



African women's steering committee on Post 2015 agenda: Reaction to High Level Panel Report on Post 2015 Development Agenda

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Representatives of African regional, sub regional, national and grassroots women's organizations and networks would like to applaud the High Level Panel's (HLP) commitment to gender equality and women's rights, including the bold commitment to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. Ranking the goal on women and girls second after the goal on ending poverty demonstrates the level of commitment by the HLP. The High Level Panel reports that, "No society has become prosperous without a major contribution from its women."

We commend the HLP for not only recognising gender equality as an important issue and proposes that it is made cross-cutting throughout the framework but further proposing a stand-alone goal on empowerment of girls and women and achieving gender equality.

The HLP report's illustrative goal number 2: *To empower girls and women and achieve gender equality* recommends four important targets:

- a. Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;
- b. End child marriage;
- c. Ensure the equal right of women to own and inherit property, sign a contract, register a business, and open a bank account; and
- d. Eliminate discrimination against women in political, economic, and public life.

We further applaud the HLP report's inclusion of specific indicators in other illustrative goals such as ensuring sexual and reproductive health rights and decrease of maternal mortality under the Healthy lives goal, increase of share of women and men and community right to own land, property and other assets under the ending poverty goal

Additionally, African women organizations are particularly encouraged by the High Level Panel's recognition of civil society organization's important role in the designing, realising, and monitoring of the post 2015 development agenda. The women's organizations appreciate the platform the HLP provided for women's participation in the global and regional consultations and the inclusion of some of their demands in the HLP report such as the ones mentioned above.

While recognizing the significant recommendations that have been made towards the inclusion of gender equality in the new agenda, we are however concerned that little focus has been placed on addressing gender inequalities and strongly linking gender equality and women's rights perspectives throughout the narrative of the report and in the illustrative goals.

Though the HLP Report recognises that the new goals and targets need to be grounded in respect for universal human rights, it fails to produce a report with a bold and visionary framework that goes beyond economic growth, taking into account the social, cultural and political dynamics that account for both vertical and horizontal structural inequalities.

The issue of unpaid care work has been overlooked in the report despite the numerous research that calls for policymakers to recognize its contribution to GDP and society in general. It is impossible to achieve a transformational development until economic policy is transformed in a manner that recognizes the importance of care economy and how it contributes to the 'productive' economy. There is a need for a recommendation in post 2015 agenda for unpaid work to be recognized, reduced and redistributed between men and women and a reinforcement of the role of the state to invest in social sector including child care, caring for the elderly and the sick.

On the illustrative goal number 2, a target to guarantee women's and girls' sexual and reproductive rights would have also added depth to this goal and addressed an important structural barrier to gender equality. While the panel acknowledges the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents as a problem, the HLP does not come out clearly with practical measures that would address this gap. We feel that they should have elaborated clearly on what it envisages through an indicator on universal access to sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR) in relation to the gap in lack of access to SRHR services by adolescents.

Both illustrative goal 10 and 11 on governance and stable and peaceful societies fail to recognize the critical role of women and youth and ensuring their full and meaningful participation.

Notably, the set vision of the framework still focuses on neo-liberal policies centers around the market rather than peoples wellbeing. We recommend for a vision that redresses the gaps in employment to ensure equitable wealth and ownership redistribution, access to and control over resources and a transformative gender sensitive fiscal system.

We call on the UN Secretary General to go beyond the HLP report and make much more ambitious and transformational recommendations to member states to produce a bold yet practical vision that would comprehensively address key structural and systemic barriers to women's and girls' human rights and gender equality and ensure a Post 2015 agenda that is truly transformative for generations to come.

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