

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

Special Event of the President of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals

United Nations, New York, NY
September 25, 2013

Post 2015: Women's Rights, Gender Equality and Sustainable Development *Statement by Savi Bisnath, PhD, CWGL, Rutgers University, savi.bisnath@rutgers.edu*

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Millennium Development Goals

A strength of the MDG framework is its focus on time bound goals and targets, though there are significant weaknesses in many of the indicators used to chart progress.

Clear weaknesses of the framework are that the goals, targets and indicators: (i) only apply to developing countries; (ii) ignores economic inequality within and between countries; and (iii) detaches development from accountability mechanisms provided by human rights.

A clear weakness in the goal of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is a lack of focus on realizing women's rights. There is no specific attention to the unpaid economy, even though it is critical for both the care of human beings and the care of the environment.

The Interim

As we move towards 2015, we are all cognizant that a lot has changed in the last 13 years since the Millennium Summit. With the rapid growth of emerging economies and the crisis in countries of the Global North, the traditional distinctions between developed and developing are becoming increasingly blurred.

The changes and the realities on the ground make it clear that the post 2015 sustainable development agenda must focus on the enabling environment and economic structures that limit the realization of women's rights.

Key Priorities for the 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda

There is a lot of talk about a stand alone gender goal, and if there is to be another set of internationally agreed goals, the gender goal should have at its core the realization of women's rights and gender equality. It should be a broad goal, with integrated targets and indicators across sectors.

Framing the post 2015 sustainable development agenda in terms of women's rights and social justice provides a context for the choice and use of quantitative indicators. This would mean addressing violence against women and reproductive and sexual health and rights, as well as the current macroeconomic model that perpetuates poverty and inequalities.

We recommend clear regulations to ensure that economic interests are not allowed to override the greater aim of promoting women's rights and sustainable development. The links between gender-based violence and impunity, militarization, military spending, and the prevalence of small arms must be addressed if meaningful gains are to be made.

Challenges in realizing women's rights persist all over the world, but they are different in different places. Global goals with meaningful national targets can increase country ownership and chances of success.

The new global partnership will involve multiple partners, in this multipolar scenario, governments and the United Nations must be honest about the regulations necessary to hold corporations to account for violations such as land grabbing, worker exploitation and corruption. Extraterritorial obligations, as elaborated in the Maastricht Principles, should be used as the foundation for facilitating good governance in the context of any new global partnership for the realization of women's rights, gender equality and sustainable development.

Thank you.

Time: 3 minutes

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