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## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL: GENDER EQUALITY FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

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### **Abstract**

Empowerment of women and girls is to be realized through sustainable development. Sustainable development depends on an equitable distribution of resources and it cannot be achieved without gender equality. Gender Equity is the process of allocating resources, programs, and decision making fairly to both males and females without any discrimination on the basis of sex...and addressing any imbalances in the benefits available to males and females. Diane Elson, an adviser to UN Women, argues in her contribution that "the disproportionate responsibility that women bear for carrying out unpaid work is an important constraint on their capacity to realize their rights... Both women and men need time to care for their families and communities, and time free from such care." Women's empowerment is a key factor for achieving sustainability. Sustainable development and sustainability have various meaning .Sometime it may be equitable distribution of resources and opportunities or living within the limits or sometime it may be defined as understanding the interconnections among economy, society, and environment. Sustainable development is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights including freedom and equal opportunities for all. Sustainability cannot exist without equity in the distributional process. Women and girls are crucial contributors, implementers and beneficiaries of sustainable development. At the Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. Women's empowerment through gender equality is a cross-cutting development issue, and unless addressed in multidimensional way, gender equality will not become a reality. Women's contribution to sustainable development must be recognized. Women have a strong role in education and socializing their children, including teaching them care and responsibility. In order to build women as catalyst for sustainable development, their role in family, community and society at large has to free from socio-cultural and religious traditions that prevent women participation. The secondary data will be used for this paper. The objective of this paper is to highlights the essentials of women contribution in sustainable development as partner and beneficiaries.

**Keywords:** Equity; Sustainable Development; Empowerment; Gender Equality; Human Rights.

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## 1. Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established in 2000/1 and consist of eight development objectives to be achieved by 2015. There is need, however, for a successor framework once the MDGs expire in 2015. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) played a pivotal role in defining the MDGs. The OECD has a number of areas of expertise which could play an important role in shaping this post-2015 agenda and framework. The OECD proposes eleven areas which would be of particular relevance (Beyond the MDGs: Towards an OECD contribution to the post-2015 agenda). This brochure focuses on policy coherence for inclusive and sustainable development.

- 1) Measuring what you treasure and keeping poverty at the heart of development
- 2) Developing a universal measure of educational success
- 3) Achieving gender equality and women's rights
- 4) Integrating sustainability into development
- 5) Strengthening national statistical systems
- 6) Building effective institutions and accountability mechanisms
- 7) Developing and promoting peace building and state building goals
- 8) Policy coherence for inclusive and sustainable development
- 9) Sharing knowledge and engaging in policy dialogue and mutual learning
- 10) Promoting the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
- 11) Measuring and monitoring development finance

The United Nations has accepted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with specific targets to achieve within stipulated time. The common goal of SDGs that no one will be left behind is a move towards equitable, egalitarian and inclusive society for all. It is a global call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that people enjoy peace, get justice and prosper. It is not only the responsibility of scientists, policy makers, governing institutions to give us safe environment but we social scientists, scientists, NGOs have to join hands to explore opportunities and find strategies to protect our social, economic and environmental health. This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. For sustainable development, eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions is accepted as the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement till 2030.

## 2. The Concept Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The concept of the SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, and economic. The SDGs are built on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 17

Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets decided at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 25-27 September 2015, which came into force on the 1st of January 2016, demonstrate the scale and ambition of the new universal Agenda. The new SDGs go much further than the MDGs, addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. The specific targets of each SDG are to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs are built on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, contrarily to the MDGs that were intended for action in developing countries only, the SDGs apply to all countries. “They seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”.

The SDGs cover the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. (Fig. 1)

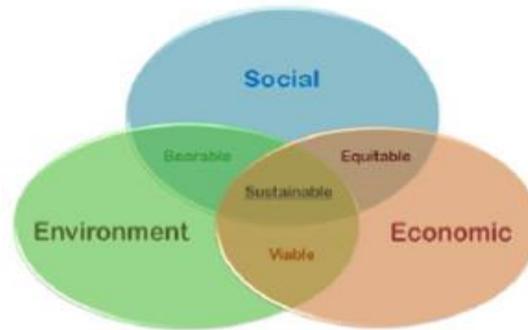


Figure 1:

Source: <http://www.thesustainableleader.org/>

UN has also put forward the idea of six essential elements that help frame and reinforce the universal integrated and transformative nature of the Sustainable Development Agenda. (Fig. 2)



Figure 2:

Source: “The Road to Dignity by 2030 – Synthesis report of the Secretary General on the post-2015 Agenda”, UN, 4 December 2014.  
[http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG\\_Synthesis\\_Report\\_Road\\_to\\_Dignity\\_by\\_2030.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf)

### **3. Empowerment, Women's Empowerment & Human Rights**

#### **3.1. Empowerment**

Empowerment can be defined as a "multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives.

#### **3.2. Women's Empowerment**

Women's empowerment means women gaining more power and control over their own lives. It can also be seen as an important process in reaching gender equality, which means "rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female". According to the UN Population Fund, an empowered woman has control over her own life, both within and outside the home, and she has the ability to influence the direction of social change. Women need to be "empowered" in order to narrow the "gender gap" and to create an equal playing field between women and men before gender equality can be reached and maintained.

According to UN World Survey (2014) on the "Role of Women in Development 2014", there are proven synergies between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability. Women's active participation in decision-making facilitates the allocation of public resources to investments in human development priorities, including education, health, nutrition, employment and social protection. Empowerment should not be seen as a zero-sum game where gains for women automatically imply losses for men. In fact, according to UN World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014, there are proven synergies between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability. Women's active participation in decision-making facilitates the allocation of public resources to investments in human development priorities, including education, health, nutrition, employment and social protection. For example, as female education levels rise, infant and child mortality rates fall and family health improves. Education also increases women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to household and national income. Women's increased earning capacity, in turn, has a positive effect on children's nutrition, health and educational prospects.

#### **3.3. Human rights**

The "rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female". The Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 recognizes that gender equality is a matter of human rights, the foundation of democracy and good governance, and the cornerstone of inclusive, sustainable development. It acknowledges the underpinnings of gender inequality, namely the unequal gender power relations and gender-biased social norms that discriminate against women and girls, marginalizing them from the benefits of social, economic and political change.

## 4. Gender & Gender Equity Vs Gender Equality

### 4.1. Gender

Gender refers to the social differences and relations between men and women. This refers to socially and culturally ascribed roles to men and women. Gender roles are learned behaviors. The term gender does not replace the term sex, which refers to biological differences between men and women. Gender roles are affected by age, class, race, ethnicity and religion, and by the geographical, economic and political environment.

### 4.2. Gender Equity

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Gender equity is the process of allocating resources, programs and decision-making fairly to both males and females. It does not necessarily mean making the same programs and facilities available to both males and females.

### 4.3. Gender Equality

Gender equality means that the different behaviour and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality requires equal enjoyment of valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards by women and men. It is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources in case of gender inequalities.



*Gender Equality focuses on creating the same starting line for everyone*

*Gender Equity has the goal of providing everyone with the full range of opportunities and benefits – the same finish line*

## 5. Sustainable Development and Women Empowerment

Sustainable Development:-The Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In order to achieve sustainable development, the three core elements that need to be harmonized are-economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. Sustainable development aims at eradicating poverty through, in particular, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living and fostering equitable social development and inclusion.

Sustainable Development and Women Empowerment:-Sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality. It also depends on an equitable distribution of resources. Women's empowerment is a key factor for achieving sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. It is based on the principles and brings about solidarity within and between generations. In almost all countries, women are sharing the primary responsibility for nutrition, child care and household management. In most developing countries, women play a major role as animal tenders, farmers, and water and fuel collectors. Women took active part in the Rio Earth Summit process and succeeded in obtaining a chapter on women and sustainable development and over one hundred references and recommendations pertaining to women in the final agreement, Agenda 21. The 1992 Rio Summit, together with the 1993 Human Rights Conference, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Social Summit and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, have focused the work of the United Nations on the environment, population, human rights, poverty and gender, and the relationships between these issues. In Rio, women were considered a "major group" whose involvement was necessary to achieve sustainable development. The United Nations system is in the process of mainstreaming a gender-perspective in its work. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, emphasized that empowerment, full participation and equality for women are the foundations for peace and sustainable development.

## 6. The European Union New Gender Action Plan 2016-2020

On 21 September 2015, the European Union (EU) released its new framework, *Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020* – the new EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) for 2016-2020. This succeeds the 2010-2015 GAP, which suffered from weak institutional leadership, accountability and capacity.

The new GAP outlines an ambitious approach to gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment, and the promotion, protection and fulfillment of women's and girls' human rights, thus meeting the mandate outlined in the 2014.

It seeks to concentrate the efforts of all EU actors (EEAS, Delegations, Commission services and Member States) and Taking action and transforming lives through four pivotal areas:

- Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity
- Promoting the economic and social rights / empowerment of girls and women

- Strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation
- Shifting the Commission services' and the EEAS' institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments

It promotes and supports gender equality and respect for women's and girls' human rights.

## **7. Role of Industry in Promoting Sustainable Development**

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) while highlighting" role of industry in promoting sustainable development" recognize that

"Industry provides the foundation for entrepreneurship, promotes business investment, fosters technological upgrading and dynamism, improves human skills, creates jobs and establishes the foundation on which both agriculture and services may expand. It is therefore the principal source of employment creation and income generation" UNIDO recognize the fact that the most vulnerable groups throughout the world are youth and women. "The empowerment of women, and in particular their economic empowerment, has a positive impact on sustainable economic growth and sustainable industrial development. UNIDO aims, in its programmes, to integrate women into the growth and development process, which in turn, yields positive multiplier effects for households, communities and ultimately national economies".

## **8. Importance of Education for Sustainable Development**

The Incheon Declaration (21 May 2015) at the World Education Forum (WEF 2015) held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, Recognize the importance of education as a main driver of Sustainable development

*"The Incheon Declaration rightly commits us to non-discriminatory education that recognizes the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development. This is a crucial opportunity for us\ to work together, across sectors, towards the fulfillment of the Education for All promise of peaceful, just and equal societies. A world where people are equal can only be achieved if our education also universally teaches this".*

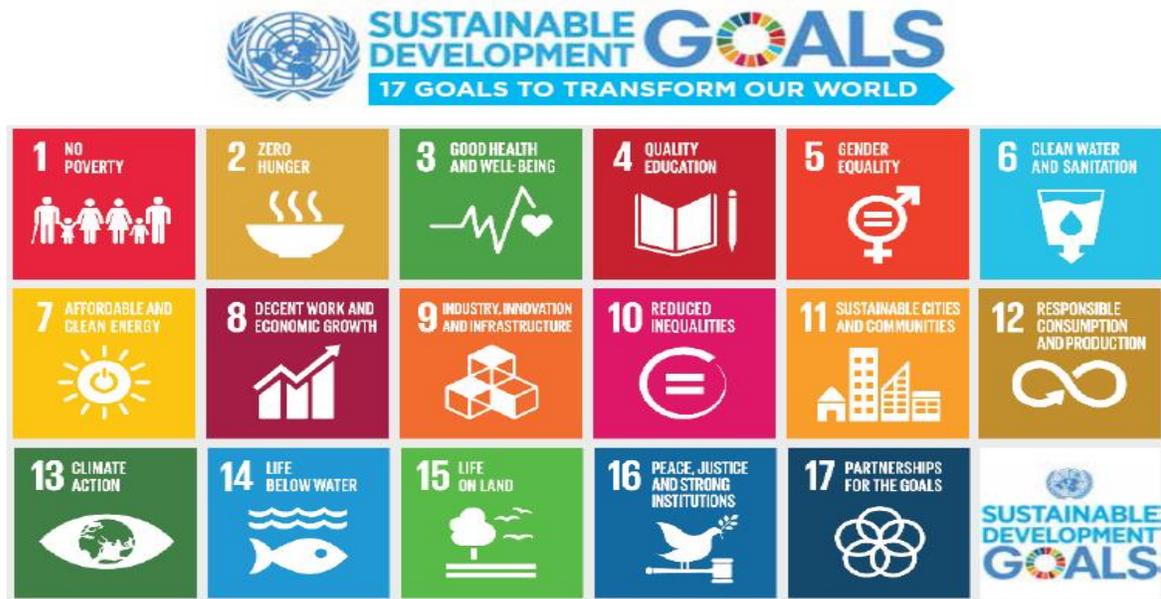
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director

The importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all has been recognized. A transformative education agenda should include 'inclusion and equity' in and through education. Commitment had been shown to develop gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools. UN World Survey on "the Role of Women in Development 2014", as female education levels rise, infant and child mortality rates fall and family health improves. Education also increases women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to household and national income. Women's increased earning capacity, in turn, has a positive effect on children's nutrition, health and educational prospects.

## 9. The 17 Proposed Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169, targets to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, the social and environmental. Beyond the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that emphasized only equality of opportunity, the 2030 (SDGs) Agenda acknowledges that equality must be based on both *opportunity and outcome*. Many other targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are linked to women's empowerment: there are targets on gender dimensions of poverty, health, education, employment and security. These goals are the showcase that how women are affected by 17 proposed SDG,s as well as how women and girls can — and will — be key to achieving each of these goals. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are:

- 1) End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- 2) End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- 3) Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- 4) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- 5) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- 6) Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- 7) Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- 8) Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- 9) Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster Innovation
- 10) Reduce inequality within and among countries
- 11) Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- 12) Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- 13) Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- 14) Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- 15) Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- 16) Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- 17) Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



Source: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

### **10. Sustainable Development Goal-5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls**

The following target has been included to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls:

- 1) End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
- 2) Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- 3) Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
- 4) Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
- 5) Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;
- 6) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;

10.1. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;

10.2. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;

10.3. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Ways to achieve SDG-5, efforts and interventions (UN Women Communications and Advocacy Section in New York, analysis report).UN Women works to empower women and girls by:

- Advancing women's political participation and leadership and economic empowerment
- Promoting women's role and leadership in preventing conflicts, ensuring peace and security
- Raise awareness about violence, its causes, consequences, efforts needed to prevent and respond
- Work to ensure that governments should reflect on the needs of women and girls in their planning and budgeting
- Engagement of boys and men to become champions of gender equality

## 11. Conclusion

Women need to be "empowered" in order to narrow the "gender gap" and to create an equal playing field between women and men before gender equality can be reached and maintained. All SDG's are talking about gender sensitizations in one or the other way. The contribution of women in all fields needs to be enhanced by ensuring their full economic growth. Gender bias is still deeply embedded in cultures, economies, political and social institutions around the world. Women and girls face unacceptable levels of discrimination and abuse, which is not only wrong, but also, prevents them from playing a full part in society and decision-making. Yet women's empowerment must not mean simply adding to their burdens of responsibilities or building expectations of women as 'sustainability saviors'. To mainstream the involvement of women and girls in sustainable development, it demands a change in attitudes and behaviour towards women and girls across all levels. All 17 SDG's will collectively help to achieve gender equality through women empowerment and only the achievement of SDG-5 alone will not create a gender-equal world. All countries should shoulder the responsibility and support each other countries side wise side to ensure the full implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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