

SDG 5: Gender Equality

This module focuses on SDG 5 which aims to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” The stories include the first female debate team in Rwanda, poetry about masculinity which includes experiences in Nigeria and the United Kingdom, and a podcast about gender equality globally. Activities include debate, creative writing, and media analysis related to gender equality.

Link to Subjects	Humanities, Social Studies,		
Link to Indiana High School Core	TBD Employability 9-10.SE.4	Link to International Baccalaureate	TBD
Story	Story #1: The First Female Debate Team of Rwanda Story #2: Masculinity and Negative Capability Story #3: The Journey Toward Gender Equality		
Activities	Activity #1: Debate gender quotas	Activity #2: Write a Poem	Activity #3: Gender Equality Media Analysis
Type of Activity	Debate	Writing	Analysis
Time of Activity	1 class	1 class	1 class

Key Questions & Terms

Key Questions	Key Terms
What is Gender Equality?	Gender
How does Gender Equality differ by context?	Equality
What is the role of men in achieving Gender Equality?	Quota
What is SDG 5?	Masculinity
	Femininity
	Intersectionality

Story Summaries

Story #1: The First Female Debate Team of Rwanda

In the heart of Kigali, Rwanda, the Akilah Debate Team, an all-woman ensemble, defied societal norms. Their mission? To challenge conventions, break barriers, and amplify their voices. Led by Amina, they prepared to debate the topic: “Should Developing Countries Adopt Western Feminism?” Armed with research and determination, they dismantled stereotypes and championed women’s agency. Amina’s unwavering voice declared, “Western feminism is not a monolith; it’s a tapestry woven from diverse threads.”

[Full Story](#)

Story #2: Masculinity and Negative Capability

Inua Ellams, a versatile artist known for his poetry and plays, delves into themes of identity, displacement, masculinity, and destiny. His works, including “Barber Shop Chronicles,” “The Half-God of Rainfall,” and “Candy Coated Unicorns and Converse All Stars,” blend wit, vulnerability, and cultural connections. “The Actual”: This collection, published by Penned In The Margins, likely continues Ellams’ exploration of themes such as masculinity, belonging, and cultural identity. “Barber Shop Chronicles”: This play explores masculinity, particularly within the context of black men. It weaves together stories from barbershops across different countries, revealing shared experiences and cultural connections. “Masculinity and Negative Capability” is a TEDTalk by Ellams.

[Full Story](#)

Archived story: <https://bit.ly/3RwwRNH>.

Story #3: The Journey Towards Gender Equality

In this special episode of *The Development Podcast*, experts discuss gender equality and its economic impact. Female leaders from business, politics, and the International Monetary Fund share insights. The Prime Minister of Togo emphasizes self-investment and community contribution. Meanwhile, an entrepreneur in Rwanda highlights gender equality progress in management and leadership. The World Bank report suggests that including women in economies could double global growth over the next decade.

[Full Story](#)

Opening discussion

1. Have students read the story / listen to the podcast
 - a. Ask how the story related to gender equality
 - b. Ask what is similar or different about the story context and the students' own context
 - c. Ask for examples of areas of life where gender equality is not yet reached

Activity #1: Debate gender quotas

Explore how gender equality can look in different spheres of private and public life and the role of quotas, parity, and representation. With a special focus on SDG 5 to “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”

Activity Learning Objectives

1. Understand the targets of SDG 5
2. Explore how gender equality may manifest differently in different contexts
3. Identify areas in need of improvement in their own community

Teacher preparation

1. Review the targets and indicators for SDG 5
2. Review the situation of female parity in Rwanda (especially in parliament, education, and employment)
3. Review how you would like to organize a debate for your students. You might find these resources useful:
 - a. Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning <https://bit.ly/3KL8Luz>
 - b. Harvard University Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning <https://bit.ly/3RuN0mC>

Student preparation

1. [Optional] Have students listen to the podcast episode and/or read the story prior to class.

Lesson Flow

Introduction

1. Present students with the key targets of SDG 5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” Source <https://bit.ly/4c8yIWv>. (5-10 minutes)
 - d. Explain the concepts of gender parity and quotas
 - e. Provide examples of the level of the indicators in different contexts

Debate (30-50 minutes)

2. Divide students into two debate groups
3. Explain the debate rules (e.g., how many speakers of which length and order)
4. Assign one group to argue in favor of the use of gender quotas and the other group to argue against gender quotas.
 - a. You can focus the debate on specific areas (e.g., employment vs parliament) or specific contexts (e.g., the United States)
5. Allow student groups to prepare

6. Conduct debate and provide feedback.

Final Notes

Students can either read the summary of the experience of the Akilah debate team or listen to the podcast from minute 6:50 to 37:10. Note that there are stories and advertisements before and after those timestamps, so you will need to control the start and stop times.

References

- UN Women. (2018). Revisiting Rwanda five years after record-breaking parliamentary elections. UN Women. Retrieved from
- [Revisiting Rwanda five years after record-breaking parliamentary elections | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

Activity #2: Write a Poem

Teachers may focus more on the overall goal or targets 5.2 and 5.4 as appropriate for their students and classroom objectives. Target 5.2 is to "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" and 5.4 is to "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"

Activity Learning Objectives

1. Understand the role of men in achieving or hindering gender equality
2. Identify ways in which that masculinity differs by culture
3. Explore gender equality through verse and poetry (or other creative writing format)

Teacher preparation

1. Identify one or more poems (or plays) from Inua Ellams for students to engage with
2. Determine which type of writing you want students to use

Student preparation

1. [Optional: Pre-reading of material]

Lesson Flow

1. Ask students to define "Gender Equality"
 - a. Identify if any students talk about men/masculinity
2. Read/watch/listen to the poem/excerpt from Inua Ellams
3. Discuss students' reactions to the excerpt
4. Discuss the relevance of the cultural and historical concepts of masculinity for achieving SDG 5 using examples from Targets 5.2 and 5.4
5. Explain the format of the writing assignment (e.g., poem, play, specific structure etc)
6. Ask students to write their own poem about masculinity
7. Invite students to share the poems and/or their reflections

References¹

- TO DO

¹ Using APA format

Activity #3: Gender Equality Media Analysis

Using the Bechdel Test students will explore how media of their choice represents women and how these media representations influence societal progress on gender equality.

Activity Learning Objectives

1. Understand the Bechdel Test
2. Understand the concept of gender bias in film/television (or other stories)
3. Able to apply basic gender bias analysis to film/television (or other stories)

Teacher preparation

1. Review the Bechdel Test (see below)
2. Identify several pieces of media (or stories) to use in class
4. The Bechdel Test, created by Alison Bechdel in 1985, evaluates female representation in film and television using three criteria. This test aims to highlight gender imbalance and can be adapted to assess diversity in various contexts beyond gender
 - a. At least two named female characters: The work must feature a minimum of two women with distinct names.
 - b. They talk to each other: These female characters must engage in conversation.
 - c. About something other than a male “love” interest: Their dialogue should not revolve solely around men

Student preparation

1. [Optional] Identify and bring to class a story/film/television episode of interest

Lesson Flow

1. Read one of the stories (5-10 mins)
2. Discuss how this relates to gender equality and SDG 5 (5-10 mins)
3. Ask students how gender equality might relate to film/television (5 mins)
4. Explain the Bechdel test and how to apply it (5 mins)
5. Ask students (individually, in pairs, or in groups) to choose a media excerpts of 5-15 minutes and to apply the test to that excerpt (5-15 minutes)
6. Students report back to the class and share their reflections (10-20 mins)
7. Discuss how these patterns relate to other statistics and the achievement of SDG 5 (5-10 mins)

Possible Enrichment

Students in fine arts / humanities courses can work in groups to create a short film that passes the Bechdel test. Students in statistics / mathematics courses could collect data using the test and investigate if there are factors correlated with passing the Bechdel test.

Advanced Approaches

Students could be tasked with providing reports on specific indicators of SDG 5 and Gender Equality for a country of their choice. As a more advanced option, this report could include a comparison with a country that has better scores on the indicator and a country that has worse scores on the indicator along with an analysis of why these countries might be more or less successful at achieving Gender Equality.

Full Story Texts

Story #1: The First Female Debate Team of Rwanda

Original spotify podcast: <https://spoti.fi/45r1pWM> (minutes 6:50 - 37:12). Original NPR story: <https://n.pr/3Xu3Plo>. NPR archive: <https://bit.ly/3KNuYs4>.

Once upon a time, in the heart of Kigali, Rwanda, a group of remarkable women gathered. They were not ordinary women; they were the Akilah Debate Team. Their mission? To challenge conventions, break barriers, and prove that their voices mattered.

The Akilah team was an all-woman ensemble, defying expectations in a society where men dominated the discourse. They met in a small room, their passion glistening like the Rwandan hillsides. Their leader, Amina, stood at the front, her eyes fierce with determination. She believed that words could change the world, and she intended to wield them like a sword.

The one topic that the Akilah team wanted, the topic the women knew they were going to rock, was, "This House Believes That Developing Countries Should Adopt Western Feminism." So when the judges announced that the topic the team would debate was the very one they wanted, the Akilah team could barely contain its excitement.

The room buzzed with energy as they prepared. Amina paced, her mind racing through arguments and counterarguments. She knew that this was their chance to shatter stereotypes, to prove that Rwandan women were not just victims of history but architects of change. As the debate began, the Akilah team took the stage. Their opponents, a group of seasoned male debaters, smirked. They assumed victory was theirs; after all, what could these women possibly know about Western feminism?

But the Akilah team had done their homework. They cited bell hooks, Simone de Beauvoir, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. They dissected the nuances of intersectionality, dismantled the myth of the "white savior," and championed the agency of women in developing countries. Their arguments flowed like a river, each woman building upon the other's words.

Amina stood tall, her voice unwavering. "Western feminism is not a monolith," she declared. "It's a tapestry woven from diverse threads—black, brown, queer, disabled. And we, as Rwandan women, have the right to choose which threads resonate with our struggle."

The judges leaned forward, captivated. The Akilah team was not just debating; they were rewriting the narrative. They spoke of Rwanda's history—the scars of genocide, the resilience of survivors, and the emergence of a new generation. They argued that Rwandan feminism was not a mere copy of the West but a unique blend of tradition and progress.

The room held its breath as Amina concluded, "We don't need Western feminism to save us. We need our voices amplified, our stories heard. We need land rights, equal pay, and a seat at the table. And we will fight for it, with or without your approval."

The applause was thunderous. The Akilah team had crushed it, leaving their opponents speechless. The judges awarded them the victory, not just for their eloquence but for their audacity—the audacity to challenge the status quo, to redefine feminism, and to claim their space.

Outside, the sun dipped below the hills, casting a golden glow on Kigali. The Akilah team celebrated, their laughter echoing through the corridors. They knew that this victory was not just for them; it was for every Rwandan woman who had been told to stay silent, to accept her fate. And so, the Akilah team became legends. Their story spread across Rwanda, inspiring young girls to dream beyond the confines of tradition. They proved that invisibility was a choice—one they rejected with every word they spoke.

In the years that followed, the Akilah team continued to debate, to challenge, and to crush it. They became the beacon of hope for a nation that was rewriting its own narrative. And whenever someone doubted their abilities, they would smile and say, "Watch us. We're the Akilah women. We don't just debate; we change the world."

Story #2: Masculinity and Negative Capability

Listen to Inua Ellams discuss masculinity and capability through poetry. Inua Ellams is a Nigerian-born British writer and multimodal artist. Archived story: <https://bit.ly/3RwwRNH>.

Story #3: The Journey Towards Gender Equality: Are Laws on the Books Enough?

Original source: <https://bit.ly/3VLAfGM>; Archive link: <https://bit.ly/3VJUqVr>.

Srimathi Sridhar: 00:00

Hello and welcome to The Development Podcast from the World Bank Group. I'm Srimathi Sridhar in Washington DC. This episode, the latest in our special series about ending poverty on a livable planet, coincides with the celebrations we are seeing across the globe this month to mark International Women's Day. We'll be exploring the economics of equality, and asking what it'll take to have parity for women across the board. We'll be getting the views from female leaders in business, politics, and from the International Monetary Fund.

Gita Gopinath: It is critically important to have gender equality, and from pure economic perspective, this makes a lot of sense.

Srimathi Sridhar: The Prime Minister of Togo tells us about being a role model for women across the region and the world.

Victoire Tomegah Dogbé: So I insist on the importance of investing in oneself, but also one's community. Because our local communities need our contribution to thrive as a community.

Srimathi Sridhar: One entrepreneur in Rwanda explains why support for women always needs to start at the grassroots level.

Maryse Mbonyumutwa: I do see actually the gender equality issue on probably lower function. But when it comes to management, to leadership, in Rwanda, it's a non-issue.

Srimathi Sridhar: And we'll be hearing how further including women in economies could potentially double the current global growth rate over the next decade from an author of a new World Bank report right here in Washington DC.

Tea Trumbic: Laws in the books are not enough. If you don't have the type of systems and frameworks to implement those laws, then women can't realize the rights that they have, even when they have them.

Srimathi Sridhar: That's all coming up in The Development Podcast from the World Bank Group.

It probably hasn't escaped your attention that International Women's Day takes place every year on March 8th, giving us the opportunity to assess progress towards gender and economic parity, raise awareness about discrimination, and discuss issues that are keeping women from achieving their social and economic potential. And of course, it is an occasion to celebrate women's achievements worldwide. So let's start this episode with a snapshot of some truly inspirational speakers.

Audio footage: It is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights. / And I considered it my duty to fight for their rights. I wanted to see them in school uniforms, holding books and pens in their hands. I wanted to see the future bright. If you don't educate children, it means it becomes a generation lost. / I am a feminist. And when I looked up the word in the dictionary that day, this is what it said, "Feminist, a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. / All of us must keep on hoping and working for a change, constantly asking ourselves if we are doing all we can to make clear our desire to live in peace and friendship with all our neighbors in the world community. / I ask the people of the world and not just the leaders therefore, to hold us accountable, and to ask us to act in your name to save this earth, and to save the people of this earth. The choice is ours. What will you do? What will you choose to save? / The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough.

Srimathi Sridhar: Some amazing words of wisdom there from Hillary Clinton, the former United States Secretary of State, activist Malala, Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, former first lady of the United States Eleanor Roosevelt, prime minister of Barbados Mia Mottley, and former president of Liberia, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson.

See the original source for the rest of the audio/transcript (from 4:35)

Sources

[Global Platform for Gender Equality and Girls' and Women's Empowerment in and through Education | #LeadingSDG4 | Education2030 \(unesco.org\)](#)

[Global Accountability Platform - EGER: Evidence for Gender and Education Resource \(egeresource.org\)](#)

[Data | UN Women Data Hub](#)

[Gender Dashboard: Track, Monitor and Report Data on Gender Indicators | iTech Mission \(genderequalitydashboard.org\)](#)

[Gender Inequality Index | Human Development Reports \(undp.org\)](#)

[About the Accountability for Gender Equality \(AGEE\) project \(gendereddata.org\)](#)

Malala Book at home