



Gender and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Abstract

This paper briefly highlights key challenges faced in advancing women's rights in the last two decades. It draws attention to 'gains and gaps' in the implementation of the UN Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the UN Millennium Development Goals (2000). It marks the evolution of a new compact on women's human rights and gender equality through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that has been universally endorsed by governments, donors, women's movements, civil society and other stakeholders. Women's groups have consistently been raising critical questions of how equality, inclusion and participation would be embedded in a world structured around grave inequalities and exclusions. While the framework of the paper is global, it throws light on two critical areas in India—the economic empowerment of women and ending violence against women—with pointers regarding how these commitments could be better realised in the implementation of the SDGs, especially SDG Goal 5. The paper concludes by sharing information on how some countries are developing mechanisms to advance SDG 5 and draws attention to the lack of data and monitoring measures for gender equality. It emphasises that for transformative changes, governments need to engage with women's organisations for policy development and implementation.

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2015 was an exceptional year for women's rights globally. New data reported the gains made and challenges faced in advancing women's rights through the 20-year review of the implementation of the UN Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the completion of the 15-year UN Millennium Development Goals (September 2000). These agreements paved the way for a new set of global agreements to emerge—the UN Sustainable Development Goals (September 2015). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore the areas where states have failed to meet with their gender-equality obligations. The SDGs represent the evolution of a new compact on women's human rights and gender equality that has been universally endorsed by governments, donors, women's movements, civil society and other international and national stakeholders.

This paper traces the key commitments made to women's rights through these three major above-mentioned conferences in the last two decades. It engages the context and framing of the women's rights agendas by global and regional women's advocacy groups, their organising efforts and their impact on UN agendas. Women's groups imprinted upon the world's consciousness the need to develop enabling policy frameworks (that are pro-women), and fast-track their implementation to ensure significant changes in the lives of women and marginalised populations. They also raised critical questions of how equality, inclusion and participation would be embedded in a world that was structured around grave inequalities and exclusions.

Whereas the framework of the paper is global, the final section of the paper suggests what it would require for countries to meet SDGs. Using India as a case study, it examines two critical areas among the SDGs—the economic empowerment of women and ending violence against women in India—with pointers regarding how India could better meet its commitment vis-à-vis these two goals. India's policy initiatives and budgetary commitment to advance women's rights in the context of the SDGs is also reviewed in the light of the SDG commitments urging the need for instituting effective mechanisms and additional fund flows to meet the gender equality goals intrinsic to the SDGs. While some civil society and Indian women's movement groups have been engaged with global policy in the context of advancing women's rights in the SDG framework, it is hoped that they will continue to play a strong role nationally and regionally.

The paper concludes with a broad-brush snapshot of how other countries are developing mechanisms to advance their SDG commitments. Key areas of focus being identified by various countries are described, noting how the North and developing countries are engaged in the process. The lack of data and measurement on gender equality is a key concern in the SDG process, and the efforts underway to improve data collection for monitoring processes are underlined and national plans to create the infrastructure for this described.

Clearly, the SDGs mark a new phase in the struggle for gender equality. This can only be realised with women's voices, a rights-based framework and lived realities informing this process, together with broad-based partnerships with civil society and government.

Women's Rights: The Journey from the Beijing Platform for Action to Sustainable Development Goals

189 countries adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) in September 1995¹ during the Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing followed the three major international conferences for women that were held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985), as part of the UN Decade for Women. The participants at these meetings raised critical concerns pertaining to the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women around the world.² The Beijing Conference is considered to be one of the major achievements of global and local women's movements in the early 1990s as the women's movements were extremely effective in their organising and took their agenda to governments and other state actors, generating broad-based public support for women's equality. Women from the global South also played a critical role in framing and advancing their concerns in global agendas.

The 12 areas of concern in the BPfA were women and poverty; the education and training of women; health; violence against women (VAW); armed conflict; the economy; women in power and decision-making; mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights; the media; women and the environment; and the girl child. Most importantly, the BPfA called for strong commitments on the part of governments, national governments, international institutions and other partners to fully support and realise the advancement of women's human rights and gender equality. Several grassroots women's groups, community

organisers, feminist academicians and others from India had participated in the lead-up preparations to the Beijing conference and sought commitments from both local and national stakeholders.

As the implementation of the Beijing agenda proceeded, regional and global reviews and appraisals occurred on a five-year basis to track progress.³ Through this period women's groups and networks prepared alternative reports to highlight the gaps and achievements been made at the national, regional and global levels. In this way they sought to push their governments and relevant bodies to meet their commitments. For example, in India, the National Alliance of Women⁴ held regular reviews and The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) South Asia⁵ convened bi-annual regional review meetings with government and civil society to support the implementation of BPfA with governments in South Asia.

For the 20-year Beijing review, The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in 2015⁶ continued its dialogue and assessment process with the government and civil society in India, and convened a National Consultation in partnership with the Beijing+20 Civil Society Working Group and a wide set of stakeholders. Key issues discussed were that of disability and sexuality, the need for using an intersectional lens across gender issues, the impact of information technology and social media on gender and rights, and newer forms of violence faced by women and girls. The need to work with men in ending VAW, and with the LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer) and young people as allies was also raised. The findings were thereafter presented at regional and global review meetings.

At the 20-year review of the BPfA, held by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women⁷ in New York in September 2015, a political declaration was adopted by member states (UN Women, 2015). The Declaration recognised that no country had fully achieved equality and empowerment for women and girls. It further noted that progress across the 12 critical areas has been uneven and that there were persistent obstacles and structural barriers to achieving gender equality.

Currently available gender statistics at the UN underscore severe gender gaps in some critical sectors. Worldwide, 58 million children of primary-school age are out of school (more than half of them being girls), with nearly three-quarters living in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women, and this number has remained the same over the last 20 years. Worldwide, 35 per cent of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate

partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. So far, it has been noted, not one country has reached or surpassed gender parity. At the legislative level, while a record 143 countries had guaranteed equality between women and men in their constitutions by 2014, there were still 52 that had not (UN Women, 2015).⁸

In response to these persistent inequalities, governments pledged to take further concrete actions to achieve gender equality, including strengthening the implementation of laws, policies, strategies and institutional mechanisms, as well as work towards transforming discriminatory gender norms and practices. Governments committed to significantly mobilising additional financial resources and strengthening accountability mechanisms. Most importantly, governments seemed to have welcomed the contributions of civil society, including women's and community-based organisations, to support implementation at all levels.

Whether these commitments translate into action is needed to be seen over time. In some countries, it has been noted that governments have not to date sufficiently embarked on translating women's rights using the normative framework of equality and non-discrimination at the national level, nor have they partnered with women's groups for implementation of this important agenda. India prepared its National Plan of Action for Women post the Beijing Conference and instituted several steps to meet with its obligations. The brief findings from the India review reports and its evolving plans for the SDGs are highlighted in the section under India in more detail.

Changing Contexts from MDGs to SDGs

Before the turn of the last century, and in preparation for the 2000 Millennium Summit, the UN Secretary-General launched his report, *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* (Annan, 2000). A Millennium Forum was convened that brought together several representatives of non-governmental and civil society organisations from over a hundred countries to discuss issues such as poverty eradication, environmental protection, human rights and protection of the vulnerable. In September 2000, leaders of 189 countries signed the historic Millennium Declaration⁹ and adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), committing themselves to achieving a concrete set of eight measurable goals by 2015. The goals addressed extreme poverty in its many dimensions—income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion—while promoting gender

equality, education and environmental sustainability. They also included basic human rights—the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security.

Among the eight goals was Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (MDG3). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the indicators of MDG3 were formulated to track key elements of women's social, economic and political participation and to guide countries towards building gender-equitable societies.¹⁰ It is worth noting here that the goals and targets for the MDGs were framed around key development concerns—primary education, nutrition and health—that are largely relevant to developing countries and were thus not considered universally applicable.

Despite the intentions, the MDGs were met with much dismay by women's groups across the world. There were concerns about their being located within a development framework rather than a rights-based one. The MDGs neither mentioned nor identified a target for ending VAW, the care work of women, women's autonomy or agency. Feminists continued to underline the missing agendas and advocate for their inclusion. They also critiqued and challenged the inadequacy of the framing of targets and indicators, and outlined the difficulties of capturing the goal of women's empowerment (Kabeer, 2005).

Women's advocates argued that the MDGs represented a contraction of commitments in relation to the previous UN agendas empowering women. Sen and Mukherjee (2014) observed that only about one-quarter of the targets in the BPfA were (directly or indirectly) covered by an MDG target and indicators. These targets were primarily related to education, health, women's employment, political representation and access to water and sanitation. Furthermore, education and health rights were given a higher priority than women's economic and political rights. Maternal health and HIV/AIDS were considered more relevant than sexual and reproductive health, again underlining the fact that the MDGs were development oriented but not rights based. Women's groups insisted that a rights-based approach drive the development agenda. The insistence by women's groups did lead to an additional MDG target, the 'universal access to reproductive health' (Sen & Mukherjee, 2014). Women's groups were simultaneously working at the national level, advocating with their respective governments to build in additional targets on VAW into national plans. At this level they met with limited success.

To bridge deficits on gender issues within the MDGs, women's groups also strongly advocated for deploying 'lessons learnt' from the various

outcome documents of the Beijing reviews, country Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reports,¹¹ and other global reviews (Security Council Resolution 1325), so as to inform the MDG implementation plans. UNIFEM too raised these concerns and strongly advocated for the need to address women's rights as had been enshrined within international obligations embodied in the BPfA, CEDAW and other international documents (Waldorf, 2003). Fears about dilution in human rights standards for women and unmet state obligations continued to remain at the heart of the struggles of women's groups through this entire process.

On the completion of 15 years of MDGs, while some significant gains were seen to have been made regarding several MDG targets worldwide, uneven progress across regions and countries was also noted in the global report (MDG Report, 2015). There were concerns raised in the report about millions of people being left behind (especially from among the poorest and disadvantaged sections of society) because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic and other social locations. These findings further corroborated the concerns raised by women's groups regarding the persistence of gender gaps that require more systemic attention.

As global efforts progressed within the UN, it was at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development (The future we want, 2012) that a global development framework was being envisioned, which was to go far beyond the time frame of 2015 and carry forward the momentum generated by the MDGs. It led to the formulation of the UN General Assembly Open Working Group (2014) that drafted a document with 17 goals for the General Assembly's approval, spanning the years 2015 to 2030.¹² On 25 September 2015, 193 member states of the United Nations adopted the SDG global framework¹³ to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) noted that the SDGs were based on an inclusive agenda that could help tackle some of the immense development challenges facing the world, such as poverty, climate change and conflict.¹⁴

It is instructive to note at this point that the MDGs were formulated in the post-Cold War geo-political context, when the neo-liberal globalisation agenda was dominant. They were thus driven by the aid agenda from the North and formulated for developing countries only (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). The SDGs, on the other hand, set out a universal set of goals with targets for all countries. The SDGs were thus based on key principles, such as being inclusive in nature and 'leaving no one behind'—universally applicable and based on human rights.

Voices from the Women's Movements

Due to the sustained efforts of women's groups, UN Women and other gender equality champions, a stand-alone Goal 5 on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality was adopted within the SDGs with gender targets included across other goals as well. This was marked as a great step forward. The SDG Goal 5 encompasses a multi-dimensional approach to gender equality with a wide range of targets that include ending discrimination and VAW, including trafficking and sexual (and other types of) exploitation; ending child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation; recognising unpaid care and domestic work; promoting women's participation and opportunities for leadership; ensuring universal access to sexual health and reproductive rights; enabling ownership of land and other property, including natural resources; and providing access to intermediate technology (Stuart & Woodroffe, 2016). The 17 goals are interconnected, that means that gains in any one area would catalyse achievements in others, with the potential to create greater synergies and impact.

Given the limited success that women's movements, networks and groups had in integrating gender and rights issues within the MDGs, they engaged far more extensively in the lead-up processes to the adoption of the SDGs. Among the prominent women's groups and networks engaging with the process were Post-2015 Women's Coalition, Women's Major Group (WVG), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN),¹⁵ Association of Women in Development (AWID) and Asia Pacific Women's Law and Development, as well as other regional networks. Each of them, independently and collectively, raised concerns throughout the negotiation processes with member states and UN bodies regarding the structural nature of poverty and the neo-liberal macroeconomic framework and their impacts on women and marginalised people. Others, too, highlighted the deepening of gender inequalities and the differential impacts of the neo-liberal economic framework and globalisation upon women's care work and on environmental sustainability (Ponte & Enríquez, 2016).

The Post-2015 Women's Coalition (March 2015) demanded dramatic changes in macroeconomic policies. They called for the development of an alternative economic framework that would end the feminisation of poverty and address the multiple burdens of unpaid care and non-care work, disproportionately borne by women and girls around the globe. Among the key outcomes of the organising and critiques by women's groups was the establishment of the High Level Panel on Women's

Economic Empowerment by the Secretary-General in January 2016,¹⁶ post the adoption of Agenda 2030.

Women's groups have also been critical about governments' disregard of women's human rights and have unequivocally demanded that states fulfil their obligations under CEDAW and its optional protocols. They have consistently advocated for the inclusion of diverse women's voices and the need to move away from the reductive nature of targets and indicators under the SDGs. AWID, a global women's coalition (Abelenda, 2015), welcomed the inclusion of decent work, social protection and the institution of a new multi-stakeholder Technology Facilitation Mechanism in the SDGs. However, they expressed some alarm at the binary notion of gender equality that was being adopted by some states. This had resulted in the exclusion of LGBTIQ rights and non-protection against discrimination for persons with different sexual orientation and gender identities. The Women's Major Group (July 2014) amplified these concerns during the negotiations. They called for a truly universal agenda grounded in human rights, asserting that woman's bodies and lives cannot and should not be subjected to national agendas. In a strongly worded statement to governments, the WMG stated,

To those who are still denying our rights we reaffirm, again, that we will always refuse to have our lives used as bargaining chips. No agenda should be traded off. The entire world is at stake because of the narrow ways in which policies and actions are implemented. The significant global challenges we face require a comprehensive ambitious agenda.

Khan and Lappin (APWLD) flagged concerns regarding how the SDGs had undermined agreements reached at Beijing. Essentially, they argued, the SDGs did not reflect an understanding of the deeper structural nature of inequalities experienced by women as was in the Beijing documents. They stressed the lack of firm commitments to reducing military expenditures by governments and to reducing arms manufacturing and trade. They also noted that the right of female workers to organise and collectively bargain for eliminating their wage inequality was unattended to within the SDGs, and, there was need for more state commitments to analyse and adjust macroeconomic policies (including taxation and external debt policy) utilising a gender perspective:

The objectives of Beijing were consistent with recognition of the deeply structural nature of the inequalities experienced by women. By openly challenging austerity programmes and the impact of macroeconomic policies on women, the platform acknowledged that the neoliberal, 'trade not aid' model of

development was—and is—failing the majority of the world's women. Despite the intervening impact of two global financial crises, rocketing wealth inequality, growing fundamentalisms, and a steadily worsening climate crisis, the SDGs fail even to match the Beijing agreement's level of ambition, let alone build on it to meet our current challenges. (Khan & Lappin, 2015)

Clearly it pointed to the fact that the SDGs lacked a coherent socio-economic and political framework that was pro-poor and pro-women.

The Asia-Pacific Women's Alliance for Peace and Security (APWAPS, 2015)¹⁷ underlined issues of peace and security, particularly highlighting concerns of women in conflict situations, within the ambit of the SDGs. They stressed the concerns of the Beijing +20 reviews and of the Global Study of the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN Women, 2015) that focused on six key areas: (1) addressing issues of lack of accountability and continued impunity; (2) the impacts of militarisation, small arms and the continuum of violence in everyday life; (3) the nature of structural inequalities and climate injustice and their links to current development policies and practices; (4) the phenomenon of rising cultural and religious fundamentalism; (5) unaddressed issues of victim/survivor recovery and reparation; and (6) ensuring women's full and meaningful participation in building peace and security. They called for periodic reviews that would fully integrate commitments to the women, peace and security agenda.

While conversations continue on the development of strategies to respond to the framing, application and limitations of the SDGs, there are apprehensions about the nature of effective public financing by the state to meet these commitments. Women's groups have learnt from the Beijing process that lack of budgetary support to their programmes results in ineffective and partial implementation of planned commitments. They are organising to secure increased investments and intentional support for gender budgeting through innovative financing mechanisms. While there is some disquiet about the increasing corporate control over development agendas (the corporate sector is a key stakeholder in the SDGs), there have been suggestions to institute adequate mechanisms to advancing human rights and gender justice within the corporate sector. These have been followed with discussions to enforce accountability standards within the SDGs, and not leave them to 'voluntary' reporting processes (Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2015).

Mary Shanthi Dairiam (IWRAW-AP, 2016), a leading human rights activist and former CEDAW Committee Member (2005–2008), asserts:

‘There is a need for a consistency of approach that integrates equality and non-discrimination as normative standards across not only all the goals, but importantly across institutions using legal, policy, and programmatic measures.’

SDGs in the Context of India

In the context of India, it is important to understand how SDGs are framed and what the mechanisms being developed are to deliver them. India has a long history of work and a vibrant women’s movement on the ground, which has consistently raised concerns and engaged in advancing the status of women in the country. The movement is diverse and works with an intersectional lens at policy and field levels.

Several initiatives have been underway in India on women’s equality. *Towards Equality* (GOI, 1974), the historic and path-breaking first report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, was led by the late feminist academics Vina Mazumdar and Lotika Sarkar. The report drew the country’s attention to discriminatory socio-cultural practices and how economic and political processes disempowered women. It issued an alert to the problem of the declining sex ratio that in turn led to the development of gender-sensitive policy-making and an increased focus on the education of girls.

Forty years later, the second report was prepared by a High Level Committee on the Status of Women (2015). This report highlighted key gender gaps, applying an intersectional lens, and covered the diversity and complexity of women’s lives in the country. Along with several other reports—*ShramShakti* (1988), Justice Verma Committee (2013), CEDAW (2014)—there has been an extensive and informed analysis of the pathways that can be traversed to enhance women’s status. Despite all such commitments, a greater political will is needed to transform gender relations and inequalities. There is need for deeper commitment in enacting sustained institutional reforms and in changing patriarchal, feudal and misogynist mindsets.

India has been a signatory to the Beijing, CEDAW, MDGs and SDGs agendas. The Beijing report of the Indian government, as reported in the news, stated that deep-rooted gender inequalities remain and undermine the country’s potential to translate economic growth into inclusive development, and that gender inequalities persist in education, income and employment and women’s health (Menon, 2014). In its MDG report, India claimed that it had halved its incidence of extreme poverty from

49.4 per cent in 1994 to 24.7 per cent in 2011, despite the large numbers of underweight and malnourished children and women in the country (Raghavan, 2015). The report highlighted deficits on several health parameters, such as maternal mortality, infant mortality and basic sanitation. Referencing the MDG 3 targets (on gender equality), India claimed to be close to target, achieving higher enrolment and female youth literacy than earlier, with women in wage employment increasing to 22.28 per cent by the year 2015. It also noted that there was a higher representation of women in parliament (12.24 per cent), a figure still far below the 33 per cent being advocated by women's groups (Dubudu, 2015).

In its concluding comments to India's fourth and fifth reports, the CEDAW Committee made some observations regarding steps that could be taken towards progress on women's rights (United Nations, 2014). It noted the absence of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law in the country to effectively address all aspects of discrimination and all forms of intersectional discrimination against women. The Committee also observed that the two declarations made by India to the CEDAW Convention were incompatible with its constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination. It noted the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes that were entrenched in the social, cultural, economic and political institutions and structures of Indian society and in the media, and stated that sustained action was needed to eliminate harmful discriminatory practices.

In a follow-up consultation, post the adoption of the SDGs, UN Women convened the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Commitment to Action. More than 90 leaders made national commitments that would close the gender equality gap—from laws and policies to national action plans and adequate investment.¹⁸ India was not among the countries listed on the above-mentioned commitments.

The key challenge for India is to understand more deeply why, despite constitutional guarantees on women's equality and rights and the adoption of several policies and programmatic directions over the years, patriarchal mindsets and misogyny continue to persist and limit women's freedom, voices and dignity.

A more in-depth analysis is provided below on some of the barriers to realising women's rights in two key areas, economic rights and the pandemic of VAW, and is supplemented by a brief analysis of the data from select policy measures and budgetary investments for women.

Barriers to Economic Rights of Women

Despite the economic growth in the country in the past decade or so, the declining workforce participation rates for women have been cause for concern. It is well known that women face a host of barriers to realising their economic rights. They are largely employed in the informal sector that is marked by insecure and precarious work conditions with little or no access to social protection. Rigid gender norms impact their employment opportunities and mobility patterns. Labour markets also provide fewer and low-paid work options for women. Women bear the brunt of time-poverty due to unpaid and care work. Gender gaps persist in infrastructure and public services and place enormous pressure on their daily lives, including the poor availability of drinking water, sanitation facilities, fuel, fodder and transport.

The UN Global Report on Economic Empowerment and SDGs (United Nations, 2016a) has found that only one in two women (aged 15 years and over) is in paid employment as compared with three in four men. That amounts to about 700 million fewer women in paid employment than men (i.e., 1.27 billion women as against 2 billion men). The report also found that women take on about three times more unpaid work than men do and hundreds of millions of women work informally without social and labour protection in law or in practice.

In India, there are about 120 million women who work informally. According to the India Census data (2011), there are 149.8 million women workers, of which 121.8 million and 28 million are in rural and urban areas, respectively. Of these 35.9 million work as cultivators, 61.5 as agricultural labourers, 8.5 in the household industry and 43.7 are classified as 'other workers' (GOI, n.d.). Even though India's economy grew at an average of 7 per cent between 2004 and 2011, its female workforce participation fell by seven percentage points, to 24 per cent from 31 per cent (Pande & Troyer, 2016). This then amounts to more than 25 million women missing from the labour force.

NSS data show that while participation rates for women workers is highest in the 34–44 years age group, the decline is highest in the age group 25–34 years (ISST, 2014). Pande et al. (2016) noted that if efforts were made to close the gender gap in labour-force participation in India, there would be a 27 per cent net increase in the GDP. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), 865 million women in the world have the potential to contribute more fully to their national economies and 94 per cent (812 million) of them live in emerging and developing economies (ILO, 2016).

Well-known Indian feminist economist Jayati Ghosh (2016) offers an explanation for the missing women in the economy. She points out the limitations of the NSSO definition of employment that has excluded some important activities that need to be counted as work. This is specific to two NSSO codes, 92 and 93, that exclude certain activities that are largely in the domain of domestic duties and care work.¹⁹ The data suggest that shifts have taken place from recognised work to unpaid work. Ghosh further adds that as per the ILO definition (Castillo, 2014), if such activities were counted as work, the data would certainly read otherwise. Additionally, and as is well known, women's work is affected by their limited agency in bargaining, both within the family and outside.

Studies have indicated that female workforce participation is affected due to childcare, particularly for women from urban areas with children less than five years old (Sudarshan, 2016). Neetha N. (cited in Institute of Social Studies Trust, 2015) points out that it is difficult to separate unpaid economic work and social reproduction work while computing women's actual contributions to the economy.

There is a need to develop methodologies to accurately capture women's care and unpaid work in the country, as well as an urgency to free women workers from disadvantaged backgrounds from exploitative work conditions. A recent study (Centre for Equity Studies, 2015) flags the abysmal living and work conditions of women from specific social groups. They suffer sexual violence, harassment and have little or no control over and access to land, assets, housing and other community resources. Domestic workers, women manual scavengers and women sex workers are particularly subject to severe discrimination, violence and social stigma.

To advance women workers' rights within the SDGs, secure livelihoods and enabling conditions must be created. The UN Global Report on Economic Empowerment and SDGs (United Nations, 2016b) underscores some of the systemic constraints that need the attention of policy makers and planners. These include (1) addressing adverse social norms; (2) reforming discriminatory laws and building legal protection; (3) ensuring sufficient access to financial, digital and property assets; and (4) recognising and redistributing unpaid household and care work. It adds that women's access and ownership of property and greater access to resources along with collective mobilisation to negotiate and bargain is the only way towards reversing their lower status and reclaiming their rights.

India needs to step up to this challenge urgently. It needs to address Goals 1 and 5 of the SDGs in a continuum and plug the gender gaps

highlighted above. It needs to make unequivocal and sufficient investments for maternity and child care and for social security. It needs to ensure access to not only meaningful livelihoods (in farm and non-farm sectors) but also quality gender-based skill training, and to institute enabling policies that result in greater access and control over resources for all women. It can no longer pursue economic policies that benefit large corporations that displace women from their traditional lands, forests and livelihoods, forcing them into an insecure pool of migrant labour and distressed human beings. The impacts of such economic policies only further erode women's rights and deepen the feminisation and inter-generational transfer of poverty, and need to be reversed.

Pandemic of Violence against Women

The second thematic area being highlighted is that of the pandemic of VAW, a missing target of the MDGs, as mentioned earlier, but the SDGs have undone that injustice, stating a commitment to ending all forms of VAW under Goal 5.

The UN Special Rapporteur on VAW noted in her India mission report that VAW in India is systemic in nature, and occurs both in public and private spaces. She observed the persistence of patriarchal social norms, structural and institutional forms of inequalities and other gender hierarchies that underpin VAW (Manjoo, 2014). The Special Rapporteur further noted that there are high levels of tolerance in society with regard to violence. This is a disturbing observation that requires both government and society at large to work at transforming social norms.

Data from reliable national sources, the National Family Health Survey 3, state that one out of every three ever-married women has experienced spousal violence (Kishore & Gupta, 2009). Other national data indicate an increase of 9.2 per cent in the reporting of crimes against women (CAW) for the year 2014. The data further reveal an over 50 per cent increase since 2010 in such reporting.²⁰ This is a good trend as it is hoped that increased reporting will result in firmer actions against the perpetrators of violence and more action regarding preventive measures. The difficulty is that, according to the data, in more than 90 per cent of the cases the perpetrator is known to the victim, and is often a member of the family in incidents of incest and sexual assault (National Crime Record Bureau of India, 2015).

Even though reporting on VAW has increased, there are barriers faced by women survivors of violence. These include delays in the timeliness

of the response system and the process of re-victimisation faced by them at police stations, courts and hospitals. This is also accompanied by a very long period of the trial system and an overall lack of support. Many survivors also fear lack of support from family members and the breaking of family honour codes, especially if the perpetrator is a relative.

The national capital of Delhi accounts for approximately 21 per cent of all CAW, despite being home to less than 1.4 per cent of India's population (*Indian Express*, 2016). There was a 27 per cent increase in 2014 (Mukherjee, 2016) over the previous year on reporting on rapes and sexual assaults. A multi-site study by Women In Cities International (2009–10) and Jagori reported that 75 per cent of women respondents identified gender as the main contributory factor to their lack of safety in urban spaces (Jagori, 2010). In another study, Jagori reported that two out of three women reported facing incidents of sexual harassment more than once during the year. In particular, young women below the age of 25 years, women from low-income communities (particularly the homeless), single women and women from marginalised communities were the most vulnerable (Jagori & UN Women, 2011).

Following the brutal gang rape on 16 December 2012 in Delhi that led to massive street protests by citizens and women's groups nationwide, far-reaching changes in laws (that could impact upon women's right to equality and right to dignity) were recommended by the committee headed by the late Justice Verma (Report of the Committee, 2013).

The recommendations led to the adoption of the new Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013). Women's groups continue to demand actions on the recommendations, and the inclusion of issues that were left out, such as sexual violence during situations of communal violence; structural violence faced by women from Dalit, Adivasi and minority communities; violence on women with disabilities, single women and LGBTIQ women; and women who are internally displaced and living in militarised zones and fragile regions. Women's groups continue to raise concerns also about women facing communal- and caste-based violence that deprives them of fair and just access to redress, reparation and justice, and have continually raised issues of impunity of both state and non-state actors.

A network of women activists has also been working on peace, security and development for women living in conflict areas, advocating the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). Irom Sharmila led this charge for 16 years through a peaceful hunger strike. This courageous woman ended her fast on 9 August 2016 with,

regrettably, little change in the situation.²¹ The Supreme Court on 8 July 2016 did, however, note that the indefinite deployment of armed forces in the name of restoring normalcy under AFSPA ‘would mock at our democratic process’, apart from symbolising a failure of the civil administration and the armed forces (Anand, 2016).

In undertaking their campaigns to support women victims of violence, women’s groups and activists have faced repression, intimidation and severe threats to their lives. Attacks on women human-rights defenders have been on the rise and their voices are being stifled through a slew of counter-legal and other threats.²² Women’s groups are also facing an enormous backlash as they continue to demand due diligence and effective implementation of the various laws and procedures to end VAW as well as hold institutions and alleged perpetrators to account. In a stunning reversal, in a case of sexual harassment in Delhi, an injunction against one of the woman complainants and her lawyer was filed by the defendant’s lawyer in a civil suit that demanded one crore rupees in damages from the complainant (Venkat, 2016). Unheard of in legal procedure so far, it will discourage women survivors from speaking up in future. The Special Rapporteur on VAW in her report also noted threats faced by women rights defenders in India.

While India has ratified several human rights instruments and despite progressive laws and policies,²³ effective implementation and preventive measures fall far short of requirements. The issues of impunity and immunity enjoyed by perpetrators under the guise of tradition, culture and other factors, and the low rates of prosecution and conviction undermine the drive to reduce VAW. Unless the state steps in and takes urgent measures to respect the rights of women as constitutionally mandated and supports the elimination of structural barriers that impede women’s human rights, all efforts towards reducing VAW will be stymied. To tackle these deep-seated problems requires a transformative vision and an approach that sees women as autonomous and equal citizens, with rights to bodily integrity and the right to assert their sexualities, freedoms and voice.

Policy Initiatives and Budgetary Investments for Gender Equality

The Indian government in recent years has expressed its commitment to the SDGs and has catalysed several programmatic initiatives, which include Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities and Skills India, aimed

at boosting economic and skill development as well as manufacturing to help lift millions out of poverty (*Indian Express*, 2016). Other prominent schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Swachh Bharat were rolled out earlier in an effort to advance girls' and women's rights and dignity. Women's groups have suggested that such initiatives need to be developed with a rights framework that would ensure elimination of structural barriers for girls and women.

Niti Aayog, the new planning body set up in 2014, has mapped the core central schemes of the government in line with SDG areas. In June 2016, Niti Aayog uploaded online a comprehensive list of targets and interventions by the respective ministries with regard to SDGs in India.²⁴ It is believed that state governments are in the process of formulating their plans based on the SDGs, and these will culminate in a 15-year plan to be adopted by Niti Aayog (Mishra, 2016). Niti Aayog recently presented India's first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of SDGs to the 2017 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York on 19 July 2017.²⁵

In the meanwhile, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) placed two draft policies, the Draft National Policy on Women (MWCD, 2016) and the Draft Trafficking in Persons Bill (MWCD, 2016), in the public domain for feedback. While some rounds of consultations with women's groups have been held by the National Commission for Women (NCW), and recommendations received online, the final documents are not yet in the public domain. The MWCD has been given a nodal role for Goal 5 of the SDGs (women's empowerment and gender equality), and has been assigned a role in addressing other goals too. However, MWCD seems to have no role to play on SDG Goal 11, which is to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Smart cities and urbanisation processes need to be seen through a gender and rights lens. There is no information available to date about the setting up of any dedicated task force for the SDGs, nor one specifically for contributing to and monitoring the gender targets under Goal 5. Women's groups have suggested establishing consultative mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the policies and plans. In the meanwhile, some informal groups and coalitions of civil society have set up platforms to share and monitor developments in the context of the SDGs, such as a National Coalition—Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA), which also released a civil society report on SDGs: Agenda 2030²⁶ in July 2017.

As far as budgetary investments are concerned for women's development, a recent study reveals that the total magnitude of funds (budget

estimates, or BE) in the Gender Budget Statement (2016–2017) was ₹90,625 crores. Allocations for the MWCD amounted to 19 per cent of this total amount. While major allocations were made for the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), about ₹2,000 crores was allocated for cooking gas connections (for 1.5 crore families of below the poverty line, in women's names) and another ₹500 crores for the Stand Up India scheme (to promote entrepreneurship among women from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes). This confirms lower budgetary investments for women's development and empowerment. Due to fiscal devolution, the fund-sharing pattern between the centre and states has changed over two years, from a 75:25 ratio to 60:40. Intensive efforts would be needed to advocate with state governments for adequate investments to fulfil their obligations to women's rights (Centre for Budget and Governance Analysis (CBGA), 2016).

The CBGA report also noted that two schemes continue in pilot mode, a maternity benefit scheme or the Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), and Sabla, a centrally sponsored scheme for adolescent girls. The IGMSY continues as a pilot scheme and cannot adequately cover all pregnant and lactating women, as mandated by the National Food Security Act (2013). In the budget announced on 1 February 2017, while there has been a notable increase in the allocation to the Maternity Benefit Programme (formerly known as IGMSY) from ₹400 crores in 2016–2017 (BE) to ₹2,700 crores in 2017–2018 (BE), it still does not meet the estimates of the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution (2012–2013) that had projected the total expenditure for approximately 2.25 crore pregnant and lactating women to be around ₹14,512 crores per annum (to be borne by both the centre and states). The current allocation continues to fall short and will not enable universalisation of the scheme (CBGA, 2017).

Though allocations for the umbrella scheme for the Protection and Empowerment of Women (covering eight schemes) increased in 2016–2017 (BE), the total amount remains rather inadequate and certainly affects the quality and coverage of services for women survivors of violence. Besides, there are concerns about ineffective utilisation of funds meant for women. Of the two central schemes for women in distress, CBGA found that a mere ₹13 crores was utilised of ₹111 crores allocated for the One Stop Crisis Centres, and ₹17.5 crores of the 56 crores allocated for the Helpline. Another scheme for women in difficult circumstances (Swadhar Greh) has limited outreach, covering 311 homes (2014) with a capacity of only 17,370 inmates.²⁷ This only points to the ineffectiveness of programmes in not meeting the huge needs of women survivors for shelter and safe spaces.

A new initiative, the Central Victim Compensation Fund Scheme, has been set up with an initial corpus of ₹200 crores to support victims of sexual assault, acid attacks and human trafficking and for women killed or injured in cross-border firing. The Nirbhaya Fund set up in 2013 has ₹3,000 crores (as of 2016–2017). However, this too has remained largely unspent in the initial period, as observed by a Parliamentary Standing Committee (Madhukalya, 2016). An analysis of recent proposals to the Fund was for ₹2,200 crores (Kaul & Shrivastava, 2017).

The Justice Verma Committee Report was resolute about the need for police reforms. This would need a host of steps that includes not just enhanced budgetary allocations and more women in the force at all levels (currently 9 per cent), but more importantly changes in how policing is undertaken and the law implemented. The need to fill the additional 4,700 posts and develop an action plan for women's safety, particularly in Delhi's outer areas where the transition from rural to urban is in progress, has been brought to the attention of the police by the High Court of Delhi (Mathur, 2016). It is interesting to note that the CBGA study (via spatial data mapping) found a greater concentration of police stations in the centre of the city rather than on the periphery. The parliamentary panel noted the need for sensitisation programmes on behaviour towards women, among other measures (PTI, 2015). Lalita Panicker noted in her op-ed piece that

while technology can aid in addressing women's safety, the certainty and severity of the law needs to be in place. Without follow-up actions by the law—of filing and accepting FIRs in time and taking prompt actions against stalkers and harassers—there will be little progress. (*Hindustan Times*, 2017)

Needed also is an outcome evaluation of funds made available for women's safety, the key question being whether investments in technology-based surveillance (CCTV cameras, GPS devices and other equipment) have led to any significant changes, and an estimate of the costs incurred due to ineffective funding for victim support, rehabilitation and restorative justice. It is imperative that many more investments be made to bridge the gaps in the continuum of services for victims/survivors of violence, for prevention and the changing of mindsets and, more importantly, for ensuring zero tolerance to violence and access to justice for women human-rights defenders. The key recommendations emerging from CEDAW's Concluding Comments, Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW, and the High Level Committee on Women should be built into the SDG national plans.

Initial Global Efforts to Advance Goal 5 of the SDGs

Some countries have a head start in developing mechanisms for SDGs. As part of the first year of the SDGs, 22 countries volunteered to present their national reviews to the High-level Political Forum at a meeting convened by the United Nations. These reviews assessed gaps between their national contexts and policies in the context of the SDGs. From the presentations, UN Women found that 17 countries had made specific references to gender equality issues. For example, Estonia raised the issue of tackling the gender pay gap as a priority. Germany was working towards good governance by cross-cutting it with gender equality. Other countries reported specific challenges in addressing Goal 5 relating to VAW and children (Egypt and Finland), gender inequality (Egypt, Finland, France, Germany and Norway), gaps in well-being and health between genders and across regions (Finland), youth and long-term unemployment (Finland, Egypt, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone) and addressing the needs of an ageing population (Republic of Korea). Mexico specifically noted challenges in bringing in, among others, women, indigenous peoples and communities, youth, LGBTIQ groups, migrants and persons with disabilities and of African descent into the implementation efforts (United Nations, 2016).

At the 68th Session of the Nordic Council, the prime ministers of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden discussed how they could be leading examples in achieving the SDGs. The European Union has developed a Gender Action Plan (2016–2020), which is aligned with SDG 5 (Wahlen, 2016). The government of Malaysia, in partnership with UNDP, has agreed to introduce the Gender Equality Seal Certification, in collaboration with the private sector, which is aimed at equal opportunities and inclusive work environments for women (UNDP, 2016).

The International Centre for Research on Women, with leading feminist thinkers and others, presented six overarching recommendations on gender equality and women's rights to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations on his taking office, calling for the highest level of support for the effective implementation and accountability of SDGs, in particular SDG 5, and the mainstreaming of gender through all the goals (Thompson, 2017).

In the last few years, attention has focused on gender responsive data collection and its use for monitoring purposes. Of the 14 indicators to monitor SDG 5, there are no comparable data for six indicators in most countries, including women's rights to land, and an agreed standard for

measurement is missing. In this regard, UN Women has stepped up its efforts towards building accurate and comparable gender data that could monitor the progress of SDGs and provide the data to citizens to hold leaders accountable. They plan to build the capacities of National Statistics Officers and national administrations, civil-society organisations and academics from select countries. In a period of five years they expect the availability of reliable and comparable gender data on the extent of legal discrimination, women's asset ownership and, specifically, a comprehensive data base on ending VAW and women's unpaid care work (UN Women, September 2016).

As data measurement processes get institutionalised, there may be a need to develop adequate ethical measures to ensure women's privacy and confidentiality. In India, far greater effort is needed to not only upgrade the framework and collection of gender-disaggregated data, but also to analyse data with a gender lens to understand the differential impacts of policies and programmes on diverse sections of women in the country.

Conclusion

Meaningful and transformative changes cannot take place unless governments step up their efforts at all levels to address the deep gender inequalities, as well as partner women's organisations, collectives and civil society in policy and implementation efforts. Empirical data from 70 countries over the last four decades reveal that the presence of autonomous feminist organisations is among the single most important factor in advancing actions to tackle VAW. The writer points to the fact that this seems more significant than the wealth of a country or the number of women in government (Moosa, 2015).

Women's movements have been pushing the boundaries to build strategic partnerships with the government and have been advised to use SDG Target 5.5 and demand resources for their work as well (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016). In India there is urgent need for multi-sector approaches and partnerships to advance work on women's rights within the SDG plans. Alliances across civil society, trade unions, academic institutions and international bodies need to be forged more strongly to build effective accountability measures for the implementation of SDGs.

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Notes

1. United Nations: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 15 September 1995. See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingdeclaration.html>
2. The United Nations has organised four world conferences on women. These took place in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. See more at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>
3. Five yearly reviews and appraisals have been undertaken by the UN on the Beijing Platform for Action. All reports are available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html>
4. National Alliance of Women (NAWO) is an umbrella organisation of women's groups formed in 1995 post the Beijing Conference; it is now located in Bangalore. See more at <https://karnataka.ngosindia.com/national-alliance-of-women-bangalore/>
5. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has supported women's empowerment and gender equality through its programme offices since 1976. In January 2011, UNIFEM was merged into UN Women, a composite entity of the UN, with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). See more at <http://www.wikigender.org/wiki/united-nations-development-fund-for-women-unifem/>
6. A wide-ranging consultation was held covering several issues in this review process, which subsequently led to inclusion in the regional and global processes. A report of the consultation is available with UN Women. See <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2014/8/diversity-of-voices-at-beijing-20-consultations-in-india>

7. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. See more at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>
8. UN Women works to empower women and girls in all of its programmes. Its two central goals are the advancement of women's political participation and leadership and their economic empowerment. To this end, it maintains a global data base and supports research and data-gathering on women. See more at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality#notes>
9. The General Assembly, by its resolution 53/202 of 17 December 1998, decided to designate the 55th session of the General Assembly as 'The Millennium Assembly of the United Nations' and to convene, as an integral part of the Millennium Assembly, a Millennium Summit of the United Nations. The Millennium Summit was held over 6–8 September 2000 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York with 149 heads of state and government and high-ranking officials from over 40 other countries. The main document, unanimously adopted, was the Millennium Declaration, which contained a statement of values, principles and objectives as the international agenda for the 21st century. It also set deadlines for many collective actions. See the United Nations Millennium Development Goals website http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/millennium_summit.shtml
10. WHO works to advance the empowerment of women, especially in its intersection with health issues, and supports the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, also promoting women's leadership in the health sector. See http://www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/gender/en/
11. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. See more at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>
12. The Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, set out, inter alia, a mandate to establish an Open Working Group to develop sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action at the 68th session of the UN General Assembly. It also provided the basis for the SDGs' conceptualisation, and the mandate that they should be coherent with and integrated into the UN development agenda beyond 2015. See the proposal drafted by the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>
13. The outcome document of the United Nations Summit for the post-2015 development agenda was adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 at its 70th session: Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For more see http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

14. The UNDP, as a lead UN agency for human development, has had its development and funding policies working in 70 countries and territories guided by the SDGs. See more at <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>
15. The Post-2015 Women's Coalition is an international network of feminist, women's rights, women's development, grassroots, peace and social justice organisations focused on the realisation of women's rights and gender equality (<http://www.post2015women.com/mission/>).

The Women's Major Group is self-organised, comprising more than 500 organisations and recognised by the UN, including in the UN processes on Sustainable Development, and facilitates women's civil society inputs into the policy space (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/women>).

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) is an international feminist network of advocates and researchers (<http://dawnnet.org/>).

16. The UN Secretary-General announced the first-ever High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment to provide thought leadership and mobilise concrete actions aimed at closing economic gender gaps that persist around the world. The Panel provided recommendations for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to improve economic outcomes for women and promote women's leadership in driving sustainable and inclusive, environmentally sensitive economic growth. It has recently published its findings. See more at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/1/wee-high-level-panel-launch>
17. The Asia-Pacific Women's Alliance for Peace and Security creates spaces for women to discuss peace and security that matters to women. It brings together feminist organisations, women human-rights defenders, women peace builders and others from across Asia and the Pacific.
18. A campaign was launched by UN Women for Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up to make governments commit nationally to closing gender-equality gaps, formulating laws and policies and action plans and making adequate investments. See more at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up>
19. Census Code 92, relating to those who 'attended to domestic duties only', thus includes all activities that constitute the care economy—looking after the young, the sick and the elderly as well as other healthy household members; cooking, cleaning and provisioning for the family; and so on.

Code 93 relates to those who 'attended to domestic duties and were also engaged in free collection of goods (vegetables, roots, firewood, cattle feed), sewing, tailoring, weaving, etc. for household use'.

Jayati Ghosh has suggested the need for a re-read of the data as 'Women's workforce participation rate in 1999–2000 would increase to 89 per cent in rural areas, and only decline to 85 per cent in 2011–12. In urban areas, the participation rate would show an increase to 81 per cent in 1999–2000 and remain around 80 per cent in 2011–12.' See more at <https://www>.

- theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/jul/16/womens-workforce-participation-declining-india
20. NCRB data (2015): A total of 337,922 cases of crimes against women were reported in 2014 as compared to 309,546 in 2013. There were 213,585 reported cases in 2010, which increased to 228,649 cases in 2011, and further increased to 244,270 cases in 2012.
 21. See more at standwithhiromsharmila.in
 22. The groups include the Jagdalpur Legal Aid Group (Chhattisgarh), Lawyers Collective among others, in addition to individual activists in different parts of the country.
 23. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
 24. Niti Aayog: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Targets, CSS, Interventions, Nodal and other Ministries (as on 8 June 2016), can be accessed at http://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/SDGsV20-Mapping080616-DG_0.pdf
 25. Niti Aayog presented India's first Voluntary National Review on implementation of SDGs on 19 July 2017. It can be accessed at <http://niti.gov.in/content/voluntary-national-review-report>
 26. *Civil Society Report on SDGs: Agenda 2030* is a civil society initiative anchored by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan. The report was released in Delhi on 6 July 2017 at a large gathering of 225 participants comprising academicians, members of the media, networks working on SDGs, organisations/individuals engaged with marginalised groups, and members from civil-society organisations from across 18 states of India. It can be accessed at <http://wadanatodo.net/highlight/civil-society-report-on-sdgs-agenda-2030/>
 27. This was revealed through a Lok Sabha Unstarred Question (No. 4519) for answer dated 19.12.2014 (see CBGA study, 2016).

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