UNDP

Millennium Development Goals

NATIONAL REPORTS
A LOOK THROUGH A GENDER LENS

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BACKGROUND

1.1 The Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, Heads of State and representatives of the Governments of 191 countries met at the United Nations and adopted the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration outlines the central concerns of the global community - peace, security, development, environmental sustainability, human rights and democracy - and articulates a set of inter-connected and mutually reinforcing goals for sustainable development. These, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), are based on the major goals and targets agreed upon at the UN Conferences of the 1990s, which have been synthesised into a global agenda for development.

The Millennium Declaration commits the international community and member states of the UN to the achievement of eight major goals.

1. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger

2. Achievement of universal primary education

3. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women

4. Reduction of child mortality

5. Improvement in maternal health

6. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

7. Ensuring environmental sustainability

8. Developing a global partnership for development.

Quantitative targets have been defined for each goal, most of which are to be achieved by 2015. Indicators have been selected to monitor progress on each of the targets. A list of 18 targets and 48 indicators has been agreed upon to ensure comparability across countries and facilitate tracking of progress at global, regional and national levels.

The Secretary-General is mandated to report annually on the progress towards the MDGs to the UN General Assembly. Additionally, most signatories to the Millennium Declaration are preparing country-level MDG Reports (MDGRs), which are potentially a mechanism for regular tracking of progress towards attainment of the targets.

In preparing national MDGRs, each country has the flexibility to set its own targets. Nearly 40 country reports have been released as of 3 June 2003. Most of these documents include an analysis of the development context, assessment of the situation with regard to each goal, identification of major challenges in achieving each target, highlights of actions taken to create a supportive environment, and enumeration of the priorities for development assistance.

1.2 Gender and the MDGs

Goal 3 – "Promote gender equality and empowerment of women" - is the culmination of years of determined advocacy and action by the international women's movement. The high priority accorded to Goal 3 represents a global affirmation of women's rights and gender equality as core values of development.

This hard-won recognition that "development, if not engendered, is endangered" was also an outcome of debates and discussions at the UN Conferences of the 1990s, including the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). Growing recognition of the gender dimensions of development paradigms and policies during the 1990s created the momentum for a consensus on gender mainstreaming – the incorporation of gender perspectives into all aspects of development theory and practice - as a key strategy to achieve gender equality.

There is a clear correspondence between the MDGs and other global instruments related to gender equality, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. However, unlike the other goals, Goal 3 is not specific to any particular sector or issue, since gender equality and women's rights underpin all the other goals. It has been pointed out that attempting to achieve the MDGs without promoting gender equality will both raise the costs and decrease the likelihood of achieving the other goals.[1] The reverse is equally true – achievement of Goal 3 depends on progress made on each of the other goals. The implication is clear - while accurate reporting against Goal 3 is critical, tracking gender gaps and inequalities against each of the other MDG targets and indicators is no less important.

At the national level, MDGRs and the process of MDG reporting represent a new opportunity for gender advocates to enlarge the space for dialogue and build a broad national commitment to women's rights and gender equality. Apart from their role in monitoring and tracking key indicators of women's empowerment, national MDGRs are also aimed at facilitating systematic policy dialogue on critical development challenges and building a supportive environment for translating commitments into actual results on the ground. Ideally, MDGRs are expected to reach out to a range of national actors including communities, civil society groups and the media, initiating wider debate and dialogue around key development choices and enabling citizens to demand accountability from their governments.

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[1] Carlsson, Helene and Cecilia Valdivieso. 2003. "Gender Equality and the MDGs." Unpublished World Bank discussion paper.

In several countries, the MDGR process has been "localised" and extended to the sub-national level through the preparation of regional reports. Effective gender mainstreaming would therefore expand the possibilities of building links between actions for gender mainstreaming at macro and micro levels, and encompassing a wider constituency of support for these actions.

National MDGRs are also relevant to the wider donor community, particularly in targeting and optimising their support to national development efforts. Goal 8 ("Developing a global partnership for development") is focused on making visible the linkages between national and international commitments to achieving the MDGs, with clear resource implications for action on gender equality. In addition, reporting against each of the MDGs is expected to identify priorities for action and also provides a basis for resource mobilization. Effective mainstreaming of gender issues into MDGRs can thus be expected to have significant long-term impacts in terms of enhanced resources and focused support for action on gender issues within the country.

Despite scepticism about the feasibility of achieving any of the MDGs within the projected time-frame, it is generally agreed that they represent a "strategic talking-point for assessing what the barriers to the achievement of goals are, and provide a tool with which to hold both donor agencies and governments accountable"[2].

Given the above, it is important for women's organisations and gender equality advocates to use the opportunity created by the MDGRs and the MDG reporting process to ensure greater public visibility and awareness of gender inequality, and demand a stronger policy commitment for gender equality.

Several recent studies and reports highlight the importance of mainstreaming gender concerns into the MDGs. These include a gender analysis of the MDGs commissioned by the Gender Programme in the Bureau for Development Policy UNDP[3], which reviews the goals and targets from a gender perspective. An analysis of targets and indicators under Goal 3 has also been commissioned by the Millennium Project Task Force on Gender Equality and Education[4]. The UNIFEM bi-annual report "Progress of the World's Women 2002" is devoted to the MDGs and their implications for gender equality. A UNDP programme on Gender and the MDGs, initiated with support from DFID-UK, is also underway and is expected to make a substantive contribution to engendering the MDGRs.

1.3 The Present Review

The present exercise builds on and complements the recent evaluation of MDG reporting in eight countries being carried out by the Evaluation Office of UNDP. One of the parameters of the evaluation was an analysis of strategies for mainstreaming gender into the process of MDG reporting.

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[2] Subrahmanian, Ramya. "MDGs: Is the Glass Half Full or Half Empty? " Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. 2002.

[3] "Gender and the MDGRs". UNDP-WEDO Discussion Paper. Unpublished. 2003

[4] "Promises to Keep: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. A background paper for the Task force on Education and Gender Equality of the Millennium Project". Caren Grown, Geeta Rao Gupta and Zahia Khan, ICRW. 2003

The review presented in this paper focuses on a selection of published MDG reports to assess the extent to which gender concerns and perspectives have been mainstreamed into discussions under various goals. The MDGRs of 13 countries have been scanned along three parameters.

❖ Incorporation of gender issues/perspectives under goals other than Goal 3.

❖ Mention/recognition of women's issues under goals other than Goals 3 and 5.

❖ Content/perspective of gender/women's issues under each goal.

The MDGRs were selected to provide a regional spread and include reports authored by the UN System, national governments and civil society/research institutes.

The results of the scan are presented as a series of tables in the next section of this report.

2.1 Gender as a Cross-cutting Issue

Table 1 presents the results of a preliminary scan of the selected MDGRs, to track the visibility of women's concerns and/or gender issues across goals. Any mention of gender or women, regardless of content, was scored as a positive and is represented as a solid cell in the table.

Table 1. Gender as a cross-cutting issue in selected MDGRs

COUNTRY	Ownership	Gender Issues Under Each Goal								Women's Issues Under Each Goal							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Albania	Independent consultants. Published by UN System. Foreword by Government.		■	■		■	■				■	■		■	■		
Armenia	'HD Experts Club'. UN System data used.	■	■	■		■						■		■			
Bolivia	UN Country Team.	■		■		■				■		■		■			
Cameroon	UN Country Team.	■		■		■				■		■		■			
Egypt	Independent NGO. Published by UN.	■	■	■		■				■		■		■			
Lithuania	UN System.	■	■	■		■				■	■		■				
Mauritius	Government of Mauritius and UN System in partnership.			■						■							■
Mozambique	Not specified.	■		■							■		■		■		
Nepal	Government of Nepal and UN System in partnership.			■	■	■	■					■		■			
Poland	Independent institute. Published by UN.		■	■							■	■		■			
Saudi	UN Country Team.		■	■							■	■		■			
Tanzania	UN Country Team including WB and IMF.	■	■	■						■		■	■				
Vietnam	UN Country Team.	■	■	■						■	■	■					

Table 1 leads to the following conclusions.

❖ Gender is not reflected as a cross-cutting issue in any of the reports.

❖ Goal 3, which deals specifically with gender, is the only goal where gender issues have been consistently addressed across countries.

❖ Apart from Goal 3, gender issues have been most frequently addressed under Goal 5 (maternal mortality), finding mention in seven out of the 13 reports studied.

❖ Gender issues have been mentioned under Goal 1 (poverty) in six reports.

❖ Gender issues are not reflected under Goal 7 (environment) and Goal 8 (development cooperation) in any of the reports.

❖ MDGRs for Armenia and Tanzania show the greatest degree of integration of gender issues across sectors, with gender issues being mentioned in the context of five out of 8 goals.

❖ Women's issues have also not been mentioned consistently across goals in any of the reports.

❖ Apart from Goals 3 and 5 (maternal mortality), women and women's issues find mention most often under Goal 6 (in the context of HIV/AIDS, in 10 out of 13 reports), Goal 2 (education- in eight out of 13 reports) and Goal 1 (poverty – in seven reports). Women are mentioned under Goal 4 (infant mortality) in only four reports.

❖ Women find mention under Goal 7 (environment) and Goal 8 (development cooperation) in only one report each (Mozambique and Mauritius respectively).

It seems clear from the above that gender mainstreaming in the MDGRs is still patchy, with discussion around gender issues restricted primarily to the obvious sectors of women's empowerment and maternal mortality. Women's issues find somewhat greater visibility, including under Goal 1 (poverty), which is particularly critical for women.

Of the 13 reports studied, seven were prepared by UN Country teams, four by independent expert groups, and two by the government and the UN Country team in partnership. However, the extent to which gender issues are reflected across goals appears to be independent of the authorship or ownership of the reports.

> **Good Practices**
>
> ● Integration of gender issues across Goals 1-5 in Armenia and Tanzania reports.
>
> ● Mention of women in the context of environment (Mauritius) and development cooperation (Mozambique).

The scan used to generate the above table merely records mention of gender/women's issues without reference to their specific content. The tables in the following sections are based on somewhat deeper exploration of reporting under each goal to analyse the content of any references to gender and/or women.

2.2 Gender and Poverty

Table 2 presents detailed information on gender and women's issues discussed under Goal 1 ("To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger").

Table 2. Gender/women's issues under Goal 1 in selected MDGRs

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Gendered Analysis
Albania	No	• States that pregnant/lactating women are at high risk of malnutrition. • 'Vulnerable women in situations of distress' mentioned as a target group for WFP.	None
Armenia	No	• States that UNDP is supporting gender mainstreaming in PRSP and in HD approach.	None

Bolivia	No	• Gender equity identified as central cross-cutting issue.
		• Actions for gender equity categorized as
		  - improving opportunities;
		  - creation of capabilities and exercise of citizenship;
		  - protection and promotion of rights.
			None

Cameroon	No	• Household Consumption Survey not sex disaggregated, but evidence from nutrition, health surveys cited to support contention that women are among poorest. • Mentions that a gender analysis of food security is required. • Targeted interventions for women feature in poverty plan. • Priorities for donor assistance include support in reducing gender disparities.	None
Egypt	No	• Women without identity cards categorised as 'ultra poor'. • Statement that 20% of poor households are women-headed. • Feminisation of poverty identified as priority for donor assistance. • Reduction of gender gap mentioned as part of poverty challenge.	None

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Gendered Analysis
Lithuania	Poverty headcount disaggregated by sex.	None	None
Mauritius	No	• Women and female-headed households identified as poorest. • Poverty of older women stated to be a problem. • Reference to UNDP study on feminisation of poverty and need for more research and data.	None
Mozambique	No	• Gender and women's empowerment mentioned as concomitants of poverty strategy. • Women's education mentioned as a strategy for pro-poor growth.	Women's lack of education mentioned as a cause of poverty.
Nepal	No	None	None
Poland	No	None	None
Saudi	No	None	None
Tanzania	No	• Women identified as vulnerable group.	None
Vietnam	No	• 'Gender development' mentioned as component of an integrated programme to tackle poverty and hunger.	Women's lack of decision-making power, work burden, inadequate knowledge of child care and men's lack of involvement in child care identified as cause of child malnutrition.

Table 2 shows that although gender issues and/or women and women's issues have been mentioned in nine out of the 13 MDGs studied, the content of the mention is not substantive in all cases.

❖ Only one report (Lithuania) contains sex-disaggregated poverty data.

❖ Of the nine reports that mention gender and/or women in connection with poverty, only five make specific reference to gender inequality as a source of poverty and enumerate gender-related interventions as part of poverty plans.

❖ Women in general, or particular categories of women, are stated to be particularly vulnerable to poverty (four reports) and feminisation of poverty is identified as a challenge (four reports), but no data is presented to support these assertions.

❖ Only three reports make specific reference to the need for more data and further research on women's poverty.

❖ Only two reports (Mozambique and Vietnam) bring a gendered perspective to bear on the analysis of the causes, impacts or implications of women's poverty.

❖ Only one report (Bolivia) goes outside 'the poverty box' and makes a connection between poverty reduction and actions to build capabilities, increase opportunities and ensure rights for women.

> **Good Practices**
> - Poverty data disaggregated by sex in Lithuania report.
> - Gendered analyses of poverty in Mozambique and Vietnam reports.
> - Recognition in Bolivia report, that denial of rights and freedoms is central to women's poverty.

It therefore appears that the opportunity provided by the MDGRs to bring gendered perspectives definitively into the larger poverty debate has not been sufficiently or effectively used. More than half of the reports studied reflect a clear and welcome recognition that women are disproportionately affected by poverty. However, empirical evidence has not been presented to support this statement.

2.3 Gender and Education

Table 3 highlights the analysis under Goal 2 ("To achieve universal primary education")

Table 3. Gender/women's issues under Goal 2 in selected MDGRs

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causality
Albania	Data on literacy rates and primary-to-secondary continuation rate disaggregated by sex.	• Mentions that boys from poor families are dropping out of school.	Poverty and need to work identified as causes of boys drop-out.
Armenia	No	None	No
Bolivia	'Gender Asymmetry Index' calculated based on enrolment data.	• Gender gap identified as an issue in education. • Emphasis on close interaction between Ministries of Gender Matters and Education.	No
Cameroon	No	• Gender mentioned as a donor priority in education sector.	No
Egypt	Primary enrolment data disaggregated by sex.	• Bridging gender and regional gaps identified as national and donor priority in education sector. • States that strategy for girls' education is being developed.	Fluctuations in enrolment ratios attributed to 'supply-side' factors.

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causality
Lithuania	All data disaggregated by sex.	• Increasing the number of women in 'hard science' disciplines as long-term strategy for reducing the gender wage gap.	No
Mauritius	No	None	No
Mozambique	Primary enrolment data disaggregated by sex and region to show disparities.	• Emphasis on women's/community involvement for increasing girls' enrolment.	No
Nepal	No	None	No
Poland	Enrolment rates disaggregated by sex.	• Mention of reverse gender gap in tertiary education.	No
Saudi	Enrolment and literacy rates disaggregated by sex.	• Gender gap stated to be narrowing as a result of pro-women policies.	No
Tanzania	No	• Country stated to be on track on gender targets. • Gender gap in performance indicators noted as an issue, cross-referenced to discussion on Goal 3.	No
Vietnam	Net Enrolment Ratio disaggregated by sex.	• Increasing girls' access to education identified as a priority for national actors and donors. • Need for sex-disaggregated data at sub-national levels emphasized.	No

As the above table demonstrates, gender issues have been mainstreamed to a certain extent under Goal 2 in most reports.

❖ Sex disaggregated data on enrolment and/or retention and literacy have been presented in eight out of 13 reports.

❖ One report (Bolivia) has developed an "Asymmetry Index" to measure the gender gap in education.

❖ One report (Lithuania) presents a complete set of sex disaggregated data on access to primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Good Practices

• Data on key indicators disaggregated by sex in Lithuania report.

• Calculation of 'Asymmetry Index' in Bolivia report.

❖ Bridging the gender gap in education has been identified as a national priority in seven reports.

❖ Only three reports make absolutely no mention of gender issues in education, and refer to 'children' as an undifferentiated category.

The greater visibility of gender issues under Goal 2 as compared to Goal 1 appears to be an outcome of the fact that gender equality is an explicit component of the target. On the other hand, the fact that an education target is also incorporated into Goal 3 may be a factor behind the absence of any attempt to go behind the data to even list, if not analyse, the reasons for gender gaps in education.

2.4 Gender and Infant Mortality

Table 4 presents highlights of discussions under Goal 4 ("To reduce child mortality") in the reports studied.

Table 4. Gender/women's issues under Goal 4 in selected MDGRs

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causes
Albania	No	• Constitutional rights of pregnant mothers and children highlighted, including non-discrimination against children born outside marriage. • Link between high IMR and education/income levels of mothers. • Need for sex-disaggregated IMR data stressed.	Traditional preference for male child in rural areas mentioned as a factor that leads to higher IMR for girls.
Armenia	No	None	None
Bolivia	No	• Capacity building of mothers identified as priority.	Women's inadequate knowledge of appropriate child care practices mentioned as contributing factor in high child mortality.
Cameroon	No	• Poor health of mothers and limited knowledge of child health issues identified as challenges.	None
Egypt	No	• "Cultural and attitudinal factors such as early marriage and fertility preferences" identified as contributing to high IMR. • Suggestion that boys are favoured over girls in health care. • Mother's education linked to child survival. • Need to address gender disparities stated to be a donor priority.	None
Lithuania	No	None	None

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causes
Mauritius	No	• Maternal age and health listed among factors influencing IMR.	None
Mozambique	No	• Poor health of mothers and low access to health services listed among causes of high IMR.	None
Nepal	No	• Mentions that there is no gender gap in under 5 mortality.	None
Poland	Gender disaggregated data on age-specific death rates.	None	"Healthy behaviour in pregnant women" stated to be behind reductions in child mortality.
Saudi	No	None	None
Tanzania	No	• Poverty and poor health of mothers identified as causes of high IMR.	None
Vietnam	No	• Women's inadequate knowledge of proper care and feeding practices listed among challenges.	None

Women's issues find a fairly prominent place in discussions of infant mortality. However, mention of gender issues is absent in discussions under this goal in the majority of reports.

❖ Women's issues are incorporated into discussions on infant mortality in nine out of 13 reports.

❖ In four reports, discussion on women is focused on linkages between the age, health, poverty, education and knowledge levels of mothers, and the survival chances of infants.

❖ The discussion on infant mortality is clearly gendered in two reports (Egypt and Albania), which include analyses of cultural and attitudinal factors leading to gender differentials in infant mortality.

❖ Only one report (Poland) provides data on age-specific death rates that has been disaggregated by sex.

❖ One report (Armenia) stresses the need for sex-disaggregated data on child mortality and survival.

> **Good Practices**
>
> • Data on age-specific death rates disaggregated by sex in Poland report.
> • Gendered discussion on infant mortality in Albania and Egypt reports.

❖ One report (Nepal) mentions that there is no gender differential in child mortality, but does not provide disaggregated data to corroborate this statement.

In the majority of reports, discussion on women's issues is based on the perception that women are, and should be, solely responsible for the care and survival of infants. Given the importance

placed on women as mothers in most countries, the complete absence of any mention of women in four out of 13 reports is surprising.

2.5 Gender and Maternal Mortality/Reproductive Health

Table 5 presents the results of a scan of discussions under Goal 5 in the reports studied.

Table 5. Gender/women's issues under Goal 5 in selected MDGRs

COUNTRY	Gender Issues	Analysis of Causes
Albania	• Provides detailed statistics on indicators of reproductive health, including women's nutrition, access to contraception, pre- and post-natal care and general health care. • Notes changes over the last decade in traditional attitudes to sexuality and reproductive health, but decisions related to reproductive health are still considered a male prerogative (particularly in rural areas). • Emphasises that the Government has endorsed a human rights-based approach to reproductive health, and highlights provision in Penal Code that makes violence against a pregnant woman a criminal offence. • Noted that abortion continues to be used as a method of contraception and gives details of new law on termination of pregnancy and law on maternity leave.	• "Overall unfavourable status of women" listed among factors influencing MMR. • Men's role in women's reproductive health discussed.
Armenia	• Reluctance of young people to marry cited as cause for concern. • Low level of economic development listed as a barrier to affordable maternity care. • Culture of gender equality emphasized as a facilitating factor for maternal health.	• Emigration of men, unemployment, uncertainty about the future listed among causes of fall in number of marriages. • Fall in birth rate and fewer births among older women cited as causes for fall in MMR.
Bolivia	• Women's limited access to health services stated to increase vulnerability. • Need to ensure 'warmth' of public health services emphasized.	• Women's inability to make health-related decisions, which are taken by men, highlighted as cause of maternal mortality.
Cameroon	• Notes that men have greater knowledge and higher rates of contraceptive use than women.	None

COUNTRY	Gender Issues	Analysis of Causes
Egypt	• Cultural and attitudinal barriers highlighted, including women's reluctance to approach male doctors. • FGM highlighted as a major issue. • Innovative strategies such as involving older women as health motivators.	• Women's lack of education, mobility and need for husband's permission listed as barriers to health-seeking behaviour.
Lithuania	None	None
Mauritius	• Self-induced and back-street abortions listed among causes of high MMR. • Door-to-door IEC programme for working women listed among priorities.	• Poverty and lack of information identified as causes for reliance on unsafe methods for abortions. • Lack of reproductive health education in schools cited as limitation.
Mozambique	• Noted that young women in prime childbearing years are also high-risk group for HIV/AIDS. • Poor socio-economic status of women and limited involvement of men in reproductive health identified as challenges.	• Early pregnancy, unsafe abortions and HIV infection listed as causes of high MMR.
Nepal	• Early marriage and childbirth identified as causes of high MMR. • Need for "rapid socio-economic transition and improvement in women's status" emphasized.	• Patriarchal values and cultural rules identified as cause for women's low access to contraceptives.
Poland	• Decline in MMR attributed to higher status of women, greater respect for women's rights. • Heavy manual work by pregnant women included among risk factors. • Teenage pregnancies identified as serious issue.	• Analysis of reasons behind increase in teenage pregnancies includes "instrumental approach to sex", lack of sex education, pornography and distorted presentation of sexuality in mass media.
Saudi	None	• Rise in literacy and women's education cited as causes of decline in MMR.
Tanzania	• Gender inequity identified as factor that prevents women from making reproductive choices.	• Discussion on reproductive health services mentions that because these are located in maternity clinics that are the domain of older and married women, they are not accessible to adolescents.
Vietnam	• Limited male participation in RH identified as challenge. • Gender norms stated to affect vulnerability and health-seeking behaviour of pregnant women. • "Gender-based approach" to safe motherhood recommended.	None

Mainstreaming of gender issues into MDGRs (other than under Goal 3) has perhaps been most visible in the context of Goal 5. This goal has been defined in terms of maternal mortality in the global framework of MDGs, but a number of countries have chosen to redefine it in the broader context of reproductive health.

❖ The discussion on maternal mortality/ reproductive health is gendered in all but two of the reports (Lithuania and Saudi Arabia), with gender inequality being clearly identified as a contributing factor in maternal mortality.

> **Good Practices**
>
> ● Highlighting of Constitutional and legal provisions related to women's reproductive rights in Albania report.

❖ Men's roles in reproductive health have been highlighted in seven out of 13 reports.

❖ Patriarchal norms and cultural barriers that limit women's mobility, autonomy and decision-making on contraception and health are analysed and identified as critical issues in seven reports.

❖ One of the reports (Albania) specifically highlights Constitutional and legal provisions to safeguard women's reproductive rights.

❖ 'Supply-side' factors including inappropriate, inconveniently located and unaffordable services are highlighted in six of the 13 reports as reasons for women's limited access to health.

The incorporation of a gendered perspective into the analysis of maternal mortality in the majority of reports is encouraging, as is the placing of the issue in the broader context of reproductive health and rights. Commitments are made in several reports to policy measures for the promotion of women's rights.

2.6 Gender and Health

Table 6 shows the extent and content of coverage of gender and/or women's issues under Goal 6 in relation to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Table 6. Gender/women's issues under Goal 6 in selected MDGRs

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causes
Albania	Incidence figures cited separately for men and women from vulnerable groups.	None	None
Armenia	Data for condom use disaggregated by sex.	None	None
Bolivia	HIV prevalence rates disaggregated by sex.	● Pregnant women and sex workers identified as high-risk groups.	None

COUNTRY	Disaggregated Data	Gender/Women's Issues	Analysis of Causes
Cameroon	HIV prevalence rates disaggregated by sex.	• Promotion of condom use among sex workers listed as challenge.	None
Egypt	HIV prevalence and contraceptive use data disaggregated by sex.	• Education for women emphasized as a strategy to combat HIV/AIDS. • Traditional beliefs and religious prohibitions against sex outside marriage considered barriers to spread of HIV/AIDS.	• Erosion of traditional values as sources of risk.
Lithuania	HIV prevalence rates disaggregated by sex. Data on mortality from TB, cardiac diseases, cancer, accidents and suicides, disaggregated by sex.	• Mentions men in prisons as high risk group.	None
Mauritius	HIV prevalence data from sentinel surveys given separately for pregnant women and sex workers.	• Female sex workers identified as vulnerable group. • Reduction of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS listed as a priority.	None
Mozambique	No	• Pregnant women identified as most vulnerable to malaria.	None
Nepal	HIV prevalence data for high-risk groups include separate figures for pregnant women and female sex workers.	• Women identified as high-risk group. • Importance of addressing gender inequality underlined.	None
Poland[5]	–	–	–
Saudi	No	• Reference to "social and cultural norms that mitigate against the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus".	None
Tanzania	HIV prevalence data disaggregated by sex.	• Gender inequalities and inequities stated as most important factor behind women's vulnerability to HIV.	None
Vietnam	HIV prevalence data given separately for women from vulnerable groups.	• Pregnant women and female sex workers identified as high risk groups.	None

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[5] Goal 6 has been modified in the MDGR for Poland, which reports on "Expansion of democracy and participation" instead of on HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

❖ Data on HIV/AIDS incidence has been disaggregated by sex in all but two out of the 12 reports that have addressed Goal 6.

❖ In addition to sex-disaggregated data on HIV incidence, one report (Lithuania) also provides sex-disaggregated and age-specific data on other major causes of mortality, including tuberculosis, cardiac conditions, cancer, accidents and suicides.

❖ In four out of 12 reports, women are mentioned as being among the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. One report (Lithuania) states that men in prisons as the most vulnerable category.

> **Good Practices**
> ● Sex-disaggregated and age-specific data on mortality in Lithuania report.

❖ Only two reports (Nepal and Tanzania) have a gendered perspective on the issue, and identify gender inequality as a specific cause of women's higher vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Despite the ongoing global and national debates around the gender impact of HIV/AIDS, most of the MDGRs reviewed do not reflect a gendered perspective on the epidemic. While there is certainly recognition that women are among the most vulnerable groups, no connections are made between vulnerability and gender inequality, or the implications of vulnerability for women's lives. A positive feature is the disaggregation by sex of data on HIV/AIDS incidence.

2.7 Gender and Goal 3

Table 7 below summarises reporting under Goal 3 in the MDGRs under review.

Table 7. Reporting under Goal 3 in selected MDGRs

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
Albania	● Enrolment and literacy ● Employment ● Political and managerial representation	● Workloads and traditional attitudes as barriers to girls' education. ● Age discrimination in labour markets. ● Masculine political culture as barrier to women's entry into politics. ● Prioritisation of "gender education of mass media". ● Role of women NGOs.	● Detailed listing of legal provisions and government policies. ● Need for gender mainstreaming strategy recognized.
Armenia	● Primary and secondary enrolment	● Gender gap in education. ● Need for women's representation in decision-making, legal equality, economic opportunities and worker rights. ● Poverty and child labour as barriers to education. ● Cuts in funding to education sector.	● "Negative transformation of the gender culture of society" identified as barrier to equality. ● Aid priorities listed.

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
Bolivia	• "Asymmetry index" in primary and secondary education	• Gender gap in education. • Women's lack of access to resources. • Unequal distribution of familial and household work. • Limitations in national capacity for "reflection, analysis and political handling of the relationship between gender and women's empowerment". • Lack of financial and human resources.	• Interventions based on recognition of women as social/political/economic actors. • Differences in capabilities, opportunities and participation of men and women identified as markers of inequality. • Priorities for development assistance spelt out in detail.
Cameroon	• Primary and secondary enrolment	• Gender gap in education. • Poverty and male preference as factors behind girls' exclusion from education.	• Discussion confined to education.
Egypt	• Primary and secondary enrolment • Labour force participation • Employment • Political representation	• Worsening of women's development indicators during economic restructuring. • Economic and attitudinal barriers to girls' education. • Preferential access of males to employment opportunities and leisure. • Women's low awareness of rights. • Women's double burden and violence. • Economic recession and underdeveloped private sector. • 'Chauvinistic norms' as barriers to women's participation in politics and achievement of legal rights.	• Recognition of women's contribution to the economy and society. • Role and contributions of National Commission for Women highlighted. • Priorities for donor assistance identified, including legal reform and action on violence against women.
Lithuania	• Employment and unemployment • Labour force participation • Representation in management • Wages • Political representation	• Labour force participation. • Wage inequalities. • Participation in governance. • Resource constraints in implementation of National Programme for Equal Opportunities.	• Specific recommendations for action on domestic violence, violence against children and trafficking.

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
Mauritius	• Primary and secondary enrolment • Literacy • Employment in non-agricultural sector • Representation in Parliament	• Policy measures to address gender inequality. • Detailed discussion on National Women's Action Plan. • Poverty, wage disparities and legal frameworks as barriers to gender equality.	• Detailed analysis of national plans, programmes and targets. • Issues highlighted indirectly through discussion on National Action Plan.
Mozambique	• Primary and secondary enrolment • Participation in non-agricultural sector	• Impacts of gender discrimination. • Violence against women and girls. • Barriers to girls' education including poverty and consequent early marriage and prostitution, domestic work, lack of female teachers, distance between home and schools. • Tension between modern education and traditional values and practices. • Sexual harassment of girls by male teachers.	• Analysis of barriers to girls' education. • Details of national plans of action on gender equality.
Nepal	• Data on primary and secondary enrolment	• Poverty and girls' workload as barrier to girls' education. • Relevance and supply-side constraints. • Early marriage perpetuating a culture of denial of education to girls. • Need to compensate opportunity cost of girls' education through incentives for parents. • Role of women's groups in changing perceptions about women.	• Discussion confined to education. • Analysis of factors that mitigate against girls' education. • Emphasis on changing "negatively gendered consciousness", cultural norms and social practices that perpetuate women's subordination. • Listing of national initiatives and priorities for donors.
Poland	• Employment and unemployment data • Data on women in decision-making and managerial positions	• Labour market inequality identified as central issue. • Wage discrimination. • Low representation of women in managerial positions.	• Labour Market Inequality used as indicator instead of education.

COUNTRY	Indicators and data	Issues addressed	Highlights of Analysis
Poland *(contd.)*		• Domestic work and childcare as barriers to women's participation in the labour market. • Women's acceptance of discrimination.	• Analysis of reasons for women not using available legal provisions to claim their rights as workers. • Priorities for action to end labour market discrimination (strengthening legal framework, increasing resource allocation and providing women with childcare and other social services).
Saudi	• Enrolment and literacy • Employment	• Labour force participation. • Marital status and women's lack of mobility, with married women preferring to work at home. • Limited scope of employment for women. • Mismatch between women's qualifications and available opportunities. • Need for support services including child care to enable women to work.	• Priorities for UN Technical Cooperation identified.
Tanzania	• Primary and secondary enrolment · Achievement levels	• Early marriage, pregnancy and perceived opportunity costs as barriers to education.	• Discussion confined to education.
Vietnam	• Primary and secondary enrolment	• Geographic disparities. • Perceived opportunity costs of educating girls. • Burden of household work. • Textbooks perpetuate domestic roles for girls.	• Discussion confined to education. • Provisions of National Action Plan for Women highlighted. • Priorities for donor support identified.

As highlighted in the table above, discussions under Goal 3 in all reports have attempted to foreground some critical aspects of gender inequality.

❖ All the reports studied contain gendered analyses of barriers to girls' education.

❖ Four out of 13 reports have confined the discussion under Goal 3 to education-related issues only, without reporting on work-force participation and political representation.

❖ Labour market participation and gender inequalities in employment are discussed in six of the reports.

❖ Issues of women's participation in political processes and decision-making are addressed in four reports.

❖ Cultural/attitudinal barriers to women's equality and 'harmful' traditions such as female genital mutilation have been discussed in nine reports.

❖ Women's double burden of work and girl child labour have been discussed in 10 of the 13 reports studied.

❖ The issue of violence against women is specifically named in only two reports (Lithuania and Mozambique).

❖ Six reports highlight details of national action plans and programmes for women. One report (Albania) also provides an overview of legal and constitutional provisions for gender equality.

> **Good Practices**
>
> • Clear articulation of rights and capabilities as the framework for women's empowerment in Bolivia report.
>
> • Prominence given to legal and Constitutional provisions for gender equality in Albania report.
>
> • Extensive data on the full range of indicators in the Lithuania report.

As the above table shows, coverage of issues and the depth of the analysis vary widely across reports. Since the target for Goal 3 is phrased in terms of education, it is not surprising that all the reports provide information against the education indicator. Similar attention has not been given to the other two indicators (the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments), that are equally if not more critical to the achievement of gender equality.

It is significant that most reports have skirted discussion of 'difficult' issues such as violence against women – practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage, where they are mentioned, are referred to as 'harmful traditions' rather than as violations of women's human rights.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusions

The exercise of scanning a selection of the national MDGRs from a gendered perspective, the findings of which are summarised in the previous section, leads to the following conclusions.

❖ Gender equality perspectives are not adequately mainstreamed into the MDGRs. Discussions on gender are primarily confined to Goal 3 (gender equality), Goal 5 (maternal mortality) and Goal 6 (HIV/AIDS).

❖ This 'ghettoisation' of gender issues within women-specific sectors appears to be independent of the authorship of the report – there is no significant difference on this score between reports authored by the UN System, national governments or independent consultants.

❖ The inclusion of gender perspectives and women's concerns under Goals 5 and 6, when seen in conjunction with the total invisibility of women in discussions on Goals 7 (environment) and 8 (development cooperation) in the overwhelming majority of reports, suggest that women are still being seen in terms of their vulnerabilities, and cast in their traditional roles as mothers or victims rather than as actors in development.

❖ Further, despite the rights-based perspective reflected by most reports in discussions on Goal 3, the approach to women in discussions under other goals continues to be instrumental rather than rights-based. Examples are the discussions on child mortality in several reports, where women's lack of knowledge of care and feeding practices is most commonly identified as a barrier to achieving the goal. Such a formulation ignores the gendered variables that mediate child survival, while accepting without comment the invisibility of fathers in parenting and care.

❖ Similarly, while several reports make mention of women in the context of discussions on poverty, these are usually limited to identifying them as a particularly vulnerable group. The statements in some MDGRs about feminisation of poverty are indicative of a welcome shift from earlier approaches that were insensitive to the differential concomitants and implications of poverty for women and men. However, when they are not backed up by data or policy commitments, such statements are of little value either as entry-points for refocusing the direction of poverty policy or as benchmarks for tracking change.

> Instrumental perspectives are also reflected in language - One report assesses the situation with regard to women's education in terms of the "total stock of educated women in the country".

❖ Discussions on gender in the majority of reports reviewed do not adequately reflect the fact that gender inequalities do not operate in isolation, but are mediated by inequalities of class, race and ethnicity. Looking at gender in isolation obscures the relationship between gender inequality and other systems of domination and can lead to a serious underestimation of the real extent of women's subordination and vulnerability.

❖ The rationale for reporting or not reporting on a particular indicator is not always stated in the reports. It is generally assumed that reporting may be based on the availability of data at the national level, but this may not always be the case. Sex-disaggregated data on a large number of indicators have been collected in several countries under programmes supported by various UN organizations, but are not used in the MDGRs. Sex-disaggregated school drop-out rates in education are a case in point. Data on this indicator are available in several countries, but are not generally included in the MDGR, possibly because it is not specifically listed as an indicator under Goal 2 (education). Yet, drop out rates can bring the issue of girls' unpaid work into sharp focus, and can complement enrolment data to provide a more complete picture of gender differentials in access to education. Similarly, sex-disaggregated data on voter turn-outs in elections are available in many countries, and could supplement data on women's presence in legislatures.

> Data on girls' school enrolment can be deceptive. In many countries, girls who are sent to school during enrolment drives drop out soon thereafter, and do not attend school even though their names remain on the rolls.
>
> Sex-disaggregated drop-out rates reflect girls' involvement in household work and can add depth to the picture painted by enrolment ratios.

❖ One or two reports among those reviewed have been able to successfully collect and present disaggregated data on a range of indicators, implying that the difficulties usually cited to justify data gaps on gender issues are not insurmountable. The failure to flag data gaps in MDGRs therefore represents a lost opportunity to bring these issues into the forefront of national and donor priorities.

❖ There are wide variations in the presentation of data in the MDGRs reviewed. While some reports present only brief composite tables, others contain exhaustive data on a range of indicators and seem designed for an expert audience. Cross-cutting issues and inter-sectoral connections are not always highlighted and data are not always interpreted in a manner that makes connections between the status of a particular indicator and the larger situation of gender inequality in the country.

❖ While the MDGs cover most of the key areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, a major gap is in the area of reproductive health. Some countries have chosen to report on reproductive health under Goal 5 (maternal mortality). However, the indicators used are still those for tracking maternal mortality and do not adequately capture critical dimensions of reproductive health and rights. It is nevertheless encouraging that, despite the absence of specific targets and appropriate indicators, countries reporting on reproductive health have included discussions

on issues such as male responsibility and the need for tailoring services to the needs of adolescents.

❖ The MDGRs are not expected to be vehicles for exhaustive analysis – instead, they are expected to present snapshots of the situation against each indicator. However, this review shows that MDGRs are more analytical (in terms of identifying the underlying causes of a particular phenomenon) in their reporting on Goal 3 than on any other goals. Even though these analyses do not always conform to a rights perspective, the fact that they identify and name some deep-rooted manifestations of gender inequality is to be welcomed, since it creates the space for subsequent advocacy on these issues.

> One of the reports reviewed here contains data on suicide rate, disaggregated by sex and by place of residence, which show a suicide rate for rural women that is 30% higher than that for urban women.
>
> Since the country in question has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, this data is obviously of some significance. Yet, since there is no analysis or explanation of the causes of this differential, it remains impenetrable to most people.
>
> The question could well be asked: "If it is significant, why is it unexplained? If it is not significant, why is it included?"

3.2 Recommendations

The simplest and most straightforward way to build on the findings of this review and strengthen gender mainstreaming in the MDGRs would be to add at least one gender-specific indicator to the set of indicators under each target. For instance, one could suggest the addition of the indicator "Number of women agricultural workers who own land" as an additional indicator under the poverty reduction target. However, considerations of data availability, national capacities, increase in workload and the need to make the national MDGRs as accessible and simple as possible, would all militate against adding this critical measure of women's poverty to the existing set of indicators.

Experience has shown that, where indicators are concerned, "less is better and simplest is best". Despite ongoing debates and discussions on the appropriateness and value of particular indicators, there is a general consensus that adding to the basket will not be feasible at this stage. Bringing a gendered perspective to the centre of MDGRs through providing sex-disaggregated data and qualitative information on gender issues across goals and targets, would be a more practical and effective approach.

> The challenge of bringing gender perspectives to centre-stage in the MDGRs can be addressed through incorporating disaggregated data and qualitative information on critical gender issues across goals and targets.

The challenge for gender equality advocates is therefore to devise strategies for mainstreaming gender issues into the MDGRs that do not strain or overload national capacities, expand the basket of indicators or subvert the purpose of the report. The following suggestions could be discussed.

MDG Reporting Process

❖ The process of preparation of national MDGRs is envisaged as a consultative one involving a range of stakeholders and representatives of civil society groups. **Involving members of women's groups and gender experts in consultations across goals** can be a strategy to ensure that gender issues are discussed and integrated into all sections of the final report.

❖ Supporting **independent studies using rapid participatory methodologies** to collect qualitative information on key gender dimensions of key issues such as poverty and health.

❖ Draft reports could be shared for **review by a group of independent gender experts** (other than those who may have been involved in consultations) who are also familiar with the country context. Comments and feedback from the experts could supplement the outputs from consultations.

❖ In most countries, UN organisations are involved in building the capacities of National Statistical Systems, which also provide the data for inclusion in MDGRs. UN support could be specifically focused towards **gender sensitization for statisticians** involved in collating and processing data for the MDGRs, directed towards equipping them to identify and use relevant additional data from existing data sets, that can supplement and bring a gender dimension to the mandatory indicators under each goal.

❖ Promoting and **supporting the collection of sex-disaggregated data** on key indicators is also an urgent necessity for successful gender mainstreaming in the MDGRs. UN Country Teams in UNDAF countries are already committed to the development of a common country database with disaggregated data on key national indicators. This process requires coordination at all levels to synergise the ongoing data-related interventions by various organizations, and to ensure that the appropriate data is fed into the process of preparation of national MDGRs.

MDG Guidance Note

❖ Since the MDG Guidance Note is currently under revision, it may be possible to add some **suggestions and tips for gender mainstreaming**.

❖ The last section of reporting under each goal in the MDGRs is an assessment of monitoring and evaluation capacities. The addition of **a specific query on capacity to collect sex-disaggregated data** in this section would have a significant impact in terms of attention to and accountability for providing disaggregated data.

❖ The Guidance Note could also include a suggestion to include at least one **box under each goal, highlighting a gender dimension** of that goal. These could either provide additional data, or could highlight the qualitative implications for women of the issues highlighted in the body of the discussion.

MDG training

❖ Training for country teams involved in preparation of the MDGR should emphasise the importance of gender as a cross-cutting goal, and provide practical tips and tools for such

integration. A **module on gender and the MDGs** could be incorporated into every training programme.

❖ Training could also be **supplemented with an information pack/mainstreaming toolkit** containing suggested entry points, best practice examples and templates to facilitate the organization and analysis of data around key indicators, for use by UN country teams involved in supporting the MDGR process. A folder of resources and reading materials on gender and the MDGs has already been developed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and MDGs[6] under its joint work programme.

"
There is no time to lose if we are to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. Only by investing in the world's women can we expect to get there.

- Kofi Annan
Secretary General of the United Nations
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[6] The Task Force is co-chaired by UNDP and the World Bank. Members of the core group include UNIFEM, DAW, OECD/DAC, World Bank and UNFPA.

Acknowledgement