Making Every Woman and Girl Count at the United Nations General Assembly

Event information
- Wednesday, September 21st, 2016 1.15pm-2.30pm
- United Nations Headquarter, Economic and Social Chamber, 46st and 1 avenue, 10017 New York

Organized by
- UN Women
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Data2X
- The Government of Australia

Panelists
- Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director
- Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia
- Melinda Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Emily Courey Pryor, Executive Director of Data2X

Participants
- Mme. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia
- Mr. Yoweri K. Museveni, President of Uganda
- Mr. Macki Sall, President of Senegal
- Mrs. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh
- Ms. Claudia Ruiz Massieu, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
- Mr. Wade Warren, Assistant to the Administrator of USAID for the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning
- Ms. Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie of Canada
- Ms. Gwen Hines, Director for International Relations of DFID
- Mr. Shamshad Akhtar, Executive Secretary of ESCAP
- Ms. Anne-Birgitte Albrectsen, CEO of Plan International. Ms. Cicily Kariuki, Cabinet Secretary for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs of Kenya will also offer remarks.

On September 21st as part of the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly a flagship programme entitled 'Making Every Woman and Girl Count' was launched with a high-level event organized by UN Women, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Data2X and the government of Australia.

The 5 year programme consist of a private and public partnership aiming at generating gender sensitive data to effectively track the implementation progress of the Sustainable Development Goals in a gender specific manner. Resources will be invested in various countries to generate expertise in the collection of gender data and assist in the development of capacities in national statistic institutions.

The discussion of the event focused on the lack of resources for generating gender data. The speakers all confirmed their commitment to raising awareness of this issue and to further push for effective partnerships to ensure sufficient and reliable data for tracking the progress of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The crucial link between the ability to monitor such progress and the ability to achieve the targets set for each of the SDGs was also reiterated throughout the statements.

The executive director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Nqcuka underpinned the fact that as of today, 80% of the indicators for goal number 5 of the SDGs, aiming to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, lacks data. It is thus not possible to monitor the progress for nearly all the indicators for this vital goal.

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, reaffirmed the Australian government's support for the flagship programme and stressed the interdependent relationship between achieving gender equality and achieving sustainable development. She highlighted the importance of having reliable gender sensitive data to track progress made while further stressing the need for creating a globally coherent methodology for the collection of such data.

Currently only 13% of countries have a budget dedicated to gender statistics which emphasizes to the need to prioritize this area. On behalf of the Australian government a commitment to contribute 6, 5 million dollars in funding for the flagship programme was given by Julie Bishop and Wade Warren, assistant to the USAID for the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, committed to contributing 5 million dollars to the initiative.

Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, reaffirmed the Foundation's commitment to working towards mainstreaming the use of gender specific data throughout their projects and programmes around the world. When specifically asked to highlight one area in which gender data would make a tangible impact for the lives of women and girls on the ground, she stressed the importance of recognizing unpaid work. This is often carried out by women and girls at the expense of contributing to the economy through paid work. The potential in this resource must be recognized and monitored for the sake of local economic growth and to ensure the quality of life for all women and girls.

The Executive Director of the UN Foundation programme Data2X, Emily Courey Pryor, seconded the words of Melinda Gates by noting the need for ensuring that this issue remains at the top of the political agenda as the realizing of the SDGs is not possible without ensuring the equal rights of women and girls. The President of Uganda noted national progress in the area of promoting education for women and girls but also highlighted challenges towards achieving full gender equality in his country.

The statements given by all participants reaffirmed the importance of keeping the worlds eyes on the issue of gender data. The panelists provided insight into how the international community can and must work together in a collaborative manner to create a more coherent methodology in generating and using gender specific data. The words of Melinda Gates further inspired everyone to remain dedicated to raising awareness of this vital, yet underfunded, area.

"The gender gap cannot be closed without closing the gender data gap".