

Statement submitted by the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund (VGIF) at the thematic debate of the whole on theme 3: “Global partnership for development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda” and presented by Eileen Menton, President.

I thank you Mr. President for giving me the opportunity to present this statement on behalf of the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, an international grant making organization that provides small grants for grassroots projects which empower women and girls in developing countries. VGIF is a member of the NGO Committee on Financing for Development.

We recognize the strides made in the MDGs and that three important targets on poverty, slums and water have been met. Nevertheless, considering that over three billion people still live on less than \$2.50 a day, that 22,000 children die due to poverty every day, that more than 100 million children of primary school age are out of school, and that women continue to be underrepresented in the formal economy and in national parliaments, we are still far from achieving most of the MDGs by the 2015 deadline.

The 2012 Global Food Policy Report of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) reveals that almost 55 percent of the reduction in hunger from 1970 to 1995 can be attributed to improvements in women’s status in society. Given the demonstrated effectiveness of the advancement of women and girls on achieving such development outcomes, we must redouble our commitment to support them to achieve their full potential. This involves prioritizing MDG 3 alongside the other seven goals.

MDG 8, though one of the most crucial levers affecting the success of all the other MDGs, is one of the least developed. The post-2015 development framework should give utmost importance to identifying, developing and implementing strategies to promote global partnerships for development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

The recently released OECD figures showed that official development assistance (ODA) from rich countries fell by 4% in real terms in 2012, which followed a dip in 2011. It was the first time since the early 1990s that ODA had dropped two years in a row. Measures need to be taken to ensure that innovative partnerships are developed so that funds reach where they are needed most. Based on our experience as a grant-making organization, we can say that accountability and legitimacy can pose a problem when providing funds for projects in the remotest parts of the world, but we are finding ways to overcome these problems through joining funding networks and partnering and collaborating with funds that have a presence in the region. VGIF is part of the International Network of Women’s Funds through which the members share best practices in monitoring and evaluation, technology solutions, funding strategies and supporting each other through vetting mechanisms such as site visits and references.

We commend the work of the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda and support its proposals and recommendations in its recent report. We would also like to make some additional recommendations:

1. Implement an all-inclusive multi-stakeholder approach at every stage of post-2015 development agenda that ensures meaningful participation of women's and social movements in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of development policies and programs.
2. Hear the voices of smaller NGOs more often at the UN and develop mechanisms/ partnerships to allocate targeted funding to ensure voices are heard from the grassroots, especially during the post-2015 strategy development discussions.
3. Promote opportunities, venues and the necessary support to build the capacity of grassroots level NGOs to enable them to be effective, efficient and accountable in their work, and to identify and connect with grant-making organizations directly rather than relying on outside agencies that may charge exorbitant fees.
4. Develop and foster partnerships on education and technology and ensure that funds are being directed to strategies that bring STEM activities to schools in the remotest areas. Such activities have proven to be effective in encouraging more children, especially girls, to explore science, technology, engineering, and math programs. Recently VGIF funded a project in a remote part of India in Agartala where a girls' school will build much needed Physics and Biology laboratories.
5. Develop partnerships between schools, universities and the international donor community for sharing learning strategies that work, and identify and allocate funds for leadership development, mentorship and educational training for teachers. Recently VGIF funded a project in Zanzibar, Tanzania, that will provide high quality science education for girls and teachers using distance education materials developed by the North Carolina School of Science.
6. Increase partnerships that promote local food production and allow countries to move away from heavy dependency on food imports. VGIF is identifying opportunities to help our grantees in this area. This year we will be funding projects for women in Ghana, India, Kenya, and Zimbabwe to promote sustainable community development through nutritional gardens.
7. Develop and promote partnerships and projects that promote women's economic empowerment while considering the current political developments within the country. Currently VGIF is funding a project in Kenya where 40 widowed women will get training in farming technology and in their legal right to own property in light of the recent developments in Kenya where the new constitution recognizes this right for women.
8. Considering that women more than men are likely to work in the informal sector, develop partnerships to promote initiatives in this area. In our most recent grant cycle, VGIF has funded a variety of projects that will promote women's livelihood security through cage, including Tilapia fish farming in Ghana, mushroom farming 25 women affected by HIV/AIDS, quilting and product marketing skills training in Mongolia for 250 unemployed women, and establishment of a cooperative for women spinners in Peru.

MDG 3 and 8 are both vital to the success of the other MDGs and concerted efforts are needed to develop partnerships in and between governments, private sector and civil society, the common thread being to uplift the most vulnerable and reach those that need our help the most.