MenEngage comments on the Open Working Group Draft Report on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

MenEngage is a global alliance of NGOs working together with men and boys to achieve gender equality. MenEngage members work collectively and individually toward achieving gender justice, human rights and social justice, to achieve a world in which all can enjoy healthy, fulfilling and equitable relationships and their full potential. MenEngage recognizes that the Post-2015 Development Agenda must embrace a human rights-based approach and transform unequal power relations between women and men.

In these comments we briefly assess the proposed SDG-framework from the perspective of what we stand for: global gender justice. We offer some suggestions for how the new Development Agenda can be strengthened. We believe that the SDGs targeting gender justice are more likely to be achieved through engaging men and boys: for the benefit of women and girls, for men and boys themselves, and for a world that is just, peaceful and sustainable. We encourage UN agencies and member states to embrace these suggestions in the final stage of the process leading up to the Post-2015 Global Summit in September 2015.

MenEngage:

- stands with the Women’s Major Group, UN Women and other gender justice, human rights and social justice advocates;
- applauds the OWG for proposing a stand-alone goal on gender equality: SDG 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls;
- also notes the positive achievement of proposing a goal on reducing inequality within and among countries (SDG 10);
- welcomes the fact that centrality of human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment is recognized in the introduction to the proposed framework;
- welcomes the fact that gender equality and women’s empowerment are addressed as a cross-cutting issue in many of the other proposed goals;
- welcomes the fact that key systemic gender-justice issues have been proposed as targets under SDG 5, including ending all forms of discrimination and eliminating all forms of violence and harmful practices against women and girls.
- believes that engaging men and boys in the proposed SDG-framework can contribute to achieving gender equality, women’s rights and the empowerment of women through a transformative agenda, by addressing root causes of gender inequalities and speaking to the roles and responsibilities of men and boys to address these issues;
MenEngage recommends under SDG 5 to address men's and boys' roles in preventing and responding to Gender Based Violence (GBV); commit men and boys to equal share in caregiving and household work; and engage men as partners, clients and agents of change in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and maternal, newborn and child health;

MenEngage believes that targets under SDG 5 can be strengthened and are more likely to be achieved by developing indicators which stimulate and monitor engagement of men and boys, and by actively engaging men and boys in policies and practice to implement the SDG-framework.

In these comments MenEngage provides background to these key-messages and offers concrete suggestions for targets and indicators.

KEY-MESSAGES

MenEngage stands with the Women’s Major Group, UN Women and other gender justice, human rights and social justice advocates. We commend all UN agencies and member states in the OWG who have supported the advancement of gender equality, women's empowerment and women’s rights throughout this process, as well as all civil society groups that have worked tirelessly to support and influence the OWG on these crucial issues.

MenEngage applauds the OWG for proposing a stand-alone goal on gender equality: SDG 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls. World leaders have understood - and are walking the talk – how crucial gender equality and women’s empowerment are for a world that is just, equitable and inclusive. We believe that explicit reference to “women’s rights” can strengthen the proposed stand-alone goal. MenEngage welcomes the fact that key systemic gender-justice issues have been proposed as targets under SDG 5. These include, inter alia, ending all forms of discrimination and eliminating all forms of violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

We commend the OWG for proposing a goal on reducing inequality within and among countries (SDG 10). We welcome the fact that gender equality and women’s empowerment are addressed as a cross-cutting issue in many of the proposed goals. We furthermore welcome the fact that centrality of human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment is recognized in the introduction to the proposed framework. These recognitions include para 7. respect for all human rights, including gender equality and women’s empowerment; para 11. the need to enhance gender equality and women’s empowerment as a persistent challenge related to sustainable development for all; 17. monitoring the implementation of the SDGs by improving the availability of and access to data and statistics disaggregated by, inter alia, gender.

We believe that engaging men and boys in the proposed SDG-framework can contribute to achieving gender equality, women’s rights and the empowerment of women through a more transformative agenda. Lessons from the past 20 years include that: a) stand-alone agreements for women’s empowerment are crucial to ensure that their issues are addressed, and b) that engaging men and boys in gender justice efforts supports a transformation of unequal systems that perpetuate gender inequalities. A target on engaging men and boys under the stand-alone goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment was suggested in the draft text of OWG11: “5.11 - fully engage men and boys in efforts to promote and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.” We commend those governments.
who have spoken out during the OWG negotiations to include such a target. Unfortunately this target has since been removed and there are currently no targets on engaging men and boys in the proposed SDG document.

In the process of advocating for a transformative goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment, MenEngage has recommended to include targets to:

• Engage men and boys in preventing and responding to Gender Based Violence (GBV)
• Commit men and boys to equal share in caregiving and household work
• Engage men as supportive partners, clients and positive agents of change in sexual and reproductive health and rights, and maternal, newborn and child health

We are pleased to see that all key-issues of these targets are included in the proposed SDG-framework (targets 5.2, 5.4, 5.6).

**STRENGTHENING TARGETS**

We believe that the following targets can be strengthened and are more likely to be achieved through engaging men and boys. We propose to do so by developing indicators which stimulate and monitor engagement of men and boys, and by actively engaging men and boys in policies and practice to implement the SDG-framework:

**TARGET 5.2 ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS**

is considered a precondition to achieving gender equality. Evidence shows that men perpetuate the majority of GBV. Rigid gender norms socialize men to respond to conflicts with violence, to abuse alcohol and drugs, and to dominate their partners. Studies reveal that the strongest factor associated with men’s use of violence against women and girls is having witnessed their own fathers using violence. It is essential to work with men and boys to transform social norms perpetuating GBV, including understanding and addressing root causes of gender inequality, such as unequal power relations, practices and stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls, sexual minorities and non-gender conforming people, and promoting alternative role models for boys. In the process of developing indicators to accommodate target 5.2, MenEngage recommends to include engaging men and boys to contribute to achieving this target.

Possible indicators could be:

- Rate of men who condemn rape supportive attitudes
- Rate of men who support existing GBV laws
- Rate of men seeking help to change violent behaviour
- Number of national, regional, and global policies that clearly seek to engage men and boys for gender equality
- monitoring of the provision of psycho-social support for children affected by violence
- reduction in the use of corporal punishment or increase in the number of countries that implement a full ban on it
- Number of men compliant with state regulations related to child support
- Number of children under five with access to quality state-supported childcare
TARGET 5.4 RECOGNIZE AND VALUE UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

speaks of recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. MenEngage is pleased to see a target on this issue, and recommends to make the shared responsibility even more concrete. The target can be strengthened by adding “reduce and redistribute” unpaid care work, to allow women in particular more time for other pursuits such as self-care, education, political participation and paid work; and redistribute care-work from poorer households to the state by financing, regulating and providing care services. This also speaks to the need to promote the equal sharing of unpaid care work between men and women to reduce the disproportionate share of unpaid care work for women and girls and to change the attitudes that reinforce the gendered division of labour. Encouraging men’s participation in care work contributes to the perception of caregiving and domestic work as a shared responsibility. Evidence shows that when fathers are involved with their children at an early stage, preferably from conception, there is a higher likelihood that they will remain connected to their children throughout their lives.

Possible indicators to accompany this target could be:

- Number of weekly hours men spend providing care for children and others
- Number of countries with paternity and maternity leave
- Number of men compliant with state regulations related to child support

TARGET 5.6 ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (SRH&RR)

as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences. MenEngage is pleased to see a target on SRH and RR. We believe it can be strengthened by including “sexual rights” (SRHR) and reference to “comprehensive sexuality education”. MenEngage also recommends to extend the focus to engaging boys and men in the implementation process. Throughout the world, SRH is largely considered the sole responsibility of women while many men continue to neglect the SRHR needs and responsibilities of themselves, their partners, and their families. Evidence shows that men’s lower utilization of SRH services, like HIV testing and treatment, is a result of both rigid gender norms as well as structural barriers such as clinics that are ill-prepared to address male-specific health issues. As a result, not only are women and girls left to bear much of the burden of their own and their families’ SRHR, but men’s lack of involvement in SRH also places expensive and unnecessary burdens on health systems. Interventions with men and boys on SRHR have been shown to effectively increase men’s utilization of services, as well as support and respect for their partner’s SRHR, which in turn improves the health of women, children and men themselves.

Possible indicators to accompany this target could be:

- Number of men who seek and support access to HIV treatment and prevention services
- Number of men who view contraceptive use as a joint responsibility
- Number of men who accompany their partners to a prenatal visit
- Percentage of contraceptive use that are male methods
- Number of countries with paternity and maternity leave
- Number of men compliant with state regulations related to child support

The above builds on our MenEngage Call for Action (2013) and Suggested Targets and Indicators (2014). For more information about MenEngage, please visit http://menengage.org/
Goals and targets addressing gender-issues include, inter-alia:

SDG 1: creation of gender-sensitive development strategies; equal rights for women and men to economic resources, access to basic services, ownership and control over property, etc;

SDG 2: nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women; double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women;

SDG 3: reduce the global maternal mortality ratio; universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes;

SDG 4: inclusive and equitable quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all; equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education; education facilities that are gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all;

SDG 6: adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls;

SDG 8: full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, and equal pay for work of equal value; labour rights and safe and secure working environments of all workers, particularly women migrants;

SDG 10: reduce inequalities within and between countries, and reverse the trend towards ever growing income inequalities; empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status; ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including through eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and actions;

SDG 11: safe and affordable housing and transport systems for all; improving road safety, with special attention to the needs of women; safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women;

SDG 13: action to combat climate change and its impact, including focusing on women;

SDG 16: peaceful inclusive societies and participatory decision making, access to justice and reducing arms flow;
As the era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) comes to an end in 2015, a new framework for global development will be put in place. The ‘Post-2015 Development Agenda’ will culminate in the formulation of a new set of goals and targets that will build on the progress of the MDGs and also address the shortcomings. In anticipation of the transition, the United Nations system has been engaging in an unprecedented effort to bring the voices of people into the discussions and debates concerning the next agenda and the future. The aim of these public consultations is to support governments to create and adopt an agenda that is at once bold and ambitious, inspirational yet practical and – most of all – reflective of the aspirations of people from every part of the world, of all ages and from all walks of life.

One of these processes is the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The OWG was established following the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, commonly known as Rio+20. Consisting of 70 Member States sharing 30 seats, the OWG has been working over the past 18 months to develop a set of SDGs for consideration by the UN General Assembly. On the 19th of July 2014, the OWG finalized their report.

The Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals: Outcome of the United Nations General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, placed people at the centre of sustainable development. Para 4 reads: “[...] Rio+20 promised to strive for a world that is just, equitable and inclusive, and committed to work together to promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection and thereby to benefit all, in particular the children of the world, youth and future generations of the world without distinction of any kind such as age, sex, disability, culture, race, ethnicity, origin, migratory status, religion, economic or other status.”