

POSITION PAPER

MONITORING GENDER EQUALITY  
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF  
WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE 2030  
AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT: OPPORTUNITIES  
AND CHALLENGES



On 2 August 2015, the outcome document of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 was agreed by consensus by Member States. The outcome document will be presented to the Summit for adoption in September 2015. From a gender perspective, the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets address many concerns and therefore represent a significant step forward compared to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As a result of a wide-ranging consultation process with United Nations Member States, civil society and international organizations, this position paper sets out UN Women's suggestions for global indicators to effectively monitor how the SDGs are being implemented for women and girls.

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**UN WOMEN**

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# INTRODUCTION

“Data on their own will not change lives, but we will not change lives without them. With the right metrics and illuminating information, we can inform policies, check on progress and hold leaders accountable if they fall behind on their commitments. We need 2030 to be the point when the lives of girls and women have been changed irreversibly, sustainably and substantively for the better.”

— **Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women**

On 2 August 2015, United Nations Member States agreed by consensus the draft document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*,<sup>1</sup> which will be presented for adoption to the General Assembly of the United Nations.<sup>2</sup> The Declaration states that “Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress”. The prioritization of gender equality and women’s rights is reflected in a cross-cutting manner throughout every part of the 2030 Agenda, including the declaration; goals, targets and indicators; means of implementation; global partnership; and follow-up and review.

From a gender perspective, the proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 Targets address development in its three dimensions of economic, social and environmental, and therefore represent a significant step forward from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition

to the targets in Goal 5 “*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*”, the targets in the other goals cover a comprehensive set of issues, including the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, safe cities and peace and security. There is a strong realization this time around that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is essential to achieve progress across all the goals and targets.

As stressed by all actors, the choice of indicators to monitor the implementation of the current framework is of critical importance and can to a large extent determine whether policy efforts are channelled adequately and the goals and targets are achieved or missed. Choosing the appropriate indicators and thorough and effective monitoring of progress on gender equality across all goals will be important to ensure that women and men and girls and boys are benefiting from implementation efforts.

Following a wide-ranging consultation process with United Nations Member States, civil society and international organizations, this paper sets out UN Women’s suggestions for indicators to effectively monitor how the SDGs are being implemented for women and girls.<sup>3</sup>

1 Available: [http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/08/120815\\_outcome-document-of-Summit-for-adoption-of-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf](http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/08/120815_outcome-document-of-Summit-for-adoption-of-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf)

2 After several working sessions beginning in 2013, the Open Working Group (OWG) presented the proposal of 17 SDGs and 169 specific targets for a 2030 Agenda for Global Action. In August, member states approved the draft, which will be submitted for consideration and adoption at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015. Complete document “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” is available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891Transforming%20Our%20World.pdf>

3 The paper also draws on the most current list of indicators (as of 11 August 2015) submitted to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

# A SOLID FOUNDATION EXISTS: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN GENDER STATISTICS

At the international level, substantive work on gender statistics can be traced back to the 1980s, following the the first Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975 and the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women (1976–1985).<sup>4</sup> Since then, there have been important advances in normative and technical standards related to gender statistics. In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action included a strong call for generating and disseminating ‘gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation’.

More recently— and following calls by the UN General Assembly—the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) adopted in 2013 a core set of nine indicators on violence against women.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the UNSC endorsed a minimum set of gender indicators (referred to herein as the *minimum set*) to serve as a guide for the national production and international compilation of gender statistics.<sup>6</sup> These international agreements provide a broad and strong basis for monitoring gender equality in the 2030 Agenda.

The *minimum set* in particular addresses key policy concerns identified in the Beijing Platform for Action and other more recent international commitments covering national norms and laws on gender equality (the Annex includes the list of indicators of the *minimum set*).

However, it is also important to recognize that the *minimum set* is not a comprehensive list and does not address all areas of gender equality. Given that the choice of indicators for the SDGs is not solely driven by data availability, new and/or improved indicators that go beyond the *minimum set* are suggested for some targets as the optimal choices.

For some indicators, particularly those in the Tier II and III<sup>7</sup> categories, additional efforts will be needed, including the collection and analysis of new and existing data and/or the development of new standards and methodologies. Hence, to be successful, the 2030 Agenda must emphasize the need for enhanced technical capacities and increased investments in

4 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3647Compendium%20of%20statistical%20notes.pdf>.

5 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doco9/Report-English.pdf>; <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/2013-Report-E.pdf>.

6 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/2013-Report-E.pdf>; at the regional level, various initiatives on gender statistics also exist, including coordination mechanisms such as those under the auspices of regional statistical commissions.

7 As defined by the Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), Tier I indicators are those for which methods and standards to produce internationally comparable indicators exist and the data are regularly collected by countries. Tier II indicators are those for which methods and standards exist but the data are not regularly collected by countries. Tier III indicators are those for which there are no comparable methods and standards and the data are not regularly collected by countries.

statistical capacity at the national, regional and international levels. **Addressing gaps in the production of gender statistics will be critical.**

Effectively monitoring the targets for women and girls goes beyond identifying indicators for the targets in SDG5: **Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.** Several targets in the other SDGs address gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. **Therefore, it is important to take a holistic view of gender equality throughout the entire framework and ensure that concerns that are not addressed in SDG5 are addressed in other goals.**

Besides including **additional gender indicators** for the relevant targets, a **systematic disaggregation by sex** of all relevant indicators across all goals and targets is needed.

Where relevant, indicators should also be disaggregated by age as gender inequality is experienced differently by women and girls across the lifecycle. Further, to better capture intersectional inequalities throughout the framework, indicators should be disaggregated by other salient socio-economic characteristics, including income/wealth, location, class, ethnicity and other relevant characteristics.

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