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GENDER AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

It has now been five years since the landmark United Nations Millennium Declaration and related Development Goals (MDGs), was adopted by Member States. The Declaration is a blueprint for action and has created a political momentum which holds great potential not only for improving the rights and empowerment of women, but more fundamentally for achieving the MDGs. The targets and indicators represent concrete benchmarks to measure progress on the eight development goals.

The 2000 Millennium Declaration commits States to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.

The acknowledgement that the achievement of women's rights and equality is central to the achievement of social and economic development is a significant achievement. This issue of Gender Dialogue, looks at gender equality and women's empowerment and the achievement of the MDGs.

What are the Millennium Development Goals?

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint for tackling critical issues facing developing countries – poverty, hunger, inadequate education, gender inequality, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation.

The MDGs have galvanized international efforts to strengthen cooperation to meet the needs of the world's poorest. "The Goals are underpinned by the comprehensive approach to development framed by the agreements reached at the world summits held by the United Nations in the 1990s. They are derived from the Millennium declaration, which is even broader in scope and proposes that action be taken to build consensus in such crucial areas as peace, security and disarmament, human rights, democracy and good governance". (Jose Luis Machinea, Executive Secretary, ECLAC).

"The power of the MDGs lies in the unprecedented global consensus and commitment that they represent. They establish a common index of progress, and a common focus for global partnership for development, which emphasize the needs of poor people. The MDGs also provide an opportunity to raise awareness about the connections among the eight Goals and the rights and capacities of women". (Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM).



Engendering the MDGs

Gender inequality remains a major obstacle to meeting the MDG targets in most developing countries. In fact, achieving the goals will be impossible without closing the gaps between women and men in terms of capacities, access to resources and opportunities, and vulnerability to violence and conflict.

In the Caribbean despite the entrenched gender inequalities, there has been noticeable progress towards the achievement of gender equality particularly in the areas of educational attainment, employment and health care. During the past three decades legislative changes coupled with policy changes have resulted in a marked improvement in the situation and status of women. Although the concerns of women are more visible, many challenges remain which hamper the full attainment of gender equity and equality.

Women are still the major victims of economic and social disadvantage as expressed in the higher numbers of women living in poverty, their underrepresentation in the political process and their segregation in the labour market in low paying jobs.

The inclusion of goals and targets in the MDGs of interest to women must therefore be understood that at the global level, there is recognition of the fact that women's rights and equality are fundamental to the achievement of economic and social development priorities. The MDGs provide op-

portunities for advancing gender-equality initiatives in that it provides an international enabling environment with which to hold governments and donor agencies accountable for gender responsive results.

What is important about the MDGs framework is that for every Goal, there is direction on gender equality that exists in the core human rights treaties. Engendering the MDGs therefore requires that ongoing connections are made between the Goals and other global agreements, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Vienna Declaration, CEDAW and the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The majority of States are already under formal, legal obligations to realise gender equality, particularly those states that have ratified CEDAW. In this respect, CARICOM is the first region where every country have ratified the CEDAW Convention.

In keeping with their commitments to implementation of these agreements, and in recognition of the relevance of gender to national development CARICOM governments have all established national machineries for the advancement of women and gender equality, however despite the espoused commitments there are still many areas of inequalities that remain problematic. The promotion of gender equality continues to be relegated to a lower level of national prior-

ity' (UN 2000b, 10), as demonstrated in the low level of resources, both financial and human allocated to national machineries.

Problems such as the lack of resources and lack of accountability for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming mandate to ensure equity in public sector delivery at national level are obstacles to achieving Goal 3, and have emerged in many progress reports on efforts to implement these agreements. For example, the five-year review of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform, held in June 2000, showed that the path to progress was one where on the one hand there was significant improvement in the social and economic status of women, yet on the other hand new and emerging issues, as well as the lack of gender responsive policies were hampering women's progress.

As the Secretary-General's report states: 'an improved understanding of gender equality does not necessarily automatically translate into gender equality in practice. Despite progress, the persistence of traditional and stereotypical gender roles, often reinforced by legal and/or institutional structures, impedes women's empowerment.

Although positive actions have been taken in almost every country, the Secretary-General's report concludes that

'more work needs to be done, at every level, to create the enabling environment envisioned in the Platform for Action, in which women's rights are recognized as an indispensable part of human rights and women as well as men have the opportunity to realize their full potential.

This uneven progress results from a complex set of conditions that lie at the heart of women's inequality. The structures that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination pervade economic, social, political, cultural, legal, and civic institutions, norms, and practices around the world. The know-how and investments required to eliminate them are rarely committed, especially in poor countries. The political will required to achieve gender equality is variable, or altogether lacking. (Noeleen Heyzer – UNIFEM)

In order to bring about the required transformation political commitment at the highest international and national levels is integral to the implementation of policies to effect meaningful changes in the allocation of resources, which would result invisible changes in the distribution of power, opportunity and social change necessary for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. There is therefore need for greater commitment towards mainstreaming gender in the development of national policies and actions in the achievement of the MDGs.

Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals

At the core of Goal 3 is an acknowledgement that gender equality and the empowerment of women is achievable with the necessary leadership and political will. The problems of gender inequality are well known, but it remains extremely difficult to translate this knowledge into development policy and practice at the level required to bring about the desired transformation in the distribution of power, opportunity and outcomes for women and men. The MDGs with their concrete time-bound targets for action provide a glimmer of hope for change.

The existence of a separate goal on gender equality is the result of decades of advocacy, research and coalition-building at the international concerning the actions to be taken by the global agenda for gender equality and women's human rights. Its very existence demonstrates that the global community has accepted the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the development paradigm. The Goals are therefore not new but rather build on the development agendas as agreed upon in the Beijing Platform for Action where twelve critical areas for the advancement of gender equality were agreed upon in 1995. The Goals also lend support to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and its Optional Protocol, both of which are binding Instruments advocating actions to mainstream gender in all areas of life.

The Mexico City Consensus: Paths to Gender Equality (June 2004), also reflects this consensus building. The full text can be found at

<http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/UnidadMujer/6/LCG2256/lcl2256i.pdf>

CARICOM Progress and the MDGs

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), has used the MDGs as an important tool for the development of policies towards the achievement of the goals and targets. A number of country reports have also been prepared indicating progress at the national level towards the achievement of the MDGs. Within the CARICOM region, there is every expectation that the eight goals as set out in the Millennium Declaration with their measurable targets and indicators can be achieved. However, CARICOM Governments have acknowledged that the indicators of the MDGs in themselves are very limiting and do not represent a realistic and complete development plan for the region. For example, Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment has one target: 'to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015', and four indicators, which are used to measure progress towards the goal: "The ratio of boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate women to men in the 15-24 age group; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

There are some important differences in CARICOM with respect to the gap between rhetoric and reality. While in the region the 2005 primary and secondary school parity target will more than likely be met, it is hardly sufficient to ensure the full participation of women in the political and economic lives of their countries. The reality is that in the Caribbean there is parity in the ratio of boys to girls in schools. In fact the available evidence shows that females/girls have a much higher rate of participation and completion than do boys at all levels of education from primary through to tertiary. Further females have been out-performing males in education however this higher rate of completion and performance belies the ongoing problems which continue to confront women in the Caribbean.

Gender equality is the foundation for the MDGs

'Gender equality and empowerment of women' – Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals - is at the core of all the MDGs, from improving health and fighting disease, to reducing poverty and mitigating hunger, expanding education and lowering child mortality, increasing access to safe water, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Attempting to achieve the MDGs without promoting gender equality will both raise the costs and decrease the likelihood of achieving the other goals.

(From Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women

Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. UN Millennium Project 2005).

CARICOM Progress and the MDGs

Dialogue on the MDGs in the Caribbean all point to the fact that the targets and indicators are inappropriate for the regions and has resulted in recommendations that there is need for the region to develop its own targets and indicators to reflect its needs. The common consensus in the Caribbean speaks to the weakness of the gender equality goal in respect of their focus on reproductive health and on domestic violence which continues to be an inherent feature of Caribbean culture, serving to dis-empower women regardless of their social or economic position in society.

An example of this dialogue is reflected in comments from Peggy Antrobus who in her presentation to the Caribbean Regional MDG Conference in 2003, underscored the fact that the high rates of literacy and education achieved by Caribbean women had not translated into higher access to employment, decision-making positions in the public domain or political office. In her view the region was still one where there was persistent poverty, unabated violence against women, the rapid spread of HIV-AIDS particularly among young women and a lack of safe and affordable abortion services.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Report on the Achievement of the MDGs in the CARICOM region also supports the view that women's higher educational attainment had not translated into the expected empowerment for women or increased gender equality. "This begs the question of the extent to which women's education develops capabilities which give them a competitive advantage beyond school and equips them with the competencies required to take advantage of employment opportunities and participate as full citizens in their various contexts" (P.31). This situation is clearly one of the most glaring examples of the inadequacy of the targets and indicators for goal 3.

Dialogue at the April 2005 Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), acknowledged the strategic importance of the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment to the achievement of the MDGs. However, the meeting again highlighted the inadequacy of the targets and indicators associated with capturing the goal of women's empowerment, and recommended the identification and development of Caribbean specific indicators, particularly in relation to Goals 3 and 5, which focus on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment and reducing maternal mortality. The COHSOD recommended the mainstreaming of gender equity concerns throughout the eight goals, focusing attention on gender based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights as issues where targets and indicators needed to be developed for the region.

A further example is taken from the June 2005 meeting of the United Nations ECLAC meeting on 'Developing an Agenda to Address Equity Gaps in the Caribbean SIDS', where it was pointed out that the MDGs were "limited in their scope to address problems of inequity, especially from a Caribbean gender perspective".

Clearly much more is needed to improve the situation of women. There is need for full reproductive health rights and access to services, the guarantee of equal property rights and access to work, affirmative action to increase political representation, and an end to violence against women and girls. To realize the MDGs, governments and their partners must seriously and systematically 'engender' efforts to achieve all the goals.

One positive action in addressing the issue and taking action was the establishment by COHSOD of a Task force on "Gender and the Poverty", which focused attention on Gender and the MDGs and the development of more specific targets and indicators for the region. The Report of the Task Force was submitted to CARICOM in June 2005, for consideration at the Heads of Government Meeting in July 2005 in preparation for the United Nations General Assembly/Millennium Summit in September 2005.

The Achievement of Other Goals is critical for Goal 3

Gender equality is at the core of the achievement of the eight development Goals. The failure to achieve gender equality targets will severely compromise the achievement of other goals and targets. It is therefore critical that actions are taken to accelerate progress on Goal three. According to the World Bank, “gender issues are highly relevant to achieving all of the MDGs, be it protecting the environment, achieving sustainable development or enabling universal access to health care”. (Gender Equality and the MDGs – 2003, p.3).

The recognition that the MDGs provide an integrated framework for removing existing gender inequities is perhaps it’s the most powerful and positive feature. The underlying expectation is that achievements in each goal will have positive impacts on gender equality in the same way that achievements in the gender equality goal will have positive effects in other goals. In effect all the goals are mutually interdependent.

Recommendations providing concrete ways in which the MDGs implementation process can be made more gender-sensitive have been made in numerous reports and policy dialogues on the Goals. Among these are recommendations from the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, which has identified a number of critical development problems which must be addressed to eliminate gender inequality and accelerate progress on Goal 3.

To ensure that Goal 3 is met by 2015, the Task Force has identified seven strategic priorities. These seven interdependent priorities are much broader than the Goal 3 target and represent the minimum necessary to empower women and alter the historical legacy of female disadvantage that remains in most societies of the world:



1. Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education.
2. Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights.
3. Invest in infrastructure to reduce women’s and girls’ time burdens.
4. Guarantee women’s and girls’ property and inheritance rights.
5. Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women’s reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings and reducing occupational segregation.
6. Increase women’s share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies.
7. Combat violence against girls and women.

(UN Task Force on Education and Gender Equality p.29)



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.



2. Achieve universal primary education

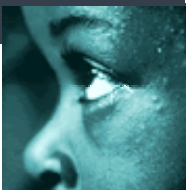
Educated girls and women have greater control over their fertility and participate more in public life.

A mother's education is a strong and consistent determinant of her children's school enrolment and attainment and their health and nutrition outcomes.



4. Reduce child mortality

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



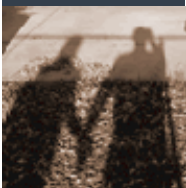
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

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



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



8. Develop a global partnership for development

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

(UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality. 2005 p.31).

Reproductive Health and the MDGs

The concept of reproductive health is rooted in the premise that all women have a right to reproductive health which embraces the right to regulate her fertility, the right to understand and enjoy her sexuality and the right to protection from contracting life threatening disease associated with reproduction and sexuality. This definition removes reproductive health from the more restrictive biological realm of maternal and child health where it is viewed more as a basic human right incorporating factors such as women's economically productive and cultural roles in recognition of the fact that sexual and reproductive health and rights are integral factors in the emotional and physical well-being of women.

Although there is no specific goal or target on reproductive health and rights, a number of the Task Forces commissioned by the United Nations Millennium Project point to the need to guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights in order to achieve Goal 3. The Task Force Report on Education and Gender Equality provides a comprehensive overview of the current reproductive health status of women. The Report states that the reproductive health of women was poor and suffered as a result of numerous unmet needs. Further, the report points to the fact that the sexual and reproductive rights of women were not fully realized because women continue to die as a result of pregnancy related complications, lack of access to contraception and to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as their vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections, particularly HIV.

Within the context of gender and reproductive health and the MDGs, Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment, Goal 5 on maternal health and Goal 6, which aim to combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases are important to the reproductive and sexual health of women. The target for Goal 5 is to reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio, and for Goal 6 to halt by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, and to have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

In the Caribbean sexual and reproductive health and rights is central to the achievement of gender and women's empowerment because women's status continues to be defined on their reproductive role, where mothering is viewed as a major determinant in women's status. The rigidity of gender roles in the Caribbean where women have little control over their bodies because they are expected to be passive while males are expected to be the sexual decision makers places the sexual and reproductive health of women at severe risk.

One of the more worrying problems is the fact that many of these young women have been sexually abused, exposing them to reproductive health problems including unwanted pregnancy, STIs and mental health problems such as depression. Of notable significance is the fact that research has linked early sexual abuse to sexual promiscuity in adult life, including a propensity to engage in risk taking behaviour. This has expressed itself very significantly in the feminization of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region where women are now the major victims of this disease, particularly young women in the age group 15-24 years whose prevalence rates outstrip those of males in the same age group.

The CARICOM Task Force report highlights the need for interventions to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights as critical to MDG strategies, and identify the strategic difference between strategies for reducing maternal mortality and strategies for protecting and promoting other aspects of maternal health and meeting the maternal health Goal. It is within this context that the broader aspects of sexual and reproductive health as endorsed by the Cairo and Beijing conferences are identified.

The Report makes the critical link between the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and the other seven MDGs, particularly Goals 1 – the reduction of poverty and Goal 3 the empowerment of women and argues that while sexual and reproductive health requires action in multiple sectors, health sector interventions are at the core of sexual and reproductive health strategies. This sentiment is also echoed by the UN Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, which calls for the fulfillment of commitments made in the Cairo Programme of Action, and for specific interventions within and outside the health system to address the sexual and reproductive health needs of both women and men.

The recent decision adopted by States at the 2005 General Assembly must therefore be viewed as timely not only in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, but more critically, to ensuring equal access to reproductive health and the protection of reproductive rights. States reaffirmed their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was identified as essential to achieving the MDGs and resolved to promote gender equality and eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by ensuring equal access to reproductive health: **by Achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as set out at the International Conference on Population and Development, integrating this goal in strategies to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium declaration, aimed at reducing maternal mortality, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, promoting gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS and eradicating poverty.**

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

The recognition of women's rights as human rights is central to empowerment.

Empowerment can be defined as the ability of individuals to make strategic life choices. The ability to make decisions with respect to reproduction, namely whether to engage in sexual activity for procreation or pleasure, whether or not to have children, when to have children are strategic life choices that have profound impacts on the economic and social outcomes of one's life. For women who have responsibility for biological and social reproduction empowerment is critical, and is key to the achievement of gender equity.

The recognition of women's rights as human rights is central to empowerment. Education may be an important

precondition to women's empowerment, but it does not guarantee that empowerment. For this to occur women must also enjoy equal rights with men, equal economic opportunities use of productive assets, freedom from drudgery, equal representation in decision-making bodies, and freedom from the threat of violence and coercion'. (UN Task Force Report on Gender equality p.29).

The Caribbean is an excellent example of the inadequacy of the using indicators on education as a measure of empowerment. Further this measurement must not be limited to quantitative measures of achievement, but also qualita-

tive measures. For example, while parity in school enrollment number is an important indicator for educational outcomes for females and males, it does not take into account qualitative measures such as school curriculum, which is still represents a major reinforcement of sex-role stereotyping which serves to limit the choices and options for females.

The recommendations for additional and expanded targets and indicators for advancing the rights of women are therefore central to the goal of empowering women.

Achievements – The Way Forward

As women throughout the World mark the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico in 1975 (the first of the world conferences on women), there is some renewal of optimism for women as reflected in the outcome of at the 2005 Millennium Summit where member States renewed their commitment to achieving the MDGs and adopted the following commitment in relation to Goal 3:

58. We remain convinced that progress for women is progress for all. We affirm that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Plat-

form for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly is an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and we resolve to promote gender equality and eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by:

Eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by the earliest possible date and at all educational levels by 2015;

Guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own and inherit property and ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women;

Ensuring equal access to reproductive health;

Promoting women's equal access to labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate labour protection;

Ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology;

Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and the girl child, during and after armed conflicts in accordance with the obligations of States under international humanitarian law and international human rights law;

Promoting increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process.

59. We recognize the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for achieving gender equality. To that end, we undertake to actively promote the mainstreaming of a greater perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, and further undertake to strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender. A full copy of the Outcome document can

Achievements – The Way Forward

be found at www.un.org/millenniumgoals

This global re-commitment to achieving gender equality through the MDGs creates the much needed enabling environment to ensure that governments take action to be more supportive of the gender mainstreaming mandate by providing the necessary resources to build capacities within the public sector to enhance the core competencies of institutions to deliver their functions from a gender perspective.

It also provides the framework for increasing accountability for the implemen-

tation of gender responsive policy-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This must also be supported through the implementation of legislative reforms by incorporating international commitments on gender equality, such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action into national laws. The CARICOM region already has achievements in this respect where the government of Guyana amended its Constitution to incorporate CEDAW and other human rights Conventions as an enforceable guarantee of gender equality.

The MDGs provide

the CARICOM region with an integrated framework for stimulating progress in human and social development. Within this context, there is need for ongoing policy dialogue to ensure that the Goals are adapted to reflect the socio-economic and cultural context of the Caribbean.

The importance of gender equality as a cross-cutting theme throughout all the goals must be understood and incorporated in the delivery of national development policies and programmes. More critically, the linkages between all the goals must be recognized and acted upon.

"We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals – worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries – but only if we break with business as usual. We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals."

*United Nations Secretary-General
Kofi A. Annan*

UPCOMING EVENTS

34th Session of CEDAW

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), is the UN body that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It comprises 23 experts who represent the range of fields of competence covered by the CEDAW Convention, as well as equitable geographical distribution and principle legal systems. States parties submit initial and periodic reports for the CEDAW Committee to review. These reports should indicate the legal, administrative and programmatic measures they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the CEDAW Convention. This review takes place in sessions normally conducted twice a year, once in January and the other in June.

The thirty-fourth session of the Committee will take place at the UN Headquarters, New York, 16 January - 3 February 2006 to examine the reports of the following States parties to the Convention: Australia, Cambodia, Eritrea, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mali, Thailand, Togo and Venezuela.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Fiftieth Session - 27 February - 10 March 2006

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946 to prepare recommendations and reports to the Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The Commission also makes recommendations to the

Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights. The object of the Commission is to promote implementation of the principle that men and women shall have equal rights.

The Commission consists of 45 members elected by the Economic and Social Council for a period of four years. Members, who are appointed by Governments, are elected on the following basis: thirteen from African states; eleven from Asian states; four from Eastern European states; nine from Latin American and Caribbean states; and eight from Western European and Other states. The Commission meets annually for a period of ten working days.

The 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will consider the following two themes:

Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work.

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

The Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women (fiftieth and fifty-first sessions) comprises the following members:

H.E. Ms. Carmen María Gallardo (El Salvador), Chairperson

Mrs. Adekunbi Abibat Sonaike (Nigeria), Vice Chairperson

Ms. Szilvia Szabo (Hungary), Vice Chairperson

Mr. Tom Woodroffe (United Kingdom), Vice Chairperson

Mr. Dicky Komar (Indonesia), Vice Chairperson

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RESOURCES

Task Force on Education and Gender Equality

Taking action: achieving gender equality and empowering women



There are many practical steps that can be taken to reduce inequalities based on gender, which hinder the potential to reduce poverty and achieve high levels of well-being in societies around the world. Those detailed in Taking Action include strengthening opportunities, increasing access, investing in infrastructure, guaranteeing rights, eliminating inequality in employment, increasing women's representation in government and reducing violence against girls and women.

The Millennium Development Goals: a Latin American and Caribbean perspective ***Coordinated by José Luis Machinea, Alicia Bárcena, and Arturo León***



This report provides a description of the progress made by the Latin American and Caribbean region in the achievement of the MDGs and the challenges that remain to be met. The analysis also looks at the differences across countries in terms of their chances of attaining the Goals and, wherever possible, the differences between trends in various segments of the population (classified by gender, ethnic group, age group, place of residence and income stratum) as a means of helping to pinpoint the areas in which efforts must be redoubled in order to ensure that advances are of benefit to all. This is supplemented by an integrated analysis of macroeconomic (including fiscal) factors as they relate to the Goal of eradicating poverty.



The UN Millennium Development Goals

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

- Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

Goal 4: Reduce Child mortality

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

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

- Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

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

- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
- Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

- Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory, includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction— nationally and internationally
- Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction
- Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
- In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies— especially information and communications technologies

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/goals.html>

http://www.eclac.cl/mdg/default_en.asp

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The Statistics and Social Development Unit of the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean has as its focus the conduct of research and analysis on the areas of women and development; population and development, (migration and teenage fertility), poverty, and other social development issues such as the conditions of vulnerable groups in the society, social reform and social policy formulation. In this regard, the ECLAC/CDCC Secretariat is responsible for assisting member States with the implementation of programmes of action coming out of international conferences such as the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD); the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Conference).



Group Picture, ECLAC Staff Members, September 2005



Gender Dialogue

GENDER DIALOGUE was created in response to calls from participants at the Third Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on Women, held in Trinidad and Tobago in October 1999, for a more systematic sharing of information and dialogue around policies and programmes for women. In addition to this call we, too, at the ECLAC/CDCC Secretariat, have felt the need for a medium through which we could routinely share our work.

The newsletter is available both in print form and at the ECLAC website. We are exploring as well, the creation of a chat room to expand the possibilities for dynamic dialogue.

Contact Us

Please feel free to send your contributions and feedback to:

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