



KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUTH ON GENDER EQUALITY:

A CALL TO ACTION

Gender Equality and Youth: 20 Years since the Beijing Platform for Action and Onwards to a Post-2015 Development Framework

ECOSOC Youth Forum 2015

In keeping with the ECOSOC Youth Forum's overall theme of "Youth managing the transition from MDGs to SDGs" and to mark the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Women, with the support of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), organized a session on Gender Equality and Youth.

Four youth leaders – Dakshitha Wickremarathne from Sri Lanka, Melissa Ruvimbo Kubvoruno from Zimbabwe, Mirna Ines Fernández from Bolivia and Vivian Onano from Kenya – spoke at a panel on "Gender equality and youth: 20 years since the Beijing Platform for Action and onwards to a post-2015 development framework" and presented the following demands and recommendations.

Gender equality and youth

- We call on Governments to fully implement the existing commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action and ensure a gender-sensitive implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). Political commitments must translate into action and change at the grassroots levels.
- We call on Governments to create or encourage the establishment of mechanisms at national and regional levels for youth and civil society organizations to hold leaders accountable for the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Such mechanisms should include national/regional civil society watch-dogs with youth representatives to monitor and report on progress.



- The MDGs largely failed to address the root causes of gender inequality and adopt a life-cycle approach to realizing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. As a result, girls and young women continue to face unique challenges because of their gender and age and are subject to systematic discrimination on a daily basis. Therefore, we call on Governments and the United Nations system to ensure that girls and young women are clearly acknowledged and their voices and priorities are reflected in the post-2015 development agenda. Girls and young women, including those who are marginalized, must be engaged as active agents in the implementation and monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda.
- We call upon all Governments to ensure that the stand-alone goal for gender quality and the empowerment of women is included in the Sustainable Development Goals, together with specific targets on gender-based violence, economic empowerment, and equality in decision-making in both public and private domains, among others. We also call on them to mainstream gender perspectives throughout the framework.
- Gender inequality starts very early and is rooted in gender stereotypes, social norms, behaviour and attitudes that form early and that perpetuate inequality and discrimination against women and girls. Therefore, efforts to prevent gender stereotypes and change attitudes that condone gender inequality and violence must also start early, in schools, in society and in homes. We are calling upon the governments, educational institutions and the United Nations to put in place gender-sensitive curriculum in schools, starting from kindergarten and primary school levels.
- Every girl and young woman has the basic right to education, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. They have the right to quality education that prepares them for full employment and decent work. We call upon Governments to make affordable, accessible and quality education available for all women and girls.
- We call upon governments and educational institutions to establish guidelines for comprehensive sexual education, which respects all genders, and provides comprehensive and gender-sensitive information on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- We call upon governments to allocate specific budgets for comprehensive health care for women and girls, and invest in young mothers, to promote their health and lifelong learning and education opportunities.



- We call upon governments to take urgent and decisive action to end gender-based violence. In order to do so, we urge all Governments to implement their existing commitments and establish adequate legislation at national and local levels to prosecute gender-based violence. We urge them to ensure allocation of sufficient resources to implement existing and new laws to this effect, raise public awareness of the laws, and to expand their efforts to prevent such violence from occurring.
- The gender gap in economic participation and opportunity stands at 60 per cent globally. Globally, only 22 per cent of Parliamentarians are women. Young women face additional barriers in participating in politics and leadership positions. We call upon Governments and the civil society and the youth movement to work on eliminating gender stereotypes and barriers that women, including young women, face in participating in decision-making at all levels.
- The efforts to overcome gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms, attitudes and behavior must be a bottoms-up approach, and start at the grassroots levels. We call upon all youth to start an inclusive conversation in their communities, their schools and work places and among their friends on gender equality, engaging men and women, boys and girls. We call upon youth to engage traditional leaders and faith-based organizations to promote gender equality.
- We demand real progress towards gender equality by 2020 and full gender equality by 2030. We call upon youth everywhere to hold their governments accountable for ensuring gender equality. Young people are the protagonists of thinking out of the box. We call upon them to create new understandings of masculinity and femininity that promotes healthy, respectful relationships and ends gender stereotypes that are the root causes of gender inequality.