



An overview of global processes and meetings to inform preparations for the DCF Vienna Policy Dialogue

“Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women: the role of development cooperation”

The DCF Vienna Policy Dialogue: Making international development cooperation work for the empowerment of women

The Millennium Development Goals have made a huge difference, helping to set global and national priorities and fuel action on the ground. They have raised awareness and shaped a broad vision that remains the overarching framework for development work across the world. While important progress has been, it has been uneven both between countries and within countries. Addressing the needs of women leads to better development outcomes. Moving forward, development cooperation must therefore explicitly target women and girls facing multiple forms of inequality and discrimination.

Given the centrality of women in development, the Vienna Policy Dialogue will discuss how to firmly anchor gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the protection of their rights in a post 2015 UN development agenda. Deliberations in Vienna will build on outcomes and recommendations of the 2008 and 2010 DCF and previous DCF High-level Symposia, in particular the [2010 DCF High-level Symposium](#) on “*Coherent development cooperation: maximizing impact in a changing environment*” in Helsinki that focused on making development cooperation more responsive to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. This short paper provides an overview of major recent and ongoing international processes aimed at strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women in development cooperation. The Vienna Policy Dialogue in particular aims to provide an input into the discussion on a post 2015 UN development agenda.

Past international commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women

Member States have anchored and reaffirmed their commitments to gender equality in several normative frameworks. These include the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, the **Beijing Platform for Action**, **Security Council resolution 1325** on women, peace and security and the **outcome documents of the 2010 MDG Summit and the Rio+20 Conference**.

The **Internationally agreed development goals (IADGs)**, including the **MDGs**, remain the shared guidepost for the international community.

Member States and key stakeholders reaffirmed at the [2010 MDG Summit](#) that “gender equality and the empowerment of women is both a key development goal and an important means to achieve the MDGs”. Member States also committed themselves to “enhance the impact of development assistance in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls through targeted activities, including capacity-building, as well as through gender mainstreaming and enhanced dialogue between donors and partners, involving, as appropriate, civil society and the private sector, with a view to ensuring adequate funding.”

Member States and key stakeholders recognized at the [Rio+20 Conference](#) that “gender equality and the effective participation of women are important for effective action on all aspects of sustainable development” and “reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen international cooperation to address the persistent challenges related to sustainable development for all, in particular in developing countries” and “the need to achieve economic stability, sustained economic growth, promotion of social equity and protection of the environment, while enhancing gender equality, women’s empowerment and equal opportunities for all, and the protection, survival and development of children to their full potential, including through education.”

Donors, multilateral organizations and recipient governments further recognized in the [Accra Agenda for Action](#) (AAA) that “gender equality, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability [as] cornerstones for achieving enduring impact on the lives and potential of poor women, men, and children” and found that “it is vital that all our policies address these issues in a more systematic and coherent way.” The related commitment in the AAA held developing countries and assistance providers accountable to “ensure that their respective development policies and programmes are designed and implemented in ways consistent with their agreed international commitments on gender equality, human rights, disability and environmental sustainability.”

The [Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation](#) takes these commitments a step further by calling for accelerated efforts to achieve development gender equality and women's empowerment recognizing that "reducing gender equality is both an end in its own right and a prerequisite for sustainable and equitable growth".

Putting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at the Heart of a Post-2015 UN Development Agenda

Discrimination against women and girls impairs progress in all other areas of development. The empowerment of women and girls and the protection of their rights should be central to the post-2015 UN development agenda. Gender equality has long been recognized both as a human right and a core development goal. The post-2015 global development agenda must not only address the elimination of specific gender gaps, but also transform the structural factors that underpin the widespread persistence of gender inequalities, gender-based violence, discrimination and unequal development progress between women and men.

Reflections on a post-2015 UN development agenda have started. In response to the call of the 2010 MDG Summit outcome document, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon established a 60 UN agencies and entities strong UN System Task Team (UNTT), which made the below key recommendations on possible contours of a post-2015 UN development agenda in its report to the Secretary-General entitled "[Realizing the Future We Want for All](#)" (June 2012):

- A new vision of transformative change towards inclusive, people-centered and sustainable development is needed;
- The focus on human development and the eradication of poverty should remain at the core of the new agenda, however it must allow for the inclusion of emerging challenges;
- Emerging challenges include the persistence of major inequalities; the knowledge gap between countries and within countries; shifting demographics; a growing environmental footprint, peace and security issues; and governance and accountability deficits;
- The post-2015 framework should build on the values outlined in the Millennium Declaration and should build around three fundamental principles: respect for human rights, equality and sustainability;
- These three principles could inform the identification of goals for the post-2015 agenda, which could be defined along four, highly interdependent dimensions: inclusive economic development, inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, and peace and security;
- The post-2015 UN development agenda needs to draw on the lessons learned from the MDGs. Based on this learning, the post-2015 framework should retain the format of concrete goals, targets and indicators. While the post-2015 agenda should consist of global goals that

are universally applicable the agenda should allow for target settings adapted to regional, national and sub-national conditions;

- The challenges faced by the world today require new partnerships for development that include the full range of actors and flexible forms of partnerships. The global partnership for development needs to be reshaped and become truly global with clear commitments;
- Stakeholders have outlined the need to ensure that the intergovernmental process of identifying sustainable development goals is coordinated with and consistent with the processes of defining the post-2015 development agenda.

The High-level Panel on Eminent Person on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

In July 2012, the UN Secretary-General announced the composition of his [High-level Panel on post-2015 development agenda](#) to advise on the global development agenda beyond 2015. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom are co-chairing the 27 – member panel. The panel will submit its report setting out a "bold yet practical development vision" to the Secretary-General in May 2013. The global post-2015 agenda should outline shared responsibilities for all countries and with the fight against poverty and sustainable development at its core. The Panel's work will be closely coordinated with that of the intergovernmental working group tasked to design Sustainable Development Goals, as agreed at the Rio+20 conference.

The Panel held its first substantive meeting in November 2012 in London focused on household poverty—both defining it and looking at ways to get households out of poverty. Subsequent meetings in Liberia and Indonesia will focus on national development and global partnerships respectively, followed by a final meeting in New York in May.

Consultations on a post-2015 UN Development Agenda

A series of at least 50 national and 9 thematic consultations and extensive online outreach to civil society are under way. The on-going UNDG global thematic consultations on inequality have identified nine key issues. Gender inequality has been identified as one of the first and main issues. During the ongoing consultations, bearing in mind the differences in context, violence against women and the lack of full participation have been identified as the main barriers which must be addressed to achieve gender equality and human development. Key inputs from these consultations, as well as related consultations, will be offered for consideration to the High-level Panel. The consultations will also inform a Special Meeting of the President of the General Assembly to be held in autumn 2013.