

Executive Summary:

Global Perspectives on Implementing Sustainable Development

Based upon the experience and knowledge of Soroptimists who implement transformative projects at the local, national and international levels, Soroptimist International submits the following recommendations to ensure that all people equally benefit from sustainable development and that 'no one is left behind'. Gender equality and education both have a central, cross cutting role to play in realising the 2030 Agenda. As a fundamental requirement for sustainable development, gender equality must become a priority issue for governments.

Gender Equality and Sustainable Development

Efforts to achieve gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable development must be considered as a means of implementation and a critical policy measure for countries who want to achieve their full development potential. As a cross-cutting sustainable development issue, actions taken to achieve SDG 5 will benefit all people. Gender mainstreaming is an essential strategy for achieving gender equality at all levels, and should be used across all policies and programmes to ensure women's and girls' inclusion in sustainable development. For gender mainstreaming to be effective it must also include gender budgeting and gender-differentiated statistics and indicators. Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources, are essential for gender mainstreaming to be put into practice and for gender analyses to have an impact.

Soroptimist International is a global women's organisation active in over 3,000 communities across 132 countries and territories world-wide. SI club projects aim to 'educate, empower and enable' women and girls, contributing to the achievement of gender equality.

Eradicating violence against women and girls in all spheres must also play a central role in sustainable development, with programmes and policies must being human rights-based. Legal reform to properly legislate on gender-based violence must happen in every country to ensure laws are effective in protecting women and prosecuting those who commit violence. This will improve accountability, address structural inequalities experienced by women and girls, and ensure that legislation supports the needs of victims and survivors, and end impunity for this widespread human rights abuse. Programmes promoting attitude changes, socio-legal services and those working with victims of violence must also be properly supported through resourcing and training to support change.

Education and Sustainable Development

Education is a powerful driver of development and a critical tool for empowering women and girls, and their communities. The benefits of education include promoting gender equality, reducing poverty, improving health outcomes, peace promotion and social stability. Education can therefore have a transformative role within sustainable development and should be considered a global strategic priority. As part of sustainable development, increased efforts must be made to ensure girls' and women's life-long access to quality education, that schools are safe spaces, and that actions are

taken to directly tackle policies and situations that contribute to unequal gender-based educational outcomes. The critical role that education, including vocational training, plays in promoting sustainable development outcomes for women and girls must not be underestimated.

Essential Implementation Recommendations

The following practical recommendations should be used to achieve sustainable development for all:

- Women must be included in policy creation, implementation and evaluation as part of gender mainstreaming. Additionally, all disadvantaged groups, traditionally viewed as ‘vulnerable’ should be automatically considered key development agents, and be involved in policy making, implementation and evaluation at every level.
- Specific and targeted resources must be allocated to programmes and policies that contribute to the achievement of gender equality. This must include properly resourcing essential services that combat gender-based violence and support victims.
- All implementation approaches should be human rights-based in order to ensure that programmes and policies are non-discriminatory, recognising the intersectional discrimination that many women and girls face.
- Legal, political and service reform is essential to achieve gender equality, recognising their interrelated nature and impact. Reforms must focus upon those who have previously been left behind in development efforts.
- Sustainable development efforts must engage with global challenges including migration, climate change and conflict. For sustainable development for all to be achieved, those living in refugee camps, in areas affected by disasters and those living in conflict zones must also benefit from policies and programmes that provide access to human rights and promote gender equality and education.

Data Collection

Gender-differentiated statistics and indicators should be developed and data collected nationally, regionally and globally in order to measure gender gaps and consequently adjust sustainable development programmes to rectify inequalities. At a minimum, data should be disaggregated on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, geography, income, disability, race and ethnicity, and other factors relevant to monitoring inequalities. In addition to quantitative data, quality qualitative data is needed. This means that disadvantaged groups need to be able report on their experiences of development, and that this information must guide implementation.

NGOs, Civil Society and the 2030 Agenda

NGOs and civil society groups are able to effectively build the capacities for sustainable development. As accountable organisations they are able to integrate the perspectives of vulnerable groups into sustainable development programmes, enhancing the legitimacy of such programmes. NGOs and civil society can expand outreach, develop positive impacts, contribute to awareness raising and can play a critical role in promoting effective data collection. The role that these organisations have in implementing the SDGs should not be underestimated. Concerted efforts should be made at every level to further the involvement of NGOs and civil society in achieving the 2030 Agenda. This will foster effective action at the grassroots level, and facilitate the input of experience-based expertise.