



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 December 2013

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
and to the special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development
and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation
of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of
concern and further actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by Sociologists for Women in Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Sociologists for Women in Society affirms the proposal of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for a transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment in the post-2015 agenda, including its suggested targets and indicators. We agree that freedom from violence is the highest priority goal to ensure that women and girls are included in development opportunities, such as education and employment. As noted in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. It is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement. When women and girls are handicapped by violence in their daily lives, not only are their human rights violated but national development is inhibited and diminished. As the World Bank stated in its 2012 *World Development Report*, gender equality is good economics.

The absence of adequate gender-disaggregated indicators on the incidence of violence makes the elaboration of programmes and monitoring of changes difficult. The indicators proposed by UN-Women for the post-2015 agenda will help to address this difficulty and will provide a broad picture of violence against women and girls worldwide. In accord with guidelines issued by the Statistical Commission, the indicators should measure the prevalence, severity and frequency of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women and girls by age and relationship of victim to perpetrator, including intimate partner violence, child sexual abuse and spousal homicide. Sociologists for Women in Society recommends as well the measurement of violence on the basis of gender identity, sexual orientation and disability, the frequency and prevalence of human trafficking in women and girls and the disaggregation of all indicators by gender, class, ethnicity and rural/urban location.

To address the root causes of violence against women and girls, the processes of social construction of gender, especially the socialization of boys into masculinities of dominance and violence, should be addressed in school curricula and in the media. The indicators suggested by UN-Women on gender perceptions, attitudes and behaviours are examples of ways to track cultural assumptions on gender. Proven practical strategies can be tracked as well, such as the criminalization of gender-based violence, women's shelters in both urban and rural locations, specialized courts for intimate partner violence and specialized police units staffed with female police officers.

While real progress has been made on increasing the number of children enrolled in primary school (Millennium Development Goal 2), the completion of primary school by all children remains a challenge. In a family crisis, girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school than boys. In some poor rural areas, no more than 10 or 15 per cent of girls are even enrolled in primary school.

The prevalence of formal and informal school fees make primary school completion challenging for poor girls, especially in rural areas. Poor parents delay their children's entrance into school or trade one child's education for another's when they do not have funds for school fees. Children are likely to drop out of primary school when their parents cannot pay their school fees. Uneducated girls earn less as

adults and cannot support their families or pay for their own children's school fees. To avoid these undesirable outcomes, school completion rates and school fees, both formal and informal, should be measured and tracked in the post-2015 development agenda, disaggregated by gender, class, ethnicity and rural/urban location.

Adult literacy classes, vocational programmes and women's community grass-roots groups should be included in the post-2015 development agenda with indicators disaggregated by gender, class, ethnicity and rural/urban location. Adult literacy is much lower for rural women than for urban women. Even among rural women, literacy varies dramatically along class, caste, ethnic and religious lines. When rural women acquire literacy, they have new opportunities for paid employment and the means to contribute more effectively to their family circumstances. Literacy projects bring women together and give them the confidence to organize against violence.

Vocational training for both school-age children and adults provides them with marketable skills in both rural and urban settings. Women migrate to cities at higher rates than men and find themselves in a disadvantaged and marginalized position in urban areas. Vocational skills can help women transition into the urban environment more successfully, avoid low-paying informal work and alleviate the high incidence of urban poverty. Women with vocational skills are more likely to obtain decent employment and avoid gender traps, such as trafficking and prostitution in both rural and urban areas.

Literacy projects provide the means for women to support one another as they address community and family needs. Community grass-roots groups mobilize and empower women, especially in rural areas, giving them the confidence and skills to engage in the political process. Educated women empowered by community grass-roots groups are more likely to fill leadership roles and work for community improvement rather than merely individual advancement. They can press for the enforcement of laws protecting women, such as those against domestic violence and early marriage. Despite their proven success, there are few women's community grass-roots groups in rural areas. A significant increase in women's community grass-roots groups can empower rural women and accelerate social transformation and should be measured and tracked in the post-2015 development agenda.

In addition to stopping violence against women and improving female education, the post-2015 development agenda should include indicators of women's involvement in conflict situations. Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) changed the image of women from exclusively victims of war to active participants as peacemakers, peacebuilders and negotiators, as noted by the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. Indicators should track the number of women in peacekeeping missions, peace negotiations and refugee camp administration.

Sociologists for Women in Society is an American non-profit scientific and educational organization of sociologists dedicated to improving women's lives and creating feminist social change. Through our teaching, research, publications and activism, we educate and sensitize the sociological profession, other scholars and the public to the social, political and economic situation of women. We publish a highly regarded professional journal entitled *Gender & Society*, and engage with a network of sister organizations on several continents through our global feminist partnership programme.