

## **Compilation of women’s groups and other civil society responses to the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

*The views expressed in this document are those of civil society  
and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women.*

### **A. Women’s groups responses**

#### **Summary**

*Women’s rights and gender equality advocates welcome the inclusion of a gender equality goal but are concerned that the report lacks an integrated gender perspective. They point out that critical inter-linkages, specifically in terms of women’s rights and gender equality, are absent in the goals and stress that certain targets (energy, agriculture, transport, deforestation, food security) need to articulate these inter-linkages. Furthermore, groups feel that the report does not offer a transformational approach to issues such as growing feminization and intergenerational transfer of poverty. References to the role women play in the care economy and their unfair burden of work are barely mentioned, if at all, in the report. However, most groups acknowledge that there are improvements over the MDGs framework. And, the inclusion of concrete recommendations on women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality is positive. But others feel that the opportunity to build targets on the internationally agreed normative framework of women’s rights as human rights has been missed and that the Panel failed to recognize the declarations, plans of action and subsequent agreements stemming from the conferences in Vienna, Cairo and Beijing. The excerpts below capture some of the views, comments and responses of women’s groups to the HLP report.*

### **African women's steering committee on the Post 2015 agenda (FEMNET, Akina Mama wa Afrika, IPPF Africa and others)**

Although the report includes specific indicators, such as ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights, a decrease in maternal mortality, women's right to own land, property and other assets, etc., little focus has been placed on addressing gender inequalities and strongly linking gender equality and women's rights perspectives throughout the narrative of the report and in the illustrative goals. The report fails to take into account the social, cultural and political dynamics that account for both vertical and horizontal structural inequalities. The issue of unpaid care work has been overlooked and while the panel acknowledges the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents as a problem, the HLP does not offer practical measures to address this gap.

### **Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development (APWLD)**

The report fails to fully recognize that women make up the majority of workers in the most vulnerable sectors: domestic workers, garment workers, subsistence farming. They suffer disproportionately from climate disasters that they are least responsible for. Women need more than non-discrimination measures. They need real economic transformation, redistribution and justice. They need to have a genuine say over development, their bodies, their communities and global systems.

### **Amnesty International**

It is not enough for women to enjoy living in stable and peaceful societies (Goal 11) or to have access to justice mechanisms and benefit from due process; the law must challenge gender discrimination and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **Campaign for Peoples Goals for Sustainable Development**

The report fails to address wealth and power inequalities and reduces labour to the value it brings to economic growth and consumption and suggests that labour market flexibility is required to stimulate growth. This contradicts the notion of labour security and leaves workers, particularly women, in vulnerable employment.

### **CARE International**

The report's inclusion of women's access to finance as a target as well as the suggestion that the data used to measure progress with the new framework will be broken down by gender so that inequalities can be better tracked is welcomed. Further work is required in addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination and inclusion of women's protection and participation in conflict and post conflict settings.

### **Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)**

Recommendations fall short of the human rights litmus test. Gender equality, although more comprehensively addressed than under the current MDGs, is still framed in a reductive and instrumental way, and the proposed targets dimly reflect the range of measures States are already obliged to take to ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights by women, people with disabilities, indigenous people and others facing systemic discrimination.

### **Center for Women's Global Leadership and 90+ women's organizations<sup>i</sup>**

The standalone goal, the target on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the target on maternal mortality are all welcomed inclusions. However, the report fails to: offer the necessary transformational building blocks for a new sustainable human development agenda; provide a transformational approach to address growing inequalities within and between countries and between women and men, as well as the root causes of poverty, including the growing feminization and intergenerational transfer of poverty; address the current macro-economic model which perpetuates poverty and inequality; include people who are discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; link existing human rights accountability mechanisms at the regional and global levels in its accountability discussion; and address limited financing as a key barrier to advancing sustainable development, including women's rights and gender equality.

### **Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)**

The report falls short of providing substantive direction and support to Member States. Indicators fall short of clearly articulating that women's poverty needs to be understood as the consequence of multiple violations of rights and it should be tackled as a multi-dimensional concern. Poverty measures need to move beyond income towards the multi-dimensional approaches that are now well recognized as essential and that pay attention to the exercise of rights and access to services, among other factors.

### **Education for All Global Monitoring Report**

Education's cross-cutting importance should be more clearly reflected in targets for other goals. It is worrying to see that the goal to empower girls and women and achieve gender equality no longer specifies an education target. Gender disaggregation of data for education should not be compartmentalized under an education goal.

## **Equity for Children**

The HLP report is a great step forward but should be more daring. On a positive note, the explicit mention of girls (under goal 2) will increase the visibility of adolescent girls and move the equality agenda forward. However, the report relies on the much criticized \$1.25 a day to measure extreme poverty. This essentially understates the problem for children and women. Instead, metrics beyond income, such as the multiple deprivation methods, and others that combine income and consumption measures, should be applied to measure poverty.

## **Feminist Task Force (of the Global Call to Action against Poverty - GCAP)**

Women's sphere of influence in the HLP Report is shrinking and this is evident in the number of references that are made to gender-related issues, such as violence against women, gender, gender equality and women over other words, such as banks, investment, business and accountability.

## **International Women's Health Coalition**

The report did not place greater emphasis on promoting and achieving the *full realization of women's and girls' human rights* and would have been stronger had the panel delved deeper in addressing the connections between violence and child marriage and other critical issues for women and girls, such as HIV infection or access to education. The role women play in the care economy, the unfair burden of work they face as a result, and the impact this has on their ability to participate equally in society should have also been addressed. They recommend the inclusion of increased access to public care services, including child care and elderly care, and ensuring quality and decent working conditions for care providers would help contribute to a fairer redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work.

## **Indian Civil Society NGOs**

The upfront attention to the issue of violence against women in the Report is welcome. However, it would be useful to highlight the link between violence against women and increased militarization, small arms industry resulting in increased violence within the home and outside. There are various intersectionalities that confront women facing multiple discriminations and make them even more vulnerable to violence, abuse, neglect and deprivation, which the report does not take into account. And, despite having a goal on gender, the gender analysis seems weak as it does not talk about causes of poverty or gender inequality.

## **Participate**

Despite promoting gender equality as a cross-cutting issue that should be addressed across the development framework, the content of the report does not clearly elaborate on how this can be done and why this is critical.

## **RESURJ**

That the report goes beyond a discourse of poverty reduction to poverty eradication is encouraging. So too is the integration of sustainable development into the recommendations; and the fact that specific attention was paid to including women's and young people's human rights, their sexual and reproductive health and rights, their education and political participation as key components of national economic growth; environmental sustainability and various recommendations under target 2, addressing violence against women and girls, women's right to inherit property, ensuring universal sexual and reproductive health and rights were also included. However, the report falls short of proposing a truly transformative framework and goals that address the root causes of the inequalities and injustices that they face. Targets do not address the necessary interventions required for the full realization of rights highlighted, such as the provision of a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health services.

### **Women's Major Group**

It is encouraging that the report includes concrete recommendations on women's and girls' empowerment and gender equality and addresses many of the issues that women have argued are critical but it is not good enough. However, there is a weak gender analysis and a failure to address women's rights as a cross-cutting issue. Although goals have a universal approach, they are reductive and not ambitious enough. Although the report recognizes that development has to be sustainable, socially just and within the planet's carrying capacity, it does not recognize the failures that underlie the current economic system. Although the report recommends the inclusion of critical human rights, there is nonetheless an inconsistent application of human rights throughout the framework. The report also fails to call for a global social protection floor and the right to decent work as well as failing to mention some important forms of discrimination, (sexual orientation and gender identity). And finally, although the report identifies CSOs as partners, it fails to design mechanisms for accountability that will ensure the meaningful participation of women's and social movements in development planning and programming.

## **B. Other civil society responses**

*Common themes emerged in the responses by civil society organizations on the HLP report. These evolved around human rights, accountability, inequalities, corporate responsibility (private sector), health (which includes sexual and reproductive health) and other issues.*

### **Human Rights**

#### **ACORD**

Despite impressive economic growth, Africa faces increasing and enduring inequalities and, by not including a goal on addressing inequality, a historic opportunity to put this crucial issue at the heart of the debate on international development was missed. And, though the report is strong on civil and political rights, there is a host of vital social, economic and cultural rights that States have already committed to which are not included in the goals.

#### **Amnesty International**

The report neither recognizes that Governments are bound by pre-existing human rights standards nor does it address accountability in the right to effective remedies for violations of human rights. Human rights must play stronger role in the post-2015 development agenda. The report too often narrowly frames human rights in terms of civil and political rights without referencing economic, social and cultural rights. Although it recognizes economic and social rights, in other areas these rights are referred to as 'basic needs', which is regressive considering States' existing obligations under international law.

#### **Beyond 2015**

The reference to human rights principles, such as universality, participation and inclusion, inalienability, and accountability, is positive. The report should have included implementation of human rights as the sixth transformational shift and it should have replaced the term "humanity" with "human rights". It approaches peace and security pragmatically, placing it in a broader perspective. However, by linking peace and good governance, it ignores a gross reality – that the majority of present day conflicts are motivated by resources and not a failure of democracy, leadership or governance. This could cause a potential further rift to conflict countries who feel they bear the burden of dealing with conflict alone, when in fact several players have an important role.

### **Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)**

The report displays a fragmented reading of human rights. It fails to address corporate accountability; yet, human rights norms are unequivocal in requiring that Governments set up systems which guarantee the private sector respect human rights universally, irrespective of its contribution to development. The report's proposals assume that businesses will create a more coherent, transparent and equitable system through good intentions alone when this is not the case. The report's failure to promote adherence, at the very least, to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights is a missed opportunity.

### **Campaign for People's Goals**

The report's failure to link the human rights accountability mechanisms with comprehensive development policies is a missed opportunity.

### **Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)**

The report displays a fragmented and inconsistent incorporation of human rights in its proposals. Furthermore, the market/business-led development of which the report gives prominence is seen as outdated and hindering to any chances of undertaking a truly transformative shift.

### **International Women's Health Coalition**

The report should have placed greater emphasis on promoting and achieving the full realization of women's and girls' human rights. The recommendations of the report are not framed in terms of fundamental human rights which extend beyond political and civil rights, and encompass the full spectrum of rights to which Governments have already committed. It also failed to promote human rights-based approaches through the implementation of the post-2015 framework and link the strong human rights accountability mechanisms that already exist at the regional and global levels with Governments' development obligations. There is also a lack of an acknowledgement of Governments' obligations to protect human rights through the proper oversight and regulation of private actors, especially business and private financial entities, to guarantee that they respect human rights and the environment, including in their cross-border activities.

### **Accountability**

### **Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development (APWLD)**

The report's approach of broadening the MDGs to include sustainable development, governance and some human rights is valuable but the issue of accountability remains an challenge and while there are some useful inclusions like a stand-alone gender goal

and the sexual and reproductive health and rights, the report fails to address growing income inequalities.

### **Center for Women's Global Leadership**

According to the report, under the new global partnership of mutual accountability, everyone must be “fully accountable and each country is being asked what it wants to do, on a voluntary basis. The report promotes the private sector as the engine of development, while gesturing toward self-regulatory and weak systems that have failed to ensure that the private sector is accountable for environmental and human rights violations. The report also notes that “accountability must be exercised at the right level: Governments to their own citizens, local governments to their communities, corporations to their shareholders, civil society to the constituencies they represent” - this contradicts and undermines the call for mutual accountability.

### **Women Won't Wait**

Although the report calls for the engagement of all stakeholders in the proposals of the new development agenda, this will only be possible if those stakeholders that occupy global decision-making positions are held accountable for ensuring implementation and fulfillment of the main commitments.

## **Inequalities**

### **Campaign for Peoples Goals for Sustainable Development**

Goals should aim for a redistribution of wealth, power and resources between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women. But instead of putting business at the center of the development agenda the report should end business as usual. Furthermore, the right to development appears only fleetingly in the principles to underpin global partnerships and is, moreover, not connected to substantive recommendations to realize this right and to ensure that it underpins all rights enumerated throughout the text. The opportunity to link the human rights accountability mechanisms with comprehensive development policies was therefore missed.

### **Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP)**

The report does not make reference to the care economy or the rights of people with different sexual orientations. And, although the report acknowledges that inequality is a cross-cutting issue, it emphasizes equality of opportunity rather than redistribution. Inequality is absent from the proposed goals and indicators. Equality should be a Goal of the Post-2015 framework and indicators could be related to a nation's Gini Index or



Palma Ratio. Instead, the HLP leaves it to national Governments to formulate policies on this key issue.

## **Corporate Responsibility**

### **Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)**

The privileged role that the HLP report gives to the business and corporate sector in driving development is a cause for concern because it contrasts with a very weak framework to hold corporations accountable. The report promotes a woefully inadequate approach to business regulation, arguing that business should not be 'hamstrung by unnecessarily complicated regulations'.

### **Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)**

There is the consistent foregrounding of the business sector as a fundamental driver of development. The private sector must be accountable to Governments and citizens on human rights obligations and environmental standards, including extraterritorial obligations. This is especially the case today, where State and non-State military-industrial investments have major powerful vested interest in international development. The report exhibits a business-oriented language which defines accountability at the right level: Governments to their own citizens, local governments to their communities, corporations to their shareholders, civil society to the constituencies they represent". Yet, in reality, corporate shareholders' interests are not the same as citizen's interests, as profit is their primary declarative interest. Furthermore, there is a narrow definition in the report of corporation accountability, which goes against the efforts of business schools and management institutions, towards recognizing the need for genuine corporate accountability. It is not enough to simply promote transparency in extractive industry revenue management. Rather, it is necessary to seriously examine the real costs of these industries to the planet's biospheres and ecosystems and people's livelihoods, and adopt corrective regulatory policies...The private sector must be accountable to Governments and citizens on human rights obligations and environmental standards, including extraterritorial obligations.

## **Health and Sexual Reproductive Health – SRH**

### **Civil Society Response from India**

There is an absence of a commitment to free and universal health coverage, making the adoption of a human rights frame seem inadequate.

### **International HIV/AIDS Alliance**

It is commendable that the report includes the target to ensure universal sexual and reproductive health and rights as this was a glaring gap in the MDGs. The inclusion of the 4th goal of Ensuring Healthy Lives is also welcomed. However, the report outlines no goals or indicators to drive the much needed political commitment to equality and the need to create more engaged and inclusive societies that address the needs of the most marginalized.

### **Ipas**

Some key aspects of sexual and reproductive rights need to be more explicitly highlighted in the report. The Panel should recommend that women and girls be enabled to take voluntary, autonomous decisions about whether and when to have children so that they can take full advantage of educational and employment opportunities and be able to participate in community and civic decision-making and activities...Increasing women's access to safe and legal abortion care needs to be considered a priority in achieving gender equality in the post 2015 development agenda.

### **NCD Alliance (Non-communicable Disease Alliance)**

The definition of NCDs must be aligned to the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition and include chronic respiratory disease; the description of NCDs needs to be strengthened and it should be recognized that NCDs impact disproportionately on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and greater attention should be given to the major NCD risk factors - including tobacco use; food security and nutrition. The goal currently does not address overweight and obesity- a major driver of the NCD epidemic and ill health.

### **International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)**

The organization fears that the lack of clarity on universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights may lead some Governments to sideline this target or call for its removal when negotiations about content of the post-2015 development agenda begin in earnest.

### **Other issues**

#### **CARE International**

Although the report highlights climate change as a fundamental barrier to tackling global poverty and inequality, it falls short of delivering the call for action to tackle climate change and secure a safe future.

### **Campaign for People's Goals for Sustainable Development**

Despite the positive and essential ingredients in the report it nonetheless equates development with business-led economic growth which is ultimately unsustainable and has been proven to fail in improving the general wellbeing of the people and the environment. The most important ingredients for addressing poverty and environmental degradation are redressing inequality; strengthening corporate regulation and accountability; strengthening the right to participation of people from the most impoverished and marginalized communities in governance; expanding and protecting the commons; and promoting deeper respect for nature are still missing. There is a desperate urgency to explore viable alternatives in the quest to construct frameworks that will inform development.

### **Civil Society Response from India**

There is an inadequate focus on inequality (particularly income inequality) which could have been articulated as a standalone, universal goal rather than leaving it to the national policy space. Attention to key intersectionalities that affect not only gender inequality but also as perpetuating inequality remains muted in the suggested new development frame. Inadequate attention to public provisioning of basic entitlements is another let-down. Furthermore, neither the goals nor the indicators in the report mention disability. Ageing and rights of the elderly are not mentioned in the document although this section of the population is most vulnerable to abuse and deprivation.

### **International HIV/AIDS Alliance**

The report fails to outline goals or indicators to drive the much needed political commitment to equality and the need to create more engaged and inclusive societies that address the needs of the most marginalized.

### **Social Watch**

The report does not rise to the challenge of advancing a new development agenda. It instead "lowers the bar", both in terms of the objectives proposed as well as conceptually. On most of the issues it deals with there is already agreed UN language that goes beyond the report recommendations.

### **Women Won't Wait**

Several goals should be defined with the rule of zero tolerance. These include: ending violence against women and girls under the Empowering Girls and Women and Achieving Gender Equality goal; section 2d: Eliminate discrimination against women in economic, political and public life; Goal 4: Ensuring Healthy Lives; section 4c: "Decreasing the maternal mortality ratio; section 4d: "Ensuring universal sexual and reproductive health and rights"; section 4e: Reducing the burden of disease from HIV/AIDS (zero- tolerance should be applied to women's access to lifesaving treatment).

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<sup>i</sup> Action Works Nepal (AWON), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Akshara Centre, Angikar Bangladesh, Appropriate Technologies for Rural Women Cameroon (ATRuW), Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO), Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), The Association of War Affected Women, Bangladesh Nari Progari Sabgha (BNPS), CAFSO-WRAG for Development, Campaign2015+ International, Center for Integrity Promotion and Information (CIPI), Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), The Center for Women's Health and Human Rights at Suffolk University, Centre for Social Research, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Civil Society Coalition on Migration and Development (CISCOM-D), Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), Concertación Interamericana de Mujeres Activistas por los Derechos Humanos (CIMA), Deltawomen Ngo, Dharti Development Foundation Sindh, Equidad de Género, Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia, Europe Focal Point of GCAP Feminist Task Force, Feminist Task Force, FemLINKPacific, FEMNET - Mali, FOKUS - Forum for Women and Development, Foro de Mujeres y Políticas de Población, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), Foundation Desire, Fundación Justicia y Género, Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM), Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP), Gender and Development Network, Global Justice Center, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), Global Partnership for Local Action, Huairou Commission, Institut Perempuan/Women's Institute, Institute of Human Rights and Civic Values (IHRCV), Inter Africa Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV), International Alliance of Women (IAW), International Peace Initiatives (IPI), International Women's Anthropology Conference (IWAC), International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific), International Women's Rights Action Watch USA, Jalal Foundation, KULU - Women and Development, Legal Rights Forum, MADRE, Millennium Sistahs T&T, Minority Gender Action, Le Monde Selon Les Femmes, Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum (MWRAF), National Alliam, National Alliance of Women (NAWO), National Department of Social Development, National Network Against Domestic Violence (NNADV), National Network for Beijing Review Nepal (NNBN), Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace & Development (NDWPD), Northeast Feminist Association, Practical Solutions, The Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR), RAFED 4, Red Nacional de Género y Economía (REDGE), Red por los derechos sexuales y reproductivos en México (DDESER), Saathi Nepal, Servicios Ecumenicos para la Reconciliacion y Reconstruccion (SERR), Sex og Politikk - The Norwegian Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre, Solidarity for Women's Rights Association (SOWA), Temple of Understanding, TGNP Mtandao, United Methodist Women, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights, US Solidarity Economy Network (SEN), Utthan, Vacha Trust, Vision Spring Initiatives, WIDE – Network for Women's Rights and Feminist Perspectives in Development, Women for Human Rights, single women group (WHR), Women Living Under Muslim Laws International Solidarity Network, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Women's Equity Council, United Nations Association-USA (UNA-USA San Diego), Women's Human Rights Education Institutes of the University of Toronto, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Women's Museum of California, Women's Resource and Advocacy Centre, Women's Rights Center, Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN), Young Women's Leadership Institute (YWLI)