

Gender Equality & Women and Girls Empowerment: Considerations for the Post-2015 Agenda

**Women's Major Group vision & priorities for delivery of the
Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015
development agenda**

An updated position paper for the SD 2015 programme:

*"Post 2 Post: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-
Rio+20/Post-2015 Process"*

February 2015

Introduction (draft)¹

This short position paper details the Women's Major Group vision and priorities - including themes, goals, targets and indicators – for delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the wider post-2015 development agenda and the growing role of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). It forms part of the European Commission-funded programme “*Post 2015: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process*” (*Post 2015*). This updated position paper provides an opportunity for the WMG alongside the other Major Groups² to communicate, consult and to build upon its position paper released in 2014 and co-author on its new position as a basis for ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity building and advocacy.

The paper sits alongside similar position papers authored by the other Major Groups.³ The paper highlights the priorities of the [Women's Major Group](#) and builds upon a previous position paper that was released in 2014. This update takes into account the work that has taken place in drafting text for the SDGs as well as the December 2014 United Nations Secretary General's Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda which summarised the latest priorities for delivering the SDGs.

The [Women's Major Group](#) was created as a result of the United Nations 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which recognized women as one of the nine major groups of civil society whose participation in decision-making is essential for achieving sustainable development. The Women's Major Group (WMG) is organized globally with over 500 representatives of non-governmental organizations that work on women's rights, gender equality, sustainable development and environment policy processes. The WMG facilitates meaningful participation of diverse women's groups, civil society organizations, social movements and women from indigenous and other communities in international policy negotiations on issues of sustainable development. In the current context, the [Women's Major Group](#) develops policy positions on the different areas of the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda, presents women's recommendations to policy makers as well as media, and raises awareness on gender equality and equitable and sustainable policy alternatives. The organizing partners facilitate strategy meetings, travel, conference calls, surveys, and open calls for input to understand and prioritize issues on its agenda. In 2013, the WMG created open thematic advocacy groups to transparently and effectively develop priorities and share knowledge and research related to issues of Post-2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Continuing with this rationale, in 2014 the WMG actively engaged in each of the sessions of the Open Working Group as well as the High Level Political Forum and will continue throughout 2015.

The WMG position papers and documents have aimed to address the root causes of the unsustainable development model that has triggered the ecological, social and economic crises the planet is facing today, and the structural, transformative changes that are needed to address these crises. The members of the WMG propose a transformation towards a sustainable, equitable and inclusive economy that includes alternative measures of prosperity, mindful that in many areas such economies have long existed or should be restored.

Summary

The WMG envisions a world in which human rights, including all women's and girl's human rights are upheld. We firmly believe that gender equality, and the human rights and empowerment of girls and women of all ages are a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and that Sustainable Development Goals need to be the basis for the Post 2015 agenda, to support that no one is left behind. The WMG prioritizes rights-based targets and indicators, deeper transformation of our economic and financial systems and global support for gender equality including through gender disaggregated data collection and analysis, gender budgeting, and the full realization of all women's and girls' human rights and

¹ The opening two paragraphs are to be included in all of the Major Groups' position papers, though content may be updated by Stakeholder Forum

² A full list of the Major Groups producing papers will be added by Stakeholder Forum

empowerment. In that respect, Goal 5 must remain a stand-alone goal and also addressed as a cross-cutting issue throughout the post-2015 framework.

The WMG does not support the use of the “6 elements” proposed in the SG Synthesis reportⁱ. While gender equality was included in the report to a limited extent, the 6 elements de-emphasizes the critical importance of gender equality and women’s human rights in the framing and implementation of the agenda. In addition, framing under six elements makes invisible goals, such as the goal of eliminating inequalities within and between countries. Instead, the WMG recommends the post-2015 Declaration focus on the Sustainable Development Goals and prioritize human rights, gender equality and the full realization of women’s and girl’s human rights, ending inequalities, and achieving environmental sustainability, peaceful societies, accountability and justice through a profound transformation of the current neoliberal economic model of developmentⁱⁱ.

A robust indicator framework with gender-specific indicators will be essential to measure progress toward the SDGs. At a minimum, data should be disaggregated by age, sex, income and location (urban/rural) across the indicator framework and countries should aspire to greater disaggregation as capacity to collect and analyze data improves, for example, on the basis of disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, indigenous status, etc. The MDGs demonstrated that what is measured counts. Narrowing the indicators to two per target may have the unintended consequence of limiting implementation of broadly-framed targets to just those elements that are measured. While we recognise that there are capacity and resource constraints to collecting and analysing data at a national level, there is a risk that the depth and transformative change that are reflected in final Open Working Group proposal will be lost.

A selection of *priority* aspects for the Post-2015 agenda listed below are referred to in detail in the following section and elaborated throughout the paper:

1. Human Rights, Eliminating Inequalities and Poverty Eradication - "intersecting" discriminations
2. Realization of Women and Girls Human Rights and Gender Equality
3. Economic Justice for Sustainable Development
4. Ensuring healthy Climate, Biodiversity, and Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecosystems
5. Realizing Peace, gender equality and addressing root causes of conflict
6. Accountability: Transparent, Inclusive and Participatory Review and Monitoring Mechanisms
7. Financing for Human Rights and Gender Equality in the Post-2015 Agenda

Our position

1. Human Rights, Eliminating Inequalities and Poverty Eradication - "intersecting" discriminations

The SDGs & post-2015 framework should, at the bare minimum, build on the development frameworks set in the 1990s such as Rio and the MDGs declaration, and integrate women’s human rights and a human rights architecture in general into the development agenda, taking into account the diversity of needs and constraints based on gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and abilities. States should protect and fulfill human rights, and the principles of non-regression minimum standards and progressive realisation for economic and social rights, equity, equality, non-discrimination, accountability and participation and should guarantee the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as all other human rights’ instruments.

2. Realization of Women and Girls Human Rights and Gender Equality

It is essential that in the post-2015 framework there is a definitive commitment to the realization of human rights of girls and women of all ages, and women's full legal, political, social, economic and cultural rights, including equal participation and influence in all forms of decision making, the elimination of the sexual

division of labor, equal rights to access and own economic resources, finances, property and secure land tenure, inheritance and credit, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights. These are as basic pre-conditions for gender equality and ensuring that girls and women of all ages are active agents of sustainable development and the transformative change that is needed.

3. Economic Justice for Sustainable Development

The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals must lead to profound change of the global economic systems that channel resources and wealth from developing countries to wealthy countries and from people to corporations. To ensure economic justice it is necessary to provide an enabling international environment for development that upholds the extra-territorial obligation of states to ensure macroeconomic and financial policies meet economic and social rights as enshrined in the Maastricht principlesⁱⁱⁱ. This includes development-oriented trade, fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies, progressive tax measures, a sovereign debt workout mechanism, and ending trade and investment treaties that impoverish nations and people; challenging global intellectual property rights frameworks; eliminating harmful subsidies; boosting productive capacity through an inclusive and sustainable industrialization strategy of diversified economic sectors moving from carbon intensive to safe and environmentally sound societies; transforming the gendered division of labour and assuring the redistribution of paid and unpaid work, while ensuring decent work and a living wage for all.

The Post-2015 framework must ensure that the planet's limited resources are used sustainably, equitably and responsibly, acknowledging the historical debt, and our responsibility to future generations. In accordance with the Rio principle of polluter pays, and the Sustainable Development Goal on SCP (Sustainable Consumption and Production), economic transformation needs to move away from extractive and polluting activities towards renewable, sustainable and safe economics options which preserve ecosystem and well being of all people, and fully ensuring a human rights safeguards, liability and redress mechanism for impacted populations. Committing to a system change requires a radical and urgent transition and transformation away from maximized profit-growth economies to resilient and people-centered, social and environmentally sound economic models that are safe, sustainable, just, equitable, gender-responsive and locally driven and owned (*'Buen Vivir'*).

4. Ensuring healthy Climate, Biodiversity, and Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecosystems

Recognizing planetary boundaries and intergenerational justice, the post-2015 framework should:

- Recognize the plight of developing countries (particularly LDCs and SIDS) as a priority in the post-2015 agenda. Lessen already-extreme levels of loss and damage and have developed countries recognize their obligation to support disaster relief and response medium and slow-onset adaptation challenges, and loss and damage measures for developing countries through finance, technology transfer, recognizing endogenous and indigenous knowledge, capacity building debt relief and sustainability mechanisms, and the removal of patent and intellectual property restrictions and the climate-proofing and human-rights proofing of international ODA and investments.
- Aim to drive fundamental change towards sustainable consumption and production in areas such as energy and food and the use of natural resources like forests, fisheries and biodiversity. It is imperative to uphold the rights of small producers, indigenous peoples and local communities to have access and control over their productive resources including secure land tenure, forests, mountains, water sources, wind, the sun and seeds and acknowledging the central role of women across various sectors. Governments should commit to mandatory phase-out of unsustainable, radioactive and harmful substances and technologies, including GMOs and Geo-engineering, and to ensure all countries have the capacity to assess and monitor technologies and their long-term impacts.
- Protect the natural commons for future generations, halt biodiversity loss in alignment with the Aichi targets^{iv} and eliminate any perverse economic incentives that lead to biodiversity loss; ensuring the Free and Prior Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples^v and to recognize and promote Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas and Territories (ICCAS), as essential components that would prevent

structural adjustment policies and bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations that have led to competition for resources and export-oriented production in developing countries, hence strengthening a harmful *extractivist* model while decreasing land and resources availability for small producers like indigenous peoples, pastoralists, small farmers, threatening food security and fuelling conflicts. Economies based on bio-products (bio-economy) and their market-based mechanisms function at the detriment of women and other economically and politically marginalized groups like Indigenous Peoples and small farmers.

5. Realizing Peace, gender equality and addressing root causes of conflict

The post-2015 framework should:

- Reaffirm the importance of ensuring peace and realizing the UN charter's^{vi} commitment to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and genocide, particularly for countries in situations of fragility and conflict, which are a gap in the MDGs. Integrate a holistic approach reflecting all four pillars of the Women Peace and Security agenda (UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2106, and 2122): participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery.
- Commit to ensuring women's full, effective and meaningful participation in decision making at all levels – including for women human rights defenders and women led civil society – and as active agents in peace-building, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, reconstruction and in the delivery of justice, in accordance with Beijing Area E, CEDAW General Recommendation 30, Resolution 68-181 on Women Human Rights defenders and the Women Peace and Security Agenda, and UNSCR 1325-2122.
- Commit to develop and implement effective conflict prevention approaches to development that recognizes how conflict and war is intricately connected to militarized gender inequality and violence: commit to reducing military spending and redirecting resources to gender equitable social development commit to ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty and implementing its gender criterion which prohibits the sale of arms if there is a risk that the weapons could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law, including gender based violence or violence against women and children; take action promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace^{vii} including through peace education and media.
- Commit to ensure gender-responsive protection efforts including eradication of early, child and forced marriage; support enhanced gender training for humanitarian and security personnel and relief and recovery services to uphold human rights, including for women refugees, women human rights defenders and internally displaced people (IDPs); and call for “support for gender-sensitive durable solutions” for refugees and IDPs.

6. Accountability: Transparent, Inclusive and Participatory Review and Monitoring Mechanisms

The post-2015 framework should:

- Reaffirm principles of transparent, inclusive and participatory processes, ensuring the involvement of civil society organizations and all major groups,^{viii} especially women's, youth and other groups representative of diverse constituencies and those in vulnerable situations, in decision-making processes and in follow-up mechanisms at local, national, regional and global levels, including their meaningful participation in the High-Level Political Forum. In this regard, the right of the public to access information justice and public participation,^{ix} and fundamental related rights should be explicitly recognized.
- Novel, people-centered accountability mechanisms and monitoring by civil society are essential element for effective review, in particular of national action plans and legislation, that should be enshrined in the post-2015 review and monitoring mechanism.
- Create national actions plans, relevant policies, for accountability and monitoring of the post-2015 agenda, and ensure institutional space for full participation of diverse civil society, including women and indigenous peoples.

- In the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, all stakeholders, including in public-private partnerships, should be held accountable to their commitments, ensuring compliance with human rights, gender equality, labour and environmental standards; ensure strong justice systems that can provide remedy and redress for individuals when their rights are violated in conjunction with development and development corporations. Include measures to hold private sectors accountable including through a binding corporate accountability mechanism.

- As a key basis for follow up and review, commit to supporting the 'data revolution' with emphasis on equity and especially disadvantaged and excluded groups to effectively address the multiple dimensions of poverty and discrimination, including ensuring disaggregated data collection and analysis, in particular gender-disaggregated data.

7. Financing for Human Rights and Gender Equality in the Post-2015 Agenda

For the success of the post-2015 development agenda, adequate international and domestic resources are required as well as providing a framework for accountability for both public and private sector financing for development; the private sector financing must respect tax regulation, worker rights and women's human rights and promote decent work and a living wage for women.

Strong gender-sensitive and human rights-based approaches to development financing should be an integral strategy, including financing for SDG targets on sexual and reproductive health and rights, as reflected in the work of the committee of experts on financing for SDGs. Gender budgeting should be an integral part of the post-2015 MOI strategy. Ensuring access to and expanding the scope and scale of financial services available to women and women's organizations and addressing gender aspects in the design phase will also be crucial. Finally, implementation of key aspects of the financing for gender equality agenda, that have been already agreed in Doha (2008) or Busan (2009) including commitments to gender-sensitive collection of data, gender responsive accountability frameworks, and addressing gender equality in all aspects of development efforts must continue.

A commitment to regulate commodity markets, limit fluctuations in food prices, ban speculation on food, close tax havens, implement global corporate taxation floors and global financial transaction taxes is also needed.

Goals and Targets

The Women's Major Group has issued a document that contains an analysis of the OWG's outcome doc: "[8 red flags](#)" where you will find specific recommendations on each of the Goals and Targets. While the WMG notes areas that could be improved, it recommends to address improvements through the indicator and means of implementation framework. All goals and targets in the SDGs proposal have ramifications for and benefit from inputs by women, therefore all are relevant. Therefore, the WMG supports maintaining the SDG package as it is. We oppose the aims of UK and others to undo the SDGs, we want the full 17 goals and 169 targets, the strong stand alone goal 5, and strong gender equality and women's rights language in all other goals.

The WMG is concerned that the indicator proposals are particularly bad for the mainstreaming of gender equality in the other goals; the proposals by UN Statistical Commission are direly insufficient. Besides, other more complex issues on e.g. environmental sustainability, cultural diversity, decent work for women, economic justice are not sufficiently transferred into indicators. Other WMG positions and publications go into more detail, including forthcoming papers on the indicator framework which is currently an on-going discussion for the WMG.

In order to track changes in the underpinning social norms that lead to discrimination, and to ensure that the post-2015 framework is achieving the transformative social change that it has set out to, we recommend that several key indicators need to address critical challenges that women worldwide face today. Some preliminary considerations are:

- Women and girls' physical and sexual violence (e.g.inclusion of disaggregated data by sex, age, country, etc).

- Women and girls' physical security and mental health
- Women's access to water and sanitation in urban and rural areas
- Women's participation in public life and in undertaking leadership roles
- If existing legal frameworks discriminate against women and girls, including inheritance and land tenure issues.
- Data to show how unpaid care and domestic work has been redistributed.
- Available sources – including laws and regulations - for women and girls' informed choices on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (e.g. disaggregated by age location, income, disability and other characteristics relevant to country, etc.).
- Preventable deaths from safe abortion
- Inclusion of women and girls in national security policy frameworks

Framework

Cross-cutting Issues

Gender Equality as a cross-cutting issue

Gender equality and the full realization of women of all ages' human rights and their empowerment cut across all aspects of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. They should be integrated to different international arenas that cover the different dimensions of sustainable development. Since 2000, the distinct, compartmentalized ("siloed") nature of the MDGs has drawn much criticism. Governments should ensure that the new framework for sustainable development (SDGs) and Post-2015 and related legislation and policies, consider multiple cross-cutting issues. Gender is one of the most prominent cross-cutting issues and requires a strong commitment to long-term actions on gender equality and women's empowerment. Some of the examples of how gender cuts across the agenda are in decent work/employment, education and climate change, to name but a few. Employment and decent work are integrated within the SDGs, and the monitoring framework provides opportunities to measure the availability of decent work, appropriate wages and good working conditions, to understand and address that the majority of women are working in jobs characterized by lower pay, less skilled employment, precarious conditions, fewer employment benefits, fewer career opportunities, less involvement in decision-making and less unionization. Education, which has proven to be a key issue for poverty eradication and an accelerator for development especially for groups that face multiple forms of discrimination, has women and gender equality well-integrated. The SDG on climate change integrates building capacity and has the potential to contribute to design and implementation of rights-based, socially just, gender-responsive and coherent ecosystem-based approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation.^x

Monitoring and Evaluation

Follow up, review and accountability are essential to the success of this visionary, transformative agenda.

1. Monitoring mechanisms should be transparent, inclusive and participatory, and done regularly at global, regional, and national levels.

The indicator framework must emphasize equity, focusing on especially disadvantaged and excluded groups to effectively address the multiple dimensions of poverty and discrimination.

Disaggregated data must be collected and analyzed for all goals and targets, at a minimum based on gender, age, income level and geographic location.

On the SDGs proposal, Para 17 says: 17. *'In order to monitor the implementation of the SDGs, it will be important to improve the availability of and access to data and statistics disaggregated **by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts** to support the monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs. There is a need to take*

urgent steps to improve the quality, coverage and availability of disaggregated data to ensure that no one is left behind'.

2. Accountability and review mechanisms should be mandatory, with a universal global accountability mechanism that ensures qualitative and participative monitoring, building on the existing mechanisms under the Human Rights Council UPR, CEDAW and other human rights treaties.

Mechanisms should be linked to a strong justice system for remedy and redress for individuals when their rights are violated.

Public-private partnerships should be held accountable, ensuring compliance with human rights, gender equality, labour and environmental standards, and through a binding corporate accountability mechanism.

3. Mechanisms need to enable full and meaningful participation of all girls and women of all ages in all stages and levels from definition to review and monitoring, from the national level to HLPF, and women's organisations should have institutional space in these mechanisms.

Next Steps

The way forward must ensure priority for women's and girl's human rights in the process and outcomes.

Going forward, negotiations should take place based on the OWG on SDGs outcome document as it stands now, as well as in a manner that is inclusive, transparent and accountable. The review for indicators should not mean that the document is open for changes and that commitments can be watered down or even discarded. Countries should commit to further strengthening and to no further regressions of proposed goals and targets. Likewise, the proposed '6 elements' could be used as a reference but should not serve as a basis for negotiating the post-2015 framework.

Our focus is to ensure that the Post-2015 Agenda will have strong financial commitments, with a focus on public funding for sustainable development based on a reform of current unsustainable financial and trade systems. We must ensure that in the negotiations on the sustainable development financing package, from the Financing for Sustainable Development to the Post-2015 Summit, governments commit to women's equal say, equal access and equal share in access to finance and other Means of Implementation, and we call we call on governments to ensure a concrete and relevant set of MOI targets for the full realization of Goal 5, and to commit to "financing women's rights organisations".

We call on Member States to ensure strong participation of civil society including the Women's Major Group and other constituencies in the process. The process must be inclusive, with full access and meaningful participation of Major Groups and civil society. It will be essential to transparency and integrity of the forthcoming negotiations, as has been demonstrated by our participation in the Open Working Group, where we have fostered essential links between the global and national levels.

The Women's Major Group will continue to facilitate participation; recommend improved text; highlight best practices from women and women's organizations; connect global to local and vice versa; and promote the WMG as a platform to showcase the why and the how of implementation. The WMG will connect with key actors and processes including finance ministers, Financing for Development, HLPF, the UNFCCC, the DRR process, trade processes, CSW, and UN agencies. Internally and across to other Major Groups and stakeholders, as well as government and UN colleagues, the WMG will build capacity on the linkages to and centrality of gender equality to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Conclusion

We welcome SDG#5 and call for continued strong and global support for gender equality, the full realization of all women's and girls' human rights and empowerment which should be addressed as a cross-cutting issue in the post-2015 framework. We call on all governments of the world to move from empty promises to real action for sustainable development based on the principles of solidarity, equality, justice,

and universality in order to achieve the well being of today's and future generations and a healthy planet. This global agenda should be measured with global indicators and full participation of all sectors of government and civil society and reaffirming previously agreed commitments on the human rights of girls and women of all ages that should be the bare minimum of any post-2015 framework. The implementation of the goals and targets should be supported by strong ethical and transparent financial and non-financial means of implementation, based on strong environmental, human rights and gender equality safeguards and redress mechanisms. Throughout a post-2015 sustainable development agenda a sharp focus on intergenerational equity and justice needs to be integrated.

We reiterate that accountability is essential for ensuring that States adhere to their commitments, including national and local level accountability mechanisms. Public participation, particularly from women and marginalized groups, in the design, implementation, and monitoring of international and national plans to implement the SDGs, should be a priority. International accountability mechanisms, including intergovernmental mechanisms such as the HLPF and those within the Human Rights Council, in which they are all required to participate, should be established or strengthened to track progress on the Post-2015 Agenda.

Finally, there will be no sustainable development without ensuring that all girls and women have access to formal and non formal education, have the ability to control their reproduction, have healthy and satisfying sexual lives, and live a life free from stigma, discrimination and violence. We are concerned that women's bodies and lives continue to be subjected to national agendas where not always laws are made to guarantee our rights. We continue consistently calling for a truly universal agenda grounded in human rights. We refuse for our lives to be negotiating chips. Therefore, we expect nothing less than a transformative and universal agenda that will ensure a just, equitable and sustainable world in which all people, including for the girls and women of all ages who comprise 50% of the planet's population, will experience individual and collective well-being, a life in dignity and the full enjoyment of our human rights.

ⁱ <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/women-major-group-response-to-the-sgs-synthesis-report-the-road-to-dignity-by-2030/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/womens-proposals-for-the-political-declaration-of-the-post-2015-agenda/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/womens-proposals-for-the-political-declaration-of-the-post-2015-agenda/>

^{iv} Maastricht Principles ON Extraterritorial Obligations Of States In The Area Of Economic, Social And Cultural Rights <http://www.etoconsortium.org/en/observance/maastricht-principles/>

^v http://www.etoconsortium.org/en/observance/maastricht-principles/?tx_drblob_pi1%5BdownloadUId%5D=23

^{vi} Aichi targets, Convention on Biological Diversity <http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>

^{vii} [UNDRIP http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)

^{viii} [UN Charter, Preamble and Article 1](#)

^{ix} Beijing Area E, target 4

^x On civil society engagement, see Rio+20, paras. 43 (including major groups), 53, 75(h); UN Millennium Declaration, para. 20 ("partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations").

^{xi} Rio+20, para. 44.

^{xii} For further recommendations on specific agendas, access the WMG [Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Priorities: Recommendations for the proposed Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) and the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)