



## Position Paper for the 2018 High Level Political Forum (HLPF)<sup>1</sup> Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

### Executive Summary

The complexity of women's lives and realities is reflected in the intersectional nature of the sustainable development goals. While 8 of the 17 goals explicitly integrate commitments to women and girls, the achievement of targets across the agenda has implications for women's and girls' human rights. The six goals under review at the 2018 High Level Political Forum, on water and sanitation, energy, safe and sustainable cities, protecting biodiversity, addressing unsustainable consumption and production and ensuring the means of implementation to achieve the SDGs are as important for gender equality as they are critical for sustainable development.

This paper offers a detailed gender analysis of the six goals, demonstrates how women and girls are differently impacted by development failures and provides specific recommendations for future action.

As governments take forward implementation of these SDGs, the women's major group offers the following cross-cutting recommendations:

1. **Actively support the meaningful participation of women in decision-making.** From increasing access to safe drinking water and ensuring that women and girls have the information and means necessary to practice menstrual health, to protecting forests, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture, to addressing safety and security within cities, women offer particular expertise and must be at decision-making tables. Governments should create formal opportunities to ensure that the most marginalized groups of women and women most affected by policies and programs under consideration have a say in their development.
2. **Invest in the collection of gender data.** The lack of data disaggregated by sex, age, location, ethnicity, migration status and other factors sets back development efforts by failing to give adequate information about who is being left behind. Investing in efforts to close the massive gender data gap is essential for effective budgeting and policymaking.
3. **Address gender-discriminatory norms, stereotypes and gender-based violence** that hold women and girls back. Stigma surrounding menstrual hygiene, stereotypes about women's roles that prevents their participation in the sustainable energy sector, and harassment in the streets of cities all limit women's ability to participate in public life and achieve equality. Strategies to address gender discriminatory norms and violence must be integrated into policies and programs to address each of the SDGs.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the Women's Major Group, please visit [www.womenmajorgroup.org](http://www.womenmajorgroup.org). For specific queries on the paper, please contact [lean@wedo.org](mailto:lean@wedo.org).

4. **Value women's time and prioritize the reduction and redistribution of women's unpaid work.** Whether it is through additional time women spend collecting safe drinking water, fuel wood, or nutritious food, or on public transportation in cities to complete their care work, women and girls bear the burden of development failures in hours of unpaid work, which in turn affects their prospects for education and employment. Investing in gender-responsive infrastructure, social protection programs and care services to reduce and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate burden of unpaid work must be a priority.
5. **Use gender budgeting to ensure investments in women and girls.** The failure to account for gender in budget allocations hinders the effectiveness of sustainable development programs. Governments must analyze the gender differentiated impacts of budgets and allocate money towards achieving clearly defined gender equality targets.
6. **Protect women's rights to own and control land, energy and other productive resources.** Eliminating discriminatory laws and putting in place proactive policies to guarantee women's rights to own and control land and other productive resources is essential across each of the SDGs under consideration.
7. **Commit to accountability from the local level to the global.** None of the SDGs will be achieved without addressing closing spaces for civil society at all levels; protecting women human rights defenders, including environmental defenders; ensuring that women's and feminist groups are at accountability tables, and ensuring rigorous and transparent review at all levels, including at the HLPF.

## **Section 1: Systemic Concerns**

Women's lives and realities are complex and are reflected in all goals and targets of the sustainable development agenda. Our intersecting identities influence our ability to exercise our rights, opportunities, health and well-being. We are girls, adolescents, middle aged, and older women; people of various castes, races and ethnicities; indigenous, migrants and refugees; we live with disabilities; we live in poverty and in wealth; we are formal and informal workers, manual laborers, and executives; we live in rural, peri-urban and urban communities; we have diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics. Unequal structures and systemic barriers impact all of us, with the most marginalized being impacted hardest.

Patriarchy, colonialism and other systems of oppression interact to reinforce inequalities, deny women their agency and block progress toward achieving sustainable development and solving many of the ongoing global crises. This is reflected in the ways that women bear disproportionate burdens of development failures. For example, women typically have the majority of care and household responsibilities such as cooking, collecting fuel (SDG 7) and water (SDG 6) and subsidize inadequate, failing or non-existent public health systems by caring for children, the sick and elderly (SDG 5). Lack of sanitation facilities (SDG 6) affects women's security (SDG 16), including when they must travel distances to use toilets or collect water on a daily basis. Reliance on solid biomass and other polluting sources for household energy (SDG 7, 12) can harm women's health (SDG 3), increase their share of unpaid care work and impact their safety (SDG 5). Biodiversity and forest loss hinder women's ability to perform responsible forest management and increases women's workload as they struggle to access food and medicine for their families (SDG 15).

Women disproportionately lack access to resources to support both productive and reproductive work, creating dependency on patriarchal structures and impeding women's ability to be equal stakeholders in

society. For example, lack of formal recognition of women as credit holders or farmers creates obstacles for women to access land ownership, productive resources and economic opportunities (SDG 2, 11); and lack of access to sustainable, renewable, clean and efficient household energy technologies and fuels limits women's ability to engage in productive activities outside of household tasks (SDG 7, 8, 11.; and limited access to financial resources and education limits women's economic and financial literacy (SDG 17) and capacity for economic empowerment (SDG 5).

In concert with these patriarchal norms, other unequal structures, including the current economic model, lead to: climate change and ecological degradation, militarization and conflict, unjust ecosystem, financial, trade and investment governance, corporate capture and wealth concentration, illicit financial flows, land and resource grabbing, to name only a few. We see these interactions in extractive and mining industry projects that destroy local ecosystems and economies and militarize territories, increasing violence in societies, especially against women and girls; in the maquila model where violence against women is carried out as a means to control the entire society; in coltan mining where sexual violence against women leads to forced displacement allowing multinational companies to access mining resources at a much lower economic cost; and in industrial agriculture and livestock production which causes deforestation, biodiversity loss and unsustainable use of valuable natural resources, destroying human health and the planet for corporate profit, whilst bankrupting the majority, family and small-scale farms - which are largely run by women in developing countries - causing endless cycles of food insecurity and unemployment. This is further intensified by illicit financial flows that continue to sustain inequalities between countries and augment corporate power.

Ending these crises and ushering in just and equitable transitions to a sustainable, low carbon economy will require a rigorous examination of traditional power structures, strong political will and national government commitments, and collective action from all of us.

## **Section 2: Sustainable Development Goals for 2018 (Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 & 17)**

### ***Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all***

In 2015 almost a third of the world's population still lacked access to safe drinking water and progress towards this goal is being undermined by climate change and continued, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.<sup>2</sup> As of 2017, nearly 2.3 billion people still do not have toilets or improved latrines.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the UN recognition of access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right in 2010, progress has been slow.

Inadequate access to safe, reliable water and improved sanitation, including for menstrual hygiene management, disproportionately impacts women and girls. In 80% of households that did not have a source of safe drinking water on site, water collection was the sole responsibility of women and girls.<sup>4</sup> In addition to burdens on women's and girls' time and labor, there are implications for school attendance, productivity, earnings and employment opportunities, privacy, safety and risk of violence, and health, including for women with disabilities. In rural Macedonia, ninety per cent of female students do not attend school 4 to 5 days each month due to lack of menstrual hygiene management options. More study is needed to explore correlation between water and sanitation obstacles and the mortality of women,<sup>5</sup> but preventable diarrheal

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<sup>2</sup> UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action* (2018), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> WHO Sanitation Factsheet (2018), <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs392/en/>

<sup>4</sup> UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action* (2018), p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank data shows that the percentage of women in developing country populations is decreasing <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS>.

diseases kill approximately 842,000 people each year<sup>6</sup>, with numbers for children in Nigeria reaching 60,000.<sup>7</sup> At a societal level, poor management of water and sanitation can contribute to financial and political instability.

Privatization and militarization highly impact water access. When safe water is privatized, women bear the consequences of cut-offs or price hikes, fixed charges regardless of water use, and value added tax, which may put access to safe water out of reach. They must travel farther from home and face increased safety risks in search of water or allocate scarce financial resources towards purchasing water, which may have been designated for other necessities.

The agriculture sector is both a major water user and polluter, responsible for 70% of water extractions worldwide and 92% of the water footprint. Agriculture-related degradation of water quality occurs throughout the sector, including operation of aquaculture and livestock systems, growing crops for animal feed, and from farms that discharge agrochemicals, drug residues (including antibiotics), sediments, saline drainage, and other non-point source contaminants accessing receiving waters. Women contribute 43% of global agricultural labor<sup>8</sup> and carry higher biological loads of contaminated water. Empowering women to implement more sustainable innovations in agriculture will reduce water contamination and protect women and the children they often bring into the fields, strengthening entire communities and countries.

Water management decisions are not gender neutral. Differences and inequalities between women and men influence how individuals and communities use and make decisions about water use and access and respond to changes in regulation of water use and access. Empowering women to access, protect and proscribe sustainable consumptive uses for clean and safe water and effective recycling of waste water, including from leadership positions, can enable women to claim their power while also improving community health.

## **Recommendations, Goal 6:**

### ***Education and Awareness Raising***

- Incorporate menstrual health education for all girls and boys in school curricula. Sensitize and increase knowledge about menstruation as a normal part of development and reduce stigma about it. Empower women to manage menstrual health education and facilitate awareness on menstrual health management with women-led efforts within communities.
- Build knowledge and capacity among communities, including in particular, women using local languages, to enable their active participation in the design and implementation of community water management, sanitation and waste reduction plans that embody economic efficiency, gender equity, social justice, and environmental awareness.
- Build awareness about the role of women and girls as equal partners in the water cycle and water sector at every level to ensure water security and sustainability for all and reduce women's and girls' time and economic burdens.
- Target all actors in the community, particularly industries and institutions, with public information campaigns to enable waste-reduction innovations.

### ***Improve Disaggregated Data, Research and Monitoring***

- Compile data on household expenditures, tariffs, income, time spent caring, hours worked, and poverty to benchmark affordability across countries, describe the time and economic burdens on woman-headed households, and report national, regional, and global trends.

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<sup>6</sup> WHO Sanitation Factsheet (2018), <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs392/en/>

<sup>7</sup> Journalists for Human Rights. Water Aid Report 2016

<sup>8</sup> The role of women in agriculture', FAO, 2011, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/am307e/am307e00.pdf>

- Increase understanding of data collection methods -prioritizing community data generation and reporting-, processing, and transparency, so as to apply gender-sensitive indicators to monitoring and evaluation, to water, sanitation, and integrated water resources management.
- Harmonize WASH monitoring tools and indicators in the context of gender equality and human rights, promoting women-led initiatives. At the same time, incorporate a WASH gender dimension into cross-cutting sector policies and strategies (food security, nutrition, health, and emergency).
- Monitor water usage and water impacts relating to different industries and usages, as a basis for the development of policies, programs and fiscal measures to regulate these.
- Finance research and studies on emerging issues, for example, subterranean industries that can impact water for countless generations to come.

***Improve women’s participation in water and sanitation decision-making***

- Encourage women’s leadership and gender mainstreaming in collaboration and coordination between national level agencies involved with the integrated water resources mechanism, with particular focus on transboundary water resources, to ensure water governance at local, regional, and global levels.
- Implement capacity development, vocational training, and leadership training for all women of all segments of society, especially including marginalized women and girls, to support women as actors, experts, and leaders in the field of water and sanitation.
- Ensure leadership of women in executive, policy, and operational positions related to water and sanitation through targeted programs, parity and quotas.
- Raise participation of women and girls in all aspects of decision-making concerning planning and installations of water and sanitation projects, including strengthening local decision-making participation of women in WASH committees. It is important to foster institutional changes that will decentralize regulation of water use and access and enhance the role of women in community management, building on their expertise.

***Implement policies that ensure just and equitable access to water and sanitation and improve infrastructure at all levels***

- Recognize water is a human right and implement international human rights instruments at local, national, and regional level to enable women’s effective participation in healthy water habitats.
- Promote ratification of existing human rights instruments and strengthening of treaty monitoring mechanisms especially regarding food sources and labor safety, including all ILOs, CRC, CBD, CEDAW, Law of Transboundary Aquifers, Copenhagen Protocol, UNEA Pollution Declaration, and related instruments and regional water treaties.
- End privatization of water and codify water as a shared public resource with a transparent system for allocation and adjudicating conflicting uses.
- Increase safe sanitation services in rural areas as a priority, bearing in mind that it is much lower in rural areas than in urban areas.
- Ensure safe, reliable, accessible sanitation facilities at school, workplaces and other institutions. The specific needs of women and girls regarding sanitation services, in particular in terms of menstrual hygiene, should be taken into account all along the decision chain, and in the conception of installations.
- Implement gender-responsive budgeting for water and sanitation.
- Strengthen institutional capacity and skills and promote cooperation and partnership among key players in the sector, especially at national, sub-national and regional levels while ensuring policy coherence.
- Develop international instruments for monitoring and reporting on emerging technologies, i.e., aquifer storage and recovery, hydraulic fracturing, or other industrial processes with far-reaching impacts on shared waters, in collaboration with women’s and feminist organizations.

- Invest in infrastructure and technologies to reduce time burdens and drudgery, which will make care work more efficient and increase available time for other activities.<sup>9</sup>

***Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all***

There is a clear and important intersection between energy access, sustainable energy and gender equality, which spans many of the SDGs. Universal access requires energy to be affordable, appropriate, efficient, modern and reliable, as well as, sustainable, renewable and safe for communities and for the environment. Each stage of energy planning and policy-making needs to factor in gender dimensions and actively support and advance women’s rights to meet SDG 7 and SDG 5, at a minimum, which further supports meeting SDGs 8, 13 and 15 in the changing world of work through a just and equitable transition to a low-carbon economy. Global access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking reached 62 percent in 2015, and global electrification reached 86 percent in 2016.<sup>10</sup> However, over 1 billion people still do not have access to electricity and 2.8 billion people still lack access to clean cooking; mainly in rural Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Asia-Pacific.<sup>11</sup>

Thirty-eight percent of the global population and almost 50 percent of the population in developing countries lack access to clean cooking, relying on solid biomass, coal, and kerosene.<sup>12</sup> Polluting fuels are used for cooking in 75 percent of households in rural communities across the world, 91 percent of rural households in Africa, and 82 percent of rural households in the Western Pacific. In countries that rely heavily on individualized solid biomass and coal for cooking, household air pollution is responsible for 2.8 million premature deaths every year.<sup>13</sup> Africa alone accounts for about 600,000 deaths each year as a result of household air pollution<sup>14</sup>, and approximately 60 percent of these victims are women.<sup>15</sup>

Where there are gaps in energy justice, it is women’s and girls’ unpaid time and labour that is typically expended to gather biomass fuels for cooking, collect water or manually process grains and other foods. In these settings, primarily women and children spend on average 1.4 hours a day collecting solid fuels (i.e., wood, crop wastes, charcoal, coal or dung) and several hours cooking with inefficient stoves, limiting time available to pursue other economic, academic, and personal, family and leisure activities. Also, inadequate and unreliable access to affordable, efficient and sustainable energy services hinders social and economic resilience of women. For example, women forced to procure energy individually because they cannot access the national grid often incur high costs of running small-scale businesses, which points to a role for small-scale, locally-controlled renewable energy systems.

Aside from eliminating or at least reducing individual household air pollution, addressing gender and energy issues can have discernible impacts on global health and well-being. Improved lighting and hygiene associated with clean energy and safely managed water would help reduce maternal mortality rates.<sup>16</sup> Two under-researched but often-mentioned links between health and energy poverty are sexual assault and the physical burdens of carrying heavy loads of fuel and water. Some evidence indicates that women and girls

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<sup>9</sup>UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment (2017). Recognizing, Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Work and Care. <http://hlp-wee.unwomen.org/-/media/hlp%20wee/attachments/reports-toolkits/hlp-wee-working-group-paper-driver-3-en.pdf?la=en>

<sup>10</sup> IEA and World Bank, 2017

<sup>11</sup> IEA and World Bank, 2017; IEA, 2017

<sup>12</sup> IEA, 2017; WHO, 2016

<sup>13</sup> IEA, 2017

<sup>14</sup> Africa Progress Panel, 2015

<sup>15</sup> ESMAP, 2011; IRENA 2013 cited in UN Women 2017

<sup>16</sup> UN Women, 2014 cited in Smart Villages 2015

are at risk of sexual violence when they collect fuel and water or when they are outside after dark<sup>17</sup> or before school, especially in the absence of community lighting. Electricity (through lighting) is also known to give women greater flexibility in the organization of their work patterns.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, in some cases electricity access has increased women's burden due to expectations that women labor day and night.<sup>19</sup>

Unsustainable energy production is costly in the long-run and impacts women in particular. For example, nuclear waste management plans demand thousands of years of dedicated resources and complex maintenance systems to protect all people, especially women and girls. Women carry higher biological loads of contaminants from mining, extraction, milling, processing, manufacture, and transport of energy fuels, including coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear materials.

Women's leadership in sustainable energy production can help influence policy and regulation to protect people, communities and the earth from contamination from open pit mining, strip mining, mountaintop removal, in situ leaching, hydraulic fracturing, steam extraction, drilling, milling, processing, refinement techniques, transport, and camps, that oppress women to serve the operations and result in increased violence against women. When safe from physical and environmental violence, women can plan and execute sustainable energy projects that generate healthy economic and societal benefits at multiple scales.

### **Bottlenecks and Challenges**

*Discriminatory social norms and practices prevent women's participation in the energy sector:* Because of prevailing gender norms, women and girls often have less access to information, skills, training and labour markets, including decent work. Women's familiarity with new technologies is thus usually lower than men's, particularly in rural settings.<sup>20</sup> Also, there is a lack of women in technical fields, in energy companies and as entrepreneurs, outside of the retail segment of the value chain due to prevailing stereotypes and structural barriers that prevent women to pursue careers in these areas.

*Gender and energy budgetary allocations:* The failure to include gender in national government budget appropriations for energy is a huge gap that when it comes to planning, negating the inclusivity of the SDGs

*Data availability:* Lack of high-quality, sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics is a major impediment to projects in the gender-energy nexus. Gender statistics on energy access are almost never available at any level. Data from marginalized groups are discredited based on prejudices.

*Underfunding:* The OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) in June 2016 noted that only a very small proportion of ODA for women's economic empowerment is directed to the energy and transport/storage sectors (9 and 11 percent respectively). Availability of financing also remains a primary bottleneck for women energy entrepreneurs.

*Access to and control over resources:* Greater access to and control over sustainable energy and services can improve women's health and well-being, free up their time, and enable their economic empowerment, thereby supporting the achievement of SDGs 3, 5, among others. Access to electricity can support women's economic empowerment by facilitating productive and employment opportunities. Moreover, as

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<sup>17</sup> "Energy and Women and Girls", Rebecca Rewald, 2017, <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/energy-women-girls.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Dutta et al, 2017

<sup>19</sup> Sovacool B.K., Kryman M. and Smith T.C., 2014

<sup>20</sup> "Opening Doors: Mapping The Landscape For Sustainable Energy, Gender Diversity & Social Inclusion", SEforALL 2017a, [https://www.seforall.org/sites/default/files/Opening\\_Doors-Full.pdf](https://www.seforall.org/sites/default/files/Opening_Doors-Full.pdf)

investments in renewable energy increase there is opportunity to foster equitable employment opportunities for both women and men<sup>21</sup> through a just and equitable transition to a fossil-fuel free economy.

### **Recommendations, Goal 7**

- Promote and invest in research, development and deployment of innovative, low-emissions technologies to provide decentralised sustainable energy solutions that support gender equality and women’s economic empowerment: Women should be directly involved in all phases, including as designers and beneficiaries of these business models and technologies.
- Scale up women’s energy entrepreneurship approach as an effective business model, including to reach last-mile communities: As part of their energy access strategies, governments should raise their efforts to promote women-centric business models for expanding energy access to all, including at the last mile.
- Support clean cooking fuels and technologies: National governments should be encouraged and supported to demonstrate greater political and financial commitment to ensure that all households switch to clean fuels and clean, efficient stoves and have access to decentralised renewable energy solutions in the short term.
- Support and invest in women’s and girls’ science and education programs.
- Engender energy sector programming through support for national and locally-led initiatives: Advocating for strategies and planning approaches that enable the inclusion of women at every stage of the design, implementation, delivery and monitoring of energy services is critical if those services are to respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls.
- Adopt national policies to support community energy projects, including gender equitable sustainable energy cooperatives, through:
  - Tax reductions and benefits for cooperative members;
  - Simplification of administrative procedures for registering and operating community energy projects;
  - Low-interest loans, energy funds, etc., to increase women’s access to invest in sustainable energy;
  - Ensuring gender-mainstreaming and gender-budgeting for energy projects and targets.
- Adopt policies to support women-led projects through mechanisms that support the right of women to self-produce, self-consume, receive fair payment for excess electricity fed into the grid, store energy and engage in demand-side management.
- Integrate systematic and sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis of gender statistics as part of programming, and to support policy formulation, including data collection on women’s and men’s resource use, knowledge of, access to and control over resources and economic opportunities.
- Build gender-responsive global and national energy sector policy regimes. Evidence-based policy advocacy should be supported to devise a high-level strategic mobilisation plan to build gender and social inclusion more firmly into sustainable energy opportunities, financing, and services.
- Uphold the application of the “precautionary principle” as well as other safeguards in the case of non-conventional energy processes: Ensure the exclusion of inefficient energy approaches that have

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<sup>21</sup> World Bank ESMAP 2018



proven to be inequitable, ineffective, dangerous and otherwise unsustainable (i.e. large dams, nuclear energy and fracking).

- Reduce fossil-fuel subsidies progressively to allocate resources to renewable energy technologies systems and to services aimed to reduce and redistribute domestic and care unpaid work.
- Phase out unfair, unsustainable, high risk, polluting coal and nuclear energy production.
- Establish binding national targets for sustainable energy and, specifically, including targets for gender equality in decision making and linking energy and climate goals and gender equality
- Include women-centered funds methodically into existing sustainable energy financing vehicles, recognizing that there are both rights-based and efficiency-based arguments for doing so.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable***

For the first time in history, there are more people living in cities than in rural areas. Each month, five million people are added to the cities of the developing world.<sup>23</sup> It is expected that by 2045, six billion people will live in urban areas and many cities have a predominantly or significantly growing population of women. The rapid urbanisation in the last decades is showing effects on cities. Today, 828 million people already live in slums.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, insecurity and risks are increasing: “60 to 70 per cent of urban residents have been victims of crime in those developing or transitional countries where rapid urban population growth is at its highest.”<sup>25</sup>

Despite the urbanization trend, there is still a need to promote human settlements in which the modes of production and reproduction are not based on the exploitation of the natural resources or of marginalized groups. An urban model should not constrain the project of humanity to live and co-exist with its surroundings. Other models of life are possible beyond the predatory capitalist model (which has proven to deplete the rural areas and alternative modes of life of their full potential). Indigenous Peoples’ settlements provide productive models of sustainability, especially where women are empowered.

Urbanization also poses challenges to gender equality, because it affects women and girls in fundamentally different ways than men and boys, due to persistent gender inequalities, social norms and stereotypes. While cities offer great opportunities to women and girls, often their urban experience is also one of insecurity, sexual harassment, and exclusion. The fear of suffering sexual assault and/ or harassment, including femicide, in public spaces by girls and women severely restricts them exercising their right to the city, as it limits their mobility (which is not just physical, but also symbolic). When added to other factors of oppression such as an irregular administrative situation (such as lack of identity document, migration status, or numerous obstacles to undergo proper institutional procedures), functional diversity, age, gender and sexual identity, ethnicity, disability status, among others, then exercising this right to full urban citizenship becomes even more restricted.

Women in many cities face challenges accessing safe and secure housing, land rights and land tenure. They, along with youth, indigenous, trans and gender non-conforming peoples, and other marginalized groups,

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<sup>22</sup> SEforALL, 2017a

<sup>23</sup> UN HABITAT, State of the World’s Cities 2008/2009: Harmonious Cities, [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11192562\\_alt-1.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11192562_alt-1.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> UN SDGs, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

<sup>25</sup> UN HABITAT, World Cities Report 2016, <https://www.diba.cat/documents/7294824/16060840/WorldCitiesReport2016.pdf/b249e7fe-a609-438a-900a-0cbd2faed30c>

are more likely than men to face forced evictions and experience violence, including sexual violence, as a consequence of homelessness.<sup>26</sup> For women and girls living in both urban slums and informal settlements, a lack of access to services to meet their basic needs, including water, sanitation and health care, has detrimental consequences for their health and well-being.<sup>27</sup>

The design of cities is determined by, and reproduces the hierarchical relationships found in, patriarchal societies where some activities are given greater value than others. For example, in many cities, the movement of private vehicles has been prioritised over public transport, and are designed to give priority to routes dominated by men who tend to have a linear commute during traditional work “rush hours.” Conversely, women incorporate more care work in their journeys, which are shorter, more frequent and diverse, and often made on public transport outside of commuting hours, making travel more costly and time consuming.

Ensuring girls’ and women’s participation and safety in cities requires a gender transformative approach to achieve systemic change. This includes empowering girls and women to claim their rights and together with the relevant stakeholders actively transform their communities into safer, more inclusive places. It includes designing future cities that are well-lit, well-planned, well-maintained, using Universal Design principles where women can claim space to participate as active citizens. It requires the active participation of women and girls in the governance of cities and in the design of urban legislation. It is necessary to explicitly address the underlying structural and political issues that hinder girls and women to be safe in cities and other settlements as well as to aim to transform the pervasive social and cultural norms that allow for unequal power dynamics and gender-based violence.

### ***Disaggregated Data***

Since the majority of human inhabitants of the planet live in cities, it is clear that most of the SDGs and targets will need to be implemented in cities and towns. Further, recognizing that women are half the population of the planet, it is indispensable to ensure collection and solid sex- and age-disaggregation of data sets, alongside disaggregation by income, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other categories relevant in national context, as well as more gender-specific indicators across the framework. To monitor the SDGs and targets requires that actions are documented with disaggregated data that is accurate, verifiable and confidential and collected at different levels of government within a cohesive international framework. Without this, trends analysis will be limited and compromised. For example, in devising data to address the challenges faced by urban population living in slums, informal settlements and inadequate housing, there has to be a clear connection in a disaggregated manner in the information meant to address poverty reduction. Also, in devising data needed for disaster risk reduction, the disaggregation will also be useful for the development of appropriate and sustainable mitigation and adaptation strategies at local and national levels.

### **Recommendations, Goal 11:**

- Governments should ensure the implementation of urban public policies that re-shape cities, in order to:
  - Make them safe (i.e. recovering public spaces, ensuring better inter-connection between productive and reproductive activities, fighting all types of gender violence in public spaces including sexual assault and harassment);

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<sup>26</sup> UN- Habitat (2007). Global Report on Human Settlement. Enhancing Urban Safety and Security. UN-Habitat, Nairobi. P 133

<sup>27</sup> UN Women, *Turning Promises into Action* 2018, p. 114.

- Provide services that recognize different mobility patterns (i.e. reducing overcrowded and unsafe routes and accommodating the movement of everyone - women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and others);
- Allow care work to be shared among men and women (i.e. flexible hours in delivering services, child and elder care options, planning and zoning that integrates education, health care, housing, parks and transport);
- Allow women to exercise their right to free time (i.e. to practice sports and arts); all this while building solidarity among communities;
- Strengthen positive rural-urban linkages through equitable and sustainable sharing of scarce resources, including through sustainable territorial water and energy systems and through conservation and restoration actions.
- A new global governance is required, where cities and their citizens, including women's organizations, participate in decision-making of the planning of spaces and their management, and also a global governance where women's organisations and the feminist movement are represented, allowing them to participate in decision-making in a substantive manner.
- Recognize and realize the concept of sustainable human settlements in national planning, beyond the paradigm of cities. There is a need to decentralize and reverse the trend toward megacities, especially for climate change action and ecological integrity, given the extensive resource use by cities; protect biodiversity for long term survival of humanity, and incorporate indigenous biodiversity cultivation into all settlements.
- Enact progressive taxes, fees, fines, penalties, incentives, tariffs and other regulation to promote sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and emissions reductions.
- Local governments should use planning power to integrate obligatory sustainable energy and energy efficiency into public, new and renovated buildings and streamline requirements for community power projects, ensuring gender parity in decision-making.
- Rethink and redevelop human settlements, including cities, from a feminist perspective. Stop producing spaces from a productivist and mercantilist logic and start thinking about environments that prioritise the persons that use them in all their diversity. Feminist development of space demands that persons must be at the centre of the design and planning of human settlements giving greater prominence to and revaluing care and reproductive work, acknowledging that we are all interdependent: we are persons who are carers and we are persons who are cared for.

### ***Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns***

Current patterns and levels of consumption and production are clearly unsustainable, even without the projected growth in the world's human population to 9.7 billion in 2050. Yet governments and international organizations have still not demonstrated political will and leadership to tackle this issue. Maintaining the status quo is a consequence of materialistic, consumerist, throw-away lifestyles. The current economic environment, based in a neoliberal capitalist system, prioritizes short-term portable growth and profit that impinges on justice. Implementing women's human rights and gender equality, and ensuring environmental, ecosystem and animal protection at all levels can achieve sustainable consumption and production.

Overconsumption, particularly executed by the global north, results in harmful emissions and pollution that disproportionately affects marginalized communities, especially in developing countries, and results in poor working conditions and labor policies and insufficient implementation of labor laws. Overconsumption fuels conflict over resources, as well as human, drug, weapons, mineral, and money trafficking, and it prevents local communities and developing countries from productively regulating mineral exploitation, manufacture, and transport industries.

Overconsumption also results in poor health outcomes in wealthier populations and reduced food security for poorer populations. For example, the issues of food production, consumption and waste are critical to solving SDG 12. Women are the first to produce, cook and serve food, but, in many cultures, they are last to eat. In low-income households, women tend to feed children and men first, while going with little or no food for themselves. The culture of food wastage, particularity in the developed and affluent parts of the world deprive women living in poverty. The evidence is also now clear that the production of animal food products results in fewer people having access to adequate food supplies. Research shows that along with reducing other food losses, “replacing all animal-based [food] items in the US diet with plant-based alternatives will add enough food to feed, in full, 350 million additional people.”<sup>28</sup> Governments should use incentives and penalties to shift production and consumption away from diets heavy in animal foods and towards plant-centric diets.

Changing consumption and production patterns requires deep-seated societal and culture change. This will require strong political will and strategic and effective action involving all of society - including government, business, civil society, education, the media and thought leaders – to achieve a move away from materialism towards simpler lifestyles that value sufficiency.

The use of economic growth (measured by GDP) and neoliberal policies have fueled unsustainable production and trade, with corporations plundering the planet and using valuable natural resources free of charge and with impunity. Change will not be possible until this paradigm is replaced with one that prioritizes the well-being of women, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples, to build systems that hold corporations accountable for their social and environmental records.

### **Recommendations, Goal 12:**

Consumption and production are mutually reinforcing. Consumer demand impacts production. Conversely, production impacts consumption, particularly through marketing, availability, and price mechanisms. Thus, to comprehensively implement SDG 12, multi-pronged solutions are needed, including complementary actions.

Governments should:

- Exercise oversight to ensure that sustainable production and consumption priorities are incorporated in development, trade, industry, science, research, agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and technology policies.
- Establish fiscal incentives and disincentives to guide industry towards sustainable production patterns, particularly targeting the mining, extraction, industrial farming, transportation, and energy generation industries. Most important of these are:
  - Removal of subsidies from unsustainable and polluting production;
  - Disincentives/penalties applied to unsustainable/polluting production;
  - Incentives to support sustainable, ecological alternatives.
- Enact regulations for lifecycle analysis by corporations on their products and simultaneously run consumer awareness programs to ensure consumers have adequate product information on social and environmental impacts through the product’s lifecycle to enable them to make sustainable choices.

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<sup>28</sup> Shepon, A., Eshe, G., and Milo, R. The opportunity costs of animal based diets exceeds all food losses. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)*. 2018. <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/03/20/1713820115>

- Target segments of the global population where unsustainable production and consumption are most entrenched to promote accountability in developed countries and in wealthier sectors in developing countries.
- Restore women’s traditional decision-making powers regarding ecosystem impacts.
- Support research, and provide technical support, education and awareness to facilitate a sustainable trajectory in developing countries.
- Support effective anti-money laundering mechanisms with protections for women. Include measures at every segment of production, distribution, and consumption chains to end human, drug, weapon, mineral, and money trafficking, with special attention to trafficking of persons.
- Effectively regulate and enforce regulations to shift consumption and production, including gender-sensitive policies on management of consumer, industrial, chemical, radioactive and hazardous waste.
- Ensure women’s rights to a healthy workplace and environment free of hazardous chemicals and waste through regulation that:
  - Ensures mandatory phase out of hazardous chemicals in consumer products (according to BRS conventions and SAICM), particularly in products targeted towards women and girls such as menstrual hygiene products (no toxins, no plastics, no pesticides), body care products (no mercury in skin bleaching creams, no phthalates or other hormone disrupting chemicals);
  - Enforces regulations protecting women in the workplace from hazardous pesticides, including mandatory phase out of all highly hazardous pesticides and toxins from electronic waste and other waste (including plastic waste);
  - Encourages circular economies, but ensures that hazardous chemicals are not “recycled”;
  - Requires companies to reveal the full health and safety information of products, including the complete identification of chemicals (as well as the amount) in individual constituent components of the product. This also refers to the entire product life-cycle, including during product manufacture, use, recycling and/or disposal;
  - Guarantees respect for the fundamental chemical safety principles of ‘public right to know’ and the ‘precautionary principle’ through stronger national and international regulations and market requirements in all countries. This will support achievement of a toxic-free environment with non-toxic products and will protect human health;
  - Sets up funds based on the ‘polluter pays principle’ to award damages to those who have been affected by hazardous chemicals at work and in their surrounding environment: in particular, the impacts of global companies employing women in the electronics industry (e.g. affected by hazardous chemicals while working at Apple & Samsung); agricultural plantations (who has been exposed to e.g. palm oil, flowers, soybeans for animal fodder) and in extractive industries (e.g. gold mining) as well as in the chemicals industry (e.g. teflon, pesticides, plastics).

***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***

Despite playing a major role in biodiversity conservation, forest management and restoration—such as through inter-generational transmission of traditional knowledge, keeping seeds, energy generation, collection of traditional food and medicine, and sustainable livelihoods—women and Indigenous Peoples are often excluded from participation in local, national and global natural resources governance, especially managerial positions and decision-making bodies, and from accessing, owning, and controlling land and resources.

Women are also disproportionately affected by deforestation and degradation of ecosystems. Gender roles in many contexts dictate that women interact with and depend on these ecosystems on a daily basis, thus ecological degradation poses significant challenges for them to fulfil their differentiated role in agricultural and food production, land use, conservation, land rehabilitation, and restoration, water and energy access, household and care responsibilities, and livestock-based livelihoods. Depleted ecosystems also increase women's workload and burden and exacerbate existing inequalities: walking longer distances to collect food and water restrains opportunities to take up education and makes them more susceptible to sexual violence; taking care of sick family members due to lack of access to food and medicine reduces time and energy for other activities. This results in harmful consequences for women's health, income, subsistence needs and available time.

Laws, policies, programs and services must fully and intentionally integrate a gender-responsive approach in their formulation and delivery and engage and recognise women and indigenous peoples as rights holders, ensuring their roles in decision-making and governance in all related processes regarding land management, forests, biodiversity, food and water security.

### **Addressing major drivers of forest and biodiversity loss**

Halting deforestation by 2020 (15.2) is a pre-condition for addressing the global climate and biodiversity crises, and their multiple social impacts.

*Industrial agriculture and livestock production* is one of the main drivers of deforestation, biodiversity loss and social and environmental degradation. It contributes to the impact of climate change for local communities, undermines the wellbeing of 3.2 billion people,<sup>29</sup> and triggers land degradation, rural depopulation, and the depletion and contamination of water. The meat and dairy industry contributes to land use change through either direct conversion to pasture for livestock farming or through conversion to agriculture for feedstock production.<sup>30</sup>

The impacts of this industry on biodiversity are significant, including fishery collapses as a result of fresh water pollutants; the introduction of endocrine disruptor compounds into the water that show up in women's breast milk; and the large-scale use of antibiotics in the meat and dairy industry that has led to collapses in amphibians, fish and fish-eating birds in many countries – all of which affect community food security and contribute to antimicrobial resistance, with significant risks to health. Corporate capture of the industrial livestock sector also undermines small family farms. For example, household backyard poultry production in India - mostly led by women for their families' consumption and additional income - has almost been replaced by large agribusiness corporations.<sup>31</sup> The UN's Global Land Outlook Report highlights the urgency of this issue to our planet and future food security, with a third of our land already severely degraded.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), <https://www.ipbes.net/news/media-release-worsening-worldwide-land-degradation-now-‘critical’-undermining-well-being-32>

<sup>30</sup> The Root of the Problem: What's Driving Tropical Deforestation Today? (2011). Union of Concerned Scientists, [https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/documents/global\\_warming/UCS\\_RootoftheProblem\\_DriversofDeforestation\\_FullReport.pdf](https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/documents/global_warming/UCS_RootoftheProblem_DriversofDeforestation_FullReport.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> “What's at Steak”, Global Forest Coalition (2016), <http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/whats-at-steak-web-English.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> The Global Land Outlook UNCCD (2017), <https://www2.unccd.int/actions/global-land-outlook-glo>

Unsustainable practices and industries such as palm oil plantations and pulp and bioenergy production through large-scale *monoculture tree plantations* of eucalyptus and pine amongst others, have serious negative environmental and social impacts, replacing natural forests and ecosystems, and causing alterations to hydrological cycles, depletion of water sources, land degradation, nutrient loss and soil erosion, and agrochemical contamination, which leads to localized warming as well as food insecurity, water scarcity, livelihood loss, and health problems for women and their families.<sup>33</sup> Women are particularly hard-hit as they are often responsible for gathering fuelwood and other non-timber forest products that are privatized or depleted when ecosystems are replaced by plantations and they lose their resources and / or access to resources. Moreover, setting up monoculture tree plantations often involves transfers of land ownership and decision-making power, including coercing people away from their land and restricting access rights for grazing and farming practices by communities. For private investors, transnational corporations, international financial institutions, investing in commercial tree plantations are more profitable than community-based approaches to forest conservation or restoration. This is despite the benefits of the latter for local rightsholder groups, including frontline communities and women, and their land rights and livelihoods.<sup>34</sup>

## Recommendations, Goal 15

Governments should:

- Implement gender-responsive, women-led resource management and governance processes, as well as mitigation of land degradation and desertification.
- Enact programs and policies that promote women's equal rights and access and control to land, water and natural resources; and that ensure engagement and leadership of women and women's organizations in related decision-making and governance processes.
- Respect the rights, including Free Prior and Informed Consent, of Indigenous Peoples and women's leadership in negotiations, policies and programs: including the land tenure, territorial and governance rights of Indigenous Peoples and indigenous women's rights to their community forests, as well as their rights to lead in protecting their People's traditional knowledge and livelihoods.
- Implement existing international environmental agreements and ensure policy coherence between the three Rio Conventions:
  - The Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has adopted numerous policy recommendations to address land and soil degradation through community-based, participatory approaches that respect and foster the role of women in land management.
  - The Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) have agreed to the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets<sup>35</sup>, which include targets to redirect or phase out perverse incentives and subsidy schemes that might trigger the destruction of biodiversity by 2020 as well as to restore ecosystems to ensure health, well-being and livelihood needs of women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable. The CBD Gender Plan of Action 2015-2020<sup>36</sup> recognises gender-mainstreaming in biodiversity and women's

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<sup>33</sup> Global Forest Coalition (2017). The Risks of Large-scale Biosequestration in the context of Carbon Dioxide Removal, <http://globalforestcoalition.org/risks-of-large-scale-biosequestration/>

<sup>34</sup> Global Forest Coalition (2017). The Risks of Large-scale Biosequestration in the context of Carbon Dioxide Removal, <http://globalforestcoalition.org/risks-of-large-scale-biosequestration/>

<sup>35</sup> Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Convention on Biological diversity, <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>

<sup>36</sup> 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action. Convention on Biological diversity, <https://www.cbd.int/gender/action-plan/>

rights, including in relation to women's significant roles in biodiversity and human health<sup>37</sup> and capacity building on gender and engagement of Indigenous women.<sup>38</sup>

- Streamline CBD's post-2020 strategic plan and targets with SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls
- Ensure effective implementation of SDG 15.2 to halt deforestation by 2020 and to conserve terrestrial ecosystems by prioritizing women's participation and gender-responsive:
  - Policies that support lowering meat and dairy consumption and promote plant-based diets, grown sustainably;
  - Natural ecosystem regeneration for strong economies;
  - Practical alternatives to unsustainable agriculture like agro-ecology, agroforestry and many forms of peasant agriculture and traditional pastoralist practices, using native breeds and species;
  - Promotion of responsible forest management of timber and non-timber forest products.
- Implement gender-responsive strategies and women-led resource and land management initiatives as well as gender-sensitive, community-led interventions along with strong legally and socially legitimate land tenure for women.
- Close the gender gap in evidence-based responses by collecting sex-disaggregated evidence of actual and perceived tenure security nationwide in conjunction with gender-sensitive disaggregation gathering on proportion of land that is degraded as per definition of indicators 1.4.2 and 15.3.1 to better inform policies and programs.
- Eliminate or redirect perverse incentives for unsustainable agriculture, livestock production, and monoculture tree plantations, and revise trade policies of the corporate free trade model that benefit the few and are skewed in favour of large agribusinesses and export-oriented food production, as opposed to women's small-scale farming practices, which benefit the many.
- Amend the FAO definition of forests to include the concept of forests as complex ecosystems with different functions that not only hold vast biodiversity but that are also key in the regulation of climate, including the water cycle. The current definition does not differentiate between a real forest and a monoculture tree plantation, leading to deforestation, timber and/or energy production - often in the name of carbon projects – and undermining the rights of forest dependent people, many of whom are women.
- Address the global pollinator decline due to its significant and well-documented implications for crops worldwide, including small-scale medicinal crops such as honey that are important for women.
- Respect and support community conservation approaches and initiatives led by indigenous and rural women, as well as through non-economic incentives like the recognition of Indigenous and Community Conserved Territories and Areas.

### ***Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development***

Inclusive implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at all levels is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This is only achievable where there is an economic system that promotes equitable distribution of wealth and resources. It is therefore necessary to strengthen, and promote and invest in effective, meaningful and transparent public policy that integrates a human rights and gender perspective and support the mainstreaming of gender aspects in financing, budgeting and taxation.

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<sup>37</sup> UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/XIII/6, (2016), <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-13/cop-13-dec-03-en.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> See more at Alvarez, I. & Lovera, S. Development (2016) 59: 263. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41301-017-0111-z>



The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development should also be transparent, accountable, and inclusive, where all actors participate on an equal footing to enhance the proper implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The essential role of feminist and women's rights organizations in advancing gender equality, women's rights and empowerment alongside sustainable development should be recognized and spaces open for their participation in the development process. The Global Partnership should have human rights, gender equality and the SDGs as the primary purpose and/or the bare minimum for partnerships.

Following this, any multi-stakeholder partnerships that aim to enhance engagement of governments with global, regional and sub-regional bodies and programmes, the scientific community, donor community, non-governmental organisations, civil society, feminist and women's organizations, community groups, youth- and girl-led organizations, academic institutions, and other relevant actors should also be rights-based, effective, meaningful and transparent. While diversity and inclusion are important factors to true multi-stakeholder partnerships, there is a need for emphasis on the participation of primary stakeholders – the poorest and marginalized sectors that are often left out in the development process. Governments and development partners should live up to their commitments and put in practice institutional and legal mechanisms as well as funds and programs that ensure that the implementation of the SDGs become a reality.

Public private partnerships and other forms of corporate engagement have so far failed to address implementation, legitimacy and participation gaps in sustainable development policy making and can compromise objective public governance. The HLPF should engage in an open, objective discussion about the risks of partnerships that trigger undue corporate control over public policy-making in sustainable development in general.

Transparency is crucial to understand how industry and government contribute to and detract from sustainable development. Clear regulation, with reporting requirements, needs to be set and included in all industry and GDP reporting so that civil society can make informed decisions.

## **Recommendations, Goal 17**

Governments should:

- Invest, as a priority, in the formulation, generation and analysis of sex- and gender-disaggregated data, including commitment to collection and reporting on deliberate action to mainstream a gender perspective in the Voluntary National Reviews. Countries providing funds and technical support to enhance the capacity for the collection of statistical data for developing countries should ensure that this support builds capacity for better statistical data in the collection of sex-disaggregated data.
- Prepare a database of Best Practice guidance and case studies, covering issues such as policy/legislation, education and awareness, and capacity building, as well as SDG programmes, across a diversity of contexts with a focus on gender mainstreaming.
- Empower women to decolonize local governments to value women's traditional roles free of foreign economic pressure and prejudice.
- Support and provide comprehensive protection to women human rights and environmental defenders, at all levels, to enable them to do their work free from violence, fear of imprisonment, or other human rights abuses.
- Promote increased adoption and fulfillment of human rights instruments and international agreements, including ILO Conventions and Rio Conventions.
- Support the development of a legally binding treaty on the responsibilities of transnational corporations, including in the field of environmental human rights.

- Promote awareness that financing is just one means of implementing Agenda 2030. Promote women's participation in healthy ecosystems. Refute the myth of 'natural capital' that can be depleted or manipulated.
- Undertake clear efforts to combat shrinking spaces for CSOs, particularly women CSOs, including feminist organizations, and establish an enabling environment for collaboration. Promote equitable political participation at all levels.
- Global partnerships to curb illicit financial flows should also showcase their impacts on women's human rights.
- Ensure gender-responsive budgeting systems in public, private and donor agencies.

### **Section 3. Accountability, Follow-up and Review**

Accountability for gender-responsive, inclusive, holistic and comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a cornerstone of the High Level Political Forum. While SDG 5 is not reviewed in depth every year, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue like inequality and poverty that must be integrated to every regular national, regional and global review of the SDGs in order to properly measure progress. The reviews at all levels should incorporate all actors, including duty-bearers, decision-makers, and rights-holders - governments, private sector and civil society and communities.

At **national level**, the reviews must be undertaken in close consultation and collaboration with the people, including women's and feminist organizations. Countries should establish a coherent national strategy for implementation of all the SDGs that institutionalizes collaboration and coordination between different national level agencies and prioritizes country needs. A robust national level process will provide regular dialogue between government agencies and civil society, whether it is a specific mechanism or not. By engaging throughout the year, and over the course of years, national reporting will better reflect reality on the ground, government will be able to draw from citizen reporting to fill in gaps in knowledge and will be able to develop joint strategy to meet implementation targets. Moving beyond silos to ensure synergies between the three dimensions of sustainable development must start at the national level.

The **regional level** has not yet lived up to its potential as a space of peer learning and dialogue where similar countries can share experiences, best practices and lessons learned; review, monitor, and uphold human rights instruments; identify regional-level trends and challenges; facilitate cooperation and implementation; identify priorities as well as strategies to address challenges, including through cross-border approaches; and facilitate south-south and triangular cooperation to accelerate implementation, as well as other means of implementation. The regional level fora should also ensure robust participation mechanisms for major groups, recognized constituencies and rights holders – developed with civil society. The participation should include space to interact regarding VNRs, especially on issues more specific to national and regional context.

The **global level** HLPF remains the time and space to understand global progress and challenges in addressing the SDGs and related structural inequalities, while also facilitating global understanding of national progress and challenges. As the foremost accountability space for Agenda 2030, Member States should present a holistic and interlinked assessment of progress and open a dialogue about achievements and challenges that support learning and help the HLPF to fulfill its goals, which include political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development as well as agenda-setting to advance sustainable development. The global HLPF should be a time for civil society to interact with governments, particularly their own Voluntary National Review presentations, including on the global structural issues. The HLPF ensures participation by the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS), with specific rights, including to attend, speak and make recommendations to the HLPF, and this needs to

be evaluated and strengthened in terms of its uptake to the HLPF process and outcomes, as the MGoS bring extensive and unique expertise, experience and evaluatory perspectives that enhance impact of HLPF.

Looking ahead to the 2019 review of the HLPF modalities (GA Res 67/290), the Women's Major Group strongly advocates for an updated HLPF format to better reflect the transformative spirit and potential of the 2030 Agenda as well as to accelerate learning and progress. Initial recommendations include:

- The HLPF MGoS Coordination Mechanism and its role must be supported and strengthened, procedurally, politically and financially. It is a critical aspect of the HLPF, allowing networking and solidarity among MGoS from different countries and constituencies to actively support participation of constituents and their critical and relevant commentary in the VNR sessions, roundtables and throughout the HLPF.
- The HLPF must make extensive changes to the schedule to ensure sufficient support and meeting time for the HLPF, including sufficient meeting time to conduct 40-50 reviews each year that allow meaningful dialogue and participation of the MGoS.
- The current VNR process should be reviewed and revisioned, in terms of time and content and MGoS engagement.
  - The time allotted is insufficient to meet the stated goals of VNRs at the HLPF;
  - Member states typically report achievements rather than taking a critical eye to their progress or sharing challenges and lessons learned, for example, in impacting structural issues. They tend to report by specific goals and many of them fail to present their progress in a holistic or interlinked way. They also rarely consider what is done both inside and outside their borders, or what role the private sector has played in implementing/hampering the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Guidelines should be more specific to ensure these issues are included in presentations;
  - All countries, especially voluntary reporting countries, should communicate ambitious goals and incorporate lessons learned into implementation strategies and actions, sharing at the national level, as well as globally.
- The WMG urges the HLPF to establish formal mechanisms to receive and support dialogue around shadow reports by women's groups and others within the MGoS, especially rightsholder groups.
  - This would make the VNR sessions more robust than the current process, where civil society participation in the VNRs was almost non-existent. With only 2-5 minutes allotted for joint CS questions that had to be pre-submitted, sometimes to a group of countries, it was not meaningful. The time contribution of MGoS was not reflected in the sessions and thus did not adequately contribute to constructive dialogue or on-going learning;
  - This would alleviate active resistance to civil society engagement at the global level and would promote safety for people working on issues at a national level by channeling the work into an officially recognized report.
- At HLPF, the private sector needs to be accountable to their human rights and environmental impacts by incorporating reports on their activities. Clear standards and accountability for partnerships must be established with the private sector to avoid human rights violations and perverse incentives.
- The HLPF must be more action-oriented, ensuring that the HLPF outcomes, including the Ministerial Declaration, codify actions that can be revisited as part of follow-up, review and accountability.

## **Section 4. The challenge of interlinkages and coherence**

### ***Interlinkages***

The WMG stresses the need to recognize the challenge of properly addressing interlinkages at all levels in the implementation, but also in the follow up and review in order to honor the ambition of the 2030 Agenda. At the High Level Political Forum in 2016 and 2017, the economy, climate, and ecological dimensions of the agenda were discussed in isolation from achieving social justice and realizing human rights, in particular in the VNR reporting. Even the simplest connections failed to be made. Member states, with the support of the UN system, must seek conceptual clarity, and address specifically the misconceptions related to interlinkages, and what is needed in particular related to policy coherence and data, to implement the agenda in a universal, integrated and indivisible way.<sup>39</sup>

We need a solution-driven imagining of how the targets interact across goals, and how understanding and addressing interlinkages through robust policy coherence, budget allocation, and data, is the cornerstone of this agenda. Similarly, member states should explore how certain policy and budgetary interventions have the potential to impact multiple goals and targets, and are potential key tools in the realization of the agenda. One such example is how Comprehensive Sexuality Education can have a positive impact on young people and adolescent's lives including contributing to reducing inequalities and violence, improving health and education outcomes, reducing poverty and increasing opportunities.

The interlinkages are varied and multidimensional, so we believe proper attention should be made to comprehend these. We cannot understand the environmental crisis without talking about violence against women or the extractive economic system. We cannot speak of decent work and economic development without talking about human trafficking<sup>40</sup>, the crisis of care, the gendered division of labor, and the heteropatriarchal system. We cannot ensure sustainable cities and communities, without recognizing and addressing sexual violence and overuse of resources. And we cannot ensure healthy lives and wellbeing, without ensuring the bodily and sexual autonomy of women or the integrity of our natural environmental systems. We will not achieve the transformational aims of this agenda, if we silo our responses to the economic, ecological and social crises that we face. We therefore recommend one major measure to properly address the challenge of promoting interrelated measures:

- The HLPF could consider, as part of its review in 2019, establishing a mechanism to monitor and review the interlinkages aspects of the agenda, including how the implementation is addressing systemic concerns such as international taxation, illicit financial flows, colonization and ODA.

### ***Coherence: looking at linkages with other processes***

The sustainable development framework and the human rights framework can and must be harmonized in order to ensure that states meet both their existing obligations under human rights treaties and their political commitments espoused in the 2030 Agenda. Agenda 2030 was not drafted in a political or legal vacuum, but in the context of international agreements and conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well outcomes from processes on social development, cities, disasters, population, Indigenous Peoples, climate change and from regional bodies. Some of the points of entry we recommend are as follows:

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<sup>39</sup> Source: Going Beyond Aspiration - HLPF analysis 2017, RESURJ <http://resurj.org/Analysis/Going-Beyond-Aspiration-HLPF-analysis-2017>

<sup>40</sup> Oil, gas, and mining industries: Women's rights at risk. Oxfam Fact Sheet, (2015), <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/Women-in-EI-final-web.pdf>

- HLPF should be the space to ensure policy coherence between the 2030 Agenda and the three Rio Conventions for improved biodiversity policy and law. Also, there is a need for climate change adaptation and mitigation policies in the UNFCCC that do not harm biodiversity, in order to reach the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Inversely, the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted a Gender Action Plan to support the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates so far adopted in the UNFCCC process; it follows that stronger synergies should be promoted.<sup>41</sup>
- HLPF should be the space to fully integrate implementation of the New Urban Agenda with the SDGs to ensure inclusive, gender-responsive, rights-based and sustainable cities and settlements.
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction positions gender equality and women's leadership as critical component to success; it also shares some indicators with the SDGs, thus their policy, practice, follow-up and review must be integrated from the beginning.
- In a broader dimension, the HLPF should be the space to recognize that a rights-based approach to sustainable development is not an option, but an obligation. As the HLPF has a mandate of sharing and peer-learning, utilizing the existing human rights review mechanisms presents an opportunity to transform the sustainable development agenda from burgeoning rhetoric into rights realization. In this way, we will ensure that women's voices are not only heard, but answered. This is the essence of accountability. In addition, public-private partnerships should not be advanced unless they are accountable to citizens, ensuring ex-ante and ex-post compliance with human rights, gender equality, and labour and environmental standards, through a legally binding corporate accountability mechanism.

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<sup>41</sup> Decision -/CP.23, (2017), <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2017/sbi/eng/129.pdf>

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