



## Swiss Position on Gender Equality in the Post-2015 Agenda

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10.10.2013

Persisting gender inequalities are a major obstacle to sustainable development, economic growth and poverty eradication. To address root causes of discrimination against women and girls, Switzerland promotes a stand-alone goal titled *Achieve Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls* and advocates for gender equality as a transversal issue with gender-specific targets and indicators in all other relevant development goals. Indicators – quantitative as well as qualitative - should be based on sound analyses and empirically grounded sex disaggregated data and measure interwoven processes of discrimination and exclusion. Accountability needs to be ensured through robust monitoring frameworks and statistics.

### 1. A stand-alone goal on Achieve Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls

Gender inequalities are a major obstacle to sustainable development, economic growth and poverty eradication throughout the globe because they reduce chances of women to meaningfully participate in social, political and economic life. While the MDGs achieved substantial results in fighting poverty and hunger and living conditions for women and men have improved over the last decades, large gender gaps and discrimination against women remain in many areas.

A stand-alone goal on gender equality addressing root causes rather than symptoms is critical to eradicate discrimination against women and girls, achieve women's and girls' empowerment and promote sustainable development. Gender-based discrimination represents a severe and widespread human rights violation and the new framework has to be in full compliance with existing women's human rights obligations and standards.

Switzerland suggests a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment with three sub-goals, which are considered as key for addressing and overcoming structural impediments to gender equality. The stand-alone goal needs to go in conjunction with consequent mainstreaming of gender considerations into all other relevant sustainable development goals.

#### 1.1 Equal Economic Opportunities

Women's contribution to measured economic activity and growth is well below its potential although women's economic empowerment is a driver for sustainable development that addresses poverty, reduces inequalities and improves the wellbeing of women and their families. Even though women's education level has increased and women have entered the labor force in large numbers across the world in the last 20 years, this has not translated into equal economic opportunities for women and men.

Women occupy very different parts of the economic space than men and are disproportionately concentrated in subsistence agriculture, lower productivity activities, self-employment, lower positions in the hierarchy of companies and in the informal sector. These patterns of horizontal and vertical gender segregation in economic activity are persistent worldwide and are driven by women's constraints in access to productive resources, services and credit and by institutional and societal constraints based on gender stereotypes and discrimination. Furthermore, the differences in time use and the provision of care, which all over the world is still largely in the hands of women, turns out to be a highly critical domain and a root cause of gender inequality.

Switzerland suggests promoting four key areas under this sub-goal:

- **Equal access to education:** Women still account for 2/3 of illiterate persons around the world, girls have less access to quality education than boys and their completion and transition rate to secondary and tertiary education is lower. Equal access to high quality education and vocational training at all levels for women and girls is indispensable to enter the work force and/or participate in economic development.
- **Equal access to employment and decent work for all:** A gender-responsive sustainable development approach promotes equal employment opportunities (i.e. specific capacity building, skills development and training in entrepreneurship for women, equal access to finance and investment in infrastructure and technologies, measures to combat horizontal and vertical segregation, a more equitable division of labour between women and men for the provision of care work) as well as decent work (i.e. labour standards and working conditions, equal pay) for women and men.
- **Equal access to and control over productive assets and resources:** Equal access to land, finances and other productive assets for women as well as to skills development, training and advisory services are key to promoting gender-equitable sustainable development. Moreover it addresses the conditions under which women engage in small scale and subsistence farming (i.e. policies to promote small scale farming and local value chains, and affordable and accessible technologies for sustainable production).
- **Social security and care work:** Equal access for women and men to basic social security and gender-responsive social protection floors are critical for sustainable development framework. Moreover, the time spent on reproductive tasks and unpaid care work should be more equitably distributed between women and men, and their contribution better accounted for in economic terms. Technology development may help to reduce the time needed for such activities. Furthermore, to measure the effects of these transformations beyond aggregate results, indicators to map relative gains and losses for different groups shall be designed.

## 1.2 Freedom from violence against women and girls in all its forms

Over one third of all women and girls worldwide experience physical or sexual violence – and much of this violence remains with impunity. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has many faces - intimate partner or domestic violence, harmful traditional practices (i.e. female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage etc.), VAWG in refugee and migration contexts, sexual violence in conflict, post-conflict and emergencies, sexual harassment in public, at schools and at the workplace etc. Men and boys also experience gender-based violence albeit to a much lesser degree.

VAWG is deeply rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men. Apart from having negative consequences for women's physical, sexual and mental health, VAWG causes high costs to public budgets and prevents women from full participation in public and economic life.

Switzerland therefore suggests promoting four key areas under this sub-goal:

- **Prevention of VAWG:** The root causes of VAWG - the unequal power relations between women and men and gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence – need to be tackled by introducing as well as implementing gender-responsive legal and policy frameworks explicitly criminalising VAWG, by changing social norms and reducing economic dependency of women. Sex-disaggregated data on VAWG and its prevalence in different forms need to be collected and indicators to be defined (i.e. on intimate partner violence, early and forced marriage, FGM).
- **Protection and response to VAWG:** Survivors of violence need to be safe and get the comprehensive support services (i.e. shelters, psycho-social and medical support, legal aid, rehabilitation, economic integration etc.). Sufficient financial and human resources for these support services need to be allocated at national and local level.
- **Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict & disaster:** SGBV is exacerbated in conflict, post-conflict, disaster and post-disaster situations and rape remains a reality in war. Gender-specific security such as safe access to basic services and protection from sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) need to be provided as integral part of any emergency, peacekeeping and reconstruction response. Security for women does not automatically come with a peace accord and women remain exposed to high rates of SGBV at home and in public in post-conflict and post-disaster settings.

- **Access to justice and ending impunity:** Impunity for VAWG has to be addressed by ensuring accountability for violence crimes and by providing equal access to justice for women and girls. In order to install gender-sensitive justice response mechanism and to combat gender-based discrimination in the judiciary and the executive, important gatekeepers such as police and other authorities (i.e. religious, political and traditional leaders) need training and capacity building to implement the laws and to respond adequately to people experiencing violence.

### 1.3 Equal participation and leadership

Generally, women have less voice in decision-making than men in politics, the economy, their societies, and within their household where they often lack control over household spending and earned income. Women's ability to own, control, and dispose of property largely differs from that of men because of discriminatory laws or lack of enforceability of existing legal frameworks for gender equality. Increasing women's leadership at all levels of decision-making is essential for advancing issues of importance to women on the national and local agendas, with benefits for both women and men. Meaningful participation is about more than numeric presence in decision-making, it is about strategic representation and women's capacity to influence issues that matter for different groups of women and the society.

Switzerland therefore suggests promoting four key areas under this sub-goal:

- **Participation in political and public institutions:** In order to include women's needs and perspectives at local, national, regional and international level and to implement gender-responsive policies, women's access to all levels of political decision-making in executive and legislative institutions and the judiciary needs to be facilitated. Women's capacity to express themselves and to defend gender equitable policies needs to be developed.
- **Participation in the private sector:** Advancements in women's education have not translated into greater representation in the administration or the management of private companies. Equal participation on all levels of the hierarchies and in operative and strategic management should be promoted. One sector that needs specific attention is the representation of women in the media, a powerful force, which shapes public opinion and perpetuates gender stereotypes.
- **Participation in peace and security:** With the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), women for the first time have been recognized as actors (and not only victims) contributing to sustainable peace and development. While the policy is firmly established on the international agenda, women's participation and the inclusion of a gender perspective in conflict resolution, peace processes and security policies remain marginal. Special efforts are needed to overcome the impediments for women to shape peace and security politics.
- **Strengthening women's collective action and participation in civil society:** The presence of a strong women's movement can make a difference in advancing women's rights and voice in social, legal, political and economic areas. Special actions are needed to promote equal participation and leadership of women in civil society institutions and supporting women's organisations and activism at all levels is essential. Particular attention is needed to mobilize and engage young women.

## 2. Gender equality as a transversal issue

Switzerland considers gender equality as a very important transversal issue essential to the achievement of gender equality and considers the inclusion of gender-related indicators in all other stand-alone goals as indispensable.

### 3.1 Education

Women still account for 2/3 of illiterate persons around the world. Girls have less access to quality education than boys and their completion and transition rate to secondary and tertiary education is lower. School curricula still promote traditional gender roles, which lead to marked differences in girls' and boys' professional choices and careers. Targeted, gender-responsive improvements on accessibility and infrastructure, the quality of education for all, the

training of teachers and their working conditions, special measures such as scholarships for disadvantaged groups, non-formal education, adult education as well as literacy programs are necessary to guarantee the right to education for all. Particular attention needs to be paid to the education and training of adolescent girls.

### **3.2 Health**

A gender-differentiated analysis is decisive to understanding health care provision, health seeking behaviour and health status. Women have less decision-making power and control over their bodies and health. While high workloads expose women and girls to increased health risks, they often lack information on health services and/or social norms hinder them from accessing these, including contraception. Gender-responsive health indicators, including women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, should therefore be part of the monitoring system of the post-2015-agenda.

### **3.3 Water**

The lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation affects women disproportionately. Most of time-consuming water collecting is done by women and girls preventing them from education and income generation. The lack of access to basic sanitation infrastructures in their homes or in refugee camps is a question of dignity and puts women and girls at greater risk of violence and assault. Equally, the lack of safe and private toilets at schools is a reason for drop-out amongst young girls and thus a direct obstacle to girl's education. The introduction of payment for water can constitute a new burden for women. Such gender aspects together with women's integration in decision-making over water resources have to be taken into account.

### **3.4 Employment and decent work**

Labour markets are probably the most powerful place of opportunities, opening the door to participation in public and economic life and resulting in financial independence. Women, however, face multiple and context-specific barriers to enter employment and the benefits attached to it due to lack of education, the structure of labour markets, the policies of skills development and vocational training, the time available for training and paid labour and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work. In order to reach gender equality, the promotion of women's education and employment, reduction of unpaid labour, basic social security, and representation of women in managerial and decision making economic bodies are necessary. Policies aimed at furthering a 'green economy' also need to include considerations of the impact on women and men.

### **3.5 Sustainable agriculture and food security**

The vast majority of the hungry live in rural areas and depend on smallholder agriculture. Women contribute 43% of the work to agricultural production, while they control only approx. 15% of the land. They face bigger obstacles to access markets as well as financial and advisory services. They are more likely to be negatively affected by the industrialization of agriculture and the impacts of climate change. A gender-sensitive sustainable development approach has to improve the conditions under which women provide food at a small scale and for self-consumption, and women need to get equal access and rights to productive assets, land, resources and inputs as well as adequate information and training.

### **3.6 Governance**

Women are still considerably under-represented in decision-making, particularly at higher levels. Yet the promotion of women is not sufficient and has to be accompanied with measures to enable them to advance gender responsive policies and budgeting. Equal access to decision making in politics, the economy as well as civil society and scientific bodies and the realization of women's basic rights and freedoms of association, including their unlimited and safe access to public space are key to promote active citizenship for women and inclusive, egalitarian and democratic societies.

### **3.7 Peace and safe societies**

Violence, conflict and fragile situations have different consequences and lead to different vulnerabilities and security needs for women and men. While men make up the vast majority of those killed, detained or disappeared during war, women are increasingly targeted as civilians, suffer scarce resources, become refugees and are exposed to sexual and gender-based violence. The integration of a gender perspective, the protection of women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations and women's full and equal participation in conflict

resolution, peace as well as in reconciliation and reconstruction processes are a precondition for sustainable development.

### **3.8 Energy**

A large percentage of the population in poor countries still relies on biomass fuels for primary energy needs. This task is predominantly done by women and limits their opportunities for education or productive activities and has negative health impacts. Women should have equal access to affordable and renewable energy and to decision-making concerning the implementation of energy policies, its mechanisms and funding. Furthermore sex disaggregated data and an investment in gender-responsive technologies and capacity building is needed.

### **3.9 Sustainable consumption and production (waste and chemicals)**

In many countries, women are predominantly found in the lowest echelons of the production process (particularly garments, manufacturing, non-traditional agricultural exports) and disproportionately affected by negative effects of production methods. In order to promote gender equality, stronger regulations on clean production and waste standards for global production chains and the promotion of decent work conditions for the lowest class of employees are needed.

### **3.10 Disaster risk reduction**

The majority of victims of natural disasters are women and girls. They have less access to information and often lack specific skills such as swimming and climbing. It is thus crucial that early warning mechanisms for disasters reach both women and men. On the other side, women often play the role of 'last resort' for survival strategies and in adapting to environmental degradation. Their place-specific knowledge on natural resources at local level needs to be heard in the design of adaptation and mitigation programs. The root causes of environmental degradation need to be addressed by increasing the accountability and liability of the polluter and strengthening the rights of local communities.

### **3.11. Population dynamics and migration**

All four population mega trends - rapid population growth in some countries, low fertility and an ageing population in other countries, urbanization and migration - have gender dimensions that need to be analysed in the different contexts and taken into account in national planning. The global response to gender-specific realities in the four fields should include access to sexual and reproductive health services, empowering migrant women and preventing and combating violence against women in migration context (such as trafficking of women, sexual exploitation etc.) as well as the protection of elderly women.

### **3.12. Biodiversity**

Biodiversity plays an important role in indigenous and rural people's livelihoods. The maintenance of biodiversity at local level often depends on the different, but complementary knowledge of both women and men. Due to their care and food security related responsibilities, women in particular have extensive knowledge of their natural environment, i.e. of herbs and plants and their curing properties (according to the WHO 80% of the world's population uses plants medicines for their primary health-care needs). Forests, in particular, offer a variety of resources for rural people's livelihoods, e.g. fuel wood, which is traditionally collected by women. Women also rely to a higher degree on natural resources for subsistence and income, such as basket weaving or pottery. It is therefore important that women's skills and knowledge are equally protected at the national and international level.

### **3.13 Sustainable cities and infrastructure**

As urban areas are growing, so is urban poverty and inequality, with 33% of the urban population now living in slums. Urban planning and infrastructure often do not adequately account for poor women's specific livelihoods, needs and activities (such access to clean water as well as adequate and safe sanitation). Their role in the informal economy is often under-valued and transport systems are not taking into account their specific needs. Due to their vulnerability to gender-based violence, safety is a major concern for women and needs to be adequately addressed by urban planners and policy makers.

# Achieve Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls



**Equal Economic Opportu-  
ties**

**Freedom from VAWG in all its  
forms**

**Equal  
Participation & Leadership**

**Access to education**

Improving access to quality education and vocational training, completion and transition rates

**Prevention of VAWG**

Addressing gender stereotypes and social norms, establish/reform legal framework and reduce economic dependence, data collection and indicators on intimate partner violence, early and forced marriage, FGM

**Participation in political & public institutions**

Promoting women's representation *and* gender-sensitive policies on all levels (multi/international, regional, national, local); building women's capacities and establishing support schemes, incl. temporary special measures.

**Access to employment & decent work**

Promoting decent working standards, equal pay, skill development, reducing time for care work, representation in managerial bodies and different economic sectors

**Protection & Response to VAWG**

Establishing comprehensive support & rehabilitation services, allocation of sufficient resources

**Participation in the private sector**

Promoting women's representation and influence in the administration and management of private companies; specific attention to women in the media

**Access to and control over productive assets & resources**

Improving conditions for small scale and subsistence farming through rights and access to land, productive assets, finances, advisory services, skills building

**SGBV in conflict & disaster**

Ensuring safe access to basic services, protection from SGBV, SEA in conflict, disaster, addressing SGBV in post-conflict/disaster

**Participation in peace & security**

Increase accountability around WPS agenda, address impediments to access formal and informal peace processes, post-conflict transformation and reconstruction (as outlined in UN Res 1325)

**Social security and care work**

Access to and benefits from basic social security, promoting gender-sensitive social security floors, reconcile and redistribute paid and unpaid (care) work, reduce time use for care work through technology development

**Access to justice & ending Impunity**

Promoting access through gender-sensitive justice response mechanism, capacities, compliance & awareness of authorities concerned, gender in police & security

**Women's collective action and participation in civil society**

Strengthening women's movement, collective action and participation in CS institutions on *all* levels; mobilize and organize young women

STAND-ALONE GOAL

TRANSVERSAL ISSUES

Gender & Education

Gender & Water

Gender & Health

Gender & Governance

Gender & DRR

Gender in Sustainable Growth & Employment

Gender & Biodiversity

Gender & Population Dynamics

Gender in Sustainable Agriculture & Food Security

Gender in Peace & Safe Societies

Gender in Sustainable Cities & Infrastructure

Gender & Energy

Gender in Sustainable Consumption & Production (Waste and Chemicals)