



**“Mobilising financing for gender equality and women’s rights
to deliver on the SDGs in practice”**

Wikigender online discussion synthesis report

OECD Development Centre and OECD DAC Gendernet

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is at the heart of the ambitious new set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) currently being negotiated that will replace the Millennium Development Goals when they expire at the end of the year. The proposed Goals include a standalone goal on gender equality (SDG5) and gender-specific targets across the other goals.

On 13-16 July 2015, world leaders will meet in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3), to agree a financing package to turn the proposed Goals into a reality. In the current negotiations on the Addis Ababa outcome document,¹ UN Member States have recognised that gender equality, women’s empowerment, and the full realisation of their human rights are essential to achieving sustainable development. They have reaffirmed the vital importance of women’s leadership and full and equal participation in the economy. They have called for targeted actions and investments to mainstream gender equality in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies, including through the promotion of gender-responsive budgeting and tracking.

Over five days from 22-26 June 2015, the Wikigender online discussion debated current and future challenges facing the achievement of gender equality goals at national and international levels. 54 comments were exchanged, which underscored the historic underinvestment in gender equality and women’s rights, and proposed a new agenda to turn this underinvestment around. This Report provides an overview of the main messages coming out of the Wikigender online discussion.

¹ UN (2015), Addis Ababa Action Agenda Draft Outcome Document, 7 July 2015, <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/news/updated-draft-outcome-document.html>

Five key messages

1. **Recognise** that dedicated funding of unprecedented quantity and quality will be required to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women, and sustainable development for all
2. **Mobilise** all actors to step up financing for gender equality to turn commitments into impact
3. **Monitor** all spending, across all sources of finance, for its impact on gender equality and women's rights
4. **Close** gaps in funding for women's organisations, especially at grassroots levels
5. **Invest** in national mechanisms and institutions to benchmark and track progress on gender equality

1. **Recognise that dedicated funding of unprecedented quantity and quality will be required to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women, and sustainable development for all**

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will require targeted investments that are unprecedented in quantity and quality, and come from all sources and at all levels. Challenging the status quo for financing gender equality was a key theme of the discussion. A review of progress on gender equality and women's empowerment highlighted the ongoing struggle to mobilise adequate resources to live up to the commitments enshrined in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Costing exercises confirm that current levels of financing fall far short of the commitments made on gender equality. Evidence from UN Women's work on national action plans indicates resource gaps of up to 90% (Zohra Khan, UN Women). While no costing exercise has yet been undertaken for proposed SDG5, Chiara Capraro (Christian Aid) reminded discussants that "previous iterations of the FfD process, at Monterrey and Doha, stated the need for dedicated resources to achieve gender equality and this needs to be part of the deal at Addis too".

"We have seen normative gains on gender equality... but there is a chronic and persistent lack of financing for these commitments"

Zohra Khan (UN Women)

The level of ambition of the proposed SDG targets will require a substantial increase in investments at all levels. Discussants suggested that targeted funding should be directed at strengthening national mechanisms to implement gender-responsive and transformative policies, reinforcing national statistical capacities to track progress towards gender equality, as well as supporting the work carried out by local women's organisations, especially at the community level where funding gaps are often greatest.

2. Mobilise all actors to step up financing for gender equality to turn commitments into impact

Money is available – the issue is what is prioritised and who is able to access it. Discussants noted with concern the low priority placed on gender equality in national budgets, and the “lost” funds due to tax evasion and inefficient domestic resource mobilisation. Stepping up financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment was seen as the responsibility of all: governments, the development community and the private sector.

“While I agree with a discussion on new resources, I want to emphasise that there is no such issue as lack of resources. Resources are there, distribution is problematic; prioritising is skewed; and mechanisms are inefficient”

Angelika Arytyunova (AWID)

Countries’ domestic resources, such as taxes, are a critical source of finance for achieving gender equality. Ensuring that countries allocate a higher percentage of national budgets to gender equality was seen as a priority. This requires

institutional change: “it takes time and continuous effort to change mind-sets and institutional systems and processes of the government to make them gender responsive. The role of ministries of finance is key in this regard” (Samina Anwar, UN Women). Gender-responsive budgeting is a critical tool for increasing available resources for gender equality. Indeed, cuts in health, education or care services (e.g. childcare) are not innocuous for gender: they exacerbate gender inequalities by increasing women’s time spent on household care activities (Chiara Caparo, Christian Aid).

Better use of existing resources was presented as a critical path to redress inequalities. Progressive budgeting and tax policies were recognised as having enormous scope to reduce inequalities, for example, through raising money for high-quality public services and supporting a fairer distribution of income and wealth. It was noted that “tax is already

“Setting up systems to track budget and spending on gender equality has resulted in improved accountability and increased allocations to achieve better outcomes for women and girls”

Samina Anwar (UN Women)

dwarfing aid”, with Africa raising ten times more resources through taxes than aid received in 2012 (Chiara Caparo, Christian Aid). Removing gender biases in taxation systems, such as tax allowances and high rates of VAT, could help level the playing field for women (Chiara Caparo, Christian Aid): “poorly designed fiscal policies undermine progress towards gender equality” (Nerea Craviotto, AWID).

Increased priority to gender equality in Official Development Assistance (ODA) was considered essential to close funding gaps in critical areas such as women’s economic rights and family planning. At the same time, participants called for more ODA to be directed towards supporting progressive, gender-responsive domestic budgeting and tax policies. According to recent OECD data, just 30% of bilateral aid is responsive to women’s needs and interests (2012-2013), and funding is heavily concentrated in traditional areas such as health and education, with major shortfalls in other key sectors such as the economic and productive sectors, family planning and peace and security.

3. Monitor all spending, across all sources of finance, for its impact on gender equality and women's rights.

Respondents warned that all forms of development financing can present risks as well as opportunities for gender equality, and called for appropriate monitoring mechanisms and ante- and post-evaluation systems to determine the gendered impacts of any intervention.

"All sources of finance pose opportunities and challenges for gender equality and the realisation of women's rights. Whether we are talking about tax, private investment or aid, all these finance flows need to be assessed at the outset for their potential to contribute, or not to gender equality"

Chiara Capraro (Christian Aid)

Particular caution was raised with regards to private sector investments in development.

Inadvertent negative consequences of private sector development interventions for gender equality can be far-reaching. For example, privatisation of public services that women, especially poor women, depend on most can exacerbate or worsen inequalities (Nerea Craviotto, AWID). Participants argued that state regulation is essential to ensure that private flows are aligned with national development strategies and do not undermine human rights including labour rights, and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, all countries, including OECD countries, should establish robust systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality, and take action to close gaps between policy commitments and financial allocations.

Different propositions were put forward to ensure robust monitoring of public and private spending. For example, using the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as a benchmark by governments at the project approval process, and including the voices of women's rights organisations in project design and monitoring, were some of the measures proposed to counter unintended negative gender impacts and ensure transparency and accountability. The OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker (GEM) is a standardised system for reporting aid allocated in support of gender equality by DAC donors, which could also complement these efforts at the international level.

4. Close gaps in funding for women's organisations, especially at grassroots levels

Women's organisations are on the frontline of driving change in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, in Africa, civil society groups are active in combatting illicit financial flows and tax evasion; 'Stop the bleeding' is an African campaign, where women's rights organisations such as FEMNET are working with Tax Justice Network Africa and Afrodad.

Yet, the discussion revealed their struggle to receive adequate funding to carry out their critical activities. Direct ODA to women's organisations and institutions remains a very small percentage of total aid allocated in support of gender equality: in 2012-2013, while aid for gender equality reached USD 28 billion, women's organisations received less than

"Women's organizations and civil society play a critical role in empowering women at the grassroots level and they need adequate funding to continue this crucial role"

Samina Anwar (UN Women)

USD 400 million on average per year.

Difficulties in attracting funding were linked both to donor priorities and institutional capacities. Smaller NGOs or those operating in Francophone countries, for instance, cited the uneven playing field in competing against larger NGOs. Restricted institutional capacity was a major stumbling block to fundraising; AWID's Angelika Arutyunova shared data on gaps in funding between small and large women's organisations, for example. Additional problems listed were donor reluctance to finance institutional development needs and human resources of NGOs.

Good funding practices for grassroots women's networks were shared. The Dutch MDG3 Fund and women's funds were presented as flexible funding mechanisms that enabled women's organisations to access small amount of funding, including for core funding. In addition, they offer simplified grants application, monitoring and reporting processes. Funds provide "predictable, accessible, and flexible funding that is medium-to-long term and includes core support" (Emily Esplen), which are critical for supporting the quality and effectiveness of activities of women's organisations.

5. Invest in national mechanisms and institutions to benchmark and track progress on gender equality

Good-quality data on gender equality play an important role in benchmarking and tracking progress on national actions and policies. Yet, as the discussion respondents argued, few resources are allocated to national statistical capacity to collect vital data and information that are necessary to inform policies. According to recent data from [Paris21](#), only 0.5% of ODA is spent on statistical offices; an additional 200 million dollars per year of external finance would be needed to measure the 17 SDG goals.

Participants agreed that more investments are, therefore, needed into producing high-quality gender statistics and building the capacity of national statistical offices. Redressing gender gaps was seen as a priority to advance policy making on gender equality; for example, sex-disaggregation of data on income and expenditure, and on taxpayers at the individual level, rather than the household level (Chiara Caparo, Christian Aid). Moreover, the ambitious targets under SDG5 will put additional demands on national statistical offices to collect data on gender equality: for example, unpaid care work, which is measured through time use surveys, are still not carried out in many developing and developed economies. The discussion debated the difficult balance between data constraints under some of the proposed SDG targets with setting ambitious targets on gender equality, although there was strong consensus around the point that "Financing development is also financing data collection and analysis" (Gaelle Ferrant, OECD Development Centre) on gender equality.

"Investing in gender statistics and national capacities are key to making governments accountable to the SDG process"

Keiko Nowacka (OECD Development Centre)

An agenda for action

The rich contributions illuminated key elements or priorities that will need to be central to any agenda for action to drive implementation of the proposed SDG commitments on gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights.

Governments should:

- ❖ Take all policy actions to progressively broaden the tax base, improve tax compliance, combat illicit financial flows, and address gender biases in tax systems to generate maximum available resources for the realisation of gender equality and women's rights.
- ❖ Assess all fiscal policy from a gender equality perspective, including systematically integrating a gender analysis at every phase of the policy and budgetary cycle to ensure that domestic resources support the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
- ❖ Integrate gender equality commitments in national strategies and plans, backed by a dedicated budget line at the national, sectoral and local levels.
- ❖ Ensure effective public consultation and citizen engagement in national planning and budgetary processes, including by supporting the participation of women's rights organisations in fiscal decision-making.
- ❖ Increase women's equal participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making and build gender expertise within ministries of finance and other financial institutions.
- ❖ Develop and implement safeguards and human-rights based accountability and transparency mechanisms to ensure private sector compliance with human rights obligations.
- ❖ Regularly conduct time-use surveys and increase investment in infrastructure, technologies and public care services that reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work and support their equal participation in economies and societies.

DAC donors should:

- ❖ Increase ODA to meet the 0.7% target, and the specific target of 0.15-0.20% of the Gross National Income (GNI) as ODA to least developed countries.
- ❖ Systematically track and report on aid in support of the achievement of gender equality and women's rights.
- ❖ Increase priority to gender equality in ODA allocations, particularly in sectors where underinvestment in gender equality is most pronounced such as the economic and productive sectors and the peace and security sector.
- ❖ Allocate more aid to support countries in raising revenue progressively and in a gender-responsive manner, and support low and middle-income countries in applying a gender analysis when developing tax and budgetary policies.
- ❖ Strengthen collaboration within development agencies between gender advisors, planning experts and tax and fiscal policy experts.
- ❖ Increase support for feminist researchers, economists and activists, particularly from the global south, who are advocating for changes in tax and fiscal policy.

- ❖ Close data gaps by investing in gender statistics and national statistical capacity, including sex-disaggregated data on taxpayers and income and expenditure at individual level, beyond the household.
- ❖ Close the gap in funding for women’s rights organisations and women’s national machineries and improve the quality and effectiveness of this support through:
 - providing predictable, accessible and flexible medium- to long-term funding that includes core support;
 - funding intermediaries such as women’s funds, which have strong links with the grassroots level of civil society;
 - establishing and publicising national funds on gender equality that prioritise local women’s organisations.

The private sector should:

- ❖ Comply with international human rights standards including labour standards through, inter-alia: eliminating gender inequalities in wages and opportunities, ensuring a living wage, providing paid parental leave and flexible working policies, and taking a zero tolerance approach to violence and discrimination in the workplace.
- ❖ Broaden the focus of private sector-led women’s economic empowerment initiatives beyond access to finance and training towards a more integrated approach that addresses structural and systemic factors and respects women’s human rights.
- ❖ Strengthen dialogue with women’s organisations to increase understanding of the complexities of tackling gender inequality and improve outcomes.

Civil society should:

- ❖ Strengthen collaboration between women’s rights and economic justice advocates.
- ❖ Be sensitive to power imbalances between civil society organisations, and ensure that larger/international organisations do not access funding at the expense of smaller/local organisations.

Annex: key resources

AWID (2014). New actors, New money, New conversations. A mapping of recent initiatives for women and girls, <http://www.awid.org/publications/new-actors-new-money-new-conversations>

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UN Women (2014). Financing for Gender Equality, <http://gender-financing.unwomen.org/en>

Wikigender online discussion with:

