



GENDER EQUALITY

V I E W P O I N T P A P E R

*Benefits and Costs of the Gender Equality Targets
for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

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Post-2015 Consensus

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Introduction

UN Women National Committee Canada members and I applaud the efforts of the Copenhagen Consensus to deliver robust and timely research in support of the Post-2015 Consensus on the SDGS.

Women's economic empowerment is central to efforts in advancing gender equality. It also supports the three pre-conditions identified in the assessment paper (Galiana 2014) for the achievement of the proposed targets. Economic empowerment is a catalyst that is often instrumental in bringing about positive changes in legal, political and cultural treatment for women. The benefits of economic empowerment often impact the cultural dynamic of communities, benefitting women as well as their families. What is important to emphasize in our messaging is that such empowerment is not only a benefit to women, but to all of society, which is able to harness the latent economic productivity and innovation of almost half of the population.

Good partners in public and private sector remain crucial to the negotiation and implementation of the Post-2015 goals, and these relationships could also inform the development of these new objectives, as cross-sector cooperation becomes more important than ever in the face of the rapidly changing, multi-faceted problems that we face in the modern world.

Viewpoint

Regarding the two targets recommended for inclusion in the Post-2015 consensus, we note that one appears to be more robust than the other. The first target, "increase in women's political representation" is a broad and ambiguous objective. The benefits and the costs are not sufficiently mapped out. Of course, the research on this topic is admittedly very limited. Nonetheless, if this goal is proposed to be adopted as a target, it will have to be defended and measurable. It does not take into account that women's political representation, influence and participation can also happen outside of the institutionalized halls of power. Political representation can be increased by the impact of non-governmental organizations and corporate activity, both sectors whose representatives often play a political role vis-à-vis the government apparatus, and have impact on shaping the policies of elected representatives.

The first target would benefit from more specificity, and consideration of the implications for those governments who would be tasked with implementing such a measure. Creating quotas for women within institutions of governance could prove very difficult to implement in the real world, and the feasibility of such an initiative would surely vary greatly from country to country. Programming that aims to encourage this would need to be very sensitive to not disrupt inappropriately the political processes of any country.

Furthermore, if such an initiative is proposed, the rationale must be more robust than "fairness." Benefits would need to be made explicit and measurable, for if there is no real

incentive for governments to implement quotas for women, no amount of encouragement will compel them to do so. There are certain tools and practices that UN Women has supported that allow governments to ensure that women's interests are represented in their respective political arenas. For example, gender-sensitive budgeting tools permit government officials to have a framework within which to think about the gender-specific needs, as well as a framework through which they can choose to allocate resources towards gender equality.

The second target, "working conditions and labour force participation" appears to be relatively more feasible. It should be noted that the issue is not only surrounding labour force participation, as women already compose a sizeable portion of the overall labour force in the developing world. The challenge is also to integrate women from the informal economy into the formal economy, and to move women's participation up the economic value chain.

Moreover, this target can leverage the many programs and initiatives that are already underway in the public and private sector to encourage the labour force participation of women (especially in value-added, skilled work) and provide vocational training. This second target has more of a "track record" to rely on, and has tangible benefits that can be presented to policymakers.

Closing

We sincerely hope that you will continue your efforts to aid policy and economic leaders in fulfilling their responsibilities to future generations. Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper.

This paper was written by Almas Jiwani, President, UN Women National Committee Canada. The project brings together 62 teams of economists with NGOs, international agencies and businesses to identify the goals with the greatest benefit-to-cost ratio for the next set of UN development goals.

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Copenhagen Consensus Center is a think tank that investigates and publishes the best policies and investment opportunities based on how much social good (measured in dollars, but also incorporating e.g. welfare, health and environmental protection) for every dollar spent. The Copenhagen Consensus was conceived to address a fundamental, but overlooked topic in international development: In a world with limited budgets and attention spans, we need to find effective ways to do the most good for the most people. The Copenhagen Consensus works with 100+ of the world's top economists including 7 Nobel Laureates to prioritize solutions to the world's biggest problems, on the basis of data and cost-benefit analysis.

