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DATA DRIVING CHANGE

INTRODUCING THE EM2030 SDG GENDER INDEX
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, 193 countries – every member state of the United Nations (UN) – pledged to end gender inequality by 2030 when they signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This global ambition must now be matched by action. And action demands robust data and evidence.

Data and evidence can drive accountability on gender equality issues. This is particularly true when data are in the hands of – and used effectively by – girls' and women's movements and advocates, backed by champions from government, business, the media, religious communities and others who have the power to make a difference.

Data – especially about the lived realities of girls and women, about what is working and where we're falling behind – have the power to hold governments accountable, to shine a light on hidden issues, and to change laws, policies and budget decisions. If we want to galvanize political will and policy attention that translate into positive change for girls and women, we need data as one of the tools to ensure that gender equality moves up the policy and political agenda.

Equal Measures 2030 (EM2030) aims for global gender equality, backed by robust data – a world where every girl and woman counts and is counted. This unique partnership, led by civil society and the private sector, connects data and evidence with advocacy and action. We aim to ensure that girls' and women's movements, advocates and decision makers have the rich data they need, when they need them, and in a form they can use to drive progress on gender equality.

EM2030 believes that the urgency of this issue cannot be over-stated. And according to our recent survey of gender equality advocates, nine in ten (89 per cent) agree with us that a breakthrough in SDG progress on helping the most disadvantaged girls and women will not be possible without relevant data.[1] Almost half (49 per cent) of advocates feel that gender equality has neither improved nor worsened, but has instead remained static for the past five years. Those on the front-line in the fight for gender equality are worried about stagnating progress, and believe that there is a long way to go before we see the transformational advances needed to achieve the SDGs.

In this, our latest major report, EM2030 introduces a new tool – the SDG Gender Index – to tell the story of progress for girls and women and to measure whether the world is on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. The pilot Index responds to the urgent need for data on gender equality, given their critical role in progress towards the goals.

This report unpacks the SDG Gender Index to demonstrate its use for cross-country comparisons and in-depth analysis, and for the review of gender equality across the SDGs. It also identifies a range of 'missing' issues that are not sufficiently reflected in the current stock of global data: issues that are, nevertheless, of critical importance for girls and women.[2] This pilot iteration of the Index provides a solid basis for the further development of data tools for gender equality and the expansion of country coverage in 2019.

DRIVING PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE SDGS: THE ROLE OF DATA

In a world where 'evidence', 'information' and 'knowledge' are increasingly weaponized, undermined, and even called 'fake news', robust data – grounded in people's lived realities – are more important than ever. Their importance is also heightened by the SDG agenda, with its unprecedented demand for new and better data on a wide range of indicators.

Here, the SDGs represent a marked departure from their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which measured gender equality primarily by the educational participation of girls, with a nod to maternal mortality and reproductive health.

In contrast to the MDGs, with their focus on low- and middle-income countries and the reduction of extreme poverty, the SDGs are universal, applying to all countries, rich or poor. What's more, gender issues are mainstreamed throughout the goals and gender equality has its own comprehensive, stand-alone goal: SDG 5. With its emphasis on equity and on 'leaving no one behind', the SDG agenda also amplifies the importance of gender equality as an essential component for the achievement of every goal. Taken together, the SDGs offer a crucial opportunity to push for lasting progress for girls and women.

The comprehensive nature of the SDGs, however, also presents significant data challenges. For many of the SDG targets and indicators, information is not yet disaggregated by sex, there is no intention to disaggregate by sex, or there are data gaps that prevent us from measuring key issues, which hamper our ability to understand today's gender differences and the direction of travel for the well-being of girls and women. Indeed, gender bias is often engrained in the way that we measure – or fail to measure – aspects of a person's life.[3]

Currently, less than one quarter of the 232 indicators used by the UN to measure progress towards the SDGs refer explicitly to girls or women or specify disaggregation by sex. And for the 53 indicators that relate specifically to gender, only 15 are generally available and well-defined enough to measure.[4] This leaves to one side the many other indicators spread across the SDGs that are highly relevant for gender equality, but that either do not focus explicitly on gender, or worse, are 'gender blind': failing to acknowledge or address existing and often deep-rooted inequalities.

Gaps also persist across every aspect of data disaggregation. Two thirds (66 per cent) of advocates in our recent Global Advocates Survey identified insufficient data disaggregation (including by sex, wealth and location) as a challenge. Monitoring of the SDGs' 'leave no one behind' agenda demands disaggregation of data not only by sex but also across multiple forms of disadvantage, combining sex and other characteristics such as age, income quintile, geographic location, disability and more. There are also political challenges. When asked why gaps remain in government gender data, the most common response from gender advocates is that "collecting data on issues that affect girls and women isn't prioritized": 91 per cent think this is a "very relevant" or "fairly

relevant" explanation for government data gaps. And they go further: 85 per cent of advocates also said that government data on gender equality are "somewhat" or "mostly" incomplete.

WELCOME TO THE SDG GENDER INDEX

EM2030's SDG Gender Index and related tools – including our new Gender Advocates Data Hub to share data, evidence and stories on gender equality and the SDGs[5] – build on the first two years of our partnership's engagement and research.

The Index has been shaped by our work with partners across six initial focus countries – Colombia, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Senegal – as well as dialogue with thousands of other stakeholders worldwide. Its development has been informed by the findings of two formal surveys: one with more than 100 policymakers in 2017[6] and the other with more than 600 gender equality advocates in 2018. Together, these have increased our understanding of the demand for gender-related data and the inherent challenges and opportunities in connecting such data with advocacy and action for gender equality. The perspectives of gender advocates, in particular, have been crucial for the development of the SDG Gender Index.

Drawing on this mix of country engagement and global consultation and research, the SDG Gender Index is the most comprehensive index to date on gender equality aligned to the SDGs. And because gender equality is embedded in every goal, this tool is a vital indicator for key advancements across almost the entire SDG agenda.

The Index aims to help girls' and women's movements and champions across sectors to measure progress on the gender equality aspects of the SDGs and to use data, stories and evidence to hold policymakers accountable across countries.

As well as being a global tool for accountability on the promises made in the SDGs, the SDG Gender Index is already being used by our partner organizations in the six initial focus countries to frame their advocacy, and to dig deeper into the issues they have prioritized for data-driven advocacy on the SDGs.

BUILDING THE SDG GENDER INDEX: COLLABORATION TO PUT GENDER DATA IN THE HANDS OF ADVOCATES

The EM2030 SDG Gender Index is unique in that it has been developed by a partnership between civil society and private sector actors, as well as through engagement across six countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Its design has been informed by consultations across the EM2030 partnership (including with national partners in the focus countries), the public, by inputs from a Technical Reference Group, and by our surveys with policymakers and gender advocates worldwide.

In keeping with the spirit of the SDGs, the universal Index aims to capture a mix of gender equality issues that are relevant across all

Rene Løkkegaard Jepsen/Plan International

countries and contexts. Its breadth of indicators responds to the expressed needs of gender equality champions across sectors.

Their views have helped to:
- prioritize issues that must be reflected in the EM2030 SDG Gender Index
- identify issues that have traction and widespread support among advocates
- identify issues that should be amplified to build larger constituencies of support among gender equality advocates, such as climate change, clean water and sanitation, and public finance
- identify the 'missing' but critical policy areas where global data are insufficient to adequately measure cross-country progress towards the gender equality issues within the SDGs.

In its first iteration, the SDG Gender Index includes 43 indicators across 12 of the 17 SDGs and is tested here across our six initial focus countries: Colombia, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Senegal.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE SDG GENDER INDEX?

In the SDG Gender Index we assign an overall score for each country: the scores are presented as a heat map – a score closer to dark green on the spectrum represents greater gender equality, in comparison to the other countries in the group and based on the measures we've chosen.

One strength of the SDG Gender Index is that it breaks down a country's score to enable comparisons by individual SDG. For the six initial focus countries this goal-by-goal analysis reveals a mixed picture: all countries perform well on some SDGs, but no country is ahead of the others across all of the 12 goals. A dashboard of results by SDG and by country, as well as further analysis, can be found in the full report.

It is important to clarify that the score does not represent how near or far a given country is to reaching the 'end-point' for that SDG. It represents how the country performs on the selected indicators when compared with the other countries in this group.

FIGURE 1
Pilot SDG Gender Index scores for six focus countries
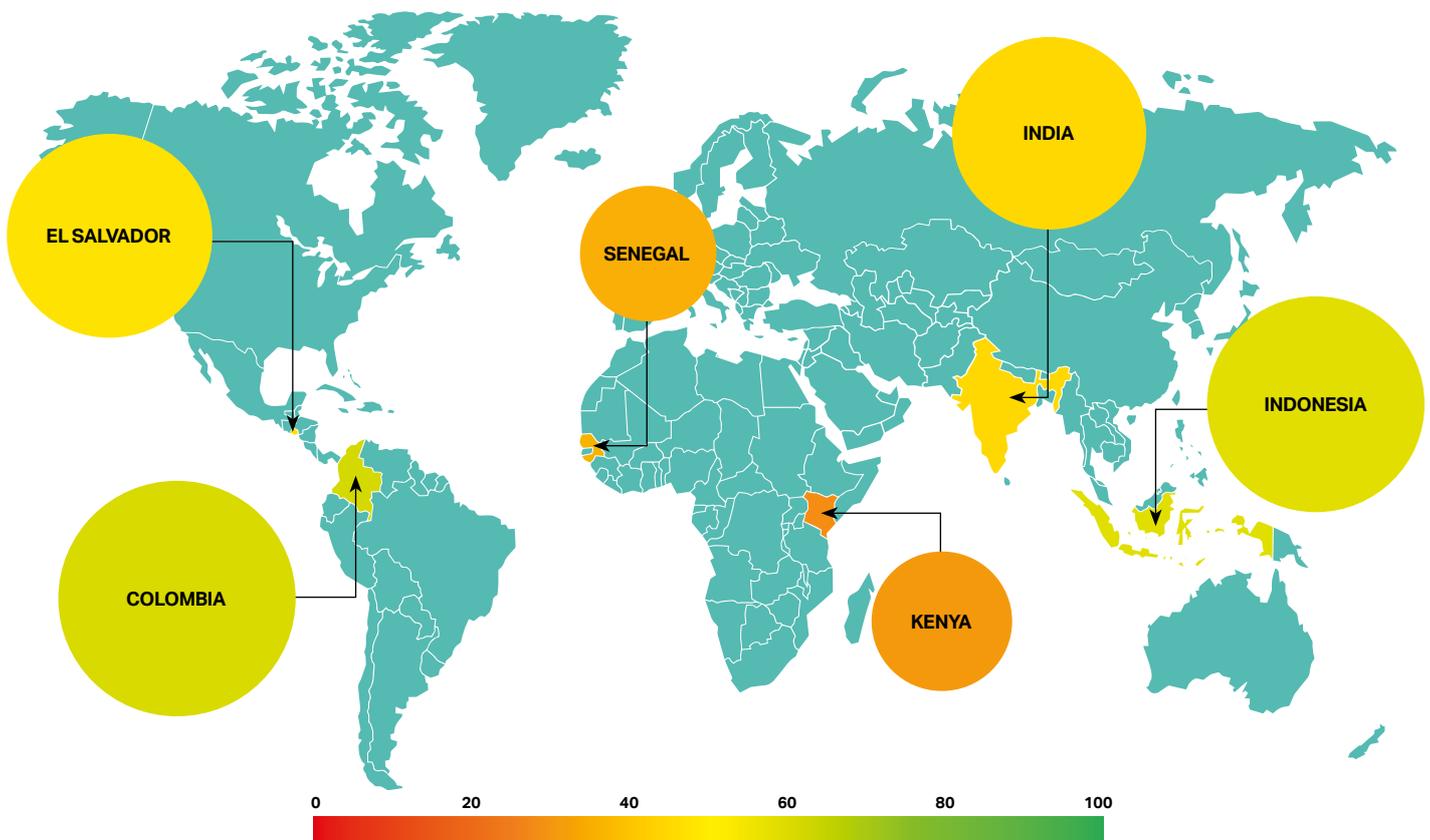
Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2018

This method of relative scoring holds the potential for much richer cross-national comparisons when the SDG Gender Index is extended to cover a wider group of countries in 2019.

Colombia has the highest overall score on the SDG Gender Index among the six countries, scoring relatively well on several SDGs, especially SDG 1 (poverty) and SDG 7 (energy). On SDG 3, Colombia had the highest rate of women whose need for family planning was being met (87 per cent in 2016), and the lowest incidence of new HIV infections among women of reproductive age (0.04 in 2016). However, the Index scores show there is room for improvement on a number of SDGs, most notably on SDG 16 (peace, justice and institutions), where the impact of violence and conflict on girls and women is apparent. For example, Colombia had the lowest percentage of women who reported feeling safe walking alone at night (just 36 per cent in 2017).

El Salvador scores fairly well on SDG 3 (health), SDG 6 (water and sanitation) and SDG 7 (energy). El Salvador, for example, had the lowest maternal mortality ratio of the six countries in 2015 and the highest proportion of people across the six countries using at least basic sanitation services (91 per cent as of 2015). However, El Salvador has several weak points in the Index, including on SDG 5 where it has the lowest score (alongside Senegal) for the restrictiveness of its abortion laws. It also accounts for one of the most startling figures emerging from the Index in SDG 16 (peace, justice and institutions): the rate of women who were victims of intentional homicide in El Salvador was nearly 60 times the rate in Indonesia in 2016.

India scores well on SDG 10 (inequality), with the lowest levels of income inequality, alongside Indonesia, as of 2012 and the highest score for the extent to which gender equality was reflected in its Constitution. However, it lags behind on SDG 13 on climate especially, largely due to the impact of major droughts in 2015 and 2016 that affected nearly a quarter of the country's large population, but also because it has the lowest score for whether the delegation representing the country at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was gender-balanced in 2012.

Indonesia has the highest Index score for SDG 4 on education amongst this group of countries. It had the lowest rate of girls who are 'over-age' for their grade in primary school in 2016, and it tied with Colombia for female literacy in the same year, with 94 per cent of women having basic literacy skills. However, on SDG 10 it has the lowest score (alongside El Salvador) for the extent to which gender equality is reflected in its Constitution.

Kenya has a strong Index score for SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (work and growth). It had a very high proportion of women who have made or received a digital payment in the past year, and does fairly well on both the measure of whether women are represented in five key senior positions in the government in 2018 and also the extent to which the country has laws mandating women's workplace equality. However, Kenya has areas of weakness in several goals including SDG 3 on health, due to a high maternal mortality ratio (MMR), high adolescent birth rate, and very high rate of new HIV infections among girls and women.

Senegal has some areas of relative strength in the Index, especially considering that it is the least economically developed of the six focus countries (as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita), but it is clear that challenges remain. Senegal leads the group on the percentage of seats in the national Parliament that are held by women (42 per cent in 2018) and it also has the highest Index score on SDG 13 (climate). However, it has significant challenges in a number of areas, including SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 4 on education, and certain aspects of SDG 5 on gender equality. For example, Senegal had the highest rate of child, early and forced marriage in 2015, and the highest percentage of women who reported thinking a man is justified in beating his wife in certain circumstances in 2016. Like El Salvador, Senegal also has no legal grounds for abortion.

COMMON CHALLENGES AND REASONS FOR HOPE ACROSS THE SIX COUNTRIES

The report delves into our partners' analyses of the six focus countries, using the findings of the SDG Gender Index. Looking across the country profiles, however, several themes emerge, both negative and positive.

Common challenges

While all six countries demonstrate some examples of strong laws, quotas and constitutional commitments to women's human rights, they are not necessarily transforming the lives of girls and women, as seen in El Salvador's continuing high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) and in Kenya's lack of land ownership among women.

In many of the six countries, the legal frameworks that protect the rights of girls and women can be overridden by customary law (including legislation on the age of marriage in India, Indonesia and Senegal), leaving the rights of girls and women effectively unprotected, further compounding their marginalization.

Entrenched patriarchal social norms are also a strong common theme, including in El Salvador's *machista* (male chauvinist) environment, in pervasive discrimination in Kenya, and a negative reaction to the very word 'parity' in Senegal.

Religious and/or conservative backlash against gender equality is described in several of the six country profiles, including in relation to child, early and forced marriage in Indonesia and in response to recent changes in Senegal.

Two challenges that emerged as gender equality policy priorities for advocates in our Global Survey – GBV and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) – have also emerged as persistent challenges in many of our focus countries, driven by discrimination and patriarchal social norms that limit a woman's agency, choice and options. Examples include rising murders of girls and women in Colombia, almost half of women in Senegal and Kenya reporting having experienced violence, and high rates of teen pregnancy in El Salvador.

Finally, the intersecting nature of discrimination – where certain groups of girls and women (often those from indigenous communities, remote areas and the poorest) are most often left out of progress – comes through strongly in many of the country case studies, including Colombia, Kenya and Indonesia.

> **… because of the conflict, [women] have to leave behind an entire house and land. I believe women have been the most impacted by the armed conflict and have since struggled to access social and health services."**
> **- Nini, Advocate, Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres**

Reasons for hope

Despite certain challenges, our six country profiles also tell stories of great hope for gender equality. While progress may not be felt equally by all women, each country has seen progress that is worth celebrating and has examples of girls and women driving change, including through the use of data and evidence. Recent changes in laws are aiming to tackle key challenges in some countries, such as the 2010 Parity Law in Senegal, the requirement in Kenya's 2010 Constitution that no more than two thirds of the members of elected bodies can be of one gender, and the legislative reform in India to criminalize voyeurism, stalking and acid attacks.

There has been rapid progress linked to the provision of services, including water and sanitation, health, integrated services to respond to GBV, and financial services. Examples include the rapid acceleration of household access to improved sanitation in El Salvador, to public healthcare in Colombia and Indonesia, and to GBV response services in India.

Some countries cite progress on women's financial inclusion, including India, where the percentage of women with a bank or savings account more than trebled between 2005/06 and 2015/16, and in Kenya, where almost as many women as men are aware of mobile money markets and have used mobile money in the last month.

THE STORIES BEHIND THE DATA

> **We – the GROOTS women – decided to begin generating our localized data based on the specific needs of a specific project. This data is powerful – it is real-time and highly contextualized. It is this kind of evidence that has equipped us with content for public participation. We are able to share our views in government planning meetings and support our arguments with our strong data."**
> **- Winrose, Advocate, GROOTS Kenya**

The SDG Gender Index is a starting point for advocates at national level: a full understanding of its results requires unpacking of the indicators, analysis of the country context, and the ability to dig deeper, using national and sub-national data to scrutinize the results for different groups of girls and women. It also requires data and evidence generated by communities that complement official, government statistics, including the qualitative data and human stories that look beyond quantitative numbers alone.

Fauzan Ijazah/Plan International

One distinctive feature of the SDG Gender Index is that it reflects the work of a partnership that extends far beyond the Index itself. Through our regional partners and national influencing partners we have access to country-specific insights that can be used alongside our SDG Gender Index to tell a deeper story of the everyday realities for girls and women in a given country, and to explore the root causes of inequality to inform the design of effective solutions.

In all six of our focus countries, powerful stories illustrate the role of girls' and women's movements and gender equality champions from all sectors in using data and evidence to drive change on key SDG issues. Stories from three countries demonstrate the potential of data-driven influencing (with stories from all six countries available in the report).

In Colombia the National Summit of Women and Peace in 2013 played a pivotal role in one of the most inclusive formal peace processes yet seen. EM2030's partner, Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres, is now gathering data to monitor the implementation of the resulting Peace Agreement.

> **When I was evacuated (once more) in 2017, without any reparation, my parents were very worried about me. I was not threatened though. I was there negotiating with other leaders, asking the government, 'what support or guarantees are you going to give us?'"**
> **- Nini, Advocate, Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres**

In Indonesia, EM2030's partner KAPAL Perempuan supports community women's groups, including one that is recording incidences of domestic violence and child, early and forced marriage, the number of women with adequate documentation, and the number receiving any social support from the

government in order to bolster advocacy for better access to government services. KAPAL Perempuan is combining such community-level data on early marriage with national and sub-national data to make the case for raising Indonesia's legal age of marriage for girls.

> **We're working with the Social Security Administrator and Social Department to access the government scheme, especially national health insurance, to ensure women get the right support."**
> **- Ning, Advocate, KAPAL Perempuan**

In Kenya, EM2030 partner GROOTS Kenya has collected data on land ownership to advocate for joint land titles, making it faster, easier and cheaper for a woman to have her name added to a land deed. With support from EM2030, GROOTS Kenya is broadening its data-driven influencing, using national and local gender data drawn from original research to drive accountability on gender-transformative SDG targets prioritized by communities.

> **In our culture, land ownership belongs to the boy. We have seen big improvements, though. Today, land is at least shared among both boys and girls."**
> **- Mary, Advocate, GROOTS Kenya**

APPLYING THE SDG GENDER INDEX TO THE GLOBAL GOALS

This report draws on the SDG Gender Index to assess gender equality across 12 of the interlinked, indivisible and universal SDGs. In each case, we provide key facts and a rationale for the inclusion of each SDG, outlining its relevance for gender equality. We explain the issues captured in our Index, and why these must be tackled if the world is to uphold the rights of girls and women. One word dominates our review of the issues included in the SDG Gender Index, and that is 'disproportionate': across the 12 goals reviewed, we see that the world's most pressing challenges have a disproportionate impact on girls and women. Yet their disadvantage is often masked by data that present a picture of averages, and, therefore, of progress that appears to be evenly distributed. This reinforces the urgent need for more and better data, disaggregated by sex and other characteristics, to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

The first iteration of the SDG Gender Index has also revealed a number of issues that are of critical importance for girls and women worldwide, yet are currently 'missing' from the stock of global data on gender equality. Given their importance, these are issues we would have included in the Index, if the data were available. They include, for example, intra-household income and resource allocation, age at first pregnancy, women's participation in energy policymaking, and the inclusion of gender provisions in trade agreements, among others.

Taken together, these 'missing' issues can form part of an advocacy agenda calling for more and better gender data, contributing to existing calls for gaps in gender data to be filled.[7] In order to truly gauge whether the ambition of the SDGs is

being met for all girls and women, we will need better globally-comparable measurements of all of these issues and more. We set out the relevance of each of these 'missing' issues for gender equality and the achievement of the SDGs, as well as some examples of promising measurement approaches on these issues in the report.

NEXT STEPS

We are already a fifth of the way through the 2015 to 2030 lifespan of the SDGs, and the global community urgently needs accelerated and expanded action to meet the goals. Yet few countries are making the wide-ranging policy, law and budget commitments that will achieve the scale of change needed to achieve gender equality by 2030.

The first two years of the EM2030 partnership have put in place strong foundations for future research and advocacy to uphold the rights of girls and women. It has generated new tools for gender advocates worldwide, including the SDG Gender Index and the Gender Advocates Data Hub, which incorporates country pages where advocates can explore national gender and SDG issues. And it has paved the way for partners in each of our six initial focus countries to strengthen their data-driven influencing efforts and to draw on the findings of the SDG Gender Index in their advocacy.

This report is, in itself, a starting point: the beginnings of a dialogue on how the SDG Gender Index can be expanded, enhanced and improved to offer a full picture of progress on gender equality.

Over time, the SDG Gender Index is designed to provide some answers to the burning questions for girls' and women's movements and gender equality champions from all sectors.

Do we understand the progress that is being made or the reasons for lack of progress? Where and how is progress being made? Which challenges to the rights of girls and women are proving to be the most intractable? And very importantly: who is being left behind?

For EM2030, connecting evidence to action means using existing gender equality-related data, supporting calls to fill data gaps, and training and equipping advocates to use data and evidence in their efforts towards accountability on SDG commitments. When advocates and decision makers have the compelling evidence they need, they can better work to ensure girls' and women's

rights become, and remain, a priority on the policy agenda and in efforts to achieve the SDGs.

As demonstrated by the results of EM2030's 2018 Global Advocates Survey and 2017 Policymaker Survey, and through the experience of local partners in our six pilot countries, it is imperative that girls' and women's movements, advocates, and decision makers have easy-to-use data and evidence to guide efforts to meet the transformational agenda of the SDGs.

With access to relevant, timely and disaggregated data and evidence, as well as related training and capacity-building opportunities, girls' and women's movements and advocates will be better supported to undertake and deliver coordinated, data-driven advocacy to influence their governments to achieve the SDGs for girls and women.

If we are to work towards a world where governments adopt, implement and fully fund policies and laws to achieve gender equality (in line with the SDGs), we must diversify our efforts and move beyond monitoring by applying a multi-pronged approach. This includes: capacity building of civil society on data for advocacy; engaging with accountability processes, including the development of alternative report findings and participation in voluntary national reviews (VNRs); and increasing government engagement on issues related to gender data and decision making.

EM2030 understands the imperative role of data-driven advocacy to build political will and influence policy agendas. We see the SDG Gender Index as a critical tool that adds value to relevant and timely data and provides evidence to measure progress on the goals and to help paint a fuller picture of progress and challenges for girls and women.

> **EM2030 is eager to hear from all stakeholders who can contribute ideas, suggestions and examples to this initiative to strengthen the SDG Gender Index before we launch it with data for as many countries as possible in 2019. Please stay in touch by visiting us at www.equalmeasures2030.org and at our new Gender Advocates Data Hub at www.data.em2030.org. You can also sign up to our newsletter and follow us on Twitter @Equal2030.**
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> **Direct inputs on the design of the SDG Gender Index can be sent to info@equalmeasures2030.org.**

1   For more information on the findings of the EM2030 Global Advocates Survey 2018, see http://www.equalmeasures2030.org/products/advocate-survey/.

2   Global data gaps are usually reflective of severe data gaps at the national level as well, meaning that these issues are not just difficult to monitor across countries, but also issues on which national monitoring is difficult in many countries. For more on gender, data and SDG monitoring, see the work of Data2X at: https://www.data2x.org/partnerships/gender-data-sdg-monitoring/.

3   M. Buvinic y R. Levine, "Closing the Gender Data Gap", Significance Magazine (London: Royal Statistical Society, Abril, 2016), https://www.data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Closing-the-Gender-Data-Gap-Mayra-Buvinic-and-Ruth-Levine.pdf.

4   M. Buvinic and E. Swanson, "Where are the Gender Data? Three Steps to Better Data and Closing Gaps", CGD Blog, September 18, 2017 (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development), https://www.cgdev.org/blog/where-are-genderdata-three-steps-better-data-closing-gaps. For additional context, forthcoming work from Data2X is relevant here. Following their foundational work on Mapping Gender Data Gaps (https://www. data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Data2X_ MappingGenderDataGaps_FullReport.pdf) across the development domains in 2014, Data2X is now in the process of aligning this mapping more closely with the SDG framework. This work will also deepen the analysis to examine microdata and indicator production at the international and country levels and provide insights into systematic data gaps and point towards potential solutions.

5   www.data.em2030.org

6   EM2030, Policymakers and Gender Equality: What They Know and How They Know It (Woking: EM2030, 2017), http://www.equalmeasures2030.org/products/policymaker-report/.

7   See, for example, the work being led by Data2X on measuring time use and economic empowerment.

EQUAL MEASURES 2030 PARTNERS

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arrow
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