

SDG5 – GENDER EQUALITY
AND EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS

CONCISE GUIDES TO THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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SDG5 – GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

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PREFACE

The post-2015 agenda for Sustainable Development envisions a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind. Investing in women and in processes to utilise their services, knowledge, experience and labour is a critical step in achieving this objective. This book is an attempt to explore the issues and challenges faced in realising the Goals and Targets under Sustainable Development Goals-5.

Gender inequalities have several facets which manifest themselves in different forms according to the context and situation of a region or community. Discrimination against women primarily takes shape during socialisation of individuals which ascribes certain roles and responsibilities to men and women. The gender stereotypes created are so deeply engrained in our minds that we tend to perceive gender equality only as a woman's issue. Men tend to be isolated from the process; this gives a very narrow perspective to issues of gender inequality. Women's realities are constantly changing with time and situation, with new manifestations of discrimination regularly emerging. There are several factors that contribute to this discrimination; there are still others that increase or promote gender stereotyping.

Depriving women and girls of equal participation, choices and opportunities has several implications not only for their lives, but also for the future of the planet as a whole. This short book on gender equality outlines the various dimensions, namely, social, economic and political, which form the

three pillars of sustainable development and how women have been systematically excluded from the process of development. The work suggests that the process of sustainable development is incomplete without women's participation and that much needs to be done to ensure their inclusion in the process. However, the lack of control and access to various resources and property is an obstacle to women making their contribution to the process of development. The role of childbearing and childrearing, the non-economic status of domestic work performed by women, low participation in economic activities and paid labour further exacerbate their inherently low position in society. Cultural norms and practices perpetuate their insignificant participation in various decision making and leadership activities in the political, economic, social, cultural and religious spheres of societies. This leads to the persistence of 'inequality traps', whereby women are unable to escape the vicious circle.

This book puts existing studies into perspective, discusses various aspects of gender-based discrimination and its manifestation across various dimensions. It further describes the importance of women's participation in the overall realisation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). It is divided into nine chapters.

The first chapter 'Background' discusses a basic understanding of the issue of gender discrimination and how the phenomenon is related to the concept of sustainable development. The second chapter 'Understanding Gender Inequality' discusses the roots of gender inequality and the basic factors and institutions which are responsible for reinforcing the phenomenon at various levels. The third chapter 'Gender Inequalities as a Social, Economic and Political Challenge of Our Times' highlights various issues which have implications for gender equality. The underlying challenges for developmental planning are described. The chapter also examines the consequences of the

disadvantaged position of women. The fourth chapter 'Drivers and Indicators of Gender Inequality' discusses the various measures and indicators used to assess the situation and condition of women at various levels and their importance in formulating policies and programmes associated with women's welfare. The fifth chapter 'Gender Inequalities in Developing, Middle Income and Developed Countries' provides a comparative analysis of the different situations of women in countries at different stages of development, namely developing, middle income and developed countries. The sixth chapter 'Women and the Sustainable Development Agenda: A Historical Perspective' highlights the challenges that gender-based discrimination pose to society and the world community as a whole in social, economic and political terms. Starting from Brundtland Commission report the chapter gives a glimpse of the global concerns for sustainability during past few decades. This chapter concludes with the description of SDG-05. The seventh chapter 'The Relationship of SDG5 to Other Goals' elaborates on the interlinkages between SDG5 and other SDGs and the critical role played by women in achieving the process of sustainable development. The eighth chapter 'Policy Action for Gender Equality' discusses the various policy strategies that may be used to tackle the problem of gender inequality. Finally, the ninth chapter 'Some Reflections on Inequalities' brings out the concept as the defining challenge of our times and gives our concluding remarks.

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