



70TH UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A POLICY PAPER FROM THE WORLD
ASSOCIATION OF GIRL GUIDES & GIRL SCOUTS



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Reaction

Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents an historic agreement of unprecedented scope, setting out a far-reaching and ambitious collection of goals to structure our collective efforts to achieve a more just and equitable world.

As the leading voluntary organization for girls and young women, with 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 146 countries, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) celebrates the agreement of this document and the potential it represents for transformative change in the lives of girls and women. WAGGGS particularly welcomes:

- the explicit recognition within the Introduction that gender equality is critical to progress on all other goals.
- the existence of a stand-alone goal on gender equality that includes specific targets on the elimination of violence against women and girls.
- the ways in which gender issues have been mainstreamed and highlighted throughout the large majority of the other goals and targets.
- the recognition of the importance of education for sustainable development and of creating life-long learning opportunities.

Yet while there is much to commend in this outcome document, WAGGGS remains extremely concerned about the allowance for implementation of certain targets on gender equality as 'nationally appropriate.' We are disappointed to see the inclusion of this language, which substantially undercuts and weakens the ambition of these targets, and opens the door to continued discrimination against girls and women. Girls' and women's rights should not be contingent on or subject to national context; rather, the sustainable development framework should do more to advance its stated ambition to achieve the human rights of all.

Transitioning from Rhetoric to Reality

Now the challenge lies in implementing this ambitious framework – in translating the aspirational rhetoric of the 2030 Agenda into tangible progress, particularly in the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalized. WAGGGS' recommendations to deliver real change for girls & young women include:

1. Measure what matters

Most immediately, we now need **a robust framework of indicators** that adequately captures the expansive spirit of the SDGs. One of the most significant flaws of the MDGs was the reliance on overly narrow and reductive indicators that did not sufficiently represent complex goals such as gender equality. As the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) continues to formulate the indicator framework that will be used to measure progress against the SDGs, it is critical that the Group allow multiple indicators per target and take seriously the recommendations of civil society organizations on the language and nature of these indicators. Multiple indicators are particularly necessary on goals such as gender equality which require multi-dimensional change at a variety of levels, from the individual to the institutional.

It is equally essential that, for all targets, **data is disaggregated by both age and gender** (among other variables) so that girls' experiences are visibly captured in all monitoring.

2. Invest in girls

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in and recognition of the multiple benefits of investing in programming for adolescent girls. However, at present, the rhetorical commitment to girls is not matched by actual investment levels. Today, fewer than two cents of every international development dollar goes to girls. Moving forward, development agencies must **commit more substantial levels of resources** to specialized programmes aimed at girls and young women.

3. Tackle the structural barriers to gender equality

It will be critical that national governments and development agencies commit to directly addressing the underlying structural barriers to gender equality. This must include:

- improving their access to social, political, and economic resources;
- **reforming norms, attitudes, and cultural & institutional practices** that systematically discriminate against girls and women.

Governments and NGOs must not attempt to sidestep these more difficult or intractable issues, but must instead recognize that genuine empowerment of girls and women must go beyond change at the individual level to address relational, cultural, and institutional issues as well.

4. Build the capacity of girls & young women to participate in and drive change

Girls & young women must be considered more than just the objects or beneficiaries of the new development agenda – they must be the agents of change. For this to happen, it will be essential to **adopt a rights-based approach** to development in which girls & young women are:

- educated through both formal and non-formal channels about the enactment of 2030 Agenda and their rights and entitlements
- substantively involved and consulted in the design and implementation of national action plans and non-governmental programming
- empowered to advocate for change and hold governments and other duty-bearers to account.

The 2030 Agenda is a bold and visionary document that has the potential to deliver significant positive change for girls and women. The key challenge now is to turn rhetoric into reality and to deliver on the promises made. Governments and development agencies must commit substantial resources and attention to girls' programming and, more importantly, listen to girls' voices and perspectives on how those resources can be best allocated to address the structural causes of gender inequality and enable girls to reach their full potential. **Girls are the experts on their needs and lived experience and can make a genuine contribution to the success of the 2030 Agenda if given the tools and the spaces to do so.** In order to effect real change in the lives of girls & young women around the world, we must equip and empower young people to be the drivers and agents of the 2030 Agenda.

About the World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts

With ten million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts from 146 countries across the world, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) is the largest voluntary movement dedicated to girls and young women in the world. Our mission is to enable girls and young women to develop their fullest potential as leaders and responsible citizens of the world. Through our innovative non-formal education programmes, we help girls to understand and take action on important issues in their lives.

Some of our current initiatives include:

- Voices Against Violence: empowering girls to understand & combat violence in their communities
- Free Being Me: improving girls' body confidence and self esteem
- Global Action Theme: equipping girls to make the new Global Goals a reality

For more information about WAGGGS and our work, please visit: www.wagggs.org.