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Gender and development: understanding the experiences of young South African women in advancing the sustainable development goals in South Africa: Gender and global norms: understanding the experiences of South African women in advancing the sustainable development goals in South Africa

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Abstract

On September 25th 2015, countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all, as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. 2015 marked the end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were also a set of internationally accepted frameworks to organize the international community's efforts to address global issues (United Nations, 2015). Post-colonial feminists criticized the MDGs for not having a clear framework to include women, particularly in 'developing' countries in their design and implementation, as with most global agendas and international norms, development was something that happened to women and not with women.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs/ Global Goals) have been recognised for vastly improving on the MDGs, by broadening the global development agenda to include environmental, social, economic and political concerns, and for, in the process of their formulation, engaging with member states and civil society groups and placing a great emphasis on women and youth participation. The SDGs have also widened the scope and action of the targets under SDG 5 – the goal on gender equality and women's empowerment, and most notably recognise that gender equality has multiple dimensions.

This research will explore how norms are cascaded or diffused locally; the transition from the MDGs to SDGs and the role young and women play in their respective communities to advance the 'Global Goals', actively participating in the development process. The research seeks to contribute to understandings of how young people, young women in Africa can be better supported to participate in the development processes using the SDG implementation in South Africa as a case study. The research will investigate and analyse the challenges and best practices learned by a sample of young women led organisations since the introduction of the SDGs in South Africa.

Key Words

Youth; Women; Global Goals; Gender; Civil Society; Equality; Development; Empowerment; United Nations; Youth Participation; Feminism; Sustainable development; Poverty; Education.