



Women's Major Group contribution for the Sixth session of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Goals (9-13 December 2013, NY)

Analysis and key recommendations on Needs of Countries in Special Circumstances - Small Island Developing States (SIDs)¹

As acknowledged in the recent regional and interregional meetings of SIDS States, women from small island states possess complex knowledge and skills that are fundamental to social, economic and ecological sustainability. They play critical roles in all areas of sustainable development; and organized women are at the centre of addressing issues on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR); public health; education; empowerment; demilitarisation; food sovereignty; renewable energy; climate change; ocean acidification; biodiversity loss and ecological degradation; debt sustainability; land insecurity and land grabs, and many other priorities;

Despite this, references to gender equality concerns are almost entirely absent in the UNTST issue brief on needs of countries in special circumstances. Gender is mentioned in passing in the discussion on progress toward achieving the MDGs. A brief reference is also made to positive progress on gender alongside 'health and certain educational and environmental goals.'²

The UNTST issue brief omits the fact that women play the largest role in unpaid work, the care economy and social reproduction in small island states. They are also crucial food producers and leaders in agriculture and fisheries. This is unfortunately consistent with SDG and Post 2015 text to date, where gender equality is inadequately framed as a mainstreaming concern, instead of as a core transformative aspect of sustainable development. In some instances it is almost completely invisibilised.

¹ This WMG handout was collaboratively developed from the analysis and advocacy of Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Punanga Tauturu Inc, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, along with other allied SIDS groups including Pacific Youth Network, Diverse Voices and Action for Equality, Fiji, ISACI Inc, and others

² Technical Support Team of the Sixth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, TST Issues Brief: Needs of Countries in Special Situations – African Countries, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing Middle-Income Countries (<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1678>)

While we agree that the economic dimension of sustainable development is essential to eradicate poverty, and that to date it has not received sufficient attention in the SDGs and Post 2015 Development process, the WMG insists that in addition to foregrounding economic dimensions of sustainable development, we must be clear on the specific kind of transformative attention required. For example, while we agree with the Issues brief on the importance of economic development to eliminate poverty, we note that they are vague on their exact proposals. The WMG is very clear that sustainable development must focus on redistribution of societal resources through a gender-equitable, rights-based, socially oriented and ecologically sound development framework.

This requires the underlying development paradigm to be redefined and renegotiated in the Post 2015 Development agenda - from one focused on economic growth to that which is based on economic justice.³ For instance, environmental degradation and climate change impacts can no longer be framed as an externality to economic development. Rather, claims of economic development cannot be named as such, if social and ecological costs are high.

This also underscores the important work toward alternative conceptions of development, and new indicators of sustainable development as begun by many states, in order to adequately define and describe costs and gains. But there is a cautionary note. Such alternate development paradigms and indicators may indeed call for profound economic changes, but they do not measure or address unfair distribution of wealth, assets, and power. They can also be embedded in persistent and intersecting inequalities and multiple discriminations based on age, class, caste, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity disabilities and other status.⁴

The Women's Major Group asserts that the current global development system plays a major role in exacerbating patriarchal inequalities. The small scale, ecological complexity and remoteness of most small island states add to the intersecting impacts on women, girls and their communities. Ordinary women in SIDS continue to bear the burden of unsustainable export-oriented economic growth, with environmental disasters exacerbating persistent poverty and rising social inequalities, human rights violations and discriminations. Women in the SIDS states face overall high levels of economic, social and environmental injustice. **Accordingly, SIDS-related WMG recommendations at OWG6 negotiations toward the SDGs and Post 2015 Development Agenda are as follows:**

- As repeatedly conveyed to the UN Secretary General and Member States, WMG reiterate our unequivocal call for a **“stand-alone gender equality goal”** in the post 2015 development agenda, as well as, gender equality and women's rights as a cross-cutting priority in all dimensions of sustainable development;
- Also calling for strongest action on SRHR including universal access to quality, comprehensive integrated sexual and reproductive health services, commodities, counseling and information for women, youth and adolescent girls, with respect for their human rights;

³ The Bangkok Civil Society Declaration (<http://peoplesgoals.org/bangkok-civil-society-declaration-from-inclusive-to-just-development/#sthash.qgjJVlna.dpuf>)

⁴ Nabulivou, N. in *Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Priorities*, WMG. 2013: http://www.womenrio20.org/docs/Womens_priorities_SDG.pdf

- Sustainable development must include the right to education, a human right that promotes all other rights. Women, adolescents and girls must receive comprehensive education and, information services, that, respect their, human, rights, throughout, their, life, cycle. We therefore urge SIDS states to provide all forms of education, including non-formal and popular education for children, young people and adults as rights holders. The right to education throughout life should be an integral part of the definition of a new paradigm of development.⁵
- SIDS Constitutions, legislation, policies and programmes must also recognise and (re) distribute to women, equitable shares of decision-making and access to food, water, land, agriculture, fisheries, livelihoods, crafts, indigenous and other natural medicines, and other forms of wealth. This includes women's land tenure and use rights including through land reform programs and ancestral domains regulation;
- The WMG affirms that care and social reproduction is intrinsically linked with the productive economy, and must therefore be fully reflected in both microeconomic and macroeconomic policy, with governments, fulfilling their human rights, obligations. Government must also „ advance the multiple dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated manner. At a minimum, governments must support their tax base through progressive policies and address gendered labour market segregation; ensure quality education and healthcare, full, employment, decent work and a living wage. At the same they must also promote the re-distribution of unpaid care work among social actors inside and outside households;⁶
- WMG and regional civil society groups call on SIDS states to quickly phase out extractive industries including land and ocean-based mining and, industrial bio-energy, and re-orienting national agricultural plans toward local small holder agro-ecology, practices- including making, women's, work, and, contributions, visible, recognising their human rights, and, guaranteeing their land tenure and, food, sovereignty;⁷
- As well as land-based focus, the WMG also strongly calls for an SDG Goal on Oceans, and for healthy oceanic ecosystems to be a core aim of sustainable development;
- States must urgently initiate an implementing agreement to UNCLOS to address the survival, conservation and repair of already-heavily impacted marine biodiversity and marine ecosystems, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This includes specific attention to ocean acidification, heavy metal, mercury and plastics pollution, among other issues;

⁵ Conference on Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: monitoring the development agenda post-2015 and Rio +20. Bogotá, March 2013

⁶ Women's Major Group Strengthening Gender Justice: Recommendations,for,the,Sustainable Development Goals and the,Post-2015,Development,Agenda, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, September 2013.

⁷ Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post2015DA -A Consultation with CSOs'; Report by UN-NGLS, for the UN Secretary General, General Assembly and the OWG on the Sustainable Development Goals. 2013

- Building on the work of the ad hoc working group and before the end of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, States also need to address the issue of rescue, repair and conservation of marine biological diversity, coral reefs and other ecosystems including in areas beyond national jurisdiction, by taking a negotiated decision on the development of an international instrument under UNCLOS;
- States must also promote and protect community-based governance models for marine protected areas and set targets for the implementation of the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries;
- On industrial fisheries, Pacific tuna stocks and in particular big eye and yellow-fin tuna, are at record low levels, an extremely concerning situation as the Pacific tuna industry is often termed, *'the last healthy tuna fisheries stock in the world'*. There are many who would now disagree. Therefore as integral to ocean governance, all States must eliminate subsidies for industrial fishing fleets and in particular end the exploitative use of purse seiners and fish aggregation devices. According to many SIDS, there may even be need for targeted high seas fisheries closures to ensure sustainable fisheries;
- Additionally, there is urgent need of resources toward strongest regimes for monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing vessels to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Large catch nations must be responsible for these costs. SIDS have already called for global compliance with national laws and for strengthened regime on fisheries security and conservation management measures at regional and international levels. This also requires compliance of market States, port States, flag States and coastal States with robust and accountable catch documentation throughout the market chain. In the upcoming 2014 Year of the SIDS, there is no better time to ensure the health and sustainability of SIDS fisheries.
- Along with oceanic health, climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and SIDS continue to be leaders in the struggle to comprehensively address climate justice from the local to the global. This is because the threats are immense, and immediate. The WMG therefore calls for increased international resourcing of community adaptation, resilience and emergency plans for SIDS, LDCs, Coastal and other affected communities. This includes development and implementation of clear contingency plans to address climate change, sea-level rise including effects of king tides, ocean acidification, increased natural disasters and other associated risks including water supply, food sovereignty - as well as the deeper risk of loss of one's entire homeland;
- On climate change financing, the recent turbulent COP19 meeting was an indicator of the global struggle toward climate justice. This must include the implementation of a Loss and Damage mechanism dealing with much more than adaptation and mitigation. Rather, it must operationalise common but differentiated responsibilities and historical responsibility. What remains to be seen is whether these and other COP19 outcomes result in any new, unconditional and easily distributed climate funding.

- Wider on MOI, there is need for OWG6 text to advance the following: Honouring agreed ODA pledges including specific attention to LDCs; genuine aid for trade schemes without conditionalities that favour donor states; differentiated market access for states based on their special circumstances; removal of industry and fossil fuel subsidies by OECD states; sovereign debt relief and international debt resolution mechanism; FTTs, technical assistance and capacity building support provided as continued Agenda 21 obligations; increased technology transfer, and strengthened SIDs-SIDS and South-South cooperation.
- Across the economic South and with attention to special circumstances of States, natural disaster risk management must be integrated into all facets of national development planning, starting from policy formulation and development level to budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. SIDS must ensure in the context of climate change, that mechanisms are provided to alleviate the impact of extreme weather events and disasters including floods, tsunamis, storm surges, hurricanes and earthquakes such as the one that devastated Haiti in 2010, with other SIDS recently affected including Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Jamaica, Cuba, the Bahamas, Barbados and more recently, our neighbor in the Pacific - the Philippines. This includes implementing provisions to mitigate the impact of the displacement of populations and the availability of social safety net such as re-location expenses, compensation and unconditional grants for relief, rebuilding and recovery.
- Toward protection of SIDs communities, the WMG call for the strongest protection and defense of long-agreed key principles and commitments achieved at the UN Conference on Environment and Development 20 years ago, in Agenda 21, and reaffirmed and supplemented in follow up conferences including in BPoA and MSI *inter alia*, and overall reaffirmed in Rio+20 Outcome document, *'The Future We Want'*. These include sustainable development principles of critical importance to SIDs, LDCs and LLDCs such as the precautionary principle; common but differentiated responsibilities and historical responsibility. Also the polluter pays principle; access to information, participation and justice; transfer of proven and appropriate technology; and free, prior and informed consent, of particular concern to indigenous people, women and girls, young people, children, people with diverse and non-heteronormative sexuality and gender identities, people with disabilities, and many others;
- Finally, as repeatedly articulated by States and civil society in recent SIDS regional and interregional meetings, the Post 2015 Development Agenda must include specific text on the needs of countries in specific circumstances at every OWG session, and indeed in every set of reports and negotiations. This includes attention to the special circumstances of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), African countries, Middle-Income countries and Small island Developing States (SIDS).
- **What is exceedingly clear to the people of small island states as with many others across the world, is that this Post 2015 Development Agenda must be sufficient to address the rapidly escalating scale and intensity of loss and damage to humans and the planet, where the goal is no longer sustainability but that of survival.**

