

### **Executive Summary:**

The NGO Major Group's Human Rights Cluster advocates the investment in gender equality, as it has among the highest returns among financing for development for the 2030 agenda as a whole. It is crucial to utilize rights-based implementation of the SDGs, with particular attention to marginalized peoples and minority groups including, but not limited to, women, persons of all Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities (SOGI), ethnic and religious minorities, marginalized castes, persons living in extreme poverty, refugees, migrants, ageing persons, and indigenous persons. As females and female identifying people, across these marginalized and minority groups, are most affected by poverty, human rights violations, climate change, and conflict, and have the least access to opportunities and resources, an intersectional gender-sensitive, rights-based development approach must be used in the implementation and assessment of the sustainable development goals. Investing in SDG 5, Gender Equality, is the key to achieving the other 16 sustainable development goals. Oppressing half of the global work force due to gender inequality prevents poverty eradication. Funding gender equality has among the highest returns of financing for development. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, "\$12 trillion could be added to the global GDP by 2025 by advancing women's equality." Additionally, gender equality is the best predictor of a nation's stability. Empowering women leads to more peaceful and sustainable societies. One important method to eradicating poverty, mitigating violence, slowing climate change, and achieving the SDGs through the realization of gender equality is through the use of SDG 4.7, global education. Using education to change the culture of how women are valued will bring about wider realization of human rights and greater success in the overall implementation of the SDGs.

### **Full Position Paper:**

The NGO Major Group's Human Rights Cluster is encouraged by the innovative nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, as the SDGs are the first global development agenda to center around human rights. We advocate for rights-based implementation of the SDGs, with particular attention to disaggregated data for marginalized peoples and minority groups including, but not limited to, women, persons of all SOGIs, ethnic and religious minorities, marginalized castes, persons living in extreme poverty, refugees, migrants, ageing persons, and indigenous persons.

Across these marginalized and minority groups, females and female identifying people are at the most significant disadvantage. Women are most affected by poverty, human rights violations, climate change, and conflict, and have the least access to opportunities and resources. When constructing policies and implementation strategies, it is vital to remain mindful of the women's multiple identities. Race, religion, age, class, caste, SOGI, gender, and other identities contribute to multiple oppressions. Women who face multiple oppressions are among

the most vulnerable. An intersectional gender-sensitive, rights-based development approach must be used in the implementation and assessment of the sustainable development goals. In order to achieve this, education for global citizenship should be used to narrow the gender gap by promoting equality, intercultural communication, global citizenship, and the open exchange of ideas.

Violence against women and girls, including cultural, structural and direct violence, is a global health crisis that pervades every culture, class, religion, and border, and makes up a large percentage of human rights violations today. One in four women over the age of 15 will experience sexual violence in their lives (WHO). This includes the trafficking and forced labor of an estimated 25.4 million women and girls worldwide (International Labour Organization). In urban areas, women are twice as likely as men to experience violence (UN-Habitat). Gender-based violence (GBV) worsens in wartime. During the Rwandan genocide, between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped (UN Women). GBV hinders economic growth, global peacekeeping efforts, sustainable development, and equality. Domestic violence causes a large strain on the economy, and leads to poverty and homelessness. 28% of families were homeless in the United States in 2009 due to domestic violence (U.S. Conference of Mayors). Tanzania loses 1.2 per cent of its GDP each year, and Chile loses 2 per cent of its GDP each year, due to loss of productivity of women injured by domestic violence (World Bank Report). GBV increases homelessness, health care costs, the spread of disease, poverty, and homicide. Building gender-equality is crucial for achieving sustainable development, lasting peace, and poverty eradication.

SDG 5, Gender Equality, is the key to achieving the other 16 sustainable development goals. Oppressing half of the global work force due to gender inequality prevents poverty eradication. Investing in gender equality has among the highest returns of financing for development. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, “\$12 trillion could be added to the global GDP by 2025 by advancing women’s equality.” Partnerships between social, private, and public sectors are vital to reaching gender equality in the workplace and in society in general. Empowering half of the global workforce to be full participating members of the economy and the achievement of the sustainable development goals, will have rippling effects on resources, development implementation mechanisms, and human rights standards.

Improving women’s economic capacity to be educated, work, and earn money decreases the overall violence in a society. For instance, in Kerala, India “only 7 percent of women who owned immovable property were subject to physical domestic violence, as opposed to 49 percent of women who did not” (Landesa). As gender equality is the best indicator of a nation’s stability, empowering women leaves states less vulnerable to extreme poverty, violent extremism, and political instability. Women are disproportionately affected by conflict, and are vital to establishing and maintaining peace. However, women are drastically underfunded and underrepresented in laws, policies, aid programming, political representation and peacekeeping processes (UN Women). When women are stakeholders and decision makers in peace keeping processes, peace is more sustainable. According to UN Women, “when women are included in

peace processes there is a 35 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years.” Lessening structural violence against women and girls by lessening the gender pay gap, increasing women’s access to sexual and reproductive health rights, and ending gender segregated jobs in the workforce leads to more stable families, communities, and nations. Understanding gender-dynamics and empowering women is essential to establishing peaceful and sustainable communities on every level.

Gender equality and the realization of women’s rights is a prerequisite to achieving human rights and poverty eradication, and therefore, to reaching the Sustainable Development Goal targets. Based on these gaps, one crucial aspect of building gender-equality is implementing goal 4, for Education, in order to teach equality to people of all ages. The global culture of valuing women’s lives as less than men’s is debilitating to all members of society. Goal 4.7 to “ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development” can encourage global citizenship, cultural and ideological exchange, and collaboration on building sustainable solutions to local and global problems. Global education not only has the power to change the notion that women hold lesser value than men, it can also be used for skills training, financial literacy, economic empowerment, technology sharing, and international collaboration.

Creating awareness of the global community brings empathy and intercultural understanding. This can be done through international education, implementing global citizenship material into existing coursework at schools, story sharing campaigns, pen pals, social media, theater, film and TV. Using SMS, wifi and smartphone technology, people are able to communicate with relative ease and speed across the globe. Global education can also be carried out by expanding the UN’s push for qualitative data, to quantitative data as well. Putting individual faces and voices to vast statistics is more likely to elicit empathy and collaboration.

#### Recommendations:

- Invest a higher percentage of funding for development into gender equality. Investing in gender equality has among the highest financial returns and the biggest impact on the other SDGs. Gender equality is the best indicator of a nation’s stability. The best way to achieve gender equality is by building a strong feminist movement (Peace Women). To promote sustainable peace, invest in women, peace and security.
- Invest in gender equality, not war. According to Peace Women, the cost of one US fighter jet can fund gender equality. As gender equality leads to longer lasting peace treaties and stronger national and global stability, moving money from weapons to equality building will lead to more sustainable peace.
- End the Cold War’s divide between Social, Economic and Cultural Rights and Political and Civil rights. Encouraging all member states to value human rights as a holistic development practice will improve the relationship between the global north and south, and enable better global collaboration and farther reaching rights-based development practices.

- Implement laws and policies that promote inclusion, redistribute blue and pink collar work, as well as unpaid care work, and build equality of opportunity and resource access. For instance, Iceland has begun to conduct gender-equality auditing in midsize and large companies.
- Increase decision making power and opportunity, particularly through political representation and participation, of women and other marginalized and minority persons. Gender parity should be practiced within the United Nations system. Establish more decision making capacities and opportunities.
- Encourage global leaders to address problems, and to refrain from blaming others.
- Encourage member states to bring goodwill, accountability and data.
- Disaggregate data to accurately portray the reality for marginalized and minority groups.
- Maintain quantitative data collection, and increase qualitative data by collecting and sharing individual stories to build empathy, intercultural communication, and global citizenship.
- Increase representation at the UN of people, particularly women, living in extreme poverty. People living in extreme poverty are the best experts on extreme poverty. This group should be provided funding and resources to participate in the development discussions, including the HLPF.
- Apply gender-sensitive rights-based implementation strategies to the SDG implementation and evaluation processes.
- Utilize global education to promote capacity building, equality, intercultural communication, global citizenship, and the open exchange of ideas.

Global education should be used to reverse the feminization of poverty, and stop the resulting setbacks in achieving the sustainable development goals. As long as half the global population is oppressed, there is no hope of achieving poverty eradication, sustainable development, climate justice, and lasting peace. When all persons have access to and control of their rights, information, and economic resources, the SDG targets will be more attainable.