



Gender and the MDGs – Part 2

Centre for Women

UN- ESCWA

A monthly ECW issuance aiming at raising the gender awareness and responsiveness through highlighting the gender dimensions in various fields.

The Gender and MDGs series which will consist of four issues covering gender and all eight goals will be released consecutively in April, May, June and July 2007.



Special events in the
ESCWA
Centre for Women

ECW organized a sub-regional workshop on gender Mainstreaming for gulf countries in Amman, Jordan on 4,5 and 6 May 2007.

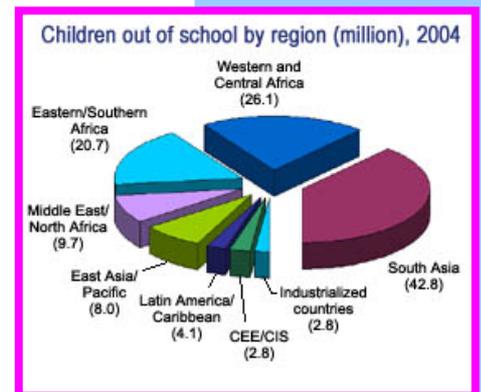


Gender and Education

The main barriers to gender equality in education

While the previous issue on the MDGs explored the gender dimension of goal one which is on the eradication of poverty, our issue today will focus on goal two and three related to the achievement of universal primary education and to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The second goal on education is narrowly related to the reduction of poverty since investing in human capital can noticeably improve the economic opportunities of men and women. Education is a key tool used for empowering women economically, socially and politically. There are however many barriers that impede girls and women from accessing education. Attitudinal barriers related to the belief that there are no benefits in educating girls, in addition to early marriages and teenage pregnancy restrict girls' access to education and favor high school drop-out rates in developing countries.



<http://childinfo.org/areas/education/>

Highlights:

Goal 2: Gender and Education

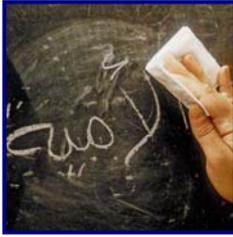
Goal 3: Gender Equality and the empowerment of Women

The three dimensions of goal three

Recommendations: How to mainstream a gender perspective into goal two

Recommendations: How to define the dimensions of goal three

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Goal 2: Gender and Education

Achieve Universal Primary Education

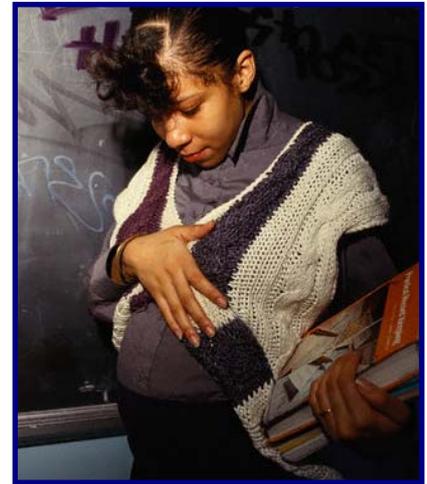
- Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

Gender discrimination inside the household and unequal distribution of household chores such as cleaning and cooking, in addition to agricultural work; exhaust young girls and force them to quit school. Furthermore, in countries experiencing economic crisis or undergoing macro-economic policy adjustment, cuts in education budgets increase the cost of schooling in such cases, most families prefer to invest in the education of their sons rather than their daughters.

Other gender concerns relating to girls education include lack of safety, –especially in conflict zones-, exposure to sexual harassment, distance, and lack of physical infrastructure. The classic example of lack of amenities in education facilities, include the lack of separate toilets forcing many girls in the developing world to stay out of school.

In sum, meeting the educational goal requires addressing the specific obstacles that girls and boys face in accessing education. Gender sensitive approaches are therefore necessary for achieving universal primary education which includes both an analysis and recognition of the nature of the gender gap in schooling.¹

Making reporting to goal two more gender responsive can be accomplished by providing sex-disaggregated data, identifying and listing the main barriers that restrict girls' education at the national level, and then collecting data on these specific issues.



Pregnant Teenager at School



Girls Collecting Water

Displaced with her family in northern Iraq, a girl dreams of education



Sheelan, 14, has never gone to school. Neither have any of her seven older sisters. Her family is Kurdish and has been displaced for two decades, ever since the Iran-Iraq War.

Despite the efforts of UNICEF and other humanitarian aid organizations, many displaced young Iraqis like Sheelan (not her real name) are suffering from a lack of basic services such as safe water, health care and education.

Sheelan's sisters were all married by the age of 12. Because she is the youngest and is coming of age in a different time, Sheelan has not had to marry early.

"I don't have a future," she lamented. "I can't write and I can't read. But if I had the opportunity to read and write and be a student, I would want to learn to be a teacher – to teach the next generation. I would like to send my children to school, even in wartime and in difficult times."

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_39088.html



Goal 3: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

The three dimensions of Goal three

Gender experts and United Nations agencies including UNIFEM and UNDP often use the “capabilities, opportunities, and security” approach when referring to goal three on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

- Capabilities are defined as access to basic rights such as nutrition, education, and health. These rights are perceived as basic stepping stones that would permit women to access other forms of rights.
- Opportunities refer to equality in access to economic and political resources, such as employment, land, and political representation. For instance, even if women’s capabilities are enhanced and they do acquire an education, they will not be able to take full advantage of that skill, if they do not have equal access to employment.
- The third component of this gender sensitive approach is related to human security because women are most prone to violence, abuse and rape especially during times of conflict. Violence can result in both physical and psychological injuries that could reinforce women’s subordinate position and cripple their ability to reach social, economic, and political empowerment. Therefore, reducing gender imbalances and reaching gender equality necessitates three elements: freedom from violence, equal capabilities and equal opportunities.



Centers for the Eradication of Illiteracy among Women. Cairo, Egypt -2005.



Gaza - Palestinian Elections



Women Working in a Confectionery Plant

As mentioned in our previous issue on the MDGs, the indicators of goal three do not capture the essence of gender inequality and are not sufficient to measure the gender gap in both the private and public spheres.

Since 2001, there have been many attempts made to propose new indicators and to shed light on the different challenges to the attainment of goal three. These include referring to legal barriers to equality (unequal access to resources, land, loans, the issue of wage gaps and income differentials), violence against women and how to measure it, and attitudinal barriers such as stereotypes and discriminative practices.

Many indicators were proposed to better measure progress achieved towards the attainment of goal three. States, however, need to “localize and

contextualize targets and indicators” to ensure that they capture the needs and priorities of women at the national level.²

Furthermore, qualitative data needs to be collected and presented in the MDGR. Instead of measuring for instance the share of women in national parliament, there is a need to examine the efficiency of their political representation i.e. whether these women are able to lobby or have a say in drafting new bills favorable to women, and amending gender discriminative laws. Although harder to compile, these qualitative indicators capture better the true reality of women vis a vis gender equality.

2 En route to Equality: A Gender Review of National MDG Reports, 2005. UNDP

Recommendations:

How to mainstream a gender perspective into goal two

- Analyze and recognize the nature of the gender gap in schooling.³
- Provide sex-disaggregated data
- Identify and list the main barriers that restrict girls’ education at the national level, and then collect data on these specific issues.

³ Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals. The World Bank Gender and Development Group
April 2003

Recommendations:

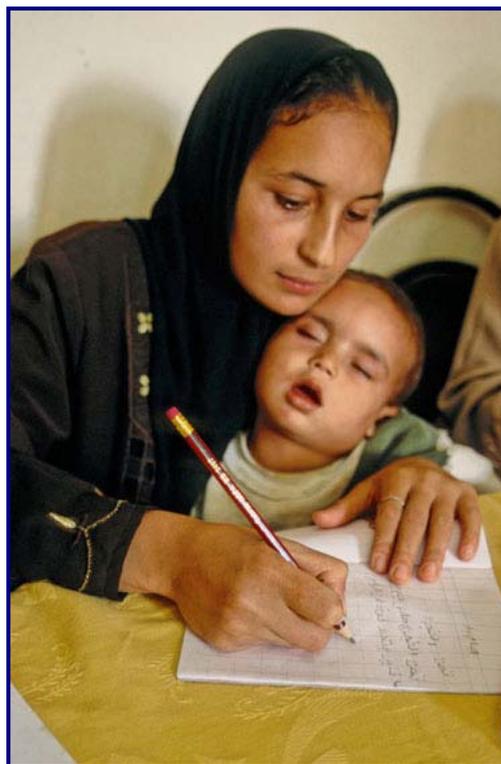
How to define the dimensions of goal three

- Use the “capabilities, opportunities, and security” approach
- Localize and “contextualize targets and indicators” to ensure that they capture the needs and priorities of women at the national level⁴
- Collect and Present qualitative data in the MDGR.

⁴ En Route to Equality: A gender Review of National MDG Reports, 2005. UNDP



Lessons at a Health Clinic in Morocco



Centers for the Eradication of Illiteracy among Women.

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.escwa.org.lb

About Our Organization...

The ESCWA Centre for Women was established on October 1, 2003, following the Commission's adoption of Resolution 240(XXII). This resolution, recognizing that a fundamental part of development is the empowerment of women, called for the creation of a Committee on Women comprising the member countries, and for the establishment of a women's Centre at ESCWA. The Centre continues and expands on the work carried out by the Women Empowerment and Gender Mainstreaming Team, formerly a part of the Social Development Division at ESCWA.

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