Introducing Equal Measures 2030: visualizing data for accountability on gender equality

BY ALBERT MOTIVANS
EQUAL MEASURES 2030

As efforts to monitor donor funding and policies for gender equality are garnering more attention than ever, the Donor Tracker is introducing gender equality as a new sector. So how aligned are ODA gender investments with the priorities of policymakers and gender champions? What is the impact of spending on gender-related investments? The Equal Measures 2030 global survey assesses how important gender equality is in domestic policy, while their new SDG Gender Index tracks progress for 51 gender equality issues in 129 countries across 14 of the 17 SDGs. The Index can help to suggest how ODA spending (alongside domestic efforts) is helping to leverage progress towards SDG5 that seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030.

Equal Measures 2030 (EM2030) works to ensure that gender equality advocates from across all sectors have the skills and the data they need to hold decision-makers accountable for the ambitious promises made to women and girls in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Together with partners, we compile, transform, and visualize gender data, we train and equip advocates to use that data, we call for the collection of more and better gender data, and we help to push gender equality issues up the policymaking agenda. We believe that data in the hands of advocates — especially women and girls themselves — can ignite change.

Highlights of our recent work include:

• The EM2030 SDG Gender Index ('the Index'), the only global index that applies a gender lens across the SDGs, including SDG 17 which covers development finance, tax and public spending issues (see data.em2030.org)

• Data-driven advocacy training, targeting women's rights organizations, civil society and gender equality advocates

• National-level impact through supporting data and advocacy partnerships with women's rights organizations in Colombia, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Senegal, and Tanzania

EM2030 partners include Plan International, ONE Campaign, ARROW, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Data2X, Women Deliver, KPMG, International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), Comité de América Latina y El Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de las Mujeres (CLADEM), and African Women's Development & Communication Network (FEMNET).

Gender equality and finance: how policymakers and advocates see the connection

The work of Equal Measures 2030 is informed by our understanding of the gender advocacy and policy environments. At the outset of our partnership, surveys were conducted with policymakers and gender advocates to better understand their gender equality policy priorities, awareness of key gender issues, data and evidence gaps and needs, technical capacity, and trust in existing data sources.

Percentage of policymakers who said gender equality is given a "very high" or "high" priority in each policy area

81%	67%	55%	54%	46%	39%	38%
Education	Health	Justice	Social Protection	Public Admin	Labour	Finance

Source: Equal Measures 2030 | Base = 109 | July to September 2017

A [2017 EM2030 survey](#) in five countries asked policymakers to assess how important they thought gender issues were in decision-making in their country. Results showed that gender equality is considered much more important in some 'traditional' policy areas than others. For example, eight in 10 policymakers felt that gender equality is a high or very high priority when setting policy on education, whereas fewer than four in 10 ranked gender as high or very high priority when making decisions about public finance or budgets.
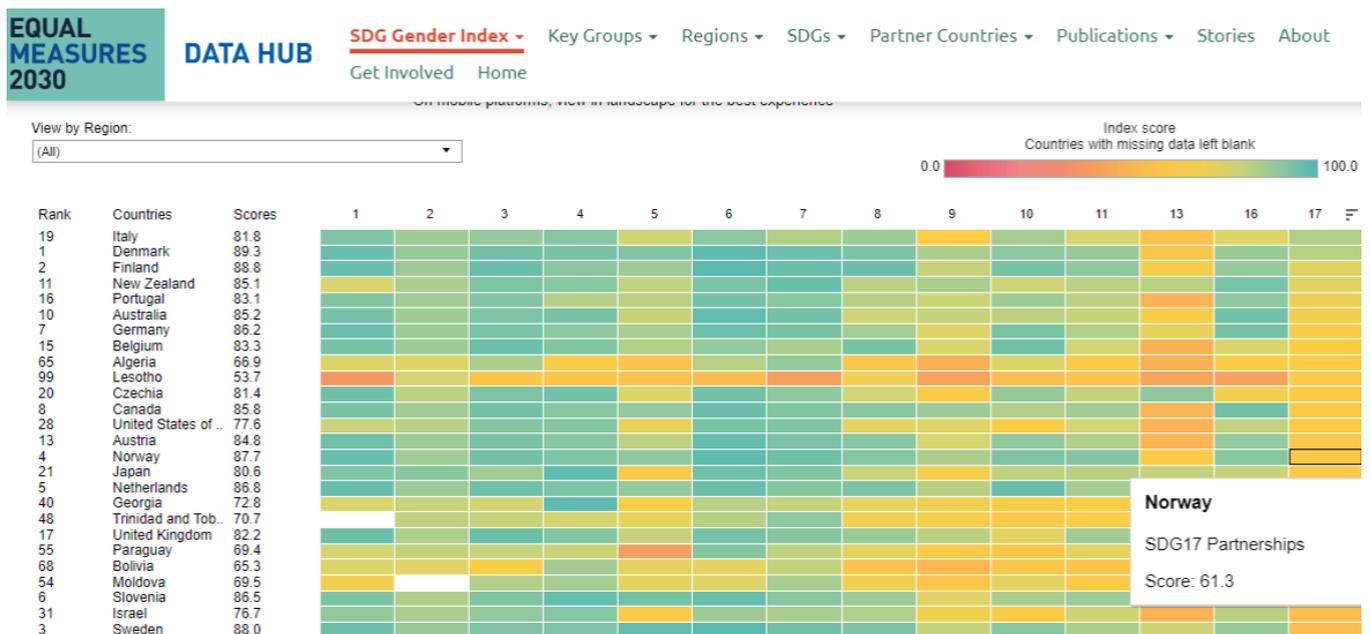
The [2018 EM2030 global survey](#) of gender advocates helped us to pinpoint which gender equality issues have the most traction and widespread support among advocates. These high priority areas included violence against girls and women, financial inclusion, employment, health, and political leadership. The advocates survey also identified concerns that must be addressed if women's rights are to be realized, but that garner less attention among gender advocates. These include public finance, climate change, and other 'enabling environment' issues such as ensuring that global data sets are sufficiently gender-focused and disaggregated to accurately measure progress on the SDGs. It is important to work with gender equality advocates to build a shared understanding of the importance of these issues, in order to establish and leverage larger constituencies of support.

EM2030 also places a high priority on awareness-raising about the importance of gender data itself for both advocacy and policymaking groups. A range of data-driven approaches including gender audits, gender mainstreaming, and gender-sensitive measurement provide key opportunities for achieving change.

The SDG Gender Index: monitoring progress in gender equality and finance

EM2030 launched the Index, its flagship data tool, to monitor progress towards gender equality by 2030. The Index applies a gender lens to 14 of the 17 SDGs, including SDG 17 on 'means of implementation', which covers domestic finance, transparency of government budgets, and gender statistics. The Index seeks to go beyond measuring traditional gender equality issues and to ensure that the official SDG framework for SDG 17 is not gender blind.

The Index's measurement of a country's progress on the gender equality dimensions of SDG 17 is based on four indicators: government spending on social assistance, tax revenue, disaggregation of national budgets by disadvantaged groups, and openness of gender statistics. The selection of indicators for the Index tool was limited by the type of data available across a large number of countries in order to allow global comparisons. There is still a real need for better SDG 17 indicators on gender equality at the global level; EM2030 would like to see more and better

Source: Equal Measures 2030, 2019

data on indicators such as governments' use of gendered approaches in national budgets, the inclusion of gender provisions in trade agreements, and the share of official development assistance (ODA) committed to gender equality, among many others.

From the baseline Index results, we can see that most countries in the world are not achieving passing grades on gender equality in SDG 17. Italy and Denmark top the list for gender-smart approaches to SDG 17 but, surprisingly, some of the usual high-scorers on gender perform poorly here; Norway is ranked fourth on the overall Index but fifteenth on SDG 17. It is imperative that all countries – even those with relatively high levels of gender equality overall – place a greater focus on the crucial means of implementation issues contained in SDG 17 which are essential to achieving the gender equality goals embedded across all other SDGs.

Leveraging approaches: broadening gender constituencies in finance-related areas

One important way to ensure that countries place a greater focus on the enabling environment for gender equality – including financing, open data, and open budgets – is to improve direct engagement with women's movements within existing initiatives for more open governance.

EM2030 conducted research in Colombia, Indonesia, and Kenya for the Open Government Partnership (OGP); the findings highlighted ways that women's and girls' rights organizations can both support and benefit from engagement in Open Government initiatives, through more inclusive processes, gender mainstreaming, and gender-focused commitments.

To date, within the Open Government Partnership, 31 countries have committed to a gender action or are currently implementing a gender commitment. Commitments relate to processes such as participatory decision-making and budgeting, public service provision (such as improving access to education or health services) and strengthening existing laws or policies – for example, calling for improved enforcement of a gender quota in decision-making bodies. This includes commitments to ensure a fair playing field for women-owned enterprises in government procurement processes in Kenya and to ensure that women-led enterprises and women's participation in village budgeting processes are prioritized in Indonesia.

The EM2030 research for OGP looks at the barriers for women's organizations to engage in open government initiatives as well as at how to better bring together open government and women's rights constituencies. It also looks at the value proposition for both groups and how they would both benefit from closer collaboration.

For more information on EM2030, see https://www.equalmeasures2030.org/ and the Gender Advocates Data Hub https://data.em2030.org. Equal Measures 2030 is an organisation that provides easy access for advocates and NGOs to data on gender equality.