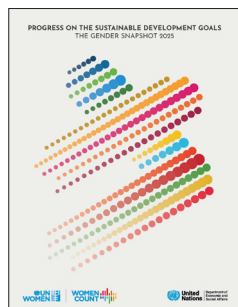




## Milestones

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## Small steps to Elusive Goals

### SDGs Gender Snapshot 2025 report reveals hopeful progress, continued cause for worry and a whole lot of stagnation

UN Women has developed the Beijing+30 Action Agenda with six priority actions to accelerate progress on both the Platform for Action and the SDGs, positioning gender equality at the heart of global development efforts. The agency's 'Gender Snapshot' 2025 report assesses progress in the SDGs related to each of these six actions, among which climate justice is of high importance especially with respect to fisheries. As well, every SDG is assessed with particular respect to its gender-specific indicators.

Turn to page 24 of the report and you see the chapter heading "From fisheries to climate talks, women play vital roles – but not on equal terms". Four of the SDG are lumped together (45 total indicators, 1 gender specific indicator!) A central finding here is that women remain significantly underrepresented in primary fisheries production, holding only 24 percent of jobs in the primary fisheries and aquaculture sector. However, their participation increases sharply in downstream segments: "rising to about 62% in the processing subsector." This is not really new information. An exploratory paper that looked at women employed at various levels in a local shrimp processing unit in Asia clearly highlighted this pattern: it was the men who owned and did all the important work, while women handled the processing at freezing temperatures for low wages. Not that things were much different in Europe: the experience from Europe's small-scale fisheries sector indicated that when women stepped into power roles, the terms of reference were modified and they were no longer the decision-makers.

Back to the Gender Snapshot report: as the afore-mentioned chapter points out, it is not only in terms of livelihoods that we need to be concerned about women's participation. Women must be included in critical decisions to both protect marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods. Again, mere participation is not enough as this alone may not necessarily lead to policies that are gender-sensitive or gender-responsive.

Climate change emerges as a major threat multiplier for women in fisheries-dependent communities, with the report warning that, under a worst-case scenario, "climate change may push up

to 158.3 million more women and girls into extreme poverty by 2050" – sub-Saharan Africa accounts for nearly half of this figure. These are regions where small-scale fisheries are critical for livelihoods and food security. Climate impacts also heighten food insecurity, with projections of "up to 236 million more women and girls" becoming food insecure. These dynamics disproportionately affect women in coastal and riparian communities who already face limited access to land, credit, technology and decision-making spaces.

The report highlights that women's voices remain largely absent from climate and marine governance. Only "39% of countries have established national coordination mechanisms [...] to integrate gender equality into climate policymaking." This omission is particularly consequential for fisheries, where climate adaptation, marine spatial planning and resource allocation decisions shape livelihood security.

As ever, data remain hauntingly deficient. The report underscores the importance of gender-responsive data and financing. Despite the centrality of women to fisheries value chains, gender data systems remain underfunded: "only 26% of countries [...] had comprehensive systems to track resource allocations for gender equality." This gap limits evidence-based policymaking in fisheries and aquatic food systems.

Going through the report, under SDG 5 on Gender Equality, I was struck by the finding that 'the gender gap in mobile phone ownership had narrowed'. This is a good thing – from access to customers, to accessing education and creating awareness on a variety of essential subjects, including hygiene and safety, apart from entertainment, the mobile phone has become an essential item for women in fisheries. So, that sounds good! And I hope that such small steps will grow into big leaps. **Y**

**Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2025 by UN Women and UN DESA, 2025:**

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2025-en.pdf>