Achieving the SDGs for women and girls requires an enabling environment, including the mobilization of adequate resources, fair and equitable trade and technological progress for sustainable development and capacity-building, delivered through partnerships based on accountability and solidarity, and adequate data to monitor implementation. All of these have important gender dimensions. For instance, budget cuts that reduce social spending may increase the demands on women’s unpaid care and domestic work, while access to labour-saving technology may contribute to reducing the drudgery of such work.

At a glance

- In 2012, finances flowing out of developing countries were 2.5 times the amount of aid flowing in, paling gender allocations in official development aid.\(^1\)
- In 2018 alone, 124 countries are expected to be cutting their budgets—eroding social protection measures and essential services on which so many women and girls depend.\(^2\)
- 54 out of the 232 indicators in the global indicator framework are gender-specific, meaning that they are targeted at women and girls, explicitly call for the disaggregation by sex or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective.\(^3\)
- 6 out of the 17 SDGs, and 4 out of the 6 that are under review this year, are gender-blind at the indicator level.\(^4\)
- A mere 26% of the data necessary for global monitoring of the gender-specific indicators is currently available. Unless gender is mainstreamed into national statistical strategies, gender data scarcity will persist.\(^5\)
- The costs and benefits of technology remain unequally distributed. For example, internet usage among women globally, is 5.9 percentage points lower than among men.

1) Delivering on the gender equality commitments of the 2030 Agenda stands and falls with allocation of sufficient resources for their achievement.

Essential services on which millions of women and girls depend—health, education, water, childcare, shelters—are chronically underfunded or simply unavailable. Where they exist, they are often the first to be hit by austerity measures, which are once again on the rise. In 2018 alone, 124 countries are expected to be cutting their budgets—eroding social protection measures and essential services on which so many women and girls depend. This is not inevitable. Far from a world of scarcity, we live in a world of unprecedented opulence, but where resources are unfairly distributed and do not reach those who need them the most. The financial resources flowing out of developing countries, for example, are 2.5 times the amount of aid flowing in, undermining the ability of these countries to invest in their people and repair their damaged environments. Unrecorded capital flight, including illicit financial flows, constitute the bulk of these outflows—compared to which gender allocations in official development aid are a drop in the ocean. Global tax competition has further compromised the ability of developing countries to
raise sufficient domestic resources. Between 2005 and 2014, developing countries across all regions except Latin America decreased their corporate tax rates, for example, letting go of an important source of domestic revenue. In virtually all countries, there is scope for raising or reallocating resources to strengthen public services that are essential for women and girls. It is a matter of political will and of using all the available policy tools. The cost of inaction is simply too high.

2) Gaps in gender data make it difficult to assess and monitor the direction and pace of progress for women and girls.

54 out of the 232 indicators in the global indicator framework are gender-specific, meaning that they are targeted at women and girls, explicitly call for the disaggregation by sex or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. However, 6 out of the 17 SDGs are gender-blind at the indicator level—the global framework does not currently monitor progress for women and girls in these areas. This includes 4 out of the 6 goals that are under review at the HLPF this year, including areas we know are critical for women’s livelihoods, such as water and sanitation, energy and forest conservation. In addition, monitoring progress for women and girls is hampered by low levels of data availability. A mere 26% of the data necessary for global monitoring of the gender-specific indicators is currently available; and only 13% is available for two or more points in time, meaning that we can actually capture trends. Unless gender is mainstreamed into national statistical strategies, gender data scarcity will persist.

3) The potential of technology to support sustainable development for women and girls is enormous, but the costs and benefits of technologies remain unequally distributed and their risks inadequately managed.

The potential of science, technology and innovation to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development for women and girls is enormous: pharmaceutical inventions, such as vaccines or antiretroviral drugs, can save the lives of millions of women and girls; family planning methods increase women’s reproductive choices; and running water and electricity reduce the drudgery and increase the productivity of unpaid work that is disproportionately performed by women and girls. Yet, the costs and benefits of scientific and technological progress remain unequally distributed – between countries, between women and men, and between different groups of women. Significant barriers remain, for example, for women and girls to fully benefit from the new opportunities provided by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Globally, internet usage among women is almost 6 percentage points lower than among men. The gender digital divide is largest in least developed countries (LDCs) where connectivity infrastructure is still insufficiently developed and the cost of connecting to the Internet is high.

References

3 UN Women. 2018, op cit.
4 UN Women. 2018, op cit.
5 UN Women. 2018, op cit.

For the full report, see: http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/sdg-report