

## Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (New York, 17 – 19 June 2013)

### Girls an Untapped Potential at the Bottom of the Youth Pyramid.

Question posed:

“How should the specific concerns of youth be addressed in SDG’s, specifically with respect to employment and decent work, education and culture, but possibly also in other relevant goals”.

Name ...This statement is based on the experience of my Organization – **Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd** - working in 72 countries focusing particularly on girls living in poverty. Girls, while part of the youth population are an untapped potential at the bottom of the Youth Pyramid. I represent the Working Group on Girls and Coalition of more than 80 NGO’s and the NGO Coalition for a Social Protection Floor, a global network of NGO’s.

One person in eight is a girl or young woman age 10–24.<sup>1</sup> In many countries of the world by the time a girl is 8 or 9 years, she spends her day tending house, cooking, cleaning, and collecting firewood and water. Often she does not have a birth certificate. She is less likely to be vaccinated, to see a doctor, or to attend school.

The High Level panel noted that over the last decade 15 million girls aged 10 -14 have been married.

Girls are subject to female genital cutting, are vulnerable to HIV, sexual violence, physical exploitation, unsafe migration, human trafficking and do not have the right to stop unwanted sexual advances or gain justice. Girls are prevented from going to school, devalued because of gender bias and seen as unworthy of investment or protection by their families, their community and national Government.

The advancement of women and youth is not sustainable without attention to the rights of girls and their empowerment. It is critical to consider girls human and social capital from a human rights perspective providing the infrastructure that is necessary for her wellbeing, education and empowerment. An extra year of primary school boosts girls' eventual wages by 10% to 20%. An extra year of secondary school adds 15% to 25%. Girls who stay in school for seven or more years typically marry four years later and have two fewer children than girls who drop out.<sup>2</sup>

As we seek to develop sustainable development goals the special needs of girls must be specifically addressed in a poverty goal, gender equality goal, and targets according to identified

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<sup>1</sup> Girls Count A Global Investment and Action Agenda.

<sup>2</sup> Girls Grow: a Vital Force in Rural Economies.

need streamlined throughout the various other goals. It is only through major and sustained improvement in the conditions of girls that poverty will be eradicated and gender equality achieved.

Implementation of ILO Recommendation No 202 Concerning National Floors of Social Protection is a good starting point to launch the first transformative shift as suggested by the High Level panel Report 'Leave no one behind'. I say 'Leave no Girl behind! Implementation of national floors of social protection is a comprehensive, concrete and practical strategy towards ending poverty, guaranteeing gender equality, promoting decent work and equitable growth. The NGO Coalition for a Social Protection Floor proposes a goal with six targets that could be considered the building blocks of the social protection floors.

Goal: End poverty and establish a social protection floor for everyone. 6 suggested targets are:

**a) Food security:** End hunger and malnutrition and protect the right of everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food.

**b) Health care:** Ensure access to affordable health care, including essential drugs, on a sustainable basis.

**c) Education:** Ensure that every girl and boy, regardless of circumstances, completes secondary education and has access to technical and vocational training.

**d) Social security:** Guarantee income security up to at least the level of the national poverty line.

**e) Housing:** Ensure decent housing for all with security of tenure.

**h) Water and sanitation:** Ensure universal access to safe drinking water at home, and in schools, health centres, and refugee camps; end open defecation - ensure universal access to sanitation at school, in the workplace and in the home.

Regular and reliable income transfers and access to basic social services will help to unlock productive entrepreneurial capacity, increase labour market participation and boost local development and job creation. You may ask how this can be financed. Where there is a will there is a way.

National governments have a number of options to create fiscal space for implementation of national floors of social protection. They include

- Reallocation of public expenditures, - e.g. from the military budget to health or education,
- Increasing tax revenues,
- Fighting illicit financial flows, tapping into fiscal and foreign exchange reserves,
- Restructuring debt and
- Adopting a more accommodative macroeconomic framework (e.g. tolerance to some inflation, fiscal deficit).

Thank you!