



THE ORGANISED MANY

A gender justice agenda for action

A summary of a series of convenings on achieving
gender justice

2026

 GLOBAL 50 | in DIALOGUE

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COVER ARTWORK

Nan Zhao, Fragments of Identity, Germany, 2023.

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Global 50/50, The Organised Many: a gender justice agenda for action. Cambridge, UK, 2026.

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Summary

Between January and May 2026, more than 150 gender justice leaders, from grassroots women's rights organisations to multilateral agencies, came together across four convenings and a survey of the field, hosted by Global 50/50, an independent think tank that holds some of the world's most powerful institutions to account on gender.

In 1995, 189 governments adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, still the most complete agenda for gender equality the world has set itself. Three decades on it remains largely undelivered, and the ground it covers is now the direct target of an organised countermovement.

Gender justice protagonists are up against a real and rising opposition. Convenings described a well-resourced, coordinated and disciplined countermovement waging a global campaign against gender justice, and against the people, organisations and systems working to reduce inequities, achieve equality and realise justice. By strategically wielding financial, narrative, political and organisational power, the anti-gender, anti-rights opposition has overturned laws, dismantled institutions built to advance gender equality and disrupted and diminished lives.

Now is the time for the pro-justice movement to respond and defend progress for everyone. Drawing on those conversations, and analysing them for their strategic recommendations, we identify five priority actions that will provide strategic gains towards gender justice.

01

Get political and organised around power

As a field, we know and work with evidence and technical fixes; the opposition knows how to exercise power and is adept at controlling agendas. These gaps are contributing to why we are losing ground. Better understanding of the

gaps requires comprehensive mapping of where anti-gender actors operate across spaces of power – particularly financial, legal, political, commercial and digital spaces; and where our own assets, allies and openings lie.

Closing these gaps means engaging with legislative and political strategies to promote gender justice, including by making it politically costly to side with the anti-gender, anti-rights opposition, or to shelter in professed neutrality, rather than merely virtuous to stand against it. Global leadership transitions provide windows of opportunity to win public commitments for delivery on gender justice goals. We must also turn the same questions on ourselves: who convenes, who decides, who gets counted.

02

Connect the movements and resource a shared infrastructure

Feminist movements have long distinguished the *power over* that the opposition wields – the concentrated financial, legal and political muscle to compel and constrain – from the *power with* i.e. acting together and the *power within* i.e. claiming one's own standing to act. Expanding on the *power with*, we will be stronger when we align with other movements on issues of social justice and put aside our internal divisions to present a more united front.

The anti-gender, anti-rights opposition is disciplined, often aligned, and generates unity across its groups, while the divisions among our own movements are exploited against us. We need a cross-movement alliance around a handful of priorities we can win, not a coalition of everything. Build it on the alliances, funds and networks we already have, and sustain the movement through regular convening, a shared digital hub, and a live, shared map of who and what we can call on.

03

Reposition strategic communications and narrative capacity as foundational and fund it

Narrative and communications occupy a space where power is gained or lost. The anti-gender, anti-rights opposition understands this and treats communications as a critical investment while we have too often treated it as a budget line to cut. We need more than just more financial resources, we need to be better at delivering narratives that resonate widely across multiple audiences. In the era of the attention economy, evidence-led claims, even when careful and qualified, risk being lost.

Moving from defence to offence means funding feminist communications as core work: supporting feminist media; turning our evidence into narrative; and focusing on expanding the reach to carry narratives and ideas across channels, media and a range of languages, cultures and demographics. With this approach we can reach the sympathetic majority and take back the narrative and language the opposition captures, manipulates and exploits.

04

Change how the work is funded and make the gender-responsive investment case

Funders are encouraged to change the terms on which they deploy their financial resources and power. Funding practices today put the heaviest financial risks on the recipient organisations least

able to absorb them. Women's rights and feminist organisations need core, flexible, multi-year funding not short-term investments.

Further, finance ministries and the planners who deploy public capital should apply a gender lens to investment decisions as standard, and steer that money towards what advances gender justice. Funding decisions that ignore gender still produce gendered outcomes, with hidden costs for women and worse results for everyone.

05

Expand and sustain independent monitoring and establish a standing accountability mechanism

We need independent monitoring of institutions' commitments and performance on gender justice. The power of monitoring is as a basis for action and a pillar for accountability. Without it, we cannot demonstrate progress, expose regression or hold power to account. One such mechanism, a Lancet Countdown on Gender Justice, is being explored by Global 50/50 and The Lancet. Each year it would track what governments and institutions commit to and what they deliver, focused on gender and health, and potentially climate. Over time, it could extend to other sectors - ultimately making non-delivery on gender justice commitments publicly expensive.

These five priorities are not a panacea for the full range of substantial challenges we are up against. They do, however, represent actionable, time-bound opportunities for supporting the gender justice movement at a time of powerful, organised opposition.



Hope is a political decision we have to make every day.

Participant, Global 50/50 convening at CSW69, New York, 2025

Participants did not resolve whether gender justice remains the right entry-point frame in every setting, what a shared endpoint would look like, or whether existing measurement frameworks are adequate to the moment. The report sets these out as open questions rather than forcing agreement. None of them blocks the five actions, which command support across the convenings and the survey regardless of where participants stand on them.

Following the convenings Global 50/50 has made a start on advancing this agenda. We have launched an **open letter to the next UN Secretary-General** setting out five commitments to make gender equality real: Measure it, Analyse it, Centre it, Fund it, Institutionalise it. We are about to open a movement-wide consultation on the shared digital hub. Design work on the Lancet Countdown is underway and open to partners, with a convening of funders to follow.

The current rollback on rights, justice and equality is not inevitable - it is constructed and can be de-constructed. If we organise, fund the work and hold the line together, this moment becomes an opening, not a loss. No single organisation can do this alone. Advancing this agenda will take partners, funders and allies across the movement, and Global 50/50 will keep convening so we can all build this power together.

WORK WITH US

If you want to fund this work, partner on it, or join others determined to advance gender justice, please get in touch at **info@global5050.org**.

02

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Mara Scamporrì, *Two mothers*, 2023

This report draws on four convenings held between January and May 2026 and on a survey of the gender justice field conducted in April 2026. Approximately 120 people took part across the convening series and more than 40 online respondents completed the survey, representing feminist movements, multilateral institutions, government ministries, philanthropy, academia, civil society, the private sector and frontline service delivery. Many convening participants came from the health sector and in several places

in the report we use this sector as a source of ideas and actions that can be transferred, adapted or replicated across other sectors too.

The survey was distributed to approximately 160 gender justice leaders, of whom 42 responded. Respondents were asked, anonymously, to rank their most significant challenges, to identify the strategies they had found most effective, to name what would most strengthen their ability to act, and to say where Global 50/50's work should focus.



The train of weaponisation of gender has been coming down the tracks for years – it didn't start with the current US administration. What's changed is that we're now seeing it reach inside our own institutions: disbanded gender teams, restricted language, the disappearance of the people we used to work with in governments and multilaterals. That's the domino effect of funding pressure. At Global 50/50 we are focused on how we reverse it – together, with more joined-up strategies than we've ever attempted before.

Sarah Hawkes

Co-CEO, Global 50/50

THE CONVENINGS

Malaysian feminist roundtable

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
APRIL 2026

A roundtable of feminist NGOs grounding the global analysis in a specific national political context.

Studio 5 (Women Deliver)

NAARM (MELBOURNE), AUSTRALIA
APRIL 2026

A closed-door high-level strategy session with Project Everyone, during the Women Deliver conference, with thirty leaders from feminist movements, multilateral institutions, philanthropy and the private sector.

Fondation Brocher

HERMANCE, SWITZERLAND
MAY 2026

A technical workshop at Fondation Brocher, bringing researchers and practitioners from different analytical traditions, including members of two Lancet Commissions, to examine the challenges facing gender justice in health research and practice.

World Health Assembly

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
MAY 2026

A Lancet-Global 50/50 convening on the margins of the World Health Assembly, bringing together health sector and gender justice leaders from the multilateral system, NGOs, academia and research organisations.

We used verbatim transcripts to synthesise the narratives and recommendations arising from the convenings and survey. We then applied lenses of power and feminist interpretation to contextualise the discussions. A word on the power lens we have used. Power works in three ways, and we looked for all three. The first is visible, in the decisions, budgets, appointments and laws where we can see who won and who lost. The second is quieter: the questions kept off the table altogether, through unwritten rules, strategic silence, or partnerships that occupy the space a regulation might have filled. The third is quieter still, and works on what people come to accept as normal, natural or simply not worth contesting.

Much of what participants described sits in the second and third domains, which is where this contest is increasingly lost and won. We also

turned the lens on ourselves: on who was in the room, on whose knowledge counted, and on the instruments we use to measure everyone else.

Discussions at the convenings were not for attribution, in keeping with the principle of the Chatham House Rule. Participants were free to use what they heard, but contributions are not linked to any named individual or organisation. The one exception is with explicit consent, where a participant agreed to a specific quotation being attributed to them by name and organisation, in some cases with a photograph. No other participant is identified.

We are grateful to everyone who took part in the convenings and responded to the survey. This report is built on their insights.

The report offers many opportunities for future collaboration – and we would love to hear from you. You can contact us at: info@global5050.org



03

THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT: ORGANISED OPPOSITION & SELF-SILENCING

David Iloba, Untitled, 2024

“We are experiencing the most adverse set of conditions for anybody concerned with social justice and progressive movements in any of our lifetimes.”

- Convening participant

The US executive orders of January 2025, mandating the removal of gender language from federal contracts and terminating diversity, equity and inclusion programmes, followed a coordinated, transnational anti-gender movement decades in the making. The second face of power, keeping issues off an agenda, exerted a swift and devastating impact. Almost overnight organisations removed gender language from public documents and set about restructuring or

closing programmes, some under direct threats to their funding and others in response to the broader chilling effect, pre-emptively lowering their profile rather than risk becoming a target. At one convening a participant likened the effect to self-stigma: organisations that have not been defunded begin to act as though they have and comply with the most conservative reading of instructions that in many cases are not even legally enforceable.

A rapid review by Global 50/50 in early 2025 found that within weeks of the orders, 20 of the 72 US-headquartered organisations in our Global Health 50/50 Report sample had removed gender equality and diversity language from their websites, nearly all of them holding US federal grants or contracts. **Holding the Line (2025)** then confirmed the full-year picture: workplace fairness and equity policies down 33 percent among organisations with US federal funding, workplace gender equality policies down 19 percent, and, for the first time since monitoring began in 2017, the direction of change backwards across every variable we assess, reversing the steady gains recorded from 2020 to 2024.

Yet it is not just the current political moment that is keeping us from making progress. Participants in one convening highlighted the role of culture and social norms as barriers to gender equality - what one participant called the “hidden hand that blocks”. An example was given around dress codes - nothing in law says a woman must conform to a certain dress code to progress in her job, yet somebody decides, and the effect is as binding as any statute. Some of these barriers are spoken about only quietly and behind closed doors - another reflection of where power sits.

The anti-gender movement has identified gender equality as a strategic entry point for broader objectives such as contesting democratic norms, constraining civic space, advancing authoritarian agendas, promoting pro- or anti-natalism. This countermovement (to gender justice) has been

building its infrastructure for decades. Participants argued that this is not a conservative cultural reaction to rapid social change, and that the word “backlash” concedes too much, because it implies a prior state of equality to return to. “We are not going back to the good old days,” one participant said, noting that these had never actually existed.

“We are not going back to the good old days.”

- Convening participant

Even in the face of these challenges, the convenings still urged optimism. There are countries, political environments and communities - including large constituencies inside countries driving the pushback - where real progress is being made. If we do not see and recognise our own gains we will struggle to persuade anyone else of them. And we are not pursuing gender and social justice alone - in 2026, a survey of over 22,000 people across 31 countries found that support for international cooperation rose for the first time in years.

Rising support for global solidarity

Global Nation’s annual Ipsos survey of more than 22,000 people across 31 countries found agreement rising on all three of its measures of global solidarity, across every generation, every income group and every level of education, and in nearly all countries. The authors’ reading is that it is precisely the threats to the international system that are making people value it more.

Global Nation, At its darkest hour, is internationalism back?, May 2026

04

THE ACTION AGENDA: WHAT GENDER JUSTICE LEADERS ARE ASKING FOR

01

Get political and organised around power

02

Connect the movements and resource a shared infrastructure

03

Reposition strategic communications and narrative capacity as foundational and fund it

04

Change how the work is funded and make the gender-responsive investment case

05

Expand and sustain independent monitoring and establish a standing accountability mechanism

Get political and organised around power



There has been a deliberate strategy by the anti-rights movement to muddle the distinction between gender as a structural construct and gender identity and it's working. We spend a huge amount of energy generating evidence to convince people who already know it. It's time to add the politics and to develop a collective overarching strategy.

Neil Datta

Executive Director, European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

The gender justice field is fighting a political battle with a technical toolkit, and if we are to gain ground we need to become more politically strategic, for example being more active in the kinds of political and legislative spaces where the opposition is having success.

A first step is to understand the wider terrain: map where anti-gender actors exercise power – financial, legal, political and digital – and where the gender justice movement has the openings, allies and assets to contest it. This means real-time intelligence on the opposition, across a range of languages and cultures, so the field can see anti-gender activity as it happens rather than after the fact. Alongside where anti-gender actors act, we need to see what they keep off the agenda, and better understand and act on their narrative power.

The question of commercial power was raised in the health-focused meetings in particular. The industries whose products shape health, among them alcohol, ultra-processed food, gambling, tobacco and the fast-growing market in medicalised women's health, exercise power in a myriad of ways, using their financial and political resources to influence both social norms (including gender norms) and government legislation. They also shape evidence, including

by funding research and leaving inconvenient questions unfunded, and they increasingly fund the advocacy and patient groups that lobby for change. Mapping and holding power to account for gender justice extends to the commercial actors as well as the anti-gender anti-rights groups.

The second step is to identify windows of political opportunity. For example, the upcoming leadership transitions across the multilateral system over the next eighteen months, including the appointment of a new UN Secretary-General, are a chance to win public commitments and make it costly to side with the opposition rather than merely virtuous to oppose it.

Finally, the convenings urged recognition of strategic opportunities, even in the face of adversity: the withdrawal of powerful funders could be an opportunity to make progress on some long-blocked positions. Moreover, the regional bodies such as the African CDC, ASEAN health processes and G20 workstreams are increasingly the routes to country-level uptake. One urgent task is to act before the landscape shifts again. Power is built and used at country level, so this work depends on national partners and locally generated commitment rather than global prescription.



If you look at the major shifts in global health, many were driven by women with a feminist agenda. Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland transformed WHO and delivered the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the first global health treaty, now ratified by 168 countries. The remnants of gender equity we still have in the institution exist because of the political space she and others opened. That's the standard we should be holding leadership to – not just who holds the title, but what they stand for and what they do with it.

Flavia Bustreo

Former Assistant Director-General, World Health Organization

WHAT GLOBAL 50/50 IS DOING

Global 50/50 has launched an **open letter to the next UN Secretary-General** calling for action on five commitments to operationalise gender equality – Measure it, Analyse it, Centre it, Fund it, Institutionalise it – and is building the coalition of signatories behind it.

ACTION TWO

01 02 03 04 05

Connect the movements and resource a shared infrastructure

The attack on gender justice is part of a broader anti-democratic project, and convening participants agreed that the field has not yet built sufficient alliances or campaigns with those working on this and other aligned agendas. Direct collaboration of gender justice actors with groups working to defend democratic norms, civic space and the rule of law, and others tackling issues such as climate justice, will be more impactful and sustainable than keeping the gender justice field siloed from other social justice movements.

The movements that have made notable gains, among them labour, climate, disability rights and anti-racism, share both structural interests and opponents with the gender justice field – and we can learn a lot from them. For example, in those settings where action on gender and sexuality is challenging for political or cultural reasons, participants highlighted the value of using adjacent framings such as disability rights as entry points for a broader social justice agenda that includes gender justice. Convening participants frequently mentioned that the opposition already works in this way with members and movements studying one another's playbooks and sharing funders and strategies.

Participants also acknowledged that the gender justice field itself can appear disunited, particularly around definitions and language. These differences are used and exploited by the anti-gender oppositions. The opposition is not united on definitions either but unites on principles. Participants argued for the same discipline: hold the line on the principle of inclusion across sex, gender and gender identity, and stop ceding ground on terminology in ways that signal division without changing the argument.

Four opportunities for further connection and available resources were raised during discussions:

- the need for regular convening in shared, safe spaces;
- development of a shared digital hub that provides resources, knowledge, evidence and tools for the movement;
- a live, collaborative map of the spaces, networks and people the field already has in place;
- the availability of a skilled workforce of people who have expertise in the field of gender justice, including some who have recently lost their jobs.

A large majority of survey respondents indicated they would help build the map of assets for the proposed digital hub.

Connecting the movements: what leaders say would help most

Asked what would most strengthen their ability to promote gender justice, more gender justice leaders pointed to cross-movement alliances and connections than to any other option – the most-selected priority in the survey.

WHAT GLOBAL 50/50 IS DOING

Global 50/50 is exploring how to use its **In Dialogue** convening programme to bring the gender justice field into structured exchange with adjacent movements – for instance, bringing gender, climate and rights actors together to work out shared strategies against a common opposition.

Global 50/50 is scoping a digital hub for the movement as a home for research, resources, jobs, grants and events and is launching an ecosystem-wide consultation on what to build.



Although the gender justice movement lacks an overarching strategy, the history of the AIDS movement and of the progress leading up to Beijing points to the lesson that the gender justice movement shouldn't go it alone. We need a better-connected infrastructure: one that shares resources, intelligence, and platforms, and that's able to respond at the speed the opposition already moves.

Kent Buse

Co-CEO, Global 50/50

Reposition strategic communications and narrative capacity as foundational and fund it

In the realm of narrative we are acting too little and too late. Convening participants pointed out that no one has yet built counter-narratives that match the emotional force and cultural reach of anti-gender storytelling. The opposition is not simply out-spending us, they are also telling powerful stories with a villain, a victim and a remedy. Too often we offer evidence, findings and caveats, and in an attention-based economy we are losing out.



The opposition has understood something we are still learning: communications is not the last step, it is the first. Building that capacity in from the start, reaching people who are not already in our spaces, making it politically costly to align with anti-gender agendas – that is the infrastructure this movement needs. We have not built it yet. That has to change.



Elizabeth Ames
CEO, Atalanta

PARTICIPANTS POINTED TO SEVERAL STRATEGIES:

Reclaim language.

Terms like family and traditional values have been politically constructed and captured by the anti-gender groups; participants argued for reclaiming them. Participants added a note of caution on “discourse capture,” that progressive language, once institutionalised, gets professionalised and drained of political content, so any new framing risks the same fate unless the politics stay explicit.

Shift from defensive to offensive posture.

A consistent call was to “channel resources into more intentional offensive strategies.” A precedent from the tobacco-control movement – the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control’s “Dirty Ashtray Award” naming the most obstructive state each day of the conference – was suggested as a model for accountability and reputational pressure.

Build communications in from the start and resource it.

A dedicated communications budget should sit at the proposal stage. Identify spokespeople and case studies before research is finalised. Media attention needs “a book, a story or a person,” not just aggregate data.

Invest in the missing infrastructure.

Multilingual social listening was named as a gap. Mainstream AI tools don't do social listening well outside English, leaving regional information environments – “where things are really happening” – unmonitored. Participants called for stronger shared strategic-communications tools and capacity (e.g. building social listening tools, developing shared narratives, working more closely with media, and a centralised digital platform to support this connectivity).



We're not asking anyone to take a leap of faith – the proof is in the numbers and in the community. When we have the resources, the results are real and measurable. Right-wing media is well-funded and it shows. Feminist media deserves the same investment.



Ky Polanco
Co-Founder, FEMINIST

WHAT GLOBAL 50/50 IS DOING

In our planned Global 50/50 In Dialogue convenings (see [Action two](#)), we will bring evidence-generators and communicators into the same room, to work out together how the field communicates earlier, more strategically, and in the spaces beyond those it defaults to. This includes bringing gender justice and climate justice together with communications experts, to consider shared tactics against shared opposition.

Global 50/50 is also exploring how a digital hub (see [Action two](#)) could provide a platform for shared narratives and communications tools.

ACTION FOUR

01 02 03 04 05

Change how the work is funded and make the gender-responsive investment case

This action is addressed directly to funders and addresses two issues: how money flows, and how the case for a gender investment case is made.

Firstly, on how money flows, it was highlighted time and again that the current funder-grantee system drives fragmentation and small-scale action at the cost of the collective infrastructure that the field is looking for. Current funding models are not working for organisations to deliver sustained impact. The asks were consistent across all convenings and the survey: more unrestricted, flexible, trust-based core support; multi-year commitments rather than project-by-project grants; risk held at the

institutional level rather than passed down to the grassroots organisations and frontline service providers who are least able to absorb it; and a willingness to fund the infrastructure – convening, coordination, monitoring, communications. The problem is not only one of how much money there is, but the conditions under which it flows. The ask was summarised as “give more, give core, give flexibly”, alongside a request that funders review the risk structures that currently transfer cost and exposure downward.



The real risk in this moment is being transferred to grassroots organisations and frontline service providers - often with the least resources and the most to lose - while restricted funding and risk-averse donors stay distant from the work that actually matters. If the progressive movement is serious about winning, donors need to look at their own policies. Unrestrict the funding. Trust the people closest to the communities you say you're serving.

Maria Antonieta Alcalde Castro

Director General, IPPF



Financial instruments exist - bonds, blended finance, investment tools - but they haven't been accessed by the gender equality community or deployed properly. The problem isn't the absence of money; it's the absence of shared language in the financing space and the confidence to use what we already have. We need to name gender as a good investment, and back that with the evidence of what it costs not to act.



David Imbago-Jacome

Manager, Ecosystem Development & Equity, The Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)

One participant described asking a funder to support a five-year communications strategy and being offered a two-year programme; another described the impossibility of resourcing sustained cultural work because results frameworks cannot capture it. An opposition operating over decades cannot be met with funding that renews over months.

The terms on which money flows decide which organisations grow and which will fold, which questions get researched and which remain unanswered, and who carries the risk when the political climate turns. Money has been used, wittingly or not, to set the movement competing with itself, and past waves of donor enthusiasm have built parallel structures that displaced national systems and left new dependencies behind. So the question for funders is not only to give more, give core and give flexibly, but to see the power their conditions already exercise, and to shift the risk to those most able to bear it.

Secondly, we need to be more innovative in our sources of funding. Financing instruments such as bonds, blended finance, impact-investment tools, exist and are largely untouched by the gender justice field. The constraint is not the absence of capital but the absence of a shared language to make the gender investment case to the people who deploy it.

To the finance ministries and planners who deploy public capital, the ask is different: apply a gender lens to investment decisions as standard and steer that capital towards what advances gender justice. Sophisticated financing

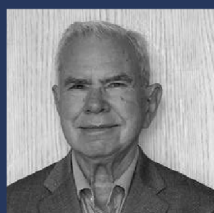
instruments – bonds, blended finance, impact-investment tools – exist and are largely untouched by the field.

Participants argued for presenting gender justice work as an investment with a return and impact, priced against the measurable, mounting cost of doing nothing. Inaction on gender justice is expensive – paid in lost productivity, avoidable ill health and wasted potential – and naming that cost strengthens the case. We need to be able to show where and how today's investment decisions still rest on assumptions that ignore gender, and to make visible the costs and externalities of such decisions. Most of the invisible costs are currently borne by women – for example, cost-effectiveness analyses of healthcare investments do not consider the opportunity costs to women of inadequate and ineffective health care provided to family members that result in women's unpaid care burden increasing. We need to ensure that equity and gendered social costs sit inside cost-effectiveness frameworks rather than outside them.

WHAT GLOBAL 50/50 CAN DO

Global 50/50 can partner with others across three fronts: building the gender investment case; monitoring how far funds are applied with a lens of gender justice, including the distribution of risk as well as finance; and convening like-minded funders around this agenda for better-coordinated support.

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We have the people who can make the case for gender-responsive health investment in the language that actually moves decision-makers. But it requires bringing together those who understand health investment frameworks and those who understand gender – because neither can do it alone. That is how you make the argument land with finance ministries and health planners: not by asking them to speak our language, but by speaking theirs. And above all you motivate them by showing what is possible – you really need a glass half full mentality to move this agenda.

Dean Jamison

Professor Emeritus, University of California, San Francisco

Expand and sustain independent monitoring and establish a standing accountability mechanism

Independent monitoring was named at each of the four convenings and endorsed by 32 of the 42 survey respondents – the strongest mandate from the survey results. It was the function most consistently described as foundational to everything else. Without it, the field cannot demonstrate progress or regression, hold institutions to account, or sustain the evidence base that makes the case for change over time.

Actors in the health sector proposed a Lancet Countdown on Gender Justice as a long-term accountability mechanism to track what institutions have committed to, what they have implemented, and where commitments remain only on paper. Such a mechanism would follow the model of other Lancet Countdowns including the **Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change** which is now establishing regional countdowns across Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. A new Lancet Countdown on Health and Plastics, is organised around stakeholders rather than countries, holding specific actors to account while avoiding the political sensitivities of country rankings. A Countdown on Gender Justice would be off to a strong start as it could build on the foundations of the **Lancet Commission on Achieving Gender Justice for Global Health Equity (2025)** and on Global 50/50's monitoring since 2017.

At several points participants emphasised that accountability and monitoring metrics may look neutral but they almost never are. If a Gender Justice Countdown is to hold others to account, it has to show its own workings, to say what it is counting and what cannot be counted (see **Gender and health**), and to be designed collaboratively with a range of audiences. The

exact content of monitoring will vary by sector, geography and level of governance, but is likely to focus on tracking institutional behaviour, policy content, resource allocation, and monitoring the spaces where power is exercised. Advances in AI-assisted analysis now make the underlying monitoring markedly more feasible than even eighteen months ago, across large numbers of institutions, countries and languages, but holding the powerful to account requires sustained funding.



Accountability means monitoring, bringing people together to examine what that monitoring reveals, and then taking action. That's the cycle that creates change. We've done it on climate, on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health – now it's time to do it on gender justice. And I look forward to doing it in partnership with Global 50/50.



Richard Horton

Editor-in-Chief, The Lancet



Gaia Giongo, It's not a movie. Stand up!, 2023

WHAT GLOBAL 50/50 IS DOING

Global 50/50 and The Lancet are exploring a Gender Justice Countdown, building on the [Lancet Commission on Achieving Gender Justice for Global Health Equity](#) and on the independent monitoring Global 50/50 has conducted since 2017 through its [Indices](#). This includes where gender can be built into existing accountability mechanisms, including on climate and health. Partners interested in collaborating, shaping and supporting the initiative are invited to come forward.

05

GENDER AND HEALTH

Lessons from health on who gets counted and how to make the case

Two of the four convenings were gender-and-health gatherings, drawing on the **Lancet Commissions on Achieving Gender Justice for Global Health Equity** and on **Investing in Health**. Several issues stand out that carry lessons for other sectors.

01 Measurement dictates whose experience counts, and biased measurement is exploitable.

Many national level health and demographic surveys have only included (married) women aged 15 to 49, thus rendering women's health outside the childbearing years invisible while setting no equivalent boundary for men, and overlooking the health needs of gender-diverse people. These metrics prioritise women's fertility, while conditions such as endometriosis, the menopause and much of women's later life are rendered invisible.



Our standard metrics in global health surveys define women as women of reproductive age, 15 to 49. That is an administrative convention, not a biological standard. It makes everyone else invisible, including women outside those ages and men across all ages. If we want to broaden our understanding of gender and health, we must broaden who gets counted. Indicators and metrics determine who gets prioritised and who gets left out of policy designs and resource allocation – which is precisely why a monitoring mechanism for gender justice, one that tracks structural drivers in addition to reproductive outcomes, is needed.



Angela Chang

Professor of Global Health Economics and Metrics, University of Southern Denmark

02 **A broader frame can strengthen the argument rather than dilute it.**

The convenings moved away from treating gender in health as a question only about women and girls, and only about reproductive health, towards a whole life-course view. The room addressed the political risk of this directly, recognising that the framing of “gender is about everyone” has been used elsewhere to weaken women-specific advocacy. The response was to be more precise: a life-course frame is not a claim that men and women face equivalent disadvantage. It is a claim that the field’s tools should be able to see every way gender operates as a structural system, including where it harms men and where it intersects with class, race, disability and geography.



In Norwegian municipalities with the most favourable social conditions, the gap in life expectancy between men and women approaches zero. That is hard to explain biologically. It would be easy – I would even say cowardly – to say this gap is natural and therefore not our problem to solve. The evidence says otherwise. What is good for women turns out to be even better for men. A genuine gender lens in health is not a threat to men’s health – it is probably the best argument for it.



Vegard Skirbekk

Professor, Columbia University
Mailman School of Public Health

03 **Gender analysis can be presented, simply, as better science that produces better health for all.**

Framing the ask as ‘sex-disaggregated data leading to better outcomes for everyone’ reaches finance ministries, health planners and sceptical scientists in a way that a rights-first argument does not, without conceding the rights argument at all.



Take tuberculosis: men face higher incidence, longer delays before diagnosis, and worse treatment outcomes than women, yet our health systems are not often designed to ask why, let alone respond adequately and with empathy. A genuine gender lens in health does not pit the interests of women and men against each other – it reveals where gender-blind assumptions are costing everyone. That is a crucial evidence gap we need to close, and it is also an argument that can open new doors for the gender justice agenda.



Jeremiah Chikovore

Chief Research Specialist, Social
Aspects of Public Health Research,
Human Sciences Research Council



Gina C Meneses, When the mountain won't move, healthcare must, 2023



Everything we know about how social and structural context shapes women's health applies to men and others too – we just haven't always asked the right questions. A genuine gender justice lens is not about competition between male and female health needs or a zero sum game. It is about asking better questions across the board and taking action on data to promote gender equity and justice.



Sally Theobald

Professor in Social Science and International Health, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK



This moment of crisis gives us an opportunity to question the entire system. As long as we are using metrics and indicators within the existing patriarchal systems, we are maintaining that system. Research that is feminist and intersectional needs to reflect the complexity of the reality it is trying to understand. So we should think bigger, and ask, what could gender-responsive research in global health look like if it didn't look like this?



Shirin Heidari

Senior Researcher, The Graduate Institute Geneva

Open questions for the year ahead

Several questions recurred across the convenings that demand further attention.

01 • Should we use alternative entry-points?

Participants argued that gender justice is a politically costly frame in many contexts, and that the field should weigh other entry points - justice, democracy, health equity, human rights, or a 'good science' (i.e. 'it works and it has positive impact') framing. It was noted, however, that the goal of justice, too, is being weaponised. Others argued that abandoning the gender justice frame compounds the damage by accepting the terms of the opposition's attack. Health equity and the democracy agenda were proposed as the encompassing 'umbrella' frames.

02 • What does expanded monitoring look like?

The convenings were clear that independent monitoring must be sustained and extended, and a particular vehicle for health was suggested (A Lancet Countdown). They were less clear about what extension means in practice: collating existing mechanisms, expanding current methodologies into new domains, building new measurement approaches, or some combination, each with different costs, timelines and governance.

03 • Do we know the shared endpoint?

Unlike some movements where the goal is clear even when contested, the field has not converged on a statement of what success looks like that could function as a shared planning horizon. Some participants argued that a movement grounded in plurality may not need a single endpoint, and that imposing one would reproduce the structural problems it is trying to solve; others argued that its absence makes coordination harder in practice.

04 • Are our existing frameworks adequate, or does the current moment of crisis invite new ones?

Some argued that measuring gender within existing systems risks maintaining them, and that feminist, intersectional research should reflect the complexity of the reality it is trying to understand; others held that the established tools remain the field's strongest asset.

05 • Whose instrument, and whose blind spots?

If the field builds new monitoring, it has to decide whose categories it will use and those it will change, given that the tools available to it, including the AI systems that now make monitoring feasible, work best in English and in the global North and carry those biases into whatever they measure.

06 • How do we apply a power lens to our own architecture?

Participants noted that global institutions remain largely headquartered in the sites of power fixed in the 1950s, so a colonial structure of governance persists inside the very organisations that speak for global health and justice. How do we support moving decisions, money and authority closer to where the work is happening?



07

HOW TO GO FURTHER

Shamim Ul Islam, Chattogram, 2025

Let's not leave this room just having had a nice conversation. Let's think what actions we can advance in the next 12 months to move the recommendations forward.

- Convening participant

This report is a synthesis and an argument. Each convening has its own outcome report, available [here](#).

The [open letter to the future UN Secretary-General](#) is available at global5050.org. The five commitments – Measure it, Analyse it, Centre it, Fund it, Institutionalise it – set a forward-looking accountability standard that we are calling on the next Secretary-General to deliver once in office. Those who want to add their voice are invited to do so.

Directly after this report, Global 50/50 opens an [ecosystem-wide consultation](#) on the digital hub described under Action two: what is needed, and whether and how to build it.

For further information: info@global5050.org | www.global5050.org

The Organised Many

A gender justice agenda for action
Global 50/50, 2026



in DIALOGUE