



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
FOR HOME ECONOMICS

IFHE POSITION STATEMENT

on the

UN Sustainable Development Goal 5

**“ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND
EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS”**

**with Input of the
Associated Country Women of the World
(ACWW)**





IFHE Position Statement on the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 with Input of ACWW:

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Introduction, Objective and Purpose of the Statement

The following Position Statement intends to serve as the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) and the Association for Country Women of the World contribution to the discussions on and success of the UN SDG 5, **“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”**.

Home Economics in all its dimensions and on all levels of pursuit such as the academic area, the education field, the daily life of families and the advocacy arena, aim to improve the well-being of individuals, families and communities. One important focus is the relationship between family members, their roles within and beyond the family, the division of work and especially the role of women. We regard the empowerment of women and the work life balance in their everyday lives, as well as equality between men and women and girls and boys within households, as well as in the broader economy and society, as essential conditions for future sustainable development and a good quality of life for all.

ACWW is committed to raising the health and improving the livelihoods of rural women and their families world-wide. Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls start at home: IFHE demands for peace, safety and security in the home, for basic respect for women and girls, giving due recognition to their vital and reliable contribution in economic stability and growth; in meeting basic needs of individuals and families; in managing health, crises and disaster related concerns in homes and communities; and towards sustainable development in the management of limited and diminishing resources.

Background information to SDG 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”

Women have a critical role to play in achieving the SDGs. The relevance of the SDGs are for example obvious in the face of Climate Change. A two-degree Celsius rise in temperature may increase hunger by 90% in 2050, thereby having dire consequences on the 70% of poverty-stricken people living in sub-Saharan Africa, whose livelihoods depend on rain-fed agriculture.

(<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5531e.pdf>)

The goals and targets of the SDGs reflect gender equality considerations in an integrated manner, such as the gender dimensions of poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), health (SDG 3) and water and sanitation (SDG 6).

While some progress has been achieved towards gender equality and women’s empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer from discrimination and violence in every part of the world, often due to mis-interpretation of cultural (religious) texts (UN ECOSOC 2016). According to UN Women, rural women were left behind by the MDGs. SDG 5 is the stand-alone gender specific goal focusing on the issue of gender equality and women’s empowerment. It consists of nine targets (UN DESA 2016):

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- 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.
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as to children, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Recognise 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.
- Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- 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, as well as the outcome documents of their review conferences.

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

Drawing on recent work by UN Women, sustainable development means economic, social and environmental development that ensures human well-being and dignity, ecological integrity, gender equality and social justice, now and in the future (UN Women 2014, p.26). This understanding is in line with the definition proposed, in 1987, in the landmark report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: sustainable development should “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (A/42/427, annex), and underlines that questions of equality and justice are important for present as well as future generations (UN Women 2014, p. 26).

Relationship of Home Economics and the work of the IFHE, ACWW and their members to SDG 5

Understanding of Home Economics

Home Economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living conditions for individuals, families and communities. In the 21st century, Home Economics extended its context from the private household to the (wider living) broader society and environment, because the capacities, choices and priorities of individuals and families impact at all levels, beyond the individual and household, to the local and global (glocal) communities.

The content (disciplinary bases) from which studies of Home Economics draw is dependent upon the specific context, but might include, among others: food, nutrition and health; textiles and clothing; shelter and housing; consumerism and consumer science; household management; design and technology; food science and hospitality management; human development and family studies; education and community services. The capacity to draw from such disciplinary diversity is a strength of the profession, allowing for the development of specific interpretations of the field, as relevant to the context.

This disciplinary diversity coupled with the aim of achieving optimal and sustainable living conditions for all means that Home Economics has the potential to be influential in all sectors of society, contributing to the transformation of political, social, cultural, ecological, economic and technological systems, at glocal levels.

The IFHE (2008) Position Statement clarifies that Home Economics can be identified by its so called “four main areas of practice”. First, it is an academic discipline that educates new scholars and professionals, who conduct research, and create new knowledge and ways of thinking. Second, it focuses on the arena of everyday living where people’s basic human needs are met and where people develop human growth and potential. Third, Home Economics is a curriculum area that teaches students how to develop and strengthen their capabilities by preparing them for life. Finally, as a fourth dimension, Home Economics manifests in the societal arena where it influences and develops policy to enable families to achieve empowerment, well-being, transformation and sustainable futures (IFHE, 2008).

Home Economics and its Relation to SDG 5

Home Economists emphasise the importance of all targets of the SDG 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. From their professional background, Home Economists have a special focus on women’s empowerment and the equality between women and men.

Theories of the household states that a household is run by a group of members, who need to fulfil its needs. As a group, household members have a social relationship with each other and interact to achieve their individual and collective aims. They share the tasks within and outside the household.

Regarding the household as a unit where resources are equally distributed does often not reflect reality. Intra-household decision-making, resource allocation and the division of work depend on various power relations within households, which is influenced by the social and cultural factors, often regarding men as household head, and the family member’s individual attitude. There is ample evidence that if heterosexual families are built on equal partnership of women and men, who share the responsibility for the family and household chores, they also provide a supportive environment for equally shared decision-making and socialising children. Social norms, that limit women to a role as a housekeeper and mother only, limit the rights and the severely restrict the potential of women.

Home Economists advocate for changing these norms and perceptions and support the transformation of gender relations from the household to the policymaking levels. While there are increased awareness and efforts to include women, without a systemic approach and transformation of the society as a whole, women will continue to be instrumentalised and overly exhausted within the current frameworks of (predominantly economic) empowerment (Lemke and Bellows, 2016).

Barriers to participation that women in many societies are facing need to be acknowledged and overcome by strengthening women's rights, including the rights of women-headed households. Further, it is critical not to focus on women as a "vulnerable" group in isolation from decisive structural issues at the household and community levels. Men should be integrated into related research and programming, recognising that not doing so perpetuates women's "burden" of food related labours and remains blind to the potential, real, and desperate need for men's changing identities and masculinities. Besides gender, other social dynamics, such as age, social status, ethnicity and race need to be taken into account in order to reveal and more clearly differentiate hierarchies among women and men and their different social locations (Lemke and Bellows, 2016).

Home Economists acknowledge the importance of equality in education, employment and business. However, gender equality in education or employment cannot be reached, if there is no gender equality at the private sphere, the home. The home is the nursery for public actions, behaviours and attitudes. Practiced equity must first be acknowledged among the diverse groups that exist in the home so that these values can be confidently pursued and embraced outside the home.

Unpaid and Domestic Work – Workload of Women

From its foundation, Home Economics engages with studies related to time, work and resource management in households. Research shows that in most countries of the world, the major part of the unpaid work at home, i.e. cooking meals, child care and care for relatives, is done by women even if they participate in paid work outside work as well. The everyday tasks of women are multifaceted. They care for children, sick members of the family, the elderly and the disabled. They clean the house, wash clothes, prepare meals and contribute to the household production and income generation. For example, women comprise on average 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, and produce more food for household consumption than men, however, they are often regarded as family members who "help with farming".

Women often do the most labour-intensive tasks such as planting, weeding, harvesting and winnowing and produce up to 89% of the food in some African countries (FAO). They are further overrepresented in low paid work such as part-time and seasonal work (FAO, 2011). As a result, women often suffer from triple responsibilities the sum of which is burdensome in most instances: domestic work, paid work, with their wages being lower than those of men, and child/relative care work.

Especially unpaid care and domestic work is often challenging, and not adequately recognised and valued and does not lead to a sufficient pension (UN General Assembly, 2013). In all countries women need to be unburdened in tasks such as child care, time management and housekeeping especially because these take up long hours in the day. Even as this may be the rallying cry of women, this reality may remain for a long time because someone has to do the job, women biologically bear children and girls continue to be socialised into this role. At the minimum, women cry out for respect and recognition of their vital contribution to wider societal development and sustainability.

Equal Rights for Men and Women – Access to Resources, Land and Leadership

Women are heads of more and more households worldwide. Many households are dependent on female income, either as sole income or as significant supplement to the family income.

Poor families headed by women in developing countries, especially in rural areas, are facing poverty, malnutrition and exclusion, loss of status and lack of land-rights. Often they are vulnerable to forced marriage or rape. This can be due to discrimination by both national governments and faith-based organisations.

This often results from laws and policies, inheritance laws as well as social norms and practices, which discriminate and disenfranchise women. Women, who have to care for their family and generate income need full access to ownership and control over land, and equal rights to economics resources, financial services, credit, inheritance and natural resources to succeed (UN HRC, 2012). Even in countries, where laws are in place that ascribe equal rights for men and women, women are still discriminated in many ways (Quisumbing, 2010). Another discriminatory aspect is in governments' austerity cuts that often disproportionately affect women.

Women's role in production, consumption and family care is crucial for improving the economic, social and environmental sustainable pathways to manage resources and landscapes; to produce food, to achieve food security, and to have access to safe water.

Equal rights for women also lead to reduced workload and improved health and well-being for the whole family, including the opportunity to send children to school and improving the education of women. Mothers have an important role in passing on nurturing skills and imparting emotional intelligence to their children; therefore early separation of boys from their mothers should be discouraged and single mothers, including those who bring up sons, should have equal parental rights and be supported by society at large.

To avoid the above mentioned triple burden of women, they have to be relieved from household and care work, which requires a shift in thinking and transformation of gender roles, including more active involvement of men and other household members, as well as adequate support structures from the state.

Having equal legal rights, and if they are implemented in practice, will enable women and men to be partners in controlling, using and managing natural resources in ways that sustain livelihoods and well-being for all.

Violence against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls often starts at home, in families and communities and is affected by culture and traditions. Women and girls face different kinds of physical, biological and psychological violence, such as sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, child marriage or rape.

From a Home Economics perspective, the family and the home is the place of regeneration and recreation. It is the place to fulfil basic needs including the need for protection and security. Home Economists demand the protection of women and girls, especially at home, and highlight the home as a place of security, comfort and peace of mind for all. Women in remote rural areas also need access to protection services.

Home Economics Education to advance Gender Education

Having previously outlined the multifaceted tasks of women at home and in income generation, it is reiterated here that women must have access to high-quality education as well as to household technologies and Home Economics knowledge and skills. They also need for women to be educated in information and communication technology, in order to obtain access to information and innovation and be able to fully contribute to regional, national and global development and participate more fully in a modern information age. Because of their crucial role, women and girls need access to primary, secondary and higher education as well as education for employment and business.

The skills learned and the equal opportunities acquired also improve the quality of life at home. Having a comprehensive education in everyday life management, resource management and economy and being aware of their legal rights, women will demonstrate their full capacity to contribute to sustainable future and share in their own as well as their families' development.

Specific Examples of Accomplishments by the IFHE/ IFHE Members/Home Economics Significance of Home Economics Education to improve Women's Capacities

Following the IFHE Position Statement 2008 Home Economics focuses on the arena of everyday living, on how people's basic human needs are met and how people develop human growth and potential. Home Economists around the world conduct culture determined projects to improve the quality of life with a focus on women and girls. Examples, collected and published by the IFHE, show the working areas and effects of these projects (IFHE, 2012). The ACWW's Women-to-Women projects can be retrieved at the website (ACWW, 2016), please see under www.acww.org.uk/.

They demonstrate the significance of Home Economics education and training for sustainable development and the improvement of life for families and, most of all, women and children. In Home Economics extension programs people are educated how to manage land and water resources to secure food and nutrition security and livelihoods. Women holding enhanced skills in the areas of hygiene, use of clean energy sources for cooking, use of natural resources, gardening and family farming, food processing and nutrition, are able to improve the food security and health situation of their family members.

Further, skills in household financial management and sustainable purchasing improve the spending and income generation side of a household budget. For example, Home Economics organisations support women's cooperatives and single women groups through micro financing. As evidence shows, both – women and men – as well as the whole family, benefit from such measures and projects.

IFHE and ACWW advocate for Empowerment of Women

As a longstanding UN International Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) - a global network of Home Economics experts - has consultative services with the United Nations (ECOSOC, FAO, UNESCO, and UNICEF) and with the Council of Europe. IFHE is in a position to contribute to the SDGs by empowering individuals, families, and communities with the skills necessary to build a just society.



For many years the topics, women and girls, gender equality and women's empowerment have been consistently on the IFHE Agenda. The IFHE highlights the relevance of women's and girl's everyday-life education and its role for sustainable development to influence the United Nations and its stakeholders, other NGOs and Associations.

IFHE has published several statements based on research results and successful projects at the UN, NGO Working groups and conferences to spread the Home Economics involvement and significance. IFHE is a partner of the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, a member of the Global Alliance for Health Promotion and participant of the Zero Hunger Challenge. ACWW has "Special Consultative" status with ECOSOC and has also signed up to the Zero Hunger Challenge. Both especially focus on health and food issues targeting women.

The Way forward: Expectations and specific Recommendations for Policymakers from the Perspective of IFHE

Following the Beijing Platform for Action and the aims set by the Development Agenda and the SDGs the IFHE recommends the following:

- Recognise and support the important role and the high, often under-utilised productive potential of women as key players for reaching sustainable development goals.
- Ensure that all girls and women of the world receive education to improve their everyday life management for the benefit of their household members and communities.
- Build on partnerships between women and men to achieve development opportunities for the whole community.
- Promote gender equality agenda to improve women's access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance and training.
- Women farmers need training in the production of commodity crops, such as cocoa, coffee and cotton so that they can benefit from selling in international markets.
- Strengthen the empowerment of women as key actors for social, economic and sustainable development.
- Acknowledge the importance of education in Home Economics subjects to improve food security, eradicate poverty, and improve in quality of life.
- To ensure that rural women are not left behind by the SDGs, all data relating to gender equality and women and girls' empowerment should be dis-aggregated between rural and urban women.

Recommendations for Home Economists and Home Economics teachers, Home Economics associations and IFHE how they can support transforming our world in the area of SDG 5

In addition ACWW points out that these recommendations must be linked to the indicators, which are used to measure the progress in achieving the targets.

The indicators of the FAO related to SDG 5 are:

- 5.a 1 % of people with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land by sex;
- 5.a 2 % of countries where the legal framework guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

Recommendations:

- Maintain an advocacy role in respective countries through Planning and Development agencies, Ministries with responsibilities for Agriculture, Child Welfare, economic and social well-being, health and education, communication and technologies and labour and compensation equity among other relevant agencies.
- Partner with other NGOs to strengthen the call by the UN to improve the lot of women and children for the universal development of families in a progressively sustained way.
- Use their research agenda and publication activities to publicise undesirable practices social practices of discrimination against all gender groups.
- Devise creative solutions to the existing problems and practice such solutions in visible ways both in personal, community and national levels as appropriate.
- Promote gender equality at homes, communities and the societies at large in a contextually relevant manner.
- Promote boys' and girls' access to quality Home Economics education at all levels, starting from primary education.
- Enhance the role of women in economic development through vocational education and training in Home Economics related fields.

Closing

In recent years the synergies between gender equality, women's empowerment and various levels of sustainability, i.e., economic, social and environmental, was increasingly acknowledged. The important multifaceted role of women and girls in the household, community and larger society underlines the need to empower them through education in day-to-day life management, in resource management and in increasing their economic capacity through access to vocational training, and in raising their awareness on their contribution to wider societal development.

Gender equality and empowerment starts with self-respecting women themselves, before it moves to the home, the wider community and transforming society. Societies that empower women give them equal legal rights, access to resources including land ownership, creates policies that removes all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls and ensure that boys are not alienated but grow up valuing and respecting women and girls.

These are the conditions for women to reach their full potential and achieve sustainable development.

The IFHE demands that women and girls be empowered, that their needs and rights be kept in focus to harness their potential and importance for sustainable development.

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