



Women's Major Group

Response by the Women's Major Group



19 Focus Areas document

by the co-chairs of the
Open Working Group (OWG) on

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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The Women's Major Group is pleased to see an integrated approach, with inter-linkages identified between the focus areas, in particular we are happy to see both a stand-alone focus area for Gender Equality and Women's empowerment, as well as 7 areas where linkages to gender equality are indicated. We also appreciate that within the priority areas, you've addressed *inequalities, the multidimensional nature of poverty, eliminating harmful agricultural subsidies, SRH, universal access to quality education* among others.

We recommend that the focus areas are **complemented by a strong narrative** that clearly articulates the need to redistribute wealth, power and resources; where human rights are enjoyed and where all humans can prosper and live dignified lives.

We regret that the document uses languages which falls back on existing agreements and lacks adequate recognition and use of the agreed upon language in the Rio+20 outcome document nor does credit to our collective aspiration of developing an ambitious, human rights-based, people-centered and planet-sensitive agenda that will remain relevant in 2030 and beyond. We call for reference to be made to guiding frameworks that support women's rights and women's empowerment such as CEDAW, The Beijing Platform for Action, ICPD and the Rio +20 outcome document.

We lack key concepts in the document, and call for their inclusion, see our proposals below.

1. Regarding Focus area 5: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

We are deeply disappointed that:

a) **Women's rights are completely absent from this document**, unlike the Co-Chairs summary document of OWG 8 where better language already existed. Equality and empowerment are necessary, but they alone are not sufficient and cannot be achieved without firm commitment to and fulfillment of women's human rights.

b) **Inter-linkages** between gender equality and women's rights are **not sufficiently** made with all areas, e.g. they are **omitted in climate change, ecosystems and oceans**.

c) The document does not also call for the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of **unpaid care and domestic work**, done mostly by women and migrant domestic workers. We therefore call for a goal on **universal social protection** which includes non-contributory schemes that **acknowledge the burden of women's unpaid care work** and promote access to quality health, care, education, housing, services for all.

d) The document does not guarantee the **sexual and reproductive rights** of women of all ages, especially adolescent girls, and it does not guarantee sexual, bodily and reproductive autonomy free from stigma, discrimination and violence, and should target the provision of **comprehensive sexuality education** programs that promote respect for human rights, non-discrimination, gender equality, non-violence and peace-building;

e) The impact and burden of disasters on vulnerable groups and their productive assets has also not been addressed and needs specific mention of **women's access to justice**; including an **end to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination** in the public and private spheres. We propose that the language on **eliminating early and forced marriage** also should refer to ending **female genital mutilation, honour killings**, child labour and the trafficking of children, especially girls as well as an **end to sexual violence** perpetrated also during and after conflict and natural disasters.

g) The document should call to guarantee the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls at all public and private spheres, **including parity in decision-making and leadership, and in all peace processes**.

h) The document should target to **eliminate discriminatory laws and policies**,– which the World Bank says exist in over 120 countries by law – **and practices** that contribute to gender inequalities, inhibit access to services and rights, and criminalize or stigmatize children, adolescents, and young people; promote access to legal advocacy for the disenfranchised, and ensure women's equitable access to, control over and ownership of resources that promote fair asset redistribution among different social groups, including land, water, oceans, credit, information, technology, intellectual and cultural property.

i) We recommend the recognition of the importance of the means of implementation and recall Ireland's intervention regarding **financing for gender equality**. In the spirit of partnership, we commit to jointly develop these targets and subsequent indicators as well as to contribute technical expertise on gender mainstreaming in each of the aforementioned areas. In conclusion, we look forward to continued collaboration between women and men, governments and civil society so as to achieve the set

commitments. The realization of gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment will go a long way in ensuring a just, fair, equitable and sustainable world.

2) Regarding focus Area 3: Health

We welcome the inclusion of this critical focus area, though we see very little here on a rights-based approach to health, and we are very disappointed to see **no recognition of sexual and reproductive rights**, unlike in the co-chairs OWG8 summary. We are troubled by the reference to healthy populations as assets, rather than people with the right to health. New investments and strategies for health and the development of goals, targets and indicators must be firmly based on human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.

This focus area should set targets aimed to:

- Ensure universal health care and coverage that is **based on human rights, addresses underlying and structural inequalities, and gives particular attention to women, young people, and marginalized groups** (such as young people living with HIV and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities).
 - Services must be free from violence, coercion, stigma and discrimination and remove barriers to care within the health system, such as requirements for parental/spousal notification and consent. Services must respect the principles of full informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and non-discrimination, prioritizing the health of the patient over cultural or political views.
- End preventable infant and under 5 deaths and ending **preventable maternal mortality** and morbidity;
- Achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services that are **equitable, comprehensive, integrated, respect human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights** and are of high quality and accessible at all levels of care, especially the primary health care system.
 - These services should include the ability to prevent unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV and AIDS, and ensure their availability even in times of conflict, disasters, migration and displacement.
 - These services include access to and information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, access to contraceptives, emergency contraception, maternity care, safe abortion services, prevention and treatment of STIs, HIV and AIDS as well as of non-communicable diseases, especially those that affect women most such as breast and cervical cancers.
- Develop and implement comprehensive strategies to **address the social determinants** of health, **guarantee free access to health services** at the point of care, and ensure that health financing and systems are designed to eliminate inequalities in access to care and coverage and achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support **for HIV, TB, malaria**
- Recognize and develop strategies to address the **environmental determinants of health**, addressing **environment pollution – including by harmful chemicals and radiation** - and ensuring the implementation of the **pre-cautionary and polluter pays** principles.

3) Regarding focus Area 4: Education

a) There must be a specific target on eliminating women's illiteracy by 2030. It should aim to provide formal and non-formal education for all women and ensure they are aware of, and able to exercise their

human rights. Targets should include curricula to eliminate gender- and other stereotypes, sexism, homophobia as well as teacher training for non-discriminatory education.

b) The post-2015 agenda must include specific means to address the social and cultural practices that prevent girls and women from accessing and completing education and life-long learning, create enabling environments for girls' education, including safety, hygiene and sanitation and mobility.

c) It is time to go beyond a focus on access to primary education; ensuring completion of a full cycle of education requires specific targets on ensuring free access to and completion of early childhood as well as secondary education, as well as disaggregated data for the different levels.

4) Regarding focus Areas 8: Economic Growth

The document lacks a truly transformative focus. The document does not aim at an outcome which will be **transformative and result in social, economic and environmental justice**. Feminist and other social movements have repeatedly stressed that the development agenda must be re-imagined. It must foster transformative, **structural changes in the way global economies are managed**. This can only happen if we unequivocally call for radical and transformative shifts in the systems and structures that have caused and perpetuated inequalities and injustices. The document must call for fundamental reforms that **meaningfully transform the imbalanced structures of the international finance, tax, debt and trade architectures**. While 'rights' are mentioned only four times in the document, 'growth' is mentioned 21 times and is afforded its own focus area despite the evidence that the growth agenda often undermines equitable and sustainable development as well as the future of the planet. We must never repeat the mistakes of the past and prioritize short-term economic development at the expense of sustained and equitable social development, environmental protection and peace.

The document fails to address wealth concentration. While it's pleasing to see an inequalities goal as a possible focus area, the document fails to genuinely address wealth and resource inequalities between and within countries. The scant reference to inequalities between countries is followed with an oblique reference to increasing growth in developing countries but **ignores the need to redistribute wealth from wealthy countries** and to end the extraction of wealth and resources from the global south that benefit the north. Inequalities within countries is regarded as discrimination based inequality and again the need to redistribute wealth, resources and power is absent.

The document is doing the bidding of the private sector. The private sector has had an audible and instructive voice throughout the various consultative processes to establish a post2015 agenda. The private sector priorities of growth (FA 8), industrialization (FA 9), public investment in infrastructure (FA 10) and in energy (FA 7 where public private partnerships are flagged) and references to foreign direct investments as the means of implementation as well as growth point to a model that will facilitate private wealth accumulation.

5) Regarding focus area 2: Food Security

Include the Right to Food: We note with concern that the **right to adequate food** is not explicitly mentioned. Given its overarching and transformative role in achieving food security for all. While it is positive to see some reference to the importance of local, Indigenous and subsistence farming, there needs to be more work done to **acknowledge food sovereignty** as a key demand of the poor.

Include ending Land-grabbing: There is also no reference to diminishing access to land that results from

forced acquisition by corporations and governments. Targets that **encourage redistribution of land** and measure land access and use by local people are needed. The correction of inherent market failures must include efforts to eliminate dumping, support the establishment of food reserves to mitigate price and supply volatility, and preventing land grabbing and excessive speculation on commodity markets through the establishment of commodity-specific position limits and increased transparency.

Include women smallholder farmers: We are concerned that smallholder farmers as the critical “agents of change,” have not been given the necessary prominence in the document. Empowering smallholder farmers and other rural communities, in particular women and disadvantaged groups, is essential, including through access to productive resources, such as credit and other financial services, land tenure, and agricultural extension services, as well as through better access to education, information and markets, including fair prices for their products. In this respect it is also necessary to address the structural causes of what we see as **the feminization of poverty**, especially in the countryside and end all forms of violence against women.

6) Regarding focus Area 11: Employment and Decent work for all

Decent work rightly features as a central focus area yet more needs to be done to provide a vision to achieve all the elements of the decent work agenda. **Decent Work needs stronger goal ensuring living wages for all and closing the gender gap**, by setting target for:

- Eliminating gender disparities in all sectors and at all levels of the workforce and implement and enforce policies that address discrimination of women in the labor market, including equal access to a range of educational and employment opportunities, with equal pay, equal redistribution of paid and unpaid care work through the universalization of care services, the promotion of balanced work-family policies including maternity, paternity and parental leave benefits.
- Gender equality in the workplace with respect to wages must be addressed through "equal Pay for work of equal value" including the need to re-value the lowest paid work like domestic work taking into account in particular ILO Convention 189.
- Recognizing domestic work and care work as work and as a result appropriately valuing and redistributing unpaid care work through the universal access to care services, quality health (including sexual and reproductive health and right services), housing, water, transport and energy.
- Extend concept of social security to include income security for ALL including the unemployed, those in informal and/or precarious work, the working poor, the marginalized, the young, the ageing, the disabled and those in vulnerable situations

7) Regarding focus Area 15-16: Climate, Marine Resources, Oceans & Seas

The documents fails to call explicitly for a stronger ecosphere approach to oceans and seas, and **standalone goals on Oceans and also on Climate Change**

Therefore, we also specifically reiterate as follows:

- **Equal attention to urgent action and slow-onset targets on climate change, DRR and oceans**

Inclusion of attention to global sea level rise, ocean acidification and 'dead zones', eutrophication and nuclear radiation; strongest monitoring of POPs, toxins, and plastics; effects and responses to natural disasters; over-exploitation, including overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and already destroyed ecosystems. In order to build sustainability, the SDGs should emphasize long-agreed Agenda 21 commitments including technology sharing, and production and dissemination of knowledge products and best practices, along with integration of all SD, CC and DRR plans, with equal attention to urgent and slow-onset oceanic issues. Also strongest coherence between SDGs, P2015DA and the UNFCCC processes;

- **Biosphere and integrated ecosystem approach to land-ocean management**

The new sustainable development framework should place most stringent regulations on land-based activities, also based on their impact on oceans and seas. As well as regulations on land including attention to sustainable and safe cities and subsidisation of renewable safe industrial materials; Marine protected Areas or MAPS must also be instituted strongly and securely, with timed targets on size and strongest protection in line with UNHR, CEDAW, ICPD, COB, UNDRIP and other human rights normative agreements. They must not just protect biodiversity hotspots, but also reflect connectedness to the whole ocean system, and importance to local communities including indigenous people. One cannot protect a significant area, and also institute deep sea mining, overfish and take illegal catches, or otherwise pollute and harm marine ecosystems for supposed economic gain. Environmental and social costs are not externalities. Otherwise as many have stated through the OWGs, it is not really an economic gain at all.

- **Sustainable and just marine economic activities**

Given that approximately half of all international tourists travel to SIDS and coastal areas and much of these countries heavily rely on the tourism industry, more stringent regulations should be enforced in order to address unsustainable and destructive tourism. Tourism, as with all economic activities, must be designed and monitored in accordance with human rights normative agreements, as above and with specific attention to gender equality and women's and children's human rights, rights of indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, and other at-risk and marginalised groups. There is also a need for National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), including national biodiversity inventories, as 1 in 4 fish species depend on the disappearing coral reef ecosystems, upon which many poor citizens depend for survival. This is also good for tourism. Relatedly, one cannot sustain pristine areas for tourism, and also pursue heavily resource-oriented activities such as mining, etc. There is a need for greater congruence and consistency, with urgent moves from extractive economic activities to those built on the long-term strength and health of oceans and seas;

- **Surveillance and Enforcement of Laws of Maritime Crime and Terrorism**

The new sustainable development framework must include strengthening of UNCLOS and ISA in line with Agenda 21 and human rights principles, as part of global efforts to strengthen the unfinished business of MDG8, on effective and just global governance systems. Also recognition of Maestricht Principles on Extraterritoriality, and greater resources for recognition and implementation of multilateral global maritime governance, including in territorial waters and areas beyond national jurisdiction.

8) Regarding focus Area 17: Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Forests are one of the most important ecosystems on which millions of forest dwelling people depend, many of them indigenous women, men and hunter gathers scatters in different regions around the Globe. We therefore appreciate the fact that you recognize Indigenous peoples vital role on sustainable development and much welcome your proposal for an integrated goal on ecosystems conservation that

includes forests, land-use, and recognition of Indigenous Peoples' role, on biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and "access and benefit sharing".

We disagree with some Member States who want to take forests out of this focus area, and want to see forest purely as a monetary value and a random collection of trees rather than, as ecosystems which sustain livelihoods, for many indigenous peoples, women, and their local communities, but also as the freshwater providers for many of the mega cities in this world.

Let me give 3 proposals for improvement of this focus area:

1) In addition to a stand-alone goal, and in order to halt biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, we must promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the development agenda and keep reminding ourselves that biodiversity is not a problem to be solved, but rather an opportunity to help achieve our social and economic goals.

2) This Goal area should specifically mention Indigenous territories and Community Conserved Areas (ITCCA) as these area-based conservation mechanisms are even more effective than protected areas, and provide far more socio-economic and cultural benefits. We recommend you specifically set targets for ITCCA protection - as they are under great threat from extractive and infrastructure development.

3) Finally, we recommend that this area sets stronger targets for reversing the negative drivers of forest loss. 80% of forest loss due to unsustainable Agriculture including unsustainable livestock production - this includes the soy monocultures for the meat we eat every day - as well as the large-scale industrial bioenergy production - the mono-tree and other crop plantations which are market as 'green' but are devastating because of land grabbing, displacement, chemical contamination and water extraction.

9) Regarding focus Area 18: Means of Implementation

We welcome for developed countries to recommit to meet ODA targets, especially in light of the recent decline in ODA flows.

We are concerned, however, that the focus area text does not recognize that Means of Implementation must **address both the mobilization of financial resources and technology, and the international architecture that determines States' ability to use those resources** for sustainable development, namely the global trade and financial framework.

International financial institutions and trade policies require fundamental, structural reform. Taking the key issue of sovereign debt: The IMF and World Bank, despite some debt cancellation initiatives, continue to require a total debt service that is reportedly 5 times that of total annual ODA flows to developing countries. Ensuring long-term debt sustainability is included under "means of implementation" in the Rio+ 20 outcome document, and we therefore call for sovereign debt to be specifically addressed by the Open Working Group.

Our second principal concern is that, consistent with the Rio+20 outcome document, **new sources of financing such as public-private partnerships and South-South** cooperation must be recognized as **complementary and not a substitute** for traditional means of implementation.

We caution however that private public partnerships can seem financially attractive because of accounting that hides fiscal risks and costs. **These partnerships risk worsening inequality in income** and access by socializing costs while privatizing benefits. Moreover, the profit-orientation of the private sector and the fact it's not required to invest in global public goods means that the public sector must be at the center of sustainable development financing.

Investment is highlighted in the focus area text as a promising additional source of financing, yet bilateral and **multilateral investment treaties allow significant infringement** by corporate actors on national policy space that should be protected to allow rights-based, development-oriented social and economic policies.

Third, we wish to highlight that means of implementation encompasses **capacity-building and technology transfer**. While the focus area text makes some mention of technology transfer, it misses critical points from the Rio+20 outcome document, and we draw your attention particularly to paragraphs 269 to 273. We emphasize that developing countries must have **equitable access to environmentally sound technologies**, which may require lifting intellectual property barriers. In this regard, we refer to the work of the Technology Working Group and its recommendations pertaining to least developed countries. We also need **independent assessment and monitoring of technologies which risk a worsening** of inequalities and damage to ecosystems and the climate.

Fourth, we emphasize that the **principle of common but differentiated responsibilities** applies to means of implementation on the whole, and not just climate policy; and that the obligations of States should be commensurate with their stage of development.

Finally, we call for a **standalone goal on global partnership**. Effective means of implementation requires a strengthened global partnership that can create the necessary systemic change.

10) Regarding focus Area 19: Peaceful and Non-violent Societies, Capable Institutions

It is critical that the Post-2015 SDG agenda address root causes of violence and conflict and builds on existing commitments to promote sustainable development and peace.

First, the SDGs should strengthen investment in peace rather than current investments in violence and conflict.

We call for targets to reduce spending on militaries and armaments, eliminating stockpiles and production of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, and demilitarizing the lands, territories, waters and oceans particularly of Indigenous Peoples.

Second, the SDGs should strengthen support for inclusive and gender equitable participation. We call for a separate focus area on governance, which includes a clear mandate and mechanisms for how civil society and marginalized groups, including children, youth, women and indigenous people, can influence government at the national and international levels.

This should include the establishment of platforms for participation and co-creation, and public access to information, in which civil society could play a role in data gathering and monitoring.

Third, we demand state and non-state actors take action to eliminate and implement protective measures against human rights abuses including child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour killings, and other harmful traditional practices, and violence committed on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We ask that the SDGs recognize the critical contribution of women's participation and rights to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Finally, the SDGs should ensure the rule of law to address impunity – particularly regarding sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. We call for strengthened accountability mechanisms at the international, regional and national levels, including for police and private military corporations, to

prevent human trafficking, arms smuggling, and the proliferation of drug cartels. Mechanisms should include strategic response plans to control and prevent endemic community violence from groups such as urban gangs, vigilante organizations, and/or ethnic militias.

11) Regarding focus area 1 and 12: on Poverty Eradication and Promoting Equality

We are glad that the text acknowledges the multidimensional causes of poverty, and that inequalities within and between countries need to be addressed, and that instruments to of poverty eradication include social protection for those living in poverty, and that you mention a number of vulnerable groups which need to be focussed on, including the mention of women, youth, indigenous peoples, older persons. However, we feel that this section lacks recent global understanding of how poverty and inequalities are increasing in particular in some higher and middle income countries, and that we need to address not only the bottom poverty but also the top wealth in order to reach sustainable development. Addressing power structures, redistributive mechanisms such as progressive taxation and universal social protection and services need to be part of the solution, and should be clearly mentioned in this section.

12) Focus Area 7, 9 and 10: Energy, Industrialization and Infrastructure

We express our concern at the regressive language of **industrialization and infrastructure**, which seems to be replacing the notion of sustainable development in this document. Clearly basic social services and the necessary infrastructure are a pre-requisite for poverty eradication, but the SDGs need to set clear targets that major infrastructure. The SDGs should set targets to which lead to social, economic and environmental sound investments in infrastructure, **which benefit women and men living in poverty**, with a focus on public and basic services as well as rehabilitation of environmental ecosystems essential to their livelihoods. SDGs should target investments in sustainable, local and household services, and move away from environmentally and social harmful focus on mega-projects aimed at corporations and the top income groups.

Access to safe, renewable and environmentally-friendly energy is central to sustainable development and reduction of poverty, **we therefore support the inclusion of both stand alone and cross cutting goals and targets on “safe, renewable and environmentally-friendly energy” in the SDGs.**

However, the focus area 7 does not sufficiently address the existing drawbacks of unjust and unsustainable energy systems which harm **the environment, climate, communities, and especially women. A transformative Post 2015 agenda must address this power imbalance – of the continuing corporate influence/control in the way the world produces, distributes and consumes energy at the expense of the people and the planet.**

We therefore call for following targets:

- **Women should be fully and equally involved in decision-making about energy policies and should have equal access to and control over safe, fair and renewable energy sources.**
- Redirect incentives from current detrimental energy sources to the development of efficient, low carbon, renewable, and clean energy infrastructure.

- Establish a “just energy transition program” that promotes community-based decentralized renewable energy systems and transitions energy workers to decent employment paying living wages.
- Prioritize decentralised and democratically controlled energy generation and use, with decision making parity by women.
- Results in more equitable access to energy which means meeting everybody’s fundamental energy needs while reducing excessive energy consumption at the same time;
- Protect the climate, ecosystems, and communities', including women's livelihoods and rights.

There seems to be a **deliberate absence of addressing the aspects of long term damage** to the climate, the great and unsolved costs of radioactive waste and pollution, the health damage from coal fired power plants, and lately the water pollution by shale gas fracking.

Clearly, the SDGs need to set clear targets to :

- **Phase out existing destructive energy sources** (coal, nuclear, large scale hydro, industrial biofuel)
- **Remove direct and indirect fossil fuel and nuclear energy subsidies**, especially in developed nations
- **Remove perverse incentives e.g. carbon offsets**

The SDGs also need to set targets to increase energy efficiency strongly in the period of the SDGs

However, efficiency alone is not enough, and SDGS need to set targets for **absolute caps to reduce (over-)consumption, especially in Northern countries**, so as to halt the current trend where increasing energy demand in the global North is provided by socially and environmentally questionable energy sources in the global South, for instance, large-scale wood-based bioenergy.

Definition of energy: Special attention needs to be paid on what is being offered as ‘modern’ sources of energy since experiences from nuclear energy have shown that these can result even more detrimental. We thus resort to the use of the precautionary principle in any new type of ‘modern’ energy that is being offered as an alternative and call for a clear definition of safe, renewable and environmentally friendly energy which exclude nuclear energy.

This document was prepared in particular with input from following members of the Women’s Major Group: FEMNET, APWLD, AWID, WECF, GFC, IWHC, RESURJ, IPPF-WH, DAWN, DIVA, ICAE, Indigenous Information Centre, IBON, Red Climatica, G.Bowser, HUAIROU, FAS, WILPF

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