Sustainable Development Goals and **Gender**

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Key issues covered:

A) Overview of the development policy process within the United Nations (UN): introducing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

B) The gender dimensions of the SDGs: recognising that gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, and that women's lack of access to land, natural resources and participation in decision-making is disempowering for women and leads to greater gender inequality; that issues such as unpaid care work disproportionately affect women and their participation in economic and political life; and that gender-disaggregated data is critical for enabling gender-responsiveness in planning, monitoring and implementation of the SDGs.

C) Transformative change to achieve the SDGs: accomplishing the SDGs calls for the adoption of a rights-based approach, which recognises human rights and the rights and free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and other rightsholder groups. This rejects corporate-driven SDG implementation and instead prioritises community-driven and non-market-based approaches to sustainable development.

D) Follow up and review processes of the SDGs: ensuring these processes reflect the experiences and impacts at the local level requires bottom-up approaches in monitoring and reporting and meaningful participation of women, men and youth at the grassroots level as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

A) Introduction to the SDGs

On 25 September 2015, the Heads of States of the UN 193 member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is the result of two policy processes that have merged, namely the sustainable development process, which was initiated following the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, and the development process, with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at its core. [1] The UN Millennium Declaration was adopted in September 2000, building upon a decade of major UN conferences and summits, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015. This became known as the MDGs. [2] It was intended that a new agenda would come in to place by 2015 that would draw on the lessons learned from the MDGs, avoiding previous mistakes such as silo approaches, and understanding the root causes underlying the current unsustainable and inequitable system. [3] The replacement SDGs would then try to overcome such obstacles and create a <u>universal</u> 'transformative' framework for the world's development. In the end, 17 Goals and 169 Targets were agreed upon by all governments in very complex negotiations that, despite some important setbacks, are still seen by some as a 'commendable achievement'. [4] The 17 SDGs are at the core of the 2030 Agenda. However, governments also negotiated other details and aspects, including the indicators for the 169 targets, [5] the Political Declaration, [6] the process for Monitoring and Accountability (through the High Level Political Forum), [7] and the financial and Non-financial means of implementation (through the Finance for Development process). [8]

17 Sustainable Development Goals:

1. **Poverty -** End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. **Food & Agriculture -** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. **Health and Well-being -** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. **Education -** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. **Gender Equality -** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. **Water and Sanitation -** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. **Energy -** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy for all
8. **Decent Work -** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure -** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. **Reduced Inequalities -** Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. **Sustainable Cities -** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. **Sustainable Consumption and Production -** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. **Climate Change -** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. **Oceans, seas, freshwater -** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. **Forests & biodiversity -** 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. **Peace & Justice -** 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. **Means of Implementation -** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

See full Declaration & Targets via https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

B) Gender dimensions of the SDGs

Gender as cross-cutting in the 2030 Agenda

An important outcome of the SDGs, unlike the MDGs, is that the agenda has standalone goals on biodiversity, ecosystems, oceans, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change, all of which recognise gender dimensions, and comprehensively aim to end poverty and hunger, ensure healthy lives, universal access to water and sanitation for all. [9] Given that gender inequality is one of the most pervasive threats to sustainable development, [10] we celebrate that gender in the 2030 Agenda is cross-cutting; by failing to recognise structural inequalities between men and women, the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women as well as the rights and opportunities entitled to women and girls, achieving sustainable development is not possible.

Until recently, gender and the environment were treated in separate silos. [11] In 1995, in the Beijing Platform for Action [12] this connection was finally spelled out and slowly started to gain recognition. This is

Community conservation in Panama. Ronnie Hall/CIC

Women in Kyrgyzstan process raw wool. UN Women/ Flickr

Community conservation with the Abolhassani tribal confederacy in Iran. Cenesta/CIC

approaches to environmental policies requires effective and meaningful participation of men and women in policy planning, implementation and monitoring. Gender equality cannot be measured by women's and men's 'presence' alone. Presence does not necessarily mean participation nor does it imply influence: the nature of people's participation is what makes their presence meaningful or not. [14]

now acknowledged in different international agreements, [13]

although translating these into practice has proven difficult. To date, evidence supports the inextricable link between environmental degradation and its differentiated impacts on rural and indigenous women and girls. Moreover, gender-responsive

Access to land and resources

The norm (rather than the exception) is for women to own less land and financial and other resources than male counterparts; due to this, although not necessarily exclusively, women participate less in management and economic decisions that will ultimately affect them. Land tenure then becomes a critical aspect of women's participation in decision-making and empowerment and thus, gender equality. Besides, there is also an important link between lacking access and rights to land tenure and poverty. At the same time, there is also a connection between being a female-headed household and higher chances of poverty (see Box 1.). These concerns should be tackled through SDG 1, especially given the notion that most of the world's poor are women (also known as 'the feminisation of poverty').

In vast areas where monoculture tree plantations or monocrops have been established, women have lost access to resources that they depend on for their livelihoods; they are mostly dependent on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for income, food and energy. Losing these resources not only translates into difficulties for survival and increased chances of hunger but also the cultural loss that comes along with it. Traditional knowledge regarding medicinal plants, native seed preservation, climate change adaptation, and spiritual values, to name a few, also get lost when communities are further dispossessed. Land competition for overexploitation of resources, whether mining or agro-industrial production for example, results in significant negative impacts on women and girls, including increased

Case study: Women's access to land and resources in Ethiopia by Patricia Howard, researcher from the Wageningen University (Antonios, 2006) [15]

In Tigray, Ethiopia—one of the poorest regions in the world—there is a highly significant correlation between extreme poverty and households where the head of the household is a woman. Belonging to such a household means one is 35% more likely to be poor, compared to an 8% chance in households led by a man. In addition, women heads of family often lack land ownership, and where they do own land, they are obliged to rent the land out, losing close to 50% of the harvest, because they lack enough workers or working animals to help them with direct harvesting. Thus many households headed by women depend on food aid. Additionally, in this area, there is limited access to forest and agricultural resources, which are also key for their livelihoods, because it is an area severely affected by soil erosion, deforestation, and overgrazing. Access has also been deteriorating, including because of physical delimitation with fences and monoculture plantations. Cultural prejudices also affect women in Tigray: there is a high divorce rate fragmenting agricultural activities as "getting a divorce and building a new family, especially for men, is a new way of accessing additional land." Despite this situation, the Ethiopian government has recently been involved in providing access to extensive areas of land to foreign investors, causing further harm to its people (Oakland Institute, 2011).

Young women in Tigray, Ethiopia. Rod Waddington/Flickr

gender-based violence due to displacement. [16] Thus, SDG 2 targets recognise the need for increased support to small-scale women farmers while SDG 5 focuses on Gender Equality.

Increased land competition for agro-industry expansion is growing, and vast areas of native forests are being cut down and replaced with monocrops and/or monoculture tree plantations worldwide. The very definition of

forests used by most UN organisations still considers an exotic species of trees and monoculture plantations as a forest; this paves the path for claims that 'deforestation rates have decreased'. Such industrial production monocultures require chemical input to combat pests, and therefore the monocultures provide little benefit to biodiversity in comparison to real forests that make up an entire ecosystem and include soil micro-organisms. In light of this, the implementation and achievement of SDG 15 faces significant challenges ahead. At the same time, women's role in biodiversity conservation is not recognised in the SDGs even though it is clearly present in the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) preamble and its Gender Plan of Action 2015-2020.

Women's unpaid care work

Factors such as the unpaid care work that many women and girls do worldwide, exert important effects in women's lack of participation in economic and political life given that it often bars them from acquiring further education, as well as other activities; it has been acknowledged that women's working schedule largely surpasses that of men if household work is included. Unfortunately, SDG 8 on decent work fails to recognise this. However, SDG 4 acknowledges the need for men and women to have the same opportunities and access to education. Health and well-being constitute the main issues of SDG 3. The time and energy invested in caring for children, the elderly, the ill and the weak should be recognised and redistributed, integrating all members in the household. Health problems triggered by environmental contamination often increase the workload of unpaid caretakers.

Sustainable consumption and production

SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production must take into account the specific experiences and burdens faced by different segments of society, for example, many industrial chemicals (such as endocrine disruptors for instance) have disproportionate effects on women and children. Renowned Goldman Environmental Prize winner (2012), Sofia Gatica, pioneered a campaign against the spraying of agrochemicals near human settlements after her newborn baby passed away as a result of spraying on soy fields near her home. The case was not an isolated one and Gatica's claims received scientific support, which then led to the prohibition of Monsanto's agrochemical use near human settlements in Argentina. [17]

Gender-disaggregated data

To ensure gender-responsive implementation of the SDGs as well as policy planning, monitoring and budgeting at the national level, it is necessary to collect gender-disaggregated data for the SDGs targets and indicators. It is important to know how women and girls are being affected by sustainable development policies, to identify gender gaps and inequities that are currently invisible, and to allow for actual gender-responsive implementation. This is a priority that is currently missing in the planning and reporting processes of many of the SDGs by most governments. Data disaggregation based on gender, age, geographical and other relevant aspects allows for the impacts and progress of SDG policies on women and girls to be measured. To assist in this process, governments can also support and take into account data collection from independent civil society organisations such as women's organisations.

C) The need for transformative change to achieve the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs seek to create a transformative framework for the world's development. Accomplishing the global targets therefore calls for transformative change that steers away from business as usual. Central to achieving this is adopting a rights-based approach including human rights and the rights and free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and other rightsholder groups. Land tenure and territorial rights is critical. Whilst no clear means of implementation has been outlined to achieve the SDGs, there is significant emphasis and proclivity at the UN to facilitate partnerships with the private sector to finance the implementation of the SDGs. Corporate-driven SDG implementation, including approaches that are market-based and propelled by private-sector led partnerships, would serve to undermine objective public policy goals and stand contrary to a rights-based framework that seeks to attain just sustainable development.

Achieving gender equality and recognising women's and girls' human rights as cross-cutting and essential to the success of the SDGs is crucial for genuine transformative change. Equitable and non-market based approaches such as community-based conservation initiatives and related traditional knowledge have proven to be more supportive of sustainable livelihoods, food security and effective conservation of the environment.

Case study: Gunduribadi Women as champions of sustainable community-based forest management in India by Sonali Pattnaik [18]

Box 2

Women from the Gunduribadi tribal village in the eastern Indian state of Odisha patrol their forests to prevent illegal logging. Around 27 households are working with fellow residents to map the boundaries of this 200-hectare forest that the community claims as their customary land. At the forefront of the movement are women from tribal communities in states like Odisha who are determined to make full use of a 2012 amendment to India's Forest Rights Act (FRA); a provision of the amended FRA gave forest dwellers and tribal communities the right to own, manage and sell non-timber forest products (NTFP), which some 100 million landless people in India depend on for income, medicine and housing. Women have emerged as the natural leaders of efforts to implement these legal amendments, as they have traditionally managed forestlands, sustainably sourcing food, fuel and fodder for the landless poor, as well as gathering farm-fencing materials, medicinal plants and wood to build their thatched-roof homes. Some 850 villages in the Nayagarh district of Odisha state are collectively managing 100,000 hectares of forest land, with the result that over half of the district's land mass now has forest cover, more than double India's national average of 21 percent. Forty years of illegal logging across the state's heartland forest belt, coupled with a major commercial timber trade in teak, sal and bamboo, left the hilltops bald and barren. Streams that had once irrigated small plots of farmland began to run dry, while groundwater sources gradually disappeared. As a result of the heavy felling of trees for the timber trade, Nayargh suffered six droughts in a 10-year span, which shattered a network of farm- and forest-based livelihoods. Villages emptied out as nearly half of the population fled in search of alternatives.

As the crisis escalated, Kesarpur, a village council in Nayagarh, devised a campaign that now serves as the template for community forestry in Odisha. The council allocated need-based rights to families wishing to gather wood fuel, fodder or edible produce. Anyone wishing to fell a tree for a funeral pyre or house repairs had to seek special permission. Villagers took it in turns to patrol the forest using the 'thengapali' system, literally translated as 'stick rotation'. The council imposed strict yet logical penalties on those who failed to comply. As the forests slowly regenerated, the villagers made additional sacrifices. Goats, considered quick-cash assets in hard times, were sold off and banned for 10 years to protect the fresh green shoots on the forest floor. Tribal women are charting the way to a sustainable future, along a path that begins and ends amongst the trees in the quiet of Odisha's forests.

Providing resources and capacity building support to such non-market based and community-led initiatives for implementing and monitoring the SDGs instead of private sector-led partnerships is important. Clear problems arise with co-existence between such community-defined and led sustainable development approaches and corporate-driven implementation. The commercial timber trade and years of illegal logging in Odisha, India, is an example (see Box 2) which led to depleted groundwater resources and destroyed the farm- and forest-based livelihoods of hundreds of villages. Implementation of SDGs by corporations are often driven by profit and business interests, and therefore tend to undermine public policy priorities related to human well-being and development.

Woman and daughter in India. sandeepachetan.com/Flickr

D) Accountability, civil society participation and Voluntary National Reports

The active and meaningful participation of civil society and social movements in the planning, implementation, follow-up and review of the SDGs is a key issue as well as the need for governments to be accountable to their national populations. Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) make up the central component of the follow-up and review mechanisms of the SDGs. Member states are 'encouraged' to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven"

(paragraph 79 of the 2030 Agenda). As VNRs are voluntary and country led, with no specifications regarding which SDGs are to be monitored, many governments may not report on progress made towards achieving Goal 5 on gender equality. This is highly problematic particularly as gender equality is a cross-cutting issue and essential to the achievement of the SDGs. In the first round of VNRs submitted at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2016, a total of 22 countries volunteered to submit VNRs. In most of these cases civil society were not consulted by governments or

minimally consulted in the preparations of the reports. [19]

There is no guidance yet as to the content of the reports or how often VNRs and other national SDG review processes should be undertaken by governments before 2030. The VNRs and review processes ought to build upon existing models that enable comparisons over time and across the SDG targets. Existing review mechanisms of UN human rights bodies can also provide insights for the VNRs and national review processes,

including for example, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism under the Human Rights Council, [20] CEDAW Committee, [21] and the Agreed Conclusions from the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). [22]

To make VNRs reflective of the experiences and impacts on the ground and in communities, the review process should involve bottom-up approaches and meaningful participation of rightsholders who are the assumed beneficiaries of the SDGs: women, men and youth at the grassroots level and their social movements, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities and non-governmental organisations. The participation of these groups in the process of developing VNRs is not yet institutionalised at the HLPF; the challenge that is faced now is that many governments have not made channels available for participation of rightsholders to give inputs during the entire preparation of VNRs.

However, the development of open, transparent, and regular review processes by governments that facilitate the inclusion of all relevant rightsholders at all levels of the planning, implementation, follow-up and review of the SDGs is necessary. This can be achieved through formal mechanisms such as dialogues and consultations with Major Groups [23] and other rightsholders, including at the national and regional levels and intergovernmental processes at the UN. Additionally, establishing channels for monitoring by Major Groups through Major Group submissions and shadow reporting during the preparation of VNRs at country level is also critical for collecting inputs and experiences from the ground. [24] The Major Groups and other rightholders play a key role in connecting with large constituencies, disseminating information, and coordinating input in intergovernmental processes at the UN. [25]

Institutionalising such participation mechanisms for rightsholders, including Indigenous People's Organisations, women's groups and other grassroots organisations, needs financial resources and capacity building. This would require governments to allocate funding, grants and capacity building support, particularly through national budgets, to enable rightsholders at all levels to meaningfully participate in the planning, implementation, follow up and review processes.

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[2] "Millenium Development Goals and Beyond 2015," United Nations, accessed 1 October 2016, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml

[3] "Millenium Development Goals and Beyond 2015," United Nations, accessed 1 October 2016, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml

[4] "Women's "8 Red Flags" following the conclusion of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Women's Major Group Final Statement – 21 July 2014", Women's Major Group, accessed 20 October 2016, http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Womens-Major-Group_OWG_FINALSTATEMENT_21July.pdf

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[6] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

[7] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf

[8] See http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/

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[10] UNEP, Global Gender and Environment Outlook: The Critical Issues (Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Environment Programme, 2016), http://web.unep.org/geo/sites/unep.org.geo/files/documents/ggeo_full_report.pdf

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[12] See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/

[13] Convention on Biological Diversity; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; Commission on the Status of Women; Agenda 2030; International Conference on Population and Development

[14] UNEP, Global Gender and Environment Outlook: The Critical Issues (Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Environment Programme, 2016), http://web.unep.org/geo/sites/unep.org.geo/files/documents/ggeo_full_report.pdf

[15] "Acceso desigual a los recursos naturales," Pierre Antonios, Oficial de informacion, FAO-Sala de prensa, Italy, http://www.fao.org/newsroom/es/news/2006/1000342/index.html

[16] OHCHR. 2016. "Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (former Independent Expert on human rights and the environment)", Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/SREnvironment/Pages/SRenvironmentIndex.aspx

[17] "Sofia Gatica: 2012 Goldman Prize Recipient South and Central America," Goldman Environmental Foundation, accessed 17 November 2016, http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/sofia-gatica/

[18] "Saving forests: Women sentinels of Gunduribadi," Sonali Pattnaik, India Together, accessed 17 November 2016, http://indiatogether.org/sentinels-of-gunduribadi-women

[19] "ISSUE #4: Voluntary Country Reviews – ensuring meaningful participation and ensuring gender equality targets and goals are at the forefront," Women's Major Group, accessed 17 November 2016, http://wedo.org/policy-brief-4-voluntary-country-reviews/

[20] See https://www.upr-info.org/en

[21] See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports.htm

[22] See http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/outcomes

[23] For more information about the different Major Groups, their contact details, and how to get involved, see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/about

[24] "Women's Major Group paper for the High Level Political Forum (2016)," Women's Major Group, accessed 17 November 2016, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=249&menu=3170

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