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ENSURING GENDER-SENSITIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided over the last decade an overarching framework for development. As we near the end date for the achievement of the MDGs, it is clear that although a few targets have been met, a lot more remains to be done to fulfil the vision underlying the MDGs.

The consensus on the need of a new development framework has resulted in a proposed set of 17 ambitious and universal sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that delineate the areas of focus. Discussions are ongoing at the technical level on around 120 indicators that will be used to measure progress achieved.

The purpose of this policy brief is to offer stakeholders (government, civil society) some suggestions on elements and data that may help them to assess whether they are implementing the new framework in a gender-sensitive manner. The suggestions are linked to the proposed goals, targets and indicators and are meant to guide the implementation process once the post-2015 «package» is agreed upon by member States. While gender equality should be promoted throughout the goals, this brief offers suggestions on SDGs 1, 2, 5 and 17, the goals that are intimately related to the role of women as economic agents. The elements suggested emerge from analytical studies conducted by UNCTAD on the gender impacts of macroeconomic policy, in particular trade policy.

From the MDGs to the SDGs: Poverty and hunger, gender equality, and partnership for development

MDG 1 deals with extreme poverty and hunger.¹ Linked to this, it also deals with decent and productive employment for all. While access to productive resources is a precondition for fighting poverty and hunger and achieving productive employment, none of the indicators of Goal 1 refer to it. In particular, no attention was paid to the fact that women's lack of access to land and other productive resources is a key obstacle to tackling hunger and achieving MDG 1. According to United Nations data (United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Rural Women, 2011), if female farmers in developing countries had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 per cent, raising

agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 per cent, in turn reducing the global number of hungry people by 12 to 17 per cent. The proposed SDG 1 – to end poverty, and SDG 2 – to end hunger and malnutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, remedy this serious shortcoming by including targets on ensuring that men and women have equal access to economic resources, basic services, property and inheritance, technology, financial services and markets as a means to fight poverty and improve food security.

The gender equality Goal 3 in the MDGs was criticized for not paying enough attention to the structural causes of gender inequality, such as violence against women, systematic gender-based discrimination and lack of access to economic resources, while focusing mostly on education and agency. The proposed new SDG remedies some of these gaps by including targets on violence against women, unpaid care

¹ For an overview of progresses in achieving the MDGs, see *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014*, available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2014%20MDG%20report/MDG%202014%20English%20web.pdf>.

work, and on access to economic resources, land ownership, inheritance and natural resources.

Goal 8, fostering a global partnership for development, was supposed to mobilize support from rich countries for development in the form of trade policy concessions, higher aid, debt relief and capacity-building, but has been found weak in design and lacking in implementation. Its “successor”, SDG 17, addresses some of these shortcomings – among others, by calling on developed countries to honour their commitments related to the percentage of their gross national income (GNI) provided as official development assistance to developing and least developed countries, and by including, among the measures meant to facilitate market access for the least developed countries, transparent and simple rules of origin. In its trade-related component, SDG 17, however, mainly focuses on trade in goods, while paying limited attention to trade in services, where most women are employed;² and on tariff barriers, overlooking the role of non-tariff measures, the latter being a major obstacle for women producers and exporters. While the SDGs are meant to be inspirational, SDG 17 is not particularly so. Target 10 promotes a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of the Doha Round. However, it does not explicitly link it with the achievement of overarching objectives that are beneficial to a wide range of countries and of people within countries. Trade, however, is addressed in several other goals (beyond SDG 17), where its potential role as an enabler of development emerges more clearly.³

Common structural constraints with respect to gender in low- and middle-income countries: Findings from UNCTAD country case studies

UNCTAD has conducted analytical studies on the impact of trade and trade liberalization on gender equality in a number of developing and least developed countries.⁴ Although the history, economic structure, level of development, insertion into the global economy and existing productive capacities of each country and region

are quite different, UNCTAD’s analytical work shows that there are clearly identifiable structural constraints with respect to women’s economic empowerment that are common to all.

First, gender segmentation is evident in all economic activities. Women are concentrated in low value added and low productivity work that pays little and in subsistence production that generates no surplus. They tend to be excluded from high-skill occupations and from the commercialized and capital-intensive segments of production and trade, thus providing few pathways of advancement unless specific policy interventions are put in place.⁵

Second, women have unequal access to productive resources in relation to men. Women often have restricted access to community managed facilities or receive assets that are of poor quality. Discriminatory customary laws that deprive women of equal rights to land are still prevalent, especially in Africa.

Third, women have low access to vocational and on-the-job training that would increase their chances of obtaining higher skilled jobs. This in turn is related to the gender segmentation of occupations: because women are crowded in labour-intensive work in the manufacturing sector, they have less opportunity to acquire advanced skills required for more technically sophisticated employment. Employers may also prefer not to “invest” in women due to their intermittent participation in the labour market or to gender stereotypes that reserve higher paying jobs for men. In terms of agriculture and fisheries, women use low-productivity technologies, have low access to credit and are often excluded from extension programmes and other support services due to time and mobility constraints as well as social and cultural barriers.

Fourth, women remain primarily responsible for care and household work. In countries where data is available, women are reported to spend more than twice the number of hours that men do on unpaid domestic and care work on average (Economic and Social Council, 2013). Given poor infrastructure facilities in low-income countries (for example, electricity, fuel, water supply, public transport), the burdens of household work are multiplied and lead to even higher female time poverty, which in turn curtails women’s ability to advance in their positions or to expand their productive activities.

² According to International Labour Organization (ILO) data, in 2012 globally a third of women were employed in agriculture, near half in services, and a sixth in industry (ILO, 2012).

³ For example, SDGs 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 14.

⁴ The country case studies include Angola, Bhutan, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Lesotho, Rwanda and Uruguay. The studies and a synthesis report summarizing their main findings are available at <http://unctad.org/gender>.

⁵ According to ILO data, men are overrepresented in the following occupations, “craft and related trades workers”, “plant and machine operators” and “managerial and legislative”. Conversely, women’s employment is most heavily concentrated in mid-skills occupations, for example, “clerks and service workers” and “shop and market sales workers”. This suggests that women do not have the same opportunities to access the full range of occupations as men (ILO, 2012).

UNCTAD's suggestions

The analytical work of UNCTAD highlights the benefits or potential benefits of trade liberalization for women's economic empowerment and, consequently, for the well-being of the households, but also outlines its possible regressive impacts if existing gender-based inequalities are not addressed. Based on this work, this section presents suggestions on elements, data and considerations that, once the post-2015 "package" enters into force, may prove useful to assess whether SDGs 1, 2, 5 and 17 are being implemented in a "gender-sensitive" way. The same elements and data can be used to measure progress with reference to several goals and targets. The sections below outline our suggestions.

(a) Poverty, hunger, food security and sustainable agriculture

SDGs 1 and 2 make an appropriate link between ending poverty and hunger and access to economic resources, basic services, land, technology and finance. They also link investments in poverty eradication actions with the establishment of pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies. Since women's lack of, or limited access to, productive resources is among the main reasons why they are poorer and often less efficient than men as economic agents, the establishment of such links is welcome.

The following could be used to track compliance with some of the proposed targets, having women's economic empowerment in mind.

For target 1.4 (access to productive resources):

- a. Female share of landholding and immovable property;
- b. Female share of bank/ savings accounts;
- c. Female participation rate in technical and vocational training programmes;
- d. Female participation rate in government support programmes (extension services, inputs, credit);
- e. Proportion of micro- and small and medium-sized enterprises owned by women that have access to mobile phones and Internet.

For target 1.b (poverty eradication):

- a. Domestic revenues targeting specifically women as percentage of GNI, by sector;
- b. Official development assistance and net private grants targeting specifically women as percentage of GNI.

For target 2.3 (access to land and other productive resources to improve agricultural productivity and small farmers' income):

- a. Female share of landholding;
- b. Female participation rate in technical and vocational training programmes;
- c. Female participation rate in government support programmes (extension services, inputs, credit);

- d. Female use rate of storage, drying and processing facilities;
- e. Female rural employment in non-farm activities.

(b) Gender equality and women's empowerment

UNCTAD recommends that economic empowerment be thoroughly included in the implementation of SDG 5.

For target 5.1 (end all forms of discrimination against women and girls), compliance, among others, could be tracked by looking at:

- a. Ratio of female wages to male wages for similar work, by sector/industry.

For target 5.4 (recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work):

- a. Average hours spent on paid and unpaid work, by sex.

For target 5.5 (ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities in decision-making):

- a. Index of dissimilarity for occupations and sectors (among others);
- b. Female share of permanent, managerial, professional (including and excluding health workers) and clerical jobs;
- c. Female share of informal employment.

More transparent and less complex trade procedures and trade facilitation measures can facilitate the switch from informal to formal employment.

Target 5.a refers to the need to ensure women's ownership and access to productive resources, the cornerstone of women's economic empowerment. Since gender segregation in the labour market is connected to gender segregation in vocational and technical training, which in turn is related to employability, tracking access to training, including vocational training, is important. Compliance could be tracked by looking at the same elements/data as suggested for targets in SDGs 1 and 2, and in particular target 1.4. Moreover, the suggested elements would be of relevance also for SDG 8 dealing with sustainable economic growth, productive employment and decent work for all:

- a. Female share of landholding and immovable property;
- b. Female share of bank/ savings accounts;
- c. Female participation rate in technical and vocational training programmes, and in government support programmes (extension services, inputs, credit).

For target 5.b (enhance the use of enabling technologies to promote women's empowerment):

- a. Proportion of micro- and small and medium-sized enterprises owned by women that have access to mobile phones and Internet.

This element recognizes information and communications technology as an enabler for women's economic empowerment and an instrument that can help overcoming gender-specific barriers. The same element is proposed for checking gender-sensitive compliance with target 1.4.

(c) Means of implementation and global partnership for development

SDG 17 still appears to be weak. A strong link between promoting a universal multilateral trading system and achieving overarching objectives, such as equality and inclusive development, has not been established. The existence of a well-functioning multilateral trading system will not in itself guarantee economic growth that is equitable among and within countries. Trade can be used by countries to move up the value chain and to improve labour standards and working conditions, which implies linking economic upgrading with social upgrading. However, as highlighted by previous sections of this note, women tend generally to be concentrated in the labour intensive nodes of the chain where working conditions remain poor and upgrading may be associated with a defeminization of employment. Thus, apart from tapping the potentialities of trade, its possible adverse effects also need to be addressed.

For SDG 17, the intention is to capture the various dimensions of inequality that women face in the economic sphere and track progress made on them.

For target 17.10 (to promote the multilateral trading system), in addition to assessing the fairness, openness and non-discriminatory nature of the multilateral trading system, it seems important for countries that wish to ensure that trade contributes to inclusive development and to reducing gender inequalities to look at the following elements:

- a. Female share of seasonal export jobs;
- b. Gender wage gap, work conditions and social benefits in the export sector relative to the domestic sector;
- c. Female underemployment rate in import-competing sectors;⁶
- d. Female share of permanent, high-skilled and managerial jobs in export-oriented sectors.⁷

Moreover, making gender impact assessments of trade and investment agreements may contribute to gauge their contribution to inclusive development.

Target 17.15 (to respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development) could be interpreted to include social safety nets to address economic insecurity and volatility due to trade. Elements to assess if the target is being implemented in an inclusive manner could include:

- a. Coverage of unemployment insurance;
- b. Coverage of cash transfer and nutrition programmes for unemployed and underemployed populations.

⁶ Import-competing sectors are broadly defined as those where domestic production is larger than imports.

⁷ Export-oriented sectors are broadly defined as those where exports are larger than domestic consumption.

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