Global Development

Worksheet 2.1: Gender and the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out a powerful agenda for a global partnership to fight poverty, offering a shared vision of a better world by the year 2015. In all there are 8 goals.

Goal 1	**Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger** Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
Goal 2	**Achieve universal primary education** Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
Goal 3	**Promote gender equality and empower women** Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
Goal 4	**Reduce child mortality** Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
Goal 5	**Improve maternal health** Target 5: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
Goal 6	**Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases** Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
Goal 7	**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: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation Target 11: Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
Goal 8	**Develop a global partnership for development**

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The third Millennium Goal challenges discrimination against women, and seeks to ensure that girls as well as boys have the chance to go to school. Indicators linked to this goal also aim to measure progress towards ensuring that more women become literate, have more voice and representation in public policy and decision making, and have improved job prospects. Women disproportionately suffer the burden of poverty, are the primary agents of child welfare, are the victims of widespread and persistent discrimination in all areas of life, and put their lives at risk every time they become pregnant. One of the greatest injustices in the world is maternal mortality. This reflects the low status of women in society. In the industrialized countries one woman in 4,000 dies in childbirth. In Africa, it's one in 16. Women are increasingly susceptible to HIV/AIDS and other major diseases.

There's now universal agreement that the single most important intervention for development is the education of girls. All studies indicate that when girls and women are empowered, there is faster economic growth, less corruption in governance, lower childhood malnutrition, lower child mortality, increased agricultural production and more children in school including girls.

Getting more girls through school not only impacts directly on their own welfare. Research has shown that women with only a few years of primary education have better economic prospects, have fewer and healthier children, and are more likely in turn to ensure their own children go to school. The benefits to families and society of these gains are enormous – and the impacts on poverty reduction immediate and direct.

Reducing income poverty is not just dependent on a better investment climate and more vibrant markets; it also depends on the availability of a healthy and well-educated workforce.

Improvements to health are as dependent on better housing and environmental conditions and a better-educated population as they are on improved medical and clinical services. In other words, the overall health and wellbeing of a society is greatly improved.

Recognizing women's contributions, empowering women, realizing and protecting their rights and tackling the issues of gender inequality are crucial objectives that have impacts across all eight of the MDGs, and failure to address these concerns will lead to failure in achieving the MDGs themselves. The UN Hunger Task Force concluded that gender equality must be put into practice if the hunger goal, and all the other goals, are to be met. For example, South Asia has the most severe subjugation, marginalization, and disempowerment of women in the world. They've got more than enough food and yet the rates of low birth weight babies and severe child malnutrition are twice as high as in Africa and the reason is the severe inequality between men and women.

Adapted from *Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals* http://www.mdgender.net/goals/ and *The Hunger Project and the Millennium Development Goals: A Global Citizen's Briefing* by Joan Holmes http://www.thp.org/resources/speeches_reports/speeches/global_citizens_briefing

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Read the above material and, working in groups:

1. Identify and explain all the ways suggested that increasing the equality of women can benefit development in poor countries

2. Suggest reasons why achievement of all of the Millennium Development Goals might be undermined by a failure to achieve gender equality