

Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development
Call for inputs for the Study:

**Women’s active, free and meaningful participation in development, with
emphasis on decision-making**

By Liliana Valiña

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Gender diversity and women’s empowerment are good business and bring social and macroeconomic benefits.

The Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (EMRTD) is seeking input for its study on the Women’s active, free and meaningful participation in Development, with emphasis on decision-making. The areas for which information is required are set out in the “**Guidance Questions**” section at the end of this document.

In addition, the EMRTD seeks the support of and welcomes those **volunteer to act as advisors** to the study. The views and observations of the advisory group will be sought during the preparation of the study.

• **Background:**

The Human Rights Council established the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development through resolution 42/23 of 27 September 2019. The Expert Mechanism is composed of five independent experts and provides the Human Rights Council (HRC) with thematic expertise on the right to development.

The HRC, in its resolution 45/6 of 6 October 2020, welcomed the first report of the Expert Mechanism (A/HRC/45/29), and requested the EMRTD to implement the recommendations contained in its report, including the preparation and submission of one to two thematic studies per year and the conduct of country visits to provide thematic expertise to the HRC on the right to development, in seeking, identifying and sharing best practices with Member States.

The EMRTD is seeking input for its study on women’s active, free and meaningful participation in development from the perspective of the right to development. The UN Declaration on the Right to Development affirms the right to development without any distinction, including by sex (Article 4), and promotes women’s participation by requiring that *effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process* (Article 8).

• **Objective:**

From a general perspective, the study aims to contribute to the strengthening of knowledge and awareness related to the Declaration on the Right to Development; to make visible valuable national

and international experiences related to women's active, free and meaningful participation; and to promote the right to development in all its dimensions by strengthening women's participation and inclusion in all stages of the development process, particularly in decision-making processes.

- **Additional information on this study**

Equal opportunities for women's active, free and meaningful participation in the development process, including in decision-making, remains a transformation to be achieved worldwide. In accordance with the Agenda 2030, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. As several studies have shown, including those by global and regional economic and financial institutions, the gender diversity and the inclusion of women is good business and brings social and macroeconomic benefits.

This study aims to analyse:

- Implications of women's active, free and meaningful participation in development, particularly in decision-making processes;
- The impact of discrimination against women and gender gaps on the realization of the right to development for all; and
- How the good practices and relevant changes have affected indicators related to the realization of the right to development of women and in the whole country.

It will be based on the consideration of three relevant aspects: inequalities, discrimination and the Human Development Index. It will therefore examine how women in their diversity, including young women and girls, are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural, political and environmental development. The study will take into account the diversity of women and girls and the impact of the **intersectional discrimination**.

In this study, in order to identify good practices for women's participation in development and the consideration of national and global experiences and challenges, participatory and inclusive processes for designing public policies for women's empowerment, governance and leadership will be considered particularly relevant and useful.

Indicators related to the level, degree and capacity of women's participation in decision-making processes, especially in the political, economic and social spheres, will also be essential to assess women's empowerment and participation in development.

Access to active, free and meaningful participation in the economic, political and social spheres, including equal representation and decision-making, depends on the following factors:

Capabilities: related to issues such as access to education, information, health and a safe environment;

Opportunities: related to real options and mechanisms for removing barriers to access to business, employment, autonomy and leadership positions; and

Freedom: legal and practical access to basic rights, especially through adequate legal frameworks and mechanisms to prevent and protect against discrimination and violence.

- **Methodology:**

To carry out this study, a documentary review will be conducted taking into account relevant international instruments, doctrine and jurisprudence.

An exchange will also be sought with States, UN partners, civil society and women's organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, to identify key information, data and good practices, ensuring a broad perspective and a plurality of viewpoints.

Field work:

In accordance with its mandate, the EMRTD may, to the extent possible, conduct some relevant study visits and interviews to include specific perspectives and situations on the ground to complement the written/paper contributions.

• **Areas for contributions:**

The EMRTD invites Member States, civil society, women's organizations and representatives, and other stakeholders to cooperate with the study by submitting relevant information following some **guiding questions**.

Based on the aforementioned focus, the relevant information and data will be particularly linked to these three key elements:

Inequalities. Information on the potential impact of inequalities affecting specific population groups, with a particular focus on women, on their access to the right to development and on the country's development outcomes.

Gender gaps. Global information on gender gaps and country data is another relevant entry point for the analysis and identification of factors, barriers and opportunities for the realization of women's right to development and the overall realization of the right to development in the country.

Human Development Index. The Human Development Index and its respective indicators provide valuable additional information for assessing national conditions for the realization of the right to development by focusing, for the purposes of this study, on the specific situation of women and its close relationship to country's performance.

From this inspiring umbrella, the study will address public policies, programs, experiences and instruments aimed at enhancing women's active, free and meaningful participation in development, focusing on decision-making, governance, autonomy and leadership, and analyzing some **relevant parameters**:

- a. The existence of **inclusive and participatory processes** to design, monitor and evaluate gender equality and participation, including women and girls in conditions of greater disadvantage or affected by intersectoral discrimination;
- b. **Transparency, accountability, and up-to-date information**, including indicators and data;
- c. The **level and extent of women's leadership and representation** in their diversity in public, economic and social life.

Special attention will be paid to women's access to education, employment, health, and protection against discrimination and violence, as well as the existence of comprehensive care systems, in

order to ensure adequate conditions for active, free and meaningful participation, and particularly the real access to decision making processes.

- **Guiding questions**

Accordingly, the EMRTD requests Member States, UN entities, civil society and women's organizations, National Human Rights Institutions, academic, economic, financial and business institutions, and other stakeholders for information, studies and assessments on the following guiding questions:

Kindly submit your contributions to OHCHR-emrtd@un.org, preferably in English or Spanish, in MS Word or compatible format by **26 April 2024.**

1. Women's participation in development and gender equality, including women's access to education, employment, health, comprehensive care systems, and protection against discrimination and violence, showing data, preferably disaggregated taking into account the diversity of women, e.g., by sex, gender, age, disability, social conditions, ethnic, religious, national or cultural origin, etc.
2. National and local institutional framework for women's rights and gender equality, including civic space and the level of women's participation in this framework.
3. Data and examples about national and local leadership and level of women's representation in public life, especially in government and other public institutions, as well as in the private sector.
4. Studies/reports and impact assessments of national experiences of women's empowerment - including the adoption of temporary affirmative actions and corrective measures - on women's access to development and on the correlative evolution of the country's development outcomes.
5. Examples of relevant indicators and procedures designed and applied at the national and/or local level to systematically measure and evaluate women's participation in development, including decision-making, and in the enjoyment of development benefits.
6. Public policies, diagnostics, assessments, evaluations and data, including action plans and priority groups and areas, at the national and/or local level, to identify and overcome challenges to women's and girls' access to equal opportunities and participation in decision-making processes.
7. International cooperation projects (including impact assessment of their implementation) to empower women, including young women and girls and those affected by intersectional discrimination, to prevent, remedy and overcome inequalities and discrimination that affect them.
8. Civil society initiatives to overcome challenges and assess opportunities and progress in women's active, free and meaningful participation.
9. Public-private initiatives, including those with local, rural and indigenous institutions and communities, to empower women and promote their active, free and meaningful participation in development, including in decision-making.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and follow-up mechanisms to systematically measure the situation of women in their diversity in terms of their participation in development, including gender equality, discrimination and potential barriers, as well as impact evaluations of these efforts.
11. Innovative measures, policies, methods and strategies to accelerate gender equality and women's active, free and meaningful participation in development, including those linked to the care economy.
12. Systems, methods and strategies to facilitate, generate opportunities, measure and guarantee the active, free and meaningful participation of women, in their diversity, in decision-making processes at national, regional or international levels.

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