

# Summary on Germany's 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) – Women and Girls

## Overview

Germany's 2025 Voluntary National Review reflects a high-level commitment to sustainable development, human rights, and international solidarity. The report outlines Germany's strategies to promote equality, economic resilience, environmental protection, and international cooperation. However, while women and girls are referenced, a more detailed gender-disaggregated and intersectional lens is still needed across several of the SDGs.

## Women, Girls & Marginalized Groups: Summary by Focus SDGs

### SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being

#### Achievements & Focus Areas:

- Universal health coverage is a legal guarantee in Germany, including mental health care, telemedicine, and public health preparedness.
- The pandemic exposed mental health gaps, particularly affecting youth, women, and vulnerable populations.
- COVID-19 recovery efforts included psychosocial support and healthcare digitization, but lacked a gender-specific lens.

#### Recommendations:

- **Expand gender-specific health services** (maternal, reproductive, menstrual health).
- **Ensure inclusive health strategies** for migrants, refugees, elderly women, and people with disabilities.
- **Increase access to mental health care** for adolescent girls and women affected by gender-based violence.

- **Strengthen healthcare workforce diversity**, supporting women in leadership roles in health systems.
- **Improve data collection** on health outcomes disaggregated by sex, age, and socio-economic status.

## SDG 5 – Gender Equality

### Achievements & Commitments:

- **National Gender Equality Strategy** adopted in 2020 aims to close structural gaps in power, pay, time use, and representation.
- Mandatory quotas implemented for women in corporate boards and public service leadership.
- Germany supports a **Feminist Foreign and Development Policy**, focusing on gender justice and global women's rights.
- Focus on **preventing gender-based violence**, including funding for shelters and improving legal protection.

### Recommendations:

- **Strengthen implementation** of gender equality laws with budgetary accountability.
- **Address intersectional inequalities**, particularly for migrant, Roma, disabled, and LGBTQ+ women and girls.
- **Expand safe shelters and legal aid** for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.
- **Support girls' leadership** through school-based programs and civic education.
- **Promote equal caregiving responsibility** through incentives for paternity leave and flexible work.

## SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

### Achievements & Actions:

- Legal minimum wage raised to address in-work poverty and improve gender equity.
- Reforms introduced for parental leave and part-time work benefits.
- Targeted support for female entrepreneurs and women-led SMEs in national and EU funding schemes.

### Ongoing Challenges:

- **Gender pay gap** persists (approx. 18% in 2023).
- **Part-time employment** heavily affects women, limiting pension security and economic independence.
- **Migrant women face structural barriers** in labor market entry and career advancement.

### Recommendations:

- **Mandate pay transparency** and enforce equal pay audits.
- **Expand vocational and technical training** access for women, especially in STEM and green jobs.
- **Support inclusive entrepreneurship**, including migrant and refugee women.
- **Ensure labor protections** for informal workers and caregivers.
- **Integrate gender equity in AI and digital economy frameworks.**

## SDG 14 – Life Below Water

### Achievements:

- Germany has committed to marine biodiversity conservation and reducing plastic pollution through EU and national directives.

- Strong support for the Global Biodiversity Framework and international ocean governance.
- Engagement in OSPAR and HELCOM treaties for regional marine conservation.

### **Gender Gap:**

- No specific mention of women's or indigenous groups' roles in marine resource management.
- No inclusion of gender or community-based approaches in environmental sustainability projects.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Integrate gender-responsive strategies** in marine and coastal policies.
- **Support women's participation in marine science**, fisheries, and coastal governance.
- **Promote environmental education** for girls and young women.
- **Fund gender-inclusive ocean conservation initiatives** through Germany's ODA and development programs.

## **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals**

### **Achievements:**

- Germany is a leader in Official Development Assistance (ODA), consistently exceeding the 0.7% GDP target.
- Germany actively promotes multilateralism, climate justice, and the 2030 Agenda globally.
- Launched **Feminist Development Policy** in 2023, focusing on gender justice, especially in Global South partnerships.
- Supports **global SRHR access**, anti-FGM projects, and economic empowerment programs for women.

### **Key Partnerships:**

- Engagement with **UN Women, WHO, GAVI, and OECD DAC GenderNet.**
- Bilateral support for **gender equality strategies in partner countries** (e.g., Sahel, Western Balkans, Latin America).

### **Recommendations:**

- **Prioritize gender equality in all bilateral aid agreements.**
- **Support grassroots, women-led civil society organizations** in fragile and post-conflict states.
- **Track gender impact of financial flows** and SDG implementation.
- **Promote capacity-building** for women in development diplomacy and international institutions.

## **Cross-Cutting Gender Issues**

### **Gender-Based Violence**

- VNR notes progress on legal frameworks and state-funded support centers.
- Women's shelters receive federal support, but **disparities in access persist at the local level.**

### **Recommendations:**

- Standardize **minimum service levels** across federal states.
- Include **gender-responsive policing and judiciary reforms.**
- Improve **reporting mechanisms and survivor protection.**

## Young Women and Girls

- Education system promotes inclusion, but girls in **migrant communities** face higher dropout risks.
- Youth programs include digital literacy, yet rarely address **gender norms or leadership**.

### Recommendations:

- **Invest in STEM programs** for girls, particularly in low-income areas.
- Expand **mentorship and civic engagement** initiatives for adolescent girls.
- **Ensure SRHR education** is mandatory, rights-based, and intersectional.

## Girls as a Distinct Focus

- The term “**girls**” **appears only once** in the entire report.
- This mention is part of a **stakeholder contribution by VENRO**, calling for continued German advocacy for the rights of women and girls, especially in education, protection from violence, and participation.
- The main body of the VNR **contains no explicit references to girls**, indicating a lack of targeted attention within official policy reporting.
- While gender equality is addressed broadly, **age-specific needs of girls are not distinguished** from those of women, limiting alignment with SDG 5.

### Recommendations

- **Explicitly reference girls** in national and international gender policies.
- **Disaggregate gender measures by age** to ensure that girls’ unique challenges are addressed.
- **Include girl-focused indicators**, especially in education, protection, and participation.
- **Engage girl-led and youth organizations** in future VNR consultations.

- **Showcase examples** of effective programs supporting girls at home and abroad.

## **Women in Leadership**

- Corporate and public quotas led to modest improvements.
- Gaps remain in academia, media, tech, and startup sectors.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Set sector-specific targets** for female leadership.
- Support **childcare and family-friendly workplaces**.
- **Train women for climate, tech, and trade leadership** roles.

## **Gender Data & Accountability**

- Germany commits to SDG monitoring but gender data gaps persist.

### **Recommendations:**

- Require **sex-, age-, and ethnicity-disaggregated data** across all SDGs.
- Fund **intersectional gender research** in collaboration with civil society and academia.

## **Conclusion**

Germany's 2025 VNR demonstrates a structured, rights-based approach to sustainable development and international cooperation. The country's national gender strategy, feminist foreign policy, and development leadership are commendable. Yet, gaps remain in translating high-level commitments into inclusive, localized action for all women, girls, and marginalized communities.

With stronger intersectional policies, better disaggregated data, and inclusive partnerships, Germany can lead globally in ensuring that no one — especially women and girls — is left behind in the SDG journey to 2030.

## **Personal Reflection**

Germany's 2025 Voluntary National Review presents a clear and structured overview of the country's progress and priorities in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. I especially appreciated the inclusion of stakeholder quotes, which added a sense of transparency and authenticity to the report. The emphasis on strong institutions, youth participation, and economic justice demonstrates a commitment to broad and inclusive development.

The presentation at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum also left a positive impression. The presentation was notably grounded and sincere, featuring a focused discussion led by three women: two representing government institutions and one from civil society. This setup allowed for a more honest portrayal of challenges, and the strong female presence highlighted an implicit message of women's empowerment. The inclusion of a stakeholder representative helped ensure that critical perspectives were not overlooked, which added to the credibility of the presentation.

However, I noticed a discrepancy between the tone of the HLPF presentation and the content of the written VNR. While Germany presented itself as feminist and self-reflective at the forum, the VNR itself gave limited attention to SDG 5, gender equality. The experiences and needs of women and girls were not sufficiently addressed — the word “girls” appeared only once, and only within a stakeholder contribution. This raises questions about the consistency and depth of the gender equality commitment across different formats.

Additionally, while the VNR outlines ambitious goals, I believe that implementation still lags behind. Progress often does not reach those most affected, and real change must become more visible in everyday settings — in schools, clinics, workplaces, and homes.

In summary, both the VNR and the HLPF presentation have strengths — especially in their openness to stakeholder voices — but to be truly effective, they must be better aligned and more inclusive, particularly when it comes to gender equality.



## Sources:

- <https://www.vnr-germany.de/resource/blob/256810/vnr-germany-2025.pdf>