

How Empowering Women and Girls in Zambia is Interconnected to the Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number five states: **Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**, and it is this goal that has the most far-reaching effects for all of the SDGs. Women and girls must not be overlooked as major players in development and in attaining the SDGs. From my experiences so far in Zambia, it is apparent that it is women who are involved in grassroots, ground-level development work and they must continue to be empowered and supported. This assignment will discuss the interconnectedness of gender equality in regards to the SDGs that focus on sustainable agriculture and consumption; healthy lives; and quality education.

Women are world leaders when it comes to growing, collecting, and maintaining sustainable food sources. In Zambia, it is still the norm for men to leave the home for work while women remain at home and maintain the household. This leads to women being innovative in their approach to feeding their families and, thanks to their ability to multitask and make use of the resources they have access to, these hardworking women are working towards achieving the following SDGs: **End poverty in all its forms everywhere; End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.** There are many ways that Zambian women contribute to these goals; for example, it is rare to see a household in Kitwe, Zambia that doesn't have a garden and chickens. This ensures that families have food security and nutrition and also maintains sustainable consumption/production patterns. This home "farm" can also result in a small profit and help families to move away from poverty. At least 95% of the local produce stands I have seen in Kitwe are run by women, many whom have walked to town with a baby on their back and a pot of produce on their head! It is truly amazing to see this and not uncommon for a woman to be breastfeeding while managing her produce stand- it is evident that Zambian women are experts at multitasking.

The downside to women's pivotal role in the above SDGs is that land degradation and biodiversity loss directly affects the roles females play as food providers in developing countries. This relates to the SDG stating the need to **sustainably manage forests and combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss.** It must not be overlooked that even this SDG, which is seemingly unrelated to gender equality, has massive implications for women in Zambia and truly highlights the interconnectedness of the SDGs.

The other SDG that is interconnected to the concept of women and food security is that of education. While primary education is becoming more and more commonplace in Zambia, many women are still either unable to attend or only attend until a certain age when they must start helping out at home. It is my opinion that women need to be given the opportunity to complete schooling, in order to further promote and support the

ingenuity they are capable of. If a woman with no education is able to maintain a sustainable farm, and manage a business, it is unimaginable what she could do with access to education!

Ultimately, by achieving gender equality and empowering girls and women, developing countries like Zambia are ensuring success in the most fundamental necessities of life (i.e. nutrition) and providing a solid foundation in which to grow their country on. I would suggest that, thanks to this very clear entry point, development workers within Zambia should invest resources in programs that empower girls and women. If women have access to education and materials, I have no doubt that it will be a female who innovates a way of providing food/nutrition, reducing poverty and increasing health in a way that is sustainable and promotes land preservation.