

**THEMATIC PAPER ON MDG 3:  
PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY  
AND  
EMPOWER WOMEN**

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## Executive summary

### 1. Introduction

In 2000, 189 UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, which distils the key goals and targets agreed at the international conferences and world summits during the 1990s. Drawing on the Declaration, the UN system drew up eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to provide a set of benchmarks to measure progress towards the eradication of global poverty. MDG 3, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, includes one target on education and additional indicators on women's employment and political representation.

Global agreement to include this goal was a very positive development and signalled a recognition by member states that gender inequality not only decreases the likelihood of achieving the other goals, but also that advancing gender equality and women's empowerment depends on progress made on each of the other goals.

MDG 3 interprets gender equality very narrowly, and there is growing recognition that the targets and indicators that frame the goal on gender equality and women's empowerment are too limited. Nevertheless, half the MDGs now have targets directly related to gender equality and women's empowerment: MDG 1 on decent work for women; MDGs 2 and 3 on girls' education; and MDG 5 on maternal mortality and sexual and reproductive health.

A review of progress related to MDG 3, as well as the targets related to women's sexual and reproductive health, shows that progress towards gender equality has been uneven over the past 10 years. With only five years to go until the deadline for reaching the MDGs, we are now at a critical juncture to reflect on where and how countries have managed to achieve progress, and what lessons can be drawn to accelerate progress in countries where it has been too slow.

### 2. Progress and gaps

#### Gender parity in education

- In developing regions, as a whole, 95 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 2007, compared to 91 in 1999.<sup>1</sup>
- Significant gaps remain in some regions. In South and West Asia, 66 per cent of out-of-school children are girls.<sup>2</sup>
- In some regions, gaps in secondary education parity are widening, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, where the ratio of girls' to boys' enrolment in secondary education fell from 82 in 1999 to 79 in 2007.<sup>3</sup>

#### Women's employment

- Globally, the share of women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased marginally. But in South Asia, North Africa and West Asia, employment opportunities remain very low.

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<sup>1</sup> MDGs Report, United Nations, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, "Education for All Global Monitoring Report", 2008.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF. *Children and the Millennium Development Goals*. 2007.

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Children\\_and\\_the\\_MDGs.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Children_and_the_MDGs.pdf)

- Nearly two thirds of all employed women in developing countries work either as contributing family workers or as own-account workers, extremely vulnerable employment which lacks security and benefits.
- Gender differences in labour force participation rates, unemployment rates and gender wage gaps are a persistent feature of global labour markets.

### **Women's representation in politics**

- There is a slow rate of improvement in women's share of national parliamentary seats, averaging 18.6 percent as of October 2009. This represents an increase of seven percentage points since 1995. In the two decades between 1975 and 1995, women's representation rose by less than one percent.<sup>4</sup>
- The positive results that some of the world's poorest countries, including Rwanda, have had in increasing women's seats in parliaments through the use of temporary special measures, such as quotas, show that political will is more important to making progress than level of resources.
- However, even if the present rate of increase continues, women will not reach the parity zone for another 40 years.

### **Sexual and reproductive health and rights**

- Just 23 countries are on track to meet the target to reduce maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015.<sup>5</sup>
- It is estimated that one in three maternal deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth could be avoided if women who wanted contraception had access to it.<sup>6</sup>
- The numbers of women living with HIV have increased in many regions: In the Caribbean, for example, women accounted for 50 per cent of all adults living with HIV, up from 37 per cent in 2001.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. What works to advance gender equality and women's empowerment**

- Eliminating user fees for primary education has contributed significantly to the improvement of girls' enrolment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Stipends for girls, to cover tuition and other costs, have been successful in increasing girls' attendance at secondary school in some countries, including Bangladesh.
- Gender sensitive employment guarantee programmes, supporting women entrepreneurs and benchmarking for gender equality in the private sector are proven approaches to improving women's access to employment. In addition, measures for social and legal protection for vulnerable women workers are essential, particularly in the context of the ongoing economic crisis.
- Quotas or special temporary measures are the most direct route to increasing the number of women in parliaments. In 2008, the average representation of women was 21.9 percent in countries that used temporary special measures, compared to 15.3 percent for those that have not.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Women in National Parliaments*. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> See The Lancet, *Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980–2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5*, Early Online Publication, 12 April 2010, available at [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(10\)60518-1/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)60518-1/abstract)

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Population Fund. *Facts about safe motherhood*. See [www.unfpa.org/mothers/facts.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/facts.htm).

<sup>7</sup> UNAIDS 2009 AIDS Epidemic Update: [http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2009/2009\\_epidemic\\_update\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2009/2009_epidemic_update_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/9*

- Community health approaches are proven to increase skilled birth attendance and reduce maternal mortality and increase contraceptive use, especially for women living in poor and rural households, who are often hardest to reach.
- Evidence suggests that, in meeting the health and education rights of women and girls, increasing the numbers of women in public service delivery, for example as teachers or community health providers, supports progress towards meeting the MDGs.

#### **4. Recommendations for accelerating progress**

Based on analysis of key interventions that have made a difference, there are eight key policies and/or actions that have potential to propel progress:

1. Remove key barriers to girls' education, including by providing scholarships, cash transfers and eliminating user fees; tracking completion and attendance rates; improving the quality of education, including tackling violence against girls in school; and scaling up investments in girls' enrolment in secondary school.
2. Make the generation of full and productive employment and the creation of decent work and income the primary goal of macroeconomic, social and development policies, including by promoting equal skills development and employment opportunities; reducing wage gaps between women and men; introducing social protection measures and labour laws and policies that are gender-responsive; and introducing and enforcing legal protections for the most vulnerable women workers.
3. Introduce positive action to improve the numbers and influence of women in all political decision-making, including by investing in women's leadership in local decision-making structures and by creating an even playing field for men and women within political parties.
4. Invest in sexual and reproductive health, including community health approaches to tackle maternal mortality, meeting unmet need for family planning and addressing high adolescent fertility rates, as well as measures to ensure that women living with HIV have their reproductive health needs met and are able to participate fully in shaping policy to tackle the pandemic.
5. Improve national level capacity to track and report on progress, gaps and opportunities through better generation and use of sex-disaggregated data and statistics, including on time use.
6. Reduce women's work burden through investments in infrastructure, labour saving technologies and gender-responsive economic stimulus packages.
7. Strengthen accountability for enhancing women's rights and ending gender discrimination, including through eliminating inequalities in access to land and property and by investing in implementation of laws, policies and programmes to prevent and address violence against women.
8. Scale up and account for investments in gender equality, including by institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting to ensure that financial commitments are commensurate with policy commitments to gender equality.

## 2. Introduction

Far-reaching commitments to gender equality and women's human rights are encapsulated in core international human rights instruments, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as well as in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889. Together with the commitments in the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit, the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action and Doha Declaration, and the ILO Conventions on working women's rights, they offer a road map for strengthening action, investments and accountability to advance gender equality and women's rights in countries worldwide.

In 2000, 189 UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, which distils the key goals and targets agreed to at the international conferences and world summits during the 1990s. Drawing on the Declaration, the UN system drew up a set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to provide a set of benchmarks to measure progress towards the eradication of global poverty. MDG 3, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment includes one target and three indicators (Box 1). Global agreement on including this goal was a very positive development and signalled a recognition by member states that gender inequality not only decreases the likelihood of achieving the other goals, but also that advancing gender equality depends on progress made on each of the other goals.<sup>9</sup>

However, MDG 3 interprets gender equality very narrowly. There is a single target for this goal, linked to education, which is just one important element of women's empowerment. Only two other MDGs have only one target: Goal 2 calls for the achievement of universal primary education and Goal 4 for the reduction of child mortality.

### **Box 1: Millennium Development Goal 3**

Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 3a: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

Indicators

- 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
- 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Aside from education, the MDG 3 indicators focus on women's employment and political representation. While the commitment of Members States to tracking these two crucial elements of women's empowerment is welcome, the absence of corresponding targets on these issues has meant they have received less attention, and are less likely to be prioritized.

Moreover, the employment indicator is limited to women's share of waged employment in the non-agricultural sector. While this is a good indication of women's ability to earn income of their own, it excludes the vast number of women working in agriculture, particularly in developing countries, where women comprise from 50 to 80 percent of those working in this sector, many of them as unpaid family workers. It also fails to address the issue of informal employment, in which close to two-thirds of all employed women in developing countries work.

<sup>9</sup> UNDP. *Millennium Development Goals: National Reports, a Look through a Gender Lens*. 2003.

In an effort to address these gaps, in 2005 a new target on full and productive employment and decent work – especially for women and youth – was added to Goal 1. Another essential target for women’s empowerment, access to reproductive health, was added to Goal 5, thereby incorporating 2 of the 7 critical priorities for gender equality identified by the MDG Task Force on Gender Equality.<sup>10</sup> Notwithstanding these welcome additions, there remain important gaps in the MDGs framework in relation to gender equality and women’s rights—notably the absence of indicators on women’s property ownership and combating violence against women.

With only five years to go to achieve the MDGs, this paper draws attention to: a) The ways in which countries are instituting policy and practice innovations towards achieving targets and indicators related to MDG 3; b) Cross-cutting gaps in the MDG framework for gender equality and in existing efforts to make progress on agreed priorities; and c) Recommendations for scaling up promising practices that could propel progress towards MDG 3 over the next 5 years.

Before embarking on this, it is important to acknowledge that the enduring impact of the inter-linked food, climate and economic/financial crises pervades all considerations of MDG progress, and recognizes that their effects are likely to include a reversal of gains in reducing poverty and hunger and eliminating gender inequalities.

In the past decade, climate change and environmental degradation have led to increased desertification, soil contamination and depletion and more frequent and destructive natural disasters. As a result, women require far more time to collect water and fuel, particularly in rural areas, increasing their already onerous burden of household provisioning. Evidence from previous natural disasters, including the increasing number that are related to global warming, suggest that women generally die in far greater numbers than men, while those that survive will have even greater difficulty providing care for the elderly, the sick and the young.<sup>11</sup>

Food insecurity and instability in food prices also affects women differently from men. Research suggests that female-headed households, even when they are not over-represented among the poor, are disproportionately affected by rising food prices since they tend to spend a greater share of their income on food than male-headed households<sup>12</sup>. Based on studies of previous crises, there is growing recognition that in times of economic crisis and insecurity, levels of violence against women tend to increase.<sup>13</sup> This is already showing up in media reports in different countries as well as in surveys of shelters and hotlines, primarily in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

The economic slowdown is impacting on women and men in developing countries through different transmission channels, including declining demand for exports, reduced capital flows,

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<sup>10</sup> Grown, Caren et al. *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*. New York. 2005.

<sup>11</sup> UNDP. *Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change*. 2009. Women must be a crucial part of managing risks, as outlined in ‘Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive, Policy and Practical Guidelines’, UNISDR, UNDP and IUCN, Geneva, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> FAO. *Soaring Food Prices: Facts, perspectives, impacts and actions required*. 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Knowles, James et al. *Social Consequences of the Financial Crisis in Asia*. ADB Economic Staff Paper #60. Manila. 1999.

<sup>14</sup> See ‘Mary Kay’s Truth About Abuse, survey of 600 shelters across the US, May 12, 2008; ESCAP, quoted in IPS, ‘Financial Crisis Threatens Women’s Meagre Gains,’ 5 March 2009; SIREN, ‘Cambodia: Exodus to the Sex Trade?’ Phnom Penh, 20 July 2009.

and declining remittances.<sup>15</sup> The economies of many if not most developing countries are inadequately diversified and dependent on one or very few commodities or manufactures. For example, 85 percent of Cambodia's exports are from the garment industry, nearly 80 percent of Zambia's exports are from copper/cobalt, and almost 80 percent of Benin's exports are from cotton. The decline in trade has increased unemployment for many poor households, obliging them to adopt short-term coping strategies such as eating less and foregoing health care.<sup>16</sup>

A decline in capital flows in developing countries, whether in the form of bank lending, foreign direct investment or portfolio flows, is putting many sectors, including those that employ predominantly women, at risk of closures and bankruptcy. As the economic stimulus packages have kicked in, the ILO revised its estimate of the number of jobs lost by the end of 2009 due to the crisis from up to 55 million to 34 million.<sup>17</sup> The ILO and others have also raised concerns that the impact of the global crisis could threaten recent gains in reducing child labour and increasing the numbers of girls in school. When families are pushed deeper into poverty and must choose between sending their sons or their daughters to school, it is often the girls that lose out.

It is also important to acknowledge that economic growth in many countries and regions over the past decade did not lead to full and productive employment and decent work. Rather, new employment has generally been part-time, seasonal, temporary or other forms of informal employment, which has translated into worse conditions for many women workers.<sup>18</sup> In addition, even where high rates of growth led to new employment opportunities, these tended to benefit those with the education, skills and contacts to access them, exacerbating gender inequalities in all regions. Between 2003 and 2005, for instance, while men's average earned income in India increased 26 percent, the figure for women was three percent; in Pakistan, where men's average income rose by 17 percent, women's went up by less than one percent.<sup>19</sup> Finally, remittances declined sharply in 2009, eliminating a major source of income for women in poor households and severely stretching their coping strategies.

Understanding these contextual factors is vital to redoubling efforts to achieve the MDGs and gender equality. Strategies to propel progress on all of the MDGs, including MDG 3, need to re-examine the macroeconomic models that have led to these global crises and introduce corrective measures that increase social protection, gender responsiveness, and long-term sustainability (see Box 4).<sup>20</sup>

### **3. Trends in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment**

A review of progress related to the specific target and indicators that comprise MDG 3 reveals that advances towards gender equality have been uneven over the past 10 years.

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<sup>15</sup> UNDP. *Guidance Note: Turning the Global Economic Crisis into an Opportunity for Poor Women and Men*. Bureau for Development Policy, Gender Team. 2009.

<sup>16</sup> See for example, Hossain, N, Eyben, R et al. '[Accounts of Crisis: Poor People's Experiences of the Food, Fuel and Financial Crises in Five Countries](#)', Brighton: IDS. 2009.

<sup>17</sup> ILO. *Global Employment Trends, 2010*. Page 9.

<sup>18</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2005*; Report of the Expert Group Meeting on 'The impact of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action on the Full Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals', November 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Figures from UNDP Human Development Reports 2005 and 2007, cited in Action Aid *Hit or Miss? Women's Rights and the Millennium Development Goals*. 2008. [http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc\\_lib/aamdg.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/aamdg.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> See UNDP. *The need for rethinking: Vision for a Better World: from Economic Crisis to Equality*. 2010.



**Despite increasing international recognition that the education of girls is one of the most powerful tools for women’s empowerment, gender discrimination continues to keep girls out of school.**<sup>21</sup> Both MDG 2 and MDG 3 include targets on eliminating gender disparities in primary education, which is a necessary part of achieving free and compulsory primary education as envisaged under international human rights law. The first target for MDG 3, to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005, was missed. However, the progress that has been made at regional and national levels in increasing girls’ primary school enrolment shows how much can be achieved by governments willing to invest. In developing regions, as a whole, 95 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 2007, compared to 91 in 1999.<sup>22</sup>

However, progress has been mixed and significant disparities remain between and within regions. While Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe have made progress, significant gaps remain in West Asia, South Asia, Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>23</sup> In South and West Asia, for instance, 66 percent of out-of-school children are girls.<sup>24</sup> Even within countries, nationwide averages can mask significant disparities: a survey of primary school attendance in 108 developing countries showed that gender parity has been reached in urban areas and among the richest 40 percent of households, while girls in poor households and rural areas are more likely to be excluded.<sup>25</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, children from the richest 20 percent of households have, on average, more than six times the chance of reaching grade nine than those from the poorest 40 percent of households. Urban children are four times more likely to be enrolled in grade nine than their rural counterparts.<sup>26</sup>

Post-primary education is critical for women’s empowerment. An Action Aid study found that girls who had completed secondary school had lower risks of HIV infection and practiced safer sex than those who had completed primary school only.<sup>27</sup> In this context, slow or non-existent progress on increasing girls’ enrolment in secondary schools is of serious concern. In some regions, gaps are widening, such as in sub-Saharan Africa where the ratio of girls’ to boys’ enrolment in secondary education fell from 82 in 1999 to 79 in 2007, in Oceania where it fell from 89 to 87, and in CIS where it fell from 101 to 98 in the same period.<sup>28</sup>

**Women’s share of waged non-agricultural employment has increased in the last decade, but only slightly.** Globally, women account for almost 40 percent of the total employment in this sector. But in South Asia, North Africa and West Asia, employment opportunities for women remain extremely limited. And while more women have secured paid jobs outside of agriculture, they have generally failed to access decent work. Close to two-thirds of all employed women in developing countries, and over fifty percent globally are working in vulnerable jobs, either as

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<sup>21</sup> ILO. *Formula for progress: Educate both girls and boys*. 2008.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations. *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. 2009.

<sup>23</sup> DFID Fact Sheet, December 2008.

<sup>24</sup> UNESCO. *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. 2008.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. 2009. Page 20.

<sup>26</sup> Keith M. Lewin. *Access to education in sub-Saharan Africa: patterns, problems and possibilities*. 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Id21. “Girls Education”. *Education Highlights 4*. 2007. [http://www.id21.org/publications/girl%27s\\_ed4.pdf](http://www.id21.org/publications/girl%27s_ed4.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> UNICEF. *Children and the Millennium Development Goals*. 2007. [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Children\\_and\\_the\\_MDGs.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Children_and_the_MDGs.pdf)

contributing family workers or as own-account workers.<sup>29</sup> In March 2009, the ILO estimated that between 10 million and 22 million more women would become unemployed in 2009 and women would be pushed into insecure jobs at a faster rate than men as a result of the global economic and financial crises; this figure is now estimated to have been 18.7 million.<sup>30</sup>

**There is a slow rate of improvement in women's share of national parliamentary seats, averaging 18 percent as of January 2009.** Worldwide, approximately one out of every five parliamentarians is a woman. While the percentage is far from the 30 percent target envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action, it represents a rise from 11.6 percent in 1995, which is a significantly greater increase than the one percent increase registered between 1975 and 1995. However, at the current rate of progress, it will take developed countries at least 20 years and all other countries closer to 40 years to reach the parity zone between 40 and 60 percent.<sup>31</sup>

**Progress on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights has been far too slow.** The MDGs, Cairo Consensus from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Platform for Action all highlight the crucial role that sexual and reproductive health issues play in the ability of women and girls to claim, realize and enjoy their human rights. However, MDG 5 on maternal mortality is one of the most off-track of all the goals and continues to take an unacceptable toll on women's lives. An estimated 500,000 maternal deaths occur each year, 85 percent of them in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.<sup>32</sup> HIV infection rates among women, particularly young women, continue to grow. In this context, the inclusion of the target of universal access to reproductive health within MDG 5 is a welcome recognition of the essential role that reproductive health plays as a foundation for women's rights.

**Articulating and supporting the gender equality elements of all other MDGs will accelerate progress in achieving MDG 3.** Improving women's access to decent work, as envisaged in the new indicator of MDG 1, provides opportunities for women to access non-agricultural wage employment, as an important basis of economic empowerment. Addressing and articulating women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights provides clear benefits in terms of girls' education, women's involvement in paid employment, their control of economic resources, and decision-making at all levels. Since it is women who usually bear the burden of collecting water, progress on MDG 7 is vital to enable women and girls to attend school, access paid employment, participate in their communities and so on.

On the other hand, failure to make these links can impede progress on MDG 3. For instance, the growing rates of HIV infection are an impediment to girls' ability to complete primary and secondary school. When a parent falls ill with an AIDS-related illness, it is daughters who are

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<sup>29</sup> ILO. *Global Employment Trends for Women March 2009*. 2009.

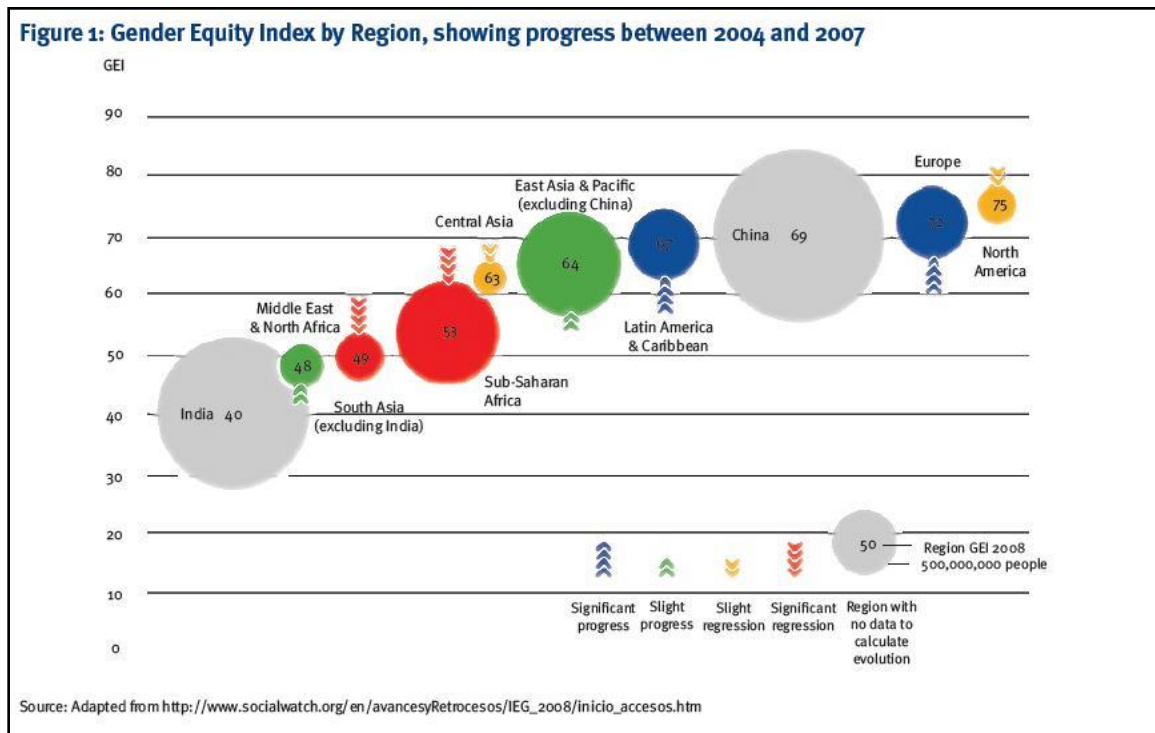
<sup>30</sup> ILO. *Global Employment Trends*. January 2010. Page 22.

<sup>31</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. Page 123.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. 2009. Page 26. A recent independent estimate (see *The Lancet, Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980–2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5*, Early Online Publication, 12 April 2010 available at [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(10\)60518-1/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)60518-1/abstract)) suggests that 343,000 deaths occurred in 2008. At the time of writing, up-to-date UN agency estimates were still in process. However, the margins of error of the estimates overlap. Improvement of data systems and detailed national level examination of the causes of maternal mortality are required.

statistically more likely to be called upon to drop out of school to shoulder the burden of care and run the household.<sup>33</sup>

**There is growing recognition that the targets and indicators that frame the goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment are too limited.** As noted, additional indicators in MDGs 1 and 5 on women’s employment and reproductive health are welcome. However, beyond this, an “MDG 3 plus”<sup>34</sup> perspective, which takes into account other critical forms of discrimination and factors that perpetuate gender inequality, such as violence against women, unequal access to housing, inheritance, land and property rights, women’s unequal share of unpaid care work and infrastructure burdens, is increasingly being put forward by bilateral and multilateral organizations, as well as being reflected in national MDG reports.<sup>35</sup>



**Progress on all the MDGs is dependent on progress on gender equality and women’s rights.**

It is evident that continuing discrimination against girls and women will make it difficult to fully achieve any of the MDGs. Women and girls account for roughly half of the world’s population, but, according to informal estimates, comprise the majority of the poor and excluded. Evidence suggests that, aside from being highly inequitable, women’s lack of access to land, as well as agricultural inputs and credit, is impeding progress on tackling hunger and the achievement of

<sup>33</sup> International Labour Conference, 98<sup>th</sup> session. Report VI. *Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work*. ILO, 2009, Page 38.

<sup>34</sup> Mayra Buvinic, et al. *Equality for Women: Where Do We Stand on Millennium Development Goal 3?* World Bank. 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Examples: Report of the Expert Group Meeting on “The impact of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action on the Full Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.” November 2009; UN Millennium Project, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*. 2005.

MDG 1.<sup>36</sup> By 2005, girls already accounted for 57 percent of the world's out-of-school population, a percentage likely to increase as households cope with falling income.<sup>37</sup> While women remain the primary caregivers for children, the causes of child mortality will remain intimately linked with the rights of women. Globally, four million babies die each year in the first four weeks of life, but three-quarters of these deaths could be prevented if women were adequately nourished and received appropriate care during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period.<sup>38</sup> Maternal mortality decreased by less than two percent per year between 1990 and 2005, well under the 5.5 percent annual improvement needed to reach the target for MDG 5.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, a UN survey in 177 countries shows that women collecting water spend an estimated 40 billion hours collecting water each year – equivalent to a year's labour for the entire work-force in France.<sup>40</sup>

As noted by the Secretary-General in the 2005 report *In Larger Freedom: Toward Security Development and Human Rights for All*:

*In order to reduce poverty and promote global prosperity for all, I urge Heads of State and Government to: ... (j) Reaffirm gender equality and the need to overcome pervasive gender bias by increasing primary school completion and secondary school access for girls, ensuring secure tenure of property to women, ensuring access to reproductive health services, promoting equal access to labour markets, providing opportunity for greater representation in government decision-making bodies, and supporting direct interventions to protect women from violence.*<sup>41</sup>

At the same time, there is growing knowledge about the policies and innovations that propel progress towards MDG 3. Securing a greater proportion of domestic and external resources, including development assistance to replicate and scale-up successful strategies is critical to ensuring that their benefits accrue to many more women and men.

#### **4. Pathways to progress on gender equality and women's empowerment: Analysis of successful factors and measures**

##### **4a. Gender Parity in Education**

Target 3a: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015 Indicator: 3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
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<sup>36</sup> Mayra Buvinic, et al. *Equality for Women: Where Do We Stand on Millennium Development Goal 3?* World Bank. 2009.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations. *Millennium Development Goals Report 2007*. 2007

<sup>38</sup> DFID. *Child mortality factsheet*. November 2007

<sup>39</sup> See The Lancet, *Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980–2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5*, Early Online Publication, 12 April 2010, available at [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(10\)60518-1/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)60518-1/abstract)

<sup>40</sup> UNDP. *Human Development Report: Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*. 2006.

<sup>41</sup> United Nations. *In Larger Freedom: Toward Security Development and Human Rights for All*. 2005. Page 56.

Although the initial 2005 date for eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education was missed, the achievement of gender parity in education is an area in which the MDGs have had considerable success, particularly at the primary level. In 2000, Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) as the principal mechanism and platform for addressing gender and girls' education. To date, UNGEI partnerships are formally recognized in a quarter of countries around the world.

UNGEI operates at global, regional and country levels. At the global level, it has successfully advocated for the broader inclusion of gender, HIV and AIDS, childhood disability and child labor issues in the appraisal process for the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) funding. At the country level, it has supported countries in undertaking gender audits of the education sector.<sup>42</sup>

The Latin America and Caribbean region is well on track to achieve the target, with 25 of 27 countries for which data exist having achieved parity in both primary and secondary education. Eighteen of 21 countries in Europe and Central Asia and 15 of 17 countries in East Asia and the Pacific with available data are on track or have achieved this target. In sub-Saharan Africa, 20 of 37 countries for which data exist are not on track, and another 10 countries lack data. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa lag behind at all levels for this target, particularly at the tertiary level. Ten of the 22 fragile states (for which data exist) are seriously off track, and only 6 have achieved the target.<sup>43</sup> Worldwide, 53 of the 171 countries with available data have achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education, 14 more countries than in 1999. That over 100 countries have yet to reach the target is a source of concern.<sup>44</sup>

Worldwide, there are more women than men enrolled in tertiary education. In developed regions there is now a reverse gender gap: 129 females to 100 males. In developing regions the gap is narrowing: 96 females to 100 males. Girls are much more likely to proceed to tertiary education in CIS countries, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South-East Asia. Fewer have advanced to tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Oceania.<sup>45</sup>

### **What has helped to make a difference?**

**Elimination of user fees.** Eliminating user fees for primary education has contributed significantly to the improvement of female enrolment in a number of countries, including in sub-Saharan Least Developed Countries.<sup>46</sup> User fees are a particular barrier to school attendance for children from poor and/or rural households, girls, orphans, and children with disabilities. The abolition of fees functions most effectively when part of a broad government commitment to achieving free universal primary education.

Elimination of school fees does not necessarily remove all costs for parents. In some cases, fees for books or uniforms and transport costs may be prohibitive for families that want to send children to school. The School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI), led by UNICEF in partnership with

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. *Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender in Education: A Gender Review of the 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report*. January 2010.

<sup>43</sup> World Bank. *Global Monitoring Report 2009*. 2009.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> World Bank and UNICEF. *Abolishing School Fees in Africa: Lessons from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique*. 2009.

the World Bank, UNESCO, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and others continues to support countries' efforts to establish and integrate policies and strategies that address cost barriers to education within national planning processes, specifically through the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) partnership.<sup>47</sup>

In Malawi, the policy of free primary schooling was advocated in the early 1990s on the grounds of equity. The country partially abolished fees in the early 1990s and in 1994 the new government announced full abolition of all primary school fees effective for new students. This led to a surge in enrolment from 1.9 million students in 1993-1994 to 2.9 million students in 1999-2000. Girls' net enrolment rate went from 47 percent in 1991 to 97 percent in 1999, where it has since stabilized. As a consequence of the abolition of primary school fees, secondary gross enrolment rates increased from 8 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 2005. Importantly, enrolment rates among poorer groups in Malawi increased to a greater extent than richer groups; however, there remains a wide disparity in girls' secondary enrolment rates between rich and poor households.<sup>48</sup>

Sierra Leone, emerging from a prolonged conflict, increased the ratio of girls to boys at the primary school level from 0.71 in 2000-2005 to 0.9 in 2006-2007. Importantly, early in the decade, Sierra Leone adopted a National Millennium Goal committing to providing girls with the same education opportunities as boys. This was followed in 2004 by an education act that made six years of primary education and three years of secondary education compulsory for all children. Primary education fees were abolished in 2001 and in 2003, full support was provided to all girls who enter Junior Secondary Schools in the Eastern and Northern Regions.<sup>49</sup>

**Demand-side financing mechanisms.** The World Bank has introduced stipends, targeted vouchers, bursaries and other demand-side financing mechanisms in 30 countries to encourage the enrolment of poor children and girls at all levels of education in an effort to offset the indirect opportunity costs. Programmes such as Guatemala's *Eduque a la Nina*, Brazil's *Bolsa Familia*, and Mexico's *Oportunidades* essentially involve payments to families to enrol their children, with notable success in increasing enrolments among poor families.<sup>50</sup> Critical in-depth studies assessing the long-term effectiveness of these programmes are still pending, but initial research suggests that many of the benefits are the result of women's capacity to treat service provision as a commercial transaction in which they choose between private providers.<sup>51</sup>

In Bangladesh, the Female Secondary School Stipend programme has provided money directly to girls and their families to cover tuition and other costs, on the condition that they enrol in secondary school and remain unmarried until the age of 18. By 2005, girls accounted for 56 percent of secondary school enrolment in the areas covered by the programme, compared with 33 percent in 1991.<sup>52</sup> In Ghana, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme is being developed as a national social protection strategy that provides direct cash

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<sup>47</sup> World Bank and UNICEF. *Six Steps to Abolishing School Fees: Operational Guide*. School Fee Abolition Initiative. 2009.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. 2009.

<sup>49</sup> Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone. *Millennium Development Goals Report for Sierra Leone 2005*. 2005

<sup>50</sup> Kattan Raja Bentaouet and Nicholas Burnett. *User Fees in Primary Education*. World Bank Education Advisory Service. 2004.

<sup>51</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

<sup>52</sup> ILO. *Give Girls a Chance: Tackling Child Labour, a Key to the Future*. 2009.

transfers to support the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population. Participating households are required to enrol and keep all school-age children in public schools.<sup>53</sup>

**Community and NGO managed schools.** Community schools are playing an important role in some West African countries such as Chad and Mali, as well as in parts of Asia. Community schools are financed by parents in contexts where the state is unable to provide public education. They may also receive some assistance from the public sector, such as the provision of materials or teachers. Community schools were often considered illegal in the past, though they are now generally recognized, with names such as *écoles clandestines*. The schools charge fees, often according to family income. Payment of these fees can play an important role in building local ownership of school-related activities. More than 35 percent of primary school children in Togo attend community schools, with even higher proportions in Chad, where local communities have played a significant role in financing and operating schools.<sup>54</sup> In Bangladesh, the policy of free education for girls up to grade eight and the space created for NGO-run non-formal schools largely explains the country's success in achieving gender parity. Non-formal schools run by NGOs account for 8.5 percent of primary school enrolment and have grown four-fold in a ten year period. Non-formal programmes have been particularly beneficial for girls as they offer flexibility.<sup>55</sup>

**More female teachers.** Nepal has made steady progress in reducing the gender disparity in primary education. In 2000 the ratio of girls to boys at the primary school level was 0.79. By 2005 it was 0.86 and by 2007 it was 0.99. In addition to raising public awareness on the importance of educating girls, the Nepalese government took a number of affirmative action measures. It made a provision that at least one female teacher be recruited for every primary school and stipulated that at least one woman had to be a member of the management committees of institutional and community schools, village management committees and district education committees. Institutional

#### **Box 2: Conditional Cash Transfer Programs**

In Mexico, *Oportunidades*, formerly known as *Progresá*, is a conditional cash transfer program aimed at developing the human capital of poor households. The program provides monetary transfers to families contingent upon children's regular school attendance. The transfers are provided to families and the benefit levels are intended to offset the opportunity costs of sending children to school. Transfers increase with the grade level in school—recognizing that the opportunity cost of children's time increases as they grow older. Furthermore, to discourage girls from abandoning school, *Oportunidades* offers higher monetary scholarships to girls versus boys from the first year of secondary school. Impact evaluations of the program indicate that it has significantly increased the enrolment of children, particularly girls and especially at the secondary school level. The results indicate that the children will have an average of 0.7 years of extra schooling because of *Oportunidades* (World Bank, 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Raja B. Kattan and Nicholas Burnett. *User Fees in Primary Education*. World Bank Education Advisory Service. 2004.

<sup>55</sup> UN-OHRLS. *Gender Perspectives and Employment of Women in Least Developed Countries*. 2006.

schools were asked to ensure that at least 5 percent of their scholarships went to girls and other disadvantaged students, while community schools were asked to waive all fees for poor girls.<sup>56</sup>

In the pastoral Goa region of north-east Mali, communities move frequently and enrolment of girls in schools is still very low. Oxfam has worked with *animatrices* – female community workers – to promote gender awareness and quality education through a flexible approach that aims to increase the number of girls who go to and stay in school. Efforts are made to ensure that they acquire relevant and long-term basic skills in mathematics, literacy, health and nutrition. *Animatrices* are local women, who mostly have completed six years of primary education. They work with parents, telling them about the importance and value of schooling for both girls and boys. They monitor girls' attendance and work with teachers to ensure a safe and friendly school environment. When girls drop out of school, the *animatrices* talk with families to find out the reasons why and to encourage the girls to return. The programme has used a rights-based approach which has begun to transform beliefs about schooling for girls.<sup>57</sup>

### **What continues to impede progress?**

Poverty remains a key impediment to achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education. Poverty increases child labor for both girls and boys, interfering with their education. The ILO estimates that some 100 million girls are involved in child labour around the world.<sup>58</sup> Many have little or no access to education and work in situations that place their health and safety in serious danger.

There are two important actions that countries can take to improve the relevance and impact of action on this target. The first is to track attendance and completion of school, in addition to enrolment. Girls often drop out or fail to attend for reasons such as distance from home, lack of or poor sanitary facilities, class size, or poor school security. Older girls may be needed for household or farm labour, or may drop out due to early marriage or high poverty levels.

Berhane Hewan is a UNFPA-supported programme in Ethiopia that targets girls at risk of child marriage, focused on the Amhara Province, where child marriage rates are among the highest in the world. The programme promotes functional literacy, life skills, reproductive health education and opportunities for saving money for both married girls and girls at risk of child marriage. In developing the project, local Ministry of Youth and Sports staff felt strongly that the programme needed to address the economic motives for the practice of child marriage. Accordingly, economic incentives were added to encourage families to allow their daughters to participate in girls' groups that meet five days per week, and to remain in school. An impact evaluation undertaken two years after the programme started found significantly fewer girls in the experimental area had been married during early adolescence (ages 10–14) compared to girls of similar age in a control site. Married girls living in the project site were nearly three times more likely to use family planning methods.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> National Planning Commission of Nepal and the United Nations. *Nepal Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2005*. 2005.

<sup>57</sup> id21. *Education Highlights 4*. March 2007. [http://www.id21.org/publications/girl%27s\\_ed4.pdf](http://www.id21.org/publications/girl%27s_ed4.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> ILO. *Give Girls a Chance: Tackling Child Labour, a key to the future*. 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Annabel S. Erulkar and Eunice Muthengi. *Evaluation of Berhane Hewan: A Program to Delay Child Marriage in Rural Ethiopia*. *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*. Volume 35, Number 1. March 2009.



The second action is to increase attention to the quality of education, which is not measured by the MDGs. Programmes to increase the numbers of women teachers and to improve school security, infrastructure and transport contributed to increases in the numbers of girls attending school in Nepal and Bangladesh. Increased enrolment can put strains on the quality of education, as demonstrated in Kenya where the adoption of universal primary education generated 1.3 million new students, placing teaching staff and existing infrastructure under tremendous strain. Holistic and comprehensive approaches to quality education can mitigate these effects. During the last ten years, the Child Friendly Schools approach has developed as a model of integrated quality education.<sup>60</sup> Holistic approaches have a far-reaching impact on societies, transforming not only the lives of girls and boys, but also the communities where the schools are located. These models strengthen girls' education and promote gender equality through teacher education, creating flexible learning environments that respond to the context and needs of the learners. Further, planning and programming of quality education allows a system-wide focus on gender-based violence, provision of life skills education, improving safety and security, and prevention and protection in contexts of HIV and AIDS and conflict.

Qualitative indicators are also needed to monitor the curriculum and teachers' attitudes to ensure that girls' and boys' capabilities are equally supported and that gender stereotypes are not reinforced through the school system.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, while literacy is accounted for in MDG 2, adult illiteracy continues to be heavily skewed towards women. Although global literacy is rising, women still make up two-thirds of the world's illiterate people.<sup>62</sup> This is exacerbated by the strong focus in many countries on primary education which can exclude illiterate youth, no longer eligible for primary school.

#### **4b. Gender Parity in Non-Agricultural Employment**

Indicator: 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
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The second indicator of MDG 3 is the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. The focus on the non-agricultural sector reflects the benefits of women's integration into the monetary economy, in terms of greater autonomy, control over household decision-making and personal development.

Globally, the share of women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased marginally. But in South Asia, North Africa and West Asia, employment opportunities remain very low. In sub-Saharan Africa, 64 percent of women's employment is in agriculture. In North Africa and West Asia, only 23 percent and 21 percent of working-age women, respectively, are employed.<sup>63</sup> Latin America has shown some positive trends. Data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) show that between 1990

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<sup>60</sup>UNICEF. *Child Friendly School Evaluation*. 2009.

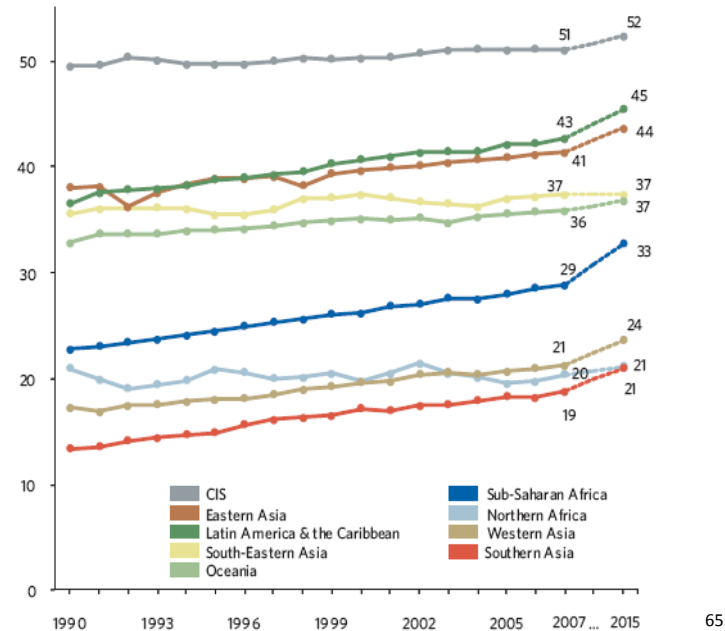
<sup>61</sup> Asian Development Bank. *Pursuing Gender Equality through the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific*. 2006.

<sup>62</sup> UNESCO. *The New Courier*. April 2003. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=10513&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=10513&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>63</sup> United Nations. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*.

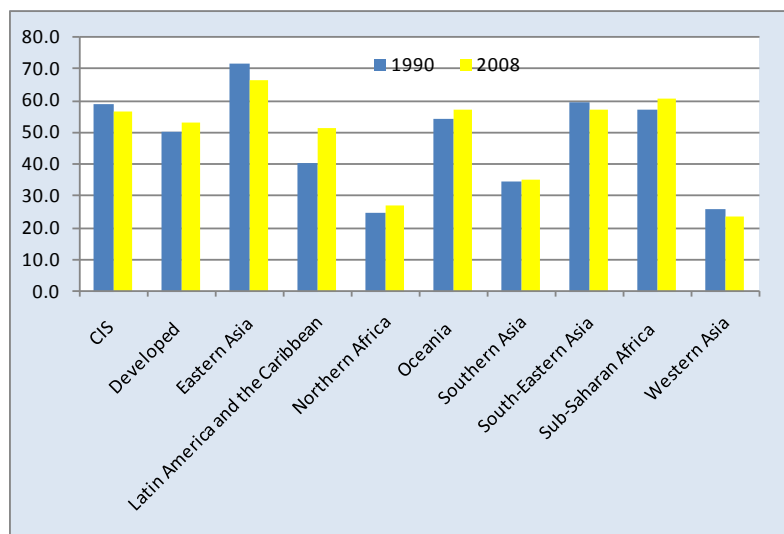
and 2005 women' economic participation practically doubled in absolute numbers for the region as a whole and that it will increase further by up to 70 percent between 2005 and 2030.<sup>64</sup>

Employees in non-agricultural wage employment who are women, 1990 and 2007, and projections to 2015 (Percentage)



### Women in the labour force:

Labour force participation rate by region, 1990 and 2008<sup>66</sup>



<sup>64</sup> ECLAC. *Demographic change and its influence on development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/G.2378(SES.32/14). Santiago, Chile. United Nations Publication. June 2008.

<sup>65</sup> United Nations. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. 2009. Page 20. 2009.

<sup>66</sup> ILO Department of Statistics. LABORSTA Database. <http://laborsta.ilo.org/>.

Women suffer multiple disadvantages in access to labour markets and often do not have the same freedom to choose to work as men. Gender differences in labour force participation rates, unemployment rates and gender wage gaps are a persistent feature of global labour markets.

Close to two-thirds of all employed women in developing countries work either as contributing family workers or as own-account workers, extremely vulnerable employment which lack security and benefits. This is especially true in Oceania and South Asia, where the largest share of women's employment is as contributing family workers: 64 percent and 46 percent, respectively.<sup>67</sup> The large share of unpaid jobs adds to the already heavy burden of unpaid work carried out by women in households in all regions, which is not reflected in official labour force statistics.<sup>68</sup>

### **Box 3: Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work**

ILO promotes gender equality at the heart of its Decent Work agenda, which is captured in four strategic objectives: fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards; employment and income opportunities for women and men; social protection and social security for all; and social dialogue and tripartism. These objectives hold for all workers, women and men, in both formal and informal economies; in wage employment or working on their own account; in the fields, factories and offices; in their home or in the community.

The resolution on Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2009 further guides efforts towards a labour market in which all women and men can participate freely and actively. It calls, for example, for measures to facilitate women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship development, to address unequal remuneration between women and men, to enhance social protection for all, to strengthen women's participation in social dialogue on an equal footing with men, and to prevent and eliminate violence against women at work.

In some regions, cooperatives and enterprise clusters are powerful vehicles of social inclusion and social and economic empowerment for women. Women are becoming better organized in sectors where they have traditionally been discriminated against and gaining better access to finance and business services catering to their specific needs.

*Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work:* [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_093653.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_093653.pdf)

At less than 30 percent, the labour force participation of women in West Asia and North Africa is the lowest in the world.<sup>69</sup> Many female workers are concentrated in service sectors and tend to be the first to lose their jobs in the time of economic regression and the last to obtain employment in the time of recovery.<sup>70</sup> For many private sector employers, women's double burden of earning a living and caring for their families is viewed as an impediment to their productivity, despite significant increases in the levels of women's education in recent years.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. 2009. Page 21.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> ILO Department of Statistics. LABORSTA Database. <http://laborsta.ilo.org/>.

<sup>70</sup> UN-ESCWA. *Promoting the economic participation of Arab women*. 2009.

In terms of having access to decent and productive employment opportunities across the world, youth have been particularly hard hit. Globally, the female share of inactive youth was 56.5 percent in 2007. Women's youth unemployment was between 1.8 to 4.6 times higher than female adult unemployment rates across regions in 2007, showing a similar pattern as for male youth. However, female youth unemployment was much higher than the corresponding male rates in Latin America and Caribbean, North Africa, and the Middle East in 2007.<sup>71</sup>

#### **Box 4: The Global Jobs Pact**

The Global Jobs Pact was adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2009 to help mitigate the social impact of the financial and economic crises. Recognizing that the crises present an opportunity to reshape policy responses, the Pact calls for recovery packages that fully integrate gender equality concerns and involve women in decision-making and design. In doing so, it is important to recognize the labour market disadvantages that women may face. Women carry the heaviest burden when it comes to unpaid care work. As the crises deepen, if policies for sharing care responsibilities are not developed, this is likely to further limit women's access to labour markets.

#### **What has helped to make a difference?**

A growing body of evidence suggests that economic growth and poverty reduction is spurred by improvements to women's access to education, health care, jobs and credit, and efforts to narrow the gender gap in economic opportunities.<sup>72</sup> When women can find decent jobs and acquire assets, they earn incomes and accumulate savings to help themselves and their families. Less is known about which interventions are most effective in sustainable progress towards women's economic security and rights. Country experiences in Asia show that higher education for young women does not necessarily lead to better employment outcomes as gender barriers in labour markets persist<sup>73</sup>. A clear understanding of what works best is critical for mobilizing political and financial support for women's economic empowerment.

**Positive action in employment programmes.** In 2005, the Indian Government passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which resulted in the creation of the world's largest social safety net programme based on the right to work. The law guarantees 100 days of employment on rural public works projects to a member of every rural household, and one-third of the workers are intended to be women. The programme allows a multiple number of eligible members to register on one job card, which is given to a household. NREGA reflects the Government's commitment to supporting women's employment, including through the provision of local projects and childcare facilities. Women's share of employment in the scheme has been over 40 percent, rising to 82 percent in Tamil Nadu. NREGA is changing the gendered landscape of rural work. In Dungarpur, Rajasthan, for example, more than two-thirds of the work on NREGA projects – digging, breaking, lifting and depositing stones – is done by women, who claim their work and their wages with pride.<sup>74</sup> An ILO report recommended amendments to

<sup>71</sup> ILO. *Global Employment Trends for Youth, October, 2008*. Geneva. 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Janet Stotsky. *Gender and its Relevance to Macroeconomic Policy: A Survey*. IMF Working Paper WP/06/233, 2006; Mayra Buvinic and Elizabeth M. King, 'Smart Economics,' *Finance and Development* (IMF), June 2007.

<sup>73</sup> ILO. *Global Employment Trends for Youth, October, 2008*. Geneva. 2008.

<sup>74</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

the programme because it currently overlooks unmarried or widowed women who live with their families and do not qualify as a separate household.<sup>75</sup>

**Supporting women’s entrepreneurship growth.** Self-employment is another strategy for the economic empowerment of women and their families as it provides an important option for many entering work for the first time in developing countries. Since women face barriers in access to credit, training and technology in many countries a gender focus can help to develop women’s entrepreneurship.<sup>76</sup> An ILO/USDOL supported project in Bangladesh, which assisted over 4,000 women micro-entrepreneurs, has shown substantial improvement of women’s income levels, household land ownership, health status and working conditions.

The Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association (UWEAL) provides another good example. UWEAL, with membership of more than 1,000 women and programmes in seven districts of Uganda, offers a wide range of services to female entrepreneurs. UWEAL, on behalf of its members, also actively engages in policy dialogue and participates in debates on legislation, particularly relating to property rights. UWEAL has lobbied the African Development Bank to offer guarantee loans to women. UWEAL currently also serves as the centre for the International Trade Centre-Supported Access Programme. This links UWEAL’s programmes with other initiatives and trainings on export markets.<sup>77</sup>

Positive action has proven effective in addressing the inadequate participation of women in senior management and corporate boards. The World Bank’s enterprise surveys indicate that about half of the firms in East Asia and the Pacific have female participation in ownership, compared with only 13 percent in South Asia and 18 percent in the Middle East and North Africa. The percentage of women in senior positions is far smaller, ranging from two percent in South Asia to 13 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>78</sup> Globally, there is one woman for every nine men in senior management in firms.<sup>79</sup> In 2008, Norway made it compulsory for Norwegian companies to have at least 40 percent female membership on their management boards, a measure that affected 487 public companies. Today, 40.1 percent of board members in public limited companies are women.<sup>80</sup>

**Benchmarking standards for gender equality in the private sector.** Women in the labour market in middle income countries are often relegated to dead-end jobs with poor salaries and working conditions. A growing number of initiatives are creating a more conducive environment for women workers in the private sector by introducing gender equality ‘seals’ or accreditation processes.

In Egypt, the Gender Equity Model Egypt (GEME) is a joint pilot project, replicated from experiences in Mexico and Brazil, between the Government, the World Bank and UNIFEM.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> ILO. *Current Employment Strategies and Women’s Work*. 2009.

<sup>76</sup> ILO. *Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality Brochure*. 2009.

[http://www.ilo.org/empent/Whatwedo/Publications/lang--en/docName--WCMS\\_118096/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/empent/Whatwedo/Publications/lang--en/docName--WCMS_118096/index.htm)

<sup>77</sup> UN-OHRLLS. *Gender Perspectives and Employment of Women in Least Developed Countries*. 2006.

<sup>78</sup> World Bank. *Enterprise Surveys 2009*. See <http://www.enterprisesurveys.org/gender>

<sup>79</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World’s Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Statistics Norway. 2009. See <http://www.ssb.no/en>.

<sup>81</sup> UNIFEM News. “Egyptian Government Scales Up Gender Equity Certification for Private Firms. 3 November 2009. [http://www.unifem.org/news\\_events/story\\_detail.php?StoryID=969](http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=969).

GEME has set up a voluntary certification scheme with minimum standards for hiring, training and promoting women in private sector firms. Companies that meet these standards earn a gender equity seal, which serves as public recognition of their efforts to embrace corporate social responsibility norms for women and promote a conducive and productive working environment for men and women. GEME has been piloted in 10 Egyptian companies, with a number of firms now investing their own resources in ongoing training programmes on gender equality for their employees.

In Central America, the Equality Seal is a voluntary certification process that verifies that the company is meeting standards that promote workplace equality between men and women. For example, *Fresquita Vegetales* is a certified private sector enterprise in Costa Rica that promotes gender equality in recruitment, remuneration, training opportunities and labour rights. It has policies against sexual harassment and for work/family balance, such as maternity leave and flexible schedules for pregnant and breastfeeding workers.<sup>82</sup>

**Advocacy for gender-responsive labour and employment laws and policies.** Women's networks and professional associations are important as advocates for gender-responsive labour legislation and policies, to enable women to access training, and to foster information sharing. Developing countries should be supported to provide social protection, with the aim of establishing universal access to social security, as well as to health and education. Efforts to expand cost-share maternity protection (both income compensation and medical subsidies for maternity) and affordable, good quality childcare, including community-based facilities are important. They not only enable women to participate in employment outside their homes, but they also create employment opportunities in themselves. In addition, emphasizing men's parental roles and responsibilities for unpaid work should be encouraged.

**Gender-responsive service delivery.** Essential for the achievement of the MDGs in developing countries is the expansion and effective delivery of basic public services. This poses a major challenge for local governments in particular, as they tend to lack the resources and capacity needed to ensure that all citizens receive basic necessities. Many countries, particularly in Africa, are currently implementing decentralization reforms which add to this challenge. As more responsibility is placed on local governments, they are having difficulty meeting the growing demand alone and are turning to other actors, including the private sector, resulting in a growing number of public-private partnerships (PPPs).

Service delivery gaps are also being filled by civil society organizations, including women's groups. Grassroots women's organizations and entrepreneurial groups have been involved in transport, energy, and food supply services. There has been a growth of savings and credit cooperatives formed by poor women to support micro-enterprises. Apart from providing the necessary service delivery at local levels, these partnerships have provided women with a source of income, which has proven particularly effective since women are more likely to spend resources on household expenditures, healthcare, and education.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> UNDP. *Innovative Approaches to Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment*. 2008.

<sup>83</sup> UNDP. *Meeting the Employment Challenge Can the Government Act as Employer of Last Resort?* 2010; UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008. Chapter 3.

### **What continues to impede progress?**

**Wage gaps.** Pay differentials remain one of the most persistent forms of gender inequality. They vary between and within countries, as well as across sectors. Throughout most regions and many occupations, women are paid less money than men for the same job. In a majority of countries, women's wages represent between 70 and 90 percent of men's wages, with even lower ratios in some Asian and Latin American countries.<sup>84</sup> A World Bank study in Lebanon found a 27 percent wage difference between male and female employees and that wage gaps existed within the same sector and occupation, even after adjusting for different levels of education.<sup>85</sup> As illustrated in the example in Box 4, higher education can make a difference, but current gaps in girls' education means that the potential is rarely achieved.

Gender wage gaps directly impact women's opportunity costs for entering into paid employment. Because women's opportunity costs are typically lower than men's, households often decide that it is more economically practical for the woman to stay at home.<sup>86</sup> Even achieving a higher level of education than men does not always help women to get quality jobs or better pay. A key challenge is to encourage women to enter non-traditional and more highly valued careers such as the scientific professions and technical occupations.

Systematically tracking and addressing wage gaps as a central element of MDG 3 is needed to enable appropriate policy responses and corrective measures. One such response is to pass and implement legislation for equal pay, including requirements for employers to carry out pay audits as the basis for addressing persistent gender wage gaps.

**Social and legal protection for the most vulnerable women workers.** Migrant and informal economy women workers comprise a significant portion of the female labour force and require both gender-responsive laws and social protection policies. Globalization has contributed to an increasing flow of migrant workers from countries with limited economic opportunities to fill gaps in nations with a dwindling labour supply. The World Bank estimated remittances at US\$328 billion in 2008, revised from an earlier figure of \$305 billion.<sup>87</sup> These monetary investments — used for food, housing, education and medical services — along with newly acquired skills of returnees, can potentially contribute significantly to poverty reduction.

Women constitute 50 percent or more of the migrant workforce in Asia and Latin America.<sup>88</sup> Studies indicate that migrant women workers contribute to the development of both countries of origin and destination and remittances from their incomes account for as much as 10 percent of GDP in some countries.<sup>89</sup> Yet, while migration can promote economic independence and status for women workers, it also bears great risks for women, many of whom are at the lower end of the job market and face multiple forms of discrimination. Migration can also have social impacts for children, in some cases increasing educational opportunities, but in others resulting in care deficiencies in sending countries. For migration to have a lasting impact on women's

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<sup>84</sup> ILO. *Global Employment Trends for Women*. March 2009.

<sup>85</sup> UN-ESCWA. *Women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources*. 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Falth and Blackden. *Unpaid Care Work Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction*. 2009.

<sup>87</sup> World Bank. *Migration and Development Brief*. Number 8. July 2009.

<sup>88</sup> United Nations Population Division Database, illustrated in UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*, Page 59

<sup>89</sup> UN-INSTRAW and UNDP. *Migration, Remittances and Gender-Responsive Local Development Case Studies: Albania, the Dominican Republic, Lesotho, Morocco, the Philippines and Senegal*. 2010.

empowerment and gender equality, countries of destination, transit and origin should adopt gender-sensitive migration policies so as to enhance the benefits of migration on development and mitigate its social harmful effects. In Jordan, a specialized department for migrant domestic workers was established and a standard contract for migrant domestic workers was adopted by the Government as the first of its kind in the Middle East.<sup>90</sup> Agencies that recruit migrant women workers in Nepal, Lao PDR and Cambodia have developed codes of conduct and pre-departure training to support women to better understand their labour rights once they migrate.<sup>91</sup>

**Attention to the impact of child labour – particularly girls’ labour – is critical.** The ILO’s most recent global estimate showed that more than 100 million girls between the ages of five and 17 were involved in child labour in 2004, contravening the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Girls accounted for approximately 46 percent of all child workers. Approximately 53 million girls were estimated to be in hazardous work, of which 20 million were under 12 years old. Reliable estimates on the extent of the worst forms of child labour including commercial sexual exploitation and forced and bonded labour are difficult to obtain, but studies suggest that the majority of children involved are girls. There is also evidence that girls are involved in significantly more unpaid household services than boys. More than 35 percent of working youth below the age of 15 are in employment for 21 hours or more per week. The barriers this presents for their participation in education are a direct violation of their right to education.<sup>92</sup>

#### 4c. Gender Parity in Political Representation

Indicator: 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Globally, women make up 18.6 percent of parliamentarians, still far from the 30 percent that was envisaged in the Beijing Platform for Action as required to achieve a ‘critical mass’ of women’s representation (Table 1). Nevertheless, this represents an increase of seven percentage points since 1995. In the two decades between 1975 and 1995, women’s representation rose by less than one per cent.<sup>93</sup>

There are significant differences within and between regions. The very positive results that some of the world’s poorest countries – including post-conflict countries – have had in increasing women’s seats in parliaments show that achievements on this indicator are related more to political will than to level of development. Rwanda, for instance, was the first country in the world to elect more women parliamentarians than men in 2008, and now has the highest number of female parliamentarians in the world at 56.3 percent. Sweden is second at 47 percent, followed by South Africa at 44.5 percent and Cuba at 43.2 percent.

<sup>90</sup> UNIFEM, “Empowering Women Migrant Workers (Jordan)” see <http://www.unifem.org/fo/pages/project.aspx?pid=553#>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> ILO. *Tackling Child Labour, a Key to the Future*. 2010 (forthcoming).

<sup>93</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Women in National Parliaments*. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.



**Table 1: Regional Averages of Women in National Parliaments, October 2009 (%)<sup>94</sup>**

	Single House or lower House	Upper House or Senate	Both Houses combined
<b>Nordic countries</b>	42.5	-	-
<b>Americas</b>	22.6	20.2	22.2
<b>Europe - OSCE countries including Nordics</b>	21.5	19.4	21.1
<b>Europe - OSCE countries excluding Nordics</b>	19.5	19.4	19.5
<b>Asia</b>	18.6	16.7	18.4
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	17.8	21.0	18.2
<b>Pacific</b>	13.0	32.6	15.2
<b>Arab States</b>	9.0	7.3	8.6

Over the past 10 years, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 27 countries have at some point achieved 30 percent or higher female representation in their parliaments (see below). It is noteworthy that sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean are well represented among countries with at least 30 percent female representation in parliament while in Asia only Nepal has reached this level.

**Table 2: Countries with at least 30 Percent Female Parliamentarians since 2000<sup>95</sup>**

Rwanda	The Netherlands	New Zealand	United Republic of Tanzania
Sweden	Norway	Nepal	Guyana
South Africa	Denmark	Germany	Timor-Leste
Cuba	Angola	Ecuador	Switzerland
Iceland	Costa Rica	Belarus	FYR Macedonia
Argentina	Spain	Uganda	Andorra
Finland	Belgium	Burundi	

### **What has helped to make a difference?**

**Positive action and quotas.** Constitutional or electoral laws mandating quotas or special temporary measures are the strongest means of increasing women's engagement in political competition and are used in 46 countries. As of 2008, the average representation of women was 21.9 percent in countries that used these types of quotas as opposed to 15.3 percent for the rest of the countries. Other types of temporary special measures, such as quotas at the sub-national level or political party quotas raise the number of countries with such quotas to 95. The majority of countries with women in 30 percent or more of national assembly seats applied quotas in some form.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

Quotas are important because granting women the right to vote and run for election is not, in itself, sufficient. It took 30 years before women in Lebanon or Morocco won seats in their national parliaments, although they had been granted political rights in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>97</sup>

In the Kyrgyz Republic a 'policy of achieving gender equality,' was formulated and linked to the National Action Plan (NAP) for 2007-2010. An important outcome was the establishment of the target of 30 percent for women deputies of the Parliament.<sup>98</sup> In 2005, there were no women in Parliament and only one woman in a high government position. By 2008, the Kyrgyz Republic had the highest proportion of women in Parliament (26.6 percent) and in government (21 percent) in Central Asia.<sup>99</sup>

**Stronger investments in women's participation in governance at the local level.** While MDG 3 focuses on national parliaments, it is crucial to provide women with opportunities and incentives to lead at the local level, where the results of women's leadership can often be seen more quickly and they can build constituencies to support their aspirations at the national level. A growing number of countries – from Cambodia to Argentina and Rwanda – are introducing quotas at the local level. In India, a 1992 constitutional reform introduced gender reservations at all tiers of local governance, including the local *panchayat* village council system. One-third of all council seats were reserved for women-only competition as were one-third of council heads (*pradhan*). Specific *panchayat* councils were randomly designated to have a female leader. A study of a sample of *panchayat* councils in West Bengal and Rajasthan villages found systematic differences in the way that *panchayat* councils responded to complaints. In both states women were more likely than men to make requests and complaints concerning water resources, reflecting their role as managers of domestic water supplies. There were no differences in the pattern of requests to male-led and female-led councils, but the number of drinking water projects was more than 60 percent higher in female-led than in male-led *panchayats*.<sup>100</sup> A study of municipal politics in Norway found a direct causal relationship between the proportion of female city councillors and childcare coverage.<sup>101</sup>

**Proportional Representation (PR).** Electoral systems are a strong predictor of the number of women in representative politics. PR often allows more women to compete and win than in simple majority systems. This is because they tend to have multi-member constituencies where seats are assigned in proportion to the percentage of votes won by the parties, which encourage more diversity in party platforms and candidates. Simple majority systems in which one candidate alone represents a constituency tend to discourage parties from fielding women. Out of 176 countries for which data was available in 2007, PR systems had a global average of 20.7 percent of their parliamentary seats held by women, compared to 13.3 percent in non-PR systems.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> UN-ESCWA. *Protecting the Rights of Women in the ESCWA Region through the Proper Use of UN resolutions and International Protocols on War and Armed Conflict*. 2009.

<sup>98</sup> United Nations in the Kyrgyz Republic. *Second Periodic Report on the Millennium Development Goals in the Kyrgyz Republic*. 2009

<sup>99</sup> United Nations in the Kyrgyz Republic. *Translating Commitments on Gender Equality into Actions*. 2009.

<sup>100</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

<sup>101</sup> Bratton, K. and L.P. Ray, 'Descriptive Representation, Policy Outcomes and Municipal Day-Care Coverage in Norway,' *American Journal of Political Science* 46, no.2. April 2002.

<sup>102</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

### **What continues to impede progress?**

Even at the current rate of increase, the 'parity zone' where neither sex holds more than 60 percent of seats will not be reached for 40 years. Moreover, the current rate of increase is unlikely to be sustained unless countries continue establishing quotas or other temporary special measures. The new generation of quotas used by countries such as Spain and Norway is worth highlighting as particularly effective. These quotas follow the principles of balanced gender presence and apply to both men and women.

**Creating an even playing field within political parties.** Political parties are the main route to political participation, so ensuring women's representation and advancement within them is crucial. Data on female membership in political parties is difficult to obtain, but a 2008 study in Latin America revealed that even in countries in which women's membership in parties is high, their participation in leadership remains disproportionately low. In Paraguay, women make up 46.5 percent of members, but 18.9 percent of executive positions; 45 percent of party members in Panama are women, but they occupy only 18.8 percent of leadership positions. In Costa Rica, however, women hold 43.9 percent of party leadership positions, bringing women into the parity zone. This is the result of an electoral code amendment in 1996, requiring Costa Rican parties to fill at least 40 percent of their leadership posts with women in 'electable positions'.<sup>103</sup> Costa Rica has recently elected its first female President, Laura Chinchilla. Improving data on political party membership worldwide and opportunities for women's leadership in parties is a key step in advancing progress on this indicator.

### **4d. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

The centrality of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights is recognized in several international agreements, including CEDAW and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action. The latter recognises that advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, the elimination of all kinds of violence against women and ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility are cornerstones of population and development-related programmes. It states that States should take all appropriate measures to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, universal access to healthcare services, including those related to reproductive health care, which includes family planning and sexual health. The basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so is also reaffirmed.<sup>104</sup>

Without control over their own bodies and fertility, it is very difficult for women to access other social, economic and political rights, or to benefit and contribute to development processes. In addition to the three new indicators under Goal 5, the importance of these rights is also reflected in two targets under Goal 6 (see Box 5).

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.* Page 21.

<sup>104</sup> United Nations International Conference on Population and Development 1994. *Summary of the Programme Action*. March 1995. <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/populatin/icpd.htm#chapter2>

## **Box 5: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the MDGs**

### **Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health**

Target 5A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

- Maternal mortality rate
- Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

Target 5B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health

- Contraceptive prevalence rate
- Adolescent birth rate
- Antenatal care coverage
- Unmet need for family planning

### **Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

Target 6A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Target 6B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it.

One of the MDGs where there has been least progress is MDG 5 on maternal mortality. According to new analysis on current trends, just 23 countries are on track to meeting the target to reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters by 2015. Globally, the number of maternal deaths has been decreasing by less than two percent a year since 1990.<sup>105</sup> To reach the target, global annual reductions of 5.5 percent are needed. In addition to deaths, between 8 and 20 million more women are affected by severe pregnancy-related complications, which induce ongoing morbidity and long-term disability.<sup>106</sup>

Progress towards the goal to stop and reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS has overall been mixed. At 33.4 million people (adults and children), the absolute numbers of people living with HIV are greater than ever before. In sub-Saharan Africa, women now account for 61 percent of those living with the virus; in the Caribbean, women accounted for 50 percent of all adults living with HIV, up from 37 percent in 2001; while in Asia, the proportion of women living with HIV rose from 19 percent in 2000 to 35 percent in 2008.<sup>107</sup>

The number of deaths has fallen from 2.1 million in 2001 to 1.7 million in 2007, mainly as a result of the growing availability of antiretroviral drugs. Although the proportion of women receiving services for prevention of mother-to child transmission of HIV increased from 10 percent in 2004 to 45 percent in 2008, only 21 percent of pregnant women received HIV testing and counselling and only one-third of those identified as HIV-positive during antenatal care were subsequently assessed for eligibility to receive antiretroviral therapy for their own health.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> See The Lancet, *Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980–2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5*, Early Online Publication, 12 April 2010, available at

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(10\)60518-1/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)60518-1/abstract)

<sup>106</sup> UNFPA. *Maternal mortality figures show limited progress in making motherhood safe*. October 2007:

[www.unfpa.org/mothers/statistics.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/statistics.htm)

<sup>107</sup> UNAIDS. *2009 AIDS Epidemic Update*. 2009.

[http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2009/2009\\_epidemic\\_update\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2009/2009_epidemic_update_en.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> World Health Organization. *Women and Health: Today's Evidence Tomorrow's Agenda*. 2009.

### **What has helped make a difference?**

Strengthening health systems and increasing skilled birth attendance is critical to making progress on maternal mortality. Four-fifths of deaths are the result of complications that could be prevented by the presence of skilled birth assistance or emergency obstetric care, but only one-third of all births in the poorest countries are attended by skilled health personnel.<sup>109</sup> There are also large equity gaps, with women living in poor and rural households particularly unlikely to receive such care.

Rwanda has implemented health reforms that are based on a decentralized system, performance-based financing and community-provider partnerships. The reforms have established grants to health facilities that are conditional on meeting performance benchmarks and indicators. Traditional birth attendants are paid to bring women to health centres and women are given free institutional deliveries if they attend antenatal clinics regularly. As a result of these reforms, in just three years between 2005 and 2008, the proportion of births attended by skilled personnel rose from 39 percent to 52 percent and infant mortality dropped 35 percent.<sup>110</sup>

As well as adequate health systems, specific policies on sexual and reproductive health and rights are needed. One in seven maternal deaths is caused by unsafe abortion.<sup>111</sup> UNFPA estimates that one in three maternal deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth could be avoided if women who wanted contraception had access to it.<sup>112</sup> In this context, Target 5B, which was added to MDG 5 in 2007, to achieve universal access to reproductive health, with its indicators on contraceptive prevalence rate and unmet need for family planning, is a welcome development.

Nepal has managed to increase contraceptive prevalence among women from 23 percent in 1991 to 48 percent in 2006 and now has one of the highest levels of contraception use among women of any poor country. In the three years between 2005 and 2008, Rwanda more than doubled its contraceptive prevalence rate from 17 percent to 36 percent.<sup>113</sup>

Making progress on stopping the spread of HIV and AIDS depends on recognizing the gendered drivers of the pandemic. Approaches such as the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) programme have addressed women's access to resources and strengthened their resilience in HIV prevention and intimate partner violence. The programme provides access to microcredit, while also building a support system to provide participants with information, support for their small businesses and space to discuss HIV, gender and other issues related to sexual decision-making.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> United Nations Population Fund. *Maternal mortality figures show limited progress in making motherhood safer*. October 2007. See [www.unfpa.org/mothers/statistics.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/statistics.htm).

<sup>110</sup> Sushella Singh, et al. *Adding it Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health*. UNFPA. 2009.

<sup>111</sup> UNFPA. *No Woman Should Die Giving Life Facts and Figures 1*. [http://www.unfpa.org/safemotherhood/mediakit/documents/fs/factsheet1\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/safemotherhood/mediakit/documents/fs/factsheet1_eng.pdf).

<sup>112</sup> United Nations Population Fund. *Facts about safe motherhood*. See [www.unfpa.org/mothers/facts.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/mothers/facts.htm).

<sup>113</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. Millennium Development Goals Indicators Database. See <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>.

<sup>114</sup> UNIFEM and the European Union. *Promoting Gender Equality in HIV and AIDS Responses: Making Aid More Effective Through Tracking Results*. 2009.

### **What continues to impede progress?**

Much of the current international effort to combat HIV and AIDS assumes that women and men are equal, and are therefore equally empowered to protect themselves, make decisions about their sexual activity, and access health care. This lack of a gender perspective on the HIV and AIDS crisis has led to women assuming a greater share of infection and negative impacts from the disease. Barriers and constraints to accessing services that stem from women's socio-economic status in society need to be recognized and addressed. For example, due to family responsibilities such as childcare often women cannot travel distances to access free treatment; stigma and discrimination by health care workers affect women disproportionately; women do not control income in the household, which lessens their ability to pay for costs associated with accessing treatment (i.e. user fees, costs for tests, transportation costs, etc.).<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, where women's rights and agency are denied, their ability to protect themselves is severely limited.

Women's voices – particularly those of women living with HIV – are too seldom heard in AIDS decision-making forums. A 2006 survey by UNAIDS found that in fewer than 10 percent of the 79 countries surveyed did women participate fully in the development of national AIDS plans. Strengthening women's participation in these contexts is a matter of equity, but also of effectiveness in shaping the global response to HIV and AIDS.

### **5. Critical cross-cutting gaps impeding progress on gender equality**

Despite the centrality of gender equality to each of the Millennium Development Goals, gender is not mainstreamed into the goal statements, the indices chosen, nor the methods used for measuring against these indices. A gender review of 78 national MDG reports found that references to women and gender were largely 'ghettoised' under Goals 3 and 5, and that discussions around Goal 7 on environment and Goal 8 on partnerships were almost always gender-blind.<sup>116</sup>

The November 2009 UN Expert Group Meeting on the Impact of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on Achieving the MDGs concluded, "...in order to achieve the MDGs, it is necessary not only to emphasize specific strategies in particular countries, but...to change the overall policy framework of both national governments and international organizations in a more equitable and democratic direction, recognizing the need for a gender perspective throughout."<sup>117</sup> Despite economic growth in many countries and advances in formal guarantees of equality in constitutional and legislative frameworks, progress for many women – particularly the poorest and most excluded – has been far too slow.<sup>118</sup>

The 2008 Gender Equity Index (GEI) reveals that no country in the world has achieved full gender equality.<sup>119</sup> The GEI shows that progress towards the achievement of gender equity is

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<sup>115</sup> Nanda, Priya. 'Gender dimensions of user fees: Implications for women's utilization of health care'. *Reproductive Health Matters*. Elsevier. 10(20): 127-134. 2002.

<sup>116</sup> Menon-Sen, Kalyani. *En Route to Equality: a Gender Review of National MDG Reports*, Bureau of Development Policy, UNDP. 2005.

<sup>117</sup> Report of the Expert Group Meeting on 'The impact of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action on the Full Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.' November 2009.

<sup>118</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

<sup>119</sup> Social Watch. <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/9274>.

not associated with GDP levels (Figure 2). For example, according to GEI indicators, Rwanda and Mozambique, two countries with low income levels have achieved higher levels of gender equality than some much richer European countries.

The previous sections of this paper have identified critical gaps related to the specific targets and indicators of the MDGs, with a particular focus on MDG 3. The impediments to making more consistent progress on gender equality differ between countries and regions. What cuts across all of them is the critical need to enhance accountability for commitments made to gender equality and women's empowerment. Some of the cross-cutting gap areas include the following:

**Generating, analyzing and using sex disaggregated data and statistics, including on agricultural and unpaid care work.** Gaps in data needed to track progress toward gender equality are a manifestation of the inadequate investment and accountability that have plagued efforts to advance visionary commitments. Many countries do not disaggregate their statistics, especially those related to employment and/or agricultural production. For example, neither India nor China, the world's two most populous nations, have sufficient sex-disaggregated data to allow easy analysis of progress towards gender equality over the past decade.<sup>120</sup> Some countries, including in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, do not produce data frequently enough to monitor changes in patterns or trends in employment. Furthermore, there are many areas that are fundamental to achieving gender equality – from ending violence against women to guaranteeing women's land and property rights – for which there are no global databases. Consequently, recommendations that have emerged from the majority of expert groups and high-level convenings on gender and the MDGs stress the indispensability of sex-disaggregated data, as well as of building capacity to generate data in other areas that fuel gender inequality.

Data on women's time use and their investment in unpaid care work is particularly essential to inform policy-making. A resolution adopted at the 2008 International Conference of Labour Statisticians urges countries to develop comprehensive statistics on working time that can adequately account for all labour inputs into productive activity, including 'unpaid household service and volunteer work' as the basis of better targeted labour market, economic and social policies.<sup>121</sup>

The Population and Housing Census that many countries will embark on in 2010 provides a good opportunity for ensuring that essential gender-sensitive data (including on time use) is collected. Beyond this, national statistics systems should make greater use of UN Statistical Division guidelines on gender statistics in their planning and execution of censuses and surveys.<sup>122</sup>

**Reducing women's time burden through investments in infrastructure and gender-responsive economic stimulus packages.** Supporting improvements to rural water and irrigation systems, domestic energy and rural transportation have substantial multiplier effects in creating jobs for women and men and reducing women's unpaid care work. Providing facilities for childcare also

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<sup>120</sup> Overseas Development Institute. *Gender and the MDGs*. Briefing Paper Number 42. September 2008. <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/2386.pdf>.

<sup>121</sup> ILO. *Report of the Conference*. 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians Geneva 2008. 2009. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_101467.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_101467.pdf).

<sup>122</sup> United Nations Statistics Division. *Handbooks, Guidelines and Training Manuals*. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/standmeth/handbooks/default.htm>.

tend to reduce women's burden of unpaid care work and provides opportunities for women to enter the labour market. Yet, the OECD/DAC Gender Equality Marker in its Creditor Reporting System shows that far fewer donor resources are allocated to gender equality in the economic infrastructure sector than in health and education. Given that several stimulus packages are focusing on infrastructure, there is a need to create the conditions for women to enter male-dominated sectors such as public works and infrastructure.<sup>123</sup>

**Scaling up and accounting for investments in gender equality.** At the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2008), Member States agreed that realizing the multiplier effect of gender equality on sustained economic growth requires gender-responsive macroeconomic policies as well as greater resources at all levels. The World Bank has estimated that external resources in the range of US\$13 billion annually are required to finance gender equality in the context of the MDGs in low-income countries over the next few years, with readjustments thereafter based on increased domestic resources for these interventions. They further estimated that the costs for achieving gender equality, on average, accounted for between one third and one half of the total MDG costs (in the range of US\$37-\$57 per capita per year), depending on the country.<sup>124</sup>

In the past 10 years, there have been important advances in tracking investments for gender equality. The Gender Equality Marker (GEM) of the OECD/DAC has shown that, of the US\$26.8 billion in ODA disbursements that donors who use the Creditor Reporting System accounted for in 2006, US\$7.2 billion (roughly 27 percent) were allocated to programmes that had gender equality as either a principal or significant objective. In the context of aid effectiveness, with more funds expected to be channelled via general budget support, securing and accounting for investments in gender equality could become even more challenging. Institutionalizing Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in donor and programme countries, as well as in multilateral organizations, is also a key priority and an area where there has been some progress.

There are at least 70 countries that have had some experience with GRB in the past 10 years. Through GRB analysis, women's groups and parliamentarians are highlighting the differential impact of public spending on services for women and men. A growing number of countries are institutionalizing this capacity in their Ministries of Finance, by regularly issuing call circulars and budget laws requiring GRB in the context of public financial management reform, in addition to undertaking GRB at local levels. This has led to reallocation of resources to increase investments in women's economic security, health, agricultural productivity and education in communities in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and Latin America. UNDP, in collaboration with national and global researchers, has undertaken an eight country research project to highlight implicit and explicit gender bias in the national tax systems of Argentina, Ghana, India, Mexico, Morocco, South Africa, Uganda and the United Kingdom. Such biases, particularly in income taxes, may provide important obstacles and disincentives for women to join the labour market and for women and men to equally share the burden of unpaid care work.<sup>125</sup> Greater investment in applying GRB to revenues – including taxation – as well as expenditures is thus a priority for the future.

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<sup>123</sup> Falth and Abbadi. UNDP Draft Guidance Note. 2009.

<sup>124</sup> UNIFEM. *Gender Equality Now*. 2008.

<sup>125</sup> UNDP. *Policy Brief on Gender and Taxation*. 2010 (forthcoming).



In addition to GRB other vehicles to enhance accountability are emerging. Through public audits of local government spending, corruption is being exposed and better controls on spending at the local level are being identified to enable women to benefit from public resources. Through citizens' report cards surveying the quality of urban public services, women and community groups are identifying poor performance and demanding improvements from municipal authorities in sanitation systems, street lighting, and public housing.<sup>126</sup>

**Addressing impediments to advancing women's human rights and end gender discrimination.**

Gender discrimination remains a key impediment to securing progress on the MDGs, despite global, regional and national commitments to ensure gender equality made under core international human rights covenants and conventions – CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action, Security Council resolutions, ILO Conventions<sup>127</sup>, and key regional gender equality agreements such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. In October 2009, the Human Rights Council called on Member States to take all measures to eliminate discrimination against women and expressed concern that, despite pledges made in the Beijing Platform for Action and the General Assembly review in 2000, many countries still have laws in force that discriminate against women and girls.<sup>128</sup>

Of the many areas that require greater attention, two that are consistently cited as priorities are guaranteeing women's inheritance and property rights and ending violence against women. Both are essential to making progress on MDG 3, as well as on the other MDGs, and inadequate attention to both continues to cripple overall efforts.

**Women's unequal access to land and property rights** has severe economic consequences on all of the MDGs. In many countries, women have limited rights to inherit, dispose or manage land or other assets. Women without assets are unable to put up collateral to borrow money and have to seek out a marginal existence in the informal economy. In some cases, lack of assets can make women more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and social exploitation and discrimination. Weak property and inheritance rights can also lead to female homelessness and economic destitution.<sup>129</sup>

While inadequate, there are a growing numbers of efforts to reverse discriminatory laws and practices that restrict women's right to and ownership of land and property. In the immediate post-conflict period, both Mozambique and Rwanda instituted policies and laws to enable women to claim property on an equal basis with men. The 2005 amendment of the Hindu Succession Act in India gave equal inheritance rights to daughters and sons in all forms of property, including agricultural land. Land reform processes can also play an important role in addressing this inequality. Many early land reform processes in Latin America, for instance, targeted male heads of households. But more recent efforts are showing greater promise. In

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<sup>126</sup> UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009*. 2008.

<sup>127</sup> Especially ILO Conventions 100 (on equal remuneration); 111 (on ending discrimination); 156 (on family responsibilities); and 183 (on maternity protection).

<sup>128</sup> United Nations General Assembly. Human Rights Council. A/HRC/12/L.3/Rev.1. *Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development*. New York: United Nations. 2009.

<sup>129</sup> UN-OHRLS. *Breaking Barriers: Gender Perspectives and Empowerment of Women in Least Developed Countries*. 2006.

Guatemala, the state-sponsored land and market programme, based on a land bank, requires the names of both spouses to appear on documents. In parts of India, incentives – such as cuts in stamp duty rates – are offered when property is registered in a woman’s name or in both names.<sup>130</sup>

**Ending violence against women and girls** is, according to many women’s rights advocates and from a human rights perspective, “the missing MDG”. Based on national surveys, from 17 to 76 percent of women experience physical and/or sexual violence by men at some point in their lifetime, most often perpetrated by husbands and intimate partners.<sup>131</sup> Violence against women and girls has far-reaching consequences, harming families and communities. For women and girls 16 to 44 years old, violence is a major cause of death and disability. There is increasing evidence on the direct and indirect linkages between violence against women and girls and HIV that stem from gender dynamics and social norms in relationships. A study in Lesotho found that sexual and physical violence is a key determinant of the country’s HIV epidemic: 47 percent of men and 40 percent of women in Lesotho say women have no right to refuse sex with their husbands or boyfriends.<sup>132</sup> A survey among 1,366 South African women showed that women who were beaten by their partners were 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV than those who were not.<sup>133</sup>

Countries are making some progress in creating a better enabling environment to address violence against women and girls. According to the UN Secretary-General’s 2006 ‘In-depth study on all forms of violence against women’, 89 countries had some legislation on domestic violence, and a growing number of countries had instituted national plans of action. Marital rape is a prosecutable offence in at least 104 States and 90 countries have laws on sexual harassment. However, in too many countries gaps remain. In 102 countries there are no specific legal provisions against domestic violence and marital rape is not a prosecutable offence in at least 53 nations.<sup>134</sup> The persistent invisibility of this pandemic – including in the glaring absence of nationally-available data on prevalence in most countries – led, in 2008, to the UN Secretary-General’s launch of the global campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women. He called for all countries to move forward on five main goals, including through the active involvement of men and boys in ending this scourge. Among the five top priorities at the country level, the UNiTE campaign proposes urgent action to: adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls; adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans; strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls; increase public awareness and social mobilization; and address sexual violence in conflict.

The social mobilization campaign, Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women, [www.saynotoviolence.org](http://www.saynotoviolence.org), first launched as a signature campaign in 2007 and subsequently

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<sup>130</sup> UN-DAW/UN-DESA. Report of the Expert Consultation. 2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: ‘Women’s Control Over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources, including Microfinance.’ 2009.

<sup>131</sup> García-Moreno, C., et al. , *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women*. Geneva, 2005; Johnson, H., Ollus, N. and Nevala, S., *Violence Against Women: An International Perspective (IVAWs)*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media, 2008.

<sup>132</sup> UNAIDS. *AIDS Epidemic Update 2009*. 2009.

<sup>133</sup> Dunkle, Kristin L. et al. ‘Gender based violence, relationship power, and risk of HIV infection in women attending antenatal clinics in South Africa.’ *The Lancet*. 363 (9419): 1415. 2004.

<sup>134</sup> United Nations. *In-depth study on all forms of violence against women*. Report of the Secretary-General. 2006. [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/61/122/Add.1](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/61/122/Add.1).

developed into an advocacy and communications platform in 2009, contributes directly to the UN Secretary-General's global campaign.

## 6. Recommendations

While progress on MDG 3 has been uneven and, in many cases, far too slow, there are a growing number of promising examples that demonstrate pathways to advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. Greater investments in testing and scaling up these practices offer great potential. A World Bank study of successful 'scaling up' efforts to reduce poverty identified four dimensions for learning from change: (i) institutional change – change in the rules, norms, behaviours, and organizations; (ii) experimentation and learning – how change is learned from and adapted to different contexts; (iii) political leadership and commitment – how different interest groups and coalitions support change; and (iv) supportive external environments – how external environments can catalyze and sustain change. 'Scaling up', therefore, should be viewed in terms of enabling and supporting change in a way that maximizes the potential of resources to achieve impact.<sup>135</sup> For this reason, simple replication of successful projects or activities in new locations is unlikely to be effective unless it is accompanied by a conducive enabling environment.

Based on the review in this paper, and on many of the key convenings and analyses generated over the past several years on the gender dimensions of the MDGs, there are eight key policies and/or actions that have potential to propel progress:

1. Remove key barriers to girls' education, including by providing scholarships, cash transfers and eliminating user fees; tracking completion and attendance rates; improving the quality of education, including tackling violence against girls in school; and scaling up investments in girls' enrolment in secondary school.
2. Make the generation of full and productive employment and the creation of decent work and income the primary goal of macroeconomic, social and development policies, including by promoting equal skills development and employment opportunities; reducing wage gaps between women and men; introducing social protection measures and labour laws and policies that are gender-responsive; and introducing and enforcing legal protections for the most vulnerable women workers. Particular attention should be paid to gender gaps in school-to-work transition for youth, making education and training relevant to labour market demand, based on a life-cycle and rights-based approach.
3. Introduce positive action to improve the numbers and influence of women in all political decision-making, including by investing in women's leadership in local decision-making structures and by creating an even playing field for men and women within political parties.
4. Invest in sexual and reproductive health as a key foundation for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including community health approaches to tackle maternal mortality, meeting unmet need for family planning and addressing high adolescent fertility rates, as well as measures to ensure that women living with HIV have their reproductive health needs met and are able to participate fully in shaping policy to tackle the pandemic.

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<sup>135</sup> UNESCO. *Scaling up Good Practices in Girls' Education*. 2005.

5. Improve national level capacity to track and report on progress, gaps and opportunities through better generation and use of sex-disaggregated data and statistics, including on time use.
6. Reduce women's work burden through investments in infrastructure, labour saving technologies and gender-responsive economic stimulus packages.
7. Strengthen accountability for enhancing women's rights and ending gender discrimination – in line with commitments made under international human rights instruments, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and relevant ILO Conventions – including through eliminating inequalities in access to land and property and by investing in implementation of laws, policies and programmes to prevent and address violence against women.
8. Scale up and account for investments in gender equality, including by institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting as part of public financial management reforms to ensure that financial commitments are commensurate with policy commitments to gender equality.

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