



Making the MDGs Work for All Executive Summary

Women and girls are the key to achieving the MDGs. Gender equality and women's empowerment is not just a goal in itself, but also critical for attaining most of the other goals, including universal primary education; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; eliminating extreme poverty and hunger; and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Making the MDG Work for All emphasizes that the slow progress against the MDGs is partly due to non-gender-responsive implementation of policies and programmes, making them less effective in reaching and addressing the needs of women and girls. It is also partly due to a failure to link implementation to a rights-based approach that empowers all people—both women and men—to claim their rights and become active agents in their own development.

What is needed, the report argues, is a gender-responsive and rights-based approach to implementing, monitoring and reporting on the MDGs. The foundations for such an approach have already been laid in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Plan for Action, which complement and reinforce the MDG framework.

The report also notes that long-term goals and five-yearly reports are of limited practical interest to national governments which need to focus on short-term political survival. To move governments to take real responsibility and concrete actions, monitoring needs to focus on intermediate targets that are achievable and politically relevant, with timeframes of one to three years.

The report aims to assist countries to adopt this approach by suggesting a process for developing a gender-responsive rights-based national MDG reporting framework, and providing a sourcebook of issues to consider, possible strategies, and suggested long-term and intermediate targets and indicators.

Goal 1: Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger

Poverty and hunger have a greater impact on women. They are also among the principal causes of inequality and lack of empowerment.

To eradicate poverty and hunger, the first challenge is the macroeconomic policy context. Conventional neo-classical economic policies have often harmed the interests of the poor, with particular impact on women and girls. *Making the MDGs Work for All* argues that macroeconomic policies need to be **pro-poor**, requiring increased public spending and universal access to basic social services. Whether they are provided by government, the private sector or NGOs, basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation should be either free or heavily subsidized. A greater focus is also needed on agriculture, which has been neglected for decades because of unfavourable macroeconomic policies, resulting in persistent poverty and widening inequality in regions such as Asia and the Pacific.

To achieve Goal 1, a number of groups need to be specifically targeted, including young women, poor women in non-poor households, and women and girls in crisis and conflict situations.

Goal 2: Universal Primary Education

Between 2000 and 2005, the global primary school completion rate increased from 78 percent to 83 percent and the pace of progress accelerated in many countries. Yet 60 percent of developing countries are unlikely to reach 100 percent primary completion by 2015. Of the 72 million children of primary school age who were not in school, 57 percent were girls.

In many countries, one of the main issues is the lack of value which parents and society attach to the education of girls. Girls are expected to marry, leave their parents' household and have children, so educating boys is often seen as a better investment for the family. The introduction of fees for basic education make the situation even worse for

girls—even non-poor families may be unwilling to bear the direct costs of education for their daughters. In most countries, primary education is not sufficient to lead to regular paid employment, meaning that the economic incentive for parents to support their children to complete primary education is not high. The report argues that in countries which have achieved universal primary education, the national goal should be universal secondary education (or higher), which has greater potential to lead to paid employment and thus to increased empowerment..

Girls from ethnic, religious, or caste minorities—the ‘doubly disadvantaged’—made up approximately 75 percent of the 55 million girls who remain out of school. These girls may be excluded due to their ethnicity, language barriers, socio-cultural status, remoteness, legal requirements for birth certificates or citizenship papers, or cultural norms within the minority group that seclude women, or expect women to work long hours on domestic chores or farm work. These barriers are challenging, but must be addressed if Goal 2 is to be achieved.

Goal 3: Gender Equality and Empowerment

Goal 3 is the only explicitly gender goal in the Millennium Development Goal framework. It focuses on improving women’s lives and women’s empowerment as a way to achieve the other goals, rather than to benefit women and girls and realize their human rights.

The priorities for achieving Goal 3 are interdependent with the other Millennium Development Goals. While the MDGs focus on capabilities and access to resources and opportunities, gender equality also requires security: reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict, including gender-based violence.

Three target groups of women require special attention if the MDGs are to be achieved: poor women in the poorest countries and in countries where poverty remains high despite significant increases in national income; adolescents—their age and their high share of the population in poor countries mean that interventions for adolescents can lead to dramatically improved outcomes over their lifetime and at the national level; and women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

High levels of infant and child mortality continue to be a major development and human rights issue in many developing countries, particularly the poorest. Although more children are surviving the first five years of life, progress in reducing child mortality lags behind progress in all the other goals.

Progress in sub-Saharan Africa is still lagging far behind other regions in the world. Southern Asia also has relatively low rates of child survival, although there was a marked improvement between 1990 and 2004. Only two regions, East Asia and Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, are close to achieving the MDG target. But even in those two regions, more than half the countries are off track.

In most countries, gender differences in infant and child mortality are small and largely reflect biological differences. However, sex-selective abortion is widely used in societies with a strong preference for sons, including China and India. After adjusting for the impact of hepatitis B, which may cause differences in the sex ratio at birth, population estimates for 1980–1990 suggest that there were 32 million ‘missing women’. These differences are not limited to poor societies or those where women are particularly disempowered.

The gender implications are alarming. Unbalanced population sex ratios are likely to result in more girls being married at younger ages, more girls dropping out of school, higher maternal mortality due to early child bearing, the immigration of poor women from other countries for marriage, especially to rural areas, and an increase in violence against girls and women, including rape, abduction, trafficking, and forced polyandry. Policy makers must develop strategies to prevent these negative outcomes on women.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

In 2005, 536,000 women died of maternal causes, compared to 576,000 in 1990. Ninety-nine percent of these deaths occurred in developing countries. The maternal mortality ratio was 450 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in developing regions, compared to just 9 per 100,000 in developed regions.

Maternal mortality is typically approached from a health perspective, which tends to emphasize health education rather than women's empowerment as the solution to the widespread failure of women to attend clinics or use the services of trained midwives or doctors. However, the real issues may be that they lack the decision-making power to choose to use the services; they lack the financial resources needed to access them; or their families or even the women themselves may be unwilling to pay for the costs of accessing the services because of the low status of women and a lack of understanding of the importance of reproductive health care. Women's empowerment, and health education which targets men and other decision makers in the community, are needed to overcome these barriers.

Reproductive health care both improves maternal health, and is essential to the full realization of women's reproductive rights. Genital mutilation is both a serious violation of women's reproductive rights and a health issue, and must be eliminated. While making female genital mutilation illegal may play a role, ultimately it is women and men in communities and national leaders who must take the initiative in bringing about the social and cultural changes needed to eliminate the practice.

Goal 6: Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

Activity under Goal 6 usually focuses primarily on combating HIV/AIDS—partly because HIV-related illnesses or conditions are a major cause of death; and because of the immense publicity given to the campaign to fight the HIV/AIDS; the relatively good access to data for monitoring progress; and its economic and social impact, much of which falls on women and children. However, in terms of total deaths, deaths among women, the disease and care burden for individual women and the economic costs for countries, increased attention is needed to combating malaria and tuberculosis.

Women are more vulnerable to HIV infection—biologically, socially and culturally. Traditionally, target groups for programming have been identified in terms of behavioural risk factors, such as sexual behaviour or drug use. However, broader aspects of social, economic or political vulnerability that result from power imbalances in gender and other social and economic relations are often overlooked.

Groups that need to be targeted include those who are vulnerable to threats of forced sex—poor women, women in female-headed households with no adult male present, disabled women, homeless women and women in crisis and conflict situations; and those with limited access to information about HIV and methods of transmission, such as women in minority groups, and women migrant workers. Married women infected by their husbands also need attention, particularly wives of migrant workers, fishermen or other men who normally work far from their homes for extended periods.

While sex workers are widely targeted for preventive strategies, discrimination and stigma restrict their access to HIV/AIDS treatment and services. HIV/AIDS programmes are often gender-blind and may even discriminate against women, for example by testing pregnant women without their informed consent.

Tuberculosis kills more women each year than all maternal mortality causes combined, and is the single biggest killer of young women. The social stigma often attached to it means that many women in developing countries fail to seek diagnosis or treatment. Men face less stigma and are more likely to be supported by their families, visit a doctor, be diagnosed, treated and cured. Women are more likely to ignore their symptoms and just hope they will go away, rather than be divorced, abandoned, or lose access to their children.

Goal 7: Environmental Sustainability

Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for environmental sustainability. A sustainable environment is also critical for the welfare of women and their families. Without water, food, shelter and the means for a livelihood, equality and empowerment are both meaningless and unattainable.

Among the urban poor and most rural populations, women are largely responsible for providing water and fuel. They are also the majority of farmers in developing countries. Women are therefore particularly dependent on natural resources, and are most affected by their loss or degradation. However, poor women's dependence on the environment, combined with their poverty and lack of alternatives, may also mean that they contribute to environmental degradation and pollution.

Clean water and adequate sanitation are human rights, but have often been denied to the poor—especially women and girls and particularly those in urban slums—by the imposition of privatization and user-pays fees. Access to clean water and adequate sanitation is essential for gender equality as it gives women and girls time for other activities, such as education, health care and paid work. Adequate sanitation also reduces disease and the time women spend on care of the sick. Locating water sources and toilets close to home may reduce the risk of violence against women. These issues are more likely to be recognized and addressed if women are involved in decision-making about water and sanitation projects. Women should be involved as decision makers in environmental sustainability at all levels.

Women, especially female-headed households, need land rights and water for productive uses such as crop irrigation. They also need security of tenure and adequate housing, especially in urban slums. Lack of secure tenure means that in cases of domestic violence, it is the women who become homeless, rather than the perpetrators. However, security of tenure and access to housing on their own will not make significant improvement to the lives of women in urban slums. Lack of basic transportation and communications infrastructure and other services, including health care, are also major issues and need to be addressed.

Goal 8: Global Partnership for Development

Goal 8 deals primarily with macroeconomic and general economic policy issues, and the role of donors and international financial institutions in working with developing countries to support development through global partnership. It also deals with access to drugs, and to new technologies.

The first target for the global partnership is to develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. However, policy makers must recognize that the implementation of such systems is not gender neutral, and often negatively affects women. Implementation policies need to be subject to gender-responsive rights-based analysis to identify the benefits and costs and how these are distributed, and the likely impact on the poor, women and other vulnerable groups. This should inform decisions about whether and how to implement the policies, including the design of strategies to enhance positive impacts and mitigate negative impacts.

In the poorest countries and for the poorest women and girls, the MDGs are simply not achievable within current national budgets. Both the total amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided by donor countries to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, and the share of that ODA directed toward policies that are pro-poor, gender-responsive and rights-based, must be increased. Gender analysis of budgets should be applied to ensure that programmes that promote gender equality and fulfil the rights of women and girls receive an adequate share of the available resources. Resource allocation should also reflect that agriculture is the main livelihood of the poor. Improving gender-responsive and sex-disaggregated data should be a particular focus of donor countries, through both ODA and technical assistance.

Many targets and indicators under Goal 8 are the responsibility of donor countries, and should be addressed by them in donor reports. Some are the responsibility of developing countries, and can only be reported against by them. International financial institutions and United Nations agencies and NGOs are also players in the global partnership, and should consider developing their own MDG reporting frameworks to increase awareness within their organisations of their impact across the MDGs, and to ensure that all areas incorporate a gender-responsive rights-based approach that supports the achievement of the goals.

Some emerging issues which have the potential to obstruct the achievement of the MDGs in the poorest countries are cross-border in nature. In particular, issues such as migrant workers and trafficking cannot be adequately addressed at national or even regional levels. Consideration should be given to including these issues in the MDG framework, not only at the national level but also in regional reports and possibly in the global report.

