

POLICY BRIEF

12 NOVEMBER 2015

# THE GLOBAL GOALS: GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

*We envisage a... world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed.<sup>1</sup>*

IWDA welcomes this recognition of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment to achieving sustainable development.<sup>2</sup> This is reflected in a standalone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (Goal 5) and in the recognition of gender dimensions in targets across other goals including those related to health, agriculture, education, climate change and economic inequality.

It is a major achievement that the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment is reflected across the global goal framework. This prioritisation was by no means guaranteed, particularly in the current global context where women's rights are constantly under attack. It resulted from the efforts of women's rights organisations and networks all over the world. It means that national governments have committed to act to empower all women and girls, and we have a new framework to hold them to account.

## Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

At IWDA, as the leading Australian agency entirely focussed on women's rights and gender equality in the Asia Pacific, we will be focussing our efforts on Goal 5. It has enormous potential to drive forward Australia's commitment to women's empowerment and investment in gender equality both at home and abroad.

The breadth of the targets under Goal 5 is a major development in comparison to the more limited commitments on gender in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We particularly welcome the inclusion of targets in relation to recognising and valuing unpaid care, eliminating violence against women, and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. It is also significant that the target in relation to women's participation in decision-making extends beyond the national level to include all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

There are limitations within Goal 5 such as the failure to recognise sexual rights or to tie any of the targets to a specific time frame. However, Goal 5 represents an important step forward from the previous MDGs framework and the range of targets provide important levers to drive implementation. We can use them to connect practical work with partners to a global change agenda, to demand action, track progress and push for resourcing.

Indicators to measure progress against the targets are still being developed by an expert group and are due to be finalised in March 2016. There will likely be at least two indicators per target. Civil society continues to engage with the aim of ensuring indicators are feasible and relevant yet ambitious and transformative.



## Gender equality targets across other goals

In addition to Goal 5, 11 of 17 goals contain targets on gender equality. There are targets in relation to reducing maternal mortality and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services (Goal 3), eliminating gender disparities in education (Goal 4) and paying special attention to the needs of women and girls in the provision of clean water and sanitation (Goal 6) and safe and accessible green and public spaces and transport systems (Goal 11). Targets also include full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men (Goal 8) and a focus on women in climate change-related planning and management (Goal 13). There is also a commitment to increase gender disaggregated data (Goal 17) and to create policy frameworks based on gender-sensitive development strategies (Goal 1). Disappointingly, an explicit target on women, peace and security was not included under Goal 16 on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. However, the promotion of the full and effective participation of women in peace and security (as set out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions) is already a requirement, and so must form the foundation of efforts to achieve Goal 16.

## A plan for action

Goal 5 and other gender equality-related targets provides a roadmap for change. Our collective challenge is to see this potential become reality. Governments have repeatedly signalled their support for gender equality through international agreements and commitments but the change for women and girls has been slow and limited. The first year of the global goals is an opportunity for building the relationships and structures that will enable the Australian Government to be a leader on this agenda.

IWDA urges the Australian Government to lead by example, supporting Goal 5 through:

- **Targeted Resourcing:** Governments must meet their financing obligations, including through increasing the amount of overseas development assistance invested in gender equality and women's empowerment, both standalone gender equality programming and funding and support for women's rights organisations. [The Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality](#) developed by UN Women, the OECD and UN member states includes specific actions to address this under-investment in women's empowerment and must be a priority. Australia also needs to get better at tracking the funding which targets gender equality within its mainstream development spending.
- **Transformative Measurement:** There is a wealth of information and understanding about gender equality and women's empowerment, including the [Individual Deprivation Measure](#) which IWDA has helped to develop, which should inform the development of indicators and the measurement of progress. Mapping the data already being collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics against the global goals and assessing how data gaps can be addressed would be a good first step.
- **Ongoing Collaboration:** The global goals apply to all countries. This provides an important opportunity for collaboration between local, national, regional and global women's rights networks, bridging divides between 'domestic' and 'international' issues and engagement. IWDA is uniquely positioned to foster these links and will continue to work with partners and across our networks to drive real transformative change for women and girls.
- **Coordinating Mechanism:** A whole-of-government approach, and coordination across local, state and national jurisdictions is key to ensuring Australia meets both its national and international obligations under the global goals. A national action plan overseen by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) could include shorter-term targets as stepping stones to enable consistent progress towards the 2030 deadline, supported by specific financial commitments.

## Useful Resources

Transformative Financing for Gender Equality Action Plan (2015), available at: Statement by the Women's Major Group on the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030: <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Press-Release-WMG-re-2030-Agenda-WMG-10Aug2015.pdf>

Women's Major Group (2015). *Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Women's Priorities: Recommendations for the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. Policy Statement. September 25. <http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/strengthening-gender-justice-and-human-rights-to-achieve-sustainable-development/>.

Statement by AWID, *2030 Development Agenda Gets Adopted – Strong on Gender but Structural Obstacles Remain*, available at: <http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/2030-development-agenda-gets-adopted-strong-gender-structural-obstacles-remain>

Statement by APWLD, "New Development Goals lack foundations to deliver according to women's rights network," August 2015, available at: <http://apwld.org/new-development-goals-lack-foundations-to-deliver-according-to-womens-rights-network/>

For a detailed description of the monitoring framework for Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) see p145 of the [full report](#) or <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/150612-FINAL-SDSN-Indicator-Report1.pdf>

For a detailed description of proposed indicators, including a timeline: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7981List%20of%20Indicator%20Proposals%2011-8-2015.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), para 8, available at: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E)

<sup>11</sup> For example, gender equality and women's empowerment is recognised as 'a crucial contribution to progress across the Goals and targets (para 20).'