Monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies

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1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2015, embody a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind.

The global SDG indicator framework establishes a set of measurement tools to assess country performances in a comparable way, and helps governments to identify appropriate policy interventions to achieve the SDG targets. Seven years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, however, still different methods are being used by leading international organisations for assessing whether the SDG targets will be achieved or not. This may lead to different results, sometimes contradictory, generating confusion among users and policy-makers, who therefore cannot base their policy decisions on solid and coherent assessments. International organisations address two distinct measurement objectives: (i) monitor the "current" status of achievement of a SDG target, i.e. the situation as pictured by the latest available data, and (ii) assess whether the SDG targets can be achieved by 2030. These distinct objectives are then translated in various methodological approaches, that often include also a way for identifying the targets when not explicitly set, and the procedure to obtain regional and global aggregates (as well as, aggregates by target and goal).

Gender inequality is one of the biggest obstacles to sustainable development, economic growth and poverty reduction. SDG 5 advocates equal opportunities for men and women in economic life, the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, the elimination of early and forced marriage, and equal participation at all levels. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but it also has a multiplier effect across all other development areas.

Monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at national level requires an appropriate set of metrics statistics and indicators on the situation of women and men are needed to describe the roles of women and men in society, the economy, and within the family, to provide the basis for the development of SMART policies and establish sound monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness. They can help us to reflect upon the challenges strict gendered roles in society present, and demonstrate the negative or positive changes in the status of women in comparison to men in areas such as education, work, access to resources, health or decision-making.

Monitoring is defined as a continuing function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and key stakeholders of an ongoing intervention, with indications both of the level of progress and achievement of the objectives as well as the use of any allocated fund.

In this paper, after a recognition of the international indicators related to SDG 5 and the possible sources of production of statistical data, the Italian indicators are analysed in term of current production, reliability and timeless.

2. Indicators for monitoring SDG 5

At the international level monitoring and evaluation of 17 DSGs is based on a statistical indicators system developed by Inter Agency Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) and endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission (United Nations 2017).

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With respect to each target of SDG 5 the follow indicators are defined as follows:

Target 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Indicator 5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex. It measures Government efforts to put in place legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality.

Unit measure Percentage (%) of legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality.

Data source The data for the indicator are derived from an assessment of legal frameworks using primary sources/official government documents, in particular laws, policies and action plans.

Target 5.2 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

Indicator 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age.

Indicator 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12months, by age and place of occurrence.

Unit measure % of victims respect total female population in the same age class.

Data source Specialized national surveys dedicated to measuring violence against women and administrative data from health, police, courts, justice and social services, among other services used by survivors of violence. No standard definitions and methods have been globally agreed yet to collect data on the place where the violence occurs.

Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Indicator 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in an informal union before age 15 and before age 18.

Unit measure % of subject respect total female population in the same age class.

Data source National censuses, other national household surveys or administrative data.

Indicator 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age.

Unit measure % of subject respect total female population in the same age class.

Data source UNICEF undertakes a wide consultative process of compiling and assessing data from national sources for the purposes of updating its global databases on the situation of children.

Target 5.4 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

Indicator 5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.

Unit measure Data are expressed as a proportion of time in a day.

Data source Time-use information collected by a specific survey.

Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

Indicator 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments

Unit measure % of women on total elected members.

Data source National Parliaments, administrative data based on electoral records.

Indicator 5.5.1 Proportion of women in managerial positions.

Unit measure It is recommended to use two different measures jointly for this indicator: the share of females in (total) management and the share of females in senior and middle management (Gennari F., 2015).

Data source Labour force survey, administrative registers.

Target 5.6 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 and the outcome documents of their review conferences

Indicator 5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care. Women who make their own decision regarding seeking healthcare for themselves are considered empowered to exercise their reproductive rights.

Unit measure Proportion of women aged 15-49 years (married or in union) who make their own decision on all three selected areas.

Data source National health survey.

Indicator 5.6.2 "Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education".

Unit measure Proportion of Countries.

Data source Official government responses collected through the United Nations Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development. Data collection is scheduled every 4 years.

Target 5.a 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

Indicator 5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights[1] over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.

Unit measure % of women on total agricultural population.

Data source Agriculture Census, Agricultural Administrative Registers.

Target 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Indicator 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone. The mobile phone is a personal device that, if owned and not just shared, provides women with a degree of independence and autonomy, including for professional purposes.

Unit measure % of females have a mobile telephone.

Data source National household surveys.

Target 5.c 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

Indicator 5.c.1 Systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment, to measure government efforts to track budget allocations for gender equality throughout the public finance management cycle.

This indicator aims to encourage national governments to develop appropriate budget tracking and monitoring systems and commit to making information about allocations for gender equality readily available to the public.

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[1] Secure rights" in the context of indicator 5.a.1 is defined as secure tenure rights, i.e., rights to use, manage and control land, fisheries and forests

The above indicators are classified as:

Tier 1: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.

Tier 2: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries.

Tier 3: No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.

According to the update of 28 December 2020, 130 indicators belong to Tier I, 97 indicators to Tier II, and four indicators belong to several Tiers (different components of the indicator are classified into different levels), while none indicator is in Tier III.

With regard to SGD 5 the indicators 5.2.1, 5.3.1, 5.32 e 5.6.1 are Tier 1, the others Tier 2.

The global indicator framework set was approved during the 48th Conference of UN Statistical Commission. Through the activities of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) (central element of the United Nations), each year the progress and results of the political actions of all members of the United Nations are evaluated (ONU, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/).

The initial set of indicators to be refined annually and reviewed comprehensively by the Commission at its fifty-first session, held in 2020, and its fifty-sixth session, to be held in 2025, and will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be developed by Member States.

3. Indicators for monitoring SDG 5 in Italy

Data production is essential to guide, inform and empower governance and decision-making. For this reason and to make up for the non-constant availability and reliability of up-to-date information, the United Nations, in addition to the various specialised agencies, trust in the responsibility of the individual States to submit regularly on a voluntary basis (Voluntary National Review, VNR), accessible, rigorous data. and transparent, disaggregated by sex, age, income and any other relevant characteristic to assess the progress of the SDGs at national and regional level.

In Italy, the official body in charge for SDGs metrics is the National Institute of Statistics. Istat has the task of coordinating the institutions belonging to the National Statistical System (Sistan) in the statistical production of data, but, as a matter of fact, other bodies are also involved in sub-regional monitoring action (e.g., PoliS-Lombardia).

The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS)[2] produces an annual report entitled "Rapporto ASviS. L'Italia e gli obiettivi di Sviluppo Sostenibile", in which he analyses the achievement of the SDGs at the national level and presents policy proposals. ASviS established an interactive online database (available in the page "The numbers of sustainability"), this allows stakeholders, the media and the public to verify the Italy's progress with respect to the SDGs, using a wide range of statistical indicators, among those selected by the UN for the 2030 Agenda, released by the Istat, as well as the composite indicators relative to each SDG calculated by ASviS for Italy and the Italian regions (cfr. ASSET (futurast.it)).

In this paragraph, we analyse the Italian status of SDG 5 monitoring, based on recent official reports, highlighting critical issues in the availability of statistical data. For each Italian indicator we assessed the timeliness and reliability of the statistical data required for the development internationally harmonised indicators.

In case of lack of data, we evaluated other indicators produced in our country able to signal the phenomenon to be monitored, as indicated below.

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[2] ASviS mission is to raise the awareness of the Italian society, economic stakeholders and institutions on the importance of the Global Agenda for sustainable development, bringing together actors who already deal with specific aspects related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The **indicator 5.1.1** "Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex" is very difficult to calculate, since it is a qualitative rather than quantitative assessment of the legislation in force in our Country. This indicator only plays a part in the international comparison, counting Countries that have legal frameworks versus those without.

With regards to **indicator 5.2.1** "Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age" and **indicator 5.2.2** "Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12months, by age and place of occurrence", a significant proportion of data are obtained from Italian Crime Victimization Surveys , that Istat carried out every 5 years.

To permit ongoing monitoring, it is necessary to use administrative data of the Ministry of the Interior on complaints of violence and murders, and administrative data from health, justice and social public services (e.g., the number of calls to anti-violence 1522, number of women who were welcomed into shelters, etc.). However, it is not yet possible to establish the reliability of this administrative information.

Regarding the **indicator 5.3.1** "Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in an informal union before age 15 and before age 18", it is to be emphasised that the measure of child marriage is retrospective in nature by design, capturing age at first marriage among a population that has completed the risk period (i.e., adult women). While it is also possible to measure the current marital status of girls under age 18, such measures would provide an underestimate of the level of child marriage, as girls who are not currently married may still do so before they turn 18. The problem is that early marriage is in large part a submerged and hard to detect reality.

Indicator 5.3.2 "Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age". These data must be analysed in light of the extremely delicate and often sensitive nature of the topic. Self-reported data on FGM need to be treated with caution for several reasons. Women may be unwilling to disclose having undergone the procedure because of the sensitivity of the issue or the illegal status of the practice in their country. We have to remember the retrospective nature of these data, which results in this indicator not being sensitive to recent change.

As of 2018, UNICEF launched a new country consultation process with National Statistical Offices (or other national authorities) on selected child-related global SDG indicators.

Indicator 5.4.1 "Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location" provides an assessment of gender equality, by highlighting discrepancies between how much time women and men spend on unpaid work, like cooking, cleaning or taking care of children. The main data source is the time Istat survey carried every 5 years.

Consequently, an indirect indicator of women's involvement in care has been established given by the ratio between the employment rate of aged women 20-49 years with preschool children and the employment rate of women 20-49 without children (Labour force survey), published yearly by Istat[3].

With reference to the **Indicator 5.5.1** "Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments" there are updated basis on the election results at national and territorial levels. Instead, for the **Indicator 5.5.2** "Proportion of women in managerial positions", only the percentage of women on the boards of the publicly listed companies is detected, according the Golfo-Mosca Law (L.120/2011).

Indicator 5.6.1 "Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care" it is based on data collected as part of the five-years Health Survey. The sensitivity of the topics addressed in health surveys, in particular, those examining women's health, making them a feasible instrument for

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[3] The national plan for gender equality, in contrast, chose the indicator of the difference between the two female employment rates, also this kind of information is not yet published by Istat.

incorporating questions on women's experience of decision making in sex relations, use of contraceptive, and health care for themselves. There is no other national information.

Indicator 5.a.1 consists of two sub-indicators: a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure. The first one focuses on gender parity, measuring the extent to which women are disadvantaged in ownership or secure rights over agricultural land. Agricultural Censuses can be used for collecting data on SDG 5.a.1, however, the Census is usually conducted every 10 years, therefore, it cannot provide data to closely monitor the progress on indicator.

Indicator 5.b.1 "Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone". Mobile phone networks have spread rapidly over the last decade, however, not every person uses or owns a mobile-cellular telephone. Mobile phone, if owned and not just shared, provides women with a degree of independence and autonomy, including for professional purposes. Currently available data from household survey are referred for cellular use.

To conclude with **indicator 5.c.1** "Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment", we underline that it is aimed only at international comparison. At Country level, it is necessary to know how many Public Administrations have drawn up the gender budgeting. Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality. As 2018 Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance (State General Accounting Department) publishes gender budgeting (see Ragioneria Generale dello Stato - Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze - Bilancio di genere 2020 (mef.gov.it).

4. Conclusions

The Agenda 2030 and ambitious scope of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has resulted in a long list of indicators that will need to be monitored at national, regional, and global levels. Many of these indicators are 'aspirational' and will take time and significant resources to produce.

There is a clear lack of detailed and up-to-date information to construct monitoring indicators.

Finally, a further problem arises from the need to monitor SDG5 at the regional level, often due to the non-reliability of data derived from sample surveys.

On the other hand, it should be noted that Italy has not established specific quantitative targets to be achieved by 2030 for topics relating to SDG 5

The United Nations Body for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women) highlights the need to improve the statistical production of data and to identify targeted analysis and monitoring procedures to assess the progress achieved in gender equality. In particular, it suggests strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems and increasing the quantity and quality of data through the use of innovative technologies and methods (Data Revolution).

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