



# Millennium Development Goals

NATIONAL REPORTS  
A LOOK THROUGH A GENDER LENS



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May 2003

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# BACKGROUND

## 1.1 The Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, Heads of State and representatives of the Governments of 191 countries met at the United Nations and adopted the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration outlines the central concerns of the global community - peace, security, development, environmental sustainability, human rights and democracy - and articulates a set of inter-connected and mutually reinforcing goals for sustainable development. These, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), are based on the major goals and targets agreed upon at the UN Conferences of the 1990s, which have been synthesised into a global agenda for development.

The Millennium Declaration commits the international community and member states of the UN to the achievement of eight major goals.

1. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achievement of universal primary education
3. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women
4. Reduction of child mortality
5. Improvement in maternal health
6. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability
8. Developing a global partnership for development.

Quantitative targets have been defined for each goal, most of which are to be achieved by 2015. Indicators have been selected to monitor progress on each of the targets. A list of 18 targets and 48 indicators has been agreed upon to ensure comparability across countries and facilitate tracking of progress at global, regional and national levels.

The Secretary-General is mandated to report annually on the progress towards the MDGs to the UN General Assembly. Additionally, most signatories to the Millennium Declaration are preparing country-level MDG Reports (MDGRs), which are potentially a mechanism for regular tracking of progress towards attainment of the targets.

In preparing national MDGRs, each country has the flexibility to set its own targets. Nearly 40 country reports have been released as of 3 June 2003. Most of these documents include an analysis of the development context, assessment of the situation with regard to each goal, identification of major challenges in achieving each target, highlights of actions taken to create a supportive environment, and enumeration of the priorities for development assistance.

## 1.2 Gender and the MDGs

Goal 3 - "Promote gender equality and empowerment of women" - is the culmination of years of determined advocacy and action by the international women's movement. The high priority accorded to Goal 3 represents a global affirmation of women's rights and gender equality as core values of development.

This hard-won recognition that "development, if not engendered, is endangered" was also an outcome of debates and discussions at the UN Conferences of the 1990s, including the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). Growing recognition of the gender dimensions of development paradigms and policies during the 1990s created the momentum for a consensus on gender mainstreaming - the incorporation of gender perspectives into all aspects of development theory and practice - as a key strategy to achieve gender equality.

There is a clear correspondence between the MDGs and other global instruments related to gender equality, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. However, unlike the other goals, Goal 3 is not specific to any particular sector or issue, since gender equality and women's rights underpin all the other goals. It has been pointed out that attempting to achieve the MDGs without promoting gender equality will both raise the costs and decrease the likelihood of achieving the other goals.<sup>1</sup> The reverse is equally true - achievement of Goal 3 depends on progress made on each of the other goals. The implication is clear - while accurate reporting against Goal 3 is critical, tracking gender gaps and inequalities against each of the other MDG targets and indicators is no less important.

At the national level, MDGRs and the process of MDG reporting represent a new opportunity for gender advocates to enlarge the space for dialogue and build a broad national commitment to women's rights and gender equality. Apart from their role in monitoring and tracking key indicators of women's empowerment, national MDGRs are also aimed at facilitating systematic policy dialogue on critical development challenges and building a supportive environment for translating commitments into actual results on the ground. Ideally, MDGRs are expected to reach out to a range of national actors including communities, civil society groups and the media, initiating wider debate and dialogue around key development choices and enabling citizens to demand accountability from their governments.

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<sup>1</sup> Carlsson, Helene and Cecilia Valdivieso. 2003. "Gender Equality and the MDGs." Unpublished World Bank discussion paper.

In several countries, the MDGR process has been “localised” and extended to the sub-national level through the preparation of regional reports. Effective gender mainstreaming would therefore expand the possibilities of building links between actions for gender mainstreaming at macro and micro levels, and encompassing a wider constituency of support for these actions.

National MDGRs are also relevant to the wider donor community, particularly in targeting and optimising their support to national development efforts. Goal 8 (“Developing a global partnership for development”) is focused on making visible the linkages between national and international commitments to achieving the MDGs, with clear resource implications for action on gender equality. In addition, reporting against each of the MDGs is expected to identify priorities for action and also provides a basis for resource mobilization. Effective mainstreaming of gender issues into MDGRs can thus be expected to have significant long-term impacts in terms of enhanced resources and focused support for action on gender issues within the country.

Despite scepticism about the feasibility of achieving any of the MDGs within the projected time-frame, it is generally agreed that they represent a “strategic talking-point for assessing what the barriers to the achievement of goals are, and provide a tool with which to hold both donor agencies and governments accountable”<sup>2</sup>.

Given the above, it is important for women’s organisations and gender equality advocates to use the opportunity created by the MDGRs and the MDG reporting process to ensure greater public visibility and awareness of gender inequality, and demand a stronger policy commitment for gender equality.

Several recent studies and reports highlight the importance of mainstreaming gender concerns into the MDGs. These include a gender analysis of the MDGs commissioned by the Gender Programme in the Bureau for Development Policy UNDP<sup>3</sup>, which reviews the goals and targets from a gender perspective. An analysis of targets and indicators under Goal 3 has also been commissioned by the Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality and Education<sup>4</sup>. The UNIFEM bi-annual report “Progress of the World’s Women 2002” is devoted to the MDGs and their implications for gender equality. A UNDP programme on Gender and the MDGs, initiated with support from DFID-UK, is also underway and is expected to make a substantive contribution to engendering the MDGRs.

### 1.3 The Present Review

The present exercise builds on and complements the recent evaluation of MDG reporting in eight countries being carried out by the Evaluation Office of UNDP. One of the parameters of the evaluation was an analysis of strategies for mainstreaming gender into the process of MDG reporting.

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<sup>2</sup> Subrahmanian, Ramya. “MDGs: Is the Glass Half Full or Half Empty?” Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. 2002.

<sup>3</sup> “Gender and the MDGRs”. UNDP-WEDO Discussion Paper. Unpublished. 2003

<sup>4</sup> “Promises to Keep: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. A background paper for the Task force on Education and Gender Equality of the Millennium Project”. Caren Grown, Geeta Rao Gupta and Zahia Khan, ICRW. 2003

The review presented in this paper focuses on a selection of published MDG reports to assess the extent to which gender concerns and perspectives have been mainstreamed into discussions under various goals. The MDGRs of 13 countries have been scanned along three parameters.

- ❖ Incorporation of gender issues/perspectives under goals other than Goal 3.
- ❖ Mention/recognition of women's issues under goals other than Goals 3 and 5.
- ❖ Content/perspective of gender/women's issues under each goal.

The MDGRs were selected to provide a regional spread and include reports authored by the UN System, national governments and civil society/research institutes.

The results of the scan are presented as a series of tables in the next section of this report.

# REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

## 2.1 Gender as a Cross-cutting Issue

Table 1 presents the results of a preliminary scan of the selected MDGRs, to track the visibility of women’s concerns and/or gender issues across goals. Any mention of gender or women, regardless of content, was scored as a positive and is represented as a solid cell in the table.

*Table 1. Gender as a cross-cutting issue in selected MDGRs*

COUNTRY	Ownership	Gender Issues Under Each Goal								Women’s Issues Under Each Goal							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Albania</b>	Independent consultants. Published by UN System. Foreword by Government.																
<b>Armenia</b>	‘HD Experts Club’. UN System data used.																
<b>Bolivia</b>	UN Country Team.																
<b>Cameroon</b>	UN Country Team.																
<b>Egypt</b>	Independent NGO. Published by UN.																
<b>Lithuania</b>	UN System.																
<b>Mauritius</b>	Government of Mauritius and UN System in partnership.																
<b>Mozambique</b>	Not specified.																
<b>Nepal</b>	Government of Nepal and UN System in partnership.																
<b>Poland</b>	Independent institute. Published by UN.																
<b>Saudi</b>	UN Country Team.																
<b>Tanzania</b>	UN Country Team including WB and IMF.																
<b>Vietnam</b>	UN Country Team.																



Table 1 leads to the following conclusions.

- ❖ Gender is not reflected as a cross-cutting issue in any of the reports.
- ❖ Goal 3, which deals specifically with gender, is the only goal where gender issues have been consistently addressed across countries.
- ❖ Apart from Goal 3, gender issues have been most frequently addressed under Goal 5 (maternal mortality), finding mention in seven out of the 13 reports studied.
- ❖ Gender issues have been mentioned under Goal 1 (poverty) in six reports.
- ❖ Gender issues are not reflected under Goal 7 (environment) and Goal 8 (development cooperation) in any of the reports.
- ❖ MDGRs for Armenia and Tanzania show the greatest degree of integration of gender issues across sectors, with gender issues being mentioned in the context of five out of 8 goals.
- ❖ Women's issues have also not been mentioned consistently across goals in any of the reports.
- ❖ Apart from Goals 3 and 5 (maternal mortality), women and women's issues find mention most often under Goal 6 (in the context of HIV/AIDS, in 10 out of 13 reports), Goal 2 (education - in eight out of 13 reports) and Goal 1 (poverty - in seven reports). Women are mentioned under Goal 4 (infant mortality) in only four reports.
- ❖ Women find mention under Goal 7 (environment) and Goal 8 (development cooperation) in only one report each (Mozambique and Mauritius respectively).

It seems clear from the above that gender mainstreaming in the MDGRs is still patchy, with discussion around gender issues restricted primarily to the obvious sectors of women's empowerment and maternal mortality. Women's issues find somewhat greater visibility, including under Goal 1 (poverty), which is particularly critical for women.

Of the 13 reports studied, seven were prepared by UN Country teams, four by independent expert groups, and two by the government and the UN Country team in partnership. However, the extent to which gender issues are reflected across goals appears to be independent of the authorship or ownership of the reports.

#### Good Practices

- Integration of gender issues across Goals 1-5 in Armenia and Tanzania reports.
- Mention of women in the context of environment (Mauritius) and development cooperation (Mozambique).

The scan used to generate the above table merely records mention of gender/women's issues without reference to their specific content. The tables in the following sections are based on somewhat deeper exploration of reporting under each goal to analyse the content of any references to gender and/or women.

## 2.2 Gender and Poverty

Table 2 presents detailed information on gender and women's issues discussed under Goal 1 ("To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger").

*Table 2. Gender/women's issues under Goal 1 in selected MDGRs*

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Gendered Analysis
<b>Albania</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States that pregnant/lactating women are at high risk of malnutrition.</li> <li>• 'Vulnerable women in situations of distress' mentioned as a target group for WFP.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Armenia</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States that UNDP is supporting gender mainstreaming in PRSP and in HD approach.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Bolivia</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender equity identified as central cross-cutting issue.</li> <li>• Actions for gender equity categorized as               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improving opportunities;</li> <li>- creation of capabilities and exercise of citizenship;</li> <li>- protection and promotion of rights.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	None
<b>Cameroon</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household Consumption Survey not sex disaggregated, but evidence from nutrition, health surveys cited to support contention that women are among poorest.</li> <li>• Mentions that a gender analysis of food security is required.</li> <li>• Targeted interventions for women feature in poverty plan.</li> <li>• Priorities for donor assistance include support in reducing gender disparities.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Egypt</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women without identity cards categorised as 'ultra poor'.</li> <li>• Statement that 20% of poor households are women-headed.</li> <li>• Feminisation of poverty identified as priority for donor assistance.</li> <li>• Reduction of gender gap mentioned as part of poverty challenge.</li> </ul>	None

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Gendered Analysis
Lithuania	Poverty headcount disaggregated by sex.	None	None
Mauritius	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and female-headed households identified as poorest.</li> <li>• Poverty of older women stated to be a problem.</li> <li>• Reference to UNDP study on feminisation of poverty and need for more research and data.</li> </ul>	None
Mozambique	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender and women's empowerment mentioned as concomitants of poverty strategy.</li> <li>• Women's education mentioned as a strategy for pro-poor growth.</li> </ul>	Women's lack of education mentioned as a cause of poverty.
Nepal	No	None	None
Poland	No	None	None
Saudi	No	None	None
Tanzania	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women identified as vulnerable group.</li> </ul>	None
Vietnam	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Gender development' mentioned as component of an integrated programme to tackle poverty and hunger.</li> </ul>	Women's lack of decision-making power, work burden, inadequate knowledge of child care and men's lack of involvement in child care identified as cause of child malnutrition.

Table 2 shows that although gender issues and/or women and women's issues have been mentioned in nine out of the 13 MDGs studied, the content of the mention is not substantive in all cases.

- ❖ Only one report (Lithuania) contains sex-disaggregated poverty data.
- ❖ Of the nine reports that mention gender and/or women in connection with poverty, only five make specific reference to gender inequality as a source of poverty and enumerate gender-related interventions as part of poverty plans.
- ❖ Women in general, or particular categories of women, are stated to be particularly vulnerable to poverty (four reports) and feminisation of poverty is identified as a challenge (four reports), but no data is presented to support these assertions.

- ❖ Only three reports make specific reference to the need for more data and further research on women’s poverty.
- ❖ Only two reports (Mozambique and Vietnam) bring a gendered perspective to bear on the analysis of the causes, impacts or implications of women’s poverty.
- ❖ Only one report (Bolivia) goes outside ‘the poverty box’ and makes a connection between poverty reduction and actions to build capabilities, increase opportunities and ensure rights for women.

**Good Practices**

- Poverty data disaggregated by sex in Lithuania report.
- Gendered analyses of poverty in Mozambique and Vietnam reports.
- Recognition in Bolivia report, that denial of rights and freedoms is central to women’s poverty.

It therefore appears that the opportunity provided by the MDGRs to bring gendered perspectives definitively into the larger poverty debate has not been sufficiently or effectively used. More than half of the reports studied reflect a clear and welcome recognition that women are disproportionately affected by poverty. However, empirical evidence has not been presented to support this statement.

### 2.3 Gender and Education

Table 3 highlights the analysis under Goal 2 (“To achieve universal primary education”)

*Table 3. Gender/women's issues under Goal 2 in selected MDGRs*

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women’s Issues	Analysis of Causality
<b>Albania</b>	Data on literacy rates and primary-to-secondary continuation rate disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mentions that boys from poor families are dropping out of school.</li> </ul>	Poverty and need to work identified as causes of boys drop-out.
<b>Armenia</b>	No	None	No
<b>Bolivia</b>	‘Gender Asymmetry Index’ calculated based on enrolment data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender gap identified as an issue in education.</li> <li>● Emphasis on close interaction between Ministries of Gender Matters and Education.</li> </ul>	No
<b>Cameroon</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender mentioned as a donor priority in education sector.</li> </ul>	No
<b>Egypt</b>	Primary enrolment data disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bridging gender and regional gaps identified as national and donor priority in education sector.</li> <li>● States that strategy for girls’ education is being developed.</li> </ul>	Fluctuations in enrolment ratios attributed to ‘supply-side’ factors.

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causality
<b>Lithuania</b>	All data disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing the number of women in 'hard science' disciplines as long-term strategy for reducing the gender wage gap.</li> </ul>	No
<b>Mauritius</b>	No	None	No
<b>Mozambique</b>	Primary enrolment data disaggregated by sex and region to show disparities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on women's/community involvement for increasing girls' enrolment.</li> </ul>	No
<b>Nepal</b>	No	None	No
<b>Poland</b>	Enrolment rates disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mention of reverse gender gap in tertiary education.</li> </ul>	No
<b>Saudi</b>	Enrolment and literacy rates disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender gap stated to be narrowing as a result of pro-women policies.</li> </ul>	No
<b>Tanzania</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Country stated to be on track on gender targets.</li> <li>Gender gap in performance indicators noted as an issue, cross-referenced to discussion on Goal 3.</li> </ul>	No
<b>Vietnam</b>	Net Enrolment Ratio disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing girls' access to education identified as a priority for national actors and donors.</li> <li>Need for sex-disaggregated data at sub-national levels emphasized.</li> </ul>	No

As the above table demonstrates, gender issues have been mainstreamed to a certain extent under Goal 2 in most reports.

- ❖ Sex disaggregated data on enrolment and/or retention and literacy have been presented in eight out of 13 reports.
- ❖ One report (Bolivia) has developed an "Asymmetry Index" to measure the gender gap in education.
- ❖ One report (Lithuania) presents a complete set of sex disaggregated data on access to primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- ❖ Bridging the gender gap in education has been identified as a national priority in seven reports.

#### Good Practices

- Data on key indicators disaggregated by sex in Lithuania report.
- Calculation of 'Asymmetry Index' in Bolivia report.

- ❖ Only three reports make absolutely no mention of gender issues in education, and refer to 'children' as an undifferentiated category.

The greater visibility of gender issues under Goal 2 as compared to Goal 1 appears to be an outcome of the fact that gender equality is an explicit component of the target. On the other hand, the fact that an education target is also incorporated into Goal 3 may be a factor behind the absence of any attempt to go behind the data to even list, if not analyse, the reasons for gender gaps in education.

## 2.4 Gender and Infant Mortality

Table 4 presents highlights of discussions under Goal 4 ("To reduce child mortality") in the reports studied.

*Table 4. Gender/women's issues under Goal 4 in selected MDGRs*

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causes
<b>Albania</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional rights of pregnant mothers and children highlighted, including non-discrimination against children born outside marriage.</li> <li>• Link between high IMR and education/income levels of mothers.</li> <li>• Need for sex-disaggregated IMR data stressed.</li> </ul>	Traditional preference for male child in rural areas mentioned as a factor that leads to higher IMR for girls.
<b>Armenia</b>	No	None	None
<b>Bolivia</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building of mothers identified as priority.</li> </ul>	Women's inadequate knowledge of appropriate child care practices mentioned as contributing factor in high child mortality.
<b>Cameroon</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor health of mothers and limited knowledge of child health issues identified as challenges.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Egypt</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Cultural and attitudinal factors such as early marriage and fertility preferences" identified as contributing to high IMR.</li> <li>• Suggestion that boys are favoured over girls in health care.</li> <li>• Mother's education linked to child survival.</li> <li>• Need to address gender disparities stated to be a donor priority.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Lithuania</b>	No	None	None

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causes
Mauritius	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maternal age and health listed among factors influencing IMR.</li> </ul>	None
Mozambique	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor health of mothers and low access to health services listed among causes of high IMR.</li> </ul>	None
Nepal	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentions that there is no gender gap in under 5 mortality.</li> </ul>	None
Poland	Gender disaggregated data on age-specific death rates.	None	"Healthy behaviour in pregnant women" stated to be behind reductions in child mortality.
Saudi	No	None	None
Tanzania	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty and poor health of mothers identified as causes of high IMR.</li> </ul>	None
Vietnam	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women's inadequate knowledge of proper care and feeding practices listed among challenges.</li> </ul>	None

Women's issues find a fairly prominent place in discussions of infant mortality. However, mention of gender issues is absent in discussions under this goal in the majority of reports.

- ❖ Women's issues are incorporated into discussions on infant mortality in nine out of 13 reports.
- ❖ In four reports, discussion on women is focused on linkages between the age, health, poverty, education and knowledge levels of mothers, and the survival chances of infants.
- ❖ The discussion on infant mortality is clearly gendered in two reports (Egypt and Albania), which include analyses of cultural and attitudinal factors leading to gender differentials in infant mortality.
- ❖ Only one report (Poland) provides data on age-specific death rates that has been disaggregated by sex.
- ❖ One report (Armenia) stresses the need for sex-disaggregated data on child mortality and survival.
- ❖ One report (Nepal) mentions that there is no gender differential in child mortality, but does not provide disaggregated data to corroborate this statement.

**Good Practices**

- Data on age-specific death rates disaggregated by sex in Poland report.
- Gendered discussion on infant mortality in Albania and Egypt reports.

In the majority of reports, discussion on women's issues is based on the perception that women are, and should be, solely responsible for the care and survival of infants. Given the importance