

**United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-eighth session
10 – 21 March 2014
New York**

INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

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

**Focus: Challenges and achievements
in the implementation of the MDGs for women and girls**

Wednesday, March 12, 2014, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

**Gender equality and development in the context of
implementing the MDGs for women and girls***

by

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*The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and privilege to present to you as requested by our host, UN Women, on behalf of the Bureau of the Commission of the Status of Women, some key elements focusing on the important aspects of “Gender Equality and Development in the Context of Implementing the MDGs for Women and Girls”. I do this in my personal capacity as former Director General of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and since the beginning of 2013 Chair of the Global Water Partnership, Stockholm and Vice President of UN Women, German National Committee.

1. Achievements and Challenges in the Implementation of the MDGs for Women and Girls

We have been going a long way since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000 by the members of the UN Family. A lot has been achieved, but there are still gaps to be closed on our way to the final assessment of the MDGs in a little more than 12 months in September 2015. The adoption of the MDGs, and in particular MDG 3 and MDG 5 provided a **roadmap** for long term and concerted actions at national as well as international levels to improve the living conditions of women and girls.

- The mere existence of an explicit **stand-alone goal** on the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment (MDG 3) presented a decisive stimulus for dialogue, actions, and the mobilization of resources. We are well aware at the global level of progress being made in improving girl’s enrolment in primary education, in increasing female representation in nation parliaments as well as in reducing maternal mortality. However comparing the achievements region by region, and even more so at subregional and country levels, the picture looks differently.
- Significant progress in the achievement of equality between boys and girls in **primary education** has been made. Gender gaps in **secondary and tertiary education** are also narrowing, but wide disparities remain across regions and countries in all levels of education. We have to admit that improvements in enrolment ratios come in part at the price of learning outcomes. And **early drop-out rates** are still estimated at an unacceptable high level of 25%. The situation is specifically difficult for girls and young women. This needs special attention in the years to come!
- Women are still underrepresented in decision making processes worldwide, although the average proportion of **women in parliaments** stood at 21,8% in 2013, compared to only 12% in 1997.
- We are still far away from reaching the set target with regard to maternal health, with some progress to be seen that more women are receiving antenatal care today (the coverage in developing regions increased from 63% in 1990 to 81% in 2011). We do know that maternal health remains a major concern and that it will be very unlikely to reach the target and reduce maternal mortality by three quarters until 2015. We also have to be aware of the fact that the number of women living with HIV has also been increasing globally since 2001 despite the overall progress achieved in significantly reducing **HIV** infections.

- We cannot be satisfied with the results in women's **access to paid employment and decent work**. While some progress has been made in some regions, in North Africa and Western and Southern Asia the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment remained under 20%. It needs to be considered that if today 4 out of 10 workers worldwide are women, the average woman earns only 20% of a man's wage in countries as diverse as Ivory Coast, Jordan, Latvia and the Slovak Republic. If we were to look into the ever more growing informal sector, and women's and girls' exploitation, the picture would look even more disturbing.
- From those figures and facts one can derive that there are many countries and regions that are still far away from achieving gender equality. Across **Asia and the Pacific**, a region which I know very well, women still face severe deficits in health and education, as well as in their access to productive resources, economic opportunities, voice and rights.
- In closely monitoring the MDG targets and indicators the international community has learned a lot on how to contribute to improving human development. On the **lessons to be learnt** from the MDGs I would like to call your attention to three important aspects contained in two recent reports of UN Secretary General Baan-Ki Moon:

It is necessary to treat gender equality as a global priority and to take a comprehensive approach to gender equality which addresses the structural drivers of gender inequality, as well as the complexity of inequalities.

There is a need for a meaningful participation of women and women's organizations in decision-making at all levels.

And last but not least, there is an urgency, namely for financial resources, accountability, and investments in gender statistics.

2. Official Development Assistance, Aid Effectiveness, Accountability

- **The adoption of the Millennium Development Declaration and the implementation of the MDGs** pushed the global discussion on aid effectiveness, results- and impact-oriented development cooperation, as well as strong and inclusive partnerships forward.
- Since the MDGs were established, four high-level fora on aid effectiveness have taken place: in Rome in 2003, in Paris in 2005, in Accra in 2008 and in Busan in 2011.
- In my opinion, **the implementation of the MDGs and the development of the global agenda on aid effectiveness have been mutually reinforcing**.
- The **five principles of the Paris Declaration** – ownership, alignment, harmonization, results, and harmonization – were not only decisive for accelerating progress in the fulfillment of the internationally agreed development goals. The Paris Declaration also fed into the World Summit's discussions and was integrated into its outcome document.

- The **Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011)** also explicitly links its envisioned political efforts and operational engagements to the realization of the MDGs. It further states that efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women must not only be accelerated but doubled!
- However, we are still far away from declarations made in Busan! In fact, the absence of a comprehensive **monitoring and accountability system**, which is applicable to state as well as non-state actors, is one of the main critiques of the MDG framework.
- A strong **monitoring and accountability framework** alone does certainly not create enough leverage towards the achievement of gender equality. However, it is also an important means when it comes to the **allocation and tracking of financial resources**.
- According to the MDG Report 2013 in 2012 **official development assistance (ODA)** stood at **\$126 billion** presenting a decline in allocable aid.
- Most current data, based on the ODA monitoring system, shows that bilateral **sector-allocable aid in support of gender equality** reached a total of around **\$22 billion**.
- Although the share of bilateral sector-allocable aid in support of gender equality remained relatively stable over the last decade, the report “Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls” of the UN Secretary General rightly stresses that there remains a **considerable underinvestment in gender equality**. Especially, there is an urgent need to channel more funds towards women’s political and economic empowerment.
- Experts agree that **limited funding for women’s rights and gender equality** is a crucial factor which has restrained the achievement of the **MDGs** for women and girls.
- It is therefore just the right time to cite the **Busan Joint Action Plan for Gender Equality and Development** which says that donors and countries need to **allocate their financial resources in line with their commitments**.
- Concluding, accelerating the implementation of the MDGs for women and girls needs investment in **gender statistics**, gender-sensitive, as well as **gender-disaggregated data, better monitoring and accountability systems**, as well as reliable, transparent and benchmarked funding.
- As regards the design of a new development framework, the first High-Level Meeting of the **Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation** in April in Mexico City will rise to the challenge of linking aid effectiveness, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Some of the gaps identified in implementing the unfinished MDG-agenda in a broader framework will have to be taken up again!

3. Good Practices and Challenges in Development Cooperation for Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights

3.1 German Development Cooperation

- Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for All , eradicating poverty, improving people's living conditions and promoting sustainable development, is a **central goal of German development cooperation**. This is emphasized in key policy documents, such as the strategy paper on "Human Rights in German Development Policy" or the "Cross-Sector Strategy on Poverty Reduction".
- In cooperation with diverse actors, international agencies, national institutions and ministries, civil society organizations, the private sector and the media, a wide variety of programs and projects have been put in place at the macro, meso, and micro level. Addressing gender based inequalities and targeting the most disadvantaged groups of women and girls are important aspects in this regard.
- To provide you with some rough figures I can inform you that Germany allocated in 2010/2011 some \$ 431 million to activities which target gender equality as a **main objective** and more than \$ 7995 million to activities which target gender equality as a **significant objective**. Sectors which have been primarily targeted are economic infrastructure, education, and social infrastructure.

To provide you with an important example, which is very dear to my heart as I have been actively involved in the development of this **milestone program** over the years, let me present to you in a few sentences a joint cooperation between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Federal Republic of Germany to promote women's rights and to improve their access to justice. Since 2002 German Development Cooperation has supported Cambodia and especially the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) in putting policies and strategies in place in order to substantially reduce gender-based violence. One of the main achievements was the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence that was passed by the Parliament in 2005 and subsequently made known to the public. Project activities have focused on advice and guidance towards a **Cambodian law against domestic violence**. In addition the long standing cooperation aims to improve the conditions that women and girls who are affected by violence are better benefitting from effective legal protection and well-targeted social services by various components related to institutional strengthening and strengthening knowledge and awareness of the many government and civil society based Cambodian partners involved in this ground breaking operation.

One other example I want to briefly name here is a regional program supported by Germany since 2010 in the MENA region, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia. This program "**Economic Integration of Women in the MENA Region**" aims to improve the conditions for the integration of women in business and employment, and thereby supporting the attainment of MDG 1 and MDG 3. The programme focuses on gender inequalities and gender stereotypes at the workplace, media campaigns with public and private stakeholders.

Another interesting example is related to **disaster situations**. In **Bangladesh** in cooperation with a local partner organization (INCIDN) a pilot training module was developed to

improve the communication and cooperation between men and women during natural disasters and in post-disaster situations.

3.2 Multilateral Engagement of Germany

Germany's efforts towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals for all go well beyond its bilateral development cooperation with more than 50 partner countries. I want to mention here the cooperation with the **World Bank** and **UN Women**.

For example in 2012 Germany contributed 6 million \$ to the Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality of the World Bank, supporting increased availability of gender-relevant data and evidence as well as strengthened knowledge on women's voice, agency and participation.

UN Women is a strong and reliable strategic, as well as normative partner of Germany's engagement to promote gender equality and women's rights. Germany has made regularly voluntary contributions to the budget of UN Women and its predecessor UNIFEM in order to promote female political leadership and the economic empowerment of women. I want to specifically mention here contributions to the Fund for Gender Equality in 2012 and 2013, amounting altogether to more than 4 million \$.

3.3 EU's Engagement to promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Equality between women and men is one of the founding values of the European Union. In 2010, the European Commission adopted a **Women's Charter** committing itself to strengthening gender equality in all its policies.

The **EU Plan of Action** on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015) aims to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs, in particular MDG 3 and MDG 5.

In its communication "A Decent Life for All: Ending Poverty and Giving the World a Sustainable Future (2013)", the EU confirms its commitment to facilitating progress towards the implementation of the MDGs by 2015. It emphasizes that a post-2015 framework should draw on the MDG's experience. It should take a rights-based approach to development and should particularly seek to reduce inequalities, as well as promote and protect the rights of women and girls.

In the context of the UN Open Working Group, the EU has proposed that gender equality and of women's empowerment should have **universal priority** in the post-2015 framework, and is promoting this view in the ongoing discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. Some personal reflections on the way forward

As we are now approaching the final year of the MDG Framework we have to be aware that the existing gaps in its achievement still have to be closed in the course of the post-2015 agenda, although in a broader format. A lot of joint initiatives undertaken by many international and national partners on the ground, for example in strengthening the collection of data and the establishment of local statistical bodies have to be continued and addressed in the post-2015 agenda. I want to mention here the longstanding joint **regional initiative** of the ADB, UNDP, and UNESCAP in regularly producing a monitoring report

on the accomplishments of the MDGs. The latest version “Asia Pacific Aspirations – Perspectives for a Post 2015 Development Agenda. Asia Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012/2013” is a very valuable reference for decision makers related to many facets of human development in that region. And, as stated earlier, gaps in data collection related in particular to gender and health have to be urgently addressed by the relevant agencies.

Looking into the challenges and achievements in implementing the MDGs for women and girls from a **sector perspective**, it is worth mentioning the initiative by the **Global Water Partnership**. In the new strategic framework “The GWP Strategy Towards 2020 – A Water Secure World” as cross cutting strategic issue “ensure gender equity” has been incorporated. In the new strategy for 2014-2019, which will be launched at World Water Day in Tokyo, March 21, it is clearly stated the “we will support gender mainstreaming to ensure that the interests and needs of women and men are taken equally into account when designing, implementing, and monitoring the impact of legislation, policies, and programmes on gender equity”. The high relevance of gender mainstreaming in water related activities has led us to the conclusion to prepare alongside with the main strategy an accompanying **Gender Mainstreaming Strategy**. The objective of the GWP gender strategy is to apply a gender lens to the manifold facets of GWP work and to practice gender and women inclusive approaches.

Last but not least I want to make reference to a **declaration** approved by the participants of an international symposium hosted by **UN Women German National Committee** in Bonn, 13 November 2013 with the title “The Future we Want”. The objective of this symposium was to provide an input into the ongoing discussion on shaping the Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UN Women German National Committee and all its partners present at the event made a clear call on the German Government and all relevant decision makers involved in shaping the post-2015 agenda for a special commitment to support a transformative stand-alone gender equality goal, promoting women’s empowerment, also ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in all other relevant goals through diversified targets and indicators.

With this contribution I have tried to provide an input into the discussion on the theme of the panel “Challenges and Achievements in the Implementation of the MDGs for Women and Girls”. I have also tried, based on my experience in development cooperation and gender based policy and advocacy work to give some insights in the manifold challenges at various levels, the achievements already to be seen, and what remains to be done on the way from the Millennium Development Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals to the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. It is my sincere hope that we can jointly come to a consensus on a stand-alone goal along the lines proposed by the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons to “empower girls and women and achieve gender equality”. Momentum has to be maintained in that regard, also to be reflected appropriately in the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. We have to make sure that the current strong support on a stand-alone goal be maintained until the new post-2015 development framework will be adopted by the world community in September 2015.