

Gender Justice and the Post-2015 Sustainable Development process

Prepared by the ACT Alliance Community of Practice on Gender Justice
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ACT Alliance is a network of 148 Christian faith-based humanitarian and development agencies working in 140 countries. ACT is committed to respect, empower and protect the dignity, uniqueness, and the intrinsic worth and human rights of every woman, man, girl and boy. ACT works with communities and individuals on the basis of need and human rights without any form of discrimination, ensuring that the capacities and capabilities of communities are considered at all times, and especially targeting those who suffer discrimination and those who are most vulnerable.

ACT is committed to speaking out and acting against those conditions, structures and systems, which increase vulnerability and perpetuate poverty, injustice, humanitarian rights violations and the destruction of the environment.

Work towards Gender Equality

For the ACT Alliance membership, inequality is one of the most prolific drivers of poverty. Inequality exists in all political, social and economic settings, however due to the pervasive history of global patriarchy, women have experienced a disproportionate impact of the consequences of global inequalities. Gender equality is, therefore, absolutely essential both for the progressive realisation of women's rights, and for any successful sustainable development strategy. Women continue to bear the brunt of poverty, *70 per cent of the poor are estimated to be women*. Additionally, women experience a double, if not triple, burden often as primary income generators and caretakers. Women are victims of many layers of marginalisation based on their race, age, religion, sexual orientation, health status, socio-economic status etc.

ACT is committed to address the structural drivers of gender inequality in laws, social and cultural norms and practices.

We strongly support a stand alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment and mainstreaming of gender considerations throughout the whole post-2015 framework in all areas including health, education and food security and agriculture;

Gender and Agriculture

FACT: If gaps in men's and women's access to agricultural resources were eliminated: 1) Farm yields could potentially increase by 20-30%; 2) Global production could increase by 2.5-4%; 3) Global hunger could be reduced by 12-17%

Women have less access to and ownership of land, agricultural inputs, training, marketing outlets, and credit than men. Women tend to operate smaller farms and achieve lower yields due to lack of inputs. Women's contribution to agriculture, such as the care economy, is often unpaid and under-valued. However, gender gaps in agriculture are opportunity gaps.

Increasing women's income tends to lead to greater investment in children's education and family health, reducing time burdens of women and could increase household cash incomes for smallholder farmers.

We support a new target on economic justice for women and girls including equal access to and control of resources e.g. land and finance;

Gender Inequality in Political Participation and Decision-Making

Only 20% of parliamentarians globally are women

There is a need to strengthen women's political participation at all levels of decision-making. However, increases in numbers alone will not lead to meaningful participation of women within decision-making structures. Social, religious and cultural norms that limit women's effective participation need to be challenged.

Quota systems must be seen as special temporary measures, not as sustainable policy action. Instead awareness between key religious and opinion leaders must be redoubled and promoted through a new sustainable development framework. Furthermore, capacity building of women candidates, knowledge sharing and alliance building etc. are also essential.

We support a target on participation of women and girls in political and public life at all levels;

Gender-Based Violence

35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.

The high numbers of victims to gender based violence, both in their everyday life and during periods of conflict is a major obstacle to sustainable development. Boys and men are also victims of gender-based violence, which is often unrecognized and grossly underreported, but which can have detrimental effects on entire communities. To address gender-based violence there is a need to work both with all multilateral legal frameworks, including the post-2015 process, to legislate towards social change and to break-down harmful social and cultural norms, which undermine productive economic growth and sustainable development.

We highly recommend that reducing gender-based violence is included as new targets under health, gender equality and peace-building related goals.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Over 50% of women in sub-Saharan Africa give birth before age 20, most often in the context of early and forced marriage

No reduction in maternal deaths will be achieved without fulfillment of comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health rights, including age and context appropriate sexual education Controversy over, and subsequently inaction on addressing the negative social and cultural

dimensions of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights has had a detrimental impact on sustainable development.

We therefore strongly support the inclusions of sexual and reproductive rights including multi-dimensional HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment services in the new post-2015 targets, both in a Gender goal and within all health related goals.

Education for All

123 million youth worldwide lack basic reading and writing skills; 61 % of them are young women.

Universal access to education is an essential factor in attaining sustainable development goals- including in the promotion of participation in public life, maternal and child health, and gender equality. Efforts over the last decade have focused on elementary education. There has been little to no emphasis on secondary and tertiary education, pre-school, adult non-formal education- including adult literacy, nor vocational training. Additionally attention must be paid to address the quality of education at all levels.

Although the gender gap has decreased at the primary level, it continues to strongly favor men and boys at secondary and tertiary levels and in vocational education. Cultural barriers such as early and forced marriage, forced pregnancy, fear of reprisal, unequal household and childcare responsibilities ineffective and inappropriate sexual and reproductive education for both girls and boys, and sexual violence continue to bar girls and women from participating equally in education and learning. Gender-based violence in schools affects the performance and retention rates of the girls and women affected.

We therefore support a target on universal access to quality formal and informal education at all levels without precondition as well as adult learning and vocational training as a target under an education goal.