

Global Perspectives on Implementing Sustainable Development: making the SDGs work for women and girls



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Introduction

Along with other NGOs and civil society organisations, Soroptimist International (SI) participated in the consultative processes that led to the creation of the 2030 Agenda, and through grassroots project work that empowers women, girls, and their communities, SI actively contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Reflecting the universal nature of the SDGs, this report highlights SI best practice, and shows how local communities can be empowered to create their own transformative change that supports the 2030 Agenda

The SDGs provide an opportunity to increase political will and determination to implement a truly ambitious 2030 Agenda that addresses the fundamental inequalities between peoples. For the SDGs to achieve their ambitions, actions and policies aimed at making gender equality a reality are an essential, cross-cutting approach. The role and impact of gender equality in achieving the SDGs cannot be underestimated. Governments, NGOs, civil society, and other development agents all have a responsibility to promote and enact this agenda. The High Level Political Forum provides a vital opportunity for stakeholders to meet and discuss methods of implementation that will expedite sustainable development processes to the benefit of all

people, especially those previously left behind in development efforts.

Also included in this report is an analysis of the role that gender equality plays in sustainable development and key policy approaches and objectives critical for realising the human rights of all women and girls, ensuring their inclusion in sustainable development. Due to SI's 'Educate to Lead' theme, specific attention will be given to how education can play a cross-cutting role in achieving sustainable development and gender equality. The recommendations contained in this report have been developed as a result of SI experience and knowledge gained through grassroots project work.

NGOs are able to effectively build the capacities for sustainable development and as accountable organisations are able to integrate the perspectives of vulnerable groups into sustainable development programmes, enhancing the legitimacy of programmes. Simply, the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved without the better inclusion of NGOs and civil society.

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. The information in this report is based upon the experience and knowledge of Soroptimists who implement transformative projects at the local, national and international levels. The projects that SI undertake which contribute to the achievement of the SDGs demonstrate that civil society and NGOs can achieve transformational breakthroughs to achieve a sustainably developed world.

Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals

Gender equality is a human right and a precondition for the achievement of sustainable development. Empowering women and girls drives economic prosperity for all, improves health outcomes, and creates more peaceful and stable societies. Sustainable development will only be achieved if gender mainstreaming is used as an essential implementation mechanism.

Gender equality is not only a stand-alone goal of the SDGs, it is also a cross-cutting requirement for effective sustainable development. Whilst SDG 5 should be celebrated, commitments on gender equality are not new and despite efforts to improve the status of women and girls they are still chronically disadvantaged and discriminated against in many areas of their lives. If the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda are to be achieved, there needs to be legal and political reform to ensure that women and girls are included at all stages of sustainable development. Therefore, gender equality is a cross-cutting development issue, a means of implementation, and a critical policy measure for countries who want to achieve their full development potential.

Gender equality is a cross-cutting development issue, and unless addressed in a multidimensional way and used as a mechanism to achieve sustainable development, gender equality will not become a reality.

To achieve gender equality, National Action Plans that encompass gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, effective quantitative and qualitative data collection, and specific efforts to include women in policy setting and decision making processes should be developed. Gender-sensitive development

strategies, including legislation, policies and financing are a necessary part of achieving the long-wished-for ambitions of the SDGs.

Sustainable development efforts must involve rigorous, gender-sensitive implementation as well as thorough monitoring and review mechanisms which can help drive progress forward. Persistent and chronic underinvestment in gender equality and women's empowerment has exacerbated development limitations. Therefore, all implementation processes should take into account that women and girls are at a higher risk of being left behind. Goal 5 of the SDGs does not stand in isolation – a cohesive, integrated and complimentary approach must be agreed for the 2030 Agenda to be successful. Actions taken to achieve SDG Goal 5 must reaffirm and contribute to the fulfilment of commitments to achieve gender equality that have already been agreed and ratified, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a policy approach and means of implementation required to achieve the goal of gender equality and sustainable development overall. Gender mainstreaming can reveal a need for changes in strategies and actions to ensure that women, men, girls and boys can influence, participate in and benefit from sustainable development processes.

All policies and actions that are created in response to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

should include gender mainstreaming as an implementation approach. Already globally recognised as an essential development policy, gender mainstreaming must also be used at the regional, national and local levels. By using gender mainstreaming, gender-specific interventions can and should be designed in accordance to the needs of societies in order to overcome historical and systematic discrimination and enable all women and men to benefit equally from sustainable development efforts. Using gender mainstreaming as a policy approach does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes that rectify inequality and discrimination. Instead gender mainstreaming can support the efficacy of those policies and programmes.

Gender mainstreaming is not about adding a ‘woman’s component’ into an existing policy measure, rather, it is a holistic mechanism that recognises that all issues are women’s issues and ensures that women’s and girls’ experiences and concerns are of equal value to those of men and boys, and that therefore their needs should be included and assessed equally in policies and actions. Consequently, gender mainstreaming is an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes across the three pillars of sustainable development to ensure that all people equally experience the results of sustainable development efforts. When gender mainstreaming is effectively implemented as a policy approach and strategy, it drives transformational change as envisaged by the 2030 Agenda.

Gender Budgeting and Financing for Development

Gender budgeting is a key component of a gender mainstreaming that incorporates a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender

equality. Financial resources should be appropriately allocated and distributed to support the achievement of gender equality and sustainable development.

To achieve gender equality and sustainable development, systematic and practical support from financing and budgetary processes which buttress sustainable development is required. Therefore, Financing for Development (FfD) processes must include gender budgeting as a core component of gender mainstreaming. Using this approach will ensure that dedicated resources are provisioned to advance gender equality as part of FfD. A lack of practical action on realising the economic empowerment of women and girls, as well as other marginalised groups, in all countries, will greatly inhibit the success of FfD and subsequently the SDGs.

Not one of the SDGs will be achieved without including women and girls as equal partners; the implementation of programmes to achieve the SDGs is not gender-neutral.

Women and girls comprise the majority of people living in poverty, and experience persistent and multidimensional inequalities. Persistent and chronic underinvestment in gender equality and women’s empowerment has exacerbated development limitations, often despite the best efforts of gender-responsive policies. For these policies to create results they must be appropriately financed.

Gender budgeting is a critical implementation tool to rectify economic and social inequality and discrimination experienced by women and girls, supporting their access to human rights. The relationship between public and private expenditure and gender inequality should be acknowledged and rectified as part of sustainable development. Gender budgeting and analysis should be part of implementing social protection systems and public services

to ensure that women and girls, and men and boys, equally benefit from those national policy areas consistent with sustainable development aims and strategies

Gender-Differentiated Statistics and Indicators, and Data Collection

Gender-differentiated statistics offer a numerical representation of the situational differences and inequalities between women and men in all areas of life, whilst gender-differentiated indicators serve as a means to measure reductions in gender inequality. Quantitative data is essential in assessing sustainable development progress, however, qualitative data also has a key role to play.

Gender-differentiated statistics and indicators should be collected nationally, regionally and globally in order to measure gender gaps and consequently adjust sustainable development programmes to rectify inequalities. Therefore, not only are thorough and transparent gender-differentiated statistics and indicators vital as an accountability methodology, they are also fundamental as a component of gender mainstreaming and as a means to develop appropriate financing strategies and for the

fulfilment of human rights and gender equality commitments.

At a minimum, data should be disaggregated on the basis of age, sex, geography, income, disability, race and ethnicity and other factors relevant to monitoring inequalities (including multiple inequalities experienced by women and girls). Although some indicators are measured by household (not by individual), it is still important that the data collected for those indicators is disaggregated – it is important to know how the household is comprised. Without this information it will be difficult to properly and fully identify the gaps and challenges facing women and girls.

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. That value of social development cannot be seen in statistically-driven data, disadvantaged groups in society must be empowered to generate and supply citizen-generated data as part of wider data collection methodologies and approaches that reflect the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda.

Gender mainstreaming should include:

- Effective accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress that seek out and include the perspectives and experiences of women and girls.
- Rigorous gender analyses, that address gender budgeting should always be carried out during the creation, implementation, assessment and evaluation levels of policies. Recommendations should be developed as part of those reports.
- 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.
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equal participation and input at all levels of decision-making.
- Gender budgeting, gender-differentiated statistics and indicators are critical components of gender mainstreaming and should be systematically used for all policies and actions.

Education

Education and sustainable development are interrelated and mutually reinforcing; education is central to sustainable development approaches. Education is a human rights and vital cross-cutting mechanism that underpins the achievement of gender equality.

Education is a powerful driver of development and a critical tool for empowering individuals 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. Increased efforts must also be made to achieve gender equality within education systems, as a critical aspect of the 2030 Agenda. Empowering and enabling women and girls through education will support and contribute to wider sustainable development efforts.

Access to quality education for women and girls of all ages is a fundamental human right, and underpins their empowerment as individuals and members of their communities. Gender-based discrimination in education is both a cause and a consequence of broader forms of gender inequality in society, and must be overcome to achieve sustainable development for all. Discrimination, gender stereotypes, economic and time poverty, inadequate facilities, and violence at schools all create environments that prevent women and girls from achieving their fullest potential. To improve women's and girls' access to quality education, policies and actions must directly tackle situations that contribute to unequal outcomes.

Girls' education is both an intrinsic right and a critical lever to reaching other development objectives. Providing girls with an education

helps break the cycle of poverty: educated women are less likely to marry early and against their will; less likely to die in childbirth; more likely to have healthy babies; and are more likely to send their children to school. When all children have access to a quality education rooted in human rights and gender equality, it creates a ripple effect of opportunity that influences generations to come. Girls' education is essential to the achievement of quality learning relevant to the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development.

Women's and girls' education is more than simply enrolling or attending school. Enrolment rates can be deceptive as girls are 'officially' at school, but do not attend due to unsafe transport routes, household responsibilities and other reasons. Educational environments must be safe and inclusive. Many schools still lack the facilities, including appropriate sanitation, which girls need to finish school education. It should also be recognised that school attendance is not sufficient to deem that a child has accessed education; it is calculated that 250 million children have attended school but still cannot read or write.¹ The barriers that women and girls face in accessing education remain greater than those faced by men and boys. More must be done to not only address the direct costs of education, but also the indirect costs such as school uniforms and books that prevent girls and women from accessing available education.

Many efforts to improve education access have focused upon children and young people.

Whilst it is critical that equal access and participation is achieved in this age group, it is also clear that education is a vital sustainable development and empowerment tool across all age groups. Mature and older women often have reduced access to educational services that combat illiteracy, and provide training that promotes social and economic empowerment. A life-course approach to

education must remain as a prominent issue in any new development agenda.

Poverty and economic disenfranchisement are not only outcomes of a lack of education, they are also significant factors in preventing women and girls accessing education. Policies and actions taken to improve educational access for women and girls must also address economic barriers to education at all levels.

The Role of Schools in Sustainable Development

Schools can be a focal point in a community, providing a place for members of the community to meet. In many communities, as well as providing education for children, schools allow other community groups to use their facilities outside of school hours, including community meetings, and provide evening classes for adults. Due to the connection point that schools can be, they should be considered a key institution to instigate sustainable development. NGOs are well-placed to work with schools and other educational institutions to expedite sustainable development processes through non-formal education. All children and young people attending school should be educated about sustainable development and global citizenship.

Global Challenges facing Education

Educational needs and challenges facing educational systems vary across the world, with impoverished and transitional communities facing some of the most significant challenges. Recently, global issues, including migration, have also affected educational services. Educational services must be equipped to respond to rapidly changing circumstances so that all people can access quality education. Meeting these global challenges is key to achieving the sustainable development goals, and requires coordinated action for all stakeholders, including inter-governmental action and support.

Refugees and migrants are often unable to access quality, or even adequate education in transit. There is limited access to education in refugee camps and migrant centres, despite the best efforts of many organisations, due to

chronic underfunding and a lack of resources.

Women and girls living in rural areas are often unable to access education safely. Educational facilities may be far away, travel routes may be unsafe and women and girls may be kept out of education to complete household tasks such as fetching water and fuel. To tackle these problems, a multifaceted approach should be taken, improving water access and transport routes that allow women and girls to access available education.

NGOs are often well placed to provide educational interventions in these situations; programme and resource constraints have encouraged NGOs to focus on situation specific responses rather than those of a more centralized and generic nature.

Programme flexibility allows for: significant innovation; relevance to the specific needs of disadvantaged groups; a focus on clearly defined purposes and vulnerable groups, and; the ability to respond to specific situations, and adapt methodologies quickly as required.

The inclusion of prospective learners and programme beneficiaries in the development of NGO-led education-based programmes has

provided a rich experience base that has helped ensure relevance while promoting local ownership and contributing to sustainability of programme efforts over time.

Amidst global challenges facing educational services, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed, and governments should do more to support the work of NGOs and civil society that contribute to providing education and training for all.

Project: Hangeore High School, Republic of Korea

Hangeore High School is a school for 168 North Korean students. SI Seoseoul works with students at the school, supporting their complex needs. Young North Korean refugees face challenges that are different from those of adults', such as gaps in physical health and socio-economic status, and psychological health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In this project, SI Seoseoul established a programme focused on the specific needs of the school students to aid their rehabilitation and equal participation in South Korean society.

Working with students from North Korea at Hangeore High School, SI Seoseoul provides psychosocial support and other activities that develop the educational attainment and integration of the students. Through SI Seoseoul's programme, the North Korean students are given medical treatment, including treatment for malnutrition. Physical health deficits and psychological disorders including PTSD can significantly impact integration prospects for refugees.

There is a need for specific attention to be given to young people and children who are refugees, as early-life traumatic experiences can inhibit future psychosocial development and educational attainment.ⁱⁱ PTSD symptoms such as insomnia and feelings of helplessness make it difficult for students to perform well

academically and participate in training, which is crucial for future life prospects.

By including healthcare as part of SI Seoseoul's mentoring programme, SI Seoseoul is able to support the students' rehabilitation and provide community-based support that is known to improve health outcomes, and acknowledge the inter-related nature of education and health. By connecting health and education, educational approaches can be appropriately adapted to the specific needs of the students during post-trauma development.



Students visit Namyangju Hyundai Hospital

In addition to having specific health needs, substandard education in North Korea, and the inability to access education during transit means that North Korean students arrive

significantly disadvantaged in comparison to their South Korean counterparts. With unemployment rates higher amongst North Koreans than that of South Koreans living in the Republic of Korea. Therefore, policies and programmes need to focus on rectifying the disadvantage that North Koreans have in accessing education that enables their economic empowerment.

Dropout rates amongst North Korean students at all levels of education is comparatively high.ⁱⁱⁱ Many students report social discrimination, bullying, feelings of loneliness and isolation, all of which are reasons why students leave education. North Korean women and girls are also at higher risks of violence, even at school-age.^{iv} Through their multifaceted mentoring programme, SI Seoseoul ensures that it plays an active role in the school and the lives of the students. This provides a community presence that maximises the long-term benefits of education and training.

SI Seoseoul set-up a careers programme that includes presentations from professionals, visits to work places and a variety of training scholarships that are targeted at facilitating long-term employment. This programme sits alongside and adds value and impact to government efforts that focus on short-term assistance policies. SI Seoseoul's programme ensures that results are commensurate with the aims of sustainable development for all.

In times of displacement, education is crucial. It can foster social cohesion, provide access to life-saving information, address psychosocial needs, and offer a stable and safe environment for those who need it most. It also helps people to rebuild their communities and pursue productive, meaningful lives.

Flexible Learning Approaches

Non-formal education must be included as part of a spectrum of educational approaches known to create effective learning outcomes. Non-formal education is critical to sustainable development, introducing concepts such as social inclusion, equality, and global citizenship, as well as contributing to personal growth and the empowerment of people and communities.

Non-formal education is key to sustainable development. These educational approaches are able to develop the skills and knowledge of a large percentage of people outside the reach of formal education, often women and girls, and are able to offer education programmes which can easily adapt and respond to the specific and immediate needs of a developing community.

Formal education cannot be considered to be the only way to help women and girls learn. Non-formal education must be considered a key strand in responding to education needs. Formal schooling tends to follow social trends, whereas there is the possibility to lead with non-formal education. Therefore, non-formal education is a key gender-sensitive approach for attitude change that can progressively support efforts to achieve gender equality.

Non-formal education should be organised to support sustainable development as this approach requires extensive community involvement and the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and can be used in all circumstances. Innovative NGO projects demonstrate that non-formal educational approaches can be used to combat challenges facing formal education systems, such as providing educational opportunities to migrants in transit, those living in refugee camps, and as part of post-disaster action plans. Non-formal education methodologies also support the learning needs of those with learning difficulties, increase educational opportunities to older persons and those not attending school, and support parents' and carers' involvement in their children's education.

Project: Sustainable Literacy, France

Using a family-friendly game to promote literacy skills in a variety of languages, the SI Union of France has reached over 250 children and their families living in vulnerable situations.

To promote literacy, and recognising that many children living in vulnerable situations do not get to access education that supports their learning needs, the SI Union of France developed a game that can be used by children and their families and that can be produced in a range of languages, including French and English. This educational and entertaining tool promotes dialogue, and encourages imagination and creativity. It can also allow parents with literacy problems to regain confidence and to continue learning: it is the effect of "ricochet" referred to by the National Agency for Fighting Illiteracy (ANCLI) which has approved the project.

Since 2014, in order to reach a variety of vulnerable groups, this literacy game has been distributed through schools, hospitals, and centres where literacy workshops are conducted. A partnership agreement has been signed with the General Directorate of the National Gendarmerie and handed 250 games in rooms called "Melanie" (protected courtrooms for children victims of violence) across the French territories.

Demonstrating how non-formal education can support the aims of formal education in and outside of the classroom, this SI-developed game has also been distributed through schools in Mali, Senegal, Madagascar and Cambodia, gaining international recognition. There are also current plans to deliver games to Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Project: Aktiv Soroptimist, Norway

Creating an activities programme for migrants and refugees staying at a transit centre for asylum seekers, SI Ringerike provides community support for migrant integration.

When settling in a new country, migrants, including refugees, face a variety of challenges and barriers to migrant integration. Immigrant integration is the process of economic mobility and social inclusion for newcomers and their children. In response to the current migrant crisis in Europe and working directly with migrants at the Hvalsmoen Transit Centre, the second largest centre in Norway, home to 250 permanent residents, SI Ringerike organised a range of non-formal educational activities that support refugees in taking-up socio-economic opportunities. This programme that focused on the needs of the migrants, was created in cooperation with local organisations, including schools. Particular attention has been given to supporting female migrants. Women migrants often face significant difficulties in accessing the socio-legal services they need if they are

not literate in national languages. By running language courses for women, SI Ringerike provides community-based support and improves women's access to essential services.



A child resident at Hvalsmoen Transit Centre plays on a SI Ringerike activity outing.

Social activities have also been organised for child residents at the Hvalsmoen Transit Centre to support them with transitions to local schools. This form of social support is also known to improve educational attainment and provide for the psycho-social needs of children post-trauma.

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education and training has a key role to play in implementing the SDGs. Supporting the achievement of SDG 4, vocational education and training also contributes to the achievement of a range of SDGs, including those on ending poverty, health and inclusive economic growth. Vocational training can both educate participants about sustainable development, and prepare people for jobs that directly contribute to the SDGs.

For women and girls, vocational training and education has a critical role to play both in empowering individuals and increasing essential services. Providing accessible quality life-long employment orientated training supports women's and girls' economic empowerment. The impacts of vocational training are often most pronounced in developing communities as skills acquisition and spread are critical for economic growth and social development.^v

To promote women's participation in vocational education and training, specific efforts should be made to minimise the impact of external constraints, including household responsibilities, reduced income and transportation problems, that prevent women from accessing available training opportunities. This external factors demonstrate the more stringent constraints that women and girls have to make decisions in and their knock-on social and economic effects, highlighting the cross-cutting effect that education can have on achieving the SDGs.

Project: Maternal Health Training, Samoa

In Samoa, many women live in isolated and rural communities, far from educational and medical facilities. By creating easily transportable materials for training healthcare professionals in birthing techniques and women are able to access proper medical care

that will reduce maternal death and complications.

In partnership with the Samoa Campus of the Australian Pacific Technical College, SI Karratha donated a birthing doll to the childcare and allied health departments of APTC. As part of this partnership, other resources to support mothers and their families were also transferred.

Birthing dolls are an essential tool that train midwives, birth attendants and others in how to manage and treat complications in birth, and ensures that women access the highest possible quality of healthcare whilst in labour. This beneficial impact of this training will be particularly pronounced in rural areas, where isolation from medical facilities increase the risk of maternal and infant death, as well as other health issues.



Mother & baby, beneficiaries of Birthing in the Pacific

The project in Samoa drew from 'Birthing in the Pacific', an SI appeal that supported training programmes and provided training equipment for midwives, community health workers, village birth attendants and other healthcare professionals in the small island developing state of Papua New Guinea.

Recommendations for Policy and Implementation

Education and training policies must be based upon human rights and anti-discrimination policies, and must be recognised as a universal goal that is essential for individuals and communities to access other rights and benefits, including sustainable development. Education contributes to the independence, autonomy, self-sustainability, and economic and social empowerment of women and girls, and is one of the most effective tools for alleviating poverty for individuals and communities. Without access to quality, safe, inclusive and life-course education and training, girls and women of all ages will not be equal participants and contributors to society at every level.

To achieve the transformative aims of the 2030 Agenda, future efforts should focus upon the challenges faced by women and girls who suffer multiple discriminations and live in vulnerable circumstances, which include (but is not limited to) the time-poor, working women, rural women, ethnic minorities, mothers, older women, the girl child, migrants, those with disabilities, women living in sheltered housing and those living in conflict situations. Achieving gender equality through and in education is not only an outcome of sustainable development, it is a key implementation strategy that will positively benefit all three pillars of sustainable development.

For current and future strategic objectives on the education and training of girls and women of all ages to be most effectively achieved, all relevant policies must build upon existing UN international conventions and agreements.

For the educational needs of all women and girls to be met, and for the aims of equality and empowerment to be achieved, inclusive interventions to provide education that encompasses all groups, especially marginalised, vulnerable and discriminated-against groups, is critical. Without further commitment and action to ensure that all

women and girls have full and equal access to education, sustainable development nor gender equality will be achieved.

Based on grassroots projects and programmes, Soroptimist International offers the following recommendations for actions and strategies implemented to achieve SDG 4, and in consideration of education in achieving SDG 5:

Ensure Women's and Girls' Access to Education

Education and training is still hard to access in many situations, including for migrants and those living in unsafe and rural areas, and those living in poverty or with low incomes. Targeted, gender sensitive strategies should be put in place to subsidise and fund women's and girls' access to education. These policies should also take into account the hidden costs and barriers to education that prevent equal access and routes to educational institutions should be made safe. To achieve this, the following actions are recommended:

- Specific efforts should be made to extend educational services to migrants and refugees, including those in transit and in refugee camps. Sufficient and appropriate funding should be allocated in order to achieve this aim.
- Gender awareness training must be included in all professional training, including all educational professionals.
- Policies promoting access to education should also be used to promote lifelong access to vocational training and non-formal education.
- To promote women's equal access and participation in STEAM subjects, gender-sensitive interventions should be used.
- All educational environments and associated facilities must be made safe for women and girls to be fully and equally participate in education.

Develop and Introduce Education for Global Citizenship and Women's Leadership

In a sustainably developing world, education must provide leadership skills, promote a

culture of peace and tolerance, and enhance confidence, integrity, and critical thinking skills. By doing this women and girls will be equally equipped with the professional, social and life skills needed to become individually empowered and equal contributors to society. Despite previous commitments and agreements, women and girls remain under-represented at all levels of society. They do not have an equal voice in decision making processes and consequentially gender-sensitive approaches and considerations are continuously overlooked or side-lined. Education and training policies are a key method of overcoming gender barriers that continue to sustain discrimination against women and girls. To ensure that all women and girls, especially those who experience multiple discriminations, are properly included in all levels of society, and achieve empowerment and equality, the following actions are recommended:

- All education professionals should be properly trained in gender issues, gender-sensitive approaches and equipped with the resources to develop and implement gender-aware curricula that are designed to break down gender barriers at every level of education.
- All educational environments must be safe spaces for learners and educators. Educational environments must be inclusive and gender-sensitive, and offer appropriate facilities to promote the educational needs of all women and girls, including mothers, those living with disabilities and older women.
- Women and girls must be equipped with knowledge on their rights, and the legal protections available to them.
- Education must include the teaching of leadership skills and personal development to encourage the abilities of women and girls to be representatives and leaders at every level of society.
- All learners must acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote human rights, gender equality, and a culture of peace.

Promote and Ensure the Use of Available Technologies to Increase Access to Quality Education

Many women and girls live in situations where they are unable to access equitable, quality and safe education. Those living in situations where they cannot access education are often vulnerable and face increased risks, and therefore have a significant need to access quality education. In those circumstances new innovative ways to provide education and training must be developed. Technology is an increasingly available educational tool that promotes the availability and accessibility of quality and safe education to all, and especially those unable to access equitable, quality and safe education. Therefore, the following is recommended:

- Technology-based education that provides educational flexibility to those who are living in insecure and vulnerable situations, those who are unable to participate continuous education and those who are time-poor must be made available.
- Use and disseminate technology to improve access to education particularly in times of conflict.
- Education that is made available and accessible through technology must comply with approved educational standards and policies in line with UN international conventions and agreements.

These actions will contribute to the ability of women and girls to access and achieve in STEAM careers, to update their skills, increase their employability and will contribute to life-long education.

Ensure the Existence and Availability of Accessible Community-Based Safe Spaces for Inclusive, Continuing and Lifelong Education

The needs of many women and girls, particularly those who live in vulnerable and marginalised situations and communities, and those who experience multiple discriminations, are not adequately provided for in traditional educational and training

environments. Therefore, it is necessary to facilitate and provide flexible and inclusive access to education for all, and non-traditional learning environments and methods must be developed. Community-Based safe and secure spaces provide an important mechanism to provide women and girls with human-rights based education and training. It is recommended that accessible community-based safe spaces for inclusive, continuing and lifelong education be used to achieve the following:

- The creation of inclusive educational environments where women and girls have ownership, can develop themselves socially, educationally and personally, and are able to achieve success as individuals and as members of their community.
- To create support networks that provide a platform for other enabling and empowering opportunities that are necessary for the ongoing development and improvement of the status of women and girls.
- The development and implementation of adaptable, modular learning systems and models that cater for the multitude of circumstances and the lifelong educational needs of women and girls.

These recommendations have been shown to reduce drop-out rates and combat a multitude of educational challenges faced by women and girls. They have been found to be particularly effective in providing education to all women and girls, but especially mothers, those who are time poor, women living in vulnerable circumstances, those living with disabilities, marginalised groups, and victims of violence.

Increasing the Inclusion and Participation of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality

The achievement of gender equality will benefit all of society and empower all people, including men and boys. Men and boys are also well placed to help instigate and contribute to societal, behavioural and attitude change. Therefore, the following recommendations are given to better include men and boys in the achievement of gender equality:

- Gender equality issues, and gender-sensitive expertise must be included on all curricula and educational materials at all levels of education and training.
- Education and training materials, including textbooks, must be non-discriminatory and not reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Gender studies, citizenship and human rights need to be taught in schools and training programs, at all stages of education. All people should be equipped with the tools to combat gender based violence, discrimination and the negative effects of gender stereotypes that detrimentally affect all members of society.
- Continuing education that includes mutual respect, personal, social, and health education must be included in education programs for people of all ages.
- Programmes and training must be developed and fully implemented to address the attitudes of public servants and those working in areas which demand gender awareness.
- Transformative, normative and inclusive public awareness raising campaigns should be developed with the participation of all stakeholders.

Establish Effective, Accountable, and Gender Sensitive Monitoring Systems, and promote Capacity Building

Proper data collection, monitoring, evaluation and capacity building processes is essential to ensure the full implementation of actions that will contribute to the end of gender inequality and the empowerment of all women and girls, to promote dialogue, interaction and cooperation between stakeholders, and to improve accountability. Therefore, the following is recommended:

- That micro-level data must be collected and used to develop the most effective policies and practices that will benefit communities and individuals.
- Actions must be taken to better develop links and collaborative work between communities, NGOs, CSOs, academia and

governments to improve the capacity of effective programs for gender equality.

- Improved and adequate sustainable financing and budgeting is required to be developed and implemented and must include accessible accountability mechanisms.
- Alternative gender-sensitive financing methods should be explored, including community saving schemes and micro-financing.
- All data collection, monitoring, evaluation and capacity building processes must take a human rights-based approach, be inclusive and non-discriminatory, provide disaggregated information and include gender-sensitive mechanisms.

Additional Recommendations

- Sexual and reproductive education must have a human rights based approach, be available to all, and include quality education on family planning.
- Access to quality and free or affordable childcare is crucial to enable mothers of all ages to access education and training, and to promote skills that will improve employment chances and personal development.
- Lifelong employment training must be made available to women and girls, and access to vocational training and non-formal learning must be promoted.
- Gender awareness training must be included in all professional training, including public servants, health care professionals, education professionals and legal professionals.

Summary

It is essential that the focus of future policies and mechanisms that contribute to the achievement of empowerment and equality for girls and women of all ages must have a gender-sensitive, human rights-based approach and address the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Further concerted, sustained and accountable actions based upon the above recommendations must be taken to close the gender gap and achieve the full realisation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. To achieve gender equality in and through education, the following actions and policies should be implemented:

- Implementation efforts should use gender mainstreaming approaches and principles, including gender budgeting and evaluation methodologies.
- Programmes and projects should be implemented in consultation with stakeholders and in response to their needs.
- Develop and introduce education for global citizenship and women's leadership.
- Promote and ensure the use of available technologies to increase access to quality education, particularly for women and girls living in vulnerable situations.
- Ensure the existence and availability of accessible community-based safe spaces for inclusive, continuing and lifelong education.
- Establish effective, accountable, and gender sensitive monitoring systems and promote capacity building, including the involvements of NGOs and civil society.

A Multifaceted Approach to Sustainable Development in Uganda: See Solar, Cook Solar

Using schools as a community focal point, 'See Solar, Cook Solar' in Uganda mobilised a global civil network to transform rural communities, providing access to sustainable energy, safe sanitation facilities and improved educational facilities. 'See Solar, Cook Solar' addresses all three pillars of sustainable development, providing social, economic and environmental benefits.

A Soroptimist International global appeal, 'See Solar, Cook Solar' focuses on providing solar cooking and solar lighting, fitting with SI's goal - to improve the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment or enabling opportunities. The project contributes to education, provides opportunities for employment, eliminates violence, ensures food security and healthcare, and aids environmental sustainability. Supported by SI's network of 75,000 members and four Federations across a total of seven projects worldwide, support has been directly provided to over 5000 beneficiaries, the majority of whom are women, children and older people.

Through implementing 'See Solar, Cook Solar', Soroptimist International gained an important knowledge base that will aid the delivery and impact of future projects that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

'See Solar, Cook Solar' worked with two schools in rural western Uganda, Kinyaminagha School and Musasa School, each school with 700 pupils. Initially the project was developed to provide solar lighting and cooking facilities to the school and community, therefore increasing access to and the quality of education. However, the project quickly progressed to fulfil other needs in line with the



Girls at Musasa Primary School in rural Western Uganda learn to use laptops powered by solar energy.

SDGs. After the schools were equipped with solar energy for lighting, it was clear that the students would benefit from a full range of facilities including laptops and a water system to provide safe drinking water. By building a water pump, girls' inclusion in education increased as they were no longer required to collect water.

Around the world, more than 2.5 billion people do not have access to power. For most of these individuals, light and power comes from toxic fossil fuels such as kerosene that create greenhouse gases – CO₂ being one of them. Living in impoverished, rural communities, far from the electrical grid, contribute to challenges in accessing light, safe sanitation, food, cooking, and sustainable social development.^{vi} Solar power and other sustainable energy sources play a critical role in achieving many of the SDGs. The productive use of renewable energy in rural areas helps raise incomes and improve health, providing power to pump water for irrigation, to process crops and power cottage industries, to light homes, schools, and hospitals - all services of premier importance, bringing significant benefits to the lives of those living in these remote rural communities.

Although the new facilities have only been in place a short time, the Head Teacher from Musasa School has reported that academic performance has increased as a result of extra boarding facilities that improve girls' safe access to education, additional private rooms being made available for guidance and counselling, extended study hours due to the reduction in time spent gathering water, the benefits of having access to computers and the internet and the positive relationships developed with other local schools.

To ensure programme sustainability and long-term efficacy, training was given on how to use and maintain the solar-energy equipment, rainwater systems and biosand filters to promote self-sufficiency within the

communities and create long term positive outcomes.

Lessons from Implementation

'See Solar, Cook Solar' extended the reach of sustainable development efforts. Project feedback and community inclusion has promoted good practice, and has developed SI's expertise in implementation approached.

Developing good communicative relationships between the project team and a project coordinator at each project site ensured the smooth running of the projects and that they best fulfilled the needs of the communities worked with. SI's global membership network that provided financial support to 'See Solar, Cook Solar', and the project developed positive relationships with project teams on-the-ground ensured information flows that supported North-South partnerships for sustainable development.

Drawing from the experiences of 'See Solar, Cook Solar', to maximise efficacy, all projects that contribute to sustainable development efforts should:

- Contain clear objectives that account for the cross-cutting nature of sustainable development
- Have communications processes that ensure continuous consultation with the communities that projects support in order to appropriately fulfil their needs.
- Use gender sensitive implementation methodologies and evaluation processes, to ensure that women and girls benefit from development processes equally, to close the gender gap and promote gender mainstreaming.
- Appropriately manage budgets, risks, and roles and responsibilities should all be to expedite sustainable development processes.
- Research products and approaches being used in communities to ensure the optimum outcomes appropriate to the project's location.

Violence against Women and Girls

Gender-based violence is a fundamental barrier to gender equality and inclusive sustainable development. Social norms and attitudes are both a cause and a consequence of violence against women and girls; violence in the private sphere is therefore an issue of public importance. Eliminating gender-based violence must be a global priority within sustainable development.

Violence against women and girls should be considered to be "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life", as defined by the UN.^{vii}

According to UN Women, 1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence.^{viii} This amounts to a global pandemic of violence against women and girls. Violence committed against women and girls can take many forms, including domestic violence, psychological abuse, female genital mutilation, trafficking, sexual violence, femicide, and enforced, early and child marriage. The multifaceted nature of this violence must be acknowledged, and the different experiences of victims must be listened to in order for violence against women and girls to be eliminated. This is a truly global problem, and affects all cultures and societies.

Gender-based violence must be legislated against in order to contribute to the SDGs. That marital rape, domestic abuse, and other acts of violence are legal in any country is not acceptable and contravenes globally agreed standards on human rights. Legislative reform is also critical where laws exist; the concept of consent being 'yes means yes' should be enshrined and upheld in law, and more should be done to end impunity and increase successful prosecution rates. We cannot legislate only as a moral condemnation of gender-based violence; laws must be 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 defends the human rights of women and girls.

Although legislation to protect women and girls does not solve the global pandemic of gender-based violence alone, it is a critical tool that empowers women and demonstrates that these acts of violence are not acceptable. When women and girls are disempowered through a lack of legal protection, they are given a lower status in society. This goes against human rights and the principles of the SDGs. Until violence against women and girls is eradicated, gender equality will not have been achieved.

Not one country is free from gender violence – this global problem demands global action.

To complement and support legislative change, socio-legal services also need to be developed, reformed and fully resourced. Services should be gender-sensitive and human rights-based. Worldwide women's refuges and shelters are underfunded, with rehabilitative services being provided by civil society and NGOs without government assistance.

The underlying factors that allow violence to happen in the first place unfortunately remain. Most approaches to reducing violence committed against women and girls have been top-down, not bottom-up. Soroptimists recognise the value and importance of the individual stories of affected women. Their experiences are nuanced and multifaceted and the stories of women must be collected and taken into account when producing and implementing policies aimed to help them. Only then can solutions be contextualised, culturally specific, and tailored to each community.

Progressive and safe indicators for measuring the elimination of violence against women and girls must be developed. National and Regional Action Plans are a way of doing this.

Repeatedly the experiences of women are not believed when they are reported. This is a symptom and cause of the structural causes of gender violence. Permeating all levels of society, the under-representation of women's voices perpetuates the widespread incidence

of gender-based violence and prevents the empowerment of women of all ages in all areas of life. Women and girls must be empowered and enabled to be key decision makers in order to eradicate gender violence in all spheres of society – to eliminate gender violence, comprehensive policy measures must be taken that put the voices of women and girls at their centre.

Changing Attitudes and the Role of Men and Boys:

Whilst legislative change is critical, more must be done to change social attitudes and behaviour towards women, girls, and gender-based violence. Social attitudes towards women and girls. The voices of victims must be included in policy development and implementation, and solutions must be contextualised, culturally specific and tailored to communities. Progressive and safe indicators must be developed and implemented in order to evaluate progress towards eliminating gender-based violence.

National Action Plans to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence

Soroptimist International supports the development and implementation of National Action Plans, and Regional Action Plans that;

- Prioritise and adequately resource policies, programmes, and interventions with education, empowerment, and enabling opportunities at their core, not only for victims/survivors or perpetrators, but for all;
- Strengthen legal frameworks and systems of justice to be responsive to the unique needs, experiences and perspectives of women and girls, and, where necessary, enact and enforce new laws to prevent, prosecute and punish all cases of violence committed against women and girls;
- Ensure that violence committed against women and girls is not labelled “private”, and therefore out of the reach of the state and/or community;
- Ensures meaningful, respectful, and human rights based approaches to eliminating violence against women and girls; and
- Facilitate and ensure all states work towards ratifying CEDAW and its Optional Protocols, without reservations.

Men and boys also have a vital role to play in eliminating violence against women and girls – it will be impossible to achieve gender equality without engaging men and boys.

As gender-norms reflect deeper social structures that facilitate violent actions against women in girls in public and private spaces; changing attitudes about women and gender is fundamental to eradicating gender-based violence. Since individuals come to embody gender relations and gender norms, helping men and women to change what is not only perceived as, but also experienced as, normal behaviour is a difficult task. NGOs and civil society, supported by governments, have a key role to play in enabling women and men in implementing activities that contribute to attitude change.

Gender equality requires that both women and men, girls and boys are able to access the same opportunities and choices. To enable equal access of opportunities for all, and to empower individuals, ideas of masculinity need to adapt to achieve gender equality. Currently, gender norms provide men with tangible advantages, but also with tangible disadvantages. Therefore, men and boys, as well as women and girls benefit equally from achieving gender equality for all.

Supporting the Needs of Victims and Survivors

All too often those who experience gender-based violence are not believed, and are subjugated to investigative practices (including medical examinations and police question) that do not address the needs of the person reporting violence. If poorly implemented, legislation, procedures and policies that aim to support victims and survivors can add to their trauma. To eliminate gender-based violence as part of sustainable development, it is essential that the needs of women who experience gender-based violence are put at the heart of policies and programmes.

To better include the needs of victims and survivors, all medical and legal professionals, as well as those who provide psycho-social approaches who work with victims must receive continual training to provide them with the skills and knowledge to implement gender-sensitive, best practice approaches.

It is possible to eradicate violence against women and girls. All forms of violence must be considered unacceptable in all circumstances, and impunity for perpetrators of violence must end.

Specific attention should be paid to ensuring that women and girls who have experienced violence are able to participate in the legal systems that are meant to help them. Courtroom environments and spaces in police stations should be adapted to respond to the psychological needs of women and girls reporting violence. Additionally, specific desks with trained female officers should be created at police stations to support those reporting cases of violence. These actions are known to promote successful legal outcomes.

It should be taken into account that how violence is presented in the public sphere impacts how victims and survivors are viewed, and affect societally held opinions on gender-based violence. Appropriate regulations should be put in place to take this into account and support efforts that contribute to attitude changes that will reduce incidents of violence against women and girls.

Services that provide support to victims and survivors are chronically underfunded, and in many cases NGOs and civil society provide services including advocacy, legal support, accommodation and psycho-social services in lieu a sufficient government support. Rather than expanding support to those who have experienced gender-based violence, many

governments have been decreasing the resources available to these critical services. This trend must be reversed in order to allow women and girls to access their human rights.

The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Combatting Violence against Women and Girls

Due to current structures and processes, many women and girls do not report cases of violence to legal authorities, and instead seek support from NGOs and civil society. This is because these organisations are trusted, sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups, and are active within communities. Therefore, it is critical that NGOs and civil society are involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs and the eradication of gender-based violence – they are able to sensitively work with vulnerable

groups and improve outreach. By better including NGOs and civil society eradicating violence against women and girls, it is possible to avoid many of the structural deficiencies that previous policies and programmes face and develop approaches that improve outreach and awareness raising across all social groups.

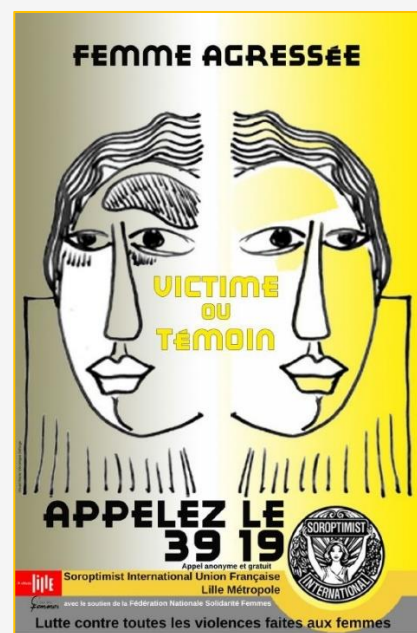
Raising public awareness about violence against women and girls and what services are available to combat this global problem is critical. As NGOs and civil society are uniquely placed within society to support vulnerable groups, they are able to access information and perspectives that it is harder for governments and other services to access. Governments and services should therefore respond to the citizen generated data collected by NGOs and civil society, and use that information to guide policy development and implementation.

Awareness Raising in Practice - Project: Call 3919, France

After a young woman was assaulted on the subway in Lille, France on 25 April 2014 and no bystanders helped her, SI Lille Métropole created a public information campaign to raise awareness about an existing helpline available to women who have been victims or witnesses of assault.

The slogan “Assaulted woman, victim of witness, call 3919”, together with a logo developed by a Club member, was printed on laminated stickers that were then distributed free of charge to public institutions, in the public transport system, and at various events. The stickers are versatile – they can be placed on any kind of indoor or outdoor surface. Their aim is to create the reflex to call the 3919 emergency line when needed.

The project has already received support from the National Federation for Women’s Solidarity (*Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes*) and Lille Town Hall, which has distributed the stickers in district offices and women’s organisations. Private companies, schools, and high schools are also showing interest.



Data Collection and Indicators

Collecting data on gender-based violence is notoriously difficult. For a variety of reasons, including social stigma, inadequate monitoring and support mechanisms and other external factors all contribute to women and girls not reporting gender-based violence. This means that the full extent and impact of violence against women and girls is unknown; current figures should be considered as the minimum number of women and girls affected.

Healthcare, law enforcement, and social care professionals (amongst others) should all be trained in recognising gender-based violence to support the administration of appropriate support mechanisms and data collection.

It is critical that data on gender-based violence committed against older women is also collected – currently little is known about the extent of this problem because often no data is collected for women aged over 45. For the successful implementation of policies and programmes to prevent gender-based abuse of women over 45, including elder abuse, the

full extent of this problem must be ascertained.

Indicators must both measure the scope, incidence and prevalence of violence against women and measure the effectiveness of measures undertaken to address violence against women. Any indicators developed to support the collection on gender-based violence should support these core requirements.

Data collected on gender-based violence should be disaggregated by age, sex, geography, income, disability, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity and other factors including relationship to the perpetrator, relevant to monitoring inequalities and violence against women and girls. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators and data should be collected; only when women and girls report that they do not *experience* gender-based violence should it be considered that the aim of eradicating violence against women and girls has been achieved.

Project: Evolution Project, Turkey

The Evolution Workshop was designed to tackle the problem of how society perceives gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence and used drama as a creative way to help combat violence against women in Turkey.

Developed and implemented by Soroptimist Union of Turkey and reaching over 8000 women across nine cities, this project supports victims by raising their awareness and empowering them through creative drama with the support of institutions and NGOs. The social view that gender-based violence is 'normal' needs to be changed. Additionally, many women who are victims of violence remain isolated, don't know their rights and lack the information to get access to legal and psychological support.

As a result of the workshops, participants said that their views had changed, and that they felt more empowered to respond to violence against women as a social issue. Information calls about the relationship between gender mainstreaming roles and violence against women was collected through individual interviews and telephone. Women who participated in the sessions were encouraged to form social support networks and gather information to help them have the courage to move away from their current problems and combat violence. They were provided with contact information for relevant local public institutions and NGOs and explained how to apply for help, demonstrating the central role that NGOs and civil society has to play in supporting women and eradicating gender-based violence as part of the SDGs.

Project: Advocacy for Igorot Women and Girls, Philippines

Indigenous women and girls experience some of the highest rates of gender-based violence. In the Philippines, SI Baguio City worked with indigenous Igorot women and girls, empowering them with information and advocacy skills so that they could combat trafficking within their community.

Through working with twelve indigenous communities, SI Baguio City organised workshops with groups of 25 women, equipping them with knowledge and information. A key aim of the session is to empower the indigenous women to be able to spread information about trafficking within their own communities.

Reaching a total of 300 women from a vulnerable social group, this project enabled women to become advocates, and developed community partnerships to eliminate trafficking as a form of gender-based violence. The success of the project meant that the SI

club was asked to come and run the forums with schools and other community groups.



Igorot Women in the Philippines participate in a workshop to develop advocacy skills.

As a direct result of the project, an ‘anti-trafficking covenant’ was established that was signed by community partners. This covenant will help establish and reinforce social norms that focus upon supporting women and girls, cementing the idea that all forms of violence against women should be eradicated and communities play a critical role in making this a reality.

Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls

Indigenous women and girls are confronted with higher risks of violence due to multiple forms of discrimination. Violence against women and girls is pervasive across all cultures, but social and economic discrimination which indigenous peoples also face compounds ‘usual’ gender discrimination.

It is known that indigenous women and girls face increased risks of violence including domestic violence, trafficking and harmful practices. Often, indigenous communities can become marginalized, under-represented and isolated, causing indigenous people to become vulnerable to discrimination.

This can particularly effects indigenous women, who experience the ‘double discrimination’ of being both a woman and

indigenous. As a result, when an indigenous woman needs to access support or services she is unable to do so, leaving her at increased risk and vulnerability.

When striving to achieve the SDGs and eradicate gender-based violence it is critical to include indigenous community and women and girls, taking into account the need to support their distinct cultures, languages and social systems. These important aspects of indigenous cultures should not be barriers to accessing vital services and protections.

Specific efforts should be made to consult with indigenous women and girls in what actions they want to support eradicating gender-based violence in their communities, enabling them to become agents of change.

Recommendations for Policy and Implementation

Violence against women and girls is one of the most significant barriers to achieving gender equality as part of the 2030 Agenda. Gender-based violence prevents women and girls from being equal participants in society at every level. Violence against women and girls is a fundamental human rights issue and a central challenge to sustainable development. Progress towards achieving previously made global commitments to reduce rates of violence against women and girls has been unacceptably slow. To eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030, there is an urgent need for political action.

Law and legal processes, education, psycho-social services, all have a critical role to play in eradicating gender violence and in realising women's and girls' human rights. The linkages between the causes and consequences of all forms of violence against women need to be further highlighted. All legislation, policies and practices developed to eradicate violence against women and girls must be human-rights based and gender-sensitive.

Current international standards already lay out a thorough framework and holistic approaches to eliminating violence against women and girls. CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Istanbul Convention, and other conventions and resolutions all have a role to play in supporting efforts to eliminate gender-based violence.

As violence against women in girls is perpetuated by social attitudes and ideas about women's status in society, gender-based violence committed in both public and private spheres should be considered as a public issue. The nuanced relationship between legal reform and social change needs to be taken into account when implementing efforts to reduce rates of violence against women and girls.

Adopt and enforce national legislation that supports the needs of victims and survivors

National legislation is critical in ensuring that women and girls who fall victim to gender-based violence are able to seek justice. Although legislation cannot drive social change alone, it is fundamental to supporting processes of attitude change that will end the social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence. When undertaking legal reform, it is vital that the needs of victims and survivors are central to the aims and ambitions of new legislation.

- All persons who assist victims of violence, be they judges, prosecutors, police officers, border guards, health practitioners or teachers, should be offered training and support to build their capacity and skills to understand and respond to all forms of violence against women. Specialized training and continuous learning are vital to this ends.
- All countries should take immediate action to make all forms of violence against women and girls illegal. This should include legislating for female genital mutilation, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, psychological abuse, and any other act that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm.
- Affirmative consent should be considered as the legal standard for assessing whether consent was given in cases of gender-based violence.
- To support all laws, policies and actions that are implemented, National Action Plans should offer guidelines on best practice and approaches that will expedite processes to eliminate violence against women and girls.
- Regular reviews should take place to examine whether socio-legal policies and practice are appropriately supporting efforts to eliminate gender-based violence.

- Investigative practices must be altered to support the psychological needs of victims.

Resource Provision

Globally, efforts to eradicate violence against women and girls have been chronically and systematically underfunded. Experiences at the grassroots level indicate that ending gender-based violence is not a government priority. Lack of institutional mechanisms to implement policies to eliminate violence against women, lack of funding, and the absence of technical expertise all serve as barriers to achieving gender equality and ensuring all women and girls can live free from violence. Dedicating effective additional resources, including financial resources, is the ultimate sign that a government is committed to eradicating violence against women and girls.

- Specific resources must be dedicated to providing essential services to women and their families escaping violent situations. Services requiring increased support include women's refuges, healthcare services, legal aid, social services, and education institutions.
- Efforts to expand and develop tools and accountability mechanisms should be properly resourced. This should include gender-sensitive budgeting, due diligence, shadow reporting, and adherence to the optional protocol to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women.
- Resources should be made available to communities so that they can support efforts to eliminate gender-based violence and be empowered as advocates and agents of change.
- Awareness raising is an effective and critical gender violence prevention strategy that should be properly resource to ensure outreach and promote efficacy.

Data collection

Violence against women and girls is known to be a global problem, however the full extent of this human rights abuse is still unknown. Many women and girls who experience violence do not officially report it, meaning all statistics should be considered as suggesting the *minimum* prevalence rates of gender-based violence. In order to assess whether policies and actions have been effective in combating violence against women and girls in public and private spaces, new innovative indicators and data collection approaches should be developed, including the use of citizen generated data.

- Quantitative and qualitative data on gender-based violence should be collected; only when women and girls stop reporting that they *experience* violence should it be considered that violence against women and girls has been eradicated.
- Data should be disaggregated by age, sex, geography, income, disability, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity and other factors including relationship to the perpetrator, as a minimum. By disaggregating data in this way, it is possible to learn more about the intersecting discrimination and causes of violence that many women and girls face, and ensure that programmes are tailored to their needs.
- Until 2030, indicators on gender-based violence must be reviewed to ensure that they are current and engage with current challenges in combating violence against women and girls.

Additional Recommendations

- Men and boys should be included in efforts to eliminate gender based violence.
- Awareness raising programmes and strategies should be implemented to

contribute to changing social attitudes on gender-based violence.

- Community leaders should be included in efforts to eradicate violence against women and girls.
- NGOs and civil society must be recognised and supported as key contributors to

providing essential services to women and girls and as organisations that lead on approaches to eliminate gender-based violence.

- All states should ratify CEDAW and remove reservations.

Summary

For gender-based violence to be eradicated by 2030, concerted and coordinated multi-stakeholder approaches should be adopted that are human rights-based and that are gender sensitive. Violence against women and girls must be recognised as a global and national priority that inhibits sustainable development and prevents half the population from being equal participants and contributors to society. Policies must be fully resourced, and should take into account the specific situations that gender-based violence occurs in and the intersecting discrimination faced by many women and girls.

- Violence against women and girls should be a primary public concern, as it is perpetuated by social norms and attitudes.
- The role that NGOs and civil society play in supporting victims and raising awareness about gender violence should be acknowledged and supported.
- Legislation and policies that address gender violence should place women and girls, victims and survivors at their core.
- Men and boys should be included in efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls – only with the support of all members of society can transformative change be achieved.
- Education, awareness raising and changing social attitudes all have a critical role to play in preventing and eradicating gender violence.
- Effective, accountable and gender sensitive monitoring systems, including data collection systems, should be developed to promote capacity building and to ensure actions properly contribute to eliminating violence against women and girls.
- Legislation and legal procedures must be reformed to provide for the needs of victims and survivors.

A Multifaceted Approach to Sustainable Development in Sierra Leone: Kori Development Project

Using education and economic opportunities to empower women and girls in a post-conflict environment, the Kori Project aims to enable communities to reject female genital mutilation whilst maintaining their cultural heritage.

The Kori Project works across the Kori Region of Sierra Leone, approaching female genital mutilation (FGM) as a multidimensional issue. Supported by SI members around the world, the project was started by SI Thames Valley and Rose Moriba Simbo, a lecturer in midwifery specialising in FGM. The Kori Project uses the empowerment of women as a cross-cutting approach to end FGM. By raising the status of women within their communities, women are able to adapt cultural practices. By maintaining coming of age ceremonies without 'cutting', communities are able to maintain their cultural heritage whilst also eliminating FGM as a harmful, traditional practice. The Kori Project is

As a result of the Kori Project, in 2012 fifty girls were not cut. Due to the ongoing and expanding activities of the project, in 2015 no girls were cut. This demonstrates

communities' willingness to adapt cultural practices according to their needs. The multifaceted approach that the Kori Project used also shows how human rights-based approaches can effectively accelerate the achievement of sustainable development for all, and close the gender gap. This further supports the idea that it is possible to eliminate FGM in a generation.^{ix}

More than 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation, mostly in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where FGM is concentrated.^x The adverse effects of FGM can include severe bleeding, sexual and reproductive health issues, and in extreme cases, death - there are no positive benefits. FGM is a violation of the human rights of women and girls, in order to achieve the SDGs



Girls attending school as a result of the Kori Project

coordinated and concerted action to eliminate FGM must continue. To end FGM, it is essential to work with communities; only by changing attitudes around FGM can it be eradicated. The empowerment of women and girls is crucial in supporting attitude change, and ensures that women and girls can be agents of change.

FGM causes physical and emotional trauma whilst enforcing the inherent gender inequality found in cultures that practice FGM.

By recognising the inter-related nature of education, economic empowerment and the elimination of FGM, the Kori Project facilitates women and girls in overcoming gender inequality and adjusting definitions of what an 'honourable' woman is.^{xi} This is critical within Sierra Leone where FGM is still legal.

Crucially, the Kori Project works with local Chiefs and seeks their support in empowering women. The project has been successful in gaining the support of local Chiefs because of the benefits that the project brings to the whole community. Chiefs have supported the project by donating land that women are able to sustainably farm in order to generate their own income. The women involved in these farming activities opted to use harvest surpluses to initiate women's farming groups in other villages. With dual support of women farmers established through the Kori Project and supportive Chiefs, the project has been able to expand its outreach to 2,500 women farming in seven villages in the Kori Region. Working within a post-conflict context, the economic empowerment of women through farming has been crucial in rebuilding local economies and in reconstruction.

It is key to also include the women who traditionally do the cutting procedure in efforts to eliminate FGM. Through a sustainable micro loan fund raised by a group of 14 year old school students from Vancouver, Canada, the Kori Project is able to enable former FGM cutters to maintain their community status. The former cutters administer the fund, supporting community-wide development.

This approach includes all community members in efforts to eradicate FGM, and ensures 'no one is left behind'.

Developing educational facilities and opportunities is a key part of the project, reinforcing the central role that education has in achieving the SDGs. To support the development of community-wide educational facilities that people of all ages can use, the Kori Project has built a library powered by solar energy. Community demand for library facilities increased rapidly, resulting in the size of the library being expanded by fifty percent. The library is now used for school lessons, by community groups and by individuals. During Sierra Leone's eleven-year long civil war libraries and their books were used for fuel, therefore the establishment of a library not only supports continuing efforts to increase literacy rates, but contributes to post-conflict reconstruction essential for sustainable development.

Developing Project Resilience

The outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone had a considerable impact upon the implementation of the Kori Project. With emergency measures being put in place, including the closure of transport routes and the burning of houses and possessions of Ebola sufferers, the Kori Project halted its usual implementation approaches as immediate challenges altered to include increased rates of homelessness and starvation.

Using multi-stakeholder networks established through the Kori Project, food and sanitation packs, that included disinfectant, were distributed across the Kori Region, with assistance from the army. This was a critical disaster risk management strategy, as death rates due to starvation higher than death rates due to Ebola. By supporting the region through the Ebola outbreak, the Kori Project was not only able to build resilience, but demonstrated its ability to work with communities in

response to their needs, further improving relationships with those communities.

Lessons from Implementation

The Kori Project uses a multi-dimensional human rights-based approach in order to eliminate FGM. This is key in acknowledging and promoting gender equality, and women's and girls' access to their full range of human rights. This approach requires an understanding and analysis of gender norms, different forms of discrimination and power imbalances to ensure that interventions reach the most marginalized segments of the population. To promote a human rights-based means of implementation, projects should:

- Promote local participation of all stakeholders and ownership of development processes.
- Ensure the development of strategic partnerships that support project and programme resilience.

- Monitor and reduce disparities between social groups and target efforts on the most marginalised and vulnerable.
- Use situation analyses to identify immediate, underlying and root causes of development problems.
- Use gender mainstreaming approaches.

Notably, these post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development activities have been funded and carried out by the Kori Project through NGO and civil society partnership, demonstrating the critical role that this sector has to play in implementing and financing the achievement of the SDGs.

Financing for development is key for the ongoing success of projects like the Kori Project. Many grassroots driven projects rely upon NGO and civil society funding; more support, including cash injections, should be made available to effective civil society projects to ensure their efficacy and longevity. This support can develop and maintain resources that ensure project expansion.



Women from Mokori Village farming as part of the Kori Project

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