

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – WOMEN AND GIRLS FRONT AND CENTRE BEYOND 2015

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“There can be no peace, no progress as long as there is discrimination and violence against women.”

– Michelle Bachelet, UN Women Executive Director, 15 March 2013

The world is a long way from achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment – goal three of the globally agreed Millennium Development Goals. Although there has been progress in some areas such as girls’ access to primary education and women’s economic empowerment, the level of achievement has been uneven across regions and within countries. There is no chance of making poverty history without significant and rapid improvements to the lives of women and girls in all countries.

MDG 3 signalled a global recognition that women’s rights, empowerment and leadership are essential for achieving all the MDGs. Even though the targets and indicators for MDG 3 were not perfect, having gender equality and women’s empowerment as one of only eight goals was a powerful stimulus for action by governments and donors.

There is no single country in the world where women have achieved full equality with men. That in itself should be enough to underscore the need to keep a strong focus on gender equality and women’s rights in the development agenda beyond 2015 by:

- Retaining a strong and standalone goal on gender equality and women’s rights; and
- Including gender-specific targets and indicators in all other relevant development goals.

It is time to put women and girls front and centre and to back up political rhetoric with action. Increased investments in the following five policy areas will have catalytic effects on the lives of women and girls, and accelerate progress towards development goals beyond 2015:

- Keep girls in school to complete a quality secondary education
- Improve reproductive health, including access to family planning

- Increase women’s control over and ownership of assets
- Support women’s leadership and influence
- Stop violence against women and girls

These five priorities are interlinked and mutually reinforcing – closing the gender gap in one policy area will have a powerful impact on all others. The link between adolescent girls’ education and their sexual and reproductive health is the most compelling of all.

- One girl in nine marries before the age of 15. Almost 10% of girls become mothers by the age of 16, with the highest rates in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.
- Pregnancy and child birth are the biggest causes of death amongst adolescent girls. Girls under 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s.
- Early childbearing is closely associated with low education levels and poverty. Girls from poor households are three times more likely than better-off girls to give birth during adolescence.
- Half of sexual assaults worldwide are committed against girls under 16.
- Each minute one young woman becomes HIV positive. Young women aged 15-24 are two times more likely than young men to be infected with HIV, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Women’s limited control over sexual and reproductive decisions, violence against women, and increased HIV rates amongst women are strongly correlated.

Increased investments are needed so that girls complete a quality secondary education; make a successful transition from school to work; and, become empowered to assert their rights to a healthy sexuality and to a life free from violence. This would make a difference to achieving development results. **Countries know what to do. It is time to do it now.**

1. KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL

- Girls and female adolescents from poor and rural households are more likely to be out of school.
- Girls and boys have similar chances of completing primary education in all regions except for Sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia. In Sub-Saharan Africa, boys are more likely than girls to complete primary education in 25 out of 43 countries with available data.¹
- Only 68% of donor aid to basic education in Sub-Saharan Africa targeted gender equality objectives despite very high gender inequality in primary school enrolment in 2009-10.²
- Girls' school enrolment in secondary education remained low in Sub-Saharan Africa (79 girls per 100 boys), the Middle East (86 girls per 100 boys) and Oceania (88 girls per 100 boys) in 2009-10.
- Only 63 girls per 100 boys were enrolled in tertiary level education in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2009-10.
- An increased number of children are completing primary school without becoming literate. In Ghana, over half of women and over one-third of men aged 15-29 who had completed six years of school could not read a sentence at all in 2008.³

Parity in access to schooling (the target for MDG 3) is only the first step towards gender equality in education. Despite significant global progress, gender parity in primary education has not been achieved in 68 countries. Gender inequalities also persist within regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania. Global averages tend to mask the influence of intersecting factors such as gender, wealth and location on chances of getting an education within a country. For example, both girls and boys from rich households in Addis Ababa go to school. However, in

the poorest households of the Somali region of Ethiopia, there is a wide gender gap – 63% of girls have never been to school compared to 47% of boys.⁴

School attendance, completion rates, and the quality of education are all essential.

Even though secondary and higher levels of education have the greatest payoff for women's empowerment, the world is still far from reaching parity between girls and boys in enrolment and completion rates. Studies have shown that an additional year of schooling for girls and women leads them to:

- higher wages, better economic prospects and increased access to credit
- make informed choices about their lives, marry at a later age, have fewer and healthier children, and ensure that their own children go to school
- seek sexual, reproductive and maternal health care and advice, reducing the likelihood of HIV/AIDS infection and child mortality rates
- increased bargaining power and decision-making autonomy within the household

Effective measures to ensure that girls are kept in school to complete a quality secondary education include: removing school fees; providing targeted financial incentives for girls to attend and complete school; improving the quality and relevance of education; building secondary schools closer to remote communities; equipping schools with trained teachers and adequate sanitary facilities; and, ensuring that schools are safe places for girls. In Egypt, Indonesia and several African countries, building local schools in rural communities increased girls' school enrolment.⁵

1. United Nations (2012). *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012*.

2. OECD (2013). *Aid in support of gender equality in education and health*.

3. UNESCO (2012). *Education For All Global Monitoring Report*.

4 UNESCO (2012). *World Inequality Database on Education*.

5. UN Women (2012). *CSW56 – Facts and Figures on Rural Women*.

2. IMPROVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, INCLUDING ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to increasing women's opportunities; not only for responsible decision-making on reproductive matters, but also for finishing their education and breaking out of poverty. Lack of access to basic health services and information, combined with laws and practices which limit women's ability to control their sexuality, severely compromise their autonomy, equality and health, as well as their children's health.

MDG 5 – *improving maternal health* – remains the most off-track MDG in 2013. Maternal mortality is alarmingly high. About 800 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. According to the World Health Organisation, 99% of all maternal deaths occur in developing countries, with more than half of these deaths taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa and almost one-third in South Asia. In Ghana, complications from pregnancy and during delivery are the leading cause of death amongst girls aged 15-19. This concentration of maternal deaths in certain areas of the world reflects inequalities in access to health services and highlights the gap between the rich and the poor. Skilled care before, during, and after childbirth can save the lives of women and future generations. Children whose mothers die in childbirth are much less likely to survive themselves.

Improving maternal health

Tanzania has reinforced its emergency obstetric care by training more assistants and midwives, building more clinics and nursing schools, and offering housing to attract health workers to rural areas. These types of intervention have made Tanzania “*an example of how, by investing in the health of women and children, we can achieve great results for us all.*”⁶ Other global efforts such as the Canadian-led Muskoka Initiative (\$7.3 billion) and the United Nations Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health (\$40 billion) have been critical in rallying political support for and investments in better health for the world's poorest women and girls.

Access to sexual and reproductive health, rights, services and information:

- helps prevent maternal and child mortality
- allows women to plan their families
- enables women and girls to delay or space childbearing to increase their educational, training and employment opportunities
- helps reduce vulnerability to HIV and AIDS

Bilateral aid flows to reproductive health care remained relatively low in 2009-10.⁷ Health services are not working for women in the poorest countries. Nevertheless, some positive steps have been taken by 37 governments as part of the African Union Commission's Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa. All of these countries face similar challenges in terms of shortages of skilled health workers, drugs, equipment, poor infrastructure and limited financial resources. By 2013, half of them have strengthened their health systems, developed a monitoring and evaluation system, or integrated HIV, reproductive health and family planning services.⁸

Increase financial support for voluntary family planning services

Donor funding for family planning has declined since the mid-1990s as a share of aid to population policies and programmes, leaving 222 million women of reproductive age without modern contraception in developing countries in 2012.⁹ This unmet need for voluntary family planning persists across all regions, but is particularly felt by those who have least access to contraceptive services – poor, less educated and rural women. In the 69 poorest countries, the number of women with an unmet need has increased from 153 million in 2008 to 162 million in 2012.

6. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (2 October 2012). *Press Conference on Maternal Health in United Republic of Tanzania*. Accessed on 3/3/2013. <http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2012/121002_Maternal.doc.htm>

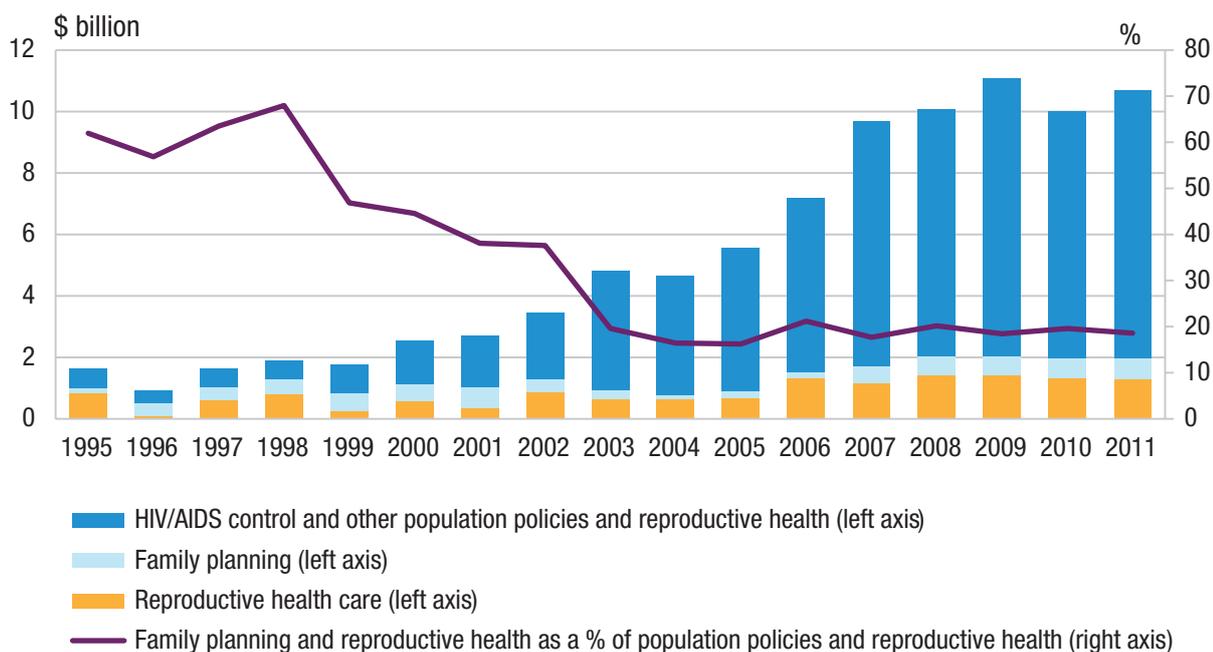
7. OECD (2013). *Aid in support of gender equality in education and health*.

8. African Union Commission and UNFPA (2013). *Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) Report 2013*.

9. Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA (2012). *Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Contraceptive Services – Estimates for 2012*.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that current funding (\$4.0 billion in 2012) for modern contraceptive services in developing countries would need to go up to \$8.1 billion per year in order to fully address the existing unmet need. The additional investment of \$4.1 billion would save around \$5.7 billion in maternal and infant health service costs.

BILATERAL ODA AND MULTILATERAL OUTFLOWS TO POPULATION POLICIES/PROGRAMMES AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, 1995-2011
Commitments, \$ billion, constant 2011 prices



Investing in and strengthening family planning services and programmes improves maternal and child health, reduces poverty, empowers women and men to determine the size of their families and increases participation in the labour market. But this will require increased funding and political commitment from both governments and donors.

Contraceptive use increased in the 1990s, but since then progress has stalled in the poorest regions of the world, where the use of modern contraceptives remained extremely low throughout the past decade. Among the 17 least developed countries with the lowest levels of modern contraceptive use, all except one are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- Addressing the unmet need for family planning worldwide would prevent 54 million unintended pregnancies, 26 million abortions, 21 million unplanned births, 7 million miscarriages and 79 000 pregnancy-related deaths.

- For every dollar spent on providing modern contraception, \$1.40 would be saved in medical care costs.
- Satisfying the unmet need for contraceptive services would also have a significant impact on child mortality. As many as 13% of under 5 deaths in developing countries could be avoided by increasing the spacing between births by at least two years.
- Family planning reduces fertility rates and is a powerful tool for combating poverty. A 1999 study of 59 countries estimated that if the birth rate had decreased by five per 1000 population in the 1980s, the proportion of people living in poverty would have fallen by a third.

3. INCREASE WOMEN'S CONTROL OVER AND OWNERSHIP OF ASSETS

Women's ownership of and access to assets, resources and services – land, housing, income, employment, water, technology, credit, markets, banking and financial services – are critical to their empowerment, rights and wellbeing, as well as that of their families and societies. Women's economic empowerment is a driver of development that addresses poverty; reduces inequalities; and improves children's health, nutrition, and school attendance. Compared to men, women save more and invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities. Making it possible for women to control capital and unleash their potential as workers, business leaders and entrepreneurs will have multiplier effects, leading to higher economic growth, sustainable development and a fairer world for all.

Globally and across sectors, women face more severe constraints (formal or informal) than men in accessing productive resources, financial services, investment opportunities and credit. Women perform two-thirds of the world's work and produce more than half of the world's food, yet they earn only 10% of the world's income and own less than 2% of land worldwide. Although women constitute half of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, they continue to have less access to land, fertilisers, seeds, credit and extension services than men. More equitable access to these resources would promote shared economic growth, reduce poverty, lift 150 million people out of hunger and raise total agricultural output by 2.5 to 4%.¹⁰

Productive employment and decent work are the main routes out of poverty for both women and men. The gender gap in earnings remains one of the most pervasive forms of inequality between women and men, including in developed countries. Today 4 out of 10 workers worldwide are women, but the average woman earns only 20% of a man's wage in countries as diverse as Ivory Coast, Jordan, Latvia and the Slovak Republic, and only 60% in Germany.¹¹ Around two-thirds of employed women in developing countries are in vulnerable jobs, as own-account or unpaid family workers, as casual or seasonal agricultural labourers, as workers in urban factories and workshops or as domestic servants.

Interventions need to vary according to countries' differing development needs. In low-income countries, women's access to basic agricultural inputs and microfinance will continue to be needed, whilst in transition countries,

the focus needs to be on labour market skills, access to commercial credit and women's entrepreneurship. Women run the majority of micro, small, and medium enterprises worldwide – the percentage of female ownership declines with increased firm size. In both developed and developing countries, female-owned firms tend to operate in a restricted number of sectors, populated by smaller firms and characterised by low value added and low growth potential. It is important that women can access the full range of credit, banking, financial and other business services beyond microfinance to develop strong and viable enterprises. In the East Asia and Pacific region, output per worker could be 7-18% higher if female entrepreneurs and workers were in the same sectors, types of jobs and activities as men, and had the same access to productive resources.

Governments and donors need to take account of gender differences in labour market participation, ensure equality for women under the law, and provide services and technologies to free up women's time. There is scope for increasing donor investments in women's economic empowerment. Aid committed by DAC members to the economic and productive sectors had a marginal focus (17%) on gender equality and women's empowerment in 2009-10. Governments can also make further efforts to expand social protection coverage and provide vocational training opportunities and better working conditions for women and men in precarious jobs.

Ultimately, a country's success in empowering women will require integrating a gender equality perspective into public policy management, budgeting and implementation.

“When we liberate the economic potential of women, we elevate the economic performance of communities, nations, and the world.”

– Hillary Rodham Clinton,
U.S. Secretary of State¹²

10. FAO (2011). *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011*.

11. World Bank (2012). *Update on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Agenda at the World Bank Group*.

12. At the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Women and the Economy Summit, California, 16 September 2011.

4. SUPPORT WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

It is time to recognise women as leaders and agents of change in their families, communities and countries. Women leaders are transforming their communities at the grassroots level every day. They play a critical role as the nurturers, farmers and educators in the most remote and vulnerable parts of the world.

Women everywhere have aspirations to freedom, equality and justice. A recent World Bank study¹³ in 20 countries provides empirical evidence that women and girls almost universally aspire to take charge over their own lives. Key findings include:

- The main pathways for women's control over their own lives are education, employment and decreased risk of domestic violence.
- Women are actively seeking equal power and freedom, but must constantly negotiate and resist traditional expectations about what they are to do and who they are to be.
- When only a few women manage to break with established norms – without a critical mass – traditional norms are not contested and may instead be reinforced.

Increasing women's voice and participation in all levels of political decision-making is essential for advancing issues of importance to women on national and local agendas. This will benefit both women and men. A study of women elected to local government in India found that female leadership positively affected the provision of services for both men and women. Women's participation in politics also improves the quality of governance and leads to more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic societies. Yet, women accounted for only 19.7% of the world's legislators in 2012.

“Women's participation in our economic, social and political life must become an integral part of our development agenda. Unless we act intentionally to reduce inequity within and between our societies, we will not be able to eradicate poverty. We must therefore work to increase the pace at which gender-related MDGs form the integral core of our development agenda.”

– H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, 13 November 2012¹⁵

This is a significant increase since the mid-1990s but is still far from the 30% target of the 1995 UN's Women's Conference in Beijing. At this pace, it will take nearly forty years to reach gender parity in the world's national legislatures.

Special measures such as gender quotas are one means of supporting women's leadership in politics. Of the 22 countries where women constitute more than 30% of the national legislature, 18 have some form of quota for addressing gender gaps.¹⁴ The presence of a strong women's movement can make a difference in increasing women's political representation. Supporting women's organisations and activism at all levels is essential.

5. STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women and girls is a universal phenomenon, with roots in persistent discrimination against women and historically unequal power relations between women and men. Violence against women and girls is a scourge in all cultures, countries, regions and across generations. It impoverishes and harms women, their entire families and society as a whole. Sexual violence against women and girls is particularly widespread in conflict situations. Rape has been used as a “weapon of war” in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Colombia and Democratic Republic of Congo.

- 7 in 10 women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime — mostly from their husbands, intimate partners or someone they know.
- Globally, girls are about three times more likely than boys to suffer sexual violence.
- 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not yet considered a crime.

13. World Bank (2012). *On Norms and Agency. Conversations about Gender Equality with Women and Men in 20 Countries.*

14. UN Women (2012). *CSW56 – Facts and Figures on Rural Women.*

15. Opening remarks at the 16th Mid-Term Review Meeting of the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank Group in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

- 1 in 4 women experience physical or sexual violence during pregnancy.
- 100 to 140 million women and girls in the world have endured female genital mutilation.
- Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18.
- 2 million women are trafficked each year into prostitution, forced labour, slavery or servitude.
- At least 200 000 cases of sexual violence against women and girls have been documented in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1996.
- Violence causes more death and disability amongst women aged 15-44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined.

“Violence against women is a heinous human rights violation, global menace, a public health threat and a moral outrage. No matter where she lives, no matter what her culture, no matter what her society, every woman and girl is entitled to live free of fear.”

– Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, 15 March 2013

Most governments recognise violence against women as a global health concern and violation of human rights. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has set out the obligations of States to take appropriate measures to overcome all forms of violence against women. In 1992, the Committee stated that the definition of discrimination, as set out by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), includes “*gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. Gender-based violence may breach specific provisions of the Convention, regardless of whether those provisions expressly mention violence.*”¹⁶

In April 2013, the Ministers of the Group of Eight (G8) endorsed a declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict and called for urgent action to address comprehensively the culture of impunity and to hold perpetrators accountable for acts of sexual violence committed in armed conflict.

The persistent prevalence of violence against women and girls shows that promises to end violence against women have not been met. It is time for concrete action to eradicate violence against women and girls. Women’s economic empowerment can improve women’s decision-making in the household and is one way of tackling domestic violence, as illustrated in the side box.

Further efforts are needed to prevent violence against women from happening. Building peaceful and sustainable

states will require the inclusion of women and the recognition of their key role in peace and security negotiations. Men and boys are key partners in preventing, challenging and shifting attitudes on violence against women and girls. Gathering data to track resources and progress on the fight against violence directed at women and girls is crucial to the eradication of this global problem.

The Agreed Conclusions of the 2013 UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls strongly recommended that gender equality and the empowerment of women be a priority in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

The IMAGE programme in South Africa combines group-based microfinance with a 12-month gender and HIV training curriculum delivered to women at fortnightly loan repayment meetings. The evaluation found that the intervention led to women having greater autonomy in decision-making and a 55% reduction in physical and/or sexual violence.¹⁷

16. CEDAW. *General Recommendation No. 19*. Eleventh session, 1992.

17. OECD (2013). *Transforming social institutions to prevent violence against women and girls and improve development outcomes*.

KEY ACTIONS NOW!

- **It is time to put women and girls front and centre and move beyond empty promises. Making the world a better place for women will make a better world for all.**
- It is time to **act – not just talk**. Gender equality and women's rights are essential to achieving the unfinished business of the MDGs. **Gender equality and women's rights need to be central to the post-2015 development agenda.**
- It is time to **confront and overcome the cultural and social norms** which hold back women and girls. Whilst women and girls continue to face discrimination on the basis of their sex, many also face additional barriers to their development through social exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity, race and caste.
- It is time to **increase targeted investments in women's and girls' rights**. Investments need to focus on those areas which have proven to have a catalytic impact on poverty, development, inequalities and future generations: girls' secondary education, family planning, women's economic empowerment, women's leadership and violence against women and girls.
- It is time to **track the proportion and coverage of all aid** focussed on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender equality is one of the main themes of the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) for the periods of 2011-14 and 2014-17. This can help to multiply resources available for women's empowerment and the achievement of development goals beyond 2015 in the poorest countries.
- It is time to **use the evidence about what works so that development becomes more effective**. It is important to improve countries' capacities to collect **sex-disaggregated data** to track and report progress, gaps and opportunities. At the same time, it is key to use the data which are already available. We have failed to act on what we know. The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative represents a positive effort to build statistical capacity in partner countries and improve the availability of statistics that capture gender gaps in economic activity.