

PART TWO
ADAPTING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT
GOALS TO THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Adapting Millennium Development Goals to the National Context

As noted earlier, the global goals and targets of the Millennium Development Goals were derived from global statistical trends to 1990, and are not directly applicable to individual countries. For countries that have already reached higher standards they are largely irrelevant, while in poorer countries they are largely unattainable.¹⁹ Countries need to adapt the global set of goals, targets and indicators to their national context to produce their own national MDG reporting framework. When appropriate, countries may then need to adapt this national set to conditions at subnational level. In the process, both gender and human rights must be taken into consideration.

CEDAW country reports and national Plans of Action based on the Beijing Platform often include more relevant intermediate targets, as well as information on how these might most effectively and efficiently be achieved, and on specific actions to which governments have already made commitments. Women's groups should ensure that these documents contribute to the development of national and subnational MDG reporting frameworks.

The process of developing the national and subnational MDG reporting frameworks should include the following steps:

- undertaking a gender-responsive and rights-based analysis of the goal;
- developing the national set of long-term goals, targets and indicators;
- determining strategies to be used to achieve these goals, and setting intermediate targets;
- determining the intermediate targets and indicators;
- determining the data to be collected.

Part Two of this handbook is designed to assist countries and agencies in this process of developing national goals, indicators and targets. It begins with a more detailed discussion of the process outlined above, before providing detailed information relating to each goal in turn.

A. Gender-responsive rights-based analysis

The first step in developing a national set of targets and indicators for a particular goal is to analyse the global goal from a gender-responsive rights-based perspective, taking into account the specific national or subnational context. Some of the issues which may be relevant are presented in section A under each goal below.

This analysis should lead on to the determination of strategic priorities. Strategic priorities are those policy or programme options that will potentially have the largest impact toward achieving a goal at the lowest cost within a specific local or national context. Typically, strategic priorities will be determined by analysis of the barriers to achievement of the particular goal, an assessment of the resources available and an evaluation of the likely success of various strategies in overcoming them. The relative importance of these various factors, combined with an assessment of the most effective, and cost-effective, ways of addressing each, and the probability of success within a given time frame, will inform judgements about the most strategic priorities.

For example, the major barriers to achievement of gender equality and empowerment may be economic—lack of paid employment for women; socio-cultural—low social status for women in the society; or human rights—the prevalence of gender-based violence, low levels of education and literacy among females or women’s lack of participation in decision-making. The strategic priorities under this goal may therefore vary across countries—economic empowerment for women in one country; eliminating gender-based violence in another; and in a third, incentives for parents to send girls to school combined with economic policies that create paid employment for them when they complete their education.

The selection of strategic priorities leads into the setting of national long-term targets and indicators. Typically, long-term targets will be time-limited to 2015, in line with the most of the global targets. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to have a different time horizon, as with global targets 6.B (by 2010), 7.B (by 2010) and 7.D (by 2020).

B. National long-term targets and indicators

Section B under each goal suggests modified or new targets and/or indicators based on the issues identified in the gender analysis. These are proposed as a starting point for consideration. Countries should adopt or modify these, or develop new targets and indicators, to reflect their strategic priorities. Although the data that relate to these national long-term indicators may not be comparable at the global level, the indicators should still be used in country reports to monitor progress at the national level.

C. Gender-responsive rights-based strategies

Section C under each goal suggests gender-responsive rights-based strategies which could be adopted by countries to address the issues and strategic priorities identified in the initial analysis. These lists are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather, to be a starting point. Not all will be feasible or appropriate for all countries. Countries should select and adapt these suggestions based on local circumstances.

D. National intermediate targets and indicators

To guide policy, motivate governments and ensure accountability, realistic intermediate targets should be set—preferably with separate targets for females and males, as well as specific disadvantaged groups. Intermediate targets are shorter-term targets which, if achieved, will contribute to attainment of the global target and goal. In themselves they are insufficient to achieve the goal.

For example, an intermediate target for ‘improving maternal health’ could be ‘providing all women, including those in rural and isolated areas and poor women, with access to emergency delivery services for childbirth’. This is an *intermediate* target because, in addition to emergency services being available, women must also be sufficiently informed to make use of them and economically and socially empowered to make decisions about their needs independently of their husbands or other family members.

Intermediate targets should, ideally, be annual targets. Each should have indicators—usually more than one—disaggregated by sex and for each subgroup in the poor population. These indicators should also have shorter time horizons, as they relate to specific strategies

designed to achieve the intermediate targets. Section C under each goal suggests national intermediate targets and indicators for consideration.

Numeric targets are important for accountability, and many of the suggested targets include percentage targets. These are marked with an asterisk to indicate that they should be adapted to suit what is both feasible and necessary to achieve national targets.

The suggested timeframes in the targets should also be adjusted to take account of how often data can be collected. Administrative data from government are more likely to be available on a regular, at least annual, basis, whereas most surveys are conducted at 3-5 year intervals. Where data are available, intermediate indicators should be monitored at least annually and the results used to lobby policy-makers and programme managers to improve their strategies.

It is to these intermediate targets that governments should be held accountable.

E. Types of indicators

In most cases, several long-term and intermediate indicators are provided for each target. Some will be more relevant and useful than others in particular contexts or countries. Some may be most useful at the subnational level, others at national level. However, in general as with the global MDGs a 'package' of indicators would be needed to adequately monitor progress and provide input to the development or refinement of policies and programmes.

Different types of indicators may be required:

- output indicators usually relate to activities that must be conducted in order to achieve a certain outcome. For example, 'the number of sexuality education classes conducted in schools or communities' is an output indicator;
- process indicators relate to ongoing processes that are required to contribute to the achievement of a goal. For example, 'agricultural extension departments routinely record and report participation in programmes by sex' is a process indicator;
- outcome indicators relate to significant outcomes that contribute directly to achievement of a goal. For example, 'female share of wage employment in agriculture, industry and service sectors' measures an outcome that directly contributes to the elimination of income poverty among women.

Some suggested indicators use numbers, while others include percentages or ratios. Numbers show short-term changes, whereas percentages, which change more slowly, reflect longer-term changes. Changes relating specifically to women show whether women are benefiting from policies and programmes. However, ratios of benefits for women compared to men are needed to show whether gender gaps are being closed.

The 2007 revised list of MDG indicators includes an overarching note that 'all indicators should be disaggregated by sex and urban/rural as far as possible'. Indicator 2.3 under Goal 2—'literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men'—is the only indicator outside Goal 3 that is explicitly disaggregated by sex in the official list. In this report, each matrix of suggested indicators includes an overall note on how data should be disaggregated, with some indicators including specific disaggregation. In national sets of MDG indicators, it is highly desirable to include the specific disaggregation as part of each indicator, so that this is not overlooked during data collection and reporting.

F. Data collection

Some of the suggested long-term and intermediate indicators require data sources such as nutrition surveys, time use surveys and labour force surveys that are not available for all countries. However, at national or subnational level, these sources may be available.

In other cases, data for the suggested indicators may be available by making changes to current data collection methods. For example, household, agriculture or industry surveys, bank credit records and reports, and some government reports may be able to be modified to provide sex-disaggregated data and data on gender issues.

In other cases, the issues may be sufficiently important for the country to invest in collecting the required data.

G. A note on numbering

- This report uses the following numbering system for targets and indicators:
- long-term targets and indicators begin with “L”;
- intermediate targets and indicators begin with “I”;
- the second character is the number of the corresponding global goal;
- the third character is a sequential letter within the goal—upper case in the long-term sets, lowercase in the intermediate sets;
- indicators have a fourth character, sequentially numbered within the target.

This system makes it easy to distinguish between global and national targets/indicators, and between long-term and short-term, within this report. This distinction may be useful to retain when a consolidated list of national goals, targets and indicators is produced. However, an alternative numbering system may be preferred.