



Pathway to Gender Equality

CEDAW,
Beijing
and the
MDGs



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development



Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH





UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security. UNIFEM works in partnership with UN organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and networks to promote gender equality. It links women's issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment strategies.



Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH

commissioned by:



This publication has been developed in cooperation and with support of the GTZ sector project "Strengthening Women's Rights" on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Written by Lee Waldorf, with research by Shelley Inglis

Acknowledgements:

A number of individuals have provided suggestions and support that have greatly assisted in the development of this publication, and we would particularly like to thank Barbara Adams, Carol Barton, Mara Bustelo, Nanette Braun, Noeleen Heyzer, Chandni Joshi, Osnat Lubrani, Zina Mounla, Juliane Osterhaus, Leigh Pasqual, Joanne Sandler, Hanna Beate Schoepp-Schilling and Damira Sartbaeva for their contributions.

Pathway to Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs
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ISBN: 1-932827-17-X

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COVER: FLOWER GROWER NEAR PALOMAR, BOLIVIA. PHOTO BY AIZAR RADES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Preface

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have opened a new door for the advancement of gender equality.

Used to their best potential, they can be the means by which the insidious link between gender inequalities, the waste and destruction of women's human potential, and the seemingly endless reproduction of poverty is brought into sharp focus, and finally overcome. As the Millennium Declaration has recognized, meaningful and sustainable reductions in poverty levels depend on our willingness to confront the reality that half of the world's population, girls and women, have been systematically subordinated and disadvantaged. And on our unflagging commitment to taking the concrete steps needed to eliminate this inequality.

Because the MDGs have become the centerpiece of a common agenda embraced by all development partners, including the development assistance community, they are positioned to be a genuinely effective engine for change. But even more important than the fact of this convergence of development agendas is the emerging consensus that efforts to achieve the MDGs must at all times be infused by the vision set out in the Millennium Declaration. While the MDGs set out very concrete, time-bound and measurable goals, targets and indicators for poverty reduction, they can only provide us with the broad strokes and outlines of the work that must be undertaken. The Millennium Declaration is and must remain our guide for bringing the MDGs to real life

– and what the Declaration tells us is that efforts to implement the commitments declared in world conferences and made international law through human rights standards must be enhanced to unprecedented levels.

The Millennium Declaration also directs us towards the urgent need for holistic and integrated approaches to poverty reduction. Certain concerns – such as promoting gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS and developing a global partnership for development – are so critical that they have been treated as Goals in their own right. But this should not distract attention from the need to attend to these dimensions in every initiative aimed at achiev-



NOELEEN HEYZER
Executive Director, UNIFEM



HEIDEMARIE WICZOREK-ZEUL
Federal Minister for Economic
Cooperation and Development

ing the MDGs. The HIV/AIDS pandemic seriously threatens the attainment of all of the other Goals. If development cooperation is not determinedly aligned to support the achievement of all of the MDGs, efforts at the national level may be in vain. And, as this booklet details in particular, gender inequalities are closely intertwined with every development challenge the MDGs are attempting to address.

As this booklet also underlines, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women must be our touchstones for realizing the potential held out by the MDGs. The wealth of understanding and experience of the nature of gender based discrimination and the steps needed to achieve gender equality that has been generated through the CEDAW and Beijing processes stands waiting to be tapped. By using CEDAW and Beijing as the lens through which the MDGs are understood and implemented, principled conviction and development effectiveness can be brought together in a powerful way.

The vision articulated in the Millennium Declaration is one that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) fully share. BMZ gives high importance to the realization of women's human right as a development goal in its own right, and as an essential means of achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development. UNIFEM has embraced the realization of women's human right to gender equality as the overarching framework and as the ultimate goal of all sectors of its work – from economic empowerment, to peace building, to combating the pandemics of HIV/AIDS and violence against women. UNIFEM and BMZ hope that this resource tool will be an important contribution to the work that we, in alliance with gender equality advocates around the world, are undertaking to make the promise of the Millennium Declaration a reality.

Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul

RIGHT: PHOTO BY AIZAR RALDES-AFF/GETTY IMAGES



Women activists at a rally
in Islamabad, Pakistan on
International Labour Day.

A Millennium Gender Equality Agenda

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were born from the **Millennium Declaration** – an unprecedented global consensus reached in the year 2000 by 189 Member States of the United Nations. In the Declaration these nations together undertook to advance a global vision for improving the condition of humanity throughout the world in the areas of development and poverty eradication, peace and security, protection of the environment, and human rights and democracy.

The absolute necessity of advancing the human rights of all people in order to achieve this vision is underscored by the Declaration. In particular, the advancement of women's right to gender equality is recognized as critically necessary for progress. The Declaration pledges explicitly "to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)". And it further recognizes the importance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as an effective pathway for combating poverty, hunger and disease and for stimulating truly sustainable development.

At the same time, the Millennium Declaration reconfirms the central role of gender equality from the perspective of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) and other major world conferences such as the Rio Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the Vienna Conference on Human Rights (1993), the Cairo Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Istanbul Conference on Human Settlements (1996). These world conferences organized by the UN in the 1990s provided the impetus for the international community to come together at the Millennium Summit in 2000 to agree on steps needed to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development, and the Millennium Declaration renewed the commitments made by all Member States at these conferences.

PHOTO BY FAROOQ NAEEM--AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Eight of the key commitments set out in the Millennium Declaration came to form the **Millennium Development Goals**:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

The MDGs are accompanied by 16 global targets and 48 global indicators. The Goals, targets and indicators are meant to work together to stimulate swift and effective action to achieve the development and poverty eradication aims of the Declaration. The targets and indicators were created to provide concrete measurements of the extent to which countries are making progress towards achieving the Goals, and this progress is being assessed on a regular basis at the country level through national MDG reports.

Achieving the MDGs has become a high priority for all development partners – national governments, the UN system and international financial institutions alike. The fact that the need to address gender inequality has been emphasized by the Millennium Declaration, and that there is both an explicit gender equality Goal in the MDGs and recognition that gender equality is important for achieving all of the Goals, would suggest that the MDGs provide a valuable opportunity for advancing the gender equality agenda.

However, many women's human rights advocates have noted that gender equality, as a cross-cutting concern for the achievement of all the MDGs, is not well-reflected in the global targets and indicators.¹ There is concern that the more far-reaching obligations and commitments embodied in CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and other globally and regionally agreed documents have been poorly represented. But advocates are taking up this challenge by calling for the inclusion of a broader range of gender-sensitive targets and indicators at the national level. And more importantly – beyond the questions of measurement and reporting – it is clear that the actual strategies that will be adopted to achieve the MDGs must incorporate strong gender equality initiatives if they are to be successful. As the 2003 Human Development Report has stressed, "gender equality is at the core of whether the Goals will be achieved – from improving health and fighting disease, to reducing poverty and mitigating

hunger, to expanding education and lowering child mortality, to increasing access to safe water, to ensuring environmental sustainability".²

There is a place secured for combating gender inequality in the MDGs, but within its broad global framework gender equality concerns appear in a very simplified form. Will the MDGs send the international community backwards in its understanding of the complex issues that must be confronted? Gender equality advocates have laboured tirelessly to ensure that obligations and commitments under CEDAW and Beijing are fulfilled, and the results are now evident in the form of gender sensitive laws, constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, policies, government structures and resource allocations. Will the MDGs distract attention and commitment away from the gender equality processes we have worked for so long to make effective?

The opportunity provided by the MDGs can be embraced – without lowering the existing standard of gender equality analysis and strategies and without weakening recognition of established global gender equality processes – if we keep true to the spirit of the Millennium Declaration. Efforts to achieve the MDGs must be guided not only by the global goals, targets and indicators but also, most crucially, by the Declaration's recognition of the central importance of gender equality to all progress in development.

The approach this publication therefore proposes is one in which the MDGs are treated not as a brand new agenda but as a new vehicle for **CEDAW and Beijing implementation**. There is much to be gained by approaching CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs as mutually supporting processes. Comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the ways in which gender inequality operates in every dimension of women's lives has already been generated through CEDAW and Beijing, and it is available to inform work on the MDGs. Many effective strategies for achieving gender equality have been developed over the past several decades through efforts to implement CEDAW and Beijing, and these proven approaches can be up-scaled and utilized in strategies to achieve the MDGs. And this is not just a question of what CEDAW and Beijing can do for the MDGs. If the commitment and resources that are currently being mobilized to achieve the MDGs can be harnessed to support the actions we already know clearly need to be taken by virtue of CEDAW and Beijing, progress in their implementation will also be taken to the next level.

The Millennium Declaration can, if we choose, be taken at its word.

¹ WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE, 2004.

² UNDP, 2003.

NATIONAL MDG REPORTING

The National MDG report maps out the priorities and approaches a country will adopt for achieving each of the Millennium Development Goals. A large percentage of the countries that have undertaken to achieve the MDGs are currently in the midst of preparing, or are beginning to prepare, these reports. This process not only provides the opportunity for the global MDG framework to be fine-tuned to individual country circumstances but, as part of this effort, for the gender equality dimensions of each Goal to be given proper attention.

As will be detailed in part 2, the gender equality issues that arise under each of the MDGs are integrally connected to CEDAW and Beijing – what gender equality means, and what is required to achieve it, doesn't change from framework to framework. This is a great advantage when engaging with the MDGs, as the decades of work that gender equality advocates have committed to CEDAW and Beijing can be applied directly. Some key steps include the following:

■ Bring CEDAW and Beijing advocates to the table

The development of a national MDG report should involve broad consultation with relevant sectors across society. The search for gender equality experts to provide input into the report should begin with CEDAW and Beijing. Across various government sectors and within civil society there will be groups of individuals who have been actively involved in implementing and monitoring CEDAW and putting Beijing national plans of action into effect.

■ Draw on CEDAW and Beijing for situation analysis

For each of the MDGs, the report begins with a situation analysis that assesses the extent to which the Goal has already been achieved and the further challenges posed. Much of the information regarding gender equality concerns does not need to be generated or collected afresh, because it is already readily available in government and NGO reports that have been submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (as well as in those that may be in preparation at the time the MDG report is being drafted). In addition, surveys and reports concerning the state of gender equality at the national level have been prepared for Beijing +5 and Beijing +10. All of these reports contain a wealth of detailed qualitative and statistical information about gender inequalities in the country.

*Mothers and children
attend a mobile health
clinic in Zambia.*

■ Frame national indicators that respond to CEDAW and Beijing priorities

The global targets and indicators are perhaps the weakest aspect of the MDG framework from a gender equality perspective and can certainly be improved upon. They can be adjusted and

expanded to suit national contexts in the MDG reports. Any gender equality indicators that have already been developed to support Beijing and CEDAW implementation are helpful resources. Also, when developing new indicators, Beijing and CEDAW requirements are good guides to ensure that these are properly designed to measure progress in achieving gender equality.

■ Improve statistical capacity on gender equality issues

The MDGs rely heavily on the use of statistical data. The targets and indicators are all intended to be statistically measurable, using data that is comparable across countries and regions. As in many cases statistical data on critical gender equality issues are currently lacking, national efforts to achieve the MDGs provide the opportunity for improving capacity in these areas. The availability of new and improved data will in turn support all advocacy efforts to advance gender equality in the country.

■ Identify appropriate implementation measures

CEDAW and Beijing can be drawn on to identify the actions most needed in each area in different country contexts under each Goal. In many countries the Beijing strategic objectives have been supplemented by national actions plans and reviews conducted for Beijing +5 and Beijing +10. Under CEDAW there are not only the obligations that all governments are legally bound to fulfil, but the steps that should be taken at country level to meet the Convention's requirements have also been set out in the CEDAW Committee's concluding comments. In addition, the Committee has provided very detailed guidance on many key issues – such as violence against women, health care and political participation – in its General Recommendations. All of these sources can be drawn on for authoritative guidance on specific gender equality measures that could be implemented to achieve each of the Goals.

Strategic Entry Points: Putting the MDGs to Work for Gender Equality

MONITORING: KEEPING THE SPOTLIGHT ON GENDER EQUALITY

The drafting of national MDG reports is the first step in initiating a monitoring process to ensure that the MDGs are achieved, and these reports will be subjected to periodic review and updating. However, the fact that there are also two other well-established and ongoing monitoring processes for commitments to gender quality, which will continue to operate during the period of achieving the MDGs and beyond, provides a powerful additional strategic opportunity. Using the CEDAW and Beijing monitoring and review processes to draw attention to progress, obstacles and failures to implement the necessary gender equality measures under the MDGs can help to ensure that national and international commitment to the gender dimensions of the MDGs does not wane.

■ The CEDAW Sessions

The States that are party to the Convention – 179 as of October 2004 – must report to the CEDAW Committee every four years. During its twice-yearly sessions, the Committee applies its expertise to review the reporting government's own assessment of progress and challenges in achieving gender equality, in light also of the alternate information ('shadow reports') about the country situation submitted by women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Following this review, which includes a dialogue with the government, the Committee issues concluding comments, identifying where the greatest shortcomings lie and what forms of action the government should consider taking.

CEDAW requires the elimination of discrimination in all aspects of women's lives to achieve gender equality. The gender equality initiatives a government has – and has not – undertaken to achieve the MDGs, as well as the extent to which these have been supported with the institutional and financial resources necessary to make them effective, are therefore relevant considerations for the Committee. When reporting on their progress in implementing the Convention, States should include information on the new measures that have been introduced in the context of the MDGs. And women's NGOs can bring both successes and difficulties to the Committee's attention. Where the Committee provides advice for improving gender equality initiatives undertaken through the MDGs, this guidance can be brought back to the MDG review process.

■ Beijing +10

Beijing +10, to be held as the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (28 February-11 March 2005), will provide the opportunity for a gender equality stocktaking by high-level gov-

ernment policy makers. It will involve a review of progress in achieving the commitments made related to Beijing and the identification of current challenges and appropriate forward-looking strategies. In preparation, each government will have produced a self-assessment of its progress, based on a standard questionnaire, and civil society organizations also have the opportunity to provide alternative information on progress and obstacles. The information on country-level progress that is provided will be consolidated into a global report that will be issued by the UN Secretary General.

These assessments of progress and challenges, as well as the outcomes of the regional Beijing +10 preparatory meetings, will inform the recommendations that will be agreed upon by government delegates. The Beijing +10 recommendations will, in turn, be brought to the Millennium Summit +5 (to be held in September 2005) to inform deliberations on paths forward to achieve the MDGs.

Beijing +10 provides an opportunity to strengthen and focus the gender equality dimensions of efforts to achieve the MDGs. Information on the adequacy of existing plans to advance gender equality through the MDGs, and proposals for more effective measures, need to be brought to the government representatives' attention. Strong gender equality recommendations from Beijing +10 and the Millennium Summit will be powerful tools for use at the national level to stimulate greater action on gender quality.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY

Efforts to achieve the MDGs will bring together a wide range of government sectors, development partners and civil society organizations. This provides an opportunity to improve coordination on gender equality concerns and raise them to new and higher policy levels. The MDGs will contribute to streamlining and strengthening monitoring and enhancing accountability for sectoral agencies and ministries in relation to specific targets and indicators. If gender equality considerations are successfully incorporated into efforts to achieve the Goals, the MDG process will help serve to mainstream gender in a broader range of national programmes and policies than may previously have been possible.

*Women collecting water from
an oasis near Jodhpur, India.*

Linking the Millennium Development Goals to CEDAW and Beijing

Gender equality is a cross-cutting concern for all of the MDGs, but its proper place still needs to be clearly articulated in targets, indicators and strategies to achieve the Goals at the national level. Fortunately, CEDAW and Beijing provide detailed guidance on the full range of relevant gender equality issues, and this can be used to fine-tune MDG agendas. The first step in making use of CEDAW and Beijing for this purpose is to identify the specific ways in which these three frameworks correspond and support each other. In what follows, a preliminary mapping of gender equality issues raised by each Goal, and the corresponding obligations and commitments under CEDAW and Beijing, is provided. Of course the priorities, challenges and most appropriate responses will vary from region to region and from country to country. The concluding comments of the CEDAW Committee for each country, and national plans of action and reviews conducted under Beijing, are important further references for linking CEDAW and Beijing to the MDGs in a way that reflects different country realities.

PHOTO BY JEREMY HORNER-PANOS PICTURES

*A rural vendor sells
vegetables at a market
in Shanghai.*

1 GOAL

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1
Reduce by half
the proportion of
people living on
less than a
dollar a day

Target 2
Reduce by half
the proportion of
people who suffer
from hunger

A major obstacle faced by countries trying to escape the poverty trap is a lack of the human skills and abilities needed to make the transition out of poverty, and gender inequality is one of the greatest contributors to this problem. The exclusion of many women from primary, secondary

and higher education, from the full benefits of health and social services, and from full labour force and market participation combine to severely limit their ability to develop the skills that are so desperately needed by their economies. As the Millennium Taskforce on poverty has noted, "one of the greatest barriers to human capital transition is the denial of basic human rights to a significant part of the population, and this applies broadly to women".³

Women's access to productive assets and resources is frequently limited. For example, a large majority of the world's poor farmers are women, but in many countries they do not have the legal rights to own either the land they till or assets that would enable them to invest in it. In addition, governments' failure or inability to provide adequate social infrastructures transfers a major care-giving labour burden to poor women and girls – and the 'time poverty' caused by

³ MILLENNIUM PROJECT TASK FORCE ON POVERTY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, 2004: 22.

PHOTO BY JIN LIU--AFP/GETTY IMAGES



the extension of their working day limits their chances of engaging in income-generating activities, participating in community affairs and obtaining an education. Poor women in both developed and developing countries can also be deeply affected by trade policies and practices, which have an impact on the way in which essential services are provided and on the demand of markets for labour, goods and services.

In relation to hunger and malnutrition in particular, it is important to recognize that economic growth alone will not provide a cure if unequal social conditions and exclusionary practices continue to deny women and girls equal access to food and health care. Ensuring women's economic autonomy and empowerment is critical to protecting both their own and their children's nutritional needs.

WHAT CEDAW AND BEIJING REQUIRE

Governments are obligated under CEDAW and committed under Beijing to take a range of measures to guarantee women's rights and access to economic resources that are critically necessary for poverty reduction. They must ensure gender equality in all aspects of employment. Laws, policies and administrative processes must guarantee that women have equal rights in relation to property, contracts and loans – in public economic life and also within the context of marriage and family life. Women must be provided with access to markets, credit and technology. Heightened attention must be paid to the situation of rural women, and in particular their equal rights to land ownership must be ensured, as well as adequate living conditions in relation to housing, sanitation and water supply.

PHOTO BY JIN LIU--AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CEDAW

- Eliminate discrimination against women to ensure the same rights for men and women in employment (article 11)
- In particular, ensure the same employment opportunities, free choice of profession, benefits and conditions of service, vocational training and equal pay for work of equal value (article 11.b, 11.c, 11.d)
- Ensure men and women equality before the law, and in particular the same legal rights and capacities relating to contracts and property (article 15)
- Ensure men and women equality in all areas of economic and social life, and in particular the same rights to bank loans and all forms of financial credit (article 13.b)
- Ensure equality between men and women in marriage and family life and, in particular, the same rights for both spouses regarding ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property (article 16.1.h)
- Ensure rural women equal treatment in land reform and access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities and technology (article 14.2.g)
- Ensure rural women enjoy adequate living conditions, especially in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, and transport and communications (article 14.2.h)

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

- Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources (strategic objective A.2)
- Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions (strategic objective A.3)
- Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty (strategic objective A.4)
- Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources (strategic objective F.1)
- Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade (strategic objective F.2)
- Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women (strategic objective F.3)
- Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks (strategic objective F.4)
- Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination (strategic objective F.5)
- Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men (strategic objective F.6)

Achieve universal primary education

Target 3
Ensure that all
boys and girls
complete a full
course of primary
schooling

The education Goal is intended to ensure that by the year 2015 all girls and boys complete primary education. While there has been a clear movement towards achieving gender equality in education over the past few decades, it remains out of reach globally – of the 150 million children aged 6-11 currently not in school, over 90 million are girls⁴— and in some regions girls' primary enrolment

remains below 60 per cent.

A wide range of economic, social and cultural barriers must be addressed to achieve gender equality in primary education, including demands for girls' labour at home and on farms, and both the reality and perception that as adults their employment and income-generating opportunities will be limited. And measures sensitive to the particular obstacles blocking girls' access to education need to be imple-

⁴ WORLD BANK GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP, 2003: 11.



mented. The reduction of the costs of schooling (such as school fees, and uniform and textbook costs) has been shown to have an especially beneficial effect on girls' school participation, along with addressing parental concerns about modesty and safety through training and hiring more female teachers and improving access to sanitary facilities. Girls' exposure to gender-based violence, both within school environments and while travelling to and from school, must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

WHAT CEDAW AND BEIJING REQUIRE

Governments are obligated under CEDAW and committed under Beijing to ensure gender equality at all levels of education – primary, secondary and university, as well as in technical training, continuing education and literacy programmes. This involves not only providing equality of opportunity to enter school, but also taking whatever measures are necessary to ensure that girls and women are supported to be able to complete their education on a basis of equality with boys and men. Governments must take the special obstacles that prevent girls and women from obtaining education into account and develop approaches to overcome them.

CEDAW

- Eliminate discrimination against women to ensure equal rights between men and women in education (article 10)
- In particular, ensure the same access to studies and achievement of diplomas at all levels of education, in rural as well as urban areas; access to the same standard of education; the elimination of stereotypes in education; the same opportunities for scholarships and grants; the same access to continuing education and literacy programmes; and the reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely (articles 10.a, b, c, d, e and f)
- Ensure rural women's right to obtain all forms of training and education (article 14.2.d)
- Take all legal and other measures necessary to provide effective protection against gender-based violence (General Recommendation #19)

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

- Ensure equal access to education (strategic objective B.1)
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training (strategic objective L.4)
- Develop non-discriminatory education and training (strategic objective B.4)
- Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms (strategic objective B.5)
- Eradicate violence against the girl-child (strategic objective L.7)

*Election workers pass
ballot boxes along
a line to be delivered
for vote counting in
Kabul, Afghanistan.*

Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 4
Eliminate gender
disparity in primary
and secondary edu-
cation, preferably
by 2005, and to all
levels of education
no later than 2015

The full range of measures that must be taken to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment have already been comprehensively mapped out in CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as in key provisions of other international instruments and conference documents.⁵ The directions provided to gov-

ernments in these documents concern the most critical dimensions of gender inequality in all aspects of women's lives – including in relation to gender-based violence, cultural stereotypes, trafficking and prostitution, armed conflict, political life, laws and legal status, government structures, the media, education, employment, health care, family planning, poverty, the environment, rural life, and marriage and family relations. As the MDGs were originally conceived as a means of accelerating and re-intensifying efforts to fulfil existing global commitments, and the Millennium Declaration specifically pledged to enhance the implementation of CEDAW, the most pressing demand to be made under Goal 3 is to implement CEDAW and Beijing across the board.

5 THESE INCLUDE: THE RIO CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (1992), THE VIENNA CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (1993), THE CAIRO CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (1994), THE COPENHAGEN WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (1995), THE ISTANBUL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (1996), THE DURBAN CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM (2001) AND THE MONTERREY CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT (2002).

PHOTO BY MARAI SHAH--AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Promote gender equality and empower women

GOAL 3

The importance of activating a comprehensive – rather than piecemeal – programme to advance gender equality is very clear in the context of the MDGs. The gender equality issues of most immediate concern under the different Goals cannot be effectively addressed unless action is taken on multiple fronts. For example, efforts to improve women's incomes cannot focus exclusively on laws and policies regarding the workplace and markets. They also have to address any underlying problems of gender inequality in women's education, legal capacity, exposure to gender-based violence, cultural stereotypes and gendered divisions of labour within the family, as well as broader issues of macro-economic policy and the global distribution of resources. Concerted efforts to enhance the implementation of CEDAW and Beijing in all of their dimensions are the best guarantee that, when 2015 arrives, the situation will genuinely have changed for women and significant progress will have been made not only on Goal 3 but on all the Goals.

WHAT CEDAW AND BEIJING REQUIRE

In addition to advocating for enhanced efforts to implement all of the provisions of CEDAW and Beijing, attention should also be drawn to the specific provisions in each that are concerned with creating the infrastructure and enabling environment that is needed for the realization of women's human rights. Where this basic groundwork has not been established, efforts to achieve gender equality will encounter obstacles. Of particular note are the requirements for constitutional and legislative review and change, and the establishment of appropriate structures and processes within government – including the creation and strengthening of women's machineries. Furthermore, while many governments have demonstrated an increasing willingness to initiate the necessary legal and structural improvements, the recognition that these changes must be adequately resourced and funded in order to be effective is often still sadly lacking.

CEDAW

- Embody the principle of the equality of men and women in national constitutions (article 2.a)
- Abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that discriminate against women (article 2.f)
- Adopt legislative measures to prohibit all forms of discrimination against women, and ensure that women have access to protection from discrimination through national tribunals and other public institutions (articles 2.b and c)
- Establish and/or strengthen effective national machinery, supported by gender mainstreaming throughout government departments, to advise on the impact on women of all government policies, monitor the situation of women comprehensively and help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination (General Recommendation #6)

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

- Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice (strategic objective I.2)
- Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects (strategic objective H.2)
- Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation (strategic objective H.3)
- Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies (strategic objective H.1)

PHOTO BY MARAI SHAH--AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Reduce child mortality

Improve maternal health

Target 4
Reduce by
two-thirds the
mortality rate
among children
under five

Target 5
Reduce by
three-quarters
the maternal
mortality ratio

CEDAW and Beijing understand gender-based discrimination as simultaneously threatening the health of both women and their children, and for this reason Goals 4 and 5 are being addressed together.

As the Millennium Taskforce on child health and maternal health has noted, the challenge to achieving these Goals is not technological but rather is a matter of delivery. The social structures needed to effectively deliver appropriate health services do not currently exist – for reasons that ultimately have to do with the

more political considerations of under-funding and the deterioration of public health systems that has resulted from economic reforms.

For women and their children, a range of gender inequalities entrenched in social, economic, cultural and political structures have rendered this situation even more threatening. Depriving women of educational and literacy opportunities significantly impairs their ability to care for their own health and that of their children and to ensure proper nutrition. In some regions higher levels of female infant mortality rates have been linked to the cultural devaluation of girl children and preferential treatment for sons in nutrition and health care. While many other health indicators have improved over the past few decades, maternal mortality rates have shown little change. This is not only because of a shortage of trained medical professionals and health centres for deliveries, but also because women's access to existing services is hampered by their lack of control over house-

PHOTO BY ANTONIO SCORZA--AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Reduce child mortality

Improve maternal health

GOALS 4 & 5

hold resources, lack of decision-making power and restrictions on their freedom of movement outside the home.

The Millennium Taskforce on gender equality has advised that, within the health sector, "countries should prioritize policies that promote universal access to reproductive health services, including family planning, safe abortion, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, and nutrition interventions, as well as policies that enable women to give birth safely by ensuring that all deliveries are attended by appropriately skilled health personnel and that all women have access to health facilities providing emergency obstetric care in the event of life-threatening obstetric complications".⁶

WHAT CEDAW AND BEIJING REQUIRE

Governments are obligated under CEDAW and committed under Beijing to institute a wide range of measures relating to the delivery of health care so as to ensure that men and women benefit equally. Where the health-care needs of both sexes are the same, equality of access must be ensured. But where women have different needs, roles and responsibilities – especially in relation to pregnancy, family planning and the nutrition and well-being of their families – governments must take the additional measures necessary to ensure that these needs are also met. Furthermore, while the maternal health and child mortality goals most directly engage CEDAW and Beijing obligations relating to the provision of health care, it is important that gender equality guarantees in other areas are also implemented to ensure that women are sufficiently empowered to be able to take advantage of the services that are available.

⁶ MILLENNIUM PROJECT TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY, 2004: 33.

CEDAW

- Eliminate discrimination in the field of health care, to ensure equality between men and women in access to health-care services, including those related to family planning (article 12.1)
- Ensure women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary (article 12.2)
- Ensure women adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation (article 12.2)
- Ensure rural women's right to adequate health-care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning (article 14.2.b)
- Eliminate discrimination in education to ensure women's access to educational information to help ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning (article 10.h)

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

- Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services (strategic objective C.1)
- Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health (strategic objective C.2)
- Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues (strategic objective C.3)
- Promote research and disseminate information on women's health (strategic objective C.4)
- Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health (strategic objective C.5)
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition (strategic objective L.5)

*A public school student
prepares a giant board
celebrating World AIDS
Day in Brasilia, Brazil.*

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 7
Halt and reverse the
spread of HIV/AIDS

Target 8
Halt and begin to
reverse the
incidence of
malaria and other
diseases

It is now well recognized that gender inequality is one of the principal factors that is currently fuelling the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS depends on the success of efforts to combat a series of deep-rooted and interconnected gender inequalities that have, together, rendered women especially

vulnerable to the disease.

Cultural norms of sexual ignorance and purity for women block their access to information about prevention. Gendered power imbalances make it difficult for women to negotiate safer sexual practices with their partners, and economic dependence and fear of violence can effectively force them to consent to unprotected sex. Women are receiving inadequate care and treatment both because it is being directly withheld from them and because what is being provided is inaccessible and unsuited to their health needs. The burden of caring for their dependents and themselves has become overwhelming, sinking families into poverty and destitution, because women lack access to economic resources and are hardest hit by the lack of social support

PHOTO BY EVARISTO SA-AP/GETTY IMAGES.



Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

6 GOAL

for those in need. Strategies to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis have consistently failed to include a gender perspective, in large measure because women have not been placed at the forefront of HIV/AIDS policy formulation.

WHAT CEDAW AND BEIJING REQUIRE

A wide range of CEDAW and Beijing provisions are applicable in efforts to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in addition to their specific provisions relating to health care. Because gender inequality and HIV/AIDS are interconnected at so many different levels, the challenge of reversing the spread of the pandemic requires the implementation of multiple provisions at the same time. Measures must be taken in the areas of women's economic equality and empowerment, equality in marriage and family relations, health-care services, elimination of gender-based violence, transformation of gender-based cultural stereotypes and enhancement of women's political participation.

CEDAW

- Eliminate social and cultural stereotypes and practices based on gender inequality (article 5.a)
- Eliminate all forms of gender-based violence against women (General Recommendation #19)
- Eliminate discrimination against women to ensure the same rights for men and women in employment (article 11)
- Ensure men and women the same legal rights relating to contracts and property (article 15)
- Ensure equality between men and women in marriage and family life (article 16)
- Ensure women's equal access to health-care services (article 12.1)
- Avoid discrimination against women in national strategies for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS (General Recommendation #15)
- Ensure women the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy and to hold public office and perform public functions at all levels of government (article 7.b)⁷

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

- Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls (strategic objective L.2)
- Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women (strategic objective D.1)
- Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources (strategic objective F.1)
- Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services (strategic objective C.1)
- Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives to address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues (strategic objective C.3)
- Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making (strategic objective G.1)

⁷ FOR A MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE MULTIPLE WAYS IN WHICH CEDAW APPLIES TO THE DIFFERENT GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC, SEE UNIFEM, *TURNING THE TIDE*, 2001.

*Woman and daughter
in field of sorghum close
to a power station in
Shanxi Province, China.*

Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 9
Integrate the principles
of sustainable
development into
country policies and
programmes and
reverse the loss of
environmental
resources

Target 10
Reduce by half the
proportion of people
without sustainable
access to safe
drinking water

Target 11
Achieve significant
improvements in the
lives of at least 100
million slum
dwellers by 2020

Because of gendered divisions of labour, women in many parts of the world shoulder the primary responsibility for agricultural work, water and fuel collection and providing food for their families. Environmental degradation and lack of access to and control over natural

resources have consequently had an especially severe impact on women. For example, due to forces that are reducing access to supplies of clean water – pollution, privatization of water services, poor service delivery and increasing population pressures – the burden on women has increased dramatically. Poor women and children (most often girls) are travelling great distances from home in search of water sources, which exposes them to violence, extends their already lengthy working days and limits the time they have to grow food and generate income. Girls may be forced to drop out of school to assist in water collection. And the alternative many overburdened women are obliged to accept is lower quality water, often contaminated ground water not normally used for consumption, that threatens their families' health. Furthermore, where HIV/AIDS has entered the household, lack of proper access to the water needed to care for family members can completely exhaust women's capacity as caregivers and is speeding the deaths of people infected with the disease.

Through their responsibilities in relation to key environmental resources, women have developed valuable knowledge about environmental sustainability and play central

PHOTO BY MARK HENLEY-PANOS PICTURES



roles in the life of their environments. However, gender inequalities and discrimination have deprived women of the necessary decision-making power to take the steps that would help achieve Goal 7. In those countries in which women's right to land ownership has not been ensured, for example, women are effectively denied access to the information, technologies and resources that would enable them to engage in more environmentally sustainable practices. As the Millennium Taskforce on the environment has noted, "when women lack the knowledge, means or authority to manage the natural resources on which they directly depend, degradation of these resources is more likely to occur".⁷ And this lack of direct control over resources is mirrored at higher decision-making levels, where women and their perspectives continue to be missing from all aspects of policy formulation and decision-making in natural resource and environmental management, conservation and monitoring.

WHAT CEDAW AND BEIJING REQUIRE

Under CEDAW and Beijing, governments must ensure that women – especially rural women – participate in all levels of decision-making related to environmental sustainability, and that women's concerns and perspectives are properly reflected in all policies and approaches adopted. Furthermore, governments must ensure that women have the access to and control over certain key environmental resources, such as water and land, that is needed both to protect women from the effects of environmental degradation and to enable them to take the action needed to improve their environments.

CEDAW

- Take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles that rural women play in the economic survival of their families (article 14.1)
- Ensure rural women's right to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels (article 14.2.a)
- Ensure that rural women have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes (article 14.2.g)
- Ensure that rural women enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications (article 14.2.h)

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

- Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels (strategic objective K.1)
- Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development (strategic objective K.2)
- Strengthen or establish mechanisms at national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women (strategic objective K.3)

PHOTO BY MARK HENLEY--PANOS PICTURES

⁷ MILLENNIUM PROJECT TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, 2004: 16.

Develop a global partnership for development

Target 12
Develop further an
open, rule-based, pre-
dictable, non-discrimi-
natory trading and
financial system

Target 17
In cooperation with
pharmaceutical com-
panies, provide access
to affordable essential
drugs in developing
countries

Target 18
In cooperation with
the private sector,
make available the
benefits of new tech-
nologies, especially
information and
communication t
echnologies

The inclusion of a goal for the development of a global partnership should direct the attention of all development partners to the broader economic and political environment in which countries are struggling to achieve the MDGs. Unless all those with global influence – including the governments composing international financial and trade institutions, donors and the UN system, as well as the private sector – are very actively engaged in securing an enabling environment for the MDGs, the viability of the entire enterprise is threatened. It is inevitable that, whatever commitments national governments undertake to implement the changes mandated by the MDGs, they will remain unfulfilled if the needed resources and policy-making flexibility are missing

Of particular concern is potential incoherence between strategies required for achieving the MDGs and economic and trade policy-setting frameworks at national and global levels, such as poverty reduction strategies. For example, if decisions taken at national and global levels in relation to subsidies effectively disadvantage poor women's agricultural products, promote privatization schemes that price water out of poor women's reach or shrink the pool of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) available for development cooperation, then even the best efforts at the national level will not be sufficient to achieve the MDGs.

It should also be stressed that, even apart from their responsibilities under the MDGs, governments are already obligated to promote women's human rights and eliminate the forms of gender inequality that have been highlighted in

PHOTO BY ROBERT NICKELBERG--TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES



this document. For this reason as well, the broader economic and political positions they advance in international fora should always facilitate the realization of women's human rights rather than serving as an obstacle. Women's leadership and the inclusion of a women's human rights perspective at the international level are critical to ensuring that the right decisions are taken.

WHAT CEDAW AND BEIJING REQUIRE

Human rights experts have been paying increasing attention to the responsibilities that international financial and trade institutions have under human rights standards such as CEDAW. Among other things, they have pointed out that governments do not just have obligations to their own citizens under human rights treaties. Governments who have voting power within and provide funding to international financial institutions are obliged to respect their human rights commitments in this context as well. Beijing also explicitly commits governments to take proper account of gender equality considerations in their activities at the international level. In addition, both CEDAW and Beijing include strong provisions requiring action to ensure that women, and women's perspectives, play a central role in political decision-making at all levels.

PHOTO BY ROBERT NICKELSBURG--TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

CEDAW

- Ensure women the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations (article 8)
- Ensure women the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy and to hold public office and perform public functions at all levels of government (article 7.b)
- Ensure women's right to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country (article 7.c)
- Ensure rural women's right to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels (article 14.2.a)

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

- Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty (strategic objective A.1)
- Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making (strategic objective G.1)

Electronic resources

CEDAW concluding comments and government reports for each country can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw>

The CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations.htm>

Summaries of the CEDAW sessions for each country can be found at:

<http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2003/index.htm>

Country reports on follow-up measures taken to Beijing and Beijing +5 can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses.htm>

Documents relating to Beijing +5 can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm>

Documents relating to Beijing +10 can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/49sess.htm>

The reports of the Millennium Taskforces can be found at:

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/html/docs%20and%20reports.shtm>

National MDG reports can be found at:

http://www.undp.org/mdg/country_regionalreports.html

A wide range of resources on gender equality and the MDGs can be found at:

<http://www.mdgender.net/>

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United Nations Development Fund for
Women (UNIFEM)
304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017
USA
Tel: (212) 906-6400
Fax: (212) 906-6705
E-mail: unifem@undp.org
Website: www.unifem.org.

Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 40
D - 53113 Bonn
Germany
Website: www.bmz.de

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
GmbH
Postfach 5180
D - 65726 Eschborn
Germany
Website: www.gtz.de/women_law

Designer: Kathi Rota
Photo Editor: Susan Ackerman
Copy Editor: Tina Johnson
Printer: Kay Printing

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have opened a new door for the advancement of gender equality. Used to their best potential, the MDGs can be the means by which the insidious linkage between gender inequalities, the waste and destruction of women's human potential, and the seemingly endless reproduction of poverty is brought into sharp focus, and finally overcome.

As *Pathway to Gender Equality* outlines, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women must be our touchstones for realizing the potential held out by the MDGs. The wealth of understanding and experience of the nature of gender-based discrimination and the steps needed to achieve gender equality that has been generated through the CEDAW and Beijing processes stands waiting to be tapped. By using CEDAW and Beijing as the lens through which the gender equality dimensions of the MDGs are understood and addressed, principled conviction and development effectiveness can be brought together in a powerful way.

