

How countries are mainstreaming gender in the sustainable development goals implementation: a HLPF desk research study

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Background: Gender equality and women's empowerment was considered a cross cutting issue during the negotiations of the open working group for sustainable development and earned a stand-alone goal when the agenda was agreed upon by 193 member states in September 2015. Member states agreed that to achieve sustainable development by 2030 it was necessary to achieve gender equality and empower women. However, when the first High-Level Political Forum ("HLPF") occurred a year later countries were struggling to include gender as a cross cutting issue in their implementation plans. The objective of this study was to analyze the number of countries in the first HLPF country reviews that mainstreamed gender in their sustainable goals implementation plans taking into consideration the thematic review leaving no one behind.

Methodology: 22 countries presented at the 2016 HLPF under the theme ensuring no one is left behind. The author conducted a desk research analysis of the national voluntary review reports presented at the HLPF and analyzed the number of countries that incorporated a gender lens into their Sustainable Development Goals implementation efforts.

Results: No comprehensive gender mainstreaming plans were identified. Of the 22 countries that presented a national voluntary review only five mentioned gender as a cross-cutting issue and of the five only two mentioned gender equality as part of their overall sustainable development plan. One country discussed the need to form partnerships with different stakeholders to achieve gender equality, and a second mentioned the general need to prioritize gender equality in implementation efforts.

Conclusion/recommendations: The authors hypothesize that, to achieve goal 5 and mainstream gender across the implementation of all SDGs countries must take specific actions that can include: appointing gender experts to national SDG implementation commissions or equivalent bodies; include ministers of gender or equivalent national gender bodies in all SDG implementation efforts; develop gender sensitive budgeting; partner with CSO, private sector, academia as well as gender specialized UN agencies and other stakeholders that specialize in gender issues; take specific actions to develop political and social will to include a gender perspective into national implementation efforts; harmonize ongoing gender equality efforts such as the ICPD plan of action and beyond 2014 with SDG implementation plans including goal 5. It became apparent in the 22 countries general implementation plan overviews that gender was not being prioritized as a cross cutting issue. It will be impossible to 'leave no one behind' if countries do not take a thoughtful look at how to achieve gender equality and find adequate formulas to holistically include gender in their implementation efforts.

Limitations: The 2016 HLPF thematic review was not focused on goal 5 ‘Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls’ and hence might have influenced countries’ decision not to focus on gender as a cross-cutting issue.