



GOAL 3

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

FACT SHEET

TARGET

1. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015

Quick Facts

- * In 2008, there were 96 girls for every 100 boys enrolled in primary school, and 95 girls for every 100 boys in secondary school in developing regions.
- The share of women employed outside of agriculture remains as low as 20 per cent in Southern Asia, Western Asia and Northern Africa.
- The global share of women in parliament continues to rise slowly and reached 19 per cent in 2010 — far short of gender parity.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Gender gaps in access to education have narrowed, but disparities remain high in university-level education and in some developing regions. Girls' enrolment ratios in primary and secondary schools have significantly increased in recent years. Nevertheless, the 2005 target was missed and major challenges remain, with large inequality gaps in primary education in Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia.

Access to university-level education remains highly unequal, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. In these regions, only 67 and 76 girls per 100 boys, respectively, are enrolled in tertiary education. Completion rates also tend to be lower among women than men.

Poverty is the main cause of unequal access to education, particularly for girls of secondary-school age. Women and girls in many parts of the world are forced to spend many hours fetching water, and girls often do not attend school because of a lack of decent sanitation facilities. Also, if they get pregnant, many are not allowed to continue school. Secondary education is especially important for women's empowerment, but in the poorest households, about twice as many girls of secondary-school age are out of school compared to their wealthier peers.

Despite progress made, men continue to outnumber women in paid employment, and women are often relegated to vulnerable forms of employment. The share of women in paid non-agricultural wage employment is slowly increasing and globally reached 41 per cent in 2008. It is still as low as 20 per

cent in Southern Asia, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and 32 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.

Even when women are employed, they are typically paid less and have less financial and social security than men. Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable jobs — characterized by inadequate earnings, low productivity and substandard working conditions — especially in Western Asia and Northern Africa, where paid employment opportunities for women are the lowest.

Globally, only one quarter of senior officials or managers are women. In Western Asia, Southern Asia and Northern Africa, women hold less than 10 per cent of top-level positions.

Women are slowly gaining political power, mainly thanks to quotas and special measures. Between 1995 and 2010, the share of women in parliament, on a global level, increased from 11 per cent to 19 per cent — a gain of 73 per cent, but far short of gender parity. Parliamentary elections in 2009 contributed to rising gains for women in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, where 29 per cent and 25 per cent of the renewed seats went to women, respectively. But 58 countries still have 10 per cent or fewer female members of parliament.

Progress in women's representation in the executive branches of government is even slower. In 2010, just nine of 151 elected heads of state and 11 of 192 heads of government were women. Globally, women hold only 16 per cent of ministerial posts.

Affirmative action continues to be the key driver of progress for women. In 2009, the average share of women elected to

parliament was 13 percentage points higher — 27 per cent as opposed to 14 per cent — in countries that applied such measures.

WHAT HAS WORKED?

- **Providing secondary school stipends for girls in Bangladesh:** The Female Secondary School Stipend programme in Bangladesh has provided money directly to girls and their families to cover tuition and other costs, on the condition that they enrol in secondary school and remain unmarried until the age of 18. By 2005, girls accounted for 56 per cent of secondary school enrolment in the areas covered by the programme, compared with 33 per cent in 1991.
- **Furthering women's empowerment in Mexico:** Mexico has developed an innovative federal programme called Generosidad that awards a "Gender Equity Seal" to private firms. Seals are granted through an independent evaluation that assesses a company's achievement of specific standards related to gender equity, including recruitment, career advancement, training and reducing sexual harassment. By 2006, 117 companies had obtained the Seal. Similar initiatives have been launched in Brazil, Costa Rica and Egypt.
- **Setting a gender quota for Parliament in Kyrgyzstan:** In 2005, there were no women in the Kyrgyz Parliament and only one woman in a cabinet position. In 2007, following a nationwide discussion facilitated by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), a 30 per cent gender quota was enshrined in the election code. By 2008, Kyrgyzstan had the highest proportion of women in Parliament (25.6 per cent) and in Government (21 per cent) in Central Asia.

WHAT IS THE UN DOING?

- The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) are working in a joint programme to **reduce female genital mutilation and cutting** by 40 per cent between 2008 and 2012 in a number of countries, including Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.
- In Cambodia, an initiative run by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in partnership with seven NGOs, provided **training in political campaigning and governing** to 919 women candidates. The initiative helped increase the number of women running for office from 16 per cent in 2002 to 21 per cent in 2007, and the number of women elected rose from 8.5 per cent to 15 per cent.

- UNDP supports the **participation of women in the political process** in Rwanda, where women now make up 56 per cent of the Parliament — the world's highest share.
- UNDP installed hundreds of **diesel-run generators**, known as multi-functional platforms, in rural areas across Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal to help ease some of the most time-consuming chores for women, such as fetching water, grinding and milling. The scheme freed up a daily average of two to four hours for women in Burkina Faso and contributed to increasing the owners' annual income by an average of US\$55 in 2009, producing net profits of US\$248 per unit.
- In Viet Nam, UNFPA works with the Viet Nam Women's Union on a **microfinance** initiative that helps women get credit and training. Participants meet weekly to review loans and learn about household economics, farming and animal husbandry.
- The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supports **teacher training** and the development of **learning materials** that promote gender equality. Through the UN Girls' Education Initiative, UNESCO also develops legal tools to reduce gender-based violence in schools and supports innovative methods to bring education to hard-to-reach women, such as through mobile phones.
- The **UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women**, managed by UNIFEM on behalf of the UN System, supports national and local action to address violence against women and girls. Since 1996, it has supported 304 programmes in 121 countries and territories with over US\$50 million in grants.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), UNIFEM, UNESCO and the World Bank partnered with the Liberian government in 2007 to stimulate the production of cassava (also called yuca or manioc) through the Ganta Concern Women's Group in Liberia. By mid-2009, the initiative had provided **technical skills and equipment** to 500 women.

Sources: *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, United Nations; UN MDG Database (mdgs.un.org); MDG Monitor Website (www.mdgmonitor.org); *What Will It Take to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals? – An International Assessment 2010*, UN Development Programme (UNDP); UN Population Fund (UNFPA); UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); World Food Programme (WFP); *Give Girls a Chance: Tackling Child Labour, a Key to the Future*, International Labour Organization (ILO), 2009; UN Development Programme (UNDP).

For more information, please contact mediainfo@un.org or see www.un.org/millenniumgoals.