The countries that have not ratified CEDAW are Somalia, Sudan, the US, Iran, Niue, Palau, Tonga, and the Holy See.
- **Adopt and enforce comprehensive legislation promoting gender equality, prohibiting all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls**, and closing existing loopholes (e.g. child marriage and FGM/C).
- **Adopt intersectional and anti-discrimination policies that address the compounded vulnerabilities** faced by women of African descent, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, migrant women, and other structurally marginalised groups.
- **Take substantive measures to prevent, address, and repair all forms of GBV**, including technology-facilitated abuse, and establish survivor-centred support systems with crisis care and psychosocial support.
- **Repeal repressive “foreign agents” laws and legally protect civic space.**

Data & accountability for SDG 5

- **Collect and use intersectional, gender-disaggregated data across all SDG indicators and policy areas**, including disaggregation by race/ethnicity, disability, caste, age, migration status, and geographic location.
- **Establish independent monitoring bodies and accountability mechanisms** to ensure national SDG commitments translate into measurable outcomes at the community level, with national legal enforcement of SDG 5 targets.
- **Implement gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors**, with annual targets, timelines, and transparent reporting to ensure funding is appropriately directed towards achieving commitments on gender equality.

Specific demands related to addressing SRHR, GBV, economic justice, and others can be found under the thematic pillars below.



GOAL 17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Global partnership is being undermined by donor retreat, corporate capture, geopolitical rivalry and fragmentation, and the sustained effort of powerful states to reshape multilateral institutions around privatised governance and their national interests, or to retreat from multilateralism entirely. At the same time, credibility of the multilateral system has been contested due to structural flaws embedded in the system, which have reduced the efficiency in the mandate of entities to resolve conflict, prevent wars, and uphold human rights. Where partnerships do still exist, they are frequently characterised by weak transparency and accountability, tokenistic consultation, and the shifting of risk burdens onto communities, including through financing models that prioritise profit. Any partnerships—whether within or beyond the multilateral system—must, as a starting point, be rooted in equality.

UN80: Cost-cutting and efficiency undermines normative mandates

In 2025, the UN celebrated 80 years since its founding. Yet instead of reaffirming the importance of multilateral cooperation and sufficient resourcing to achieve its normative mandates, the Secretary-General launched the UN80 initiative to [build](#) a “simpler, more effective and more coherent UN System that delivers better for people and planet—amid shrinking resources and rising needs.” In practice, UN80 has become a cost-cutting exercise that risks diluting essential mandates and mechanisms for rights, equality, and accountability, especially for the most structurally marginalised women and girls.

Feminists have been especially critical of the proposed merger of UN Women and the UNFPA. At a time of intensifying anti-rights and anti-gender backlash globally, the merger risks reopening hard-won mandates and political agreements on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), exposing them to renewed contestation by Member States. Evidence also shows that the two agencies have distinct mandates, with only [20-30% programmatic overlap](#). The merger assumes that institutional consolidation automatically improves coordination, when effective coordination depends on clear roles, accountability, and adequate resourcing. The risks of a merger may be far-reaching and irreversible, as it could weaken the government partnerships, technical expertise, service delivery systems, and implementation capacity needed to realise Member State commitments on gender equality and SRHR. Put simply, cutting costs puts lives at risk.

More broadly, feminists are concerned that several other UN80 workstreams, including proposals related to the sunsetting of UNAIDS, regional resets, and human rights pillar reforms are moving forward without sufficient transparency, consultation, or impact assessments.

Over 1,200 feminist civil society organisations and allies have [called](#) on the UN’s Member States to “Defend multilateralism, democracy and human rights. Pay up now!”—rather than searching for programmes to cut and institutions to merge. In 2025, the UN [projected](#) that resources across the UN system would shrink back to levels last seen in 2016. UN underfunding reflects the politicisation of multilateral funding and threatens the UN’s ability to deliver on its rights-oriented mandates, support country-level implementation, and maintain spaces for civil society participation. In the context of UN80, financial pressure may shape reform decisions in ways that privilege cost-cutting over mandate protection, institutional independence, and rights-based accountability.

The Sevilla Commitment

Feminists have been deeply involved in the process towards the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), which was hosted in July 2025 and viewed by feminist civil society as an opportunity to transform the international financial architecture—a precondition to achieving gender equality.

Yet the outcome document (*Compromiso de Sevilla*, or Sevilla Commitment) was largely lacking both on gender and delivering the transformation needed. It is notable that the document [makes](#) important references to gender equality (Paragraph 11), increasing investment in the care economy (Paragraph 11), and gender-responsive budgeting and taxation (Paragraph 22). However, as [noted](#) by APWLD, Global North countries played a blatant role in weakening the FfD4 outcome, especially in blocking any transformative commitments related to tax and debt, which would have been needed to expand the fiscal space for Member States to invest in women’s rights and gender equality. The document is also silent on women’s systemic marginalisation and oppression, instead largely viewing gender equality through the lens of economic potential.

Despite its shortcomings, the Sevilla Commitment should at least be leveraged as a starting point for transforming the international financial system to better serve the rights and needs of women and girls—but certainly not be treated as a ceiling on ambition.

Reducing dependence on neocolonial partnerships and reinvigorating South-South cooperation

Traditional North-South aid models are losing legitimacy, and carry the risk of reproducing extractive or neocolonial development patterns that disproportionately harm women and girls. For instance, the European Commission’s 2021 Global Gateway strategy [promises](#) SDG-aligned investment in digital infrastructure, climate and energy, transport, health, and education and research across the Global South. It is positioned as an alternative and human rights-aligned development partnership to China’s Belt and Road Initiative. However, a joint civil society study [found](#) that over half of the projects analysed benefited at least one European company, including multinationals such as Siemens and BioNTech, raising concerns that the initiative could serve European commercial interests over development priorities. Much of the funding from the Global Gateway strategy has also gone towards renewable energy projects, despite concerns around megaprojects that are not aligned with community energy needs.

Though South-South cooperation offers a path forward, it is not a silver bullet. China’s Belt and Road Initiative, for instance, has financed major infrastructure across the African continent, but Kenya’s Standard Gauge Railway [shows](#) how China’s investment can also reproduce dependency when projects are debt-heavy, externally driven, or poorly integrated into national development needs. The railway was intended to connect Mombasa to Uganda and wider regional markets, but stalled before reaching the border, leaving Kenya with a costly line, rising debt pressures, and contested development benefits.

South-South cooperation can and should be pursued to diversify development partnerships, including to fulfil SDG 5 on gender equality—but any partnerships must be examined through the lenses of power, accountability, and local ownership.

CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

STRENGTHENING FEMINIST SOLIDARITY AND COORDINATION TO PROTECT GENDER EQUALITY IN UN REFORM

Concerned by the implications of the UN80 reform agenda for gender equality and human rights, feminist organizations came together in late 2025 to form the “[Feminist Cross-Coalition Working Group on UN80 \(FCC\)](#),” now co-convened by seven feminist coalitions representing thousands of members and organizations across the globe, the FCC works to collectively track, analyse, and respond to reforms with significant implications for gender equality and human rights.

The working group has [produced](#) independent technical analysis contesting the merger of UN Women and UNFPA, including to demonstrate that the claimed savings of US\$32-38 million are unverifiable. The coalition has actively shared its evidence with Member States alongside joint letters, published FAQs, and advocacy toolkits, calling for reforms that are transparent, evidence-based, and protective of the Beijing Platform for Action and the ICPD Programme of Action.

FEMINIST DEMANDS FOR SDG 17

Reform of the UN

- **Ensure UN reform processes are democratic, transparent, and inclusive**, with meaningful participation by feminist civil society, and protected from corporate and geopolitical capture.
- **Base analysis on mergers and sunseting of agencies on evidenced risks and benefits, not on austerity and cost-cutting arguments.** Strengthen institutional capabilities and prioritise organisational structures that can effectively protect the human rights pillar of the UN, rather than diluting it. This translates into strengthening the coordination role of the OHCHR and allocating sufficient funds for it. Draw on successful examples of guaranteeing the inclusion of civil society bodies, such as with the Program Coordination Body of UNAIDS.
- **Subject all UN80 reform processes to a comprehensive gender and human rights impact assessment**, ensuring that any reforms protect mandates on human rights protection and provision.
- **Reject the merger of UNFPA and UN Women**, based on [evidence](#) that the UNFPA and UN Women have distinct mandates and their specialised expertise are needed to maintain and scale service delivery, rights protection, and community-level impact.

Financing for women's rights organisations and gender equality

- **Reverse ODA cuts**, demanding that developed countries fully comply with their ODA commitments.
- **Create direct, sustainable, and accessible funding mechanisms** (such as a Global Civil Society Survival Fund) that provide flexible, long-term funding for feminist and women's rights organisations, grassroots movements, and national gender machineries, especially those led by women from structurally marginalised groups.
- **Prioritise public and grant-based financing for sustainable development**, including gender-just climate finance, and reject debt-creating instruments that deepen inequality. This should also include the expansion of concessional finance and SDR rechannelling, to create fiscal space for universal social protection, care systems, public health, education, and other public goods.
- **Cancel and restructure unsustainable debt**; support a UN-led tax convention to curb illicit financial flows and strengthen domestic revenue.

Empowering rights-holders' engagement

- **Recognise civil society—including feminist movements—as equal partners in SDG implementation and monitoring**, with guaranteed, resourced participation in all partnership frameworks.
- **Adopt a grassroots-led engagement approach** to collectively advance gender equality policy reforms.

Transparency, accountability & multilateral reform

- **Implement robust frameworks to track, report, and evaluate partnership activities** and funding sources, preventing corruption and fostering trust.
- **Ensure all Member States immediately fulfil their assessed contributions in full and on time**, and end the use of underfunding as a tool of political pressure on the UN.
- **Hold annual open dialogues** to review progress, catalyse renewed political leadership, and foster peer learning.
- **Regulate corporate influence in global partnerships**, ensure binding accountability mechanisms, and prevent public-private models from undermining human rights and the public interest.

FEMINIST DEMANDS FOR SDG 17

Technology transfer & digital inclusion

- **Build inclusive, rights-based digital governance frameworks** that ensure digital and AI systems are human-centred, transparent, accountable, and aligned with international law; AI deployment must require human oversight, transparency, and social protections, especially where AI affects livelihoods, labour markets, public services, conflict settings, or access to rights.
- **Protect civic space, digital rights, and independent media**, including by safeguarding civil society actors working on disinformation, surveillance, privacy, and technology accountability.
- **Guarantee technology transfer and affordable digital access** as part of international partnership commitments, closing the gender gaps in digital access for structurally marginalised women and girls.

Alignment with the 2030 Agenda

- **Promote locally led and intersectional partnerships** aligned with SDG targets.
- **Align domestic policies and development plans with SDG targets** to maximise the impact of development cooperation.
- **Ensure regional forums feed meaningfully into HLPF and global UN processes.**

South-South cooperation

- **Support regional economic integration initiatives** that reduce dependency on external markets, lower transaction costs, expand regional trade and investment, and strengthen collective economic resilience.
- **Build and strengthen political and economic alignments rooted in South-South solidarity**, including through platforms such as the Non-Aligned Movement, to advance shared development priorities and increase collective bargaining power.
- **Resource regional, South-South, and triangular cooperation mechanisms as practical vehicles for inclusive and just development**, including through knowledge exchange, technology transfer, concessional finance, and support for just energy transitions.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



GOAL 6 UNDER REVIEW. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

ENSURE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL

Colonialism has [dispossessed](#) Indigenous users of land and water and established systems of extraction that exists to cater to the Global North and create dependencies until today. Traditional community-based handling of land and water has been [disrupted](#), and women have been pushed deeper into their role as caretakers, dependent on husbands, exposed to violence and excluded from decision-making. Water governance continues to reproduce water colonialism in the form of toxic pollution driven by extractivist industry, agribusiness (fertilisers, herbicides), destructive military and wars, dumping hazardous materials, and untreated wastewater.

In conflict settings, damage to infrastructure—including wastewater draining—can [release](#) raw sewage into soil, with cascading impacts for crop harvests and food security. Climate shocks, including through droughts, floods, and glacier retreat, are worsening water availability and infrastructure. Freshwater reserves are shrinking, including through extractive abuse, such as deforestation of the Amazon for biofuels or cattle grazing and oil and gas extraction; intensifying climate disasters; and deliberate destruction in wars and occupation, most visibly in Palestine and Southern Lebanon.

Women and girls continue to [bear](#) primary responsibility for water collection in 70% of households, especially in rural, drought-affected, conflict-affected, and informal settlement contexts. Across the world, women and girls [spend](#) 250 million hours per day collecting water. Globally, nearly half of the 1.2 billion people in sub-Saharan Africa and a quarter of the population in Central and South Asia [rely](#) on water collection, compared to just 12% in Northern Africa and Western Asia and 3% in Latin America and the Caribbean. As climatic impacts accelerate water shortages, women and girls face increasing time poverty and unpaid care workloads (including in water collection), health risks, and restricted access to education and livelihood opportunities. Without equids to support women and girls in water collection, many rural households would also face reduced water access, increased gender inequality, and worse health outcomes.

The lack of safe sanitation, free public toilets, menstrual health products, and toxin-free menstrual alternatives particularly affects the most structurally marginalised pregnant and menstruating individuals. In Bangladesh, only about 59% of the population [uses](#) safely managed drinking water and roughly 39% uses safely managed sanitation, with the greatest gaps in rural and informal urban areas. In rural Tanzania, girls [miss](#) up to 20% of school due to period stigma. The lack of appropriate WASH facilities and products disproportionately affects individuals who menstruate, are pregnant, or are breastfeeding, as their bodies are more sensitively exposed to infections and diseases across these stages.

Compounding these challenges, the rapid expansion of AI infrastructure is also increasing energy and water demand while concentrating political, economic, and informational power in a small number of corporations and states. Global AI demand is [projected](#) to account for 4.2–6.6 billion cubic meters of water withdrawal in 2027, which is half of the UK's annual water withdrawal. Recent estimates by the US Department of Energy [projects](#) AI electricity usage in the US to triple to 6–12% by 2028, from 4.4% in 2023.

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FEMINIST DEMANDS FOR SDG 6

- **Scale up public investment in accessible, safe, gender-responsive, climate-resilient WASH systems, in order to better enforce water and sanitation as human rights.** Prioritise the provision of safe and private sanitation, wastewater treatment, rainwater harvesting, resilient drinking water infrastructure, and nature-based solutions such as wetland, mangrove, river and watershed restoration. End exclusionary privatisation models that undermine universal, affordable and equitable access.
- **Address the colonial roots of water injustice.** Confronting these root causes means severing the chains of colonial extraction, non-debt creating reparations, restoration of peoples’ sovereignty, and securing the survival of humans and our planet. Demand non-debt-creating reparations, restoration of peoples’ sovereignty over land and water, and severance from extractive dependencies that continue to serve the Global North.
- **Strengthen equitable water governance, accountability and pollution control.** At the global level, pursue transboundary water diplomacy to prevent regional scarcity and prohibit the use of water as a weapon of war. Regulate corporate land exploitation, construction, mining, critical minerals projects, plastic pollution, data centres and AI-related water use, with enforceable environmental standards, prior consultation, sanctions for non-compliance and protection of aquifers, watersheds and springs.
- **Ensure women’s leadership and intersectional representation in WASH governance.** Strengthen women’s representation, agency and decision-making power in WASH policy, community structures, integrated water resource management, and climate adaptation planning.
- **Strengthen gender-responsive WASH data and regional cooperation.** Track sex-disaggregated data on access, safety, menstrual health, unpaid care, accessibility, and time spent collecting water, while supporting transboundary water management, regional observatories and collaborative SDG 6 implementation.
- **Recognise water as foundational to food systems, health, and livelihoods** by linking SDG 6 implementation with SDG 2, decent climate-friendly jobs, agriculture, livestock, beekeeping, aquaculture, nutrition, and hydration.
- **Integrate SRHR, bodily autonomy, and reproductive justice into SDG 6 services** to guarantee privacy, safety, and dignity for all.
- **Legally recognise menstrual health as human rights.** Subsidise hygiene facilities and remove the pink tax, specifically on menstrual health materials.
- **Provide education to boys and men on women’s menstrual health** to combat gender-based violence and increase sensitivity around gendered needs.
- **Advocate for transboundary water diplomacy** to ensure water to all nations sharing rivers, lakes or aquifers, to avoid regional scarcity and also to prevent water turning into a cause of war.
- **Prohibit the use of water as a weapon.** Ensuring water is governed for public interests (e.g. access to safe drinking water) rather than for profit including the extraction of minerals, industry and households., with preference to ensure equal access to safe drinking water. Distribution and price should be controlled democratically by communities, with special participation of women who know best use.
- **Integrate equids into policy, strengthening animal welfare systems, and promoting gender-equitable access,** so that stakeholders can unlock high-impact, cost-effective solutions that accelerate progress across SDG 6, SDG 5, and SDG 3, especially in rural regions where women and girls are highly dependent on equids for care work and resource collection.



GOAL 7 UNDER REVIEW. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

Energy poverty is rooted in poor housing, fossil fuel dependency, rising living costs, and unequal access to resources, with women and girls disproportionately affected. A small minority of individuals and corporations consume planetary energy resources in extreme excess while millions still lack basic electricity. The [redistribution](#) of energy consumption for the top 10% global energy consumers would meet the modern energy needs of the entire Global South nine times over. Around 600 million people in Africa lack reliable [access](#) to electricity, which amounts to almost half the continent's population and over 80% of those lacking electricity globally

Energy crises [intensify](#) gendered vulnerabilities. Global energy shocks are disproportionately burdening women and girls by intensifying time poverty and forcing a regression to labour-intensive, health-damaging fuels. Household air pollution from traditional cooking methods [causes](#) around 3 million premature deaths annually, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for an estimated 815,000. Women and children bear a disproportionate share of this burden, both through greater exposure to harmful smoke and through the time demands of fuel collection and cooking, which [absorb](#) on average four hours a day per household in Africa)—time taken from education, paid work, enterprise, and participation in public life. 2.1 billion people still [lack](#) access to clean cooking globally, half of which are living in sub-Saharan Africa, while the Asia Pacific region is still [lagging](#) in the achievement of universal access to clean cooking fuels and technologies, which is a key component of SDG7.

Renewable energy and green infrastructure projects risk reproducing extractive patterns when they displace communities, override consent, prioritise corporate interests, or externalise environmental and social costs. However, there is also significant potential to equitably scale renewable energy access to contribute to gender equality, especially in the African continent where 55.5% of total final energy consumption already [comes](#) from renewable sources, far outpacing Europe (15.3%), Northern America (12.4%), and Asia (16.8%). The tension lies in ensuring that the energy transition and any energy investments are done with community needs in mind.

Despite the gendered harms of current energy systems, women remain structurally excluded from the benefits of and participation in the energy transition. Women are especially underrepresented in leadership and technical roles. In Pakistan—the world's fifth [most](#) climate-vulnerable country—women make up only 4% of technical roles in the energy sector. This underrepresentation reflects persistent gender gaps in STEM education, shaped by restrictive social norms, limited mobility, unsafe or discriminatory workplaces, and inadequate support for women's disproportionate unpaid care responsibilities, including childcare. Yet even in countries like Malaysia, where women [make](#) up the majority (53.2%) of STEM graduates, women [remain](#) less likely than men to be employed in STEM fields due to systemic biases in hiring and retention. Insufficient involvement in energy decision-making prevents women from leading, innovating, and benefiting equally from the energy transition.

For analysis on fossil fuel phase-out and critical minerals, see the sections below.

FEMINIST DEMANDS FOR SDG 7

- **End women's energy poverty.** Expand universal access to affordable, reliable, decentralised, and sustainable energy, including clean cooking, community micro-grids, and energy for productive use, as a care economy investment.
- **Ensure a just, rights-based energy transition.** Prevent displacement and extractivism; guarantee FPIC; protect Indigenous rights; and align renewable energy expansion within biodiversity, water security, and planetary boundaries.
- **Phase out fossil fuels and reject false solutions.** End fossil fuel subsidies and confront petro-populist politics that fuel climate denialism, militarisation, and anti-gender backlash. Reject false solutions such as carbon offsets, nuclear energy, and monoculture biofuels.
- **Adopt gender-responsive energy laws, policies, and financing.** Set clear, enforceable targets for women's access, employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership across the energy sector. Protect workers and low-income households through targeted affordability measures and social protection during the transition.
- **Confront patriarchal control of energy systems.** Invest in community-owned, care-centred, democratically governed renewable energy systems that prioritise wellbeing and ecological limits over extraction and profit.
- **Build women's leadership from the ground up.** Resource grassroots women's organisations, cooperatives, and community energy initiatives. Expand pathways for girls and young women into STEM and decent energy work through education, training, mentorship, and anti-discrimination measures.
- **Guarantee energy access as a public good.** Regulate energy markets to prevent corporate monopolisation and speculation. Ensure that privatisation models do not undermine universal access, and that community and publicly owned energy systems are protected and resourced.
- **Regulate harmful energy demand from digital infrastructure.** Ensure AI systems, data centres, and digital infrastructure do not undermine local energy access, ecosystems, water security, or Indigenous rights.
- **Develop and resource gender indicators to track progress**—including qualitative and experience-based data at the individual level, and indicators for universal access to clean energy- including sex-disaggregated data on energy access, clean cooking, and workforce participation.

“Our current fossil-fueled economic model has led to the climate crisis, extreme violations of human rights, women’s rights, and Indigenous rights. It is clear that transforming this entrenched, extractive economic model is the main barrier facing us globally. This prevailing economic system is built on the exploitation of gendered and racialised labour, particularly of the unpaid and unrecognised care and domestic work led by migrants, women, and gender-diverse people. It is built on an unequal transfer of value, including raw materials and labor, from the Global South to the Global North, enriching and enabling an energy transition for the benefit of some to the detriment of many.”

[A Feminist Vision Statement for the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels Conference](#), offered by a collective of organisations within the Women & Diversities Sector

The global extractive architecture and its defenders

The US, EU, and other Global North countries are [responsible](#) for almost 50% of all cumulative production-based carbon emissions since 1850. Yet countries in the Global South are the ones paying a disproportionately high and unfair price in terms of economic, social, and ecological consequences from climate change and environmental degradation. 69% of deaths [caused](#) by climate-related disasters in the past 50 years occurred in the least developed countries.

Military spending, conflict, and war are also linked to environmental destruction, fossil fuel dependence, water insecurity, and reduced fiscal space for climate finance. The top 20 military spenders are [estimated](#) to have produced 10 billion metric tonnes of CO₂ through military-related emissions in the last 25 years. The first 14 days of the US-Israel war on Iran [generated](#) over 5 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions. Despite large military powers' claims of reducing climate impact, fossil fuel dependence and the development of high-pollution weapons [show](#) no signs of slowing down. Reducing military spending could not only [decrease](#) environmental harm, but also free resources for a global just transition, while also strengthening cooperation, trust, and institutional capacity. Gender, peace, and environmental justice should be addressed together, including in contexts affected by socio-environmental conflict, extractive violence, and militarised land or resource governance.

Petro-populist narratives increasingly combine fossil fuel dependency, nationalist politics, anti-gender backlash, and disinformation to obstruct democratic accountability and a just transition. For example, in Canadian media, fossil fuels are often [positioned](#) as the core of the country's economy by generating benefits including increased wages for workers and revenue for public services. Climate anxiety and ecological collapse are increasingly being [instrumentalised](#) through racist, nationalist, anti-migrant, and ecofascist narratives that scapegoat marginalised communities while protecting unequal systems of power and consumption.

The extractive architecture is actively defended by countries and corporations who benefit the most from interconnected drivers of harm. To stay within the 1.5°C threshold, the richest 1% would need to [cut](#) their per capita emissions by 97% between 2025-2030, yet corporations leverage investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms to [protect](#) fossil fuel profits at the expense of climate action. Of the US\$120 billion from all recorded ISDS awards, US\$84 billion [went](#) to fossil fuel corporations and a further US\$7.8 billion to mining companies. The consequences are visible in where money flows. High-income countries [received](#) 50% of global clean energy investment in 2024, while Africa accounted for just 2%, **despite being home to 85% of all people without electricity.** Just transition financing for the Global South [received](#) a fraction of 1% of available climate funds, while global military spending reached \$2.88 trillion in 2025 – driving carbon emissions and ecosystem destruction while crowding out climate investment. In 2025, Hurricane Melissa [caused](#) damage in Jamaica amounting to approximately US\$8 billion, almost half of the country's annual GDP. This amount dwarfs Jamaica's US\$150 million parametric catastrophe bond arranged with the World Bank, demonstrating a clear gap between climate harm and the limited coverage of the financial instruments designed to address this.

Countries whose energy systems remain heavily dependent on fossil fuels are left more exposed to global supply disruptions, price shocks, and energy insecurity; in Central Asia, for example, fossil fuels [account](#) for an estimated 75% of electricity generation, leaving families and firms vulnerable and reinforcing the need for a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels.

Racialised climate injustice and the compounded vulnerability of structurally marginalised groups

Structurally marginalised people face environmental racism rooted in unequal control over land, forests, water, energy, food systems, and climate finance that is shaped by the intersection of racial, gender, and territorial inequalities. Racialised communities are concentrated in territories that are more exposed to pollution, flooding, environmental degradation, and lack of infrastructure. However, climate governance routinely obscures these inequalities, from resistance to [naming](#) Afro-descendant people explicitly at COP30, to limiting targeted policy responses and erasing the specific experiences of women of African descent. A study by Geledés [found](#) that only 23% of 115 UN documents analysed contained concrete references to people of African descent.

This invisibility has material consequences, particularly for those who resist extractivism and environmental destruction, who face severe and often lethal risks. The communities that are the least responsible for the climate crisis are the most exposed to its consequences, but are criminalised and killed for defending the territories that sustain them—from resisting mining in Latin America, fossil fuel extraction in the African continent, fracking in North America, and rare earth exploitation in Asia. 146 land defenders were [killed](#) or disappeared worldwide in 2024, with 84% of documented cases occurring in Latin America and Indigenous Peoples accounting for a third of that figure.

Women and other structurally marginalised groups face increased risks to mortality and loss and damage experienced during climate-induced crises, as they exacerbate existing inequalities. Women are 8% less likely than men to [own](#) a mobile phone, limiting their access to climate and disaster information and adaptation technologies. **These inequalities limit preparedness, response capacity, and participation in climate resilience planning.** In Nepal, a study [found](#) that 71% of men received formal early warning information from a formal source compared to 51% who received warnings through informal channels.

Women and girls with disabilities also face compounded exclusion from green spaces, evacuation systems, disaster shelters, WASH infrastructure, and climate adaptation planning. Only one in four people with disabilities can easily [follow](#) evacuation instructions in the event of a disaster, and 11% are aware of a disaster management plan in their community. Inaccessible shelters, early warning systems, transport, and public infrastructure increase risks during floods, cyclones, droughts, and other climate-related disasters.

Environmental and gendered costs of industrial production

Women and girls [face](#) disproportionate exposure and vulnerability to air and water pollution, chemicals, plastics, pesticides, fertilisers, industrial waste, oil pollution, and radioactive contamination [linked](#) to nuclear industries and weapons. Everyday exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals through cosmetics, plastics, packaging, menstrual products, and household items must be [recognised](#) as a gendered environmental health issue. These exposures are linked to respiratory disease, cancers, reproductive health risks, and broader SRHR impacts. Sectors with high toxic exposure, including manufacturing, agriculture, services, and the informal economy, [place](#) female workers at disproportionate risk from occupational chemical exposure.

These impacts are not only the result of climate shocks, but of food systems structured around extraction, control, and corporate dependency. Industrial food systems are shaped by patriarchal masculinities that rely heavily on fossil fuels, petrochemical inputs, mechanisation, long supply chains, and export-oriented production, reinforcing both environmental degradation and market vulnerability. In Honduras, pesticide dealers have [threatened](#) small-scale farmers who move away from pesticide-intensive agriculture, using intimidation to protect agro-industrial interests. Meanwhile, in Colombia, armed groups have [restricted](#) small-scale farmers from selling food locally, using territorial control to shape food access and local markets.

The green transition does not automatically reduce these risks; without a justice-centred approach, it can shift and intensify them. Microchip production required to [decarbonise](#) the economy (including those used in electric vehicles and renewable energy) relies on chemical processes in the electronics sector that are associated with cancer and reproductive disorders. This has been documented in manufacturing facilities in global hubs in East and Southeast Asia, including China, Viet Nam, and Malaysia, where facilities are disproportionately [staffed](#) by women. “Critical” mineral extraction for renewable technologies can also [reproduce](#) colonial patterns of land dispossession, toxic exposure, and corporate control, driving ecosystem disruption, water depletion and contamination, and harm to frontline communities.

Climate disasters and rural livelihoods

Women (especially smallholder farmers, pastoralists, Indigenous women, and female-headed households, and those living in remote areas, informal settlements, small islands, and agricultural communities) are disproportionately affected by droughts, floods, heatwaves, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and declining crop yields, disproportionately in rural and remote areas, informal settlements, small islands, and agricultural communities. They face heightened risks during and after climate disasters, including gender-based violence, exploitation, and loss of access to protection, housing, sanitation, health services, and justice. Intimate partner femicide [rises](#) by as much as 28% during heatwaves. Displaced communities are among the most exposed, frequently lacking the basic infrastructure and legal protections that make safety possible.

Limited access to land ownership, credit, and climate-resilient agricultural technologies undermines women’s food security and economic independence. For every day of extreme heat, poor rural households [lose](#) an average of 2.4% of their on-farm incomes and 1.1% of the value of their crops. Women’s higher dependency on natural resources intensifies these losses, increasing their exposure to food insecurity and livelihood collapse. In Latin America, approximately 26 million women (around 8.9% of the female labour force) were [employed](#) in environmental sectors such as agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing in 2023, sectors particularly vulnerable to compounding environmental crises. In Bolivia, Ecuador, Haiti, and Peru, this figure reached as high as 30%.

CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

WOMEN-LED WASH PROGRAMMING TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY SANITATION AND ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

In Nairobi, Kenya, [The Women in Water and Sanitation Association](#) (WIWAS) is a gender-focused membership-based organisation working to ensure women are not just beneficiaries of water and sanitation services, but leaders in delivering them. Operating in low-income and informal settlements, WIWAS combines direct infrastructure investment with capacity building and advocacy to create lasting change, leadership development, and equitable access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene at the community and school level.

Through its programmes, WIWAS supports rural and peri-urban schools through rainwater harvesting infrastructure and sanitation facility construction in under-resourced schools, distributes menstrual health management support for girls and dignity kits for boys, and delivers targeted training and mentorship programmes to support women’s progression into leadership and decision-making roles within the sector. The organisation also works with informal pit latrine emptiers—a largely invisible workforce—helping them organise into community based organisations, access occupational health and safety training, and secure protection equipment.

These efforts have improved WASH conditions in schools, enhanced menstrual health management, strengthened community sanitation systems, and contributed to the professionalisation of informal sanitation workers. More women are now occupying decision-making roles across water and sanitation governance, demonstrating that when women lead in WASH, communities are better served and the sector itself is transformed.

CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY INTO SUSTAINABLE ENERGY POLICY AND PRACTICE

ENERGIA (International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy) has spent over 25 years working at the intersection of gender equality and sustainable energy, combining direct economic empowerment of women with high-level policy advocacy to ensure that the transition to sustainable, affordable, and clean energy is gender-just.

At the global level, ENERGIA co-[leads](#) the Gender and Energy Compact under UN Energy, a multi-stakeholder initiative engaging over 1,100 organisations and 11 champion countries. This has been instrumental in addressing a critical gap: SDG 7 on sustainable energy remains one of only six SDGs without a specific gender indicator. In 2025, ENERGIA helped launch a landmark policy brief at the HLPF calling for the integration of SDG 7 tracking and is now contributing to global mappings to inform proposals at the 2026 HLPF.

On the ground, ENERGIA's women economic empowerment programme has engaged over 19,000 women entrepreneurs in clean energy value chains and enabled access to clean energy for more than 8 million last-mile consumers. Women participants report transformative change: 90% reported improvements in quality of life, 91% reported higher business or farm revenues, 85% reported higher community status, and 83% reported a greater ability to make key business change—highlighting that gender-responsive energy programming drives both individual and systemic policy change.

FEMINIST DEMANDS TO MEMBER STATES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Rights of nature & rights to natural resources

- **Recognise and enforce the rights of nature**, embedding legal frameworks that protect ecosystems as rights holders, halt environmental destruction, and prioritise restoration, stewardship, and ecological limits.
- **Guarantee collective land titling for Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities with women's equal tenure rights**, implement land reform to advance justice and equity for women, and ensure equal access to and control over land, water, and natural resources for women, girls, and gender-diverse people.
- **Strictly enforce industrial pollution controls**, with mandatory social audits and community oversight for all water and energy schemes.

Gender-responsive climate policy & finance

- **Integrate gender analysis, targets, and budgeting into national climate plans, NDCs, LT-LEDS, multilateral climate funds, and ESG reporting.** Ensure that climate adaptation, energy transition, and biodiversity policies include gender-responsive financing and protect the livelihoods, territories, and labour rights of affected communities.
- **Redirect public finance towards gender-just climate action.** This includes grant-based climate finance and investment in community-led, care-centred, and regenerative environmental solutions—applying the polluter pays principle and public financing to fund gender-just climate and social action.
- **Integrate SRHR into national climate adaptation plans.** National and regional health plans should incorporate climate justice and its intersection with SRHR.
- **Protect and expand civil society participation in all energy and climate governance forums**, including formal accreditation and financial support for women's organisations.

Environmental racism

- **Explicitly incorporate the concept of environmental racism into legal frameworks and public policies**, recognising that the climate crisis does not affect all populations equally.
- **Ensure the explicit inclusion of people of African descent in international agreements**, national plans, and climate financing, with allocated and direct access to adaptation and mitigation funds.
- **Guarantee the binding participation of women of African descent in decision-making spaces at local, national, and international levels.**

Pollution and health

- **Phase out toxic chemicals and fossil fuel-based inputs across food and production systems**, and adopt the precautionary principle alongside health-centred approaches that address the gender-differentiated impacts of chemical exposure shaped by labour roles, care responsibilities, and unequal access to protection and healthcare.
- **Regulate harmful chemicals in consumer and menstrual products**, including endocrine-disrupting chemicals and cumulative toxic exposure, and integrate menstrual health, period equity, and toxic-free menstruation into public health, education, and environmental policies.

FEMINIST DEMANDS TO MEMBER STATES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Protection of environmental defenders

- **Protect women environmental defenders and media reporting on them**, from violence, criminalisation, and online harassment, including by ratifying and fully implementing the Escazú Agreement, the Aarhus Convention, and anti-SLAPP (strategic lawsuits against public participation) regulations, as well as regulations targeting technology-facilitated violence. As well as ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous Peoples' right to land.
- **Hold corporations accountable for health and safety risks associated with mining activities**, including mercury poisoning and sexual violence against communities.
- **Channel support to grassroots feminist and gender-diverse environmental networks.**
- **Recognise women's territorial knowledge and leadership in environmental governance** by ensuring their active and meaningful participation in decision-making and incorporating their expertise.

Disability-inclusive environmental policy

- **Develop and implement policies guaranteeing accessible water, sanitation, healthcare, and disaster response services for disabled women and girls**, including accessible emergency shelters, evacuation routes, and early warning systems.
- **Mainstream disability into all climate and environmental policies**, ensuring adaptation and mitigation strategies address the specific vulnerabilities of disabled people, especially women and girls, and create platforms that empower disabled women and girls to participate meaningfully in environmental planning and decision-making.

Food systems

- **Ensure food system governance is gender-transformative, intersectional, and grounded in human rights**, so that climate and food transitions strengthen livelihoods, self-determination, and the right to development.
- **Engage men and boys in feminist, rights-based food and climate action**, ensuring this work is accountable to structurally marginalised peoples while contributing to advancing gender equality, SRHR for all, demilitarisation, and climate justice.
- **Address patriarchal masculinities as a structural driver of climate and food system harms**, including as rooted in land control, industrial agriculture, militarisation, extractivism, and exclusionary decision-making. Prevent severe environmental destruction that is amounting to ecocide.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



GOAL 11 UNDER REVIEW. CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS

MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

Housing is increasingly treated as a financial asset rather than a human right, driving houselessness, gentrification, and displacement and deepening insecurity for the most structurally marginalised. Housing scarcity is especially pronounced in the context of rapid urbanisation; more than 80% of the Latin American and Caribbean population [lives](#) in cities, which is expected to reach 90% by 2050. As more people seek economic opportunities in cities, housing demand severely [outpaces](#) supply, fueling the growth of informal settlements or slums. In 2022, about 1.12 billion people lived in slums, which the UN [defines](#) as lacking access to potable water, sanitation, and public infrastructure.

War and armed conflicts are increasingly being perpetrated in densely populated urban areas, with explosive weapons such as large bombs, missiles, artillery, and rocket launchers causing devastating impacts to people, the environment, and infrastructure. Many refugees and other people who have been displaced by armed conflicts also live in urban areas. Urban areas are often sites of increased deployment of constantly-evolving technologies of surveillance and repression including by police and immigration enforcement agencies, with implications on human rights such as the right to privacy.

Although migrating to urban centres from rural areas can benefit women and girls through reduced impact of gender norms, they [remain](#) especially vulnerable in urban environments, particularly in slums. Poverty, lack of access to health and sanitation infrastructure, threats to their physical safety, and a lack of decision-making power in these settings [undermine](#) women's dignity, safety, mobility, and well-being.

Unsafe and inaccessible mobility systems—shaped by inadequate lighting, inaccessible transport, and weak urban infrastructure—restrict women's and girls' movement, dignity, safety, and wellbeing. Women and girls rely disproportionately on public and non-motorised transport, including walking and cycling, but these journeys come with risks of sexual harassment and violence. In South Asia, 70% of girls [report](#) that they cannot freely decide whether to visit friends or family because of concerns about their vulnerability. In Lahore, Bangladesh, 90% of (primarily younger) women [revealed](#) that they were sexually harassed on buses. In India, women often [choose](#) lower-ranked colleges to avoid unsafe commutes.

FEMINIST DEMANDS FOR SDG 11

- **Guarantee the right to the city by enshrining housing, mobility, and basic urban services as human rights.** Ensure universal access to healthcare, education, sanitation, care, and employment.
- **Invest in safe, accessible, and climate-resilient urban infrastructure** (including affordable public transport, pedestrian safety, well-lit streets, gender-sensitive sanitation, accessible green spaces, and community services in underserved areas). Integrate mobility with housing, care, health, education, and employment so that urban planning closes real access gaps, and reduces and redistributes unpaid care work.
- **Expand public and social housing**, while regulating rents and speculation.
- **Make urban and territorial planning participatory, intersectional, and binding.** Ensure women, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, persons with disabilities, older persons, and informal-settlement residents shape design, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Promote balanced territorial development.** Reduce overconcentration in megacities, invest in urban peripheries, strengthen local governments, and support post-conflict urban recovery that centres care, social infrastructure, and universal public goods. Address the issues of slum upgrading, formalisation of informal settlements, and basic service provision within existing slums.
- **Recognise care as essential urban infrastructure.** Expand public investment in universal, affordable care services and protect labour rights, decent work, and social protection for domestic, home-based, and community care workers.
- **Accelerate equitable urban climate action by decarbonising transport, improving energy efficiency,** alongside adaptation and disaster resilience, and emissions-reduction policies. Strengthen affordability protections and safeguards against climate-driven displacement.
- **Prevent urban violence, discrimination, and displacement** through safe public spaces, community-led early-warning systems, accountability for hate crimes and GBV, disarmament programming, and safeguards against regulatory capture by real-estate and corporate lobbies.
- **Protect democratic public-interest urban governance.** Strengthen the state's role, prevent regressive privatisation, ensure stable public policies with real budgets, and institutionalise civil society participation across local, national, and regional decision-making.
- **Strengthen intersectional urban data and accountability,** by disaggregating data by gender, age, disability, income, and migration status, and resourcing civil society to track safety, affordability, care workloads, and inclusion.

Conflict, militarisation, and the erosion of public services

Conflict and rising military spending are [destroying](#) civilian infrastructure and diverting resources away from health, education, housing, care, water, sanitation, and social protection. The impacts of redirecting public resources toward military expenditure are acutely [experienced](#) by women; this manifests through increases in unpaid social reproductive labour within communities and households. Militarisation also severely [affects](#) disabled women and girls, who bear disproportionate burdens when water, sanitation, shelter, healthcare, and transport systems are disrupted. **Despite their heightened vulnerability to the impacts of conflict and militarisation, women, girls, gender-diverse people, and disabled women remain insufficiently [represented](#) in peace processes, justice institutions, post-conflict recovery, and peacebuilding.**

The impacts of conflict and militarisation on migration are exacerbated due to the hollowing out of civilian infrastructure and social services. Armed conflict and political instability [drive](#) migration and forced displacement and increase rates of trafficking, subjecting vulnerable populations, including women and girls, to chronic insecurity and exploitation. As migration and displacement increase, governments increasingly [respond](#) to migration as a threat, intensifying the barriers to asylum through increased policing, detention, deportation, and repression of civic space.

Migrants and displaced people also [face](#) loss of livelihoods and exclusion from education and healthcare, [creating](#) gaps that place care responsibilities disproportionately on women and girls. Women and girls also [experience](#) a lack of access to gender-based violence support services, increasing their vulnerability.

Limited access to quality healthcare, including SRHR services

Women, adolescents, girls, and gender-diverse people continue to face barriers to quality, affordable, and accessible healthcare, especially in conflict-affected, rural, low-income, and displaced communities. The spread of conflict, rising displacement, global aid cuts and widening urban-rural divides are [reinforcing](#) this trend, and the consequences are unevenly [distributed](#). This is acutely reflected in SRHR services. Structural barriers including poverty, territorial inequalities, restrictive laws, and a lack of access to skilled healthcare providers [are](#) often [compounded](#) by social barriers such as misinformation, stigma, and so-called conscientious objection. Together, these barriers [undermine](#) access to abortion, contraception, STI prevention and treatment, and comprehensive reproductive healthcare. These barriers are especially common in sub-Saharan Africa, southern Asia and the Latin American and Caribbean region. In 2023, 70% of maternal deaths [occurred](#) in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia, and over 97% of the Latin America and Caribbean region's population of women of reproductive age [faced](#) restrictive abortion laws as of 2018.

Migrant and disabled women and girls face compounded barriers to healthcare. Migrant women workers often [face](#) discrimination, abusive recruitment practices, sexual and gender-based violence, and lack of access to healthcare, including SRHR services. Women with disabilities also [experience](#) forced sterilisation, coerced contraception, denial of rights to family formation, and exclusion from SRHR policy and service design including reproductive health services, accessible facilities, informed consent, and rights-based care.

Education exclusion and anti-rights restrictions in education

Conflict, displacement, poverty, disability-related discrimination, and inaccessible infrastructure [disrupt](#) access to education for girls, gender-diverse youth, disabled children, refugee children, and internally displaced children. For girls and gender-diverse youth, inadequate school sanitation, lack of running water, and poor menstrual health facilities [contribute](#) to discomfort, absenteeism, and exclusion during menstruation. As of 2025, approximately 122 million girls [are](#) out of school globally. Afghanistan [exemplifies](#) extreme measures taken by governments to prevent girls' school attendance: over 2.5 million girls are out of school due to bans on education and public life. Disabled children [experience](#) compounded barriers to education access, including inaccessible school facilities, discriminatory attitudes, lack of support services, and exclusion from recovery programmes. Refugee and displaced children lack consistent access to schools and [face](#) discrimination, [leading](#) approximately half of them to go without an education.

Alongside structural and social barriers to education, inclusive curricula and services within schools are severely lacking. Social norms and a lack of school capacity are [resulting](#) in a lack of comprehensive sexuality education, severely impacting women and girls who already face higher risk of sexual violence. For example, 82% of girls in Malawi [do](#) not receive menstruation education before puberty.

Anti-rights, anti-gender movements [are](#) also on the rise and increasingly coordinated in their attempts to censor feminism, gender and sexual diversity, and anti-racism content in education. These movements are successfully driving rollbacks in comprehensive sexuality education, gender-responsive policies, LGBTQI+ protections, and sexual and reproductive rights. Recent examples include censorship of gender and sexuality education in [Brazil](#) in 2022, [Uganda's](#) 2023 Anti-homosexuality act and ongoing attacks on LGBTQI+ organisations, and the US Supreme Court's 2022 [overturning](#) of Roe v. Wade.

Gender-based violence, femicide, and conflict-related sexual violence

Militarisation, political instability, armed conflict, and displacement are all contributing to the persistence of GBV globally. In Palestine, for example, an investigation by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry found Israel's increasing use of GBV against Palestinians, both through direct assault and destruction of sexual and reproductive health facilities, to "terrorise them and perpetuate a system of oppression that undermines their right to self-determination."

GBV also occurs within the domestic sphere, exposing the limits of prevention and protection. In Mongolia, reported domestic violence cases rose by 24.3% in 2024; UN Women and UNODC have highlighted the need to strengthen femicide data collection, address gaps in institutional coordination, and improve justice-system responses to gender-related killings of women and girls, which Mongolia is beginning to address by piloting the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Gender-related Killing of Women and Girls. Weak justice systems subsequently lessen consequences for GBV and heighten risks for women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

Policing and state violence has long functioned as deliberate tools of settler colonialism, and a mechanism for enforcing white supremacist hierarchies. In Brazil and across Latin America, women of African descent are disproportionately exposed to lethal violence, reflecting the intersection of gendered, racialised, and structural violence. Police lethality and excessive use of force disproportionately affect people of African descent and peripheral communities; in Brazil, people of African descent made up 82% of those killed in police operations in 2024. State violence has gendered consequences on women through family loss, community destabilisation, trauma, and increased caregiving responsibilities for women. Afro-Colombian women provide a prominent case, assuming leadership and advocacy roles at great personal risk after losing family members to racially motivated violence. Women of African descent also face higher risks of homicide and violence in the region, reflecting the central role of structural racism in gendered social injustice.

CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY TO MAINSTREAM RACIAL AND GENDER JUSTICE IN MULTILATERAL PROCESSES

Geledés Instituto da Mulher Negra (Geledés Black Women's Institute) is a Brazilian NGO founded and led by Black women, that has spent decades advocating and working at the intersection of racial and gender justice, including through sustained engagement in UN multilateral spaces. Recognising that people of African descent lacked formal recognition in the mechanisms to shape global policy, Geledés launched a sustained advocacy campaign to change that.

In September 2023, Geledés publicly called for the creation of a dedicated People of African Descent Stakeholder Group within the UN's Major Groups and Other Stakeholders which serves as the primary channel for civil society to engage with the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and contributes to SDG monitoring and review. Over the following two years, the organisation built global alliances, participated at key HLPF sessions and hosted side events at the Summit of the Future to make the political case for formal recognition.

In May 2025, this advocacy succeeded in a historic milestone. The UN officially established the People of African Descent Stakeholder Group, the first dedicated mechanism for people of African descent in the multilateral system. The group will now participate in weekly UN coordination meetings, submit collective SDG analysis documents and nominate speakers at HLPF and other global fora, enabling these communities across all diasporas to meaningfully shape the policies that affect their lives.

FEMINIST DEMANDS TO MEMBER STATES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Women, Peace & Security

- **Ensure women's full, equal, and meaningful participation at all levels and stages of peacebuilding, conflict prevention, humanitarian response, governance, and decision-making on peace and security**, including by making the participation of diverse women a requirement in all peace processes, in line with the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, CEDAW, and CEDAW General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. Refrain from supporting new peace processes that exclude women.
- **Reverse the upward trend in military spending** by progressively reducing military spending and redirecting resources from all forms of militarised, securitised, and carceral responses toward universal public goods, care, peacebuilding, and climate action.
- **Calling for an immediate end to all wars and occupation**; adherence to the UN Charter, and fundamental reform of the United Nations Security Council particularly through the abolishment of the veto.
- **Immediately cease military aid and the transfer of arms, ammunition, equipment, and other military and dual-use items** where there is risk that they will be used to commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, in line with the Arms Trade Treaty and other obligations under international law.
- **Support and engage with international justice and accountability mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable for violations of international humanitarian law**, crimes against humanity, and genocide, including gender-related violations such as reproductive violence and sexual violence in conflict, and protect the integrity of ongoing proceedings, including at the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.
- **Provide transparency about the emissions and other environmental impacts of armed conflict and military activity** and provide reparations for conflict and militarism-related environmental harms.
- **Progressively and consistently advance concrete steps towards disarmament and demilitarisation**, including control of small arms and light weapons and taking steps towards the complete abolition of nuclear weapons.
- **Defend the centrality of gender equality and the full scope of human rights of all women and girls in all international peace and security processes** and all outcome documents, including in relevant mandates and negotiations at the UN.
- **Invest in early warning systems** that are gender-responsive, disability-accessible and inclusive to avert crises and prevent conflict.
- **Provide psychosocial support** for conflict-affected women and girls.

Racialised state violence, institutional racism, and structural discrimination

- **Call for public mechanisms to hold states accountable for racialised state violence and police reform.**
- **Decriminalise migration and uphold the right to asylum**, as well as ensure access to services for displaced people regardless of their legal status.
- **Advocate for the EU to defend and strengthen the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive**, to hold corporations accountable for environmental destruction, human rights abuses, and racialised harms throughout their global value chains.
- **Identify ecomigration as a legal term**, to ensure better legal protections against growing anti-migration laws spreading across the EU.

FEMINIST DEMANDS TO MEMBER STATES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Education

- **Guarantee safe, inclusive, and gender-transformative education.** Mandate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and stigma-free menstrual and sexual health education; enforce re-entry policies for pregnant girls; end child marriage; and make schools free from violence.
- **Protect education as a public good.** Regulate public-private partnerships, reject censorship of feminist, gender, and sexuality content, and invest in public, secular, anti-racist schooling.
- **Demilitarise communities and designate schools as zones of peace.**

SRHR

- **Guarantee universal access to safe abortion, contraception, and CSE.** Integrate SRHR into urban planning, humanitarian response, climate adaptation, and health system reform.
- **Recognise and protect SRHR defenders.** Provide judicial-legal, digital, and emotional support, and ensure regular, accessible funding for SRHR organisations.

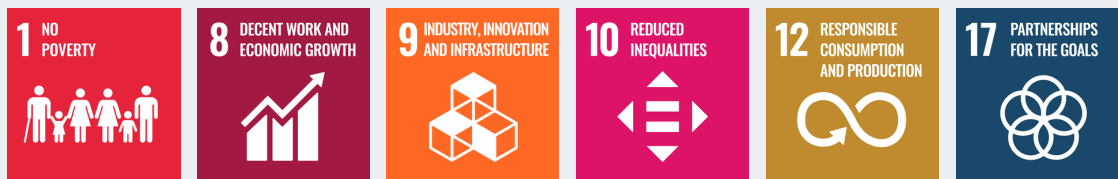
Gender-based violence and legal protection

- **Implement and enforce comprehensive laws protecting women, girls, and gender-diverse people from violence, discrimination, and exploitation.** End impunity for gender-based crimes, including state-perpetrated sexual violence; and ensure accessible justice mechanisms and survivor support services.
- **Extend full labour and social protections,** including access to SRHR services, to migrant women workers, with strict sanctions against employers who subject them to GBV.
- **Foster safe, inclusive, and harassment-free institutional environments for women in all sectors.**
- **Protect women and LGBTQI+ persons from technology-facilitated GBV.** Regulate online platforms, build AI governance frameworks on feminist principles, and advance equal access to connectivity, devices, and technical training in AI and data analytics.

Disability-inclusive social justice

- **Establish accessible, comprehensive health and social care systems responsive to disabled women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals.** Enact and enforce anti-discrimination laws. Promote social inclusion through awareness and community engagement.
- **Create meaningful mechanisms for disabled women and girls to participate in policy development, peace processes, and community leadership.** Facilitate peer-to-peer learning on disability inclusion.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE



GOAL 9 UNDER REVIEW. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION

While infrastructure and industrial development are essential to sustainable economies, women remain underrepresented in planning, governance, technical roles, industrial leadership, and decision-making. Too often, infrastructure design, technology deployment, and industrial policy overlook women's mobility patterns, unpaid care responsibilities, safety risks, and time-use realities, creating barriers to access and participation, thus limiting women's economic opportunities and weakening the ability of infrastructure and innovation systems to respond to the needs of diverse communities. This is especially the case in conflict- and climate change-affected areas where infrastructure is under threat.

Women [face](#) structural barriers to land ownership, inheritance rights, housing, property, and productive assets. Gender-based discrimination, lack of collateral, inaccessible banking systems, and bias in investment decision-making [limit](#) access to finance and entrepreneurship for women and gender-diverse people. Economic violence further restricts women's control over household income, savings, debt, and financial decision-making. Women-led enterprises continue to face limited financing and unequal opportunities.

The gender digital divide also constrains equality and meaningful participation in innovation systems. Women have lower levels of internet access than men globally, with the widest gaps in low-income countries and among adolescent girls and young women. This limited access to digital tools reduces opportunities for learning, decent work, entrepreneurship, and skills development. [According](#) to a study by the ILO, occupations dominated by women are nearly twice as exposed to generative AI as male-dominated ones (29% vs 16%) due to being concentrated in administrative and support roles with routine tasks that are more likely to be automated. Generative AI systems can also reproduce harmful gender and racial stereotypes, reinforcing existing inequalities in public discourse, service delivery, employment, and governance.

Conversely, women are underrepresented in AI-related jobs that would give them a role in the innovation ecosystem. As future employment increasingly requires digital expertise, digital exclusion risks widening gender, disability, class, and geographic inequalities. Closing the gender digital divide by 2050 would [improve](#) digital access for almost 350 million women and girls and add an estimated US\$1.5 trillion to the global economy by 2030.

FEMINIST DEMANDS FOR SDG 9

- **Embed care infrastructure into industrial zones, workplaces, and public facilities**, including childcare, lactation spaces, menstrual health support, and safe sanitation, so that infrastructure supports bodily autonomy, dignity, and equal participation. Publicly financed care infrastructure and social protection systems should be treated as productive public investments.
- **Ensure industrial policies address the specific barriers faced by people affected by intersecting inequalities**, including caste, religion, disability, age, gender, and refugee status. These policies should include strong protections against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, safe whistleblowing mechanisms, and paid parental leave.
- **Adopt gender-responsive industrial, innovation and infrastructure policies** with gender impact assessments, inclusive planning, age-sensitive and intersectional approaches, and measurable targets for women's participation, leadership and entrepreneurship.
- **Develop integrated inclusive industrialisation strategies** that align macroeconomic, trade, tax, sectoral and infrastructure policies with decent work, formalisation, living wages, equal pay, social protection and climate resilience.
- **Expand access to finance, simplified business registration, procurement opportunities, and export pathways** for youth-led enterprises, women-led businesses, cooperatives, and community-based industries.
- **Strengthen public-sector-led and public-interest infrastructure governance** through transparent standards, public scrutiny, anti-corruption safeguards, stronger accountability for PPPs and multinational corporations, and protections against fiscal risks, displacement, exclusion and environmental harm.
- **Enforce human rights, labour rights and community safeguards across infrastructure, supply chains, platform-based services, AI deployment and emerging technology sectors**, with specific protections for informal workers, migrant and returning workers, transgender people, sex workers, older persons, children and persons with disabilities.
- **Regulate digital platforms, algorithms and emerging technologies through human-rights-based, gender-responsive and regional standards**, including traceability, cybercrime protections, fair algorithmic design, risk assessments before deployment, and social dialogue over technological governance.
- **Protect workers in the platform economy and technological transitions** by advancing collective bargaining over algorithms, fair and ethical hiring, occupational health and safety, social protection, labour formalisation, and decent work standards across production chains.
- **Close the digital and skills divide** through universal access to digital tools, education, in-person training, lifelong learning and reskilling, prioritising women and girls in all their diversity, rural communities, older persons, persons with disabilities, low-income groups and workers affected by automation.
- **Reduce corporate concentration and extractive dependency** by diversifying infrastructure partnerships, promoting technology transfer and regional industrial development, increasing value-added production, and ending neocolonial extractivist models.
- **Strengthen democratic governance of technology and infrastructure** by institutionalising participation by civil society, workers, affected communities and technical experts from the outset, including in national, regional and international rule-making processes.

Macroeconomic justice and moving beyond extractivist, growth-oriented models

A feminist approach to economic justice starts from the recognition that macroeconomic systems are not gender-neutral. They are [shaped](#) by power relations between states, markets, households, financial actors, and the global economy, and they determine whose labour is valued, whose needs are financed, and whose lives are made precarious. Feminist macroeconomics therefore challenges economic models that prioritise growth, profit, and fiscal restraint while ignoring unpaid care, social reproduction, ecological limits, and the unequal relations between the Global North and Global South.

Moving beyond GDP as a measure of prosperity is therefore central to feminist economic justice. GDP treats growth as progress even when it is produced through austerity, debt, extractive industries, militarisation, ecological destruction, and the unpaid or underpaid labour of women and structurally marginalised communities. In May 2026, the High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP [presented](#) a blueprint for a Beyond GDP dashboard, which countries can use to measure well-being as rooted in the principles of peace, human rights, and respect for the planet.

However, changing what governments measure will only be meaningful for feminist economic justice if it changes what they finance. Across the Global South, for instance, debt servicing is swallowing the fiscal space that should be funding health, education, childcare, and social protection. In Latin America and the Caribbean, governments [allocate](#) around 35% of revenue to debt service—roughly triple their health spending and double their education spending. Over 70% of that debt is [held](#) by private creditors, at interest rates up to 8.5 times higher than those faced by Global North economies. As governments are forced to choose between paying bondholders or funding public services, women’s unpaid labour is filling the gap left behind by austerity.

Austerity [transfers](#) the responsibility of care from the state onto households, communities, and—overwhelmingly—women and girls. By shouldering the majority of unpaid domestic and care work, women and girls are constrained from accessing paid employment, education, rest, social protection, and political participation. Weak public care systems, energy poverty, inadequate water and sanitation, poor transport, and cuts to public services intensify unpaid care work. The unpaid [care](#) work of older women remains especially unrecognised and undervalued. In crisis and aid-dependent contexts, unpaid and underpaid labour by women often [becomes](#) the last remaining safety net when long-term public systems and development commitments are absent.

Gendered economic precarity and intersecting economic inequalities

Even when women are able to access paid work, they face wage gaps, workplace discrimination, harassment, bias, and barriers to promotion and leadership. Women are concentrated in informal, low-paid, insecure, and undervalued sectors, including domestic work, care work, agriculture, energy-related informal work, sex work, and the gig economy. Conversely, they are underrepresented in higher-paid, strategic, and decision-making roles. This disparity is especially true for the most structurally marginalised women. For instance, owing to the enduring legacies of colonialism, slavery, structural racism, and gendered labour exploitation, in Brazil over 60% of women domestic workers [are](#) Black.

People with disabilities find it especially difficult to access paid and dignified work, facing persistent exclusion that includes lower labour-force participation, higher unemployment, greater reliance on self-employment or informal work, and lower wages. Workers with disabilities [earn](#) 12% less per hour on average globally, rising to 26% less in low- and lower-middle-income countries. Women with disabilities are in a more precarious position compared to men with disabilities. The World Bank [notes](#) that, in Vietnam, 87.2% of women with disabilities who reported family barriers to employment said their families were not supportive of their efforts to work, compared with 79.8% of men with disabilities.

CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

INCLUSIVE LIVELIHOODS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Disability Peoples Forum Uganda works to advance the economic empowerment and social inclusion of persons with disabilities across Uganda, combining vocational training, microfinance access and advocacy to address both individual barriers and systemic exclusion in workplaces.

Since 2022, ILPD has delivered vocational training tailored to a range of disabilities including visual, hearing and physical impairments, and facilitated access to microfinance and entrepreneurship support for persons with disabilities to start and grow small businesses. This work is complemented by advocacy for policy reforms and partnership with local governments, NGOs and the private sector to create genuine and inclusive employment opportunities.

Over 1,500 persons with disabilities have been trained and supported to start or expand their businesses, with 70% of beneficiaries reporting improved income levels. Beyond this, the Disability Peoples Forum Uganda has influenced local policies to incorporate disability inclusion criteria in employment standards and shifted employer attitudes about the value of inclusive workplaces.

Women who work in the informal sector are especially precarious because they lack labour protections, pensions, healthcare coverage, maternity protections, social protection, and access to justice, all while shouldering unpaid care work. Zimbabwe has one of the world's largest informal sectors as a share of GDP, and it is mostly women who work in the sector, for instance, [making](#) up over two-thirds of urban street vendors. In the capital of Harare, women [are](#) "literally raising their children on the streets," street vending while dividing their attention between customers, children, and watching out for police. Police officers frequently [target](#) women street vendors, while other men offer women "protection" in exchange for money, leaving women vendors with less and less income.

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FEMINIST DEMANDS TO MEMBER STATES FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Macroeconomic policy & fiscal justice

- **Institutionalise a feminist approach to taxation**, ensuring that fiscal policies address gender inequalities through transparent, accountable, and participatory processes, including to reduce poverty and inequality through clear targets and timelines. This involves building institutional capacity, empowering local actors, and integrating gender analysis into budget and tax planning, implementation, and expenditure monitoring.
- **Adopt rights-based, gender-responsive macroeconomic policies** that move beyond GDP toward models centred on care, wellbeing, redistribution, decent work and ecological limits.
- **Advance fiscal and debt justice internationally** through an ambitious UN tax convention, coordinated debt relief and cancellation, and a permanent UN-led multilateral debt resolution mechanism.
- **Adopt taxation measures on wealth, high incomes, and corporate profits** to expand fiscal space for gender equality policies and reduce reliance on regressive taxation and user fees that disproportionately burden women.
- **End austerity and expand public investment in care**, social protection, public services, decent work and climate resilience, rather than shifting costs and care work onto women.
- **Implement gender- and race-responsive public budgeting**, with annual targets, timelines, and disaggregated data, to reduce poverty and inequality.
- **Assess the distributive, racial, gendered, labour and environmental impacts of economic policies**, including fiscal reforms, debt measures, trade agreements, digitalisation and social spending.
- **Promote fair and democratic global economic rules by reforming trade and financial systems from a development perspective**, ensuring civil society participation, binding labour and environmental standards, and safeguards against corporate concentration in digital and technological systems.

Moving beyond GDP (as [recommended](#) by the High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP)

- **Engage actively in the UN intergovernmental process to agree global norms for measuring progress beyond GDP.**
- **Establish national Beyond GDP frameworks by 2027**, using a dashboard tailored to national priorities and developed with civil society participation. National statistical offices must be well-resourced to collect, update, and publish dashboard indicators annually, identify data gaps, and adapt indicators to national context. Developing countries should be supported in doing so through ODA and South-South or triangular cooperation.
- **Integrate Beyond GDP indicators into policymaking**, budgeting, cost-benefit analysis, accountability systems, and annual reporting to government bodies, rather than treating Beyond GDP measures as secondary to GDP.

Decent work & labour rights

- **Formalise and protect informal and precarious work**, ensuring decent working conditions, labour rights, and pathways to formal employment.
- **Guarantee living wages, labour protections, and social security** for informal, domestic, agricultural, and gig workers.
- **Adopt policies to eliminate workplace discrimination, strengthen collective bargaining rights, raise minimum wages, and ensure equal pay for work of equal value.**
- **Protect migrant women workers** through strengthened labour protections, social security portability, and anti-trafficking measures.

FEMINIST DEMANDS TO MEMBER STATES FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- **Implement pay transparency measures, gender-responsive labour inspections, and affirmative policies to increase women's participation in higher-paid sectors**, including science, technology, energy, and infrastructure.
- **Recognise, measure, and address the motherhood penalty**, i.e. the specific discriminations and hurdles that women who are mothers face in access to the labour market, wages, career progression, and access to decision-making positions.
- **Guarantee the right to freedom of association and assembly**, including the right of all workers—particularly women in informal, domestic, agricultural, migrant, and gig work—to form, join, and lead trade unions, workers' organizations, and cooperatives, and to engage in collective bargaining without fear of discrimination, retaliation, or violence.

The care economy and unpaid care work

- **Formally recognise, account for, and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work** through investment in universal, publicly funded care infrastructure—including early childhood services, affordable childcare, eldercare, and disability support—and by enacting paid family leave.
- **Build universal, gender-responsive social protection systems** guaranteeing access to healthcare, pensions, unemployment insurance, disability benefits, and income support, prioritising women in informal, rural, migrant, and precarious employment.
- **Ensure decent wages, labour protections, and institutionalised social protection for care workers**—including women in ageing, migrant, and informal care roles—with targeted measures for women of African descent to address historical inequalities in care work recognition and remuneration.
- **Increase investment in energy-efficient appliances and infrastructure** that directly reduce women's unpaid care work.

Women's access to economic and resource justice

- **Guarantee equal inheritance rights, land tenure security, access to affordable housing, financial services, digital technologies, and productive assets**, especially for Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and rural women.
- **Expand women's enterprise ownership and access to capital** through patient capital, de-risking instruments, tailored acceleration, and market access initiatives.
- **Strengthen gender-lens investing**, especially by supporting women-led enterprises and collectively-owned enterprises such as cooperatives through public procurement, capacity strengthening, and guaranteed market access policies.
- **Increase women's representation and leadership** in ministries of finance, trade negotiations, central banks, labour institutions, and corporate governance structures.

Digital & technological inclusion

- Expand affordable internet access, STEM education, and digital literacy programs for women and girls, particularly in rural and marginalised communities.
- Promote mentorship, sponsorship, and re-skilling programmes for mid-career women.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN CRISIS AND RESISTANCE LESSONS AND STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

In preparing this position paper, the Women's Major Group asked civil society and grassroots organisations what best practices, initiatives, or lessons should be highlighted from and for civil society organisations.

The responses reflect the urgent realities of organising under intensifying repression, financial precarity, and political hostility. These lessons, grounded in lived experience, offer a blueprint for collective action rooted in justice and care, and inform the strategies feminist activists and community leaders are using to sustain movements against injustice.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Coalition and alliance building

- **Build broad, intersectional coalitions** that connect feminist organisations with youth, disability rights, labour, climate, LGBTQI+, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and migrant movements—but also non-traditional allies, including faith-based actors and local governments, beyond familiar feminist circles.
- **Strengthen regional feminist networks** that enable coordinated advocacy, rapid response, and collective political positioning across countries and multilateral spaces, including to provide protection for defenders, amplify local struggles globally, and resist repression through transnational accompaniment.
- **Leverage South-South and triangular cooperation** to share resources, solutions, and strategies between women's organisations across the Global South.
- **Strengthen solidarity across sectors and constituencies**, particularly among workers, farmers, migrants, young people, and other rights holders, to build shared agendas, amplify intersecting struggles, and sustain collective action for gender justice and development justice.

Evidence-based advocacy and research

- **Produce independent feminist research**, shadow reports, and gender-disaggregated data to expose inequalities, challenge official narratives, and monitor SDG implementation.
- **Expand participatory and community-led research** by partnering with academic institutions to co-produce knowledge rooted in local realities and lived experience. This research should include a focus on translating macroeconomic issues—debt, austerity, tax, and care—into concrete, lived gender impacts to strengthen engagement with policymakers and development partners.

Documentation and accountability

- **Systematically document rights violations** and discriminatory practices to build the evidentiary base for legal challenges, media campaigns, and accountability processes.
- **Track and expose anti-rights actors**—including litigation groups, religious networks, tech platforms, and state actors—to understand how backlash is coordinated and funded.
- **Engage participatory monitoring by involving local communities** in reporting on government actions and violations of gender rights and SDG commitments.

Multi-level institutional engagement

- **Participate simultaneously in intergovernmental processes** (HLPF, COP, CSW, CEDAW, Beijing+30, FfD4) and mobilise grassroots organisations to hold governments accountable from outside, as neither alone is sufficient.
- **Link regional advocacy directly to global UN processes**, ensuring that regional outcomes feed into HLPF, ECOSOC, and treaty body reviews to convert local evidence into normative pressure.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

- Engage multilateral financial institutions to campaign for disability-inclusive and gender-just funding and technical support directed to communities.

Legal advocacy and strategic litigation

- Use legal channels—including domestic and international courts—to challenge discriminatory laws and practices and secure binding rulings on gender equality commitments.
- Shift battles to UN bodies, the OAS, and intergovernmental fora to expose state abuses and demand accountability when national civic space is closed.
- Combine strategic litigation with budget monitoring, policy submissions, and public consultation participation to maximise impact across governance levels.

Strategic communications and narrative change

- Invest in accessible public campaigns, digital advocacy, and storytelling to reclaim narratives around bodily autonomy, reproductive justice, and gender equality against coordinated anti-rights messaging.
- Counter the co-optation of human rights language by anti-rights movements, and challenge disinformation with clear, evidence-based, rights-centred messaging.
- Develop encrypted communications tools and digital security training to protect activists and counter gendered online disinformation and surveillance, including in recruitment spaces such as the manosphere and meme culture.

Education and community-level work

- Implement feminist, rights-based, and intersectional education initiatives to empower young people, prevent gender-based violence, and challenge discriminatory social norms from within communities.
- Prioritise grassroots organising in rural, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and marginalised urban communities to strengthen local leadership and mutual support systems.
- Build autonomous, grassroots care networks and reframe care as a public right, directly challenging neoliberal austerity and the patriarchal distribution of unpaid care work.

Financial autonomy

- Reduce donor dependency through member dues, crowdfunding, social enterprises, and local fundraising to withstand politically motivated funding freezes and anti-foreign-funding laws.
- Support women's funds and feminist funding mechanisms that enable more sustainable organising, rapid response capacity, and greater political autonomy in contexts of shrinking civic space.
- Advocate for long-term, flexible, core funding for grassroots women's rights organisations—especially those led by women at the intersection of multiple marginalisations—over projectised, donor-driven models.

Defender protection and collective care

- Prioritise digital and physical security, risk assessments, and low-visibility leadership structures to protect activists and community members facing criminalisation and surveillance.
- Build regional and inter-regional solidarity networks and emergency response systems to protect women human rights defenders facing violence, persecution, and political repression.
- Foster spaces for collective care, healing, and mental health as essential movement infrastructure to sustain feminist organising over the long term.

CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

NARRATIVE CHANGE THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA AND GRASSROOTS ORGANISING

[Zamara Foundation](#) is a feminist Kenyan advocacy and awareness-raising organisation founded in 2019. Against the backdrop of conservative religious and political movements promoting a rigid and nuclear family model, the organisation uses strategic interventions to reclaim and celebrate the diverse, communal and diverse family structures that have existed across Africa for centuries. The organisation's work is rooted in the understanding that current efforts to enforce this model aim to erase the continent's rich history of kinship and communal care.

Leveraging digital media for empowerment, **Zamara Foundation [creates](#) digital safe spaces to counter dominant narratives through platforms like FemZone, #ZamaraVoices and #AfrickanFeminists.** The organisation provides a platform to confront patriarchal structures that underpin a restrictive nuclear family model, and foster solidarity among young women by providing a safe space for young women and girls to discuss issues on SHRH that are often taboo.

The media campaign, #ReclaimingFamilies, that confront conservative agendas through offline and online interventions. For example, [erecting](#) billboards across Nairobi and Uganda with affirming messages about diverse families during the Pan-African Conference on Family Values; countering mainstream narratives and leading conversations on X and Instagram to amplify Eurocentric framing; and conducting a roadshow to ask communities about what African values and families mean to them. **As a result of the campaign, many Africans started to have discussions about the predominantly white and European speakers participating in the conference, condemning the Eurocentric views on how African families should look.**

CONCLUSION

We are facing a turning point in history, where people, the planet, and its sustainability must be at the centre of the debate and the struggle. The crises of multilateralism have plunged us into a geopolitical debacle that has already claimed thousands of lives in armed conflicts and condemned the majority of people to poverty, forced displacement, discrimination, and destitution. Government rhetoric on reform is increasingly out of touch with the needs of the people and ineffective in stopping war, corporate greed, and the destruction of nature. This is not merely a matter of listing the groups victimised by an unjust system, but of confronting the normalisation of cruelty toward large parts of humanity and towards our planet, the vital foundation of life.

With four years remaining until the 2030 Agenda deadline, setbacks in the SDGs outweigh progress. We demand that the UN make every effort to ensure that States halt this destruction, centre reform on people, and guarantee the full and binding participation of civil society in monitoring and implementing the 2030 Agenda. We want a vibrant, democratic, and participatory multilateralism. Voluntary National Reviews can be one place to begin: they must incorporate participatory, secure, and transparent processes that effectively include civil society contributions, ensure access to public information, and provide data disaggregated by race, gender, ethnicity, region, age, and disability.

There is no sustainable development without equality, diversity, and participation. The crisis of multilateralism, militarisation, austerity, and human rights setbacks requires responses rooted in international cooperation, social justice, and the effective participation of civil society. Women and diverse groups will not be passive observers: we are, and will continue to be, essential political actors in building a shared future. Count on our utopian visions, our collective efforts, our wisdom, and our hope.

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