



Challenges and Achievements in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for Women and Girls

The Road Ahead

INTRODUCTION, OBJECTIVES AND FORMAT

Adopted at the Millennium Summit on 8 September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration built on the outcomes of the major summits and conferences of the 1990s, including the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing. In the Millennium Declaration, Member States affirmed six fundamental values as essential to international relations, namely freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. They identified key objectives and called for action in a range of areas, including peace and security; development and poverty eradication; protection of the common environment; and human rights, democracy and good governance. Member States confirmed their resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate truly sustainable development; and they highlighted the importance of ensuring equal human rights of women and men and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Inspired by the Millennium Declaration, the subsequent eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) accompanied by a set of time-bound targets and indicators served as a road map to monitor progress. Progress towards the MDGs so far has been uneven, and significant gaps and challenges remain in their implementation for women and girls. As the 2015 target date for their achievement approaches, efforts to accelerate implementation are intensifying. At the same time, intergovernmental and UN-led processes are well under way to inform and design a post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 2015 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, implementation of the commitments made nearly 20 years ago has taken on new urgency.

The Commission on the Status of Women, at its 58th session in March 2014 (CSW58), has a critical opportunity for evaluating results achieved through the MDG framework from a gender perspective; to better understand the achievements and challenges in implementing the MDGs for women and girls; accelerate progress in achieving the MDGs; and identify key gender equality issues to be addressed going forward, including in the ongoing debate on the post-2015 development framework. The discussions and outcomes of the session should also contribute to the Beijing+20

process and add impetus to preparations at all levels. In inter-active panels, the Commission will focus on experiences, lessons learned and good practices. It will assess achievements and identify gaps and challenges; discuss ways and means to accelerate achievement of the MDGs for women and girls, and for giving priority to a comprehensive vision of gender equality, women's rights and empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda.

The Commission will adopt agreed conclusions that are expected to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of existing commitments and address action-oriented recommendations to States, relevant intergovernmental bodies, mechanisms and entities of the United Nations system and other stakeholders, in order to accelerate implementation.

Stakeholders at different levels are already preparing for CSW58, and momentum is building towards an inter-active and results-oriented session. At national and regional levels, governments, civil society organizations, parliamentarians, entities of the UN system and other actors are convening to set priorities and renew political commitment for action. At the global level, efforts are under way to build alliances and strengthen networks among different stakeholders, and to expand multi-stakeholder approaches to help accelerate the implementation of the existing normative framework and to deepen and strengthen it for greater effectiveness and impact.

Given that the UN-Women Stakeholders' Forum of December 2012 generated momentum and consensus that contributed to the success of CSW57, UN-Women will again convene a forum to engage a range of stakeholders in the preparations for CSW58 and beyond. A special civil society segment will bring the authentic voices of girls and women to the discussions.

The stakeholders' forum will:

- Raise awareness of existing commitments for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, with particular reference to the MDGs
- Create a platform for sharing lessons learned and strategies for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment
- Identify key areas and issues where consensus needs strengthening
- Foster dialogue and build alliances around key elements of the gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment goal in the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- Accelerate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at all levels, and galvanize participation of all stakeholders in its 20-year review and appraisal process.

The stakeholders' forum will consist of five inter-active panel discussions and one closing session where participants from different institutional backgrounds and a range of experiences will engage in dialogue, highlight key areas for future work and commit to further action. Each panel will also identify specific expectations for CSW58.

Panelists are invited to address key questions highlighted in the discussion guides for the panels. Each panelist is also encouraged to present one concrete result/outcome for CSW58 and her/his contribution/commitment towards achieving that outcome.

OUTCOME

A report on the stakeholders' forum, summarizing the key elements from the discussions and outcome expectations will be prepared and published on the web, and contribute to the preparations for CSW58. It will also help galvanize stakeholders towards effective implementation of the outcomes of CSW58.

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 1

Challenges for achieving the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls

CURRENT SITUATION

As a set of time-bound targets, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have played an important role in galvanizing policy attention on global development issues. The goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG 3) and the integration of gender perspectives into some of the other goals have been a signal that gender equality is a global priority. However, the MDG framework is broadly recognized as narrow, omitting several important dimensions of gender inequality, and modest in its ambitions.

An assessment of progress in achieving the MDGs nevertheless reveals a mixed picture with success in some areas, such as improving girls' enrolment in primary education, but less progress in others such as reducing maternal mortality. Progress has also been uneven, both within countries, with stark differences in achievement for the

most marginalized groups, as well as between countries, with one or two regions driving much of the improvement. Moreover, progress has not necessarily led to better outcomes for women and girls. For example, in education the heavy focus on enrolment has come at the cost of educational quality. While gender equality and women's empowerment are critical for achieving all the MDGs, gender equality concerns have not been systematically mainstreamed into the implementation of all MDGs, especially MDGs 7 and 8 which deal with issues of sustainable development and global economic governance. In fact it is this broader structural environment that poses significant challenges to the achievement of the MDGs for women and girls. The successive crises and increasing shifts to austerity measures have intensified vulnerability and inequalities between and within countries, with specific impacts on women and girls. Special attention is also needed on the impact of conflict and insecurity in achieving the MDGs for women and girls.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What are some main reasons, and key factors for lack of, or limited progress towards achieving the MDGs for women and girls? What are key remaining challenges and gaps?
- What MDG-related policies and mechanisms have addressed inequalities and targeted disadvantaged groups of women and girls?
- What policies and programmes have been implemented to harness the synergies between progress towards gender equality and progress towards all the MDGs? What are the challenges for mainstreaming gender equality across all the MDGs and their achievement?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 2

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through a comprehensive approach grounded in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the vision of the Millennium Declaration — lessons learned

CURRENT SITUATION

Built upon the outcomes of major summits and world conferences of the 1990s, the Millennium Declaration confirms governments' resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate truly sustainable development, and highlights the importance of ensuring equal human rights of women and men and the implementation of CEDAW. While inspired by the Millennium Declaration, the eight MDGs fell short of the expansive vision of the Declaration. The simplified goals amenable to quantitative measurement left out many important priorities, such as inequality within and between countries, empowerment of people, climate change and sustainability, local participation and democratic governance, and conflict and security.

MDG 3, measured by a single target of gender parity in education, is clearly insufficient to achieve the broader goal of gender equality and women's empowerment. As years of experience have suggested, there are no 'magic bullets' for reaching gender equality. The transformation necessary for achieving real changes in the lives of women and girls requires a multi-dimensional strategy that tackles

the structural drivers of gender inequality. Such a strategy must be based on a comprehensive approach that incorporates the Beijing Platform for Action, the CEDAW Convention and the Millennium Declaration, and go well beyond the MDG targets.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How have States and other actors worked to broaden the implementation of the MDGs beyond the narrow scope of MDG3 to promote the full spectrum of women and girls' rights embedded in CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant international instruments and agreements? What lessons for the future can be learned from such efforts?
- How can States and the international community work to ensure that future global development frameworks will take a comprehensive approach that incorporates existing commitments and agreements on gender equality and the empowerment of women?
- How have the structural drivers of gender inequality been tackled through MDG-related policies and programmes? What are examples of good practice?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 3

A participatory approach to gender equality that champions women's voice, leadership and rights — lessons learned

CURRENT SITUATION

Having voice and participation in the political processes and decisions that determine their lives is a fundamental dimension of women's and girls' human rights and critical for achieving the MDGs for women and girls. The MDGs have monitored only one aspect of women's participation through an indicator on women's representation in national parliaments. Despite some gains, globally only around 1 in 5 parliamentarians are women, yet experience indicates that women's participation in decision-making at all levels – from the global to the local – can influence public policies and spending patterns to improve access to education, health care and decent work, and ensure adequate provision of services and guarantee women's physical integrity and reproductive rights. Amplifying women's voices and participation in household decision-making is also critically important and can have a direct impact on the wellbeing of women and girls and their families.

Achieving the MDGs for women and girls requires accountability systems to enable women to hold decision-makers to account, and to shape public policy, prevent abuses of their rights, or demand redress where abuses occur. Stakeholders such as the private sector also need to be accountable for their role in meeting the MDGs. Key to making accountability systems work for women is the strength of women's collective action, within women's rights groups and within associations such as trade unions. Ensuring collaboration and accountability across different parts and levels of government, particularly those responsible for implementing the MDGs, is important for achieving gender equality and women's rights. Institutional structures, especially national machineries for gender equality, play a critical role as advocates and catalyst for change, and monitor progress to ensure accountability. Coordination and

leadership by national machineries for gender equality vis-à-vis all government bodies, and collaboration with civil society and other stakeholders strengthens gender equality agenda-setting.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What actions have States taken to ensure women's participation in designing policies and monitoring the implementation of the MDGs? How are women's organizations involved in setting policy priorities and monitoring gaps? What are examples of effective civil society engagement in the production of national MDG reports?
- What are examples of effective collaboration between different government departments to implement the MDGs for women and girls? What mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that all public authorities responsible for implementing the MDGs systematically address the concerns of women and girls? How have national machineries for gender equality provided leadership to ensure that gender equality concerns are effectively addressed across the MDGs?
- What have States done to ensure that women's organizations are able to participate in processes of defining priorities for the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals? What strategies have been put in place to ensure the participation of marginalized groups of women and girls?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 4

Accelerating progress and investing in gender equality — lessons learned

CURRENT SITUATION

In order to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the MDGs, political commitment and investment are required. Funding from all sources and across all sectors, gender-responsive planning and budgeting, financing for specific programmes and for universal service delivery, are necessary for progress. Such funding should benefit different actors, including national mechanisms for gender equality and the women's movement. However, economic and financial crises and resulting shifts to austerity and cuts in public spending and investments in infrastructure are affecting the quality and accessibility of public services and availability of social protection, with direct implications on the overall achievement of the MDGs, with specific impacts for women and girls. Knowledge, including high quality sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators, as well as gender analysis are needed to support effective policymaking and implementation. While the need to monitor the MDGs has driven data collection efforts over the past decade and led to increased availability, the many gender equality and women's empowerment issues not included in the MDGs have been neglected in data collection efforts. Capacities of stakeholders to produce and use such knowledge and information effectively, and to ensure that tools and methodologies are in place to support policy making, can effectively enhance progress towards gender equality.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How have Governments maintained and expanded investments in achieving the MDGs overall, and MDG 3 in particular, especially in the light of crises and austerity? How have Governments kept up investments in promoting gender equality? Which sectors are particularly susceptible to cuts and how have those impacted on gender equality? What types of investments have proven successful for progress in gender equality and the economy more generally?
- What sources of funding; and what types of partnerships were critical for progress towards achieving the MDGs for women and girls? How have multi-stakeholder partnerships at the national level impacted on gender equality?
- What have States done to strengthen data collection and analysis in regard to gender equality and women's empowerment? How has enhanced knowledge contributed to better policy-making and resource allocation towards MDGs for women and girls? What are examples of good practice that can be replicated?
- What are the challenges facing States in ensuring regular reporting on gender indicators, including availability of sex-disaggregated data, especially in areas not currently covered by the MDGs? How can some of these challenges be overcome?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 5

“What do the MDGs mean to me?” Voices of girls and women

CURRENT SITUATION

Among the various approaches and types of action that have been considered as necessary to accelerate progress on the MDGs has been one that links the life cycle and rights-based approach. This approach argues that gender inequality and the cycle of discrimination and violence against women starts at the earliest stages of life, and continues through childhood into adulthood and including old age. Girls are doubly disadvantaged, on account of their gender and age and face violence, discrimination, are often subject to harmful attitudes, practices and neglect, and are treated as inferior which results in diminished opportunities in health, education, and employment. Elderly women face violence, discrimination and acute marginalization, which severely affect their enjoyment of their human rights. Therefore the MDGs must serve the rights of girls and women throughout their life cycle through childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity and beyond into to old age.

The civil society panel at the Stakeholders' Forum will focus on women's life cycle and look at how the MDGs affect young girls and women, including older women. It will bring together the voices of women and girls from across the age spectrum — young girls, women and older women — to discuss what the MDGs mean to girls and women throughout the life cycle. Participants will share their views on how the MDGs affect them and present their aspirations for the new development framework including for a transformative gender equality goal that can meet their unmet aspirations from the MDGs. The discussion will focus on the experience of the panelists as girls, women, older women — they will speak as individuals and also as advocates on the MDGs and on the future.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Has the world benefited from the MDGs?
- Have the MDGs influenced panelists' lives? Improved their lives?
- Where to from here? What from the MDGs should go into the future? What should change?
- UN-Women has called for a transformative stand-alone gender equality goal with three key targets: freedom from violence; gender equality in capabilities and resources; voice, leadership and participation. What do the three targets mean to the panelists in their lived reality?
- What is panelists' wish list to policy makers/ Governments for the future development framework?

DISCUSSION NOTE FOR PANEL 6

WRAP-UP/CLOSING SESSION

Implementing the Platform for Action and ensuring a transformative approach to the post-2015 development agenda: key actions and commitments towards CSW58 and beyond

Building on the lessons from the MDGs, a holistic approach is needed which addresses the full spectrum of women's and girls' rights. Such an approach needs to be transformative and address structural and policy constraints that perpetuate inequality and discrimination against women. It needs to include priorities for women's rights and gender equality such as violence against women and girls, women's limited access to decent employment, asset and property ownership, gender-based wage discrimination, women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work, women's and adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and unequal participation in private and public decision-making at all levels.

Based on the discussions of key areas that affect the implementation of the MDGs for women and girls, and of the need for a comprehensive approach to gender equality, the closing session will provide the opportunity to synthesize key issues for the future. The session will help in identifying policy priorities and actions for accelerating achievement of the MDGs for women and girls; and in shaping a vision for the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs that has gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment at its core.

PROPOSED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How can a transformative approach to gender equality, women's rights and empowerment be integrated in the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals?
- What are the key issues that the Commission on the Status of Women should address at its 58th session to give impetus towards such a transformative approach?
- What role can different stakeholders play, going forward, to ensure full reflection of the gender equality agenda of the Platform for Action and the CEDAW Convention in the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs?