



Photo Credit: UN Women/Flickr.com via Creative Commons

5 Years to 2030: The Need for Domestic Prioritisation of SDG 5

By S. Nanthini

International Women's Day brings with it an opportunity to reflect on the progress of gender equality around the world. This year is especially pivotal. Not only does 2025 mark the 25th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda – a seminal resolution formally recognising the role of gender in peace and security processes – but it also highlights the five years remaining for the deadline of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This year provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress that has been made – as well as – the work still to be done.

There has been progress made worldwide. For example, women now hold approximately a quarter of parliamentary seats worldwide, a significant increase from even a decade ago. In Southeast Asian countries overall, 23 per cent of seats are held by women with the highest participation rate in Timor-Leste at 38 per cent. In terms of official development assistance (ODA) to the region, ODA specifically to support gender equality has increased substantially from 12 per cent in 2013 to 47 percent in 2022 – which has clearly translated into better outcomes for women from the region.

However, progress is not linear. The continued polarisation of

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the international community and a growing backlash against women's rights are having a chilling effect on its progress. In fact, in some countries around the world, women's rights are even being rolled back, worsening gender disparities. One of the world's largest development agencies, USAID is being dismantled in an effort to "reevaluat[e] and realig[n] United States Foreign Aid". Considering USAID contributions last year made up nearly 40 per cent of all aid worldwide, this is devastating to programmes around the world. Moreover, considering the US push to reintroduce the global gag order on abortion and erase policies that favour "gender ideology", women are likely to be disproportionately affected by this disruption in the global humanitarian and development sector.

What can then be done? While the impacts of these policies are likely to be felt far and wide, this may also be a chance to revamp the global humanitarian system. In particular, by allowing recipient countries to take over formerly USAID-supported activities and fill this gap on their own. In Southeast Asia, this can be done at both the regional level – through ASEAN – or the national level. ASEAN member states could work together to increase their domestic investment to support gender equality. This includes identifying opportunities to invest in gender-responsive social protection, expanding care infrastructure and improve gender – specific data availability in the region – overall, prioritising gender parity as a key issue area for ASEAN.

This is not new for ASEAN. In fact, there has already been significant work in this area as

demonstrated by several regional commitments over the years such as the 2004 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region, the 2017 Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN and the 2022 ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS. As such, this may prove to be an opportune topic on which for ASEAN to take domestic ownership and continue to progress regionally, regardless of international support.

In order for humanity to have any hope of achieving SDGs in a timeframe that not only meets the 2030 deadline, half the global population cannot be disregarded. Considering global headwinds, it may now be necessary for recipient countries to look towards their own needs; to internalise gender equality as a significant domestic priority and work towards the achievement of SDG 5.

SUGGESTED READINGS

ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, December 2022, https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/FINAL_ASEAN%20Regional%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Women%2C%20Peace%20and%20Security.pdf

ASEAN and UN Women (2024). ASEAN Gender Outlook 2024 – Achieving the SDGs for all and leaving no woman or girl behind. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ASEAN-Gender-Outlook-2.0-FINAL-20240924-web-1.pdf>

Celis, B (2025). Dismantling of USAID will impact women more intensely. El Pais. 12 February. <https://english.elpais.com/international/2025-02-12/dismantling-of-usaid-will-impact-women-more-intensely.html>



Photo Credit: UN Women/Flickr.com via Creative Commons

CLIMATE CHANGE



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

US energy secretary says global warming a side effect of modern economy

U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright said that global warming is a side effect of building the modern world, and vowed to end former President Joe Biden's climate policies to promote growth of fossil fuels. Wright made the comments to kick off CERAWEEK, the nation's largest energy conference, in Houston.

Timothy Gardner

Reuters | 10 March 2025

Children planting trees to address climate change

School children have planted hundreds of trees, hedges and shrubs, as part of a Trees for Cities' project, to promote nature recovery and building resilience against the effects of climate change. Victoria Primary School in Keighley is one of six schools and two community sites in Bradford receiving 2,356 trees to create a natural outdoor area where pupils can learn about biodiversity.

Naj Modak

BBC | 10 March 2025

Singapore to study how worst-case scenarios affect local sea-level rise projections

Singapore Researchers from Singapore will update sea-level rise projections for the Republic and the region by taking into account what are known as "black swan" events. This move to update the Republic's projections for sea-level rise – which is estimated to be up to 1.15m by 2100 – comes after a Nanyang Technological University (NTU) study showed that global sea-level rise could be higher than earlier projections if extreme events were considered.

Shabana Begum

The Straits Times | 10 March 2025

Trump officials decimate climate protections and consider axeing key greenhouse gas finding

Trump's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an extraordinary cavalcade of pollution rule rollbacks, led by the announcement it would potentially scrap a landmark 2009 finding by the US government that planet-heating gases, such as carbon dioxide, pose a threat to human health.

Oliver Milman

The Guardian | 12 March 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Water and climate: Rising risks for urban populations

This research analyses climate hazard trends and vulnerabilities in the world's top 100 most-populated cities, plus 12 cities where WaterAid works. The findings highlight the variability of climate change impacts across the globe and emphasise the heightened risks in highly populated cities with existing vulnerabilities.

WaterAid

2025

Greenhouse gases reduce the satellite carrying capacity of low Earth orbit

Anthropogenic contributions of greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere have been observed to cause cooling and contraction in the thermosphere, which is projected to continue for many decades. Decreasing density reduces drag on debris objects and extends their lifetime in orbit, posing a persistent collision hazard to other satellites and risking the cascading generation of more debris.

William E. Parker, et al.

Nature Sustainability | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Singapore International Water Week (SIWW) Spotlight 2025

Held in the alternate year between main editions of SIWW, SIWW Spotlight 2025 with theme "Flood Resilient Cities—Adapting to Climate Change" will focus on how cities can adapt and build greater resilience to floods and extreme weather events. It will bring together leaders from cities, utilities, regulators and industry to exchange experiences, share case studies and facilitate peer-to-peer learning in tackling such climate challenges.

Singapore

23-25 June 2025

ENERGY SECURITY



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

A strategic opportunity: U.S. funding in Vietnam's pursuit of nuclear power

Vietnam is resuming its push for nuclear power after an eight-year hiatus, striving to complete a nuclear power plant in just five years. To achieve this demanding goal, Vietnam has turned to its partners for funding, including the United States.

Lauren Mai

CSIS | 6 March 2025

The world's biggest polluter, China, is ramping up renewables

China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced that the country would be investing in major renewable energy projects—developing new offshore wind farms and large scale clean energy bases that combine solar and wind farms.

Simmone Shah

Time | 8 March 2025

Mosti: Malaysia must sign at least eight protocols to use nuclear energy

The protocols or conventions that Malaysia has ratified and signed included The Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; The Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident; and The Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency.

Bernama

Malay Mail | 10 March 2025

The Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) can succeed without the United States

Despite the U.S. withdrawal, critical financing and support for the JETP remains. Germany and Japan have partnered as co-leaders to fill the U.S.'s vacated leadership position in Indonesia's USD20 billion JETP.

Grant Hauber

Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis |
12 March 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

IAEA world fusion outlook 2024

This latest report aims to be the global reference for authoritative information and updates on fusion energy — a potentially unlimited, low carbon source of clean energy, which can contribute to decarbonization and diversification of energy generation in the long term.

International Atomic Energy Agency
2024

The impact of digital economy on energy rebound effect in China: A stochastic energy demand frontier approach

This study argues that we should deepen the reform of energy prices, promote sophisticated energy-saving technology development, and promote energy structure transformation while expanding the digital economy to mitigate the negative impact of the rebound effect effectively.

Chenchen Huang and Boqiang Lin
Energy Policy, Vol. 195 | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

IRENA Insights – Green Hydrogen: The Importance of Developing a Robust Quality Infrastructure Ecosystem

IRENA, in collaboration with the German Metrology Institute, underscores the importance of careful planning, capacity building, and coordination among policymakers, industry, and scientific bodies to ensure quality, sustainability, and safety.

Webinar

11 March 2025

FOOD SECURITY



NEWS & COMMENTARIES

China, Malaysia eye food security

In conjunction with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Malaysia, both nations have signed a landmark agreement to strengthen cooperation in food security. Climate-induced challenges faced by both countries face in their agricultural sector serve as a base for collaborative solutions and initiatives, setting a regional precedent towards future resilience.

Genevieve Donnellon-May

Bangkok Post | 18 February 2025

Technology the best bet to transform Africa's food systems

Agriculture accounts for nearly 60% of total employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, but agricultural productivity continues to lag behind other regions due to the lower adoption of simple technological solutions like the use of drought-resistant seeds, drones and satellite imagery. Local governments and regional bodies play important roles in helping farmers access the necessary skills and tools to engage in sustainable and profitable agriculture.

Otiato Opali

China Daily | 21 February 2025

Indonesian president Prabowo's quest for food security faces challenges

Despite Prabowo Subianto's administration's ambitious aims to achieve self-sufficiency for staples like rice by 2027, the country still faces challenges given its ageing population and lack of young successors. Its Pasuruan province presents a potential model for adopting a long-term approach to food self-sufficiency.

Saifulbahri Ismail, Louisa Tang

CNA | 24 February 2025

Climate change threatens food security—can data be the real hero?

Climate change and more intense and frequent extreme weather effects plague the agricultural industry, disrupting pest cycles and crop yields, and in turn strategic and operational farming decisions. Artificial intelligence and data analytics offer potential to reduce these disruptions. Collaborative networks and digital platforms can also promote real-time information exchange among farmers, building a common reservoir of knowledge and enhancing resilience to present and future challenges.

Valeria Kogan

Forbes | 24 February 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Utilisation of AI - reshaping the future of food safety, agriculture and food security - a critical review

This paper examines the potential of leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance food safety and food security. The authors posit that AI models present significant benefits in supporting sustainable food systems by maximising crop yields, reducing losses and lowering operational costs. It also highlights some of the inextricable challenges that come with integrating AI into the routine operations of the food industry as well as some possible strategies to mitigate them.

Jerina Rugji, et al.

Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition | 2024

Smallholder farmers' challenges and opportunities: Implications for agricultural production, environment and food security

The authors examine the adaptive strategies of smallholder farmers and its importance in enhancing sustainable agricultural productivity and environmental management efforts. They show significant differences in farming strategies, with some households prioritising maximising yields through high-expense production strategies, and others focusing on optimising inputs to enhance profit-margins.

They recommend promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices and policies which target interventions that balance economic growth with environmental sustainability.

Van Touch, et al.

Journal of Environmental Management, Vol 370, 122536 | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

AI for Food Safety

This hybrid webinar hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) explored the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in food safety management and highlighted some practical applications of AI in areas like food recall management and outbreak prediction. It also touched on the potential advantages and drawbacks of using AI technology and offered insights and case studies that regulatory authorities can take into consideration when implementing policies.

Recorded Webinar

16 January 2025



Photo Credit: Freepik.com

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

New mutant mpox strain discovered in the DRC

A new strain of mpox is a mutation of Clade 1a mpox, otherwise known as Clade 1b, and has been spreading rapidly in Africa since 2023. The mutation has caused increased transmissibility and has spread to several countries including in Europe and Asia. The mpox epidemic has been declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization.

Arthur Scott-Geddes

The Telegraph | 3 March 2025

Europe should diversify drug supplies to face health crises, ministers say

Health ministers of 11 European Union countries recommended reducing the regional bloc's overreliance on a small number of countries' (Asia and China) production of vital drug supplies such as antibiotics and anaesthetics in preparation for future health crises.

Andreas Rinke and Vera Eckert

Reuters | 9 March 2025

TTSH helps refine AI-enabled tool that will calculate accurate insulin dosage for diabetics

Using technology to aid health outcomes, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) has collaborated with Buzud on an AI tool in an app to help diabetes patients calculate their correct insulin dosage before a meal, with an accuracy of 90%. The app will be launched when accuracy has reached 99.9%.

Zachary Lim

The Straits Times | 10 March 2025

Singapore machine to strengthen muscles approved for clinical use locally and in the US

Singapore has developed a Quantum Mitohormesis (QMT) device to strengthen muscles and reduce pain. It has gained approval from health regulators in Singapore and US for rehabilitation of patients. The device has been recommended for patients who have sarcopenia and osteoarthritis, common to the ageing population.

Salma Khalik

The Straits Times | 10 March 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATION

Community-onset bloodstream infection among people with opioid use disorders: A twenty-year population-based cohort study in Queensland, Australia

A study aimed at identifying clinical factors and outcomes among adults with opioid use disorder-associated bloodstream infections in Queensland, Australia found that patients were six times more likely to have liver disease and eight times more likely to have endocarditis, and more likely to be infected with yeasts.

Kevin B. Laupland, et al.

Infectious Diseases | 2025

Climate change unveils hidden microbial dangers

A study discusses how climate change disrupts aquatic microbial ecosystems, threatening public health, exacerbated by rising temperatures and pollution that lead to algal blooms, and how antibiotic resistance genes spread rapidly under climate stress. The paper calls for advanced wastewater treatment and global monitoring networks.

Haoxuan Yu

Environmental Science and Ecotechnology | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Strengthening Telemedicine: Sustainable Practices and Policy Pathways for Health Systems

The webinar co-hosted by World Health Organization (WHO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will address the digital health topic of post-pandemic landscape of telemedicine and the relevant tools and insights to support countries. The event is open to the public for registration and is held online on 26 March 2025.

Webinar

26 March 2025

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF



Photo Credit: DFID - UK Department for International Development via Flickr.com/Creative Commons

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

Trump's aid cuts could devastate Myanmar more than anyone expects

President Donald Trump's executive order to halt foreign aid, followed by the shutdown plan of the USAID, has caused panic and chaos in the global humanitarian landscape. Myanmar is no exception.

Su Mon Thazin Aung

Fulcrum | 11 February 2025

For Myanmar's war victims and Rohingya refugees, US aid cuts are disastrous

USAID-funded projects in Myanmar have already been hit, with UN Agencies, international NGOs, and local aid groups having to scale back some healthcare services, food aid, and educational programmes.

Tanbirul Miraj Ripon and Ali M. Latifi

The New Humanitarian | 27 February 2025

Jakarta's floods worsen, displacing thousands as extreme weather, poor planning collide

Extreme weather and poor urban planning have exacerbated Jakarta's annual flooding, displacing residents and highlighting critical infrastructure failures

Resty Woro Yuniar

South China Morning Post | 11 March 2025

EU's top diplomat pledges unified support for Ukraine and global humanitarian aid in dig at US

The European Union has a message for the Trump administration: It will continue supporting Ukraine against Russia's illegal invasion, step up humanitarian aid when others pull back, and boost global teamwork to address the world's challenges.

Edith M. Lederer and Farnoush Amiri

AP News | 12 March 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Transmission in interprofessional humanitarian teamwork: A scoping review

Since the end of the 1990s, the humanitarian sector lives a process of professionalisation which has created some challenges for organizations and workers. This journal aim to identify the mechanisms of knowledge transmission within humanitarian intervention collectives in a professionalization context.

Galaad Lefay, Pierre-Yves Therriault and Catherine Delgoulet

Journal of International Humanitarian Action, Vol. 10 | 2025

Nature-society relations in disaster governance frameworks

This paper studies how the relations between nature and society are constructed in disaster governance framework. Dominant disaster governance frameworks present nature and society as separate realms, and the organisation of society is increasingly seen as the key cause of hazards and disasters.

Eija Merilainen

Disaster, Vol. 49 | 2025

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

2025 Humanitarian Leadership Conference: Transformative Leadership in Times of Polycrisis

As the world is engulfed by a rising flood of environmental, political and economic conflicts, are we in danger of being swallowed by never-ending disaster? How can uncertainty and risk shape positive communal change and help leaders to navigate the polycrisis?

Hybrid

8-9 April 2025

MIGRATION



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

NEWS & COMMENTARIES

'Like a death sentence': Some migrant workers, maids with inadequate medical coverage hide conditions for fear of being sent home

When faced with critical illnesses, migrant workers and domestic workers are vulnerable due to inadequate medical coverage and most employers would likely choose to send workers home.

Eunice Sng

CNA | 21 February 2025

Russia wants migrants from new countries to help plug labour shortage, Interfax reports

Russia is seeking to widen its source of migrant workers beyond former Soviet republics to Asian nations such as Myanmar. Putin has held talks with Myanmar's military junta chief Min Aung Hlaing in the Kremlin. Since the war, workers have been drawn into the armed forces and defence industries away from the civilian workforce, and others have left the country.

Darya Korsunskaya and Alexander Marrow

Reuters | 4 March 2025

Work permit holders will no longer have limit on employment period, maximum age to rise to 63

From 1 July, work permit holders will have no restrictions on their period of employment, while the maximum age of employment will be raised from 60 to 63. There were close to 1.14 million work permit holders, including migrant domestic workers in Singapore in June 2024.

Davina Tham

CNA | 6 March 2025

Over 40,000 migrant workers caught in Myanmar junta's conscription trap

Myanmar's military regime has banned civilians selected for conscription from leaving the country since 30 January. Since January, over 40,000 migrant workers have been barred from travelling overseas for work and travel.

Yu Phyu Han

The Irrawaddy | 10 March 2025

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Burmese migrant domestic workers' foodwork and biopedagogies in pandemic Singapore

This study examines how Burmese migrant women in Singapore develop their own biopedagogical practices, or ways to live and eat healthily, during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research explores how migrant domestic workers can achieve health and food security individually and for their families while working abroad.

Bittandra Chand Somaiah, et al.

Global Food Security, Vol. 24 | 2024

Why has migration research so little impact?

Examining knowledge practices in migration policy making and migration studies

This article examines the impact of migration research in policy making and academia, and how migration policy actors and scholars produce knowledge. It further presents three scenarios for the future of migration studies.

Katharina Natter and Natalie Welfens

International Migration Review, Vol. 58, Iss. 4 | 2024

EVENT & ANNOUNCEMENT

Theorizing Migration and Social Mobility in Asia and Beyond

This workshop examines the processes of social mobility and migration, for example the role of migration in the emergence of new middle classes in Asia, migration-citizenship regimes and transnational family dynamics.

Hybrid

3 - 4 April 2025