
UN Women

In collaboration with ECLAC

Expert Group Meeting

Structural and policy constraints in achieving the MDGs for women and girls

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ICW statement on MDGs and post-2015

Expert paper prepared by:

International Community of Women living with HIV/AIDS*

The International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW Global) was established by and for women living with HIV 1992 as a united global network with a mandate to improve the quality of life for women living with HIV through increased representation and advocacy, networking and shared communication about their needs and experiences.

ICW Global remains the only global network for women living with HIV/AIDS by living with HIV. Currently, the organization has approximately 15,000 members in more than 120 countries from different regions in the five continents around the world.

ICW Global sees the need to reach each of the MDG targets as critical in order to advance the lives of women living with HIV around the world. The lives of women living with HIV are interwoven and impacted by each and every one of the MDGs. Poverty, access to education, and gender inequalities are determinants in increasing a women's chances of contracting HIV and/or her ability to live a full life post HIV diagnosis. While other goals such as environmental sustainability are also attached to women's livelihood and wellbeing.

While many have made claims that the MDGs are "impossible" goals to achieve, ICW Global believes that it is because of an inability of governments to put people first and to think about the long term societal investments opposed to short sited financial gains. We are disheartened with the weak commitment from the G20 countries to maintain their promises to fund the Global Fund and for the continued systemic injustices that are allowed to flourish.

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

When we look at the goals that impact women directly ICW focus our advocacy primarily on goals:

3 – promote gender equality and empower women

5 – maternal health

6 – combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

It is evident that these goals will not be reached by 2015 in most of the regions¹.

ICW has been a leader in sexual and reproductive health and rights for women. The intersections of HIV and gender creates unique challenge for women. Power imbalances make women more susceptible to contracting HIV, while women living with HIV are even more susceptible to even greater power disparities. We feel that as we approach 2015 women living with HIV, who represent more than half of the world's HIV cases, have been sidelined regardless of the failures of not meeting the MDGs.

1. We are concerned that HIV will no longer be a priority issues in post 2015 discussions. While we understand that HIV does not exist in a vacuum, we strongly believe that it is detrimental to our global response to not continue to apply pressure on the global community to create sound, gender transformative programs and systems that will and can push back new infections, and increase the quality of life for women living with HIV.
2. While some programs have worked very well to better the lives of women we are concerned that the majority of regions will not meet their targets in regards to gender equality, maternal health and HIV.
3. ICW would like to stress that gender inequality creates unequal opportunity for women to access treatment and access safe and necessary health services. This can leave women without treatment and or essential services².
4. While there has been an increase of programs that have been successful in the prevention of vertical transmission (and reduced child mortality), women living with HIV still have high rates of maternal mortality.
5. In many regions young women carry the disproportionate burden of the failure of the MDGs. We need to see more action as to how to meaningfully address the needs of young women.

In 2011, ICW and GNP+ partnered in a research project that focused on the Experiences of people living with HIV in relation to vertical transmission. Recommendations from Vital Voices:

¹ http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/report-2013/2013_progress_english.pdf

² International Community of Women Living with HIV and The Global Network of People Living with HIV. (2011) *Vital Voice: Recommendations from consultations with people living with HIV on the IATT's Strategic Framework for PMTCT Components 1 and 2.*

1. Integration of HIV and SRHR services.
2. Service providers should be constantly trained on delivering services with unbiased attitude, respecting the rights of women living with HIV – including her right to have or not to have a child.
3. Prevention of transmission programs should improve by adding specific components that address areas of unmet need: preconception counseling, counselling on safe conception methods for women and couples living with HIV, and programs that promote male involvement as well as safe guarding individual rights of their participation in these programs.

ICW Global does this work primarily as volunteers, to better the lives of our members and all women living with HIV. There is a huge disconnect in the women's movement as women living with HIV's experiences often highlight the systemic barriers that exist in the world. We think that governments and institutions need to be held responsible and accountable for the MDGs not being met. In order for us to move forward we need to actually look at root causes of these unmet goals and have real discussions about how imbalances of power (between genders, nations, corporations, individuals) have led to the failures of the MDGs. Without clear targets and lines of accountability we will never move forward.