Goal 8, which envisions a global partnership for development and which is one of the more innovative of the Millennium Development Goals, could help to assure women’s empowerment. It is therefore disappointing to see no mention of women’s inclusion and participation in the targets set for this goal. Many women’s organizations have also pointed out this lack, and have expressed concern that the targets as specified may not promote desirable forms of development. For example, Target 12 seems to suggest that liberalization of trade and finance is beneficial — but many scholars and activists have shown that unless it is carefully managed, it makes the information in these tables and charts indicates that although women have made great strides in recent years, there is still much to be done, both to move forward and to prevent falling back. At this critical time in international politics, world leaders must find a way to ensure growth, development and hope for everyone — women and men alike. Public policy for the empowerment of women has to focus on new ways of including women and enabling them to shape the institutions that structure their lives. Empowerment is essentially about the ability to make choices and exercise bargaining power; to have a voice; to have the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change; to create a just social and economic order, nationally and internationally (UNIFEM 1997).
the lives of many poor women even more insecure than they were before. Moreover, some of the targets fall short of what many advocates for social justice think is required. For example, Target 15 calls for measures to make debt sustainable, rather than the cancelation of debt. The targets implicitly assume that the key partners are governments of rich and poor countries, working in conjunction with private businesses, especially pharmaceutical and information technology companies. There is no mention of women’s organizations, or indeed of any civil society organization or NGOs. The vision embedded in the targets for Goal 8 is currently that of a top-down partnership.

Women’s and other civil society organizations must begin organizing now to create and present strategies for reversing this by proposing bottom-up partnerships which hold governments and corporations accountable for plans that truly create strategies for reversing this by proposing bottom-up partnerships which hold governments and corporations accountable for plans that truly create development that is beneficial to all. At the same time, advocates must continue to press forward on the many commitments made to women by the international conferences of the 1990s that are not included in the Millennium Development Goals but are central to women’s empowerment. There is no one path to gender equality, but there can be no gender equality unless all the different paths and different issues are confronted. Economic empowerment without reproductive rights and health care will leave women less than full citizens. Education without an end to harassment and violence against women will make it difficult for girls and women to make full use of their education. For this reason and many more, UNIFEM has spearheaded major UN inter-agency campaigns, in particular with women’s organizations and the media to end violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Eastern Europe and the CIS countries and Africa.

As UNIFEM has argued elsewhere, persistent gender inequality is a human rights violation that must be addressed through a variety of remedies, many of which are contained in CEDAW. The Convention provides guidance when considering ways in which to end gender inequality and can provide useful recommendations on the most critical next steps in a wide range of areas relevant to the MDGs.

The world can no longer afford to make commitments that cannot or will not be kept. Future stability and progress itself depend upon the decisions we make now—to fulfill commitments and to ensure that the world’s most desperately poor people, many of whom are women, have the guarantee of a better future.

TECHNICAL NOTES

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

Data is presented following the list of countries and their geographical area classification used by the United Nations Statistical Division in compiling The World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics. In common with comparable UN and World Bank reports, this report does not include the following small countries, territories, islands and states owing to problems of data accessibility: American Samoa, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bermuda, Dominica, French Guiana, French Dominica, Gaza Strip, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guam, Kiribati, Liechtenstein, Macao, Marshall Islands, Martinique, Micronesia (Federal States of), Monaco, Netherlands Antilles, New Caledonia, Palau, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and U.S. Virgin Islands.

The designsations do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of UNIFEM concerning the legal status of any country, territory and area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

DATA SOURCES

Compiling an up-to-date and comprehensive set of figures has been an easy task because of discrepancies and inconsistencies between different sources. We would particularly like to thank Jens Johansen at UNIFEM, Sophia Lawrence at ILO and Emmanuel Boudard at the Human Development Report Office for their help.

The main data sources we have used are:

- MDG Database, Millennium Development Indicators and the MDG portal. http://laborsta.ilo.org
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Laboursta database, website http://laboursta.ilo.org
- ILO definition of Labour Market Statistics, 2001 (no. 1-4)
- Electronic data file provided by ILO.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), website http://www.ipu.org

GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Secondary School Enrolment

Chart 1 shows the ratio of girls’ net enrolment rate to boys’ net enrolment rate. This is the measure of gender disparity in education used by the Taskforce working on MDG 3 and by the Human Development Report. The MDG database provides a different measure: the ratio of the number of girls enrolled in school to the number of boys enrolled in school. The argument for the MDG database measure of gender disparity in education is that it only requires information on school attendance and not on the population of school age. However, its disadvantage is that it reflects attendance away from the issue of whether the same proportion of girls of school age are enrolled as boys. This is the key issue, not the absolute numbers. A focus on enrolment rates is essential for understanding whether reductions in gender disparity are being achieved through increases in the enrolment of girls or decreases in the enrolment of boys. It is important not only to examine the gap between boys’ and girls’ secondary enrolment rates but also the level of enrolment of girls, the latest available data (2001) for which is shown in table 1. Due to recent changes in the UNESCO classification of levels of education, data before 1997 are not compatible with the data on rates before 1997. Therefore it has not been possible to assess on a country by country basis how far there has been an improvement between 1997 and 2001. The MDG database does not provide this information.

We calculated the ratio of girls’ net enrolment rate to boys’ net enrolment rate for Chart 1 using data on net and gross enrolment rates for girls and boys from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics http://portal.unesco.org/uis. The primary sources of enrolment data are national ministries of education, which collect the data from schools and report to it. The reliability of data varies according to the effectiveness of record keeping in each school. Where resource allocation to schools depends upon enrolment numbers, there may be an incentive to over-report enrolment. Accurate calculations of enrolment rates also depend upon estimates of the population of school-age children, the reliability of which is variable.

Gross enrolment rates measure the number of children enrolled in primary or secondary school as a percentage of the total number of children in the relevant age group for that level. The rates can be greater than 100 per cent because many children of secondary school age may still be attending primary school, while young people who are past the normal age of completion of secondary school may still be attending secondary school if they have not yet attained the minimum age requirements. Net enrolment rates show the number of children enrolled at a schooling level and belonging to the relevant age group for that level, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children in that age group. Net enrolment rates are better indicators and are used here whenever possible. Where this is not available we use the gross enrolment rate.

LITERACY

Chart 2 shows the ratio of females’ literacy rate to males’ literacy rate, 2002. ‘Youth’ is defined as people aged 15 to 24. Note that the MDG website refers to this indicator as ‘women to men parity index’, as ratio 2002. Chart 3 presents the change in female youth literacy rate, 1995-2002. Data for both of the literacy indicators

DATA SOURCES

- MDG Database, Millennium Development Indicators and the MDG portal. http://laborsta.ilo.org
- International Labour Organization (ILO) Laboursta database, website http://laboursta.ilo.org
- ILO definition of Labour Market Statistics, 2001 (no. 1-4)
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- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), website http://www.ipu.org

REFERENCES

For measures to make debt sustainable, rather than the cancelation of debt, see the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, April 2001 (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund).