

Achieving Gender Equality Through a Post-2015 Framework

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls must be a central ambition of a post-2015 agenda. Although some progress has been made under the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework, one in three women are still affected by gender-based violence and around 800 women die every day as a result of childbirth and other pregnancy-related complications. In order to address the persistent and interlinked barriers and challenges that women continue to face in their everyday lives a new development framework must promote gender equality as a human right. It must also seek to address the underlying structural causes of gender inequality by incorporating gender-specific targets across all goals.

Progress under the current framework

Evidence indicates that MDG3 to promote gender equality and empowerment has galvanised efforts at a national and international level around the implementation of policies and programmes to tackle discrimination and help empower women and girls. This has resulted in a greater focus on addressing women and girls' needs and on reducing the gender gap, particularly in education and governance.

Yet despite this, 800 women die every day due to childbirth and other pregnancy-related complications and one in three women are affected by gender-based violence in their lifetime. Women continue to be paid between 10 and 30 per cent less than men in jobs that are insecure and fall outside the protection of the law. They also shoulder the majority of the burden of unpaid care work. They remain under-represented in decision-making processes at all levels and only one in five legislators are women.

Failure of the current MDG framework to articulate gender equality as a human right and also to reflect the multidimensional nature of women and girls' experiences of inequalities and poverty has undoubtedly limited progress. This has been compounded by the inadequacies of broader development policies which are driven by an unsustainable neo-liberal economic model and largely premised on the low-paid labour of women.

Opportunity for a new approach

The post-2015 agenda offers a real opportunity for governments, communities and civil society, particularly women's movements, to work together to bring about a transformative change in the everyday lives of women and girls. In order to achieve this, a new framework must address the underlying structural causes of gender inequality. The recently published post-2015 High Level Panel report went some way in articulating the necessary shift in approach through its call to leave no one behind. It proposed a stand-alone goal for gender equality and empowerment and also called for gender to be made a cross cutting issue.

While these proposals are welcome, a more radical approach needs to be adopted if real and sustainable change is to be achieved for women and girls. The post-2015 development framework must be driven by a rights-based agenda and move away from the current emphasis on economic growth. Targets need to include women and girls' rights to equal access to decent work with equitable pay and good working conditions, primary and secondary education, as well as access to land rights and assets. They also need to promote women and girls' rights to voice and influence at individual, household, community, national and global levels.

Women and girls, particularly the poorest and most marginalised, must have a say in the design

and implementation of a new development agenda so it accurately reflects their needs and realities. Better participation alongside improved data and a more nuanced system of quantitative and qualitative measures will also help underpin clearer and stronger mechanisms of accountability. It will also be important to build upon the momentum created by

the current MDGs to achieve the necessary levels of national and international political will and financial resources to realise gender equality and greater empowerment. Crucially, the new framework must also address the gender dimensions of other goals by embedding relevant targets across the framework.

Policy recommendations

To ensure that a post-2015 framework helps to achieve gender equality and women and girls' empowerment it should:

- Articulate gender equality as a human right.
- Include a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment which incorporates specific targets on gender violence, decent work and employment rights, access to land and assets, education and tackling discrimination.
- Every post 2015 goal should include at least one relevant target on gender equality in order to reflect the multidimensional nature of inequalities and poverty that women and girls experience. For example, a water and sanitation goal should include a target on the provision of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in all primary and secondary schools to meet the needs of female students and staff.
- Require sex and age disaggregated data for all goals, and should take disability and other forms of disadvantage into account. It should use both qualitative and quantitative evidence to measure progress against indicators, to provide a more nuanced picture which reflects changes in attitudes of women and men, shifts in social norms and the quality of women's participation in decision-making.
- Reinforce and complement other relevant frameworks including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
- Be underpinned by adequate financial resources that have been allocated as part of gender budgeting processes employed by donors and national governments, and to which they can be held accountable.



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Further reading

A New Global Partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2013)
http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf

Smee, S. and Woodroffe, J. (2013) *Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post-2015 Framework*, UK: Gender and Development Network
<http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/gadn-post-2015-report/>

Post 2015 Women's Coalition: a coalition of women's rights, women's development, grassroots and social justice organisations working to challenge and reframe the global development agenda.
<http://www.post2015women.com>

Gender and the Post 2015 Framework: Key messages from a New York multi-stakeholder roundtable (2013)
<http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/go/home&id=65109&type=Document&langID=1>

A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment: Imperatives and Key Components. UN Women (2013)
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications>

Authorship

This *IDS Policy Briefing* was written by BRIDGE Manager and Senior Gender Convenor, **Alyson Brody** and IDS Public Affairs Officer, **Hannah Corbett**. It is based on a policy note which was the main outcome of a roundtable co-hosted by BRIDGE/Institute of Development Studies, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations and the South African Government during the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The roundtable was attended by around 70 people, comprising members of government, UN agencies and missions, non-governmental organisations, women's rights networks and academic institutions from across the world.

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