



**WORLD FEDERATION STUDY DAY
26 OCTOBER 2023
PREPARED BY EAST ASIA AREA**



**Sustainable Development Goal 5 –
GENDER EQUALITY**

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls

Introduction

Each SDG contains specific targets that can be measured and tracked over time. Like a global checklist, these targets allow us to check our progress as we approach the 2030 deadline. There are nine targets within SDG 5, which are assessed annually by UN Women and UNDESA in their Gender Snapshot report.

1. End discrimination
2. End violence
3. End harmful practices
4. Recognize and value unpaid work
5. Ensure full participation in public life
6. Ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights
7. Ensure equal economic resources
8. Promote women's empowerment through technology
9. Sound policies and legislation

More information can be found on the UN Women website: <https://www.unwomen.org/en>
Details from the website are also included in the Appendix attached to this Study Day material.

The time to act is now

Across these nine objectives, the latest data on SDG 5 underscores just how far we are from achieving them. Despite progress on some issues, recent backslide in other areas – such as on reproductive rights and women's economic empowerment – has put gender equality further out of reach.

Without seriously increased investments and commitments, including to gender data availability and use, SDG 5 will not be achieved by 2030, and may not be achieved at all. The time to come together as a global community and demand better – better laws and protections, better access to resources and services, and better funding – is now!

The United Nations Commission on the Legal and Social Status of Women (CSW67), which took place in March 2023, marks an important milestone. The priority theme was 'Innovation and Technological Change and Education in the Digital Age for Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls.' Together, the participants established the global

normative framework on gender equality, technology and innovation that will shape the lives of women and girls around the world.

The digital age is creating new and unprecedented opportunities to improve the lives of women and girls around the world. Digital technologies are rapidly transforming all spheres of life, including our economic, social and political systems, thus establishing new access points and platforms for historically marginalised groups.

However, they are also creating unprecedented threats to our well-being. Online spaces provide new arenas for violence against women and offer offenders greater anonymity and impunity. Discrimination in the technology sector and the biases of the automated systems themselves perpetuate and further entrench gender inequalities. In addition, the lack of global laws and regulations causes a greater exposure for vulnerable groups to suffer violations of their rights and privacy.

In the context of COVID-19 and many other intersecting global crises, access to online spaces has taken on even more crucial importance. As we move into the future, we must ensure that we do not leave women and girls in the past.

Women and girls cannot afford to wait any longer!

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

Action Plan 2022-2026

Following on from the Workshops at the 14th World Assembly, the World Federation Action Plan highlights issues related to Gender Justice and suggests a number of actions that Units might wish to take:

- Raise awareness of discrimination on the basis of gender, not just among the women, but also the men, in your local churches and communities
- Celebrate the lives of women leaders who have made a difference in your families, your churches, your communities, and your nations.
- Encourage young women to view themselves as worthy of respect, through mentoring, fellowship days, Bible studies, and so forth.

Full details of the Action Plan can be found in our Handbook for 2022-2026 which may be downloaded in either English or Spanish here: <https://wfmucw.org/publications/handbook>

Videos of the two Workshops on Gender Justice from our 14th World Assembly may be watched on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@WFMUCW>

'Thursdays in Black'

The *Thursdays in Black* movement demands a world without rape and violence for all, but especially for women. By wearing black T-shirts and buttons with a message each Thursday, you can show that you are in solidarity with all women campaigning for a safer world.

More information, along with a series of Bible studies and other resources, can be downloaded here: <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black>

WORSHIP SERVICE

(The hymns are only suggestions; You may use any of them or others that you prefer.)

A list of videos of all the music used during the 14th World Assembly can be downloaded here
<http://wfmucw.org/publications/14th-world-assembly-2022>

Once you have downloaded the list, simply click on any of the links to see and hear the video of each song.

WELCOME AND GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP:

“So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

OPENING PRAYER:

WORLD FEDERATION’S DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT:

Written by WFMW Executive Members 1991-96

We believe:

in God, who gave life to us and all creation.

in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, who died, is risen, ascended, and will come again.

in the Holy Spirit, who is within us, to inspire and direct, to empower and strengthen.

For Christ is risen....

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

We affirm

that the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it;

all that God has made was very good.

that Jesus came that all might have life and have it in fullness.

that we are called to go and make disciples of all nations.

that we are bound together as one family.

that we seek ‘To Know Christ and To Make Him Known’.

For Christ is risen....

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

We confess

that our lives have often denied what we have professed.

that we have sometimes failed to see in our neighbours those for whom Christ died.

that we have erected and maintained barriers of race, class and gender.

Although we have sinned, we can know the assurance of forgiveness and begin anew to follow the Living Saviour.

For Christ is risen....

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

We commit ourselves

to worship God in spirit **and in truth.**

to further the work of God's kingdom among all people.

to uphold and live Christ's way in all areas of life.

to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, with all our mind and strength.

to love our neighbours as ourselves.

For Christ is risen....

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

OPENING HYMN: 'How Great Thou Art' (UMH 77)

RESPONSIVE READING (Based on Psalm 91):

LEADER: Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

ALL: I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust."

LEADER: Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

ALL: He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

LEADER: You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

ALL: A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

LEADER: You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

ALL: If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

LEADER: For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

ALL: You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

LEADER: "Because they love me," says the LORD, "I will rescue them; I will protect them, for they acknowledge my name.

ALL: They will call on me and I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will deliver them and honour them. With long life I will satisfy them and show them my salvation.

You may wish to play this video of a song based on Psalm 91. It is called 'On Eagles Wings' by Michael Joncas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6E-Mw1fnzE>

PRAYERS:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for uniquely, creatively and thoughtfully creating each one of us in your image. We pray for women and girls today that are mistreated and not given an opportunity for who they are. Give us the courage to speak and work for equality. Lord, each of us are called to reach our full potential and accomplish our purpose. But, gender inequalities prevailing in our societies become a stumbling block. According to your word, men and women are created equally as it is in Galatians 2:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus." It reminds us that we are all loved equally in the eyes of God. We may be different in our strengths and abilities, but still we are made for each other as we remain equal in Your eyes. Give us the opportunity to build up what has been broken. Give us wisdom to see what we can change. We pray for your grace in allowing people to understand and help those who are experiencing suffering right now. May your peace and love be upon us. In Jesus name we pray, AMEN.
(Written by Yu En Liang, East Asia Area Helen Kim Memorial Schola from Taiwan.)

Dear Heavenly Father, we give you all glory and honour for all that you are and will always be. Thank you for being the defender of the weak and the fatherless. Thank you for your love and grace in our lives. We humbly come before your presence and raise the unwed mothers in prayer. Father, you know the worth of these children of yours. We ask that you will grant them comfort and security. We ask that all their needs will be met according to your riches in Christ Jesus. We also intercede for the abused mothers. Those who are oppressed and are in hopeless situations. Lord, you are a God of justice. We ask that you make a way for these mothers and provide them hope and refuge in a way no man can. We lift them up to you in Jesus's name. We also pray for those who are unjustly persecuted and unfairly treated in their work place. We ask that you bring a change in the workplace and situations. That all unfairness and unjust treatments are bound in the name of Jesus. Lord, thank you for answered prayers. In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.
(Written by Deborah Grace, East Asia Area Helen Kim Memorial Scholar, from Malaysia.)

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

HYMN: 'Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart' (UMH 451)

SCRIPTURE READINGS: *(Please choose all or some of the following Bible passages)*

- Proverbs 31:10-31
- Matthew 26:6-13
- Mark 12:41-44
- Luke 8: 1-3
- Acts 16
- Galatians 3:28-29

MEDITATION:

(The following meditation is provided by Mary Devadason, the East Asia Area President. You may use your own instead, or as well, if you prefer.)

How many of us know women – grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters and friends – who are abused, who understand us, and speak to us about their needs? How many times have we felt that these women’s needs are greater than ours?

In a survey reported by UN Women, they say one in five women have experienced sexual abuse. 80% raised their hands when asked if they had experienced sexual abuse. Women and girls shared their experience of similar harassment and abuse in the church. They spoke of being blamed, disbelieved, discouraged from going to police, and made to apologize for the sexual harassment they received. The abuse of women is not the issue in society at large. It is an issue for the church as well. Other types of abuse that women experience globally include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced prostitution, slavery, child marriage and domestic and family violence (DFV).

The Bible is replete with stories of God-fearing women who see the needs around them and respond with God’s grace. *“A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised”* notes Proverbs 31:30 as it extols the actions and attitudes of a woman. She is celebrated, not only for the way in which she takes care of her household, but also how *“she opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy.”* (Proverbs 31:20).

In Matthew 26:6-13 a nameless woman comes to Jesus, as he is visiting the house of Simon in Bethany, carrying an alabaster jar of very costly perfume. She breaks the jar and pours the perfume on Jesus’ head. She affirms both his ministry on earth and his impending death. The woman recognises the cost of Jesus’ incarnation, *“Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor”* (2 Corinthians 8:9) and his saving death on the cross, *“by his bruises we are healed”* (Isaiah 53:5). Yes, Jesus saves and heals the broken, persecuted, abused and many others.

Likewise, in Mark 12:41-44 we see a poor widow bringing her offering to the temple treasury. As she puts the two small coins in the chest, Jesus calls his disciples and tells them that she has given more than all those contributing to the treasury. She has given her all. Jesus notices the widow’s investment and calls attention to her deed. Come let us move out of our comfort zones, like the woman who gave all she had and confront gender abuse wherever we find it in our families, communities, churches, as well as in the world.

During Jesus’ ministry on earth many women became followers of Jesus. They recognised the words of life that he taught them. They recognized how Jesus met their own needs for healing and wholeness. They also perceived the needs of those around him and fulfilled those needs out of their own resources – Luke 8:3b. Let us ask God to give us the strength and courage to do what we need to do, to encourage those who are persecuted and to show them our love through our actions, so that they can sustain a good life.

Women and children have always been persecuted, throughout time they have been seen as chattel and objects, not human beings but possessions. In the present day we are much more aware of persecution. In the bigger picture there is religious persecution, discrimination

because of sexual orientation or gender, violence against women and girls, harmful practices, discrimination because of ethnicity or race, and many others. However, persecution can also be close to home, experienced by members of your own family, friends, widows, community, church, school or workplace.

Let us be a blessing to all around us, so that we can achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

SPEAKER:

You may wish to invite a speaker to talk about the issue of gender justice in your own country or local community.

CALL TO ACTION:

LEADER: Hope comes to us with a new dawn.

All: With new hope we open our eyes to the possibilities.

LEADER: Hope comes to us with joy and peace.

All: With the joy and peace we share the hope of God.

LEADER: Hope comes to us with our purpose.

All: With our purpose and support of our sisters in Christ, we put hope into action.

SPECIAL PRAYERS:

(At this stage you may invite people to pray for some or all of the following).

- Let us praise God for the creation of mankind in His own image.
- Let us pray for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- Let us pray for God's protection and safety over abused families, women and girls.
- Let us pray for our church to be burdened for such cases.
- Let us pray for ways and means by which we can bring about healing and restoration to all those affected by gender inequality.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Dear Lord, we come before you today to pray for gender equality. We ask that you help us to see all people as your children, created in your image and worthy of respect, dignity, and equality. We pray for those who have suffered because of gender inequality – for those who have been denied opportunities, for those who have been silenced, and for those who have been oppressed. May they find comfort in your love and may their voices be heard. We pray for our leaders and decision-makers, that they may have the wisdom and compassion to promote policies and practices that ensure gender equality in all aspects of life. And finally, we pray for ourselves, that we may be agents of change in our own communities and spheres of influence. May we be filled with the courage, love, and determination to stand up for gender equality and to work towards a world where everyone is valued and respected. Loving God, make us to be instruments of change: where there is evil, let us show Godliness: where there is hatred, let us show love. We ask all of these in your holy and precious name. AMEN.
(Written by Nisha, from the Young Women's Leadership Training & Development Programme)

WORLD FEDERATION PRAYER : *(Written by WFMW Executive Members 1986-91)*

Creator God, rooted in your loving care,
nurtured through your son Jesus,
challenged by your Holy Spirit,
we are in the world to bring peace with justice,
reconciliation in love, and hope for all people.
May our lives extend as the branches of our Tree of Life,
bearing fruit of Unity and Love.
We offer praise and thanksgiving
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

OFFERING:

An offering is taken during the Study Day Worship. The offering is the Unit's / Area's annual gift to the work of the Federation. It is to be sent to the World Treasurer, Mrs Ngui Ting. Contact her at world.treasurer@wfmucw.org for banking details or give her the offering at your Area Seminar or the 15th World Assembly.

CLOSING HYMN: 'Take my life and let it be' (UMH 399)

The Federation Song <http://wfmucw.org/download/the-federation-song>

BENEDICTION:

The blessing of God, from whom all Grace flows,
The blessing of the Son, who suffered injustice for us,
And the blessing of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to work for peace and justice,
Be with us always. Amen.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5 – GENDER EQUALITY

The nine objectives for this SDG are:

1. End Discrimination

Gender-based discrimination has long kept women and girls subordinate to men in the workplace, in politics and at home. In some countries such discrimination persists in the law – legally barring women, for example, from certain professions – while in others economic barriers like the gender pay gap prevent women from experiencing full equality. Ending gender-based discrimination will require laws and frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality across all areas of life.

This means equal access to employment and economic benefits, including both laws against workplace discrimination and systems in place to address violations. It means laws on violence against women – legislation specifically addressing sexual harassment, for example, or criminalizing rape within marriage. It encompasses equal rights and protections within marriage and the family, such as the right to initiate a divorce or be recognized as head of household, as well as dedicated family courts to protect such rights. And it includes equality in overarching legal frameworks like constitutions, as well as the equal right to run for and hold public office.

Though there has been notable progress in this area, the pace of legal reform is far too slow. At current rates of change, the report estimates we are 21 years from universal laws banning violence against women and a whopping 286 years from gender equality in legal frameworks.

2. End Violence

Violence against women and girls, already a pervasive problem before 2020, surged in the wake of COVID-19. Many women report feeling more unsafe since the start of the pandemic: nearly 7 in 10 women (68 per cent) say that verbal or physical abuse by a partner has become more common, and 1 in 4 women describes more frequent household conflicts.

Over the past year, nearly 1 in 10 women aged 15+ (9.9 per cent) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner; for women between the ages of 15 and 49, that figure jumps to 12.5 per cent. On global average, a woman or girl is killed by someone in her own family every 11 minutes.

In total, it's estimated that 736 million women have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. And given limitations in data collection, the scope of the problem is likely even larger.

3. End harmful practices

Practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) deprive women and girls of their agency, both reflecting and cementing their subordinate status. Marriage robs girls of their childhood, forcing them to take on the responsibilities of adult womanhood too early. It limits their futures, often preventing them from completing school. And it harms their health, putting them at heightened risk of adolescent pregnancy and its accompanying complications, as well as of domestic violence. Female genital mutilation, most often performed on children, also has serious health consequences in both the short and long term.

Child marriage remains a pervasive practice which COVID-19 threatens to exacerbate. As of 2021, nearly 1 in 5 women (19.5 per cent) aged 20-24 was married before turning 18 – down from more than 1 in 4 (25.8 per cent) in 2001 but still alarmingly high. To end child marriage by 2030, the rate of change must increase by 17 times.

Progress on FGM, already too slow, also risks reversal in the face of the pandemic. Encouragingly, however, opposition to the practice appears to be gaining momentum. 2021 saw 4,475 communities make public commitments to its elimination – a 48 per cent increase from the year before.

4. Recognise and value unpaid work

From laundry to cooking to caring for children or the elderly, maintaining a household requires an exhaustive list of daily tasks and chores – labour that’s typically done free of charge by women and girls. This work, though essential to day-to-day life as well as to the global economy, remains largely unrecognized and undervalued.

Before 2020, women did roughly three times as much unpaid work as men on global average. Then came COVID-19, during which lockdowns drove a massive increase in the daily load of household chores and care work. School and preschool closures created an additional 672 billion hours of unpaid childcare in 2020 – 512 billion of which would have been shouldered by women, assuming the same division of household labour.

Governments offered little support: 60 per cent of countries and territories did not take any action to ameliorate this strain.

Lightening the unpaid burden on women and girls will require two kinds of change. Traditional gender roles must give way to a redistribution of household labour, with men and boys taking responsibility for an equal share. At the same time, it’s on governments to provide better public services and social protections – such as expanded care systems and requirements for paid parental leave – that help to reduce the load on individuals.

5. Ensure full participation in public life

Women’s equal representation in leadership matters – not only for achieving gender equality, but for making sound decisions in politics, the workplace, and every area of public life. Equal leadership ensures that diverse perspectives and voices make it to decision-making forums, a need recently underscored by COVID-19 task forces, where women’s vast underrepresentation led to crucial gaps in response and recovery plans.

This was not an aberration: women’s representation across political and economic leadership remains far from equal. At the national level, women hold just 26.4 per cent of parliamentary seats globally – and under 10 per cent of seats in 23 countries. In the economic sector, as of 2020, they hold 28.3 per cent of managerial positions, up only 0.3 per cent from 2019.

Without an increase in the rate of progress, gender parity in national parliamentary bodies won’t be reached until 2062. In the workplace things are even worse, with gender parity in management remaining 140 years away.

The outlook is better in local politics, where women hold a little over one third of seats (34.3 per cent) in local decision-making bodies. Parity here is within reach, but it will depend on the widespread implementation of gender quotas to meet the 2030 deadline.

6. Ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

Restricting women's bodily autonomy is a pervasive form of patriarchal control, both at the government level and within the family. Women's empowerment depends on the protection of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to health care and education and the right to make their own informed decisions about their bodies.

As of 2022, 76 per cent of laws needed to guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health care — including maternity care, abortion, contraception, sexual education, HPV vaccination, and HIV testing, counselling and treatment — are in place across 115 countries.

As of 2021, just over half (57 per cent) of the world's women were able to make their own informed decisions about sex and reproduction. This means the freedom to make choices about health care and the use of contraceptives as well as to say no to sex with a husband or partner. The backslide on women's rights currently underway threatens to reduce this number further.

7. Ensure equal economic resources

Control over economic resources is a crucial driver of women's empowerment, providing increased security and independence and improving standards of living. Land ownership in particular helps to reduce women's reliance on male partners or relatives and increases their access to credit.

Ensuring equal land rights, including equal inheritance rights and shared land rights within couples, is essential for the realisation of the 2030 Agenda. But despite women's relatively equal representation in agriculture — they make up roughly half of the agricultural labour force in developing countries — their equal right to land ownership is guaranteed in only four of 52 countries with data for 2019–2021.

8. Promote women's empowerment through technology

Technology plays an ever-increasing role in the ways we learn, work and communicate, and cell phones have gone from a luxury to an essential means of connecting with the world. But for many of the world's women, such technology — as well as the access and independence it confers — remain out of reach: based on data for 2017-2021, women are less likely than men to own a phone in 50 of 82 countries.

9. Sound policies and legislation

Gender equality is not going to happen on its own. We need enforceable policies and legislation at all levels of government to promote the empowerment of women and girls. Particularly in the wake of COVID-19, whose socioeconomic impacts overwhelmingly hit women harder than men, gender-sensitive policies are essential for narrowing persistent gender gaps.

This requires dedicated resources. By tracking — and making public — budget allocations toward gender equality, governments can ensure adequate financing, as well as increasing transparency and accountability. But according to data from 2018–2021, only 26 per cent of countries have comprehensive systems in place to track such allocations, and 15 per cent have no system at all.

Reference:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer-sustainable-development-goal-five>