

HLPF: 9 July 2018, 10 - 11:30 AM, CR 4

Session: Reviewing progress in achieving the SDGs

DRAFT Intervention by Ms. Asa Regner

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The adoption of the 2030 Agenda was a global victory for gender equality.

- Not only did United Nations Member States commit to making sustainable development a reality for all countries and all people.
- They also recognized that gender equality is central to this endeavor: itself an important goal and a catalyst for progress across many other goals and targets.
- The fact that we have a stand-alone goal that includes a comprehensive list of issues that women's movements across the world have been fighting for over decades is an enormous achievement
- Eliminating violence against women and recognizing unpaid care and domestic work, for example, were absent from the MDGs.
- The fact that they are now part of the SDGs shows that we have succeeded to bring them into the 'mainstream'.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda holds the potential to transform the lives of women and girls all over the world. But is this potential being met?

- Our global report "Turning Promises into Action" provides answers to this question.
- It is UN Women's contribution to the HLPF and to monitoring progress on the SDGs, putting the spotlight on women and girls.

Despite progress on some fronts, gender inequalities remain pervasive in every dimension of sustainable development; and in many areas, progress is too slow to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

- Brand new data on extreme poverty, for example, reveals that globally there are 4 more women for every 100 men living on less than \$1.90 a day.
- Almost 30% of the world's population still lacks access to safe drinking water. Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises. This work is arduous and will only become harder given increasing water scarcity.
- Violence against women and girls is rampant with 1 in 5 women reporting to have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months.
- And while women's representation in national parliaments has increased, it stands at a mere 24 per cent globally. A far cry from parity.

Even where progress is made, it often leaves large swaths of women and girls behind.

- As soon as we look beyond national averages, there are yawning gaps between women and girls who, even within the same country, are living worlds apart. For example:
- A rural woman in Colombia is 12 times as likely as an urban woman to give birth without a skilled health professional attending.

- Women in the poorest households in Nigeria are 4.8 times as likely to be married as children as women from the richest households.
- In the United States, Native American/Alaska Native and Hispanic women are almost 3 times as likely as white women to lack health insurance.

What is needed to close these gaps and turn the gender equality promises of the 2030 Agenda into action?

Three elements will be critical for monitoring and accelerating change for women and girls.

First, we need transformative policies to achieve sustainable change at scale. This also means that governments need to systematically integrate a gender perspective in the development of all national sustainable development policies, planning processes and budgets, as well as design of services.

- Essential services on which millions of women and girls depend—health, water, childcare, shelters—are chronically underfunded or simply unavailable.
- Where they exist, they are often the first to be hit by austerity measures which are once again on the rise.
- In virtually all countries, there is scope for reallocating or raising domestic resources to avoid cut-backs and instead strengthen these services.
- To work for women, particularly those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, the location and delivery of these services must take into account their use of time and space, particularly in relation to their unpaid care and domestic work.

Second, we need better indicators and data to monitor what works for women and girls and where course corrections may be needed.

- We have made important headway on gender indicators since 2015. For SDG 5, for example, we did not have an established methodology for 7 out of the 14 indicators. Today we have a methodology for all but one—thanks to the work of UN Women and other UN agencies.
- The next challenge is to collect the data for these indicators. Currently, we have less than a third of the data needed to assess the status of gender equality in the 2030 Agenda as a whole; and an even lower share of this data is recent.
- To address these gaps, we need to strengthen gender statistics and support national statistical systems, particularly in developing countries.

Finally, we need to strengthen accountability for gender equality commitments at all levels.

- Women and girls have the right to receive explanations from those in power about actions that affect them and demand course corrections where needed.
- Where poor performance on women's rights has consequences...
- Where incentives to advance gender equality are in place...
- And where women are enabled to participate in and lead decision-making processes...
- ...better outcomes are possible.

So let us challenge ourselves, let us assess our achievements and shortfalls with honesty. This will enable us to turn promises into progress. Because progress for women is progress for all.

Contribution at end of session: one minute per speaker

The fact that Member States come together to discuss progress on the SDGs here in New York once a year is an opportunity to review where we stand, what is working and where course corrections may be needed to achieve our common goals by 2030.

For this to happen effectively, we need honest appraisals of our actions. We need a diversity of perspectives and critical voices that challenge us on our received wisdoms and convictions.

Civil society, in particular, women's rights organizations, have a critical role to play here. They need the space and the funding to speak up, to share their appraisals and concerns, to cooperate with other stakeholders and to hold decision-makers accountable.

This is a conversation that starts at the national level with the VNRs and other progress reviews, proceeds to the regional level and culminates here at the HLPF. And then moves back to the national level to translate global commitments into policies and programmes that deliver concrete results for all women and girls.

Background

The HLPF is the central space to review progress in the 2030 Agenda. Its agenda includes a week of discussions at the technical level and three ministerial days for the voluntary national reviews.

The first session after the opening of the HLPF, is dedicated to "Reviewing progress in achieving the SDGs". The keynote speaker is Mr. Liu Zhenmin, the USG of DESA, who will present the annual report of the SG on the progress towards the SDGs. Ms Regner's intervention will follow right after.

Sub-session 1. 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM Reviewing progress in achieving the SDGs

Moderator: Ms. Emily Pryor, Executive Director of Data2X

Panellists:

Ms. Asa Regner, Assistant-Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

Mr. Pádraig Dalton, Director General of Central Statistics Office of Ireland

Ms. Grace Bediako, Acting Director-General of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), Ghana

Lead discussant: Ms. Sofia Monsalve Suárez, Secretary General, FIAN International (NGO Major Group)

A few more data

There has been significant progress in terms of legislation: Today, three quarters of all countries have laws in place to address violence against women.

- **But in many areas, implementation remains weak.**
- **Services for survivors—such as shelters, health care and legal assistance—also need to be strengthened to ensure that women are safe and able rebuild their lives.**
- **Most importantly, we need to prevent violence before it happens by challenging the unequal gender power relations that lie at its root.**

Over 300,000 women still died from pregnancy-related causes in 2015. Despite progress made, the current rate of decline in maternal mortality is much too slow to meet our target by 2030.

Data from 2015 show that 90.3 per cent of girls of primary age were enrolled in school that year. In secondary education, girls have nearly caught up with boys at the global level. Despite this recent progress, access to quality education is still not universal: 48.1 per cent of adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa remain out of school compared to 44 per cent of boys. Globally, 15 million girls will never get the chance to learn to read or write compared to 10 million boys.

Globally, women constitute just 13 per cent of agricultural land holders, and in some regions their access to land is undermined by discriminatory laws or threatened by large-scale land dispossession by international agribusiness, finance capital and foreign States.

Women and the SDGs

SDG 1: Research shows that more cash in the hands of women contributes not only to eliminating poverty but also to better education, nutrition and health outcomes for children and other members of the household.

SDG 3: Gender equality in health is one of the most direct and potent ways to reduce health inequities overall and to achieve Goal 3.

SDG 6: Women and girls play a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of household water and sanitation. Addressing the water and sanitation needs of women benefits the health and well-being of entire communities.

SDG 7: As primary energy managers in households, women can play a powerful role in the successful transition to sustainable energy for all.

SDG 11: Women have equal rights to the city, and their safety in public spaces is crucial for sustainable urbanization.

SDG 12: Unsustainable production and consumption patterns are gendered, with women suffering disproportionately from resource scarcity and natural disasters resulting from climate change.

SDG 13: Gender equality is critical to mitigate climate impacts: Women's inclusion in climate discussions leads to improved outcomes of climate-related projects and policies.

SDG 15: Women's specific knowledge of and dependence on forests makes them key contributors to forest conservation and regeneration.

SDG 16: Women play a vital role in preventing conflict and forging and maintaining peace. By fully protecting women's rights, peaceful and inclusive societies will be within reach.

SDG 17: Mobilizing sufficient resources will be critical for meeting the gender equality commitments of the 2030 Agenda