UN Women
Expert Group Meeting
'Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development'

New York, New York
2-4 November 2015

Post 2015 Women's Coalition

Expert paper prepared by:

Krishanti Dharmaraj[*]
Rutgers Center for Women's Global Leadership

DRAFT: Not for citation or circulation

---

[*] The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

The Post 2015 Women's Coalition has been closely monitoring the evolving post 2015 development processes to ensure that identified and articulated multi-sectoral priorities related to gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment are implemented to ensure inclusion and realize the human rights of all people.

The outcome document of the process around the Post-2015 Development Agenda **"Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"** agreed to by member states sets an ambitious vision for the next 15 years, striving for **"**a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination (para 8). The document includes gender-equality and women's empowerment and particularly Goal 5 - dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment, and the inclusion of women as a cross-cutting issue is of importance for its specific means of implementation towards ensuring that appropriate policy reform, financing, and other resources are dedicated to achieving human rights through inclusion, equity and equality.

However, as a whole, the Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Means of Implementation still fall short of a global agenda that addresses systemic imbalances, inequalities, and discrimination, rooted in gender equality principles that deny the basic human rights of women and girls. Moreover, despite many promises, the adopted document has failed to achieve a comprehensive gender equality strategy and human rights based approach to development, and has not addressed the urgent need for reforming current structural and systemic inequalities and discrimination.

More specifically, as we move towards the implementation of the development agenda the Means of Implementation link to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which retained regressive and discriminatory language on financing and governance reform, multilateralism, and gender equality is deeply concerning.

For the purposes of this summary, below are some of the key issues identified by the Post 2015 Coalition in regards to the Means of implementation required to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the 2030 Agenda.

1. Enabling policy and legal environments
Although the adopted development agenda calls for policy coherence with existing international platforms it neglects critical international legal and policy mechanisms such as CEDAW, CERD, ICCPR, ICESCR, ICRPD, BPfA, the Cairo Declaration, the Maastricht Principles, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women, CRC, and UNSCR 1325. Also, while the targets and means of implementation under Goal 5 seek to address the gaps remaining from MDG 3, these issues still remain siloed as "women's issues."

Furthermore, despite the strong push by developing countries, civil society and other stakeholders for specific references and reformulation of the role of IFIs as well as the decision-making power and policy space for developing countries, the post-2015 agenda mentions policy

space only with specific limitations and qualifications (para 44 &63), and does not leave room for structural reform of existing dynamics and power relations.

Thus, the implementation of the agenda should:
- Ensure gender mainstreaming and coherence with international gender equality commitments
- Link standalone targets to their impact on women's economic, political and social empowerment, reinforcing the integrated nature of realizing human rights
- Critically re-examine the role, accountability and governance of International Financial Institutions toward greater gender equality and women's human rights
- Ensure women's participation in policy dialogues at local, national and international not only in planning stage but also in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Leadership and participation, including institutional mechanisms
Gender equality, women's participation and leadership needs to be at the center of all implementation efforts. To ensure equality of this process, an intersectional approach must be adopted by all relevant entities. All people must be able to contribute to and benefit through their full and equal participation, contributions, and realization of benefits in their community. Safety and equal access to justice must be ensured for women human rights defenders, who are being directly targeted by violence. They are critical to protecting and preserving human rights, economic stakes, and environmental safety and security in their communities and beyond.

When promoting the participation and leadership of women, it is critical to recognize the gender-based discrimination and violence faced by women. Marginalized women such at migrants and refugees, indigenous and disabled women, those identifying as lesbian, bisexual or transgender and those in conflict zones faces multiple levels of discrimination due to their intersecting identities. This vulnerability due to intersecting identities silence the voices of the women who should be articulating the needs and rights of their communities.

Thus, the implementation of the agenda should strive to:
- End sexual and gender based violence and violence against women in all of its forms by taking action to advance efforts through alignment of national frameworks with international women's human rights agreements
- Ensure access to comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health as well as upholding obligations to providing adequate health information and access to services
- Develop education policies that uphold the human rights to education, progressively reduce all forms of disparities and inequalities including older women, indigenous women, persons with disabilities, vulnerable children and guaranteeing equitable access to inclusive and quality education including literacy and lifelong learning
- Ensuring the rights to secure access to land for women and girls by combating discriminatory inheritance, succession, customary and/or family laws and marriage

related-practices that violate universal and fundamental human rights protections of non-discrimination and equality, progressively increasing access and control of land by women and men over time toward equality, strengthening the tracking and action to address land control and land-grabbing, and improving access to land by small landowners;

- Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work between the state, community and family, to enable equal caregiving in families- between partners, whether women, men or other gender identities- by advancing the state's role in ensuring accessible, quality public services, universal social protection, investment in infrastructure, and time and labor saving technologies in order to ensure gender equality and women's human rights including to rest, leisure, and just remuneration of work

Financing and investment mechanisms

Even though the **Means of Implementation** and **Global Partnership** stress the need for mobilizing a diverse range of resources to implement the sustainable development goals and there is a commitment to ensure women's equal rights to access economic resources, specific resource commitments have not been linked to the realization of women's human rights and advancing gender equality. The agenda has increased the role and power of the corporate sector and international financial institutions at both the local and global policy making levels, coupled with lack of transparency and public accountability for these actors. This reliance on private financing for development and women's empowerment is concerning since it diverts attention away from the role of states.

Thus, financing and investment mechanisms linked to the development agenda should:
- Institute regulatory frameworks and accountability mechanisms to ensure that people and the planet come before financial profits and limited economic growth
- Primarily focus on states as the main responsible bodies for removing global obstacles to development, mobilizing official development assistance and sufficient domestic public resources
- Strive towards new innovative mechanisms for financing for development replacing the problematic aid and debt system with one based on respect, solidarity, and non-subordination
- Develop effective financing initiatives for gender equality that move away from fragmented, short-term funding cycles towards longer term partnerships
- Take concrete action on demilitarization and disarmament by redirecting investments in militarism and arms to gender equitable social development and peace
- Prohibit attachment of harmful conditionalities to Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other forms of financing by international financial institutions and providing binding obligations of states to meet their commitments, especially the realization of the human rights of women and other at-risk groups

- Ensure that investment policies are in line with international standards on business and human rights, including women's human rights core labor standards of the International Labor Organization for all people, and the United Nations environmental standards
- Move away from remittance-driven development that only increases the vulnerability of migrants to violations of their rights and systematizes labor exports and give priority to realizing decent work and living wages in sending countries
- Ensure that the Means of Implementation (MoI) flow mainly from public resources, and in which the private funds are accountable as well as on their social and environmental impacts

Data and statistics (including monitoring and evaluation)

The development agenda has included disaggregated data in the means of implementation which is a progressive step in the implementation of the agenda as a whole. However, many of the existing targets and indicators remain aspirational as there is limited data on key challenges and threats for women, including taboos related to reporting domestic violence, harassment, rape and other forms of gender-based violence.

Thus it is critical that the implementation stage
- Ensures that indicators developed by the IAEG are supplemented by relevant capacity-building for developing countries and all stakeholders active in monitoring and collecting data
- Ensure that the 'data revolution' specifically promote public and peer-to-peer platforms for gathering and employing 'big data' while providing safe and participatory spaces for women and marginalized groups
- Strengthen public data systems including the development of guidelines and policies for data collection, use and ownership; and data pertaining to public interest and use safeguards,

Accountability mechanisms (for states, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders)

Its alarming to note that governments will only be held accountable to the implementation of targets within the development agenda more than 10-15 years in the future while there is a current urgent need to address inequalities, exclusion and systemic discrimination. As we move towards the implementation phase, civil society organizations, particularly women's rights organizations, must be recognized and treated as key partners in the design, implementation and monitoring of the agreements and relevant policies at all levels. In addition, substantial increase in financing and investment**s** in gender equitable social spending as well as a culture of peace through nonviolent conflict resolution skills, and a reduction of investment in military industry and institutions must be fulfilled.

Thus, Member States, UN Agencies, and all other relevant stakeholders
- Should monitor sustainable development vis a vis existing international reporting platforms in the interim, as well as recognize civil society led reviews of progress on a shorter and more relevant timescale
- Honor their commitments to engage with all levels of civil society and communities--local, national, regional and global - and include innovative forms of data collection in government reporting and implementation plans to accelerate progress, equality, and peace.
- Work with civil society including women led civil society to establish clear, measurable, and time-bound gender equality and women's rights objectives, and put in place accountability mechanisms for resources allocated, disbursed and implemented
- Ensure that the highest human rights and gender equality standards and participatory processes are conveyed in the means of implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms