

# Editorial

With only seven years to go before 2030, the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – “leaving no one behind” – is compromised. Despite progress, gender equality remains a distant goal and the world is not on track to achieve SDG 5, nor the other gender-related targets. At the heart of our failure to achieve gender equality lie persistent discriminatory social institutions. These formal and informal laws, social norms and practices fundamentally dictate what women and men are allowed to do, what they are expected to do, and in the end what they do. In the overwhelming majority of cases, women lose out. Addressing them is essential because gender equality is not only a social and moral obligation – it is a fundamental lever for strong, green and inclusive economic development.

Since 2009, those discriminatory social institutions – the “hidden part of the iceberg” – have been the focus of the OECD Development Centre’s work and efforts. Looking back at these last 15 years, substantial progress towards gender equality has been achieved. But change has not been linear, and some regions still lag behind. Advances are fragile, and rights are vulnerable to political change or backlash. The gendered impacts of today’s global crises, including the acceleration of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, cannot be overlooked. In many cases women and girls have been disproportionately affected by their consequences. These crises are also diverting resources away from the fight against gender inequality towards what are considered more pressing issues, thus undermining its status as a systemic and urgent problem to address. Recent attacks on women’s and girls’ basic rights are a case in point.

However, women and girls very often hold the key to societal progress. As this report shows, when it comes to the objective of making agriculture more sustainable, women are a critical source of knowledge and expertise, including on how to incorporate climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. Yet, they are not sufficiently given a voice to put such knowledge into practice, where social norms make men the primary decision makers at home or in the public sphere.

The thematic analysis of the *SIGI 2023 Global Report: Gender Equality in Times of Crisis* stresses the pivotal role women can play in climate change mitigation and adaptation, making the case to improve the response to climate change by empowering women as agents of change. However, exploiting this window of opportunity requires to address the root causes of gender inequality. Building on the fifth edition of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), the report outlines these causes and provides evidence of their impacts on girls’ and women’s empowerment and agency, in all aspects of their lives.

The SIGI is a global public good. It supports both OECD and non-OECD countries in designing transformative policies to address these fundamental barriers to gender equality and unleash women’s and girls’ potential, for the benefit of all.



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