

BUILDING GENDER EQUALITY IN URBAN LIFE

TAKING ACTION TO EMPOWER WOMEN: UN MILLENNIUM PROJECT REPORT ON EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

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How can the global community achieve the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women? This question is the focus of Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals endorsed by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 and of this report, prepared by the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality.

The report argues that there are many practical steps that can reduce inequalities based on gender, inequalities that constrain the potential to reduce poverty and achieve high levels of well-being in societies around the world. There are also many positive actions that can be taken to empower women. Without leadership and political will, however, the world will fall short of taking these practical steps — and meeting the goal. Because gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched attitudes, societal institutions, and market forces, political commitment at the highest international and national levels is essential to institute the policies that can trigger social change and to allocate the resources necessary to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

Many decades of organizing and advocacy by women's organizations and networks across the world have resulted in global recognition of the contributions that women make to economic development and of the costs to societies of persistent inequalities between women and men. The success of those efforts is evident in the promises countries have made over the past two decades through international forums. The inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment as the third Millennium Development Goal is a reminder that many of those promises have not been kept, while simultaneously offering yet another international policy opportunity to implement them.

The Task Force Perspective

The task force affirms that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. Development policies and actions that fail to take gender inequality into account or that fail to enable women to be actors in those policies and actions will have limited effectiveness and serious costs to societies. The reverse is also true: the achievement of Goal 3 depends on the extent to which each of the other goals addresses gender-based constraints and issues.

This task force believes that ultimate success in achieving Goal 3 depends both on the extent to which the priorities suggested here are addressed and the extent to which the actions taken to achieve the other Goals are designed to promote equality of men and women and boys and girls. While this interdependence among the Goals is important, the task force wishes to underscore that Goal 3 has intrinsic value in itself. That is why the report focuses on priorities and actions to achieve Goal 3.

Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct. It defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities, and obligations of women and men. The innate biological differences between females and males form the basis of social norms that define appropriate behaviors for women and men and that determine women's and men's differential social, economic, and political power.

The task force has adopted an operational framework of gender equality with three dimensions:

- The *capabilities domain*, which refers to basic human abilities as measured by education, health, and nutrition. These capabilities are fundamental to individual well-being and are the means through which individuals access other forms of well-being.

- The *access to resources and opportunities domain*, which refers primarily to equality in the opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as land or housing) and resources (such as income and employment), as well as political opportunity (such as representation in parliaments and other political bodies). Without access to resources and opportunities, both political and economic, women will be unable to employ their capabilities for their well-being and that of their families, communities, and societies.
- The *security domain*, which is defined to mean reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict. Violence and conflict result in physical and psychological harm and lessen the ability of individuals, households, and communities to fulfill their potential. Violence directed specifically at women and girls often aims at keeping them in “their place” through fear.

These three domains are interrelated. Change in all three is critical to achieving Goal 3. The attainment of capabilities increases the likelihood that women can access opportunities for employment or participate in political and legislative bodies but does not guarantee it. Similarly, access to opportunity decreases the likelihood that women will experience violence (although in certain circumstances, it may temporarily increase that likelihood). Progress in any one domain to the exclusion of the others will be insufficient to meet the goal of gender equality.

The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality but distinct from it. The core of empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her own destiny. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as are provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions). And to exercise agency, women must live without the fear of coercion and violence.

The Seven Strategic Priorities

To ensure that Goal 3 is met by 2015, the task force has identified seven strategic priorities. These seven interdependent priorities are the minimum necessary to empower women and alter the historical legacy of female disadvantage that remains in most societies of the world:

1. Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education.
2. Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights.
3. Invest in infrastructure to reduce women’s and girls’ time burdens.
4. Guarantee women’s and girls’ property and inheritance rights.
5. Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women’s reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation.
6. Increase women’s share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies.
7. Combat violence against girls and women.

These seven priorities are a subset of the priorities outlined in previous international agreements, including the Cairo Program of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The recommendations made in these international agreements remain important for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, but the task force sees the seven priorities as areas needing immediate action if Goal 3 is to be met by 2015. Although empowerment and equality should be enjoyed by all women and men, the task force believes that action on the seven priorities is particularly important for three subpopulations of women:

- Poor women in the poorest countries and in countries that have achieved increases in national income, but where poverty remains significant.

- Adolescents, who constitute two-thirds of the population in the poorest countries and the largest cohort of adolescents in the world's history.
- Women and girls in conflict and postconflict settings.

A focus on poor women is justified for several reasons. Gender inequalities exist among the rich and the poor, but they tend to be greater among the poor, especially for inequalities in capabilities and opportunities. Moreover, the wellbeing and survival of poor households depend on the productive and reproductive contributions of their female members. Also, an increasing number of poor households are headed or maintained by women. A focus on poor women is therefore central to reducing poverty.

Investing in the health, education, safety, and economic well-being of adolescents, especially adolescent girls, must also be a priority. Adolescence is a formative period between childhood and adulthood. It is a time when interventions can dramatically alter subsequent life outcomes. Additionally, the sheer size of the current adolescent cohort in poor countries means that interventions to improve their lives will affect national outcomes. The task force has given priority to the needs of adolescent girls because in most countries they experience greater social, economic, and health disadvantages than boys do. Therefore, investments to help girls complete good quality secondary schooling, support their transition from education to work, develop healthy sexuality, and guarantee their physical safety are urgently needed and can simultaneously accelerate progress toward several of the Millennium Development Goals.

Responding to these strategic priorities is particularly urgent for women in conflict and postconflict situations. Situations of conflict have disproportionate impacts on women and children, who are typically the majority of displaced persons in refugee camps and conflict zones. Postconflict periods present a window of opportunity for reducing gender barriers and creating a gender-equitable society, which is more likely to occur if the reconstruction process fosters the full participation of women.

Strategic priority 1: strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education

Gender parity in access to schooling is the first step toward gender equality in education. However, the world is still far from achieving gender parity in enrollment and completion rates, particularly at the secondary school level. A review of trends shows that gender parity ratios remain below 0.90 in Sub-Saharan African and South Asia even though girls' primary school enrollment rates rose steadily over the 1990s and are now relatively high. While the trends at the primary level are positive, a number of countries are likely to miss both the 2005 and 2015 Millennium Development Targets. Projections are for 19 of 133 countries to have girls' to boys' primary enrollment ratios in the 0.70-0.89 range in 2005 and for 21 countries to have ratios below 0.9 in 2015. Twelve countries in this second group are in Sub-Saharan Africa, which should be viewed as a "priority" region for interventions.

The picture is less hopeful if primary school completion is used as the indicator. In 1990 boys completed primary school at a higher rate than girls in all regions of the world except Latin America and the Caribbean. In South Asia the difference was almost 14 percentage points in favor of boys, while in the Middle East and North Africa and Europe and Central Asia, boys' completion rates were about 11 percentage points ahead of girls'. Despite these gender gaps, there have been improvements in girls' completion in all regions since 1990, and narrowing of the gender gap has been due mostly to increases in girls' completion rates.

Less encouraging is progress at the secondary school level. Across the world there is greater variation in enrollment rates at the secondary than at the primary level. Once again, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa fare poorly, with gender parity ratios below 0.90. East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa have a gender parity ratio above 0.90. Latin America and the Caribbean and developed countries have reverse gender gaps (girls' to boys' enrollment ratios higher than 1).

A closer look at the numbers, however, shows that girls' enrollment rates are still low in most regions. Although 78 of 149 countries for which there are data have girls' to boys' secondary enrollment ratios of 1.0 or greater in 2000, only 33 of the 78 countries have female enrollment rates above 90 percent. In South Asia the female secondary enrollment rate is 47.1 percent and in Sub Saharan Africa it is only 29.7 percent.

Country projections for gender parity in secondary education show that 24 of 118 countries are expected to have gender parity ratios below 0.90 in 2005. That number rises to 27 in 2015. These results suggest that achieving gender parity at high levels of enrollment will take concerted national and international action.

Global commitments to girls' education have focused in the main on primary education. While this focus must continue, and international commitments to universal primary education must be met, the task force notes that the achievement of Goal 3 requires strengthening post-primary education opportunities for girls. This focus is justified for several reasons.

First, the 2005 target for Goal 3 will be missed for both primary and secondary education but by a larger number of countries for secondary education. Second, evidence suggests that among all levels of education, secondary and higher levels of education have the greatest payoff for women's empowerment. These empowering effects are manifested in a variety of ways, including increased income-earning potential, ability to bargain for resources within the household, decisionmaking autonomy, control over their own fertility, and participation in public life. Third, focusing on secondary education can strengthen the pipeline that channels students through the education system and give parents an incentive to send their children to primary school. Primary, secondary, and tertiary education are not separate components but are an integral part of an education system.

For all these reasons the task force believes that achieving Goal 3 requires strengthening post-primary education opportunities for girls and that this can be achieved without wavering from the global commitments to universal primary education.

A number of interventions that have proven effective for increasing girls' participation in primary school may also apply to post-primary education. These include making schooling more affordable by reducing costs and offering targeted scholarships, building secondary schools close to girls' homes, and making schools girl-friendly. Additionally, the content, quality, and relevance of education must be improved through curriculum reform, teacher training, and other actions. Education must serve as the vehicle for transforming attitudes, beliefs, and entrenched social norms that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. All interventions taken to promote gender equality in education must, therefore, be transformational in nature.

Strategic priority 2: guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights

Goal 3 cannot be achieved without the guarantee of sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women. A large body of evidence shows that sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to women's ability to build their capabilities, take advantage of economic and political opportunities, and control their destinies. Conversely, gender inequality that restricts women's access to economic resources compromises their sexual and reproductive autonomy. For this reason, the task force has identified guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights as a strategic priority for achieving gender equality and empowering women.

Maternal mortality rates are high, particularly in developing countries where women's chances of dying from pregnancy-related complications are almost 50 times greater than in developed countries. Women's unmet need for contraception is also high. One-fifth of married women in the Middle East and North Africa and one-quarter of married women in Sub-Saharan Africa are unable to access the contraception they need. Iron-deficiency anemia is also widespread, affecting 50-70 percent of pregnant women in

developing countries. Severe anemia has been shown to be associated with postpartum hemorrhage and is thought to be an underlying factor in maternal mortality. Women are also more vulnerable than men to sexually transmitted infections, particularly HIV/AIDS. Today, almost 50 percent of the HIV-infected adults worldwide are women, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, that proportion is 57 percent.

Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to a range of sexual and reproductive health problems. In Sub-Saharan Africa about 75 percent of those ages 15-24 who are infected with HIV are women. Many sexually active adolescents do not use contraception. Of the roughly 260 million women ages 15-19 worldwide, both married and unmarried, about 11 percent (29 million) are sexually active and do not want to become pregnant but are not using a modern method of birth control. Underdeveloped physiology, combined with a lack of power, information, and access to services, means that young women experience much higher levels of maternal illness and death than do women who bear children when they are older. Their limited negotiating power exposes them to greater risk of sexually transmitted infection, especially in the common instance of having partners who are much older and more sexually experienced.

According to the World Health Organization's 2001 estimates, sexual and reproductive health problems account for 18 percent of the global burden of disease and 32 percent of the burden among women ages 15-44. By comparison, neuropsychiatric conditions account for 13 percent of all disability adjusted life years lost, respiratory illnesses for 11 percent, and cardiovascular diseases for 10 percent. Moreover, investing in reproductive and sexual health services is cost effective. An early study in Mexico found that every peso the Mexican social security system spent on family planning services during 1972-1984 saved nine pesos for treating complications of unsafe abortion and providing maternal and infant care. Beyond such savings, reproductive and sexual health services deliver other medical, social, and economic benefits, including prevention of illness and death, improvements in women's social position, and increases in macroeconomic investment and growth.

Interventions to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights must therefore be a priority and should occur both within and outside the health system. At a minimum, national public health systems must provide quality family planning services, emergency obstetric care, safe abortion (where legal), post-abortion care, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), and interventions to reduce malnutrition and anemia. Outside the health system sexuality education programs are needed to lay the foundation for improved sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Ultimately, these interventions must be supported by an enabling policy and political environment that guarantees women's and girls' sexual and reproductive rights.

Strategic priority 3: invest in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens

Women's and girls' ability to participate in educational, productive, and civic activities and thus to empower themselves economically and politically is often limited by a household division of labor that assigns to women and girls the bulk of the responsibility for everyday household maintenance tasks. For poor women and girls this responsibility is made more onerous by the underinvestment in public infrastructure that characterizes most low-income countries. Three types of infrastructure are particularly critical to reduce women's time burden: transport, water and sanitation, and energy.

In most rural communities around the world women are the primary collectors of fuel wood and water. One study comparing women's time use in Sub-Saharan Africa found that women spent more than 800 hours a year in Zambia and about 300 hours a year in Ghana and Tanzania collecting fuel wood. Studies in various countries show that women also spend long hours in water collection and management. Women's time burdens are exacerbated by inadequate transport systems. For instance, 87 percent of trips in rural Africa take place on foot, and women account for more than 65 percent of the household time and effort spent on transport.

The time spent by women and girls on routine tasks can be reduced dramatically by the provision of accessible and affordable sources of transport systems, energy, and water and sanitation systems.

Feeder and main roads can greatly expand women's opportunities, especially when combined with accessible and affordable modes of transportation. They can increase women's chances of finding employment or training, boosting sales of goods outside the village, thereby increasing income, expanding their social networks, accessing healthcare, and approaching town and district government headquarters to seek redress for their problems. The probability that girls will attend school also increases. To increase the likelihood that these benefits will accrue to women and girls, the design of transport projects must also address safety and security needs. Providing adequate street lighting and ensuring that the location of bus stops and terminals are not remote or secluded are examples of ways to address these needs.

Improving women's access to alternative sources of energy other than traditional biofuels can reduce women's time burdens, their exposure to indoor air pollution, and the risks of other health problems. Cooking fuels such as kerosene and LPG are recognized as good substitutes for traditional biofuels because of their higher thermal efficiency and relative lack of pollutants. Other interventions that can bring about the same benefits include the promotion of improved cook-stoves.

Rural electrification is probably the most desirable alternative to biofuels. However, the high cost and limited availability of electricity in developing countries restricts its use by households for some tasks, including cooking. One option is to strengthen transitional, low-cost solutions that the poor are already using. An example is diesel-powered mini-grids for charging batteries that can be carried to households. Another example is a multifunctional platform powered by a diesel engine for low-cost rural motive power. Such an intervention, implemented in Mali, has been particularly successful in reducing women's time and effort burdens.

Even when infrastructure is made available, access for poor women and men may be constrained by other factors such as cost. With respect to alternative sources of energy such as LPG and kerosene, a combination of interventions can assist in lowering transport and distribution costs: improved road and port infrastructure, improved handling and storage facilities at ports, bulk purchases of fuels, and impetus from the government through regulatory reform. Giving the poor direct subsidies or lease/finance mechanisms to cover the upfront costs of these fuel sources (such as the cost of an LPG stove or cylinder) will also reduce costs.

Increasing women's participation in the design and implementation of infrastructure projects can help to overcome obstacles to access and affordability. This is best illustrated in the sanitation and water sector, where women play key roles as users and managers. As primary collectors of water, women have key information about such issues as seasonal availability from various sources, water quality, and individual and communal rights to those sources. If incorporated in project design, this information could also improve project outcomes. There is strong evidence from community water and sanitation projects that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that ignore women.

Adapting modern science and technology to meet the infrastructure needs of poor people in a way that builds on the knowledge and experience of women and is accessible and affordable to all is therefore a development priority.

Strategic priority 4: guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights

Ownership and control over assets such as land and housing provide economic security, incentives for taking economic risks that lead to growth, and important economic returns, including income. Yet, women in many countries around the globe are far less likely than men to own or control these important assets. Ensuring female property and inheritance rights would help empower women both economically and socially and rectify a fundamental injustice. Rectifying this injustice will also have other positive outcomes because women's lack of property has been increasingly linked to development-related problems, including poverty, HIV/AIDS, and violence.

Secure tenure to land and home improves women's welfare. Land and home ownership confer such direct benefits as use of crops and rights to the proceeds thereof and having a secure place to live. Indirect advantages include the ability to use land or houses as collateral for credit or as mortgageable assets during a crisis.

Beyond the direct economic impact, assets in the hands of women have other welfare impacts. Land ownership can act as a protective factor for women against domestic violence. Research in Kerala, India, found that 49 percent of women with no property reported physical violence, whereas only 7 percent of women with property reported physical violence, controlling for a wide range of factors. Some studies found that in societies where husbands control most household resources, as in Bangladesh, expenditures on children's clothing and education were higher and the rate of illness among girls was lower in households where women owned assets than in households where women did not.

In addition to welfare gains, gender-equal land rights can enhance productive efficiency. Land title can serve as collateral, improving women's access to credit, which in turn can increase output. This can be especially crucial in situations where women are the principal farmers, such as where male outmigration is high, where widows (or wives) cultivate separate plots owned by others, or where women farm independently of men, as in much of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Relatively little data exist on the magnitude of gender asset gaps within and across countries, but these gaps are thought to be substantial. Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena Leon, in their 2003 *World Development* article on "The Gender Asset Gap: Land in Latin America," compiled a rough approximation of the distribution of land by sex in five Latin American countries and found that land ownership is extremely unequal, with women representing one-third or less of landowners in the five countries. There are similar gender disparities in rights to land in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Central Asia.

There are myriad channels through which men and women may acquire land: inheritance, purchase in the market, or transfers from the state through land reform programs, resettlement schemes for those displaced by large dams and other projects, or antipoverty programs. The literature shows that each channel has a gender bias: male preference in inheritance, male privilege in marriage, gender inequality in the land market, and male bias in state programs of land distribution.

Since 1995 there has been growing awareness and policy attention to women's property and inheritance rights drawing on evolving human rights-based frameworks. There is no one global blueprint for increasing women's access to and control over land; rather, approaches and interventions must be context-specific. Nonetheless, several types of changes are necessary within countries to ensure women's property rights: amending and harmonizing statutory and customary laws, promoting legal literacy, supporting women's organizations that can help women make land claims, and recording women's share of land or property. These reforms need to be implemented in tandem to have maximum impact. In areas that are moving toward formal land registration systems, joint titling can enhance women's access to land. It can help guard against capricious decisionmaking by a spouse; protect against the dispossession of women due to abandonment, separation, or divorce; and increase women's bargaining power in household and farm decisionmaking. Joint titling can be mandatory or voluntary for legally married couples, although mandatory joint titling provides the most secure land rights for women.

International efforts to improve women's property rights have gained momentum in recent years. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has focused on equality in property as one of its important directives. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (UN-Habitat) focuses centrally on women and land. A number of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies are working to enhance women's access to land and property; these efforts deserve greater support.

Strategic priority 5: eliminate gender inequality in employment

Women's work, both paid and unpaid, is critical to the survival and security of poor households and an important route through which households escape poverty. Moreover, paid employment is critical to women's empowerment. In settings where women's mobility is restricted, increased employment opportunities can improve women's mobility and enable women to seek and access reproductive health care. It can also expose them to new ideas and knowledge and broaden the community with which they engage.

In the 1980s and 1990s women's overall economic activity rates increased everywhere, except in Sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Europe and Central Asia, and Oceania. Yet, despite these increasing economic activity rates, women's status in the labor market remains significantly inferior to that of men's worldwide.

Gender inequalities exist in entry to work, conditions at work, and in exit from the labor market. Early marriage, early childbearing, and low education constitute barriers to women's and girls' labor market entry. These barriers are beginning to crumble with the creation of new employment opportunities in many countries and as women's education levels rise. To further reduce barriers to entering employment, important strategies are increasing women's access to post-primary and vocational and technical education and improving the quality of education. Of particular importance for adolescent girls' participation and achievement in post-primary education is their enrollment and achievement in math, science, and other technical courses.

One barrier to entry that has remained the most resistant to change is women's responsibility for providing care for children, the elderly, and the sick. Studies from around the world indicate that the presence of young children and a lack of childcare options constrain women's entry into paid employment and their job opportunities. Increased migration, the breakdown of extended families, and changing social arrangements in some parts of the world have made extended families a less reliable source of childcare than formerly, which necessitates other types of care services.

Expansion of national policies and programs to provide support for care — of children, people with disabilities, and the elderly — is an important intervention to enable women to participate in paid employment. The governments of most industrialized countries accept some public responsibility for sharing the cost of rearing their nations' children, and many governments have developed comprehensive family policies. Recognizing the value of early education, especially targeted to poor children, governments in many developing countries, including China and India, also support childcare and early education services. Yet, no single country provides the investment in care services that is required to fully meet the needs of women and their children. Filling this gap is essential for meeting Goal 3.

With regard to the conditions at work, women's status in the labor market is inferior to men's in most countries of the world, according to key indicators such as occupational distribution, earnings, the nature and terms of employment, and unemployment. In the labor force women and men typically perform different tasks and are located in different industries and occupational sectors. Occupational segregation by sex is extensive in both developed and developing countries. Approximately half of all workers in the world are in occupations where at least 80 percent of workers are of the same sex. In many countries, occupational segregation is significantly higher for the least educated workers than for those with higher education.

Gender gaps in earnings are among the most persistent forms of inequality in the labor market. In all countries men earn more than women, and this is true across different groups of workers (agricultural, services) and different types of earnings (monthly, hourly, salaried).

Employment — both formal and informal — has become increasingly flexible in the past two decades with globalization. Numerous studies show women's increased participation in temporary, casual, contract,

and part-time labor in manufacturing. Although men are also affected by these trends, the percentage of women in “flexible” jobs greatly exceeds that of men.

Gender differences are also apparent in unemployment, with women more likely to be unemployed than men in recent years. Studies from the Caribbean economies and transition economies show that women have experienced declines in access to jobs relative to men.

To improve the nature and conditions of work, employment-enhancing economic growth is a prerequisite for low-income countries, coupled with social policy that eliminates discriminatory employment barriers. For poor women, especially those in rural areas, public employment guarantee schemes can be an important intervention for providing work and increasing income, although evaluations of country programs reveal a mixed track record. Public employment guarantee schemes can also be gender-biased. In many programs, women earn less than men, partly because they are excluded from higher-wage and physically difficult tasks. Women are also more susceptible to cheating and exploitation.

For countries with large informal economies, one of the highest priorities to improve the conditions of work is social protection for workers in that sector. Social protection and safety net programs all too often exclude women by failing to account for gender differences in labor market participation, access to information, unpaid care responsibilities, and property rights. When programs do not account for these gender differences, women are more vulnerable to poverty and the risks associated with economic and other shocks to household livelihoods.

Another avenue for increasing income for poor women is through microenterprise development. Microfinance programs have been a popular economic strategy over the past two decades to assist poor and landless women to enter self-employment or start their own business. In order to have greater impact, however, microfinance programs need to be coupled with other types of products and services, including training, technology transfer, business development services, and marketing assistance, among others. More attention also needs to be given to innovative savings and insurance instruments for low-income women.

In both developed and developing countries, a common intervention to improve pay and working conditions is the passage and implementation of equal opportunity or antidiscrimination legislation. This includes family leave policies, equal pay and equal opportunity laws and policies, and legislation guaranteeing rights at work. Empirical evidence of the impact of each of these on women’s employment and on relative wages comes mostly from industrial countries and suggests that there have been some improvements, but these are conditional on the degree of enforcement and other factors.

In light of current demographic trends, female vulnerability in old age has gained increasing importance. Women live longer than men and in most regions are more likely to spend time as widows, when they are more vulnerable to poverty than men. Because pension entitlements are predominantly through work, women’s responsibilities for unpaid care work, as well as their predominance in informal employment and seasonal and part-time jobs, restrict their access to the private pension-covered sector. In many countries, jobs in the public sector have historically been a major source of pensions; as the public sector has contracted (due to structural adjustment, privatization, and cuts in government spending), women have lost pension coverage.

Many countries, especially in Latin America and in Eastern and Central Europe, are reforming their pension and social security programs. Gender equality has not been a high priority in these reform efforts. To protect retired women, it is important that the design of old age security systems take account of gender differences in earnings, labor force experience, and longevity. The specifics of pension reform vary across countries, and there are too few studies to draw clear conclusions about the effect of different types of pension programs on women. Nonetheless, it is clear that programs that have a redistributive component and that require fewer years of contributions are better able to protect women in old age.

While opportunities for paid employment for women have increased in countries around the world, the nature, terms, and quality of women's employment have not improved commensurately. Having access to paid work is critical to family survival, but it is not sufficient for reducing poverty or empowering women. Decent, productive work for all should be the goal.

At the international level, a framework exists for promoting equal access to and treatment in employment — the International Labor Organization (ILO) Decent Work Initiative. This initiative has four interrelated objectives: fostering rights at work and providing employment, social protection, and social dialogue. The primary goal is “to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity.” The gender sensitivity of the decent work framework, and the sex-disaggregated indicators it proposes for monitoring country performance, make it suitable for tracking a country's progress toward eliminating gender inequalities in labor markets. The task force recommends that the ILO be given the resources and authority to take the leadership in providing data and monitoring progress for this initiative.

Strategic priority 6: increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governments

Increasing women's representation in political office is now a widely held development goal and one of the four Millennium Development Indicators for tracking progress toward Goal 3. Indeed, the Beijing Platform for Action recommended that governments set a target of 30 percent of seats for women in national parliaments.

There are three reasons why the task force has selected political participation as a strategic priority. Countries where women's share of seats in political bodies is less than 30 percent are less inclusive, less egalitarian, and less democratic. Equality of opportunity in politics is a human right. Evidence also suggests that women's interests often differ from men's and that women who participate directly in decisionmaking bodies press for different priorities than those emphasized by men. Finally, women's participation in political decisionmaking bodies improves the quality of governance.

Yet, around the world women are largely absent from decisionmaking bodies. Only 14 countries have met the proposed target of 30 percent of seats held by women. In another 27 countries women held 20-29 percent of seats in 2004. Despite these low levels, women have made notable progress in political life since 1990. Of the 129 countries that have longitudinal data, in 96 women have increased their share of seats in parliament while in 29 countries women's representation declined over the decade and in 4 it remained unchanged.

Gender quotas and reservations are an effective policy tool to increase women's representation in political bodies. Experience suggests four lessons about the conditions under which quotas effectively enhance women's voice in political bodies. The first lesson is that the impact of quotas varies significantly according to a country's electoral system. Quotas work best in closed-list, proportional representation systems with placement mandates and with large electoral districts (that is, where many candidates are elected from each electoral conscription, and parties can expect several candidates running in the district to gain a seat). Second, placement mandates are critical to the success of quotas in closed-list proportional representation electoral systems. Because candidates are elected from party lists according to the order in which they appear, placement on the list affects the chances of being elected. Placement mandates require parties to place women in high positions on party lists. Without these mandates, political parties tend to comply with quotas in the most “minimalist” manner permitted by law, that is, with the lowest possible places on the list. Third, quota laws must be specific and stipulate details of implementation. When quota laws are vague, they leave considerable discretion to political parties to apply — or fail to apply — quotas as they see fit. Finally, for quota laws to be effective, parties must face sanctions for noncompliance. The strongest sanction is to have a party's list of candidates declared invalid and to forbid the party from contesting the election. These sanctions require that judges be willing and able to monitor party compliance and that groups be willing and able to challenge noncompliant lists in court.

Even without quotas and reservations, countries have several ways to catalyze women's political representation. A country's political culture plays an important role in affecting women's political participation. A recent cross-country study of women's presence in parliaments in 190 countries found that governments that make the provision of welfare (or "care work" for children, the sick, and the elderly) an "affirmative duty of the state" tend to elect around 5 percent more women to national legislatures than countries without these policies (holding all other factors constant). The same study found an interactive effect between constitutionalized care-work policies, policies upholding democratic civil rights, and women's political representation. Countries with both sets of policies could be expected to have 7 percent more women in their national legislatures than other countries. The presence of a strong women's political movement can also make a difference in increasing women's political representation. Women's organizations can mobilize a political constituency and pressure governments to implement specific measures to ensure that women are well represented in political parties and national decisionmaking bodies.

Strategic priority 7: combat violence against girls and women

Violence against women has serious health and development impacts and is a gross violation of women's rights. Its continued existence is thus fundamentally inconsistent with Goal 3. However, violence against women is prevalent in epidemic proportions in many countries around the world. This report focuses on two important types of violence: intimate partner violence and sexual violence or abuse by nonrelatives or strangers within the wider community.

Violence against women has many health consequences. Worldwide, it is estimated that violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among reproductive-age women as is cancer, and it is a more common cause of ill-health among women than traffic accidents and malaria combined. Physical and sexual abuse lie behind unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and complications of pregnancy. Studies around the world have found that one woman in four is physically or sexually abused during pregnancy. Some studies indicate that women battered during pregnancy run twice the risk of miscarriage and four times the risk of having a low birthweight baby as women who are not battered. Violence may also be linked to a sizable portion of maternal deaths.

In the past decade evidence has shown that violence against women is an important development constraint. National governments, women's organizations, and the United Nations now recognize violence against women as a basic human rights abuse; atrocities such as rape committed against women during armed conflict are acknowledged as a "weapon of war" and a gender-based crime; and social violence in the home is correlated with economic crime outside the home, as well as with political and institutional violence at the local and national levels.

Accurate statistical data on the prevalence of gender-based violence are difficult to come by because of underreporting by victims and underrecording by the police. Few national statistical bodies collect data on the topic, and few of the available studies yield information that is comparable across countries or regions. Where population-based surveys are available, they typically find that violence against women cuts across socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic groups and across geographical areas. Evidence from diverse contexts reveals that women living in poverty are often especially vulnerable to gender-based violence, as are adolescent girls. Women are at risk of violence when carrying out essential daily activities — walking or taking public transport to work, collecting water or firewood — especially when these activities are undertaken early in the morning or late at night.

Although no single intervention will eliminate violence against women, a combination of infrastructure, legal, judicial, enforcement, education, health, and other service-related actions can significantly reduce such violence and ameliorate its negative consequences. Throughout the 1990s countries around the world adopted new legislation on intimate partner violence and reformed laws on rape. To date, 45 nations (28 in Latin America and the Caribbean) have adopted legislation against domestic violence, 21 more are drafting new laws, and many countries have amended criminal assault laws to include domestic violence.

The health system is often the first entry point for victims of abuse. Most female victims of partner or sexual violence visit healthcare service providers but often resist contact with the police or other services. A range of interventions can be identified in the health sector to provide victim support and to deter additional violence. Education provides another important entry point for combating or preventing gender-based violence. Educational interventions include both school-based programs and broader communications campaigns aimed at raising community awareness about the damaging effects of violence. Communications media such as pamphlets, radio, television, and theater serve to educate and promote change, as they can reach large audiences. Because violence often occurs in unsafe public spaces, interventions to improve public infrastructure can contribute to reducing violence against women.

Although international agencies and the global community have rallied to address other epidemics (such as HIV and tuberculosis), they have not responded in the same way to the epidemic of violence against women. For instance, while the UN General Assembly resolution 50/166 established the Trust Fund to End Violence against Women at the United Nations Development Fund for Women, country needs and requests far outstrip the fund's current resources. The task force seeks to complement national, regional, and global efforts by calling for a global campaign to end violence against women, spearheaded by the UN secretary-general and endorsed by the General Assembly. The goal of the global campaign would be to mobilize leadership at all levels — local, national, and international — to generate action to make violence against women unacceptable.

Data and Indicators

The task force suggests several indicators for monitoring progress on the seven strategic priorities at both the country and international levels. These indicators are intended to supplement, or in some cases substitute for, the indicators chosen by the UN expert group to assess progress during 1990 – 2015, when the Millennium Development Targets are expected to be met.

Although the task force has not recommended the adoption of new international or country-level targets for the seven strategic priorities, countries may wish to set their own quantifiable, time-bound targets for establishing progress on each of the seven strategic priorities. Examples of such targets to be achieved by the year 2015 are, for strategic priority 2, “universal access to sexual and reproductive health services through the primary health care system, ensuring the same rate of progress or faster among the poor and other marginalized groups,” and for strategic priority 6, “a 30 percent share of seats for women in national parliaments.”

Millennium Development Goal 3 includes four indicators for tracking progress:

- The ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary and secondary education.
- The ratio of literate females to males among 15- to 24-year-olds.
- The share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector.
- The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

The indicators proposed for tracking Goal 3 are insufficient to track all seven strategic priorities and suffer from several technical shortcomings. To address these limitations, the task force suggests 12 indicators for countries and international organizations to use in monitoring the progress toward Goal 3 (box 1).

<p>Box 1</p> <p>Proposed indicators for tracking progress on strategic priorities for Goal 3</p>	<p><i>Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ratio of female to male gross enrollment rates in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. • The ratio of female to male completion rates in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. <p><i>Sexual and reproductive health and rights</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of contraceptive demand satisfied. • Adolescent fertility rate. <p><i>Infrastructure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours per day (or year) women and men spend fetching water and collecting fuel. <p><i>Property rights</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land ownership by male, female, or jointly held. • Housing title, disaggregated by male, female, or jointly held. <p><i>Employment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share of women in employment, both wage and self-employment, by type. • Gender gaps in earnings in wage and self-employment. <p><i>Participation in national parliaments and local government bodies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of seats held by women in national parliament. • Percentage of seats held by women in local government bodies. <p><i>Violence against women</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of domestic violence.
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None of these indicators measure the *quality* of equality, the process that brings it about, or the nature of the outcomes. Achieving numerical balance — parity — is clearly important in a world where even this goal has yet to be attained. However necessary, parity by itself is not a sufficient condition for achieving the greater goal of gender equality. Unless indicators are also developed for measuring the quality of change, we run the risk of placing too much weight on mere parity of outcomes as opposed to the quality of these outcomes and the way in which they are achieved.

Work to prepare several of the indicators proposed by the task force on gender equality and women's empowerment is well under way. Improving countries' capacity to enhance the coverage, quality, and frequency of collection of sex-disaggregated data remains a priority, however. Country statistical agencies need an infusion of resources to strengthen their capacity and efforts to do all that is necessary to collect and prepare sex-disaggregated data. Work at the country level also requires technical support from key international statistical agencies to develop methodological guidelines and undertake new data collection efforts. Concurrently, substantial funding is required to coordinate these activities within the appropriate international and regional organizations.

At the international level, the task force recognizes the importance of a focal point in the UN statistical system to bring together the various gender indicators and recommends the continuation of the Women's Indicators and Statistics Database (WISTAT) series, which served this purpose. The *Trends in the World's Women*, which was based on WISTAT, should also continue to be published on a quinquennial basis.

The Financial Costs

As the above discussion demonstrates, eliminating gender inequality is a multidimensional and a multisectoral effort. For this reason, the financial costs of these efforts are difficult to calculate. An accurate cost analysis is the first step in efforts to mobilize the financial resources needed to implement the various interventions and policy measures that have been proposed.

In collaboration with the UN Millennium Project Secretariat, the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality adapted the general needs assessment methodology developed by the UN Millennium Project for estimating the financing requirements of the gender-related interventions. There are several caveats concerning this methodology. First, the needs assessment comprises only some of the actions and strategies necessary to meet the goal of gender equality. Adequate resources alone will not achieve gender equality. Second, a gender needs assessment is possible only at the country level and meaningful only as part of a Goals-based national poverty reduction strategy in which all stakeholders participate. The estimated costs that such assessment yield depend on the interventions to be included, and these need to be locally identified based on nationally determined targets. Third, gender needs assessments should be carried out in conjunction with similar exercises in such other Goals-related areas as education, health, transport and energy infrastructure, water and sanitation, agriculture, nutrition, urban development, and environment. This simultaneous estimation of needs is important to ensure that the total resources capture all gender-related interventions and strategies.

The UN Millennium Project approach to assessing the needs for gender-related interventions follows two tracks. The first track covers gender interventions to meet all other Millennium Development Goals affecting gender equality and empowerment of women, and the second track covers the additional specific interventions to meet Goal 3.

The first track includes gender-specific interventions in agriculture, education, health, nutrition, rural development, urban development, water and sanitation, environment, trade, and science and technology. In each area there are interventions that empower women and reduce gender inequality. Three of the seven strategic priorities have been partially included in the needs assessment for specific sectors: post-primary education for girls has been costed as part of the education needs assessment methodology, the provision of sexual and reproductive health services has been costed within the health sector needs assessment methodology, and infrastructure to reduce women's time burdens has been costed as part of the infrastructure needs assessment methodology.

The second track involves estimating the resources for additional specific interventions to meet Goal 3. Examples of specific interventions for Goal 3 that are not costed in any other Goals needs assessment include:

- Providing comprehensive sexuality education within schools and community programs.
- Providing care services (for children, the elderly, the sick, and people with disabilities) to allow women to work.
- Providing training to female candidates in elections at the local, regional, and national level.
- Preventing violence against women through awareness campaigns and education, hotlines, and neighborhood support groups.
- Strengthening national women's machineries through increased budgetary allocations and staffing of ministries of women's affairs and gender focal points in other ministries.
- Undertaking institutional reform through sensitization programs to train judges, bureaucrats, land registration officers, and police officers.
- Investing in data collection and monitoring activities to track gender outcomes.

This needs assessment methodology is now being applied in several countries. The results from Tajikistan, although preliminary, are illustrative. They suggest that the costs of universal primary and expanded secondary education in Tajikistan would be roughly US\$20 per capita on average annually for 2005-2015; the costs of setting up a primary health care system (for child health and maternal health, major infectious diseases, and sexual and reproductive health) would average roughly US\$29 per capita annually; and the costs of water and sanitation provision would average roughly US\$9.50 per capita.

The preliminary estimates suggest that the additional cost of gender-specific interventions to meet Goal 3 (such as training and awareness campaigns, interventions to reduce violence against women, and systematic interventions to improve ministry capacities) will average approximately US\$1.30 per capita annually for 2005-2015, with costs peaking at US\$2.00 in 2015. Most of these costs will be for programs to end violence against women. In absolute numbers, the cost of additional specific interventions to meet Goal 3 in Tajikistan is US\$10.56 million each year, totaling \$112 million for 2005-2015, or about 0.003 percent of GDP over this period. To put this amount into context, debt-servicing payments alone accounted for about 4 percent of GDP in Tajikistan in 2001.

Making it Happen

This report describes practical actions that can be taken within each strategic priority to bring about gender equality and empower women. Within and across sectors, within institutions, and in different country and community contexts, different combinations of these actions have been implemented and shown positive results. The problem is not a lack of practical ways to address gender inequality but rather a lack of change on a large and deep enough scale to bring about a transformation in the way societies conceive of and organize men's and women's roles, responsibilities, and control over resources. Essential for that kind of transformation are:

- Political commitment by and mobilization of a large group of change agents at different levels within countries and in international institutions who seek to implement the vision of the world.
- Technical capacity to implement change.
- Institutional structures and processes to support the transformation, including structures that enable women to successfully claim their rights.
- Adequate financial resources.
- Accountability and monitoring systems.

Commitment and mobilization of change agents

The first ingredient of transformation requires a critical mass of change agents committed to the vision of a gender equitable society. These change agents include leaders at all levels of government who control critical levers for change — financial and technical resources — and set the priorities for actions affecting the lives of many. To be effective, government leaders must work in partnership with civil society institutions, especially organizations that represent women's interests. Simultaneously, there must be a critical mass of change agents at the international level in the institutions that provide support to national governments and civil society organizations in implementing changes necessary for a gender-equitable society.

Technical capacity

Achieving gender equality and bringing about women's empowerment also requires technical expertise and knowledge of how to mainstream gender into development policies and programs. At the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women the world community endorsed gender mainstreaming as a key institutional response for promoting gender equality and empowering women. Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a means to the goal of gender equality. It is both a technical and a political process, requiring shifts in organizational culture and ways of thinking, as well as in the structures of organizations and in their resource allocations. As a technical tool, mainstreaming can be effective only if supported by a strong political or legal mandate.

Gender mainstreaming is often compromised by a lack of conceptual clarity about the meaning of gender and by the assumption that certain policy areas, such as infrastructure development or macroeconomic measures, are in principle gender neutral. Such conceptual confusion can be clarified through gender analysis and gender training. Gender analysis involves gathering and examining information on what

women and men do and how they relate to each other. Gender training builds capacity to use the information from gender analysis in policy and program development and implementation.

An unfortunate consequence of training a broad range of professionals is the elimination or downgrading of specialized gender units and professionals. Because mainstreaming requires a shift of responsibility for promoting gender equality to all personnel, especially managers, gender specialists are perceived as being no longer needed. In fact, the reverse is true: gender mainstreaming can increase the need for specialist support.

Institutional structure and processes

Institutional transformation — fundamental change in the rules that specify how resources are allocated and how tasks, responsibilities, and values are assigned in society — is the third ingredient essential for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment on a large scale. Women's organizations are key agents in bringing about institutional transformation at the national and international level because they articulate women's priorities and organize and advocate for change. At the international level regional and global women's movements mobilized throughout the 1990s to put gender equality and women's empowerment on the agendas of major UN conferences, thereby transforming international norms on women's roles and rights.

Government agencies also play key roles in institutional transformation because they create an enabling national environment for gender equality. Through legislation, regulatory reform, and the expansion and strengthening of public services, governments can rectify the deep-seated gender biases that are inherent in their own institutions, as well as put in place structures and processes such as women-friendly law enforcement systems that enable women to claim their rights. To make such institutional changes happen, a central unit or ministry needs a mandate to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women are addressed across all ministries and departments. At the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing governments agreed that national women's machineries should be the institutional entity within government to support and build capacity to mainstream gender equality across all development planning and implementation processes.

Bringing about institutional transformation at the international level requires changes within international agencies similar to those within national government, including the creation of a gender unit that is structurally and functionally placed so that it can influence decisions on policy and program development and resource allocation. This is particularly important because of the interdependency between donors and low-income country governments and because international institutions often set the parameters for the resource envelope and policy changes that are possible at the country level.

Adequate financial resources

The fourth essential ingredient for large-scale reductions in gender inequality is the allocation of adequate financial resources for direct interventions by both governmental and nongovernmental organizations in building capacity, collecting data, and evaluating outcomes. Too often, insufficient funds are allocated for these purposes. Even if all the other ingredients described here are in place, they cannot be effective without adequate resources.

In part, efforts to promote gender equality are underfunded because isolating the costs of gender interventions from the overall costs of a sectoral intervention is challenging. However, methodologies for estimating such costs have been developed and can now be applied. Another reason why gender equality efforts are typically underfunded is that the costs associated with them are incorrectly perceived as additional to the core investment yielding only a marginal return rather than more accurately as an essential expenditure for maximizing the return on the core investment. A third reason is that gender equality is viewed as a cross-cutting issue, which typically receives lower priority in budgetary allocations

than sector-specific issues. Because cross-cutting issues are supposed to be everyone's business, they tend to become no one's responsibility.

The question is how to ensure that the required resources will be available and committed. Changes are needed in the international system, including debt cancellation for heavily indebted poor countries, dramatically scaled up and better quality official development assistance, and trade reform that levels the playing field for developing countries, in order to increase the availability of resources. Domestic resource mobilization is also important for generating the resources to achieve gender equality.

Accountability and monitoring mechanisms

Accountability and monitoring systems need to be in place within countries and international agencies to ensure that fundamental change is broad-based and lasting. At the country level, the needed systems include a strong legal framework along with the mechanisms to enforce it within and outside government, and a strong women's movement along with the processes that enable women's groups to inform and influence government policies and resource allocations.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides a powerful legal mechanism enabling stakeholders at the country level to hold their governments accountable for meeting Goal 3. The reporting obligation established in the convention, and the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, provide a context in which discrimination against women can be eliminated and in which women can de facto fully enjoy their rights. Frequently, the reporting process has created partnerships between government, NGOs, and United Nations entities that work together to achieve the goals of the convention. The convention has had a positive impact on legal and other developments in countries throughout the world. It has led many countries to strengthen provisions in their constitutions guaranteeing equality between women and men and providing a constitutional basis for protecting women's human rights.

NGOs such as women's organizations and other civil society organizations have taken the lead in holding governments and international agencies accountable for implementing their commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Indeed, much of the progress made to date has been due to the political efforts and the mobilization of such organizations.

In its interaction with countries the international system needs to support these components of a well functioning country-level accountability and monitoring system. Simultaneously, the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions must ensure that mechanisms are in place to hold themselves accountable for implementing international mandates and commitments to gender equality, and that watchdog agencies external to the international UN and Bretton Woods system, particularly international women's organizations, have sufficient input into policy formulation and implementation and resource allocation.

Country Case Studies

The efforts of Cambodia, Chile, Rwanda, and South Africa to improve women's status and reduce gender inequality illustrate the complicated processes involved in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. These countries are attempting significant institutional reform, catalyzed by strong and dynamic advocacy by women's organizations and other actors (such as other civil society movements or donors). Some of these countries also made progress on a majority of the seven strategic priorities described above, although it is difficult to attribute changes to specific government actions.

Each of the four countries has been affected in its recent past by significant internal turmoil and conflict. In each case powerful change agents in women's organizations and government have seized the opportunity to rectify societal inequalities. Although periods of peace-building and postconflict by definition provide space for societal restructuring of the status quo existing before the conflict, such restructuring can also occur in nonconflict settings if some combination of the five elements described

above (change agents with a vision, institutional structures and processes, technical capacity, financial resources, and accountability mechanisms) are in place.

Cambodia, Rwanda, and South Africa have all made significant progress in the last decade in closing gender gaps in primary and secondary education and in improving key aspects of women's sexual and reproductive rights and health. However, despite gains in lowering maternal mortality ratios and the unmet need for contraception, women in Cambodia, Rwanda, and South Africa have been hit hard by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Of the four case study countries Chile stands alone in opposing women's reproductive rights. On women's political participation, Rwanda and South Africa have achieved high levels of representation of women at both the national and local level. Chile and Rwanda have taken strong legal measures to address violence against women, and Cambodia has added the elimination of violence against women as one of its additional Millennium Development Targets. No country has adequately addressed women's poverty and economic opportunity — either in terms of their participation in labor markets or of asset ownership and control.

In each of the four countries the conditions have been created for fostering large-scale societal transformation. Each country has a critical mass of change agents, within government and civil society, with a vision of gender equality and women's empowerment. In some instances, such as in Rwanda and South Africa, leaders in governments have worked in alliance with leaders in civil society, while in others, as in Chile, the pressure of an independent women's movement forced change within government. Institutional structures and processes are all being transformed through constitutional change, legal reform, and the formation of new government organizations. Cambodia, Rwanda, and South Africa all made commitments to gender equality a key component of their constitutions, and all three, as well as Chile, have implemented major legal and legislative reforms to advance equality between women and men. And, in each country a national women's machinery has been put in place, supported by political leaders, with strong mandates for achieving gender equality.

It is difficult to establish whether adequate technical resources exist in each of these countries for implementing the country's commitments to gender equality. However, the multilayered responses (legislative, policy, and project) to gender inequality in each country suggest that technical capacity is not lacking.

Moreover, based on the evidence available, it is not possible to comment explicitly on whether the gender equality machinery in each country has adequate financial resources to do its work. Yet, the advent of gender budget initiatives, especially in Chile, Rwanda, and South Africa, holds the promise of such information becoming available and useful to gender equality advocates within and outside government.

Finally, each country has women's movements that can hold governments to their promises. Gender budget initiatives are an important monitoring and accountability mechanism. Each country is also a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but it is not clear whether the associated monitoring mechanism truly serves to hold governments accountable for bringing about the changes required to meet the convention's provisions.

Gender Mainstreaming in Millennium Development Goals-based Country Policy Processes

Poverty reduction strategies within low-income countries are the mechanisms for influencing development policies and plans and ensuring that actions to address the Millennium Development Goals are implemented. Thus, a critical entry point for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment at the country level is the poverty reduction strategy process.

A core recommendation of the UN Millennium Project is that every developing country restructure its short-term poverty reduction strategy in the context of a 10-year Millennium Development Goals framework. This offers a new opportunity to apply the lessons from past poverty reduction strategy

processes so that the new Goals-based poverty reduction strategies succeed in fully mainstreaming gender and empowering women. The UN Millennium Project suggests a five-step approach to designing an MDG-based poverty reduction strategy.

Gender considerations should be an integral component of each step. First, the data that countries use to diagnose the nature and dynamics of poverty must be sex-disaggregated. Second, in undertaking a systematic needs assessment to evaluate policies, governance structures, and public investments, countries should use the tools and methodologies described throughout this report, including gender analysis, gender training, and gender needs assessment, in a consultative process that allows for the full participation of women's organizations.

Third, in converting the needs assessment into a financing strategy, both the plan for public spending and services and the financing strategy should be based on a gender analysis of public expenditure and revenue. A gender-aware public spending plan must include sex-disaggregated, gender-sensitive measures for inputs, outputs, and outcomes; must make gender equality an explicit indicator of performance; and must incorporate into the budget framework dimensions of costs and expenditures that are not typically included, such as the unpaid care of children, the elderly, and sick, provided by women.

Finally, the public sector management strategy, with its focus on transparency, accountability, and results-based management, should include processes that allow stakeholders committed to gender equality to participate in meaningful ways. For example, women's organizations and other civil society groups that promote gender equality must be given full information and be able to participate in formal feedback mechanisms through which accountability can be exercised.

Conclusion

Much of what is said in this report has been known for several decades, but it has been difficult to translate that knowledge into development policy and practice at the scale required to bring about fundamental transformation in the distribution of power, opportunity, and outcomes for both women and men. The next 10 years provide a new window of opportunity to take action on a global scale to achieve gender equality and empower women, which are critical for meeting all the Millennium Development Goals. Governments and international organizations can provide an enabling environment to make this possible. Women's organizations need the space and resources to bring about the societal transformations that remove the constraints, fulfill the potential, and guarantee the rights of women in all countries. The recommendations made in this report can pave the way toward that future.

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