



SUMMARY

# TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION:

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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# TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA

In September 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Comprised of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and 232 indicators, the 2030 Agenda tackles a broad range of global challenges, aiming to eradicate poverty, reduce multiple and intersecting inequalities, address climate change, end conflict and sustain peace. Thanks to the relentless efforts of women's rights advocates from across the globe, the commitment to gender equality is prominent, comprehensive and cross-cutting. Building on the commitments and norms contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW), the 2030 Agenda is clear: Development will only be sustainable if its benefits accrue equally to both women and men; and women's rights will only become a reality if they are part of broader efforts to protect the planet and ensure that all people can live with dignity and respect.

How far have we come in turning this new development consensus into results for women and girls on the ground, and what is needed to bridge the remaining gaps between rhetoric and reality? More than two years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, UN Women's global monitoring report takes stock of ongoing trends and challenges based on available evidence and data. It uses a monitoring approach that looks at both the ends (goals and targets) and

the means (policies and processes) that are needed to achieve gender equality in the context of the 2030 Agenda. This approach is intended to enable Member States and other stakeholders to track progress in a comprehensive way and support women's rights advocates to demand accountability for gender equality commitments as implementation unfolds.

At its best, gender-responsive monitoring delivers a robust and transparent assessment of progress, gaps and bottlenecks that can inform open debate about successes and failures and support learning about what works for gender equality and where course corrections may be needed. But this feedback loop is not automatic. As the report shows, making every woman and girl count will require a revolution not only in gender data but also in policies, programming and accountability. The report provides concrete recommendations on how to align these dimensions of implementation with the bold vision of the 2030 Agenda.

## A CHALLENGING GLOBAL CONTEXT

While the integrated and universal implementation of the vision laid out in the 2030 Agenda holds the potential to transform the lives of women and girls all over the world, the challenges are daunting. The large-scale extraction of natural resources,

climate change and environmental degradation are advancing at an unprecedented pace, undermining the livelihoods of millions of women and men, particularly in the developing world. The global economy remains volatile after nearly a decade of crisis, recession and subsequent austerity measures. Orthodox economic policies continue to deepen inequality and push people further behind. A shift towards exclusionary and fear-based politics is deepening societal divisions, breeding conflict and instability; and millions are being forcibly displaced due to violent conflict and humanitarian catastrophes. In the midst of global socio-economic and political turmoil, not only does the promise of gender equality remain unfulfilled but women's rights are facing renewed resistance from different kinds of fundamentalism. Civic space is shrinking and women's human rights defenders are facing threats and persecution by both state and non-state actors.<sup>1</sup>

Gender inequalities manifest themselves in each and every dimension of sustainable development (see At a glance graphic, pp. 4-5). When households cannot access sufficient food, women are often the first to go hungry.<sup>2</sup> While girls are doing increasingly better in school and university than boys, this has not translated into gender equality in the labour market. The gender pay gap stands at 23 per cent globally and, without decisive action, it will take another 68 years to achieve equal pay.<sup>3</sup> While women have made important inroads into political office across the world, their representation in national parliaments at 23.7 per cent is still far from parity.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, gains are fragile in the face of threats and attacks on women politicians and voters, persistent sexual harassment and online abuse. One in five women and girls have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months.<sup>5</sup> Yet, 49 countries have no laws that specifically protect women from such violence (see Figure 1).<sup>6</sup> Despite their increasing presence in public life, women continue to do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work that men do.<sup>7</sup> Women and girls are also the main water and solid fuel collectors in households without access to an improved water source and clean energy in their homes, with adverse implications for their health and safety.

## HARNESSING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF THE 2030 AGENDA

This state of affairs presents a real test for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, the mere fact that UN Member States have agreed on a shared vision for a sustainable future based on global solidarity and human rights provides reason to be cautiously optimistic. The 2030 Agenda's focus on sustainability, equality, peace and human progress provides a powerful counter-narrative to current practices of extraction, exclusion and division. The SDGs are especially important now, both as a political agenda for global cooperation and as a specific, time-bound set of targets that underline the urgent need for concerted action. What will it take to harness their transformative potential and make them work for gender equality and women's rights? Three of the 2030 Agenda's cross-cutting dimensions are particularly important for gender-responsive implementation: its rooting in human rights and understanding of these as indivisible; its universal application and pledge to leave no one behind; and its potential to serve as a tool for holding governments and other stakeholders to account.

### Getting it right: Indivisibility, interlinkages and taking an integrated approach

Around the world, governments have made legally binding commitments to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights. The 2030 Agenda builds on these commitments, recognizing the indivisibility and interdependence of rights, the interlinkages between gender equality and the three dimensions of sustainable development, and the need for an integrated approach to implementation. Maintaining the focus on human rights will be critical to keeping the SDGs on track during their implementation and ensuring that the means to achieve them respond to the experiences of women and girls on the ground.

In the lives of women and girls, different dimensions of well-being and deprivation are deeply intertwined: A girl who is born into a poor household (Target 1.2) and forced into early marriage (Target 5.3), for example, is more likely to drop out of school (Target 4.1), give birth at an early age (Target 3.7), suffer complications during childbirth (Target 3.1) and experience violence (Target 5.2) than a girl from a higher-income household who marries at a later age. At the end of this chain of events, the girl who was born into poverty stands almost no chance of moving out of it. During implementation, policymakers must aim to break this vicious cycle and respond to the interdependent experiences of exclusion and deprivation by providing integrated responses: A woman who leaves an abusive relationship, for example, needs access to justice (Target 16.3) as well as a safe place to live (Target 11.1), medical care (Target 3.8) and a decent job (Target 8.5) so she can maintain an adequate standard of living for herself and any dependents she may have.

This means that while progress on SDG 5 will be critical, it cannot be the sole focus of gender-responsive implementation, monitoring and accountability. Progress on some fronts may be undermined by regression or stagnation on others, and potential synergies may be lost if siloed approaches to implementation take precedence over integrated, multi-sectoral strategies.<sup>8</sup> This is why women's rights advocates fought hard to achieve both a stand-alone goal on gender equality as well as integrating gender equality across other goals and targets, drawing attention to the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, climate change, environmental degradation, urbanization, conflict and peace, and financing for development. The report follows the same rationale, looking at progress, gaps and challenges for gender equality across the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

## FIGURE 1

### MANY COUNTRIES STILL LACK LEGISLATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Source: World Bank. 2017. "Women, Business and the Law Database." Accessed 7 November 2017. <http://wbl.worldbank.org/>. Washington, DC: World Bank.

# AT A GLANCE: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA

## 1 NO POVERTY



Globally, there are 122 women aged 25-34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men of the same age group.

## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Women represent 28.8% of researchers worldwide. Only about 1 in 5 countries have achieved gender parity in this area.

## 2 ZERO HUNGER



Women are up to 11 percentage points more likely than men to report food insecurity.

## 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



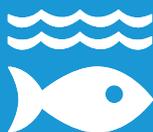
Globally, 303,000 women died from pregnancy-related causes in 2015. The rate of death is declining much too slowly to achieve Target 3.1.

## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Up to 30% of income inequality is due to inequality within households, including between women and men. Women are also more likely than men to live below 50% of the median income.

## 14 LIFE BELOW WATER



The contamination of freshwater and marine ecosystems negatively impacts women's and men's livelihoods, their health and the health of their children.

## 15 LIFE ON LAND



Between 2010 and 2015, the world lost 3.3 million hectares of forest areas. Poor rural women depend on common pool resources and are especially affected by their depletion.

## 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises.

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



The 2030 Agenda promises to put an end to barriers that prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential. But significant challenges lie ahead:

**5.1** In 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence.

**5.2** 19% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months.

**5.3** Globally, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18 and at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone FGM.

<sup>1</sup> Shorthand versions of the official SDGs are used for ease of communication.

**5.4** Women do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work that men do.

**5.5** Women hold just 23.7% of parliamentary seats, an increase of 10 percentage points compared to 2000 – but still way below parity.

**5.6** Only 52% of women married or in a union freely make their own decisions about sexual relations, contraceptive use and health care.

**5.a** Globally, women are just 13% of agricultural land holders.

**5.b** Women are less likely than men to own a mobile phone, and their internet usage is 5.9 percentage points lower than that of men.

**5.c** More than 100 countries have taken action to track budget allocations for gender equality.

## 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Indoor air pollution from using combustible fuels for household energy caused 4.3 million deaths in 2012, with women and girls accounting for 6 out of every 10 of these.

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



15 million girls of primary-school age will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school compared to 10 million boys.

## 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Women living in urban slums endure many hardships, with basic needs such as access to clean water and improved sanitation facilities often going unmet.

## 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Investment in public transportation yields large benefits for women, who tend to rely on public transport more than men do.

## 13 CLIMATE ACTION



Climate change has a disproportionate impact on women and children, who are 14 times as likely as men to die during a disaster.

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



In times of conflict, rates of homicide and other forms of violent crime increase significantly. While men are more likely to be killed on the battlefield, women are subjected during conflict to sexual violence and abducted, tortured and forced to leave their homes.

## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



In 2012, finances flowing out of developing countries were 2.5 times the amount of aid flowing in, and gender allocations paled in comparison.

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



The global gender pay gap is 23%. Women's labour force participation rate is 63% while that of men is 94%.

## Leaving no one behind: Universality, solidarity and addressing intersecting inequalities

Another hallmark of the 2030 Agenda is that it applies to all countries, all peoples and all segments of society while promising to address the rights and needs of the most disadvantaged groups as a matter of priority. Its universal nature responds to the common and interconnected challenges faced by all countries—developed and developing—while the commitment to leave no one behind seeks to reach the most disadvantaged by building solidarity between them and those who are better-off. Improving the lives of those who are furthest behind is a matter of social justice rather than charity, as well as being essential for creating inclusive societies and sustainable economic trajectories. Inequality hurts everyone: It is a threat to social and political stability, a drag on economic growth<sup>9</sup> and a barrier to progress on poverty eradication and the realization of human rights more broadly.<sup>10</sup>

At the global level, solidarity and cooperation in areas such as climate change, migration and financing for development will be crucial to providing enabling conditions for successful national implementation. Illicit financial flows, the global arms trade and large-scale land dispossession by transnational actors, for example, contribute to pushing people further behind, with women and girls often being particularly affected.<sup>11</sup> Powerful global players—be they sovereign States, international financial institutions or transnational corporations—have a particularly critical responsibility to ensure that their actions and omissions do not undermine gender equality and sustainable development. The principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility’ also recognizes that countries that have disproportionately contributed to environmental degradation must take the greatest responsibility for protecting our planet.

At the national level, it is important to ensure that marginalized groups are not excluded from progress. Those women and girls who are furthest behind often experience multiple inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination, including based on their sex, age, class, ability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and migration status. In the United States, for example, the share of black and Native American/Alaska Native women over the age of 50 who live in low-income households is more than 10 percentage points above the average for all women; similarly, older women in inner cities are significantly more likely to be poor than those who live in suburban areas.<sup>12</sup> In Nigeria, a low-income, rural woman of Hausa ethnicity is eight times as likely to be married before the age of 18 as a high-income, urban woman of Yoruba ethnicity (see Case Study, p. 8).<sup>13</sup>

The rights and needs of those who are furthest behind must hence be addressed and their meaningful participation in implementation ensured as a matter of priority. At the same time, it is vital that strategies to ‘leave no one behind’ do not contribute to social fragmentation and stigmatization. Particularly in contexts of fiscal constraint and growing inequalities, an exclusive focus on the furthest behind through narrowly targeted programmes can exacerbate tensions over resource allocation and contribute to the creation of harmful stereotypes and hierarchies of disadvantage and entitlement.<sup>14</sup> Instead, such strategies should aim to create a sense of solidarity through risk-sharing, redistribution and universal programmes.<sup>15</sup> Where all citizens reap clear benefits from public services, their willingness to contribute to funding them through progressive taxation is also likely to increase.<sup>16</sup> Rather than substituting one for the other, governments should ensure access for groups that have been historically excluded while building universal systems that are collectively financed and used by all social groups.<sup>17</sup>

# BEYOND THE AVERAGES: WHO IS BEING LEFT BEHIND?

Official statistics, such as those that were used for tracking progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), often assess trends based on national averages. Averages serve to answer important questions: How far has a country come in closing the gender gap in education? By how much has maternal mortality declined over the past decade? Yet, averages also mask inequalities

among social groups and the plight of those who are the most disadvantaged or deprived. Across countries, women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination—including based on their sex, age, class, ability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or migration status—often fare worse than the average across a range of SDG-related indicators.



Photo: UNICEF/Andrew Esiebo

# NIGERIA

Living in a poor household located in a rural area and belonging to a disadvantaged ethnic group significantly increases the risk of child marriage.

In Nigeria, the proportion of women married before age 18 stands at 46.8 per cent on average. However, shares are much higher among rural women (60 per cent), women from the poorest income quintile (80.1 per cent) and women from the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups (78.2 and 79.7 per cent, respectively). Among women who are poor, live in rural areas and identify as Hausa, the prevalence of child marriage is 87.6 per cent (1.9 times the national average and more than 9 times the rate for the most advantaged group in the country).

## Major ethnic groups in Nigeria

**Fulani** - Largely concentrated in the poorest quintile, live mostly in rural and often nomadic communities. Almost universally identify as Muslim.

**Hausa** - Live mostly in poorest and poorer households in rural areas, with some 30% currently living in cities. Almost universally identify as Muslim.

**Igbo** - Largely in the top half of the wealth distribution and mostly urban dwellers, with some 20% located in rural areas. Almost universally identify as Catholic or other type of Christian.

**Yoruba** - Live mostly in the richest households and largely in urban areas. Roughly half identify as Christians and half as Muslim.

## PROPORTION OF WOMEN AGED 18–49 IN NIGERIA MARRIED BEFORE AGE 18, BY LOCATION, WEALTH AND ETHNICITY, 2013



Source: UN Women calculations based on microdata from NPC (National Population Commission), Federal Republic of Nigeria and ICF International. 2014. "Nigeria: Demographic and Health Survey 2013." Abuja, Nigeria, and Rockville, MA: NPC and ICF International.

Note: In the left-hand graph, all groups are shown and ranked from most to least deprived except those with insufficient sample size (n<100). The bar charts to the right present results for a selection of these. Yoruba is the only ethnicity where population samples are large enough across different religions, and thus disaggregation by religion for the richest urban category is shown.

# UNITED STATES

Household income, race/ethnicity and location compound each other to create large gaps in access to health insurance among women.

In 2015, 13.1 per cent of women aged 18–49 in the United States had no access to health insurance. The proportion of uninsured is much higher among women in the lowest income quintile (23 per cent) and slightly higher among women who live away from urban centres (14.2 per cent). Racial and ethnic disparities are also large: White and Asian women are least likely to lack access to health insurance (8.8 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively). Native American or Alaska Native women are most likely to be uninsured (26.9 per cent), followed by Hispanic women (25.7 per cent). Black women fall in the middle of the distribution (14.4 per cent). Among Hispanic women in the poorest income quintile, the share of the uninsured is a staggering 37 per cent (2.8 times the national average and 10 times the rate for the most advantaged group).<sup>18</sup>

## Major racial/ethnic groups in the US

**Native American or Alaska Native** – Spread across all income quintiles but less likely to fall into the richest. Live mostly in rural (non-metro) areas.

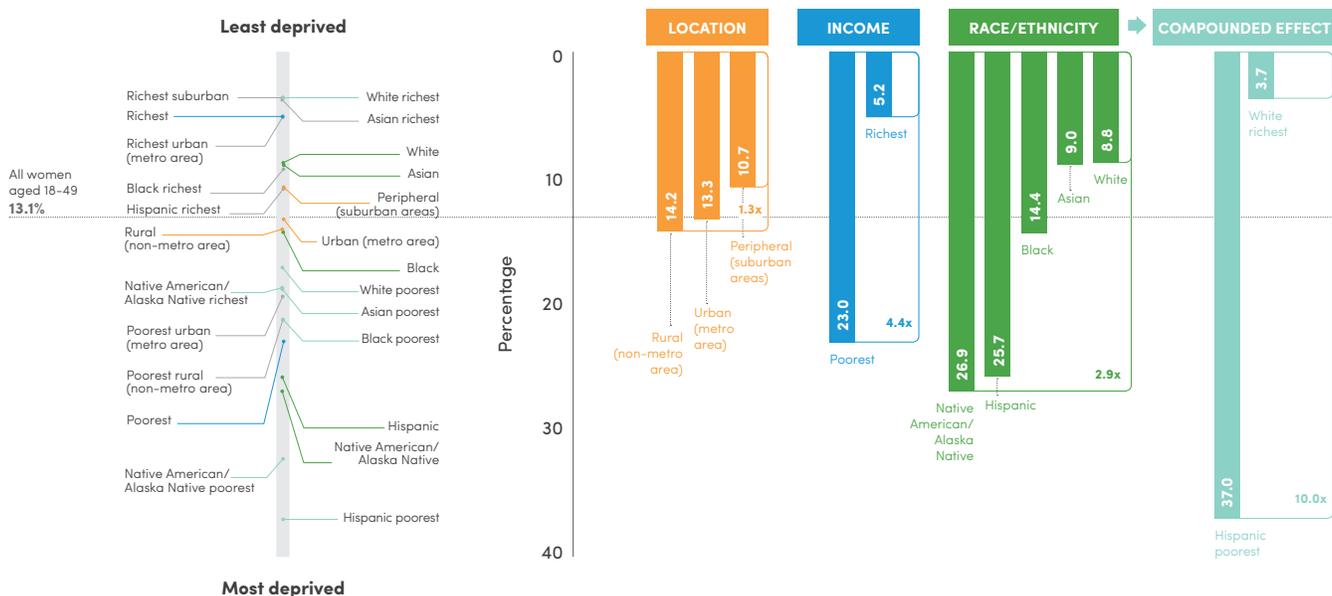
**Black** – Disproportionately more likely to fall in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution. Over-represented in metro areas/main cities.

**Asian** – Over-represented in the richer/richest quintiles. More likely to reside in urban (metro) and suburban areas.

**Hispanic (any race)** – Spread across all quintiles but largely located in the central part of the income distribution. Over-represented in main urban (metro) areas.

**White** – Over-represented in the top half of the income distribution. Live mostly in peripheral suburban areas, but also slightly over-represented in rural areas.

## PROPORTION OF WOMEN AGED 18–49 IN THE UNITED STATES WHO LACK HEALTH INSURANCE, BY LOCATION, INCOME, RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2015



Source: UN Women calculations based on microdata from U.S. Census Bureau. 2017. "American Community Survey (ACS)." Accessed 19 January 2018. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>.

Note: In the left-hand graph, all groups are shown and ranked from most to least deprived except those with insufficient sample size (n<100). The bar charts to the right present results for a selection of these.

## Monitoring and accountability: The need for a revolution in data and democratic governance

Tracking progress, identifying gaps and highlighting challenges in implementation is a critical dimension of global goals and a potential avenue for strengthening accountability. However, as the report shows, the challenges for gender-responsive monitoring are daunting. Only 10 out of 54 gender-specific indicators are produced with enough regularity to be classified as Tier 1 by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (IAEG-SDGs), meaning that they can be monitored in a reliable way at the global level (see Figure 2). For 24 indicators, while established methodologies exist, country coverage is patchy and insufficient to allow global monitoring (Tier 2). Another 17 gender-specific indicators still require some level of conceptual elaboration and/or methodological development before data production can begin (Tier 3). The remaining three gender-specific indicators have components spanning multiple tiers. While this presents a challenge for measuring change, at least in the short run, it also provides an opportunity for improving the availability and quality of gender statistics.

Yet, even with significant progress on the statistical front, the data that are available need to be used to shape public action. While data can indeed inform decision-making and contribute to holding decision-makers to account, creating this positive feedback loop requires a revolution also in democratic governance. For women and girls to claim their rights and shape sustainable development, spaces for public debate are needed to define national priorities, identify what is working well and where the gaps are, agree on

pathways for transformative change and determine the roles and responsibilities of different actors. At the global level, open consultation throughout the post-2015 process engaged and mobilized people, countries and organizations to identify common priorities and navigate tensions. Women's rights organizations were effective in building coalitions and alliances to put gender equality at the centre.<sup>19</sup> Such participatory processes and strategic alliances are also needed to ensure effective and gender-responsive implementation, follow-up and review.

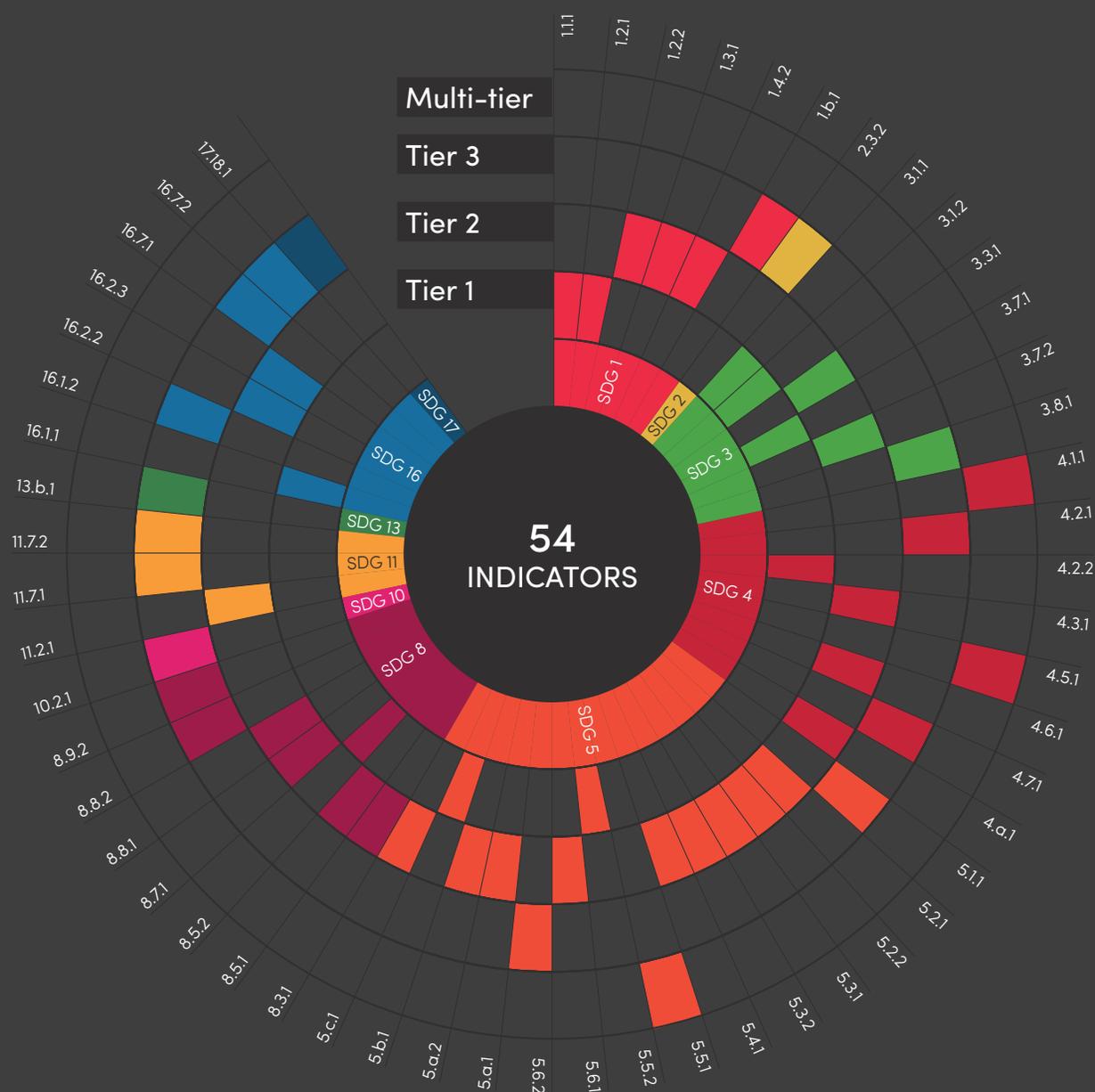
## ACCELERATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Systematic monitoring of gender equality outcomes, policies and processes at the national, regional and global levels can contribute to catalysing action, translating global commitments into results and strengthening accountability for actions or omissions by different stakeholders. The report highlights three key strategies for keeping gender equality front and centre during implementation, follow-up and review:

- Improving gender data, statistics and analysis to effectively monitor progress for women and girls across all goals and targets.
- Prioritizing gender-responsive investments, policies and programmes to align action with the principles, values and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.
- Strengthening accountability through gender-responsive processes and institutions to ensure an integrated approach to implementation, follow-up and review with gender equality at its core.

# FIGURE 2

## GENDER-SPECIFIC INDICATORS BY TIER CLASSIFICATION



All indicators are classified by the IAEG-SDGs into three tiers based on their level of methodological development and the availability of data at the global level, as follows:

### Tier 1

conceptually clear  
 established methodology and standards available  
 data regularly produced by countries

### Tier 2

conceptually clear  
 established methodology and standards available  
 data not regularly produced by countries

### Tier 3

conceptual work needed  
 no established methodology/standards or these  
 are being developed/tested

Source: UN Women calculations based on UNSD (United Nations Statistics Division). 2017. "SDG Global Indicators Database." Accessed 8 December 2017. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>; UNSD (United Nations Statistics Division). 2017. "IAEG-SDGs: Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators." Accessed 8 December 2017. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>; and tiering updates as of 14 December 2017, see UNSD (United Nations Statistics Division). 2017. "Events: 6th Meeting of the IAEG-SDGs." Accessed 8 December 2017. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-06/>.

Note: In sum, 10 gender-specific indicators are classified as Tier I, 24 are Tier II, 17 are Tier III and three indicators (4.1.1, 4.5.1, and 5.5.1) are multi-tier.

## Improving gender data, statistics and analysis

Despite increasing attention to gender statistics in recent decades, the report identifies pressing challenges that stand in the way of systematic, gender-responsive monitoring. These include the uneven coverage of gender indicators across goals and targets; the absence of internationally agreed standards for data collection; and the uneven availability of gender statistics across countries and over time. The absence of a robust body of global gender statistics is partly the consequence of weak, under-resourced statistical systems, particularly in developing countries. However, gaps in gender statistics—widespread in developed and developing countries alike—also arise from the longstanding failure to prioritize the collection of these data. Building support and capacity for gender statistics at all levels is hence an important priority. In addition, different stakeholders can ensure that available data are mined, analysed and reported to capture progress on gender equality in a comprehensive way, including for women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. To ensure the effective monitoring of progress for all women and girls across all goals, the report recommends to:

- **Support the inclusion of gender-specific indicators across all 17 SDGs by 2020.** At the global level, the 2020 review of the global indicator framework offers an opportunity to discuss and include more gender-specific indicators across the framework, particularly under goals where these are currently lacking. Until then, Member States—through the IAEG–SDGs, supported by the UN System and in collaboration with researchers and civil society—should develop a concrete proposal for doing so, including through knowledge gathering in areas that require greater analytical development. In parallel, gender data advocates should target national and regional frameworks to ensure the comprehensive inclusion of gender-specific indicators across all the goals.
- **Work towards the regular collection of data for gender-specific indicators, ensuring quality and comparability.** Greater technical and financial resources for national statistical systems will be critical for achieving this. Gender statistics, in particular, suffer from chronic underinvestment and an ad hoc approach. Solutions for gender statistics need to be seen within the larger context of statistical capacity-building and integrated into support programmes. National statistical offices (NSOs), international organizations, researchers and women’s rights organizations should also work together to address the deep-seated biases in concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies to ensure that data actually reflect the lived reality of women and girls in all their diversity.
- **Develop global, regional and national strategies for identifying groups that are being left behind.** Data should be systematically disaggregated by sex and other characteristics including age, class, ability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, migration status and others relevant in national contexts. NSOs should report disaggregated data in national reviews and put in place specific strategies to identify and expand data coverage for groups that are hard to measure and currently invisible in national statistics. The purposive study of vulnerable populations, through both qualitative and quantitative methods, is also needed, while ensuring that ethical standards—including strict confidentiality of data—are in place to protect such groups and individuals against discrimination.
- **Promote and adhere to quality benchmarks, human rights standards and other fundamental principles of official statistics.** As the ultimate guarantor of public data, the state has an important role in ensuring that data production adheres to these standards and principles. While innovations brought on by combining traditional data with new forms of data collection are promising and can help to accelerate progress in filling data gaps, safeguards are needed to ensure quality and integrity are maintained and confidentiality is secured.

- **Accelerate the development of global standards for gender-specific Tier III indicators.** UN Women and other custodian agencies, in consultation with key stakeholders including governments and civil society, should continue their efforts to develop sound methodologies for gender-specific indicators that are currently classified as Tier III. Greater involvement of NSOs is needed in the design and pilot phases to ensure methodologies work effectively in different settings. Member States should integrate these indicators into their national monitoring frameworks as soon as methodologies have been developed, piloted and agreed.
- **Strengthen commitment at the highest political level to an open, inclusive, transparent and gender-sensitive SDG monitoring process.** Statistical systems need to be independent and empowered to adapt quickly to changes in the data landscape. Researchers, academics, women's rights organizations and other civil society groups also have an important role to play in this process, not only as data producers and users but also as advocates for more and better gender data. Collaboration between national statistical systems and these and other groups will help ensure that data meet the needs of diverse stakeholders.

## Prioritizing gender-responsive investments, policies and programmes

Delivering on the gender equality commitments of the 2030 Agenda stands and falls with the capacity to mobilize and allocate sufficient resources for implementing them. In many countries, essential services on which millions of women and girls depend—water and sanitation, early childhood education and care, and shelters, legal services, specialist counselling and health services for survivors of gender-based violence—are chronically underfunded, of poor quality or simply unavailable. As countries roll out their national implementation

strategies, it is paramount that investments in these and other strategic areas are prioritized. As part of an integrated approach to implementation, some of these investments would allow for important synergies across goals and targets, as the example of early childhood education and care services shows (see In Focus, p. 15). In addition, investments, policies and programmes should be aligned with the principles of the 2030 Agenda. All stakeholders should measure their performance based on these principles and commit to making course corrections where they fail to uphold them. More specifically, the report recommends to:

- **Develop equitable and progressive domestic resource mobilization strategies.** The viability of different resource mobilization strategies varies across countries and contexts. While higher-income countries may be able to attract significant amounts of private investment, lower-income countries will rely more heavily on official development assistance (ODA), international borrowing or remittances. In all cases, however, options for increasing fiscal space for gender equality investments are available. Specific strategies should be discussed in an open and transparent manner, and their distributional consequences for women and men from different social groups should be assessed and clearly communicated.
- **Monitor budget allocations for gender equality policies and programmes.** Member States, donor agencies and international organizations should track financial commitments for promoting gender equality in both national budgets and international flows of ODA. Participatory and gender-responsive budgeting, social audits and public hearings are important tools for enhancing the transparency and accountability of spending decisions and assessing their gender impact.
- **Work together for an enabling global environment.** In light of the global partnership commitments and universal spirit of the 2030 Agenda, solidarity and cooperation between countries of all income levels must be strengthened to create an enabling global environment for its implementation. Member

States must collaborate to combat illicit financial flows and international tax competition and review stifling debt payments, all of which currently hamper domestic resource mobilization efforts.

- **Align policies and programmes with the principles of the 2030 Agenda.** All stakeholders, including Member States, UN agencies and the private sector, should ensure that their actions to implement the SDGs are gender-responsive and contribute to the realization of the rights of all women and girls. Principles such as the availability, accessibility, quality and affordability of services should guide the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes and should be key criteria for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness.
- **Scale up financial support for women’s organizations to engage in policy advocacy at the global, regional and national levels.** Private and bilateral donors, as well as international organizations, can play an important role by increasing core and multi-year funding. The financial stability that comes with this funding enables women’s organizations to respond flexibly to changes in context and facilitates the medium- and long-term advocacy, planning and programming that are needed to keep gender equality at the centre of implementation and monitoring.
- **Define clear terms of engagement and criteria for public-private partnerships at the global and national levels.** The private sector can play a critical role in supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. It can drive economic growth and innovation, create decent jobs and help close the financing gap by paying its fair share of taxes. The effectiveness and accountability of private sector participation can be strengthened by setting out clear rules for engagement and by conducting regular human rights and gender impact assessments. This should be part of broader efforts to make private businesses—of all shapes and sizes—more responsive to gender equality and

women’s rights, as laid out by the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs).<sup>20</sup> In addition, the need to move towards a global set of binding rules on business and human rights is increasingly recognized.<sup>21</sup>

- **Address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination through policies and programmes.** Redressing the entrenched disadvantages faced by particular groups of women and girls will be critical to achieve progress for all. As a matter of priority, policies that are found to deepen inequalities and contribute to pushing people further behind must be revised. Specific measures aimed at reducing inequalities and helping the furthest behind catch up must be put in place as part of broader strategies to create universal systems that are collectively financed and used by all social groups.
- **Promote meaningful participation in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes.** Democratic governance and decision-making processes must be facilitated, fostering the voices and visibility of women and girls, to ensure national priorities and strategies are defined by broader perspectives on what helps or hinders progress.

## Strengthening accountability through gender-responsive processes and institutions

The 2030 Agenda explicitly acknowledges that the starting points and challenges (and the means to address the latter) differ across countries. As a corollary, the process of implementation, monitoring and accountability is envisioned as country-owned and country-led. As a non-binding political commitment, the 2030 Agenda lacks enforceability: There are no defined consequences if countries fail to make serious efforts to meet the goals and targets. States have, however, committed to follow-up and review processes that are open, inclusive, participatory and transparent as well as people-centred, gender-sensitive, respectful of human rights

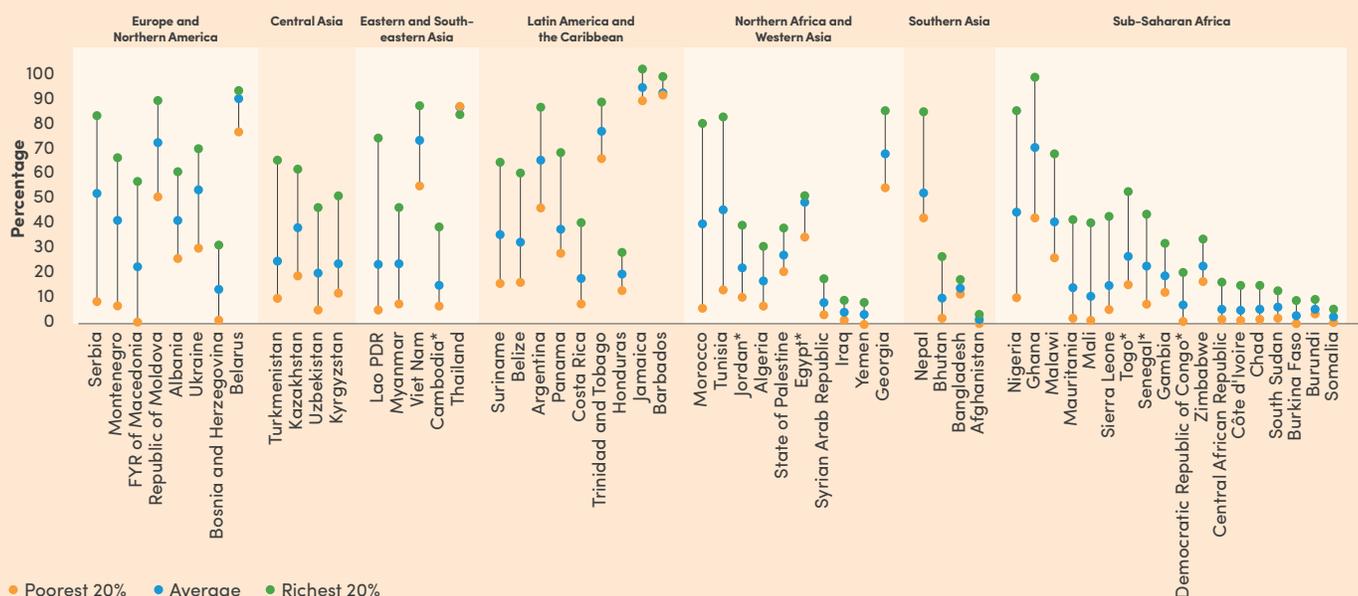
# CREATING SYNERGIES: WHAT WILL IT COST?

Investments in accessible, affordable and quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) can contribute to the achievement of several gender- and child-related targets of the 2030 Agenda by reducing the time women spend on unpaid care (5.4) and enabling them to increase their access to employment (8.5); creating decent jobs in the social services sector (8.3); improving children’s health and nutritional outcomes (2.2 and 2.3) and enhancing school readiness (4.2), particularly among those from disadvantaged backgrounds, thereby helping to equalize opportunities and reduce inequalities of outcome (10.3).

Yet, current ECEC coverage is often low and highly unequal, particularly in developing countries. While 87 per cent of children in developed countries were

enrolled in pre-primary education in 2014, only 39 per cent were in developing countries.<sup>22</sup> Inequalities based on household income are also stark. Across a range of developing countries, children aged 3 to 5 in the richest households, are almost six times more likely to attend an early childhood education programme than children from the same age group in the poorest households, as the below figure shows. Adequate public investment is paramount for overcoming these problems, and the immediate costs of ECEC expansion may well be set off by the significant medium- and longer-term benefits. As the following annual investments scenarios for South Africa and Uruguay show, between one third and one half of the gross investment could be recuperated through the tax and social security system in the short term.

## PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGED 3 TO 5 ATTENDING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMME, SELECTED COUNTRIES, 2005-2014



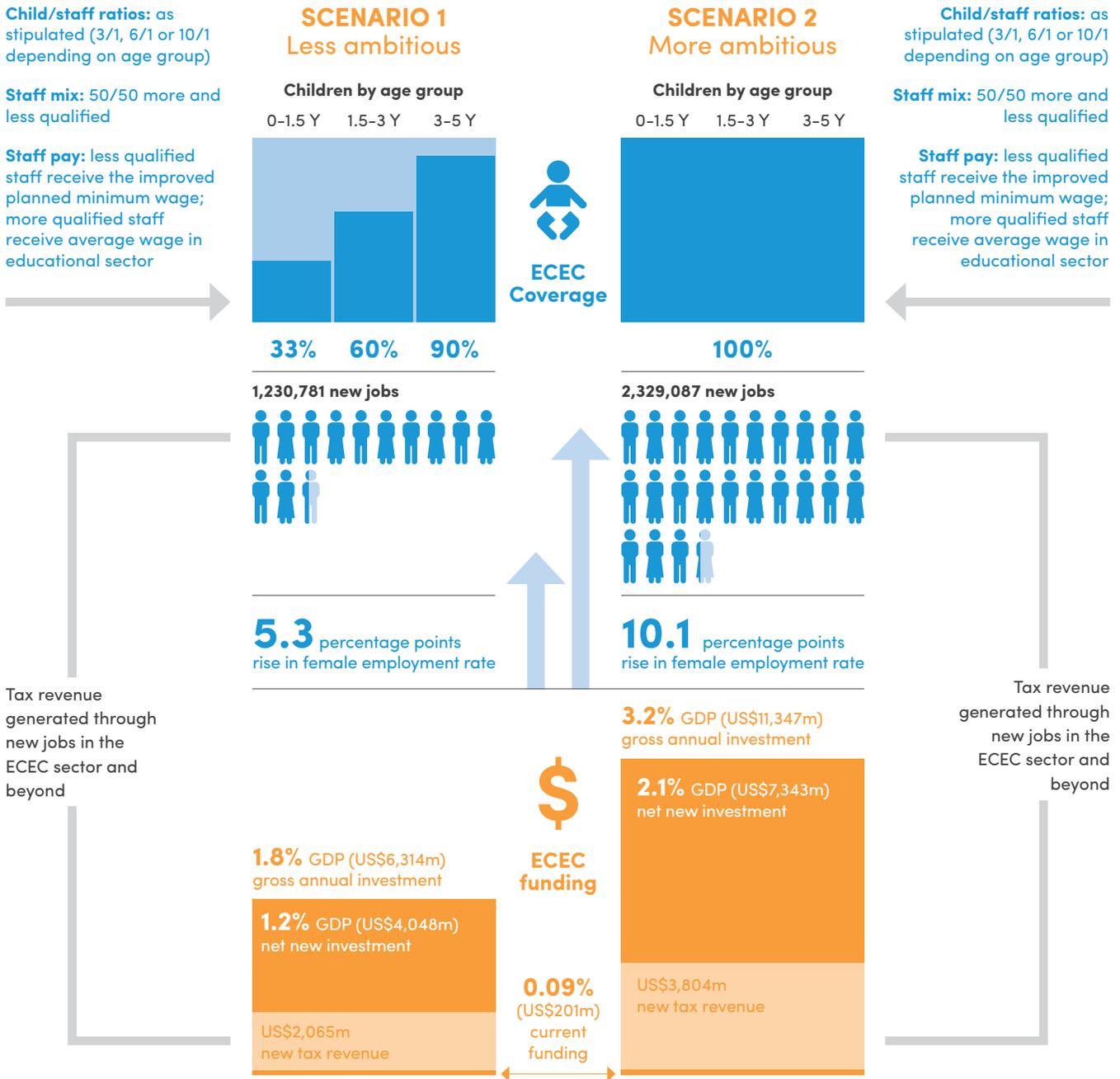
Source: UNICEF global databases, 2016, based on DHS, MICS, other nationally representative surveys and censuses.

Notes: Data correspond to the latest available year for each country (2005-2014).

\* Data differ from the standard definition or refer to only part of a country.

# ECEC INVESTMENT SCENARIOS: SOUTH AFRICA

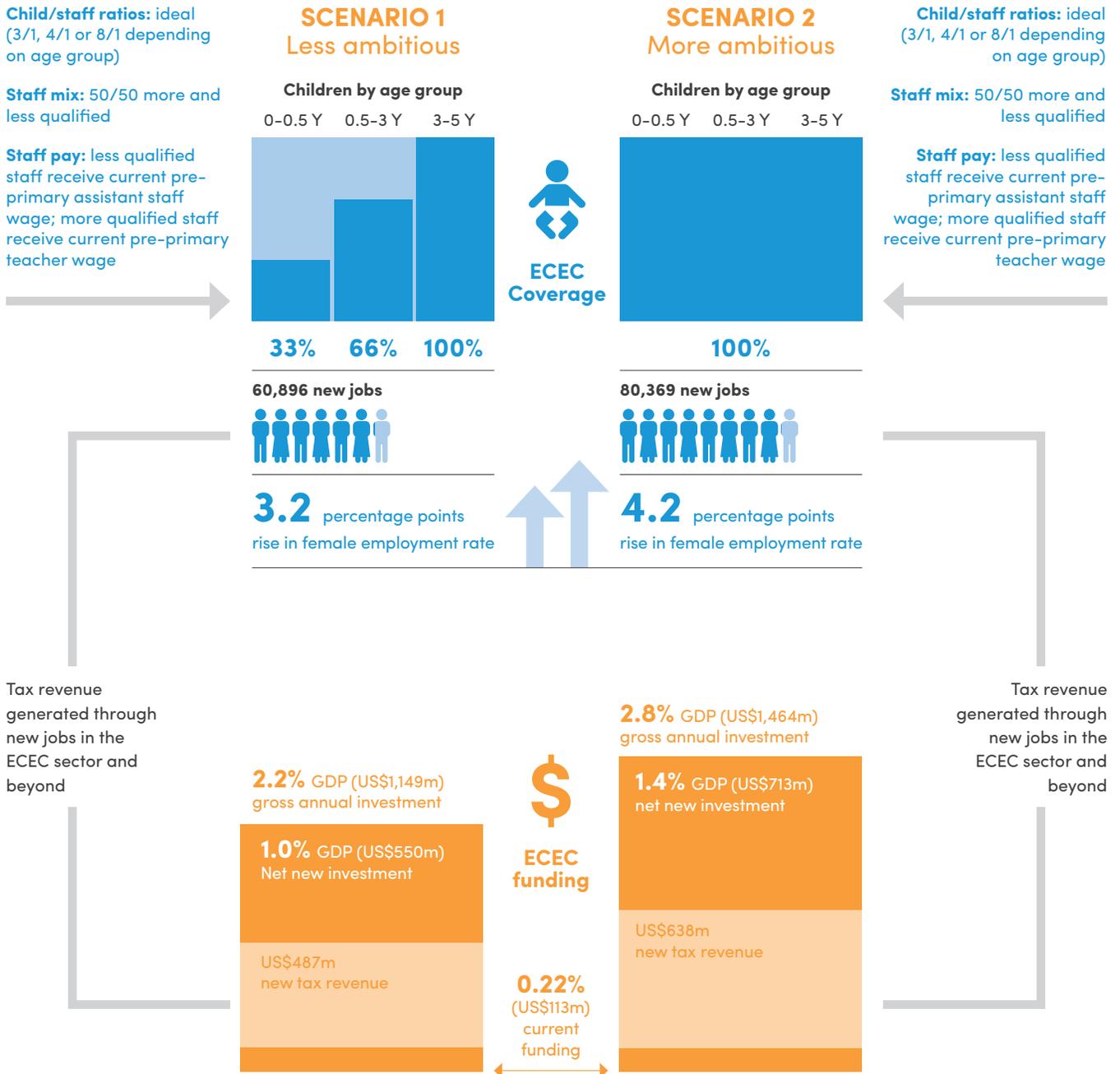
Investing in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services pays off. In South Africa, a gross annual investment of 3.2% of gross domestic product (GDP) would not only result in universal coverage for all 0–5-year-old children but also create 2.3 million new jobs, raising female employment by 10.1 percentage points (Scenario 2). These new jobs would generate new tax and social security revenue of up to US\$3,804 million. A less ambitious scenario requiring only 1.8% of GDP could serve as a stepping stone towards universal coverage (Scenario 1).



Source: De Henau, J. 2017. "Universal Childcare in South Africa, Turkey and Uruguay: A Comparative Analysis of Costs, Short-term Employment Effects and Fiscal Revenue." Background paper prepared for UN Women's Research and Data Section. UN Women, New York. The calculations for South Africa were prepared by Debbie Budlender and for Uruguay by Fernando Filgueira and Rafael Mantero.

# ECEC INVESTMENT SCENARIOS: URUGUAY

Investing in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services pays off. In Uruguay, a gross annual investment of 2.8% of GDP would not only result in universal ECEC coverage for all 0–5-year-old children but also create more than 80,000 new jobs, raising female employment by 4.2 percentage points. These new jobs would generate new tax and social security revenue of up to US\$638 million (Scenario 2). A less ambitious scenario requiring only 2.2% of GDP could serve as a stepping stone towards universal coverage (Scenario 1).



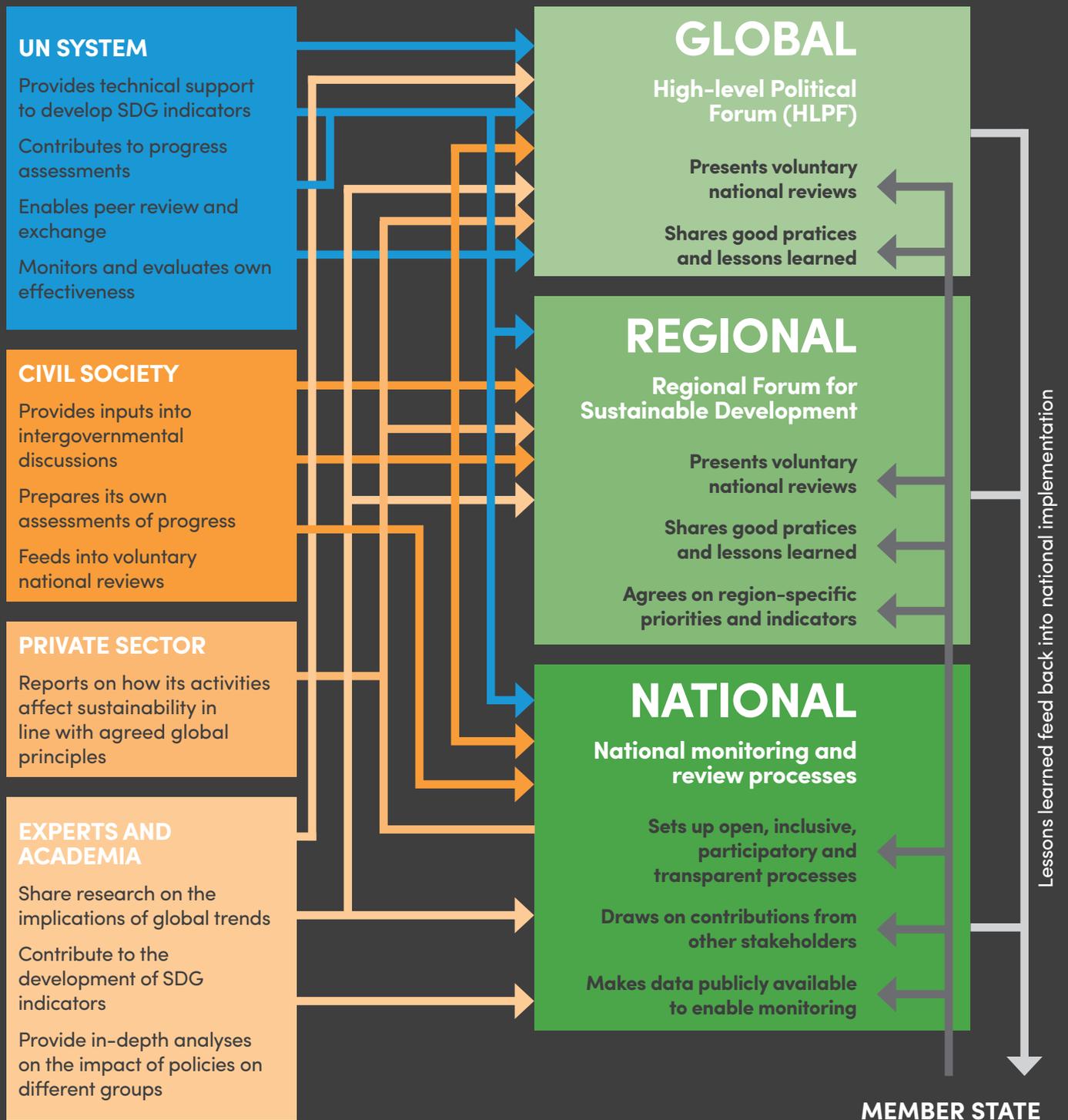
Note: All amounts in US\$ are figures for 2017. The exchange rates used were USD 1 = UYU 28.71 in the case of Uruguay and USD 1 = ZAR 13.51 in the case of South Africa. The scale used to visually display the number of jobs created is 1 for 100,000 in the case of South Africa and 1 for 10,000 for Uruguay.

and focused on those who are furthest behind (see Figure 3).<sup>23</sup> To strengthen accountability for gender-responsive implementation at the global, regional and national levels, the report recommends to:

- **Place gender equality at the centre of national implementation.** States should work towards the localization of global gender equality commitments by integrating them into national development plans and related policies, legislation and frameworks, including those for the production and use of gender statistics. Responsibility and resources for the achievement of gender equality goals and targets should be clearly defined and open to public scrutiny, including by parliaments, national human rights institutions and civil society. Women's rights organizations and national women's machineries should have a seat at the table and be supported to engage with and influence implementation processes.
- **Ensure the monitoring of and reporting on gender equality commitments.** Regionally and nationally specific targets and indicators on gender equality should be defined and reported on to deepen global commitments. At the global and regional levels, the UN System should encourage and support governments to report on these commitments through technical cooperation and sharing of good practices. Regular audits to assess whether a gender perspective is integrated into reporting by Member States, UN agencies and other stakeholders should be conducted as part of the formal follow-up and review process.
- **Support women's organizations and other civil society actors to monitor progress and hold governments to account for gender equality commitments.** The UN System, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international organizations should provide an enabling environment for researchers and civil society organizations to conduct their own appraisals of progress at the global, regional and national levels, making sure that feminist experts and women's rights organizations are able to play a leading role in their preparation. A conducive legal framework, including measures to protect spaces for civil society and ensure the safety of women human rights defenders, is also needed for women's organizations to play their critical role in monitoring and implementation.
- **Use voluntary national reviews (VNRs) for the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) to create a shared vision of progress in gender equality and challenges that stand in the way.** States should use the VNRs as well as other SDG-related review processes as an opportunity to conduct a joint assessment of progress, gaps and challenges, harnessing the knowledge and skills of all relevant stakeholders, including women's rights organizations. Holding broad-based consultations during the preparation of the VNR and making it available to the public before submission to the HLPF should be part of this process.
- **Strengthen the HLPF as a platform for peer review and meaningful dialogue.** For the HLPF to become a stronger forum for accountability at the global level, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly—with the support of the HLPF secretariat—should consider reviewing the HLPF's working methods with the intention of allocating more time to the VNRs and providing more space for participation and reporting by civil society, including women's rights organizations such as the Women's Major Group. The secretariat should also prepare a summary of civil society inputs, similar to that provided by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for the Universal Periodic Review, and make it publicly available alongside the VNRs to enhance the transparency and quality of national reporting. The review of the HLPF's working methods in 2019 will provide a timely opportunity for strengthening its role as an accountability mechanism.

# FIGURE 3

## FOLLOW UP AND REVIEW OF THE 2030 AGENDA



Note: This figure includes illustrative examples rather than an exhaustive set of processes, actors and activities that play a role in the follow-up and review process.

# ENDNOTES

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## **UN WOMEN**

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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