

What Opportunities Does the Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 Provide CSOs to Collaborate With Local Governments?

TESEV Briefs aim to share with the public different opinions and recommendations on issues that are under TESEV's working areas.



Şehnaz Kıymaz Bahçeci

Şehnaz Kıymaz Bahçeci received her BA in Biology and Sociology from Swarthmore College and her MA in Gender and Women's Studies from METU. She was the chair of the executive board of Women for Women's Human Rights - New Solutions Association between the years 2016 and 2018 and gave lectures on gender equality at Bilgi University between 2014 and 2018. Since April 2020, Şehnaz has been working as the coordinator of Women's Major Group, a global feminist collective, and also provides independent consultancy to various feminist organizations.



Devin Bahçeci

Devin Bahçeci has been actively working in various civil society organizations for more than 15 years. Having completed his higher education in the Department of Local Government, Urban and Environmental Studies at Istanbul University, Devin has also been working on sustainable development and climate change since 2004. Having started his professional career with UNDP, he worked respectively at TEGV, Bilgi University and Greenpeace and have taken on responsibilities in such areas as environment, youth and human rights. Devin Bahçeci has been working as a strategic communication specialist at the European Climate Foundation since 2015.

“Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering All Women and Girls” is Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals which were adopted in 2015 to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs embodying the sustainable development agenda that has been going on for more than 30 years provide an important framework and roadmap for local governments for their work on gender equality as well as on many other fields. This information note aims to be an elucidative introductory text on SDGs with a focus on SDG 5 and gender equality, intended for the use of local governments and civil society organizations.

Sustainable development goals

Since it was defined in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development as meeting the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to [meet their own needs](#), the concept of sustainable development is increasingly incorporated into the agenda of international organizations, states and local governments.

What had been a global development roadmap with the Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development held in Rio De Janeiro, Brasil in 1992, turned into concrete goals defined as the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, and has become a holistic, highly applicable and instructive guideline at local, national and international levels with the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, which took their place subsequently after the end of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

The commitment at the Rio +20 Summit in 2012 to set more detailed goals for sustainable development for Post-2015 has given way to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that replaced the MDGs via a global consultative and collaborative process. All the UN member states agreed on 25th September 2015 to work for the achievement of these goals by addressing their national agendas and policies within the framework of these goals for the 15 years between 2015 and 2030. The SDGs, which are more comprehensive and holistic than the MDGs, consist of 17 Goals and 169 targets. Official processes have also been established for the reporting and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda which has important references to all three pillars of sustainable development and has been created a worldwide participatory process.

Although it may seem like a process basically involving governments, SDGs provide a guideline for the decisions of local governments, private sector and civil society organizations. For as easily understood and applicable goals that can be directly related to everyday life, SDGs affect every stage of governance and guide the policies and approaches of international institutions and states by offering a global framework for measuring practices in the field of social welfare and development. Besides, they are considered as important guidelines for resolving the crises that have heightened throughout the world with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gender equality and goal 5

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is stated that “The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities.” Within this scope, Goal 5 which address economic, environmental and social development processes in an interdependent and inseparable way, is devoted to ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In line with this purpose, Goal 5 aims at tackling effectively with gender norms that affect every layer of social life and disrupt all economic, social and environmental development processes, taking local and national differences into account.

Goal 5, its targets and indicators

Within the framework of “Goal 5: “Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls” six targets are defined. These targets also include indicators created for practitioners and decision makers for tracking and monitoring the very process. Although these indicators are primarily created for public institutions, they also function as a roadmap for civil society organizations and private sector to track gender equality and its connections with sustainable development, both in their internal processes and external activities.

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- 5.1.** End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- 5.1.1.** Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.
- 5.2.** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 5.2.1.** Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.
- 5.2.2.** Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.
- 5.3.** Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 5.3.1.** Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18.
- 5.3.2.** Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age.
- 5.4.** Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- 5.4.1.** Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.
- 5.5.** Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- 5.5.1.** Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments.
- 5.5.2.** Proportion of women in managerial positions.
- 5.6.** Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- 5.6.1.** Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care.
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5.6.2. Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education.

5.a. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

5.a.1. (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.

5.a.2. Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

5.b. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

5.b.1. Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex.

5.c. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

5.c.1. Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender in other goals

When SDGs were being discussed, one of the demands of women's rights activists and organizations working in this field was that gender equality should be defined as a goal in itself, while another demand they gave equal weight was that gender equality and empowerment of women and girls should be an integral part of all other goals. Women and girls constitute one half of the society, and therefore, they are affected at varying levels from all developments in the society according to their respective social positions. Accordingly, they stressed that it was important to examine how women and girls would be affected in each step towards sustainable development.

In the wake of long advocacy work, the 2030 Agenda prioritizes the struggle against gender issue among the targets of other goals such as poverty eradication, healthcare access, right to decent work, peace and justice. Struggle against gender inequality is directly addressed in the targets of 10 among the 16 goals other than Goal 5 and is expressed as a prerequisite for the achievement of these goals. This intersectional perspective differentiates the SDGs from many other tools, as an important guideline for the work to be carried out to achieve gender equality.

Besides, this intersectional approach is quite compatible with the motto “Leaving No One Behind,” which is one of the main principles of the SDGs. As we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, women and girls are affected from all the crises we face, in different and deeper ways. And in order not to leave women and girls behind in all these processes, examining the effects of all the work undertaken for achieving SDGs on these groups and emphasizing the needs of these groups as an integral part of these endeavours should be considered as an essential approach for achieving SDGs.

Turkey and goal 5

Turkey expresses a firm determination about the SDGs in the [Eleventh Development Plan](#) published in 2019: “The main objective is to reflect the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the policies in line with our priorities and to establish an effective follow-up and review mechanism.”

As stated by the United Nations Development Program, the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but also a prerequisite for the acceleration of sustainable development. The fact that the empowerment of women and girls accelerates economic growth and development in all areas by making a multiplier effect has been [proven](#) many times. Identified as a result of national and international negotiations and discussions at the high level, Goal 5 provides an important framework for ensuring gender equality in Turkey as well as throughout the world.

However, in order for this framework to be effectively implemented and for Turkey to make progress within the scope of Goal 5 by 2030, targets and indicators are required to be localized and the endeavours to achieve these goals should be accelerated. The implementation of SDGs in our country at the public level is coordinated by the [Presidency of Strategy and Budget](#), under the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey. And yet all public institutions from local governments to the stakeholders in the civil society organizations and the private sector have important roles in the timely and effective achievement of all goals and targets, Goal 5 being in the first place.

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In the Specialization Commission Report on the Role of Women in Development, prepared in 2018, the significance of Goal 5 for Turkey is emphasized with the following statements: “The recognition of empowering of women as a requisite for promoting development has gradually led the global endeavours towards gender equality to gain importance in recent years. [Existing data](#) and experiences reveal that women’s empowerment has positive and significant effects not only on the family well-being and raising of healthy future generations but also on economic growth”. “In recent years, despite significant improvements in women’s access to employment, healthcare and education, in the harmonization of work and family life and in the elimination of early and forced marriages, gender equality [continues](#) to be an important intervention area for many countries”. Under the gender equality title of the [Specialization Commission Report on the Role of Women in Development](#), the main problems encountered in our country are also stated. Among these problems, those related to local governments are also put forward. In local governments, the lack of authority and representation of women in decision-making mechanisms is particularly emphasized, and the establishment of “gender equality units” within local governments is proposed.

It is also stated in the report that it is important for decision makers, policy makers and civil society organizations to take action within the framework of Goal 5 and that policies in this field should be momentarily determined and prioritized.

In the “[Second National Review of Turkey - Civil Society Alternative Report](#)” prepared by eight civil society organizations representing the independent women’s movement in Turkey, observations have been made on the situation of Turkey regarding gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as pursuant to Goal 5 and other goals. The most important point that is emphasized in the alternative report is the need for political determination at all levels for the achievement of both Goal 5 and all the SDGs.

Municipalities, sustainable development and gender equality

In the document “Agenda 2030 in My Municipality” prepared to guide the localization of sustainable development goals, it is stated that SDGs offer [a sustainable vision](#) for urban transformation. “This vision ensures equal opportunities for all citizens and promotes health and well-being in the face of climate change and crises.”

Indeed, since local governments are one of the authorities closest to the citizens for getting access to the public service, they are important actors in the achievement of environmental, economic and social development, in the local adaptation of 17 sustainable development goals, in the awareness

raising about the issue and in tracking of the goals. Cities, districts and municipalities [play a central role](#) in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda worldwide. For example, studies conducted at the European Union level [reveal](#) that 65 percent of the SDGs cannot be achieved without the contribution of regional and local governments. Although the legal infrastructure defining the responsibilities and duties of the regional and local authorities in the European Union countries is quite different from that of Turkey, this ratio reveals how important a role falls upon the municipalities in terms of the implementation of SDGs.

All of the 17 goals constituting the Sustainable Development Goals, and 92 of the 169 targets determined within the framework of these goals are directly related to local governments, therefore it is a requisite for local governments to carry out localization studies for the implementation of SDGs at the local level.

As in other SDGs, municipalities have an important role in terms of SDG 5. SDG 5 aims at women's equal and fair participation in political, economic and social life. In this respect, while achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the goal of sustainable development, it is also [an essential tool](#) for a holistic sustainable development. Within the framework of the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, important duties and responsibilities fall upon the local governments in Turkey as upon other municipalities all over the world in many key areas, particularly enhancement of women's political and economic participation, determination and implementation of empowering policies for the prevention and follow-up of violence against women and for empowering girls, among others.

On the other hand, the targets set within the scope of SDG 5 also provide an important and traceable road map to municipalities and create opportunities for global and local collaboration. Municipalities also play an important role in mobilizing local decision-makers, civil society representatives, industry and business world representatives, and in tracking of gender equality in the areas of employment and education, etc.

Role of Municipalities in achieving gender equality and the legal framework

Municipality Law No. 5393 is the law constituting the fundamental legal framework for local governments in our country. Within the framework of this law, the Municipality is defined as "a [public entity](#) having administrative and financial autonomy, which is established to meet common local needs of inhabitants of a town and whose decision-making body is elected by voters." The provision of gender equality is one of the basic common needs at the local as well as at the global level. Therefore, we can state that even the definition of the Law No. 5393 per se holds the municipalities responsible for the implementation of SDG 5.

In the Municipal Law, local governments are given direct responsibility within the scope of only one article to ensure gender equality. In the last sentence of paragraph (a) of sub-article 1 of Article 14 titled “Duties and Responsibilities of Municipalities,” it is stated that “Metropolitan municipalities and municipalities with a population of more than 50.000 must open guesthouses for women and children.” This responsibility which is of great importance for the protection of women from violence is also directly related to the target of “Eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation,” SDG 5.2. A correlation can also be established between Article 17 of the Municipal Law no 5393, which determines the legal framework for the Municipal Council and the SDG 5.5 which includes political participation and especially 5.5.1, the indicator of the “proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments.” The Municipal Law also gives municipalities responsibilities for monitoring and observing employment situation within municipal boundaries. In this context, we can state that municipalities are held responsible for the steps to be taken for economic equality within the framework of increasing women’s employment.

Although “Legal Survey Report on Local Administrations Legislation and the Obstacles to the Promotion of Gender Equality in Turkey” prepared within the framework of the Joint Program of the United Nations and the Ministry of Interior reveals that the legislation on municipalities in our country [falls behind the gender equality perspective](#), it is still possible to say that along with the Municipalities Law, the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216, the Special Provincial Administration Law No. 5302 and the legislation on other municipalities give important roles and responsibilities to municipalities in “ensuring gender equality in the economic and political field” even in this context.

The circular entitled “Human Rights of Women and Girls” published by the Ministry of Interior in 2010 also lays important responsibilities on municipalities in the implementation of practices regarding the protection and improvement of the human rights of women and girls. In line with SDG 5.1.1., this circular brings forward important proposals to municipalities on legal frameworks promoting non-discrimination and implementing, strengthening and promoting equality on the basis of gender, and [recommends](#) that steps be taken such as Local Equality Action Plans, Equality Units and Equality Commissions for Women and Men.

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[The Sustainable Development Goals Evaluation Report](#) that Turkey submitted to the UN in 2019 also refers to the role of municipalities in the sustainable development. In the report it is stated that “strong institutional capacity and effective coordination are needed in order to take sustainable development steps compatible with the SDGs” and the fact that local governments should take on more roles and responsibilities in this regard is [particularly emphasized](#).

How can SDG 5 be addressed in the works to be conducted in cooperation with municipalities?

The international framework and the commons-oriented municipal legislation give important responsibilities to municipalities for the implementation of SDG 5. Considering the holistic contributions of the enhancement of gender equality at the local level to social life, welfare and local economy, the goal of achieving gender equality is a roadmap providing important opportunities for municipalities to render the urban sphere as a center, respecting human rights.

Roles and responsibilities of municipalities can be summarized under four headings within the framework of SDG 5:

- 1) Raising awareness of all stakeholders on SDG 5, ensuring their access to the most up-to-date information and implementing mechanisms that ensure regular dialogue at every stage of the process,
- 2) Localizing SDG 5 and prioritizing the steps that can be taken to achieve gender equality in policy and decision-making mechanisms,
- 3) Determining the local role map and the steps to be taken for the achievement of SDG 5, carrying out the necessary and relevant steps, creating the necessary institutional structure and allocating the necessary resources,
- 4) Monitoring and reporting the provision processes of gender equality in all areas of urban life.

There are many studies carried out by municipalities both in Turkey and throughout the world for achieving SDG 5. These studies reveal that municipalities can considerably contribute to sustainable development by empowering women and girls in areas of social services, participation and equality, healthcare, employment and urban planning. Municipalities can also play a key role in the achievement of SDG 5 by consolidating their institutional structures and preparing their strategic plans with a gender sensitive approach.

“Women’s Development Code” implemented in Naga, Philippines can be cited as one of the holistic examples of mainstreaming the gender equality approach in municipalities, starting with strategic planning. As a joint project conducted with the collaboration of the municipality and women’s organizations in the city, the Code [aims](#) to include the empowerment of women in all municipal policies. Again, “Gender Mainstreaming” plan implemented in Vienna, Austria can be cited as another holistic municipal approach to SDG 5. And from Turkey, Nilüfer and Çankaya Municipalities similarly [prioritize](#) SDG 5 in all their municipal services and policies by reflecting the gender perspective to their strategic plans.

The “[Conselheira para a Igualdade](#)” (The counsellor for Gender Equality) Institution established in Cascais, Portugal with the aim of preventing gender-based discrimination and the Equality or Gender Equality Units established in [Eskişehir](#), Şişli, Nilüfer, [Akdeniz](#) and many other municipalities also exemplify what positive steps can be taken by municipalities to extend gender perspective to all municipal works.

Municipalities can easily implement important educational activities for the empowering of women and girls. For example, in the “Women, Health and Violence” program implemented by Bilboa Municipality, important awareness raising activities are [carried out](#) among women for the protection of sexual and reproductive health. In Turkey, the Women’s Human Rights Education Program (KİHEP) organized by Women’s Human Rights-New Ways Association in collaboration with municipalities is directly accessible to thousands of women since many years as an important awareness-raising program and with its holistic approach, makes considerable contributions to the empowering of women at the local level. KİHEP Cooperation Protocol signed by major municipalities across Turkey within the framework of this [program](#) set a good example both in terms of the implementation of SDG 5 at the local level and the municipality-civil society collaboration in the area of sustainable development.

The Schilleria Young Women’s Cafe which was founded by the European Relations and Innovative Projects Unit within Berlin Municipality with the aim of strengthening the political participation of disadvantaged young women and ensuring their more effective participation in decision-making mechanisms [stands out](#) as an important project in the field of strengthening political participation and social services.

Likewise, [gender-responsive budgeting](#) approach which has become increasingly popular in many cities as Gothenborg (Sweden), Rotherdam (Netherlands), Rome (Italy), etc. is one of the approaches that allow municipalities to create and use their resources with a gender perspective and can be easily applied in our country. Participatory budget projects conducted by Nilüfer Municipality can be cited as [a good example](#) of this approach from Turkey.

All these examples and others applied in many cities around the world that could be cited here demonstrate that municipalities contribute to the achievement of the targets set by SDG 5, starting from their strategies, initiate gender studies in the cities by establishing equality units, mobilize civil society organizations and other stakeholders by localizing the goals and can contribute to the raising of social consciousness by conducting training activities on human rights of women and girls. Last but not least, advocacy, monitoring, implementation, reporting and cooperation activities to be carried out by local civil society organizations, especially by women's organizations will be pioneering for the achievement of SDG 5 by 2030, and cooperation activities to be conducted with municipalities within this direction will be essential for the achievement of all SDGs.

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