



## Policy Brief #4 Recommendations on Human Rights

for the UN General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals  
(OWG on SDGs)

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The recommendations on human rights presented here have been compiled from two civil society consultations conducted by UN-NGLS in 2013: a teleconference-based consultation that resulted in the report [Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Agenda](#) and an [online consultation](#) on four post-2015 reports to the Secretary-General. A list of organizations that participated in these consultations is available [here](#). This brief presents the most common themes that emerged from these consultations, along with a collection of specific recommendations articulated by participating organizations. It also includes elements from the “Human Rights for All Post-2015” [statement](#) produced by the Human Rights Post-2015 Caucus, which UN-NGLS encourages readers to review in full. While presenting a wide range of views, this brief does not intend to represent the complete breadth of perspectives and recommendations emerging from the human rights advocacy community on the post-2015 development agenda.

Civil society networks insisted that to ensure a just, equitable, and sustainable world in which all people experience individual and collective well-being, the post-2015 development agenda must be fully aligned with the existing human rights framework and reflect its fundamental principles of universality, equality, and non-discrimination, as well as progressive realization and non-regression. Underpinning the framework with human rights would enable a move from a model of charity to one based on the inherent dignity of people as holders of human rights, with national governments as primary duty-bearers at national and international levels, and all development actors sharing common but differentiated responsibilities.<sup>1</sup>

Consultation participants underscored the need to ensure policy coherence between the post-2015 negotiations and existing international human rights agreements.<sup>2</sup> Human rights are not moral aspirations;

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Post-2015 Caucus, “Human Rights for All Post-2015” (2013), page 1.

<sup>2</sup> The following human rights agreements were referred to by consultation contributors:

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#); [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#); [Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#); [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#); [Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations in the area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#); [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#); [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#); [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#); [International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#); [Domestic Workers Convention](#); [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#); [Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights](#); [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework](#); [Committee Against Torture](#), [Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) and its [Committee on the Elimination on all Forms of Violence against Women](#); [temporary special measures provided for in Article 4 of CEDAW](#) [Human Rights Committee](#); [Beijing Platform for Action](#); [International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\)](#) and its [Programme of Action](#); [UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security](#). In addition, other rights

they are internationally agreed norms, standards and legal obligations that States must respect, protect, and fulfil. A human rights-based approach is essential to overcome growing inequalities, discriminatory practices, and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress. The new development agenda must prioritize measures to realize equality and equity, and accordingly must enable the full and meaningful participation of all stakeholders – particularly marginalized and disenfranchised groups – throughout all phases of policy-making, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. It is imperative to ensure genuine participation in decision-making at all levels, access to information, and consequential participation – with commitments to protect the freedoms of association, expression, assembly, and political participation.<sup>3</sup>

The post-2015 agenda and all associated goals and targets must be people-centered and effectively address the numerous challenges that continue to prevent the fulfillment of human rights for many. It must also reinforce the duty of States to use the maximum of their available resources to realize these rights progressively for all. Focused support must be given to fulfilling the rights of vulnerable and marginalized people, particularly those who face intersecting inequalities based on gender, age, class, ethnicity, indigeneity, sexual orientation, gender identity, (dis)abilities, and/or status as a migrant, asylum-seeker or refugee, many of whom have been systematically, historically, and continually excluded.

While States at national and international levels must remain the primary duty-holders in development, all development actors – including third-party States, the private sector, and international institutions – should be made responsive and accountable for achieving - and not undermining - global goals. Therefore, civil society networks argued, the post-2015 framework must be crafted as a tool that empowers and enables people – individually and collectively – to monitor and hold their governments, other governments, businesses, international institutions, and other development actors to account for their conduct as it affects people’s lives within and beyond borders. The framework must integrate meaningful institutions and systems to ensure human rights accountability of all development actors, incorporating citizen-led systems of monitoring and human rights accountability, with clear and time-bound commitments of all relevant actors.<sup>4</sup>

For a global development partnership to have real meaning, international post-2015 accountability mechanisms must not be limited to monitoring national outcomes and policy efforts. Constraints preventing countries from achieving their development commitments are often rooted in policy decisions taken by other States in their capacity as donors, trading partners, or members of inter-governmental institutions. The obligations of these States to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights beyond their borders must be included within the remit of global accountability mechanisms set up under the new framework. The degree to which States and their representation in international institutions are supporting or undermining the fulfillment of development and human rights commitments by third countries must therefore also be monitored.

Any post-2015 monitoring mechanism would benefit from constructive interaction with the existing human rights protection regime, as well as with other relevant accountability mechanisms. National mechanisms including judiciaries, parliaments, and national human rights institutions should be reinforced by regional and international human rights review procedures, such as the treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic

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associated with employment and decent work were also referenced, including the right to work, and freedom of association and collective bargaining.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, para 2.

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Post-2015 Caucus, “Human Rights for All Post-2015” (2013), para 3.

Review of the Human Rights Council, as concrete monitoring and accountability mechanisms for a post-2015 framework that is embedded in human rights.<sup>5</sup>

Detailed recommendations as outlined by participants in the UN-NGLS post-2015 civil society consultations are presented below.

### **1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Promote Decent Work and Social Protection for All**

- a) Put into practice the application of the [Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights](#) when formulating and implementing poverty eradication measures and other policies.
- b) Agree to a new goal on full and decent employment and livelihoods, incorporating the four pillars of the [Decent Work Agenda](#) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- c) Agree to a stand-alone goal on universal social protection, emphasizing the need to introduce “nationally tailored” social protection floors in countries where social security is minimal, with the aim to secure universal access to social services and basic income security for all, based on ILO [Recommendation 202](#).
- d) Implement fully the ILO’s core labour standards and reject policies that present the deregulation of labour standards as a necessity to maintain “competitiveness.”
- e) Promote associative forms of work in the social and solidarity economy.
- f) Combat gendered labour market segregation and implement programmes and policies that aim to redistribute unpaid work.

### **2. Address Growing Inequalities as an Obstacle to the Fulfillment of Human Rights for All**

- a) Adopt a stand-alone goal on reversing growing inequalities, and include inequality reduction targets in all other goals; ensure data is disaggregated by gender, age, geographical location, rural/urban location, socio-economic and other relevant indicators.

### **3. Promote Peace to Realize Human Rights and Sustainable Development**

- a) Adopt a stand-alone goal to eliminate violence and insecurity to promote sustainable development and peace for all social groups; targets should i) refer to access to security as a public good; ii) ensure all social groups are free from violence and insecurity; and iii) eliminate violence targeting women and girls.

### **4. Ensure the Right to Food**

- a) Reaffirm commitment to the realization and fulfillment of the right to adequate, safe, affordable, and nutritious food to ensure that all are free from hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition. Include a target to ensure food sovereignty, health, and nutrition security.

### **5. Ensure the Right to Health, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

- a) Complete the unfinished business of the unmet health MDGs (reaffirm the fights to safeguard women’s health, eliminate child and maternal deaths, and prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria) while adapting to new health challenges and addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Recognize that the health burden of NCDs is increasing in all regions of the world, undermining social and economic

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

development for all people; implement measures to lessen risk factors and establish universal access to primary healthcare.

b) Ensure that targets related to achieving universal access to primary healthcare are defined to ensure quality, affordability, accessibility, and acceptability of all necessary services, especially for segments of the population that are particularly vulnerable or marginalized.

c) Secure women's right to health, particularly sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to: i) all methods available to control their fertility; ii) safe and adequate maternity care; iii) prevention and treatment options for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections; and iv) comprehensive sexuality education. Ensure that women and girls are free to decide on all matters related to their sexuality and reproduction, free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

d) Include targets on the social determinants of health, including gender equality, access to education, water and sanitation (including hygiene), as well as State-provided incentives for healthy behaviour; include a target to prevent NCDs and their risk factors such as: prevention of tobacco use (that recognizes the [WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#)), the harmful use of drugs and alcohol, unhealthy diets, and physical inactivity.

e) Address the inter-linkages between health and inequality, and between ill-health and its impact on all other aspects of development, such as employment and education; include a target on health financing and financial risk protection through universal health coverage mechanisms.

f) Integrate innovative financing mechanisms, such as a Financial Transaction Tax, to mobilize sufficient international financing for health.

## **6. Ensure the Right to Water and Sanitation**

a) Achieve universal access to water supply, sanitation, and hygiene, focusing on the following priorities: i) everyone has access to water, sanitation, and hygiene at home; ii) all schools and health centres have water, sanitation, and hygiene; and iii) water, sanitation, and hygiene are sustainable and inequalities in access are progressively eliminated.

## **7. Ensure the Right to Adequate Housing**

a) Ensure decent housing for all with security of tenure.

## **8. Develop a Comprehensive Agenda for Fulfilling the Right to Education**

a) Make explicit the obligation of States towards free education, at least in compulsory stages and progressively beyond, as stated in [General Comment #13](#) on "The right to education" of the UN Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights.

b) Conceptualize education as central to structural transformation in countries with weak productive capacities, to achieve a shift from low to a high skilled workforce; ensure education builds on local skills and knowledge to support sustainable rural livelihoods using scale-appropriate technologies and ecological production methods (e.g. sustainable agro-forestry and agro-ecology).

c) Ensure that the education agenda does not get reduced to responding to questions of "employability," but encompasses the development of life skills essential to participate meaningfully in economic, social, and political activities, and the acquisition of adequate knowledge to respect and appreciate the value of human rights, gender sensitivity, social justice, community cooperation, and multiculturalism.

d) Include targets for adequate remuneration and benefits for teachers, as well as good working conditions.

e) Acknowledge the value of and support popular and traditional knowledge.

## **9. Respect, Protect and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

- a) Implement the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), which outlines the minimal standards of development that Indigenous peoples have requested; promote, protect and respect the human and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, including through enforcement of their rights to their land, territories, and resources, to self-determination, and to free prior and informed consent.
- b) Establish, within the Special Procedures of Human Rights Council, a Special Rapporteur on extractive industries and human rights to address human rights abuses in the extractive sector, which are prevalent in Indigenous territories.

## **10. Protect and Promote Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality**

- a) Integrate gender equality and women's human rights as a stand-alone goal, as well as across all goals and the full post-2015 development agenda, including targets to overcome women's unequal access to economic livelihood opportunities and formal employment. This must be accompanied by parallel efforts to reform governance and policy, including macroeconomic policy.
- b) Incorporate zero tolerance targets for violence against women and girls in recognition of their human rights to live free of violence and ensure universal access to essential services for survivors of violence; prevent and eliminate sexual coercion, early and forced marriages, harmful practices, and engage men and boys in promoting positive norm changes to achieve gender equality.
- c) Ensure the full and equal participation of women in all public and private decision-making, including participation in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- d) Secure rights to land and other resources for women, including rights to access, use, own, control, and make decisions.
- e) Address the unpaid contributions to development made by women at all levels, including by recognizing care work as critical to survival of the economy and society and by reinforcing State responsibilities to invest in social services including child care, elder care, and healthcare.

## **11. Eliminate Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

- a) Enact national legislation to ensure the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons, including access to health care, education, and justice.
- b) Commit to ending all violence and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- c) Prohibit and take action to eliminate harmful practices, including customary practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of any sexual orientation or gender identity.
- d) Promote changes to attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that perpetuate and foster discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression.

## **12. Overcome Discrimination Based on Ethnicity**

- a) Eliminate structural discrimination based on caste and ethnicity and address its intersection with poverty.
- b) Ensure access to justice for all ethnic groups.
- c) Establish monitoring processes to help ensure that different ethnic groups are fairly represented in the different spheres of government and the State in order to foster stability.

### **13. Mainstream the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

- a) Mainstream the rights of people living with disabilities, building on the normative framework that the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) provides to support the one billion individuals experiencing disability, with attendant impact on health, educational achievement, economic opportunities, and poverty.
- b) Develop disability-sensitive indicators and targets and stress the importance of disaggregating data by disability.
- c) Actively include people with disabilities and other marginalized groups, including people affected by leprosy, many of whom are disabled.

### **14. Empower Youth**

- a) Recognize that it is through young people that societies are transformed and that the challenges they face, such as mass unemployment, are of the present and not only “the future”; therefore, fully include youth in the design and implementation of the post-2015 agenda.
- b) Adopt serious and aggressive measures to assist youth to find jobs, access education, and integrate fully in all social, civil, and economic aspects of society.
- c) End the tendency to marginalize youth development challenges, including by establishing a UN entity dedicated to mainstreaming youth issues across the development agenda, along the lines of UN Women.
- d) Provide adolescents and young people in and out of school with comprehensive sexuality education on health, sexuality, gender equality, and human rights to develop their life and relationship skills.
- e) Improve education and training opportunities for all young people in order to facilitate access to livelihood and employment opportunities.

### **15. Uphold the Rights of Migrants**

- a) Address migration as a development concern to resolve, with due respect to the rights and welfare of migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees; overcome the severe discrimination that they face.

### **16. Ensure Human Rights for All Across the Life Course**

- a) Acknowledge the anticipated rapid demographic changes to occur in the post-2015 era, including the size and growth of ageing and young populations, and integrate a life-course approach that responds to the realities of all ages and protects and promotes their human rights.
- b) Adjust laws, policies, resource allocation, social attitudes, and institutional practices accordingly as population structures change, to eradicate extreme poverty and achieve sustainable development for people of all ages.
- c) Address age discrimination.
- d) Ensure income security for people of all ages.
- e) Adopt a stand-alone goal on eliminating violence and exploitation of children, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, with targets disaggregated by gender and age on: eliminating the number of children who are subject to sexual violence and abuse of any form; ending hazardous forms of child labour; eliminating early and forced marriage; and ensuring birth registration for all children, without discrimination.
- f) Address the rights, needs and aspirations of older people while acknowledging the economic and social contribution they make, particularly in situations of extreme poverty and fragile environments.
- g) Prioritize the disaggregation of data by five year cohorts throughout all targets.