

GENDER & DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

IDC inquiry into the Sustainable Development Goals Response by the UK Gender and Development Network

Summary

- The UK Government has played a valuable leadership role in ensuring that gender equality is taken seriously within the SDGs, and has an important continued role to champion the implementation of these commitments both under SDG 5 and across the goals.
- Accountable implementation processes must ensure that the voices of women, particularly the most marginalised, are heard and reflected upon.
- Implementation of the SDGs will require adaption and development of some of DFID's own practices, for example in relation to unpaid care, social norms and the intersection between different forms of discrimination such as disability and gender.
- Substantial new, high quality funding will be needed to meet the ambition of the SDGs in relation to gender equality
- Dedicated support for women's rights organisations, through specific funds, will be a vital component of success
- Measuring progress will require flexibility in the design of indicators to reflect the structural barriers to gender equality, and increased investment in data collection.

The Gender and Development Network

1. The Gender and Development Network (GADN) is a UK based coalition of over 100 organisations and experts working in the field of women's rights and gender equality, with specialists in both programme and advocacy work. GADN has played a role in calling for a standalone goal on gender equality within the SDGs and has written a number of reports in this area.

Introduction

2. Throughout the post-2015 process, the UK Government has been a champion of gender equality. The final framework represents some major advances in agreeing targets on issues of key importance to achieving gender equality, including but not limited to, violence against women and girls, unpaid care, sexual and reproductive health and women's participation and leadership. The Department for International Development (DFID) is now well placed to continue to play a leadership role in ensuring that that these advances are implemented.

3. In this submission the UK Gender and Development Network suggests some priority areas for the UK Government in implementing the SDGs in relation to gender equality, summarising some of the more detailed submissions made by our members.

Play a continued leadership role on gender equality across the SDGs

4. GADN suggests that the UK Government has an important leadership role to play in ensuring that SDG 5 is given sufficient priority by all stakeholders and that governments are not allowed to pick and choose which SDGs they implement. As we have argued elsewhere, gender inequality remains a barrier to the achievement of other SDGs across the board, as well as a priority in and of itself.

5. In addition to the agreement of SDG 5, there was also consensus during the process that gender equality should be mainstreamed across the goals. This was not fully achieved, leaving some challenges for implementation which again the UK could support progress on. In addition to the disaggregation of all data by gender (along with other factors) it will also be necessary to consider the particular barriers that women and girls will face in the achievement of each target and indicator, and ensure that these barriers are addressed.

Establish an accountable implementation process

6. It is important that any formal mechanisms developed to coordinate implementation of the new framework draw on the experiences of women, whose voices are often absent from key decision-making positions within international institutions, donors and national governments. It is equally important that formal avenues for consultation with women and civil society are built into these implementation mechanisms. One useful tool is gender budgeting, which shows a gender breakdown of where public funds are spent. As the UNDP explains, “Gender budgets provide increased transparency and accountability on the use of public funds, strengthen citizens’ democratic rights and abilities to participate in budgetary processes and increase the power of women both as a group of political stakeholders and as beneficiaries”¹. GADN recommends that monitoring and accountability mechanisms formally include opportunities for women’s rights organisations and movements to meaningfully participate, and that the use of gender budgeting is promoted as part of implementation of the SDGs.

Developing new policies and practices to match the ambition of the SDGs

7. In addition to, and building on, DFID’s Strategic Vision for Women and Girls and associated updates, the SDGs highlight some further issues which DFID should consider in discussion of implementation.

- Discriminatory social norms are a major barrier to many of the targets both within SDG 5 and elsewhere. Further understanding how to tackle these, and the promotion of positive norms, is an area of work on which DFID could valuably play a leadership role among donors.
- DFID’s work on women’s economic empowerment and the enabling environment will need to address the implications of the new targets on unpaid care and economic rights (including ownership of land and other assets). In particular, fiscal policy, including taxes and governments’ budgets, should not reinforce gender inequality but actually seek to create a more equitable society – starting with a recognition of the pivotal importance of women’s unpaid care work for the social well-being, economic sustainability and reproduction of the workforce.

¹ UNDP (2012) Powerful synergies - Gender Equality, Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability

- The principle of ‘leave no one behind’ presents further challenges in relation to intersecting discriminations faced for example by Dalit women, migrant women, and indigenous women in addition to those characteristics named in the update provided on the strategic vision (disability, geography, age, ethnicity and religion).

Dedicated and increased funding to support gender equality and women’s rights across the agenda

8. It is now vital that substantial funding is secured and that, crucially, this is of high quality and raised in a way that promotes gender equality and women’s rights. Current levels of funding for gender equality are inadequate to meet the ambition of the SDGs, and need to be scaled up. Prioritised and dedicated resources are needed, alongside the mainstreaming of gender equality in the mobilisation and allocation of resources from all sources. In particular we see progressive taxation as a core component of funding for gender equality. Long-term funding is particularly important for gender equality work, particularly given that changing social norms is a slow process.²

9. Robust accountability systems will be needed to track allocation of resources within all financing means for women’s rights and gender equality and for the use of these resources. The OECD DAC gender equality marker is a useful tracking tool and all ODA should be screened against this marker.

10. GADN recommends that the UK Government meet existing obligations to finance gender equality and women’s rights and commit to mobilise maximum available resources and allocate dedicated and significantly enhanced levels of financing – in scale, scope, and quality – to implement both the standalone goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment and gender mainstreaming throughout the whole framework. For example, UK Government funding for UN Women should be scaled up. Building on the UK government’s positive statements regarding financing for gender equality in the post-2015 negotiations and at the Addis Ababa FFD Summit, DFID should consider supporting the new Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, including commitments on taxation and gender-responsive budgeting.

Fit for purpose funding for gender equality through women’s rights organisations

11. There is a growing body of research demonstrating that women’s rights organisations and movements are important catalysts to promote greater gender equality. However, despite their enormous value, women’s rights organisations remain critically underfunded, and can face particular issues in accessing core and long term funding which is critical to their work³.

12. The trend towards an increased role for the private sector, with donors providing substantial pots of money managed by private companies and payment according to results, poses problems for gender equality work. It makes interventions aimed at longer-term structural and behavioural change less fundable, and reduces the space for women’s rights organisations. This trend is compounded by the focus of funders on quantitative results, with no space for the more qualitative longer term changes needed to achieve gender equality. The increasing use of competitive tendering

² GADN has produced a detailed report on financing gender equality and women's rights in the context of the SDGs available from our website: <https://gad-network.squarespace.com/config#/1/gadn-resources/2015/6/10/making-financing-for-development-work-for-gender-equality-what-is-needed-at-addis-and-beyond> and contains concrete recommendations for action

³ See GADN’s joint report *Turning Promises into Progress*: <http://gadnetwork.org/gadn-resources/turning-promises-into-progress>

as a mechanism for the distribution of aid also favours big national or international organisations rather than small local women's rights organisations.

13. Dedicated women's fund can be a particularly valuable way to reach organisations that many other funders do not reach, such as grassroots or unregistered groups, as well as organisations working on issues or with strategies or populations that are considered controversial or not a priority for mainstream funders⁴. Examples of a successful donor approach to funding civil society organisations working on gender equality and women's rights are the Dutch Government Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 and FLOW funds.

14. GADN recommends that to support the implementation and achievement of the SDGs, the UK government could develop a new strategic fund in partnership with, and implemented by, women's funds, to provide quality (core, flexible and long-term) funding to women's rights organisations and movements.

Investment and innovation in measuring progress

15. GADN has released a position on the indicators under Goal 5 which is available at <http://gadnetwork.org/post-2015/>. Whilst the overall number of global SDG indicators needs to be manageable for national statistical authorities, some targets will require multiple indicators to be true to the targets' ambition, and the number of indicators should not be limited arbitrarily. Indicators must be chosen which measure the structural causes of inequality, rather than just the results. This requires both qualitative and quantitative indicators for some areas. For example, to achieve an end to violence against women and girls requires a shift in social norms, attitudes and beliefs about its acceptability as well as its prevalence. Critically for gender equality, measurement must be at every level – recognising that households are not homogenous units and income and decision making power will not be evenly distributed among men and women within households.

16. GADN recommends that investment should be made to enable the measurement of progress on gender equality and the structural causes of inequality, and to ensure that sex disaggregation of data is possible across the framework.

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⁴ AWID, 2011, Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation for Women's Rights: Twelve Insights for Donors, available at http://www.steppingstonesfeedback.org/resources/7/AWID_Monitoring&evaluation%20for%20women's%20rights_insights%20for%20donors.pdf