



**Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the
Millennium Development Goals for women and girls**

The road ahead

**Stakeholders' Forum
4 – 5 December 2013**

United Nations Headquarters

Report

About CSW

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.

The Commission has been instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and encouraging the United Nations system to incorporate a gender perspective in all areas of work.

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of Member States, civil society organizations and entities of the United Nations system gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women. Member States agree on further action to be taken to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields.

UN-Women supports all aspects of the work of the Commission. The Entity prepares the documentation for the session including forward-looking recommendations to further expand the global normative framework. It supports Member States in their deliberations and helps them reach consensus on further actions to be taken. And it supports Member States, at the national level, to follow-up and implement commitments made and agreements reached on gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-Women also facilitates the participation of civil society representatives in Commission meetings.

At its fifty-eighth session, from 10 to 21 March 2014, the Commission will discuss the following themes:

- Priority theme: "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls"
- Review theme: "Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work"
- Emerging issue theme: "Women's access to productive resources"

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw58-2014>

Summary

On 4 and 5 December 2013, UN-Women convened a Stakeholders' Forum on *'Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls – the road ahead'*. The purpose of the event was to engage a range of stakeholders in the preparations for the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women ('CSW58'). More specifically, the Stakeholders' Forum aimed to 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 present report summarizes the key messages from the discussions and participants' expectations and commitments for the outcome of CSW58 and beyond.

The opening of the Stakeholders' Forum was followed by six interactive panel discussions. Panelists from various institutional backgrounds and experiences engaged in dialogue with lead discussants and participants, highlighting good practices, key areas of further work, and next steps to accelerate achievement of the MDGs for women and girls and for a post-2015 development agenda that places gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment at its core.

The six panel discussions focused on the following themes, supported by [discussion notes](#):

- Setting the stage: challenges for achieving the MDGs for women and girls
- 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
- A participatory approach to gender equality that champions women's voice, leadership and rights – lessons learned
- Accelerating progress and investing in gender equality – lessons learned
- "What do the MDGs mean to me?" Voices of girls and women
- Implementing the Platform for Action and ensuring a transformative approach to the post-2015 development agenda: key actions and commitments towards CSW58 and beyond.

Over 400 participants attended the [event](#), including seven Ministers or Heads of national machineries for gender equality, one parliamentarian, several capital-based experts, the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 27 ambassadors and many New York-based delegates, as well as academics and representatives from civil society

and United Nations agencies. The Stakeholders' Forum was successful in mobilizing champions for a forward-looking CSW58, and in sensitizing government delegates to the need for a strong consensus on further actions to accelerate achievement of gender equality and ensure enhanced monitoring and accountability for results, in line with existing commitments. Participants took full advantage of this opportunity to share experiences, highlight good practices and identify key lessons learned in efforts to achieve all the MDG goals and targets for women and girls by 2015 and beyond.

Participants voiced confidence that the open and frank exchanges helped build a solid foundation for a successful outcome at CSW58 and mobilized stakeholders to engage effectively beyond CSW58 in the preparations for the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the processes that are shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

Three overarching messages emerged:

- While the MDGs galvanized attention and resources, and MDG3 put a spotlight on gender equality and women's empowerment, actual progress for women and girls has fallen short of expectations in the implementation of the MDGs.
- Efforts must be significantly accelerated in the just over 750 days left before the MDG achievement deadline. Those efforts need to focus on closing persistent implementation gaps, building on lessons learned and using existing normative frameworks, so that measurable progress can be realized for women and girls.
- Gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment must be at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda, through a transformative and comprehensive stand-alone gender equality goal and the integration of gender equality perspectives across the entire future framework and all its goals, to realize the commitments made to the world's women and girls.

Key elements from the discussions and outcome expectations

A. Opening session

UN-Women Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Lakshmi Puri, [opened the Stakeholders' Forum](#). She highlighted the spirit of partnership and common resolve of the international community to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable and human-centered development embodied in the MDGs. The goals had played a critical role in galvanizing attention to gender equality and women's empowerment, not least thanks to the existence of a stand-alone goal – MDG3. But the results were mixed. UN-Women was therefore calling for a transformative and stand-alone goal on gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, and for the systematic mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all other goals and targets in the future development agenda.

Ms. Puri called on participants to take advantage of the strategic timing of CSW58, at the nexus of discussions on a post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals; and the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Member States had a once-in-a-generation opportunity to position gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment front and centre on the global agenda, both as important ends in themselves and as an essential means for the achievement of sustainable development; and to galvanize efforts to accelerate implementation of the MDGs for women and girls, and of the Beijing Platform for Action.

In a [message](#) to the Stakeholders' Forum, the Chair-designate of CSW58, H.E. Mr. Libran Cabactulan, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations stressed that CSW58 would provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to assess progress made through the MDG framework from a gender perspective and identify key gender equality issues that needed to be addressed as the international community molded its collective vision for a post-2015 development framework. It would also be an occasion for stakeholders to renew commitments made to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Chair-designate encouraged Member States and all stakeholders to seize the opportunity and make full use of the Commission's deliberations and come up with a strong outcome containing concrete and practical recommendations to accelerate progress in the achievement of the MDGs for women and girls, and to maintain gender equality and the empowerment of women as a priority in the post-2015 development agenda.

B. Panel discussions

PANEL 1: SETTING THE STAGE: CHALLENGES FOR ACHIEVING THE MDGs FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

MODERATOR:

H.E. Mr. George W. Talbot, Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations

PANELISTS:

H.E. Ms. Maria Cristina Lopes Almeida Fontes Lima, Minister of Health, Cabo Verde

H.E. Ms. Karen Tan, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations

H.E. Ms. Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations

Mr. James Heintz, Research Professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA

The following key messages emanated from the presentations and ensuing discussions:

- While there has been progress for women and girls on some MDG targets such as primary education, significant gaps in achievement remain in many areas such as maternal mortality, women's access to decent work and sanitation.
- The lack of attention to critical dimensions of gender equality such as the unequal burden of unpaid care work, violence against women and girls, and sexual and reproductive health and rights are among the key challenges for achieving the MDGs for women and girls.
- As shown by the recent crises, the broader macro-economic environment has imposed serious challenges for achieving gender equality. Insufficient attention to conflict and climate change is also a key barrier to progress.
- The persistent gap between existing laws and policies and their effective implementation impedes progress on achieving the MDGs for women and girls. Weak institutions and governance systems also present obstacles to progress.

The following recommendations for CSW 58 and the post-2015 development agenda were made:

- CSW 58 needs to send a strong message that gender equality and women's empowerment is a priority for the post-2015 development agenda and commit all stakeholders to advancing this goal.
- The inadequacy of gender mainstreaming across all the MDGs needs to be remedied in concrete and systematic terms in the post-2015 development agenda. Gender equality and women's empowerment must be incorporated visibly across the entire framework and all its goals.

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

MODERATOR:

H.E. Mr. Desra Percaya, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations

PANELISTS:

H.E. Ms. Lulu Xingwana, Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, South Africa

Ms. Radhika Balakrishnan, Executive Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University, USA

Ms. Nicole Ameline, Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The Hon. Julie Soso Akeke, MP, Eastern Highlands Governor, Papua New Guinea

The following key messages emanated from the presentations and ensuing discussions:

- Effective policies to advance gender equality requires compliance with, and implementation and use of existing tools, including the Millennium Declaration, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, in all policy areas. Opportunities such as the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action must be seized to give new impetus to accelerate progress on the MDGs.
- Grassroots support and community buy-in, and partnership with men and boys, are essential to ensure effective implementation of laws and policies. The full and effective participation of women and girls in shaping and influencing policies and their implementation at all levels must be realized.
- Gender mainstreaming in all sectors, by all actors, at all levels is needed to drive change across all the MDGs. Explicit efforts are needed to go beyond the ‘typical’ or ‘traditional’ gender equality policy areas and ensure that gender perspectives are addressed in areas such as transportation, fossil fuel use, climate change, and water and sanitation.
- The implementation of the MDGs for women and girls requires an enabling environment including gender-responsive institutions, strong and accountable governance systems, macro-economic policies that promote gender equality, and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The following recommendations for CSW 58 and the post-2015 development agenda were made:

- CSW 58 needs to secure commitments from governments on accelerating the progress towards achieving the MDGs for women and girls.
- The post-2015 development agenda must incorporate the full range of women’s and girls’ rights. The realization of their rights should encompass the private and public spheres including home, market and public space. It should have a standalone gender equality goal with a broader set of targets and indicators that include critical issues such as violence against women and unpaid work. The future framework needs to promote equality of outcomes, not just equality of opportunities.

PANEL 3: A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY THAT CHAMPIONS WOMEN’S VOICE, LEADERSHIP AND RIGHTS — LESSONS LEARNED

MODERATOR:

H.E. Mr. Paul Seger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

PANELISTS:

H.E. Ms. Clara Makungwa, Minister of Gender, Children and Community Development, Malawi

H.E. Ms. Reem Abu Hassan, Minister of Social Development, Jordan

H.E. Mr. Norachi Sinhaseni on behalf of H.E. Ms. Pavena Hongsakula, Minister of Social Development and Human Security, Thailand

H.E. Ms. Valentina Leskaj, MP, Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Albania

Ms. Hazel Brown, Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the advancement of women

The following key messages emanated from the presentations and ensuing discussions:

- Increasing women's participation at all levels is vital to accelerate the achievements of the MDGs. Women's voices and experiences need to underpin democracy, good governance and the rule of law, and help shape every aspect of policy-making in economic and social sectors such as finance, infrastructure, education and health, and post-conflict reconstruction. Women and girls must have equal access and opportunity to participate in formulating, implementing and monitoring all stages of development. Experience shows that temporary special measures such as affirmative action and quotas are effective in accelerating progress in women's participation.
- Engaging different stakeholders is of vital importance for achieving the MDGs for women and girls. Civil society, in particular, is a key partner not only for implementing, but also for monitoring progress in MDG implementation. Civil society is critical for ensuring that the voices of specific groups of women such as rural women, women living with disabilities, and young women and girls are heard. Men and boys must be effectively engaged, as well as other important partners such as the private sector and the media, to help bring about societal change for gender equality and women's rights.
- Good governance is an important enabler in efforts to achieve gender equality. Robust institutions are essential in transforming legal and policy advances into tangible benefits and change for women and girls. Strong institutions are important in all settings, and effective mechanisms are needed to promote implementation of global commitments on gender equality and coordinate accelerated action. Governments need to adopt a holistic approach to respond to the inter-linkages among sectoral issues in achieving gender equality.

The following recommendations for CSW 58 and the post-2015 development agenda were made:

- Strong agreed conclusions are needed from CSW 58 for accelerating the achievement of the MDGs for women and girls and guide the post-2015 discussions. Good practices and lessons learnt from the MDG framework should be the basis for action to accelerate achievement of the MGDs and for formulating the post-2015 development agenda.
- Participatory approaches need to be embraced in the post-2015 process.
- As a cross-cutting issue, gender equality should be at the centre of poverty eradication efforts and sustainable development. In addition to mainstreaming gender equality across all its goals, the post-2015 development agenda should also include a standalone gender equality goal.

PANEL 4: ACCELERATING PROGRESS AND INVESTING IN GENDER EQUALITY — LESSONS LEARNED

MODERATOR:

H.E. Mr. Stephan Tafrov, Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations

PANELISTS:

H.E. Ms. Lorena Cruz Sánchez, President, National Institute of Women (INMUJERES), México

H.E. Ms. Kuni Sato, Ambassador for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Japan

H.E. Mr. Geir O. Pedersen, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations

Ms. Saidah Hashim, Director, Department of Statistics, Malaysia

Ms. Cindy Clark, Acting Co-Executive Director, Association of Women's Rights in Development

Closing remarks for Day 1:

[Mr. John Hendra, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UN-Women](#)

The following key messages emanated from the presentations and ensuing discussions:

- Achieving gender equality and women's rights is an investment, not a cost. Where countries have made such investments, they have paid off in building more peaceful and socially inclusive societies where the benefits of development are equitably shared. Increasing equal opportunities for women benefits society itself, as well as women and men. Gender-responsive budgeting is one tool to help governments monitor the use of public expenditures for promoting gender equality. Accountability and participatory mechanisms are needed to support these processes.
- National governments and the donor community have critical responsibilities for investing in gender equality. Yet such investments are uneven, in terms of domestic resources and international development cooperation. Aid for gender equality is largely concentrated in the social sectors, with notable gaps in the economic sectors, making increased investments across all sectors an urgent priority.
- There is a need for concerted effort to scale up the share of official development assistance targeting gender equality. Civil society, especially women's organizations, also need adequate funding, and need to be engaged and participate in public planning and policy-making processes of investing in gender equality and in holding governments accountable for their commitments.
- High quality, reliable and sex-disaggregated data is critical for monitoring and measuring the achievement of the MDGs for women and girls, and for evidence-based policy-making in general. Greater collaboration and innovation is needed from all stakeholders to share resources and produce gender statistics for all policy areas. Continuous capacity building of statistical offices and line agencies collecting data for reporting on

MDG indicators is needed, including in regard to gender equality dimensions. Data collection methods and the reliability of statistics need to be strengthened.

The following recommendations for CSW 58 and the post-2015 development agenda were made:

- CSW 58 needs to reiterate commitments to invest in women's economic empowerment, including women's labour force participation, and public provision of care services to alleviate women's burden of unpaid care work. CSW 58 should also address the gender perspectives in natural disasters and climate change.
- CSW 58 should examine current levels of resources invested in gender equality, and call on governments and other stakeholders to increase such efforts, expand the share of official development assistance for gender equality to 20 per cent by 2015 and advance mechanisms for assessing performance, results and accountability.
- CSW 58 needs to send a clear message on the key role of data and statistics in helping to drive change for women and girls. It needs to encourage expanded data collection of high quality, and enhanced partnerships and collaboration to strengthen production and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators.

PANEL 5: WHAT DO THE MDGs MEAN TO ME? VOICES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

MODERATOR:

Ms. Rangita de Silva de Alwis, Director, Global Women's Leadership Initiative, Wilson Center, USA

PANELISTS:

Christina, girl advocate for the Working Group on Girls, USA

Ms. Chamathya Fernando, member, Sri Lanka Girl Guides Association, Sri Lanka

Ms. Tania Edith Pariona Tarqui, founding member, Organization of Young Quechuas of Cayara, Ayacucho, Peru

Ms. Manizha Naderi, Executive Director, Women for Afghan Women, Afghanistan/USA

Ms. Salina Sanou, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development, Kenya

Ms. Charlotte Bunch, Founding Director and Senior Scholar, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University, USA

The following key messages emanated from the presentations and ensuing discussions:

- In order for policy to serve the needs of women and girls, it is crucial that women's narratives and life experiences, as well as those of young girls, inform policy making. The MDGs suffered from the lack of this perspective.

- Achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment has to be central to the discussions of the post-2015 development agenda. This must be reflected as a stand-alone goal on gender equality, and gender equality must be mainstreamed in the rest of the goals.
- MDG3, promote gender equality and empower women, did not capture critical areas of concern such as eliminating violence against women and girls. Ending violence against women and girls must be at the core of the future development agenda.
- Men and boys are important actors and agents of change in achieving gender equality and strengthening the women's rights agenda. UN-Women must continue advocating for the active participation of men and boys in the achievement of gender equality in the post-2015 development agenda.
- Women in post-conflict situations are particularly vulnerable and their needs must be addressed in the future development framework.
- Women's political leadership and their inclusion at the decision-making table is important to ensure that future goals are more relevant to their lives.
- Lack of awareness of what the MDGs are has challenged their accomplishment. On the ground, not much effort was put into explaining the MDGs and their relevance to women.
- The voices of older women are rarely captured, and older women are not included in discussions. Yet, they are an invaluable knowledge-base for many of the challenges faced by women today.
- Historically, the women's movement has been key in raising gender equality issues with the world's policy-makers and bringing women's issues to the forefront. Therefore, civil society and feminist organizations must have a space to participate in the discussions about the future development framework.

The following recommendations for CSW 58 and the post-2015 development agenda were made:

- CSW58 should be an opportunity to reach a consensus among Member States on the need for a stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, as well as to have gender equality issues mainstreamed into other goals.
- Ending violence against women and girls must be a central element in the future development framework as this is a crucial aspect of ending discrimination against women and girls and gender inequality and promoting women's rights and fundamental freedoms.

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

MODERATOR:

H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations

PANELISTS:

Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN-Women

H.E. Ms. Nestorine Sangaré Compaoré, Ministre de la Promotion de la Femme et du Genre, Burkina Faso

H.E. Mr. Gérard Araud, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations

The following key messages emanated from the presentations and ensuing discussions:

- Education and economic empowerment are important pathways toward gender equality. Responsibilities of women and men must be shared in the home and the labour market.
- The achievement of gender equality requires changes in institutions and good governance. Key institutional interventions include capacity-building for policy-making based on gender analysis and the use of gender statistics; monitoring of budgets and resource allocations; and measures to improve accountability to citizens.
- Gender stereotypes, social norms, behaviours and attitudes are structural drivers of inequality that must be addressed to achieve transformative change for gender equality. Men have to be partners in all efforts aimed at changing traditional gender roles. Engagement with religious, traditional and community leaders is essential to ensure community support and enable change from the bottom up, to complement political will and leadership for a progressive post-2015 agenda.

The following recommendations for CSW 58 and the post-2015 development agenda were made:

- The strong consensus for a twin-track approach, with a stand-alone gender equality goal and systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective across all other goals, should be further consolidated at CSW 58.
- The post-2015 development agenda must be ambitious, transformative, people-centered and universal. This will require changes in processes, new thinking about the meaning of development, and participation of new actors. Current economic models have sharpened inequality within and between countries and need to be challenged to work toward the well-being of human beings. Violence against women as a major impediment to women's empowerment must be addressed in the SDGs. Women's enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights is critical for all goals and also must be addressed in the SDGs.
- Women must participate fully and effectively in the design of development frameworks at all levels.

Closing remarks

In her [closing remarks](#), the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka called on Member States and other stakeholders to achieve an outcome at CSW 58 that will accelerate progress for women and girls towards the MDGs; and to send a strong and clear message on the gender equality expectations for the post-2015 development framework. UN-Women and the United Nations system would support Member States to meet the high expectations for the session.