Gender Equality in the Post-2015 Development Agenda:

Where Does it Stand?

By Alexandra Spieldoch

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I   Rio + 20 – Hard Realities

The Rio + 20 Conference 'The Future We Want' took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012. It was organized to take stock of what results have been achieved since the original United National Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), otherwise referred to as the Earth Summit, in 1992, and to address present and future challenges that are undermining sustainable development. Twenty years ago, the Earth Summit and its outcome document, Agenda 21, fueled an optimism that led to a decade of UN conferences, including the UN Beijing Conference on Women in 1995, and world summits of the 1990's. In 2000, governments reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable development by adopting the Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were important indicators and benchmarks to achieve sustainable development goals.

It would be fantastic to state collectively that as a result of these efforts and others at the national and regional levels, sustainable development has moved in a positive direction. Instead, it is widely recognized that we are very far away from where we need to be.

A brief and depressing overview:

Though there has been economic growth in the last twenty years, it has been uneven and the gap between the haves and the have-nots has widened. Close to 875 million people in the world are undernourished (FAO: 2012), another 500 million are obese (WHO: 2013), and as much as half of the global food supply is being wasted or lost. (Institution of Mechanical Engineers: 2013). Though women cultivate more than half of all food that is grown, they are the majority of the world's hungry (OHCHR: 2013). Over a billion people are living in in extreme poverty (less than $1.25 a day) and another 2.5 billion people are living in poverty (less than $2.00 a day) (World Bank: 2012). Women account for approximately two thirds of the one and a half billion people in extreme poverty, and they make up 60 percent of the close to 575 million working poor globally (ILO: 2009). Rural women and girls are even more vulnerable to poverty and hunger (IFAD: 2011), particularly since they own less than 20 percent of land globally and as little as five percent in some countries (FAO: 2012). Almost half of the Earth's forests no longer exist and other sources are being depleted quickly. Biodiversity has been greatly reduced and carbon dioxide emissions have reached a dangerous level, having increased by as much as 40 percent between 1990 and 2008 (World Economic and Social Survey 2011). Natural disasters have increased by five times since the 1970's, displacing over 42 million people in 2010 alone. At least one fifth of the world's population experiences violence, conflict, and insecurity. For example, over 43 million people are displaced because of conflict or persecution (Realizing the Future We Want: 2012). The majority of the world's population now lives in urban areas (UNFPA: 2008) and this is projected to grow to 70 percent by the year 2050 (UN Populations Division: 2012). Almost one billion people live in slums without basic services and social protection (UN Habitat: 2010/2011). Gender inequality and gender-based violence are prevalent (UN MDG Goals Report: 2011). And, the international institutions have lacked the coherence to tackle these enormous challenges as witnessed through the food, energy and financial crises. Plan International recently released a report that highlights the fact that women and girls do, in fact, bear the brunt of the various crises as a result of their social status and their particular role in the care economy (Plan Intl: 2013).[1]

Rio + 20 had a huge order to fill in terms of addressing many concerns. And, leaders came under intense fire by civil society groups, for ignoring the root causes of today's problems by promoting a 'green economy,' which was widely perceived as 'green washing' an unsustainable model of growth.

Women's groups were critical of the Conference because it failed to make a stronger link between women's rights and the environment, and to bring more women experts and activists into the official dialogue and meeting structure. While feminist ecology and gender and sustainable development were central to the Earth Summit and its Agenda 21[2], they were barely visible in the official Rio + 20 agenda (Wichterich: 2013).

The Women's Major Group, which has accompanied the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in the official process since the original Earth Summit, put forth a damning statement at the close of the Conference: "Two years of negotiations have culminated in a Rio + 20 outcome that makes almost no progress for women's rights and the rights of future generations in sustainable development (Women's Major Group Final Statement: 2012)." Governments failed to include women's reproductive rights even though they were part of Agenda 21. No strong commitments were made to prioritize women's rights to

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1   The International Labor Office (ILO) has also referred to the negative impact of the financial crises on women's work and the UN World Food Program (WFP) has indicated that women and children bore the brunt of the global food crisis in 2008.

2   Agenda 21's chapter 24 is entirely focused on Global Action for Women toward Sustainable Development. And, one hundred and seventy eight nations adopted it.

land, property, inheritance and control of natural resources that are the basis of their livelihoods. There was no mention of the connection between climate change and gender. And there was no reference to free, prior and informed consent for communities where investment is being considered. "At Rio + 20, governments had an historic chance to take bold steps to end poverty and environmental destruction, to protect the rights of the most vulnerable members of our societies, to take concrete measures to fully implement women's rights and women's leadership. We now risk increased poverty and irreversible environmental damage (Women's Major Group Final Statement: 2012)"

Suffice it to say, the Rio + 20 did not realize its potential. The Outcome Document, The Future We Want, lacks strong language and governments committed to very little. In some important ways, governments even backtracked on existing commitments, particularly those relating to human rights.

That said, leaders did agree to establish a post-2015 development agenda that is more comprehensive and people-centered. They generally expressed their support for human rights values, equality and sustainability in a global development agenda. They also acknowledged that gender violence is one of the worst forms of inequality and discrimination. And they committed to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that, in theory, will build on the Millennium Development Goals, making them more relevant to today's challenges. Herein lies an opportunity to strengthen the international development paradigm, and within that to ensure women's rights, gender equality and sustainable development are prioritized.

II   Reflections from the last 20 years

In 1992, the World Congress of Women for a Healthy Planet, which included 1,500 women from 83 countries and spearheaded by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), drafted a Women's Action Agenda 21 that offered recommendations on all the core issues. Women's rights advocates were clear then that the empowerment of women is essential for achieving equity between and among and within countries. They proposed a universal code of ethics and international law based on equity, respect for humans and other species, and biologic and cultural diversity. They called for an accounting of women's care work. They challenged the negative impacts of macroeconomic policies on poorer nations and on women and children. They demanded women's land rights and access to basic services and resources relating to food and energy. They challenged the top-down population policies and programs that are disrespectful of women's rights as guaranteed in the Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). They questioned the impacts of genetic engineering, biotechnology and the patenting of life forms on people and the environment. They expressed their disdain for environmental racism. And they put forth recommendations for better coherence of policy and practice among global institutions. (Women's Action Agenda 21:1992).

In 1992, activists made significant gains in making the conceptual and practical connections between women's rights and the environment. But something happened – or didn't happen- in the years following. Though women's rights networks continued to flourish at the various UN Conferences of the 1990s, they lost their

analytical focus with regard to the environment. By 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI's) dominated global policy directions, undermining existing international human rights and environmental treaties and conventions and reinforcing colonial relationships between the so-called North and the South. Blind faith was given to globalization and market-led growth to resolve problems relating to international development. Sadly, the substantive link between women's rights, gender (power) relations, ecology, the economy and the environment was being replaced by more hot button topics or 'gender mainstreaming' approaches to a flawed growth model (Wichterich: 2013) And by 2000, at the time the MDGs were drafted, even fewer women's groups were actively involved in the follow up to the Earth Summit.

It may not be surprising then that within the MDGs, gender is quite narrowly defined. For example, the MDG3 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment includes only one target on education as well as narrow indicators on women's political representation and employment (UNDG: 2010). As formulated, gender had little to do with the other indicators relating to the environment, poverty and hunger and governance, for example. This was criticized globally not long after the MDGs were adopted.

With regard to MDG3, Dr. Naila Kabeer has written about the need for a deeper gender analysis, particularly in understanding and responding to dynamics associated with poverty:

> Gender analysis is about the ability to make connections which are not always apparent…One set of connections relates to the linkages between production and reproduction, between economic growth and human development. A second set of connections is between the different levels of analysis: micro, meso and macro (and increasingly, the global). A third set of connections is between different domains of society….Public policy can and should play an important role…in offsetting these disadvantages as well as actively helping to transform the institutional norms and practices which gave rise to them (Kabeer: 2003).

This kind of comprehensive analysis is entirely missing from the MDGs. There is no reference to the gendered impacts of the macro-economy even though the global trends have in many ways undermined the potential gains for women and girls. In the final report from an Expert Group Meeting on the impact of the Beijing Platform for Action on the MDGs various UN agencies[3] refer to the negative impact of the various crises problems relating to livelihoods, and access to food, water and energy, health and education. They acknowledge that the economic growth paradigm that has dominated global production has been based on deregulated markets prioritizing short-term profit for the few at the expense of the rest of the world's population. And, they recommend that the Beijing Platform for Action be utilized to reorient national and local strategies to support gender equality and women's empowerment as an essential for achieving the MDGs (DAW: 2009)."

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3   These include the UN Division on the Advancement of Women (UN DAW), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE).

In their outcome statement from a regional dialogue on post-2015, women's and civil society networks from the Asia Pacific say more about how the global economic model has undermined women's rights:

In the Pacific, the emphasis on export production or trade-led growth has encouraged the development of extractive industries (mining, logging, fishing), which have had deleterious social and environmental impacts that are disproportionately borne by women and girls. These industries widen gender disparities in income, encourage transactional sex, enable corruption, and trigger social conflict and violent repression. They have also encouraged the introduction of laws to protect foreign investors at the expense of local landowners. The prioritization of extractive industries has led to a focus on export oriented agribusiness and a neglect of agriculture, including subsistence agriculture that supports 75 % of the regions' population, and is primarily undertaken by rural and indigenous women. This underscores the fallacy of an automatic link between economic growth and improved development outcomes (The Future Asia Pacific Women Want: 2012).

Women's rights advocates acknowledge that the MDGs achieved some important things on specific issues like curbing HIV/AIDS and Malaria and achieving some gender parity in education. However, it is immensely problematic that the MDGs 'did not address the root causes of poverty, most especially women's inequality, which made it impossible for the goals to be truly transformative' (Action Aid: 2012). Gender dynamics of power, poverty, vulnerability and care should have been linked to all of the MDG goals and should have been the basis for formulating policy (ODI: 2005).

There is another problem, which is not specific to the MDGs per se, but after years of governments committing to women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, they have lacked the political will to make good on their promises – they have largely failed to collect sex disaggregated data, to incorporate gender into their programming, to designate funds through gender budgets, and to enforce implementation at the national level. The World Bank and OECD/DAC write that comprehensive approaches to link funding, policy, and implementation have to be aligned to achieve MDG3 (WB,OECD/DAC: 2009). It is safe to say that most women's rights advocates would agree with this incredible understatement.

In short, these glaring oversights and inconsistencies have done their damage. Now it is time to explore what is being considered and what is needed for a post-2015 development framework.

III   Gender and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

a.   Official Process

As was stated earlier, the agreement among governments at Rio + 20 was to facilitate the framework for a post-2015 development agenda with a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core. With regard to the 'framework,' official structures have been put into place. First, there is the UN Task Force, co-chaired by the UN Department on Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and

the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which began meeting even prior to Rio + 20. It includes more than 60 UN agencies and other international organizations. Its mission is to assess ongoing efforts within the UN system, to consult all relevant stakeholders, and to define a vision and plan of action. In June of 2012, in preparation for the Rio + 20 Summit, the UN Task Force prepared a report entitled 'Realizing the Future We all Want' which set the stage for thinking about a post-2015 development framework (UN System Task Force: 2012). A thirty member open working group of the General Assembly has also been launched to develop a proposal for SDGs in preparation for the sixty-eighth Assembly (2013-2014). This working group is functioning as part of the UN System Task Team on the post-2015 UN development agenda. And the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)'s Committee for Development Policy (CDP) is providing support to the General Assembly by reviewing cross-cutting and conceptual issues within this process overall.

As well, the UN Secretary General appointed a high-level panel of Eminent Persons (HLPE) in July, 2012, which is currently being co-chaired by the President of Indonesia, the President of Liberia and the Prime Minister of the UK, and is expected to contribute to the post-2015 development agenda by identifying key principles for shaping global partnerships, strengthened accountability mechanisms, and measures to build political consensus around the three dimensions: economic growth, social equality and environmental sustainability.

Frankly, it is unclear how the official efforts align to develop a post-2015 development agenda and SDGs. Critics argue that these parallel processes are not only confusing, but could lead to 'policy fatigue' and hinder the potential for progress on a globally owned set of goals with meaningful input from civil society (NGLS: 2013).

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has outlined some reflections on ensuring women's rights are central to any post-2015 development framework and she puts forth five principles for a post-2015 development framework from a gender perspective:

- Advance equity (fairness in distribution of benefits and opportunities), equality (with full protection of the law), and non-discrimination (prohibition of any illegal grounds to restrict rights).

- Nothing about us without us: ensure women's meaningful participation and a process in which all voices are heard nationally and internationally.

- Accountability, requiring political commitment, transparency; institutional mechanisms; measures for monitoring and benchmarking to achieve gender equality.

- The indivisibility of human rights as the basis for achieving sustainable and equitable development (this refers to all rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural)

- Universality: gender inequality is not confined to any region in the world but universally relevant (OHCHR: 2012).

b.   Voices from Civil Society

Both the panel and the task force are supposed to work closely with one another and with civil society and there are efforts to achieve this. The third panel meeting took place in Monrovia, Liberia[4] at which the African Women Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) sponsored a gender roundtable. The Special Advisor to the Secretary General on Post 2015 stated, "In every single goal, women will matter (FEMNET: 2013)."

The UN Development Group (UNDG), which brings together the various funds, agencies, and programs of the UN, has also launched a series of consultations with a mix of stakeholders in over one hundred developing countries. Over 50 national and thematic consultations and community based discussions are also being planned and documented through 'The World We Want 2015',[5] which is a digital platform that generates dialogue and compiles input from civil society voices, including on issues such as gender and inequality. This work is meant to feed into a high-level event on the MDGs and post-2015 at the UN General Assembly in 2013 and to be adopted by 2015.

UN Women and UNICEF, partnering with civil society, organized a global e-discussion on gender equality, asking for people around the world to share their inputs from the 3rd of October to the 2nd of November 2012. 372 comments were received and six priority areas were put forth that support a rights-based agenda:

1.   Combat all forms of gender-based violence;

2.   Ensure women's sexual and reproductive rights and access to quality healthcare;

3.   Enact and enforce laws that promote gender equality and eliminate laws, policies and practices that are harmful to women and girls;

4.   Prioritize access to quality education and skills development for all women and girls, especially those from socially excluded groups;

5.   Ensure women's full participation in society, including the economic, legal, social and political life of their communities;

6.   Enact economic and social policies that contribute to achieving gender equality and align with human rights principles.

Participants highlighted the importance of tackling vulnerability, access and equality for women and girls. They also stressed the fact that social and economic issues are linked, cautioning that women's issues not be separated out from the recommendations to strengthen the economy, including measures to capture 'care work' and more broadly to develop appropriate fiscal, trade and monetary policies that are supportive of and don't undermine women's rights (UN Women/UNICEF: 2012).

Civil society groups have also launched Beyond 2015[6] as an autonomous information and action space, which includes more than 570 organizations from over 95 countries. It is led by a steering committee of NGOs[7] who have identified criteria for a post-2015 development framework: Legitimacy, Leadership, Accountability and Substance (see Annex I) and serve as a clearinghouse for documents and events. They have developed a series of working groups as well as national and regional hubs for consultation.

Some interesting reflections and recommendations are emerging from these various processes. For example, the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development, which is an alliance of seventeen civil society activists, experts, and academics, is recommending an institutional revamping to ensure that the proper economic and political process is put into place. This includes a new charter on the right to sustainable development that reaffirms the commitment of governments for human rights and sustainability; a global system of financial burden-sharing beyond Official Development Assistance (ODA) to move away from paternalistic relationships between rich donors and poor partners; a Sustainable Development Council that can infuse rights and sustainability into the various developmental and environmental bodies; a stronger Committee on Development Policy (CDP) to provide inputs to ECOSOC on cross-sectoral development issues; an international ombudsman for international justice/future generations; and Special Rapporteurs to monitor and report on issues (Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development: 2012).

The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the Korean Development Institute (KDI) argues a bit differently, 'We cannot load everything on the new development agenda; it is asking too much to expect a single, global, aspirational agreement to align goals of sustainable development with the profit-making focus of, for example, the private business sector or to improve the coherence between macro, social and environmental policies. There is a limit on the number of goals a framework can accommodate' (CIGI/KDI: 2012). They propose 11 Bellagio Goals which are addressed in the next section.

Women's groups and individual gender experts are also weighing in. For example, The Gender and Development Network (GADN) recommends gender mainstreaming throughout any post-2015 framework by identifying targets under each goal, as well as a separate gender equality target to reach the most marginalized (GADN: 2012). A separate gender equality target would serve as 'lever' and 'impetus for action' for holding governments accountable (GADN: 2013).

Dr. Rosie Peppin Vaughan from the Institute of Education at the University of London writes that any relevant post-2015 development agenda has to incorporate a much stronger participatory process that includes more civil society groups and NGOs that are focused on gender equality and women's rights, and are able to bring an understanding from their grassroots and national experience. She raises the question: "To what extent are global policy frameworks genuinely able to engage with and

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4   The Monrovia meeting took place from January 30-February 2, 2013.

5   www.worldwewant2015.org

6   www.beyond2015.org

7   List of NGOs in Steering Committee: bond, CAFOD, Sightsavers, WWF, Voice, Center for Economic and Social Rights, Ecoweb, Global Call to Action against Poverty, J.D.P.C Nigeria, Save the Children, SADPD, and the Seed Institute.

serve as a platform for national and local NGOs and local women's voices?"(Vaughan: 2012). In spite of women's central role in every society, they are more likely to be excluded from institutional decision-making at the state and national levels, and tend to be most active at the local level. The challenge is figuring out to mobilize collective action among grassroots women to ensure that their priorities 'trickle up.' This means helping them to realize their autonomy from men and protecting them from violence. It means ensuring that their voices aren't co-opted by global organizations' agendas rather than their own (Vaughan: 2012). And, it means providing them with financial support so they can participate in a meaningful fashion.

Some groups are focused on economic transformation and policy reform. For example, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) highlights the importance of an enabling policy environment that would focus on appropriate taxes and pricing systems; fiscal policies that support a redistribution of wealth; effective regulation to end unsustainable investment practices; a favorable environment for trade; the phase out of harmful subsidies; innovation; decent job creation; and green skills development. "An inclusive Green economy should include indicators that measure progress beyond GDP, which value the unrecognized contribution of women and the environment to the economy. (WECF: 2013)."

•   Action Aid has developed a research and action agenda to support women's contribution to the economy, taking into account their various roles, barriers and vulnerabilities. This includes the reversal of structural barriers such as access to decent work, unequal responsibility for unpaid care work, ending violence against women, decision-making power over finances and resources, and land rights so that gender equality and inclusive growth go hand in hand (Action Aid: 2013).

•   And, the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) and the Association of Women in Development (AWID) are challenging the negative impact of macroeconomic policies on the realization of social and economic rights and advancements. They argue that a new understanding of development needs to be framed in a way that gives precedence to the human rights framework, and this should be linked to the monitoring of progress in the post-2015 period (CWGL: 2012 and AWID 2013).

IV   Sustainable Development Goals – Delving into the Weeds

 "Tell me what you are going to measure; and I'll tell you how I'm going to behave (CIGI/KDI: 2012)." This quote gets at a real dilemma that if goals and indicators are not realistic or useful to those who are meant to implement them, then they serve no purpose. For women's rights activists, this question really matters. We can call for gender-disaggregated data, but if gender equality is defined narrowly and governments don't make data collection a priority, then how will we measure progress? The SDGs represent an opportunity to realize more comprehensive goals with measureable results for women's rights.

The Rio + 20 Outcome Document generally states that the SDGs should build on the efforts from the MDGs; it also states that they should contribute to the implementation of the outcomes of all major summits (CIGI/KDI: 2012). Beyond this, there is

a fair amount of room to define the SDGs to incorporate more comprehensive and inclusive approaches, including a rights-based framework from a gender perspective. This section lists a few of recommendations that are relevant to the topic of this paper.

As has been briefly mentioned, after meeting in Bellagio, Italy in 2011 and regional consultations in 2012, CIGI/KDI released 11 Bellagio Goals that are designed as 'one-world goals' that apply to poor and rich countries alike (CIGI/KDI: 2012). These are quite comprehensive and are useful for considering appropriate targets and indicators more broadly and specifically those relevant from a gender perspective. These goals are:

•   Inclusive growth for dignified livelihoods and adequate standards of living;

•   Sufficient food and water for active living;

•   Appropriate education and skills for productive participation in society;

•   Good health for the best possible physical and mental well-being;

•   Security for ensuring freedom from violence;

•   Gender equality, enabling men and women to participate and benefit equally in society;

•   Building resilient communities and nations for reduced disaster risk from natural and technological hazards;

•   Improving infrastructure for access to essential information, services and opportunities;

•   Empowering people to realize their civil and political rights;

•   Sustainable management of the biosphere, enabling people and the planet to thrive together; and

•   Global governance and equitable rules for realizing human potential.

Each goal is cross-cutting and supported by indicators that could be disaggregated by sex, urban/rural, identity groups and income bands. They could also apply to both developed and developing countries.

Goal #6 is entitled 'Gender equality enabling men and women to participate and benefit equally in society.' CIGI and KDI have conceptualized this in terms of the need to respect the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and a basic understanding that empowering women is a means to combat poverty, hunger, disease and to stimulate the economy. They refer to the importance of the Johannesburg Plan of Action, which already comprises government commitments from the Rio + 10 Summit, and the need to promote women's equal access and decision-making at all levels with gender mainstreaming as a key strategy. They also agree with the 2008 UNDP report which states that gender discrimination persists, that gender mainstreaming has become too instrumentalist in its approach, and that sex-disaggregated data is lacking as are enough

gender experts (UNDP: 2008).

In considering targets and indicators, they have reviewed different models such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index released in 2012 by USAID, the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative; as well as the 2010 Human Development Report's Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender-Inequality Index (GII). From these, they put forth three categories for Goal #6:

1. Physical autonomy: Do women have control over their own bodies?

2. Economic autonomy: Can women generate their own income and control their assets and resources?

3. Decision-making autonomy: Do women have full participation in decisions that affect their lives and communities?

Within the first category, physical autonomy, they have two targets: reproductive rights and violence. For these they have specific indicators relating to improved family planning, contraception and reduced cases of violence against women. In the area of economic autonomy, they have another two targets: capacity and participation. For these they have specific indicators to capture statistics on women's earnings and levels of poverty as well as new ways of measuring women's care work and their work in the formal and informal economy. As for decision-making autonomy, they have public and private targets. The private indicators address women's control of their income, decision-making power at the household level, and whether they own land and other assets. The public indicators address women's political participation by seeking to capture the number of women voters and political leaders.[8]

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has offered particular recommendations for better data on women's work and inequality. They write, "Over the past two or three decades income inequalities have worsened…and that gender inequalities are narrowing at a snail's pace (UNRISD: 2012). As a means to address this, they propose that new indicators and targets could assess and respond to:

•   Inequality in terms of the top and bottom deciles/ventiles;

•   Wages vs. profits – this helps to provide a clearer picture of the functional distribution of income;

•   Gender-based wage gaps (note: currently the average difference of women's wages to men's is close to 30 percent);

•   Other labour market indicators: median wage, existence of minimum wage, percentage of labour force with social protection (female, male); and

•   Female/male ratio of unpaid work.

One of the most comprehensive reflections on appropriate gender indexes and indicators was written by Dr. Caren Grown in 2009 and it remains relevant for the post-2015 framework and SDGs.

The title of her chapter is 'Indicators and Indexes of Gender Inequality: What Do They Measure and What Do They Miss?' (Grown: 2009). In it, she makes the point that gender equality and women's empowerment are not the same thing and therefore their indicators cannot be the same. She also writes that presently there are several challenges with measuring women's empowerment. The most obvious is, of course, lack of data. But there is another challenge in that women's empowerment can mean different things in different countries and contexts and it can change based on circumstances. This is difficult to capture in an indicator. While indicators tell an important story, they need to be reviewed as part of a broader understanding of the linkages to the question being asked.

She reviews a number of existing indexes. In addition to the ones already mentioned, she looks at the Gender and Empowerment Measure (GEM) and the African Gender and Development Index. She explores Social Watch's Gender Equity Index, which was designed to address the social, political and economic dimensions of poverty. And she reviews the Standardized Index of Gender Equality (SIGI). Her basic assessment is that various composite indexes provide good information, but could still be improved.

She writes, "Good indicators are concise and intuitively meaningful to the public and decision-makers and meet statistical standards of rigor and validity. Excellent indicators are those in which factors causing changes in the indicator are known and for which impact can be modeled (Grown: 2009)."

If the SDGs are to succeed, a select set of indicators should be identified that can move things forward, not bog things down in a review of what has already been done.

V   Conclusion

The post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs have potential to make a positive, long-lasting difference in addressing today's myriad of challenges. Whether they will is another story - and there is room for skepticism. Politically, Rio + 20 should have been the space for dealing with all aspects relating to sustainable development, especially for linking macro and micro-level policies to address all of the issues from an environmental, social and human rights lens. Unfortunately, it was not. And, as many have noted, there are other high-level meetings relating to food and agriculture, the environment, and gender outside of the post-Rio and post-2015 political space that seem to take precedence. That said, there is no reason why things couldn't be organized differently. Ultimately, a new understanding of development is needed – even better if post-2015 can provide the intellectual power and the political will to move differently. And, there is growing interest and convergence around this theme.

In terms of the thematic issues, the process is still quite fragmented. And, as has been mentioned, only a small group of women's rights advocates are really engaged in efforts to frame the post-2015 development agenda. This is not to imply that women aren't organized. For example, rural women's groups with GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission are organizing in their communities, with their local governments and in their local contexts. But their voices are not guiding the consultative process as they should. Efforts to speed up the official decisions forget that lack of process and participation will undermine the success of the

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8   See Table 7: Candidate Indicators on Gender Equality within CIGI/KDI report.

post-2015 development framework.

Thematically, it will be important for women's rights activists not to fall into the trap of focusing on micro-level solutions and gender mainstreaming. They will need to be more aggressive and focused in taking on governance and policy reform, including macro-economic policy reform. For example, global policy shifts over the last 30 years have focused on expanding trade and reducing government regulations that have taken their toll on the ability of governments to support sustainable development goals at the national level. Lower tariffs, cuts in spending and deregulation served to decrease government revenues to support key development policies, production incentives, infrastructure investments and price stabilization measures. Lowered tariffs also led to the privatization of essential services, such as water, sanitation, health, and extension services for the rural poor, who are primarily women and children and entrenched women in their care economy roles (CWGL: 2011). Global rules have been set without taking into account the gendered impacts and the negative ramifications are apparent. Poorly designed economic policies represent another form of violence that has compounded the challenges that so many women already face in their daily lives. It is not enough to speak in generalities about the economic trends - specific policy interventions are needed in those arenas where the decisions are being taken. This includes a sustained presence and pressure on the G20 and on the regional and international institutions where major decisions are being taken. To date, very few feminist activists with technical expertise have stayed the course.

The other related issue area that women's rights advocates need to address has to do with 'resilience.' Women and girls, particularly those in rural areas, are facing many of the development challenges already at an extreme disadvantage due to unequal access to resources and political participation with their vulnerability increased by climate change, conflict, poverty and hunger. Oxfam India writes, "Strengthening resilience requires a range of measures, from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to factoring disaster and climate risks into economic and development policy, to ensuring effective national policy and regulatory risk management to address the drivers of disaster risk (NGLS: 2013)." AWID adds that "human rights and equity shall be key to generate resiliency" and Action Aid International adds that "policies must be community-driven and community-centric, with communities empowered to voice their concerns from national to international level to influence policies and practices that build resilience and protect and fulfill their rights (NGLS: 2013)." Much more work is needed to promote a feminist policy agenda for recognizing and support resilience models as it is currently lacking.

In terms of a process to strengthen the post-2015 development framework and measures for implementation, targeted networking is needed. A new women's coalition has formed. Perhaps it has potential to stay close to the process, to expand participation and to offer substantive inputs.[9] Other initiatives are also underway such as the 'Ask Africa Now' initiative sponsored by the Agency for Cooperation and Research and Development (ACORD) to consult with African women across the Continent to feed into the post-2015 process.

In terms of process, one way forward would be to develop 'Women's Rights and Sustainable Development Policy Councils.' These could be organized within regions and at the national level to bring together a mix of voices to critique the current development model, formulating substantive positions moving forward, promoting cooperation and weighing in on the various themes and processes. They could include gender experts, grassroots activists, and women leaders with technical knowledge in key areas such as human rights, development, macroeconomic policy or climate change and legal systems as well as sector-specific expertise on food, water, land, and energy. They could play a duel role in strengthening the official process as well as serving as a catalyst for sparking dialogue action among women's rights advocates on the need to engage in ongoing global processes to support human rights and sustainable development. The other value they could play is in linking issues that still need to be put together in a more comprehensive way. For example, violence against women, food security, conflict and disaster relief are all inter-connected. And there is very little dialogue on how to assess what is needed.

Either as part of these Councils or as a separate entity, 'a women's rights and sustainable development observatory' could also be created to review implementation of the indicators and outcomes, as well as inter-ministerial committees and the promotion of gender-sensitive budgeting (UN DAW: 2009). In fact, the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean was launched in 2010 as an inter-agency effort whose purpose is to analyze and provide visibility for the achievement of specific gender equality goals and objectives in the region; to provide technical support and training; and to provide an assessment of the inequalities between women and men. Unfortunately, it is not clear how its agenda is fed by civil society priorities. It is narrowly focused on women's physical autonomy, their decision-making autonomy and their economic autonomy, ignoring a stronger women's rights agenda, also in relation to the environment.

The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative, which is co-managed by UN Women and the UN Statistics Division, working with the World Bank and the OECD, is also developing gender statistics and data-collection in 10 pilot countries to be reviewed in 2015 (UN Women: 2012). Again, the indicators are quite narrow. That said, perhaps these tools are a starting point for strengthening gender-based reporting and gender-budgeting within the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs, assuming civil society is an integral player in defining the work.

And, then there is the 'nitty gritty' of defining and implementing the SDG targets and indicators. To date, the inputs on gender have been fairly general. It seems dangerous to begin making long lists of gender indicators. As was stated earlier, groups should be defining a few select indicators that can truly advance achievements that have already been made.

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9   Groups currently involved include the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Baha'i International Community, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), the Feminist Task Force, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders - International Civil Society Action Network, Huairou Commission, the International Women's Health Coalition, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the World Federalist Movement, and the Institute for Global Policy.

What is absolutely clear is that women cannot continue with more of the same. Any new formulation of a global order must reflect their reality and their priorities, and will have to be accompanied by adequate funding and full political support. If post-2015 is to go anywhere, it will require major institutional reform and rethinking of the value of the economy in support of women's human rights – this is the work ahead.

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ANNEX I – 'Must Haves' from Beyond 2015

Legitimacy

a) The UN must lead an inter-governmental debate on the process immediately, which must be connected to the on-going discussions about sustainable development, aid effectiveness and financing for development.

b) The UN must agree on a roadmap, including time-specific milestones to develop the new framework. This roadmap must use the 2013 MDG Summit to define the vision for the post 2015 process, and culminate in a global Summit to adopt a new framework in 2015.

c) The framework must be aligned with, and facilitate progress in other global and regional processes, such as Rio +20, to avoid duplication.

d) The development of the framework must be based on a full and meaningful evaluation of the MDGs and the Millennium Declaration, and must take into account the shortcomings of the MDG approach and its limitations in addressing structural causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion. It must also recognise the positive achievements of the MDGs.

e) The development of the framework must be completely open and transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive to voices and expertise of those directly affected by poverty and injustice.

f) The development of the framework (and its monitoring) must include an extensive consultation involving all stakeholders at local, national, regional and global level. This must include a formalised and meaningful process for civil society engagement, including the most marginalised groups.

g) Civil society organisations without ECOSOC status must be included in the consultation, as must those who are unable to participate in an internet based consultation.

h) Given the importance of monitoring and data collection, researchers and statistical experts must be included in the process for developing the framework.

Leadership

a) The UN is the only legitimate and representative global governance structure and must lead the process.

b) The process must not be led by the G20, G8, OECD or any other non-representative global forum.

c) National governments must have primary ownership of, and accountability for the framework and its delivery. Governments should make use of local expertise, but must also be able to request external expertise without sacrificing control of their development strategy, and international institutions must respect and support, as appropriate to their mandate, existing national development frameworks.

Accountability

a) The framework must clearly lay out enforceable accountability mechanisms, as well as the process for accountability at a national, regional and global level. This must include national oversight and independent review mechanisms at the international level.

b) The framework must include mechanisms for mutual accountability between governments and donors.

c) The framework must include mechanisms for a governmental peer review process which includes civil society.

d) The framework must enable citizens in developing countries to hold their governments to account in real time for progress on commitments made.

e) The framework must include monitoring mechanisms with measures to disaggregate data so that the impact on marginalised groups can be properly addressed.

f) National processes must, in the spirit of democratic ownership, involve meaningful consultation and scrutiny by parliament and civil society.

Substance

What should the framework contain?

a) The framework must set out global goals, as well as contextualised national targets for developed and developing countries aiming at a sustainable and equitable global development, as well as the eradication of extreme poverty.

b) The framework must be based in full accordance with international human rights laws and frameworks.

c) The framework must lever the reform of existing structures that perpetuate poverty and inequality.

d) The framework must recognise that international aid is only a part of a balanced approach to development.

e) The framework must address:

- Root causes of poverty and injustice in all countries, from the richest to the poorest.

- Inequity and inequality.

- Environmental sustainability and climate change.

- The responsibility of national governments to sustainably manage their natural and financial resources.

- The responsibility of the international community to support developing countries in the face of global challenges through respecting their ODA commitments as well as through innovative redistributive funding mechanisms which would generate additional predictive finance.

- The responsibility of developing country governments to deliver on development commitments.

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