



# Building A More Equitable World: Strategies To Combat Gender Inequality

Sasmita Tripathy, Research scholar\* Department of Political Science, Rama Devi Women's University,  
751022, Bhubaneswar (Odisha)

## Abstract

Gender inequality is a persistent global problem that impacts various areas of human life, including social, economic, political, and cultural aspects. Despite international promises and national reforms, women and gender minorities still face gaps in education, employment, and health, access to technology, decision-making, and safety. This paper explores the nature of gender inequality, traces its historical and structural causes, reviews important scholarly work, and examines how the Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 5—promote equality. The study also presents a set of strategic actions, including legal reforms, economic empowerment, gender-responsive budgeting, changing social norms, and data-driven policymaking, to create a fairer world.

## Introduction

Gender inequality means that individuals face different treatment or opportunities based on their gender. This issue is rooted in patriarchal systems, cultural norms, unequal resource access, and discriminatory practices. Around the globe, women and gender minorities experience disadvantages in education, healthcare, economic participation, property rights, and leadership roles.

In recent years, global agreements like the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have highlighted gender equality in discussions about development. Although progress has been made, ongoing gaps show that gender equality is not just a development issue but also a complex structural and social problem that needs various solutions. Gender inequality refers to the systematic discrimination against individuals based on gender, primarily affecting women and girls. It manifests in unequal access to education, healthcare, employment, political representation, and legal protection. Gender inequality undermines human rights, weakens democratic institutions, and hampers sustainable development.

## Statement of the problem

- Despite global progress, gender inequality takes many forms:
- Millions of girls still do not have access to quality education.
- Women carry a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work.
- Gender-based violence is still widespread.
- Women remain underrepresented in political and economic decisions.
- Wage gaps and job segregation continue.

- Digital gender gaps limit access to technology and information.
- Cultural norms and stereotypes restrict women's freedom and choices.
- These issues weaken human development, hinder economic growth, and compromise social justice, making gender inequality a priority for global policy.

## Objectives of the study

1. To understand the concept and scope of gender inequality.
2. To identify the main causes of gender inequality worldwide.
3. To review key scholarly work and global research on gender inequality.
4. To examine the role of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 5, in promoting gender equality.
5. To suggest strategies and policy recommendations for reducing global gender inequality.

## Review of literature

### 1. Amartya Sen (1990, 1999)

Sen's "missing women" idea shows the demographic impact of discrimination and emphasizes the need to expand women's capabilities.

### 2. Simone de Beauvoir (1949)

In *The Second Sex*, she argues that gender inequality is constructed by society and upheld through cultural norms.

### 3. UN Women Reports (2015–2024)

These reports track ongoing gaps in education, employment, violence, and political involvement around the world.

### 4. World Bank Gender Strategy (2024–2030)

Emphasizes economic empowerment, digital inclusion, and legal reforms as vital ways to close gender gaps.

Gender inequality is complex and rooted in social norms, economic systems, legal discrimination, and unequal access to opportunities. Effective solutions require integrated policies, cultural shifts, and global cooperation.

## Methodology

This study uses a descriptive and analytical research design to explore strategies for addressing gender inequality and the role of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in creating a more equitable world. It combines both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a full understanding of the issue.

We collect primary data through field surveys, structured questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions, especially focusing on women from various socio-economic backgrounds. Secondary data comes from government reports, census data, the National Sample Survey (NSS), academic journals, books, policy documents, and reports from international organizations like the United Nations and UN Women.

The study analyzes gender-disaggregated data to examine gaps in education, health, employment, and political participation. We use analytical tools such as comparative analysis and content analysis to

interpret the data. The findings are placed within the context of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and related goals.

The research focuses on a specific socio-cultural setting and follows ethical guidelines. We ensure informed consent, maintain confidentiality, and respect participants. This approach helps us understand the reasons, effects, and potential solutions to gender inequality in a clear and organized way.

## CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY

### 1. Patriarchy and Social Norms

Patriarchal values assign dominance to men and subordinate roles to women, restricting autonomy and mobility. Gender roles are socially constructed and perpetuated through family, religion, and culture.

### 2. Educational Disparities

Girls face barriers such as early marriage, household responsibilities, poverty, and safety concerns, resulting in higher dropout rates and limited skill development.

### 3. Economic Inequality

Women are concentrated in informal, low-paid, and insecure jobs. The gender wage gap and lack of access to property and credit reinforce economic dependence.

### 4. Political Marginalization

Women's participation in political institutions remains minimal, limiting gender-sensitive policymaking and representation.

### 5. Gender-Based Violence

Domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, and cyber abuse create fear, insecurity, and social exclusion.

## STRATEGIES TO COMBAT GENDER INEQUALITY

### 1. Education as a Transformative Tool

Universal access to free and quality education

Scholarships and incentives for girl students

Gender-inclusive textbooks and pedagogy

Life-skills and leadership education

Impact: Enhances awareness, confidence, employability, and decision-making capacity.

### 2. Legal Frameworks and Justice Mechanisms

Strong enforcement of anti-discrimination and violence laws

Gender-sensitive policing and judiciary

Legal literacy programs for women

Fast-track courts for gender crimes

Impact: Ensures protection, accountability, and justice.

### 3. Economic Empowerment and Employment

Equal pay legislation and wage transparency

Skill development, vocational training, and entrepreneurship

Access to micro-finance and self-help groups

Recognition and redistribution of unpaid care work

Impact: Financial independence strengthens social and political empowerment.

### 4. Political Participation and Leadership

Reservation and quota systems

Leadership training programs

Support for women candidates

Gender-responsive budgeting

## 5. Health, Nutrition, and Reproductive Rights

Universal access to maternal healthcare

Menstrual hygiene awareness

Reproductive autonomy and family planning

Mental health support services

Impact: Improves quality of life and productivity.

## 6. Role of Technology and Digital Inclusion

Bridging the digital gender divide

Online education and skill platforms

Cyber safety laws and awareness

Women-led tech innovation

Impact: Expands access to information and opportunities.

## 7. Social and Cultural Transformation

Engaging men and boys as allies

Challenging stereotypes through media

Promoting shared domestic responsibilities

Community-based gender sensitization

Impact: Long-term attitudinal and behavioural change

## 8. Redistribution of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

One of the most hidden yet powerful sources of gender inequality is the unequal burden of unpaid care and domestic work that falls on women. Cooking, cleaning, childcare, elder care, and emotional support often go unnoticed in economic and policy frameworks.

## Role of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Combating Gender Inequality and Its Implications

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provide a global framework to tackle gender inequality and encourage inclusive development. Gender equality is both a separate goal (SDG 5) and a principle that appears in all SDGs.

### Role of SDGs in Promoting Gender Equality

#### 1. SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls

SDG 5 focuses on breaking down the structural and cultural barriers that women and girls face.

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls.



- End harmful practices such as child marriage and female infanticide.

- Recognize unpaid care and domestic work.



- Ensure women's participation and leadership in political and economic life.
- Provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

## 2. Gender Equality as a Cross-Cutting Goal

Gender equality is included in multiple SDGs:

- SDG 1 (No Poverty): Empowering women economically reduces household poverty.
- SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): Supporting women farmers improves food security.
- SDG 3 (Good Health): Focus on maternal health and reproductive rights.
- SDG 4 (Quality Education): Ensure equal access to education for girls.
- SDG 8 (Decent Work): Promote equal pay and safe working conditions.
- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): Tackle gender-based social exclusion.

## Implications of SDGs for Gender Equality

### 1. Social Implications

Improved status of women in families and society.

Reduction of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Greater social inclusion and dignity for women and girls.

### 2. Economic Implications

Increased participation of women in the labour force.

Higher household incomes and less poverty.

Improved productivity and sustainable economic growth.

### 3. Political Implications

More representation of women in decision-making bodies.

- SDG 16 (Peace, Justice): Improve access to justice for women.

## 3. Policy Framework and Accountability

SDGs encourage countries to adopt laws and policies that respond to gender needs.

Using gender-disaggregated data helps track progress.

International cooperation and reporting mechanisms ensure accountability.

## 4. Strengthening Institutional and Grassroots Action

SDGs promote partnerships among governments, NGOs, and civil society.

Support women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs), microfinance, and community leadership.

Encourage inclusive governance through local institutions.

Stronger democratic institutions and inclusive governance.

Greater transparency and accountability.

### 4. Educational Implications

Higher literacy rates among women.

Intergenerational benefits: educated mothers improve child welfare.

Skill development and innovation.

### 5. Health Implications

Reduced maternal and infant mortality rates.

Better access to reproductive healthcare.

Improved mental and physical well-being of women.

### 6. Developmental Implications

Faster progress towards sustainable development.

## Way forward

- Putting gender-equal laws into practice is just as crucial as creating them.
- We should improve gender-responsive budgeting at all levels of government.
- Sustainable Development Goal 5 must be included in all development policies and programs.
- Equal access to education and skill development is vital for empowering women.
- Women's economic independence helps reduce poverty and social vulnerability.
- We need to challenge patriarchal social norms through awareness and education.
- Men and boys should take an active role in promoting gender equality.
- Women's involvement in politics and decision-making processes must be increased.
- Digital inclusion and safe work environments can further support gender equality.

## Conclusion

Gender equality is a prerequisite for building a just, inclusive, and sustainable world. Combating gender inequality requires coordinated action at individual, institutional, national, and global levels. Empowering women is not merely about providing opportunities but about transforming power relations and social structures. A more equitable world can be achieved only when gender justice becomes a shared societal responsibility.

## References

1. United Nations. (2015). transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations General Assembly.
2. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). Gender equality strategy 2018 to 2021. UNDP.
3. World Economic Forum. (2023). Global gender gap report. World Economic Forum.
4. Sen, A. (1999). Development as freedom. Oxford University Press.
5. Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 13 to 24.
6. Government of India. (2016). National policy for women. Ministry of Women and Child Development.
7. Benería, L., Berik, G., & Floro, M. (2016). Gender, development and globalization: Economics as if all people mattered. Routledge.
8. UN Women. (2021). Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.