



Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific

Baseline and pathways for transformative change by 2030



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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a new and transformative vision. It establishes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are integrated and indivisible, with gender equality as a central priority. Gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed as explicit priorities through the stand-alone Goal 5 and by mainstreaming gender equality across the SDGs. In recognizing multi-dimensional inequality within and between countries, the 2030 Agenda is a commitment to "leaving no one behind".

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific jointly produced the first comprehensive review of the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific region under the Sustainable Development Goals' framework. This report aims to assist governments, civil society, women's organizations and key stakeholders in the region to improve gender equality and sustainable development outcomes by 2030.

This report provides a baseline for monitoring progress on gender equality within the SDG framework and identifies priority actions towards achieving gender equality in the region. The report is informed by extensive regional consultations, involving key national stakeholders from planning ministries, national women's machineries, statistical offices, experts and UN agencies.

Gender equality and women's empowerment as a stand-alone Goal 5 and cross-cutting priority across all the SDGs



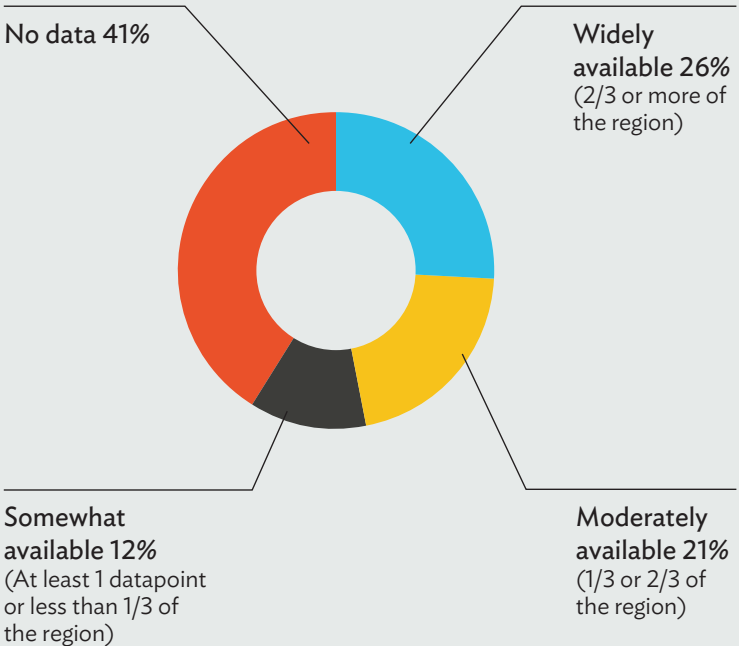
Baseline on 85 SDG gender-related targets

While Asia and the Pacific has made progress in some areas of gender equality, available data against the SDG indicators highlights significant inequality for women and girls. Moreover, major gaps remain in data availability and comparability.

The Report identifies a core list of 54 gender-specific indicators and an additional 34 gender-relevant indicators from the official SDG indicators list, through which the region can measure progress towards achieving gender equality and sustainable development.

Of the 85 unique gender-related SDG indicators used in this report, only 26% are available for more than two thirds of the countries or territories in the region, as defined in this report, and 41% have no relevant regional data.

Availability of data for gender-related SDG indicators

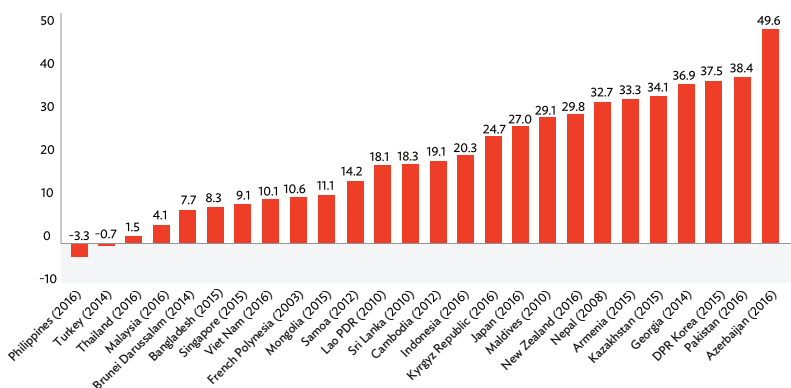


Selected key findings from the Report

1. Women in formal employment earn much less than men.

The gender wage gap is highest in Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, the gender wage is tipped in favor of women in the Philippines and Turkey. Lack of data limits a more complete understanding of the gender wage gap, particularly for women in informal work.

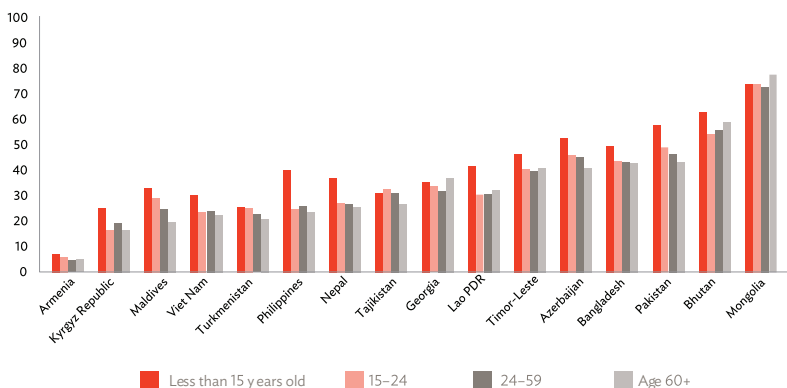
Gender wage gap (difference of male and female monthly earnings as a proportion of male monthly earnings), selected countries in Asia and the Pacific, latest available year (%)



2. Girls aged under 15 are overrepresented amongst those living in slums.

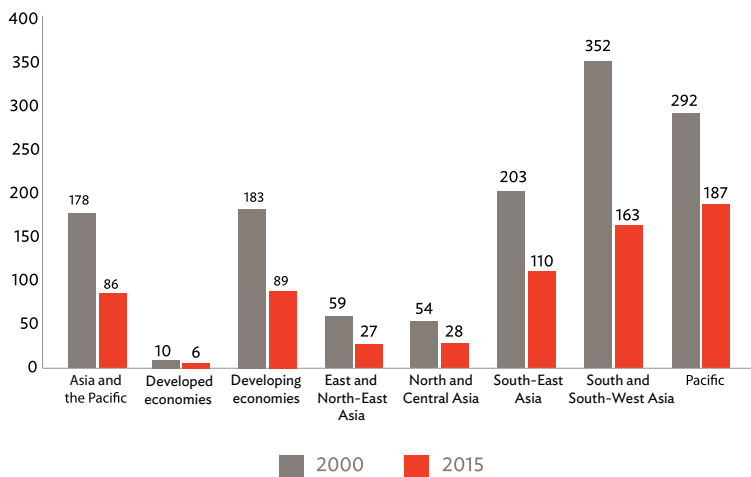
In countries with available data, 50% of the female population living in slums (no access to clean water, improved sanitation facilities, durable housing and sufficient living area) are girls under the age of 15.

Proportion of female urban population living in slums by age group, selected countries in Asia and the Pacific, latest available year (%)



3. Maternal mortality ratio dropped from 178 to 86 per 100, 000 live births between 2000 and 2015. However, in 2015, almost 92% of all maternal deaths in the region (around 78 000) occurred in just 12 countries.

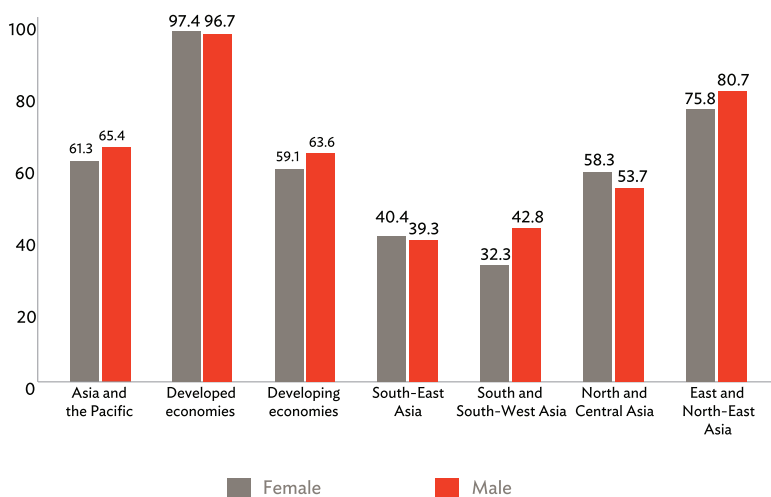
Maternal mortality ratio by sub-region, Asia and the Pacific, 2000 and 2015 (per 100,000 live births)



4. Women have less access to financial services

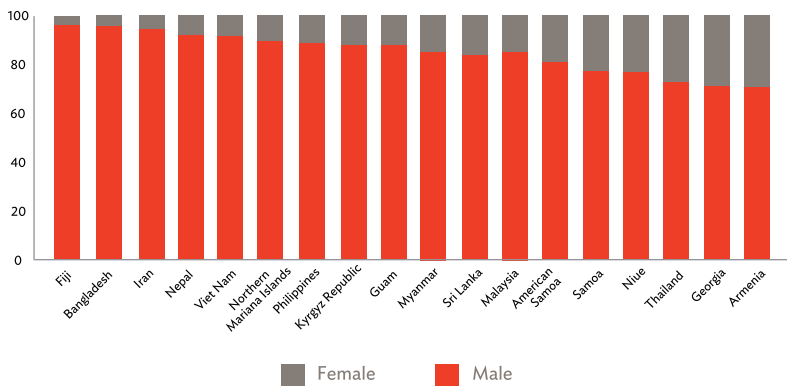
than men. On average across the region, 61.3% of women aged 15 and older have an account at a financial institution, compared to 65.4% of men for the same age group in 2014.

Proportion of population aged 15 years and older with an account at a financial institution by sex and sub-region, Asia and the Pacific, 2014 (%)



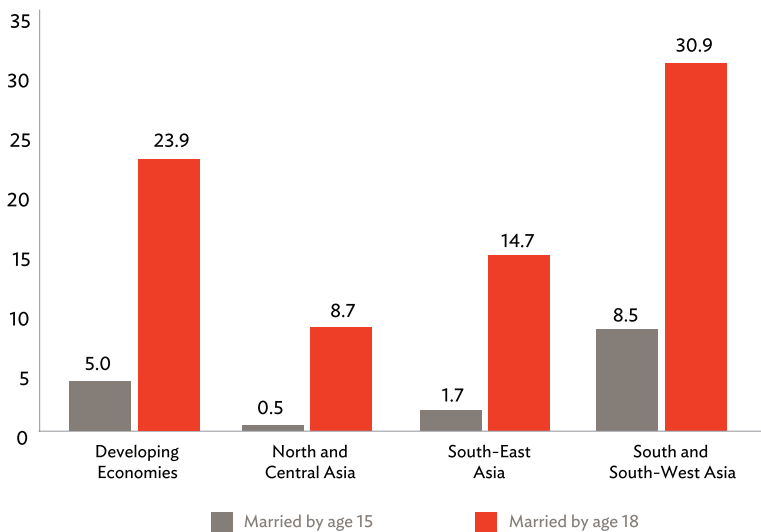
5. In countries with available data, women hold agricultural land at rates far lower than men. The largest disparity is in Fiji, where women hold 3.6% of agricultural land compared to men's share of 96.4%. Even in Armenia, Georgia and Thailand, which have the smallest gaps, women still hold less than half the share of agricultural land compared to men.

Distribution of agricultural holders by sex, selected countries in Asia and the Pacific, latest available year (%)



6. Highest child marriage rate in the world. One in three women in South and Southwest Asia are married or in a union by the age of 18, with 8.5% of women aged 20-24 married by the age of 15. This is the highest global rate.

Proportion of women aged 20-24 years married by ages 15 and 18 by sub-region, Asia and the Pacific, latest available year (%)



Four transformative policy areas

The Report also puts the spotlight on four transformative policy areas and highlights key policy actions that can make a fundamental difference to the achievement of sustainable development:



Sexual and reproductive health and rights



Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work



Eliminating violence against women and girls



Empowering women to build climate resilience and reduce disaster risks

Key pathways and policy actions for transformative change

The report brings together key recommendations centered around how gender equality issues can be tackled across the SDGs to support the attainment of the 2030 Agenda.

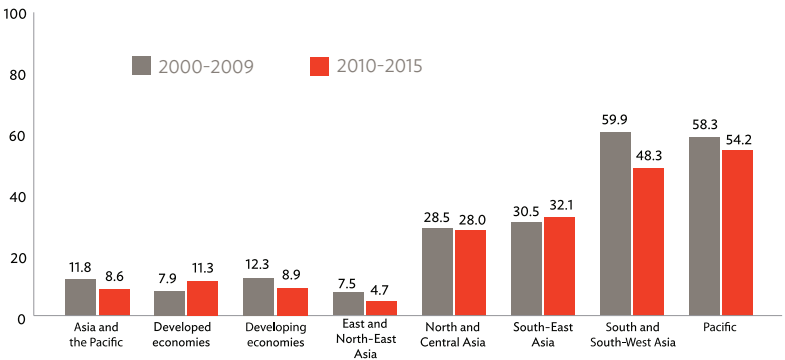
- Removing discrimination from legal frameworks and promoting change in social norms
- Strengthening the production, analysis and use of gender data and statistics
- Gender-responsive institutions and localization to mainstream and prioritize gender equality across all policy sectors
- Ensuring women's active and equal participation, representation and leadership at all levels
- Increasing financing and investment

Why these four transformative policy areas matter for gender equality in the Asia and Pacific region:

1. Sexual and reproductive health and rights. The ability of women and girls to make their own decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health is critical for achieving gender equality and sustainable development. The report emphasizes the synergies and interlinkages between realizing sexual and reproductive health and rights (Goal 5) and the achievement of other SDGs in the region. Expanding sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls will enable them to enjoy other social and economic opportunities.

Despite overall progress in the region, women's need for family planning remains unfulfilled in many countries and adolescent birth rates are rising in some countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. Between 2000–2009 and 2010–2015, the adolescent birth rate in Asia and the Pacific decreased from 11.8 to 8.6 births per 1,000 adolescents aged 15–19 years (Figure 2.8). This has been driven by a large decrease in births among adolescent girls in South and Southwest Asia, with Afghanistan seeing the largest change in the region (declining from 146 to 51.9). However, the adolescent birth rate has increased in Developed Economies and in Southeast Asia, where the rate in Thailand has nearly doubled from 33.1 to 60.

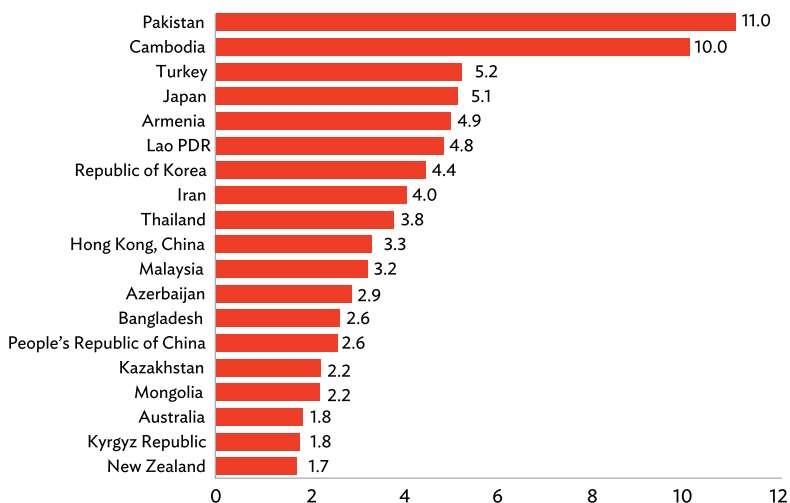
Adolescent birth rate by sub-region, Asia and the Pacific, 2000–2009 and 2010–2015 (per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years)



2. Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work. The unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men is a major barrier to gender equality and women's empowerment. The data shows significant gaps between women and men in every country and territory in which time spent on this work is measured (Figure 2.12). Women spend 11 times more time than men in unpaid care and domestic work in Pakistan, compared to New Zealand where women spend 1.7 times more in unpaid care and domestic work. Many factors influence the unpaid time and relative burdens among women and men.

These include not only social norms and demographic factors, but also public policies related to employment, subsidization of childcare and other care services, parental leave, and public infrastructure that saves time, such as water, sanitation and energy.

Women's time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, selected countries and territories in Asia and the Pacific, latest available year (as a ratio of men's time)



It is important to make care work more visible through statistics. Time-use data can reveal the details of how and for how long individuals spend their time on paid and unpaid activities. However, less than half of the countries in the region have collected time-use data at least once, and only six have mainstreamed time-use surveys in their national statistical systems and collected the data regularly.

3. Ending violence against women and girls. Ending violence against women and girls means addressing the most serious manifestation of gender inequality and discrimination that deprives women and girls of their basic rights and opportunities. Addressing this violence would widen the opportunities for women to complete their education (Goal 4), participate in paid employment (Goal 8), and increase their income (Goal 1), which can also reduce their social and economic vulnerability. Furthermore, it would reduce women's risks of physical harm, which can lead to poor health and well-being (Goal 3).

The proportions of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, by an intimate partner, in the last 12 months, ranged from 50.7% in Bangladesh, 46.4% in Timor-Leste, 46.1% in Afghanistan, 44% in Vanuatu, and 41.8% in Solomon Islands, to 6% in the Lao PDR and 0.9% in Singapore.

The proportion of women who experienced sexual violence, regardless of the perpetrator, in their lifetime ranged from 4.2% in Singapore to 35.6% in Fiji. Girls younger than 15 are at acute risk in several Pacific countries: in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, more than 30% of women reported being sexually abused before 15 years of age. There is limited data on the proportion of women who experience psychological violence in their intimate relationships. However, the prevalence of psychological violence is generally higher than physical and sexual violence in women's lifetime and in the past 12 months. In most countries in the region, women are much more likely to have experienced intimate partner violence than to have experienced violence by someone other than a partner

Proportion of women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime and the past 12 months, selected countries in Asia and the Pacific, latest available year (%)

Country	Year	Age Group	Physical and/or sexual violence	
			Lifetime	Past 12 months
Developed economies				
Australia	2012	18+	16.9	---
East and North-East Asia				
People's Republic of China	2012	15-49	38.7	8.7
North and Central Asia				
Armenia	2008	15-59	9.5	---
Pacific				
Cook Islands	2012	15-64	33.0	9.1
Fiji	2010	15-64	64.1	23.7
Kiribati	2008	15-49	67.6	36.1
Marshall Islands	2012	15-64	50.9	18.2
Micronesia, Federated States of	2014	15-64	32.8	24.1
Nauru	2013	15-64	48.1	22.1
Palau	2013	15-64	25.2	8.4
Papua New Guinea	2012	15-49	67.5	32.9
Samoa	2000	15-49	46.1	22.4
Solomon Islands	2008	15-49	63.5	41.8
Tonga	2009	15-49	39.6	18.9
Tuvalu	2007	15-49	36.8	25.0
Vanuatu	2011	15-49	60.0	44.0
South and South-West Asia				
Afghanistan	2015	15-49	50.8	46.1
Bangladesh ¹	2011	ALL	67.2	50.7
Bhutan	2012	15-49	26.5	13.0
Maldives	2006	15-49	19.5	6.4
Nepal	2011	15-49	28.2	14.3
Sri Lanka	2012	15-49	27.8	18.4
Turkey	2014	15-59	38.0	11.0
South-East Asia				
Cambodia	2015	15-64	20.9	7.7
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2014	15-64	15.3	6.0
Myanmar	2015	15-49	17.3	11.0
Philippines	2013	15-49	16.9	7.1
Singapore ²	2009	18-69	6.1	0.9
Thailand	2000	15-49	44.0	22.0
Timor-Leste	2015	15-49	58.8	46.4
Viet Nam	2010	18-60	34.4	9.0

4. Empowering women to build climate resilience and reduce disaster risks.

Asia and the Pacific is one of the regions most affected by the harmful impacts of climate change. As women in developing countries are more likely to rely on agriculture, be responsible for collecting water and involved in small-scale fisheries, climate change affects women's livelihoods, income and employment prospects, while putting their health at risk and increasing their time burdens. At the same time, women also play a key role in mitigating and adapting to climate change risks.

Natural disasters also have a disproportionately negative impact on women and children, who are at an increased risk of violence in the aftermath of a disaster and more likely to die during a disaster. Disaster-induced migration and displacement are on the rise in many countries and territories in Asia and the Pacific, as are women's risk of exploitation, trafficking and violence.

Women's outcomes post-disaster are directly linked to their status prior to the disaster. Where there is greater gender equality, disasters cause comparable numbers of deaths across sexes, boys and girls are equally likely to attend school during displacement, and food distribution is equal even in situations of shortage.

While there are two gender-relevant indicators under Goal 13, there is virtually no data to monitor this goal from a gender perspective in the region. There is a general dearth of gender statistics to further and better understand the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, including their use of natural resources and time spent in collecting fuel, and their engagement in conservation practices, for example in relation to forests and oceans. Collecting and using sex-disaggregated data to track the number of people killed, missing or affected in natural disasters by sex is a priority action area, as well as sex-disaggregated data on the social and economic outcomes following disasters.



Goal 5: Targets to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.



5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.



5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.



5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.



5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.



5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Means of implementation targets:



5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources in accordance with national laws.



5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.



5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

<https://www.adb.org/themes/gender/main>



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