

placed on women as mothers in most countries, the complete absence of any mention of women in four out of 13 reports is surprising.

## 2.5 Gender and Maternal Mortality/Reproductive Health

Table 5 presents the results of a scan of discussions under Goal 5 in the reports studied.

*Table 5. Gender/women's issues under Goal 5 in selected MDGRs*

COUNTRY	Gender Issues	Analysis of Causes
<b>Albania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides detailed statistics on indicators of reproductive health, including women's nutrition, access to contraception, pre- and post-natal care and general health care.</li> <li>Notes changes over the last decade in traditional attitudes to sexuality and reproductive health, but decisions related to reproductive health are still considered a male prerogative (particularly in rural areas).</li> <li>Emphasises that the Government has endorsed a human rights-based approach to reproductive health, and highlights provision in Penal Code that makes violence against a pregnant woman a criminal offence.</li> <li>Noted that abortion continues to be used as a method of contraception and gives details of new law on termination of pregnancy and law on maternity leave.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Overall unfavourable status of women" listed among factors influencing MMR.</li> <li>Men's role in women's reproductive health discussed.</li> </ul>
<b>Armenia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reluctance of young people to marry cited as cause for concern.</li> <li>Low level of economic development listed as a barrier to affordable maternity care.</li> <li>Culture of gender equality emphasized as a facilitating factor for maternal health.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emigration of men, unemployment, uncertainty about the future listed among causes of fall in number of marriages.</li> <li>Fall in birth rate and fewer births among older women cited as causes for fall in MMR.</li> </ul>
<b>Bolivia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women's limited access to health services stated to increase vulnerability.</li> <li>Need to ensure 'warmth' of public health services emphasized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women's inability to make health-related decisions, which are taken by men, highlighted as cause of maternal mortality.</li> </ul>
<b>Cameroon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes that men have greater knowledge and higher rates of contraceptive use than women.</li> </ul>	None

COUNTRY	Gender Issues	Analysis of Causes
<b>Egypt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural and attitudinal barriers highlighted, including women's reluctance to approach male doctors.</li> <li>• FGM highlighted as a major issue.</li> <li>• Innovative strategies such as involving older women as health motivators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's lack of education, mobility and need for husband's permission listed as barriers to health-seeking behaviour.</li> </ul>
<b>Lithuania</b>	None	None
<b>Mauritius</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-induced and back-street abortions listed among causes of high MMR.</li> <li>• Door-to-door IEC programme for working women listed among priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty and lack of information identified as causes for reliance on unsafe methods for abortions.</li> <li>• Lack of reproductive health education in schools cited as limitation.</li> </ul>
<b>Mozambique</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted that young women in prime childbearing years are also high-risk group for HIV/AIDS.</li> <li>• Poor socio-economic status of women and limited involvement of men in reproductive health identified as challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early pregnancy, unsafe abortions and HIV infection listed as causes of high MMR.</li> </ul>
<b>Nepal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early marriage and childbirth identified as causes of high MMR.</li> <li>• Need for "rapid socio-economic transition and improvement in women's status" emphasized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriarchal values and cultural rules identified as cause for women's low access to contraceptives.</li> </ul>
<b>Poland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decline in MMR attributed to higher status of women, greater respect for women's rights.</li> <li>• Heavy manual work by pregnant women included among risk factors.</li> <li>• Teenage pregnancies identified as serious issue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of reasons behind increase in teenage pregnancies includes "instrumental approach to sex", lack of sex education, pornography and distorted presentation of sexuality in mass media.</li> </ul>
<b>Saudi</b>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rise in literacy and women's education cited as causes of decline in MMR.</li> </ul>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender inequity identified as factor that prevents women from making reproductive choices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on reproductive health services mentions that because these are located in maternity clinics that are the domain of older and married women, they are not accessible to adolescents.</li> </ul>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited male participation in RH identified as challenge.</li> <li>• Gender norms stated to affect vulnerability and health-seeking behaviour of pregnant women.</li> <li>• "Gender-based approach" to safe motherhood recommended.</li> </ul>	None

Mainstreaming of gender issues into MDGRs (other than under Goal 3) has perhaps been most visible in the context of Goal 5. This goal has been defined in terms of maternal mortality in the global framework of MDGs, but a number of countries have chosen to redefine it in the broader context of reproductive health.

❖ The discussion on maternal mortality/reproductive health is gendered in all but two of the reports (Lithuania and Saudi Arabia), with gender inequality being clearly identified as a contributing factor in maternal mortality.

**Good Practices**

- Highlighting of Constitutional and legal provisions related to women’s reproductive rights in Albania report.

- ❖ Men’s roles in reproductive health have been highlighted in seven out of 13 reports.
- ❖ Patriarchal norms and cultural barriers that limit women’s mobility, autonomy and decision-making on contraception and health are analysed and identified as critical issues in seven reports.
- ❖ One of the reports (Albania) specifically highlights Constitutional and legal provisions to safeguard women’s reproductive rights.
- ❖ ‘Supply-side’ factors including inappropriate, inconveniently located and unaffordable services are highlighted in six of the 13 reports as reasons for women’s limited access to health.

The incorporation of a gendered perspective into the analysis of maternal mortality in the majority of reports is encouraging, as is the placing of the issue in the broader context of reproductive health and rights. Commitments are made in several reports to policy measures for the promotion of women’s rights.

## 2.6 Gender and Health

Table 6 shows the extent and content of coverage of gender and/or women’s issues under Goal 6 in relation to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

*Table 6. Gender/women's issues under Goal 6 in selected MDGRs*

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women’s Issues	Analysis of Causes
<b>Albania</b>	Incidence figures cited separately for men and women from vulnerable groups.	None	None
<b>Armenia</b>	Data for condom use disaggregated by sex.	None	None
<b>Bolivia</b>	HIV prevalence rates disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnant women and sex workers identified as high-risk groups.</li> </ul>	None

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causes
<b>Cameroon</b>	HIV prevalence rates disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of condom use among sex workers listed as challenge.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Egypt</b>	HIV prevalence and contraceptive use data disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education for women emphasized as a strategy to combat HIV/AIDS.</li> <li>Traditional beliefs and religious prohibitions against sex outside marriage considered barriers to spread of HIV/AIDS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erosion of traditional values as sources of risk.</li> </ul>
<b>Lithuania</b>	HIV prevalence rates disaggregated by sex.  Data on mortality from TB, cardiac diseases, cancer, accidents and suicides, disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentions men in prisons as high risk group.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Mauritius</b>	HIV prevalence data from sentinel surveys given separately for pregnant women and sex workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Female sex workers identified as vulnerable group.</li> <li>Reduction of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS listed as a priority.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Mozambique</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pregnant women identified as most vulnerable to malaria.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Nepal</b>	HIV prevalence data for high-risk groups include separate figures for pregnant women and female sex workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women identified as high-risk group.</li> <li>Importance of addressing gender inequality underlined.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Poland<sup>5</sup></b>	-	-	-
<b>Saudi</b>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reference to "social and cultural norms that mitigate against the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus".</li> </ul>	None
<b>Tanzania</b>	HIV prevalence data disaggregated by sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender inequalities and inequities stated as most important factor behind women's vulnerability to HIV.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Vietnam</b>	HIV prevalence data given separately for women from vulnerable groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pregnant women and female sex workers identified as high risk groups.</li> </ul>	None

<sup>5</sup> Goal 6 has been modified in the MDGR for Poland, which reports on "Expansion of democracy and participation" instead of on HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

- ❖ Data on HIV/AIDS incidence has been disaggregated by sex in all but two out of the 12 reports that have addressed Goal 6.
- ❖ In addition to sex-disaggregated data on HIV incidence, one report (Lithuania) also provides sex-disaggregated and age-specific data on other major causes of mortality, including tuberculosis, cardiac conditions, cancer, accidents and suicides.
- ❖ In four out of 12 reports, women are mentioned as being among the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. One report (Lithuania) states that men in prisons as the most vulnerable category.
- ❖ Only two reports (Nepal and Tanzania) have a gendered perspective on the issue, and identify gender inequality as a specific cause of women’s higher vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

**Good Practices**

- Sex-disaggregated and age-specific data on mortality in Lithuania report.

Despite the ongoing global and national debates around the gender impact of HIV/AIDS, most of the MDGRs reviewed do not reflect a gendered perspective on the epidemic. While there is certainly recognition that women are among the most vulnerable groups, no connections are made between vulnerability and gender inequality, or the implications of vulnerability for women’s lives. A positive feature is the disaggregation by sex of data on HIV/AIDS incidence.

## 2.7 Gender and Goal 3

Table 7 below summarises reporting under Goal 3 in the MDGRs under review.

*Table 7. Reporting under Goal 3 in selected MDGRs*

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
<b>Albania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enrolment and literacy</li> <li>● Employment</li> <li>● Political and managerial representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Workloads and traditional attitudes as barriers to girls’ education.</li> <li>● Age discrimination in labour markets.</li> <li>● Masculine political culture as barrier to women’s entry into politics.</li> <li>● Prioritisation of “gender education of mass media”.</li> <li>● Role of women NGOs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Detailed listing of legal provisions and government policies.</li> <li>● Need for gender mainstreaming strategy recognized.</li> </ul>
<b>Armenia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Primary and secondary enrolment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender gap in education.</li> <li>● Need for women’s representation in decision-making, legal equality, economic opportunities and worker rights.</li> <li>● Poverty and child labour as barriers to education.</li> <li>● Cuts in funding to education sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Negative transformation of the gender culture of society” identified as barrier to equality.</li> <li>● Aid priorities listed.</li> </ul>

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
<b>Bolivia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Asymmetry index” in primary and secondary education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender gap in education.</li> <li>• Women’s lack of access to resources.</li> <li>• Unequal distribution of familial and household work.</li> <li>• Limitations in national capacity for “reflection, analysis and political handling of the relationship between gender and women’s empowerment”.</li> <li>• Lack of financial and human resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions based on recognition of women as social/ political/economic actors.</li> <li>• Differences in capabilities, opportunities and participation of men and women identified as markers of inequality.</li> <li>• Priorities for development assistance spelt out in detail.</li> </ul>
<b>Cameroon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary and secondary enrolment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender gap in education.</li> <li>• Poverty and male preference as factors behind girls’ exclusion from education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion confined to education.</li> </ul>
<b>Egypt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary and secondary enrolment</li> <li>• Labour force participation</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Political representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worsening of women’s development indicators during economic restructuring.</li> <li>• Economic and attitudinal barriers to girls’ education.</li> <li>• Preferential access of males to employment opportunities and leisure.</li> <li>• Women’s low awareness of rights.</li> <li>• Women’s double burden and violence.</li> <li>• Economic recession and underdeveloped private sector.</li> <li>• ‘Chauvinistic norms’ as barriers to women’s participation in politics and achievement of legal rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of women’s contribution to the economy and society.</li> <li>• Role and contributions of National Commission for Women highlighted.</li> <li>• Priorities for donor assistance identified, including legal reform and action on violence against women.</li> </ul>
<b>Lithuania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment and unemployment</li> <li>• Labour force participation</li> <li>• Representation in management</li> <li>• Wages</li> <li>• Political representation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour force participation.</li> <li>• Wage inequalities.</li> <li>• Participation in governance.</li> <li>• Resource constraints in implementation of National Programme for Equal Opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific recommendations for action on domestic violence, violence against children and trafficking.</li> </ul>

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
<b>Mauritius</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary and secondary enrolment</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Employment in non-agricultural sector</li> <li>• Representation in Parliament</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy measures to address gender inequality.</li> <li>• Detailed discussion on National Women's Action Plan.</li> <li>• Poverty, wage disparities and legal frameworks as barriers to gender equality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed analysis of national plans, programmes and targets.</li> <li>• Issues highlighted indirectly through discussion on National Action Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Mozambique</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary and secondary enrolment</li> <li>• Participation in non-agricultural sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of gender discrimination.</li> <li>• Violence against women and girls.</li> <li>• Barriers to girls' education including poverty and consequent early marriage and prostitution, domestic work, lack of female teachers, distance between home and schools.</li> <li>• Tension between modern education and traditional values and practices.</li> <li>• Sexual harassment of girls by male teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of barriers to girls' education.</li> <li>• Details of national plans of action on gender equality.</li> </ul>
<b>Nepal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on primary and secondary enrolment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty and girls' workload as barrier to girls' education.</li> <li>• Relevance and supply-side constraints.</li> <li>• Early marriage perpetuating a culture of denial of education to girls.</li> <li>• Need to compensate opportunity cost of girls' education through incentives for parents.</li> <li>• Role of women's groups in changing perceptions about women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion confined to education.</li> <li>• Analysis of factors that mitigate against girls' education.</li> <li>• Emphasis on changing "negatively gendered consciousness", cultural norms and social practices that perpetuate women's subordination.</li> <li>• Listing of national initiatives and priorities for donors.</li> </ul>
<b>Poland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment and unemployment data</li> <li>• Data on women in decision-making and managerial positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour market inequality identified as central issue.</li> <li>• Wage discrimination.</li> <li>• Low representation of women in managerial positions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour Market Inequality used as indicator instead of education.</li> </ul>

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
<b>Poland</b> ( <i>contd.</i> )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic work and childcare as barriers to women's participation in the labour market.</li> <li>• Women's acceptance of discrimination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of reasons for women not using available legal provisions to claim their rights as workers.</li> <li>• Priorities for action to end labour market discrimination (strengthening legal framework, increasing resource allocation and providing women with childcare and other social services).</li> </ul>
<b>Saudi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment and literacy</li> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour force participation.</li> <li>• Marital status and women's lack of mobility, with married women preferring to work at home.</li> <li>• Limited scope of employment for women.</li> <li>• Mismatch between women's qualifications and available opportunities.</li> <li>• Need for support services including child care to enable women to work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities for UN Technical Cooperation identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary and secondary enrolment</li> <li>• Achievement levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early marriage, pregnancy and perceived opportunity costs as barriers to education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion confined to education.</li> </ul>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary and secondary enrolment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographic disparities.</li> <li>• Perceived opportunity costs of educating girls.</li> <li>• Burden of household work.</li> <li>• Textbooks perpetuate domestic roles for girls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion confined to education.</li> <li>• Provisions of National Action Plan for Women highlighted.</li> <li>• Priorities for donor support identified.</li> </ul>



As highlighted in the table above, discussions under Goal 3 in all reports have attempted to foreground some critical aspects of gender inequality.

- ❖ All the reports studied contain gendered analyses of barriers to girls' education.
- ❖ Four out of 13 reports have confined the discussion under Goal 3 to education-related issues only, without reporting on work-force participation and political representation.
- ❖ Labour market participation and gender inequalities in employment are discussed in six of the reports.
- ❖ Issues of women's participation in political processes and decision-making are addressed in four reports.
- ❖ Cultural/attitudinal barriers to women's equality and 'harmful' traditions such as female genital mutilation have been discussed in nine reports.
- ❖ Women's double burden of work and girl child labour have been discussed in 10 of the 13 reports studied.
- ❖ The issue of violence against women is specifically named in only two reports (Lithuania and Mozambique).
- ❖ Six reports highlight details of national action plans and programmes for women. One report (Albania) also provides an overview of legal and constitutional provisions for gender equality.

#### Good Practices

- Clear articulation of rights and capabilities as the framework for women's empowerment in Bolivia report.
- Prominence given to legal and Constitutional provisions for gender equality in Albania report.
- Extensive data on the full range of indicators in the Lithuania report.

As the above table shows, coverage of issues and the depth of the analysis vary widely across reports. Since the target for Goal 3 is phrased in terms of education, it is not surprising that all the reports provide information against the education indicator. Similar attention has not been given to the other two indicators (the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments), that are equally if not more critical to the achievement of gender equality.

It is significant that most reports have skirted discussion of 'difficult' issues such as violence against women – practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage, where they are mentioned, are referred to as 'harmful traditions' rather than as violations of women's human rights.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 3.1 Conclusions

The exercise of scanning a selection of the national MDGRs from a gendered perspective, the findings of which are summarised in the previous section, leads to the following conclusions.

- ❖ Gender equality perspectives are not adequately mainstreamed into the MDGRs. Discussions on gender are primarily confined to Goal 3 (gender equality), Goal 5 (maternal mortality) and Goal 6 (HIV/AIDS).
- ❖ This ‘ghettoisation’ of gender issues within women-specific sectors appears to be independent of the authorship of the report – there is no significant difference on this score between reports authored by the UN System, national governments or independent consultants.
- ❖ The inclusion of gender perspectives and women’s concerns under Goals 5 and 6, when seen in conjunction with the total invisibility of women in discussions on Goals 7 (environment) and 8 (development cooperation) in the overwhelming majority of reports, suggest that women are still being seen in terms of their vulnerabilities, and cast in their traditional roles as mothers or victims rather than as actors in development.
- ❖ Further, despite the rights-based perspective reflected by most reports in discussions on Goal 3, the approach to women in discussions under other goals continues to be instrumental rather than rights-based. Examples are the discussions on child mortality in several reports, where women’s lack of knowledge of care and feeding practices is most commonly identified as a barrier to achieving the goal. Such a formulation ignores the gendered variables that mediate child survival, while accepting without comment the invisibility of fathers in parenting and care.
- ❖ Similarly, while several reports make mention of women in the context of discussions on poverty, these are usually limited to identifying them as a particularly vulnerable group. The statements in some MDGRs about feminisation of poverty are indicative of a welcome shift from earlier approaches that were insensitive to the differential concomitants and implications of poverty for women and men. However, when they are not backed up by data or policy commitments, such statements are of little value either as entry-points for refocusing the direction of poverty policy or as benchmarks for tracking change.

Instrumental perspectives are also reflected in language - One report assesses the situation with regard to women’s education in terms of the “total stock of educated women in the country”.

- ❖ Discussions on gender in the majority of reports reviewed do not adequately reflect the fact that gender inequalities do not operate in isolation, but are mediated by inequalities of class, race and ethnicity. Looking at gender in isolation obscures the relationship between gender inequality and other systems of domination and can lead to a serious underestimation of the real extent of women's subordination and vulnerability.
- ❖ The rationale for reporting or not reporting on a particular indicator is not always stated in the reports. It is generally assumed that reporting may be based on the availability of data at the national level, but this may not always be the case. Sex-disaggregated data on a large number of indicators have been collected in several countries under programmes supported by various UN organizations, but are not used in the MDGRs. Sex-disaggregated school drop-out rates in education are a case in point. Data on this indicator are available in several countries, but are not generally included in the MDGR, possibly because it is not specifically listed as an indicator under Goal 2 (education). Yet, drop out rates can bring the issue of girls' unpaid work into sharp focus, and can complement enrolment data to provide a more complete picture of gender differentials in access to education. Similarly, sex-disaggregated data on voter turn-outs in elections are available in many countries, and could supplement data on women's presence in legislatures.
 

Data on girls' school enrolment can be deceptive. In many countries, girls who are sent to school during enrolment drives drop out soon thereafter, and do not attend school even though their names remain on the rolls.

Sex-disaggregated drop-out rates reflect girls' involvement in household work and can add depth to the picture painted by enrolment ratios.
- ❖ One or two reports among those reviewed have been able to successfully collect and present disaggregated data on a range of indicators, implying that the difficulties usually cited to justify data gaps on gender issues are not insurmountable. The failure to flag data gaps in MDGRs therefore represents a lost opportunity to bring these issues into the forefront of national and donor priorities.
- ❖ There are wide variations in the presentation of data in the MDGRs reviewed. While some reports present only brief composite tables, others contain exhaustive data on a range of indicators and seem designed for an expert audience. Cross-cutting issues and inter-sectoral connections are not always highlighted and data are not always interpreted in a manner that makes connections between the status of a particular indicator and the larger situation of gender inequality in the country.
- ❖ While the MDGs cover most of the key areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, a major gap is in the area of reproductive health. Some countries have chosen to report on reproductive health under Goal 5 (maternal mortality). However, the indicators used are still those for tracking maternal mortality and do not adequately capture critical dimensions of reproductive health and rights. It is nevertheless encouraging that, despite the absence of specific targets and appropriate indicators, countries reporting on reproductive health have included discussions

on issues such as male responsibility and the need for tailoring services to the needs of adolescents.

- ❖ The MDGRs are not expected to be vehicles for exhaustive analysis – instead, they are expected to present snapshots of the situation against each indicator. However, this review shows that MDGRs are more analytical (in terms of identifying the underlying causes of a particular phenomenon) in their reporting on Goal 3 than on any other goals. Even though these analyses do not always conform to a rights perspective, the fact that they identify and name some deep-rooted manifestations of gender inequality is to be welcomed, since it creates the space for subsequent advocacy on these issues.

One of the reports reviewed here contains data on suicide rate, disaggregated by sex and by place of residence, which show a suicide rate for rural women that is 30% higher than that for urban women.

Since the country in question has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, this data is obviously of some significance. Yet, since there is no analysis or explanation of the causes of this differential, it remains impenetrable to most people.

The question could well be asked: “If it is significant, why is it unexplained? If it is not significant, why is it included?”

### 3.2 Recommendations

The simplest and most straightforward way to build on the findings of this review and strengthen gender mainstreaming in the MDGRs would be to add at least one gender-specific indicator to the set of indicators under each target. For instance, one could suggest the addition of the indicator “Number of women agricultural workers who own land” as an additional indicator under the poverty reduction target. However, considerations of data availability, national capacities, increase in workload and the need to make the national MDGRs as accessible and simple as possible, would all militate against adding this critical measure of women’s poverty to the existing set of indicators.

Experience has shown that, where indicators are concerned, “less is better and simplest is best”. Despite ongoing debates and discussions on the appropriateness and value of particular indicators, there is a general consensus that adding to the basket will not be feasible at this stage. Bringing a gendered perspective to the centre of MDGRs through providing sex-disaggregated data and qualitative information on gender issues across goals and targets, would be a more practical and effective approach.

The challenge of bringing gender perspectives to centre-stage in the MDGRs can be addressed through incorporating disaggregated data and qualitative information on critical gender issues across goals and targets.

The challenge for gender equality advocates is therefore to devise strategies for mainstreaming gender issues into the MDGRs that do not strain or overload national capacities, expand the basket of indicators or subvert the purpose of the report. The following suggestions could be discussed.

## MDG Reporting Process

- ❖ The process of preparation of national MDGRs is envisaged as a consultative one involving a range of stakeholders and representatives of civil society groups. **Involving members of women's groups and gender experts in consultations across goals** can be a strategy to ensure that gender issues are discussed and integrated into all sections of the final report.
- ❖ Supporting **independent studies using rapid participatory methodologies** to collect qualitative information on key gender dimensions of key issues such as poverty and health.
- ❖ Draft reports could be shared for **review by a group of independent gender experts** (other than those who may have been involved in consultations) who are also familiar with the country context. Comments and feedback from the experts could supplement the outputs from consultations.
- ❖ In most countries, UN organisations are involved in building the capacities of National Statistical Systems, which also provide the data for inclusion in MDGRs. UN support could be specifically focused towards **gender sensitization for statisticians** involved in collating and processing data for the MDGRs, directed towards equipping them to identify and use relevant additional data from existing data sets, that can supplement and bring a gender dimension to the mandatory indicators under each goal.
- ❖ Promoting and **supporting the collection of sex-disaggregated data** on key indicators is also an urgent necessity for successful gender mainstreaming in the MDGRs. UN Country Teams in UNDAF countries are already committed to the development of a common country database with disaggregated data on key national indicators. This process requires coordination at all levels to synergise the ongoing data-related interventions by various organizations, and to ensure that the appropriate data is fed into the process of preparation of national MDGRs.

## MDG Guidance Note

- ❖ Since the MDG Guidance Note is currently under revision, it may be possible to add some **suggestions and tips for gender mainstreaming**.
- ❖ The last section of reporting under each goal in the MDGRs is an assessment of monitoring and evaluation capacities. The addition of a **specific query on capacity to collect sex-disaggregated data** in this section would have a significant impact in terms of attention to and accountability for providing disaggregated data.
- ❖ The Guidance Note could also include a suggestion to include at least one **box under each goal, highlighting a gender dimension** of that goal. These could either provide additional data, or could highlight the qualitative implications for women of the issues highlighted in the body of the discussion.

## MDG training

- ❖ Training for country teams involved in preparation of the MDGR should emphasise the importance of gender as a cross-cutting goal, and provide practical tips and tools for such

integration. A **module on gender and the MDGs** could be incorporated into every training programme.

- ❖ Training could also be **supplemented with an information pack/mainstreaming toolkit** containing suggested entry points, best practice examples and templates to facilitate the organization and analysis of data around key indicators, for use by UN country teams involved in supporting the MDGR process. A folder of resources and reading materials on gender and the MDGs has already been developed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and MDGs<sup>6</sup> under its joint work programme.

“There is no time to lose if we are to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. Only by investing in the world's women can we expect to get there.

- Kofi Annan  
*Secretary General of the United Nations*



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<sup>6</sup> The Task Force is co-chaired by UNDP and the World Bank. Members of the core group include UNIFEM, DAW, OECD/DAC, World Bank and UNFPA.

## **Acknowledgement**

This review of selected MDG Reports through a gender lens was commissioned by the Gender Team in the Socio-Economic Development Group, Bureau for Development Policy at UNDP. The review was conducted by Kalyani Menon-Sen, an independent gender expert who is currently Gender Advisor to the Human Development Resource Centre, UNDP India. She is also a member of the team that carried out a recent assessment, commissioned by the UNDP Evaluation Office, of the MDG reporting process in eight countries.



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