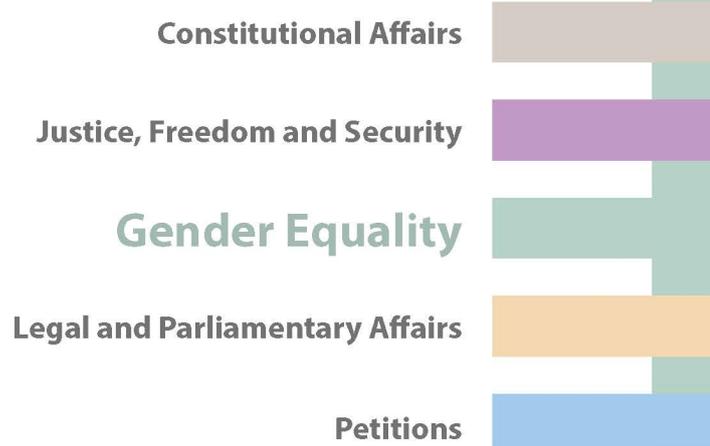


DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

**POLICY DEPARTMENT** **C**  
CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS



# Women's empowerment and its links to sustainable development

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS



**DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES**  
**POLICY DEPARTMENT C: CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND**  
**CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY**

**Women's empowerment**  
**and its links to sustainable development**

**IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS**

**Abstract**

Upon request by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament, this note provides background information for the FEMM Committee mission to the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women which will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016. The note focuses on the key priority theme of the 60th Session which is "women's empowerment and its links to sustainable development".

**This study was commissioned by the policy department for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ACP countries** African, Caribbean and Pacific countries
- BPfA** Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- CSW** Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations
- DCI** Development Cooperation Instrument
- ECOSOC** The United Nations Economic and Social Council
- EDF** European Development Fund
- EEAS** European External Action Service
- EIDHR** European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
- ENI** European Neighbourhood Instrument
- EU** European Union
- FEMM** Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament
- GA** The United Nations General Assembly
- GNI** EU Gross National Income
- HIV/AIDS** Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- HLPF** The United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
- IAEG-SDGs** Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators
- IPA** Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
- LDCs** Least Developed Countries
- MDG** Millennium Development Goal
- NGO** Non-governmental Organisation

**ODA** Official Development Assistance

**OECD** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**SDG** Sustainable Development Goal

**UN** United Nations

**UN WOMEN** The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background

The 60th session of the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** of the United Nations (UN) will take place at the UN Headquarters **in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016** and will be attended by representatives of UN Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world. **The key priority theme** will be **"women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development"**. In addition, the CSW will undertake a review of progress made in the field of the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

### Aim

The aim of the present note is to provide background information for the Members of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament attending the 60th session of the CSW, as regards the priority theme of the session: women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development. It gives an **overview on the role of women's empowerment in the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda**, clarifies some **basic concepts** relating to empowerment and sustainable development and examines the means of **implementing, financing and monitoring** of the activities related to the new **Sustainable Development Goal 5 entitled "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"**.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### KEY FINDINGS

- The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the **principal intergovernmental body responsible for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women**.
- **The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** launched the concept of gender mainstreaming and flagged 12 key areas where urgent action was needed to ensure greater equality and opportunities for women and men.
- Each year, CSW holds a session to discuss, in particular, **the annual priority theme** based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and on the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing +5).
- **In 2016**, the priority theme will be **"women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development"**, and the review theme will be "the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls".

### Commission on the Status of Women

Established on 21 June 1946, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the **principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women**. As one of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, it is also responsible for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and for mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities.

Each year, CSW holds a two-week session where representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather to discuss the annual priority theme based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and on the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing +5), and to evaluate progress in implementing agreed conclusions from previous sessions as a review theme:

- 2013: Priority theme: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.<sup>1</sup> Review theme from the 53rd session of the CSW: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS.
- 2014: Priority theme: Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls. Review theme from the 54th session of the CSW: Access and participation of women and girls to education,

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, please see the following publications of the European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality: "The issue of violence against women in the European Union", author: Claire Genta, 2010, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ReqData/etudes/note/join/2010/419623/IPOL-FEMM\\_NT\(2010\)419623\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ReqData/etudes/note/join/2010/419623/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2010)419623_EN.pdf) and "Violence against women", author: Dessislava Velikova, 2005. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ReqData/etudes/note/join/2005/365967/IPOL-FEMM\\_NT\(2005\)365967\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ReqData/etudes/note/join/2005/365967/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2005)365967_EN.pdf)

training, science and technology,<sup>2</sup> including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

- 2015: Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23th session of the General Assembly<sup>3</sup>, including current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, as well as opportunities for strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post 2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective.<sup>4</sup>
- 2016: priority theme: Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development. Review theme: The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.<sup>5</sup>

## The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The Beijing Conference, held in September 1995, represented a turning point in the development of gender equality policies: it **launched the gender mainstreaming concept**<sup>6</sup> and also resulted in the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing gender equality and women's rights worldwide: **the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)**. For the last 20 years, the BPfA has been the world's most powerful framework for international and national gender equality policies and practices.<sup>7</sup>

As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action makes comprehensive commitments under **12 critical areas of concern**: (A) women and poverty, (B) education and training of women, (C) women and health, (D) violence against women, (E) women and armed conflict, (F) women and the economy, (G) women in power and decision-making, (H) institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, (I) human rights of women, (J) women and the media, (K) women and the environment and (L) the girl child.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on women's empowerment in the field of education, please see "Empowering women and girls through education", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, authors: Katie McCracken, Elaine Unterhalter, Sergio Márquez and Agata Chełstowska, February 2015.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510022/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)510022\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510022/IPOL_STU(2015)510022_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> For more information, please see also "Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly", UN Economic and Social Council, Report of the Secretary General, E/CN.6/2015/3, 15 December 2014.

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/ecn620153.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> For more information, please see "Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and the opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, author: Petra Debusscher, March 2015.

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/ecn620153.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Commission on the Status of Women, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

<sup>6</sup> For more information, please see also "Gender mainstreaming in Committees and Delegations of the European Parliament", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, author: Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale, March 2014.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/493051/IPOL-FEMM\\_ET\(2014\)493051\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/493051/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2014)493051_EN.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> "Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and the opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, author: Petra Debusscher, March 2015.

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/ecn620153.pdf>

## 1. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

### KEY FINDINGS

- Women's empowerment means **women gaining more power and control over their own lives**.
- According to UN World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014, there are **proven synergies** between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability.
- The **chronic underinvestment** in gender equality has been aggravated by the austerity measures adopted in many countries in the post-crisis context.

### 1.1. The concept of empowerment

Empowerment can be defined as a "multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important".<sup>8</sup>

### 1.2. Empowering women

Women's empowerment means **women gaining more power and control over their own lives**. This entails the idea of women's continued disadvantage compared to men which is apparent in different economic, socio-cultural and political spheres. Therefore, women's empowerment can also be seen as an **important process in reaching gender equality**, which is understood to mean that the "rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female".<sup>9</sup>

According to the UN Population Fund, an empowered woman has a sense of self-worth. She can determine her **own choices**, and has access to opportunities and resources providing her with an array of options she can pursue. She has **control over her own life**, both within and outside the home and she has the ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, both nationally and internationally.<sup>10</sup>

Gender **role expectations** are institutionalized through legislative, educational, political and economic systems. Women need to be "empowered" in order to narrow the "gender gap" and to create an equal playing field between women and men before gender equality can be reached and maintained.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Page and Czuba, Extension Journal, October 1999. <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999october/comm1.php>  
For a more detailed description of empowerment, please see also "Empowerment of Roma Women within the European Framework of National Roma Inclusion Strategies", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, authors: Niall Crowley, Angela Genova and Silvia Sansonetti, September 2013. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/493019/IPOL-FEMM\\_ET\(2013\)493019\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/493019/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2013)493019_EN.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> "Fact sheet on Important Concepts underlying Gender Mainstreaming", OSAGI 2001. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Idem.

<sup>11</sup> "Empowering women for sustainable development", Economic Commission for Europe, March 2011. <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/commission/2011/Informal%20document%20No.%202.pdf>

Empowerment should not be seen as a zero-sum game where gains for women automatically imply losses for men.<sup>12</sup> In fact, according to UN World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014, there are **proven synergies** between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability.<sup>13</sup> Women's active participation in decision-making facilitates the allocation of public resources to investments in human development priorities, including education, health, nutrition, employment and social protection. For example, as female education levels rise, infant and child mortality rates fall and family health improves. Education also increases women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to household and national income. Women's increased earning capacity, in turn, has a positive effect on children's nutrition, health and educational prospects.<sup>14</sup>

### Box 1: The economic empowerment of women

#### Facts and figures – economic empowerment

Benefits of economic empowerment:

- When more women work, economies grow: If women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's, the USA gross domestic product would be approximately 9 % higher, the Euro zone's would climb by 13 %, and Japan's would be boosted by 16 %. In 15 major developing economies, per capita income would rise by 14 % by 2020, and by 20 % by 2030.
- Evidence from a range of countries shows that increasing the share of household income controlled by women, either through their own earnings or cash transfers, changes spending in ways that benefit children.

Women in the world of work:

- In the majority of countries, women's wages represent between 70 % and 90 % of men's, with even lower ratios in some Asian and Latin American countries.
- If women had the same access as men to productive assets, agricultural output in 34 developing countries would rise by an estimated average of up to 4 %. This could reduce the number of undernourished people in those countries by 17 %, translating to up to 150 million fewer hungry people.

Source: "In Brief: Economic Empowerment of Women", UN Women publications, 2013

<sup>12</sup> "Fact sheet on Important Concepts underlying Gender Mainstreaming", OSAGI 2001.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> "The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014: Gender Equality and Sustainable development", UN Women 2014(E.14.IV.6).

[http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/unwomen\\_surveyreport\\_advance\\_16oct.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/unwomen_surveyreport_advance_16oct.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> idem.

### 1.3. Global review of progress on women's empowerment<sup>15</sup>

In December 2014, the UN Secretary-General issued a report entitled "Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly"<sup>16</sup> which bundles national and regional reviews and discusses progress, challenges and opportunities at the global level. The main findings of the report are the following:

Over the past two decades, governments have increasingly removed discriminating **laws** and have adopted laws promoting gender equality and addressing violence against women. Significant gains are also noted in the enrolment of girls in primary and secondary education. In several regions, women's participation in the labour market has increased, while some regions have made progress in increasing access to birth control. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriages have started to decline in some contexts. Furthermore, some countries have made major gains in women's representation in national parliaments.

Nevertheless, **global progress has been slow**, uneven and limited. Despite expanded normative commitments, equality is often undermined by a **lack of implementation**, institutional barriers and discriminatory social norms. In addition, increased access to education, for instance, has not been matched by policies to increase women's access to decent work, good employment conditions, promotion and equal pay.

Progress is also hampered by the low levels of participation and leadership of women in **decision-making**, at all levels – household, local, regional and national governments, the management of environmental resources<sup>17</sup>, national planning and development structures, national parliaments and global governance.

There continues to be a **chronic underinvestment** in gender equality globally, a tendency which has been aggravated by the austerity measures adopted in many countries in the post-crisis context. In addition, aid focused on gender equality is typically concentrated in social sectors such as education and health, while only low levels of aid have been targeted to economic and governance sectors. Women's organisations at all levels remain significantly under-resourced.

**Gender mainstreaming** remains limited, and key institutions and mechanisms for promoting gender equality are often under-resourced and lack political support. In addition, monitoring progress is challenged by a severe lack of comparable data of high quality. Many countries are still not producing regular statistics that are of critical importance for gender equality such as time use, asset ownership, women's participation in decision-making at all levels, or data on gender-based violence and poverty.

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<sup>15</sup> This section has been reproduced from the study "Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and the opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, author: Petra Debusscher, March 2015.  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519191/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)519191\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519191/IPOL_STU(2015)519191_EN.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> UN Economic and Social Council, Report of the Secretary General, E/CN.6/2015/3, 15 December 2014.  
<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/ecn620153.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> See in more detail the in-depth analysis "The Gender Dimension of Climate Justice", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, author: Anne Bonewit, 2015.  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/536478/IPOL\\_IDA\(2015\)536478\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/536478/IPOL_IDA(2015)536478_EN.pdf)

## 2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### KEY FINDINGS

- Sustainable development has been defined as **development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.**
- The three **core elements** of sustainable development are **economic growth, social inclusion** and **environmental protection.**
- The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** entails **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and 169 targets which came into force on the 1st of January 2016 and **apply to all countries.**
- **SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" contains five targets.**

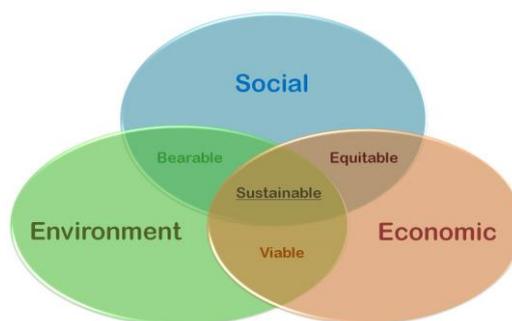
### 2.1. The concept of sustainable development

Sustainable development has been defined by World Commission on Environment and Development as **development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.** It contains two key concepts:

- the concept of "needs", in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.<sup>18</sup>

There are three core elements that need to be harmonised in order to achieve sustainable development: **economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection.** Sustainable development aims at eradicating poverty through, in particular, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living and fostering equitable social development and inclusion.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 1: Sustainable development**



Source: <http://www.thesustainableleader.org/>

<sup>18</sup> "Our Common Future", Report of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, March 1987. <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org.>

## 2.2. Sustainable Development Goals

The UN General Assembly adopted in New York on 25 September 2015 the resolution on the post-2015 development agenda entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".<sup>20</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ("the 2030 Agenda") entails **17 Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) and 169 targets which came into force on the 1st of January 2016. The specific targets of each SDG are to be achieved by 2030. The 2030 Agenda goes hand in hand with the so-called Addis Ababa Action Agenda, an agreement reached by the 193 UN Member States attending the UN Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 27 July 2015 (for more details on Addis Ababa Action Plan, see below point 3.3).

The SDGs are built on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, contrarily to the MDGs that were intended for action in developing countries only, the **SDGs apply to all countries**. They cover the three above mentioned dimensions of sustainable development: **economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection**. UN has also put forward the idea of **six essential elements** that help frame and reinforce the universal integrated and transformative nature of the Sustainable Development Agenda (Figure 2).<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 2: Six essential elements for delivering the SDGs**



**Source:** "The Road to Dignity by 2030 – Synthesis report of the Secretary General on the post-2015 Agenda", UN, 4 December 2014.

[http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG\\_Synthesis\\_Report\\_Road\\_to\\_Dignity\\_by\\_2030.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Resolution 70/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

[http://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ses2-1.-A.RES\\_70.1-Transforming-our-world-the-2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development-Goal-14.c-14.4.pdf](http://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ses2-1.-A.RES_70.1-Transforming-our-world-the-2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development-Goal-14.c-14.4.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> "The Road to Dignity by 2030 – Synthesis report of the Secretary General on the post-2015 Agenda", UN, 4 December 2014.

[http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG\\_Synthesis\\_Report\\_Road\\_to\\_Dignity\\_by\\_2030.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf)

### 2.2.1. The Sustainable Development Goals

- SDG 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- SDG 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;
- SDG 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- **SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;**
- SDG 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- SDG 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
- SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- SDG 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
- SDG 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries;
- SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
- SDG 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- SDG 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
- SDG 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- SDG 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;
- SDG 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;
- SDG 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Countries are expected to establish their own sustainable **development strategies**, supported by **integrated national financing frameworks** policies. There is a strong focus on implementation through mobilising financial resources, capacity-building and technology. Resources need to be mobilized from domestic and international sources, as well as from the public and private sectors. The UN Member States have recognised the importance to align private investment with sustainable development, along with public policies and regulatory frameworks to set the right incentives. All stakeholders, including governments, civil society and the private sector, are expected to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>22</sup>

At the global level, the **UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** (HLPF) has the central role in overseeing the follow-up and review processes, as regards

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<sup>22</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

the implementation of the SDGs. To this end, it works together with the General Assembly (GA), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and other relevant organs and forums. The HLPF will meet every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the GA and once a year under the auspices of ECOSOC.<sup>23</sup> The countries themselves are responsible for follow-up and review at national, regional and global level. This is will be done by collecting quality, accessible and timely data on the implementation.

An efficient follow-up and review mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will require a **solid framework of indicators and statistical data**.<sup>24</sup> On 6 March 2015, at its 46th session, the UN Statistical Commission created an Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), composed of Member States and including regional and international agencies as observers. The IAEG-SDGs will provide a proposal of a global indicator framework (and associated global and universal indicators) for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its 47th session in March 2016.<sup>25</sup> There will be in total approximately 300 indicators for the 169 targets.<sup>26</sup>

### **2.3. SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

SDG 5 includes the following targets:

- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
- 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;
- 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;
- 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;
- 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;

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<sup>23</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/follow-up>

<sup>24</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>. For more information on statistical data and data revolution, please see "Evaluation of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and the opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, author: Petra Debusscher, March 2015.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519191/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)519191\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/519191/IPOL_STU(2015)519191_EN.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

- 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;
- 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

### 3. EMPOWERING WOMEN AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#### KEY FINDINGS

- **Women have a critical role to play in all SDGs**, with many targets specifically recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and part of the solution.
- The **choice of appropriate indicators** to monitor the implementation of the SDGs it has an important impact on determining whether policy efforts towards women's empowerment are channelled adequately.
- **The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development**, endorsed on 27 July 2015 by 193 UN Member States, **provides a foundation for implementing the 2030 Agenda**. It states that women's empowerment is vital for sustainable development as well as for sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth.
- **The Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** was launched in July 2015 in the context of Addis Ababa Conference. It calls for **accelerating the implementation of existing commitments** in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- **The EU has an active role** in promoting women's empowerment and sustainable development, in particular through **Official Development Assistance (ODA)**.
- In October 2015, the Council adopted **the Gender Action Plan 2016–2020** which establishes **a new gender framework** to be implemented jointly by the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

#### 3.1. Empowering women in the context of the 2030 Agenda

*"The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what they did not achieve. They seek to **realise the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls**. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, the social and environmental."<sup>27</sup>*

Gender equality and women's empowerment figure prominently in the 2030 Agenda. They are **reflected in an integrated manner** throughout the Agenda, and also considered critical for its achievement: in the Resolution on the Agenda, the General Assembly declares that "**realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets**". The role of women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda can be further concretised by looking at the **SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"** and its

<sup>27</sup> Resolution 70/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (preamble, paragraph 4).  
<http://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ses2-1.-A.RES .70.1-Transforming-our-world-the-2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development-Goal-14.c-14.4.pdf>

**targets** as well as **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** and **Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**.

As a significant step beyond the MDGs that emphasized only **equality of opportunity**, the 2030 Agenda acknowledges that equality must be based on **both opportunity and outcome**. This is written out in target 10.3 of SDG 5: "Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard".

Not only the targets of SDG 5 but **also many targets of other SDGs are linked to women's empowerment**: there are targets on gender dimensions of poverty, health, education, employment and security, for example. In fact, gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential across all SDGs and their targets. Therefore, it is crucial to take a holistic view of gender equality throughout the entire framework.

As a result of a wide-ranging consultation process with the UN, Member States, civil society and international organizations, UN Women have put forward a position paper setting out suggestions for global indicators to effectively monitor how the SDGs are being implemented for women and girls. In their paper, UN Women call for including **additional gender indicators** for the relevant targets, as well as a **systematic disaggregation by sex of all relevant indicators across all SDGs and targets**.<sup>28</sup>

### **3.2. Empowering women in the context of Addis Ababa Action Agenda**

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, endorsed on 27 July 2015 by 193 UN Member States,<sup>29</sup> provides a foundation for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Women's empowerment is very visible also in this agreement: in their resolution, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives reaffirm that "gender equality, **women's empowerment, the full realisation of their human rights and their full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital to achieve sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development**".

In order to achieve women's empowerment for sustainable development, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives propose, in particular the following actions and means:

- targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies;
- adoption and strengthening of sound policies and enforceable legislation and transformative actions for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment at all levels;
- promotion and enforcement of non-discriminatory laws, social infrastructure and policies for sustainable development, as well as women's full and equal participation in the economy and their equal access to decision-making processes and leadership;

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<sup>28</sup> "Monitoring Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Opportunities and Challenges", Position Paper, UN Women, 2015.

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/9/indicators-position-paper>

<sup>29</sup> Resolution 69/313 adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2015 "Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)".

<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/>

- commitment to women's and girls' equal rights and opportunities in political and economic decision-making and resource allocation and removal of any barriers that prevent women from being full participants in the economy;
- contribution of the private sector to ensuring women's full and productive employment and decent work, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and equal opportunities;
- establishment and maintenance by all development banks of social and environmental safeguards systems, including on human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, that are transparent, effective, efficient and time-sensitive;
- further development of instruments by multilateral development banks to channel the resources of long-term investors towards sustainable development, including through long-term infrastructure and green bonds;
- forward-looking plans which increase clarity, predictability and transparency of future development cooperation, in accordance with national budget allocation processes.

### 3.3. Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

In July 2015, in the context of the Addis Ababa Conference, UN Women launched an **Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing<sup>30</sup> for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment** together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Women's Working Group on Financing for Development and the governments of Brazil, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The Action Plan calls for **accelerating the implementation of existing commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. It also aims to ensure that the gender commitments that were included in the agreed text on Addis Ababa Action Agenda will be turned into actions. The Action Plan proposes policy and financing actions for five different areas of commitments.<sup>31</sup>

Areas of commitment	Policy and financing actions
<b>1. Domestic policy actions and public resources for gender equality and women's rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure fair and progressive tax systems by addressing explicit and implicit gender biases in tax policies.</li> <li>• Provide tax incentives to support ownership of assets/property by women.</li> <li>• Cost and adequately resource national policies, strategies and plans on gender equality across all sectors of public expenditure, and ensure they are integrated or closely linked to national sustainable development financing strategies.</li> <li>• Prioritize investments in accessible, affordable, and quality social infrastructure and essential services that reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work and that enable their full participation in the economy.</li> </ul>
<b>2. International policy actions and resources for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematically track and prioritize allocation of ODA in support of gender equality and take specific actions to close financing</li> </ul>

<sup>30</sup> For more detailed information on transformative Financing, please see "Policy Hub – Transformative financing and goals for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment – Addis Ababa and New York 2015", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, July 2015.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/519237/IPOL\\_IDA\(2015\)519237\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/519237/IPOL_IDA(2015)519237_EN.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

**gender equality and women's rights**

gaps in order to meet new and existing targets on gender equality and women's empowerment.

- Adopt the UN target of a minimum of 15% of all peacebuilding funds targeting gender equality as a principal objective.
- Ensure that global trade, financial and investment agreements are conducive to the promotion of gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls through ex-ante and ex-post gender impact assessments as well as targeted incentives and investments, including Aid for Trade, capacity building and participation of women in global supply chains.

**3. Enabling environment for women's economic empowerment and sustainable development**

- Promote and enact legislative and administrative reforms to ensure women's equal rights to economic and productive resources, including to inheritance and access to, control over and/or ownership of land and other property, credit and other financial services, information and communication technologies and other forms of technology and capacity building to utilize and maximize the potential of these services/assets.
- Develop strategies to support women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses, including by improving women's equal access to finance and expanding trade opportunities for women producers.
- Enforce core labour standards and antidiscrimination laws for decent work, including ensuring minimum wage legislation and equal pay for work of equal value.
- Ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for leadership and decision-making in all sectors.

**4. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for gender equality and women's rights at country, regional and international levels**

- Use all available opportunities and processes to build political commitment – from governments, international organisations, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector – in support of transformative financing for gender equality and women's rights.
- Adequately resource local, national, regional and global women's rights institutions and organisations to advance gender equality, women's empowerment, and the human rights of women and girls.
- Track and publish allocations to and public spending on gender equality.

**5. Data, monitoring and follow-up**

- Close data gaps by investing in national statistical capacity to systematically collect, analyse, and use data disaggregated by sex and age through appropriate financial and technical support and capacity-building.
- Develop and enhance national standards and methodologies to close data gaps.

**3.4. The EU as an actor in empowering women in the context of sustainable development**

The Lisbon Reform Treaty considers gender equality among its key values and objectives: according to Article 2(3) of the Treaty, the EU "shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, **equality between women and men**, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child".<sup>32</sup> The EU has also committed to mainstreaming gender considerations into all aspects of its operations and policies, including its external and development policy.

<sup>32</sup> Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007, Article 2.  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=OJ%3AC%3A2007%3A306%3ATOC>

### 3.4.1 Official Development Assistance

The EU, together with its Member States, is the **world's largest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) with EUR 58.2 billion in 2014**. Gender equality is fully integrated in development cooperation programmes as a core pillar and a prerequisite for socio-economic development and poverty eradication.<sup>33</sup> For the year 2013, around 39 % of the EU ODA (EUR 13 700 million) was allocated to gender sensitive objectives.

The European Commission has **five instruments** for the financing of development cooperation:

- the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) for candidate countries,
- the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI),
- the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR),
- the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) for geographic and thematic programmes worldwide, and
- the European Development Fund (EDF) for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries (Cotonou Agreement).

The **mid-term review** of the programming period (2014–2020) will take place in 2017. This will give a possibility for a new analysis from a gender equality perspective of the allocation of the resources and the efficiency of the programmes.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.4.2 The Gender Action Plan 2016–2020

On 26 October 2015, the Council adopted the "Gender Action Plan 2016–2020", based on the **Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) Joint Staff Working Document on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020"**.<sup>35</sup> The new Gender Action Plan stresses "the need for the full realisation of women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls".<sup>36</sup>

The Gender Action Plan 2016–2020 is a continuation to the previous "EU Action Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010–2015". It establishes a new gender framework to support partner countries, in particular developing, enlargement and neighbouring countries, to achieve tangible results towards gender equality. The indicators proposed in the framework will be reviewed in 2016 to fully align with the finalised set of SDG indicators.

The new gender framework focuses on four areas:

- ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity,
- promoting the social and economic rights / empowerment of girls and women,
- strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation,
- shifting the institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments.

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<sup>33</sup> "Fact Sheet – Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030", European Commission, Brussels, 25 September 2015.

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-15-5709\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5709_en.htm)

<sup>34</sup> "Policy Hub – Transformative financing and goals for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment – Addis Ababa and New York 2015", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality, July 2015.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/519237/IPOL\\_IDA\(2015\)519237\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/519237/IPOL_IDA(2015)519237_EN.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> 21.9.2015, SWD(2015) 182 final.

[https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/joint-staff-working-document-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-transforming-lives-girls-and\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/joint-staff-working-document-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-transforming-lives-girls-and_en)

<sup>36</sup> Council Conclusions on the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, 26 October 2015.

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press-releases-pdf/2015/10/40802204150\\_en\\_635814753600000000.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press-releases-pdf/2015/10/40802204150_en_635814753600000000.pdf)

Within the new framework, gender analysis will be done systematically for all new external actions, such as projects and bilateral and regional programming. EU actors reporting on these activities will need to use sex-disaggregated data wherever available.

The EU will use a wide range of **external assistance instruments** to finance the new framework, including specific bilateral or regional development support programmes (for example the women's economic empowerment project financed by the EU Trust Fund for Central African Republic, and the Pan-African programme on female genital mutilation) and the Global Public Goods and Challenges thematic programme included in the DCI, with around EUR 100 million committed to improve the lives of girls and women. The Commission and EEAS are jointly responsible for the implementation of the framework.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Fact Sheet - Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030", European Commission, Brussels, 25 September 2015.  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-15-5709\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5709_en.htm)

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## **NOTES**

## DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

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