



Reflections towards a post-2015 development agenda

**An AWID in-depth analysis of the Post-2015 High Level Panel Report
and recommendations moving forward**

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Introduction

This paper¹ presents AWID's analysis of the [post-2015 High Level Panel \(HLP\) report](#) and reflections for the post-2015 development agenda moving forward. The HLP report marks one step in a long complex and rather insufficient consultation process. AWID recognizes the HLP report as an opportunity to debate desired outcomes and we agree with the interest to move towards a paradigm shift and profound structural transformation. However, we are concerned with the lack of concrete proposals or definition of the very understanding of structural transformation or alternative visions for development in the report. We are particularly concerned with the narrow vision of women and girls' empowerment and gender equality and the lack of proposals on financing for gender equality. As the international community moves towards the forthcoming General Assembly in September 2013 and advances on negotiations on Sustainable Development Goals and the post 2015 development agenda, we urge governments to recommit to already existing Human Rights frameworks and boldly continue working for a future international development agenda that is aligned with human rights principles and integrates gender equality, building a strong foundation for long-term, sustainable, inclusive, and just development for all.

1. A call for true structural transformation and political will for change

The current available evidence on poverty, environmental degradation, and inequality trends around the world shows clearly that a 'business as usual' approach is not an option. Despite a decade and a half of the Millennium Development Goals, an estimated 3 billion people - 50% of the world's population - are still living in poverty (on less than \$2.50 a day), at least 1 billion - most of whom are women - live in extreme poverty (less than \$1.25 per day)². On top of this, millions have been further impoverished as a result of aggressive plunder of essential resources such as water, land, minerals and biodiversity. The effects of poverty are greatly compounded by multiple structural oppressions. Given this stark reality, any serious approach to development would recognize that a deep structural transformation in economic, social and environmental policies, a change to the currently dominant development paradigm, is urgently needed.

Despite the welcome discourse in the HLP report on the need for "a paradigm shift, a profound structural transformation" and to "promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production", the HLP's policy prescriptions clearly uphold 'business as usual', with a focus on businesses and private sector, while reaffirming the neoliberal vision of economic growth and business-led development, evidenced by the strong role the report gives to the private (for profit) sector "to create more value and drive sustainable and inclusive growth." Moreover, the HLP does not question the current "extractivist" model³. Thus the measures proposed in the HLP report will not only compound the already negative effects brought on by these policies, but will fail to address the structural causes of poverty and inequalities. The pledge for structural transformation remains an empty promise when no clear definitions or transformative proposals are provided and when the substructures of economic, political, and social power are either unaddressed or reinforced.

Genuine reforms in global governance and macroeconomic policies - which civil society organizations (CSOs) have repeatedly called for in consultations - are needed. Despite stated efforts of the HLP members to include recommendations made by social movements via the myriad of consultations and meetings at global, regional, and national levels, we find the report ignores the call to put human rights, gender, social and environmental at the center of development. Most of all, simply applying a superficial gender-perspective - an "add women and stir" approach - to the equation, as the HLP suggests, will do little or

¹ This analysis builds on our internal analysis as well as our common statements with the [Post-2015 Women's Coalition](#) and the [Women's Major Group](#) on the report of the High Level Panel (HLP) of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda that was released on 30 May 2013. While our contribution reflects on the HLP report it goes beyond it given that it has - despite positive elements - serious flaws and is just one of many contributions to shape the thinking on the post-2015 development framework.

² UNDP Human Development Report 2011, Global Issues section.

³ The term Extractivism was first coined in Latin America to refer to mineral and oil exploitation. Current exports have been nourished by extractivist activities in the region. Extractivism continues to play a major role in national economies. It has also occupied a place at the centre of power struggles because of its economic, social and political impact. See full text [here](#).

nothing to address the deeply embedded gender power structures that force women, in all their diversity, to bear the heaviest burden of poverty and inequality.⁴

It will take strong collective political will, sustained action, commitment and accountability – including for the implementation and financing of the internationally agreed development goals, commitments and obligations - to achieve true structural transformation, environmental sustainability, and human rights for all.

A contribution to the terms of the debate

A fundamental development framework is supposed to be shaped in the UN post-2015 process. At AWID, we believe there is much to be done to address the structural issues and challenges that still today impede the full realization of human rights and prevent sustainable development for all. Diverse imbalanced power relations (within and among countries, between men and women, donors and recipients, and between different social groups - to name just a few), are some of the main drivers of poverty, inequalities and environmental degradation.

True structural transformation and sustainable development entail the grounding of any new framework in the principles of human rights, justice and environmental sustainability – in the integration of a consistent and systematic gender, social, economic, political, cultural and environmental perspective, and effective, purposeful interventions to correct power imbalances at different levels.

This approach requires:

- Transforming the market based development model, reformulating economic modelling and indicators to reflect value on people and planet, and therefore challenging existing neo-classical, patriarchal, unsustainable and extractivist models of development. - Recognizing and building from alternative visions of development that put people and the planet's well-being at the center, as the governments of Ecuador, Bolivia and Bhutan have done in their constitutions.⁵
- Fully eradicating poverty, going beyond cash transfer processes to reframing the role of the state, ensuring a equitable distribution of wealth, services and resources, decent work and sustainable modes of production and consumption.
- Placing environmental sustainability goals and targets at the center, de-instrumentalising nature and its resources as a source of profit, and looking for strategies that do not further threaten the very survival of our planet, and protect and restore ecosystems.
- Recognizing and dealing with new(er) forms of economic integration and cooperation such as SouthSouth and triangular cooperation. New forms of relations should be based on respect, solidarity, equity, inclusion, non-subordination and justice for all.⁶
- Challenging unequal power relations at home, in the community and at the global level that sustain an unfair economic system, including recognizing the care economy and support for both paid and unpaid work.
- Ensuring that all countries have enough policy space at the national level to decide their national development plans, grounded in international human rights and environmental agreements, recognizing the right to development of each nation and the diversity of forms that development could therefore take, depending on each country's realities, priorities and possibilities.
- Ensuring that policy coherence between different kinds of policies, such as those regarding aid, financial regulation and trade, are aligned to national development plans and to internationally agreed development goals, environmental policies and human rights agreements.
- Ensuring that people in all their diversity fully enjoy their human rights. Non-discrimination is a key principle and state obligation when designing and implementing development policies. Sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, ability, age, marital status, race, among others, should not determine people's ability to benefit from development and fully enjoy their human rights.

⁴ AWID has submitted an [input](#) to the UNICEF/UN Women Global Thematic Consultation on post-2015 agenda "Addressing Inequalities" (October 2012) that is still relevant now.

⁵ These country examples are not without contradictions and/or free of concerns (such as on human rights obligations), nonetheless they symbolize a break from the neoliberal, capitalist vision of development. See also: AWID [IDeA Debate Articles 2](#), 2013:

⁶ See also: [Key Demands from Women's Rights Organizations and Gender Equality Advocates](#) (October 2011).

We thus define development as a process of economic, social, cultural and political change that is based on the eradication of poverty, and redressing of inequalities and power imbalances, aimed at ensuring the wellbeing of all people and the planet. This vision of development means respect for the full body of human rights of all people, social, gender and environmental justice including protection and regeneration of the natural resource base essential to human life now and in future generations, peace and the eradication of all forms of violence and militarism.

2. Respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights are state obligations, not voluntary choices

The report mentions some of the most pressing issues in our world today, most of which are already reflected in key international human rights agreements such as, the right to development, the right to food, education, water and sanitation, health including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHRs), the right to a life free from violence, right to freedom of expression, information and association as well as access to justice. However, despite the rhetoric of developing a universal framework grounded in human rights to achieve these goals, the report contradicts itself in the continuous references to the voluntary nature of these commitments. Of further concern is the proposal to have a “menu” of internationally agreed targets from which countries can select the ones that are “most applicable to their particular circumstances.” We absolutely reject this proposal on the grounds that this allows countries to sideline previously agreed human rights, particularly the human rights of women and girls, including SRHRs, if they determine that these rights are not a national priority. We remind all governments of the obligation of states to implement all necessary measures to ensure the realization of the full body of human rights, using the maximum of their available resources⁷ to ensure their implementation.

Human rights standards in the HLP report are further diluted by the lack of reference to existing legal human rights instruments at the international level that provide specific definitions for many of the proposals offered⁸. For example, the recommendation to “eliminate discrimination against women in political, economic, and public life” would be stronger if based on the commitments of 1993 [Vienna Human Rights Declaration and Program of Action](#), The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women ([CEDAW](#)), and the 1995 [Beijing Platform for Action](#) (BPfA) that address multiple and interlinked forms of discrimination against women, including those that take place in the private sphere. The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance [Declaration](#) and Programme of Action, the 2007 [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are also crucial international agreements to build from for the post-2015 agenda.

Similarly, the HLP could have strengthened its recommendation to “ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights”, by referring to the Programme of Action of the ICPD. By not asserting the ICPD Programme of Action as a basis, SRHRs are opened to interpretation, which too often ends in backsliding from established sexual and reproductive health and rights commitments. Again, with regard to the HLP’s vaguely expressed aspiration of “good jobs”, we join the concerns expressed by several other organizations about the sidelining of the more ambitious Decent Work agenda agreed under the International Labor Organization (ILO) as well as existing economic, social and cultural rights.⁹

We are concerned that the recommendations in the HLP report take an instrumentalist approach to human rights, over-emphasizing their economic value¹⁰ rather than the intrinsic value of respect, protection and

⁷ See also the report “Maximum Available Resources & Human Rights: Analytical Report” (Balakrishnan, R., Elson, D. et. Al. (Center for Women’s Global Leadership, 2011) for an expansive examination of what it means to use the maximum available resources to realize fundamental human rights.

⁸ It is worth reminding that some of the proposed goals and targets in the HLP report are not new, but are already included in internationally agreed human rights commitments such as the CEDAW; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Declaration on the Right to Development; the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights; the ICPD Program of Action; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the UN Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples; the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the Convention of the Rights of People with Disability, to name just a few.

⁹ See for example, the [response by the Center for Economic and Social Rights](#) (CESR).

¹⁰ The civil society statement [Human Rights for All Post-2015](#) (May 2013) elaborates further what it implies to anchor the post-2015 agenda in human rights.

fulfillment of human rights. Particularly with regard to the proposals relating to women and young people, the report is inundated with references to the importance of healthy women and youth to “build up the labor force”, as “irreplaceable assets for every economy” vital for “business to thrive” – as if there were no human rights or ethical imperative to invest in the health of women and young people.

The proposals of the HLP for a new development framework fail to link existing human rights accountability mechanisms at the regional and global levels with comprehensive development policies. The numerous references to the private sector’s role in driving development post-2015, coupled with the lack of any visible or effective mechanisms for monitoring and regulation to ensure that private sector actors are accountable for upholding human rights and environmental agreements and standards, are particularly problematic. And while the HLP refers to innovation and technology as key drivers of development, and the private sector acts as the main source for these, the report does not appear to be aware of, or recognize, the many innovative approaches to development coming from communities – including impoverished and marginalized communities - and academic institutions as well as organized civil society, including feminist and women’s rights organizations¹¹.

Moving forward and in relation to the private sector, at a minimum the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights approved in 2011 should be applied. This is a tool addressed to both governments and businesses on how to implement the Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework, endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. It includes the responsibility of business to respect human rights and is currently a primary global reference point for business and human rights¹².

Although women’s rights and gender equality are central to the fulfillment of human rights for all, we discuss them separately in the next section in order to discuss their relevance to the post-2015 agenda in more depth.

3. Women’s rights and gender equality for a truly just post-2015 development framework

Gender inequality is unlike other inequalities. Gender inequality places women and people with non-hegemonic gender identities at a greater disadvantage at every level of income and within every disadvantaged group, including those facing discrimination due to age, race, ethnicity, class, caste, religion, abilities, health status, sexual orientation, location, and so forth. Gender discrimination is not just one of many inequalities but is at the very foundation of how we organize our societies and economies – thus, no development goal or agenda can be achieved without seriously addressing it. The HLP report recognizes this to some extent by placing gender equality both as a cross-cutting¹³ issue and as a stand-alone goal. Indeed, it is essential to move beyond gender mainstreaming to advance women’s rights and gender equality, building on the knowledge and institutional mechanisms that have already been created and that need to be strengthened. For AWID this means applying a three-pronged approach: on the one hand, making gender equality and women’s rights central to each and every goal and outcome of the post-2015 agenda, with clear targets and indicators within each and in line with international agreements; secondly, including women’s rights and gender equality specific goals and strategies; and thirdly, supporting, promoting and ensuring the participation of women’s rights advocates in all development and related policy making processes.

However, the HLP report makes a series of assumptions that need to be challenged because they fail to recognize the patriarchal power structures at play in the political, economic, social, cultural and private spheres that perpetuate gender inequality. These prevent the advancement of women’s human rights, and therefore, hinder the achievement of internationally agreed development goals.

One example is the goal to eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG). Though we wholeheartedly welcome its inclusion, the report displays a very simplistic and even outdated approach to the dynamics that contribute to VAWG, focusing on the “lack of equal protection under the law”. Effective interventions to end VAWG have to be multifaceted, building on the understanding and knowledge that

¹¹ See for example AWID’s efforts on [alternative development strategies](#) and the work of [DAWN](#).

¹² This is a tool addressed to both governments and businesses on how to implement the Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework welcomed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. It includes the responsibility of business to respect human rights and it is the authoritative global reference point for business and human rights. See more information [here](#)

¹³ We suggest referring to gender equality and women’s rights as a *central development goal*. The continued use of the term ‘cross-cutting’ or ‘mainstreaming’ perpetuates its marginalization and lack of visibility.

feminist and women's rights movements have generated about the complexity of its root causes. The report fails to recognize that it is in the most intimate and personal areas of women's and girls' lives that they experience some of the most fundamental forms of discrimination and violence - areas in which laws have failed to permeate. A change in men's individual behavior and social norms around masculinity are essential to eradicate VAWG. There is no evidence that, on their own, even the most stringent laws against VAWG, as fundamental as they are, have brought such changes in norms and a significant decrease in the incidence of VAWG.¹⁴

The repeated and increasing use of religion¹⁵, culture and tradition to justify gender inequality and gender based violence and other human rights violations, is not recognized in the HLP report. Women's rights organizations and gender equality advocates have been long denouncing an alarming trend of rising fundamentalist and 'traditionalist' agendas that push back women's rights and promote a culture of violence and discrimination around the world. The need to tackle human rights violations and harmful and sexist practices by those non state actors - including religious or other fundamentalist groups - which negatively incur the development and inclusion of highly oppressed and discriminated groups of the population, should also be central to the post-2015 development agenda.

The 2010 Annual Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders stated that of the 350 communications sent to governments per year between 2004 and 2009, almost one-third (105 annually) concerned women defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues.¹⁶ It is vital that the post-2015 agenda recognizes that VAWG includes one pervasive and increasing form: violence and rights-violations against Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)¹⁷ perpetrated by state and non-state actors. Violence against WHRDs presents severe threats to the future effectiveness of women's rights organisations and other CSOs, and requires a diversity of urgent responses addressing specific situations and contexts. An enabling environment that allows civil society - particularly women human rights defenders and their organizations and movements - to carry out their vital work without risking their wellbeing and lives, is a key state obligation that contributes to advance inclusion, respect for diversity, environmental sustainability, social justice and peace.

The report similarly ignores the gender implications of the unequal distribution of unpaid work in every society as a key contributor to the gendered nature of poverty and inequality, that perpetuates the feminization of poverty. As a result, there is no recognition of the economic value of women's unpaid work, including care and reproductive work that are an essential contribution to sustainable development and livelihoods¹⁸. A forward looking development agenda should take the recognition of women's unpaid work seriously, changing the way in which economic indicators are defined and accounted for, and ensuring a gender-sensitive design, implementation and assessment of public policies.

Reframing and reclaiming the discourse on the impact of poverty on women¹⁹

Although the report claims to have a people-centered approach, it lacks a systematic analysis of how to address the disproportionate impact of poverty - well beyond lack of income - that women and girls experience. The report frames women as poor and vulnerable victims synonymous with marginalization, exclusion and inequality, but discounts the fact that poverty is also a complex and multidimensional reality. It is not limited only to a lack of access and control over income and resources, but also to a lack of decision-making power, and to a low status in social power structures, to greater vulnerability to all kinds of violence, including gender-based violence, all of which determines physical, social, and psychological wellbeing. Thus women are marginalized in multiple ways, as a result of intersecting oppressions and exclusions.²⁰

¹⁴ See, for example, Dutt, Mallika. "[A tipping point?](#)" *The Times of India*, 9 July 2013.

¹⁵ For analysis and resources see for example the work of the AWID team on Challenging Fundamentalisms.

¹⁶ Annual report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya. 20 December 2010. A/HRC/16/44.

¹⁷ See for example the [Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders](#) by the WHRD International Coalition.

¹⁸ The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepulveda, is [preparing to submit a report](#) in 2013 concerning unpaid work, in particular unpaid care work and women's human rights. We believe the findings should inform any post-2015 development framework if it seriously aims to advance gender equality

¹⁹ Aspects of this section draw from Natalie Raaber, "[Brief 11: Cross Regional : The Impact of the Crisis on Women: Main Trends across Regions](#)" AWID.

²⁰ Batliwala, Srilatha. "[What does transforming economic power mean?](#)" AWID Forum. 2012,

Moving forward, the areas of lack of access to employment or other forms of livelihood, violence against women, unpaid work, increasing female migration - that in real life, are in many cases neither separate nor distinct - should be recognized as intersecting, simultaneous factors in the lives of women living in poverty. Particularly important is that a new development framework takes a more comprehensive conceptualization of poverty and gender.

Poverty elimination cannot be based on a narrow approach that relies solely on “rising incomes” or macroeconomic growth. Although achieving a positive and sustainable growth rate is important for poverty alleviation, it is not sufficient since the benefits of growth do not trickle down automatically to all people or to all household members. Households must not be treated as harmonious units as they currently appear in the report. As has been clearly established by feminist economists²¹, a gendered analysis of poverty needs to go beyond household-headship and a careful analysis of inequalities in intra-household distribution of resources should be considered. This analysis needs to be extended to the meso level, where the interaction of households and household members with a variety of other economic and social institutions such as the state or markets is studied. Engendering the macroeconomic level of analysis is equally important since the economic, social, political and ecological environments in which households maintain themselves or fall into destitution are shaped by macroeconomic policies.²²

Gender diversities and differences in the experience and incidence of poverty must be addressed in a contextualized way. Information about the varying levels of poverty or income found in female-headed households (FHHs) or among individual women including ethnical and age groups disaggregated data should be used for designing policy. Gender-aware benchmarks and gender-aware monitoring must accompany gendered analyses of poverty.²³ We believe in the need to strengthen the capacity of countries in the measurement and valuation of women’s unpaid work.²⁴

Also important is to incorporate the concept of time poverty that is linked to the feminization of poverty and includes time scarcity. The report fails to recognize trends in division of labor. Many of the new job opportunities are precarious; this implies more work, diminished time for leisure, social, civic and political participation and other activities. We believe time use surveys can give visibility to women’s realities in terms of time poverty. Time surveys can generate statistics for monitoring and evaluating programmes and policies at various levels and to strengthen knowledge on the contribution of unpaid care work to the economy.

Finally, recognizing that women are discriminated against in multiple and intersecting ways is important, but it is also critical to acknowledge that they can and often have moved from being beneficiaries and victims to leaders and active agents in social and economic transformation. This perspective is vital to determine the distribution, access to and control of material, human and technological resources, as well as goods and services²⁵ that will benefit women’s wellbeing. Governments and policy makers must intensify their efforts to create a post-2015 development framework that recognizes women’s contributions to changing the current systems of structural discrimination, and their potential as co-architects of transformative development approaches and alternatives. Responses should meaningfully integrate the perspective of women’s rights groups in all their diversity, in their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and should, at the minimum, invest in care, community-based services, education, health, gender budgeting initiatives and in strengthening women’s political leadership and meaningful participation; they must also take into account women and men in all their diversity, including sexual orientation and gender diversity.

Despite facing discrimination in virtually all domains, women are leaders and effective catalysts for change and solutions that benefit their homes and communities. But the report’s efforts to recognize these critical roles of women are often the exception rather than the norm. Women are recognized as the poorest of the poor, which is indeed accurate - but it is the portrayal of women mostly as victims and passive beneficiaries

²¹ For example, Nilufer Cagatay, Caren Grown and Diane Elson, to name a few.

²² Cagatay, Nilüfer, [Gender and Poverty](#), Working Paper Series, UNDP, May 1998, page 4.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ We suggest to read relevant [research of UNRISD](#) on care work.

²⁵ Batliwala, Srilatha. “[What does transforming economic power mean?](#)” AWID Forum. 2012.

in this report that is particularly problematic. Such an approach fails to recognize women's agency in a meaningful way.

Women's Empowerment

Women's capacity to participate in transforming our world is linked to their empowerment. But for this, empowerment must be understood as a complex socio-political process that has multi-dimensional results, not merely economic returns. Women can only empower themselves while external actors and agencies can create supportive environments. Yet the report treats the empowerment of women as a means to an end, viz., economic growth. This tendency to view women's empowerment as an instrument for achieving other objectives is perceptible throughout the report, e.g.: "developing skills to better do business". This rhetoric further coopts women into the mainstream economic model, without questioning the inequality, discrimination or power imbalances experienced by women in all their diversity, as a result of such models.

To be truly empowering and transformative, post-2015 efforts must be made to include women's empowerment specifically as a methodology to transform the relations of power between individuals and social groups, challenge the ideologies that justify gender and social inequality and discrimination, change prevailing patterns of access to and control over economic, natural and intellectual resources and technologies, and transform the institutions and structures that reinforce and sustain existing power structures (such as the family, state, market, educational institutions, religious institutions, and media)²⁶. Ensuring and promoting the rights of all women and advancing gender equality is a crucial strategy for the construction of a new development model that benefits all, including those that have been historically subject to discrimination and exclusion.

Education

Education for young women and girls is narrowly addressed in this report. This is particularly worrying given that gender equality in education has been largely understood in terms of gender parity in enrollment. It is important to move beyond this restrictive view and include a gender analysis to the experiences of young women and girls in school, on their way to school, and out of school, particularly looking at gender based violence, gender-biased curricula and stereotyping. Moreover, the HLP makes no reference or recommendations regarding the factors that inhibit large numbers of young women and girls from transitioning from primary to secondary and tertiary education. This is particularly relevant given that during the transition from primary to secondary education is when girls are more likely to be pushed out of school due to younger sibling care and housework responsibilities, early pregnancy, early and forced marriages and motherhood. Of further concern is the HLP report's failure to include comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programs for in and out of school youth as a recommendation both under Education and "Ensure Healthy Lives" goals. CSE is a vital tool to equip young women, girls and boys with the skills and knowledge about their rights, bodies and making informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

The report understands gender equality as equality between men and women but falls short of recognizing that all people should be able to enjoy the human rights described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The report fails to recognize the fact that millions of people across the globe face execution, imprisonment, torture, violence and discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, remaining excluded and without benefiting from development processes. Human rights abuses based on sexual orientation or gender identity include the violation of the rights of the child; the infliction of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; arbitrary detention on grounds of identity or beliefs; the restriction of freedom of association and basic rights of due process. Protection from these kinds of violations have for decades formed the core agenda of international human rights law and the United Nations' human rights machinery. Further efforts are now necessary to call attention to SOGI-based violence and discrimination as the process moves forward to the UN General Assembly in September 2013 and in relation to the formulation of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

²⁶ Batliwala, Srilatha. "[Putting power back into empowerment](#)" Open Democracy, 2007.

4. Addressing multiple and intersecting inequalities: another missed opportunity

Addressing multiple and intersecting forms of inequalities is an ambitious but necessary proposal as it implies tackling the multiple root causes of social exclusion. Focusing on eradicating extreme poverty is not satisfactory.²⁷ In its narrative, the HLP report recognizes the need to address inequalities as a cross-cutting issue and even states that "targets will only be considered achieved if they are met for all relevant income and social groups". Despite this initial attempt, the HLP falls short of providing concrete proposals to address growing inequalities within and between countries and also overlooks the multiple forms of intersecting inequalities that result in the intergenerational transfer of poverty and its growing feminization in every region of the world.²⁸

Multiple and intersecting inequalities

The paradox of rising inequalities even in countries with impressive economic growth figures is not recognized within the HLP report. When it comes to addressing income inequality, there are no recommendations for specific targets to reduce this gap - rather the report states that it is the "national policy in each country, not global goal-setting, [that] must provide the answer". This is disappointing, given that if the process of determining acceptable levels of inequality, including gender inequality, rests with national governments, then the very meaning of sustainable development goals as global standards to which every nation should adhere is brought into question. Thus, we regret this missed opportunity to set new global targets for narrowing the gaps – particularly the highly gendered ones - in the distribution of income and wealth among and within countries and individuals. Fulfilling IADGs and HR agreements is not optional, but the definition of strategies and means to do so, has to take into account the capacity of each State to reach agreed goals by recognizing that each country will get there in different ways, given their growth, level of inequality, natural resources, environmental degradation, vulnerability to natural disasters, conflict, etc.

Beyond income, the HLP report also fails to address multiple and intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination - e.g. several studies²⁹ have proven that elders and women with disabilities have fewer possibilities to access quality education or jobs than their male counterparts in the same situation. This neglect of intersectionality has already resulted in the underachievement of the MDGs in several areas, particularly those relating to the advancement of gender equality. A new development framework must be grounded in an analysis that takes into account the dynamics of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, ability, territoriality and other dimensions of social inequality and the diverse ways they impact on peoples' lives and opportunities to enjoy their rights, particularly those of women and girls.

5. Financing and accountability - core to implementing commitments and realizing positive change for all moving towards and beyond 2015

While the HLP report makes important points on financing for development, including addressing illicit money flows, taxation, recovery of stolen assets and the long overdue fulfillment of Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments, it does not concretely mention the critical need for financing for economic justice and gender equality, nor insert specific measures to ensure compliance. This is particularly problematic given the very limited resources allocated by donors from different funding sectors to this goal and the serious gap that exists in holding donors accountable by tracking their performance in financing gender equality, women's organizing, and women's collective empowerment processes around the world. Given that some key bilateral donors³⁰ committed to women's rights and supporting women's organizing have been heavily affected both by financial and conservative political pressures for shrinking international

²⁷ See Social Watch Press Release: "[High Level Panel Proposes to Put Business, Not People at the Center of Development](#)".

²⁸ For an in-depth analysis of why addressing inequalities matters in any development framework, see for example the works of Naila Kabeer' such as "[Can the MDGs provide a pathway to social justice? The challenges of intersecting inequalities](#)" (IDS, 2010) or see <http://nailakabeer.com/>

²⁹ To learn more about double discrimination of women with disabilities please read [here](#).

³⁰ Such as those in the Netherlands, Spain and Canada.

development aid, this is now even more essential to address. And, while a few donors³¹ that champion women's rights have retained strong levels of commitment, funding levels are still far from what would be required to meet commitments to women's rights, and therefore, contribute to the achievement of broader development goals.³²

New development aid actors and financing for gender equality

There has also been the upsurge in 'new' development actors from the private sector and a proliferation of public-private partnerships, with 'investment' becoming the preferred strategy to 'aid'. While these new actors bring new resources and political commitment to the table (some of which are directed to issues affecting women and girls, providing short term supports), their diversity and varying perspectives on development makes this a highly complex field to rely on. Their increased engagement in development at large and on women and girls' issues in particular, raises a pressing need for accountability in how they fulfill human rights commitments and environmental regulations—beyond just notions of corporate social responsibility. A push for coherence in the implementation of the philanthropic work and priorities of diverse actors from the private sector, including their compliance with labor rights, other human rights provisions, fair competition and environmental regulations should be a key dimension of private sector engagement in the post-2015 agenda.

Channels for influencing agendas and accountability by these new actors are often unclear or delinked to human rights commitments. Women's organizations and movements are often not represented directly in the major spaces where private sector actors set the tone and agenda of funding on women and girls and broader development issues as well. This lack of inclusion and uneven understanding about women's rights, has led in many cases to instrumentalising women's contributions to economic growth, and often making invisible the knowledge and experience of feminist and women's rights movements around the world.³³ A critical question is the extent to which such initiatives are leveraging significant resources for a narrow agenda that is defined by the initiating organizations, at the expense of supporting gender equality and human rights from a more transformational perspective. We recommend that the post-2015 process explicitly address this issue moving forward.

Donors – from all funding sectors, whether private or public - need to establish clear, measurable, and time-bound gender equality and women's rights objectives, and put in place accountability mechanisms for resources allocated, disbursed and implemented, and provide data on the results of their financial support in terms of the types of social, economic, cultural and political transformations generated. This should be done by building on and improving the existing country or regionally relevant indicators and accountability mechanisms in a time-bound manner. For example: CEDAW and other international treaties and reporting requirements, reporting on the BPfA, the ICPD, and other international mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Report (UPR). Building on already existing indicators, such as the Gender Equity Index developed by Social Watch, and ensuring that existing rights-based gender equality outcome indicators become mandatory for all governments, should be a key dimension of the agenda.

Further, financing for gender equality must recognize the diversity of actors engaged in development, including civil society, and among them, women's rights organizations, movements and grassroots activists organizations, who are doing some of the most impactful and innovative work in the field, holding the line on past gains, pushing for new policy and behavior changes, providing critical services, and holding governments accountable for their commitments. In order to foster positive and sustainable change in women's lives around the world, it is important to ensure that women's rights organizations' creative strategies and close connection to local and grassroots women's concerns are at the forefront in guiding and

³¹ Including, but not limited to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish International Development Agency, the growing international community of women's funds, and some private foundations such as the Oak Foundation). The Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs with their creation of the MDG3 Fund and consequently the creation of the FLOW Fund has been a trailblazer and leading advocate for women's rights and gender equality within the bilateral agency community.

³² Data provided by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) reflect that while funding to civil society women's organizations and institutions has more than tripled (from close to US\$72 million in 2007 to over US\$285 million in 2011), the 2011 figure represents only 0.27% of total aid from DAC country donors. Based on AWID analysis of data provided in the OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System using sector code 15170: Women's equality organisations and institutions and Channel 20000: NGOs & Civil Society.

³³ See also: the AWID contribution (p.244-255) to [the State of Civil Society report 2013](#) from CIVICUS.

shaping funding strategies. Research³⁴ from recent years shows that the most effective financing for gender equality moves away from fragmented, short-term funding cycles towards longer term partnerships of predictable, flexible, and multi-year core support.

The HLP report assumes innovation, including for funding mechanisms for development, will come primarily from the private sector. This perspective ignores the fact that many innovative ways of organizing economies and raising financial resources for development are already taking place in diverse communities, many led by women and young people based on principles of solidarity, sustainability and collective well-being. Some concrete examples include diverse forms of solidarity economy, crowd-funding or cooperative forms of production and consumption, just to name a few³⁵. A broader understanding and specific policy provisions to support existing alternative sources of financing for development, supporting innovation on this field by diverse actors (not only from the private sector), taking into account the new economic reality of the world, where new philanthropic actors are present in all regions, and including a strong focus on the generation of domestic resources, should be a key part of the post-2015 development agenda.

Regulating financial flows, markets, and policy coherence

The systemic risks produced by poorly regulated financial flows and financial markets need to be addressed. Re-evaluation, validity and profound reform of existing global financial institutions—International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), World Trade Organization (WTO)—and the creation of new ones to correct global economic imbalances, enforce accountability, and promote stability has been the longstanding demand of civil society organizations and should be an essential part of any sustainable development goals.

Regarding policy coherence, it is positive that the report sees the need for "reforms in the international financial architecture" and ways to "create a more open, more fair global trading system". However, it is regrettable that the report falls short of explicitly recommending policy coherence and the alignment of trade and financial systems with aid and international human rights agreements, including labour rights and environmental regulations, instead stressing their contribution "to real economic growth" and thus allowing for an ambiguous interpretation of the call for a more open and fair global trading system.

The Monterrey Consensus, referred to in the HLP report, is a key reference in global development and financing for development. At the time it was adopted, civil society acknowledged that it represented an unprecedented effort to build a consensus among multiple stakeholders to introduce sound economic and social policies, eradicate poverty, improve governance and create domestic regulatory environment aimed at the development of private business sector. It was also stated that the Monterrey Consensus was not a finished product but rather a point of departure, and that the credibility of the follow-up process would depend on its ability to overcome the rhetoric of the Consensus with specific proposals that would make the availability of development resources effective.³⁶ For AWID and many others working particularly on issues related to governance, democracy and transparency, it meant an opportunity to have a space to put forward proposals. Nonetheless, 11 years after it should be kept in mind that there is still much more to be done to fully address both the structural obstacles to development and systemic inequalities, including gender equality. The post-2015 and SDG process should be seen as a critical opportunity to move forward in this respect.

³⁴ See "Women Moving Mountains: How Resources Advance Gender Equality", forthcoming at www.awid.org

³⁵ AWID explored alternative strategies for development from a feminsit perspective in a series of briefs published in 2011-2012 and is conducting research in 2013 on innovative sources of financing for women's rights.

³⁶ To learn more about CSOs analysis on Monterrey Consensus please visit [this page](#)

6. Conclusion

We urge all actors and decision makers involved in the post-2015 and SDG process to consider the following critical aspects as the process advances and the agenda unfolds:

1. Any post-2015 development agenda must be grounded meaningfully and consistently in human rights, including women's rights and gender equality.
2. Gender and an intersectional social analysis must be systematically incorporated into all aspects of the post-2015 agenda for policy making, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting. AWID recommends a three-pronged approach towards this, viz., (i) Gender equality as a sector-thematic area; (ii) Integrating gender equality in all development goals and processes; and (iii) Supporting, promoting and ensuring the participation of women's rights advocates in all development and related policy making processes.
3. Recognize the fact that poverty is a complex and multidimensional reality and that women are marginalized in multiple and intersecting ways. Building from existing knowledge on a gendered analysis of poverty and related policy proposals is key. Acknowledging at the same time that women can and have moved in many cases from being beneficiaries and victims to leaders and active agents in social and economic transformation.
4. The enjoyment of women's rights and advancement of gender equality should be a central and fully-funded objective of development strategies, including a focus on and specific indicators to measure shifts in entrenched power imbalances, patriarchal social norms, cultural change and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities, that are key hindrances to achieving broader development goals.
5. Genuine reforms in global governance and macroeconomic policies are needed if we are serious about the need for structural transformation. Otherwise, major root causes of gender and social inequalities will remain untouched.
6. The post-2015 process and the SDGs must build on internationally agreed development and environmental sustainability goals, existing regional and global accountability mechanisms within the UN human rights system, and ensure meaningful, consistent and systematic CSO participation.
7. Apply a 'multiple accountability'³⁷ approach and hold development actors to account for their financial commitments – including holding donors accountable by tracking their performance in financing gender equality, women's organizing, and women's collective empowerment processes around the world – as well as human rights and environmental agreements. This includes also the accountability of non-state actors, and the need for stronger regulatory³⁸ frameworks, especially for the corporate sector.
8. Recognize and study the many innovative economic models and approaches to development coming from diverse communities. Any post-2015 development framework must be informed by the many grassroots innovations around the world, many led by women, indigenous and young people that are based on the values of human rights, environmental sustainability, solidarity and collective well-being. Some concrete examples in which women actively participate and benefit from include: the solidarity economy, re-claiming the commons, the wellbeing paradigm, food sovereignty, experiences with agroecology and the de-growth movement.³⁹

³⁷ A 'multiple accountability' approach to the implementation and fulfillment of the post- 2015 agenda recognizes and includes the contributions of diverse development actors working at all levels (from national to regional and global) - such as CSOs (including feminist and women's rights organizations), parliamentarians, local governments, the private sector, and others.

³⁸ We cannot simply rely, as the HLP recommends, on the "willingness on the part of large corporations as well as governments to report on their social and environmental impact in addition to releasing financial accounts."

³⁹ AWID explored with some detail several of these experiences from a feminist perspective in a [series of publications](#) released during 2011-2012.