Monitoring and Evaluation for Achievement of SDG

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Introduction

Adopted in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) tackles a broad range of global challenges, aiming to eradicate poverty, reduce multiple and intersecting inequalities, address climate change, end conflict and sustain peace. Due to the relentless efforts of women's rights advocates from across the globe, the 2030 Agenda's commitment to gender equality is prominent, comprehensive and cross-cutting, building on the commitments and norms contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The 2030 Agenda makes clear that development will only be sustainable if its benefits accrue equally to both women and men; and women's rights will only become a reality if they are part of broader efforts to protect the planet and ensure that all people can live with respect and dignity. More than two years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, recently published global monitoring report takes stock of ongoing trends and challenges based on available evidence and data. It looks at both the ends (goals and targets) and the means (policies and processes) that are needed to achieve gender equality and sustainable development. This approach of monitoring is intended to enable all the nations and other stakeholders to track progress comprehensively and to assist women's rights advocates to demand accountability for gender equality commitments as implementation proceeds.

The 2030 Agenda holds the potential to transform the lives of women and girls all over the world even though the challenges are daunting. The large-scale extraction of natural resources, climate change and environmental degradation are advancing at an unprecedented pace, undermining the livelihoods of millions of women and men, particularly in the developing world. A volatile global economy and orthodox economic policies continue to deepen inequalities and push people further behind. Exclusionary and fear-based politics are deepening societal divisions and breeding conflict and instability; millions are being forcibly displaced due to violent conflicts and humanitarian catastrophes. Amid global socio-economic and political turmoil, not only is gender equality out or reach but women's rights are facing renewed resistance from

different kinds of fundamentalism. Civic space is shrinking and women's human rights defenders are facing threats and persecution by both state and non-state actors.

Gender inequalities manifest themselves in every dimension of sustainable development. When households cannot access sufficient food, women are often the first to go hungry. While girls are increasingly doing better in school and university than boys, this has not translated into gender equality in the labour market. The gender pay gap stands at 23% globally and, without decisive action, it will take another 68 years to achieve equal pay. While women have made important inroads into political office across the world, their representation in national parliaments at 23.7% is still far from parity, and women politicians and voters face threats and attacks, persistent sexual harassment and online abuse. One in five women and girls have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months. Yet, 49 countries have no laws that specifically protect women from such violence. Despite their increasing presence in public life, women continue to do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work that men do. Women and girls are also the main water and solid fuel collectors in households without access to an improved water source and clean energy in their homes, with adverse implications for their health and safety.

The 2030 Agenda builds on previous commitments to respect, protect and fulfil women's human rights. It recognizes the indivisibility and interdependence of rights, the interlinkages between gender equality and the three dimensions of sustainable development, and the need for an integrated approach to implementation. In the lives of women and girls, different dimensions of well-being and deprivation are deeply intertwined: A girl who is born into a poor household (Target 1.2) and forced into early marriage (Target 5.3), for example, is more likely to drop out of school (Target 4.1), give birth at an early age (Target 3.7), suffer complications during childbirth (Target 3.1) and experience violence (Target 5.2) than a girl from a higher-income household who marries at a later age. At the end of this chain of events, the girl who was born into poverty stands almost no chance of moving out of it.

During implementation, policymakers must aim to break this vicious cycle and respond to the interdependent experiences of exclusion and deprivation by providing integrated responses: A woman who leaves an abusive relationship, for example, needs access to justice (Target 16.3) as well as a safe place to live (Target 11.1), medical care (Target 3.8) and a decent job (Target 8.5) so she can maintain an adequate standard of living for herself and any dependents she may have. This means that while progress on SDG 5 will be critical, it cannot be the sole focus of gender- responsive implementation, monitoring and accountability. Progress on some fronts may be undermined by regression or stagnation on others; potential synergies may be lost without integrated, multisectoral strategies. This is why women's rights advocates fought hard to achieve both a stand- alone goal on gender equality as well as integrating it across other goals and targets, drawing attention to the gender dimensions of poverty, hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment, climate change, environmental degradation, urbanization, conflict and peace, and financing for development.

The universal nature of the 2030 Agenda responds to the common and interconnected challenges faced by all countries-developed and developing-while the commitment to leaving no one behind seeks to reach the most disadvantaged by building solidarity between them and those who are better-off. Improving the lives of those who are furthest behind is a matter of social justice, as well as being essential for creating inclusive societies and sustainable economies. Inequality hurts everyone: It is a threat to social and political stability, a drag on economic growth and a barrier to progress on poverty eradication and the realization of human rights more broadly. Global solidarity and cooperation in areas such as climate change, migration and financing for development will be crucial to providing enabling conditions for successful national implementation. Illicit financial flows, the global arms trade and large-scale land dispossession by transnational actors, for example, contribute to pushing people further behind, with women and girls often particularly affected.

Powerful global players-be they sovereign States, international financial institutions or transnational corporations-have a particularly critical responsibility to ensure their actions and omissions do not undermine gender equality and sustainable development. Across countries, women and girls experience multiple inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination, including based on their sex, age, class, ability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity and migration status. Their rights and needs must be addressed and their meaningful participation in implementation ensured. At the same time, strategies to 'leave no one behind' should create solidarity through risk- sharing, redistribution and universal programmes and avoid contributing to social fragmentation and stigmatization. Narrowly targeted programmes can exacerbate tensions over resource allocation and contribute to the creation of harmful stereotypes and hierarchies of disadvantage and entitlement.

Rather than substituting targeted programmes for universal ones, governments should ensure access for groups that have been historically excluded while building universal systems that are collectively financed and used by all social groups. To strengthen accountability, progress on the goals must be tracked, gaps identified and challenges in implementation highlighted. The challenges for gender-responsive monitoring are daunting. Currently, only 10 out of 54 gender-related indicators, can reliably be monitored at the global level. Established methodologies exist for another 25 indicators but country coverage is insufficient to allow for global monitoring. The remaining 18 indicators still require some level of conceptual elaboration and/or methodological development before they can be used. While this is a challenge for measuring change, at least in the short run, it also provides an opportunity for improving the availability and quality of gender statistics.

A revolution in democratic governance is also needed for women and girls to claim their rights and shape sustainable development. Spaces for public debate and democratic decision-making must be created to define national priorities, identify what is working well and where the gaps are, agree on pathways for transformative change and determine the roles and responsibilities of different actors. At the global level, open consultation throughout the post-2015 process engaged and mobilized people, countries and organizations to identify common priorities and navigate tensions. Women's rights organizations were extremely effective in building coalitions and alliances across different interest groups to put gender equality at the centre of the new agenda. Such participatory processes and strategic alliances are also needed to ensure effective and gender-responsive implementation, follow-up and review. The systematic monitoring of gender equality outcomes, policies and processes at the national, regional and global levels can contribute to catalysing action, translating global commitments into results and strengthening accountability for actions or omissions by different stakeholders.

The UN SDG report highlights three key strategies for keeping gender equality front and centre during implementation, follow-up and review and provides concrete recommendations.

Despite increasing attention to gender statistics in recent decades, the report identifies pressing challenges that stand in the way of systematic, gender-responsive monitoring. These include the uneven coverage of gender indicators across goals and targets; the absence of internationally agreed standards for data collection; and the uneven availability of gender statistics across countries and over time. To ensure the effective monitoring of progress for women and girls across all goals and targets, the report recommends to:

a.   Support the inclusion of gender-specific indicators across all 17 SDGs by 2020.

b.   Work towards the regular collection of data for gender-specific indicators, ensuring quality and comparability.

c.   Develop global, regional and national strategies for identifying groups that are being left behind.

d.   Promote and adhere to quality benchmarks, human rights standards and the fundamental principles of official statistics.

e.   Accelerate the development of global standards for gender-specific Tier III indicators.

f.   Strengthen commitment at the highest political level to an open, inclusive, transparent and gender-sensitive SDG monitoring process.

Delivering on the gender equality commitments of the 2030 Agenda requires mobilizing and allocating sufficient resources for policies and programmes that contribute to their achievement. As countries roll out their national implementation strategies, it is paramount that investments in these and other strategic areas are prioritized. It is also important that policies and programmes are aligned with the principles of the 2030 Agenda, including human rights principles such as equality, non-discrimination and universality.

Overall, turning gender equality promises into progress will require action to:

A.   Develop equitable and progressive domestic resource mobilization strategies.

B.   Monitor budget allocations for gender equality policies and programmes.

C.   Create an enabling global environment for domestic resource mobilization by promoting solidarity and cooperation between countries of all income levels.

D.   Align policies and programmes with the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

E.   Scale up financial support for women's organizations to engage in policy advocacy.

F.   Define clear terms of engagement and criteria for public–private partnerships.

G.   Address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination through policies and programmes.

H.   Promote meaningful participation and accountability in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes.

Gender-responsive processes and institutions are critical to turn the gender equality promises of the 2030 Agenda into action and to ensure that progress is monitored in a transparent and accountable way. States have committed to follow-up and review processes that are open, inclusive, participatory and transparent, as well as people-centred, gender- sensitive, respectful of human rights and focused on those who are furthest behind.

To strengthen accountability for gender equality commitments at the global, regional and local levels, the report recommends to:
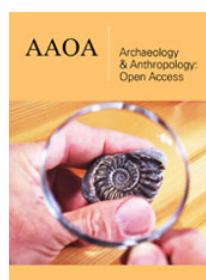
a.   Localize global gender equality commitments by integrating them into national development plans and related policies, legislation and frameworks.

b.   Ensure systematic monitoring of and reporting on gender equality commitments.

c.   Support women's organizations and other civil society actors to monitor progress and hold governments to account for gender equality commitments.

d.   Use voluntary national reviews (VNRs) for the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) to create a shared vision of progress in gender equality and challenges that stand in the way.

e.   Strengthen the HLPF as a platform for peer review and meaningful dialogue.

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