



International Council on Social Welfare

Global Cooperation Newsletter

March 2016



*This edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter is largely devoted to gender issues. March is the month when the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)—the largest and most critical intergovernmental forum to discuss the role of women in global development—meets every year in New York at United Nations Headquarters. The 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which took place on 14-24 March, is the first in the era of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was only natural that the priority theme of the Commission was women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development. In her opening speech, the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, noted in that regard that “the Sustainable Development Goals include gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as a centerpiece, with enabling targets threaded throughout all the other goals, making gender systematically integrated into the implementation of the whole Agenda for Sustainable Development”.*

*Every year, ICSW speaks at the Commission session, submitting a statement on topics of international significance, addressed from a gender perspective, that we consider important for improving the situation of women. The full text of the most recent ICSW statement is*

continued on page 2

INSIDE

Commission on the Status of Women  
Achieving Gender Equality

2

6

continued from page 1

*published in this issue.*

*We also publish here a featured article written by Dr. Patience Stephens of UN WOMEN, who discusses at length some key issues related to the implementation of the new 2030 Agenda, particularly in the context of the existing international commitments on promoting empowerment of women and girls and achieving gender equality.*

The Editor

## Statement submitted by International Council on Social Welfare to the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

### **Priority theme: Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development**

The aspiration of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the creation of a more just and prosperous world with universal respect for human rights and human dignity where "no one is left behind" and where transformative steps required for sustainable development have become part of the day-to-day reality. The International Council on Social Welfare, one of the oldest non-governmental organizations with a global reach, wholeheartedly supports the Commission on the Status of Women in its work aimed at gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, considering those two goals to be a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets of the new development Agenda.

Women have a vital role to play in the realization of the sustainable development

agenda. Their voices must be heard, and should be recognized and promoted. Equality and empowerment of women of all ages are both the objective and a crucial part of the on-going quest for solutions. We share the conviction that the achievement of full human potential and sustainable development is simply not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full rights and opportunities. Beginning with the enjoyment of equal access to education and equal opportunities for employment, the world community should continue combating gender based-discrimination and violence in all the forms that it may assume, including old-age discrimination and violence.

The International Council on Social Welfare believes that gender and sustainability should be recognized as cross-cutting priorities of all development programs conceived at the national and international levels. Much depends here on the ability of government, civil society and the private sector to join forces and act together. Given that women of all ages are more vulnerable than men to the negative impacts of climate change, largely because the livelihood of the majority of the world's poor, including women farmers, closely depends on natural resources that are threatened by climate change, it is essential to reduce existing vulnerabilities and build up resilience.

In that light, the International Council on Social Welfare strongly believes that wider use of internationally agreed instruments, such as ILO Recommendation 202 on National Floors of Social Protection, could facilitate the fight against poverty and promote women's empowerment. Social protection schemes, already in use in many countries, have proven critical in redressing the disproportionate impact of economic, social and environmental shocks on women, but the potential of such schemes is far from exhausted, and many of those schemes

cannot fully correct the disadvantages and discrimination that women still face in the labor market with regard to the sharing of reproductive work between genders and access to education systems. However, there is a clear synergy between gender, social protection and environmental sustainability. Better and more gender-proactive social protection schemes can bring about structural changes in the economy and society, facilitating both mitigation and adaptation. The 2015 UN Women report entitled "Progress of the World's Women" states: "A comprehensive approach to social policy that combines universal access to social services with social protection through contributory and non-contributory transfer systems is the best way to realize economic and social rights for all without discrimination" (p.15).

Together with our partners in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, the International Council on Social Welfare takes an active role in the global advocacy campaign aimed at achieving better understanding of the core principles of social protection floors, and the analysis and building of the evidence-base for social protection floors. We also believe that civil society organizations must play an active role in monitoring and evaluating the social protection floor impact, including the assessment of the additional benefits that are generated for sustainable development. The quest for gender-sensitive responses to the effects of climate changes should be considered in the context of better-targeted development efforts, where social protection is firmly embedded among the key priorities.

The integration of a gender perspective into development programs and better visibility for all women within development theory and practice has been an important outcome of international and national efforts to uphold gender-equality and empowerment. But much more needs to be done. For example, older women are often overlooked in

discussions of gender-equality, empowerment and sustainable development. This is in spite of the fact that the world's aging population is projected to reach 2 billion by 2050, with women age 60 years and older projected to comprise over 1 billion of the aging population at that time. Studies demonstrate that less than 10 per cent of older women need institutional care at any given time in old age. However, the stereotypical conflation of old age and dependency has established the basis for harmful policies, as well as traditional practices, that exclude older women from full participation in society and do not support or



recognize older women's capacity for productive and active aging.

In the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing" ([A/70/185](#)), released on July 24, 2015, a number of gaps were identified in efforts to achieve gender equality and empowerment for all women, specifically for older women. It notes that

women and men experience old age differently and, while both experience age discrimination, older women also experience negative stereotypes that label them unimportant, limit their access to services and entitlements, and cause them to face cumulative life disadvantages owing to lack of education, their exclusion from decision-making and participation in public life, diminished access to age appropriate health care, lower earning-capacity and the additional barrier of discriminatory gender-based laws and customs that apply to property and inheritance.

The shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals included the failure to tackle structural underpinnings of gender inequality, such as violence, unpaid work, limitations in women's control of assets and property, and unequal participation in private and public decision-making, resulting in cumulative life disadvantages in old age. While the addition of language modifications in the post-2015 Sustainable Development



Goals (for example, the addition of "all" prefacing references to "women and girls" intended to promote inclusion) implicitly referenced older women, the primary reference was the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, with older women relegated to the important but non-binding General Recommendation No. 27.

Discriminatory laws and practices against older women continue to fuel violence and abuse. Harmful traditional practices continue with older women accused of witchcraft, justifying horrific abuse against them, as well as financial abuse of older women denied rights to inheritance and property. Older women are often excluded from the studies on violence conducted by the World Health Organization and other United Nations entities, based on ageist assumptions that older women do not experience domestic violence or sexual abuse, would not remember such abuse owing to age-related cognitive limitations, and would refuse to disclose such experiences because of a distaste for sharing distasteful memories. Age cutoffs for subjects in these studies often range up to age 49, the presumed end of reproductive functioning.

Given the aging of the world's population, we must recognize that combating gender inequality and that empowering all women and girls is a life-long process and that a life-cycle analysis of gender equality is needed. While the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment has been increasingly recognized, we must not overlook some key segments in society such as older women. Focusing on girls and women of reproductive age is important for building a foundation for the empowerment of women in old age, but is only a partial strategy. It needs to be recognized that a focus on older women in the later phases of their lives is also critical to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women of all ages. Understanding and integrating gender-specific vulnerabilities can help with the implementation of gendered adaptation practices, eventually relieving some of the disproportionately high burden of the adverse effects of climate change that women of all ages bear.

Another important policy issue that affects

older women and their social and economic protection in old age is the need to recognize and value unpaid work. Girls and women of all ages take on disproportionate responsibility in the family for the care of children and other care-dependent family members, limiting their involvement in the formal workplace. If they work outside the home, women of all ages are more likely than men to work in the informal economy, creating disadvantages in terms of pension benefits in old age. Older women are more likely than men to experience poverty, including extreme poverty, in old age in most countries, and the developed economies are no exception. It is critical to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social-protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibilities within the household and the family as nationally appropriate, so as to ensure that women are not disadvantaged economically in old age owing to cumulative disadvantages throughout their life course. It is also critical to undertake reforms so as to give all women equal rights to economic resources as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. This represents a tangible fight against poverty and is a clear boon to sustainable development.

To ensure that gender-equality goals for older women are monitored, nations must include data disaggregated by gender and age on economic status and other indicators on an on-going basis. For example, indicators such as “percentage of the population covered by social protection floors/systems” should be disaggregated by age and sex in order to allow the tracking over time older women’s poverty and the outcome of policy initiatives to eliminate it. Monitoring and hence the creation of the statistical visibility of inequalities creates the policy space for

civil society to demand new or more effective public policies aimed at correcting inequality. We recognize that each country faces specific challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development. The integration of gender-specific targets across other goals of the new development agenda is an important prerequisite aimed at curtailing the high economic costs that are closely linked to social inequities and environmental



degradation, bringing closer a just, equitable and inclusive world.

## Achieving gender equality: trade-offs between the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action



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### **An Agenda of unparalleled vision and ambition**

In 15 years, the world as envisaged by the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), would be totally transformed from what it was in 2015. The vision of this groundbreaking Agenda is quintessentially to achieve a level of social and economic development that has eluded the world for centuries. This vision is, *inter alia*, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; combat inequalities within and among countries; build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; ensure a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality,

and where social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; ensuring the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources; creating conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all while taking into account different levels of national development and capacities – these and many more are among the aims of this historic Agenda.

In the words of the drafters of the 2030 Agenda, this vision is “supremely ambitious and transformational.”<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly so. Indeed, the UNDP Human Development Report for 2015 provides a vivid and alarming picture of our world as one with major and endless deprivations, inequality, poverty, lack of access to basic services and infrastructure, and high levels of illiteracy. Despite the progress achieved, the report notes that “human development is undermined by multiple shocks, vulnerabilities and risks—by epidemics, by emerging health risks, by economic and financial crises and by food and energy insecurities.”<sup>2</sup> The report indicates as well that in 2015, 795 million people were suffering from chronic hunger, 11 children under age 5 died every minute and 33 mothers died every hour. About 37 million people were living with HIV and 11 million with tuberculosis. More than 660 million people used an unimproved source of drinking water, 2.4 billion used an unimproved sanitation facility and nearly a billion resorted to open defecation. It notes also that, worldwide, 780 million adults and 103 million youth aged 15–24 years were

1 United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Resolution 70/1 adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, paragraph 7.

2 United Nations Development Programme (2015). Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development

illiterate and 250 million children globally had not learned basic skills although 130 million of them had spent at least four years in school. Even in developed countries, 160 million people were estimated to be functionally illiterate. These statistics speak for themselves by outlining the monumental challenges that require urgent, comprehensive, forward-looking actions and solutions.

### **Responding to the challenge of gender equality and the empowerment of women**

With respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the situation is equally alarming and disappointing. Twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, followed by recommitments in intergovernmental forums, the goal of gender equality remains elusive in all nations. Women and girls continue to be subject to various forms and degrees of discrimination everywhere. At the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2015, United Nations Member States acknowledged in a Political Declaration that "significant levels of inequality between women and men and girls and boys persist globally, and that many women and girls experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability and marginalization throughout their life cycle."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the 2015 Human Development Report notes that "women are actively disempowered by mutually reinforcing processes in every walk of life" and that women and girls are held back by biases in social beliefs, norms and cultural values; that they face discrimination in economic, political and social structures, as well as policies, institutions and strategies, and too often are constrained by real and perceived physical insecurity (p. 69).

Given this context, it is not surprising that

gender equality and women's empowerment are not only extolled in the 2030 Agenda but are also recognized as preconditions for its achievement. Although the Agenda emphasizes the universality, indivisibility and interlinked nature of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, it notes that the goals and targets "seek to realize the human rights of all and (*emphasis added*) to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". It argues that "realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets" (paragraph 20) and warns that "the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity (women and girls) continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities."

The 2030 Agenda's Goal 5 aims, therefore, "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," and that goal is supported by nine targets, including three for the means of implementation. Eleven other goals are associated with gender-related targets. They include the goals on poverty (SDG1), hunger (SDG2), health (SDG3), education (SDG4), water and sanitation (SDG6), employment (SDG8), inequalities (SDG 10), sustainable cities (SDG11), climate change (SDG13), just and peaceful societies (SDG 16), and global partnership (SDG 17). It is also expected that the indicators that will be agreed upon to monitor progress on the goals and targets will include many that address gender-specific issues and that are disaggregated by gender. In that way, the monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will be based on an expansive set of data that better reflect the real situation of women and girls,

3 The Political Declaration adopted on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference - Accessed at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015#sthash.DsKYiCdT.dpuf>.

thus helping to guide policy interventions to close gender gaps.

The 2030 Agenda has been recognized and hailed for the sophisticated way in which it integrates gender equality-related targets under various goals. The Agenda has also been acclaimed for going “well beyond Millennium Development Goal 3’s single target to eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015.”<sup>4</sup> According to the Executive Director of UN Women, “Agenda 2030 is anything but business as usual. Together we called for a bold and transformative agenda. Member States made far reaching inputs and supported a transformative agenda all the way.”<sup>5</sup>

Turning this historic Agenda’s ambition and vision on gender equality and women’s empowerment into reality calls for the application of comprehensive tools, approaches, and strategies – in particular those that fundamentally change the structural factors that underlie the unequal relations between women and men within societies. Achieving SDG 5 will require, above all, that societies dismantle structures that perpetuate gender inequality and identify and tackle deep-rooted issues in a holistic and consistent manner. In order to address those factors effectively, development experts will need to turn not only to the 2030 Agenda, which provides the broad guidelines for achieving its vision, but also to the Beijing Platform for Action, which offers relevant, detailed and specific guidance on how to move ahead.

### **Approaching gender equality and the empowerment of women: the 2030 Agenda versus the Platform for Action**

Although it singles out gender equality and the empowerment of women as preconditions for achieving sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda does not delve into the details of the strategies for achieving that goal.

Those details and specifics lie not so much in the 2030 Agenda as they do in the Platform for Action, whose analysis and recommendations for addressing 12 critical areas of concern are specific, detailed, comprehensive, and as relevant in 2016 as they were in 1995. While new priorities have emerged and old priorities have become more complex in the last 20 years, few would question the validity and continued relevance of the issues and the critical areas of concern identified by the Platform.

The 2030 Agenda cannot, and does not, purport to offer the analytical rigor or comprehensive policy guidance that the Beijing Platform for Action does, nor is it intended to be a comprehensive strategy for interventions in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Indeed the Agenda recognizes the Beijing Platform for Action as “one of the major United Nations conferences and summits that have laid a solid foundation for sustainable development and have helped to shape the new Agenda.” It can be said that, more than just being foundational, the Beijing Platform for Action provides the struts, braces, as well as the mortar with which a future gender-equal world must be built.

There are three fundamental reasons for this.

#### **1. Specificity**

As noted by the Beijing Platform itself, “the objective of the Platform for Action ... is the empowerment of all women.” Unlike the 2030 Agenda, which lays out the broad requirements and dimensions of sustainable

4 United Nations (2016) Women’s empowerment and the links to sustainable development. Report of the Secretary-General. E/CN.6/2016/3. United Nations

5 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/2/ed-speech-at-executive-board-first-regular-session#sthash.pm52b9bm.dpuf>

development, the Platform for Action dwells on women and girls as its center. Removing the existing vulnerabilities and creating opportunities for women and girls in the changing and challenging global climate are the central thrust in that regard. However, the specific areas and sectors addressed by the Platform for Action are as wide as those covered in the 2030 Agenda.

For example, many paragraphs of the Platform address how women should be actively involved in environmental decision-making at all levels. Others address equally central issues that are highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, including the disproportionate impact on women and girls of foreign debt; the shift from government to women of responsibilities for providing basic social services; the under-remuneration of women in employment and their unpaid work; and the relative absence of women in decision-making. With regard to data -- a strong focus of the 2030 Agenda -- Strategic Objective H3 lays out a comprehensive list of areas in which data must be collected and how. For example it calls for "developing methods, in the appropriate forums, for assessing the value, in quantitative terms, of unremunerated work that is outside national accounts, such as caring for dependents and preparing food, for possible reflection in satellite or other official accounts that may be produced separately from but are consistent with core national accounts, with a view to recognizing the economic contribution of women and making visible the unequal distribution of remunerated and unremunerated work between women and men."

## 2. Focus on inequalities

The 2030 Agenda's emphasis on leaving no one behind responds to the strong global call for equitable, inclusive development. Under Goal 10 to "reduce inequality within and among countries", targets 10.2 and 10.3 of

the Agenda address empowerment and the promotion of social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status, and seek to reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in that regard.

The Platform for Action, similarly asserts in paragraph 14 that "it is indispensable to search for new alternatives that ensure that all members of society benefit from economic growth based on a holistic approach to all aspects of development" Six of the Platform's critical areas of concern are framed in the context of "inequalities."<sup>6</sup> A number of recommendations and strategies are identified for addressing those and other inequalities, and they remain valid today. Particularly well-known and still relevant is the Platform's recommendation that "In addressing the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively" (paragraph 189).

## 3. Attention to education as a key

6 Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training; Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services; Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources; Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels; Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media; Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment

### enabling factor in gender equality

The 2030 Agenda gives education strong recognition and focus through Goal 4 – “Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all” and also includes the elimination of gender disparities in education as a central part of the targets of Goal 4. It does not, however, address education within Goal 5, and the targets of the gender-equality goal do not specifically acknowledge the centrality of education for gender equality and sustainable development.

The Beijing Platform for Action, in contrast, rests firmly on the widely acknowledged and empirically demonstrated recognition of education as a driver of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Platform mentions education as an “essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace” and states that “Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change” and that “investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.”

The Platform provides rich analysis and also suggests interventions and strategies in education across all its critical areas of concern. Many of its recommendations are relevant to the gender-sensitive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For example, the Platform calls for efforts to “facilitate the productive employment of documented migrant women through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and credentials, and facilitate their full integration into the labour force (paragraph 58(k)). Also important -- and highly relevant today – is its call to work “in cooperation with

Governments, employers, other social partners and relevant parties, contribute to the development of education and training and retraining policies to ensure that women can acquire a wide range of skills to meet new demands” (paragraph 60 (e)).

In their contributions to the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women held in New York in March 2016, -- under the theme “Women’s empowerment and the links to sustainable development,” -- various civil society organizations drew attention to the centrality of education for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Non-Governmental Organizations Coordinating Committee, for example, noted that “gender equality in the classroom is a prerequisite to gender equality in society: educating girls is the entry point for achieving women’s empowerment and systemic, sustainable change”.<sup>7</sup> The World Youth Alliance similarly noted that “one of the best ways to address inequality and to end poverty is in Goal 4: Education for all.” It further argued that “education for girls should be a primary focus of the sustainable development agenda”.<sup>8</sup> These views echo a key tenet of the Beijing Declaration, in which Member States noted their determination to “Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, life-long education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women.”

While it may be argued that the inclusion of the elimination of gender equality in education under Goal 4 addresses the linkage between those two areas, the omission of the explicit mention of education under the gender equality goal (SDG5) could dilute the

7 “Statement submitted by Non-Governmental Organizations Coordinating Committee, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council” E/CN.6/2016/NGO/60

8 World Youth Alliance E/CN.6/2016/NGO/129

focus, energy, gender-sensitivity and gender expertise with which this critical interlinkage must be addressed. Education and gender equality are an inseparable pair. In that regard it is important to note that a number of the issues that have topped recent discussions with respect to gender equality and education relate, not necessarily to pedagogy or curriculum – even though they are important as well -- but rather to issues such as safety, school-based violence and discrimination, lack of access to appropriate sanitation facilities for girls, and premature attrition from school owing to early pregnancy, early and forced marriage and the lack of appropriate role models and mentors for girls and young women. Effectively addressing those issues, which are in the intersection of gender equality and education, will require the co-operation and engagement of both sectors. It will require the expertise of gender as well as education specialists. It will also require that the implementation of Goals 4 and 5 of the 2030 Agenda do not end up being claimed, owned and cloistered by the respective sectors, but rather are analysed and implemented in the indivisible and interlinked manner emphasized in the Agenda and as demonstrated in the Beijing Platform for Action.

#### 4. Looking ahead

In acknowledging the outlined strengths of the Platform, as well as its complementarities with Agenda 2030, it becomes evident that actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda's goals and targets with respect to gender equality and sustainable development must go hand in hand with the implementation of actions outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. There is a lot to be built upon without re-inventing the proverbial wheel. It is essential to find and capitalize on the common threads across those two landmark intergovernmental agreements and, in particular, to draw on the wealth of guidance provided by the Platform. In doing so, we may well come to agree with

the view that “in reflecting on what is absent from the 2030 Agenda, it becomes clear that, in many ways, the Beijing Platform for Action remains a more bold and far-reaching document, and sets out a vision for gender equality that remains the most progressive of any global political commitment of the past 20 years.”<sup>9</sup>

***The opinions expressed in the article are those of the author and may not necessarily reflect views of the United Nations or the position of the ICSW Management Committee.***

9 Statement submitted by World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. For the Commission on the Status of Women

Sixtieth session 14-24 March 2016.  
[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2016/NGO/3](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2016/NGO/3); p. 3.

## Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors: strategy meeting of the Core Team

Since the inception of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors four years ago the ICSW has been an active participant and contributor to its advocacy activities. The strategy meeting organized by Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES) took place in Geneva on 7-8 March 2016, bringing together participants of the Core Team of the Coalition to discuss the existing challenges and define strategic priorities of the group. Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director of ICSW, took part in the meeting on behalf of ICSW.

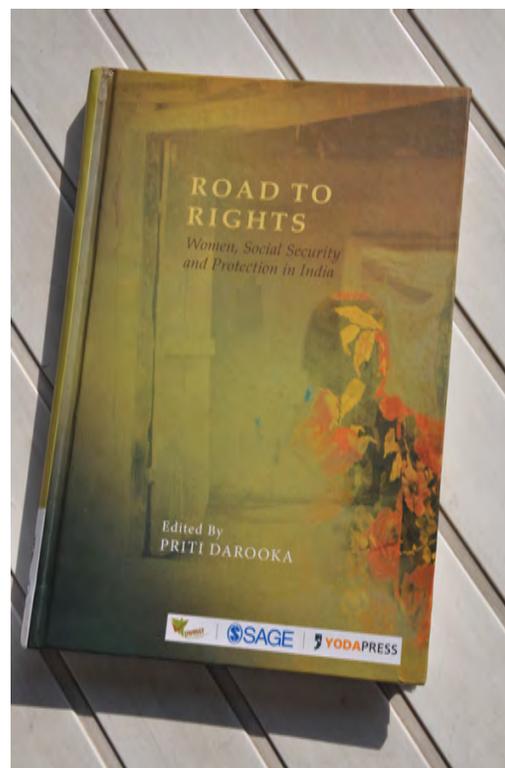
Internal concerns of the Coalition, such as recalibrating its objectives, improving budgeting and financing, creating communication strategy and other practical matters, were discussed at length. While identifying gaps and opportunities, the strategic meeting also concentrated on some thematic concerns, such as the refugee crisis in the context of social protection, the role of the informal sector and capacity-building issues. In light of the identified gaps and opportunities, participants put forward proposals on future projects and activities. After the results were summarized and presented to the plenary, responsibilities were assigned among the members of the Coalition, with a clear time frame presented for the short, medium and longer terms.

The meeting was addressed by the Director of the ILO Social Protection Department, Dr. Isabel Ortiz, who briefed the participants on recent ILO initiatives and presented an overview of the current developments in the area of social protection, internationally and nationally. She underscored the significance of the Social Protection Assessment-based National Dialogue (ABND) promoted by ILO

as an important mechanism for setting priorities in national social protection systems, providing a welcome opportunity for all national stakeholders to come together and consider policy options.

## The useful resources and links – the find of the month

### ***Road to Rights. Women, Social Security and Protection in India***

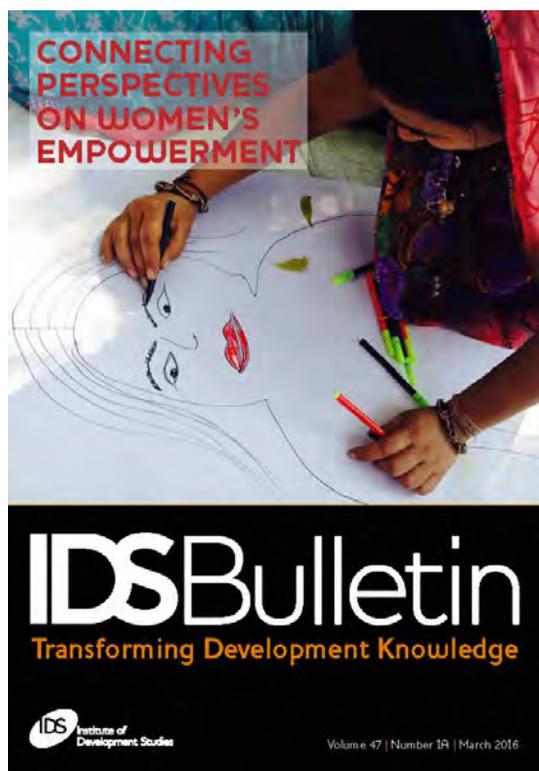


Priti Darooka, editor. SAGE Publications India, New Delhi, 2016

*Road to Rights* examines the conceptual framework of social security, and focuses the reader's attention on the missing dimensions of social security and protection for women in India. It explores experiences and lessons learned from various interventions on the

ground, throwing particular light on the problems faced by specific vulnerable groups, such as female domestic workers and sex workers.

For more information:



<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/road-to-rights/book252234>

### IDS Bulletin.

Transforming Development Knowledge.

Vol.47 Number 1A March 2016. Sussex, UK

### ***Connecting Perspectives on Women's Empowerment***

Editors: Deepta Chopra and Catherine Muller

This bulletin, published by the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, UK, comprises a set of article focusing on women's empowerment across three lines: economic empowerment and its links with poverty reduction – focusing on the intersections between paid work and unpaid care work; social empowerment in terms of changes in gender norms and values; and political empowerment and mobilization. The importance of the interconnectedness of those three domains of empowerment is highlighted.

For additional information:

<http://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/idsbo/issue/view/98>

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