



ACCELERATING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PROGRESS AND ONGOING AREAS OF CONCERN FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THE POST- 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The international community is currently in the process of negotiating an ambitious universal development agenda facilitated by the United Nations, in response to reaching the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. As part of this process, a proposed set of broad-reaching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been developed and is expected to be adopted by UN Member States in September of this year.

The progress achieved by the MDGs, such as the halving of the global poverty rate 5 years ahead of the 2015 deadline,¹ shows that international development frameworks facilitated by the United Nations can have a profound effect on the international system and can dramatically transform peoples' lives across the globe. The SDGs and the broader Post-2015 Development Agenda have the potential to address the unfinished business of the MDGs and make historic progress towards the eradication of poverty worldwide and the development of a more equitable and just global society.

In the midst of negotiation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including the finalisation of the SDGs, women's organisations currently have an opportunity to ensure that considerations of gender equality and female empowerment are firmly incorporated into all aspects of the development framework that will guide the international community for the next 15 years. We are faced with an historic opportunity to break the cycle of discrimination against women and enable the 21st century to be remembered as the century that empowered women and girls across the world.

Looking back on the SDG process to date, there is much for women's organisations and activists to celebrate. The proposed list of SDGs includes a stand-alone goal devoted to gender equality, SDG 5, which calls upon states to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".² The draft targets associated with this goal address some of the most crucial issues facing women today, such as eliminating violence against women and girls³ and ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making.⁴

While celebrating these victories is important, women's organisations now have an essential role to play in ensuring that achievements to date are in no way reversed or diminished through the intergovernmental negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda taking place between now and September. There is scope for the proposed SDGs to be altered through these negotiations, for example through the 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in July this year, at which a framework to financially support the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be decided upon. Furthermore, the indicators for the SDGs, which will be used to measure and monitor progress towards the goals, will not be finalised until March 2016. It must be ensured that these indicators are gender sensitive, to ensure that progress is mapped to include the rights of women and girls.

Additionally, while some aspects of the SDGs are promising, there has been criticism by women's organisations that the SDG framework lacks a strong grounding in human rights; that the SDGs are not truly transformative or universal in nature; and that they are not sufficiently ambitious or strongly worded in some critical areas.

It is now crucial for women's organisations to form a clear position on the proposed SDGs and to advocate for certain problematic elements to be changed throughout the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations and for commendable elements to be safe-guarded against alteration and regression. It is essential that women's organisations are aware of what still remains to be done and agreed upon in the Post-2015 Development Agenda process so that women and girls worldwide do not miss out on this invaluable opportunity to have their voices heard and their human rights enforced.



Julie McKay
Executive Director
Australian National Committee for UN Women

1 The United Nations, "The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014", 2014

2 SDG 5

3 SDG 5, Target 5.2

4 SDG5, Target 5.5



THE SDGS AND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: PROGRESS SO FAR

The Post-2015 Development Agenda is the global development framework which will guide the international development community for the next 15 years and was formulated by the United Nations in response to reaching the deadline for the realisation of the MDGs in 2015.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda consists of UN Secretary General led initiatives, such as the work of the UN System Task team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, combined with the intergovernmental process of formulating a set of SDGs to replace the MDGs.

Now that a set of proposed SDGs and associated targets has been released in the final Report of the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs,⁵ these goals are in the process of being converged with the various UN Secretary General initiatives, in order to arrive at one global development agenda for the post-2015 period, with sustainable development at its centre.

The following timeline illustrates the key events that have taken place so far in relation to the SDG process and UN Secretary General initiatives.

⁵ Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, "Report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/288", July 2014

THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR

UN SECRETARY GENERAL INITIATIVES

SEPTEMBER 2011: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UN SYSTEM TASK TEAM ON POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

JULY 2012: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL OF EMINENT PERSONS

Mandate: To provide guidance and recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

SEPTEMBER 2013: HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ESTABLISHED

As of 2016, the HLPF will be the new institutional home within the United Nations system for follow-up on sustainable development and the Post-2015 Agenda

DECEMBER 2014: SYNTHESIS REPORT BY UN SECRETARY GENERAL BAN KI-MOON ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Brings together the results of the different work streams on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including SDGs

Report of the OWG on SDGs is one of the inputs to this Synthesis Report

JANUARY 2015: INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA COMMENCE IN NEW YORK

Will include discussions on integrating SDGs into the Post-2015 Development Agenda

SDG PROCESS

SEP
11

JUN
12

JUL
12

JAN
13

SEP
13

MAR
14

JUL
14

SEP
14

DEC
14

JAN
15

MAR
15

MAR
15

JUN
15

JUNE 2012: RIO+20 CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Agreement to launch an intergovernmental process to develop SDGs

JANUARY 2013: OWG ON SDGS ESTABLISHED BY UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OWG tasked with preparing SDG Proposal Report

MARCH 2014: 58TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Agreement and recommendation by the Commission that gender equality should be reflected in a stand-alone SDG and integrated into all SDGs through appropriate targets and indicators

JULY 2014: OWG COMPLETES REPORT ON PROPOSED SDGS AT ITS 13TH AND FINAL SESSION

Outcome: 17 proposed SDGs and 169 associated targets

SEPTEMBER 2014: UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS THE OWG REPORT ON PROPOSED SDGS

In adopting the Report, the General Assembly decides that the Report will be the main basis for integrating the SDGs into the Post-2015 Development Agenda

MARCH 2015: 46TH SESSION OF THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION (UNSC)

Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) established by the UNSC to create an indicator framework for the monitoring of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and provide technical support for indicator implementation

MARCH 2015: 59TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Focus on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women through the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs

JUNE 2015: FIRST MEETING OF THE IAEG-SDGS

IAEG-SDGs released a proposed list of priority indicators for the draft SDGs to be discussed at this meeting

WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED SDGS?

GOAL 1.

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

.....

GOAL 2.

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

.....

GOAL 3.

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

.....

GOAL 4.

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all

.....

GOAL 5.

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

.....

GOAL 6.

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

.....

GOAL 7.

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all

GOAL 8.

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

.....

GOAL 9.

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

.....

GOAL 10.

Reduce inequality within and among countries

.....

GOAL 11.

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

.....

GOAL 12.

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

.....

GOAL 13.

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

.....

GOAL 14.

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

GOAL 15.

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

.....

GOAL 16.

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

.....

GOAL 17.

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development





DO THE PROPOSED SDGS ALIGN WITH UN WOMEN'S VISION?

UN Women is the United Nations entity responsible for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. In June 2013, UN Women released a report entitled "A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components"⁶, which outlined UN Women's vision for a stand-alone SDG devoted to gender equality and women's empowerment. The report outlined 3 key areas to be targeted in the stand-alone SDG in order to address the structural causes of gender-based discrimination and make the stand-alone SDG truly transformational in nature. These key areas were: freedom from violence against women and girls; gender equality in the distribution of capabilities; and gender equality in decision-making power in public and private institutions. Under each of these key areas, the report proposed specific targets to be met and indicators to measure progress in relation to the targets.

⁶ UN Women, "A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components", June 2013

Overall, the vision contained in the 2013 UN Women report is reflected to a large extent in the draft SDGs, which are expected to be adopted by UN Member states in September this year: there is a stand-alone goal in the form of SDG 5; the targets associated with SDG 5 collectively address the 3 key areas that UN Women wanted to see addressed; and gender considerations have been mainstreamed into targets associated with other SDGs apart from SDG 5.

“ There has never been a better time in history to be born female...The data also shows how far we still have to go”

Hillary Clinton - 6th Annual Women in the World Summit, New York

PROPOSED TARGETS IN THE 2013 UN WOMEN REPORT: ARE THEY INCLUDED IN THE SDGS?

NB: Proposed targets listed as “included” in table have been included in the targets for SDG 5 or mainstreamed into other SDG targets

Key area in UN Women 2013 Report	Proposed Target in UN Women 2013 Report	Fully Included in Draft SDGs	Partially Included in Draft SDGs	NOT Included in Draft SDGs
Freedom from violence against women and girls	Prevent and respond to violence against women and girls	■		
	Change perceptions, attitudes and behaviours that condone and justify violence against women and girls		■	
	Ensure security, support services and justice for women and girls		■	
Gender equality in the distribution of capabilities and resources	Eradicate Women’s Poverty		■	
	Promote decent work for women		■	
	Build women’s access to, and control over, productive assets	■		
	Reduce women’s time burdens		■	
	Promote education and skills for women and girls		■	
	Improve women’s and girls’ health		■	
	Reduce maternal mortality and ensure women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights	■		
	Ensure women’s sustainable access to energy			■
	Ensure women’s sustainable access to water and sanitation		■	
Gender equality in decision-making power in public and private institutions	Promote equal decision making in households		■	
	Promote women’s participation in public institutions	■		
	Promote women’s leadership in the private sector	■		
	Strengthen women’s collective action			■



WHAT IS THE POSITION OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS ON THE PROPOSED SDGs?

POSITIVE COMMENTARY

The proposed SDGs have been broadly welcomed by women's organisations, with most groups relieved to see a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment.⁷ It was also welcomed that women's empowerment and gender equality are specifically addressed in other SDGs and associated targets, such as SDG 3 Target 3.7, to ensure universal access to sexual reproductive health care services including family planning; SDG 4 Target 4.5, to eliminate gender disparities in education and SDG 6 Target 6.2, to achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls.

Positive progress from SDG 5's predecessor, MDG 3, can be seen in the fact that SDG 5 calls on governments to

⁷ See, eg: "Gender equality necessary for success of post-2015 agenda", Speech by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the Stocktaking Event on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, at UN Headquarters in New York, 11 September 2014; "Women's '8 Red Flags' following the conclusion of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)", Final Statement of the Women's Major Group, 21 July 2014

achieve, rather than just promote, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.⁸ The targets associated with SDG 5 also cover issues that were not included in MDG 3, namely: ending discrimination against women and girls (Target 5.1), eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (Target 5.2), eliminating harmful practices including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (Target 5.3), recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work (Target 5.4), ensuring women's full and effective participation in leadership and decision making (Target 5.5), ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health rights (Target 5.6), undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources and ownership of land and property (Target 5.a), and using enabling technologies to promote women's empowerment (Target 5.b). The targets associated with SDG 5 thus clearly cover a much broader range of issues than those covered by MDG 3, which only had one associated target; the elimination of gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education by 2015.

⁸ MDG 3: "Promote gender equality and empower women"; SDG 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"

The 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held this year from the 9th to the 20th of March, focussed on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁹ and the opportunities to further this implementation through the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs. The Commission on the Status of Women adopted a political declaration, made by attendees of the 59th session, which highlighted the links between the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SDGs and emphasised that “the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential for achieving the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals”¹⁰ through the SDGs. The declaration included a commitment “to using all opportunities and processes in 2015 and beyond to accelerate and achieve the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”, with a pledge to “strive for the full realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of women by 2030”, the impending deadline for the realisation of the SDGs.

NEGATIVE COMMENTARY

Despite welcoming some aspects of the proposed SDGs, women’s organisations have criticised the SDGs for lacking a strong grounding in human rights; for not being truly transformative or universal in nature and not being sufficiently ambitious or strongly worded in some critical areas.

9 “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995

10 “Political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women”, Commission on the Status of Women 59th Session, March 2015

“ I do not underestimate the challenges. I do not think that together we have ever underestimated the challenges. But we have to be bold, because it has never been so possible to make the changes that we want to make”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
– UN Women Executive Director

The Women’s Major Group

The Women’s Major Group (WMG), one of the 9 Major Groups involved in the negotiation process within the OWG on SDGs, released a Final Statement following the final session of the OWG, in which it raised criticisms regarding the proposed SDGs in the form of “8 Red Flags”. In their Final Statement, it was noted that “the Women’s Major Group has continuously called for stronger rights-based targets and a deeper transformation of our economic and financial systems, which we regret are not reflected in the outcome document: the proposed SDGs are still not sufficiently ambitious, transformative or rights-based”.¹¹

The 8 “Red Flags” outlined by the WMG are as follows:

- **RED FLAG 1:** Absence of human rights
- **RED FLAG 2:** Sexual and reproductive health targets do not go far enough
- **RED FLAG 3:** Concentration of power and wealth imbalances that deepen poverty and inequalities within and between countries are not sufficiently addressed, and the agenda lacks targets to reverse this trend
- **RED FLAG 4:** The burden of unpaid domestic and care work still relies on women
- **RED FLAG 5:** Lack of recognition of women as farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples and as key for sustainable natural resource management.
- **RED FLAG 6:** Insufficient attention to women’s role in peace and justice
- **RED FLAG 7:** Concern around private sector financing and “partnership(s)”
- **RED FLAG 8:** Technology focus remains on trade and private access

The WMG emphasised that the SDGs are “lacking real ambition for the urgent transformational change that the world needs to achieve gender equality.”¹² Specifically, the WMG advocated that for the SDGs to be transformative, they need to go beyond a discussion on goals and targets, into the structural and policy constraints that are a

11 “Women’s ‘8 Red Flags’ following the conclusion of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, Final Statement by the Women’s Major Group, 21 July 2014

12 Ibid.



barrier to the achievement of women’s rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment. The group cautioned against “developing another set of reductive goals, targets and indicators that ignore the transformational and structural changes required to address the failure of the current development model rooted in unsustainable production and consumption patterns, exacerbating gender, race and class inequities”.¹³

UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

In a speech at the intergovernmental negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September 2014, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stated that while SDG 5 as a stand-alone goal was welcomed as an important milestone, there are improvements that could be made to the draft SDGs.

She stated that the Post-2015 Development Agenda requires a strong grounding in human rights, requiring SDG targets to “be aligned with existing human rights

standards”.¹⁴ She highlighted the importance of the Post-2015 Development Agenda being universal, as this will make the agenda truly transformative. She criticised the historic focus on “statistics and aggregated progress... which left the poorest and most marginalised groups behind” and advocated for increased capacity in the collection, use and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in order to achieve a “precise view to make well-targeted plans”.

The Executive Director also emphasised that certain aspects of gender equality need to be strengthened in the SDGs. The areas that she explicitly mentioned were:

- Ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work
- Ensuring women’s equal rights to productive assets and resources.

At a panel discussion organised by UN Women on “The Centrality of Gender Equality and the Empowerment

¹³ Statement by Alejandra Scampini, Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), on behalf of the Women’s Major Group, at the 8th session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG8), February 2014

¹⁴ “Gender equality necessary for success of post-2015 agenda”, Speech by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the Stocktaking Event on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, at UN Headquarters in New York, 11 September 2014

of Women and Girls for the Post-2015 Development Agenda” in January 2015,¹⁵ UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka again emphasised the need for a transformative approach to the Post-2015 Development Agenda in order to reach gender equality. She highlighted the need for a “time bound” approach, with 2030 as the deadline to “bend the curve of gender inequality” particularly by measuring and monitoring key indicators. She called for alternative approaches, including strong comprehensive goals to overcome structural impediments to gender equality as a precondition for a successful post-2015 outcome.

At the Intergenerational Dialogue held at the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka once again emphasised the need for the SDGs to be transformational, stating that if she “could rewrite the title of goal five, it would be called ‘Dismantling Patriarchy’”.¹⁶ She emphasised the need for the SDGs to translate into real changes in the lives of women and girls, stating that “this is about breaking the walls of patriarchy brick by brick, not surviving within patriarchy”.

Women’s organisations with expertise on connecting conflict resolution and peace-building with women’s rights

A team of organisations with expertise in women’s roles in conflict resolution and peace-building released an open letter¹⁷ to the co-chairs and participating UN Member States of the 8th Session of the OWG in February 2014 urging them to continue to strengthen the link between the sustainable development processes and the conflict prevention and peace-building agenda from a gender perspective.

The drafting team included the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL), Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Global Justice Centre (GJC), the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), and the Global Network of Women Peace-builders (GNWP).

15 Statement by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at Panel discussion organised by UN Women on “The Centrality of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls for the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, January 2015

16 Statement by UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, at the Intergenerational Dialogue, held at the 59th Commission on the Status of Women, New York, 13 March 2015

17 “Open Letter RE: GA Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consideration of the theme of conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and the promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance”, 6th February 2014

The letter urged participants in the 8th session of the OWG to be mindful of the existing commitments, indicators, and targets addressing the theme of conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding, such as CEDAW General Recommendation 30, and the Beijing Platform Area E on Women in Armed Conflict, and to build on these already established targets in the SDGs.

International Women’s Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific

The Asia Pacific branch of International Women’s Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) published a position paper on the SDGs and the broader Post-2015 Development Agenda in March 2015.

IWRAP echoed criticism by other women’s organisations that the SDGs lack a foundation in human rights, stating that the SDGs “fail to reaffirm in a concrete way the position of human rights and states’ accountability to respect, protect, promote and fulfil human rights within the development agenda”.¹⁸ They also noted that the SDGs place insufficient emphasis on existing international standards and principles as established within international human rights law treaties, such as CEDAW.

The organisation also criticised the SDGs for failing to be truly transformative, as they “perpetuate an economic model that has run its course and has proven its inability to adequately address structural inequalities”.¹⁹

18 International Women’s Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific, “Position Paper on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, 10/03/15

19 Ibid.

“Gender equality is a necessary condition for the success of the SDGs, and for ending poverty, inequality and building sustainable peace”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
– UN Women Executive Director



IS THERE SCOPE FOR THE PROPOSED SDGs TO CHANGE BETWEEN NOW AND THEIR ADOPTION IN SEPTEMBER?

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES

There is a possibility that the proposed SDGs will be altered through the course of the intergovernmental negotiations that will take place each month from now until the summit for the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September.

It is unlikely that the number of goals will be reduced from the current number of 17. While there has been criticism from some UN Member States, such as the United Kingdom, that the number of goals is too high and that “there are too many to communicate effectively”,²⁰ UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon made no mention of the possibility of decreasing the number of goals in his Synthesis Report released in 2014.²¹

²⁰ Remarks to the Transparency International Post 2015 High-Level event by David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 24th September 2014

²¹ “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet”, Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary-General On the Post-2015 Agenda, December 2014

There is, however, a chance that the proposed targets may be reduced or altered between now and their adoption by UN Member States. A draft programme for the May session of post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations²² included a “Revised Targets Document” which outlined proposed changes to the SDG targets to be discussed at the May negotiations. An outcome document for the May negotiations is yet to be released, so it is unclear whether these proposed changes will be acted upon or not. Significantly for women’s organisations, the document contained no proposed changes to the targets associated with SDG 5.

Another event which has the potential to modify the proposed SDGs is the 3rd International Financing for Development Conference to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2015. This conference will bring together government representatives, as well as relevant institutional stakeholders, non-governmental

²² Draft Programme, Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (18-22 May 2015), released 7th May 2015

UN Photo: Mark Garten



organisations and business sector entities, with the aim of negotiating and agreeing upon a framework for the financial support and implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

There is a risk that some countries may be hesitant to agree to the SDGs and the broader Post-2015 Development Agenda unless certain economic assurances and agreements are made at the Financing for Development Conference. For example, the outcome document²³ of the Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union (AU) Specialised Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), held in March 2015, expressed support for a post-2015 development agenda which takes into account “Agenda 2063”, the long term vision for the African continent developed by the African Union. The statement contained outcomes to be advocated for by African delegates at the upcoming Financing for Development Conference, including adequate, predictable financing; attention to domestic African resource mobilisation; international resources for development; international trade; and international financial and technical cooperation.

If countries make their agreement to the SDGs conditional on certain reforms to the international financial system, there is a potential danger for certain

aspects of the SDGs, such as considerations of gender equality, to be altered in order to achieve universal agreement on the SDGs before the target date for their adoption in September.

However, a draft Outcome Document for the 3rd International Financing for Development Conference has been made available²⁴ and contains some promising and reassuring aspects for women’s organisations. The draft Outcome Document affirms that “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is essential to achieve equitable sustainable growth and development” and acknowledges that “evidence shows that gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s full participation as economic agents, enhances economic growth and productivity”. The document also recognises the need for “high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data, including by gender, in support of the post-2015 development and its means of implementation”.

Furthermore, in anticipation of the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda in September of this year, a “Zero draft” of the outcome document for this summit has been released,²⁵ which includes all of the goals and targets proposed in the report of the OWG on SDGs. This document thus appears to indicate that the UN anticipates minimal changes to the SDGs between now and their adoption in September.

23 Ministerial Statement, Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 30 and 31 March 2015

24 “The Addis Ababa Accord of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Revised Draft)”, Released 6th of May 2015

25 “Zero draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, Released June 2015

THE SDG INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

The formulation of an indicator framework for the SDGs has the potential to greatly influence the efficacy of the SDGs and their practical influence on global development. It is essential that there exist indicators to monitor progress towards gender equality and that indicators are disaggregated by gender, so that gender considerations are mainstreamed throughout all SDGs.

The development of indicators to measure and monitor the implementation of the SDGs has been an ongoing process led by the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the Statistics Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), with the input of partner UN agencies, including UN Women. The indicator process is underway, with Member State and agency consultations having begun in early 2015, however a set of indicators is not expected to be agreed upon until March 2016, following the release of a report by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) which will include a set of proposed indicators for the SDGs agreed upon in September of 2015.

Following consultations with Member States and partner agencies, including UN Women, a “First Proposed Priority Indicator List”²⁶ has been released by the IAEG-SDGs, which was discussed by the IAEG-SDGs at its first meeting on the 1st and 2nd of June 2015. While this document will be subject to significant change over the coming months, it provides valuable insight into what the indicator framework for the SDGs will look like. Significantly, the document states that “the number of indicators must be limited and that there should be only one indicator per target (or fewer, if multipurpose indicators can be identified/developed)”.²⁷ This raises concerns that some aspects of the proposed SDG targets may not have a corresponding indicator and will thus not be adequately monitored.

The detrimental effect of having only one indicator per SDG target is illustrated through Target 5.3 of SDG 5; to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations. The indicator listed for this target in the IAEG-SDGs proposed indicator document is “the percentage of

women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 18 (i.e. child marriage)”. While this is an appropriate indicator to measure child marriage practices, the inclusion of only this indicator for this target means that there is no indicator pertaining to female genital mutilation and thus there is no way to measure progress towards eliminating this harmful practice.

While the IAEG-SDGs indicator document will be subject to a further round of consultations and is likely to change between now and the finalisation of the indicator framework in March 2016, this is nevertheless a concerning issue which has the potential to greatly impact upon the SDGs.



“This year offers a strategic moment to breathe new life into the gender agenda. The synergy between the review of the Beijing Platform and the debates around the targets of goal 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment of the SDGs opens an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that the promises of 1995 can deliver transformative change for women and girls”

“Sustainable Development Goals must fulfil Beijing’s vision for women” – Keiko Nowacka, Gender Coordinator for the OECD Development Center

26 The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), “First Proposed Priority Indicator List”, Released 1st June 2015

27 Ibid.

THE SDGS AND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

The graphic below illustrates the remaining key events relating to the Post-2015 Development Agenda process that are expected to take place in 2015 and 2016

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES

JANUARY – JULY 2015: CONTINUING INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA IN NEW YORK

One intergovernmental negotiation session to be held each month from January to July 2015, with 2 sessions being held in July in the lead up to the September Summit

JULY 2015: THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT (FFD) IN ADDIS ABABA

Will develop an intergovernmentally negotiated outcome to financially support the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda including implementation of the SDGs

SEPTEMBER 2015: UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT TO ADOPT THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

UN expected to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including SDGs

SDG PROCESS

JAN
15

JUL
15

SEP
15

NOV
15

JAN
16

FEB
16

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015: THE INTER-AGENCY EXPERT GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL INDICATORS (IAEG-SDGS) will provide a Report of a proposed indicator framework for measuring and monitoring the SDGs agreed by Member States in September

JANUARY 2016: SDGS WILL COME INTO EFFECT ON THE 1ST OF JANUARY
The deadline for the fulfilment of the SDGs will be 2030

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016: 47TH SESSION OF THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION (UNSC)
UNSC expected to endorse and adopt the report of proposed indicators by the IAEG-SDGs, thereby agreeing on an indicator framework for the measurement and monitoring of the SDGs



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVOCACY

This discussion paper provides an overview of the progress to date relating to the SDGs and the broader Post-2015 Development Agenda. While the developments so far illustrate some encouraging aspects for women's organisations, there remains essential work to be done to ensure that this ambitious development framework actually achieves gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide.

THE ROLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

The Australian National Committee for UN Women commends the work that the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has done so far in contributing to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, through representing Australia's interests at the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF), attending the First High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), and playing an active role in the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the process of modernising Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The Australian National Committee for UN Women also welcomes DFAT's support of a post-2015 development agenda which promotes gender equality and women's economic empowerment, along with economic growth, peaceful and inclusive societies and effective institutions.

The Australian National Committee for UN Women would welcome the support of the Australian Government and DFAT in raising awareness about the problematic aspects of the proposed SDGs for women and to advocate for these elements to be addressed. A significant area of concern is that two of the proposed targets included in the 2013 UN Women Report "A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment" were not included at all in the draft SDGs or in any associated targets, namely; "to ensure women's sustainable access to energy" and "to strengthen women's collective action". Furthermore, the Australian Government could play an essential role in echoing the comments made about the SDGs by women's organisations, such as the need for a stronger grounding in human rights and the need for the goals to be transformational through addressing the structural causes of gender inequality.

An aspect of the SDG process that has a great potential to be influenced by the Australian Government is the indicator framework for the SDGs, which will not be finalised until 2016. The Australian Government has a vital role to play in addressing and highlighting the importance of SDG indicators being gender-specific and disaggregated by gender, and other relevant factors such as age and ethnicity, so that implementation of the SDGs is monitored to show impacts on women and girls and governments are held accountable for progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Additionally, the Australian Government should advocate for gender considerations to be mainstreamed into the

indicators for all SDGs so that a comprehensive and transformative approach is taken to gender equality in this development framework.

Finally, the Australian Government has a valuable role to play in advocating against the alteration or diminishment of the commendable aspects of the SDGs for women. As there is no indication of the possibility that SDG 5 will be removed from the list of SDGs between now and September, this advocacy would focus on retaining all targets associated with SDG 5, as well as safeguarding the mainstreaming of gender considerations into the targets associated with other SDGs.

WHAT CAN I DO?

To ensure that gender equality is strongly represented in the SDGs and Post-2015 development agenda, further advocacy is needed.

A crucial element of including gender considerations in the global development framework is raising awareness about the importance of the SDGs for women's empowerment. Australian women's organisations can play an essential role in raising awareness about what the SDGs mean for women through publishing position papers on the proposed SDGs and using social media to keep their supporters updated about the ongoing process.

Organisations can also influence the SDG process through participating in the forums which allow for the opinions of women and girls to be heard in international policy making. Australian organisations have the opportunity to join the Women's Major Group (WMG), which facilitates women's civil society input into UN policy making and is open to all interested organisations working for gender equality and women's rights. Organisations can join the WMG "email listserve", which is comprised of over 600

participants and provides regular information on sustainable development policies at the UN. To join this group, organisations can contact the WMG at join-us@womenrio20.org, indicating their wish to join the "listserve" and providing their name, organisation, function and country.

We all have a role to play in making Governments aware of the importance of the SDG process and its impact on progress towards gender equality. You are encouraged to speak to your local member and encourage them to ensure that Australia continues to lobby for gender to be mainstreamed into the SDG targets and indicators, so that implementation of the SDGs is monitored to show impacts on women and girls. Governments should also be made aware of the fact that two of the proposed targets included in the 2013 UN Women Report "A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment" were not included at all in the draft SDGs or in any associated targets. Furthermore, it will be important for the Australian Government to continue efforts to ensure the SDGs are grounded in human rights and are truly transformational through addressing the structural causes of gender inequality.

GET ACTIVE:

- Raise awareness of the SDGs and the role they will play in achieving gender equality
- Speak to your local MP about the importance of gender in the SDGs and the opportunity to strengthen the indicators which are still being negotiated
- Use social media to lend your voice to the calls for the SDGs to be grounded in existing human rights frameworks
- Share this discussion paper with your networks



CONCLUSION

The proposed SDGs released in 2014 contain both commendable and problematic elements from the viewpoint of women's organisations and advocates. It is important that progress towards gender equality, such as SDG 5 and the mainstreaming of gender considerations into other SDGs, is celebrated, and that ongoing areas of concern for women, such as the potential effects of the upcoming Financing for Development Conference, are highlighted and awareness is raised.

As the international community is currently in the middle of the finalisation of, and agreement on, the SDGs and the broader Post-2015 Development Agenda, it is essential that the commendable elements of the

SDGs are protected against alteration or regression between now and their expected adoption by UN Member States in September this year.

The development of an indicator framework, which is not expected to be finalised until 2016, constitutes an invaluable opportunity for gender considerations to be firmly incorporated into the upcoming development agenda. Women's organisations should advocate for gender oriented and disaggregated indicators to be used to measure and monitor the implementation of the SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, so that this ambitious set of goals actually translates into better lives for women and girls across the world.



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