



FACT SHEET

GOAL 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

QUICK FACTS

- » Of the 113 countries that failed to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment by the target date of 2005, only 18 are likely to achieve the goal by 2015.
- » Girls account for 55 per cent of the out-of-school population.
- » Since 2000, the proportion of seats for women in parliaments only increased from 13.5 to 17.9 per cent. Women occupy at least 30 per cent of parliamentary seats in 20 countries, although none of these countries are in Asia.

agriculture, compared to 35 per cent in 1990. But almost two thirds of women in the developing world work in vulnerable jobs as self-employed persons or as unpaid family workers. In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, this type of work accounts for more than 80 per cent of all jobs for women.

Women hold at least 40 per cent of the seats in five parliaments: Rwanda (48.8 per cent), Sweden (47 per cent), Cuba (43.2 per cent), Finland (41.5 per cent) and Argentina (40 per cent). Women constitute less than 10 per cent of the members of parliament in one third of all countries. Despite greater parliamentary participation, women are largely absent from the highest levels of governance. In January 2008, women accounted for 7 of the 150 elected heads of state and 8 of the 192 heads of government of United Nations Member States.

WHERE DO WE STAND?

School doors have swung open for girls in nearly all regions, as many countries have successfully promoted girls' education as part of their efforts to boost overall enrolment. Girls' primary enrolment increased more than boys' in all developing regions between 2000 and 2006. As a result, two out of three countries have achieved gender parity at the primary level.

While there is evidence of some success, especially in enrolment at the primary level, gender disparities in education are clearly evident in some regions. Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia have the largest gender gaps in primary enrolment. At the current rate of progress, the Goal 3 target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015, remains far from being achieved.

Lack of access to water and sanitation has a major impact on women and girls. Women and girls in many parts of the world are forced to spend large parts of their day fetching water, and children, especially girls, often do not attend school because their schools lack private and decent sanitation facilities.

Women have more income-earning opportunities than ever before. Overall, women occupy almost 40 per cent of all paid jobs outside

Despite some gains, violence against women remains an obstacle to the achievement of the MDGs. Studies show that incidents of gender violence can result in loss of household income equivalent to 25-30 per cent of the monthly income of poor households.

WHAT HAS WORKED

1. **Rwanda's** constitution, adopted in 2003, guarantees a minimum of 30 per cent of parliamentary seats and other leadership positions to women. Rwanda currently has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians in the world, with women constituting nearly 50 per cent of elected officials in the Chamber of Deputies and about 35 per cent in the Senate. In the Government Cabinet, 36 per cent of posts are occupied by women. In Rwanda, the gender gap in primary education reached its goal of zero in 2005, and the gender gap in literacy is close to zero. **Algeria** is another country where parity between sexes has been achieved at the primary school level, and where the proportion of girls exceeds the proportion of boys at the secondary and higher education levels.
2. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently awarded \$19 million to a UNDP-supported project using low-cost technology to boost the productivity and income of women farmers in **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Senegal**, three Least Developed Countries in Africa. The project's centerpiece is a multi-functional platform

consisting of a diesel-run engine mounted on a steel frame, to which a variety of processing equipment is attached, including a cereal mill, husker, battery charger, and joinery and carpentry tools. Such “platforms” provide electricity for lighting and refrigeration, as well as mechanical power for agro-processing and pumping clean water. They also perform the milling and husking of sorghum, millet, maize and other grains, a tedious, time-consuming task that used to be performed by women and girls, with a mortar and pestle or a grinding stone, in addition to the time devoted to collecting firewood and fetching water. Women started devoting the hours freed every day, thanks to the platform technology, to literacy courses and income-generating activities, such as creating small agro-business enterprises. After a few years, a majority of surveyed women in platform-equipped villages have tripled their revenues. Some 94 per cent became literate, compared to 62 per cent of women living in villages without platforms.

3. Since 1991, a growing number of women’s groups and civil society organizations from more than one hundred countries have taken part in the campaign “16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence”, tackling all forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence, sexual violence in armed conflict, and female genital mutilation/cutting. The “16 Days” run from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, through 10 December, Human Rights Day. Building on decades of work by women activists, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched in February 2008 a multi-year campaign to intensify action to end violence against women and girls, and ensure that policy makers at the highest level work to prevent and eradicate violence against women.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- » Scale up actions, increase financial resources and support governments to accelerate the achievement of the MDG targets that equally benefit and empower women and girls, and ensure their access to education and health services, full and decent employment, and equal political participation and decision-making in all sectors.
- » Support women entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas, including through improved access to property and economic assets, microfinance, agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, training and markets.
- » Guarantee women’s land and property rights through legal reforms.
- » Raise public awareness to reduce girls’ domestic responsibilities and prevent early marriage and pregnancy.

- » Adopt comprehensive laws on all forms of violence against women and support awareness raising campaigns to prevent violence against women and girls.
- » Increase funding to provide adequate services and access to justice and redress to victims of violence against women. Ensure a supportive environment to encourage the enrolment of girls in school and reduce absenteeism and drop-out rates.
- » Hire more female teachers to act as role models and to promote girls’ school attendance.
- » Promote gender-sensitive curricula and provide gender sensitization programmes for teachers and school officials.
- » Ensure that girls are provided with transportation to and from school.
- » Provide separate school sanitation facilities for girls and boys.
- » Enhance non-formal education for girls and women, such as vocational or skills training and literacy programmes.
- » Ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and ILO Conventions on Equal Remuneration, Discrimination, Workers with Family Responsibilities, and Maternity Protection.
- » Step-up efforts to implement decent work principles, such as social protection and freedom from harassment.
- » Enhance the participation of women at all levels of government and their role in other decision-making positions in the judiciary, the private sector, civil society and the media.

Sources: *Committing to action: Achieving the MDGs*, Background note by the Secretary-General for the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations, New York, 25 September 2008; *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*, United Nations; MDG Monitor Website <http://www.mdgmonitor.org/>; UNDP; *UNDP Annual Report 2008*; Women in National Parliaments Webpage <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, Inter-Parliamentary Union; UNIFEM, <http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/16days.php>; UNite to End Violence Against Women <http://endviolence.un.org/>; and UNFPA <http://www.unfpa.org/endingviolence>).

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