



HLPF 2016 Brief Series

ISSUE #2: Three cross-cutting issues for the 2030 Agenda: Human Rights, Gender Equality and sustainability criteria

As we set the basis for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Women's Major Group calls for a recognition of the three cross-cutting elements that need to be at the core of all actions: the human rights framework, gender equality and sustainability criteria. These will function as the linking pieces for a holistic approach for the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Human Rights

The new global sustainable development paradigm must be inherently adhered to the human rights framework, and it needs to be holistic, inclusive, just *and* gender-just, equitable and universal, **based on the specific and already agreed international human rights instruments**, mechanisms and reviews of social and economic rights, including major and relevant UN conferences and the outcomes of their reviews and international human rights treaties and instruments. This includes implementation of already agreed upon international agreements such as the 1993 Vienna Human Rights Declaration and Program of Action; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) and the Key Actions (ICPD+5), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA); the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance Declaration and Programme of Action; the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among others. In this regard, two elements need to be highlighted:

1. The human rights framework is not a new imposition to countries, but rather it is the mandate of states to respect it and fulfil it. **The 2030 Agenda cannot replace the agreed human rights commitments nor can it be implemented without the full recognition of their universal nature.** The integrity of the existing platforms for these agreements must be acknowledged and reinforced while honoring treaties as well as previously agreed outcome documents (e.g.: the 12 Areas of Critical Concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, the 10 Commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and the CEDAW Recommendations). Numerous regional commitments also underscore the importance of and uphold gender equality, including the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted in 2003 by the African Union; the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (the Convention of Belem Do Para), the 2011 European Convention on Preventing Violence against Women and Domestic Violence; the Pacific Islands Forum Gender Equality Declaration of 2012; and the Montevideo Consensus, through equal protection and accountability measures accompanying good governance.
2. The Follow up and Review of the 2030 Agenda should be addressed every year in a comprehensive manner. No silos or clustering should be made in the Follow up process. The WMG calls for a **continuous review process** throughout every year in the next 15 years. **Years can be thematic but need not limit to**

specific goals. If goals and targets are only reviewed once every 3 or 4 years as part of a cluster, countries will be more challenged to identify gaps, innovative ways to fulfill commitments or share learning through exchange of experiences. Rather, **the entire UN system should be promoting a holistic implementation and a thorough implementation.**

Gender Equality

Gender equality and the human rights of women and girls must be recognized as a cross-cutting issue critical for the success of the 2030 agenda. Women and girls comprise the majority of people living in poverty, experience persistent and multidimensional inequalities, and bear a disproportionate burden of the impacts of financial and environmental crises, natural disasters and climate change. Gender equality, the empowerment of girls and women of all ages, and the full realisation of their human rights is not only a good in itself, it is essential for poverty eradication and sustainable development. As such, Gender equality and the full realization of the human rights of girls and women of all ages should be emphasised as a cross-cutting thematic priority throughout the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. An accelerated implementation and monitoring process must reflect the full range of issues that are critical to achieve gender equality, the human rights and empowerment of women and girls, and not just a subset of them, including women's economic rights and their sexual and reproductive rights. To ensure success, the national and regional plans of action as well as global resources for the 2030 Agenda must be committed, must be sufficient and to have dedicated resources to achieve gender equality, including resources for women's and feminist organizations. To enhance the way in which gender equality is to be mainstreamed, we recommend two things:

1. **To support a legally binding interpretation of crucial targets of Goal 5**, such as the complete eradication of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, in accordance to the CEDAW mandate.
2. **To address during implementation and follow up and review those structural elements that were missing in the 2030 Agenda** but that could be the determinant elements to succeed in achieving its fulfilment. These are: **to reduce and redistribute unpaid domestic and care work; to fulfil sexual and reproductive health and rights; to eradicate the discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; to promote comprehensive sexuality education; to ensure the safety of women environmentalists and human rights defenders.**

Sustainability criteria

Ensuring intergenerational equity is imperative and sustainability criteria should guide every action. It requires engaging women and men fully in formulating rights-based, ecosystem based, gender-responsive and socially just solutions to halt biodiversity loss and climate change, which stand as symbols of a global focus on short-term gains and unsustainable consumption and production patterns, and impede poverty eradication. The implementation process must better draw connections between economic and social development, the environment and justice. It must recognize how inequalities (including gender inequality and inequalities within and between states), human action and entrenched structural and systemic problems have undermined sustainable development, contributed to environmental degradation and climate change, and threatened the wellbeing of people and the planet. Acknowledging and addressing these challenges is fundamental for the 2030 Agenda to deliver transformative change.

1. The 2030 Agenda framework must ensure the planet's limited resources are used sustainably, equitably and responsibly, acknowledging the historical debt, and our responsibility to future generations. Actions should 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**. 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. In this regard, it is urgent to eradicate the obscene concentration of wealth, because this is the core of the causes of extreme poverty that the 2030 Agenda aims to eradicate.

2. To ensure urgent action **implementing to climate change actions and keep global warming below 1.5 degrees, as well as commitments to address biodiversity loss, desertification and unsustainable land use; protect wildlife, safeguard forests and mountains; and reduce disaster risk and build resiliencies**. With this in mind, 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. Sustainable development projects operated by non-monetized Peoples, including Indigenous Peoples, should be supported. 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.

3. We are deeply concerned by the prioritization given to public-private partnerships in the 2030 Agenda and its potential to promote the outsourcing of development programmes as well as critical public services. The private sector has its own interests, which often conflict with those of people, resulting in programmes and services that prioritise profits over long-term public good and the needs of the most marginalised people. Certain public services should be the primary responsibility of states and ring-fenced from public-private partnerships, especially those related to the delivery of health care, education, water, sanitation and energy. That is consistent with the duties of governments to fulfil the human rights of its citizens to health care, education, water, housing sanitation and other goods. Further, **any public-private partnerships that do proceed must be evaluated ex ante for their economic, social and environmental impacts; compliance with gender equality and human rights standards; and any potential conflict of interest**. Their work must be conducted in a transparent manner with data that is measurable to evaluate the advancements made of the 2030 Agenda. Costs for human rights and ecosystem protections, stakeholder participation, and remediation must be internalized into projects achieving the 2030 Agenda. Risk should be balanced to ensure that marginalized groups are not bearing the risks, including climate change impacts. They should demonstrate specific added value in contributing to the achievement of agreed sustainable and social development principles and goals as outlined in the Rio Declaration, the Copenhagen Declaration, the ICPD Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the future SDGs. Further, the the Follow up and Review process must include strong commitments on the parts of States to ensure **private sector accountability, including for transnational corporations in their cross-border activities, international financial institutions and multilateral development banks**, including access to justice and legal remedies where human rights are violated, monitoring and periodic evaluation, and participatory review mechanisms.