GWI United Nation Representative

Advocacy Report

2026

GWI advocacy goals

- 100% of United Nations Member States commit to policy, legislation, budget and infrastructure to facilitate transition of girls from primary to secondary school and ensure gender parity and gender equality throughout secondary education by 2030.
- By 2030 100% of United Nations low-income Member States have increased access to tertiary education for girls and women by 50%.
- 100% of United Nations Member States commit to and implement policies for continuing education to empower women throughout the life course, within the formal and informal economies.
- Influence the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.
- All 17 SDGs will include girls' education targets.

Please bear in mind these five overarching, long-term goals during any United Nations intervention that you make on behalf of GWI. Any intervention should push these five goals further.

NB*: Although these goals represent GWI's mission, UN Reps are also invited to promote GWI key messages on areas where especially relevant e.g., women in STEM, securing investment in women teachers, addressing barriers to girls' education such as child marriage.*

UN Women Briefing (10/19/26)

CSW71 Preparations

• CSW71 is scheduled for 8–19 March 2027. The priority theme is "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." The review theme focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies, and programs.

• *The ministerial week is proposed to begin on 15 March* to allow Member State Representatives to celebrate International Women's Day and the UN holiday for Eid in their home countries. Final confirmation is expected in early November. *This means that Member State Representatives may not be in NYC the first week of CSW71. The question was asked which week is best to attend, to influence the outcome document, given the high cost of attending CSW*. UN Women said that the ministerial schedule remained a proposal at this time but that further details would follow.

• The Expert Group Meeting Report is available on UN Women's website and created to inform the drafting of the Secretary-General's report on the priority theme for the 71st session of the Commission on the Status of Women as well as global normative frameworks relevant to the priority theme. (See below for some highlights of this report). It is hoped that the S-G's report will be out soon and the Zero Draft in early December.

• Regional Multi-Stakeholder Hearings are being organized with UN Women regional offices and regional commissions to broaden participation, including for grassroots organizations that face barriers to travel to New York. At the time of this meeting, an Africa hearing was being planned with Asia-Pacific and GRULAC expected in December, and MENA expected in late January or early February. A global hearing is planned for January, with the date depending on the timing of the Secretary-General's report. The Multi-Stakeholder Hearing provides a formal space for Civil Society, Member States, the UN system, and other stakeholders to exchange priorities for the Agreed Conclusions.

CSW Revitalization and Methods of Work

• The Commission is strengthening its Methods of Work following the CSW revitalization resolution adopted by ECOSOC in September 2025. The revitalization process includes provisions for the possible rotation of CSW sessions outside New York every five years. It is hoped that the host country will be identified by 2028.

• The Secretary-General has proposed a dedicated high-level discussion on *financing gender equality in 2029*. *Civil society organizations were encouraged to advocate for this proposal during negotiations, as the arrangements have not yet been formally adopted*.

• A proposal was presented to establish a more systematic review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and previously adopted Agreed Conclusions. The proposed mechanism would strengthen accountability through voluntary national presentations, peer exchanges, and engagement with civil society.

• Further discussions on the Commission's Methods of Work are expected in the lead-up to CSW71, with negotiations anticipated to begin in January 2027. The proposed arrangements remain subject to agreement by Member States.

• The proposed CSW71 Interactive Dialogues would provide a Member State-led peer exchange on national reports as well as implementation gaps, challenges, and opportunities related to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and SDG5 commitments. *Civil society participation remains under discussion.*

• UN Women emphasized that the Multi-Stakeholder Hearing and Interactive Dialogues can both strengthen accountability. *Civil society can influence the Agreed Conclusions through advocacy and text proposals, contribute to the hearings, prepare shadow reports, and engage Member States.* A list of Member States participating in CSW71, as well as a list of the five Bureau Members, can be found on the UN Women website.

UN Women encouraged civil society to review the Secretary-General's report on Methods of Work when it comes out and bring proposals into the negotiations.

Merger of UN Women and UNFPA

No further update on the possible merger was available at the time of the meeting.

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Format of Future UN Women Briefings

Beginning with the next CSW briefing, UN Women proposed dedicating 45 minutes of each 90-minute meeting to a deeper discussion on the most critical emerging gender equality issues. A synthesis of the themes across the meetings would inform recommendations for the next Secretary-General's agenda on gender equality, peace, security, human rights and sustainable development, to be presented during CSW71. UN Women *will share discussion questions in advance* so participants can prepare and influence the agenda. *Civil society participants proposed organizing consultations within their networks and contributing group perspectives. UN Women welcomed this approach*.

Highlights of the Expert Group Meeting Report

As 2030 approaches, progress on gender equality has fallen short or even regressed in some contexts. Yet it remains more urgent than ever. Given that, UN Women convened an Expert Group Meeting this year, from 6/30-7/02, to assess progress, identify factors that either aid or constrain gender equality, and draw lessons that will accelerate implementation and shape the post-2030 framework.

SDG Gains Made

The SDGs have generated important gains:

- Established a universal framework for gender equality
- Contributed to strengthening global norms
- Fostered the development of new methodologies
- Improved the availability of gender data
- Established new openings for gender mainstreaming
- Created new spaces for advocacy and policy action
- Brought greater attention to issues critical to gender equality, including care
- Strengthened the focus on key issues such as violence against women and sexual and reproductive health and rights

Finally, the 'leave no one behind' principle has played an important role in *acknowledging intersecting inequalities and increasing the visibility of marginalized groups.*

Implementation Lessons

Gender equality is more likely to advance where it is institutionalized across government systems, supported by robust coordination mechanisms and gender-responsive planning and budgeting, and shaped by meaningful participation of civil society, particularly women's rights and feminist organizations, movements and coalitions. Experiences from national and local contexts demonstrate the importance of multilevel governance, participation and accountability, while regional cooperation has provided additional platforms for accountability and collaboration. *However*, *civil society participation remains unduly restricted, and data collection systems do not adequately capture real lived experiences nor yield transformative action.*

Limitations of the SDGs

Despite the gains noted above, serious limitations related to the attainment of the SDG5 goals continues.

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Only a small number of gender equality targets are on track for achievement by 2030 because of:

- Deep structural constraints
- A lack of political will
- Inadequate prioritization by governments
- Financing gaps
- Weak accountability
- Limited political commitment

These challenges are linked to a broader economic model that has prioritized the concentration of wealth while being sustained by systemic inequality.

The following are priority areas for accelerating progress while laying the foundation for longer-term transformation:

Close the financing gap for gender equality

The broader SDG financing gap reflects significant constraints on countries' ability to invest in sustainable development but calls attention to how resources are prioritized and allocated. Greater fiscal space is needed to:

- Sustain investments in public services, social protection, care systems, and gender equality
- Provide ODA for feminist and women's rights organizations.
- Establish a more equitable taxation system at the national level
- Address unsustainable debt burdens
- Expand access to development financing

The financial system must move beyond short-term, fragmented projects towards longer-term investments that strengthen institutions, support feminist movements, and enable sustained implementation. Finally, gender-responsive budgeting should be strengthened to track not only allocations but whether resources contribute to measurable improvements in women's and girls' lives.

Strengthen accountability for implementation

Accelerating progress requires accountability mechanisms that support implementation, learning, and course correction. While reporting processes have created important opportunities to monitor commitments, stronger links are needed between commitments, responsibilities, resources, and follow-up action. *Accountability systems should move beyond measuring activities and outputs to assessing whether policies and investments are producing meaningful improvements in gender equality outcomes*.

Invest in data and evidence systems that support action

Robust evidence systems are essential to ensuring that gender equality policies are informed by timely, relevant, and actionable information. While gender data have improved significantly since the adoption of the SDGs *important gaps remain, particularly in capturing intersectional inequalities and the experiences of marginalized groups. Investment is needed in national statistical systems, citizen data, qualitative evidence and integrated data systems that can inform policy design, resource allocation and implementation*. Building analytical capacity is equally important to ensure that available evidence is translated into effective action.

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Protect and resource feminist movements and women's rights organizations

Sustained progress depends on the continued engagement and leadership of feminist movements and women's rights organizations. *Protecting civic space and ensuring that these organizations have the resources and institutional recognition needed to participate meaningfully in governance and accountability processes remain essential*. Feminist movements and women's rights organizations need to be protected from repression, violence and misogyny in all public and private spaces by individual and institutional state and non-state actors. Feminist and women's rights organizations and movements should be recognized not only as implementation partners, but as political actors and knowledge-holders whose leadership is essential to advancing equality. Long-term, flexible funding is particularly important to enable movements to sustain advocacy, respond to emerging challenges, and contribute to policy development and implementation. Supporting women's rights organizations is not only an investment in civil society but also in the broader accountability and democratic infrastructure needed to advance gender equality.

Beyond 2030: From incrementalism to transformation

The preceding sections have shown that the SDGs made important contributions to advancing gender equality while also revealing significant shortcomings. These shortcomings are not simply technical or implementation-related failures. Rather, they reflect deeper structural constraints that have limited what the SDGs can achieve for gender equality. The post-2030 framework must move beyond incremental reform and address the structures that reproduce inequality These foundational shifts should be guided by three core principles:

- *Gender equality as a core priority and enabler of progress*
- *Human rights as the foundation and operating framework*
- *Accountability to feminist and women's rights movements*

Additional topics include but are not limited to (1) protecting civic space and democratic participation, (2) challenging unsustainable development models, (3) a feminist approach to care, (4) financing structural transformation, and (5) data governance, sovereignty and ownership.

Conclusion

Uneven SDG progress demonstrates the limits of approaches that seek to address inequality without transforming the systems that produce it. The post-2030 agenda must therefore move from incremental reform towards structural change, grounding action in human rights, redistributing power, and strengthening the agency of feminist movements and communities. In a period of profound uncertainty, transformation will depend on the ability to reimagine economic, political and institutional arrangements and build new forms of solidarity capable of advancing gender equality. To read the full report see EGM/CSW71/2026/REPORT on the Un Women website.

Follow-up Recommendation:

UN Women has asked Civil Society to advocate with Member State participants. Once GWI and its NFAs have selected their delegates, GWI could provide them with talking points to refer to

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around the Agreed Conclusions, the UN Women merger, and Methods of Work should they have such an opportunity.

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Empowering women and girls through lifelong, quality education and training. GWI, formerly International Federation of University Women (IFUW), in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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