

PART ONE
UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Understanding the Global Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, the global community came together to take a global approach to development. The Millennium Declaration—adopted by 189 of the 192 Member States of the United Nations—identified peace, security and development, including environment, human rights, and governance, as the main global development challenges. The Declaration resolved, among other things, to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.

The Declaration consolidated a set of inter-connected development goals into a global agenda in the form of the Millennium Development Goals. The current goals and targets, as revised in 2007, are shown in Matrix 1.

Matrix 1: The Millennium Development Goals and Targets			
Goals		Targets	
1.	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	1.A	Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
		1.B	Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
		1.C	Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2.	Achieve universal primary education	2.A	Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
3.	Promote gender equality and empower women	3.A	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
4.	Reduce child mortality	4.A	Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
5.	Improve maternal health	5.A	Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
		5.B	Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health
6.	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	6.A	Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
		6.B	Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it
		6.C	Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Matrix 1: The Millennium Development Goals and Targets	
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	<p>7.A Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources</p> <p>7.B Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss</p> <p>7.C Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</p> <p>7.D By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</p>
8. Develop a global partnership for development	<p>8.A Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally</p> <p>8.B Address the special needs of the least developed countries. Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction</p> <p>8.C Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)</p> <p>8.D Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term</p> <p>8.E In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries</p> <p>8.F In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications</p>

The Millennium Development Goals represent a vision or aspiration at the global level, and are derived from the averages of long-term global trends (primarily during the 1970s and 1980s), projected forward to 2015. The global goals and targets **cannot** be taken directly as appropriate targets for any individual country. Progress in meeting the global targets should be assessed at the global level, and any failure to meet the targets reflects a failure of the

global community. Individual countries should adapt the global goals, targets and indicators to their specific situation and context, and their progress should be measured against these national goals, targets and indicators.

A. Gender in the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals include a specific goal on gender equality and women's empowerment—Goal 3. However, the role of gender in the goals has been the subject of criticism and a source of confusion among countries and agencies struggling to implement and monitor them at country level.

Since the submission of the early national reports, a number of studies have explored this issue. In 2003, the World Bank publication *Gender Equality & the Millennium Development Goals*² reviewed the MDGs as a whole from a gender perspective, emphasizing that achievement of Goal 3 was an essential input to the achievement of all eight goals.

In the same year, a gender review of 13 national MDG reports by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) focused on whether and how reports incorporated gender, mentioned women's issues and/or identified gender and women's issues in goals other than Goal 3. The review revealed that:

- gender equality and women's empowerment perspectives were not adequately mainstreamed into reports;
- women were still viewed in terms of their vulnerabilities and traditional gender roles;
- the approach to women under the other goals was instrumental—seeing improvements in women's situation as a means of achieving other goals, such as reducing child mortality—rather than rights-based and focused on realizing women's human rights as the primary objective.³

The review considered adding at least one gender-specific indicator to each target but, due to concerns about data availability, national capacities, and the reporting burden on countries, instead recommended more sex-disaggregated data showing differences between females and males, and more qualitative information on gender and women's issues.⁴

In 2005, the UNDP Bureau of Development Policy reviewed all the 78 national reports that were available against similar criteria, but in more detail and with more thorough gender analysis.⁵ The review identified three areas of concern that needed to be addressed to align reporting with strategic priorities for gender equality.

Range and scope of reporting

- reports tended to cover only the minimum set of indicators;
- data were rarely disaggregated along other axes of inequality such as class or ethnicity;
- where sex-disaggregated quantitative data were used, they were not supported by qualitative data or adequate gender analysis.

Linkages across goals

- targets and indicators overlap across goals but the approach to reporting made these cross-linkages invisible. For example, the dependence of child survival on gender equality was not apparent, and linkages were not drawn between eradicating poverty and hunger, gender equality and improving maternal health.

Ownership and buy-in

- there was wide variation in the extent to which non-government groups were involved in producing national MDG reports. Women's groups and gender experts should have been involved for all goals.

Gender and the Millennium Development Goals, a review published by Oxfam in June 2005, highlighted a number of weaknesses in both the goals themselves and their implementation:⁶

- Goal 1 views poverty as lack of income and food, but poor women experience poverty in many ways, including economic, social and political marginalization;
- the Millennium Development Goals do not support non-poor women whose security and human rights are threatened by, for example, domestic violence or barriers to political participation;
- the goals have a limited view of empowerment as a technical goal to be implemented by the same decision makers and institutions that have disempowered women in the past;
- the paralysing effect of poverty on women's ability (sometimes described as 'agency') to overcome inequality is not recognized or addressed;
- the goals adopt an instrumental approach on gender that uses women to deliver other aims without really addressing gender inequality or the needs and priorities of women.

Oxfam emphasized the need to view the goals from the perspective of the Millennium Declaration, and to more clearly link the Millennium Development Goals to women's human rights, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In 2007 a revision of the targets and indicators under the MDGs led to some important changes. Of particular significance to gender equality and women's empowerment was the inclusion of two new targets: 'achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people' and 'achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015'. In addition, all relevant indicators are to be disaggregated by both sex and age. This is a significant step forward, and reflects persistent inter-agency advocacy and technical work, particularly by UNIFEM.

B. Human Rights in the Millennium Development Goals

Although not explicitly presented within a human rights framework, the Millennium Development Goals have the potential to support a rights-based approach through their emphasis on investment in public goods such as health, education, water and sanitation and other infrastructure, and through their call for gender equality.⁷ In 2005, the then Secretary-General noted that development, security and human rights go hand in hand.⁸ Indeed, Section V of the Millennium Declaration commits Member States to promote 'respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development'. The Declaration explicitly referred to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁹

CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action each contain a wealth of information that is directly relevant to efforts to apply a gender-responsive rights-based approach to the Millennium Development Goals—further detailed in the International Agreements Appendix of this report. The three international agreements have complementary and mutually reinforcing roles:

- CEDAW highlights specific areas of women’s rights;
- the Beijing Platform Critical Areas of Concern provide a roadmap of the actions needed to achieve gender equality and women’s rights;
- the Millennium Development Goals, as the focus of the global development agenda, present an important opportunity for integrating a gender-responsive and rights-based approach into development in ways that will benefit all—women and men, girls and boys.

Both CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action emphasize the relationship between women’s rights and human rights:

- women’s rights are human rights, and human rights are also women’s rights;
- women, as human beings, have equal rights with men in all spheres of life, a principle not yet recognized in law in many countries, nor achieved in reality in any country;¹⁰
- due to their biological and gender roles, the loss of certain human rights—eg reproductive rights, and the right to a life free of all forms of violence—has a greater impact on women than on men.

C. A rights-based approach to development

A rights-based approach regards development, poverty alleviation and gender equality as processes toward the full realization of human rights. Equality and non-discrimination are important ends in themselves, not merely a means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Four basic principles must be met in a rights-based approach.¹¹ Each explicitly includes gender equality between women and men and a gender perspective that recognizes that women have different roles from men and therefore different needs, priorities and specific rights. The four principles are:

- **participation** in the process of decision-making by all those who are potentially affected, particularly women and poor people;
- **accountability** that enables rights-holders—females and males—to claim their rights and ensures that the State fulfils its obligations as duty bearer;
- **empowerment** that gives women and men the power, capacities, capabilities and access to resources to enable them to change their own lives;
- **non-discrimination** and specific attention to vulnerable groups. Discrimination is defined as ‘any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.’¹²

A rights-based approach emphasizes processes equally with outcomes. The key processes to be observed in implementing a rights-based approach are:

- **ensuring broad participation in decision-making**, especially of poor people and marginalized poor women;
- **holding governments accountable** through transparency of process and results and widespread access to information. All citizens, including women, have a right to hold their governments accountable for progress in implementing international and national commitments, including the MDGs, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform. In order to do this, they must have ready access to the necessary information;
- **empowering women**, especially poor women, through capacity-building to support informed and active participation;
- **removing discrimination and including women**, the poor and disadvantaged groups as active agents in development rather than as passive beneficiaries. The principle of non-discrimination requires an active effort to identify those who are discriminated against, trace the causes and mechanisms that result in discrimination, and actively address them.

The challenge for gender equality and women's empowerment lies in effective implementation of gender equality policies. This requires civil society and women's groups to be empowered to claim their rights, work with their governments, and monitor results through gender-responsive targets and indicators.

D. Lack of gender-responsive rights-based approach contributes to slow progress

In many countries, progress against the Millennium Development Goals at any reasonable level has been less than satisfactory. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations said in *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2005*, 'the report shows us how much progress has been made in some areas, and how large an effort is needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals in others'.¹³

One of the principal reasons for slow progress is that the policies and programmes designed to achieve the goals have not been implemented in a gender-responsive way to ensure that interventions are as effective in reaching and addressing the needs of women and girls as they are in addressing those of men and boys. In most countries, women and girls form more than half of the population, with important roles in the economy, managing and supporting their households and caring for family and community. However, a gender-responsive approach that equally benefits females and males is often not evident:

- the specific situations, problems and priorities of women and girls are not considered, leading to gender blind strategies and programmes. For example, overlooking the role of women and girls in an issue may mean that a key target group of a strategy is not reached. As a result, the country as a whole may suffer;
- targets are not disaggregated by sex or other socio-economic variables, meaning that the specific needs of social groups most in need, especially women and girls, are not prioritized. This often has negative consequences both for those groups and the country as a whole.

Women's roles are often overlooked

Agricultural policies and programmes often overlook the role of women in small livestock and crop farming, concentrating on male farmers. However, in countries such as Thailand, many men in farming households have migrated to urban areas in search of wage employment, leaving women to do most of the farming. If agricultural extension programmes and information that could increase agricultural productivity are not designed with this in mind, they may not reach these female-headed households, and their impact will be much less.

Another reason for the slow progress is failure to link implementation of the Millennium Development Goals 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, as well as that of their families, communities and the nation. In the great majority of national MDG reports, the issue of human rights is either absent or rates only a token reference.¹⁴ The basic principles of a rights-based approach are often weak or absent:

- in terms of **participation**, policies and programmes are developed without the participation of civil society or beneficiaries;
- in terms of **accountability**, information on policies, programmes and people's rights is not widely available, especially to women and disadvantaged groups, and the lack of transparency and avenues such as parliamentary committees or a free press make it difficult for civil society and other groups to hold governments accountable;
- in terms of **empowerment**, women, the poor, minorities, the disabled, internally displaced persons, refugees and other disadvantaged groups lack the capacity to participate on an active and informed basis in decision-making and monitoring;
- in terms of **non-discrimination**, governments fail to identify or address direct or indirect discrimination experienced by women, the poor, ethnic minorities, the disabled and disadvantaged groups.

For policies and programmes to be well designed and implemented, monitoring and reporting must also be gender-responsive and rights-based. However, with few exceptions, national monitoring and reporting are neither. The reasons include:

- **lack of data on gender issues:** data available for monitoring and reporting do not cover many gender issues where males and females have different interests or different outcomes. These may include inequalities between women and men in access to and ownership of resources such as land, livestock, credit and property; inequalities between females and males in inheritance; and inequalities in total workload due to women's combined responsibilities for labour force participation, household chores and family care;

- **gender-insensitive data collection methods:** most data are collected from interviews with male household heads, usually by male enumerators who are also supervised by men. The process is not sensitive to the different situations, roles and priorities of women and men or to the need for data on the specific needs of women, including women in disadvantaged groups;
- **lack of sex-disaggregation in data available for monitoring:** even when collected by sex, data are often not shown separately for females and males;
- **lack of sex-disaggregation for data at more detailed levels:** even where sex-disaggregated data are provided, the breakdown by sex is often limited only to totals and does not extend to more detailed levels of analysis. For example, the total labour force may be shown separately for females and males but detailed industrial and occupational classifications are shown only for the total labour force. Other areas where detailed sex-disaggregation should be undertaken include aged women and men, disabled females and males, females and males in minority groups, and females and males with HIV/AIDS or chronic diseases;¹⁵
- **lack of transparency and accountability:** data on progress toward targets are not widely disseminated, especially to women's groups, the poor and other disadvantaged groups. Data are also not presented in formats that are appropriate to non-technical or illiterate audiences, such as graphics, pictures, story boards or oral presentations.

Addressing these problems does not only benefit women and girls. It may also benefit men and boys, by revealing their specific needs. It is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for all—women and men, girls and boys.

Sex-disaggregated data reveal the needs of boys

Data comparing educational outcomes for females and males have revealed lower attendance rates among males in several countries (such as Lesotho, Mongolia, and Philippines) and poorer performance by boys in others (such as Australia and the United Kingdom). As a result, new programmes have been introduced to address the specific educational needs of boys.¹⁶

E. An opportunity to improve global gender-responsive rights-based data

The 2010 round of the Population and Housing Censuses provides an important opportunity to provide internationally comparable gender-responsive rights-based data on a global scale. A United Nations expert group meeting to review critical issues relevant to the planning of the 2010 round of Population and Housing Censuses emphasized 'the need for Governments to ensure that the census would be gender-responsive and that by revising the definitions, data disaggregated by gender would become available. Such data are necessary in the formulation of gender policies at national and subnational levels'.¹⁷ Countries such as India and Nepal, with the assistance of UNIFEM, implemented strategies to make their 2001 national population and housing censuses responsive to gender issues and differences between women and men. Their experience offers a basis for other countries to undertake similar initiatives for the 2010 census, with the support of the United Nations Statistics Division and, in Asia-Pacific, the UN-ESCAP Statistics Division.

A model for engendering the 2010 Population And Housing Census

In Nepal, women's groups worked with government to engender the 2001 Population and Housing Census to ensure that data were gender-responsive, covered gender issues and were disseminated to women's groups. Strategies were implemented in three areas:

Planning and Design

- gender training was provided for senior and middle management;
- a committee monitored equal treatment of women in project management;
- questionnaires and manuals were reviewed from a gender perspective, resulting in questions being added on property ownership for women and men;
- new occupation and industry codes were developed with the same level of detail for male- and female-dominated occupations and industries;
- a media campaign raised awareness on the need for data on women.

Data Collection

- gender training was held for all interviewers and supervisors;
- a target was set for 50 percent of enumerators and supervisors to be women. (The actual figures achieved were only 20 percent of interviewers and 10 percent of supervisors, due to a lack of qualified women and the extent of gender barriers faced by women in Nepal, particularly in rural areas);
- a public campaign emphasized that women work, and that their work is economically important.

Data Processing and Analysis

- all individual data were disaggregated separately for women and men, and tables were reviewed from a gender perspective;
- special tables were added comparing labour force participation of women in male- and female-headed households; marital status for male and female household heads; and women's and men's ownership of housing, land and livestock for male- and female-headed households;
- the extended production boundary of the 1993 System of National Accounts, which includes fetching water and fuel as work, was used. This increased labour force participation of females by 9 percent compared with 5 percent for males.¹⁸

F. A gender-responsive rights-based approach to MDG reporting

MDG reports are mechanisms for holding the 189 governments that attended the Millennium Summit accountable for the commitments they made under the Millennium Declaration in 2000. The first comprehensive five-yearly report on progress was released by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2005, and the next is scheduled for 2010. Regional and subregional reports have also been prepared by some of the regional UN Commissions. All these reports are useful political tools for motivating governments to improve their performance through comparisons with other countries at the regional and global levels.

However, at the national level, monitoring should be more regular and linked to routine data analysis and advocacy. Long-term goals and five-yearly reports are of limited practical interest to 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.

National MDG reports, linked to CEDAW reports and national plans of action for women and gender equality, can provide the basis for regular monitoring. However, civil society groups, especially women's groups, need to participate more actively to achieve genuine accountability and gain value from monitoring and reports. For example, trends in sex-disaggregated and gender indicators can be used to support sustained campaigns of advocacy and lobbying to improve the gender-responsiveness of policies and programme implementation. Women's groups should therefore play a more pro-active role in:

- monitoring national MDG indicators on a regular, preferably annual, basis;
- analysing reasons for slow progress and identifying achievable and relevant intermediate targets;
- promoting the adoption of indicators which are more gender-responsive and rights-based;
- ensuring that all data and indicators are shown separately for females and males and presented in formats that are usable by non-technical audiences and useful for lobbying and advocacy;
- using monitoring results in lobbying and advocacy with both decision makers and communities.

To achieve this, it is necessary to build the capacity of women's groups, yet capacity-building for civil society groups often overlooks women and is gender blind in providing conditions such as childcare, gender equality behavioural norms, appropriate timing and locations that enable women to participate. For example, the 2003 MDG Guidelines recognize the need to build the capacity of civil society to use data and information effectively to improve the quality and accountability of governance. However, they do not specify the sections of civil society, such as women and vulnerable groups, that should be prioritized.

Capacity-building efforts also need to incorporate mechanisms where the capacity developed can be used to work with States Parties to meet their obligations under national and international commitments such as the MDGs. These mechanisms can be as simple as annual meetings between government officials and civil society representatives, including women's groups, to review progress on indicators for intermediate targets. Other approaches might include use of the media to publicize progress.