

**BEST PRACTICES ON INTEGRATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL
PERSPECTIVE INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower
All Women and Girls**

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BEST PRACTICES ON INTEGRATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls

Executive Summary

This report discusses best practices for achieving gender equality and empowering girls and women through the integration of women and men as whole people, each with their own vital role in society. The document discusses ways in which this integration can be reinforced through legislation, education and active participation by both women and men to end discrimination against women.

Target 5.1 describes violence against women and girls as a systemic issue where people at all levels and all sectors of society benefit. This document offers a variety of actions to change this system through increased exposure, not only to the pain and suffering it causes but also through increased exposure of all those who benefit from these abuses. A number of best practices are enumerated.

Harmful practices against women and girls can be seen as an anomaly in Nature. This report proposes actions that will enable powerful natural law to reinstate itself. If, for example, women's work in caring for the home and family is to be valued, its actual value to all concerned must be recognized. A number of actions are proposed to help accomplish this.

The Internet can be an invaluable tool to enable women to have full and effective participation in leadership positions, helping to bring about the required changes in human socio-economic structures. As well, increase education is the key to giving women access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Targets 5 a,b, and c provide lists of best practices to implement this goal.

Goal 5. Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls

There are strong natural evolutionary forces working inside of the natural order and within people individually. These are constantly encouraging humanity to form a well-integrated global community in which all can come into their own, including both men and women. This evolutionary process has been in evidence since the Big Bang with the development of matter, life, new species, and, ultimately, human beings.

At this critical planetary juncture, humanity is attempting to come into a new, integrated form through these same evolutionary pressures. One of the strongest evolutionary forces now coming to the fore is *gender equality*. If humankind is to create a sustainable future, there must be far greater understanding and valuing of the crucial role that women and girls play in maintaining and sustaining our species. This increased valuing of women's roles can be reinforced through:

- Legislation and education on the importance of women inside the family and inside of societies at all levels; and
- Active participation by both women and men in this movement to end discrimination against women.

When we look at Nature, we see clearly that females of the species are powerful forces to be reckoned with. Their power is derived from respect rather than fear. There is nothing more dangerous than an animal in a state of fear. Fear engenders aggression and inhibits compassion. In the "human kingdom", power is often obtained through fear-based tactics.

To empower boys/girls, men/women, we need policies and programs at all levels, in addition to laws, that foster mutual respect rather than fear. Females and males have different biological imperatives and these are critical to the survival of the human species. Humans can acknowledge and celebrate these differences, without judgment, rather than use them to diminish or control either gender.

Proposed Actions:

1. Educate all people on the essential purpose of these gender differences.
2. Foster insight and appreciation for the uniqueness of individuals within both genders.
3. Organize informal mixed-gender groups, in which members switch off positions so that all develop an understanding and respect for the different perspectives of each gender.
4. Incorporate role-playing activities into schools, organizations and corporations so that each gender becomes sensitized to the experiences of the other.

Need to Balance Power Differentials

In the human species, females are often subjugated to males through socio-economic, religious, cultural and psychological structures. The more girls and women are stunted in

their unique personal development, the more the family, community, nation and the human species suffer, as does Nature herself.

Given the biological role of their gender, females exhibit qualities such as receptivity, nurturing and the need to foster connection and cohesiveness. While these attributes exist in both females and males, they have been devalued and lost to some extent in both genders. The increased tendency to devalue these important nurturing attributes can be explained in part by their negative association with "females" and "primitive peoples".

With the loss of what was considered feminine characteristics, the cohesiveness between people has diminished. This, in turn, has led to a range of problems, including further fragmentation and cut-throat competition, destruction of the environment, and the loss of nations' young people to terrorist organizations.

Achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls will require a paradigm shift, a new perspective that values all beings regardless of gender. This will mean a change in education, a shift in media depictions of females *and* males as well as new policies that support this shift.

By creating gender equality and empowering both women and girls, we can help to advance the full development of the human personality in both females and males, while fostering global community in which new and meaningful bonds can be formed across existing geographic, cultural, and economic boundaries. This will enhance rather than undermine our globalizing world.

It will help form more humane and nurturing situations in schools, organizations, corporations, communities, nations and our world as a whole. Once girls and women have been empowered to develop their own feminine characteristics and are respected in that role, both genders will be liberated to express these traits. At the same time, the cohesiveness between people will help build a human society that can live in greater harmony with itself and with Nature.

Proposed Actions:

1. Implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 26 (2), the development of the whole human personality, both legislatively and via the curricula of all formal educational institutions. This will empower girls and women in their relationship to men and boys and eliminate the need for males to subjugate females forcibly. UDHR 26 (2) will require:
 - Inner development of our faculties, including intuition, which is the human umbilical cord that connects each individual with Nature.
 - Development of skills in peaceful assertiveness and training in one's individually chosen profession.

2. Develop forms of education that foster intuition, including:
 - Reflection and meditation, which grants the receptive aspects of the mind the necessary importance.
 - Artistic activities that afford people a sense of wholeness and involve both genders in generating creative projects to foster innovative thinking and new perspectives.
 - Learning through socially relevant group projects that encourage people to act in keeping with their own strengths, become team players and work for the betterment of society; and
 - Learning to communicate with Nature, which requires self-awareness and deep listening for what Nature wants to communicate in order to develop harmony with the Natural Order. (For more detailed information on education in communicating with Nature, please see the attached report, *Best Practices on Integrating the Environmental Perspective into the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4.*)
3. Foster education and experiences that connect humans to Nature.
 - Model respect for the interconnection of all life.
 - Develop programs that value all life forms.
 - Teach discernment in balancing respect for others with needs of self.
4. Develop curricula that teach:
 - The ability to balance gentleness and acceptance with strength.
 - The distinction between aggression and assertiveness.
 - The value of welcoming each new being with curiosity, wonder and awe.
5. Create education, policies, entertainment and technology that empower individuals to share their unique gifts with the world regardless of gender.

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

Boys and men also suffer from discrimination against women. In fact, past inequalities create confusion and challenges for *all* children today. Addressing the situation by focusing solely on equality for girls/women maintains the premise that boys/men are treated ideally and that we should compare the treatment of girls/women with the treatment and opportunity for boys/men as a way to achieve equality. This approach keeps us in continual conflict since the basis of the problem for women originates from an underlying foundation of inequality, wrongdoing and blame.

Rather than trying to fix a broken system that is not helpful for either gender, it will be more effective to create a new way for people to view *all* children, whether girl or boy, honoring each one as a precious new member of our species with untold qualities and

gifts. This new thought movement can be introduced by national leaders, teachers and community leaders to increase awareness of the importance of our planet's children. With this awareness, people will seek out the unique characteristics of each child and take pride in being a part of their careful development. A community truly can raise a child. Changing our view of children so that each is considered "our own precious child" will give them the freedom to blossom. In a system that values *all* children, gender inequality cannot exist. Considering the brilliance and adaptability of our human species, this is a real possibility.

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.

Violence against women is rooted in fear, rage and feelings of powerlessness. Meeting violence with more violence is not the answer. We can meet this violence with peace, love and compassion—a *"fierce compassion" that sees and understands the reality of what is and sets an intention to shift to greater love and compassion.* This will require females and males of all ages to join together. Violence against women is not a "female issue." It impacts all of us. Males must play an active role in this shift.

The basis for ongoing trafficking and other types of exploitation is intricately related to economics. If there were not buyers there would not be sellers and all those with a role to play in between. If it were not for sellers there would not be buyers. As it stands, even some parents and other family members participate, thinking of their girls as possible money earners for the family in these ways. In many cases, these families' actions are based in desperation for survival, but such practices are now increasingly common when survival is not the reason. It is a total system that must be addressed as such. While partial solutions can be helpful to provide immediate counter measures, ultimately the entire system must be changed to bring about a final end to this violence against girls.

Real change is only possible by dismantling the system. The operators who work as middlemen/women are the foundation of the business. They have powerful structures, which protect them from being affected by any campaigns to fully end these operations. They often are well-respected people and leaders who view trafficking and exploitation as simple business ventures. They fail to appreciate the pain they cause and instead focus on the money they make. Breaking down these systems will require transparency in bringing these leaders' involvement into public awareness. This is key to solving this issue and, going forward, to creating a new way of viewing our children as precious gifts rather than financial resources, as suggested above in 5.1.

Proposed Actions:

1. Work to understand the economic drives of those participating in the system that perpetuate violence against women; implement alternatives for those who contribute out of perceived need.
2. Stop promoting violence in media, advertising, play.
3. Model peace and mutual respect in books, magazines, TV, movies, games.
4. Teach problem solving, conflict resolution, mediation, and non-violent communication.
5. Organize a worldwide peaceful march in support of eradicating violence against girls and women. The energy released in this process could be a powerful force in creating change.

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

Love and appreciation of each woman in her own right and for what she can contribute to the wellbeing of a whole community/society is the true basis for change. In Nature, individual species are able to survive and thrive only to the degree that each contributes to the whole and is nurtured by it.

In our human society harm of women has brought humanity out of sync with the laws of nature practiced by all other species. It is important to remember that disempowerment and abuse of women is kept alive by *both* women and men.

Change has begun through the adoption and implementation of SDG 5 and targets 5.1-5.6 and 5a-c) on gender as a global standard and policy. As a next step, the recommendations made in this report should be translated into enforceable national and local laws.

But durable change will only take place once these predatory behaviours have truly been eradicated in both men and women and all can experience for themselves the benefits of a society where both genders can come into their own without being stunted by violence.

At that point,

- The natural laws will be able to operate fully within the human species; and
- The resulting experience of benevolence and wellbeing that will make genital mutilation and forced marriages unthinkable.

Harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilations are possible because of a belief that female children and adults are a commodity with potential value to influence or in trade. There is also a basis of fear in general with perpetrators, including fear and superstition about females and fear for survival. Understanding what drives parents and perpetrators to acts of forced early marriage and genital mutilations is key to eliminating these acts. This can be done through creating a new way to view all children.

Proposed Actions:

1. Develop groups that include both boys and girls and enable them to work in harmony with one another with the same mission, equally sharing the benefits.
2. Bring true equality to education and daily life by introducing innovative ways of understanding and interacting with one another to create greater appreciation of the intrinsic value of every life, rather than the perception that some lives are worth more or less as compared to others.
3. Create special education for girls and boys that includes formal training in traditional subjects that will prepare them for work and offer them more options, while at the same time trainings designed to build their self-esteem and empower them to move beyond their current limitations.
4. Stop glorifying and promoting substance abuse and pornography. Create and support - with finances and policies - entertainment, products and activities that promote mutual respect, problem solving, conflict resolution, healthy sexual attitudes, and healthy connections between humans and with Nature.
5. Bring about a new movement that supports all that we as humans wish to experience and share in our lives.

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.

Changing the way we view stay-at-home parents and providers for children's care will make a tremendous shift for humanity.

If we believe that *all* children have value and importance, truly as the future of our species, we naturally think of their parents, caretakers, and teachers as essential in their development. We want the best and finest for them. When child-rearing and children's education is consistently valued, community members are inspired to become mentors and contribute to the development and expansion of our species.

To create the world we want, it is of paramount importance that we change the perceived value of at-home work and child-rearing duties.

Proposed Actions:

1. Create policies and funding to support shared responsibility for the home and show that education, caregiving and domestic work are highly valued.
2. Encourage/support media and entertainment that shines the light on the value of this work to each individual and to society as a whole.
3. Promote mutual respect with policies, funding, education and technology.

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.

Females of many species, including humans, have shown their capacity for leadership to be equivalent to that of males. In the human species, gender equality will require change in the socio/economic power structures that are currently supported by both genders. It will require shifts in individual consciousness, training in self-assertiveness, and support of both genders within one's own culture and in other cultures where greater equality has been achieved.

This can be greatly helped where women and girls, universally, have access to the Internet. (See 5.0; and 5b). People in many countries have made great headway in this effort, changing power structures to maintain gender equality through the law as well as through social and peer pressure. Eventually there will be a tipping point that will enable legal protection of gender equality to become a global reality.

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

The implementation of 5.6 is essential to nearly all other goals; education is the key. In addition, it is suggested that a department of reproductive health and education be developed to

- Train educators for sexual and reproductive health and rights and make them available worldwide from the smallest village to the largest cities.
- Make education and health services available for both women and men, and young people as well, so they can become new leaders, teaching others in the community.

- Align policies, education and funding with this goal.

In many cases, lack of education and health services have contributed to the challenges, misunderstandings and abuses seen today. Making sexual health education and health services available and acceptable will serve to unify women and men in understanding. A movement of education to develop new leaders in this field, bringing in trainers from other areas when necessary, is important.

Training can also occur via the Internet. Individuals interested in becoming experts in sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights can be developed to give community workshops, classes and presentations. Making these education and services available and popular among men and women and young people is key.

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.

Proposed Actions:

- Reform policies, education, laws and funding so that they are in alignment with and support this goal.
- Develop new leadership in the areas of land ownership, financial services, inheritance, natural resources and living in harmony with nature; create financial and ownership support as applicable to nations' laws.
- Bring the relevant education to women, men, and young people; ensure that educational programs are available to all and that women and girls attend.
- Work with people to guide them in the fulfilment of land purchases, managing finances, inheritance and living in harmony with Nature.
- Develop more women landowners and encourage them to become new inspiring leaders in the community for both men and women.

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

Access to technology is key to promoting women's empowerment. In addition, technology, media, advances in communication, and entertainment can be used to reinforce empowerment of both genders. Empowerment of both women and men creates deeper understanding and respect of each gender for the other. By extension, this increased appreciation and valuing of each other can also help us more deeply appreciate and value our connection with Nature as well.

Proposed Actions:

1. Bring computers and Internet to villages and especially to young girls, and women who have had no access.
2. Develop technology and training in equality and inclusivity.
3. Provide women and girls with access to materials and training.
4. Ensure that a spirit of inclusivity and equality among the genders becomes a new basis for interaction and development going forward.

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

The inclusivity of all such programs is key to creating gender equality. Where sound policies and enforceable legislation are passed that benefit *all people*, gender equality will result. But where one gender is treated as weak and incapable, gender discrimination is perpetuated. The objective is to educate individuals of both genders and the community as a whole on new possibilities for living, employment, health and wellness and nearly all areas of interest.

Proposed Actions:

1. Provide training and opportunities for both genders to foster a new basis of equality.
2. Embrace youth to create a future with myriad possibilities for all.
3. Create unity and cooperation through inclusiveness to generate a spirit of new unlimited potential for life.