



The Promise to “Leave No One Behind”: Financing the SDGs to Empower Women and Girls in Africa

UNITED NATIONS—By 2030, the world aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, but the new development agenda to be adopted by the United Nations (UN) in a few days does not live up to the previous, hard-fought commitments toward gender equality and provides only a fragmented plan to empowering half the world's population.

During the UN Sustainable Development Summit, from 25 to 27 September 2015, the 193 Member States will adopt the new development agenda with an outcome document titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The 2030 Agenda – to be implemented over the next fifteen years – includes the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the next generation of global goals to address extreme poverty and which build upon the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Unlike with the MDGs, the process to develop the SDGs was inclusive, involving consultations with civil society and women’s organizations and other stakeholders. As the SDGs will impact every woman and girl in the world, their meaningful participation and leadership and greater investments in gender equality are required to implement the global goals and achieve sustainable development.

However, the 2030 Agenda, although ambitious, contains critical gaps in several important issues for realizing the full rights and empowerment of all women and girls.

The lack of financing for gender equality in the Africa region poses a serious threat to the achievement of the SDGs. Effective implementation of the SDGs requires strong substantial investments toward the empowerment of women and strong gender commitments from governments and donors.

“Recent review of international agreements showed that the lack of financial commitment towards gender equality was one of the major constraints why progress in realizing gender equality was slow,” stated Dinah Musindarwezo of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET).

“For the SDGs to make a difference in the lives of women and girls, governments must significantly increase financial commitment to gender equality and women’s rights by funding women’s rights organizations and gender programs at all levels, from community to global,” she added.

“As we embrace the sustainable development goals and move forward with implementation, the promise of ‘leave no one behind’ embodied throughout the formulation of the agenda must be adhered to,” said Catherine Nyambura from Kenya.

National and local governments must ensure gender-responsive policies, plans, and budgets across all sectors and integrate strategies for gender equality and sustainable development to maximize their interlinkages. Examples include strategies to reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, including through paid leave and child care services.

Legislative reform to provide land ownership and right to inheritances, as well as strategies to enhance access to financial services and information technologies, are necessary to promote the economic empowerment of millions of African women. Moreover, the least developed countries require continuing resources and capacity building to overcome various structural challenges to development.

State governments will be primarily responsible for ensuring the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and civil society organizations and other stakeholders will be instrumental in holding governments accountable. Therefore, greater resources and support toward women’s and feminist organizations will be essential to the localization and monitoring of the SDGs.

“The premise to ‘leave no one behind’ is the new rhetoric. I am afraid that the issues to empower women and girls will be the last to get the required funding,” expressed Isatou Touray of Zambia. “The catch phrase is to mobilize resources that will not reach the targeted goals and objectives. There should be a financial tracking tool for CSOs and NGOs to report with regards to this.”

“African women and girls continue to die of preventable illnesses and conditions such as maternal mortality from unsafe abortions, with access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) a distant reality,” stated Nyambura.

“The SDGs promise women and girls access to SRHR and provides a blueprint to protect girls from extreme forms of violence, such as early child marriage and female genital mutilation,” she added. “Our governments must keep their promise to women and girls and allocate financing to enable woman to live this promise.”

The Post-2015 Women's Coalition is an international network of feminist, women's rights, women's development, grassroots, and social justice organizations working to challenge and reframe the global development agenda. For more information, please visit our website at www.post2015women.com and follow us on Twitter @Post2015Women.

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