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"Review SDGs---What They Are and How They Interact, with Special Focus on SGD 4 (education) and SDG 5 (gender equality)"

Sustainable Development Goals

Good morning everyone and thank you so much for inviting Graduate Women International to this event to speak about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly those goals that pertain to education and gender equality.

I am going to spend the next 15 minutes putting the SDGs into a broad perspective and then provide greater detail on the SDGs that are pertinent to this forum, SDG 4 and Education and SDG 5 on gender equality.

First some history and an explanation of terms.

In 2015, the United Nations Member States, adopted what is known as the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. But what is this agenda and what do we mean by Sustainable Development?

The **2030 Agenda** is a blueprint, a plan of action for people, our planet and prosperity by providing goals and strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth while at the same time tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

It also seeks to strengthen universal peace, recognizing that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and is also an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

What do we mean by **sustainable development**? Sustainable development is all about meeting the needs of the present, without compromising the needs of the future. It's about improving the lives of everyone, everywhere, allowing all countries to improve their economies while at the same time taking into consideration the negatives of unbalanced economic growth that impact the environment and human well-being.



The Sustainable Development Goals provide a means to look at the world in a different way. Sustainable Development is all about the big picture while at the same time paying attention to the details.

Who are the participants in the SDGs and the targets of the goals? The SDGs target ALL countries. The participants engaging in the activities of the 2030 Agenda include all UN entities and UN Member states who will work together for 15 years until 2030, while actively engaging citizens and civil society organizations (such as CFUW and GWI) in all countries, looking at ways to do business differently using the 17 Sustainable Goals as a guide to achieving a world where people and the planet benefit.



People ... Planet ... Prosperity ... Peace ... Partnership are the 5 Ps of the 2030 Agenda represented by the 17 SDGs and their 169 Goals.

The 17 SDGs are the result of decades of work by countries and the United Nations that started with the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 when more than 178 countries adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action to build a global partnership for sustainable development to improve human lives and

protect the environment. The next blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions started in the year 2000, with the adoption of the eight Millennium Development Goals or MDGs. These MDGs ranged from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education. They galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest. The Millennium Development Goals ran until the year 2015, a landmark year for multilateralism and international policy shaping culminating in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

The 17 SDGs are the following. As I read them out, you could be thinking about how each goal by itself, or collectively, looks at the big picture in order to provide



a better world and better lives in positive ways. And then ask yourself “How does each goal affect me? What could I do in my own personal life to help in the achievement of a goal?” Then pick one that you are particularly interested in and learn more about it.

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals



I have mentioned that the SDGs make up the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but just listing goals does not make anything happen. Here are the goals, now what? A plan of action is required. Each goal has a description of the issues involved, a rationale for its existence, along with statistics, facts and figures, target goals and indicators of progress along with a list of resources. Each goal has its own color. The SDGs are symbolized as a circle divided into 17 colored segments.

How does all this work? Who provides support and capacity building and tools for guidance for action? Who oversees the implementation, monitoring and review of the achievements of the SDGs, and how do we track their progress?



On the **support side**, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides substantive support and capacity-building for the SDGs and their related thematic issues, including water, energy, climate, oceans, urbanization, transport, science and technology.

On the **review side**, UN Member states themselves decided that the High-level Political Forum, the United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, will carry out reviews of the 2030 Agenda to include developed and developing countries, relevant UN entities and other stakeholders. The reviews are state-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants.

The Incheon Declaration, adopted at the World Education Forum in May 2015, entrusted UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, to lead the Education 2030 agenda with its partners. The [Education 2030 Framework for Action](#) provides **guidance to governments and partners** on how to turn **commitments into action for implementing SDG 4**. Education 2030, founded on the principle of the Right to Education, goes beyond past attempts to ensure access to basic education set in the education-related Millennium Development Goal 2, Education For All, of 2000-2015.

However, in order to make the 2030 Agenda a reality, broad ownership of the SDGs must translate into a strong commitment by **all stakeholders** (the United Nations, its member states, and civil society) to implement these global goals.

Progress of the goals are measured by Indicators that measure numbers of people and percentages of people to make sure the **'no one is left behind.'**

We are going to look at two of them now in more detail, SDG 4 (Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

The SDGs themselves do not operate in silos but intersect with each other as related issues and cross-reference each other.



SDG 4 – Quality Education

What is the rationale for SDG 4? Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to creating sustainable development. In addition to improving quality of life, access to inclusive education can help equip locals with the tools required to develop innovative solutions to the world's greatest problems.



Education is recognized as a goal that cuts across all the other SDGs, driving their success particularly the SDGs on health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), economic growth (SDG 8) and employment, sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), and climate change mitigation (SDG 13).

As stated in the description of SDG 4, over 265 million children are currently out of school and 22% of them are of primary school age. Additionally, even the children who are attending schools are lacking basic skills in reading and math. In the past decade, major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrollment rates in schools particularly for women and girls. Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides for achieving universal education goals. For example, the world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education.

SDG 4 has 7 targets:

4.1 By 2030 ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education

4.2 By 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

4.3 By 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university



4.4 By 2030 substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

4.5 By 2030 eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable

4.6 By 2030 ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7 By 2030 ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development

One of the reasons for lack of quality education is a lack of adequately trained teachers, poor conditions of schools and equity issues related to opportunities provided to rural children.

Teachers are the single most influential and powerful force for equity, access and quality in education. In addressing the gender gap in education, there must be an increase in the amount of quality female teachers in schools. In sub-Saharan Africa, less than 40% of teachers are women; in this region there is a strong correlation between female teachers and increased girls' participation, retention and success in schooling. Female teachers have a very positive effect on girls' participation in school in the developing world. They often encourage girls to break cultural barriers in order to attend school. The presence of female teachers also encourages parents to send their daughters to school, as female teachers are less likely to perpetuate gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

Goal 4.C. of SDG 4 aims to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States and 4.A aims to Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.



GWI, for example, works towards this goal by providing scholarships and mentoring support to young women from rural areas of Uganda for them to become qualified teachers and ambassadors for girls' education. Female students with an ambition to become a secondary school teacher in a rural area and improve girls' education are selected to join the programme.

In achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is vital to build up women's agency and capabilities through education to create synergies between gender equality and sustainable development. Educating women helps to fight untrue judgements about what women can do and gives them a better chance to participate in politics and get good jobs. Educating women improves the health of their families. When women have greater voice and participation, public resources are more likely to be allocated towards investments in human development priorities.

Still in 2018, according to the Report of the UN Secretary-General, more than half of children and adolescents worldwide are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics, less than half of the primary schools in developing countries have electricity and running water. refocused efforts are needed to improve the quality of education.

But there is hope: at the global level, the participation rate in early childhood and primary education was 70 per cent in 2016, up from 63 per cent in 2010.

Moving on to SDG 5 (Gender Equality)

While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world.



It is obvious that all the SDGs and not just SDG 5, need to be implemented in a gender responsive way even where there is no specific reference to it in the other goals.



Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. 1 in 5 women and girls between the ages of 15-49 have reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner and 49 countries currently have no laws protecting women from domestic violence.

Progress is occurring regarding harmful practices such as child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation, which has declined by 30% in the past decade, but there is still much work to be done to completely eliminate such practices.

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world.

SDG 5 has 9 targets.

Progress to Date

SDG 5 was the theme for the 2016 UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 60). The Agreed Conclusions of CSW 60 made the commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda, stating that the realization of full human potential and of sustainable development **"is not possible if women and girls continue to be denied the full realization of their human rights and equal opportunities."**

The High-level Political Forum, the United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs reviewed SDG 5 in 2017 for progress along with 5 others. SDG 4 will be reviewed in 2019.

According to the UN Secretary-General's *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*, some forms of discrimination against women and girls are diminishing, but gender inequality continues to hold women back and deprives them of basic rights and opportunities.



Empowering women requires addressing structural issues such as unfair social norms and attitudes as well as developing progressive legal frameworks that promote equality between women and men.

GWI believes that Sustainable Development and women and girls' access to education are inextricable and supports a gender responsive implementation of the Sustainable Agenda 2030 especially as it relates to SDG 4 and SDG 5. Gender equality is crucial to progress across all the SDGs and targets.

We are only able to empower girls, combat climate change, fight inequality and end extreme poverty if **all** stakeholders commit themselves to advancing the SDG Goals if we are to achieve success for the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you.

Resources

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/09/what-is-sustainable-development/www.womengraduates.org>

Report of the Secretary-General, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018](#)