



## Swiss Position on Gender Equality in the Post-2015 Agenda

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Persisting gender inequalities are a major obstacle to sustainable development including economic growth and poverty eradication. To address root causes of discrimination against women and girls, Switzerland promotes a stand-alone goal titled *Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls* and advocates for gender equality as a transversal issue with gender-specific targets and indicators in all other relevant development goals. Indicators – quantitative as well as qualitative - should be based on sound analyses and empirically grounded sex disaggregated data and measure interwoven processes of discrimination and exclusion. Accountability needs to be ensured through robust monitoring frameworks and statistics.

### 1. A stand-alone goal on Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls

Gender inequalities are a major obstacle to sustainable development including economic growth and poverty eradication throughout the globe because they reduce chances of women to meaningfully participate in social, political and economic life. While the MDGs achieved substantial results in fighting poverty and hunger, and living conditions for women and men have improved over the last decades, large gender gaps and discrimination against women remain in many areas.

Gender-based discrimination is a severe and widespread human rights violation and the new framework has to be in full compliance with existing women's human rights obligations and standards. A comprehensive approach is needed for the post-2015 framework, which should be universal and address the structural foundations of gender-based inequality. A stand-alone goal on gender equality addressing root causes rather than symptoms is critical to eradicate discrimination against women and girls, to empower women and girls and to achieve full gender equality.

Switzerland suggests a stand-alone goal titled *Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls* with three sub-goals, which are considered as key to overcoming structural impediments to gender equality. The stand-alone goal needs to go in conjunction with consequent mainstreaming of gender into all other relevant sustainable development goals.

#### 1.1 Equal Economic Opportunities

Women's contribution to measured economic activity and growth is well below its potential although women's economic empowerment is a driver for sustainable development. Even though women's education level has increased and women have entered the labor force in large numbers across the world in the last 20 years, this has not translated into equal economic opportunities and empowerment for women and men.

Women occupy very different parts of the economic space than men and are disproportionately concentrated in subsistence and small scale agriculture, lower productivity activities, self-employment, lower positions within the hierarchy of companies and in the informal sector and are thus more likely to have poor paid and insecure jobs lacking basic labor rights. These patterns of horizontal and vertical gender segregation in economic activity persist worldwide. They are driven by women's unequal access to productive resources, services and credits and by institutional and societal constraints based on gender ste-

reotypes and discrimination. Furthermore, the differences in time use and the provision of care, which all over the world is still largely in the hands of women, turns out to be a highly critical domain and origin of gender inequality.

Switzerland suggests promoting four targets under this sub-goal:

- **Ensure equal access to education:** Women still account for 2/3 of illiterate persons around the world, girls have less access to quality education than boys and their completion and transition rate to secondary and tertiary education is lower. Equal access to high quality education and vocational training at all levels for women and girls is indispensable for economic empowerment.
- **Ensure equal access to employment and promote decent work:** A gender-responsive sustainable development approach promotes equal employment opportunities for women and men. This includes capacity building, skills development and training in entrepreneurship for women, equal access to finance and investment in infrastructure and technologies as well as measures to combat horizontal and vertical segregation. Furthermore, women have to be granted decent work standards such as basic labour rights, safe and healthy working conditions and equal pay..
- **Ensure equal access to and control over productive assets and resources:** Equal access to land, water and other natural resources as well as to finances, productive resources, training and information are key to promote gender-equitable agriculture and non-agriculture businesses promoting women's economic empowerment. Since women contribute 43% of the work to agricultural production and form the majority of small scale farmers this target also addresses the conditions under which women engage in small scale, subsistence and in commercial agriculture (i.e. equal land rights, market access and local value chains, and affordable and accessible technologies for sustainable production).
- **Ensure equal social security and distribution of care work:** Equal access for women and men to basic social security and gender-responsive social protection floors are critical for poverty reduction and sustainable development. Time spent on reproductive tasks and unpaid care work need to be equitably distributed between women and men, their contribution better accounted for in economic terms and public policies have to recognize care as a social and collective responsibility. Technology development may help to reduce the time needed for such activities.

## 1.2 Freedom from violence against women and girls

Over one third of all women and girls worldwide experience physical or sexual violence and much of it goes unpunished. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has many faces. It includes intimate partner or domestic violence as the most widespread form of VAWG, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage etc., VAWG in refugee and migration contexts, femicide, forced prostitution and trafficking as well as sexual violence in and after conflict and disasters. Men and boys also experience gender-based violence, in particular in conflicts, albeit to a much lesser degree.

VAWG is deeply rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men. Apart from having negative consequences for women's physical, sexual and mental health, VAWG causes high costs to public budgets and prevents women from full participation in public and economic life.

Switzerland suggests promoting four targets under this sub-goal:

- **Prevent VAWG:** The root causes of VAWG - the unequal power relations between women and men and gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence – need to be tackled. Measures include gender-responsive legal and policy frameworks explicitly criminalising VAWG, changing social norms and reducing economic dependency of women. Furthermore, investment in data collection on VAWG and its prevalence in different forms is needed to develop prevention policies.
- **Ensure protection from and response to VAWG:** Survivors of violence need to be safe and get the comprehensive support services (i.e. shelters, psycho-social and medical support, legal aid, rehabilita-

tion, economic integration etc.). Sufficient financial and human resources need to be allocated at national and local level to establish these support services.

- **Eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflicts & disasters:** SGBV is exacerbated in conflicts and disasters and rape remains an aspect of every war. Gender-specific security such as safe access to basic services and protection from sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) need to be provided as integral part of any emergency, peacekeeping and reconstruction response. Security for women also needs specific attention in the aftermath of conflicts and crisis since women remain exposed to high rates of violence at home and in public.
- **Ensure access to justice and end impunity:** Women and girls must have access to justice to ensure accountability for violence crimes and end impunity. To promote gender-sensitive justice response mechanisms and combat gender-based discrimination in the judiciary, important gatekeepers such as police and other authorities (i.e. religious, political and traditional leaders) need awareness building and training to enforce the laws, respect women's rights and respond adequately to people experiencing violence.

### 1.3 Equal participation and leadership

Generally, women have less voice in decision-making than men in politics, the economy, their societies, and within their household where they often lack control over household spending and earned income. Increasing women's leadership at all levels and in all spheres of decision-making is essential for advancing strategic representation and women's capacity to influence issues that matter for different groups of women and the society. Underscoring women's vital role in achieving sustainable development, commitments and targeted measures to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision making are key.

Switzerland suggests promoting four targets under this sub-goal:

- **Ensure equal participation in political institutions:** Despite gains for women in terms of representation in national and local parliaments, large gender gaps remain in political participation, both for women's representation in political bodies and as voters. Women's access to all levels of political decision-making in executive and legislative institutions and the judiciary needs to be promoted, i.e. with temporary special measures. Women's capacity to express themselves and to defend gender equitable policies needs to be developed.
- **Ensure equal participation in the private sector:** Equal participation on all levels of the hierarchies and in operative and strategic management need to be promoted. One sector that needs specific attention is the representation of women in the media, a powerful force, which shapes public opinion and perpetuates gender stereotypes.
- **Ensure women's participation in peace and security:** With the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), women's important role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding has been acknowledged. However, women's participation and the inclusion of a gender perspective in peace and security policies remains marginal which is detrimental to achieve inclusive and sustainable peace. To overcome gender-specific impediments women's capacities in negotiation and mediation skills need to be strengthened and measures to increase women's role and inclusion in police and security structures have to be promoted.
- **Strengthen women's collective action:** The presence of strong women's movements is a powerful indicator of women's influence in decision-making and can make a difference in advancing women's rights and voice in social, legal, political and economic areas. Supporting women's organisations and activism at all levels is thus essential. Particular attention is needed to mobilize and engage young women.

## **2. Gender equality as a transversal issue**

Switzerland considers gender equality as a very important transversal issue essential to the achievement of gender equality. Therefore gender-specific targets should be integrated across other goals in order to ensure meaningful achievement of those goals by addressing the specific areas of gender-based discrimination.

### **3.1 Education**

School curricula still promote traditional gender roles, which lead to marked differences in girls' and boys' professional choices and careers. Targeted, gender-responsive improvements on accessibility and infrastructure, the quality of education for all, the training of teachers and their working conditions, special measures such as scholarships for disadvantaged groups, non-formal education, adult education as well as literacy programs are necessary to guarantee the right to education for all. Particular attention needs to be paid to the education and training of adolescent girls.

### **3.2 Health**

A gender-differentiated analysis is decisive to understanding health care provision, health seeking behaviour and health status. Women have less decision-making power and control over their bodies and health. While high workloads expose women and girls to increased health risks, they often lack information on health services and/or social norms hinder them from accessing these, including contraception. Women's access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights thus has to be ensured. Gender-responsive health indicators need to be part of the monitoring system of the post-2015-agenda.

### **3.3 Water**

The lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation and the unsustainable management of water resources affect women disproportionately. Most of time-consuming water collecting is done by women and girls preventing them from education and income generation. The lack of access to basic and gender-responsive sanitation infrastructures in their homes or in refugee camps is a question of dignity and puts women and girls at greater risk of violence and assault. Equally, the lack of safe and private toilets at schools is a reason for drop-out amongst young girls and thus a direct obstacle to girl's education. Women are also mostly affected by inadequate pricing for basic water services. Such gender aspects together with women's integration in decision-making over the allocation and management of water resources have to be taken into account.

### **3.4 Employment and decent work**

Labour markets are the most powerful place of opportunities, opening the door to participation in public and economic life and resulting in financial independence. Women, however, face multiple and context-specific barriers to enter employment and the benefits attached to it due to lack of education, the structure of labour markets, the policies of skills development and vocational training, the time available for training and paid labour and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work. In order to reach gender equality, the promotion of women's education and employment, reduction of unpaid labour, basic social security, and representation of women in managerial and decision making economic bodies are necessary. Policies aimed at furthering a 'green economy' also need to include considerations of the impact on women and men.

### **3.5 Sustainable agriculture and food security**

The vast majority of the hungry live in rural areas and depend on smallholder agriculture. Women contribute 43% of the work to agricultural production, while they control only approx. 15% of the land. They face bigger obstacles to access markets as well as financial and advisory services and hold important nutrition and health knowledge. They are more likely to be negatively affected by the industrialization of agriculture and the impacts of climate change. A gender-sensitive sustainable development approach has to improve the conditions under which women work in small scale and self-consumption farming, and also in commercial agri-

culture. Women need to get equal access and rights to productive assets, land, water and other natural resources and inputs as well as adequate information, training and extension services.

### **3.6 Governance**

Women are still considerably under-represented in decision-making, particularly at higher levels. Yet the promotion of women is not sufficient and has to be accompanied with measures to enable them to advance gender responsive policies and budgeting. Equal access to decision making in politics, the economy as well as civil society and scientific bodies and the realization of women's basic rights and freedoms of association, including their unlimited and safe access to public space are key to promote active citizenship for women and inclusive, egalitarian and democratic societies.

### **3.7 Peace and safe societies**

Violence, conflict and fragile situations have different consequences and lead to different vulnerabilities and security needs for women and men. While men make up the vast majority of those killed, detained or disappeared during war, women are increasingly targeted as civilians, suffer scarce resources, become refugees and are exposed to sexual and gender-based violence. The integration of a gender perspective, the protection of women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations and women's full and equal participation in conflict resolution, peace as well as in reconciliation and reconstruction processes are a precondition for sustainable development.

### **3.8 Energy**

A large percentage of the population in poor countries still relies on biomass fuels for primary energy needs. Collecting fuels is predominantly done by women and limits their opportunities for education or productive activities and has negative health impacts. Women should have equal access to affordable and renewable energy and to decision-making concerning the implementation of energy policies, its mechanisms and funding. Furthermore sex disaggregated data and an investment in gender-responsive technologies and capacity building is needed.

### **3.9 Sustainable consumption and production (waste and chemicals)**

Gender aspects on sustainable consumption and production are mostly about decent work standards for men and women. In many countries, women are predominantly found in the lowest echelons of the production process (particularly garments, manufacturing, non-traditional agricultural exports) and disproportionately affected by negative effects of production methods. In order to promote gender equality, stronger regulations on clean production and waste standards for global production chains and the promotion of decent work conditions for the lowest class of employees are needed.

### **3.10 Disaster risk reduction / Climate change**

The majority of victims of natural disasters are women and girls. They have less access to information and due to cultural barriers often lack specific survival skills such as swimming and climbing. It is thus crucial that early warning mechanisms for disasters reach both women and men. On the other side, rural women's dependence on and unequal access to natural resources and productive assets, compounded by limited mobility and decision-making power, mean that they are disproportionately affected by climate change. The root causes of environmental degradation need to be addressed by increasing the accountability and liability of the polluter and strengthening the rights of local communities where women bear the main responsibility to secure livelihood. Their place-specific knowledge on natural resources at local level needs to be heard in the design of adaption and mitigation programs. At the same time, it is important to analyze the different impacts of such programs on (rural) men and women. I.e., the commercialization of productive land and water as a measure to protect the environment may exacerbate women's insecurity with regard to access and control over natural resources.

### **3.11. Migration**

Migration is one of the most important global population trends. Gender roles, relations and inequalities, sex-segregated labour markets and gendered policies affect male and female migrants differently. Measures (including specific targets) to address the social, economic benefits of Migration should include gender- and context-sensitive migration policies and practices which enable women as well as men to take up opportunities that safe and regular migration may offer, and which will foster the positive impacts of migration for economic and social development. These measures should take into consideration the protection and empowerment of female migrants and family members left behind, the prevention and combating of gender-based violence in migration contexts (such as sexual exploitation in human trafficking and domestic work), and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

### **3.12. Biodiversity**

Biodiversity plays an important role in indigenous and rural people's livelihoods. The maintenance of biodiversity at local level often depends on the different, but complementary knowledge of both women and men. Due to their care and food security related responsibilities, women in particular have extensive knowledge of their natural environment, i.e. of herbs and plants and their curing properties (according to the WHO 80% of the world's population uses plants medicines for their primary health-care needs). Forests, in particular, offer a variety of resources for rural people's livelihoods, e.g. fuel wood, which is traditionally collected by women. Women also rely to a higher degree on natural resources for subsistence and income, such as basket weaving or pottery. It is therefore important that women's skills and knowledge are equally protected at the national and international level.

### **3.13 Sustainable cities and infrastructure**

As urban areas are growing, so is urban poverty and inequality, with 33% of the urban population now living in slums. Urban planning and infrastructure often do not adequately account for poor women's specific livelihoods, needs and activities (such as access to clean water as well as adequate and safe sanitation). Their role in the informal economy is often under-valued and transport systems are not taking into account their specific needs. Due to their vulnerability to gender-based violence, safety is a major concern for women and needs to be adequately addressed by urban planners and policy makers.

# Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls



**STAND-ALONE GOAL**

**Equal Economic Opportunities**

**Freedom from violence against women and girls**

**Equal Participation & Leadership**

**Ensure equal access to education**  
Improving access to quality education and vocational training, completion and transition rates

**Prevent VAWG**  
Address gender stereotypes and social norms, establish/reform legal framework and reduce economic dependence, invest in data collection on different forms of violence such as intimate partner violence, Child, Early and Force Marriage, FGM.

**Ensure equal participation in political institutions**  
Promote women's representation and gender-sensitive policies on all levels (multi/international, regional, national, local); build women's capacities and support schemes, incl. temporary special measures.

**Ensure equal access to employment & promote decent work**  
Promoting decent working standards, equal pay, capacity building and skill development, equal representation in managerial bodies and different economic sectors

**Ensure protection from & response to VAWG**  
Establish comprehensive support & rehabilitation services, allocate sufficient resources

**Ensure equal participation in the private sector**  
Promote women's representation and influence in the production, the administration and management of private companies; pay specific attention to women in the media

**Ensure equal access to and control over productive assets and resources**  
Improving conditions for small scale agriculture and non-agricultural businesses through rights and access to land, water, productive assets, finances, training and information

**Eliminate SGBV in conflicts & disasters**  
Ensure safe access to basic services, protection from SGBV, SEA in conflict, disaster, addressing SGBV in post-conflict/disaster

**Ensure women's participation in peace & security**  
Increase accountability of WPS agenda, address impediments to access formal and informal peace processes, promote women's capacities in negotiation and mediation skills, and include gender perspective in SSR

**Ensure equal social security and distribution of care work**  
Access to basic social security, promoting gender-sensitive social security floors, redistribute paid and unpaid (care) work, reduce time use for care work through technology development

**Ensure access to justice & end impunity**  
Promote access through gender-sensitive justice response mechanism, capacity building of judiciary, compliance & awareness of authorities concerned, gender in police & security

**Strengthen women's collective action**  
Strengthen women's movement and collective action to advance women's rights and voice in all areas; mobilize and organize young women

**TRANSVERSAL ISSUES**

