

Equality at the Core:

A call for a strong commitment to tackling inequalities through the post-2015 agenda

A statement from the
Beyond 2015 Copenhagen Conference
November 2014



Beyond2015

Campaigning for a global development framework
after the Millennium Development Goals

In November 2014, the Copenhagen Conference brought together 170 representatives across 46 countries from participating organisations of Beyond 2015, sharing a common vision of an equitable and sustainable world where every person is safe, resilient, lives well, and enjoys their human rights, and where political and economic systems deliver well-being for all people within the limits of our planet's shared resources.

The campaign discussed the vital importance of achieving **equality across all levels and themes** of the post-2015 framework, and through implementation and accountability mechanisms **addressing all three dimensions of sustainable development** (social, economic and environmental).

The **Beyond 2015** Copenhagen Statement contains recommendations to contribute to the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations, and other decision-making processes relevant to the post-2015 agenda, including discussions around the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report.

1. Equality at the core: key messages

For **Beyond 2015**, equality is a vital component for sustainable development which leaves no-one behind. Goal 10 'Reduce inequality within and among countries' is among the most transformative goals proposed by the Open Working Group and must be reflected in the final post-2015 framework. Social, political, economic, environmental and spatial inequities and inequalities are not an inevitable outcome of progress. Achieving equitable development and addressing the global outrage of vast and increasing inequalities within and between countries is a **multidimensional challenge that must be reflected in the new global development framework**.

The post-2015 agenda must address structural drivers and reflect different dimensions of inequality beyond income, and must:

- **Address equality in the goal headlines themselves.** While all goals proposed for the post-2015 agenda are of equal importance to Beyond 2015, in this context it is vital to ensure that equality and gender feature among the headline goals, including through standalone goals on equality:
 - **A standalone goal on equality is essential. The framework must address the structural drivers of inequalities that undermine people's social, cultural, economic, environmental and political rights, stop discriminatory laws and practices that marginalise vulnerable groups, and address inequalities between countries.**
 - **A standalone goal on gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls is essential. This cannot be subsumed into an overall inequality goal.**
- **Address equality in all three dimensions of sustainable development** (social, economic and environmental) in all goals, targets and all other elements of the post-2015 framework.
- **Include a clear commitment that no goal or target should be considered met unless it has been met for all**, starting with the poorest and most marginalised people. This must be explicitly stated in the post-2015 agenda and underpin the monitoring and accountability framework.
- **Address equality in all post-2015 indicators and data collection**, including through sophisticated and multidimensional data disaggregation that captures intersecting inequalities faced by vulnerable and marginalised groups, and reflects the priorities they identify through inclusive and participatory practices.

Only if all these criteria are met will the new framework truly 'leave no one behind'.

2. Thematic recommendations: People, Planet, Participation

The post-2015 agenda should address inequalities through the lens of **people, planet and participation**. This section contains thematic messages on equality and can be read in conjunction with the detailed recommendations contained in **Equality at the Core: Technical Recommendations on Equality**.

2.1 People

Human rights

Equality requires an explicit **human rights based approach** to be mainstreamed across the post-2015 framework, with all goals, targets and other elements of the agenda consistent with existing human rights standards and obligations to ensure civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for all people and social groups. Goal 16, as proposed by the OWG, provides a minimum baseline, and should be strengthened by the inclusion of (inter alia) the right to information, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, the rule of law, non-discrimination including on the basis of SOGIE, and access to justice for all people. Open, inclusive, transparent governance at all levels – global, regional, national and local – is crucial to achieving sustainable development which addresses inequalities and realises human rights through the post-2015 agenda.

Gender equality and the human rights of women and girls

While there has been much progress towards women's rights over the decades, many gaps remain, which is a hindrance for sustainable development. One of the core objectives of the post-2015 framework must be to **advance gender equity and the human rights of all women and girls**, referring to women and girls as agents of change, not as victims. For women's rights to become a

universal reality it is critical to address the structural causes of gender inequality, such as violence against women, unpaid care work, limited control over assets and property, unequal participation in private and public decision-making, and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Peace

Violent conflict and insecurity fuels inequalities between individuals and groups. For this reason, **peaceful societies and people's security are needed for equitable development**. At the same time, inequalities drive violent conflict and insecurity. There is a strong correlation between vertical inequalities and rates of violent crime and interpersonal violence; similarly large horizontal inequalities between groups – for example ethnic, religious and regional groups – are strongly correlated with the risk of violent conflict, whether economic, social, political or cultural. As such, there is a case for addressing inequalities across the whole framework as part of a holistic approach to building peaceful societies that goes beyond the proposed Goal 16. For example, the framework must recognise that inequalities in access to resources are one of the root causes of violent conflict - and that these can be exacerbated by issues such as climate change, exclusionary governance or economic marginalization.

2.2 Planet

Equality must fully consider **environmental degradation and climate change** which are both a driver and a symptom of inequalities and injustice. All people – and their social and economic development, livelihoods and well-being – depend on the natural environment and are affected by environmental degradation, but particularly people experiencing poverty. Environmental degradation is often caused by unsustainable consumption by rich countries or wealthy demographics within a country. Unsustainable, inequitable management of natural resources and ecosystem services exacerbates existing inequalities, making environmental sustainability a global social justice issue which must be urgently addressed.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability needs to be integrated across the post-2015 framework in a balanced way, including in all goals as well as the goal headlines themselves. The proposed goals on inequality, economic growth and governance particularly need greater integration of environmental sustainability. To address the environmental dimension of inequalities and to ensure that people can flourish within the safe ecological space of our one planet, the post-2015 agenda must decouple economic and social progress from environmental degradation. Development that is not environmentally sustainable increases inequalities and is not worth having.

Climate change

Climate change, poverty eradication and sustainable development cannot be tackled as separate entities. Climate change is rapidly becoming the greatest threat to poverty eradication, impacting on multiple aspects of development and exacerbating existing inequalities. The world cannot afford a new sustainable development agenda that does not include a strong, clear human-rights and equity-based commitment to tackle climate change.

2.3 Participation

Effective, meaningful and diverse civil society and **citizen participation** must be an integral part of the post-2015 process from beginning to end and at all levels - from local to global. A safe space for debate and decision-making must be ensured for civil society and citizen involvement, through an enabling environment consistent with internationally agreed rights including freedom of association, organization, and speech. Citizen participation - including participation of marginalized peoples - in the design, delivery, monitoring and accountability will be essential to ensuring that goals are met for everyone, and that a new model of democratic and participatory governance is followed. Only by engaging all rights-holders in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of goals and targets will the post-2015 agenda result in equitable sustainable development. Participation of, and accountability to, all people must be recognised as an aim of the post-2015 agenda, addressing inequality and catalysing a shift to more participatory and accountable governance at all levels.

Youth involvement

Young men and women and boys and girls must be recognized as **key stakeholders and equal partners** in the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Constituting almost half of the world population, youth involvement in decision-making and implementation will be key to achieving the aspirations of the post-2015 framework.

Accountability

The post-2015 framework must be underpinned by a robust, comprehensive and accessible accountability mechanism, which incorporates commitments to monitor, evaluate and report on progress, share learning and knowledge, and build capacity. This will help build a global partnership towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals that makes all actors - governments, civil society and private sector - accountable. Accountability should be first and foremost to the poorest and most marginalised. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms should scrutinize and improve country-level targets and levels of ambition, performance against those targets, and the potential impacts of any policy or activity on the full implementation of the post-2015 framework. Bottom-up approaches to accountability are fundamental to bring in the lived experiences of those who the post-2015 agenda seeks to support. To ensure inequality is fully addressed in monitoring and accountability, people need to know about the

process and framework, and how to engage in related implementation and monitoring processes. The post-2015 agenda must be communicated in language conducive to accountability, acknowledging the capacity of all people to equally participate in holding actors to account for the goals, with equality being a core value in that accountability. Existing UN mechanisms promoting the meaningful involvement of civil society and people from marginalised population groups in monitoring and accountability processes should be strengthened and improved to ensure they address inequality.

Data disaggregation

The post-2015 agenda must prioritize the **production and use of disaggregated data using sophisticated and multi-dimensional approaches that capture the intersecting inequalities faced by vulnerable and marginalised groups, and the impacts of particular policies and actions on different groups of people**. In many instances, a lack of capacities, proper methodology or technology hinders more comprehensive data collection. Who sets priorities for data collection, who gathers data, and how and when it is collected reflects existing power structures. This can be partly overcome by broadening data approaches to address current gaps, including qualitative data and participatory methodologies, and responding to the priorities identified by vulnerable groups, as well cooperation between national statistical institutions and civil society.

Indicators

Indicators need to be sufficiently ambitious, related to existing human rights obligations, and multidimensional to avoid silos. There must be a baseline of non-retrogression, non-discrimination and equality. Indicators need to track changes in social norms and attitudes and should not be only quantitative. They should be universal and comparable between all countries in order to monitor progress in meeting what are global targets, with additional indicators set at national and community levels. The process of setting indicators should be led by technical experts combined with the expertise of civil society and those with lived expertise of poverty. It must be neither too technocratic nor too political, but an expert-led process open to input from all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and citizens - particularly those most affected by poverty and inequality.

Financing, Economy, Tax

A just economy is the vital underpinning of a post-2015 agenda which addresses inequalities. To face the growing inequalities and a widening gap between rich and poor within and between countries, the post-2015 agenda must contribute to a re-examination of the current reliance on sustained economic growth. It should institute a **move away from GDP as a measure of national and global progress to a measure based on well-being**. To achieve a world where everybody can prosper within a safe ecological space, it must support the decoupling of economic development from environmental impacts.

The post-2015 agenda must address inequality in global economic governance through equal representation of the global South and North in international tax negotiations and systems. It must deliver progressive domestic resource mobilisation and redistribution by addressing capacity building of national tax administration and systems, as well as international tax rules and fiscal policies. It must ensure progressive spending of tax revenues on essential services for all, facilitating citizens and civil society holding governments to account on revenue expenditure, holding companies to account for their tax obligations, and ensuring business practices create shared value and operate in a way which contributes to equality by respecting environmental and human rights standards. The post-2015 agenda must also include a commitment to gender-responsive budgeting, and acknowledge the role of financing in furthering gender equality.

Means of Implementation

Developed countries must take the lead in supporting developing countries with the structural, financial and technological support needed to implement the SDGs. The universal post-2015 agenda will be implemented in an unequal world and systemic changes will be needed to decrease the sustainable development gaps. ODA is a crucial element of a global post-2015 partnership and discussions of broadening its definition are concerning. Advancing the international consensus on international financing for development is an essential component of the realisation of an equitable Post-2015 framework. Domestic resource mobilization through progressive taxation, international cooperation and democratic creation of international rules governing finance contribute to reducing economic inequality. Financial flows from the private sector could contribute to equality if transparent, adequately regulated and respecting human rights. It is important that the post-2015 framework tackles the economic dimension of inequality by including specific indicators and means of implementation that will realise progressive domestic resource mobilization that contributes to the fulfilment of states' human rights obligations.

The messages presented in this document were developed by 170 civil society participants from 46 countries attending the Beyond 2015 Copenhagen Conference on Inequality which took place on November 13-14, 2014. Participants examined the intersections of inequality with other key aspects of the post-2015 development agenda in eight thematic discussion groups:

- 1) Poverty, social dimensions and inequality
- 2) Human Rights, Governance and inequality
- 3) Finance, Tax and Development and inequality
- 4) Peace and Security and inequality
- 5) Climate Change and inequality
- 6) Environmental sustainability and inequality
- 7) Gender Justice and inequality
- 8) Citizens' Participation and inequality

The discussions drew on the main position papers developed by Beyond 2015 so far, including: the Essential Must Haves of the post-2015 agenda; inputs to the UN thematic consultations, national deliberations with GCAP and IFP in nearly 40 countries, regional discussions, global discussions at various conferences, the process to discuss the Vision, Purpose, Values and Criteria (VPVC), results of participatory research with those most affected by poverty and injustice, carried out by the Beyond 2015 co-chairs Participate initiative, the reactions of the Campaign to the outcomes of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), the Beyond 2015 Red Flags, and others, building on processes and messages developed by participating organisations around the world.

Equality at the Core is the product of discussions about the vital importance of achieving equality across all levels and themes of the post-2015 agenda, and through implementation and accountability mechanisms addressing all three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental). It contains recommendations to contribute to the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations, and other decision-making processes relevant to the post-2015 agenda, including discussions around the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report.

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