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IGUALDADE DE GÊNERO, MONITORAMENTO SOCIAL E DESENVOLVIMENTO REGIONAL NO BRASIL: CONTRIBUIÇÕES E LIMITES DO ODS 5 A PARTIR DO IX RELATÓRIO LUZ 2025

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the contributions and limitations of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) for promoting regional development in Brazil, based on the IX Shadow Report of Civil Society on the 2030 Agenda (2025). The objective is to examine to what extent gender equality, interpreted through an intersectional perspective, can serve as a structuring axis for regional development and what barriers condition its effectiveness. This is a qualitative, descriptive study grounded in a documentary analysis of the Shadow Report, employing intersectionality as a theoretical-analytical tool. The results show that, although SDG 5 represents an important normative framework and a tool for statistical visibility, its implementation faces structural barriers associated with racialized poverty, the feminization of precariousness, care work overload, underfunding of public policies, and persistent territorial inequalities. It concludes that the effectiveness of SDG 5 depends on its articulation with redistributive, anti-racist, and territorialized policies capable of confronting the spatial and racial hierarchies that shape Brazilian development, reaffirming the role of social monitoring and the production of critical knowledge in public decision-making and the construction of more just and inclusive societies.

Keywords: Gender Equality. Regional Development. Social Monitoring. SDG 5. Intersectionality.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa as contribuições e os limites do Objetivo de Desenvolvimento Sustentável 5 para a promoção do desenvolvimento regional no Brasil, a partir do IX Relatório Luz da Sociedade Civil sobre a Agenda 2030 (2025). O objetivo é examinar em que medida a igualdade de gênero, interpretada sob perspectiva interseccional, pode operar como eixo estruturante do desenvolvimento regional e quais bloqueios condicionam sua efetividade. Trata-se de pesquisa qualitativa de caráter descritivo, fundamentada em análise documental do Relatório Luz, mobilizando a interseccionalidade como ferramenta teórico-analítica. Os resultados evidenciam que, embora o ODS 5 constitua marco normativo relevante e instrumento de visibilização estatística, sua implementação encontra entraves estruturais associados à pobreza racializada, à feminização da precariedade, à sobrecarga do trabalho de cuidado, ao subfinanciamento crônico das políticas de igualdade de gênero e às desigualdades territoriais persistentes. Conclui-se que a efetividade do ODS 5 depende da articulação com políticas redistributivas, antirracistas e territorializadas, capazes de enfrentar hierarquias espaciais e raciais que organizam o desenvolvimento brasileiro. Reafirma-se, assim, o papel do monitoramento social e da produção de conhecimento crítico na tomada de decisões públicas e na construção de sociedades mais justas e inclusivas.

Palavras-chave: Igualdade de Gênero. Desenvolvimento Regional. Monitoramento Social. ODS 5. Interseccionalidade.

1 INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, formalized by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/1, affirms the commitment to “leave no one behind” and establishes a global normative framework aimed at promoting social well-being, reducing inequalities, and strengthening institutional capacities across different territories. Among its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 5, focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, occupies a strategic position. The very architecture of the Agenda recognizes that expanding female participation in decision-making spaces and in knowledge production is a condition for structural transformations and for the advancement of the other goals.

However, the formal incorporation of this commitment has not been sufficient to produce substantive results in the Brazilian context. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the country reveals profound regional and structural asymmetries. The IX Spotlight Report of Civil Society on the 2030 Agenda (GTSC A2030, 2025), prepared by the Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda, indicates that Brazil is moving away from meeting most of the agreed targets, highlighting that obstacles to sustainable development are neither homogeneous nor circumstantial. On the contrary, they systematically affect historically marginalized populations, especially Black women, Indigenous peoples, and traditional communities.

Analyzing these inequalities requires an approach that goes beyond universalist readings of gender equality. Although SDG 5 includes targets related to eliminating discrimination, combating violence, and recognizing care work, its effectiveness depends on addressing the intersections of race, gender, class, and territory. In Brazil, monetary poverty affects 17.7% of the white population, but reaches 66.3% among Black and Brown people; 83.27% of Bolsa Família beneficiary families are headed by women; and the maternal mortality rate among Black women is twice that recorded among white women. Such indicators reveal that gender inequality cannot be dissociated from the racial and territorial structures that organize national development.

In this scenario, regional development cannot be reduced to economic growth or the expansion of aggregate indicators. It is a process that involves reducing socio-spatial inequalities, strengthening local capacities, and promoting social justice on multiple scales. Examining SDG 5 from this perspective implies evaluating to what extent its guidelines help transform regional realities marked by persistent disparities, as well as identifying its limitations in the face of historical exclusion structures.

This article asks: to what extent can SDG 5, interpreted in light of the IX Spotlight Report 2025, contribute to regional development in Brazil, and what are its limits given the structural inequalities of race, gender, and territory? The general objective is to analyze, from an intersectional perspective, how such inequalities influence the implementation of SDG 5 in the Brazilian context, using the Spotlight Report as the main documentary source. Specifically, it aims to examine the normative framework of SDG 5, identify the structural barriers to its implementation, and assess its contributions and limitations as an instrument for promoting regional development.

Although the IX Spotlight Report is the main documentary source, this study is not limited to systematizing its results. Its contribution lies in critically reinterpreting data produced by independent monitoring in light of literature on regional development, intersectionality, care economy, and global governance, examining how gender, race, and territorial inequalities shape the effectiveness of SDG 5. By shifting the focus from the description of indicators to the analysis of their structural determinants, the article seeks to offer an analytical interpretation that broadens the explanatory scope of the report itself and highlights the implications of these dynamics for Brazilian regional development.

Methodologically, this is a qualitative, descriptive study based on documentary analysis of the IX Spotlight Report 2025. The approach is guided by intersectionality as a theoretical-methodological tool capable of highlighting how different axes of oppression overlap and produce specific vulnerabilities. Through critical interpretation of the indicators and diagnoses presented in the report, articulated with the theoretical framework, the study aims to explain the structural mechanisms conditioning the implementation of SDG 5 in Brazil, going beyond the description of results produced by independent monitoring.

Data selection focused on indicators directly related to SDG 5 targets and their interface with poverty, labor, health, and territorial inequality, prioritizing information disaggregated by sex, race, and geographic location. Indicators related to other Sustainable Development Goals without direct relevance to the research problem were excluded. This allowed highlighting how gender dimensions intersect with racial and spatial hierarchies in Brazil. Data categorization was carried out through systematic reading of the report, identification of thematic recurrences, and grouping of indicators according to their analytical convergence with the adopted theoretical framework. The analysis strategy consisted of categorizing data into three interpretive axes: (i) socioeconomic inequalities and the feminization of poverty; (ii) care economy and labor market participation; and (iii) territorialization of vulnerabilities. These categories were defined through dialogue between the theoretical foundation and empirical patterns identified in the report.

The choice of the IX Spotlight Report as a central source is justified by its epistemological relevance as an independent monitoring instrument of the 2030 Agenda. By articulating official data, technical analyses, and social control, the document provides a critical diagnosis that complements state reports and allows examination of SDG 5 implementation from a non-governmental perspective. This feature reinforces the analytical consistency of the research by enabling confrontation between normative commitments and the actual material conditions observed.

Ultimately, it is argued that the effectiveness of SDG 5 depends on the explicit incorporation of anti-racist, feminist, and territorialized public policies. Without addressing the structures that produce and reproduce historical inequalities, the commitment to “leave no one behind” tends to remain a normative statement disconnected from Brazilian regional realities.

2. SDG 5 AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND INTERPRETATIVE DISPUTES

2.1 SDG 5 IN THE REGULATORY ARCHITECTURE OF THE 2030 AGENDA

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, establishes a universal normative framework guided by the indivisibility and integration of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). In this arrangement, Sustainable Development Goal 5, aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, is not presented as an isolated sectoral objective but as a structuring element of the very feasibility of the sustainable development project (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). That is, gender equality is formulated both as a specific goal and as a cross-cutting condition for achieving the other targets.

The normative structure of SDG 5 shows a significant expansion of the concept of equality compared to previous frameworks of international development. While the Millennium Development Goals restricted the gender agenda mainly to educational parity and maternal health, SDG 5 adopts a multidimensional formulation that addresses individual rights, economic organization, and institutional structures (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). Its nine targets are distributed between substantive outcomes and means of implementation. Targets 5.1 to 5.6 address the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, the eradication of harmful practices, the guarantee of full and effective participation in political and economic life, and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (UN, 2015). Targets 5.a to 5.c focus on promoting institutional reforms and ensuring equal access to economic resources, property, financial services, technologies, and appropriate public policies (UN, 2015).

Within this set, the recognition of unpaid domestic and care work as a relevant dimension of development stands out. By proposing the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, as well as the promotion of shared responsibility in the domestic sphere, Target 5.4 brings to the center of the international agenda a topic historically relegated to the private sphere (Razavi, 2007). This formulation broadens the scope of equality policy by recognizing that the sexual division of labor constitutes a structural obstacle to women's economic autonomy and political participation.

Therefore, the concept of equality mobilized by SDG 5 goes beyond the notion of formal equality, understood as mere equality before the law, and approaches a substantive perspective, which requires material and institutional conditions for the effective enjoyment of rights. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that removing legal barriers is not enough if the social, economic, and cultural structures that sustain inequality remain unchanged. The inclusion of topics such as the redistribution of economic resources, access to land, combating violence, and ensuring reproductive rights indicates that the proposed equality is not limited to normative neutrality but involves transforming the conditions that produce subordination (Fukuda-Parr, 2016).

The centrality of SDG 5 is also expressed in its cross-cutting nature. The 2030 Agenda asserts that achieving gender equality will decisively contribute to the progress of all goals and targets. The gender perspective, therefore, is not limited to SDG 5 but permeates the implementation of the other goals. The eradication of poverty presupposes equal access to economic resources; the reduction of maternal mortality and the guarantee of sexual and reproductive health are part of the health field; the elimination of educational disparities requires addressing gender barriers; the promotion of inclusive cities demands safety and equitable access to public spaces (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). The interdependence between goals reinforces the understanding that gender inequality is a structural dimension of development.

A recent global diagnosis confirms the challenges of this cross-cutting approach. The report "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2025" indicates that none of the indicators associated with SDG 5 have fully met their targets, with most being at a moderate or significant distance from the agreed commitments (UN Women, 2025). The so-called "SDG 5 Tracker" reveals persistent stagnation in areas such as local political representation and setbacks in certain national contexts, showing that the normative adoption of the 2030 Agenda has not automatically translated into structural transformation (UN Women, 2025).

The operationalization of this cross-cutting approach is achieved through the systematic integration of the gender perspective into public policies. Resolution 70/1 makes it clear that the incorporation of this perspective is a condition for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015). This guideline implies that policies, plans, and budgetary instruments must be conceived and

evaluated in light of their differentiated impacts on men and women; that statistical systems produce data disaggregated by sex and other relevant social markers; and that institutional arrangements are capable of embedding gender equality at the core of state functions, not in peripheral management areas (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). In this context, the lack of consistent data and specific budgetary mechanisms weakens both the monitoring of targets and the formulation of evidence-based public policies, reducing the ability to transform normative commitments into concrete results.

In summary, SDG 5 is formulated as a normative pillar that connects economic, social, and institutional dimensions of sustainable development. Its architecture makes explicit the intention to address structural factors associated with gender inequality and to integrate this agenda with other global goals. The assessment of its effectiveness, however, depends on the analysis of how such guidelines are implemented in national contexts marked by territorial and structural inequalities, an aspect that guides the discussion developed in the following sections.

2.2 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TERRITORIAL INEQUALITIES

The concept of regional development, beyond aggregate economic growth, must be understood as a process of structural transformation aimed at reducing intra- and inter-regional asymmetries. This conception shifts the focus from macroeconomic indicators to the analysis of spatial dynamics of accumulation, productivity, and access to rights, recognizing that territory is a constitutive dimension of development. In historical contexts like Brazil, such an approach requires confronting the legacy of an economic system that, since its colonial genesis, structured the occupation of space around relatively disconnected export hubs, producing persistent disparities in income, infrastructure, and institutional capacities between regions (Furtado, 2005).

The structural analysis of national development shows that regional concentration of income is not a circumstantial phenomenon but a historical trend. The coexistence of regions with different levels of productivity and resource endowment, embedded in the same monetary system and subject to the same macroeconomic rules, tends to reinforce capital flows toward the most dynamic centers, deepening the relative underdevelopment of peripheral regions (Furtado, 2005). Territory, in this sense, is not a neutral stage where the economy happens, but a social construct shaped

by the spatial division of labor and the hierarchies that organize the production and circulation of wealth (Massey, 1994).

This perspective requires a multiscalar approach. The local cannot be explained only by its internal characteristics, but by the position it occupies in broader networks of economic and political relations. The dynamics of a city or region are traversed by national and global flows of capital, technology, and political decisions. In Brazil, such a configuration is manifested in the historic concentration of command functions, innovation, and high income in certain areas of the Southeast, while other regions remain tied to primary activities, low-skilled labor, or subsistence economies (Furtado, 2005). Regional inequality, therefore, is a spatial expression of production relations and the power structure that organizes the national economy.

This unequal structure is also crossed by gender and race dimensions. The organization of Brazilian territory has been shaped by racial hierarchies that defined who would occupy certain urban and rural spaces and under what conditions. The so-called racial division of space, as problematized by Lélia Gonzalez (2020), shows how the Black population was historically confined to areas of precariousness, both in rural areas and urban peripheries, which function as reservoirs of labor for the hegemonic sectors of the economy. The spatialization of poverty, in this context, is not a mere side effect of unequal growth, but a structural component of the development pattern.

Thus, a direct relationship is established between the sexual division of labor and the territorialization of inequality, in line with Massey's (1994) analysis. For the author, the spatial organization of production relations is not neutral, as it actively participates in the reproduction of social differentiations, including gender. In contexts marked by low economic dynamism, certain regions tend to sustain their competitive insertion through the intensification of female and Black labor, a segment that Lélia Gonzalez (2020) identifies as the "marginal mass" or as part of an industrial reserve army under peripheral conditions. The high incidence of informality and precariousness in territories where state presence is limited evidences the consolidation of a cycle of cumulative disadvantages which, as argued by Osorio (2021), restricts social mobility and contributes to the persistence of racial income asymmetries.

From this perspective, territorial inequality does not operate as an external scenario to public policy implementation, but as a structural element that conditions its outcomes. The spatial division of labor, in Massey's (1994) terms, and the racial division of space, as problematized by Gonzalez (2020), imply that the possibilities for economic autonomy and political participation of women vary significantly according to their position in the geography of unequal development. Policies aimed at SDG 5 that disregard this dimension tend to remain at the level of formal equality, without addressing the material bases that sustain subordination. At this point, it becomes necessary to examine gender equality as a structural arena, and not just as a normative guideline.

2.3 GENDER EQUALITY AS A STRUCTURAL ARENA: INTERSECTIONALITY, CARE, AND REDISTRIBUTION

By recognizing that the realization of SDG 5 requires confronting the structures that produce and reproduce gender subordination, it becomes evident that merely increasing the presence of women in institutional spaces or the labor market, without transforming the material and symbolic conditions that organize the social division of labor, is insufficient to alter historical patterns of inequality. The promotion of substantive equality therefore presupposes the reconfiguration of the economic, cultural, and political relations that sustain hierarchies of gender, race, and class, so as to address the mechanisms that structure the distribution of resources, recognition, and power.

In this sense, intersectionality is an indispensable analytical tool (Crenshaw, 1991). By showing how different axes of oppression articulate and produce specific vulnerabilities, the intersectional perspective enables us to understand that gender inequality is not distributed homogeneously. The experience of Black and Indigenous women in Brazil, for example, is marked by the articulation between structural racism and sexism, which positions them at the base of the social hierarchy (Santos; Teixeira, 2024). As emphasized by Lélia Gonzalez (2020), racism and sexism operate in a combined way in the Latin American social formation, producing discriminations that cannot be analyzed in isolation. Intersectionality, therefore, is not a mere sum of oppressions, but a method that reveals how racism organizes territorial and economic hierarchies, making certain groups more exposed to unemployment, informality, and crises (Osorio, 2021).

Based on this, Nancy Fraser's (2013) theory of justice offers relevant tools by articulating redistribution and recognition. The redistributive dimension refers to economic injustices associated with the poor distribution of resources and opportunities. The recognition dimension concerns status injustices, expressed in the cultural devaluation of the feminine and the naturalization of social roles. Policies that focus exclusively on the symbolic valorization of diversity, without addressing the material bases of inequality, tend to produce superficial inclusion, compatible with economic models that maintain the exploitation of female and racialized labor. The articulation between redistribution and recognition thus proves to be a condition for structural transformation.

The core of this dynamic is particularly evident in the care economy (Fraser, 2013). The historical organization of labor was structured from a sexual division that assigned women central responsibility for social reproduction, often in an unpaid manner. The collapse of the traditional single-provider model was not accompanied by an equitable redistribution of care tasks, resulting in the expansion of the double burden on women (Fraser, 2013). Feminist literature shows that care is not an inexhaustible natural resource, but an essential activity for sustaining the economy and reproducing the labor force (Razavi, 2007). When the state reduces its role, especially in contexts of fiscal adjustment or weakening of social policies, the burden of social reproduction falls disproportionately on women, especially those located in peripheral regions and affected by racial vulnerabilities (Federici, 2019).

This dynamic takes on concrete territorial expression. In areas characterized by limited public services, infrastructure, and formal employment, unpaid subsistence and community support work becomes a compensatory mechanism for state absences (Federici, 2019). The overlap between regional, racial, and gender inequality intensifies the burden of invisible labor and restricts the possibilities for qualified economic participation. The care economy, therefore, cannot be treated as a private matter, but as a structuring dimension of development, with direct effects on the distribution of opportunities and the reproduction of inequalities.

Structural racism acts as an organizing element of this dynamic. By defining patterns of access to the labor market, housing, and public services, it contributes to the consolidation of territorial hierarchies that reproduce intergenerational inequalities (Gonzalez, 2020). The persistence of the

income gap between whites and Blacks, even in the face of educational advances, demonstrates the existence of systemic barriers that are not dissolved through formal equality measures (Osorio, 2021). Territorial inequality, therefore, is articulated with discrimination mechanisms that operate simultaneously on the economic and cultural planes.

Given this scenario, SDG 5 only becomes an effective instrument for regional development when articulated with structural policies capable of promoting justice in multiple dimensions. This implies economic redistribution that addresses the sexual and racial division of labor, cultural recognition that values care and combats stigma, and the expansion of political representation for historically excluded groups. Without this articulation, there is a risk of promoting restricted modernization, incapable of altering the hierarchies that sustain regional underdevelopment.

3. THE 2025 SPOTLIGHT REPORT AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 5

3.1 O RELATÓRIO LUZ COMO PRODUÇÃO DE CONHECIMENTO CRÍTICO

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Brazil cannot be understood solely through the official documents produced by the State. Since the formulation of the 2030 Agenda, the actions of organized civil society have played a decisive role both in the incorporation of the normative framework and in monitoring its execution. In this context, the Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda stands out as a formal coalition that brings together dozens of non-governmental organizations, foundations, forums, and social movements working in the fields of human rights, gender equality, racial justice, socio-environmental policies, and sustainable development (GTSC A2030, 2025). The articulation of these entities reflects the historical accumulation of organizations that operate at the forefront of defending rights and confronting structural inequalities in the country.

The Working Group's activities represent a specific form of political advocacy within the field of global governance. By engaging simultaneously with the Brazilian State and multilateral organizations, the collective assumes the function of social oversight and public accountability regarding the fulfillment of internationally agreed targets (GTSC A2030, 2025). This role becomes

especially relevant in contexts of institutional instability and the rollback of social policies, in which normative commitments may be formally maintained but materially hollowed out. In this way, the group operates as a democratic resilience mechanism, seeking to ensure that issues of gender, race, civil rights, and socio-environmental justice remain central to the public agenda (GTSC A2030, 2025).

The main instrument of this work is the Civil Society Spotlight Report on the 2030 Agenda, published annually since 2017. Produced through participatory and collaborative methodology, the report gathers and systematizes information primarily based on official data from the Brazilian State itself. When there are informational gaps or a discontinuity in statistical production, it draws on academic research and surveys conducted by civil society organizations to preserve analytical consistency (GTSC A2030, 2025). The document does not merely compile indicators, but presents a critical assessment of the degree of implementation of the targets, identifying progress, setbacks, and stagnation. So far, it is the only continuous and independent tool with a specific focus on national SDG monitoring in the country.

The independent nature of the Spotlight Report gives it particular relevance in public debate. By producing grounded and accessible diagnostics, the document expands transparency regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and strengthens accountability mechanisms. The analysis developed by the group reveals how fiscal choices, budgetary priorities, and political arrangements directly influence the achievement of the targets, showing that the distance from agreed objectives does not result from historical inevitability, but from concrete institutional decisions (GTSC A2030, 2025).

In this sense, the preparation of the Spotlight Report is part of a broader narrative dispute over the meaning and scope of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil. While government reports, such as the Voluntary National Reviews presented at international forums, tend to emphasize progress and formal commitments, the Spotlight Report highlights contradictions, setbacks, and structural gaps (GTSC A2030, 2025). One of the central aspects of this dispute refers to the production and dissemination of data. The document denounces the persistence of "statistical invisibility" regarding historically marginalized populations, including women, Black people, Indigenous peoples, quilombola communities, and the LGBTQIA+ population. The absence or insufficiency of data disaggregated by sex, race, territory, and other social markers compromises accurate diagnoses and makes it impossible to implement public policies aimed at overcoming inequalities, in disagreement with Target 17.18 of the 2030 Agenda itself (GTSC A2030, 2025).

By making these gaps explicit, the Spotlight Report not only informs about the country's distance from global targets but also highlights the structural barriers that condition their implementation. Independent monitoring thus takes on a political character by revealing the distance between international commitments and internal public policy choices.

The literature on global governance emphasizes that the effectiveness of multilateral commitments depends on the action of civil society as a mechanism of accountability in contexts marked by a structural democratic deficit (Scholte, 2004). In arrangements based on voluntary adherence and non-coercive targets, such as the 2030 Agenda, transparency, independent monitoring, and public pressure become central mechanisms for normative effectiveness.

This dynamic can also be understood in light of the theory of transnational advocacy networks, according to which domestic actors turn to international arenas when internal channels of accountability prove limited, producing the so-called "boomerang effect" (Keck; Sikkink, 2014). By mobilizing commitments made at the global level and producing strategically organized information, civil society turns diplomatic promises into parameters for public accountability, highlighting the gap between discourse and practice and putting pressure on the structural barriers to the implementation of SDG 5.

In this context, the production and strategic circulation of information are central instruments of political influence. The systematization of disaggregated data and the denunciation of statistical gaps are not merely technical exercises, but accountability mechanisms that expose the gap between discourse and practice. This logic helps explain both the relevance of the Spotlight Report and the structural limitations faced by SDG 5, especially in dimensions that require deeper economic and territorial transformations.

Thus, the Spotlight Report constitutes a production of critical knowledge that articulates empirical data, institutional analysis, and rights advocacy. By challenging official narratives and making structural inequalities visible, civil society contributes to broadening the debate on sustainable development in Brazil. This critical dimension of monitoring is a fundamental element for understanding the limits faced by SDG 5 in the national context, an analysis that will be deepened in the following sections based on data released in 2025 by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics and through the report itself.

3.2 SDG 5 AND STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES IN BRAZIL

The systematization and cross-referencing of official data carried out by the 9th Spotlight Report show that meeting the targets associated with SDG 5 in Brazil faces obstacles that go beyond normative and legal dimensions. Gender inequality manifests itself structurally, intertwining with the dynamics of race and class that have historically shaped Brazilian social formation (Gonzalez, 2020). Reading the indicators from an intersectional perspective reveals that formal advances have not been sufficient to change persistent patterns of material exclusion.

Poverty in the country bears clear racial and gender marks. The intersection between sex and color or race is a central determinant of living conditions, positioning Black and Brown women as the group most vulnerable to material deprivation (IBGE, 2025). Poverty affects 30.4% of Black women, while extreme poverty reaches 4.5% (IBGE, 2025). In contrast, among white men, these rates are 14.7% and 2.2%, respectively (IBGE, 2025). In broader terms, 66.3% of Black and Brown people are impoverished, compared to 17.7% of white people (GTSC A2030, 2025). These data show that economic exclusion in Brazil is not distributed randomly, but follows deeply rooted racial and gender hierarchies.

The so-called feminization of poverty, however, cannot be reduced to a mere statistical observation of monetary scarcity or to the simple identification of female-headed households. As argued by Sylvia Chant (2008), the exclusive focus on income obscures a central dimension of gender inequality, which is manifested in what the author calls the "feminization of responsibility and obligation." The asymmetry lies not only in the lower availability of resources, but in the disproportionate burden of time, effort, and unpaid work that falls on women in ensuring their households' survival. In contexts of state retrenchment and precarious labor markets, this burden tends to intensify, reinforcing the overlap between economic inequality, the sexual division of labor, and territorial vulnerability.

Structural asymmetries are even more evident in health indicators, especially maternal mortality, whose reduction is part of Target 3.1 of the 2030 Agenda, with direct repercussions on SDG 5. The Spotlight Report shows that the maternal mortality ratio among Black women is twice that recorded among white women, revealing the persistence of inequalities in access to and quality of health care (GTSC A2030, 2025). Institutional racism and the precariousness of services have an especially severe impact on Indigenous women, residents of the North, Northeast, and Midwest regions, women with low education, and girls

aged 10 to 14, whose maternal mortality rate is 38% higher than that of women over 20 (GTSC A2030, 2025). These disparities show that gender inequality takes on specific territorial and racial contours, creating a situation where vulnerabilities overlap and reinforce each other (Werneck, 2016).

The structural core of this inequality lies in the sexual and racial division of care work, a dimension expressly covered by Target 5.4 of SDG 5. The Spotlight Report points to setbacks in this field, noting that unpaid domestic and care work, estimated at about 13% of GDP, remains concentrated among women, who spend approximately ten hours more per week on these activities than men (GTSC A2030, 2025). In the paid labor market, the care sector is characterized by high informality and low wages, being mostly occupied by women, among whom Black caregivers represent 47.8% of the workforce, while non-Black women represent 23.4% (GTSC A2030, 2025). This group faces multiple forms of exclusion, often working in precarious conditions and subjected to extensive, poorly structured urban commutes (GTSC A2030, 2025). The overlap of racial inequality, the sexual division of labor, and territorial precarization reinforces the centrality of the care economy as a structuring axis of the disparities observed.

The persistence of these barriers is directly linked to the lack of budget prioritization. The Spotlight Report shows that policies aimed at gender equality operate with resources significantly below identified needs. SDG 5 stands out as the goal that received the lowest volume of investments over the decade of the 2030 Agenda. Disbursements by the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) for this agenda totaled only R$130.8 million in the last ten years (GTSC A2030, 2025). Insufficient funding undermines the institutional capacity to implement policies to combat violence, promote economic autonomy, and expand public care services. Budget fragility, in this sense, is not a secondary element, but a structural component that perpetuates inequalities.

All these data show that the obstacles to the implementation of SDG 5 in Brazil are not limited to the absence of specific norms or programs. They result from the articulation between racialized poverty, the feminization of poverty, inequalities in access to health, the overload of care work, and the chronic underfunding of equality policies. These factors constitute structural barriers that affect the effectiveness of global targets and show that overcoming gender inequality requires simultaneously confronting the economic, racial, and territorial hierarchies that organize national development.

3.3 TERRITORIAL DIMENSION OF BARRIERS

The effectiveness of SDG 5 encounters limits that cannot be understood without considering the territorial dimension of inequality in Brazil. Gender inequality does not manifest itself in a neutral space; it is mediated by historically constituted regional asymmetries that condition access to income, public services, infrastructure, and opportunities for productive inclusion. Territory, in this sense, acts as a structural variable that intensifies or mitigates vulnerabilities, so that the geographic position of women on the map of national development directly influences their possibilities for economic autonomy and social participation.

The geography of poverty in the country reveals clear regional disparities. The most recent data indicate that the North and Northeast regions concentrate the lowest average incomes and the highest poverty rates, measured by the US$6.85 daily line (IBGE, 2025). In 2024, 35.9% of the population in the North and 39.4% in the Northeast were in this condition, while the South and Southeast reported significantly lower rates of 11.2% and 15.6%, respectively (IBGE, 2025). The inequality becomes even more pronounced when looking at extreme poverty, defined by the US$2.15 daily line. Although the Northeast accounts for 26.9% of the national population, it shelters more than half—50.3%—of all people living in extreme poverty in the country (IBGE, 2025). Differences in per capita income between federal units reinforce this structural divide: in states such as Maranhão, average household income is almost three times lower than in the Federal District (GTSC A2030, 2025). For women living in the North and Northeast, these material conditions significantly reduce the real possibilities of achieving the goals of autonomy and empowerment set out in the 2030 Agenda.

The precariousness of the labor market follows this same cartography of inequality. Informality, which heavily affects women at the base of the occupational pyramid, shows a strong regional concentration. In 2024, the proportion of workers in informal jobs reached 58.9% in the North and 56.6% in the Northeast, compared to 27.4% in the South and 34.7% in the Southeast (GTSC A2030, 2025). States such as Maranhão, Pará, and Piauí recorded rates above 63%, evidencing the structural fragility of the labor market in these areas (GTSC A2030, 2025). Informality, however, is not only a regional phenomenon but also a racial one. It affects 45.6% of the Black working population, compared to 34.0% of the white population, demonstrating the interplay between territorial and racial inequality

in the reproduction of social vulnerability (GTSC A2030, 2025). Black women, especially in urban peripheries and impoverished rural areas, find themselves at the intersection of these vulnerabilities.

Contemporary statistics corroborate the analysis of the racial division of space formulated by Lélia Gonzalez (2020), according to which the territorial formation of Brazil produced enduring segregations. This historical structure reverberates in current indicators, which show that 66.3% of Black and Brown people are impoverished, compared to 17.7% of white people (GTSC A2030, 2025). Added to this is the insufficiency of basic sanitation, precarious housing, and exposure to extreme climate events, which disproportionately affect rural areas and urban peripheries, where state presence is limited (GTSC A2030, 2025). In this context, so-called environmental racism aggravates the impacts of disasters and climate crises, penalizing Black and Indigenous women who face the destruction of their homes, the interruption of subsistence activities, and the increased burden of care in emergency situations (GTSC A2030, 2025). Social reproduction, already strained by economic precarization, becomes even more costly in these territories.

The territorial analysis of the data shows that the barriers to implementing SDG 5 cannot be dissociated from the spatial structure of Brazilian development. Gender equality targets tend to fail when formulated from an abstract conception of "woman," disregarding the fact that the barriers to economic and political autonomy are mediated by historically established regional and racial hierarchies. Territorial inequality, articulated with the racial division of space and labor precarization, imposes structural limits that go beyond the normative formulation of SDG 5, conditioning its effectiveness in the national context.

The analysis developed in this section shows that the obstacles to implementing SDG 5 in Brazil do not stem from the absence of adequate normative formulation, but from the persistence of structural barriers that permeate the country's economic, racial, and territorial organization. The 2025 Spotlight Report, by systematizing and interpreting official data from a critical perspective, demonstrates that gender inequality operates intersectionally, articulating racialized poverty, the feminization of precarity, asymmetries in access to health, and the overload of care work.

The indicators examined reveal that the targets associated with SDG 5 confront a reality marked by regional concentration of poverty, high informality in certain areas, and unequal distribution of infrastructure and public services. The territorial dimension is not an accessory variable, but a structuring element of inequality, conditioning the concrete possibilities for women's economic autonomy and political participation. The overlap between race, gender, and geographic location intensifies vulnerabilities and restricts the capacity to realize equality policies.

Furthermore, the chronic underfunding of policies aimed at gender equality highlights the distance between international commitments and national budgetary priorities (Rocha; Marques, 2024). The insufficiency of resources undermines the consolidation of institutional mechanisms capable of addressing violence, labor precarization, and inequalities in access to rights, leaving unchanged the material bases that sustain subordination.

Thus, SDG 5 encounters structural limits that go beyond its normative formulation. Its effectiveness depends on articulation with redistributive, territorial, and anti-racist policies that confront the historical hierarchies of Brazilian development. Without such a shift, gender equality remains a formal guideline dissociated from the concrete conditions that organize the territory and the national economy, revealing the need to rethink the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in light of the structural inequalities that cross it.

4. CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITS OF SDG 5 FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 NORMATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL POTENTIAL OF SDG 5

SDG 5 represents significant progress compared to the previous international agenda. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, which restricted gender equality to simplified metrics such as parity in access to basic education, SDG 5 establishes a comprehensive and potentially transformative normative framework (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). Its formulation incorporates historical demands of women's movements by treating inequality as a structural and multidimensional phenomenon. The targets associated with this goal address central themes for overcoming female subordination, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, universal access to sexual and reproductive rights, equality of rights to economic resources, and, innovatively, the recognition and appreciation of unpaid domestic and care work (UN, 2015). By shifting

care from the private sphere to the center of the international agenda, SDG 5 expands the normative horizon of equality policy.

Another relevant contribution lies in the emphasis on the production of disaggregated data and the statistical visibility of inequalities. The 2030 Agenda establishes the need for high-quality, timely, and reliable data, disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, and geographic location (UN, 2015). This methodological requirement forces the improvement of national statistical systems and prevents public policies from operating on the abstraction of a "universal woman." The production of intersectional statistics not only legitimizes claims of marginalization but also provides an empirical basis for policies aimed at overcoming racial and class inequalities.

SDG 5 also functions as an essential cross-cutting axis for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Gender equality is understood as a prerequisite for eradicating poverty, improving health indicators, and promoting decent work. This approach requires a shift in traditional state planning models, demanding that the gender perspective be integrated into macroeconomics, budgetary instruments, and territorial policies. Regional institutions such as ECLAC (2018) emphasize the need for systematic incorporation of SDGs into national and subnational development plans, promoting cross-sectoral coherence and articulation between governance scales. In this sense, SDG 5 offers a normative reference capable of guiding the reorganization of public policies under a more integrated perspective.

4.2 STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS TO ITS EFFECTIVENESS

The normative ambition of SDG 5, however, faces significant material and institutional constraints. The implementation of policies capable of combating gender-based violence, expanding public care infrastructure, or ensuring economic autonomy requires a significant volume of investment; however, the global agenda of fiscal austerity and structural adjustment has limited the State's capacity for action (Federici, 2019). Disinvestment in essential services such as health, education, and social assistance transfers to families the cost of social reproduction, increasing the overload of women's unpaid work (Federici, 2019). Underfunding empties the transformative potential of SDG 5, turning it, in many contexts, into a formal commitment disconnected from an adequate material base.

Another limitation refers to the lack of effective territorialization of global guidelines. Although sustainable development presupposes articulation between governance scales, the national adaptation of the SDGs often dilutes political responsibility for the local causes of inequality (Kanie; Biermann, 2017). In Brazil, this is evident in official statistics, which reveal deep regional disparities (IBGE, 2025). The absence of robust territorial strategies prevents global targets from being translated into concrete policies in rural areas and urban peripheries, where state presence is historically insufficient and the reproduction of life intensely depends on the work of Black and Indigenous women (Federici, 2019).

The persistence of structural racism constitutes an additional limit to the effectiveness of SDG 5. The racial structuring of Latin American societies operates as a continuous mechanism of exclusion, masked by narratives that deny the centrality of racial discrimination. The racial division of labor remains untouched by the formal discourse of development: Black women continue to be concentrated in the lowest strata of the labor market, especially in domestic work and undervalued services, facing simultaneous discrimination based on class, race, and gender (Gonzalez, 2020). In peripheral economies, racism is not a historical residue but a tool that contributes to reducing production costs and maintaining privileges. In this context, international normative frameworks prove limited unless accompanied by direct confrontation of these structures.

Such vulnerabilities overlap globally. Women with disabilities are significantly less likely to access family planning and digital inclusion, while Indigenous and rural women face severe restrictions in access to basic infrastructure and decision-making bodies over natural resources (UN Women, 2025). The climate crisis, in turn, could push up to an additional 158.3 million women and girls into extreme poverty by 2050, revealing that gender inequality is intrinsically connected to systemic challenges such as environmental justice and energy transition (UN Women, 2025).

Finally, institutional fragility undermines the capacity to implement the targets. The governance-by-targets model, based on voluntary adherence and non-coercive mechanisms, depends on the political will of national governments (Kanie; Biermann, 2017). In the field of gender and race policies, administrative structures are often peripheral, underfunded, and vulnerable to changes in government orientation. The low representation of women, especially Black women, in decision-making spaces reinforces the gap between institutional priorities and the concrete experiences of the

most vulnerable populations (Gonzalez, 2020). These factors limit SDG 5's capacity to operate as an instrument of structural transformation.

In light of these elements, SDG 5 can be understood as a necessary but insufficient condition for promoting regional development with social justice. Its normative framework broadens horizons and provides relevant tools for visibility and planning. However, without adequate funding, effective territorialization, direct confrontation of structural racism, and institutional strengthening, its goals tend to remain at a declarative level. Overcoming gender inequalities in Brazil depends on the articulation between normative commitment and concrete transformation of the economic, racial, and territorial structures that organize national development. Sustainable development proves unfeasible without directly confronting racism and machismo as systems of power that structure exclusion and regulate the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and recognition in the country.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis developed throughout this article demonstrates that SDG 5 occupies a strategic position in the architecture of the 2030 Agenda by affirming gender equality as a structuring axis of sustainable development. By incorporating dimensions such as combating violence, access to sexual and reproductive rights, the redistribution of economic resources, and the recognition of care work, this goal expands the normative horizon of international policy and consolidates historical demands of women's movements at the multilateral level. Its cross-cutting nature and the requirement for disaggregated data reinforce the centrality of the gender perspective in the formulation and monitoring of public policies.

However, the investigation based on the IX 2025 Spotlight Report shows that the normative density of SDG 5 encounters significant limits when confronted with Brazil's socioeconomic structure. Gender inequality manifests itself in an inseparable way from the racial and territorial hierarchies that organize national development. Racialized poverty, the feminization of precarity, the persistence of disproportionate maternal mortality rates among Black women, the overload of care work, and the chronic underfunding of equality policies constitute structural barriers that are not dissolved through formal commitments alone.

The territorial dimension has proven to be a decisive element of this equation. The regional concentration of poverty and informality in the North and Northeast, associated with the historical racial division of space, demonstrates that women's opportunities for economic autonomy and political participation vary according to their insertion in the country's unequal geography. In this context, the absence of robust territorialization strategies for the SDGs weakens their capacity to produce concrete transformations in rural areas and urban peripheries, where the reproduction of life depends heavily on the work of Black and Indigenous women.

From this set of evidence, it is argued that SDG 5 can only contribute effectively to regional development if articulated with structural policies guided by economic redistribution, the recognition of racial inequalities, and the territorial reorganization of state capacities. Gender equality, understood in its substantive dimension, requires the simultaneous confrontation of the sexual and racial division of labor, the precarization of care, and the regional asymmetries that shape access to rights and opportunities. Without such articulation, the commitment to "leave no one behind" risks remaining a normative formulation disconnected from the material conditions that sustain regional underdevelopment.

The findings of this study also indicate the need to deepen investigations into the institutional mechanisms for internalizing and territorializing the 2030 Agenda in Brazil. It becomes relevant to examine how states and municipalities have incorporated the gender perspective into their planning instruments, as well as to identify subnational experiences capable of integrating care policies, reduction of racial inequalities, and territorial development. The comparative analysis of these initiatives may contribute to understanding the conditions under which global commitments are converted into effective local transformations.

In this sense, regional development should be understood as a project of structural justice, oriented toward the reconfiguration of territorial, racial, and gender hierarchies that shape access to rights and opportunities in Brazil. The incorporation of the gender perspective is not an accessory element of state planning but a condition for reorganizing budget priorities, strengthening local capacities, and confronting intergenerational inequalities. The leadership of women, especially Black and peripheral women, in policy formulation and decision-making spaces is indispensable for

the 2030 Agenda to translate into substantive transformation and not just a formal commitment.

This study presents limitations inherent to its methodological design. As it is based on documentary analysis of the IX Spotlight Report and official statistical data, it does not include empirical research with institutional actors or beneficiaries of public policies, nor does it allow for the evaluation of differences in SDG 5 implementation among states and municipalities. The results should therefore be understood as a critical interpretation grounded in documentary evidence, which may be expanded by comparative studies and field research.

In summary, SDG 5 constitutes an indispensable normative framework, but its transformative power depends on the capacity to impact the economic, racial, and territorial structures that organize Brazilian society. Without confronting these material bases of inequality, gender equality tends to remain a formal promise dissociated from regional realities. By critically reinterpreting the evidence produced by the IX Spotlight Report based on the literature on regional development and intersectionality, this study demonstrates that the obstacles to the effectiveness of SDG 5 stem less from the normative insufficiency of the goal and more from the persistence of economic, racial, and territorial structures that condition its implementation in the Brazilian context. The consolidation of an intersectional and multiscalar approach in the field of sustainable development is thus revealed not only as a theoretical requirement but as a political imperative for building concrete social justice.

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