

Women's Major Group paper for High Level Political Forum (2016)

“Ensuring that no one is left behind”: Listen to women for a change.

1. Introduction

The Women's Major Group (WMG) and its members are fully committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to doing so while leaving no one behind, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation, migrant status, nationality or other status. Achieving gender equality, the realization of women's human rights and the empowerment of women are essential and cross-cutting to all of the SDGs and to actualizing a transformative agenda, rather than replicating business as usual.

Creative and complementary efforts are required by government, UN and civil society as we implement sustainable development in order to both ensure human rights of all and dismantle systemic inequalities. Pursuing the SDGs also carries risks if not implemented with a human rights-based approach or monitored for human rights abuses. Cases of land-grabbing for (renewable) resources, the recent murder of Berta Caceres, and the abuse of hundreds of other indigenous and women human rights defenders each year exemplify this.

The WMG identifies below what we are doing to support implementation, follow-up and review; the need to address systemic causes of being 'left behind'; and proposes key areas for action.

2. The Women's Major Group

The WMG, a coalition of more than 600 organizations working to advance gender equality and women's human rights across the full sustainable development agenda, is uniquely positioned to work on implementation, follow-up and review of the SDGs. We are self-organized, with principles of inclusivity, respect for diversity, sensitivity to power imbalances, transparency, and regionally representative leadership. Our work is global, drawing on our reach and the expertise of regional, national and local member organizations. We are committed to a model of leaving no one behind in governance and actions and expect all other stakeholders at all levels to do the same. In that sense, the WMG is itself a means of implementation.

We acknowledge and appreciate the degree to which our voices have been heard in the 2030 Agenda. Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a historic mandate for change; however, we are adamant that the full agenda, and all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), are relevant to girls and women of all ages and in all their diversity. Accountability for gender equality is essential across all 17 SDGs and the implementation, follow up and review of the agenda should ensure a gender perspective throughout. This cross-cutting focus will support the holistic implementation of the agenda, and contribute to leaving no one behind.

Our success in terms of impact on the agenda and our own methods of work is part of a larger process of feminist movement building. We are eager to scale up our work and share our expertise on gender equality as pivotal for the SDGs and insist on the allocation of resources to achieve these goals.

The WMG has identified next steps for its role in implementation, follow-up and review through a strategic planning process. This includes work at global, regional and national levels on the 2030 Agenda as well as linking to other processes; capacity building within the WMG; collaboration with diverse actors; and shadow reporting; to name a few key strategies. As rights holders, as activists and as experts, we know what is needed to transform the systems that hold women back. As non-state actors, we have experience in motivating political will and assisting states to develop accountability processes for inclusion of individuals and communities that have historically been “left behind.”

We look forward to collaborating with member states on national reviews for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). We willingly share our knowledge and skills in measuring progress on the SDGs, and we aim to capture and to amplify the stories and gaps in implementation and review of accountability processes.

3. Addressing the systemic causes of ‘being left behind’

“Tackling systemic drivers of inequality must be central to the annual review” of the 2030 Agenda, as proposed by the Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (APRCSEM). Identifying and responding to the intertwined systemic issues of neoliberalism, fundamentalisms, militarism, racism and patriarchy, and their correlation to inequality and gender inequality, are essential for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and should be an important focus of follow up and review processes at all levels, including thematic reviews.

The systemic drivers of inequality play out in diverse ways in different contexts, and in many cases, contribute to deepening and magnifying exploitation and exclusion. For example, the digitisation of cities under the ‘smart city’ focus in rapidly growing economies like China, Nigeria, India, Brazil and South Africa brings risk of leaving behind newly arrived migrants; girls and women of all ages; indigenous peoples; people of color, youth and children; the elderly; the disabled; LGBT and gender non-conforming; and the historically subjugated and ‘invisible’ communities, who may not have access to appropriate technologies or the ability to participate on an equal basis with others.

Systemic drivers of inequality are also contributing to new and emerging trends and challenges that will have an impact on our ability to implement the 2030 Agenda and have specific effects on women and girls. These include the increasing feminisation of agriculture; the impacts of climate and of development and infrastructure undertaken in the frame of “green economy/green growth” on land and resource distribution, particularly on small and subsistence farmers (many of whom are women), indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and rural communities; the widening of inequalities as a result of economic, trade and investment rules that conflict with both Agenda 2030 and the UN Charter¹; among others.

To be effective, the follow up and review processes, including the HLPF must identify and respond to shortfalls in implementation of policies; address the systems that negatively affect the lives and lived realities of all girls and women of all ages; and identify and respond to new and emerging challenges related to governance of the SDGs across all three dimensions.

¹ The UN Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable order stated that preferential trade agreements contravene both the supremacy clause in the UN Charter (103) and the state Responsibility to Act (R2A) to advance human rights, including the right to development. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/Articles.aspx>

4. Key areas of action for implementation, follow-up and review to ensure no one is left behind

Women are differentially impacted by the multiple problems the SDGs aim to address and will differentially benefit from progress towards the proposed goals. It is essential that women and girls be meaningfully involved, and their needs addressed, throughout the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda. In order to ensure that women and girls are not left behind, the WMG urges the following actions:

a. Inclusion and participation of grassroots women's organizations in planning, implementation and monitoring of 2030 Agenda at the local and national level

It is time to embed gender focused planning at every level of government through greater participation of grassroots women's organisations in policy development and governmental review processes.

The participation of grassroots women's and other civil society organizations is key for the achievement of sustainable development. Grassroots groups are implementing good projects but historically have not been included in program development beyond tokenistic consultation processes. Yet their experiences can provide valuable lessons as governments consider how to develop and scale-up programs to implement the SDGs. For example, with increasing feminisation of agriculture and urban migration, women are leading more ecologically sustainable practices as farmers and food producers, and resource-sharing in the cities.

It will be crucial to provide grassroots women's groups and civil society organisations with adequate financing and training to address their needs and those of their communities and also to support their role as vital stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies and programs to achieve sustainable development.

The advice of 19 year old Berryl from Kenya sums this up quite succinctly:

Bringing girls and young women to the table during the discussions about the SDGs is important because girls are the experts in their own lives. Girls and young women in the communities should be taught about the SDGs and how they affect their lives so they can monitor the implementation and how well the governments are doing. I think that world leaders need to:

- *Give better support to girl advocates by providing resources and encouragement.*
- *...allocate budget[s] for implementation of the SDGs, especially Goal 5 and Goal 16.*
- *Invest in girls and their access to education*

An educated, empowered girl is good not only for the family but also for the community, country and the world.

b. Financing and capacity building for women's rights groups at all levels

The critical importance of civil society, including women's rights groups, in implementing, monitoring and ensuring accountability for the new development agenda cannot be overstated. Yet, women's organizations globally struggle to raise the resources necessary to do their work. For example, AWID research in 2010 revealed that the median budget for 740 women's organizations all over the globe was US\$20,000.² This is despite evidence that women's

² See <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/20-years-shamefully-scarce-funding-feminists-and-womens-rights-movements#sthash.m7CnwqtT.dpuf>

movements are the key drivers of national and global-level action to realize women's human rights and gender equality.

In addition, women's priorities continue to be underrepresented in national plans and budget allocations.

In order address these shortfalls, governments must:

- Allocate and track specific funding to support women's rights groups at all levels, including through national budgets and official development assistance.
- Implement gender-budgeting at all levels to ensure that the differential needs of women, men, girls and boys are being adequately addressed and responded to.
- Ensure that women's groups benefit from opportunities for capacity building.

The WMG will work at national, regional and international levels to identify and strengthen existing mechanisms for flexible and rapid funding for women and feminist organizations in order to improve their capacity for effective response to ongoing issues, urgent crises and opportunities.

c. Gender disaggregated data to inform gender-responsive SDG implementation, budgets and monitoring

Gender disaggregated data is required to identify the gender gaps in resourcing and move away from tokenistic implementation of strategies by governments towards gender inclusion and well-being. Data is currently lacking and incomplete for many of the SDG Goals and targets and we have an incomplete picture of how women and girls are being impacted by the various issues the SDGs address.

For example, the scope and scale violence against women and girls is not captured adequately in most countries. The severity and extent of injuries, and the different forms of violence women and girls experience, including instances of femicide, is often lacking. In addition, the data that is collected is often incomplete. For example, the Demographic Household Survey (DHS), collects data only among women of reproductive age, between 15 and 49. This means that no woman 50+ who suffers from domestic violence, or girl under the age of 15 who experiences abuse, for example, is counted. They remain invisible.

The WMG therefore calls for:

- The disaggregation of data collected on all indicators on the basis of gender, age, disability, geographic location, migration status, marital status, and other relevant factors.
- The interpretation of data from a gender lens as a key requirement for planning and monitoring of the SDGs at national level.
- The full engagement and participation of constituencies and rights holders, including the most marginalized, in development of more gender-focused data collection through country census, surveys and periodic reviews.
- Independent data from women's organizations and other civil society constituencies to be taken into account in national reviews of progress on the SDGs.

5. Ensuring that the Review of 2030 Agenda Leaves No One Behind

The sound implementation and regular national, regional and global reviews of the SDGs by all players - civil society, governments, private sector and the communities - is essential for

equality for women everywhere. We urge that the 2030 Agenda be implemented in a way that is gender-responsive, comprehensive and inclusive, and that builds on synergies between the three dimensions of sustainable development, rather than reverting to silos.

At the global level, the High Level Political Forum must be a venue that, in addition to addressing the systemic drivers of inequality identified above, supports collaborations with civil society; shares best practices; and holds governments, the private sector and other stakeholders, including civil society, accountable for their sustainable development and human rights commitments. It must create robust links with national and regional accountability mechanisms, particularly the Regional Economic Commissions where solid data, regional realities and consultations with CSOs can inform its work. It must also recognize the special circumstances faced by many countries, including least developed, land-locked developing and small island developing states, as well as those of conflict-affected areas and ensure that specific space is dedicated to address the specific challenges they face in implementation.

We urge that national reports to the HLPF set ambitious goals and incorporate lessons learned in implementation and be widely disseminated at the national level, as well as globally. In order to supplement the voluntary reports submitted by member states, we urge the HLPF to establish formal mechanisms to consider reports, including shadow reports, by women's groups and other civil society constituencies. The WMG and allies will be conducting shadow reports that vary depending on country context as a contribution to the voluntary reporting process. In addition, the HLPF should establish spaces for dialogues between countries that are reporting and major groups, civil society constituencies and rights holders through official events such as roundtables or interactive dialogues. Lessons learned from the first reviews in 2016 should strengthen the review process moving forward rather than constrain it.

Regional sustainable development forums have a critical role in the follow up and review architecture for Agenda 2030. Planning, implementation and follow-up mechanisms at regional level must be inclusive of all civil society; take a gender perspective; address the full agenda; and allow learning and sharing. The WMG recommends that they be used to:

- share experiences, best practices and lessons learned in implementation among countries with similar development backgrounds and histories;
- identify regional-level trends and challenges, as well as strategies to address them, including through cross-border approaches;
- facilitate south-south and triangular cooperation to accelerate implementation, as well as other means of implementation; and
- identify regional-level priorities for the HLPF. Regional reviews should have robust mechanisms for the participation of major groups, other constituencies and rights holders.

Effectively using the regional space prior to the global review will support increased participation, peer learning and could provide official inputs to global HLPF. Regional reviews that institutionalize space for major groups, civil society constituencies and rights holders and their contributions (shadow reports, reactions, parallel reports) will contribute to ensuring that no one is left behind, since these reports will support member states to better understand the impacts, gaps and successes of the policies in place.

The WMG recommends that **national review processes** should be undertaken regularly, 3 or 4 times before 2030. Governments should incorporate major groups, other civil society, constituencies and rights holders into the process of undertaking national level reviews, including in the processes to develop and review indicators, collect and verify data and conduct qualitative reviews. They should officially invite reports from women's organizations and other

civil society groups to be submitted at national level and incorporate their findings in national reports.

6. Conclusion

The Women's Major Group sees the need for three key areas of action to ensure that the 2030 Agenda will leave no one behind, irrespective of gender, age, race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation, migrant status or nationality, or any other condition:

- a. Inclusion and participation of grassroots organizations in planning, implementation and monitoring of 2030 Agenda at local and national level;
- b. Financing and capacity building for women's rights groups;
- c. Gender disaggregated data to inform gender-responsive SDG implementation, budgets and monitoring

Finally, women's groups must be meaningfully engaged at all levels of the implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda, from the national level to the global.

We conclude with the words of Berta Caceres, Indigenous leader and environmental activist from Honduras, which she spoke at her acceptance speech for the 2015 Goldman Prize, before she was murdered:

Let us wake up! Let us wake up, humankind! We are out of time. We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism, racism and patriarchy that will only assure our own self- destruction. [...] Earth – militarized, fenced in, poisoned, a place where basic rights are systematically violated - demands that we take action. Let us build societies that are able to coexist in a dignified way, in a way that protects life....

Contributing Organizations

ADBR asbl

African Women's Devt and Communication Network (FEMNET)

Afrihealth Optonet Association (CSOs Network), Nigeria

Akina Mama wa Afrika

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

Association « Development of a civil society », Kazakhstan

Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD EUFRAS Georgia

Association of disabled women, Kyrgyzstan

Center for Reproductive Rights

Centre for Human Rights and Climate Change Research Nigeria

Chimkent Women resource Center. Kazakhstan

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

Coordinadora de la Mujer, Bolivia

Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality

Ecological Assosiation of Women of the Orient, Kazakhstan

FEIM- Fundacion Para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer. Argentina

Feminist League of Kokchetav, Kazakhstan

Feminist League, Kazakhstan

Forum of women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan

Gender Equity: Citizenship, Work and Family (Mexico)

Groots Trinidad

ILGA

International Planned Parenthood Federation, Western Hemisphere Region

International Women's Health Coalition
International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific
Ipas
NAWO, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (UK)
Niger Delta Women's movement for Peace and Development, Nigeria
OO Safewomb International Foundation (OOSAIF)
Out Right Action International
Pearls Care Initiative (PCI)
Plan International UN Liaison Office
Reacción Climática-Bolivia
Red de Educacion Popular entre Mujeres A lainta y el Caribe , REPEM
Rural women "DIA", Kyrgyzstan
Rural women "Epkin", Kyrgyzstan
Rural women's NGO Alga, Kyrgyzstan
Sanctus Initiative for Human Development and Values Sustainability(SIHDEVAS)
Sansristi, India
Sathi All for Partnerships (SAFP)
SecurityWomen (Member of NAWO)
Sistren Theatre Collective/ Groots Jamaica
Soroptimist International
Stakeholder Group on Ageing
Temple of Understanding
UN Women National Committee Germany
United and Strong Inc , Saint Lucia
WECF International
Women for Peace and Ecology, Germany,,Berlin
Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC) Jamaica