Women are discriminated against in all spheres of life (public and private), just because they are women. However, the fact that this discrimination is now being discussed and equal treatment is being promoted does not necessarily imply that inequalities will be addressed, nor does it eliminate them. Inequality is not an individual problem, it is a structural one that requires collective action, and social reaction for social transformation.

From a political feminist’s standpoint, violence against women is the most serious and devastating expression of male culture. Feminism covers a broad set of definitions relating to gender violence. These cover physical, sexual, psychological, economic and institutional violence, and all areas: with partners, in the family, in the workplace, socially, and within the community. Feminism focuses on the paradigm of women’s oppression, rather than simply recognising women as victims. Oppression as a concept denounces the structural situation that affects all women, rather than reducing the problem of male violence to an individual case.

**Why is violence against women a social problem?**

Violence against women is a phenomenon that affects all women, it is a social, collective and political problem, which also affects men and institutions.

**To empower or self-empowerment?**

The objective of the 5th SDG, to empower women and girls, stems out of an instrumental use of the concept itself. The empowerment of women is a process of self-empowerment, which is not granted by anyone other than women who empower themselves. Empowerment is related to agency, the power to make decisions.

In order to achieve women’s economic empowerment, feminists question the dominant male-centred economic argument that puts the market first, then life (a life that is worth living). A feminist economy calls for the logic of life over the logic of capital, encompassing welfare policies which go beyond the conciliation and recognition of these at a legal level. Questioning the unequal power relations between genders involves questioning male privilege and the naturalisation of women’s inequality. It requires visualising and breaking the profound relationship between women’s economic problems and body politics.

**ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Sustainable Development Goals seen from a feminist approach
To enable women to participate in politics it is necessary to overcome certain structural barriers: Sexist stereotypes lead to a persistent sexual division between paid and reproductive work, as well as the socialization of sexist values by both men and women. Discriminatory legislation and institutional structures and mechanisms should be eliminated and Discriminatory social practices in both public and private spheres.

Apart from overcoming the barriers described above, it is necessary to support women’s organizations fighting for the recognition and guarantee of women’s rights.

Can SDG5 be reached without acknowledging women’s sexual rights?

Women’s sexual rights are Human Rights. Women’s citizenship is built from their sexual autonomy. Women’s Human Rights include their right to have control over their body and to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality including sexual and reproductive health, without coercion, discrimination or violence.

Sexual and reproductive rights are protected in various international agreements, including the CEDAW, which is legally binding for governments. It is claimed that instruments such as the Programme of Action at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), and the Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing (1995), should also be in favour of the recognition, guarantee and exercise of sexual and reproductive rights.

Feminism understands that the unequal power relations between genders that determine patriarchy have their origin and foundation precisely in controlling women’s sexuality. A woman’s body has always been controlled by men, by religions and by states. These are violated and expropriated bodies to which pleasure is denied, maternity is imposed, and upon which violence is exercised. This leads to an infringement of women’s Human Rights and denies them full citizenship.

Women’s empowerment and gender equality cannot be achieved without the recognition and full exercise of their sexual autonomy.

Legislation in Catalonia
- Law 11/2014, October 10, to guarantee the rights of lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex people, and to eradicate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.
- Law 5/2008, 24 April, the right of women to eradicate gender violence, April 2008.

Legislation in El Salvador
- A special comprehensive law for a life free of violence for women, January 2011.
- Equality Act, equality and elimination of discrimination against women, March 2011.
- Sexual and reproductive health policy.
- National Policy for women.

El Salvador has not ratified the Optional Protocol of the CEDAW.

El Salvador has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. Abortion is not allowed in cases of rape, severe fetal malformation, or if the mother is in danger of losing her life. A monitoring device is set up in hospitals, configured by the police personnel and prosecutors.

Several women have been prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned for having an abortion. In addition, 17 Salvadoran women have received sentences of over 30 years in prison.

The 17 women prosecuted were young, poor, and had no access to health care. This refers to women who suffered a precipitated delivery. They were far from a health centre and had a non-hospital birth.

The campaign A flower for the 17 by the Citizens Association for the Decriminalisation of Therapeutic, Ethical and Eugenic Abortions, has become an emblem in the struggle for the decriminalization of therapeutic, ethical and eugenic abortions in El Salvador and elsewhere in the world.