

## Australia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

### OWG 8th session, February 2014: Promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment

#### **Promoting Equality, including Social Equity**

- 1) Promoting equality and achieving social equity will be central to a successful post-2015 agenda. Rising disparities are a threat to the economy, to good governance, to social stability and public safety in any region of the world. Eradicating extreme poverty by 2030, with no one left behind, will not be possible without tackling inequalities, including income inequality, and promoting equality of opportunity.
- 2) Extreme or high inequality is an urgent problem for two reasons. Firstly, it constitutes a threat to social cohesion, as it is associated with higher crime rates and the risk of conflicts. Secondly, it undermines the impact of growth on poverty reduction and can be harmful for long term growth.
- 3) The post-2015 framework should drive development outcomes for the poorest and most marginalized. They are often caught in intergenerational poverty because they don't go to school, can't get a job and have no access to financial services and markets. In fact, research<sup>1</sup> shows that a fifth to one half of income inequalities can be attributed to inequality of opportunity. Tackling this will require ensuring access for all to education and health services, safety nets, markets, decent jobs, infrastructure, financial services and political participation. It also requires effective and accountable institutions – including justice institutions – which underpin open and fair economies and inclusive growth.
- 4) In the new goals, a specific focus is required on uncovering and tackling structural inequalities. These include inequality linked to location, gender, age, lingo-ethnicity, religion, disability and income level. To give a few examples:
  - a. Access to reproductive health services highlights inequalities; in most developing countries, the use of modern methods of contraception is lowest among poorer women and highest among the rich.<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Demographic and Health Surveys data suggests that around two-thirds of those still living in extreme poverty are from an ethnic minority in their own country.<sup>3</sup>
  - c. Despite the enormous progress on getting more children into school in Africa, less than 10% of disabled children are currently in school, and one third of the world's out-of-school children are children with disabilities.<sup>4</sup>
  - d. Around 15 percent of the global population has a disability. Collectively, people with a disability have poorer health outcomes, lower educational achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without a disability.<sup>5</sup>
- 5) Concrete actions are needed to make sure the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups are addressed in an integrated fashion across the post-2015 framework. The new goals should incorporate mechanisms to ensure that disadvantaged groups benefit in a measurable and monitorable fashion.
- 6) To ensure that the post-2015 development goals can address discrimination and inequality in all areas we need to incorporate the "leave no one behind" principle including:
  - Zero or 100% targets for appropriate goals;
  - data disaggregation;

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<sup>1</sup> Kanbur, R. (2011) Equality of Opportunity: Circumstance, Effort and Luck

<sup>2</sup> In Smith R et al (2009) and Creanga A. and Gillespie, D. et al (2011)

<sup>3</sup> Melamed, C. (2012) ODI, Post-2015: the road ahead

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO (2007) Education for All Global Monitoring Report

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organisation/World Bank (2011) World Report on Disability (Washington) (based on 2010 global population estimates)

- targets should be met by all groups; and
  - a data revolution to enable this all to happen.
- 7) These could be complemented by social protection systems that provide protection for the poorest and most vulnerable, together with policies that tackle the causes of inequality around economic opportunity, good governance and justice.
  - 8) The private sector and non-government organisations need to play a central role in reducing inequality.
    - a. Collaboration between governments, the private sector and other stakeholders should encourage inclusive business models that include previously excluded low-income markets - creating opportunities for employment.
    - b. NGOs and other actors can play an important role in planning, implementing and monitoring inequality.

### **Gender equality and girls' and women's rights and empowerment**

- 9) Gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment are corner stones of development and should be strongly reflected in the post-2015 development agenda. None of the world's aspirations to eradicate poverty, achieve equitable, inclusive growth, peaceful societies and promote sustainable development will come within reach without substantial progress towards gender equality and women's rights and empowerment.
- 10) In the MDG's, the global community recognized that gender equality is an important development outcome in itself and key to the success of all other development goals. The global community needs to renew and strengthen this commitment. While we recognize that considerable progress has been made over time, many challenges remain before gender equality and girls' and women's rights and empowerment will become a universal reality. For example, the World Bank reports that in 130 countries women's economic opportunities are curtailed by discriminatory laws.
- 11) A key challenge is the need to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and its effects in an integrated and holistic manner. Persistent and widespread violence against women and girls, discriminatory norms (including discrimination against women and girls with a disability), lack of access to and limited control over land and productive assets and property, and discrimination and vulnerability in employment, including unpaid care work, need to be addressed. Equal access to education, health, sexual and reproductive health and rights sustainable energy, climate resilience programming processes, and equal voice and participation in public and private decision-making are also essential. Investing in gender equality is smart economics. Greater domestic gender equality in the political, social economic and environmental spheres correlates with fewer and less violent solutions to resolve disputes.
- 12) Existing norms and standards as set out in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Commission on the Status of Women should be reflected in the new framework.
- 13) UN Women, the High Level Panel and others have put forward valuable suggestions on a gender equality goal and targets, proposing that the new framework should achieve transformative change in several critical areas:
  - a. Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriages as one of the most pervasive human rights abuses;

- b. Ensuring women's economic empowerment, through the removal of legal barriers to girls and women's economic inclusion/opportunities and access to and control over productive assets, education and health;
- c. Promoting women's voice, leadership and participation at all levels and in all areas of society, including within households and in public and private decision making.

14) We welcome these proposals, and believe that the new agenda must address gender equality within a number of related priority areas, including:

- a. Ensuring universal sexual and reproductive health and rights. This needs to include reducing the unmet need for family planning and contraceptives; the opportunity to control and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to sexual and reproductive health, and the number, timing and spacing of children, which will reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, enable women's full participation in all spheres and tackle the norms underlying inequality;
- b. Ensuring that every girl and boy completes primary and lower secondary education, achieving recognized and measurable learning outcomes.
- c. Ensuring sustainable development, particularly strengthening access to food, water and clean energy for both men and women.
- d. We call for the post-2015 development agenda to fully realise gender equality and girls' and women's rights and empowerment. Initiatives that fail to include women's voices will not be able to deliver.

## Conclusion

15) We call for a post 2015 framework that ensures no one is left behind and which tackles the causes of poverty and inequality. It should include a stand-alone goal on empowering girls and women and achieving gender equality to ensure that these issues remain central to development with due attention for important aspects like the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, ending child, early and forced marriage, promoting the economic empowerment of girls and women, and promoting voice, leadership and participation.

16) We also call for gender and other aspects of inequality to be mainstreamed across the post 2015 framework. This will require:

- Zero or 100% targets for appropriate goals;
- targets that focus on specific disadvantaged groups;
- a commitment to using disaggregated data,
- targets that should be met by all groups,
- new goals that focus on governance and peace and stability.
- Due attention for the promotion of univesral sexual and reproductive health and rights, and girls' education.