

DRAFT

Statement for 'Women Leaders' Forum on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and sustainable Development' and 'Women Leaders' Summit on Future Women Want'

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) with its 10 million members all around the world (one of them being Nepal Scouts) has been empowering girls and young women through non-formal education for 100 years. Through WAGGGS we support our members to raise awareness, advocate and take action on the Millennium Development Goals. I am a member of Nepal Scouts, which is the largest youth organization in my country with a membership of 46,141 where the number of girl scouts are 22,419. We want to see girls in the leadership and decision making positions. I have come to Rio+20, with a WAGGGS delegation of 23 women from across the world. We are all leading change for sustainable development in our own communities. We're here to show that women and girls are powerful agents of change and are crucial to achieving sustainable development. We also want to advocate on behalf of our 10 million members across the world for change that will really impact on the lives of girls and young women across the world.

Nepal is a patriarchal country and women are often treated as second class citizens. The total population of Nepal is 26.62 million, of which 52% are women. Since 83 percent of the people live in the rural areas, their living is based on agriculture. Poverty is one of the crucial problems in our country because of which men are migrating to other countries for employment. This has increased the burden on women since they have to do their daily household work and on top of this, work in the fields, and also and take decisions about their household. Women now work more closely with the environment than ever before and can play a better role in the achieving sustainable development. In some parts of the world, women provide 70% of agricultural labour, produce more than 90% food, are the primary users of water, food, land and other natural resources, and yet are nowhere represented in budget deliberations (UNICEF 2008).

It has been said during this process in Rio that we must unlock 'women's potential as the drivers of sustainable development'. But to do this we must tackle the inequalities, including challenging the violence, that many women face on a daily basis and the discriminatory laws, practices and harmful traditional practices that perpetuate this cycle of violence. According to the World Bank, women between 15 and 44 are more at risk of violence and rape than from cancer, car accidents, war and malaria. In Rio we have the chance to renew and strengthen previous commitments made to women through previous conventions and plans of action such as the convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women, but we need to see decisive action from governments and real commitment to gender equality.

With Nepal Scouts, I have been working with WAGGGS and UN Women in the 'Stop the Violence' educational campaign to educate children and young people (both male and female) to remove violence and abuse from the children's behavior. In the past few years we have been working in creating awareness about Violence against Women and let me tell you that with those who I have worked with, I

can see the change in their behavior and in their lives. Thus, education is very essential to the girls as they can stand for themselves.

I have also worked closely with people in the remote part of Nepal and studied their livelihood and living conditions. I have studied the level of awareness among people in different villages in health and sanitation and have seen that *[more education is needed. We need to learn our way to sustainable solutions.]* There is a saying that, 'if a man get education, it will only last to himself but if a woman gets education, she will educate her entire family'.

To me sustainable development means changes and impacts in the lives of people in a positive way which will last long. Environment is the key to sustainable development, as things like environmental degradation and climate change give you an idea about what the future will be like. Today, if you see the river of Kathmandu it is filled with degradable and non-degradable wastes and drainage but that same river just 20 years ago was so much cleaner. If we do not take actions now we will not have any river in Kathmandu after a few years of time, it will just be a place to dump waste. Young people are tomorrow's generation and it is very important for them to understand about the importance of sustainable development. It is also important for them to be consulted with as decisions are made that will affect their future.

In Nepal I have seen the impact that girls and young women are having on sustainable development at a local level, and here in Rio I have met with other young women from all over the world who are also making that difference in their communities. In Rio we need further commitment to, and investment in, girls and young women as the drivers of sustainable development. If the negotiations here are ambitious and deliver concrete targets that help young women to 'unlock our potential' then I know that we can change the world.