

Unit 5: Millennium Development Goals and Gender

Learning Objectives

How does gender impact safety in insecure environments?

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the security challenges facing women, children and the poor;
- Be familiar with statistics of gender-based violence;
- Understand the consequences for gender-based violence;
- Know some methods for fighting against gender violence and security's impact on poverty and gender.

Introduction and Overview

Legally supported and developed policies to protect disenfranchised groups can be effective at achieving their goals. When a nation is slow to develop or enforce such policies, international commitments may encourage nations to join or follow suit, collectively achieving a goal. International social pressures, such as the millennium development goals, can put weight on countries to treat women equally and fairly in matters of education, healthcare, and finance. In this unit we discuss the role of the MDGs in protecting women and promoting gender equality.

What are the MDGs?

Box 21:

Millennium Development Goals

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

In September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Summit brought together the largest gathering of world leaders in history. In the summit's final declaration, signed by 189 countries, the international community committed to a specific agenda for reducing global poverty. This agenda listed eight Millennium Development Goals, which not only identified the gains needed but quantified them and established yardsticks for measuring improvements in people's lives. The goals guide the efforts of virtually all organizations working in development and have been commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development progress. Among the goals of the MDGs are to halve the proportion of people living in poverty by 2015 and spur significant improvements

in education, gender equality, health care, and in overcoming hunger and environmental degradation.

The Declaration calls for halving the number of people who live on less than one dollar a day by the year 2015. This effort also involves finding solutions to hunger, malnutrition and disease, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and guaranteeing a basic education for everyone. Direct support from the richer countries, in the form of aid, trade, debt relief and investment is to be provided to help the developing countries.

Looking Closer at Goal Three: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

While all of the MDGs would impact women if achieved, goal three is targeted at gender equality specifically. As we have said throughout this module, gender equality calls for more than verbal commitments and legislative action, but cultural changes and evidence of these changes through indicators that measure the progress. The MDG team measures progress in gender equality by considering the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education (See box 19).

The Education for All (EFA) initiative supports and measures these education goals specifically. Among other goals of the EFA movement, each of which includes a gender component, Goal 5 specifically aims at **“achieving gender parity by 2005, and gender equality by 2015.”** This goal calls for an equal number of girls and boys to be enrolled in primary and secondary school by 2005, or to have gender parity. It further aims to achieve gender equality in education by 2015. This more ambitious goal means that all girls and boys have **equal opportunity to enjoy basic education of high quality**, to achieve it at equal levels and to enjoy equal benefits from education.

According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report, of the 176 countries with data in 2006, 59 had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education. This is 20 countries more than in 1999. And two-thirds of countries had achieved parity at the primary level. However, more than half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab States had not reached the target. Only 37 per cent of countries worldwide had achieved gender parity at secondary level.

Gender and the other MDGs

As we look at the eight Millennium Development Goals, gender is present in each of them, not only goal three, to promote gender equality and empower women. But in order to achieve gender equality in each we need more. The likelihood for more gender-responsive programming and resource allocation can be improved through:

- An internal policy dialogue about gender
- Strengthened national capacity
- Statistical systems for data collection and reporting.

Box 22: Gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals

Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- *Gender equality in capabilities and access to opportunities can accelerate economic growth.*
- *Equal access for women to basic transport and energy infrastructure (such as clean cooking fuels) can lead to greater economic activity.*
- *Gender equality in farm inputs helps increase agricultural production and reduce poverty because women farmers form a significant proportion of the rural poor.*
- *Equal investment in women's health and nutritional status reduces chronic hunger and malnourishment, which increases productivity and well-being.*

Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education

- *Educated girls and women have greater control over their fertility and participate more in public life.*
- *A mother's education is a strong and consistent determinant of her children's school enrolment and attainment and their health and nutrition outcomes.*

Goal 4 Reduce child mortality and Goal 5 Improve maternal health

- *A mother's education, income, and empowerment have a significant impact on lowering child and maternal mortality.*

Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

- *Greater economic independence for women, increased ability to negotiate safe sex, greater awareness of the need to alter traditional norms about sexual relations, better access to treatment, and support for the care function that women perform are essential for halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and other epidemics.*

Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability

- *Gender-equitable property and resource ownership policies enable women (often as primary users of these resources) to manage them in a more sustainable manner.*

Goal 8 Develop a global partnership for development

- *Greater gender equality in the political sphere may lead to higher investments in development cooperation.*

Source: Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. UN Millennium Project 2005

Select Bibliography

Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. UN Millennium Project 2005

Internet Resources

EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, <http://www.unesco.org/en/efareport/>

<http://www.unesco.org/en/efa/efa-goals/gender-parity/>

Unit 5 Questions

Please answer each of the following questions. If you are taking this course in a group you may then meet to discuss your answers.

1. How does measuring educational parity measure gender parity?
2. What other indicators might also be used to measure gender equality?
3. How does Gender equality acts as a vehicle for the achievement of all the goals?